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HER KIND OF MAN

A Novelet by PEGGY GADDIS

I

THE house lights dimmed. All through the crowded club, voices dropped to an expectant hush. A spotlight found the gold-colored brocade drapery above the bandstand, then the curtain slid up.

As always, there were murmurs of appreciation throughout the room. For the raising curtain revealed a tall gilded
When lovely nightclub star Clarissa had to choose between two suitors, she remembered there are no people like show people.
cage built into a bay window above the bandstand, and seated inside the cage was a beautiful girl with shining blue-black hair in a crisp cap of curls above a lovely laughing face.

Her gown was ivory crepe, Grecian in its intricately draped styling. A belt of gold mesh fastened with a jeweled butterfly for a buckle, and a matching jeweled butterfly against one shoulder were the only other gems to be seen. Except the girl herself, breath-taking in her loveliness.

She leaned toward the microphone on the small white piano at which she sat and said, laughing, “Hello, all you nice people. Thank you for coming to see us tonight. We hope you’ll have fun. We have a lot of celebrities with us and we’re going to let you meet them.”

Her voice was warm, threaded with merriment, and she seemed to be having so much fun herself that her audience must have felt it would be outrageous not to have fun, too. She read her various lists, and the people she mentioned stood up in the spotlight, grinned, answered her gay questions as best they could and sat down again, flushed and pleased at the attention.

“And now,” she said gaily, “I think we’ve snooped enough in private lives. So if you don’t mind, I have a number I’d like to sing for you.”

Applause sprang up all over the house, indicating eagerness for the song.

The girl leaned close to the microphone, accompanying herself on the piano as she sang a haunting Gypsy love song. Hers was not a voice that would ever worry Dinah Shore, nor was there the slightest hope it would ever be heard at the Met. But it was a warm, vibrant, slightly husky voice that had an intimate appeal. Each one in her audience could feel she was singing especially for him or for her.

She was Clarissa Lawrence, the most popular night-club star the whole length of the Florida Gold Coast. And when she had finished, and done the encores demanded, she stood up, smiling as the gold curtain once more dropped about the gilded cage.

She was at the door of her dressing room when Dexter Harlow, owner of the club, came up behind her and followed her inside.

“You were merely great tonight, honey. Only slightly sensational, as you always are.” He spoke lightly, his brown eyes admiring as they took in from the crisp cap of blue-black curls to the tips of her golden sandals.

She laughed over her shoulder as she sat down at her dressing table, touching up her make-up unnecessarily. Her blue eyes were star-lit, and beneath the delicate make-up her cheeks were flushed with happiness.

Dex dropped into a chair, lit a cigarette for her, and one for himself.

She smiled her thanks. Then, as though he had just remembered it, Dex brought a small box from his pocket, grinning at her as he held it up.

“Here—catch!” He tossed it to her, and added, “A little something to mark a very special occasion, which tonight is.”

She caught the small white box, and pressed the catch. The lid flew up, revealing a star sapphire of such beauty and depth that for a startled moment she could only look down at it, wide-eyed.

“If it doesn’t fit, we’ll take it back to the jeweler tomorrow,” Dex said happily.

“Oh, but Dex, I can’t possibly accept this!” she stammered, and her color was deep beneath the make-up. “You know I can’t!”

Dexter Harlow studied her for a moment, then said quietly, “Not even if a proposal to commit matrimony goes along with it?”

She lifted her head and her fingers closed the little box.

“Especially not then,” she told him huskily.

He looked down at the cigarette in
his fingers, and Clarissa watched him. Miserable, because she was making him unhappy when she owed him so much. Wishing with all her heart that this moment could have been avoided and knowing it could not have been.

Even if Hal Stuart hadn’t come into her life. The thought of Hal lifted her heart and braced her for the scene with Dex she knew was coming.

“I’d be a fool if I didn’t ask,” he said at last and his darkly tanned good-looking face was almost expressionless because he was making such an effort at self-control. “Although I’m a fool for asking. It’s Stuart, of course.”

“Of course,” Clarissa said simply.

Once more that taut silence, and again it was Dex who broke it.

His clenched fist banged hard against his knee, as he said through his teeth, “When I think that you met that guy only by accident, and how much could have been avoided if you hadn’t met him, I could set off a bomb in the office of those damned lawyers who sent him here!”

“It wouldn’t have mattered, Dex,” she told him steadily. “Between you and me, I mean. I’m not in love with you, Dex. I never have been. I’m terribly sorry, but that’s the truth.”

His jaw jutted, and his blue eyes were hard.

“Not even just a little bit?” He tried hard to sound mocking.

She shook her head. “And now you’re going to remind me that you took me out of a second-rate chorus line and made a star out of me.”

For a moment she thought he was going to strike her.

“Am I the sort to throw that in your teeth, Rissa?” he asked thinly, and she saw that he was deeply hurt. “So what? So maybe I found you in a chorus when I was looking for a star for the Bird Cage here. I took a chance on you, but it has paid off. You don’t owe me a damned thing, Rissa. The shoe’s on the other foot. It’s I who am under obligations to you.”

She shook her head, smiling.

“That’s silly, and you know it,” she reminded him. “You paid for my training, for luscious clothes, for material for my act, songs that suit what little voice I have. No, Dex, you’re—well, you’ve been a fairy godfather and I’ll be grateful to you as long as I live. But I’m not in love with you, Dex and I’m terribly, terribly sorry.”

SHE had put the jewel box holding the magnificent sapphire back in his hand and he was turning it between his fingers, twisting it this way and that, his head lowered so that she could not see his expression. The light was bright on his coppery-red hair, on the clean line of his shoulder beneath the expensively tailored white tuxedo. The darkly red carnation in his button-hole was faintly fragrant in the small, close room.

“So now you’re going to throw away everything you’ve learned, all that you’ve gained, to marry a jackleg of a law clerk,” he growled, and his tone was bitter with pain.

“Hal is a lawyer and a good one, even if he hasn’t the money to open his own office and to finance himself until he builds up a practice,” she reminded him swiftly. “He is grateful for a small salary from the offices of a firm like Endicott, Jones and Halperin while he gains experience.”

“And you’re in love with him.” His tone made his statement almost an accusation.

“With all my heart,” she said simply.

As though the words had stung him, Dex instantly was on his feet, his hands jammed deeply into his pockets, fists balled, and his jaw set and hard.

“He’s not the man for you, Rissa, and you damned well know it,” he said sharply.

Anger stung her, and she could not keep back what she flung at him.

“And you are, I suppose?”

His brows drew together and his eyes, more gray now than blue, studied her sharply.
"I am," he told her flatly. "You're my kind of woman, Rissa. I'm your kind of man. We belong together. We grew up in the same world—show business. Both batting our brains out trying to get to the top. And now that we are, you plan to throw it all away on this man who knows less than nothing about everything you have learned since the day you were born. And you know as little about his kind of life. Believe me, Rissa, it won't work."

"It will," Clarissa said swiftly. "Because we love each other."

Dex looked at her, bitterness riding high in his cold eyes.

"You, Clarissa Lawrence," he scoffed savagely, "star of the Bird-Cage, trained to the teeth to wear the most exquisite clothes, to charm and to please the most sophisticated audience in the world, a night-club audience, you're going to throw it all away for the corny cottage covered with roses and mortgages."

She was trying hard not to quarrel with him, and kept her voice even, though the effort tightened the muscles of her throat.

"It seems a fair exchange, to me," she said quietly.

He made a gesture of weary resignation. "Well, when's the happy event?"

"If I had my choice, it would be tomorrow," she said frankly. "But Hal can't afford to get married now. He's barely making a living for himself, so we have to wait."

There was a flicker in Dex's blue-gray eyes.

"And the waiting is not easy," he said at last, his voice quiet, even.

Color rushed into her face but her eyes met his steadily.

"The waiting isn't easy," she admitted frankly.

The taut pause between them could only have lasted for seconds, but to Clarissa's taut nerves it seemed to stretch endlessly. Then Dex drew the jewel box out of his pocket and tossed it carelessly on the dressing table as though its value had been pennies, rather than thousands of dollars.

"Keep it as a memento of the occasion," he said drily. "An anniversary present, call it. Or had you forgotten what happened two years ago tonight?"

Her lovely eyes widened. She caught her breath, then cried eagerly, "Two years ago tonight? Dex, it was the night I signed my contract with you! The beginning of a whole new life for me. Oh, Dex, truly I am grateful for all that you've done. Terribly grateful!"

Impulsively she moved over to him, threw her arms about him and kissed him on the lips. But before she could draw back, his arms had closed hard about her, drawing her against him so tightly that she could scarcely breathe. And her light, impulsive kiss was replaced by a hard, almost brutal pressure of his lips on hers. A kiss that was desperate in its pleading, almost savage in its intensity, yet touched with the bitterness of hopelessness. It was a kiss whose violence rocked her to the depths of her being.

Then, as suddenly as he had grasped her, he thrust her away from him. With his hands clamped hard on her shoulders, his eyes blazing in a face so pale that it was ashen behind its sun-bronze he rasped in a thick, low-pitched voice:

"Don't ever do that again!" He swung around and plunged out of the room.

Clarissa collapsed into a chair, her shaking hands over her convulsed face. Beneath the impact of that savage kiss an emotion so violent, so stormy had torn at her that it left her limp. It was an emotion she had never known before in her twenty-three years. She couldn't, she dared not try to analyze it. For she was in love with Hal, deeply. Yet Dex had stirred her with a kiss as no other man had ever been able to do.

Why? Why? She didn't know and she was afraid to guess.

Kisses among people in show business were as casual, as meaningless, as a hand-shake. Kisses were the small
change with which a girl paid off her social obligations. Yet there had been nothing casual, or small-change about this one. This one had rocked her to the depths of her being!

II

CLARISSA had no idea how much later it was when there was a gentle tap on her door, and Hal's voice called to her. She swung the door open, and was in his arms almost before he was inside the room. And she was clinging to him as though for protection against some nameless, frightening thing that lurked in the shadows beyond the reach of the light.

"Well, hello there," Hal's voice was gently teasing, and his head with its crisp, wheat-straw colored hair was bent tenderly above her own, as he held her, surprised and delighted at the warmth of her welcome.

"Kiss me," she murmured and raised her soft, tremulous mouth to his.

"A pleasure, and a privilege," said Hal, and kissed her warmly.

She clung to him, returning his kiss with an ardent response that surprised and delighted him. For a moment he held her so, then he looked down at her, smiling, his eyes tender.

"Hi, you get more beautiful every time I see you, and I thought that was against the laws of probability," he told her softly, and then, puzzled and startled, she saw the glimmer of tears in her eyes. "Darling, what's wrong?"

She laughed unsteadily as she drew away from him.

"Nothing's wrong. It's just that I'm in love, and that's supposed to make people do crazy things, isn't it? I wouldn't know. I'm a stranger around here." She tried desperately to overcome a tense moment with a light touch.

"I'm pretty much of a stranger myself to this love business," Hal admitted softly. "But it's mighty pretty country, and I don't think I'll have too much trouble getting used to it. In fact, it's fun."

Without stopping to think, she said eagerly, "Hal, let's get married right away. Tomorrow?"

His arms tightened about her convulsively, but he did not answer her, just held her close. Then he cupped her chin in his hand, tilted her face up and kissed her.

"Darling, don't!" His voice was rough in his effort to control it. "You know there's nothing in the world I'd like better. But we've been all over that. You know I couldn't take care of you. Precious. I make barely enough for one to get by."

"But my job pays a good salary," she pleaded. "There's plenty for both of us."

His face darkened and his jaw was set. "Let you support me?" he scoffed. "If I were the sort of man willing to live on his wife's earnings, I wouldn't be the sort of man a girl like you could love, darling. You know that as well as I do."

She clung to him tightly, but could not speak. There was a bitter weariness in his voice as he went on:

"Don't think it isn't hard for me, Precious. It just about kills me that we have to go on waiting. Not even knowing how long it may be. Unless I bring some business in to the firm pretty soon, I may be out of even the make-shift job I've got now."

She realized she was making things harder for him and that braced her to a point where she could manage a small unconvincing laugh and draw away from him. But loving the reluctance of his arms to release her.

"I'm sorry, darling." She smiled at him, a mist of tears in her eyes. "It's just that—well, once in awhile, I sort of lose my grip. I know it's impossible for us to be married now. I've known all along, only I just hate to admit it."

She turned from him toward the
dressing table and Hal, his eyes filled with longing, watched her. After a moment he said harshly, "You know you'd be a smart girl, Rissa darling, if you told me to go peddle my papers somewhere else. You can marry anybody you want to—somebody who can give you all your beauty deserves. You ought to get rid of me. You know that, don't you?"

"I couldn't," said Clarissa simply. "Not, and go on living. Without you, I'm only half-alive. I'll wait, darling. Forever, if we have to."

SHE looked down at the small jewel box on the dressing table. Without stopping to think she picked it up, opened it, and held it out, the light falling richly on the ring it held.

"An anniversary present from Dex," she said thinly. "Lovely, isn't it?"

Hal's eyes widened as he took in the beauty of the stone. "Anniversary?" he repeated.

"Two years ago tonight I signed my contract with him," Clarissa said, her eyes on the stone. "Should I accept it, do you think?"

Hal hesitated and he was pale now, his jaw set and hard.

"That's for you to decide," he murmured, and turned toward the door.

"Wait, darling!" Clarissa dropped the jewel as though it had come from the dime store. "I have to do another show, and then we'll go somewhere and have a bite to eat. Or go to my place and I'll scramble eggs."

Over his shoulder Hal asked, "But what about Harlow? Doesn't he want to celebrate the anniversary?"

"I'd rather celebrate it with you," she told him quietly.

He turned then and for a moment they looked at each other. Her lips were sweetly curved, her eyes were brimming with love. Suddenly he swept her close and hard in his arms and held her for a lovely moment.

"I'm crazy about you," he muttered, his lips against her own.

"You'd better be." She tried desperately for a gay note. "Wait for me at the entertainers' table, darling. I'll do a much better show knowing you're watching me."

After he had gone, she went back to the dressing table and studied the reflection that looked back at her from the mirror, that was surrounded by mercilessly revealing white light. But there was something in her eyes that, even as she studied the look, she would not quite admit.

It was idiotic for her to be afraid of Dex. And yet she was. Not so much afraid of Dex, of course, as of the effect he had on her. That kiss tonight had had a terrific impact. Not even Hal's kisses had been able quite to remove their stunning, frightening effect. But she shook off the thought at last and began carefully repairing her make-up in preparation for her final show.

Ready to go on, Clarissa waited halfway up the stairs that led to the balcony where her cage was hidden behind its golden brocade drapery, while the chorus finished their number. Her eyes went over the crowded room, and came back to rest on Hal, waiting at the entertainers' table well toward the back of the room.

While she was watching him, love filling her heart, she saw Dex come to the table, shake hands with Hal and pause there, chatting with him. Clarissa tensed as she watched the pantomime, ignoring the chorus and the crashing of the music as it approached the climax of the number. Her eyes widened as she saw Hal rise and walk with Dex toward the front of the club.

Now what in the world, she wondered, had made Dex ask him to do that? She was tense as she watched the two men thread their way through the close-packed tables until they reached one that she knew was considered the best in the house. A large party sat there, and though they were too far away for Clarissa to distinguish faces, she could see they were all in evening attire
"An anniversary present from Dex," she said thinly. "Lovely, isn't it?"
which, also considering the location of this table, told her they were V.I.P.

The chorus danced off, with an impudent wiggle of neat posteriors, and the lights dimmed. Clarissa went quickly up the stairs and into the big gilded cage. And again when the golden draperies lifted she was posed gaily behind her small white piano, and her act began.

There were the usual clamorous demands for encores, and when at last she begged off, smiling, gaily throwing kisses toward the crowded room and the curtain slid down, she hurried down to the main floor.

Now, with the house lights on, she saw that Dex and Hal were still at the table up front, and she frowned. She was still puzzled as she hurried toward her dressing room.

As she opened the door a familiar voice spoke behind her. Dex followed her into the room and closed the door behind him. For a moment a smothering consciousness of his disturbing presence, a vivid memory of that moment when she had been held close in his arms and his lips had bruised her own, made it impossible for her to face him. She moved to her dressing table and collapsed on the stool before it.

"I’ve got news, Rissa," announced Dex, his eyes bright. "Bibi Marshton is out front, and I’ve just introduced Hal to her and her party."

Everything else was forgotten as Clarissa stared at him.

"Bibi Marshton?" she gasped incredulously. For Bibi was one of the richest girls in the country, and very much the queen of café society.

"No one else," Dex said eagerly. "She’s down here shopping for a divorce, and I knew she’d need a lawyer, so I introduced her to Hal."

"But why?" demanded Clarissa, sharply.

Dex raised his eyebrows, elaborately surprised.

"Why does she need a lawyer," he asked cheerfully, "or why did I think of Hal? Well? After all, a lawyer is sort of standard equipment when you’re getting a divorce, even if it is your third or fourth. With Bibi I’m not sure which. But it could be a nice break for Hal, and it might do him a lot of good with his firm. It could lead to quite a bit of new business, if he makes a hit with Bibi and her crowd. They’ve all got more money than brains, and they naturally run into spots where they need the services of an able young lawyer. Who knows? A grateful firm might take Hal into partnership, with contacts like that."

Clarissa was studying him sharply. "Of course, I know all that." Her voice was almost curt. "I’m wondering why you bothered to do anything for Hal."

Dex stiffened and the friendly twinkle left his eyes.

"I happen to be one of those goofs who wants the girl he is in love with to be happy," he told her stiffly. "Your happiness and your well-being are far more important to me. Rissa, than mine. You’re in love with Hal. You can’t be married until he is financially able to support a wife. I saw a chance to throw some business his way and I did. Is that so hard to understand?"

She was ashamed of the momentary suspicion that had struck her.

"Of course not, Dex. I’m a mean-minded, suspicious old crone," she apologized. "You’ve done so much for me, Dex. And now you’re helping Hal. That’s pretty wonderful of you!"

He leaned a little forward, and now his eyes were bleak. "Just for the record, pet, let’s get one thing straight," he said flatly. "To me Hal Stuart is just another guy. I wouldn’t lift my little finger to offer him the slightest assistance, except that you are in love with him. That makes him pretty special in my book."

Color was burning in Clarissa’s cheeks, but her eyes met his straightforwardly. "Thanks, Dex," she said huskily. "When I think of all you’ve done for me, since
the very first time you picked me out of a chorus—"

"I've been repaid for that, amply," he cut in swiftly. "I saw from the first that you had something. The something that is so hard to describe, to analyze, but the thing any performer needs to get to the top, given a break. Without it, the whole thing is hopeless. Your voice is not sensational, you're lovely, but lots of other girls are equally so. It's that indefinable something that sets you apart from them. With that, a girl don't need anything else."

"Except somebody who believes in her so firmly that they'll go all out to see you get that break," she reminded him softly.

For a moment Dex studied her, and his eyes held scarcely banked flames that brought back again the memory of that tumultuous kiss that had shaken her to the depths of her being. It was a look she could not meet.

She turned from him once more and a taut silence held them in an awkward spell.

III

IT WAS Dex who finally broke that silence between Clarissa and himself, his voice slightly roughened by his taut self-control. What he said, matter-of-factly, was:

"Bibi wants you and me also to join her party, Rissa. I thought it might be a good idea, though there's one small thing I'm afraid you aren't going to like. But I'm afraid it's pretty important."

"What is it?"

He hesitated, then, his brows drawn together in a slight frown he said awkwardly, "You know Bibi—she's a man-eater. She is a spoiled, arrogant, selfish, self-centered somebody who insists on being the center of attention at all times."

"So?"

Dex told her quietly, "So I'm afraid if she finds out that Hal is engaged to you, she may lose interest in him, but fast. She'll expect to make him one of her gang, to have him escort her around, to be pretty constantly on hand when she has a use for him. But if she knew he was engaged to you—well, good-looking young lawyers are a dime a dozen in these parts. See what I mean?"

"Of course," Clarissa said thinly. "So Hal and I keep our engagement a secret—until she gobbles Hal up. Is that it?"

"If she can, as you express it, gobble him up, then you don't want him, do you?"

"I certainly do!" she snapped hotly. "It's not fair to expose him to her kind of expensive glamour and then expect him to come tamely back to me."

Dex raised his eyebrows, and gave a small, mirthless chuckle.

"Rissa, my dear girl," he protested, "how you do low-rate yourself! Glamour, is it? Ye gods, girl, don't you know you have more glamour in your little finger than Bibi has in her whole body?"

Then his voice quickened. "Look, Rissa, give Hal his break. Play along with the gag, and when she has her divorce, who knows? That may mean wedding-bells for you and Hal. After all, lawyers are like doctors. They often have to be exposed to feminine charms, so if you're going to start out being jealous of every good-looking dame who comes Hal's way, seeking legal assistance, life could get pretty complicated almost before you know it."

Clarissa nodded soberly. "I know, Dex. You're right. I'm sorry. Hal and I are merely good friends as far as Bibi Marshtovan will ever know from me."

There was relief in his eyes but it was plain that he had not quite finished and he flashed her a rueful grin.

"I thought perhaps if I introduced you to Bibi and her gang as my fiancée—"

he began hesitantly.

Clarissa's eyes flew wide and color poured into her face.

"Oh, Dex, no!" she cried.
His rueful grin vanished and the bleak look came back into his eyes. He asked stiffly, "Is it such a terrible thought, Rissa? Sorry."

"It isn’t a terrible thought, Dex, only I hate making use of you so shamelessly. You’ve already done so much for me—"

"Skip it." His voice was harsh. "I merely thought that if Bibi believed you and I were engaged, it would convince her that Hal is not interested in you. And that is pretty important, at least for the present."

"I honestly don’t see, Dex, why you should do so much for—for us," she stammered.

"For you, Rissa. Remember that. Always for you!" He sounded as though the words had been forced from him against his will, and his jaw was set and hard.

"Thanks, Dex, for—everything," she said huskily.

"Thanks for practically nothing," he protested shortly, and picked up the small jewel box that lay on her dressing table. "Perhaps, if you wore this on the third finger, left hand, it might offer further conviction to the Marsh-hton gal that Hal is free, white and something over twenty-one. Don’t you think so?"

HE HELD out the box and, her face scarlet, trying to hide her reluctance, Clarissa slipped the ring on her finger. It felt absurdly heavy.

"All set to join the party?" asked Dex after a moment.

"In this?" she indicated the heavy white crepe gown in which she had done her shows tonight.

"You couldn’t look lovelier, so why not?" said Dex.

Smiling, he offered her his arm with an exaggerated bow. Together they walked along the narrow passage that led into the club.

Bibi Marshton was twenty-four, but she looked deceptively childlike as she sat at the head of the flower-decked table like a royal princess surrounded by her devoted court. She was barely five feet tall, and her figure was perfect, doll-like. Pale gold hair was swept away from her face into a loose roll of curls held by a jewelled band. Her big blue eyes were fringed with long, gold-tipped lashes.

As Dex performed the introductions, Clarissa was reminded of a sleek Persian kitten, its sharp claws concealed by velvet paws. For Clarissa was a woman and instinctively she was swiftly aware of the claws, even though they were so carefully hidden tonight.

Bibi looked up at Clarissa and Dex as they approached. Hal and the other three men at the table stood up and in Hal’s eyes as he met Clarissa’s was a touch of anxiety. But it vanished as Dex spoke lightly.

"Folks, I’d like you all to meet Clarissa, my fiancée," he said proudly, and smiled down into Clarissa’s lifted eyes.

Clarissa dared not look at Hal, though she was sure he was clever enough to understand the situation immediately. She greeted Bibi and the others pleasantly and accepted the chair a hurrying waiter added to the already crowded table.

"I loved your act, Clarissa," Bibi said sweetly.

"Thank you," said Clarissa, and added politely, "I’m so sorry they didn’t tell me you were here, so I could have introduced you to the others, and had you take a bow."

"Horrors!" protested Bibi, with a laugh that was a small golden tinkle of bells. "I’m hiding out, incognito, or whatever you call it. I don’t want anyone except my closest friends to know I’m down here."

"Keeping that a secret should be a neat trick, if you can manage it," Clarissa said pleasantly.

Bibi dropped a proprietary hand on Hal’s arm, and gazed at him with admiring eyes.

"Oh, my legal eagle here is going to manage that for me," she cooed sweetly. "Aren’t you, darling?"
Clarissa thought, with a sinking heart, Darling already!
She met Hal's eyes again, still anxious, yet conciliatory and smiled as though she had no interest in him whatever.

"Dex is really a love, isn't he?" Bibi chattered sweetly. "To find me such a darling to help me through this stupid divorce. I didn't know lawyers came like Hal. My others have always been such stuffy old fuddy-duddies! I know this divorce is going to be fun!"

Clarissa was startled and repelled, but she concealed it, and made some sort of light rejoinder.
A little later, Bibi decided the party was over.

"Come along, everybody. The fun is over here. Let's go to my place and see what we can do to liven things up."
She spoke gaily, but what she said was unmistakably an order, and the others rose obediently. As they all trooped out of the place, Bibi's hand held Hal's arm possessively.
Over her shoulder, Bibi said blithely, 
"Come on, you two. Of course you're invited."

DEX looked down at Clarissa, but Clarissa was looking at Hal who was watching her with mute appeal in his eyes. She shrugged lightly, smiling up at Dex.

"Why not?" she agreed lightly. "It sounds like fun."

Dex raised his eyebrows ever so slightly, but offered no protest as they followed Bibi's party out into the soft velvety night. There was much laughter and movement, and the sound of cars starting up, because the club was about to close.

Dex guided Clarissa to his yellow convertible and tucked her into it as though she had been something infinitely fragile that the slightest touch might destroy. As they swung out of the parking area and into the highway behind the cars that carried Bibi's party, Clarissa relaxed against the seat and said quietly,

"So that's Bibi Marshton."
"Quite a gal, isn't she?" Dex suggested cautiously.

"She looks about fifteen, all wide-eyed and dewily innocent, and completely devastating," Clarissa said thoughtfully.
She saw the swift, oblique glance Dex sent her way, his jaw hardening.

"And you're jealous and you wish like hell I'd never exposed Hal to her charms," he snapped.

"That's not true, Dex," Clarissa protested in swift contrition. "Of course I'm jealous. Golly, what woman wouldn't be? But I'm grateful to you for introducing Hal to her. As you said, it may be just the break he needs. The same sort of break you gave me, and look what it's done for me. I am grateful, Dex, truly."

"Then do me a favor, will you?" Dex growled.

"Of course, Dex, anything," she promised.

"Then never again so long as you live say, "I'm grateful, Dex,"" he snapped.

"But I am—"

"You needn't be. I've told you before you've more than repaid me for any slight favors I may have done you. As for Hal, let him handle things for himself from here on." His voice was almost angry.

"Then I'll just go on being grateful, Dex, but I'll stop saying so to you. Will that be all right?"

"Well, it will help," he admitted cautiously.

It was a night of magical enchantment. Mid-January, but here in south Florida, it was spring. The sort of night that lures all who can afford it to spend the season in Florida. Overhead the moon was a thin, tired wafer sinking out of sight, as though vanquished by the brilliance and the multitude of the stars that were spread so thickly across the densely dark sky that they seemed to be silver paint spread with a wide brush.

The tall palms swayed gently in the eternal wind from the ocean. The air
was salt-tangy, yet touched with the fragrance of flowering shrubbery and of dew-wet gardens they passed as they swung away from the Dixie highway toward a bridge that would lead them to Palm Beach.

The Marshton place was one of the old villas, had been a famous show place in its time. A huge place of yellow stucco, it sat in the midst of five acres of carefully tended lawns, where exotic shrubs flamed with bloom, and where the huge yellow stucco wall that enclosed it was splashed with the beauty of bougainvillea, scarlet and purple and salmon-pink.

The tall, wrought-iron gates that looked as delicate as black lace stood open as Dex turned the convertible from County Road and parked behind the other two cars that had preceded them. They were all swept into the house, with Bibi leading the way, greeted by sulky-looking servants too well-trained and too highly-paid openly to resent being kept up all night by their arrogant young employer.

THERE was a babble of laughter and voices gone shrill, and the clink of glasses. Clarissa looked on, smiling until her face ached, accepting the drinks Dex brought her, but merely holding one in her hand to keep anyone else from trying to give her another one.

She was tired and her head ached a little. When she got the chance she slipped from the huge drawing-room out to the terrace. The ground sloped steeply, and beyond the tall wall she could see the black-and-silver shimmer of the lake. There were shrubs and flowers whose color the night had stolen, but their fragrance was almost too heavy. Somewhere there were orange-trees, for the cool, crisp scent of them was mingled on the salt-tangy air.

She put her untasted drink down on the balustrade of the terrace and moved down the steps toward the shell-strewn path to the garden. She not only was tired, but she was depressed, and wanted only solitude until she and Dex could decently make their departure.

She stood at last beside an old sundial marking the center of a garden. The perfume told her it was a rose garden. Of course, she told herself drily. Bibi Marshton was rich enough to afford a rose garden in a place where roses were more expensive to grow than orchids.

IV

AT THE sound of a footstep on the shell path behind her Clarissa turned, expecting Dex. Instead it was Hal, and in the pale light from the stars, and the light that reached them from the house, she again saw the anxiety in his face.

"I saw you leave the room, so I followed you as soon as I could," he told her softly. "Isn't this the darnedest thing you ever heard of? Me, a nobody from nowhere at all, about to land such a job! I still can't believe it, but driving here from the Club, she told me she wanted me to represent her. Wait until I toss that into old Endicott's lap tomorrow!"

"I'm so glad, Hal. It's wonderful."

He looked down at her, and put his arm about her.

"You're wonderful, honey, not to mind. I mean, to let her think you're engaged to Dex, just so that she won't think you have any claims on me." And he looked then as if he wished he hadn't blurted that out.

"I knew you would understand," Clarissa said faintly. "It was not my idea, though. Dex thought of it. He seems to know her pretty well."

Hal was silent for a moment, a frown drawing his brows together. Then he said wryly, "Of course, I'm a lawyer, not a gigolo, as she seems to think. But I suppose I'd better go along with the gag, at least until I get her divorce for
her. After that, she'll forget she ever heard my name. But Endicott and the others won't. So it's all right, isn't it, darling?"

He drew her to him and Clarissa's arms went around him, and she lifted her face for his kiss.

"It's going to be wonderful, dearest," she told him huskily.

The next moment they drew sharply apart, at the sound of a step, and a light voice. They turned, to see Bibi coming toward them along the path.

"Hal?" she called questioningly.

As she came into full view and she saw them beyond the sun-dial she paused, and her golden head went up. Though it was too dark to see her facial expression. Clarissa could sense Bibi's sharp annoyance.

"Oh, am I intruding?" asked Bibi, sweetly malicious.

"Of course not," Hal said eagerly, and moved toward her as though to put as much space between himself and Clarissa as he could. "We were just discussing Clarissa's new contract. There are a couple of points she doesn't quite understand, and wanted to consult me about them."

Under any other circumstances, Clarissa would have hooted with derision at the feebleness of the excuse, but at the moment nothing seemed funny to her.

Bibi slid her hand possessively through his arm, and faced Clarissa across the ancient sun-dial.

"Well, I'm afraid Clarissa is going to have to consult someone else, because I have plans for you, darling, and they don't include anything so routine as ironing out a few contract problems. I'm sure Clarissa is perfectly capable of managing such things." Bibi's voice was light and sweet, but there was an edge to it that Clarissa could not miss.

"I'm sure of it, too," Clarissa answered pleasantly. "Especially as my contract is with Dex, and I trust Dex implicitly."

"Do you really?" Bibi seemed surprised at that. "Imagine trusting any man implicitly, or even slightly. It sounds awfully cozy."

She turned then, drawing Hal with her, and Clarissa watched them go back along the path and to the steps that led to the terrace. She stood with her hands clenched on the edge of the sun-dial and tried hard to laugh at herself for the wave of angry jealousy that swept over her at Bibi's calm assumption that she had only to whistle to have Hal instantly at her command.

But of course, Bibi was right. Bibi was so terribly rich, so completely spoiled. And so beautiful! Clarissa shivered despite the milk-warm softness of the night.

"Clarissa?" Dex was calling softly to her at last, and she braced herself and answered him.

DEX came down the path, looking down at her. He explained unnecessarily, "I saw Hal follow you out here, and saw Bibi follow him. Then they came back, so I came to hunt for you. It's been quite a day, so I thought maybe you might be ready to go home."

"I am, Dex, I am," she told him, her voice slightly shaken for all her effort to control it. "Do we have to go back to the house and tell her goodnight?"

"Heck, no. In her crowd, nobody does, it would only puzzle them." Dex tucked her hand through his arm, drawing her with him to where his car waited.

He drove without speaking until they reached the big block of garden court apartments where she lived. At the red-painted door, set into smooth gray bricks that marked the entrance to her apartment, he looked down at her thoughtfully, then made a gesture of defeat.

"Well, guess that's about it," he said, with an entirely unaccustomed awkwardness. "Get a good night's sleep, baby, and don't worry about a thing. Everything's going to be just dandy. Uncle Dex says so."
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She forced an unconvincing laugh. “Of course it is, and thanks for everything, Dex,” she told him, fitting her key into the lock of the scarlet door.

She thought he was going to kiss her. But the next moment he turned sharply on his heel and went back to his car almost with the air of flight.

In her apartment she stopped short just inside the door, her back pressed against the panel, startled to realize the depth of her disappointment that Dex had not kissed her good night.

“Why, you shameless hussy!” Her voice was a mere thread of sound as she spoke aloud. “In love with Hal, yet wanting Dex to kiss you!”

But it was true, no matter how much she tried to deny it, and the memory of Dex came back, the memory of the moment that seemed so long ago yet had only been a few hours, when he had crushed her in his arms and kissed her with such unexpected, such violent ardor. She loved Hal, yet she had responded instinctively, involuntarily, to another man’s kiss. She was appalled at her own reactions.

Long after she had gone to bed she lay awake, staring into space, trying to analyze her emotions, and not much liking what she sensed...

The days slid by and she heard nothing from Hal. But she knew that he was happy, and that the end result of such busy-ness would be their own happy marriage. She tried to comfort herself with such thoughts, but the realization that he was busy with Bibi Marshton wasn’t too much help.

Late one afternoon, just as she was preparing dinner in her apartment, there was a brisk knock at the door. When she opened it, Hal was standing there, beaming at her gaily.

“Remember me?” He laughed as he stepped into the apartment and caught her in his arms.

“Just vaguely,” she admitted, gaily reproachful. “The manner is familiar, anyway.”

Hal kissed her, then drew her to the window, indicating a sleek, expensive green convertible parked at the edge of the drive.

“Like it?” he asked eagerly.

“Like it?” she cried. “It’s beautiful! But is it yours, Hal?”

“Unfortunately, no,” he admitted with a rueful grin. “But I have the use of it for the time being. It’s just an old last year’s model that was rattling around in the Marshton garage, and Bibi was shocked that I didn’t have a car of my own and insisted I use it, since it was just going to waste.”

“Golly!” breathed Clarissa, wide-eyed. “So that’s how the other half lives!”

“Honestly, Rissa darling, it’s fantastic,” he confessed frankly. “I would never have believed it if I hadn’t seen it. The extravagance, the lushness, the—well, the absurdity of the way they live. Of course, it’s pretty wonderful, too, to a guy like me who has never had more than a hundred dollars at one time in my life, and that at infrequent intervals.”

HAL was excited, eager, his eyes glowering. Clarissa looked up at him with pride, but also with the faintest possible tinge of uneasiness.

“You should have seen old Endicott’s face when he found I had landed Bibi Marshton as a client!” he raved on eagerly. “I have a hunch my spot there is pretty solid. And he kept yapping about the importance of ‘contacts, m’boy, contacts.’ Well, I’ve made plenty of those this week, and there are more coming up. Rissa darling, you are now looking at a rising young lawyer who is going to rise fast, if I may say so modestly.”

“Oh, darling, I’m so terribly happy for you!” Clarissa was flushed and shining-eyed as she went into his arms again, and lifted her face for his kiss.

Neither of them had heard the door open, but they did hear it close with a decisive thud. They turned, startled. Bibi stood watching them, her face white with anger, her eyes blazing.
For a stunned, incredulous moment the tableau held. Then Hal released Clarissa so swiftly she almost stumbled, and he went quickly to Bibi, eagerly, anxiously conciliatory.

"I saw my car outside," Bibi said coolly, and her eyes were an effective barricade against Hal's extended hand. "I knew that Clarissa lived here, so I put two and two together and, surprisingly enough, it came up four."

"Bibi, you don't understand," Hal babbled anxiously.

Bibi laughed insolently in his face.

"Don't insult my intelligence, darling." Her tone made the endearment an epithet. "I've wondered all along if there wasn't something between you and Clarissa, but like the fool I am, I believed you when you swore she was nothing but a tiresome client."

Clarissa quivered as though she had been struck, and she turned wide, accusing eyes on Hal. But he was completely absorbed in placating Bibi.

"That's all she is, Bibi, I swear it," he said anxiously. "She kept after me, wanting me to iron out her contract problem—"

"That I do not believe," Bibi said harshly. "She's a lovely and alluring creature and you're a man, and therefore a liar and a cheat."

Clarissa gasped, but Hal seemed not to resent the ugly words.

"Clarissa can't hold a candle to you, darling, and you know it," Hal said anxiously, and his smile was warm and coaxing. "I'd never have come near her except that, after all, she was a client when I first started out and—well, I felt a certain sense of obligation."

Bibi was studying him sharply, and neither of them seemed at all aware of Clarissa who stood rigid, clinging to the back of a chair because her rubbery knees refused to support her unaided.

It was all like an ugly dream. Surely it couldn't be really happening. It couldn't be Hal, whom she loved, of whose love she had been so sure, now assuring Bibi cravenly, humbly beseeching, that he didn't love Clarissa at all.

She could only look at him with wide, dumbfounded eyes, but Hal was watching Bibi with an almost desperate eagerness, and seemed to have forgotten Clarissa's existence. But Bibi hadn't.

"Is that true, Clarissa?" demanded Bibi, her eyes cold and hard. "Aren't you in love with Hal?"

Clarissa drew a hard breath, and for an instant Hal's eyes swung to her, fearful of her answer.

"Not in the slightest degree," said Clarissa clearly, and was startled to realize that was true! "He's all yours, Miss Marshton."

She felt sick as she saw the almost frantic relief in Hal's eyes, and heard him and his placating tone as he said to Bibi: "You see, darling? You're just imagining things. Clarissa is no more to me than just another client."

Bibi did not take her eyes from Clarissa, but she spoke brusquely to Hal, in the tone she would have used to an underling. "That's what you say. Oh, all right, run along now and wait for me in the car."

Clarissa caught her breath, wide-eyed. Surely Hal was not going to accept that humiliating dismissal. And then she saw that he was. Avoiding her eyes, his face dark with embarrassment, he went tamely out of the room.

V

For a moment after Hal had gone, the two girls stood eyeing each other, the naked sword of enmity irrevocably drawn between them.

Clarissa was sick with the offensiveness of that scene, with the memory of Hal's frightened, anxious face and his humble tone. And she was dazed and humiliated with the thought that she could have been blind enough to fancy herself in love with him. Now she felt only a
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nauseating distaste for any man who could so lower his dignity as to crawl at the whip-crack of a girl like Bibi.

"There's something you and I have to get straight between us, Clarissa," said Bibi harshly. "Either Hal is all mine, or he's all yours. He cannot be ours. I never share my men."

Clarissa could almost laugh at that. "There's never any question of your having to share Hal with me," she said decisively. "As I said before, he's all yours, if you want him."

Bibi nodded thoughtfully. "There's that, of course." She admitted the doubt in her mind. "At the moment, I think I want to marry him."

Clarissa gasped, and Bibi's eyes narrowed. She demanded, "Do you know of any reason I shouldn't?"

"None at all, provided you manage to rid yourself of your present husband."

Bibi shrugged. "Oh," she said carelessly, "I have already decided that Hal and I will fly down to the Virgin Islands, where there is only a brief waiting period before a divorce. Or perhaps Mexico City. The only point I want to clear up is your relations with Hal. Of course I suspected, even though Dex Harlow said you were engaged to him, that you might be giving Hal the eye. But my detectives say he hasn't been near you until today."

Clarissa's eyes were enormous now in her lovely face. "Detectives?" she repeated incredulously. "You mean you've had Hal followed, watched?"

"Well, naturally," said Bibi, as though it were the most ordinary course in the world. "I know nothing about him, and after all, I've found out a long time ago that a girl in my position is often victimized, unless she protects herself. One reason why I thought it might be fun to be married to Hal was that it would be convenient to have a tame lawyer around all the time. Besides, Hal is cute and I like him. I may even decide I'm in love with him."

Clarissa could not keep back a derisive spurt of laughter. "Love? You don't know the meaning of the word."

Soberly Bibi nodded. "That's why I envy girls like you." Her frankness rocked Clarissa. "A girl who has to work for her living, and so is always sure that people like her for what she is, not for what she has."

Startled by this about-face, some of Clarissa's dislike for the girl melted. Was it possible she was feeling sorry for Bibi Marshton? She couldn't think of anything Bibi might resent more.

"You see," said Bibi, after a moment, "I wasn't quite sure about Hal, and about you. I thought it might be possible that the two of you were framing me to get money so you could get married. I wasn't sure you wouldn't go to the length of letting me marry Hal, and then him making himself so objectionable I'd have to buy him off with a divorce and a heavy settlement."

"What?" Clarissa was shocked and dazed at the very thought, yet Bibi had mentioned it almost casually, as though it was not at all appalling.

Bibi shrugged slightly. "It happens all the time, you know," she said carelessly. "A girl like you, ambitious, in show business, and a man like Hal who is hungry for money and all that. Though if you really are engaged to Dex, and are in love with him, I suppose it was a silly thought I had. Though I had to be sure. That's why, when my detectives telephoned me Hal was here, I came immediately so we could have a show-down."

Clarissa drew a deep, long breath. Then she said, and her voice was steady with sincerity, "You can relax, Miss Marshton, as far as I'm concerned. I have no interest whatsoever in Hal. And I am engaged to Dex—and I love him very much."

Oddly enough, her own words shook her. Because even as she spoke them she realized they were true. She had been jarred loose from her false estimate of Hal, from her belief that she
loved him. Now, in the shattering aftermath of that shocking discovery, Dex loomed before her, and her heart beat faster at the thought of him.

Bibi was watching her closely. Finally she nodded with satisfaction.

"D’you know, I believe you?" Her voice was surprised that this should be so. "And now I’ll run along. Best of luck to you and Dex."

"And to you and Hal," said Clarissa. Bibi’s smile was mirthless.

"Thanks—we’ll need it," she drawled.

The door closed behind her, and a moment later Clarissa heard the cars being driven away.

She dropped into the chair to which she had been clinging and put her shaking hands over her face. It had been a fantastic, incredible scene. Hal had revealed himself with such brutal frankness in his desire to remain in Bibi’s good graces! If he had really loved her, Clarissa, she told herself now in the bitter clarity that had followed that revelation, he would have told Bibi where she could go, even if he never got another bit of business, or a client.

But Hal had been so eager to placate Bibi that Clarissa knew now he already had hopes of marrying her. Her mouth thinned, but she told herself sturdily that Bibi was quite welcome to Hal.

By the time Clarissa reached the club that night and was ready to go on for her first show, she had made up her mind. Her decision lent a sparkle to her eyes, and she dressed with more than usual care. Her gown of pale gold taffeta fitted snugly, outlining her beautiful figure to the knees and then sprayed out in unexpected fullness that was accentuated by an enormous bustlelike bow at the back.

She had never looked more beautiful. And when the golden drapery lifted, to reveal her at her small white piano, with the microphone beside her, there was a great burst of applause.

She looked down through the darkness toward the entertainer’s table right at the back of the room, where Dex always sat to watch her act. She lifted her hand and wiggled her fingers at him in a gay little salute.

One of the most popular parts of her act was the reading of gossipy items of news about various celebrities scattered about the place. Tonight she could hardly wait until she had finished her first two songs, before she lifted the typed list of reservations supplied her by the maitre d’ hotel before the show opened.

"I see we have a lot of famous people here tonight," she announced brightly. "Maybe everybody here isn’t famous, but you’re all terribly nice people, and I like to think of you as my friends. Maybe that’s corny, but I hope you’ll forgive me. Tonight I especially want to think of you as my friends, because I have an announcement to make. The most important announcement in the world, to me, because I am going to announce my engagement."

There was a burst of applause, laughter, and shouted words of approval. She smiled down at Dex, and in the dimness she could see only that now he was on his feet, watching her.

"It’s not often a girl gets to make her own announcement of her engagement," she went on, laughing, her eyes bright, her voice threaded with happiness. "But when it does happen, like tonight, it makes it especially nice to know that your friends are with you. So, friends, let me tell you that, though he ran very fast, I ran just a little faster and I finally managed to catch up with him! And now I’m going to marry him. Friends, my fiancé, Dexter Harlow!" She spoke over her shoulder, "A ‘spot’ for the boss, boys."

Her eyes never left Dex, as the small spotlight picked him out and pinned him against the darkness behind him.

HE WAS looking stunned, incredulous, and the laughter and applause swirled over the place like a sea. While the spotlight held him, Clarissa slipped
out of the big gilded cage and the golden damask slid down over it. She hurried down the stairs and back to her dressing room, glimpsing Dex surrounded by congratulatory guests and friends.

She was shaking a little as she reached her dressing room and waited. But her eyes were glowing like stars and her color was so high that she laughed and brushed powder over it, as though trying to dim its glow.

Suddenly the door opened. Dex walked in and slammed it behind him. His face was white, his eyes cold.

"And just what was that all about?" he demanded harshly.

"Did you m-mind?" she stammered idiotically, for it was all too plain that he did. "It was just that I made a discovery this afternoon. I discovered that all along I've been really in love with you, not Hal."

She saw him stiffen and his eyes narrow. "And may I ask just how you made the discovery?"

Scarlet-cheeked, but without mincing words she told him what had happened.

"So," he said softly, after a pause so long that it stretched her already taut nerves to the breaking point. "I had him figured right after all. It worked out just as I thought it would."

Bewildered, she stared at him.

"I don't know what you mean."

"Don't you? It's simple." His voice was harsh. "I knew he wasn't the right man for you. I figured if he had a chance, he'd prove it to you for himself. So I gave him the chance. I introduced him to Bibi."

Clarissa stood as still as a statue, her face going white. She was unable to speak. Afraid to speak for fear she would find that while she had been making a fool of herself about Hal, Dex had fallen out of love with her.

"So, you see," he said at last, and there was weariness in his tone, "it's all my fault. But if you expect me to say I'm sorry, you are going to be disappointed. You're terribly hurt and angry now, but think how much worse it would have been if you hadn't found out about Hal before you married him."

He turned sharply toward the door.

Because she knew that in another moment he would be gone, Clarissa cried wildly, "You come back here!"

Startled, he turned to face her.

"Thank you, Dex," she said softly, her voice shaking. "I'm grateful."

"That, again!" he cried hotly. "Damn it, I don't want gratitude from you!"

"I know, darling," she said huskily, and though her eyes were bright with tears, she was smiling at him. "But that's just too bad, for I'm afraid you're stuck with my gratitude, and me, too. Whether you ever forgive me for making such a fool of myself or not. Because, Dex, I know now that I love you and that I'll go on loving you as long as I live."

He stood still, not quite daring to touch her though she stood within arm's reach of him, waiting for him to enfold her in his arms.

"You don't hate me?" he asked at last.

"Should I?"

"I thought you would when you found out that I was—"

"Was right all along? That you were my kind of man, and that Hal wasn't? That I'd known you so long I sort of took you for granted, and Hal was a novelty, and I had a crazy feeling he needed me and mistook that for love? Darling, I'll be grateful to you for that as long as I live! Because I know now how much I love you. Please forgive me for being a fool and—love me again."

His arms gathered her in and held her close and hard and his lips were on her own for a moment so perfect, so enchanted, that words would have profaned it. But after that moment that she wished could go on forever, he said huskily: "Love you again? As if I could ever stop loving you—my dearest, my darling, my beloved!"

There were tears in her eyes, but a radiant smile on the soft lips she raised wordlessly for his kiss.
Delphine's dream of love almost became a nightmare because she was the . . .

Lady with a Pearl

By HOPE CAMPBELL

Delphine hovered over the bargain basement counter, fingering one piece of costume jewelry after another. She had done what she always did, stopped first upstairs where the departments were deeply carpeted and spacious with only tables and chairs in sight, so that objects might be brought out and displayed one at a time. She had hovered there, watching brace-
lets and rings and necklaces almost reverently displayed until she felt she could go down to the basement and find whatever most nearly resembled the genuine.

But there was nothing, nothing. These pieces were blatantly cheap and gaudy.

Delphine gave a haunted sigh. She pushed back the curl of red-gold hair that had fallen over her forehead, looked with despair in her dark blue eyes at the women crowding around the table and then elbowed her way closer to it again. She couldn’t spend more than two dollars and she had to have a necklace to go with the really beautiful dancing frock she had found on Fourteenth Street at a fraction of its original price because the skirt was torn. She had mended the tear so it did not show but she simply could not wear anything that looked cheap with it.

Some women, Delphine thought bitterly, deliberately searched for wealthy men. She had not known that Rich was literally rich until she was hopelessly in love with him. Now she was not going to disgrace him on this weekend with his family. She had to appear as well dressed, as luxuriously pampered, as his mother and sister and his friends.

She picked up a handful of the jewelry and dribbled it through her fingers. Nothing, nothing. Then she caught a glimpse of what looked like a thin gold chain that had shifted down to the very bottom of the heaped-up pieces. She caught it, tugged it free of an entangled brooch and an odd single earring and stared, unable to believe what she was seeing.

Delphine knew why everyone else had passed it up. They wanted flash, lots to show for their money. This was only a single pear-shaped artificial pearl dangling from a fine chain. But it was beautiful, seeming to hint at color hidden under its cool opaque surface. No one, Delphine thought with excitement rising in her, would dream anything so simple was not real.

She carried it over to a salesgirl and held it out and took two dollar bills from her purse.

But the girl hesitated. “Did you notice this clasp is broken?”

Delphine had not. She took the necklace back, studied it for a moment and then smiled with relief. A tiny piece of the safety catch had broken off, but she was clever about such things. She could either fix it or remove the safety entirely and depend on the clasp holding alone. At any rate, she was anxious to have it.

“That’s all right,” Delphine said. “I want it anyhow.”

But the girl was looking around nervously. “I’m not sure I should sell it in that condition. Let me get the manager.”

“Look,” Delphine laughed, “I want it. I don’t care. This is the only piece you have that I do want and I must have it.”

“No,” the girl insisted. “Please wait. Just a minute.”

She pushed through the crowd with an almost frantic urgency. Winged brows arching, Delphine stared after her. Really, this was absurd! She knew what she was buying and she had given the girl her money. She wasn’t going to wait around to get involved in a big fuss about nothing.

WITH a slight shrug, Delphine turned and started toward the escalator that went up to the street floor. Then she heard some kind of commotion behind her. As the escalator carried her up so she could look back over the crowd, she saw a tall, handsome young man with rumpled dark hair waving at her frantically, his lips moving as if he were calling to her to stop.

Now really, Delphine thought, half amused and almost as much annoyed. How silly! If she hadn’t known what she was buying, there might have been some reason for all the fuss. As it was . . .

Why, he was pushing through the crowd, practically knocking people down in an effort to reach her. Delphine gig-
gled inwardly. Under other circumstances, she would have been delighted to have a man that attractive chasing her. But now, no.

The escalator carried her up and out of sight and Delphine stepped off it and hurried toward the outer door. She had meant to buy stockings, but she wasn’t going to stick around and get involved in a senseless rhubarb.

She rode the subway to the west side and went straight up to her small room. Thank goodness, the stores stayed open on Thursday nights, Delphine thought as she put down her bundles, or she could never have got ready for this weekend. Now she could pack and be ready to leave straight from work tomorrow. She could pick up the stockings on her lunch hour.

Delphine looked with satisfaction at the good tweed suit she had managed to afford last year, the cashmere sweaters she had knit herself, the green dinner dress, the gray gauze of the dancing frock, the single little silk with a wool bolero that would do for church. She wouldn’t be able to afford even a slip for months but she had the necessary weekend wardrobe.

Delphine smiled and then the smile saddened. She knew what people would say when the engagement was announced. That it took a mighty clever forty-five dollar a week file clerk to catch a millionaire.

Actually, Delphine thought as she put her weekend case on the bed and began to pack, had she known who and what Rich was before she was hopelessly and completely in love with him, she might have tried to stop seeing him while she still could. Loving him had not been all ecstasy. There had been agony too, the agony of constant small financial problems that Rich did not even dream existed, and once in a while, a real crisis like these clothes for the weekend. Rich simply could not imagine such emergencies, though he knew she worked. He took money for granted.

Her phone tinkled. That phone for instance, Delphine thought involuntarily. She had put it in because Rich could not conceive of anyone not having a phone and the price came off her lunch money.

“Darling,” his deep laughing voice said, “I’ve just realized something perfectly horrifying.”


“This is our anniversary and we haven’t done a thing about it.”

“Oh,” Delphine gulped. Yes, they had met exactly a year ago, now she thought back. She murmured, “Happy anniversary then, darling.”

“No,” Rich laughed. “That isn’t good enough. Grab a taxi and meet me the same place in half an hour.”

“Rich, it’s late. I’m packing. I’ve got to —”

“If you’re not there, I’ll think you don’t love me,” Rich said imperiously and hung up.

Delphine bit her lip. The place was downtown and clear over on the East River and she couldn’t get there in less than an hour unless she took a cab. But she groaned inwardly. A two dollar taxi bill. Oh, well, breakfasts were a luxury anyway.

As she hastily combed her red-gold hair and freshened her lipstick, Delphine went over and over the old problem. It was not that she was too proud to tell Rich she couldn’t afford such things. She had tried a few times to be quite frank with him and Rich had told her that he understood perfectly. His income tax was a nightmare to him. So he went right on dreaming up things like this meeting tonight which were beginning to be a real drain on her meager budget. Rich simply could not imagine what being poor was like.

What a way to go to meet the man you loved, Delphine thought as she sat in the taxi grudging every nickel that clicked up on the meter. As she jumped out at the hotel where the penthouse
cocktail lounge at which she was to meet Rich was located, a policeman strolled past. He stopped and gave her a long sharp look. Delphine stared back a moment in surprise and then shrugged and went inside.

Rich was waiting for her at a corner table which looked out over the fairy-tale fantasy formed by the lights of midtown Manhattan. He jumped up and ardentiy caught her hands in his.

"Remember?" he whispered.

Looking at his lean bronzed face, with its smooth cap of almost silvery fair hair, and those piercingly bright blue eyes, Delphine's heart twisted. Remember? She would never forget.

A school friend who had married and left town arrived on a visit and called Delphine. She had insisted if Delphine had never seen the view from the East River Penthouse, they must go there. The friend had once worked in Rich's office and had recognized him there and introduced them.

Prosaic as bread and butter on the surface. But inside, it had bubbled like champagne. They had chatted casually for a short time. But Delphine felt as if it had been hours, as if they had danced and talked and laughed a long long evening away. From the way Rich looked at her, she knew it had been the same for him.

She had gone home that first night, almost literally feeling as if she were walking on air and her head was brushing the stars, knowing that the past had been only a preparation for this meeting and her future had been met and was waiting.

Now, Delphine thought with a wry inward giggle, she kept her eye on a taxi meter when her future was waiting. She was not less in love. She was simply aware now that love made new problems instead of solving everything as she had blithely assumed at first.

Rich was chatting about the weekend. Friday evening, they would spend quietly with his family. Saturday, there was some kind of a bridge-luncheon thing at the Country Club for the women and he would play golf and then there was the dance in the evening. Sunday was church and afterwards, a group of people in for a buffet.

"Sounds lovely," Delphine murmured.

But mostly, she just smiled and nodded. Rich could not guess these things he took so much for granted would be a long strenuous ordeal for her. She had never lived that kind of life. An aunt and uncle had raised her, in a kindly enough way, but with the distinct understanding she was to earn her own living and stand on her own feet as soon as possible.

But the strangeness would not be the worst part of the weekend. She would be on public display every minute, her every word and gesture observed critically for judgment that held little liking. Half the unmarried girls had probably had their eyes on Rich and they would not accept an intruder happily.

"I do want you to like everybody," Rich said. "Of course, we won't want to live too near my family, but there's a section on the other side of the Country Club, and I want to know what you think of it."

Delphine's long lashes fluttered. The question, she thought with gentle irony, was not of her liking everybody but of everybody accepting her, even with reservations. But Rich couldn't understand that either. She was the girl he had chosen and therefore obviously perfect.

"Your taste is always impeccable," Delphine smiled.

HER glance strayed idly from the glittering panorama outside and went around the room. Then suddenly, her eyes dilated blackly. The rumpled haired young man from the store was standing in the doorway, methodically studying one table after another in search of someone. It couldn't be she but —

"Darling," Delphine said urgently, "I'm going to dash into the ladies lounge
and in exactly ten minutes, I'll meet you outside in front of the elevators. I'll explain later."

She was up from the table and into the lounge before that search reached their corner. Once safe inside, Delphine's hand went to her throat and she felt the frantic throbbing there. He couldn't have been looking for her but—that policeman had given her that long stare. Oh, she was probably imagining things but she was just as glad she had avoided him.

Delphine waited out the ten minutes and then slipped through the door. Outside, the dark young man caught her wrist in a handcuffing clasp.

"I've got to talk to you."

Icy poise, Delphine decided through the sense of jolting shock. "I don't know you and I don't wish to know you. Please stop this before I report you for annoying me."

"Look," he said with harassed exasperation, "I'm not looking for romance—if I ever am, I'll tell you. The point is—"

"The point is," Delphine interrupted ruthlessly, "I won't be followed and bothered this way." She raised her voice. "Waiter!"

A man serving a nearby table raised his head, looked and came slowly toward them.

Delphine jerked her wrist free. "This man has been bothering me. Please keep him here until I get out of the building."

"Please," the dark man said frantically. "Please wait, miss! I tell you this is a matter of life and death."

Delphine ignored him and looked at the waiter. "Perhaps it would be wise to check and see if anyone has escaped from Bellevue lately."

As hastily as she could and still keep her dignity, Delphine hurried to the elevators. Rich was waiting and by luck, a car was there. They rode down in silence, but once on the sidewalk, Rich stopped and looked down at Delphine doubtfully.

"Were you trying to avoid that man who was looking for somebody? Who is he?"

"I don't know his name," Delphine said and decided on something less than the truth. "I was shopping earlier this evening and there was some kind of a rhubarb in the store. That man is a department manager or something. Probably he wasn't looking for me but I didn't want to take a chance on his recognizing me again and wanting me to be a witness or something."

"Very wise," Rich approved. "Those things can be very annoying and unpleasant. You can get entangled with the strangest people. And sometimes there's publicity. You were wise to avoid him."

MY DARLING, you are an incurable snob, Delphine thought with amused affection. You still think a lady gets her name in the paper only three times in her life, when she's born, when she marries and when she dies.

But she only said, "I'd better get home. Out of the vicinity, so to speak."

Rich signaled a taxi, put her in and kissed a quick good night, pressed some bills into the driver's hand and waved as she drove off. He would go back to the hotel apartment suite he kept when he was in town, Delphine thought, musing on what her life would be like after they were married. Since he wanted to build near his parents, doubtless Rich would commute instead of going out only weekends as he did now, even though it was a slightly uncomfortable distance. But there would still be a summer place and a winter's trip somewhere and all the freedom that money and a inherited job in the firm could give them.

If she just survived the engagement period, though the very thought of trying to get an appropriate trousseau together made her shudder, Delphine thought wearily, life would be beautiful. And the wedding. No, she had been through too much getting ready for this
weekend. She would worry about the rest when she had to meet it.

The next day proved to be One of Those Days at the office. Delphine nearly didn't get out for lunch but she finally managed and snatched up a couple of pairs of stockings. She almost had to fight her way out at five because she knew Rich would be waiting with his car outside the building.

She fell into the seat beside him with an explosive sigh. "I've had a hard day at the office, dear," she warned, trying for lightness. "Treat me gently."

Rich nodded but he was frowning. "Seen a paper today?"

"I have been flooded by papers, all misfiled by that stupe who was supposedly helping me last month."

"I mean a newspaper. On the seat there."

Delphine raised her eyebrows but she picked it up. The paper was folded to a quarter page department store advertisement with only three lines in heavy black type.

WANTED—RED HEADED GIRL WHO BOUGHT A PEARL OF PERIL!

"Huh?" Delphine gulped.

"That man last night, looking for you," Rich said uneasily. "And you are red headed."

Delphine blinked as if she did not quite understand but her mind was racing. She shouldn't have run. Whatever this was all about, and she couldn't imagine what it was, she had to find out. All she could do was go to the store Monday and see that man.

But this kind of thing, being an object of this blatant advertising, Rich would never forgive. He simply must not know she was the girl.

"So are half the girls in New York this season," Delphine said lightly. "Sounds like a publicity stunt."

"You wouldn't buy yourself a pearl anyway," Rich conceded doubtfully.

You mean I won't wear a necklace to the dance, Delphine thought. I'll pretend I believe in stark simplicity.

All the way out, Delphine knew she was batting much too fast and much too jerkily. She was betraying every inward jitter as she spoke. She hated lying and she hated things she couldn't understand. If only she had never seen that silly necklace.

When they finally began driving along the winding roads lined by the gates and hedges of luxurious estates, Delphine knew they must be nearing Rich's home. But when they turned in and she saw its formal severity, she groaned inwardly. Some of the others had looked comfortable and lived-in and enjoyable, in a massive kind of way, but not this one.

Her worst fears were realized as they walked in and she saw its gilt and brocade formality. She had met Rich's sister Leone, a tall severe girl, and his mother was a white haired duplicate. Mr. Filmore, Delphine saw with a sense of understanding and liking, was a slightly harassed looking man who had the appearance of knowing his place.

"Someone has been calling, inquiring when you'd be here," Mrs. Filmore said crisply to Rich. "Something urgent. I trust you haven't been involved in anything."

Delphine swallowed hard, panic sweeping over her. She looked around huntedly, a sudden impulse to flee and just keep running overwhelming her.

But Rich said, "It could be about that saddle I'm having made. I'm not at all satisfied with it."

She was suffering from a guilty conscience, Delphine decided, but she was glad to get away for a few minutes when a maid came and picked up her bag to show her to her room. That room, Delphine thought as she looked around it, was about as cozy as a small railroad station. Still she would rather have stayed there than go downstairs and face Mrs. Filmore's icy appraisal. Nevertheless she forced herself to change into the dark green dinner dress and
told herself defiantly that only she would know it was four years old. Its classic simplicity betrayed nothing.

Fighting her reluctance every step of the way, Delphine went down the sweeping staircase and walked into the drawing room. And tensed, her whole body a silent scream.

The rumpled-haired man came forward, saying urgently, "What a chase you've given me ever since you got away from our salesgirl. They all had orders to watch for the sale of an imperfect piece. So I didn't hope for the luck of finding you here."

"Then why are you here?" Delphine asked faintly.

"One of the waiters recognized Mr. Filmore last night and gave me his name. Since I couldn't locate where he was staying in town, my best chance was to try to locate his family through the Social Register, find out where he was so I could get your name from him and then locate you."

"I don't understand," Delphine said, one hand up to cover the throb in her throat. "But, please, can't we talk about it another time?"

"Have you worn the pearl?"

"She bought no pearl," Rich said impatiently. "I told you."

Delphine felt herself go white. "I did," she said, her voice almost inaudible. "But I haven't worn it and I don't understand why you're making all this fuss. I don't mind about the clasp."

Mr. Filmore came forward with unexpected authority. "I think this will be more easily discussed if we all sit down and have a cocktail. Apparently it's a complicated matter, Mr.—?"

"Ashland, Rocky Ashland."

"Rocky Ashland?" Rich said. "Hockey? I assumed you'd turned pro."

"Strictly college stuff," Rocky said more cheerfully. "I'm now buried in basement bargains, learning the family business from below the ground up."

Cocktails were as formal as a butler, crystal glasses and elaborate canapés could make them. But it was easier sitting with something to hold in her hand, Delphine discovered.

Rocky said easily, "Being young and ambitious and full of ideas, I came up with a brainstorm for a publicity stunt and it blew up in my face. So I've had orders to clean it up personally. Or else. A demotion to stock boy was clearly implied."

"Yes?" Mrs. Filmore said icily, urging him to the point.

"Remember an old yarn that keeps cropping up in one form or another, until it's practically folklore, about a real jewel being put on sale with a bunch of junk and the girl with the taste to see its beauty and buys it in spite of a deliberate and intentional flaw? The versions vary but that's the basic thing. Well, I said, let's do that and use it for publicity. Play up the girl big and dramatize the bargains we offer and all that. I sold the idea but it never occurred to me I would lose the girl or that the jewelry department would cross me up by giving me the piece they did."

"Is it real?" Delphine gasped on an indrawn breath.

"It is. And the thought of you wearing anything that valuable with an imperfect clasp had me in a sweat to begin with. Then I saw the information Jewelry had prepared for Advertising on the pearl and I knew I had to find you. I didn't even stop to knock a couple of heads together. I'll do that later. I sent out an urgent message to the police and your description and asked them to let me know if you were seen and where. But you kept slipping away from me. You wouldn't even answer the ad. Not that I mind running it. It gives us an additional publicity buildup."

"You mean this will be played up in the papers?" Mrs. Filmore asked with frank distaste.

"Yes, and with more oomph than I ever thought," Rocky said casually. "Blame Jewelry. They've had that pearl for five years now and couldn't dispose of it. I guess they thought as long as
they were allowed to choose the piece to be used, it was a fine chance to get rid of a lemon.”

“A lemon?” Leone asked.

“A jinx really,” Rocky said. “You know certain jewels seem to attract disaster. Their owners die, are murdered or meet one catastrophe after another. Well, that’s the Valerian Pearl and it’s stained in blood ankle deep. If you want the gory details, the finder was killed for its possession, a French owner went to the guillotine, a favorite to whom an Indian Prince gave it was poisoned, an Englishman who had bought it for his collection was trampled to death at a hunt, the—”

“Stop!” Delphine cried with a shudder.

“Anyhow you see why it’s been difficult to sell. Even a person who isn’t ordinarily superstitious might not be very happy wearing it.”

“But what were you doing shopping in a bargain basement?” Mrs. Filmore asked with distaste.

Delphine drew a long breath. “Because,” she said clearly, “I always shop there. I make forty-five dollars a week and I’m lucky if I can even afford bargains and still eat.”

Mrs. Filmore looked horrified as if she had not known such conditions existed and if they did, thought they should not be mentioned.

“This must be stopped, of course,” Rich said decisively. “Delphine will give the pearl back and you simply will have to have your advertising department think up some other explanation for that ad about a redhead.”

“Sorry,” Rocky said cheerfully. “It’s my own little publicity stunt and it’s gone too far to be covered up. We’ve got even bigger ads scheduled for Saturday and Sunday, explaining what we did and why we must find the girl before she wears the pearl without knowing what it is. Monday’s a slow day in the papers so we’ll spring her identity then.”

“Oh, no,” Mrs. Filmore protested. “No. This is impossible. It can’t be.”

Delphine said slowly, “I don’t want the pearl.”

“Then it goes straight back to Jewelry and if I accidentally knock down a couple of guys delivering it, that’s a pleasure,” Rocky grinned. “We should get some additional space for free out of a picture of you handing the pearl back and us giving you a check for its value.”


“Look, chum,” Rocky said pleasantly, “Delphine works for forty-five dollars a week. Have you any idea how hard it must be for her to keep up the appearance and all the rest if she plays around with guys in your league? Do you know what this money would mean to her?”

“That’s completely beside the point,” Rich growled.

DELPHINE stared at him. She wasn’t mercenary. But she remembered what an utter nightmare the mere thought of trying to get together a trousseau was to her. And wedding expenses. And, oh, just things like not skipping breakfasts.

“Maybe I’m sentimental,” Rocky said softly, “but I think it should be the whole point. I may kid about it, but I have a soft spot in my heart for the basement and its bargains. I try to make them as good as I can because I see these girls day after day trying to stretch their money so they can look pretty and attractive and sometimes a bargain means the difference between going hungry and eating and I know it—even if you don’t.”

“Will our name be involved?” Leone demanded.

“I intend to make as good a yarn out of it as I can,” Rocky said. “Trying to chase Delphine down and all the rest.”


“I’ve always told Rich his vulgar tastes would involve us in a scandal one day,” Leone said angrily.

Delphine’s eyes widened. But not with hurt. With a cold anger such as she had not known she could feel. She
was not vulgar. This had been brought on by her too good taste.

"Whatever happens, our name must not appear," Rich said.

"I think we have enough influence to assure that at least," Mr. Filmore threatened.

Delphine jumped up, her eyes flashing. "One way to simplify the whole thing would be for me to leave. I'm sure I could only be an embarrassment to you."

"If we introduced you as our guest this weekend and then this miserable story appears Monday—" Mrs. Filmore seemed actually unable to complete the thought.

"Just consider I'm on my way," Delphine said, walking toward the door.

"My car's outside," Rocky called after her. "I'll be waiting in the hall."

Delphine changed back into the tweed suit and repacked her case with a speed which amazed her. She could hardly wait, she had to confess, to get out of this gilt and brocade icebox. She almost ran down the stairs, though they had been designed for slow sweeping entrances, and Rocky was waiting in the hall.

So was Rich. His face was shadowed with concern and yet he seemed unsure too.

"If you had only told me the truth, right at the beginning," he began excusing himself.

"If you had only shown any understanding about anything, right from the beginning," Delphine parodied and then said seriously, "I'm sorry, Rich. We're just wrong for each other and, considering how I've half killed myself in ways you don't know exist but I certainly do, I don't know why I didn't call it quits sooner. I'd have done us both a favor."

"I don't like hard feelings," Rich said diffidently.

Delphine laughed. "No hard feelings," she said cheerfully. "And no particular good feelings either. I've been a fool and it's over. That's all."

"You've been a fool?" Rich gasped.

"Mutual, I'm sure," Delphine said with an impish grin and handed her case to Rocky.

He opened the door for her and Delphine strolled through it with a wonderful sense of release and freedom. An unpretentious blue coupé was parked in the drive. Just like Rocky, Delphine thought as she got in.

As they went down the drive, Delphine looked back and gave a mock shudder. Her spirits were rising by the second. Never again would she have to spend two dollars on taxis when it should have gone for food. Never again would she have to try to make a ten dollar dress look like a hundred. She could, Delphine realized happily, be herself instead of a straining imitation of what Rich wanted in a girl.

"I'm sorry," Rocky said. "I guess the pearl is living up to its reputation."

"Rich, you mean?" Delphine said. "Oh, I'm not silent because I'm brooding. I'm counting my blessings. And not to console myself either. How did I ever convince myself that rat race was love?"

Rocky laughed. "He certainly was loaded with family."

"Stop sending cold chills up my spine." Delphine shivered.

"I've stopped," Rocky promised and then asked seriously, "About this publicity. How do you feel?"

"I wouldn't go out for it," Delphine said. "But if I think of it as a way of earning some money that will keep the pressure off me for a long time, I won't mind."

"Think of it that way. The store couldn't buy the advertising this story will bring at twice the price. So it is a kind of job."

"Maybe I can afford an apartment," Delphine planned. "And a really nice winter coat. Maybe," her voice grew awed, "I could even take a cruise."

"All that and lots more besides," Rocky laughed and slowed the car outside a rambling colonial structure set in wide green lawns. "Say, I know this
place. Charming atmosphere, wonderful
food and I think you’d like it. I’m sure
you haven’t had dinner either.”
“I’m starving,” Delphine realized sud-
denly. “I’d settle for a hamburger, but
I wouldn’t argue with filet mignon.”
The place was all Rocky had promised
and more. They were seated at a table
by a window looking out on rolling hills
in a small room in the back with an
ornamental fire flickering on the tiled
hearth.
Delphine just sighed with content-
ment and then beamed at Rocky.
“I can’t tell you how happy I am to
be here instead of there,” she said.
“I prefer it too,” Rocky grinned.
Delphine’s heart began to beat, just a
little faster and a little heavier. This
wasn’t like the evening she met Rich,
she thought suddenly. Falling in love
with Rich had been like walking into a
dream in which she kept running faster
and faster until finally she couldn’t run
any longer and so she woke up and the
dream was over.
She just plain liked Rocky. She liked
the way his unruly hair grew back from
his square forehead. She liked his grin.
She liked the smoothly co-ordinated way
he handled his big body. She liked the
way he thought, the sympathy, the
understanding in him.
Why, Delphine realized on an in-
drawn breath, Rocky was the sort of
man she had been waiting for all her
life. Rich had been a dream. Rocky
was the reality.
She wouldn’t have to pretend and
keep up a front with Rocky. He would
either like her for what she was or dis-
like her for it. And she was very sure
from the look in his eyes, that he liked
her. Very much. As much as she liked
him.

THAT dinner had a mood of blithe
gaiety about it such as Delphine
could never remember sharing with
Rich. They talked. Sometimes they
both talked at once. They talked about
things close to their hearts and shifted
to utter nonsense in an instant. They
sighed, they laughed, they had a fine
and wonderful time.
As they left and walked out to the
car, Delphine tilted her face up to the
flooding moonlight. She drew in a deep
breath of the fragrant air and relished
it.
All at once, Rocky’s arm was around
her waist.
“Remember I once said my purpose
was not to kiss you and if it were, you’d
know it?”
“Yes,” she breathed.
“Do you know it?”
“Yes.”
With Rocky, Delphine felt no need
of subterfuge. She felt she could be as
clear and open as a rippling stream,
sparkling under the sun of his affection.
She lifted her lips to his.
Why, she had never been kissed be-
fore, Delphine thought dreamily, never
really kissed with all a kiss should mean
between two people, all the things they
were to the other in one sweetly linger-
ing caress.
Rocky said, “I’ve got a hunch you and
Rich fell in love at first sight.”
“We did.”
“We didn’t,” Rocky said firmly. “Fall-
ing in love is far too much fun to be
rushed. We’re going to take our time
to it. A couple of months at the very
least.”
Delphine’s eyes dreamed. “I think
they’re going to be a lovely couple of
months.”
“And I don’t believe in rushing en-
gagements or weddings either. I be-
lieve in them, thoroughly, but I think
they should be enjoyed too.”
And not a headache, a financial night-
mare.
His arm went around her waist and
her head dropped dreamily on his shoul-
der. They strolled slowly toward the
car, not hurrying to get there either,
because it was so lovely to be together.
So lovely that a lifetime would hardly
be enough.

❤❤❤
"Nice seeing you, Pam," Lissa said in her low, sugary voice

You Can't Budget Love

By MARGERY WOODS

Practical Pam was a stickler for balancing the books—but that extravagant man of hers made her see red...

IN SAN FRANCISCO, if you say “Meet me under the clock,” you mean the grandfather clock near the lobby in the St. Francis Hotel. During their courtship Pam and Jerry Leonard had often met here, and during their marriage, for that matter.
Now the marriage was over. In six weeks the divorce would become final. But again Pam stood by the clock, waiting for Jerry, this time in a last, desperate attempt at reconciliation. Forgetting Jerry just hadn’t worked, tall, blond Jerry with his laughing blue eyes and the tiny crescent scar near his left eye.

“I got this,” he had explained, “jumping out of a tree when I was nine. I was trying to fly like Peter Pan.”

Harum-scarum Jerry, carefree Jerry. Too carefree, Pam had thought. She had met him on a blind date not long after she had come to San Francisco. That night she had worn the first really expensive dress she had ever owned, having bought it on the theory that if you had an out-of-this-world date dress, you might get a man to go with it.

She had got Jerry, for keeps. Or so she had thought, never dreaming that anything could part them, least of all money.

Pam was a practical girl, though she didn’t look it, being tall and curvacious, with hair the color of a new penny and eyes that wavered between green and gray. However, from the time she could write laborious figures with a sawed-off pencil, she’d had to account for every penny of her small allowance.

Her parents were like that. They kept books on themselves. They budgeted like mad.

On the other hand, Jerry budgeted like this. He was paid twice a month. The first week after pay-day he lived like a king, the second he was plain lucky if he had lunch money. He and Pam had fallen in love practically at first sight. There had been a month of sheer magic, of heady dates, phone calls at all hours and plans for the future.

“Let’s get married now,” Jerry had said one night. “I can’t stand it without you.”

So the following weekend they’d been married. They had got time off from their respective jobs for a lush honeymoon at Cal-Neva on the Nevada border, and a flying trip south to introduce him to Pam’s family.

BACK in San Francisco, they had found a furnished apartment, Pam wrecking her small bank account to help with the first month’s rent. Not that she’d minded helping. She’d been too wildly, blissfully happy to consider anything but Jerry.

She had scarcely considered money until Jerry made her quit her job. No need for her to work, he’d said, and there wasn’t, as he had an excellent income for a young man in his twenties. After that, however, it was steak and parties one week, hamburgers and staying home the next. But no matter. They were together.

Finally, Pam’s mother had come north to visit them. Pam’s frugal mother, poking into the refrigerator, scandalized by the delicacies she found there.

“Jerry,” she’d said, “isn’t all this rather extravagant for a young couple just getting started?”

“We hoard that stuff,” he’d explained gaily, “for a rainy day. When we’re broke, we live on caviar.”

His mother-in-law had not been amused. She’d worked on Jerry, trying to make him see the error of his ways.

“Do you have health insurance?” she’d asked one day.

“Whatsoever for? We’re never sick.”

On another occasion she’d urged him to buy furniture. “You could budget it, Jerry.”

“Not me. I don’t believe in charge accounts.”

“Neither do I,” Pam’s mother had said. “But this is different. You pay a certain sum monthly, and after awhile the furniture is yours.”

“I’d forget to pay,” Jerry had grinned.

Pam had been furious. “You go out of your way,” she’d told Jerry, “to make the worst possible impression on Mother. And she is right, you know. We should put aside some money for an emergency:’”
“What emergency? I’m not about to lose my job. Ned Barrett is crazy about me.” Ned Barrett was his boss.

That argument had grown into their first quarrel, a hot one, as Pam had the kind of temper that goes with red hair, and Jerry was a stubborn man who refused to be pushed around.

That night they had made up, promising each other never to quarrel again, though they did of course. For instance, there was his casual way of loaning money to improvident friends. Which didn’t make sense, since Jerry himself refused to borrow, was almost superstitious about that.

Incidentally, he really was against charge accounts. He had tried that, he explained to Pam, and had got into an awful mess.

One pay-day he loaned fifty dollars to Lissa McCoy, and that instigated a quarrel that was a dilly. Lissa was a shapely brunette with incredible eyelashes. She and Jerry were graduates of the same university, and as a coed, she might have dated him. Pam wouldn’t know about that.

At any rate she was not fond of Lissa, probably because Jerry admired the girl. Lissa never raised her voice, he would say. He had never seen her angry. This was hard to take when Pam lost her temper at the drop of a hat. Lissa was now a model in San Francisco’s wholesale district. She’d needed the fifty dollars to help pay for a sheared beaver, which she had bought from a manufacturer on a cash basis.

Every time Pam saw Lissa in that fur coat, she seethed with anger. They met frequently, for the whole group of Jerry’s old friends had a habit of getting together on Saturday nights. Lissa generally turned up at these parties, bringing her current boy friend.

“How much is Lissa paid off that loan?” Pam asked Jerry one day.

“Not yet,” he answered.

“How much? I could use that money for a new dress.”

“You want a dress? Then buy one. Next pay-day.”

Okay, I will. We’d spend the money anyway on some foolishness.”

Pam had taken cash for the dress from their joint checking account and had shopped around a little. But she was so worried by their reckless ways that she had finally stashed the bills away for an “emergency.” There they remained until the day Jerry phoned that he’d been asked to entertain an out-of-town customer and his wife that evening.

“You’re in on the deal,” he said gaily, “and the firm pays the bill, of course. We’ll do the town, baby. We’ll shoot the works.”

This would be fun, Pam had thought, a plush evening at the firm’s expense. She was so happy that she took the hoarded money from her dresser drawer, went downtown and bought that new dress. It was a honey, a toast-brown taffeta with off shoulder neckline and wide, rustling skirt.

Jerry was late getting home, and he found her dressed for the evening.

“Surprise!” she cried, turning slowly around to display her new elegance.

“So you finally bought it. Good. I go out tonight with the most beautiful girl in San Francisco.”

Catching her close, he had proceeded to ruin both her lipstick and the careful arrangement of her penny-gold hair. Not that she cared. This was her night. Sure. This was her night—until she discovered that their bank account was down to twelve dollars, and that Jerry had planned on financing their evening with that money she had stashed away in her dresser drawer.

“You said,” she had wailed, “that tonight was on the firm.”

“And it is. But I collect later via the expense account.”

“Ned Barrett,” she said, “would have advanced the money.”

“Well, yes. And I did consider asking him. But I hated to admit that I hadn’t so much as fifty dollars in the old bank
account. Ned might think I was improvident. He's a swell boss, but just a little on the stingy side."

"Improvixent!" Pam cried, her eyes bright green with anger. "You're hopeless! Well, get the money. Collect that loan from Lissa McCoy."

"Don't be silly. It's the twenty-eighth, and Lissa wouldn't have five dollars, let alone fifty."

Jerry had finally solved the problem by cashing a check at a bar, the idea being that tomorrow morning he would get an advance from his boss and deposit it in the bank. By that time Pam's gala mood was destroyed. They'd spent a lavish evening but a horrid one, she playing the gay young wife, when she longed to wring Jerry's neck.

Before going to bed they had quarreled again, hotly and bitterly.

That had been the beginning of the end, because Jerry never got the advance from his boss. Pam knew nothing about that until the proprietor of the bar phoned that the check had bounced. Jerry had got home that day to find her pacing the floor.

"I hated to ask Ned for the money," he explained, "and I figured that with the first of the month so close I could probably deposit my pay in time to cover the check. They wander around several days before arriving at the bank on which they're drawn, so I took a chance."

"You took a chance! You always take a chance."

"Calm down," he said. "You act as if I were a criminal, a real for sure bad-check artist."

"You are," she snapped, "practically."

To her a bounced check was horrible, degrading. To him it was just one of those things. They had shouted horrible accusations at each other, had talked about divorce as if it were something they'd had in mind for months.

Finally she had walked out on him and taken the first possible plane for Los Angeles. Unfortunately, her mother and dad had agreed that Jerry was impossible. She'd best get the divorce immediately, they advised, then forget her improvident husband.

PAM got the divorce, but she couldn't forget. Not in the dreadful night when she reached for Jerry, only to find herself alone in the narrow bed of her girlhood. Not in the dreadful day, working at a new job, and her shorthand notes blurred with remembering. For months Pam had lost all contact with San Francisco, assuming that the old crowd would take Jerry's side in the divorce.

However, she had been so fond of one married couple—Nancy and Jim Garth—that she did send them a Christmas card. Nancy had responded with a letter, after which the two girls corresponded. Presently there was bad news from San Francisco. Jerry, Nancy wrote, was going around with Lissa McCoy. Oh no! Pam thought. Not Lissa. She slept badly that night.

Only last week, another letter had dealt Pam a body blow. Lissa and Jerry planned on getting married as soon as he was free. Lissa was spreading the news, confidentially, and Nancy was furious about it. She was not fond of Lissa McCoy.

Pam was more than furious. She just couldn't take it. She had finally quit her job and headed for San Francisco. This morning she had phoned Jerry, and he was to meet her for lunch. She'd asked him to meet her.

Now she waited under the clock, her mouth dry, butterflies dancing a flamenco in her stomach. She had a plan, a crazy, desperate plan, one not like her at all, she being an inexperienced liar.

Her heart jumped into her throat as she saw him coming from the lobby. Her Jerry, with his wheat-gold hair, stubborn chin and blue eyes under craggy brows! Making a smile for him, she longed to kiss the crescent scar near his left eye, as she had so often kissed it. A good luck scar, she'd al-
ways said.
He held out his hand. “Hi, Pam. Nice seeing you again.”

As if she had never belonged to him, she thought. Well, what had she expected? A great big clinch?
He suggested a cocktail here, then lunch at Solari’s. So they found a table in the elegant Orchid Room, which was filled with memories of their courtship. Once, his hand would have found hers under the table, his eyes would have embraced her. Now, over a daiquiri, he asked politely about her family, and she about his. Then he mentioned her job in Los Angeles.
“I quit,” Pam explained. “I’m back in San Francisco for good. Living at home didn’t work out so well.”

She longed to tell him why, that she couldn’t stand the scrimping and saving. She wanted caviar in the refrigerator, and a huge bunch of flowers on pay-day. Her mother and father seemed to have budgeted love right out of existence.

But she couldn’t even hint at all this, with Jerry so cool and casual. So they went to Solari’s where they had often lunched. Here goes, Pam thought, her breathing shallow and frightened, as she dug at her cracked crab with a long-handled fork.

“Jerry,” she said, “I phoned you because—well, I’m in a jam.”

“A jam! Good Lord! What’s wrong, baby?”

Her pulse quickened to that “baby,” his old pet name. “It’s a little matter of money,” she explained. “I went haywire in Los Angeles and opened a slew of charge accounts. Now the bills have crept up on me, and credit men are howling at my door like a pack of hungry wolves.” Her face was hot, and her eyes slid from his astonished blue ones.

“Bills!” he exclaimed. “You, Pam, of all people. What did you buy, for Pete’s sake?”

“Oh! Clothes and stuff for my room. It was such a dingy little room compared with—with our apartment. Could you help me, Jerry? I hate to ask it.”

“Why shouldn’t you ask it? After all, you refused to take alimony. But why so many clothes? Never mind. It’s obvious. For dates, of course.”

“Well, naturally,” she agreed, aware that he was glowering at her, and hoping the glower indicated jealousy.

“I don’t get it,” he said. “And, Pam—what a time to quit your job and to leave home, where you don’t have to pay board.”

“I did pay a little board,” she said, which was true. “And I had to get away, Jerry. I came up here because I can make more money in San Francisco. Salaries are higher.”

HE SHOOK his head wonderingly.
“You knee-deep in debt. I can’t believe it.”

But she knew he did believe, knew she had put over her story.

They parted on a street corner, with a hundred-dollar check in her purse. That check hurt Pam’s conscience, though it was her heart that hurt when Jerry turned back and lifted his hand in a final good-by. That old habit of his, that sweet habit. She silently thanked him for remembering this small token of former bliss.

Pam had no trouble finding a secretarial job. In fact she had several offers. The one she accepted was not the best financially, but was in an office building not far from Jerry’s firm on Front Street. She counted on “accidentally” running into him now and then at noon, for he had a habit of lunching in one particular restaurant.

Within a week she also had an apartment, which was small, dingy and dispiriting, the proper environment for a girl who was supposed to be hounded by creditors.

With all this off her mind she phoned Nancy Garth, and the two girls met for lunch. Nancy was a petite, energetic girl with frank brown eyes.

She said in her forthright way, “You threw Jerry straight into Lissa’s arms.
She was the little comforter and was plenty smart about it. She never criticized you, Pam. Her angle is that you and Jerry were psychologically unsuited to each other, mainly because both of you are hot-tempered."

"And Lissa," Pam added bitterly, "is that soothing character who never raises her voice."

"Not if there’s a man around," Nancy amended. "I’ve seen her blow her top in a big way. But with men she has a system. She hypnotizes them with that sugary voice, then bewitches them with her melting eyes and those terrific lashes. Look, Pam. Break this up. I know you’re still in love with Jerry."

"I suppose I am," Pam confessed, her face hot. "But I’ve seen him, Nancy, and there seems to be nothing left. Nothing at all."

"Keep trying, honey. I’ll help if I can."

Pam was grateful for Nancy’s friendship. She’d been so alone in her fight for Jerry. The next day she phoned him to tell him her new address. After they’d talked of her job and her apartment, he mentioned mailing her a check on payday.

"You’re wonderful!" Pam exclaimed. "I don’t know what I’d have done without you. Look, Jerry. Why don’t you drop by with the check and share my lonely dinner. If you would, I’d feel a little better about ruining your budget like this."

He hesitated, she holding her breath, but finally agreed to come. Stars in her eyes, Pam cradled the phone. She wouldn’t wear, she decided, the green organdie he had always liked and would serve his favorite dish—fried chicken simmered in sauterne.

She remembered other pay-days, Jerry arriving with flowers for his love. Would he bring flowers this time? She wondered.

Pam cooked that dinner in a dither of excitement, a fluffy apron tied over the green organdie, her bright hair caught back from her face, drifting smooth and shining, to her shoulders. Opening the door to Jerry, she felt as if she must fly into his arms. But there were no flowers, and he was maddeningly casual.

"Hi, Pam," he said. "Is that chicken I smell?"

He had brought a bottle of rum, and he mixed daiquiris as they elbowed each other in the narrow kitchen. There had been a time when he would have forgotten the cocktails to crush her against him, kiss her until the dinner could burn to a crisp for all she cared. Now they discussed the rent she paid for this apartment, and he told her about his—a bachelor deal further up the hill.

They dined in the small living room on a rickety card table, with candles between them, love and heartbreak between them. Though the heartbreak, Pam thought, appeared to be completely one-sided.

"What chicken!" Jerry gloated. "Pretty expensive though for a gal who’s on a strict budget."

"You ruined me, Jerry. I lost the habit of economizing."

JERRY grinned wryly. "So I get the blame. Well, my shoulders are broad. But you listen to me, Pam Leonard. No more charge accounts."

"Oh, dear! They’re so convenient, and I do love beautiful clothes."

"I don’t get it," he said helplessly. "There must be a man at the bottom of this. Are you cleaning up your bills in order to get married?"

"Oh, no!" she answered, taking a cigarette from the package he offered. "Though I hear you have plans, Jerry."

He looked startled, his lighter poised in midair. "Me? Where did you get that?"

"Well, the rumor is that you and Lissa are engaged."

He put the lighter to her cigarette, quicksilver emotion leaping through her. Touch of his hand, familiar fragrance of his shaving lotion.

"Just a rumor," he said, leaning back. "I’m not free, baby. I couldn’t be en-
gaged, officially."

But he could unofficially, she thought. He had really hedged the issue. After he'd helped with the dishes, they tried out phonograph records she'd bought that day. Deliberately she had made this like cozy home evenings of more than a year ago.

But it didn't work. Jerry left early, politely thanking Pam for the dinner, and she politely thanking him for his generous check.

When would she see him again? she asked herself. Meeting him "accidentally" on her noon hour hadn't worked, either. He must have changed restaurants.

The very next day, however, Nancy Garth phoned and invited Pam to a party at her house the following Saturday night. Just the old crowd, she said.

"I couldn't!" Pam gasped. "All of them probably blame me for the divorce. And, Nancy, aren't Lissa and Jerry coming?"

"Naturally, they're coming. That's the idea. Are you afraid of Lissa McCoy?"

"Who said I was afraid?" Pam snapped. "Thanks, Nancy. I'll be there with my broken heart tucked out of sight—I hope."

FOR the party, Pam bought a new dress, gray, with a green belt and low, square neckline. It would boost her morale, she thought. She needed a boost. The very thought of that party gave her goose pimples.

The dress was very becoming, and she fastened her bright hair in a pony tail. She could hear Jerry say, "Cute," giving the tail a playful tug. But that had been the old Jerry, who had held her in his arms through the night.

Most of the couples in the old crowd, married or unmarried, lived in apartments. But the Garths had a roomy house on Russian Hill, a grand house for parties. Pam ran up the steps to the accompaniment of phonograph music from inside, dance music. The party was in full swing, she thought, longing to turn and dash away. Then Nancy flung wide the door and pulled her guest inside.

"Look!" she cried. "Here's Pam!"

"My favorite redhead," Jim Garth exclaimed, and gave Pam a resounding kiss.

That broke the ice. Several of the men followed Jim's lead and the girls rallied around. It was good, so good that a lump rose in Pam's throat. In the confusion she saw Lissa coming her way through the dining room, and Jerry beyond with a bowl of ice cubes.

"Nice seeing you, Pam," Lissa said in her low, sugary voice.

Pam made some reply, her eyes leap ing to Jerry, with the confusion suddenly resolved into expectant silence. She heard him say, "Hello, Pam," heard herself answer. And the bad moment was over. These parties were do-as-you-please affairs, bridge in the den, rugs in the living room rolled back for dancing, talk where you found it. Jim Garth swung Pam into a two-step.

"The bartending," he remarked, "I turned over to Jerry."

"And his able assistant," Pam added, glancing into the dining room where Jerry presided over the portable bar with Lissa hovering at his elbow.

"Chin up," Jim said. "That girl has been after Jerry for years, and she hasn't hooked him. Not yet."

Pam gave him a grateful smile and squeezed his hand. Chin up, she thought. That was it. She had got herself into this and must carry it through. But time seemed to crawl, as she danced with a succession of partners, chatted volubly, played the gay divorcée until her mouth felt stretched with smiling.

Finally she escaped to the guest room. She had to be alone for a moment, had to subdue if she could this gnawing hurt and jealousy.

The bed was heaped with coats, and on top of the pile Lissa's odious, sheared beaver. In a way that coat had broken up Pam's marriage. No. She, Pam had
broken it herself. The fault was hers. Her eyes in the mirror were gray and hopeless. When she was dancing, she had willed with all her heart for Jerry to cut in. But he hadn't. Once, they had been so close they read each other's thoughts. Now they were light-years apart.

Hearing someone come in, she snatched her lipstick and glanced over her shoulder.

"Lovely party," said Lissa McCoy.

"Oh yes!" Pam answered, shivers chasing up her spine.

"I do hope Jerry and I aren't spoiling your fun."

"Heavens, no!" Pam scoffed, leaning toward the mirror. "This is a friendly divorce."

"Of course. Your lunching with Jerry proved that. I mean, it was such a nice gesture."

"Oh? He told you?"

Gesture indeed, Pam thought, hot with anger as she snapped her purse shut on the lipstick. Lissa hadn't answered that question. She had gone to the bed and was fumbling in the pocket of her coat. She brought out a handkerchief, looked at it unseeingly then put it back. Lissa wasn't so calm after all, Pam thought, getting to her feet in a new rush of excitement. Perhaps she was even afraid.

"Did Jerry tell you," Lissa asked, sliding gold bracelets up and down her arm, "that he and I are going to be married?"

"No, he didn't," Pam answered, "Congratulations." And she left the room.

WELL, there it was straight from the horse's mouth, or from Lissa's mouth, to be exact. But they weren't married yet, though Jerry would be free in a couple of weeks. Free and broke, Pam thought, with a mischievous smile. For once, her trickery in wrangling those generous checks had absolutely no effect on her conscience.

In the living room Jerry was nursing a highball and talking to Nancy. Pam marched over to them.

"How about a dance, Jerry," she asked, "for old time's sake?"

He grinned, put the highball on a table and took her in his arms. So they danced a samba, their feet in tune as their hearts had once been. Could he hear, Pam wondered, the thunder of her heartbeats? Could he have forgotten dancing with her when their love was new? Dancing until he said, "Let's get out of here," and they had left for a quiet place where he could crush her against him, take her lips in a storm of ecstasy like flying to the moon.

It had been on such a night that they decided to be married right away. "I can't stand it without you," he'd said.

Impulsively, she spoke aloud. "So you could stand it without me, Jerry, after all."

He looked at her, startled. And he did remember. The memory smoldered in his blue eyes in a flush rising under his tan.

"I had to," he said, "I got used to it. We had something, Pam. Something exciting and wonderful. But underneath was antagonism, which flared up at the drop of an angry word. There's more to marriage than physical attraction."

"So you have it all worked out," she said, flushing angrily, knowing Lissa had worked it out really.

He didn't answer. Almost savagely, he drew her close and pressed his cheek to her forehead. Now her face was hidden in his shoulder, and the anger drained out into the old pulsating joy, the old madness. The fire was still there, she thought exultantly. There was hope. Then his arms loosened.

"On pay-day," he said, "I'll have another check for you."

Her face hot, Pam tilted back her head to look at him. "Want to drop it by, Jerry? I loathe eating alone."

"I don't know," he answered. "Best if I don't perhaps. But thanks. I'll let you know."

He was looking over her shoulder, and as they turned Pam knew why. Lissa had reappeared and was smiling at him,
gaily, confidently. It was no use, Pam thought, in the old emptiness and despair. Lissa was clever, much too clever.

The remainder of that evening was a nightmare. Pam got through it somehow. Later she wept in her bed with great, shaking sobs. She hadn’t cried like this since she’d got the divorce.

Pam gave up then. No more looking for Jerry at lunchtime, no more walking home the long way past his office. Suppose she did bump into him. So what? He hadn’t phoned to tell her if he was coming to dinner. But then she didn’t expect him to come. He was afraid of her, she thought, of her red hair and her temper. Afraid, too, of being snared again by that physical attraction he’d mentioned. But couldn’t he see that it had been more than that?

On the evening before pay-day Pam was getting her solitary dinner when the doorbell sent her into a pandemonium of renewed hope.

Jerry! she thought. But to her amazement the visitor was Lissa McCoy in a handsome spring suit.

“I hate to break in on you like this,” Lissa apologized. “But I did want to talk with you Pam, as one girl to another.”

Highly skeptical of this girl-to-girl talk, Pam offered her a seat.

“I’m worried,” Lissa explained, crossing her shapely legs, “about Jerry.”

“About Jerry?” Pam asked. “What’s wrong, Lissa?”

“Yes. He told me you refused it. But what could have happened to him, Pam? Have you any idea?”

This was crazy, Pam thought, pushing back hysterical laughter. “It’s probably a loan,” she said, “to some improvident friend. You know Jerry.”

“Well, he might loan five or ten dollars. But this is different. He always seems to be short of money.”

“Five or ten dollars,” Pam scoffed. “Why, Lissa, at one time you borrowed fifty from Jerry.”

“Oh that!” Lissa said. “But we’re such old friends. And I was in a spot.”

“They’re always old friends and always in a spot.”

“That isn’t right,” Lissa exclaimed heatedly. “It isn’t fair. To me.”

Look out! Pam thought. Your lovely disposition is slipping.

“You’ll get used to it,” she said. “You’ll realize that Jerry is a lovable guy even if he doesn’t make sense. And he doesn’t, you know. He loans, but never borrows. He spends money like water, but would blow his top if you ever opened a charge account.”

“Oh, yes,” Lissa agreed. “Charge accounts. But he’ll get over that. Perhaps it is a loan, as you surmise. Though if so, it must be a whopping one.”

“What a pity,” Pam said, “for this to happen now. You might have to put off your marriage.”

“We’ll manage,” Lissa snapped.

HER visitor exhaled smoke violently as if there were tension behind it.

“I’m afraid he’s in some kind of a mess, Pam. Lately he’s always short of money, and he won’t tell me why, just says he’s had obligations to meet. From one of his remarks I suspected that he might be helping you. I mean I wouldn’t blame him in the least. It’s just that I would like to know.”

“You must have misunderstood,” Pam answered, meeting the girl’s shrewd, dark eyes squarely. “I don’t even have alimony, you know.”

CLOSING the door behind her guest, Pam shook with laughter. What a crazy business, for that girl to come here! She probably had come on impulse, angry impulse. She had suspected that Pam was at the bottom of Jerry’s personal depression, and had hoped to find out.

But her mission had failed, Pam thought, pleased with the way she had handled the situation. And Lissa was in a spot. Her bridegroom obviously couldn’t afford to get married.

On sober second thought Pam realized that she couldn’t wangle checks
from Jerry indefinitely. But even so, she had snapped out of that numb resignation. Again she felt that Lissa wasn’t as sure of Jerry as she pretended to be. She had spread the word around that they were going to get married, as soon as he was free. Now she was stymied, jealous of Jerry’s ex-wife, afraid her plans would fall through.

Pam admitted that all this could be wishful thinking. Nevertheless she phoned Jerry the next morning.

“I just realized,” she said gaily, “that this is the fifteenth. Are you dining with me, Jerry? I’ve the makings of a meat pie at home.”

“Sounds good,” he answered cagily. “But I don’t know—Okay, Pam. Why not?”

“Good. Never mind the rum, Jerry. There’s plenty in the bottle you brought last time, and we must economize, you know.”

SHAKEN with love and longing, Pam cradled the phone. “We,” Jerry and Pam. Oh! They did belong together. They did!

All day she nursed a lovely dream of opening the door to the old Jerry, his arms reaching for her. Closing her eyes, she knew again the storm and fire of his lips on hers. It must be like that. It had to be. She was nothing without him.

That night she put on a blue cotton dress from the days of Mrs. Jerry Leonard. It was a provocative dress with a way of slipping off one shoulder.

“We,” she thought, assembling the meat pie. “We,” Jerry and Pam. There was magic in that two-letter word. Within an hour, however, the magic was gone, when Jerry and Pam were at dinner with a wall between them, a wall of her own making.

“I have never eaten a better meat pie,” he said. “It’s also economical. My hat would be off to you, baby, if I wore a hat.”

That “baby” stabbed through her.

“Preaching economy,” she said, “used to be my line. I’m afraid I used it until the record was cracked. I don’t blame you for walking out on me.”

“Come on, Pam. You walked. Remember?”

“I know. My horrible temper.”

He got up and fiddled with the radio dials, finally getting a concert orchestra.

“Dinner music,” he said with a grin.

In other words, don’t think of the past. Forget your dreams. The future was the thing. The future with Lissa. The room seemed to have turned cold.

“By the way,” he said, “I mustn’t forget to write that check.”

“Never mind,” she wanted to say. “I don’t want it.”

But she couldn’t speak for the tears pushing up in her, and began to remove the dinner plates. There was apple pie for dessert. She’d made it last night in the hope that he would come to dinner. What wasted effort, she thought, starting for the kitchen. Then she stopped, glancing back at Jerry. The doorbell had rung. “The Garth’s perhaps,” she said. “You get it.”

She waited for him to open the door and almost dropped her load of dishes when she saw dark hair, a sheared beaver coat.

“Jerry!” Lissa exclaimed. “Good heavens! I’ve phoned everywhere. What is all this? You were supposed to be working.”

“I have been working. On a meat pie. Come in, Lissa. And why did you phone everywhere?”

Hurriedly depositing the soiled dishes in the kitchen, Pam heard Lissa explain that she had called Jerry at the office just to say hello, and when there had been no answer, had been afraid that something had happened to him.

She finished, “Finally I thought of Pam, though I didn’t really expect you to be here.”

“Why not?” he asked, as Pam returned to the living room. “Her meat pies are fabulous.”

That did it. Lissa’s wonderful disposition simply fell apart.

“Stop quibbling!” she cried hysteri-
cally. "You tell me the truth, Jerry Leonard! What is Pam up to? What is she doing to you? You've been short of money ever since she came back. We haven't had a decent date in weeks!"

He was staring in astonishment at this new, enraged Lissa. "A decent date," he repeated. "How about the movies? Or do you love me only when we're dancing?"

"Oh, stop it!" Lissa shouted. "I know you're giving Pam money. And I know why she's after it, though I doubt if you do. She's playing dog in the manger, that's what. Trying to keep you broke so you can't get married."

"You talk crazy," he snapped.

"I do not talk crazy," Lissa contradicted. "Let her tell you. I dare you to tell him, Pam Leonard."

Pam's eyes were wide, and she clenched her hands to her breast. "I came back," she admitted shakily, "because I want Jerry. Nothing makes sense without him. Nothing."

The statement fell naked into stunned silence. Pam's face was hot, her chin was lifted defiantly. Lissa was the first to speak.

"You want Jerry," she mocked. "How sweet! Do you really think he'd come back? After what he went through with your beastly selfishness and temper?"

"Wait a minute," Jerry protested. "Haven't you always insisted that Pam wasn't to blame? That the divorce was just one of those things?"

"You're so right," Lissa answered vindictively. "She is as she is, an impossible character if I've ever met one."

"I'll be the judge of that. You'd better go, Lissa."

His face was hard, and hers whitened as she looked at him. "You mean, alone?" she asked. He nodded and opened the door for her. "You fool!" she exclaimed. "You utter fool!" and rushed from the apartment.

Closing the door, Jerry shook his head wonderingly. "I've never heard her raise her voice. Never until tonight. She was like a—" His voice trailed off as he stared at Pam bemusedly. "What about those charge accounts?" he asked.

She had tricked him, and now her heart stilled with fear. "No charge accounts, Jerry. I had to see you, had to find some excuse for seeing you."

He frowned, again shaking his head. Then the frown cleared into a grin. "You fake!" he exclaimed. "You adorable little liar!"

He caught her in his arms, rocking her gently, speaking into her hair. "I wanted you, baby. When you asked me here, I couldn't say no. But it seemed a weakness in me. I thought we didn't go together. I had this idea, this stubborn idea. There was something else too, this change in you, this wild extravagance. It wasn't like my Pam. You had me all mixed up, baby."

She pushed back her head to look at him. "Jerry, I have changed. It's love that matters. Who cares about money? Darling, hold me! Never let me go."

**T** ANGLING his hand in her hair, he pressed his lips to her bare shoulder then covered her face with kisses. She were by her own heartbeats, she held his head to hers as he took her lips slowly, tenderly. After that the delirious madness, the fire and storm, his kiss channeling through her blotted out all thought, all sense of time. "Darling," she whispered brokenly, limp in his arms, her face hidden from him.

"No charge accounts," he said huskily. "What a girl!"

Glowing with love, she looked up at him. "No charge accounts. The money you gave me is in the bank waiting for you."


"Wonderful. We'll shoot the works."

"Hold it," he teased. "You stole my line. Take it easy, baby. We'll have to rent a larger apartment and stuff."

"Don't be a penny-pincher," she chided.

They clung to each other, laughing like crazy.
TELEVISITING

with Pat Jones

Meet a Television Heroine Who Lives the Part She Plays!

For an actress, playing a part in a daily television series can easily become more than a job—it can actually become part of her private life! At any rate, that's what Peggy McCay, who appears daily (12:15 EST) as Vanessa Dale, the heroine of CBS-TV's "Love of Life," tell us.

Viewers of the dramatic serial who see Peggy in her familiar Manhattan haunts are often pressed, by considerations of loyalty, to try to help Vanessa, her TV personality, out of one of her TV jams.

It happened that some time ago, during one sequence of the program, Vanessa's sister, Meg, was feigning paralysis in order to thwart Vanessa's romance. The TV audience knew, of course, that Meg could walk perfectly well.

While she was riding from the studio one afternoon, the woman sitting next to Peggy on the bus struck up a conversation.

"Miss Dale," she said. "I've just got to tell you. Your sister Meg can walk as well as you can—don't let her ruin your life!"

The next day, the script of "Love of Life" picked up just as though nothing had happened. "That lady must have thought that Vanessa Dale was pretty stupid," Peggy laughs, "but there was nothing Peggy McCay could do about it!" Then Peggy turns serious for a moment and says, "You can't imagine how flattering it is for an actress to know that she is actually making friends for the character she is portraying."

In fact, every time Vanessa's life reaches a crisis, Peggy's mail is flooded with well-meaning letters advising her what to do. Since Peggy's show appears around lunch time, much of her fan mail comes from children who are home from school at that hour. "But they don't usually give me advice. They just write as though I were an old family friend, or a relative!"

Working steadily is a showbusiness ideal, but not many people realize that the preparations which go into a daily TV show are as exacting as any nine-to-five job. Peggy is usually concerned with as many as three scripts at a time. The current performance, the dress rehearsal for the next day's show, and reading the script for the one two weeks hence. Such an arduous schedule calls for discipline as rigid as any army's. Every move must be planned and executed according to direction, or the camera may lose sight of the characters. To keep in camera range, the actors follow foot-marks. "You can't imagine how hard it was at first for me to play a tense, romantic scene and look where I was stepping at the same time!"

On stage, the director's word is law, but there is one time when Peggy is allowed to have her own way. "Whenever there's cooking to be done, our director, Larry Auerbach,
let's me do it my way. He knows that cook-
ing requires the woman's touch!"

Born in New York, Peggy's first taste of
the limelight came at the age of five when
she played in a Christmas pageant. She can
still recall the excitement she felt when the
audience laughed or cried. From then on,
Peggy was a child who loved to play "make
believe." Her interest was sustained until
she attended Barnard College where she
copped the lead in her class' Junior Show.
That was the outstanding thespian honor a
student could achieve.

The college part was one of the few times
Peggy was required to sing and dance, but
it was an excellent example of her unusual
versatility, which is always an asset to an
actress.

After a June graduation, Peggy spent the
hottest weeks of the summer pounding the
pavements. She began to read "Variety," the
showbusiness weekly. The language of that
paper, she found, was more foreign to her
than translating Chaucer in college. But a-
fter visiting ten theatrical offices a day for over
two weeks, she felt like an old-timer.

One office which she visited repeatedly
was that of Margo Jones, the well-known
producer of the Dallas Civic Theatre. At first
Miss Jones felt that Peggy's lack of profes-
sional experience was a drawback, but fin-
ally, admiring Peggy's persistence in spite of
the heat, asked her to read for her. The
result? Peggy played in repertory in Dallas
during the 1949-50 season.

Next Peggy appeared in Chicago in the
road company of "Summer and Smoke" and
also played the role of Shakespeare's Juliet.
Returning to New York, she played in off-
Broadway productions, and with the Black
Friars, a noted non-professional group.

She appeared on the "Crime Photographer," Kraft and Philco TV shows, and then
came the long, dry spell which showpeople
call being "between engagements."

Ironically, it was just the time when Bar-
nard, her alma mater, invited Peggy to ad-
dress a group of aspiring actresses on "How
to get a job in the theatre." "Well," Peggy
says, "they got a real heart-to-heart talk
from an actress out of work! But at least
they got an honest picture of what acting is
really like!"

Some time later, Peggy won an audition
for the role of Vanessa Dale, and it's a job
she has held ever since it first went on the
air.

Peggy had had one experience with TV
while she was still in college. She did some
make-up testing for WPIX in New York.
In those days, TV make-up consisted of a
green-gray base and black lipstick. "Defini-
tely unglamorous," Peggy observes. "Luckily,
today's make-up is a little closer to ordinary
street make-up—just a couple of shades
darker."

Incidentally, one of the nice things about a
job like Peggy's is that all the clothes which
she uses on the show become her own. "It's
all right for Vanessa's sister Meg, who's very
smart and sophisticated, but not for the
actress who plays her mother. Being poor,
she never gets a chance to wear anything
really fashionable." When shopping for her-
self, Peggy's choice of clothes is simple, and
her favorite colors are beiges and browns.
With auburn hair and brown eyes, you can
imagine that such a choice is most becoming
to Peggy.

When Peggy was due for a vacation, it was
necessary for Vanessa to be "written out" of
the script. The scriptwriters sent Vanessa
to the drugstore. Since time passes more
slowly on a TV series than in real life, Peggy
had a chance to fly to Europe and visit Paris,
Rome and Venice during that trip to the
corner. It was travelling in Europe which
gave Peggy the inspiration for many of her
mimes—wordless dramas acted out in the
classic tradition—which are one of her fa-
favorite pastimes, and which she hopes one day
to present on TV.

Another of Peggy's hobbies is her 16mm
movie camera. She's proudest of her shots
of a bullfight, taken in Spain, and is now
anxiously awaiting some prints taken on a
ski lift at Banff, Alberta, Canada. As Peggy
tells it, "There I was, at 7,000 feet, taking
movies without a safety belt."

Though she plays the role of a romantic
heroine, Peggy is still a bachelor girl. Not
that she wouldn't swap a career for marriage,
but the right man simply hasn't turned up—
yet.

Asked what quality she most valued in
a man, Peggy answered without hesitation,
"Individuality."

Well, Peggy has plenty of individuality of
her own—hard-working, talented, she is a
girl of many interests with a sparkling, viva-
cious personality.

It's our contention that if you like Vanessa
Dale, you'll like Peggy McCay as much, if
not more.
STRANGE BARGAIN

Being a lady photographer was no snap for Brenda, especially when two men tried to get into the picture.

It was a sloppy, rainy night. The wind, howling down the main street of Stoneport, tossed the little sign which read, "BRENDA PHILLIPS, PHOTOGRAPHER," back and forth on its squeaky chains out over the sidewalk.

Inside her studio, Brenda was having her troubles with two men. One of them was talking too much. The other hadn't said a word. One she knew too well, the other she hadn't had time to look at, but both of them disturbed her equally because it was Saturday night and time to close.

Besides, if the truth must be told, Brenda was allergic to men, all men. If she were a man herself right now, she'd chuck them both out into the storm just on general principles.

"Listen, Andrew." Her voice was crisp and cool. "For the

"Tell her, Snowbell, tell her all about it!" Grant was demanding
a romance by CARLETTE MATSON
last time I'm telling you—I like you, I respect you, but I refuse to go out of business for you or anybody else. You can perish that thought! Why can't you realize that good clean competition never hurt anyone?”

Andrew Snell's blue eyes blazed. His hand came down with a resounding smack on Brenda's desk as he jumped to his feet.

"Brenda Phillips, as heaven is my witness, this is the last time I'll do any more begging." He leaned over until his angry face was close to hers. "I've offered to buy you out. Won't sell, you say. You know I want to marry you. Don't love me enough, you say. No matter what I do, it's all wrong, and how much can a guy stand?"

His eyes darted quickly over to the other man and back. His words were harsh as he went on:

"All right! Don't say I didn't warn you. From now on, if you're going to keep on being stubborn, I'm going to run you out of business, by fair means or foul. You shouldn't be doing this kind of work, anyhow! And as for that fellow"—Brenda started up in amazement as he pointed his trembling finger at the stranger—"you'd better look out for him, too!"

Brenda really looked at the stranger for the first time. He was the biggest thing she'd ever seen. He was a giant! And his face—it looked as though someone had taken a chisel and carved it out in chunks. But they weren't bad-looking chunks, especially when they all fell in line and the man smiled as he was doing now, showing a perfect set of teeth and a pair of nice dancing brown eyes.

But the giant didn't give her so much as a glance. He simply walked over to Andrew, towering above him, smiling genially, and said, "Time you got going, isn't it, chum?"

Brenda watched, fascinated, while Andrew's familiar lean face changed from rage to bewilderment, from bewilderment to something strangely resembling fear. After all, a man as big as that was enough to scare anyone.

Without a word, Snell grabbed up his hat and strode to the door. He turned around and looked at Brenda for a hostile second, then was gone, the door slamming behind him.

"Pleasant friends you have," the giant remarked as though he were saying "pleasant day," and strolled coolly by Brenda to resume his thoughtful scrutiny of her sample photographs on the walls of the studio. Something in his very nonchalance, his cool disregard of her, made Brenda furious.

"I'm sorry you don't like my friends," she snapped. "They're the best the town can offer!"

"They remind me of the weather outside," the stranger said. "Dreary!"

Brenda whirled around in her chair. "My floor looks dreary too. You might have had the courtesy to take off your rubbers. What do you want in here, anyhow?"

The giant's response was an expressive jerk of his thumb in the direction of the display of her portraits.

"Not bad, really," he drawled. "Considering your lack of experience. I want that job you advertised about!"

Brenda's eyes narrowed as she slowly uncoiled her legs from around the feet of her chair and stood up to her five-feet-four. With a sensation of triumph she watched the giant's eyes open wide at her loveliness.

It had always been that way with men's eyes, and her loveliness hadn't changed, even after two tempestuous, tragic years of marriage and the birth of her baby girl, even after the months of struggle to keep herself, a nursemaid, and baby Lorraine in food and clothing.

If anything her beauty had grown richer and more stirring because of the struggle which had added steel to her body and a haunted, wistful look to her delicate fine-drawn features. But the wistful look was misleading.

"I suppose if I keep taking pictures fifty more years or so, I might get some
place," she said with fine scorn, her arched brows lifting. "As for the job, it's filled, as far as you're concerned."

The giant was still looking at her in undisguised wonder.

"What the hell," he finally said.

Then he sat his large frame down in Brenda's best chair which groaned a little at the contact. With a slow hand he extracted a package of cigarettes from his pocket and offered one to Brenda. She took it automatically and lighted it from his match. The smoke poured from her firm red lips while she scowled at him a little, shaking her head.

"You don't seem to be able to understand English. I said the job was filled!"

Then as he didn't move she shrugged her shoulders and sat down again, crossing her slender legs carefully. "I can wait as long as you can," she said sarcastically. "Now it's your turn to say something."

The giant came to life again as though a mist had suddenly cleared. He ran a huge hand through his crisp brown hair, sat up straight in the chair, and his brown-flecked eyes looked directly into hers, this time with such penetrating curiosity that Brenda found herself unable to meet their impact.

She glanced down at her cigarette and scolded herself. This is what I get for working too hard. No stamina!

"I came here intending to say one thing," the giant said in a low tone. "Now that I've seen you I seem to have a lot more to say." Then with startling abruptness, "I knew your husband. We were overseas together for three months."

"No, wait a minute—that's true," the giant insisted flatly. "And I can prove it. Correct me if I'm wrong. Dick was about five-foot-ten or eleven, dark curly hair, handsome as a Greek god, willful, irresponsible, but a wizard with the lens and shutter."

He kept his eyes from Brenda, tapped his cigarette thoughtfully against the tray.

"He drank much too much, and he had a scar on his right hand where he'd got the worst of it in a fist fight with a bunch of photographers because he insisted on being first. He always insisted on being first. He died last February twenty-eighth. He must have led you a merry chase."

Brenda drew in her breath sharply. "There isn't a man born who doesn't lead a woman a merry chase," she said icily. "They're all undependable, like a bunch of babies!"

The giant looked up, then suddenly relaxed in his chair, and began to grin. The grin turned into a chuckle, and the chuckle into a deep rumbling laugh that sent the blood flushing into Brenda's cheeks.

"If your experience has been limited to Dick, and that charming fellow who was just in here," he said, "I don't wonder you feel that way! Mrs. Phillips, may I present myself, the one and only Grant Braddock, the first man in your life you can really depend upon!" He leaned forward in his chair close to her and peered at her with such intentness that Brenda grew confused. "You are lovely," he said, with his characteristic abruptness. "As lovely as a mountain lake in Maine, with the blue of the sky reflected in the clear bright water."

Brenda, in spite of her self-control, tensed. She tapped her cigarette viciously in the ashtray.

"If you're having a good time I wouldn't think of asking you to leave."

She sprung nervously to her feet and took a quick step toward her coat and hat on the rack in the corner. The giant glided from his chair with swift ease and towered before her. He put a large hand out and lifted her coat, held it while she slipped into it. Then as she reached for her hat he caught her hand and held it, forcing her eyes up to meet his.

Brenda was tired, overwhelmingly
tired. At any other time she would have
drawn her free hand back and landed its
white palm flat on the rugged bronzed cheek of this intruder. But a strange
thing was happening to her other hand.
A delicious tingling sensation was
spreading up her arm to her shoulder
and down through her weary body. His
hand was big, and—yes, comforting.
That was the word. Suddenly the world
was very large and Brenda felt very
small.

“Oh, go away,” she moaned, trying to
hide her face in the collar of her coat.
“Get out! I’m terribly tired and I’m sick
of remembering and thinking, and I’m
sick of worrying. And you can’t help me,
possibly?”

“Oh the contrary.”
The giant’s voice was husky in her
ears and she felt herself swaying help-
lessly toward him. In a flash his arms
were about her and his lips were bent to
hers, tenderly, and Brenda found her-
self reluctantly answering their pres-
sure with a surge of eagerness that
frightened her.

Gently then he withdrew his lips.
“That was for all the trouble you’ve
been through with Dick, and all the
cares that must be hiding behind your
sweet face,” he murmured. “And
this—”

He held her to him again and she
thrilled to the hardness of his long body
against her own, and the steady beat of
his heart as again his lips came down
on hers, this time with such driving in-
sistence that Brenda couldn’t think at
all.

Her arms crept up around his neck,
and her lips poured out her own pent-up
emotions, clinging to his in a fire of new
ecstasy.

The minutes ticked breathlessly by
until he finally released her. It was a
long time before he spoke and Brenda
waited, her eyes closed, her heart pound-
ing.

“That—was just in case you had any
idea of marrying any one else—right
away.”

SHE slowly opened her eyes and stared
up at him, trying to control her
whirling senses, trying to fathom the
meaning in his intense features. But
what she saw was too dangerous. She
pulled abruptly from him and stepped
over to the mirror. With trembling fing-
ers she adjusted her hat over her shin-
ing curls.

When she faced him she had regained
something of her shattered calm. She
said in a hushed voice, “If that’s all
you’ve got to say, I guess you’d better be
going.”

“But that isn’t all I have to say,” he
insisted gently.

He reached for his raincoat and care-
lessly pulled it on, took up his hat.
Brenda turned hesitantly toward the
door, torn between the desire to be near
him, and her deep-seated caution of him
as a man. It had always been a man who
brought trouble, and this abrupt, in-
sistent young stranger had made an out-
right attack on her senses.

Could she trust him? Could she trust
herself?

Grant Braddock jumped at her inde-
cision. “Let me make up your mind for
you!”

He caught her arm and propelled her
toward the door, snapping off the studio
lights on the way. There they were out
on the sidewalk in the pouring rain.
Brenda saw the quick, sure movements
of his hands as he took the key from
her and locked the studio door.

“We’re going up the line for a bite to
eat,” he said, “and I give you my word
of honor I’ll bring you home in good con-
dition. The Braddocks always stand by
their word!”

There was such a world of confidence
behind the laughing words that before
Brenda knew it she was seated beside
him in his car, her eyes following the
swish-swish of the windshield wiper as
it flicked off the pounding raindrops.
She wondered dazedly if she’d taken
complete leave of her senses.

She, a widow of eight months, with a
baby girl sleeping innocently back there
in her crib, sitting beside a total stranger whose very nearness was upsetting her as nothing had ever done before. It was unbelievable, ridiculous!

As if he understood her struggle, Grant kept silent, guiding the car through the splashy streets with ease, a little smile playing about his strong mouth.

But as Brenda faced him again over a small table in the dining room of the Captain’s Galley, her assurance was mounting. After all, she was only twenty-one. She was entitled to a spark of adventure. All work and no play, and the cares of the whole world pushing down on her shoulders, day in and day out—

“No more of that!” Grant’s voice cut in sternly as he thrust a menu into her fingers.

Brenda gasped. Did he know everything she was thinking? In sudden confusion sheuck her head while her eyes flitted over the list. Food! Food that she didn’t have to cook herself! Food and service and dim lights and music.

When she lifted her gray eyes again they were glowing with excitement. The giant drew in his breath sharply.

“We’d better eat,” he said gruffly, turning to their waiters. “Let’s see, I’ll make a guess at it.” He ran his eyes down the menu and glanced up, his white teeth flashing in a quick smile. “Fried clams, French fries, and cole slaw, I’m willing to bet!”

Brenda laughed. “You win again! And lots of coffee!”

When the order was given Grant turned back to her, and again she was struck with the impact of his scrutiny. Nervously she lifted a hand to tuck a stray curl back into place.

He said abruptly, “We’ll get things straight right in the beginning. You thought you were kidding when you said the job was filled, but you were really telling the truth. I wanted that job, and I’ve got it. From now on I’m your manager.”

Brenda was getting used to his surprises.

“You’ve got me where I have to listen anyhow.”

He grinned. “That’s all I want you to do—listen until I get through.” Brenda nodded. “Before I came into your studio I made a thorough investigation of the city—”

“Why?” Brenda broke out, instantly on guard.

GRANT reminded her brusquely, “You’re supposed to listen!” For an instant his eyes clouded. “How can one small girl be so suspicious?”

Brenda was quickly penitent. “I’m sorry. I’ll try not to do it again, I promise.”

She tilted her face up to his and the light from the little table lamp caught her delicate features, accentuating the creamy richness of her skin, the curve of her full lips.

Grant Braddock shook his head slowly. “You can’t look like that!” he muttered. “Now sit back in your chair, out of the light, and smoke a cigarette. This is strictly a business conference.”

When they had lighted up, he began again. “Now, here is my proposition. . . .”

As Brenda listened, watching the play of expression on his face, the ease of his gestures as he explained his “proposition,” everything sounded too good to be true. How easy it would be to let him run her business, do all that messy, tiring work developing films, making the proofs, finishing the photographs.

Andrew was right, she thought in sudden revolt. It wasn’t a woman’s job. Why, the way this giant put it, all she’d have to do would be to act as receptionist and cameraman, the two things she loved most to do! She could almost visualize his plan. Eager mothers trotting their babies into the studio for pictures, each sure she would win the prize for the city’s most perfect child. A baby salon—a competition! It had been done practically everywhere else, Brenda
new, but no one had ever done it in Stoneport. And it was sure-fire!

“And furthermore,” Grant went on, his brown eyes never leaving Brenda’s shadowed face, “I guarantee you a profit of two thousand dollars, and it might be twice that much in the three months I ask for.”

Brenda looked hard at the cigarette in her hand, watching the smoke curling up into the air. Two thousand dollars! She couldn’t hope to bring in that much in eight months of back-breaking work. Oh, what couldn’t she do with two thousand dollars, clear!

At least, for the time being, she wouldn’t have to make up her mind about Andrew Snell, whether to marry him or not marry him, sell her business or not sell it. And her nights would be free from that awful indecision, that wracking parade of worries. She might even be able to take a short vacation! Any one of these would be worth the gamble, but—

“How do I know you’re not playing a trick on me?” she demanded suddenly, a little fear pricking at her heart. “Why should you do this for me? Who are you, anyhow?”

“I’m not sure!” was the surprising answer, and again the funny shadow passed over the giant’s features. “Before I met you I had an idea who I was. Now everything is different.” His sensitive fingers toyed with the knife and fork on the table. He lifted the knife and set it down with a little bang. “I’m going to ask a favor of you.”

Brenda felt a queer tremor pass through her body. She raised her eyes and their glances met and locked.

“I want you to give me until the baby salon business is over. Then ask me who I am. Not before. Will you, Brenda?”

The use of her first name, slipping so easily from his lips, made her heart leap. For a moment she pondered. Then she whispered: “I can depend on no funny business?”

“No funny business,” he answered.

On impulse she reached out her hand. He grasped it, and the strange bargain was sealed.

Brenda wouldn’t have been Brenda if she hadn’t had many misgivings during the next few weeks, but she wisely kept them to herself. It would have been traitorous to go back on her promise, especially in the face of the amazing amount of new activity going on in her studio.

Even after two weeks of seeing her name and picture splashed over the newspapers, after a hectic month of days packed full of appointments, of making photographs of one child after another, teasing and cajoling them in the sweltering heat of her small light-filled studio, she still couldn’t get used to the idea. A strange young man had sailed blithely into her life and completely made it over!

JUST how far he had made it over she didn’t dare admit. For the present theirs was a brisk, businesslike partnership.

Brenda found delight in posing and photographing the little boys and girls, and turning her back to the more arduous toil which Grant Braddock had taken over so easily and competently. It was wonderful, after the first month, to be able to take time off to wheel her own child through the streets, gazing into shop windows, and now and then darting into a store to purchase some crazy little thing which would strike her fancy—a new apron, a sunbonnet for little Lorraine, a bouquet of vivid fresh garden flowers for the studio.

Toward the end of the second month, on a hot morning, Brenda pushed open the studio door and shouted her regular morning:

“Hi, Boss!”

There was no answer. A little frown shot up between her brows.

“That’s funny,” she muttered, but a quick tour of the dark-room and dressing room convinced her that Grant wasn’t there. But he was always there ahead of her! The scowl deepened as
she realized he had said nothing to her about taking a day off. Then she thought, Maybe he's ill!

She rushed to the phone in sudden panic and started to dial. Her hand froze. The outside door was opening slowly and in the entrance stood the giant, looming large against the sunshine outside. But it wasn't the giant she had known during the past weeks.

Slowly she lowered the receiver into its cradle and felt the crazy pump-pump of her heart, heavy and stifling, as he approached her and saw the odd expression in his brown-flecked eyes. His crinkling brown hair had been slicked smoothly down and he wore a white summer suit, handsomely tailored and fitting his long, rangy body in perfect casualness. In his hand he carried a Panama. She'd never seen him look like this!

Brenda finally found her voice, tried to make it sound natural.

"Are we celebrating something—or something?" she whispered.

Grant didn't speak until he was close to her. Then without warning, his hand tilted her head up and his lips brushed briefly over hers in a sweet, maddening caress. Brenda drew swiftly back, stared up at him.

"I thought this sort of thing was out!" she flared, her voice shaking. "That was our agreement."

"I'm taking a day off from business," was his strange reply, as he swung abruptly by her into the dark-room.

No apology at all for the kiss, no explanation for suddenly plunging all her carefully controlled emotions into swift confusion. Little cool prickles of apprehension shot up and down Brenda's spine, and when he reappeared, her reckless words tumbled out.

"Grant, where are you going?"

He stopped by the desk. One big hand reached out and shut the appointment book with a little slap. His face was inscrutable.

"That wasn't in our agreement, either," he said softly, "but I'll tell you, anyway. I'm going to Boston. You may as well take the day off, too, because I didn't book any sittings. See you later!"

And he was gone, leaving Brenda staring stupidly at the closed door, an endless chain of new little fears and suspicions galloping crazily through her mind. How long she stood there she never knew, but finally she set her shoulders squarely and drew a deep, ragged breath, remembering her promise.

"I'll wait—this time," she whispered.

That afternoon as she lay on the sand, idly watching little Lorraine poking tentative fingers in a shallow pool of ocean water, she was surprised to look up and see Andrew Snell coming toward her across the beach.

"Hi, Brenda!"

"Hi, yourself, stranger. Business slack with you, too?"

Andrew settled himself carefully in the sand and Brenda eyed him curiously. He looked almost debonair in his blue gabardine slacks and polo shirt, and his narrow face, with its nice even coat of tan, was more attractive than she'd ever seen it.

"Don't be funny, Brenda. You're doing all right!"

Brenda turned on her side and stretched her long, slender legs.

"Thought you weren't speaking to me?"

Andrew's quick eyes flashed over the smooth, firm lines of her slim body in the white bathing suit. "Well," he said finally, "it seemed kind of silly to be enemies when we've known each other all our lives. Seemed kind of childish, somehow. So I came here to apologize for speaking the way I did that night in your place. You look nicer than ever, Brenda!"

"It's taken you long enough!"

Brenda cocked her head a little, ignoring his compliment. So he was backing water. Her smooth brows drew together in a tiny frown.

"What's up your sleeve, Andrew?"
"Nothing, Brenda, nothing. Only"—he coughed a little self-consciously—"I've missed you. You know I've always been crazy about you, and not seeing you at all—"

Here it comes again, Brenda moaned to herself. Too bad she couldn't love Andrew. He was good-looking enough in his lean, compact way, and he certainly had been attentive to her ever since she could remember. Especially so in the dark days when her marriage had ended so tragically. Though she knew he was almost too shrewd for his own good, Brenda had to admit that he had a good, solid business and a certain standing in the community.

Could a girl ever learn to love a man, she wondered. She roused herself to pay attention to what he was saying.

"—and I thought if you'd forgive me, I'd like to come to see you some time again. Maybe take in a show the way we used to."

He bent closer to her and Brenda was startled by the new urgency in his face. He had never looked at her quite like that! She drew herself up to sit beside him, reached out and idly whisked a bit of sand from Lorraine’s chubby cheek.

She thought quickly, Andrew never does anything without a purpose. Then just as quickly chided herself, Maybe I am too suspicious, just as Grant says.

She turned to Andrew and smiled impulsively.

"Why don't you come over tomorrow night for supper? We can have some coffee and sandwiches, and—"

Andrew's delight was mirrored in his lean features. He jumped to his feet, brushing off his clothes, and reached for her hand, held it tightly.

"Thanks, Brenda," he said, "I've got to get back to work now, but I'll be over around seven tomorrow." He bent swiftly and planted a sudden unexpected kiss on her hand, then abruptly turned and picked his way back over the sand.

"Just like that!" Brenda remarked to her daughter who was now joyously munching a mouthful of wet sand, letting it spill in grimy rivulets over her tiny round chin.

"Gh-ee-ee!" chortled Lorraine in agreement.

Brenda smiled and turned to gaze out over the sparkling blue of the ocean, watching the sailboats scud back and forth, feeling the late afternoon sun hot on her shoulders. In her mind the events of the past few weeks raced in endless succession, and again she felt a vast uneasiness creep over her.

"Gh-ee-ee!" gurgled Lorraine again, this time with emphasis, forcing Brenda's attention back to her.

The baby was bumping up and down on the sand, waving her little fists gleefully in the air. A big dark shadow slanted across in front of Brenda. Her heart contracted with a familiar deep surge of feeling. It was Grant!

"Hello, little mother and child! Tess said I'd find you here."

With easy grace, he dropped down beside them and reached over to scoop little Lorraine onto his lap. He had shed his city clothes and was now familiarly clad in rough dungarees with a blue shirt open at the throat. In his very casualness it was as though this morning had never existed.

Then as Brenda's gray eyes flashed over his rugged features, all the swirling suspicions that had flitted in and out of her mind throughout the day, suddenly and astonishingly dimmed, and vanished. With a big, happy sigh she lay back on the sand. It was enough that he was home again. The questions could wait until the proper time.

She fell to comparing the two men—Andrew's tight, compact face, and the giant's large, craggy countenance, with its ready smile and white, even teeth.

For a long, lazy hour they lay in the sand, talking, laughing, playing with little Lorraine, back on the same friendly footing that had carried them through the past weeks. It was Grant who finally said:

"Time to go!"
The sun had cast longer shadows, and a cool breeze had begun to stir along the beach as he held the baby on one arm, and extended his big hand to pull Brenda from the sands. The trip back to her apartment was made in almost complete silence.

When the car drew to a stop, Brenda turned lustrous eyes up to Grant’s face. Little Lorraine was quietly sleeping against her bosom. Grant looked down at the child, then his eyes traveled slowly over Brenda’s face, from her rumpled curls down over her eyes and smooth cheeks to her lips.

There was no need for words. His arm slipped about her shoulder, his head bent, and their lips met. Brenda shivered a little as she gave herself to his caress with complete abandon. When he finally drew away, lingeringly, his brown-flecked eyes bored deep into hers. His voice was husky.

“In case—you still are thinking of marrying—anyone else—”

The next day sped by with the memory of Grant’s kiss in Brenda’s heart, tingling everything she did with a rosy glow. She had completely forgotten her invitation to Andrew Snell until a sharp rapping at the door brought her to her senses.

“I am slipping,” she moaned. “I even let Tess go home. Now we’ll have to be alone together.”

She threw open the door and saw him standing there, trim and neat, with a quizzical look in his eyes. In his hand he held a bouquet of sweet peas and roses.

“Hi, Brenda. Here’s something for you.”

“They’re sweet,” Brenda whispered, trying to ignore the question in his lifted brows. “You shouldn’t have done it, Andrew.”

He followed her into the room, dropped his hat on the couch.

“Come on into the kitchen while I throw something together.”

“I have something to say to you, Brenda,” he began, when he perched himself on the kitchen stool to watch her quick hands mixing a chicken salad and spreading it on soft white slices of bread.

Brenda stopped short and looked at him out of wide gray eyes. Something told her to be careful. This was a new Andrew, and he did have something on his mind, after all.

“Well?” she said, as he was silent.

Andrew’s face under its tan began to flush slightly. He coughed nervously and spoke as though it were an effort.

“As much as I dislike your going on alone in your business, Brenda, and working at odds with me, I would much rather see you do it that way than to see you being cheated out of everything you have!”

The spreading knife clattered from Brenda’s hand. Slowly she reached to pick it up, keeping her face averted.

“What are you talking about, Andrew?” She spoke evenly although her heart chanted, Grant, of course. I knew it, I felt it!

She gathered up the plates and carried them into the living room, setting them down on the bridge table. With her heart straining with suspense, she darted back and forth, bringing olives and pickles, filling the electric percolator, plugging it in.

“Sit down, Andrew,” she commanded finally.

Snell relaxed into his chair with a sigh. They began to eat and Andrew began to talk, not about the unspoken terror which was hovering around Brenda’s heart, but about inconsequential things, little unimportant things.

Brenda longed to tell him to stop and get down to business. But Andrew was too happily engaged in trying to make her supper a success. Either that, Brenda thought bitterly, or biding his time, shrewdly allowing her suspense to mount and mount.

“You know, Brenda,” he said, setting down his coffee cup and reaching into the glass cigarette container, “I’m a
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funny man, and I know it." He lit her cigarette and held the match up to his own, his blue eyes gleaming. "But in my funny way, I'm in love with you, and you're the only girl I've ever been in love with."

"Did you come here to propose to me, Andrew?"

"In a way, yes," he said, nervously whisking out the light on the match. "You think you don't love me, Brenda, but I can still offer you protection and a life free from worries." He leaned over the table toward her, his eyes on her face. "And Brenda, I guarantee that some day you will grow to love me as much as I love you."

"We've been all over that before, Andy," Brenda sighed.

Andrew stiffened, and his voice, though still persuasive, was edged with a sharpness that always crept in when he became excited.

"I wanted to spare you, Brenda, but if you still refuse to listen to me, then I feel it's my duty, loving you as I do, to warn you against Braddock."

Brenda's gray eyes narrowed as she watched his lean face. Here it is, she thought in panic. It's come at last!

"He's a snake, a cheat, a spy! That's what he is—a spy!"

"You'd better explain that, Andy!"

"I'll explain it, although you'll find out for yourself before the month is out. Before fall the Achendrake chain will have a studio in this city, and your business will be snowed under. Do you know what Braddock is?" Andrew leaned over the table and peered into her face. "He's the advance agent for their chain, and he's been trying out this city to see if it would yield enough to run one of us old-timers out of business so's they could come in!"

Brenda clasped her hands in front of her to keep them from trembling, as Andrew's voice rose.

"If he figures your place has made enough money from that one competition to guarantee a year-round interest, they'll swarm down here all over you. And you know how Achendrake can do it, with their resources. Those Achendrake men like Braddock are damn smart!"

Those Achendrake men, like Braddock! Brenda found herself trembling uncontrollably. She jumped to her feet as a flood of memories rushed in to sting her with their insinuations.

"Are you telling me the truth?" she whispered, through tight lips.

Andrew rose swiftly and in two short steps was at her side. "As sure as I'm standing here, it's the truth," he stated firmly. "You ask him!" Suddenly his voice softened. "Brenda, marry me. Please say that you'll marry me!"

Deathly pale, Brenda refused to listen to the urgency in his voice, shrugged off his outstretched arms. She forced a weak laugh.

"I can't answer you now, tonight, Andrew. I'm awfully tired. But I promise to think over what you've said. And I'll answer you soon. Good night, Andrew!"

Somehow she eased him toward the door, and when it had finally closed behind him, Brenda leaned weakly against it, the whole room swaying dizzyly before her eyes. So that was the score! Grant Braddock, agent for Achendrake, the most powerful chain of photographers in the East.

She raised one arm to cover her eyes, trying vainly to shut out the picture of his rugged face, the quick smile, the huge compactness of his giant body, the queer flecks of brown in his eyes.

It was only too clear! He'd come down here for the express purpose of nosing her out. There wasn't room for more than two photographers in a city of this size, and her studio would be the one to go because it was the newest and smallest, and because a woman was at the helm. Her precious business which she'd slaved to keep alive!

Brenda looked wildly about the room. With a desperate need to stave off the giddiness that was engulfing her, she attacked the cluttered table, carried the
dishes to the kitchen, washed and wiped them in a burst of nervous speed, then returned to empty the ashtrays, clean up the room.

THAT was why he'd asked her not to question him until after the salon business was finished. That was why he had played upon her emotions with his kisses!

A moan escaped her lips. Perhaps Grant had decided that after he'd made her a lot of money, he could confess his duplicity and ask to be forgiven. But more likely he'd meant to skip town after it was all over, and she'd never see him again. The thought gave Brenda's heart a painful wrench.

She mustn't think of him that way! But what about that business trip of his yesterday? And all that about her marrying no one else? Was it all part of a big stall until he could get what he wanted?

It was nearly three o'clock in the morning before Brenda's tortured mind allowed her to drop off into a light slumber. But her last waking thought, and her first waking determination in the morning, was to confront Grant herself. She would never really believe it unless he admitted it himself and she heard it with her own ears.

Somehow she got through the morning routine—bathing, dressing and feeding little Lorraine whose round blue eyes regarded her mother's pale, drawn features with serious curiosity. Finally, when Lorraine had been tucked in for her nap and Tess had arrived, Brenda stood before her mirror and freshened her make-up.

Always a man bringing trouble, she told her weary reflection. Even the most fascinating man in the whole world.

The sunlight was too bright and the people in the streets too gay. As her footsteps neared the studio, Brenda's throat contracted with a nameless dread, and her steps lagged. Finally she turned the knob and entered. He was sitting hunched over the desk, running a finger down the day's appointments. She approached him slowly.

"Grant!"

The sound of her voice brought him swiftly to his feet, towering above her, smiling a greeting. But his smile vanished as his eyes flashed over her face. He took a step toward her, but Brenda held out her hand.

"Grant, I've got to ask you that question—now!"

The familiar shadow played across the giant's strong feature.

"You gave me your word—"

Brenda drew herself up scornfully and flung the question at him, recklessly discarding her earlier promise.

"Grant, did you or did you not work for Achendrake before you came to work for me?"

Grant's brown eyes narrowed and a little muscle twitched at the side of his cheek.

"Snell must have been at you," was his gruff retort.

"Answer me!" Brenda demanded.

"Yes."

The clipped monosyllable sent a sword plunging into Brenda's heart. Her shoulders slumped, as hope slowly drained out of her, but she continued relentlessly:

"Did you come here with the express purpose of swamping out my business to make room for Achendrake, if it proved worthwhile?"

"Yes."

Suddenly Brenda had difficulty in seeing Grant's stony face through the tears which filled her eyes. In an agony of spirit she turned and fled. Through the streets she ran, down toward the waterfront, along it to the beach. There, with the wind whipping her hair around her face and the tears streaming down her cheeks, she faced her own disillusion.

"I should have known," she sobbed.

"I should have known that I couldn't trust him. All men are the same! I was burned once, with Dick, and didn't have sense enough to avoid another, worse fire! Oh, Grant, Grant, how could you
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fail me? Without you, there's no one left I can believe in—no one!”

Brenda drew up short. There was! There was Andrew, patient, devoted Andrew! If she couldn’t have love, ever, she knew the only thing left to her. For without any business and hardly any money, how could she hope to struggle on alone? She whirled around and began to retrace her steps, toward the only possible solution. She'd marry him right away and get it over with. Then she could spend the rest of her life trying to forget.

BACK on Main Street again she moved swiftly along the crowded sidewalk until she reached the Snell Studio, hurried up the long flight of steps. Her hair was windswept, and her breath was choking in her throat. Once up in the dark little reception room she slumped into a chair, fighting to keep the sobs down. After a few minutes, Andrew’s head peaked out from his posing room. He looked hard, blinked, and looked again.

Brenda choked, without rising, “I’ve come, Andrew. I’m here with my answer. You win. I—I accept your proposal.”

If she’d dropped a bombshell in front of him he couldn’t have been more surprised.

“Which one?” He cleared his throat, looked hard at her. “You mean, you’ll marry me?”

Over the terrible wrench in her heart, Brenda answered.

“Yes. Now—today. Any time you want!”

“Wait!” Andrew called excitedly. “I’ll wash up and be right out!”

Brenda covered her face with her hands. So this was the end of her life! This deep aching emptiness, this wretched feeling of sinking, sinking.

She didn’t see the huge shadow which blocked the doorway and moved swiftly across the room to disappear through the further door. And she was only vaguely aware of the funny scuffling sounds which came from that quarter. So she almost fainted when her hands came down from her eyes and she saw Andrew burst into the room, forcefully propelled toward her by a huge fist which was gripping him by the coat collar. There was no mistaking whose fist it was.

Brenda drew back in her chair, shivering, her heart pounding miserably. The powerful hand kept urging Andrew forward by hard little shoves until he stood directly in front of her. Brenda raised her tear-stained eyes mutely, wondering what was coming next, what further terrible ordeal she would have to go through.

“Tell her, Snell, tell her all about it or I’ll break your scrimy neck!” The giant’s voice rumbled and rolled through the room, accompanied by a sudden tightening of Snell's collar which sent the words tumbling from his chattering lips.

“What should I tell her? It was a good piece of business!”

Andrew’s voice quivered with suppressed rage and fright.

Brenda could only stare. “What business?” she managed to whisper.

Grant cut in, “He hasn’t got the nerve to tell you, because he thought he’d get you to marry him first. He sold his business to Achendrake Studios last week! I heard the rumor, and that’s what I went to Boston to check on.”

“He sold his business—” Brenda stopped short, gazing wildly up at Andrew’s cowering face. “And I was going to—”

She caught herself before uttering those impossible words. She turned stormy eyes up to Grant, her whole expression one of miserable perplexity.

“Is this another one of your tricks? I thought it was my business they wanted. I thought you were their agent?”

Grant said drily, “I was, but I left them almost three months ago, the first day I met you. I figured you had too good a thing here to hand it over to
them without a struggle. I figured you and I could beat them at their own game, and come out on top—together."

He stared down at Brenda’s huddled figure while she struggled to fit the broken pieces together into this new fantastic pattern which his words were weaving. Then that was why Andrew had made such a last-minute, cowardly attack to win her, before she discovered his secret, and it would be too late. That was why Grant’s eyes had held anger and hurt when she’d broken her promise to him.

She taunted herself in acute, painful humility. He wanted to show me! He believed in my business—and in me. He trusted me, and I let him down. Now look what I’ve done!

SHE couldn’t stand it any longer. Without daring to look up at him, she crawled from the chair and ran blindly down the stairs into the street again, sobbing, her mind goading her with its own accusations. She didn’t hear the crack of furniture as Grant threw Snell bodily away from him, nor did she hear the sudden rush of feet. But she couldn’t help feeling the two powerful arms which presently gripped her and swung her fast around.

Even if people did stop and stare, Brenda did not know it. She was conscious only of a husky, throbbing voice, repeating the most wonderful words in the world, repeating them over and over:

"You little fool! You darling, precious, crazy little fool!"

Some people grinned, others nodded gently and walked on, smiling as though they shared a secret. Others simply stared, and wondered how a kiss could last so long on Main Street in broad daylight of a busy day.

But Brenda neither saw nor heard, for she was safe at last, pressed hard against her giant’s vibrant body, lips clinging tremulously to his demanding ones, heart soaring to the skies in a new rhapsody of joy.

Brenda really couldn’t be blamed for not paying the slightest attention!

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Learn What Happens When a Determined Redhead Matches Wits and Hearts with a Stubborn Male

in

WITH ALL MY LOVE

A Fascinating Romantic Novelet

By NELLIE W. FINLEY

COMING NEXT ISSUE—PLUS OTHER DELIGHTFUL ROMANCES!
Listen Girls!

A Chat With The Editor

BE IT Hollywood or Squeedunk, girls the world over have the same glamour problems. Movie queens can't afford to have a hair out of place, even for a second, and have to keep on the charm beam all the time. If necessary, they must carry a few beauty replacements in the handbag in anticipation of that awful, unforeseen moment when sheer stockings pop a run or a slight snip demands a dainty handkerchief.

In a word, they belong to the good grooming school that demands a lingerie wash basin dunking at night and the proper hanging of clothes before bedtime. Rich or poor, there are few girls who have the services of some kind fairy to perform these chores at odd hours. Even the well-heeled and glamorous must work at being chic.

Here are some useful tips from Hollywood beauties who are willing to share their beauty habits with you.

Be sure to hang your skirt on a hanger the moment you take it off. If you throw it over a chair hurriedly, it only means you spend time over the ironing board tomorrow. The type of skirt hangers that hold ten or twelve garments save space, too.

Polish your shoes after each wearing, not only for an attractive luster, but to prevent cracks which result from too-dry leather. If you get caught in the rain without rubbers, stuff your shoes with paper until they're dry. It not only helps retain their shape, but absorbs the moisture quickly.

Wash your underthings every day, rinsing out every trace of soap. If the soap isn't washed out carefully, it's likely to eat through the fabric. Never squeeze. Press gently. When drying remember that clothespins aren't old-fashioned, just useful and sensible.

Brush your clothes when you take them off and before you put them in your closet. Be sure to air them overnight.

Empty your coat pockets of coins, matches and handkerchiefs before putting it away. This helps preserve the shape of jackets and coats.

Keep your jewelry in a container meant for the purpose. It will be easy to locate earrings, pins or pearls the next morning if you don't get into the habit of just dropping them anywhere around the house.

If you have a morning appointment—be it job or school—pin-curl your hair the night before. Too much of a delay in the morning if you succumb to the desire to go off to bed without performing your beauty chores. Nails are to be checked for a touch-up, too.

And these suggestions are basic for the glamor low-down!

Table Tips

Don't let that formal dinner phobia get you. Nobody will send you to the salt mines of Siberia if you happen to begin too soon with the wrong spoon. But it is a help to know your table manners are right. Gives you more confidence and makes you less prone to accidents and upsets because of
over-anxious eating. Here are some pointers to ease you into a good beginning for a dinner party:

Arrive on time. If there’s any doubt about when you’re expected, ask.

Boys, assist your hostess and girls to be seated before you sit down at the table.

Sit straight, at a comfortable distance from the table. During eating, you keep elbows off the table. You don’t bend down, you bring the food up to your mouth.

Unfold your napkin, half-way, place it on your lap, after the hostess takes hers. If napkins are beside plates, the one to the left is yours.

Begin to eat as soon as invited or when others start. It’s now the popular custom to begin after two are served. If not sure, wait for your cue from the hostess.

It’s courtesy to take a little bit of everything. Place neatly on the plate, not too close to the rim. Keep the foods apart. Don’t stackpile things that do not belong together.

You may reach—not stretch—for a dish on the table. If it’s not at close range, ask to have it passed to you. Then offer to pass it on.

After you take anything from a serving dish, it’s polite to place it on your plate before you begin to eat it. That applies to rolls and relishes, too.

Remember to use silverware in the order in which placed beside the plate, starting from the outside.

Keep the silver off the table during and after use. The spoon is left in the saucer or dish, never in the cup. Knife and fork are on the plate you pass back for second helpings. When you are through, you place on the plate your knife on top with the blade in; fork below with tines up. To be really right, place it parallel to the table edge.

**Good Eating Habits**

Here are some attractive eating habits that are basic table etiquette:

Break bread or rolls in small pieces, butter one at a time.

Cut meat as you eat it, not all at once.

Touch napkins to lips before you drink from a cup or glass.

Chew with lips closed, and do not talk while eating.

Eat as you want, at normal pace, then wait for others to finish without calling attention to the fact that you are through.

Hostesses do not like guests who “crumb” the table; if your hostess wants to, she will. Crumbs on the floor are no help.

Do not be unkind to napkins. Use them to dab, not scrub the lips! Don’t risk the lipstick mark. There should be no need for the tiny paper napkins some hostesses now tuck into linen napkins (mostly for fun) marked “use me” in lipstick red.

After use, you do not refold your napkin. Nor do you wad it into a big ball and toss it on the table. Crease it down a bit and place it on the left side of your plate.

Finally, here’s the behaviour plan for the restaurant dinner-date:

If silver drops to the floor, don’t pick it up.
Ask for a replacement.

If you spill or break something, call the attention of the waiter—quickly and quietly. Don’t attempt an amateur clean up that only makes more of a mess.

Eat with appetite; take time to enjoy it. That’s what good food is for and it’s the finest compliment you can pay to the cook and your host or hostess, wherever you eat.

**Shall We Dance?**

Now that we’ve dined, shall we dance? By all means—and observe these dance floor don’ts:

Don’t give helpful pointers while dancing. It makes you sound fault-finding.

Don’t chew gum in time to the music—and in your partner’s ear!

Don’t be so serious. Leave your working face at home when you’re out for fun.

If you want to lead a man to the altar—don’t lead him on the dance floor.

When you make a misstep, admit it—don’t blame it on the orchestra.

Don’t keep on dancing just to be polite when neither of you is having fun.

Don’t wave to acquaintances from the dance floor. Flirts are a pain in the neck to masculine pride.

**The Whirling Discs**

Dancing makes us think of music and music makes us think of records.

Anyone who has ever collected phonograph records knows what fun it is to look into the record cabinet and come up with some of the old timers. And what a disappointment it is if
old favorites are cracked, scratched or warped—or so noisy that listening is an ordeal.

Records don’t waste away with age. Given reasonable care, any record—even a collector’s item cut many years ago—will last in-
definitely and lose little of its original clear-
ness and pureness of sound.

If you’d like to keep your records in the same condition as when you bought them, here are some rules to follow.

Examine records carefully before you buy them. Check for scratches, dents, blemishes, signs of warping. Take home only perfect discs.

Make sure the record player is in good working order. As far as the life of your records is concerned, the most important part of every player mechanism is the needle. A dull needle will ruin a record. If the grooves in the record turn dull and gray while it’s being played, get a new needle right away. No needle lasts forever.

Vertical storage is recommended by record makers. Shelves with partitions are best—there’s less chance of records falling on one another or warping. A sturdy table or special rack near the player is a good idea. Platters left lying around are likely to be sat on or stepped on.

Keep them clean! A damp cloth or fine bristled brush, wiped gently over the record, removes most dust. Clean each disc before playing or the needle will grind the dust into the grooves.

After playing, keep them in individual albums or envelopes, away from extreme heat, dust and dampness.

Proper handling of a record means holding it by its edges, or by one edge and center. Keep fingers off the grooves. Fingerprints on the playing surface of a record leave minute gummy deposits in the grooves which add noise and attract dust.

Catalogue your records—knowing where to find them is really convenient and saves the wear and tear of handling.

Mind these hints and you’ll keep platter-happy!

Hints for Spring Brides

Every girl wishes for a fairy godmother to make her exquisitely beautiful on her wedding day, but she needs none. Her own happiness wields the magic wands.

The little incidental requirements can be taken care of when she chooses her wedding costume. The dream dress materializes when she combines individual suitability, fashion sense and the required bow to tradition.

If it’s going to be a big wedding, tradition calls for a satin, lace or tulle gown, complete with train and yards and yards of illusion veiling.

But whether it trails or billows, is low or high of neck, or long or short of sleeves, is no longer tradition’s decision. Dame fashion now dictates what these shall be—and right now she’s smiling on all of them! Let personal flattery govern what you choose—but be very conscious of the fact that white is many-toned. Choose your shade of white most carefully.

If you’re the proud possessor of a creamy skin, you can wear a white with a creamy tone; if you’re very fair, be sure the white has an oyster or blue cast.

For the semi-formal wedding in a church, garden or home, your fancy can take higher flight. Consider the possibilities of nylon tulle, organdy or any starchy sheer made with a bouffant, waltz-length skirt and a snug shoulder hug that when removed reveals a dance dress for the after-wedding gala.

Even some formal wedding gowns are convertible—a practical feature worth considering.

You can make an informal gown more romantic if you wear a brief veil, a little cap or a circlet of flowers. Carry a perky bouquet rather than an elaborate one with this type of costume.

For a quiet, informal ceremony, a daytime dress or suit can be drama-packed if the bride chooses an important fabric, such as faille or taffeta, and gives flowers and accessories full rein.

Enchanting brides follow the rule of all
charmers—let your costume express your loveliest self!

Wedding Day Cosmetics

Days before the wedding, select and practice using the cosmetics you will wear. Choose a foundation that suits your skin—dry, normal or oily. A light touch with the rouge—this is no day for a too-healthy look! Wear a light shade of perfectly applied lipstick, the slightest flick of mascara and well-brushed eyebrows, pencilled conservatively, if necessary.

Don't make the mistake of walking down the aisle with stiff, unnaturally-set looking hair! To avoid this sad fate, have the hair job done at least two or three days before the big moment arrives. Before you make your public appearance, use a brush for final grooming, lacquer for stray wisps and pomade for highlights.

It may be hard to do—but try to look as relaxed as possible. Think of happy things to avoid freezing up.

And now—on stage!

Her First Party

The bride entertains with her very first cocktail party! And her guests will be people who appreciate good drinks and good food.

To begin with, not even those devoted to drinking like a soggy canape, or big bowls of mixed goo into which the guest is supposed to dip frail potato chips and thereby obtain some measure of nourishment. One rule above all for cocktail party food: it should be easy to eat. There should be nothing drippy, and nothing difficult to dispose of such as large olive pits. Most men wind up by swallowing the olive pits or carrying them home in their pockets.

Number one on the canape list, believe it or not, is cheese and crackers. Provide different kinds of both with spreaders for the soft cheese, and the harder cheese cut into cracker size beforehand.

Only in restaurants do they try to offer a couple of dozen different kinds of canapes. So unless you want your guests to think you're showing off, confine yourself to a few—but see that they're good. If you're serving a hot one, for instance, see that it's kept hot. This can be done with a couple of chafing dishes.

There's no telling what gals will go for in the way of a canape, but here's the kind that men like:

Mash together in proportions to suit your taste, sardines, mayonnaise, horseradish, Worcestershire sauce, grated onion. Mix it well together and leave plenty of crackers handy.

A cheese spread that's exceptionally good is made by creaming four ounces of Roquefort with a tablespoon of mayonnaise until it is smooth. Add a couple of packages of cream cheese and the same amount of cottage cheese and cream that in. Then two tablespoons of Worcestershire, a teaspoon of vinegar, a crushed half clove of garlic, a teaspoon of lemon juice and a tablespoon of chopped chives. Mix it well.

Finally, here's a surprise. Combine a tin of minced chicken with four tablespoons of butter. Add a tablespoon of dry sherry and put it in a small earthenware crock. Cover it with coarsely chopped salted almonds. Provide crackers and butter spreaders and you'll have everyone asking questions.

On Your Toes!

While you're on your feet (and that's where you will be at a cocktail party)—let's talk about them.

As a new bride, your trousseau included shoes for all occasions—afternoon parties, the merry evenings, dancing, shopping. Good enough—have fun.

But if you're going to be a hearth-and-home body, do buy the right kind of shoes for tramping the domestic tread-mill. Considering how many hours you're going to spend going through the daily routine, it's important that your feet be properly housed.

Toss out the idea of wearing floppy, spaniel-eared slippers—or doing your house work in an old pair of high-heeled pumps that aren't fit for street wear. Give your feet a break. They haven't done anything to deserve such treatment.

When feet hurt, you hurt all over—and they will hurt without proper support. They are responsible for gouches that may lead to that awful first quarrel.

Get some sensible shoes. Time was when the sensible shoe could be spotted a mile away and the very idea conjured up gruesome visions— but thank goodness for different days, different ways and different shoes.
Utilizing new materials and new ideas, shoe designers have come up with a sparkling array of footwear with elegant lines that match the down-to-earth comfort.

The best shoe for housework is also the best shoe for a hike—an oxford-type model with good arch and ankle support, snug at the heel, with a flexible leather sole to give freedom of action and firm protection. Such a shoe, without cramping the foot, will hold it secure against the hazards of the domestic job. Make sure that it fits perfectly, with enough room to wiggle your toes, and giving support for the arch. Then you’re all set. High heels won’t do any harm if you wear them for festive occasions—but they just weren’t intended for housework.

Put your mind on the matter and it may be the means of your finding more enjoyment out of life, being as attractive and charming at the end of the day when The Man comes home, as on the day he first saw and loved you.

Your Beauty Routine

Few of us are born beautiful—but smart little chicks that we are, many of us have achieved beauty by careful study of our good and bad points.

Most everyone has some sort of routine to make themselves neater, more attractive. But is yours complete enough? Does it really help you to look prettier? Is it head-to-toe, or is it just from the chin up?

Check these points as a guide, and then cut a path to new beauty:

For the skin you love to touch—the golden rule is to clean with cleansing cream, stimulate with lotion, enrich with night cream— all three every day.

Check ears, neck, shoulders.
Rough elbows, ankles, heels will be baby-smooth with regular creaming.

Keep arms and legs fuzz-free.

For a body beautiful—remember good health is basic to beauty. Have regular check-ups, and follow sensible health measures.

Drink plenty of water—about 8 glasses a day—for a clear skin.

Be a sleeping beauty. A full quota of shut-eye at night will make you a wideawake beauty by day.

Make perfect posture an important project. Invest in bathroom scales. If you gain or lose, you can correct it early and more easily.

Daily exercise will keep you graceful.
Banish a double chin by throwing the head way back and then opening and closing the mouth. Do this whenever you have a moment alone.

Exercise your hands by shaking them loose, pretending to play the piano.

Makeup—change powder puffs the minute they are dingy or soiled.

Use a lipstick brush to change the line of your mouth or accent its beauty.

Vary your foundation, powder, rouge to match your changing skin tones from season to season. Experiment with eye shadow, pencil, mascara to widen or narrow eyes and bring out their hidden beauty.

Hair—brush daily, faithfully, to make your hair shining and healthy. Don’t be a shampoo-skipper. Wash weekly for best results. Experiment with a new haircut or hairdo. It’s good for you!

Toes and Fingers—manicure regularly— both toes and finger nails. Coddle your hands with cream to keep them soft and lovely.

Your feet and toenails show off in the new sandals, so keep them soft with lotions, and pedicured. It’s a protection for sheer stockings, too.

Be lovely from head to toe!

Follow a Girl Reporter’s Romance in LADY OF THE PRESS, by Frances Youlin McHugh, in Spring POPULAR LOVE—now on sale at all newsstands, 25c per copy!
Roomers Are Flying

By TEDDY KELLER

Shirley only wanted what was best for Malcolm... herself!

SIRLEY SWEENEY opened the door of her apartment and peered out. Beyond the door across the hall nothing stirred. Not a step sounded from the stairs. Clamping her wide lips, shrugging, she closed the door. Six o'clock. He hadn't been this late before.

Puttering aimlessly, she strolled toward the kitchenette. She had to jar him awake today. She just had to. This was Friday and an unplanned, available
weekend lay ahead.
For a month now she had pined for Malcolm Parks. She contrived to bump into him, she invited him in for cokes or coffee, she left her door ajar to waft odors of her cooking across to him at his can opener meals. Yet the big, brown eyes, blinking behind thick lenses, never lost their dazed glaze to regard her with more than neighborly interest. There was the work he brought home from the office or the special assignment the next day or Marla. Always there was Marla.

A stair creaked. Shirley stiffened, panicky. Then she flew to the midget bedroom. Feverishly, she yanked a comb through the hair that a lovesick high school swain had told her was the color of ripened wheat under a summer sun. Which statement was neither original nor true. Mousie, the catty girls had called her. She was dabbing lipstick when another stair creaked.

She straightened, listening. Usually he came bounding up the stairs like a girl whose little brother had a snake in his pocket. But now his step seemed stealthy. Or was it doddering? Or unsteady? Maybe he had been hurt. Or drunk.

Tossing down the lipstick, she ran to the door. She held her breath and waited. She heard the creak of the lower stairs, then the deeper, tired groan of the landing. Now he was passing the telephone. The upper stairs screeched their sharper sound. She counted. One ... two ... three ... four ... five. She let the breath out, smiled broadly and heaved the door open.

With a foot on the top step, Malcolm froze. His mouth sagged open. Shirley felt herself transfixed, her own mouth flapping. The dog in Malcolm’s arms grinned lazily. Its tail swished tentatively, then drummed the bannister like a metronome. When Shirley didn’t move, the tail slowed to a weary twitch. The dog sighed, closed its eyes and rested its chin on Malcolm’s shoulder.

“But—but,” Shirley stammered, trying to break the painful silence. “Mrs. Blosster’ll have a hissy.”

Color gushed into Malcolm’s clean, boyish face. He moved awkwardly up the last step and set the dog down. Shirley fought down a wild desire to leap to the dog’s back, yell, “Hi-yo, Fleabait,” and go galloping downstairs after Mrs. Blosster’s scalp. The dog was that big. His hair—Shirley had discovered by now that it was a he—was brown and unruly like Malcolm’s. His eyes and Malcolm’s could have come from the same, mournful mold. Unlike Malcolm, the dog boasted a tail that must have been a family heirloom, each generation adding to it before passing it on to the grandpups. In length and shagginess it certainly had never been surpassed.

“Uh, this is Horatio,” Malcolm fumbled.

“I should have known,” Shirley said, stepping into the hall. “He’s dragging his bridge behind him.”

MALCOLM dredged up a nervous chuckle “He ... uh ... he belongs to my boss, Mr. McFarland.”

Shirley smiled a tight smile, not knowing what to say. She didn’t say anything. Horatio sighed again. Wearily he swiveled his big head in the direction of his back end, turned around and flopped. The building trembled.

“I’m due for a promotion,” Malcolm said, propping his long, skinny frame against the wall. “Mr. McFarland says that no man is fit who doesn’t like dogs and who ... whom dogs don’t love. And he says that no unfit men will rise far in his firm.”

Shirley smiled and nodded in understanding, not understanding a thing he was talking about.

“Well, this is my test,” Malcolm said. “If Horatio spends a happy weekend with me, I get promoted.” He paused, then added, “Besides, the last time the McFarlands went out of town they left Horatio at a kennel. He caught fleas and nervous hysterics.”

“Him?” Shirley asked, pointing to the small horse at her feet. Horatio’s
catcher's-mit paws twitched as he lumbered through dreamland after lead-footed rabbits. Shirley jerked her head toward the stairs. "What about old no-pets Blosster? She'll boil you in oil."

Malcolm shook his head. "Horatio'll be quiet as a mouse. She won't even know he's here."

"Well," Shirley said, squatting to scratch the dog's elephant-size ear, "if Mrs. Blosster doesn't find out and if you get promoted, it'll work out fine."

"Fine?" Malcolm echoed dismally. "It's awful. I had invited Marla over for dinner this evening. She can't stand animals."

Shirley felt a new warmth of kinship for Horatio. But Malcolm moaned, "It was a real special occasion. I was going to give her a ring. Nothing to do but call it off, I guess. I'll have to take her out some place and leave Horatio here."

The elation that had risen in Shirley now plunged to oblivion. She stood, mumbled, "Have fun," and shuffled into her apartment. She flung herself onto the divan, ignoring the springs that jabbed her tummy.

Oh, cuss, she thought. A ring. It wasn't fair. He was hooked before she had a chance at him. And how he was hooked! Shirley had never met Marla in person, but she had no doubt that she hated the woman. She loathed the sticky-sweet voice that gushed from the pay phone on the landing to summon Malcolm. Nobody on the second floor ever got a phone call. Shirley never got a phone call. Long ago they all had given up answering the incessant rings. Always it was for Malcolm. And always he groveled. "Yes, Marla." "No, Marla." "Of course I'm not angry, Marla." "I got your things from the cleaners, Marla." "I should stay home and work, but if you're lonesome I'll be right over, Marla."

They had never met. But Shirley knew that Marla was a possessive, demanding, selfish, jealous woman who didn't deserve a nice guy like Malcolm. Probably she mothered him, and taught him that birds and bees were nasty, and was always so tired at the end of a day. Well, the goof deserved it. Shirley had tried. If he was so darn blind he couldn't see anyone but Marla, that was tough.

ANGER eased the gnawing of hurt and loneliness. Shirley relaxed against the lumpy cushions. She tried to think of some enjoyable, productive way to spend her week-end. She clamped her eyes shut and dozed, barely aware of the sounds of Malcolm's leaving. Five minutes later the roof blew off.

The sound yanked her off the divan and slammed her against the door, ready to run for the nearest air raid shelter. Then she recognized the racket. Horatio was unhappy. His bark was as delicate as the firing of a cannon in a small cave. His howl was the lament of a thousand lost souls. Between barks and howls he pawed the door. His claws dug and scraped from ceiling to floor.

Big feet pounded the stairs. Shirley eased the door ajar and peeked out. Mrs. Blosster advanced on Malcolm's door like a truant officer who has just found the swimmin' hole. A squatty, excited woman, she hammered thick fists against the door.

"No pets," she shrilled. "Ever'body in the house knows it's against the rules." She drummed the door. "Open up and get that dog outta there."

Horatio answered with a moan that bespoke infinite heartbreak.

"Open this door," Mrs. Blosster screeched. "Okay. Then I'm gonna git my pass key and I'm gonna throw you and that dog and ever'thing you own into the street."

Peevishly she kicked at the door, then whirled and stalked downstairs. Shirley hesitated in thought. A red exit light glowed at the end of the hall. Outside the door the landing of the fire escape extended beneath Malcolm's kitchen window. If the window was unlocked, she might get Horatio out of the apartment before Mrs. Blosster got in. It was worth a try. Certainly even blind Mal-
Thrilling Love

colm couldn't overlook a good deed like that. He'd have to notice her. And if he actually took a good look at her he just possibly might decide that. . .

Stairs creaked below. Shirley muttered an un ladylike curse. She had spent too much time congratulating herself. In a moment Mrs. Bloster's square shape would come heaving into view. It was too late to try for the exit door.

Then she remembered her own kitchen window. She raced through the tiny apartment and flung the window up. On her side the fire escape landing didn't reach the window. But it came close. She tugged up her skirt and clambered, crouching, onto the sill, banging an ankle against a cabinet. A run skittered the length of one nylon stocking.

Bracing, she groped for the pipe railing of the fire escape. As she caught hold, she glanced down into the black well of the alley. She froze, tottering on the brink of a bottomless abyss. Horatio raised his voice in mournful lament. Shirley shut her eyes and gritted her teeth. She had to go on.

White unmentionables flashed as she kicked away from the sill and swung sleek legs over the railing. Wobbly knees carried her on to Malcolm's window. She shoved up on the window. It raised without a sound. As she crawled through she heard the rattle of Mrs. Bloster's keys outside.

Darting into the living room, Shirley spotted a radio. She twirled a knob, whispered to Horatio and sped back to the open window. A key slid into the lock. Horatio turned to regard the sound curiously. Shirley called softly to him and climbed to the fire escape. Finally the dog ambled to her. The door lock clicked. Horatio stuck his head out the window and slurped Shirley's face. The front door opened. Shirley squeezed her shoulders in the window, seized Horatio's tail and pulled. He grunted and plunged on through the opening.

She coaxed him to the far end of the fire escape, then crept back near the window. The radio had warmed. A roar of gunfire blasted through the apartment. A taut voice, crackling like the breakfast cereal it plugged, barked, "And so ends another adventure of Ken Kelly of the Klondike and his faithful dog Snowboy. Next week, Ken Kelly meets a killer in another exciting. . . ."

"Stupid roomers," Mrs. Bloster muttered, shutting off the racket. "That boy must be deaf."

Shirley risked a peek inside. Mrs. Bloster waddled about the living room, pausing from time to time to cast a suspicious glance at the radio. Plainly she wasn't convinced—either way.

Finally, though, she left. Shirley heaved a sigh and snapped her fingers. Horatio ambled to her. She pointed his head through the window and pushed. When all of him was inside, she closed the window and went to her end of the landing. Now the distance from window to fire escape loomed large. Now she would have to grab for a smooth sill instead of the pipe and grillwork of the landing. The alley was very dark and very deep.

But there were doors, Shirley remembered. She got Malcolm's window open again, crawled through and hurried to his door. Home lay just across the hall. She pushed Horatio back and opened the door cautiously. Mrs. Bloster's voice drifted up the stairwell. Shirley slipped across the hall and turned the knob. The door was locked. And her purse, with keys, was inside.

She turned around. Inside Malcolm's apartment, Horatio turned too. His great tail slapped the door. It swung. Shirley cried out and lunged against it, banging it back. Once again she let out a long sigh of relief. Then she shrugged, went in and closed the door behind her. Without help, a return via the fire escape was out of the question. And she wasn't going to be silly enough to spend a cool evening out there, either. She had hauled Malcolm's goose out of the oven. Certainly he wouldn't begrudge
ROOMERS ARE FLYING

her the use of his rooms. Besides, then he'd have to find out what a good deed she'd done.

The apartment, Shirley was surprised to notice, was every bit as neat as hers. A big chair stood in a cozy corner near bookshelves and a record player. She plopped into it, ignoring the stabbing springs. Horatio licked the run in her stocking and stretched at her feet. She stacked records on the player. She turned the music low, took up an armload of magazines and leafed through them, waiting. When she heard creaking stairs, she tucked her legs under her and smoothed out the wrinkles in her skirt. She pretended not to hear the key in the lock or to notice the opening of the door.


His face paled. He leaned heavily against the door. Then suddenly he leaped away, closed it and peered down at her.

"Oh, forgive me," she said airily. Then she explained briefly her presence. When she was finished, Malcolm groaned with relief and tried to grin.

"I... I'm sorry," he stammered. "I kinda misunderstood when I first saw you here. But I'm much obliged to you for taking care of Horatio."

She put the magazines aside. "That's all right. You can return the favor by helping me get back to my apartment."

"Well, gosh," he said, color rushing into his face. "I'd like to, but..." He broke off and hurried to the bedroom. He patted the side pocket of his sport coat as he came back out. "Marla's waiting down in the car." He chuckled self-consciously. "I forgot the ring. Maybe you could make yourself comfortable till I get back."

Shirley scrambled up from the chair, letting her legs show, pleased that he noticed. She crossed to him. "That's sweet of you. I don't mind at all." She put her hands on his shoulders and bent him down. She kissed him hard on the mouth. He was so surprised, he didn't notice his pocket being picked. "Horatio and I will get along fine," she said. He wheeled and fled.

PLEASED with herself, Shirley stood a moment remembering the smudge of lipstick she'd planted on his face. Then she remembered Marla down in the car. She wondered what her competition was like. She turned down the lamp and hurried to the window. Drawing the shade aside, she peered down to the street. Malcolm climbed into his car and sped away. Shirley smiled and waited. A half hour later she heard him on the stairs. She put the ring box under Horatio's blanket.

"Marla was furious," Malcolm said, closing the door behind him. "When you... uh... kissed me you got lipstick all over me."

"Oh, I'm sorry," Shirley lied. "That wasn't all." He motioned to her and moved toward the kitchen. "I still didn't get out of here with the ring. But what really made her mad—she swore she saw a girl peeking out the window."

"No," Shirley murmured sympathetically.

"I tried to tell her it was Horatio, but she wouldn't believe me." He crawled through the window and poked his head back inside. "Then I had to tell her about Horatio and she got a headache. She's allergic to animals. She could smell the dog hair on my clothes."

"How awful."

"She thinks she'll feel okay by tomorrow night, though. I guess we'll get things patched up."

Through tense lips Shirley said, "That'll be nice."

"Yeah. Now I'll climb through your window and let you in the door. You wait there. Just be sure Horatio doesn't get out."

A minute later her door opened and Malcolm came out. "Thanks again," he
said grinning. "I guess you really saved my neck."

"I'm not sure it was worth it," she mumbled, shoving past him.

Saturday morning Shirley awoke feeling grand. Then she remembered Marla and felt miserable. Darn woman. But if Shirley had pined for Malcolm before, now she was on the verge of weeping for him. Last night it had seemed like home in his apartment. She belonged there. Sheer malice had prompted her to kiss him and the results had been what she hoped for. But the memory of the kiss, even though he didn't help, lingered on her lips. What could she do?

He had a ring. Come pickpockets, barking dogs or high water, he was determined to plant that diamond on a greedy finger. He had taken some notice of her. How could he help it? Those brown eyes even widened a bit when she flashed her legs. But what had come of it? Tonight she might not have the chance to pilfer the ring. Then they'd be engaged. With a ring to seal the bargain, a possessive babe like Marla wouldn't give up this side of a breach of promise suit.

Shirley prodded herself out of bed finally. There was breakfast to get and dishes to wash. Blouses waited to be ironed. A batch of underthings needed washing.

This was the day to chase the dust mop around the place and shake the rugs from the fire escape.

Pursuing these tasks, Shirley found no heart in her work. That poor, shattered heart, it seemed, she had left in Malcolm's apartment last night. All morning she half listened for his knock at her door. She spent the afternoon probing for an excuse to call on him. A hundred times she heard his door open and close and thought he was coming. But he never came. She began to burn with curiosity. He couldn't be moving. She never heard him on the stairs. He seemed to be occupied with just going in and out his door.

Finally the afternoon had dragged past. Shirley busied herself with preparations for supper and the idea hit her. What better excuse to call on Malcolm than a plate of scraps for Horatio? She was searching the dim corners of the refrigerator when firm knuckles rattled the door.

She sprang up. He had come after all. She was suddenly conscious of how she must look in faded jeans, battered mocassins and a shirt with no elbows. But there was no time now to spruce up. She ran to the door and pulled it open.

"Hi," Malcolm said, grinning. He looked handsome in his best suit. Something tugged at Shirley's heart and she felt empty inside. He reached toward her and opened his hand. The ring box lay on his palm.

Swallowing her hurt, she asked, "Where'd you find it?"

"Under Horatio's blanket. I don't know how, but he must have got hold of it. He was careful, though. No teeth marks on it."

"You're lucky."

"Yeah."

Shirley shifted uncomfortably from one foot to the other, wanting to say many things, able to say nothing. Finally she muttered, "Looks like you're going somewhere."

He laughed and tossed the ring box from hand to hand before her tortured eyes. "Tonight we patch it up," he said.

"Oh."

"And Horatio won't cause a bit of trouble this time. All day I've been practicing with him. I'd pet him and talk to him and get him all calm, then I'd go out and lock him in. He didn't even whine. Tonight I can go out with no misgivings."

Shirley wanted to say, "You'll be misgiving that ring if you give it to Marla." But instead a sudden thought struck her and she asked, "Horatio hasn't been cooped up all day, has he? I mean, a dog needs to go out and... well, he—you know. Nature."

"Oh, sure," Malcolm said, chuckling.
"I took him out the window and down the fire escape this morning before dawn. Mrs. Blosster's still in the dark."

This time Shirley suppressed the urge to tell Malcolm that Mrs. Blosster wasn't the only one in the dark. But she could think of nothing else to say. She stood and waited.

"Well," Malcolm said at last, "gotta be going. Thanks again for what you did last night."

"Sure," she spat, watching him out of sight down the stairs. When she no longer heard him, she stomped into her apartment and slammed the door. Darn... no, damn that conniving woman, she thought. And Malcolm, too, for being such a blockhead.

Muttering under her breath, Shirley stormed into the bathroom. She gave the tub faucets a vicious twist. Steam fogged up. Seizing a handful of her shirtfront, she ripped the shirt off, balled it, and flung it through the door into the living room. Her mocassins followed. Then her jeans and her unmentionables sailed out of the bathroom. Stalking to the tub she stabbed a toe into the water. It was hot. And the tub was filling rapidly. Good, she thought. Maybe she'd scald to death. Or maybe she'd drown.

Climbing into the tub, she settled into the steaming water. She was almost disappointed that she hadn't at least slipped on a bar of soap. She knew she'd never have the courage to hold her head under for long. Water just didn't breathe easily.

The steam soothed her, the heat relaxed her. Anyhow, she reflected, all the pleasures of life hadn't forsaken her. For a time she splashed absentley. Finally she leaned back, scooting down till the water reached her chin. She shut Malcolm out of her mind and heaved an exaggerated sigh. Then, once again, the roof blew off.

Horatio was in good voice tonight, she observed languidly. Now he sounded like a dozen cannons in that small cave. And demons with fiery pitchforks chased the lost souls who found voice through his jowls. It was a pity, she thought as she heard Mrs. Blosster's thudding footsteps, that dear Marla wasn't here to defend her man. It wouldn't be long before Malcolm's possessions cluttered the sidewalk. Old nopes Blosster might even heave stuff out the window. That'd be rough on those records. But that's what Malcolm deserved for not using better taste in women. If he had stayed home with Horatio...

Horatio! Shirley bolted up in the tub, sloshing water onto the floor. If old Blosster got in there, she might kill the dog. Maybe Malcolm merited no mercy, but Horatio had done nothing any red-blooded dog wouldn't have done. He certainly didn't deserve to meet the npet fiend.

The time was for action, not debate. Shirley shot out of the tub, snatched her old chenille robe from the back of the door and darted to the kitchen. This trip she was a veteran. Without hesitation, she clambered through the window and swung over the fire escape railing, her robe billowing about her wet, bare body. Through Malcolm's window she darted once again. She snapped on the radio, tugged at Horatio's collar and got the two of them out the window just as Mrs. Blosster steamed into the apartment.

Once more luck was with Shirley. The blaring radio came on with a Saturday night barn dance complete with mooing cows and braying jackasses. Again Mrs. Blosster shut off the racket, muttering about stupid roomers. But she tarried long, and finally, waddled out. Shirley and Horatio moved off their chilly perch.

Inside she realized that once again she was locked out of her apartment. And this time she was cold and wet. But Malcolm certainly owed her a return favor. She went into his bathroom, slipped out of the robe and towed the ice water from her bluish skin. Horatio sat in the doorway watching the opera-
tion with an appreciative eye.

Respectably robed, Shirley made another discovery. She was hungry. She had started supper a long time ago. Well, Malcolm might find returning her favors an expensive luxury. She went to the kitchen and spent the next ten minutes transporting the contents of the refrigerator to the coffee table. Again she loaded the record player. Again she took down an armload of magazines. Listening, eating, her blue body warmed and she relaxed and relaxed and relaxed.

The scream sounded from beyond a dark veil of sleep. Shirley shook her head and feebly rolled away from the noise. The scream came again, shrill and piercing. It knifed through the sleep veil, bringing consciousness with shattering suddenness. She sat up staring, momentarily stunned.

"So!"

SHIRLEY'S head jerked around. Malcolm stood in the doorway, his face ashen, his eyes dazed. Marla—it could have been no other—was beside him. Anger flared in her close spaced eyes and tightened the lines of her pouting mouth. Her perfectly shaped body was rigid in horror. She stepped forward stiffly, spike heels stabbing the worn carpet. For a moment she glared at Shirley. Then, clasping gloved hands, she recoiled as from a leper.

"So this is your dog," Marla shrilled.

"No," Malcolm said, pointing to Horatio at Shirley's feet. "There he is."

"I can see the monster," Marla snorted, peering down her nose. She drew herself up haughtily and added, "But I can see that creature too, you Casanova."

"But Marla..."

"At least," Marla said, "have the decency to ask that... that person to cover herself."

Shirley shuddered, almost afraid to look down. She was suddenly aware of drafts across parts of her body that shouldn't be exposed. She tore her flabbygasted gaze from Marla and inspected. The blush began at her toes and swept up. Most of it was visible. In her sleep she had, apparently, squirmed considerably. One sleek leg was exposed from toe almost to hip. The robe's belt had loosened. A shoulder and a wide, deep V of bare bosom glimmered nakedly. Squealing, she clutched the robe tightly about her.

"I knew it was a girl I saw at the window," Marla purred, baring her claws. "I knew you were lying when you said it was a dog."

Malcolm closed the door and blubbered, "But Marla..."

"You didn't want to show me, did you? But I insisted. And this is what I found."

Black eyebrows went up, eyes widened, she spat the words, "A kept woman."

"Marla!" Malcolm snapped.

Shirley hunched forward in her chair. "Wait a minute, girlie," she warned. "I'd hate to have to take you apart."

"You're being unfair," Malcolm said.

"Shirley was only doing me a favor and..."

Marla exhaled loudly. "That is obvious. Apparently she is quite accustomed to doing... uh... favors for you."

"Now look here," Shirley growled, bristling.

Malcolm indicated the dog. "She was here to look after Horatio."

"Horatio!" Marla fumed.

At sound of his name Horatio heaved himself to his feet. Weary curiosity moved him to Marla. He sniffed her feet tentatively. His tail flicked once. With a grunt he reared up on his hind legs. Huge forepaws slapped down on Marla's shoulders. His spatula tongue caressed her face from pointed chin to black hair, washing makeup from the plains, piling it in the crevices. Marla cried out in terror and lurched back. A spike heel caught in the rug. He sprawled all over her as she went down.

"Help!" Marla screamed.
Shirley leaped up clapping her hands. "Yea, team," she yelled. "Hold that line."

"Horatio," Malcolm said half-heartedly. "Come here."


"Six 'em, team," Shirley cheered.

"Malcolm," Marla wailed, "help me."

"Horatio," Malcom said sternly.

HORATIO swiveled his big head to Malcolm and grinned. His tail twitched and he turned away from Marla, planting an elephant foot across her mouth. He ambled to Malcolm.

"Oh, that beast," Marla cried, staggering to her feet. She pawed white gloves at her salivated face. "That monster. That... that monstrosity. That overgrown son-of-a..."

"Marla!" Malcolm snapped.

She spun on him, swinging an open palm that missed. Her dress was awry, her upswept hair swept down. Her face resembled an artist's palette. "Shut up," she yowled, "you philanderer."

"Nice words," Shirley said, "from a fallen woman."

"Oh," Marla roared in unspeakable wrath and humiliation. "You... you libertine."

Malcolm took a quick step to her, seized her shoulders and shook her till the black hair tumbled about her face. "Marla," he growled, "shut your big mouth."

"Oh," she muttered, shocked.

"You may go," Malcolm told her. "You may point your snoot out the door and follow it as far away from here as you can get."

Anger drained out of Marla's face. Her body sagged and tears brimmed her eyes. She reached for Malcolm's arm.

Closing on him, she murmured, "Malcolm, baby."

"Don't Malcolm-baby me," he rasped, wrenching free of her. He sprang to the door and jerked it open. "Now, Marla, baby," he said sweetly, then his voice mounted with terrible fury. "Get the hell out of here!"

"Oh!" Marla screamed, backing from the rage that flashed across his face. Suddenly she cried out in pure fear, whirled and dashed to the stairs. Her heels clattered down with machine-gun speed. Malcolm slammed the door hard.

"Should I apologize?" Shirley asked meekly.

"No!" he roared. Then he grinned and turned to her. He said, "No, you shouldn't apologize. I should thank you."

Hope quickened Shirley's heartbeat. "Oh?" she prompted.

Malcolm crossed behind her and eased into the chair she had occupied. He held out his arms. She came into his lap, fitting there, belonging there. Horatio flopped at their feet and the building trembled. He slurped Shirley's ankles.

"You remember what Mr. McFarland said," Malcolm asked, "about dogs and men? The same thing holds for dogs and women, too. We'll have to have us a dog as soon as we can."

"We?" she echoed, glowing. "Us?"

Malcolm grinned and dug into a pocket to produce the ring box. "Do you mind hand-me-downs?" When she shook her head, he said, "Of course we'll have to get better acquainted. We've got to see a lot of each other from now on."

Shirley colored and pecked him on the cheek. "We've already started," she said. "You saw a lot of me when you came in."

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DARK DREAM

a novelet by

AGNES NAFZIGER

BARBARA Barclay had the doctor’s reception room in apple-pie order. In a flat pink bowl she was arranging a bouquet of anemones—the little blue flowers that so bravely stick their pretty heads right through the spring snow on the mountainside—when the door opened. She turned quickly. A patient already?

In the doorway stood framed what to any eyes but Barbara’s would have been an enchanting vision. The sun brought out the reddish-gold highlights in the hair of the girl who stood there, and gave her slim figure a bright aura. She stepped inside with the smooth grace of a professional model.

“Good morning, Barbee.” She spoke in her studio voice—every syllable clear and distinct, despite the slight attractive huskiness. “Is Young Doc in?”

Barbee smiled, knowing it was a poor smile. Always, when she saw Devon Hunt—Olga Jones she’d been in premodeling days—her throat constricted and cold fingers tightened her heart. Devon was so lusciously beautiful, and not in an ordinary way. There was distinction in her cameo face with her unusual emerald-green eyes, in the high cheek-bones and full, arrogant lips.

“Young Doc was out all night,” said Barbee, trying to keep her voice level and impersonal. “Mrs. Sykes, up on Two-mile Ranch, had a bad night. He’s
Barbara loved her mining town home, but the menace that hung over
her heart blighted the sunlight and stilled the song of birds. . . .
THRILLING LOVE

grabbing a little sleep on the cot in his office. Could I make an appointment later for you?"

An appointment for Devon—that was a laugh. She didn't need one. Dr. Torrington Gray was available at any and all times for Devon Hunt.

Devon whipped out a cigarette and lighter.

"That man!" She lifted winged brows in exasperation. "Wearing himself out in this rat-hole, chasing up and down mountains all night long! And for what? I'm surprised he collects enough to pay you."

Devon's slanted long eyes swept Barbee from head to foot as though to say, "Not that you're worth much."

Barbee felt the blood rush to her cheeks. She knew she didn't make a very glamorous picture in her plain white uniform and flat-heeled shoes. But she thought, If I'd had a big-paying job as a model all winter, I could wear gorgeous clothes too. I could have my hair cut the latest style, and douse myself with expensive perfume. Maybe I wouldn't be as beautiful as you, Devon Hunt, but I wouldn't be too bad. Not bad at all.

DEVON smiled luminously. "He's beginning to see things my way, though," she murmured. "Why, a doctor with his personality can make a fortune in the city. I've bet him that in three months he'll have such a huge practice he'll have to turn away patients. Wearing himself out in this hick place is a wicked waste."

"His grandfather and his father were doctors here." Barbee's pansy-dark eyes glinted. "His father's last fear, before he died, was that Tor would leave his people without a doctor. Tor has accepted it as a sort of sacred trust." Barbee's voice faltered. She felt a little stupid talking about sacred trusts to Devon Hunt.

Devon crushed out her cigarette on the clean floor. "Oh, phoo! Let some sawbones without Tor's ability take over here. There are plenty doctors starting out who'd be thrilled at the chance. But to kill off someone like Tor—"

Barbee's eyes scanned the appointment pad for the day. Elderly pensioners. That poor Mrs. Angeline Smith, expecting her ninth child; orphaned Pete Lunn, in the last stages of tuberculosis, and with no money to pay a doctor; crabby Luke Pascoe, wild-eyed prospector who put every nickel he got into some worthless hole in the ground looking for gold, but never a penny for Tor; Mike Corey, doddering alcoholic.

Maybe Tor was wasting his talents. Barbee's heart pounded slow and hard with the fear that had hounded her ever since Devon Hunt had come back to Tinforks after her year in New York. Until then Barbee Barclay had been happy as Young Doc's office nurse, never minding the long hours, often coming back late at night to have hot coffee ready for him when he returned from a trip up canyon or to some far-lying ranch. Tor's grateful smile, his hand ruffling her dark hair, were reward enough.

Once he'd said, "How would I get along without you, Barbee?" And she'd returned flippanly, eyes like stars, "Don't you dare try! I've been working like a fool to prove you can't."

He'd laughed, his eyes fond. If she'd hoped—this was a dream she never tired of dreaming—he'd pull her to him, kissing her with the promise he'd never let her go, she smothered the hope. In due time, she told herself sternly. Young Doc was a man you couldn't push, and who wouldn't so much as kiss her until it really meant something.

Then Devon had come back. Like Barbee, she had been born in the little mining town of Tinforks, but Devon had always hated the place and couldn't wait to get away. She'd been arrogant—sure she could make a name for herself in New York, and it seemed she had. At least she'd come back with gorgeous clothes and a self-confidence that
fairly bristled.

Now she tapped a long, slim foot. "I’ve got to see Tor for just a minute. Wake him, will you?"

"I’d rather not," Barbee spoke coolly. "He was up all night, as I told you, and he’s got a terrific day ahead of him. If you’ll leave a message—"

Devon scowled, full lips petulant. Then she said, "Oh, well! It won’t be long till I’ve got him out of this dump. Just tell him the dinner dance at the Aspen Country Club begins at seventy-three. It will take us an hour to drive there, so that means he must call for me at six, to give us time for a drink at my place."

She favored Barbee with her professional smile, a calculated parting of perfect lips over perfect white teeth, and swept out of the room. The door closed on her, leaving behind a rich, potent fragrance.

Barbee sat down at her desk and thought, This numbness is better than feeling. This numbness is better than pain. I’ve got to stay numb.

The telephone jangled. She grabbed it so the ring wouldn’t wake Tor, snatching his forty winks on the cot just beyond the thin wall.

Her voice came automatically, "Dr. Gray’s office. . . . Yes, Mrs. Clark, I’ll have him call you."

SHE laid down the phone and sat there, staring out the window to the vast reaches of the peaks that ringed the once roaring gold camp. She’d always loved the picturesque little town and its mountains, but what would it be without Young Doc? What would living be, without him?

The door to his office opened and he appeared. He was a tall, powerfully built man with sandy hair, brilliant blue eyes, and a jutting chin. In spite of having been up all night, he seemed full of fresh, healthy vigor.

"Now where are we, Barbee?" he asked cheerfully. "Anyone been in yet?"

"Just one." Barbee smiled sweetly, almost as if she meant it. "Devon left a minute ago."

"She did! Why didn’t you call me?"

"You needed your nap. She only wanted to tell you to call for her tonight at six."

"Oh—yes." Tor’s grin was boyish, glowing. "Now let’s have a look at my appointments."

He leaned over her, scanning the pad, and Barbee sat tense, her mind spinning. How could she keep him here where he belonged, instead of going away with Devon to be a society doctor? What chance did she have? His nearness—she could smell his shaving lotion, the faint aroma of the cigar he’d had with his coffee—brought mingled hurt and happiness in a lump to her throat.

"Quite a day you’ve got fixed for me, slave-driver."

"They all—sounded—necessary," she said. It was only since Devon had returned that he’d thought he had too many patients.

"I know." He tweaked her ear affectionately. "I know you do your best, punkin. I’ll make my house calls and be back at eleven."

The door opened and Royce Anderson breezed in. In his natty sports clothes, he was as elegant, in his way, as Devon was in hers. They’d been the best-looking couple in school, and usually together, but after graduation Devon had gone East and Royce had gone to the West Coast.

"Morning, Tor," Royce said jauntily. "Got a minute?"

"Sorry," Tor said coolly. "Not one."

"Oh come now," Royce grinned in what was called his dynamic personality way. "Just one little short one?"

"Sorry." Young Doc turned to Barbee. "No more appointments today, young woman."

He swung out the door and into the jeep he used for his mountain traveling. Royce shrugged.

"What a busy boy. All I wanted was the chance to offer him some stock in
the San Felipe stampmill. How about you, Barbee? Even a few dollars invested now may mean hundreds when we get the mill built and go to work on the old tailing dumps around here. Why, there's a fortune in the stuff that was thrown away by the old-time miners! They didn't have our scientific ways of extracting the ore. All those old dumps on the hills up there are literally teeming with gold and silver."

"Spare your oratory," Barbee laughed. "Even if I had an extra quarter, I've seen enough of mining—and so have you—to steer clear of it."

She wondered at Royce. Just why had he left what was rumored to be a big-paying television job to come back to Tinfoaks to promote a pipe-dream? Maybe he hadn't been such a successful television actor after all.

He sat down on the corner of her desk. He had naive, laughing brown eyes and his profile would look good on the screen from any angle.

"How'd you like to go dancing tonight, Barbee? Viennese dance at the Aspen Country Club. Should be a nice party."

"What about Libby?" He'd been dating Libby Page, a friend of Barbee's since he got back.

Royce shrugged. "You know Libby. We went to a show last night and she won't leave that brother of hers in his wheel-chair two evenings in a row."

Barbee considered. She needed some fun. Only would it be fun, watching Tor and Devon waltzing together? "Okay," she decided. "If I get through the day here without collapsing."

"Take it easy, kid. Tor's a slave-driver."

"That's what he calls me."

Royce chuckled. "Devon's fixing it for both of you. Hear the town's pretty upset, wondering if they'll be without a doctor."

"He hasn't gone yet," Barbee reminded him sharply.

"He will, baby. See you about six-thirty then. If you get a chance, speak to Tor about the San Felipe, will you?" He made a circle with thumb and forefinger, flashed his smile and breezed out.

Barbee, checking on the instruments to be sterilized, decided to wear her gold taffeta, which she'd bought two months ago to wear when she and Tor went dancing. It was ballet-length, the skirt standing out stiffly with insets of knife-pleated gold net, the strapless bodice soft with swirls of net and tiny velvet violets.

It was the sort of dress a girl wore when she wanted her man to have eyes for no one else; when she hoped he'd forget his doctor sternness, and just be a man in love.

It was foolish to hope he'd even notice it now. Devon would shine in something dramatic, something crimson, dangerous and exotic.

II

The buzzer in the reception room announced a caller. It was old Luke Pascoe, on crutches from the broken leg he'd suffered when he'd fallen in a prospect hole. He was grinning toothlessly.

"Just wanted to tell you, Barbee, I can't make no payment on my bill this month, but I'll make a double one next time."

"Wouldn't it be better to make one each time instead?" Barbee suggested mildly, and with no hope, since the old prospector still had to make any payment at all.

"Can't. Put my cash in the San Felipe. That way I'll be able to pay the doc all I owe him, when the mill starts producing." He tapped a crutch on the floor. "Biggest thing ever happened to Tinfoaks since the gold mines shut down!" he declared. "That young man is putting the town back on its feet, making
it rich again. If we only had a few more like him we’d never got in the state we are.”

“Go easy, Luke. We’ve had lots of stock-promotion schemes, you know. They’ve all taken more out of the town than they ever put in.”

“Oh sure, but this is different. This is solid. Me, I’m tickled he give me the chance to get in on it. Everybody in town feels the same way. Fine chap, young Anderson.”

Luke nodded his grizzled head and hobbled out, his crutches clacking on the board walk. Barbee sighed. Maybe the old man was right; maybe Tinforks would strike it rich again. But she knew that was her prospector blood speaking, for Barbee was the daughter and granddaughter of gold-seekers.

At five o’clock Tor called her into his office. “I’m going out the back door, Barbee. No more business today. Tell those waiting out there to come back tomorrow.”

She looked at him in surprise. “But Tor—”

“Sorry, Barbee, but I’ve got to leave.” He pulled on his coat and hurried out the back door.

Barbee returned slowly to the reception room. This was what Devon did to him. He was so afraid he’d be late for her that he cared nothing about the patients who’d made appointments in good faith. When she explained that the doctor had been called out, they left without protest. Knowing Young Doc, they were sure he’d gone on an emergency case. Barbee sat unmoving at her desk in the empty room for some time.

Libby Page passed the office window, walking as if very tired. Which she no doubt was. A slight, fragile girl, she worked long hours at Blaine’s Mercantile, and took care of her young brother Carl who’d lost the use of his legs years ago. Barbee wished Libby was going to the dance tonight instead of her.

She stirred herself. Time to go home and get dressed....

It wasn’t until the third dance at the Aspen Country Club that Barbee saw Devon and Tor. Devon was dramatic, dangerous and exotic in flaming crimson; not a man in the room but turned to stare. Tor didn’t take his eyes from her, and they danced much more closely together than was correct in Viennese waltzing. Her gorgeous eyes slanted now and then about the room as though gauging the effect she made, but mostly she kept their soft shadowed glow for Tor, who danced like a man in a trance.

Barbee, a slight figure in delicate gold taffeta, smiled steadily and never missed a step in the fast, whirling waltz to the lilting Strauss music.

“You’re sweet, Barbee,” murmured Royce. “How come you hang around Tinforks? Don’t you know there are chances for a girl like you in the city?”

“But you’re back,” she pointed out, and watched his eyes flicker, ever so slightly. “From the world of big opportunities.”

“Only to put over this San Felipe deal. It’s been on my mind for years. My favorite little home town needs me. Nobody in it has gumption to start anything; they’re in a rut. I’m giving them a shot in the arm.”

She said frankly, “I don’t think you should take money from people like Luke.”

“What do you mean? I’m not taking money—I’m giving them a chance to make a fortune!” The music stopped, and he led her to their table where a strawberry mousse waited for them. “I suppose,” he sighed, “you’ve heard Young Doc say that. He’s one of these set guys that won’t budge from the established routine—except for a pair of green eyes.”

“Pardon us!” liited a gay voice beside their table. Barbee looked up to Devon and Tor. “I want to talk to Royce, Barbee, so I begged Tor to dance this one with you. Mind?”

Barbee moved into Tor’s arms stiffly, wondering if she imagined his reluc-
The orchestra was playing Tales of the Vienna Woods, and Barbee blinked swiftly at an uncontrollable rush of tears. So often she and Tor had danced to that music, and the harmony of the singing violins had been no sweeter than the oneness that held them, light and delicate as moon glow, gliding in the beautiful Vienna waltz.

And then for a minute it seemed that they were doing it again! Perfect rhythm, ultimate togetherness, the discordant note of Devon Hunt mute and forgotten. She raised her eyes to look at him, and he was scowling, his darkly sandy brows meeting over his straight nose.

"Now look," she said tartly, "if it's this bad to dance one with me—"

"How come you're with Royce?" he blurted. "I'm surprised."

"Surprised? Why? He's a charming, entertaining escort."

Tor made a sound like a snort and whirled her so sharply in wildly swift circles that her breath was gone. Then, slowing abruptly, he said, "It's none of my business, of course. Go with whom you like. But you know Libby is eating out her heart for him. And this San Felipe deal—"

"Oh yes, I forgot. He wants me to ask you if you wouldn't like in on the ground floor."

"Ground floor!" Tor's arm about her tightened as if in fury. "It's a cellar, a dungeon, and deep and smelly. I certainly thought you, Barbee, had more principles than—"

The music stopped. He led her stiffly and in silence to her table. Devon was sipping a creme-de-menthe and soda, the liqueur shining with the same emerald as her eyes. She smiled and stood up.

"Let's dance, darling!" Her lissome figure swayed toward Tor, and his arm went around her, tautly. They swirled away.

Barbee sat down, her mouth grim.

Royce murmured, "Does she make you that mad, Barbee? You have to admit she's a luscious dish, tempting enough to turn even the heart of Young Doc."

"You can't expect me to like her, stealing my boss," Barbee managed flippantly. "How do I know what the next doctor in Tinforks will be like? Maybe an old dodo or a young cluck not dry behind the ears."

"A town as prosperous as Tinforks is going to be will get a good doctor—maybe two or three," said Royce. "By the way, honey, that's a dress you're wearing! A most delightful concoction."

She smiled thinly. Tor hadn't looked at it. Tor hadn't even seen it.

After a few more dances, Barbee, pleading weariness, asked to go home. On the hour's ride back upcanyon, Royce kept talking about the San Felipe project, his darling. It really sounded quite plausible to Barbee. Engineers long ago had claimed the old tailings dumps contained enough gold to make mining them profitable, if there were a stamp-mill nearby to save expensive transportation costs. Royce's plan was for a small, economical mill that could take care of a bucketful of ore or a car-load.

She got into bed thinking anyone couldn't help but like Royce, and trust him. Why was Tor so bitterly down on him? Was it jealousy, because Devon was an old flame of Royce's? Even yet she was seen riding with him, or having a cocktail with him at the Gold Nugget Bar.

TOR walked into the office in the morning not briskly as usual. He gave Barbee an absent nod and looked over his list of appointments. He laid the pad down slowly. He stared out the window to the hills that climbed, layer upon layer, against the bright sky.

The old shafthouses and tailings dumps were outlined clearly in the thin, crisp air. For years they had denoted only broken dreams and decay, but now suddenly, for those who believed in Royce's dream, they were beginning to glimmer with life.
Clearly it was not of them, though, that Young Doc was thinking. He looked bone-tired; there were new lines around his eyes. For a moment, big, rugged and strong as he was, he seemed to be a frightened, bewildered boy.

"I don't know, Barbee," he said slowly, almost as if talking to himself. "I just don't know. I give all I have to these people, and what cooperation do I get? I've pleaded and begged the City Council to chlorinate the water, but they claim what was good enough for Grandpa is good enough for us. So every August when the water supply gets low, I work my head off tending people sick from bad water. For years I've tried to get the town to build a hospital, but a giddy young dreamer asks for money for a crackpot get-rich-quick scheme, and they pour all they have in his hands! It doesn't make sense."

Barbee was silent. It didn't make sense, and she knew why it suddenly loomed so big in his life. The luring voice of Devon had spoken, her eyes had beckoned him to easier, pleasanter fields.

"I guess your grandfather and your father often felt the same way," she murmured. "Yet they felt it was worthwhile." She groped for the right words, not preachy, not corny, and yet she knew the ones she spoke were both.

"You get out of life only what you put into it. It isn't the easy job that pays the most." And she blurted, feeling foolish, yet knowing she was right, "Who will take care of these people if you leave? No strange doctor will do it. It's too easy to make much more money elsewhere. It takes someone who loves them, and knows their struggles, their stupidity, and their goodness, too."

He didn't seem to hear a word she said. There was a gaunt look around his mouth, a pallor of suffering.

"I'll take these eight and eight-thirty appointments, then I'll make the house calls," he said, exactly like a professional man to a professional secretary.

He stalked into his office and Barbee blinked away a tear. He had been happy before Devon had come. Now he was pulled two ways. He was tortured, and whatever he decided would mean pain. Barbee felt the age-old ache of a woman's heart to ease the hurt of her man. But there was nothing she could do.

She was alone in the building when Libby Page came in to sit down on the edge of the chair near Barbee's desk, her small hands crossed childlike in her lap. She turned wide gray eyes on Barbee.

Barbee thought, Heavens, her eyes are ten sizes too large for her face. She must have lost pounds since I saw her a couple weeks ago.

Libby ran her tongue over her lips.

"Have a good time last night at the dance?"

"So-so." Barbee spoke kindly. "Look, Libby, I didn't go to be with Royce. I just needed to get out. He said you couldn't go."

"That's right. I haven't an evening dress." She wet her lips again; her big eyes went over the office aimlessly. "It's well, sort of silly, I guess. How can I expect him to—to be serious with me, after all the glamor girls he knows in Hollywood? I've always been—in love with him. Always. And you know how it is. You keep hoping." She went on, hesitating. "I—I invested in the San Felipe mill, Barbee. I've been saving for years to get Carl to that doctor in St. Paul—the surgeon who claims he can help him—and Royce said this way I should get enough back to send him so much sooner." She swallowed. "You got a cigarette, Barbee? I never used to smoke, but lately I've been nervous—"

Barbee handed her cigarette and match. Libby inhaled deeply.

"I was afraid to take my savings, and yet—yet the way Royce explains it ... But if I should lose that money, Carl's money for his operation—" Stark terror pinched her mouth into thin gray lines.

"At least you'll get back what you put in, even if you don't make a fortune."
Barbee hoped she sounded reassuring.
“You really think so?” begged Libby.
“Oh, I hope so! Now I’ve got to dash. I’m late for work.”

III

A WEEK passed in which the main topics of conversation in town were what the re-awakening Royce’s project meant, Devon’s beauty, and was Young Doc going to leave. The town seemed unusually healthy. He actually had time to take her out for lunches and dinners, leaving Barbee all the more time to brood.

The mountain spring was warmer than usual. The heavy snows on the slopes were melting, and there was a small snowslide over in Slippery Fish Gulch which closed the highway for half a mile while workers bulldozed through.

Then Tor’s little vacation was over. The James family on their horse ranch far up toward Skull Pass became violently ill. First the five-year-old child nearly died; then the other six children, the father and two wranglers. Water or food poisoning was indicated.

Tor worked feverishly around the clock to help the stricken family. He came back to the office gaunt and red-eyed. Barbee kept all unimportant calls for him, had hot coffee and hamburgers ready for him.

The illness of the James family frightened everybody, even after Tor had established that they’d been poisoned by spoiled home-canned beans, his office phone kept ringing from isolated ranches. At the slightest headache, people were sure they had the same dread disease that had almost killed a whole family.

In town, too, people were panicky. Barbee spent her evenings reassuring patients, taking temperatures and listening endlessly to symptoms. She was so busy that for once she didn’t have time to worry about Tor and Devon.

The fifth day Libby phoned in the morning from the store where she worked. “Do you have time to drop over to talk to Carl for a few minutes, Barbee? He worries me.”

Barbee ran over—it was only a block away. Carl, a gentle, pale young man of eighteen, greeted her with a smile that had the same wistful tug as Libby’s.

“Glad you came when Sis is out,” he said. “I’m okay. She’s the one to worry about. I hear her up and down all night long. She just pretends to eat. Have you noticed how thin she is?”

“Carl, Libby has a very bad fever—she’s in love. And he—Royce—is in love with her, too. But he’s so busy he probably neglects her a little. So quit stewing. Don’t add to her worries.”

“You think that’s it? But I thought he liked Devon. They take horseback rides together. I’ve seen them, from my window.”

“Royce is trying to raise money from everybody.” She felt her cheeks go hot, but she asked lightly, “As for heart interest, haven’t you heard about Young Doc and Devon?”

Carl nodded. “Yeah, I heard. Gosh, I guess you’re right, Barbee. Royce told me he’s even trying to get Denver investors interested in the mill. I’ll take your word for it and quit stewing.”

“Good boy.”

Barbee grinned and hurried back to the office to find Devon waiting. Devon’s green eyes lifted sharply.

“Where’s Tor? I’ve been here twenty minutes.”

“At the James ranch. He decided to test their well water. He won’t be back for another hour or so.”

Devon drew hard on her cigarette, tamped it out. “Every time I call he’s out!” she flared. “You just don’t want me to see him. But all your finagling isn’t going to do you a bit of good, baby. Not one little bit of good.”
“Isn’t it?” Barbee said calmly, smiling softly.

Something was wrong. Devon’s arrogance was a little thick. But probably it was only that she was out of sorts because Tor had been so busy. The long look she flashed Barbee as she swept from the reception room—was it smugness, triumph?—made Barbee wonder still more.

THAT, she remembered later, was Monday. It was Tuesday night when Libby rushed in and begged for a cigarette or, better, a shot of whisky.

“What in the world is the matter?” cried Barbee.

She was tired and nervous herself. Tor had not been in all day and she felt as if strange and dark tides moved about her, swelling into proportions that meant a crashing against something soon—just what she didn’t know. It was a helpless, ominous feeling she tried to explain away as being because of her own despair, but it would not go away.

She asked Libby, “Are you sick? Or is it Carl?”

“No—no.” Libby made an effort to calm herself. She tried to light the cigarette Barbee handed her; match after match went out. She cried out, “Where’s Royce?”

Barbee repressed the retort that she was neither Tor’s nor Royce’s keeper, and why did everybody keep asking her where they were? Instead she said quietly, “I haven’t seen Royce for days. Why?”

“He’s gone.” Libby threw down her unlighted cigarette. “He’s gone. I invited him for dinner last night, and he didn’t show up. I waited today, expecting to hear from him, but no word. So I went to his hotel. The clerk said he hadn’t noticed him around for a couple days and I insisted we go to his room.” Libby stopped for breath. Her words had poured out. “You know he kept money in that little safe in his room. It was gone. He was gone. The safe was gone.”

Barbee stared. “How could he get a safe out with nobody seeing him?”

“Haven’t you seen the safe? It’s a little one—old one of his father’s—not more than three feet high. I could carry it myself. And Bill Jenkins, night clerk at the hotel, sits there dozing. You know that.”

“I can’t believe it of Royce,” insisted Barbee. “I can’t!”

Libby fixed her wide, glittering eyes on her. “Why not? He had about eight thousand in cash,” he told me. He was proud of getting so much. How do you know he wouldn’t run off with it? He cheated with me.” The slender jaws clamped. “He promised to marry me a month ago. But he kept putting it off. I know he’s sneaked dates with Devon.”

“Oh, no! You’re crazy, Libby. Devon is in love with Tor. She cares nothing for Royce Anderson.”

“I happen to know.” Libby’s smile was thin, bitter. “I followed them one day, up Skull Pass. That’s where Royce’s father had a fishing cabin. He and Devon rode up on horseback, and just the day before he’d taken me there.”

A brick-red flush crept into her cheeks. “It’s a beautiful hideaway. Nobody ever disturbs you, nobody ever comes near the place. In fact you can’t get there except by jeep or horseback.”

Barbee pushed her dark bangs from her forehead, in a gesture of baffled despair. “Oh, Libby! If you think he really left with the money, you must tell the sheriff at once.”

Libby groaned. “But I love him! How can I be the one to send him to jail? But there’s Carl—”

The door flew open. Devon in a molded leaf-green wool suit and mink stole entered. A small hat sat smartly on her red-gold head, and she carried a huge brown bag.

She barely nodded to Libby, and turned to Barbee. “Will you give me whatever cash Tor has in the safe?”

Barbee stared blankly. “I beg your pardon?”
Devon laughed. "Don't look so appalled! Tor and I are leaving for Denver in a few minutes. While he's getting packed, he sent me over to get the cash, said there should be several hundred dollars in the safe, and that you'd get it for me."

"If Tor wants his money, he can come get it," Barbee said coldly. "I wouldn't think of giving it to anyone else."

"Oh, don't be stuffy! You're not Tor's keeper any longer, darling, much as you'd like to be. Don't deny it—I've seen how your eyes follow him around like a sick puppy. Tor and I were laughing about it the other day."

Barbee shot to her feet. Her face was dead-white. "Shut up! You can keep your funny remarks to yourself, and you can go tell Tor that when he wants money from his safe he'll come get it himself, the way he always has."

Devon's eyes opened wide. "You mean you don't know the combination?"

Barbee was silent, her blazing eyes meeting Devon's, and suddenly a strange little fear began to pulse at the base of her throat. Those gem-green eyes were strange; lifeless, opaque.

"If you don't believe me," said Devon, "why don't you phone Tor? He's at home. I just left him."

Barbee hesitated, then lifted the phone and dialed the number. "Yes?" came Tor's voice.

"Tor, Devon is here, for the money. I wouldn't give it to her unless——"

"Give it to her," said Tor, in an oddly flat voice. "And Barbee, I won't be in the office tomorrow. Take care of things."

Barbee put the phone down, went to the safe and whirled the dial. She got out the money box and handed Devon the cash. Devon took it with a flourish.

"Thanks, darling." She stuffed the bills and silver in her bag, flipped it shut and swung out of the room. "Wish us happiness!"

Barbee sat down and stared blankly about the office.

"Well?" she said then. "Shall we go, Libby?"

"You mean to the sheriff?"

"Oh. Yes." Barbee got to her feet woefully. "I'd forgotten about Royce. Yes, we must go to the sheriff."

Tor and Devon. It was over then, it was finished. Her hope, her foolish hope in the face of everything, was over. Now there was just a numb, empty feeling, the way you felt when part of you died.

Sheriff Hank McGlone listened to Libby's story. "It sounds like a little matter that should be looked into," he said sharply. "We'll do it at once, Libby."

As Barbee walked with Libby to her house, she tried to talk to her, but Libby made no answer. At her door she turned and said, like a child reciting a piece, "Thank you for coming with me, Barbee. Thank you very much. I'm tired now. I'm going to bed."

Barbee said, "Look, Libby, they'll find him. They'll guard every road leaving here. They'll stop him."

"Yes," said Libby obediently. Then, her lip curling, "He's been gone two days. It's a little late to guard the roads."

Barbee turned away, knowing nothing more to say.

In the morning she went as usual to the office. The townspeople evidently knew that Royce was gone, and that the safe with their precious money was missing. Groups stood on the corners, talking in excited voices. She heard words like "necktie party."

Luke Pascoe, his face livid, waved a crutch over his head and shouted, "He makes a horse thief look like a baby angel with a halo round his head! I say get him and string 'im up the way we used to do with other polecats!"

Barbee hurried inside the office. It was empty today with the bleak emptiness of a beloved home, suddenly bereft. She stared vacantly at her appointment pad. She must call the patients to tell them the doctor would not be in. The doctor had gone away to get married.
Maybe the doctor never would be back. Barbee's eyes darkened bitterly. So easily he had tossed off his obligations to his people. She'd thought they were sacred to him, as they were to any good doctor. She ought to have hated him for letting Devon Hunt lead him blindly. She tried to hate him. But his smile, the face that was so often worn from ministering to his people, got in the way.

SAM JAMES, still pale from his recent bout with food poisoning, shuffled into the office. He laid some money on the desk.

"Sorry that's all I can manage," he said. "Young Doc sure saved our lives, and I'll have more for him pretty quick. He ain't in yet, is he? I saw him heading up Skull Pass, and I got to wondering who was sick up there. Didn't even know anybody lived beyond our place."

Barbee's pen, writing his receipt, stopped and stuck up rigidly. "Skull Pass?" she echoed blankly. "The doctor? When?"

"Early this morning. Ma and me was just having breakfast. Saw him from the window, in his jeep."

"You must have been mistaken," said Barbee. "Doctor and a—a friend of his went to Denver last night."

Sam smiled. "Reckon he got a call before he left, so up the pass he goes instead. Poor Doc! I reckon when he heads for his wedding, he'll get a call and leave the poor girl waiting. I wasn't mistaken, Barbee. I know Young Doc's jeep."

"Was he alone?"

"Yep, and he shouldn't go up there alone. Slides been running lately."

Barbee stared after Sam as he left. If Doc had been heading for his wedding with anyone but Devon, she could imagine him putting it off to answer a sick call. But not with Devon. And up Skull Pass! As Sam had said, nobody lived there. It was a wild, barren place cutting the Continental Divide. In the early days it had lured prospectors, but for years it had been abandoned. Except—her mind spun, trying to remember—who'd talked about Skull Pass lately? Libby! Libby, and Royce's cabin! Royce's love nest. Barbee's heart began to pound. Her lips felt dry.

She locked the office and ran down the street to Libby's. In answer to her knock, Carl's voice called to her to come in. The boy was wheeling his chair toward her.

"I just tried to phone Young Doc! Libby's sick. She's really sick. She just lies in there like she's out of her mind or something."

IV

BARBEE ran into Libby's room. The girl's eyes, always too big for her face, were staring with a terrifying blankness at the ceiling. Her small hands were folded in utter stillness on the bed covers. Barbee dropped to her knees beside her.

"Libby, Libby, what's the matter? What is it?"

The only indication that Libby heard was a quick, short intake of breath. Otherwise she did not move. Barbee felt the girl's forehead. It was damp and cold. She tried again to get her to speak, but now there was not even the startled little breath.

She tried to hide her fear from Carl. "I'll find Doc," she told him calmly. "He'll take care of her."

Carl gulped. "Hurry! Please hurry." Skull Pass. Only a jeep or a horse could make it. She ran to the livery stable to rent a horse.

"I swan, I don't know if I want to trust even you with my horse," growled the stableman. "After the trick that damn coyote Royce pulled on us. He got every dime I owned."

Barbee said urgently, swallowing against the sickness in her chest, "Please hurry. I've got to find Doc, up
Skull Pass.”

“Skull? Who’s up there? Did a deer trip on his antlers?”

Barbee was in the saddle. The liveryman adjusted the stirrups and she slapped the horse into a trot, heading him out the winding road that went past Sam James’ ranch and then turned south, climbing the Divide. Sam was right. There were jeep tracks in the road, muddy from melting snow.

On either side the mountains rose, tremendous slanted slopes still covered with the deep winter fall of snow. The lack of growing trees was a sinister note—they had no chance to grow on hills where great avalanches of snow slid into the gulch almost every year, taking timber and boulders with them. Mountainers kept away from such roads in early spring, for a snowslide gave no warning, and if you were in the way of a thundering icy mass which might fill a gulch to a depth of forty feet, you had no chance.

What in the world would take Young Doc into this dangerous country, actually risking his life? What, indeed, except Devon?

Barbee’s thoughts churned. Was there something to Libby’s suspicions that Royce and Devon were still interested in each other? It seemed impossible, yet what other explanation was there? A quarrel between Doc and Devon, Devon running off with Royce to this hideaway of his, Doc following.

Devon, Royce, and the safe with the money.

Barbee pushed the horse on. No time to think of that now. Libby had looked near death.

Then from a distance she heard it—the terrible low rumbling that was like a faraway storm. But there was no storm; the sky was blue. She drew her horse to a stop so abruptly that his front legs flew straight out. Drop by drop her blood seemed to drain from her heart as the rumble became a roaring thunder, and far ahead she saw a strange flying white cloud of spray.

The sound went on and on, getting deeper, more powerful. A mountain of snow had broken loose and was raging down the slope at a terrifying pace, ravaging everything in its way. Barbee could not see the slide for it was beyond the crest of the hill. It might be a mile away. But the earth under her seemed to quiver with the mighty force of the avalanche.

The horse trembled and pawed the ground. Barbee held him still, though her hands felt lifeless and her heart zigzagged to her feet. She sat rigid for perhaps only a minute, then with a sharp breath she came to life. She kicked the horse into action and swung him on up the road.

Would she find jeep tracks—going into the slide?

She never remembered much about that ride. The horse rebelled at the steep climb, but she kept pushing him on, and still it seemed to her he was barely moving.

Now it was quiet ahead. The thunder had stopped. She kept going, and her mind was numb with dread as each hoofbeat was a relentless step nearer the place where once a fishing cabin had stood, where now the slope was swept clean by a plunging, sliding mountain of snow.

“Tor—Tor!” she screamed.

But he—or was it he?—couldn’t hear her. The dark pygmylike figure she saw outlined against a wall of white was still a long way off. But someone was there. The jeep—a man—he could see them. And then she leaned against the saddle-horn when she reached him, limp as a wet rag, and tried not to cry.

“Tor,” she kept saying, “Tor, you’re safe. You’re all right.”

He lifted her from the saddle, his face ashen. “What in the name of heaven are you doing up here?”

She stared at the jeep. “It’s pointed this way. You were on your way back. You were ahead of the slide.”

“I was ahead of it or I wouldn’t be
here,” he said grimly. “Biggest slide I’ve ever seen up here—started a mile up. Get in the jeep—I’ll tie your horse behind. We’re getting out of here.”

As the jeep plummeted downward on the rocky road, Barbee leaned back against the seat, closing her eyes. She ached with limpness, and the events of the last few minutes were like some dis-jointed movie, flickering and skipping off and on the quivering curtain of her mind.

Young Doc put his hand on her tightly

“Let’s not talk about it now.” His jaws were set grimly, and she had never heard his voice so bleak, so drained of life.

He seemed to be far from her. He drove like a man in deep sleep, actions purely automatic. She clung to the metal bar edging the seat as the jeep jolted and bumped on the rough road. The miles seemed endless, but finally they were in town, stopping in front of the sheriff’s office. The sheriff came out, and beside him stood Royce Anderson.

The Great Love

Once in a lifetime one great love comes by,
Out of the silence. None knows how or why.
Fairer than springtime, sweet as a dream—
Others are great, but this one supreme.

Wait for its music. Listen for its drums.
Watch for its wonder. Seize it when it comes.
When lesser voices call, make no reply—
Once in a lifetime one great love comes by.

by Clarence E. Flynn

clenched fists. “Relax, Barbee. Everything’s okay.”

“But why—did you—go up there?” she stammered, the anguish of her fear easing little by little.

“Went after something in Royce’s cabin. Got it just in time. Nothing left of the cabin now but broken logs under a thousand tons of snow.” He nodded toward the back of the jeep. She looked, and there sat a small black safe, about three feet high.

She shuddered. “And Royce—was he there?”

“No. Nobody was there.”

“But what—why—”

“So you got it,” he said. He looked, Barbee thought, old and haggard; as if he’d been up all night and then some. “Just barely.” Tor told about the snow slide. “If you hadn’t phoned me when you did, and if I hadn’t seen Barbee coming up the pass by herself I wouldn’t have hurried as I did—and saved my life.” He turned to her and something almost a smile lifted his lips. “Did I thank you for saving my life, Barbee?”

She shook her head slowly, the thought of his narrow escape freezing her blood. She said, “I came because Libby’s sick. Please hurry to her, Tor.
She looked so ill. I'll go on to the office."

She returned the horse to the livery stable. Back at the office, she started a pot of coffee on the electric grill. She was as tired as if she'd run all the way up the Pass.

The whole affair was still a mystery. Why hadn't Royce got the safe himself instead of sending Doc? How come Doc was here, instead of in Denver with Devon?

HE CAME in, a few minutes later.

"Libby's okay. Royce is with her, and for a wedding present he's sending Carl to that doctor in St. Paul. I misjudged him. He's sincere about Libby, and he's sincere in wanting to do something for Tinforks."

"Yes. Then why did he hide the money up in that cabin?"

Tor stood at the window, staring out. "It's a hard thing to tell. To tell about anyone, but when that anyone is a girl you were in love with —"

She gasped, "A girl! Devon!"

"She didn't work much this winter in New York—just got deep in debt—and so she was desperate for money. She came home, gambling on two chances, Royce and me." He hesitated. "Monday afternoon I gave her my decision. I could not leave my work in Tinforks, but I asked her to stay here and marry me. She wanted to think it over. It struck me she planned to see what Royce would do for her, but I knew he was in Denver to raise money.

"Anyway, I couldn't sleep Monday night. I was afraid I'd lost her. I was standing at my window in the dark when I saw her get into my jeep—it's always parked out front—and drive off. I waited till nearly dawn, when she brought it back and slipped away. I was curious, but not too concerned. When I saw her that afternoon, she never mentioned the jeep. She was very affective. Wanted to borrow fifty or seventy-five dollars to go shopping in Denver—for our wedding, she said. I told her to get it from you."

Barbee gulped. Seventy-five dollars. There had been about seven hundred in the safe. Tor turned from the window, his strong face drawn and black, his voice harsh.

"Someone like you, Barbee, wouldn't understand the fever that raged in me. A wild, miserable fever I couldn't control even when my reason told me she was not worth it. I knew she was playing up to Royce all the time, in case I didn't come through. She believes in having two aces up her sleeve. I knew she'd gone to Denver to see him, and I knew I would follow her and bring her back. But I made myself wait until morning.

"Just as I was ready to leave, Royce phoned, from Denver. She was with him all right, to tell him she had his safe up in the cabin where it would stay until they could think of some way to get it safely out of the country. She said she'd make it look as if he'd taken it—fingerprints and such—and if he didn't play her way she'd prove that he had.

"She thought she could twist him around her little finger, but she couldn't. Royce was through with her long ago, a fact she couldn't believe. He advised her to get out of the country and stay out. Then he phoned me, to get the safe."

Barbee set out a couple of coffee cups. She told him about the money Devon had asked for, and had got. For a long time Tor said nothing. A vein in his temple throbbed hard.

He said evenly then, "I deserve to lose much more than that."

She poured the coffee. She sat down across from him, put her hand, gently, on his. He made no move. He didn't seem to feel it, nor did he drink his coffee ....

It was a week later when he came into the office in his old brisk way.

"Did you hear, Barbee?" he cried. "The San Felipe stampmill is going to be the San Felipe Hospital!"
DARK DREAM

She stared. “Hospital, for Tinforks at last?”

“It’s Royce’s idea. After talking to some engineers, he decided his original scheme was pretty much of a gamble, especially with the Government taking over mine production for uranium in so many cases. So the people have voted to build a hospital with the funds.” He grabbed her hands. “All I could think of when they told me was that I must hurry to Barbee. I wanted her to know. It means as much to her as it does to me.”

She had trouble swallowing. Her heart was in her throat. She tried to meet his eyes, but hers blurred crazily. He drew her to him.

“Barbee, Barbee, I don’t deserve you. But if some day you can forgive me—”

She rested against him. For a fleeting moment the dark image of Devon was in the room, and then she was gone—utterly and forever.

Young Doc’s lips found Barbee’s, and held them.

Nobody in Tinforks ever heard of Devon again. Once in awhile Young Doc’s wife thought of her, but it was a mere wisp of memory recalling casually a dark dream which no longer seemed real.

ARE YOU DANCE WISE?

LISTED below, jumbled fashions are 11 types of dances, mostly of the past, and terms pertaining to dancing, together with a brief explanation or description of each. Can you match up at least 7 of them correctly for a passing score? 8-9 is good, 10 excellent, and 11 perfect!

1. SHUFFLE (a) a rapid whirling upon the toes in dancing.
2. TRIP (b) to swing partners, as in a country dance.
3. REDOWA (c) a dance accompanied by tremulous motions of the body.
4. BOLERO (d) a dance, or the step used in it, where the dancer pushes his foot along the floor at each step.
5. SHIMMY (e) a stately march-like Polish dance.
6. TOY (f) an Italian round dance.
7. POUSSETTE (g) a dance of Bohemian origin resembling the waltz or the polka.
8. RIGOLETTO (h) a Spanish national dance; danced in ¾ time by two persons accompanied by castanets and guitars.
9. ONE STEP (i) to perform a dance lightly or nimbly.
10. POLONAISE (j) a dance tune.
11. PIROUETTE (k) a round dance consisting of a long step in ¾ time: a development from the Turkey Trot.

(Answers on page 114)
"Stop right there, Buster Brown!" she commanded

The Second Team

By D. S. HALACY, JR.

They wanted to make a big impression, but not on each other

SITTING there across the small table from Violet, Bill Everson kicked himself experimentally on the ankle. Unbelievably he was awake and winced a little. The whole thing was too good to be happening to him!

Taking the Violet Sternwald to the big shindig was the opportunity every young man at Wetherby, Inc. with any blood at all, would give his bonus check for. Actually Bill had given considerably more than that. The dinner jacket, manicure even. The sterling lighter and the orchid. Yipe!

He had to keep feeling his emaciated wallet to see that it was still there. But
it was worth it. Oh yes it was! The vision across from him had for months been the object of his affection, though he'd never dared hope he'd actually date her, touch her. And in a few minutes he'd even be dancing with her!

The click of her cigarette case snapped him out of his trance and he watched as she took out a kingsized corktip. Trying to keep his hands from shaking, Bill whipped out the lighter and spun the wheel, setting fire to the cigarette. She didn't notice her name neatly inscribed in the silver; but there was time for that later. "Take it, light of my life," he'd say gallantly when the time came.

"Miss Sternwald—Vi," he said. Nothing like wading right in. "I'm just an assistant plant engineer right now; but—" He paused, looking to her for some sign of encouragement. And wonder of wonders, her eyes lit up and she smiled dazzlingly. Buoyed up, he went on rapidly. "Vi, there's something I must tell you. I—"

"Why look," Vi said, "it's Mr. Barnaby!" She wasn't looking at Bill at all; the shattering smile hadn't been for him, but for Barnaby. H. Neil Barnaby, the heir-plainly-apparent to the managerial throne of Wetherby, Inc., the huge stainless steel and plate glass beehive where Bill and Violet spent their working days. Tonight was the annual dance, commemorating Wetherby's anniversary.

Trailing Barnaby was a tiny female. With a blink of surprise Bill recognized Miss Willis, the rather mousy little secretary in the main office. Only she had undergone some sort of change and didn't look so mousy. It was only the freckles that provided identification.

BILL got up and Barnaby still loomed over him. They shook hands vigorously. "Everson, isn't it?" His eyes were glued to Violet. Bill mumbled something and listened jealously as the tycoon-to-be chatted on with Vi. He wondered again why the boss hadn't asked her to the dance. That had been the lucky break he'd needed; but now his knees were getting shaky again. At last the brass moved on with Miss Willis trailing along behind. She looked out of her league, Bill thought.

"Isn't he a doll!" Vi said, and it was plain she didn't want to wait for Christmas. Suddenly Bill could see the handwriting on the wall. Vi was fidgeting around like a high school girl at a Gregory Peck movie.

The orchestra played "I Won't Cry Anymore" and Bill jumped up desperately. This much he would have. At least once he'd clasp this gorgeous bundle to his chest, cradle her head on his shoulder and dream...

"Would you like to dance, Vi?" Looking something less than enraptured, she forced herself. Her head did not rest on his shoulder, mainly because she tried to keep Barnaby in sight; but for several happy minutes, Bill held her tightly. It was a lot of woman he had hold of and his temperature was in the low hundreds when he felt the tap on his shoulder. It was Barnaby, of course.

"Everson old man, would you mind terribly if I kidnapped Miss Sternwald. I simply must see her a few minutes on a business matter."

"Well, it's up to Vi of course," Bill said; and they whirled away in a haze of tulle and heliotrope. Bill stood with fists balled against his sides, growling sounds escaping from his lips.

"Ahem!" He turned in surprise at the sound and saw Miss Willis, arms folded, one gold platform sole tapping the floor with not too much patience. "I'm not particular whether we dance or just sit, chum," she said drily, "but let's do something even if it's wrong, hummm?" She didn't look very happy about the whole thing.

"Oh yeah, sure." He took her arm and led her through the music and the dancers to the table. Seated, he propped his chin in his hands and stared toward the distant, tantalizingly swaying figure of Violet. He moaned audibly.
"And what," the transformed mouse wanted to know, "is gnawing on you, my good man?" The sarcasm angered him and he glared at her bitterly.

"You have the gall to ask that!" he exploded. "When I manage to swing a date with Miss Luscious herself, spent my last buck to make a hit. When I've—" He stopped, shaking his head futilely. "But no, you wouldn't understand. You don't even—"

And then right under his nose, the little secretary went off like a souped-up H-bomb.

"Stop right there, Buster Brown!" she commanded, and Bill realized she was on her feet, leaning across the table and wagging a finger in his face.

"You think you have it tough, eh?" Freckles popped through her make-up and her bosom heaved. Bill noticed that part of her for the first time and blinked.

"My heart bleeds for you, you stoop! You think you managed a date with that mantrap? You think I just happened to latch onto a date with Mr. Big? Ha!" She laughed furiously.

"Well think again, lumphead." She had him by the tie now, pulling his face closer to hers. Funny he had never noticed her before. "I just happened to misfile a memo so the boss forgot to ask Miss Sternshaker to this fracas. Understand?"

"It's Sternwald," Bill said, shocked.

"You shut up; I'm talking!" Miss Willis said. "Smell that," she commanded, yanking him a little closer. "There! You owe me a buck already. You think I can afford that stuff? Think I can afford this dress, this hair-do?" That was the difference, Bill thought suddenly. She had—

"And I don't like to wander around in the fog without my specs, either." She fumbled in her bag and pulled out a pair of harlequins and put them on.

"That's the trouble with us plain girls," she said, and her voice was weakening fast. "We have feelings too. So I got delusions of grandeur and thought I'd have me a try at hooking the Number One boy. Funny, isn't it?" She was sitting down now, and her voice broke. She swallowed a couple of times.

"So tomorrow I'll be back behind my desk; maybe back of the filing cabinets again. And nobody will look behind the specs and the freckles. Now let's hear all about your troubles, friend, and we can both go out and fling ourselves merrily under a passing bus."

She had a hankie out and the tears were coming in a rush. Bill had her hand, marveling that it was as soft as Vi's. The scent of perfume trailed enticingly across to him, and he wanted to comfort her, tell her he was sorry.

He looked up and there was Barnaby, looking like the cat that ate the bird.

"Look, old man; something's come up. I'll have to take Miss Sternwald down to the office. It's those government orders, you know." Vi was smiling triumphantly, holding to Barnaby's arm.

"Sure," Bill said, waving his hand generously, "I know. Take off. I'll look after Miss Willis. Have fun now." And oddly he was feeling very little pain. He looked down and saw he was still holding the soft little hand.

"Miss Willis—"

"Betty," she said tentatively. She was looking up at him and he reached over and took the glasses off.

"Betty," he said tenderly. "How about this dance?" They danced, and he noted happily that her head was cradled perfectly on his shoulder. It wasn't like dancing with Vi. Somehow it was nicer, more relaxed.

Betty looked up and smiled at him. "I'm sorry I was so hateful. I know how you feel about losing out. She's big league. I'm just jealous. Do you hate me?"

Bill was pretty sure it wasn't hate he felt. He shook his head and grinned. "And I have news for you, too. I think the second team is going to do all right!"

She pressed tighter to him and they whirled with the music. He was sure of it now. ♥♥♥
GLORIOUS and enchanting romance appears on the horizon. It can come while you are on a week-end trip, when you attend a neighborhood party, or during the festive celebration of a wedding to which you are invited. Sparkling wit, good humor, and fascinating compliments can give a glamorous accent to almost every social occasion. Enjoy yourself whether you are the guest or are the one who provides the entertainment for friends and relatives.

Don’t expect too much quietude in your home, however. There may be considerable excitement and tension because of extra duties. A strong compulsion to appear in public may keep you on the go throughout the late spring and early summer. It should be comparatively easy to win the approval of someone who holds a position of authority. Your personal prominence can be satisfying but take care that there isn’t an open clash with a member of your family about various home obligations.

Though you are right in your viewpoints, some sort of adjustments or concessions may be necessary. Otherwise considerable friction and upsets could hamper pleasant household routines while the Sun, Mercury, Jupiter, Uranus, and the Moon’s South Node form a stellium in the Sign Cancer, which rules home and family.

For a while this stellium is opposed by Mars and the Moon’s North Node. So don’t be surprised if you get the impression that you are caught in a two-way pushing and pulling match by people who are impatient and unreasonable. Since Neptune is included in these aspects through cross formation, you also may be bothered by someone who is trying to pull the wool over your eyes.

You can save yourself a lot of bother and heartache by not paying any attention to scandalmongers. Gossip and falsehood cannot put a stranglehold on romance, however. So give your affection generously to the one whom you love most in all the world, and whose devotion to you brings joy into your life.

Her Heart’s Desire

Anita R. E. writes: What I want more than anything is to have a happy home. This wish has been denied to me because my husband is unable to make an adequate living for me and the children. Does Astrology show any prospect of improvement for us? I was born May 4, 1925. My husband was born November 26, 1923.

What your horoscopes reveal: When you want something, you keep on wanting it until you get it. Now that you want a happy home, you won’t give up until your heart’s desire is realized. You may have to wait a couple of years, however, because of obstacles put in your way by the continued difficulties that your husband has to overcome.

He has Sun in the Sign Sagittarius, which inclines him to be kind and generous. He would like nothing better than to surround you with all the bounties of wealth. No doubt he has done a great deal for you in the past, and will continue to look after you in the future.

He is starting to do well, perhaps, in a new career. Therefore, it may be hard for him to make the progress he is capable of achieving. Try not to nag him. Give him a break, and he will do his best to buy you a house. Can you refrain from being impatient?

Love and Romance

Donald A. G. writes: I have never been
able to decide which is more important in my life, music or romance. The only trouble is that the kind of love I want has not come into my life, and so far I have been unable to find a market for the songs I write. What is there in my horoscope that accounts for these strange restrictions? I was born September 22, 1914.

What your horoscope reveals: Actually there is no reason for you to feel restricted since you have the mental equipment plus the intellectual drive to be an inspired musician. The creative efforts you put out should bring their own rewards within the next year or two while transiting Uranus moves forward to conjoin your natal Pluto.

That aspect should be favorable also to a sudden romantic experience since the Uranus-Pluto conjunction will be in exact sextile aspect with your Sun in the Sign Virgo.

The only trouble is that you might feel inhibited, allowing the opportunity for happiness to pass, or you might be unable to meet the challenge of new musical trends. Although you can be aggressive in thought, you can't always make up your mind to carry out your plans. Stick to your purpose during the next couple of years, and you may be surprised at the wonderful progress you can make in achieving success through music and happiness through romance.

Mother-Daughter Complex

Mrs. Florence S. D. writes: For some reason that I cannot fathom my daughter holds a grudge against me. She thinks it is my fault that she married the wrong man, and she blames me for not having a happy life. She thinks I should have let her study for the stage. Can Astrology explain this awful family situation? I was born January 3, 1908. My daughter was born January 4, 1931.

What your horoscopes reveal: The similarities and contrasts in your birth chart and in that of your daughter are almost perfect examples of why serious conflicts arise in many families. You have Sun, Moon, Mercury, Uranus, and the Moon's North Node in the Sign Capricorn. This stellium inclines you to be self-centered. What you probably want more than anything is to be a celebrity.

At the same time you have a strong sense of duty toward the members of your family. This is revealed by the exact conjunction in your horoscope between Neptune and the Moon's North Node in the Sign Cancer, which rules home and family.

In some ways this is a wonderful combination, but there also is a tendency toward friction since these aspects in your birth chart are in zodiacal opposition. At times you behave as if you had a split personality.

When your daughter was born an equally powerful stellium occurred in the Sign Capricorn. This time it was formed by the Sun-Saturn conjunction, close to Mercury, opposed by Jupiter and the Moon in the Sign Cancer.

Since Saturn is so strongly accented in your daughter's birth chart, she is inclined to be even more determined than you. The Moon typifies women, and the Sign Cancer signifies motherhood. That means that you and your daughter are more alike in temperament than either of you realize.

You think she has a grudge against you, and she thinks that you misunderstand her. A little tact and sympathy on your part could go far to straighten things out so that you can begin to appreciate each other. Try to see things from her viewpoint. With a little prodding on your part, everything should turn out well.

Lonely Widows

Mrs. Cora T. S. writes: After the death of my husband I was almost sick with grief and loneliness. A friend of mine, also a widow, was so kind and compassionate that I began to depend on her more and more as time went on. We both thought it would be a good idea if she came to live at my place since I owned the house, and she had only a small apartment. This was about five years ago. Now she has become so domineering that I can't call my soul my own. She runs the place, and I pay all the expenses. What does Astrology show about my chance to break this yoke? I was born April 5, 1895. My friend was born August 29, 1899.

What your horoscopes reveal: The disturbed domestic condition you describe can be traced to the current transit of Uranus through you Fourth House, which rules home matters. This transit is to continue until 1955, so it may take another couple of years before you find a solution of your problem.

The only alternative is to sell your house. The Planet Jupiter, symbol of good fortune, transits your Fourth House this year. There-
What Astrology Reveals About

ROMANCE

A Guide to Emotional Enchantment

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fore, you may be able to obtain a good price for it. Make sure, however, that the cash is well invested.

Since your friend has Sun in the Sign Virgo, which rules health, she might claim that what she has done for you in recent years has undermined her physical condition. In all likelihood she may want you to assume the responsibility of looking after her. To forestall this situation, you might complain about being worn-out.

You may have to compensate her financially for the time she spent at your home. This, according to what you say, is not fair. Nevertheless, it might be the cheapest way to get out of a burdensome condition.

A Wonderful Future

Ann D. B. writes: My sweetheart and I want to get married, but he still has to finish dental school. Due to an accident when he was a child, a broken ankle he had never healed properly. This weakness kept him out of the Army. He is so patriotic that his conscience bothers him. He thinks he should go in for veterans' rehabilitation service rather than open a private office after he graduates. He insists we should get married, and that I should hold on to my job until he has carried out his self-assumed assignment. Can you please tell me what the Stars reveal about this problem? I was born November 6, 1935. My sweetheart was born February 27, 1933.

What your horoscopes reveal: Your sweetheart is a born philanthropist since he has Sun in the Sign Pisces which rules welfare service. You are the more practical of the
two because at your birth the Sun occupied the Sign Scorpio which rules security. When you think of marriage, you visualize a well-established home with enough income to pay for comforts and conveniences as well as a sufficient margin for steady saving.

You don’t like to live from hand to mouth. You would like to put off the wedding until you are sure that you won’t have to worry about household funds. Instead, you probably will agree with your sweetheart to get married when he graduates, and to continue working until he carries out his public service task.

The reason you will decide to take a chance is because of the beneficent alliance between his Sun in trine formation with your Sun. You and he could have a wonderful time while preparing for a wonderful future!

Home or Travel?

John W. A. writes: My wife and I want to buy a new home in the suburbs. We have found just the place that suits our purpose, but the price is higher than we expected to pay so we will have to take on a bigger mortgage. Can we find out through Astrology whether we will be able to meet the extra financial burden? I was born February 4, 1918. My wife was born June 11, 1922.

What your horoscopes reveal: Buying a home may prove a fairly good investment. Nevertheless, you and your wife should not tie yourselves down too much with property ownership. You like to feel free since you have Sun in the Sign Aquarius which rules independence. Your wife likes frequent change because she has Sun in the Sign Gemini which rules short trips.

Unless your budget includes money for travel, both of you may become bored with the monotony of staying at home. This is something that should be given serious consideration before you sign the contract for the new home.

Well-Matched Couple

Lola U. T. writes: My brother is dating a girl three years older than he is. She is attractive but she has the reputation of being a flirt. She has broken two engagements, and she boasts of her popularity with men. Mother is heartsick, but Dad shrugs his shoulders. Can I find out through Astrology if they are suited to each other? My brother was born July 26, 1925. The young lady was born December 18, 1922.

What your horoscopes reveal: Despite your apprehension the romance between your brother and his girl friend should go along smoothly. They understand each other since his Sun in the Sign Leo is in trine formation with her Sun and Moon in the Sign Sagittarius.

She is vivacious, matching his social temperament admirably. He likes to mingle with people who are clever. Both can be fascinating and courteous. Your brother is old enough to make up his own mind about love and marriage. Therefore, it is best to leave the matter where it is—namely in his own competent hands.

Regretful Divorcee

Mrs. Kate L. V. writes: After my divorce I realized that I made a mistake in parting from my husband. We had a lot of differences, but somehow we always made up. He never married again, nor did I. Is it possible to find out in our horoscopes about a reconciliation? I was born June 18, 1907. My former husband was born May 26, 1906.

What your horoscopes reveal: Both you and your former husband have Sun in the Sign Gemini. Therefore, whatever influences affect one can affect the other. That is why you both agreed to disagree!

On the other hand, you might both agree to remarry although the prospect of harmony between you is no greater in the future than it was in the past. Each of you will remain the same in outlook and feeling. That might mean another break in the union. Would you and he be willing to go through the same experience?

Marriage Prospects

Margaret E. F. writes: All my sisters married early. I am the only one who remained a bachelor girl. Although I am still young, my friends and relatives are beginning to think that I am destined to be a spinster. What does my horoscope show about marriage? I was born April 3, 1927.

What your horoscope reveals: Romance can come into your life in a most unexpected manner, perhaps on a trip or through the introduction to an eligible man by someone who is invited to be your house guest for a weekend. It is just as well that wedding bells
did not ring for you during the last two or three years while conjoined Saturn—Neptune in your Seventh House, which rules marriage, opposed your Sun in the Sign Aries.

Now that Saturn has moved away from this position, the strictures against marriage are not so rigid. You may surprise yourself and everyone else by marrying someone who is rich. This is indicated by the fact that at your birth the Moon and Venus were conjoined in the Sign Taurus which rules wealth.

Temporary Fascination

Mrs. Glenda C. O. writes: Last winter I fell deeply in love with a man who came to live with his sister in our neighborhood. He seems to care for me, but since I have a husband and three children, I am not sure of what the outcome will be. I was born February 12, 1920. He was born October 1, 1917. My husband was born December 15, 1915.

What your horoscopes reveal: You are attracted to the newcomer since your Sun in the Sign Aquarius is in trine formation with his Sun in the Sign Libra. You and he could have been happy as a man and wife. Had you known each other when you were still single, he might have proposed. Now there is a barrier that stands in the way. This obstacle, of course, is the fact that you are a wife and mother already.

At present he has Neptune, symbol of illusion, in his Seventh House which rules marriage. Therefore, the attraction between you is transitory. Your ardor for him may pass out of your life like smoke from a chimney, without leaving a trace in your mind or memory. Instead of feeling heartbroken, be grateful that you have the emotional zest to fall in love with an attractive man, temporarily.

There is an excellent foundation for love between you and your husband since his Sun and Mercury in the Sign Sagittarius conjoin your Moon, in sextile formation with your Moon. The man you married can continue to bring security and happiness into your life.

Invalid Father

Sylvia C. M. writes: My father has been invalid for three years. I had to give up school, and mother has to work. We both fret a lot because we are so tired. A friend of the family, almost twice my age, suggests that my married sister and her husband should take over the job of caring for my father, while I come to his house to rest up. The offer is tempting, but Mother does not approve. What do the Stars reveal for me? I was born August 5, 1936. My adopted "uncle" was born October 31, 1903.

What your horoscopes reveal: The plan might work out for a while, but in the long run you may regret the decision to leave your parents in the lurch while you live in indolence. Turning your back against personal responsibilities would not make you happy since you have Sun in the Sign Leo which rules loyalty.

Also, you have Moon and Saturn in the Sign Pisces which rules service to the sick and needy. Surely, there is no one who needs you more than your own parents.

Furthermore, there might be a clash between you and the man who wants to assume your support. The tension might result from his being too strict with you in some ways. He might even propose marriage. Everything could tumble down for both of you since your Sun is in square aspect with his Sun in the Sign Scorpio. Let well enough alone.

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Kathy yearned for the single life again, and all she had to do was—say the word

A Lesson for Kathy

By FRANCES YOU LIN McHUGH

Kathy stood for a moment looking up at the heavens through the window of her son’s room. The evening star was bright and the moon was a silver sliver hanging in the high plush darkness.

A sigh escaped her. Back in the days when she was an individual, she used to be home from her office at this time, dressing for an exciting dinner and eve-
ning date—usually with Jim.

But that was before they were married—when they were still in love, and he used to call her, Kitten. That was back in the days when he used to take her to The Candlelight Club and tell her how beautiful she was. When they used to skate in Rockefeller Plaza of a clear, cold winter evening, and be glad just to be alive—and together. When, in the summer, they went down to Jones Beach on a Saturday or Sunday and, after an invigorating swim in the surf, lay on the warm sands, side by side and tried to see who could get the nicest tan without getting burned to a crisp.

Then there were the dinners at the little out-of-the-way places in the Village where, over café espresso, or vino, they used to plan their future life—together.

It had all sounded so wonderful—when they talked about it. But living it, trying to keep up with the payments on the house—with all the money having to go back into Jim’s business—that was something else.

Now, a dinner and evening date meant only boredom. Like the one ahead of them tonight. It was just an excuse to get out of the house they’d planned so carefully—back in those days.

Drawing the shade, Kathy tiptoed to the maple bed, gently touched the tangled curls on the head of four-year-old Bobby.

He was almost asleep, exhausted from a day of trying to prove to his contemporaries that his shrill, “Bampa bamp bamp!” was a better imitation of a machine gun than theirs, but he roused himself enough to say, “Daddy’s awful late, isn’t he?”

As if it corroborated this sage statement, the banjo clock down in the living room struck seven.

She said, “Yes, he is.”

“Are you going down to the station again, so I can take care of the house?”

A cocker spaniel, curled up on the bed said, “Ruff!”

She said, “No. I certainly am not!”

The phone rang and she hurried across the hall to the large room she shared with Jim.

With her, went a recurring thought that had been bothering her for days—no, weeks—even months. It seemed to be perched on her shoulder like an evil genie, whispering, What does a woman do when she falls out of love with her husband and has a son to bring up?

What, she asked herself, had become of all those golden dreams she’d had?

SWINGING around the foot of one of the twin beds she banged her hip on the post, reached the night table and caught up the receiver on the third ring. “Hello?”

“Hello Kathy, I’m down at the station.”

“Oh, Jim! Well, it’s about time! I met two trains, and you know we’re due at Lanson’s at seven thirty.” There I go, sounding off like a typical nagging wife. When you get that way it’s time to do something about it.

Jim was saying, “I know, Kathy. I’m sorry I’m late. But I just couldn’t get away any earlier. We had a conference about the Brandon account. I’ll come up in a taxi. I know you can’t leave Junior.”

To the marriage vows should be added; I promise not to go nuts when my husband gets on my nerves! If Jim wasn’t so goshdarn casual about everything. If he’d only worry about something once in a while!

“All right, Jim. And for goodness sake hurry!”

Hanging up the receiver she peeled off her clothes and took a quick shower, thinking: Brandon account! Brandon account! Our whole family is being sacrificed on the altar of the Brandon account. Jim ought to be married to his damn advertising agency and the Brandon account, instead of to a flesh and blood woman!

She was slipping on her old black dinner dress when Jim arrived. He came upstairs slowly. That meant he was tired. He appeared in the door-
way with a sheepish grin. "Sorry," he said, "but I couldn't help it."

A quick look at him showed her how really tired he was. His dark eyes didn't have their usual sparkle, and there were new lines in his handsome young face. His collar was wilted in spite of the fact that it had been a cool day, and his brown curly hair was mussed, the way it got when he kept running his fingers through it. He tossed his hat and overcoat on one of the beds and she had an urge to say, "Would you rather not go tonight?"

But her better judgment warned: Now don't go getting soft hearted. Tell him tonight you think it would be better for all of us if we separated. No use dragging it out. A good clean break. That's the best way.

She batted powder on her nose with a puff that needed washing. But she'd long since given up doing little things for herself, like washing powder puffs. She said, "I do wish you'd hurry and dress, Jim. Your tux is in my closet. It's nearly seven-thirty now. It does seem as though you could have come home a little early tonight. You know I've been cooped up here for over two weeks, with Bobby having the measles and that cold and everything."

"Do I have to get into a tux?" Jim asked wearily.

"Yes. Adele said they were going to dress. She thinks it makes the evening seem more festive, or something."

Jim grunted, then asked, "Bobby's all right now, isn't he?"

"Yes, of course. But you just don't even try to understand." She attacked her short blonde hair with a rat-tail comb. "You get out every day—see people—do things, the way I used to. You have a ride on the train twice a day and get a good rest. I have to work right on through. I never get a chance to sit quietly in the train and read a newspaper twice a day!" How I used to hate women who talked like that, she reminded herself, and now I'm as bad, and worse.

"I'm sorry, Kathy." Jim's perpetual patience was one of the most maddening things about him. If he'd only snap back occasionally.

"For goodness sakes, hurry!"

"All right, so I'll hurry!" As he took off his suit coat, vest and shirt, he watched her. "Say, that's a pretty dress. New?"

A FEW years ago she could have been moved by the admiration in his eyes, but now she knew it was just a line, and she could feel herself freezing solid with righteous wrath. "This dress—my friend and unobservant husband—is exactly one year and one month old! I've worn it to every evening affair we've attended for exactly that length of time. Pretty, it may have been, in its heyday. But now it rates a well-deserved rest in a museum!"

Leaning closer to the mirror, she pretended to fix her hair in front. Then throwing the comb on the bureau, went to work on her eyes; first eye shadow, then mascara. Not because either improved the blue of her eyes, but because she knew Jim didn't like her to use heavy make-up. For the same reason, she put on an extra layer of lipstick.

"Busy today?" she asked. It was a stock question. She'd long since given up listening to the answers.

Jim went into the bathroom. "I'll say I was busy. This morning I was negotiating for that big office on the corner next to us and this afternoon we had a conference with Brandon."

She stepped back and tried to see the bottom of her skirt in the mirror. Thank goodness my figure hasn't changed much. It's still youthful in its proportions, considering the fact I'm twenty-five and have had a child.

Raising her voice she called, "For the love of Pete, don't start talking Brandon now!" Brides should be given a special potion at the altar to make them immune to conversations about their husband's clients, she fumed inwardly.

Jim came and stood in the doorway
drying his face with a large rose-colored towel. "What's the matter with you lately, Kathy? You snap me up every time I open my mouth!"

Now's your chance. Tell him now. Tell him you're so fed up with marriage, you can't stand it another week—another day!

Turning to face him, she hoped the look she tossed his way held the scorn she felt. "Matter with me? Matter with me? You try taking care of a house and a baby with measles, and cook and scrub and wash and iron and all the rest of it, and see how pleasant you are at the end of a day. You men make me sick! You sit in nice comfortable offices all day, and have stenographers to wait on you and..."

Tears came into her eyes but she blinked them back. If they ran over, they'd mess her make-up. "Some women have help! Even now! At the outrageous prices they charge!" Her voice wasn't very steady. "But I have to do everything myself!"

Go on, feel sorry for yourself. You got tired of business and were glad enough to get married. And now you're kicking—just like all the rest of the fat-headed parasites that call themselves wives!

Jim dried his hands carefully, as if they were very important and needed particular attention. He said, "I'm sorry, Kathy. I'll help you all I can week-ends, until we can get a maid again, for a price we can afford. After all, we're still young. We can't have everything right in the beginning."

"You help?" she cried. "A great help you are! If you think you were helping me last Saturday, when you washed the kitchen floor with that cleaning powder I use on the sink, then didn't wash it off enough, you're mistaken!" Go on, make him feel cheap! Show him what a superior being you are!

Jim grinned. "That was dumb, wasn't it? But believe me, I was as astonished as you, when I saw my footprints in white, all through the dining room, living room and upstairs."

"Your footprints!" Kathy's voice was a wail. "You mean yours, and Bobby's and the dog's. And the dog has four feet!" Now the tears just oozed out of their own accord. But she didn't care. To heck with the fancy make-up. "And I didn't see anything funny about it!" Her voice was as petulant as Bobby's when he was sick. And girls went out of their way to get married—the fools! It would be funny, if it wasn't so tragic.

The grin left Jim's face and the new lines became etched more deeply. "You wouldn't see anything funny about it," he said grimly. "But you'll make a fine story of it, for the benefit of the Lansons and the rest of them. It will be hilarious then!" He turned and went back to the bathroom and Kathy repaired the damages to her face which the tears had caused.

"Can't take it, hey?" she called after him. That's right, be nasty—show him just what kind of a wife you've turned out to be.

"I can take just so much," Jim called back. "But if you tell that story tonight, I'm through!"

"Is that a threat or a promise?" This is getting out of hand. But isn't it just what I wanted? Didn't I want things to come to a head tonight?

Jim said, "It's a promise. And if you don't think I mean it—tell your story at that party!"

So he'd be through, would he? The nerve of him! Well, be through, Mister, and see if I care. Maybe that's my way out?

The clock down in the living room struck once. "There, do you hear that, Jim Crosby? It's seven-thirty and you haven't even gone for Mrs. Jones. She's going to stay with Bobby. Now I suppose I'll have to go, or we'll never get to the Lansons."

There you go, with that superior being stuff again! Who the heck do you think you are? Well, I'm a human being—that's what. And I'm fed up!
“If you would go for her,” Jim suggested, “I could have a quick shave.”

“Oh, all right.” Kathy went to the closet for her coat. “I wish I had a decent evening wrap,” she said, more to herself than to anyone in particular.

That was another thing about being married; you never had any decent clothes to wear, when your husband kept putting all his money into his business, the way Jim did.

He appeared in the doorway again. This time he was meticulously rubbing shaving cream into his face. “What’s the matter with your fur coat?” His eyes looked owlish, peering out from the lather.

As she put on the slightly old-fashioned full-length coat, she gave him, this time, what she hoped was a very dirty look. “There’s nothing the matter with it,” she said sweetly. “Only it’s six years old, has been remodeled twice, and was only rabbit, dyed to look like seal, in the first place.”

The owlish eyes took on an expression of puzzlement. Without answering her, he returned to the bathroom, and she could hear him begin to scrape his face and neck with a razor. It gave her a certain pleasure, to think of the sharp blade so close to his throat.

After a moment of scraping he called, “What would you like for an evening wrap, if you could have just what you wanted?”

Her answer came quick, as if she’d had it in readiness. “A mink cape. Hip length.” With nervous fingers she transferred car keys, license and money, from her every day purse to an evening purse.

“Hip length?” Jim said. “Wouldn’t that leave the bottom of you a bit—wind-swept?” A chuckle followed the words, but she refused to echo it.

“My pride would keep me warm, from where the mink stopped, on down!” she told him.

“I’d rather have red flannel myself,” Jim called, as she started down the stairs. She could feel him watching her from the bathroom doorway but she didn’t turn around.

“You would!” She flung the words over her shoulder, went out the front door and slammed it behind her. She really hadn’t meant to slam the door but it reacted to her vehemence. If it only hadn’t wakened Bobby, she stopped to listen, but everything was quiet, so she went on down to the garage.

A few minutes later, returning to the house with Mrs. Jones, she picked up a very slick, sleek and good-looking Jim. But she was in no mood to be swayed by any man’s attractive looks tonight—least of all her husband’s.

It was nearly eight when they finally arrived at the Lansons’. Any similarity between Kathy and a happily married young woman, was purely coincidental.

Adele Lanson’s charming white clapboard, seven room house, which her father had given her as a wedding present, was up on a terrace overlooking a brook. Climbing the steps, Jim rang the bell and silently they waited to be admitted.

But it took several moments before sharp heeled footsteps came and the door was opened. Adele, tall slender and charming, said, “Oh, come in,” and smiled a welcome. But Kathy knew instantly there was something wrong with that smile.

Adele was a couple of years older than she, nearer Jim’s age of twenty-seven. Tonight her black hair was sleek and sculptured. Her dress was black, with a blouse of pink chiffon. She said, “Just hang your things here in the vestibule closet.” Her voice was tight. “I’ve got to hurry back to the kitchen and clean up the mess Jeff’s made there.”

**WITH** each word, the voice became more brittle. “Anna had the nicest canapés all set out on a tray, and Jeff upset the whole darned business, upside-down! Everytime he goes into the kitchen to mix a drink, he either upsets or breaks something, and I’m sick and tired of it!”

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Leaving them to put their wraps away, she stalked through the doorway and they saw her cross the living room, go through the dining room, and disappear into what they knew to be the kitchen.

Jim whispered to Kathy, “Poor Jeff!”

Poor Jeff, indeed! Men were all alike. They couldn’t do the smallest thing, without messing it all up.

She made no comment aloud, but she could feel the marital distance between herself and Jim widen like a cracking glacier.

Their wraps disposed of, they went into the living room and Jim lit a cigarette for her, then one for himself. Then they sat down on opposite sides of the room.

Loud altercation was coming from the kitchen, then Jeff, his one hundred and eighty pounds looking stiff and uncomfortable in a tux, came in, carrying a tray containing a large cocktail shaker, glasses and a pewter bowl full of potato chips.

He was of medium height, not quite as tall as Adele, and for that reason, his weight made him look fat. His hair and eyes were light brown. “Hello folks,” he said pleasantly. “Afraid you’ll have to be satisfied with potato chips. I had a little accident with the canapés.”

Kathy and Jim smiled tolerantly. “So we’ve heard,” Jim said.

Kathy thought Jeff’s eyes looked tired, and there was a stoop to his broad shoulders she’d never noticed before. Or had she, and just never given it a thought?

The bell rang and Sue and Dick Winthrop came in. Sue had on a stunning red dinner dress and a short mink cape, like Kathy wanted. Sue was tall and slender and blonde and Dick looked enough like her to be her brother.

Their wraps disposed of, they came into the living room and sat down; as far away from each other as possible. “I’m mad as hell!” Sue said, lighting a cigarette.

[Turn page]
Kathy was ready to sympathize—or was she hoping for a kindred spirit in her revolt against matrimony? “What’s the matter?” she asked.

Sue blew smoke up to the ceiling and wrinkled her dainty nose at it. “Oh, I asked Dick to bring me a carton of my special brand of cigarettes tonight, and he came home with these awful things!”

Dick frowned. “I told you I didn’t have time to go over to Fifth Avenue for the others,” he said crossly. “I just barely had time to make my train.”

Another man—and cut from the very same pattern as Jim and Jeff!

Adele came back from the kitchen looking warm and ill-tempered. She had a plate of round crackers, upon each of which a dab of yellow cheese had been melted, then paprika sprinkled over the top.

Seeing the bowl of potato chips, she stood looking down at it. “Jeff,” she said, “I’ve told you time and time again, not to put potato chips in that pewter bowl. The salt just eats the pewter right off. That’s what those black spots are.”

Jeff looked contrite. “Sorry, I’ll put them into something else.”

Adele sighed. “Oh, never mind now. Pass these, will you?” She handed him the plate of cheese crackers and sat down wearily, “If it hadn’t been for his stupid clumsiness, we’d have some decent canapés,” she told everyone. “Anna makes gorgeous ones.”

UNEXPECTEDLY, a wave of sympathy for Jeff washed over Kathy. But why should I feel sorry for him? Men don’t need sympathy. It’s the women who need it. But she heard herself saying, “Oh, I shouldn’t eat fancy things anyway. My girlish figure, you know.”

Jeff was standing in front of her with the plate of crackers. She looked up and their eyes met. Was there a look of gratitude in the depths of his?

“I’m sure Jeff couldn’t help knocking over the canapés,” she told Adele, taking one of the cheese crackers. Well, Adele was rubbing it in a little. After all, why such a fuss over some old canapés? Then an old saying came to her: Take the beam out of your own eye, before you criticize the mote in somebody else’s.

Adele stood up, poured the cocktails and began passing them. “Oh no, Jeff can’t ever help anything! Did I ever tell you about what he did last summer?”

Jeff’s lips tightened. “Cut it out, will you?” he snapped.

Adele laughed coyly, ignoring him. “He left the electric iron turned on for two days, while I was up at Mother’s. It was just a miracle it didn’t set the house on fire! It burned a hole through the ironing board cover, of course, and scorched a big place on the board itself—but it was just a miracle. Imagine, it was on for two days and nights!”

The girls laughed and the men smiled—faintly—very faintly.

In the momentary silence that followed, Kathy tensed herself to tell her story about Jim and the kitchen floor. She could really make a good story of it and it would bring things to a head between them. And Jim was sitting there waiting for her to do it. Maybe he even wanted her to, as an excuse to get out himself? A cold chill crept up her back. Well, here goes! She opened her lips to speak, but just then the Browns arrived.

Letty Brown was cute and petite, with blue eyes and reddish hair. Ned Brown was a little taller and quite fat, even fatter than Jeff, with a round jovial face and blond hair, and eyes as blue as Letty’s. They were about the same age as the rest of the crowd.

“I’m sorry we’re late,” Letty said. “But just wait until you hear why.” She giggled, then her pretty face sobered and she threw a dirty look in Ned’s direction. Giving Jeff her wrap she dropped down on the sofa beside Kathy. “Give me a drink somebody, I need it.”

Adele poured a cocktail and gave it to her. “What happened? The kids all right?”
Letty settled back comfortably. "Oh sure. The kids are fine. But—well, when Ned and I were dressing, I discovered there was a button off this dress. You know the darn thing fastens up the back, and the top button is always coming off. So I asked Ned if he'd pin it for me. He was tying his necktie and he gave it a yank, as if I'd asked him to go to the moon or something. Then he said, 'Sure, sure.' "Well, instead of going right up to the dresser for the pin, he reached over my shoulder for it—and my new box of expensive face powder went all over the rug! And you know, the rug is black! Mother gave it to me to go with my new white drapes and my zebra striped chairs."

There was an assembled sound of pity from both men and girls. But Kathy had the feeling the sympathy from the girls was directed towards Letty, while the men's sympathy was for Ned. And this time she wasn't quite sure where her own belonged. In fact, she was beginning to feel a bit muddled about life in general. Maybe the men didn't get such a good break, after all? "But wait," Letty cried. "That isn't the half of it. He wasn't satisfied with that much damage. He had to go for the vacuum cleaner!" She launched into a long detailed story of how Ned, after cleaning the carpet, had let the handle of the cleaner fall against a window. Reaching the climax she said, "There was a splintering crash!" Then she waited dramatically.

The jovial look Ned had had on his face when he came in, had gradually disappeared, like the fadeout of a television scene. Now, two deep lines were between his brows. His lips were shaped into a smile but there was no reflection of the smile in his tired eyes. Kathy felt queer way down deep in the pit of her stomach. These friends of hers and Jim's. They were all so young. Nice people, successful in business, nice homes.

Yet they were all miserable. [Turn page]
KATHY, watching Ned, saw for the first time, the crow’s feet around his eyes; the tight little lines around his mouth. She knew his business was having a hard time just now because of all the taxes, but he’d been successful, for one so young, even so. And she’d never heard him complain. Perhaps inside, men didn’t take things as casually as they appeared to.

She turned her attention to Dick and discovered a hunted look in his young eyes, she never noticed before. He was a junior partner in a firm of corporation lawyers and was making money. But all of a sudden, Kathy seemed to discover he wasn’t happy.

Her tummy felt a bit wobbly at the thought. She’d always taken the happiness of her friends for granted, the way she had her own—until lately. But come to think of it, they all seemed to be heading for the matrimonial rocks—like herself and Jim.

And over what? It’s these constant little scraps that cause all the trouble. Nothing big—just the little things; like the fuss Jim and I had about his washing the kitchen floor last week. And tonight; those were mere surface words. Beneath them, in my heart, I’ve resented Jim considering that additional office space. If he hadn’t been planning on that for months, there would be enough money for my mink cape, and a maid. But everything we can save, has to go back into the business, just because he’s president and owns the gosh darn place.

Unconsciously she frowned at Jim. Then was startled to see the look that came into his eyes. Once she’d seen a fox at bay, up in Connecticut, with six dogs barking at it. That was the kind of a look in Jim’s eyes. She ought to be ashamed of herself, she thought. She should be proud of him for getting to be president of his own business so young.

He said, “Go on, tell your story now—about my washing the kitchen floor and leaving it thick with white cleaning powder.”

Yes, tell your story, Kathy. Jim had warned; “If you tell that story I’m through.” Well, that would simplify the whole thing and tomorrow I could pack up and go home with Mother and Dad. They’d love to have me and Bobby.

But suddenly she wanted to cry instead. She finished her cocktail in one gulp and then, shaking away the tears, she smiled across the room at Jim. Everyone was waiting expectantly for her story, but somehow she couldn’t tell it. Something held the words back; something stronger than herself.

Instead, she said, “Oh well, that could happen to anybody.” She included the room full of people in her smile. “Jim was such a dear when Bobby was sick. I never could have managed without him.”

Dinner was announced just then, so she was able to avoid Jim’s eyes, without it being noticeable. Slowly everyone stood up and went into the so typically suburban dining room, with its blue walls, white woodwork and venetian blinds. The table was covered with a lace cloth, candles burned in silver holders, and gleaming silver and sparkling glass completed the picture.

Kathy sat next to Ned. “You know, Kathy,” he said, “when our little girl grows up, I hope she’s as nice as you are, and I hope she’s as happily married as you and Jim.”

To cover her embarrassment, Kathy gave a nervous little laugh. Did she really deserve such a compliment? Fortunately the conversation around the table was general, so no one else heard.

After they finished their fruit cup and Jeff was carving a golden brown turkey, he said, “The choicest piece goes to Kathy tonight.” He laughed. “Turkey in the spring. Well, I guess that’s the way life is these days.”

Reaching for an olive, Kathy wondered if she was blushing. “Oh, but why should I have a choice piece?” Her words were shaky.

Jeff carefully lifted off a large slice of breast and, knife in mid-air, he
smiled at her across the candle flame. "Oh, I don't know," he said, "unless it's because I kind of like you tonight."

AFTER dinner they played bridge. Kathy was still avoiding Jim's eyes. She avoided also being placed at the same bridge table with him and eventually found herself playing opposite Dick. She didn't like to play with him because he was an expert player and didn't have too much patience with anyone who made mistakes. But tonight, even though she did several very silly things, Dick was patient. Once she said, "I'm sorry Dick, that was just stupid of me. I should have followed your lead." But instead of agreeing with her, as he usually did, under such conditions, he smiled. "Anything you do, Kathy, is okay by me," he said.

As twelve o'clock neared, Kathy began to dread the breaking up of the party because then she and Jim would be alone, and eventually she'd have to meet his eyes. Would she see disappointment in them, because she hadn't told her story, and given him a way out?

The time for her question to be answered came all too soon and at twelve-thirty, as she told Adele and Jeff, "We've had a lovely evening," she still avoided her husband's eyes.

"Swell party," Ned said, right after her.

Then Sue raved, "The dinner was simply marvelous!"

"Thanks for a lovely evening," Letty said sweetly.

"That goes for me too," Dick interposed.

It was a pattern. Every piece dovetailed, keeping everything of a harmonizing tone. But beneath the pattern Kathy could feel the chaos heaving its bilge around in a seething that would eventually churn up and spoil the lovely picture they were making tonight.

The inevitable moment arrived. At the door, Kathy had to wait for Jim. He

[Turn page]
was shaking hands with Adele. "This is the nicest evening I’ve ever had in my life," he told her. Of course he was lying, but that was like Jim, always trying to make people comfortable. Something caught at her throat; clutched at her heart.

But maybe he really meant it? But why? Quickly she glanced at each of the men in turn; Jeff, Ned, Dick—all looked ineffably tired; discouraged, disheartened. And not one of them had yet reached thirty. Jim alone, somewhere during the evening, had lost his tired look. Now his eyes sparkled and the new lines she’d noticed in his handsome young face, earlier in the evening, were gone.

To her surprise he came and put an arm around her. "Well, what do you say, Kitten? Shall we run along?" He hadn’t called her "Kitten" in over a year.

Turning, she stumbled out of the house, tears blinding her eyes. Some way she got down the steps and into the car. Some way? She got down the steps and into the car, because Jim had a strong grip on her arm. Jim always had a strong helping hand to offer, when she needed it.

Jim walked around the car and slid in beside her, switched on the lights, started the motor. It was nice and cozy there, all alone—with Jim. She felt like a teen-ager out with her boy friend—the way she used to feel when they had those exciting evening dates, before they were married, when she was still an individual. Or was she the individual now, having been only a person in embryo, before she was Jim’s wife?

As Jim started the car, she leaned against his shoulder. "Nice party, wasn’t it?" she said with a comfortable yawn.

That’s one nice thing about being married, you can be yourself, not always putting on a show. If you feel like yawning—you yawn.

"It was a swell party," Jim said.

"Only I feel kind of sorry for Dick and Ned and Jeff."

"Why?"

"Because they haven’t got you for a wife."

A sob started way down deep inside her but before it escaped, she turned and kissed his cheek.

"I think," he said, "that instead of taking that large corner office, I’ll try to get the smaller one on the other side. Then you can have your mink cape, and we really don’t need so much more space, now we’ve lost the Brandon account."

Her heart gave a large leap and then seemed to stop beating. Sitting up stiff and straight she cried, "Oh Jim! And that was your best account!"

"Well, maybe we’ll get another, soon."

He is always so casual about everything. But this hurts. He doesn’t have to tell me, I know. "When did you find out?"

"At that conference this afternoon. That’s why I was so late tonight. They finally decided on using a bigger and better equipped agency."

"Oh." If someone had just quietly pulled the earth out from under her, she couldn’t have felt worse. The Brandon account—the curse of her life—and now it was gone. "And you never told me when you came home tonight." He’s always so casual about everything! "We needn’t have gone out. You probably didn’t feel a bit like it, with all that you have on your mind."

He turned the car into their driveway. "Oh well," he said, "I’m glad now, we did go."

There was only a dim light in the living room. Mrs. Jones was probably taking a nap on the sofa. Kathy hoped she’d put a newspaper beneath her feet before lying down.

Jim switched off the ignition. "Why don’t you ask Mrs. Jones if she can come and stay with Bobby tomorrow? And you run into town for your mink cape?"

She felt hot tears trickling down her face. Her make-up would be a mess, but it didn’t matter now. She’d have it all
washed off anyway, before Jim got back from taking Mrs. Jones home.

"I don't really need such an expensive wrap." Her voice predicted sobs. "This coat's still all right for daytime. And it's getting too hot for it this year anyway. Next fall, if I get a full length black velveteen for evening, I'll be all right. And that wouldn't cost much."

She stepped out of the car, then turned around. Her heart was beating again, wildly, exultantly. "And Jim, did I ever tell you—I love you?"

He grinned. "Not in a long time. But as soon as I get back from taking Mrs. Jones home, you can tell me more about it. It's an interesting subject."

Blinded by tears, she stumbled up the porch steps. How awful if I'd told that silly story tonight and—lost Jim! Women can be such fools!

She opened the door and stepped into the hall, saying breathlessly, "Mrs. Jones, my husband is waiting for you in the car. And please hurry, because—he wants to get home quickly tonight. It's very important."

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**DID YOU KNOW?**

That in a female, the ring finger is usually shorter than the first or index finger; in a male the exact opposite is true, the ring finger being usually longer than the index finger.

That a woman's heart normally beats on the average of about 8 times per minute faster than a man's does.

That the average adult male brain weighs 49 ounces; the average adult female brain only 44 ounces.

That American women average 53 minutes more sleep nightly than do men.

That the average age at the time of their first marriage is 21 for females, and 23 for males.

—Joseph C. Stacey
THE FRIENDLY SET invites you to receive interesting letters—and find new friends who are sincere and worth while. To introduce yourself write to me—addressing your letter to Mrs. Elizabeth Elder, care of THRILLING LOVE, 10 East 40th Street, New York 16, N. Y.

Give me a nickname under which you want your letter to be published. It will be only under this name that other readers will know you. They will write to you in my care—and I will forward their letters.

No letter will be forwarded unless a stamped envelope is enclosed. After the first letter, direct correspondence between you and your new friends will have been established.

IMPORTANT: In writing to me, or in requesting me to forward your letters, do not neglect to state your name, address, age, and sex.

In asking that letters be forwarded, clearly print the number assigned to your chosen friend on the stamped envelope which you enclose. All letters should be written neatly in ink. Do not seal the letter that you wish forwarded.

Elizabeth Elder

WANTS TRUE FRIENDS
Dear Mrs. Elder: I am a widow age 42, I have dark brown hair and eyes, olive complexion, weigh 130 pounds and I am 5 feet 3 inches tall. I enjoy all kinds of music except classical, and like true, sincere friends. I am fond of the outdoors, reading, shows and television. I would like to hear from folks 35 to 50 years old and will be glad to exchange snapshots.

TILLIE No. 8797

NAVY VET
Dear Mrs. Elder: I do hope you publish my plea for pen pals as I am lonesome for mail and a sincere friend. I am shy and young, and good-looking, so my friends tell me. I enjoy all sports, music, art, theatre, traveling, reading and meeting people. I am a Navy Vet, so come on pen pals, and flood me with mail. Please send me your picture.

JOE No. 8794

STRAWBERRY BLONDE
Dear Mrs. Elder: I live in a small town in B.C. and would like to write to boys in the States or Canada. I am 5 feet 2 inches, have strawberry blonde hair, blue eyes and would like to write to boys 16 or over. My interests are jazz and popular records, hiking, singing and most other sports.

GINGER No. 8795

THE SHY TYPE
Dear Mrs. Elder: I am 25 years of age. I have light brown hair and blue-green eyes. I am 6 feet in height and weigh about 190 pounds. I recently returned from Korea and I want to settle down for good. I like all sports, music and I also enjoy reading. I will exchange snapshots and answer all letters. I am somewhat the shy type and not getting any bolder, so how about writing to a handsome young man who is very lonely? I am a locomotive fireman.

HOWIE No. 8796

WON'T YOU WRITE FOR ME?
Dear Mrs. Elder: I am a widow age 42, I have dark brown hair and eyes, olive complexion, weigh 130 pounds and I am 5 feet 3 inches tall. I enjoy all kinds of music except classical, and like true, sincere friends. I am fond of the outdoors, reading, shows and television. I would like to hear from folks 35 to 50 years old and will be glad to exchange snapshots.

TILLIE No. 8797

FISHING ENTHUSIAST
Dear Mrs. Elder: Wheel Unattached male, age 45 and a retired G-Footer on a pension. I moved 2500 miles away from home and now live on the Gulf where I do not know many people. I enjoy the stories in THRILLING LOVE very much and want you to help me get some pen pals. I like people who have a sense of humor, like gardening and fishing, repeat: gardening and fishing. I enjoy entertaining at home, motor trips, helping others, and of course writing letters.

BUB No. 8799

LIKES HOME LIFE
Dear Mrs. Elder: I am a widow in my late fifties and would like to have some pen pals of both sexes near my age. I will answer all letters received. I am 5 feet 6 inches tall, weigh 150 pounds. I have gray eyes, dark brown hair and have a jolly disposition. I like a home life, enjoy reading and sewing.

G.I. No. 8800
THE ONLY GIRL

Dear Mrs. Elder: I am a 15 year old girl from Green Bay, Wisconsin. I would like to hear from either boys or girls around my own age. I have blonde hair, brown eyes and I am 5 feet 4 inches tall. I like all kinds of sports and I sing in the high school girls chorus. For a hobby I like to paint and I also have a collection of movie star's pictures. I will exchange snap-shots of my home town, my brothers and some of my friends. I am the only girl in the family of five children.

GAIL No. 8801

READING FAN

Dear Mrs. Elder: I would like to be a member of your club as I am very lonely. I like almost anything that is good clean fun. I am 22 years old, 5 feet 5 inches tall. My favorite pastime is reading good books, listening to music and dancing. I would appreciate hearing from both fellows and girls from 20 to 35. Especially servicemen in Korea and hospitals.

EVIE No. 8802

GREEN EYES

Dear Mrs. Elder: I am a German girl, eighteen years of age, five feet and seven inches tall. I have chestnut hair, green eyes and clear complexion. I love the outdoors, music, dancing and traveling. I came to the U.S. in 1952 and like it so much. I would like to hear from service men abroad, around my age.

STIN No. 8803

CALLING PENN.

Dear Mrs. Elder: I would appreciate your placing my appeal in your column. I am 5 feet 8 inches tall, weigh 160 pounds, have blue eyes and curly blonde hair. I am single and 42 years of age. I'm considered to have a good personality, I like a nice home, traveling, reading and enjoy sports. Would like to hear from people living in Pennsylvania.

JAMES No. 8804

LIKES TO MEET PEOPLE

Dear Mrs. Elder: I do hope you can print my letter as I am so lonesome for mail. I live alone in Hollywood. I'm fond of all sports, movies, and enjoy meeting people. I am in search of some sincere friends and they are hard to find. So how about dropping me a line?

JOE No. 8805

MOTHER OF FOUR

Dear Mrs. Elder: I am a 30 year old house wife and a mother of four children. My eyes are hazel, hair brown, I stand 5 feet 6 inches tall and weigh 130 pounds. My hobbies are reading, writing letters, sewing, cooking, embroidery and watching sports. Hope several of you gals between 25 and 40 will fill my mail box with letters.

SHIRL No. 8806

LONESOME FELLOW

Dear Mrs. Elder: I am just another lonesome fellow asking for letters from Indiana and Illinois. I am in my middle forties, am about 5 feet 3 inches tall and weigh 140 pounds. I have blue eyes and have gray wavy hair. I am interested in the movies, radio, TV, sports and I enjoy reading. I will answer all letters promptly.

JO No. 8807
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ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS

Lillian L., Lynwood, Calif.: To cover up small broken veins on the nose, use a good foundation base under your makeup. Use a complexion brush and mild soap daily to stir up the circulation. Watch your diet, avoiding spicy, peppery foods.

Mrs. M. B., Malden, Mass.: Informal invitations may always be telephoned. But it’s not tactful to prefix the invitation with “What are you doing Saturday night?” Be specific and come to the point. Say, “Can you have dinner with us next Saturday night?”

Serena, Americus, Ga.: You could try sewing one of your light-weight cotton bras into your bathing suit if you can’t find a suitable style with one built-in. This will give you proper bra support.

Miss Ida, Niles, Ohio: This is a tummy whittler: lie flat on your back, on the floor. Wrap your arms around the knees and pull them slowly as far as possible up toward the chest. Relax and repeat 10 times, increasing the number of the count daily. You must do this faithfully every day if you want results!

D. R., Runway, N. J.: Those blisters on the back of the heels are probably caused by perspiration and friction. You can relieve the condition by applying spirits of camphor on a piece of gauze. Put it on the blistered area. To prevent blisters, paste a piece of velvet inside the back of the shoes. Tender feet will respond to daily foot lotion treatment.

Evelyn P., Plainview, Texas: Here’s an exercise for reducing thick ankles. And you can do it any time—whether you’re sitting at a desk, typewriter or with feet under the dining table: sit with the knees crossed, then draw imaginary circles with one foot, rotating toes down, in and out. Alternate with the other foot. Repeat as many times as possible.

Read LISTEN, GIRLS on Pages 62-66
Answers to Quiz on Page 91
1-d, 2-i, 3-g, 4-h, 5-c, 6-j, 7-b, 8-f, 9-k, 10-e, 11-a.
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—Continued from Other Side

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CAPTIVES of the DESERT
THE LATEST ZANE GREY MASTERPIECE!
"Man, you are crazy . . . ridin after them
thieves' varmints without a gun," the cow-
boy known as High-Lo told his partner, John
Curry.
Suddenly Curry and High-Lo stopped in
their tracks. There, on the steep slopes of
Devil's Canyon, were the two men Curry had
sworn to run out of the territory! A voice
broke the silence. "Stay where you are,
Curry! Ride one step closer and you'll be
feelin' some hot lead!"
"I ain't alnin' to turn back until I get
some straight answers!" Curry warned. The
only answer were two gleaming six-shooters,
a spurt of fire, and . . .
Thus begins the pulse-pounding climax of
this action-cramped story—the latest Zane
Grey novel released for book publication!

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