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JULY 31, 1937

LOVE STORY

EVERY WEEK

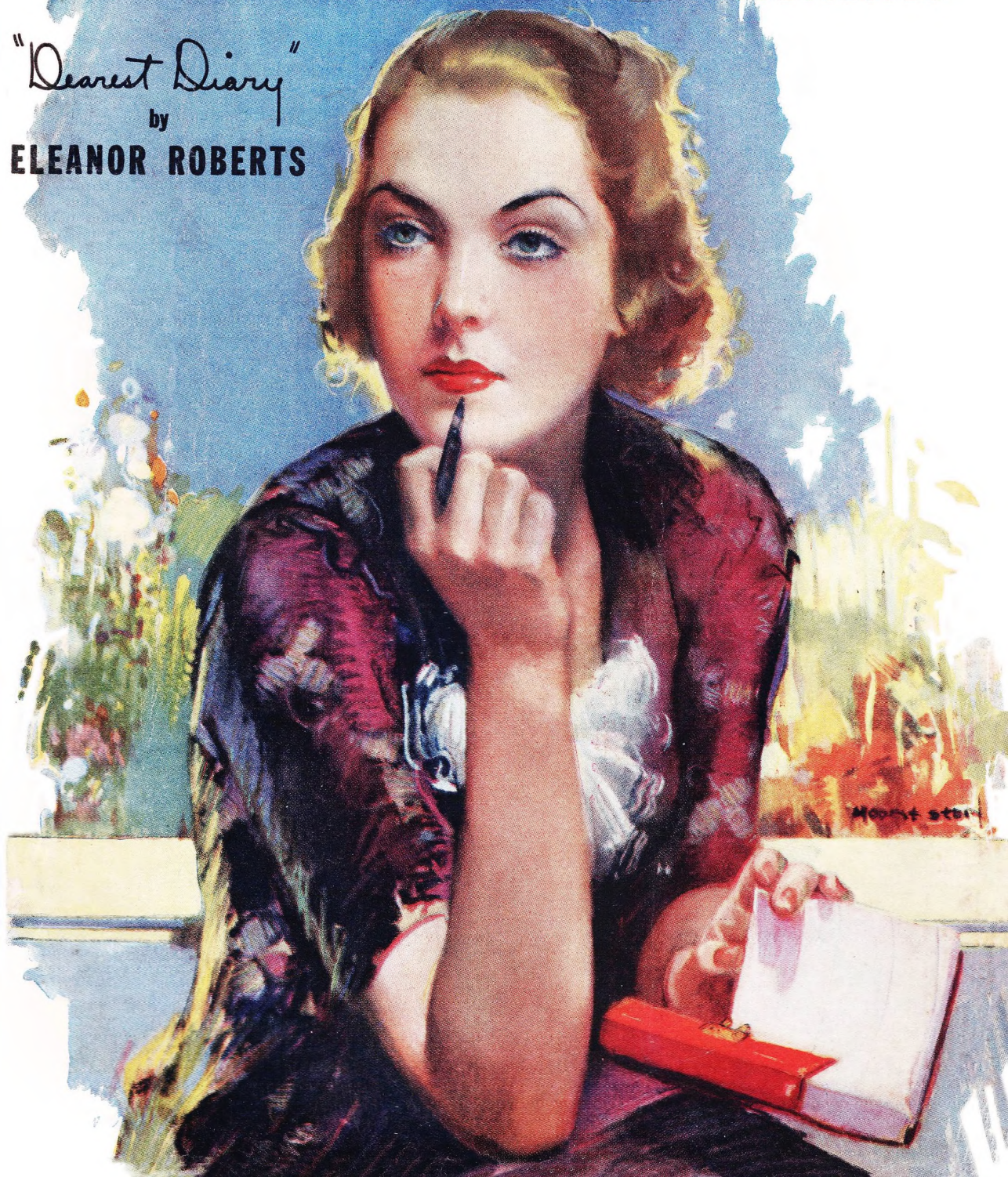
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by

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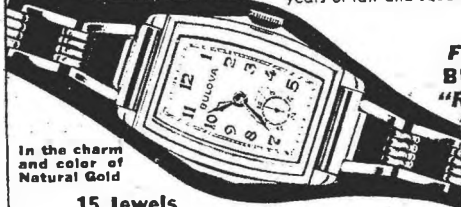
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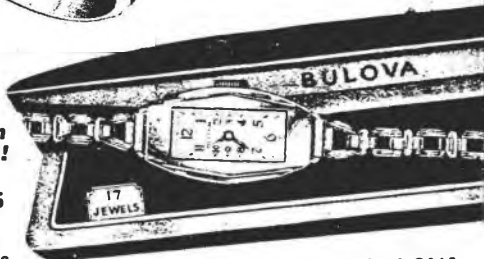
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STREET & SMITH'S LOVE STORY

MAGAZINE

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Vol. CXXXV

EVERY WEEK

No. 2

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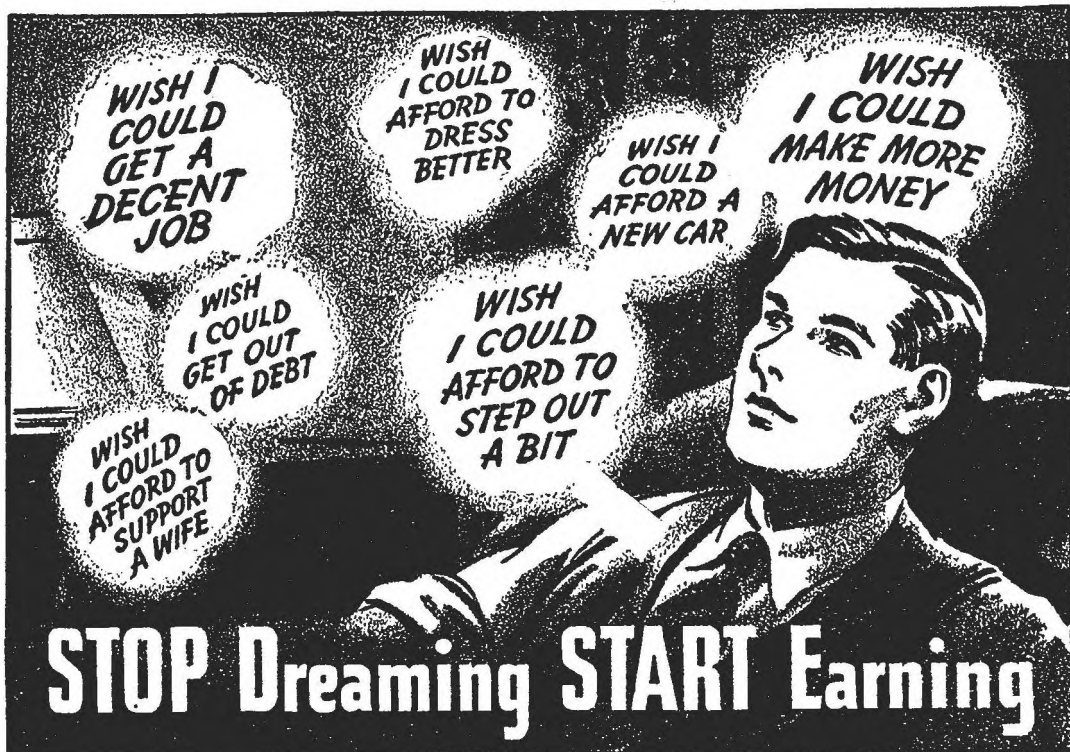
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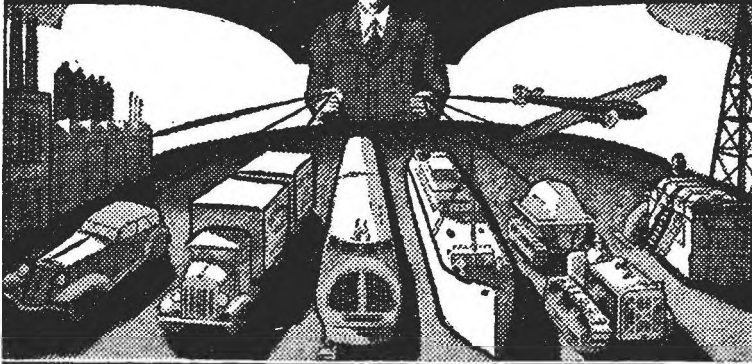
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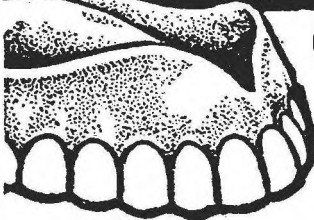
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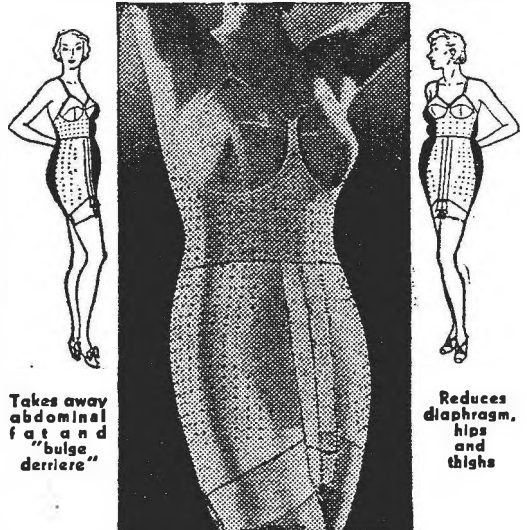
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Kisses to the Stars

By Ellen Farley

KIRK NEALON was at the train to meet her, just as she had hoped—and feared.

Dropping tipped-up lashes over forlorn brown eyes, Jane tried to look at him casually, at his broad shoulders, at his proud, dark head. She tried to look at him expectantly, as any girl would look at a tall man like Kirk—just any girl who hadn't grown up with him.

"He's just my friend!" she whis-

pered fiercely, seeing him through tears. He was tall and strong-looking, like a tree on a mountainside. He stood out from the other people on the platform. There was something about him—

Jane thrust out a small chin and blinked her thick lashes fast. "He's just any good-looking man to me," she breathed. "I'm just any girl."

Then Kirk saw her with brightening eyes and strode toward her.



"Draw us something, Kirk. Draw Jane. We've often wondered why you didn't do her." Jane closed her eyes. Dry sobs clutched at her throat as Kirk lifted a fresh canvas to his easel and set to work.

And Jane knew, by the way her heart leaped to her throat, that she could never be just any girl with Kirk, no matter if he were engaged to a hundred Vivian Jeffcotts.

"Jane!" His lean fingers closed over hers as he drew her toward the light that gleamed from the station door. "Say, it's nice to see you again! Do you know it's almost three months? When Vivian said you were coming on this train, I couldn't get here fast enough." His teeth flashed like paper in his dark face.

"'Lo, Kirk, ol' man," she laughed out in her low, husky voice. "It is almost three months, isn't it? How time flies!"

What a liar she was! Time hadn't

flown for her. With its wings broken, it had hopped along on one leg.

Her generous lips twisted wryly in her lovely face as she pulled her hands away and motioned toward her bags. But as she started forward, Kirk caught her arms and she heard his infectious laugh—the laugh she thrilled to even as it angered her with its taking-her-for-granted friendliness.

"Jane! Don't be so darned distant! Let me look at you."

And before she could protest, he had swung her slender figure around to him and was holding her by her rounded arms. Jane fought to keep her eyes from betraying her secret. He must never suspect that she

trembled because of his nearness. He didn't care how close she was—never had cared. That's what made everything so terribly hard.

"Let me see if you're still my Jane." Kirk's eyes crinkled whimsically. "Big brown eyes, two of them, both of them as unreadable as a forest pool. Some day you must tell me what you think of behind those solemn eyes, Jane."

As if wild horses could have dragged those thoughts from her!

"One nose, dotted with seventeen bronze freckles. Are they still there? I can't see in this light."

How dear he was! The moments sped with twinkling, golden laughter when Kirk was near.

"Still there," she managed in answering gayety.

"One mouth, too big for beauty. That's what you told me once. Remember?"

"Yes." The word was a faint breath.

"One chin, firm and proud." Kirk shook her as his laugh echoed jauntily. "Why, honey, you're just the same! Just as calm, just as beautiful!"

Beautiful! Was he making fun of her? Jane drew back sharply, searching for mockery in his laughing eyes. She found none. She answered, with a catch in her voice:

"I'm not beautiful, Kirk. You, an artist who paints lovely women, can tell me I'm beautiful?" She made a face at him, choking back a sob. "Me!" She wasn't going to spoil things for Kirk by going blubbery on him the day before his wedding. "With my tumbled ol' mop of curls an' my funny ol' eyebrows!" She traced one where it jumped up, at her temples, like a question mark. "I'm just the kid you used to play with, grown up. It's Vivian who's beautiful."

Kirk's hands relaxed. The light in his gray eyes faded from laughter to remembrance. Jane saw his glance go beyond her perky hat and she knew, with a sharp pang, whose lovely face he saw against the star-flung sky.

"Yes, you're right, Jane. Vivian is beautiful."

How many, many times he had breathed those words to her! Hundreds of times last summer, after their ten-year companionship had been shattered by the coming of Vivian with her gold-and-silver beauty. Hundreds of times, and yet the wound in Jane's heart was just like new.

"So beautiful, Jane, that sometimes I can't believe I'm going to marry her." His voice trembled and his sensitive artist's fingers smoothed Jane's arm as if he were imagining the velvety perfection of Vivian's golden skin. "I can't believe that such a woman has promised to be mine!"

Jane wanted to laugh shakily. Why wouldn't any girl want to belong to Kirk? He was handsome, rich, talented. But most of all, he was Kirk—Kirk, with whom she had played from the time she wore pig-tails. Her chin quivered. She steadied it.

"And yet she will be yours, tomorrow." Her light voice jerked. "And I'm here to be one of her bridesmaids, because I introduced you to her. Isn't that—isn't that lovely, Kirk?"

They were walking toward his car now, Jane taking two quick, boyish steps to Kirk's one.

He smiled down at her affectionately. "Very. And if Vivian hadn't asked you to be a bridesmaid, I'd have asked you to be my best man!"

Jane gritted her teeth. Vividly, she saw herself as Kirk must see

her—a boyish, tousled madcap, the kid she had been when they hunted hazel nuts together and she could scramble to a higher branch than he.

She clenched her hands and choked back an angry retort. Sometimes she almost hated Kirk. Sometimes, as now, she wanted to shake him fiercely.

"Best man?" Her voice was light as thistledown. She wasn't going to fight with Kirk, not on the eve of his wedding.

"Sure." His eyes crinkled at the corners as he helped her into his long, green roadster. "That's what you are. My best man. And let me tell you, I've been lonely since you left."

He started the motor and they slid away from the country station down a narrow, dusty road.

"Oh, I know you've done swell," he continued. "Vivian told me you were already a buyer for hats, or something. But just the same, I wish you were back. I can paint better when you're around. I've missed you."

The way he'd miss an old hat, Jane thought grimly.

"And you never even wrote me a line!" His eyes gleamed as he turned an accusing glance.

"I was pretty busy," she murmured, lifting her face thankfully to the cold breeze. "I did think of you, though, often. But let's not talk about me. Tell me about Vivian. How is she? What's she doing? Have you painted her? Oh, just everything!"

Her nails dug into her palms. Maybe if she talked about Vivian on this ride to Kirk's estate, she'd become used to the pain and Vivian wouldn't find any misery in her eyes.

She sat with her eyes fixed on the road, while half of her mind listened to Kirk's voice and the other half

remembered things she had tried to forget—the funny way he had of speaking in little bursts of words; the dear way his laugh gurgled in his throat before it jumped out, merry and strong; the way his hair curled, bold and crisp; the way—Oh, why must everything about him be funny and dear and heartbreaking to her?

He was talking about Vivian now. Jane heard: "She's like the moon and the stars. She's not real."

Jane thought: "She's real enough to select a man with plenty of money to buy her jewels to pin in her silver hair."

Aloud, she said softly, pressing her feet hard against the floor to keep from trembling: "You're mad about her, aren't you, Kirk?"

She knew, without turning, that he was staring straight ahead. "Yes, I'm mad about her. There's something that gets into my blood. She's a flame, a drug."

They were silent as the car purred through the warm summer evening. Jane watched a falling star. She didn't wish, because it wouldn't be any use wishing for a man who was going to be married the next day. Jane's throat ached.

Then she heard her voice: "Are you happy, Kirk?"

She didn't know why she asked that. It just came out, like a prayer.

He hesitated. She caught the narrowing of his eyes in the light of the gateposts as they swung into the drive that swept up to the Nealon mansion. She tensed, because she couldn't help noticing that his face was suddenly grim, tired. She thought of the boy she had grown up with. He had been happy, always, whistling, singing, exultant.

He flung out: "Is any one happy, Jane? All the time, I mean. Are you?"

She drew in her breath, searching his face. Her Kirk, cynical, mocking?

But then he laughed and the old, joyous Kirk was beside her again. "But I mustn't ask you that. Self-sufficient, wild, little Jane Tabor." He reached over and put his hand over one of hers. "Why, you'd be happy on a desert island with nothing to do but weave baskets out of twigs, and shinny up palm trees! What's your secret, Jane? How are you able to stand back and watch life flow by, while the rest of us race around like mad, hunting for happiness?"

Jane's soft lips set with sudden anger. So he thought she was devoid of feelings, of longings. She forgot her resolution—that she wouldn't allow herself to get into a quarrel with Kirk.

She jerked her hand away and shook it up and down right in front of his startled nose.

"Don't you go telling me I'd be happy shinnying up palm trees, Kirk Nealon! Don't you tell me I'd like weaving baskets out of twigs! What do you know about me? You big lump of oil paint and greenbacks! How do you know whether I'm happy or unhappy? Have you ever given a fraction of a second to thinking about me? No! And don't! But I'll tell you one thing. Maybe I'm happy because I'm not in love!"

With that she let her hand drop, gave him one last furious glare, and jumped out of the car as Kirk brought it to a stop under the white portico.

"Stop, you little spitfire!"

But Jane paid no attention to his amazed, laughing words. She hurried up the steps, Kirk striding behind. Then she was inside the quiet hall and Vivian was coming toward her—a languorous Vivian with sil-

ver-colored hair piled high on a graceful head, her slender, seductive figure swathed in an emerald-green gown that matched the emerald gleam in her eyes.

Jane caught her breath and felt awkward, plain and somehow childish in her trim navy-blue dress with its neat lace collar encircling her white neck.

"Jane darling!"

"'Lo, Viv!"

The two voices were so different—Jane's husky, boyish and casual, Vivian's musical and far from casual! Vivian always managed to be breath-takingly intimate.

"So you're going to be a happy bride," Jane said, too gayly, "and going to be married from this lovely old place of Kirk's!" She was glad that she had suffered all she could suffer on that ride alone with Kirk. She prayed that Vivian, with her insolent green eyes, couldn't see the heartache beneath the trim red buttons that marched up the navy-blue dress.

"We're awfully happy you could come, Jane. Kirk and I wanted you so much." The red lips parted in a smile that did nothing except show a line of perfect teeth. "You know, he's always talking about you. Always remembering some silly thing you did together when you were kids. Half the time, I believe he's in love with you!"

She put a slender hand on Kirk's arm. It was a certain, possessive gesture that belied her honeyed words.

Jane flushed. Instinctively, her eyes sought Kirk's. She was surprised to find him gazing at her, a puzzled look in his gray eyes. She glanced away quickly, and laughed like a gaminish boy.

"With me? Say, when I was ten, he put an eel down my back. Ugh!

I swatted him so he saw stars. Eels and swats don't fit in with the tenderer emotions, do they, Kirk?"

He looked from Jane's flushed, impish face down at the silvery head leaning against his shoulder. He smiled.

Abruptly, Jane turned away and started toward the stairs. "I'll go up now."

"Better dress, honey," Vivian's soft voice called after her. "We've waited dinner for you."

"Fine," murmured Jane. "I'm awfully hungry." Lips smiling at that lie, she skipped up the stairs.

Once in the room assigned to her, she sank down on the bed. A long sob shivered up from her heart and finally came out, a dry, choked sound, from the aching tautness of her throat.

She shouldn't have come. She hadn't realized how ghastly it would be. It would have been almost easy, back in the city, alone. But here, with Kirk so near and yet so far—with Vivian and her exotic beauty, her triumphant, hard eyes—

Hands clenching, Jane jumped up and began to undress. Best man! That's what she'd always be. She didn't pretend there'd ever be any one except Kirk. She had given her heart to him, forever.

Slipping her checkered brown-and-orange taffeta dinner dress over her brown curls, she took a grip on herself. She must go down there, among all those old friends, and smile and smile. No one must ever know that she felt like running out of that old house, where she had spent so many careless moments with Kirk, and stumbling into the darkness so that she might cry her heart out.

She couldn't stop her lips from trembling then, but a moment later

as she hurried downstairs, her chin was high, her lips parted in a brave smile, and her cold hands were steady.

She paused in the huge archway that led to the brilliantly lighted drawing-room. Groups of colorfully clad girls and black-garbed young men chatted and laughed into each other's eyes over the rims of their champagne glasses. Over by the grand piano, Vivian waved a tiny, gilded fan before her full-lipped mouth, while her eyes smiled up into Kirk's.

Smile stiff, Jane looked quickly away and into the eyes of Tommy Keene, who was striding toward her, grinning appreciatively.

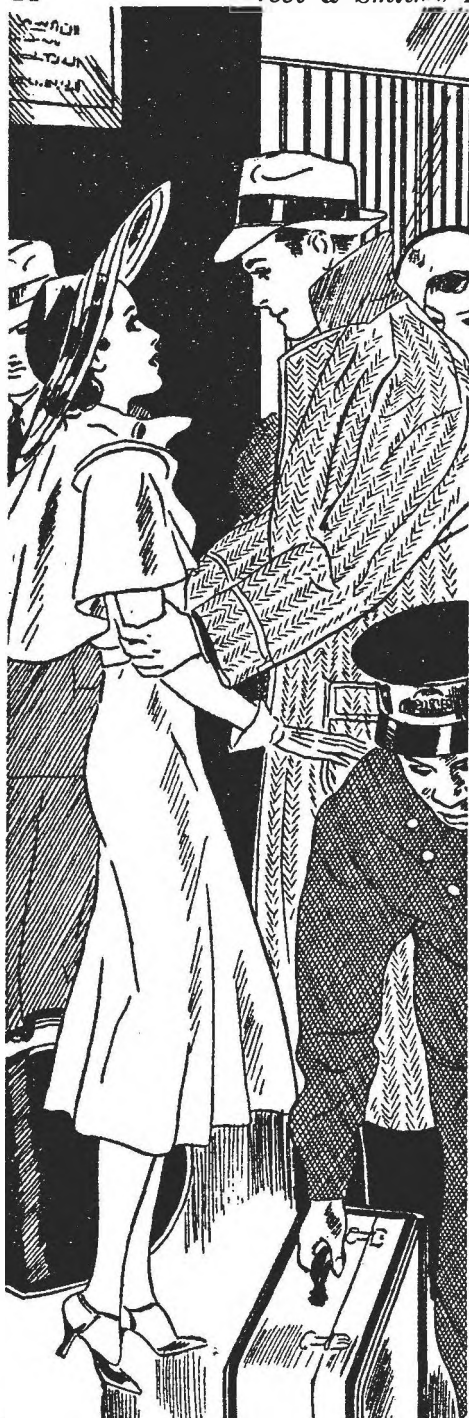
"Jane Tabor, you little minx! Why don't I get over you?" He was close now, looking down into her childish face with undisguised admiration. "Alone?"

She threw him her quick, impish smile, wondering wretchedly why she couldn't have fallen in love with Tommy. He was just as rich as Kirk and nearly as attractive in a blond, jubilant way.

"All alone, ol' man!" Her husky, boyish voice was doubly enticing, combined with the swing-skirted gown and the orange flower nestled in her soft curls. "Do you wish to share my solitude?"

"Couldn't think of anything nicer, lovely," he whispered with a warm laugh. He tucked his finger through a dusky curl. "See the way that clings to me! Why don't you—"

Valiantly, Jane tried to play up to his gay flirtation, but it was no use. She couldn't stop thinking of those two over by the piano, of Kirk's gray eyes looking deep into fringed green ones. And, against her will, as she breathed in the fragrance of Tommy's carnation and asked him why he didn't wear violets since they



"Jane! Say, it's nice to see you again. Let me look at you." He caught her arms and swung her slender figure around to him.

were her favorite flower, her unhappy brown eyes sought Kirk's dark head.

Suddenly Tommy stopped in the middle of a sentence.

"How about paying attention to me, Janey? Must you keep staring at that northeast corner? Are you looking at the piano or at Kirk? I'm the best man at this here shindig, but I'm open to suggestions as to when I should be the groom, unless you're going into retirement."

Jane paled. Was she so obvious then? She tried to think of something careless to say, and couldn't. Her lips were dry.

Tommy must have seen the misery in the shadows behind her stiff black lashes. For he said with swift warmth, pressing her cold fingers, "Why, Jane!"

She screwed up her lips. Tears ached in a dam behind her eyes. No, she mustn't let on. She couldn't bear any one's knowing, any one's being sorry for her—not even any one as nice as Tommy.

"Jane Tabor?"

At the words, spoken by a voice strange to her, she turned gladly away from Tommy's sympathetic eyes and looked into a darkly handsome face creased into a careless smile. As she nodded, the man said: "I'm Clive Prentice, an usher at this wedding. Viv said I was to take you in." His pale eyes were expressionless above his smile.

There was something about that dark face Jane distrusted, but she was glad of any excuse to get away from Tommy before he knew what he now only suspected.

"Clive Prentice?" she murmured as they moved toward the dining room. "I don't recall meeting—"

"You haven't." He held her chair, then sat down beside her. "I just arrived. I'm an old friend of Viv's."

"Oh!" How lightly he said that—Viv! No one else had ever spoken of her so casually.

"I run a tourist camp in Florida. That's how I met Viv." He glanced down the long table to the head where Vivian sat with her rounded, white arms gleaming through the slitted sleeves of a black velvet gown. "Can't imagine why she asked me to come." He smiled in a way that struck Jane as ugly. "Unless she wanted to rub it in."

Jane breathed, puzzled: "Rub it in?"

He laughed shortly, gulping down his wine. "My income is two thousand a year. This Nealon's must be at least twenty."

Jane gazed at his narrow face, her eyes wide and troubled. She saw his bold glance slide down the rows of guests toward Kirk.

Kirk was handsome, confident, and rich. Jane, watching Prentice's face, realized suddenly how some one not so handsome and not so rich might feel about Kirk, especially if he loved— A thought clicked sinisterly in her brain. But then she saw Kirk toss a smile at Vivian, and she forgot everything in the ghastly pain that contracted her heart.

The evening promised to be long for Jane. She managed to keep up a smiling conversation with Clive Prentice and with Tad Woodring, who sat on her left. But an agonizing desolation was swelling in her heart. She saw the flickering candles through a blur of tears. The gay chatter sounded far off.

She was thankful when dinner was over at last, and the guests straggled back to the drawing-room, where some one took up the rug and turned on the radio.

There were many old friends to greet, many questions to smile over

and pretend to answer—about her job and why she hadn't been back before; about how lovely she looked except that she was a bit pale.

It was ghastly. But Jane congratulated herself, wryly, that at least no one suspected how her heart was breaking. She was spared that last humiliation—pity from old friends. She danced around and around the polished floor with this man, with that one.

Once she danced with Clive Prentice and noticed through her own searing pain that there was a hungry look in his pale eyes.

"It's Vivian," she thought to herself. "He's in love with her."

And although she disliked something about the man, her heart softened for him. She knew what it was—seeing some one you loved loving somebody else.

Tad Woodring cut in just then. Jane watched Clive saunter across the floor toward Vivian who was sitting alone near a group of sheltering palms. She started to look away, not wanting to spy on his unhappiness. But then she saw Vivian lift her head and smile at Clive. And Vivian's face had lost its lazy coolness. The mouth was soft, the eyes inviting. Then, before Jane's amazed eyes, Clive bent over and his fingers slid over Vivian's, surely, possessively.

Jane's heart thudded madly. Her lips were parched. That warmth in Vivian's face! The eagerness of that sly handclasp! Vivian was in love with Clive! But she was going to marry Kirk, who was rich. How horribly clear it all was!

Helplessly, Jane sought Kirk's tall form. She located him across the room. His wavy brown hair was tousled. His ringing laugh came faintly to her ears.

He was so boyish, so much in love.

Jane's heart contracted as she realized how deeply Vivian could hurt him.

Then Mae Saunders, another bridesmaid, tripped across the floor and her baby voice chirped out clearly above the blare of the music:

"Kirk, darling, won't you show us Vivian's picture now? You promised, you know, this afternoon. You said it was the best you'd ever done, that it might land you a prize at the exhibition!"

Tommy Keene shut off the radio. Some one else cried buoyantly: "Come on, Kirk. Not many men are artists when they might be playboys. Let's see the masterpiece."

"Right-o!" laughed Kirk, and led the way across the hall and into a huge room on the farther side of the big house—his studio.

Jane, swept along with the rest, tried to keep her face calm. She didn't want to see that picture. She knew that it would hurt her more than she could bear to be hurt, with its revelation of Kirk's love and longing for Vivian.

Kirk swung the picture from the wall. There was a gasp as the guests stared at the exquisite loveliness gazing out from the canvas—Vivian in silver-and-blue. A blue dress hugged the lovely curves of her body as she half reclined on a couch thrown over with a silver robe.

Kirk had put his soul into that picture—his ideals and his dreams—into the painting of a woman who was marrying him for his money!

Jane looked away swiftly, her heart pounding. She had to get away where she could think. Pale and trembling, she stumbled forward, hunting for a way to leave the studio.

But Mae Saunders saw her and her gay face brightened with a new idea.

"Kirk," she chortled, "draw us something! We've never seen you at work. Draw Jane. I've often wondered why you didn't do her."

There was a murmur of assent. Kirk's glance swung to Jane, standing still and white before him. Slowly, his eyes shadowed with the puzzled light that had gleamed there once before that evening.

With a terrific effort, Jane tossed her head and smiled mockingly. "Have that amateur paint me? Good grief! I can remember when we used to steal apples together."

Kirk paled at the mockery. Then he cried in a strange voice: "Keep quiet, brat!" He reached for his charcoal and had lifted a fresh canvas to his easel before she could move. His strong, brown fingers blackened the white with swift, sure lines and his intent glance held her steadily.

Jane closed her eyes. Dry sobs clutched at her throat with tight fingers. Her slender form, taut as a bowstrings, trembled like a leaf in the wind.

She didn't know how long she stood there. But at last she heard Kirk's voice cry: "Portrait of Jane Tabor!"

She opened her eyes and stared at the charcoal drawing. It was she, beyond a doubt. There were her steady, laughing eyes. There were her boyish mouth and softly tumbled curls. But it was not Jane Tabor as she was that night. It was a girl who lived in Kirk's mind.

He had clothed her slim body in a boy's ragged overalls—the kind she had worn when they were kids, when life was joyous and heartache had been just a funny-sounding word. Her tiny feet and slim legs were bare. In her left hand she carried a fishpole, while her right was lifted in a gamin's careless salute.



Like a furtive shadow, Jane slipped into Clive's room. "Go in there! Quick!" she breathed, motioning Vivian toward the closet door. "Do you want Kirk to find you here?"

She looked like a handsome, carefree boy, except for the unfathomable something Kirk had drawn into the wide, thick-fringed eyes.

Vivian was the first to speak. "Perfect!" she breathed, and if Jane hadn't been rigid with hurt anger, she might have observed that Vivian's voice was harsh with chagrin.

"My best man!" Kirk murmured the words around a grin that was a bit uncertain. His eyes were steady upon Jane.

Jane's lip caught between her teeth. He had dared draw her like that before all those old friends, dared reveal callously, what he

thought of her—a ragged, bony brat in overalls! White and trembling, she took a step forward. She spoke slowly:

"Kirk Nealon, I hate you! To make me look like that!" Her brown eyes were pools of flame. "I despise you. Do you understand? You're not responsible for hurting people. You don't even know what it means to be hurt. You're a conceited blob of indigo."

Kirk stared at her stormy face with widening eyes that were at once puzzled, amazed, and hurt.

Some one behind Jane whispered: "Good heavens! I believe Jane is in love with him!"

Miraculously, the icy tenseness left Jane's body. Faintness wavered in her heart. So they knew at last. They knew that she worshiped Kirk. And it was his fault! If he hadn't drawn that beastly picture——

With a strangled sob, Jane swung, pushed her way through the crowd, raced down the hall, and into the warm summer night. Tears made the bright moon look like a ragged-edged yellow basket as she scurried to the summerhouse beyond the rose garden.

Here she sank to the floor and put her head in her arms, crying out her shame and heartbreak. For a long time she sobbed there, with the scent of roses drifting in the air. Then she relaxed, and with a sigh, slept, her hand under her tear-stained cheek.

When she opened her eyes again, she didn't realize at first where she was, didn't remember the humiliating scene in the studio. But, at last, after she had moved and felt the bare floor under her legs, it all came rushing shamefully back to her. Tears seared her lids as she sat up blindly. Then she stiffened and lay back.

Some one was sitting on the small porch that ran around the summerhouse! She could hear voices—one eager and hungry, the other, seductive and yielding.

"What's the difference? I can't bear waiting for you any more. Come to-night."

Jane went rigid. Clive Prentice!

Then Vivian spoke: "I know, darling. I've missed you, too. But what if he should find out? Then, too, it's sort of raw, the night before our wedding!"

"Don't go honest, Viv. You don't love him. It's his money you're after. But I don't mean to be put

off. I want you to-night. Come at three."

Jane shivered. She must cry out her presence. But before she could move she heard Vivian's surrender: "All right, darling. To-night, at three."

Jane pressed her hand against her mouth. A moment later, steps ran off the porch. She was alone.

Stunned by what she had overheard, she sat up, temples pounding. Vivian and Clive were lovers!

For a moment, Jane forgot that she hated Kirk as she twisted her hands in the darkness. But then the blood rushed into her cheeks. He had been cruel to her. He had made fun of her in his careless, laughing way. He had made her reveal her secret. She hated Kirk!

Lips twisted wryly, Jane stumbled to her feet and then started, as a glare of light blinded her eyes. Some one with a flashlight stood in the door of the summerhouse.

"Jane! You're here! We've been hunting the place for you."

She recognized Kirk's deep voice. The flash went out. After a moment she could see his broad shoulders outlined against the sky.

She choked out: "I don't want you to hunt for me, Kirk Nealon!" She strode toward him. "Get out of my way. If it weren't so darned late, I'd go back to town."

"Jane"—his voice was bewildered—"I don't understand why you're acting so. Why, Janey, you're my pal!"

She was so near that she could see the angles of his handsome young face and the gleam of his deep-set eyes. If she hadn't been so heart-sore, she might have heard the unhappiness and uncertainty in his voice. As it was, she knew nothing except her own pain.

"Your pal!" She laughed bro-

kenly. Then: "Get out of my way," she cried furiously. Her eyes shone like angry jewels in her white face, bathed in the warm moonlight.

"Janey!" Then, with sudden anger: "You brat! I'd like to shake you, making a scene like that and running away! I thought you were lost—hurt." He seized her shoulders and shook her fiercely, just as he had when they were kids. "Why should you get so angry because I drew you in overalls? Why, honey, I wouldn't hurt you"—he had stopped shaking her and was looking down into her face—"not for all the world." He finished in a whisper.

Jane stood as if frozen, refusing to hear the pleading in his voice. She jerked away from him. "Hurt me! You're always had life break for you, Kirk Nealon. But maybe some day you'll suffer, too!"

She raced past him, into the rose-scented night. Once inside the big house, she hurried to her own room. Moved by the fierce anger that still flamed in her, she sat down and wrote swiftly:

Come to my room at three. Important.
CLIVE PRENTICE.

She clenched her teeth. Let him know of Vivian's infidelity. Let him be hurt, as he had hurt her, Jane.

Heartlessly, she would smash his house of dreams. And then she would laugh carelessly, when he stared down at the fragments at his feet.

She gazed at the note. She was sending a forged letter—the lowest kind of trick. But then her hurt pride and bitter resentment rose and fairly stifled her.

Forgetting her hesitation, she hurried from her room, and tiptoeing down the hall, slipped the note under Kirk's door.

Once again in her own room, she undressed feverishly, and, donning her thin silk pajamas, crept into bed, to lie there cold and tense, counting the seconds as they faltered by.

She stared into the darkness, seeing Kirk's face after he had learned the ghastly truth. She tried to tell herself that she would be glad when his mouth lost that masterful, boyish smile.

But she knew, as the hours crept by, that she had fooled herself. What was the use of lying? She wanted life to be kind to him—wanted him to be happy. Why should she hate him because he didn't love her? For that was the real reason.

Somehow, she knew she must repair the horrible damage she had done. Kirk mustn't know about Vivian. She leaped out of bed and



quickly snapped on the light. Three o'clock!

Without waiting to throw a negligee over her yellow pajamas, she hurried to her door, opened it, and caught a glimmer of light under Clive's door. She raced down the hall on bare feet.

At the door she put out her fingers to turn the knob and then, confused, hesitated. Looking toward Kirk's door, she saw a glimmer of light widen on the carpet and then fade. His door had opened and closed. He was coming down the hall.

Without hesitating, she opened Clive's door and slipped in like a furtive shadow. A startled gasp sounded behind her. She turned and stared into Vivian's angry eyes. She was clasped in Clive's arms.

"What the devil——" began the man in a furious voice.

"Go in there!"

With a frenzied gesture, Jane motioned Vivian toward the closet door. Then, as Vivian stood helplessly: "Kirk!" breathed Jane. "Do you want him to find you here?"

Gasping in fright, Vivian hastened into the closet. Jane closed the door and raced back to Clive.

"Take me in your arms," she ordered fiercely.

A knock sounded on the door. Jane reached her arms around Clive's neck and pressed her slender body against him. Just as the door opened, Clive's mouth crushed down on hers.

"Jane!"

Kirk's voice rang out sharply. Clive's arms relaxed and Jane swung, to gaze into Kirk's white face and blazing eyes. His glance went down her thinly clad figure. She flushed.

"Jane!" Again just her name ground out, unsteadily. She swayed weakly. "What are you doing in

this room at three o'clock in the morning? You get back where you belong!" His voice was stern, angry.

Her hands clenched into small fists. "Who are you to tell me what to do, Kirk Nealon! Am I your property? Am I——"

Kirk moved swiftly, his mouth a grim line. She felt herself lifted in strong arms, could hear his heart beat furiously under her own.

"You're leaving, Prentice. I don't expect to see you again!" There was stern warning in Kirk's voice. He swung to the doorway and went out. Jane just lay in the circle of his arms. There was no more fight left in her. Her job was done. She had saved Vivian for Kirk.

At her door, Kirk set her on her feet.

"You little idiot!" he whispered. "Get to bed! I'll see you in the morning." His voice was strangely shaken.

Jane stumbled into her room. She began to unfasten her pajamas with numb fingers. There was nothing else to do now, but to leave.

It was almost dawn when she slipped out of the big house and started down the road toward the station. At half past six she boarded the train to town.

She sat back in her seat and pulled down the shades, closing her eyes and trying to keep from thinking.

At ten o'clock the train pulled in. Jane didn't see the tall, broad-shouldered figure that strode toward her as she got off. She didn't realize, at first, that the deep voice was speaking to her.

"Good morning, sweetheart. Let me take your bags?"

Jane stared up into the man's face.

"Kirk!" She let her bags drop to the station floor. "I left you in Old-town. It can't be you!"

He took her fluttering hands. "There are planes, Jane. I own one."

She just gazed at him, eyes wide.

His hands came up and gripped her arms in the old way. "Did you ever hear the story of the fool, Jane, who didn't realize, until almost too late, that he wasn't marrying the girl he really loved?"

She said nothing. She couldn't.

"Oh, Jane," he went on, his voice trembling, "I didn't know until last night, when I saw you in his arms."

Kirk talking like that about her—with that fire in his voice, that pleading in his eyes? Jane scarcely breathed.

"It was you all the time. Why, I must have fallen in love with those brown eyes and freckled nose when we were kids!"

"But Vivian——" she gasped.

"She eloped with Clive this morning," he cried jubilantly. "I

knew, last night, that something was wrong. I went back to his room, and——" He paused, then murmured, "But what do they matter? I had a funny feeling inside me, all day yesterday, after you came. I think I knew the truth when I drew that picture of you. Only, I wasn't making fun, sweetheart. That's the way you're drawn on my heart—a cute little tomboy!"

She smiled tremulously. "Kirk, you ol' boob!"

"Sweet!" He drew her close, and his kiss paid her for all that she had suffered. It lifted them both on glorious wings and set them down in paradise, where a boy and a girl climbed the highest trees and threw kisses to the stars.

"My best man," Kirk breathed unsteadily. And when her soft lips pursed to protest, he laughed and kissed her again.

And she wasn't angry. After all, there really wasn't anything to get angry about, when he said it so tenderly and punctuated it with a kiss!



LOVE WEATHERS EVERY STORM

WHY should I care for rain or wind
Or sea that moans and sighs?

I'm sheltered here so cozily

Close to your lips and eyes;

Your arms are safe and strong enough

To shield me from all harm,

So blow, wind, blow—my love and I

Have love to keep us warm!

HELEN VAN DUSEN.



Love, Not Marriage

By Elizabeth Gillespie

A Two-part Story—Part I.

CHAPTER I.

ANN ENGLE cautiously observed that Natalie Brant was engaged in a game of bridge, before slipping unobtrusively from the large paneled room to meet Bill,

Natalie's husband. Bill had told Ann several minutes before that he would be waiting on the lawn beneath the maples. By her tiny, diamond-studded wrist watch, she knew that it was only minutes ago, but her impatience made it seem hours.

She turned to leave the room with its several card players, when she thought she caught Natalie's luminous dark eyes upon her. Ann turned to be sure, and Natalie quickly glanced down at her cards. It happened so quickly that Ann could not decide whether Natalie had been watching her with a hint of amusement in her eyes, or whether it was merely Ann's own guilty conscience. Whatever it was, it gave her an uneasy feeling and diminished a little of the glowing anticipation of the meeting.

Because she knew Bill adored her in white, Ann to-night wore an evening gown of white satin. Its graduated pleats rippled gracefully about her tall slender body and flared with each swift step as white satin sandals sank into the soft, freshly cut grass. Golden hair caught back with pearl clips caught glints of moonlight, and the interwoven strands of pearls about her throat were like dewdrops.

Bill Brant emerged from the shadows of the two large maples, into that bluish haze of the moonlight, and met Ann with both hands extended. Like the moon which flooded the earth with its lustrous silver, the presence of Bill Brant infused Ann's tiresome, insipid world with a breath-taking brilliance.

He touched each slender white hand with his lips, and the blood in Ann's veins flashed warmly in response. Her eyes caressed his brown hair, then his shadowed brown eyes and his lips.

"It's been hours," he murmured.

She laughed gayly, a little deeply. Just being with Bill vanquished uneasiness along with all else that was unpleasant to remember.

"Hours! It's been centuries."

Arm in arm, they sauntered to the marble bench in the shadows, and

there Ann's golden head rested contentedly upon Bill's black-coated shoulder, his arms held her close. The breeze gently stirred the trees into soft whisperings; crickets and frogs gave plaintive nocturnal cries. Lonely sounds. Lovely sounds.

"I love you, Ann," he breathed into her lustrous, fragrant hair, as though he hadn't said it dozens of times before.

Ann closed her eyes. Always, those words were sweet, but bitterly sweet.

"It's really too bad, isn't it?" she murmured softly, choking back a sob.

"Very bad, since Natalie won't give me a divorce."

Bill's calmly spoken announcement amazed Ann. Not that she didn't expect it, but she had at least hoped Natalie would consent, and so had he.

Ann bit her lip, her breath caught, threatening to break into sobs, and bursting into tears at this moment was the last thing she wanted to do. Tears weren't fair weapons.

"I can't live without you!" he burst out suddenly and vehemently, and as he did, he lifted her face and touched his lips to hers. Ann forgot everything else for another turbulent moment.

"It looks as if," she choked, "there's nothing to be done about it."

"One thing," he offered, "but I couldn't ask that of you."

"What?"

"We could go away together, and stay forever if Natalie still refused to free me. I believe she would, though, when she was convinced we were really serious."

"I wouldn't dream of doing such a thing!" Ann declared indignantly.

"I knew you wouldn't," he admitted consolingly. "In my despera-

tion, it was the only thing that came to my mind. No, if you weren't the only daughter of Anderson Engle, and so well-known, it might work splendidly. After all," he reflected, "we have a right to love. I got married, believing it was true love; later, I found it wasn't and that mistake deprives us of each other!" He ended with an unfamiliar note of bitterness that sank deep into Ann's heart.

Just why should they be deprived of each other? They couldn't help falling in love, any more than they could stop the sun from shining. It wasn't fair. Natalie was selfish in her claim upon her husband. If it had been Ann in her place, she was quite certain that her pride would not permit her to cling to a man when he had made it very plain that he no longer loved her. She would give him his freedom to save her own pride and self-respect, if nothing else. It wasn't that Natalie was dependent upon him financially, for she had money of her own. Plenty of it.

Natalie sometimes frightened Ann. One couldn't tell what thoughts lay behind those somber, discerning eyes. Knowing her husband was in love with some one else, she went confidently on her way. Even seemed vaguely amused by the fact. Perhaps she believed that the power to hold him lay in her legal claim upon him. Maybe, too, she couldn't believe that Bill could be in love with some one else.

"Bill," Ann ventured shyly.

"What is it, sweet?" He stroked the lustrous hair back from her high forehead, his face so close that her long lashes touched his smooth cheek.

"If we should run away, could we—could we leave all this behind us? Would Natalie make trouble?"

"Natalie wouldn't. She has too much dignity."

"Wouldn't ghosts crop up, every time we thought we were happy?"

"Why should they? Can we help it if we met and loved, after I was married to some one else? And if we aren't to be given our freedom, could any one blame us for taking what we can of life and love?"

"How would we live? On what?"

"I have interests in South America. Not so very much in it, but we could live comfortably."

Ann smiled at him. "But you'd be with me."

"Try to keep me away!" he murmured fervently.

"I have a little available money that I can take."

"Ann! Does this mean you'll go?"

"Yes. I'd be miserable here—now."

"You won't be sorry?"

"Not as long as you love me."

Seven little words, and Bill failed to give the right answer. He might have said he would love her forever.

"I think I'm dreaming!" he ejaculated, instead. "Would you kiss me and make me sure it's real?"

Everything that happened the next two days was a little hazy to Ann. She moved about in a fog. Bill left in advance via train, the day after their decision. He told Natalie he was going to Havana on business, but he was really going to Mobile to wait for Ann, where they would board a tramp steamer carrying mostly freight and only occasional passengers. Mobile, not being a regular passenger port, would probably be overlooked if a search should be made for them.

Ann waited the two days. She selected a small amount of baggage, made arrangements for passage on a plane that would take her directly to Mobile.



*"Please, Bill, leave me alone for a few minutes. I—I want to think."
Bill stared at her, and his smile changed to an expression of consternation.*

She decided to leave a note to her father just in case he should miss her and ask questions, which she rather doubted. There were days at a time when they did not see each other, although they ate and slept in the same house. She would start out in the evening before he came home and would return in the wee hours of the morning. Then when her father was up in the morning, she would be sleeping.

She smiled rather wistfully at the thought of her father. He had decided many years ago that he knew more about the financial world around which his business life revolved, than he did about this daughter of his. And because it made his life less complicated, he let her do as she pleased. Nothing she did ever surprised him very much, and she knew this note, telling him she had suddenly decided to visit a

friend she had known at school, would not alarm him.

In the plane, Ann tried not to look back. This was good-by to everything she had ever known.

Bill had considered it wiser not to meet her at the plane. She made a hurried trip to the dock, glancing at her watch at impatient intervals. They must make it in time! And if Bill had changed his mind, she would die of wretchedness.

He looked the same when he hurried to meet her at the dock, and yet there was a difference. She tried to smile but was too frightened.

"I thought you would never get here, sweet!" he greeted her, bending to kiss her casually. "The boat has been ready to leave for an hour. You were late."

"Sorry. Bill," she beseeched, "do you think we ought to do it?"

He laughed lightly, as if to chase away her fears. "We decided that several days ago, discussed it pro and con."

He was practically dragging her aboard, gently and most subtly, of course.

The evening was sultry and close. Ann removed the thin brown coat that belonged with the yellow skirt and blouse, and carried it over her arm. She clutched her brown purse firmly. In it and in her clothes was all the money she could conveniently obtain without having questions asked. She could not bear the thought of going away with Bill like this, and being entirely dependent upon him. She needed it to retain a degree of independence and security.

Heavy motors throbbed beneath them, the gangplank was taken in, the painters tossed aboard to the nondescript sailors, and the scarred and ancient vessel eased, creaking and groaning, away from the dock.

It chugged a short distance up the muddy Mobile River, turned, then still laboriously plowed downstream, bound for Mobile Bay, thence the Gulf of Mexico.

Bill excused himself from Ann almost immediately to attend to her luggage and arrangements.

She stood alone at the railing and welcomed the stir of air. Bananas were being unloaded from huge ships from South and Central America; there were tankers and freighters from other foreign ports, ships in dry dock, schooners with their sails reefed in at the fisheries, and finally they passed the drab quarantine station.

Ann could then see the translucent green of the bay, a sharp contrast to this perpetual stream of yellow mud that poured into it. She breathed deeply of the brackish tang of the swelling salt water on beyond. She frowned. The sun was setting behind small clouds drifting together threateningly. Dark clouds that annoyed Ann. She wasn't superstitious, yet everything should have been bright and gay to-day, as it should be on a wedding day.

A wedding day! She swallowed a lump in her throat. This wasn't what she wanted of life! Definitely, it was not!

That thought burst upon her like a flaming meteor looming brightly before her on a dark night.

It was a lasting love she craved. And companionship. She could never find true happiness with Bill because of Natalie; nor could Bill be really happy. Not when it was stolen like this!

Besides, if Bill couldn't be true to Natalie, his wife by law, how could she, Ann, expect to hold his love? Nor could he have much of the right kind of love for her when he would induce her to run away like this!

She hadn't thought about it before, so blinded had she been by emotion.

And Bill had to choose that moody moment to return to her! His arm touched hers as he stood companionably beside her and leaned on the railing. She shivered.

"Cold, sweet?" he asked. She shook her head. He continued, "We're going directly to South America, no stops, no other passengers, no——" He broke off. "Why the tears?" he questioned, perplexed.

"Just s-sentimental, I s-suppose," she managed, through quivering lips.

"Darling, don't tell me you're sorry!"

"M-maybe I'm just h-homesick," she gulped.

"I never saw you cry before. Don't, Ann. It isn't like you."

"I—I can't help it."

He smiled at her. "You'll get over it. Just think about where we're going and that we have each other. Come, let's find chairs."

That smile of his was like striking tinder. He couldn't understand how she felt; maybe she shouldn't expect that of a man. If he had taken her in his arms and let her cry, perhaps she would have felt some reassurance—but that smile! And the trouble was, her thoughts were upon where they were going and that they had each other!

"Please, Bill, leave me alone for just a few minutes. I—I want to think."

"Don't think, dear. How about exploring the ship? The captain said to roam around wherever we want."

He could talk so disinterestedly of what they were doing when it was tearing at her heart! All her life she had done as she pleased, but this was the first time it had pleased her to do anything so strictly against convention. She had gotten by with

it this far, and they might continue getting by as far as the rest of the world was concerned, but when it came to herself, she would always be very much aware of what she had done.

"I want to be alone, Bill," she repeated evenly, her gaze locking with his.

"I'm not leaving you alone. What do you think of that?"

Her chin went up. Her blue eyes flashed her anger. Her mouth, usually resilient and quick to smile, pursed ominously for an instant before she spoke, and then her lips formed the words decisively. She was ashen beneath the tint of her make-up which was just enough to enrichen her own natural coloring.

"Bill! Will you leave me alone!"

Bill stared at her and had been on the verge of smiling, still confident that he could coax her into a better humor, but at that demand his expression changed to surprise. Swiftly it altered to consternation, and then to anger that equaled hers. His dark eyes blazed with a primitive fire; his mouth was taut and obdurate.

For a speechless moment they glowered at each other, wills clashing, nerves stretched to hair-trigger tension.

Still without a word, Bill whirled on his heel and strode away from her. Ann watched, neither glad nor sorry. Rather feelingless.

The boat by now was churning the clear greenish water of the bay. Only a tiny rim of the sun was visible. Sunset was brief here and the sky was dark with clouds. Only a matter of minutes until the last traces of day would vanish completely.

Ann's gaze automatically turned in the direction Bill had gone. Mentally she shook her head. She

couldn't go on! She didn't want Bill that way! As a matter of fact, she was beginning to wonder if she had loved him at all—if it weren't just the flattery of a married man's attention. If it had been the right kind of love with him, he wouldn't have wanted her like this, either.

If she had been any one else but the only daughter of Anderson Engle, who had almost more money than one man's share, she wondered if Bill would have left his wife. Anderson Engle cared too much about this unreliable daughter of his to entirely cast her out of his life, no matter what she did. Bill might even be counting on that. Besides, now that she thought about it, that plantation in South America—Natalie owned one there; might it not belong to her?

What could she do? Ann glanced up at the pilot house and shrank from confiding to the skipper. This was a tramp steamer, and the captain and his crew all looked the part. Had she been insane to come with Bill? This was vastly different from those romantic, stolen moments at home.

She strolled aft, following along the railing. From her purse she took the money that was in bills, pinned it to her clothes, slipped her purse between life preservers, concealed her coat, hat, and slippers in coils of ropes. Darkness would shield her. Anything would be preferable to going on as she had started. She waited until they neared the next channel marker.

Quickly she climbed to the railing, poised, made a graceful dive into the churning water before she could think twice about it. Her leap was from high, and the water seemed bottomless. When she did come up to the surface, she did not attempt to swim immediately, but tried

merely to keep afloat in the ship's wake. No one appeared in sight on deck, so she supposed her leap had been unobserved.

Slowly she swam to the red-and-black channel marker. It was against the law to climb one, she had heard; but, on the other hand, if the coast-guard cutter came along, they would have to rescue her. And what, she asked herself, would she tell them?

One thing she wouldn't reveal was her right name. She would use her first name, Ann, because if she didn't she might forget to answer. For her last name she would use her mother's maiden name, Holmes, since it would be easier to remember than a strange one.

The metal framework of the channel marker was wretchedly uncomfortable. The water had felt warm, but up here, dripping wet, she was chilled through; there was a breeze now that whipped her wet clothes against her.

The lights were on in these stationary markers, which were spaced at regular intervals, and farther out toward the Gulf she could see a lighthouse.

She scanned the water in all directions and could distinguish nothing that resembled the lights of a boat. On the western shore, which was the Mobile side, lights twinkled warmly, reminding her of myriads of fireflies on a summer night. The lights on the eastern shore were scattered, and she gazed yearningly toward those lights. Every muscle and bone in her slim body began to ache. To add to her misery, she was hungry. Famished. Being hungry and cold were new experiences for her, and the sight of those homes just out of reach increased the torture.

Her teeth began to chatter. And still there was no sign of rescue! The



"Are you all right?" a man's troubled voice questioned. Ann nodded. She was beginning to feel a glow from the warmth of his nearness.

rhythmic, monotonous splash of the now choppy water washing against the structure dulled her senses. Looking down upon the swelling water with those incessant waves, fascinated her and made her sway with it. She could hardly withdraw her riveted gaze.

The water looked soft and soothing, even warm. Darkness here or there, it made little difference. Yet it terrified her. There could be so many kinds of weird monsters moving about in that now murky water.

Phosphorescent lights dashed against the frame, clinging dizzily for a moment, then washed on beyond with the swirling water. Sometimes there would be an eerie trail of the faint lights as some inhabitant of the water cut through it. Under different circumstances, she might have enjoyed that part of it. But here, and alone, her terror was swiftly growing into panic.

She brushed her hand across her eyes. Very little feeling was left in that touch—only coldness. There

was a din in her head. She shook her head as if trying to shake water from her ears, but the din persisted. It increased.

It wasn't in her head! It was a motor boat! She saw the light—it was coming this way! And it was the most magnificent sound she had ever heard!

Frantically she waved. She tried to scream, but her voice was pathetically faint and ineffective.

The boat whizzed past without any indication of slowing down.

The disappointment of it momentarily paralyzed her. She lost her grip and fell through inky space into the water, which enveloped her gently in warm, soft arms.

A moment later, the motor boat made a circle and two strong arms tugged at her, lifted her from the water.

"Are you all right?" a man's troubled voice questioned.

"I th-think so," she responded, choked and coughing.

"Take over, skipper," he told some one else in the boat.

Ann turned her head and, accustomed to the darkness, perceived the blurred figure of a girl in white slacks and shirt.

"And where do we go?" the girl inquired.

"To my house," her companion and Ann's rescuer responded. He removed his shirt and wrapped it around Ann, then held her close in his arms.

"But, Curt," the girl protested, "your mother won't like it. Better take her to my house."

"Mother won't mind," Curt insisted, and from his tone, Ann judged he was really trying to convince himself rather than any one else. She was too exhausted, however, to care what happened to her.

Being with people again was like a dream she had not dared hope would become a reality. Wet, cold, and weary, she was getting a new perspective on life. Things she had always considered necessities would now be luxuries; she would know how to sympathize with people who were cold and hungry. And this wasn't a resolve she would forget tomorrow when she was warm and comfortable. It would stay with her always. Never again would she be so selfish and inconsiderate of all others but Ann Engle.

"Getting warm?" the man asked her. She liked the richness of his voice.

"Yes." The warmth of his arms and body was transfused slowly but surely to her own.

"What happened?"

She had to listen intently to hear him above the drone of the motor. "I don't know. I—I just fell overboard."

"People don't just accidentally fall overboard. Did you jump or were you thrown?"

"I wasn't thrown."

"From what ship?"

"I couldn't tell you."

"Was it leaving Mobile?"

"What difference does it make?"

"Storm warnings are out. No boat should be leaving port now."

"Oh!" What kind of cargo must the tramp steamer have had, to leave in the face of storm warnings? Maybe the captain thought he could beat the storm and would not have to pay wharfage while his boat was tied up at the dock.

"I'm Curtis Tankersley. The girl with me is Gloria Haywood, and this is a brand-new boat we are bringing from Mobile."

"I'm Ann—Holmes," she faltered, and snuggled closer to the warm shoulders of him. He sat with his

back to the bow of the boat, cutting off the stiff breeze created by the moving boat, and she was beginning to feel a glow from this new warmth. It even made her drowsy. His arms tightened about her.

"Curt," Gloria spoke up, her voice a little sharp, "I still think you had better take her to my house. Your mother doesn't welcome strays."

"My mother would never turn out any one who needed help. Besides," he laughed, "finders keepers, you know." To Ann, he explained, "I thought I saw some one waving from the marker just before we reached it, but decided it was imagination. We were past when I heard a splash."

"I was frozen stiff," she said. "And they tell me it doesn't get cold in the nice, balmy South!"

"The cool evening breeze is one of the nice things about it, when you aren't dripping wet," he added.

His voice was spontaneous and vibrantly alive. Bill's voice was always so composed and studied when he spoke. She hadn't the slightest idea how her rescuer looked, so she wriggled free enough to look up into his face. Very dimly outlined were even features. It was too indistinct to tell anything about the color of his hair or eyes, but she knew he was looking down at her, trying to see her features in the dark. He didn't seem like a stranger, somehow, and she settled back in his arms, feeling secure and even wanted, like a child cradled in the arms of a grown person when things have gone wrong.

Her eyelids were heavy, and the acute chilliness turned into uncomfortable warmth. She remembered groggily of being lifted from the boat and carried down a board wharf.

A woman's voice expressed displeasure at keeping a strange girl in her home.

"What did I tell you?" Gloria spoke up, and Ann knew it was Mrs. Tankersley who had made that statement.

"You know there isn't a hospital this side of the bay," Curtis responded calmly.

Mrs. Tankersley capitulated. "Take her to the front guest room," she ordered crisply. "Gloria, you call Doctor Rogers. I'll find towels and a gown."

Ann remembered the glorious warmth of dry clothes and a soft bed, but she shivered one minute and radiated heat the next until even her eyes seemed scorched. She was weak and growing steadily weaker, and she could still hear those waves beating against the channel marker.

She dozed off while people still moved about her. She was roused, and conscious of fingers professionally feeling her pulse, of a stethoscope upon her chest.

CHAPTER II.

There were other lucid, but brief, intervals after that. When a steady torrent of rain beat against the house, the wind bent trees low and heavy waves made stealthy advances far beyond the beach, apparently intent upon reaching the house. Flashes of blue light, peals of reverberating thunder rent the air. Remote voices would sometimes drift to her, but too distant for her to distinguish what was being said or who was in the room.

During later moments, the room was bathed in patches of sunlight from wide windows. A cool breeze with the invigorating tang of salt water wafted through the open windows from which dainty curtains fluttered lazily. A lulling rumble and splash perplexed her at first;

then she remembered it was the bay, tranquil and normal now.

At last her eyes were rested enough to remain open and she felt much stronger.

Turning her head experimentally, she found herself gazing into blue eyes which sparkled like an aquamarine stone with sunlight glistening upon its many facets, and they were in a vaguely familiar face. The man was probably a little older than she—she ardently hoped he had more sense—and he was bronze from the semitropical sun. She managed to smile, for she realized he was her finder.

"Feeling better?" he asked in that concerned tone she recalled with thrilling pleasure.

"Very much, thank you." She glanced around the room. "Have I been here long?"

"Four days."

"It—stormed? I seem to remember it."

"For one day and night. No casualties, except a tramp steamer bound for South America. Their last wireless was that their rudder was broken, and the coast guard have been unable to locate her. They believe she went down with all on board. Couldn't have been very far out in the Gulf because the storm came up right after we reached home."

Ann closed her eyes, bit her lip. A tramp steamer bound for South America! Lost! All on board! That meant Bill. Would have meant her, too, if she hadn't changed her mind. What a fitting climax that would have been!

"Ann," Curt accused, "you were on that boat."

She slowly raised her long, golden lashes. Her lips moved to ask the questions she wanted to know, but she said nothing. Had she been missed, and did the papers say who

had been aboard? He must have read the questions in her eyes.

"That," he assured her, "is my own conclusion. You have your reasons for wanting to keep things to yourself, and they aren't my affair. But I do think I should warn you that my mother is a little bit exacting about those who come to her house. She will ask you questions, and the way she regards you in the future will depend upon the satisfaction of those answers. I'm tiring you," he added ruefully, and he stroked her golden hair.

"You've been marvelous," she murmured gratefully. Then, "There was money in my clothes?"

"Yes. A young fortune. It's intact."

"Use it for my expenses."

"We'll discuss that later. Better go back to sleep because you'll be cross-questioned when mother knows you're conscious and you'll need your strength for it."

"I haven't done anything really wrong," she murmured. He had to believe her! "But I—I might have if—if— Oh, please believe I didn't!"

"I do believe it, Ann," he breathed softly as he leaned forward. His lips touched her white forehead.

"Oh!" she gasped because it gave her such an exquisite sensation of belonging to him. He was her finder and he had saved her. By both rights, she belonged to him, and she was in love with the idea.

His lips moved lightly to her mouth. The kiss was only a faint touch, but everything in the world, including her heart, stood still in that split second.

"That isn't fair, is it?" he smiled. "But you looked so sweet and helpless lying there, your eyes so large and blue in that too white face of yours, that I wanted to do it."

She made no oral response, merely returned his smile. Then she said, "It's rather nice to know I was rescued by you instead of—of any one else."

"Stop talking. I hear my mother approaching. Play at being asleep. After a while, when you've rested more, there will be time to talk with her."

She didn't have to play long, because the conversation with Curt had been unbelievably fatiguing.

Ann decided, before the inevitable interview, that while there was no necessity for concealing her identity, there was no reason to reveal the reason for her presence here.

One thing would not release its insidious grip upon her. If she hadn't agreed to run away with Bill, he would not have been killed. Any way she looked at it, she was indirectly responsible for his death. Then there was Natalie! Natalie would have to know some day, if she didn't already, about Bill. Natalie had undoubtedly loved Bill and probably still cared for him. Maybe she even trusted him in a blind sort of way.

The note Ann had left her father had probably spared him all anxiety. If Bill weren't lost, the truth might never have been made public, and how Ann dreaded the degradation of such publicity!

And so, when Mrs. Tankersley came to her, Ann was prepared. She gave her right name, requested that her father be notified where she was, and told that his daughter was all right after meeting with a very slight accident and that she would write soon.

Ann regained her strength rapidly and her paleness gave way to gold-brown from the healing rays of the sun.

LS—3B

Gloria came to see her daily, and before Ann was strong enough to shop for herself, Gloria shopped for her and had clothes sent out on approval.

It was a fashion parade. Ann would try on the clothes and model them before Mrs. Tankersley, Gloria and Curt. She adored hearing their candid opinions, and it was a lot of fun dressing to please Curt, particularly, who was quick to speak his approval or dislike. If he hadn't said a word, she would have known by the glow of admiration in his eyes, or the slight grimace of disdain.

"Every gown," he commented on one occasion when Gloria was not present and Mrs. Tankersley was called to the telephone, "is a new revelation."

Ann looked at the low-cut icy-green satin and blushed.

He laughed. "I mean, each one changes you into a different person. You are all sophistication in formal clothes—you even frighten me a little. In sports clothes you are a grand little playmate. In those simple, dainty dresses, you look so lovely and naïve I could take you in my arms and smother you with kisses!"

She was afraid he would and instinctively shrank away from him. Again he laughed, that genial, virile laugh she loved.

"Don't be alarmed. I wouldn't now." He nodded, indicating her dress. "I'd be afraid you'd turn to ice in my arms."

Ice! If he knew the fire that raced through her veins when he was near, he would know a mere dress couldn't really change her.

"I want to see that white satin on you," he told her.

Ann did look alarmed then.

"No!" she managed to whisper.



When they reached the mainland Curt lifted her from the boat and carried her into his house. He didn't seem like a stranger, somehow, and she settled back in his arms, feeling secure and even wanted.

"I—I don't want the white!" She gave a perceptible shudder. Bill—white evening dress—pearls! "I—I'll never even try on a white formal dress until—until I'm to be married."

"Are you"—Curt swallowed, loosened his collar—"going to be married?"

She shook her head. "Never!"

He gave a visible, or audible, sigh, even managed another faint smile.

Then he frowned. "Are you married?"

"No." Her long, sweeping lashes lowered upon her white cheeks, casting shadows upon them.

"Had you planned to be married?" he further questioned, and that brought the vivid color to her cheeks. Her lip trembled, and her blue eyes were veiled by swimming tears.

Curt had been straddling a straight chair, his arms resting on its high back. He quickly left it now and stood beside her.

"I'm sorry, Ann. It's none of my business," he apologized. "You're provocative and sweet. I can't help wanting to know a little about you—the you of your own world. Am I forgiven?" His eyes were blue coals of emotion.

The corners of Ann's mouth turned upward just enough to convey that he was.

Curt made a movement to take her in his arms, but his mother returned at that moment so he stepped back, his half-raised arms dropping listlessly to his sides.

"I'm anxious to see you in the white satin, Ann," Mrs. Tankersley said.

Ann's gaze went unconsciously to Curt, who explained:

"Ann has a phobia for white—she'd rather not even try it on, mom."

"Mom!" Mrs. Tankersley scorned.

It wasn't easy to be casual with Curt. Between them had sprung up a bond of belonging to each other, which Ann feared they didn't conceal from others. Mrs. Tankersley observed with disapproval, and when she and Ann were alone one day, she made a remark that struck a blow between the eyes.

"Gloria and Curtis have practically grown up together, and I hope they will marry some day," Mrs.

Tankersley said. "They have already discussed it, I understand; but, because they have known each other so long, time doesn't seem to matter. There is no rush, of course, except that I am anxious for my son to give up the work he has been following and work with his father. I think Gloria will help him change his mind."

Ann had met Mr. Tankersley only once because he seldom came across the bay to this summer home, except over the week-ends. He was a very busy attorney about to make his debut into politics.

"You mean you object to Curt being an instructor at the military academy?"

"Yes. It's no place for him and it pays a mere pittance."

"But he loves it!"

"He thinks he does. The novelty will eventually wear off, I hope, and then he'll change his mind about it. I'm depending upon you"—Mrs. Tankersley shot Ann a significant look—"not to influence him against his father's work. Son has an LL. D. degree, you know."

"I wouldn't think of trying to change his mind! I've hardly discussed work with him. Anyway, I think I'm able to leave, now. You've been very kind to me."

"There is no hurry about your leaving." And that seemed to settle it for Mrs. Tankersley. Ann finally admitted her reluctance to return home; however, she refrained from discussing her reason, which was Natalie. Natalie would have to know about Bill, and Ann was hoping that her delay might help her conceive of a way to tell her so there would be as little ado about it as possible. And yet, every day that passed without telling her made a deeper furrow in her conscience.

And each day with Curt made

Ann wish she had told him the truth in the beginning. Either he would have loved her in spite of it, or it would have been the barrier between them that would have prevented their falling in love. She tried to tell him, but invariably postponed it, and the longer she waited the more difficult it was and the more cowardly she felt.

They were lying on the beach, late one afternoon, just the two of them. Ann was stretched out on an orange-and-blue beach mat, her bare back exposed to the sun. Curt was lying in the same position, but opposite her, so that by resting their chins on folded arms they faced each other.

"So you've really decided to go!" he repeated her announcement. "I suppose I shouldn't blame you for that, but I'm going to miss you like everything!"

"For a day or two, maybe," she smiled at him. "You have all been so grand to me, I'll always be indebted."

"I should say that it would have been the same with any one. But I can't. You know that. You are not only lovely to look at and lovely to be with, but you are also mine by right of discovery. I should keep you here forever, but that wouldn't be right. Unless——"

"Don't say it!" she broke in. "Don't say anything you might regret to-morrow. I have enough regrets behind me to——"

"Why were you in the middle of the bay, Ann? I haven't asked you directly before, and it still isn't any business of mine, but I can't help wanting to know. It was a—a man, I suppose?"

Ann's face, now a rich golden tan, reddened. She buried her face on her arms so that he saw only the glinting crown of her waved hair.

She couldn't tell him what a despicable thing she had nearly done! She couldn't tell him she was responsible for that man's death! Yet, Curt was certainly entitled to an explanation, one she should have given long ago.

"I—I didn't do anything really wrong, Curt!" She lifted her face and appealed to him. Her expression was serious and confused. "No matter what you ever hear of me, I want you to always remember that! Oh, I hate myself for what I did do, and I'd give anything—my life, even—if I could make amends for what I have done to two other persons, but there's no way I can change it!"

Slowly he withdrew his gaze from her tortured face, and the color crept into his throat and face. Warily he dropped his forehead to his strong, muscular arms.

Ann was suffering. Impulsively, she reached out and touched the dark-blond hair very lightly. He glanced up, grasped her hand, quickly pressed it to his lips.

"I love you, Ann," said Curt with quiet emphasis. For another split second the world stood still for her, then her heart proceeded to throb in triple tempo. "But I'll never ask you to marry me." He ended as if trying to decide what else to say.

Ann withdrew her hand at which he had been gazing, as if he were addressing it, and clutched at her throat. Her eyes were stricken, but he met them without the quiver of an eyelash. Curt was inscrutable in that painful moment when she searched his face for a contradiction of his words. Her lashes lowered. Slowly she shifted her position, and then sat up. Curt remained lying in the sand.

A boy about twelve years old came rushing up to them and flung



himself down beside Curt, a grin on his young, sun-burned face that was a startling contrast to Curt's immobility. Then, to the boy, Curt gave a lazy smile.

"Captain Tankersley!" the boy ejaculated breathlessly. "Guess what!"

"Couldn't in a thousand years," Curt responded amiably. "What?"

"My dad's coming!"

Curt sat up, put his hands on the boy's shoulders. "Not really!"

The boy nodded vigorously. "Yep. He called us from Mobile. Flew here!" He finished by turning a somersault in the sand.

"If you'll be still long enough," Curt informed him in that caressing way he

"Natalie!" Ann gasped. "Natalie Brant!" The color left Ann's face as she realized this was the moment she had been dreading. She would have to confess everything now!

had for the boy, "I'd like to present you to my friend. Miss Engle, Corporal Gerry Wilkinson."

The cadet, in blue dungarees, extended his hand and made a grinning apology for his behavior which Ann laughed away.

"You see, the corporal and his dad are all there are in his family," Curt gravely explained. "During vacation, the corporal visits his aunt, who lives down the beach, and we two fellows spend quite a bit of time together. He attends our military academy."

Ann beamed at the corporal.

The *ding-dong, ding-dong* of a bell sounded.

"That's Aunt Ada's bell and it means she wants me!" the corporal ejaculated. "I bet that means my dad is here! I'll bring him around and show him to you!" the corporal called over his shoulder.

Ann laughed. "I know his dad will love being shown off by his proud young son! Most men do!"

"I'm surprised his father would even consider coming here," Curt mused. "He pays very little attention to his son, and the boy worships him. I'm fond of the corporal, and he's only one of the dozens and dozens of my cadets." Curt was so in earnest that Ann glanced at him quickly, for she was recalling what his mother had said about wanting him to give up that work. Curt would never do it, and Ann wasn't sure she blamed him. Not

if there were others like the young corporal, for he, alone, was enough to make any one enthralled with the life.

"It seems we have a guest," Curt announced, glancing toward the house.

Ann's eyes followed that direction. At the gate stood a young woman dressed in a summery black-and-white suit. Ann blinked unbelievably. Vaguely she saw the woman advance toward them, her luminous dark eyes anxious and deep set, in a face that was beautiful but now showed signs of weariness and desperation. A small black hat was perched over her soft dark hair and one dark eyebrow.

"Natalie!" Ann gasped. Curt had risen to his feet, and Ann forgot him in this tense moment. The color left Ann's face. "Natalie Brant!" she enunciated.

"Where," Natalie crisply demanded, "is Bill?"

"You—don't—know?" Ann faltered. A movement at her side as Curt shifted his weight, and Ann realized this was the moment she had been dreading all these days. No. It was worse than she had anticipated because the task was doubled—she was having to confess everything to both at the same time, which had not been in her scheme.

"I know only that he did not go to Havana!" Natalie asserted sharply.

TO BE CONCLUDED.





Beauty Not Required

By Beverly Crane

CECILE CARSON bent her flaming, curly red head lower over her dictation pad. She prayed that Kent Sheridan's narrowed blue eyes wouldn't see that her flying pencil was forming, instead of the usual shorthand symbols, an incomprehensible jumble of words, half phrases and characters.

"We will not," he was saying, "release the details of the new Revolta airplane motor design under any circumstances. It is constructed to government specifications for operation and——"

Her pencil flew. But she was careful to keep the page well hidden.

If only he wouldn't dictate in that rapid-fire fashion! She didn't dare ask him to repeat. That would give her away.

Outwardly, Cecile was the perfect secretary, from her trim black slippers straight up the seams of her silk-sheathed ankles to the top of her capable young head. But inwardly, she seethed with conflicting emotions.

She was afraid. Her shorthand was business-school type, with no practical experience. Yet here she was, a full-fledged secretary to the two heads of the Sheridan Aircraft Co.

She was bold. Her first week of work was almost over. So far, at least, she'd escaped detection.

"Don't tell me," she'd said to Nancy Hawthorn, her roommate, when she told her about the job, "that it doesn't pay to bluff! I got the job twenty other girls would have given their eyeteeth to get—private secretary to Kent and Mark Sheridan."

"You didn't lie about having no business experience, did you?" Nancy had asked, aghast.

"No, I just told Mark Sheridan I'd been exposed to everything from shorthand to bookkeeping. And it's true!"

Nancy, who was small, brown-haired and very efficient, didn't have the courage her vivacious, Titian-haired roommate had.

"More power to you if you can get away with it," she had told Cecile, and then added dreamily, "Just think of being able to work for Mark Sheridan! His picture is always in the papers. Is he really as handsome as he looks?"

Cecile had scowled. "I'm not interested in romance," she'd answered. "All I want is three square meals a day. And believe me, I'm going to hang onto this job, now that I've got it!"

Her mind snapped back to the present. Kent Sheridan was saying, "That will be all, Miss Carson. End it the usual way."

Cecile permitted her full red lips to relax in a smile as she struggled to pin down the last fleeting sentences. Her dark-blue eyes under their long, curling lashes lost some of the strained, frightened expression that had been in them for the past half hour.

She was awed by Kent's brusque, rapid-fire manner. He was the engineer of the partnership—a homely,

tall, square-shouldered man with straight black hair tumbled about his forehead. Mark Sheridan, on the other hand, was handsome and charming, with a magnetic personality that made him an ideal salesman for the firm. It was he who had hired Cecile with the remark:

"We can use a pretty girl around this place."

She hadn't told Nancy about that.

Now she closed her dictation pad with a self-confident flip and stood up. She told herself, "Afterward, I'll patch this letter up. He won't ever suspect——"

His voice stopped her at the door.

"Oh, Miss Carson, will you read that letter back to me?"

A thin trickle of ice water went down her spine.

"W-what?"

His blue eyes lanced her startled face. He said, "Will you read it over to me? I want to make a few corrections."

She clutched the pad to her wildly beating heart. He mustn't find out!

She stammered, "I—I'll type it first thing in the morning."

He shook his head. "It'll have to go out on the airmail for Washington to-night."

Cecile sat down again, numbly. She began to read. Ordinarily, her memory would have helped her to piece the letter together, but now with those keen blue eyes on her flushed face, she was lost.

"Here," Kent said finally, extending a hand. "Let me see your notes."

It was out—her whole miserable, desperate scheme to get work at any cost! Dejectedly, she handed him the pad. He took one glance at it and tossed it aside.

"I thought so."

She stood there, a slim, forlorn

figure, while tears of disappointment welled in her dark-blue eyes.

"Well," she asked with a kind of defiance, "what are you going to do about it?"

He didn't answer at first. He simply sat there at his cluttered desk, staring out into the growing dusk. His face, she saw, was haggard. She knew he had been working for weeks on this new *Revolta* motor.

"What?" he asked, jerking his attention back to her. "Oh, you're fired, of course. What's worrying me is how I'll get these new specifications down to Washington tonight. There isn't time to dictate that all over again to another girl, and besides it's after hours. They've all gone home."

A wave of remorse swept over Cecile. He looked so tired, so dejected.

"I'm sorry," she whispered.

He shot a quick glance at her then, and his voice was harsh as he said, "You've messed things up all right. Please get your hat and go home!"

But Cecile didn't move. A slow, crimson flush was mounting from her white throat, spreading into her cheeks. Her deep-blue eyes grew smoky and her lips tensed. She wouldn't be dismissed with a snap of the fingers!

She cried, "Of course, I'll go. But if you'd only have a little patience I could do this letter correctly. I haven't made any mistakes all day!"

He said grimly, "One mistake in that letter you just took might cost us the government contract for five hundred *Revoltas*! Now do you see why I can't let you practice taking dictation from me?"

Cecile flared, "If you'd walked the streets for two months, trying to

get work, wouldn't you try to bluff, too?"

She paused, eyes flashing, red lips parted.

Kent Sheridan looked up at her wonderingly. For the first time he seemed to be aware of the slim, defiant girl standing before him. Something in his eyes seemed to soften and then, abruptly, his lips hardened and his voice was strained.

"Please," he said, avoiding her eyes, "can't you see it's nothing personal? But get your experience somewhere else, not here."

He turned back to his blue prints with finality. Cecile stamped a dainty black slipper angrily.

"But how am I going to get experience unless I first get a job?" she cried. "I've had all sorts of business school training. I'm like every other girl who wants—who needs to get a job!" Still he didn't answer. Cecile finished tearfully, "It's men like you who won't give a girl a chance at a job."

A voice, jovial and warm, inquired behind her, "Who won't give you a job, honey?"

She whirled, startled, to see Mark Sheridan smiling down at her from his six-foot-two as he leaned casually against the door jamb. He carried an expensive camel's hair topcoat thrown carelessly across one arm. He winked at her encouragingly.

"Come on, tell Mark all about it."

Quite suddenly, Cecile was aware that her cheeks were flushed and stained with tears. Her flaming red hair was disheveled. It curled in tiny damp ringlets at her smooth white temples. Her lower lip quivered. "I'm fired," she said flatly.

"No!" Mark whistled softly, eyes twinkling.

Cecile looked at Kent Sheridan's

stubbornly averted face. She could see his jaw was set. Mark sauntered into the room, and she was all at once aware of the great difference between the two brothers.

Kent was serious and hard-working. His lean, hawklike face was burned to a dull-red by sun and wind. Only that afternoon Cecile had seen him wheeling a ship about the field, giving the new *Revolta* its final tests. He was practical, hard-headed and brusque where Mark was handsome, spoiled and able to win any one to his side by his charming personality.

Now he said, "No go, Kent. You can't fire this girl."

"Oh, can't I?"

Cecile stood there uncomfortably while they measured each other with their eyes. Mark was the first to shrug and turn away.

"No, because it's part of the agreement that I'm to hire the help."

Kent slammed a hand down upon the blue prints. "All right, but get me a girl who's dependable, not just a pretty stenographer! Put an ad in the paper, 'experience wanted.'"

Cecile felt her cheeks flaming. So they both thought that a girl, because she was pretty, didn't have a brain in her head!

"Give me a half hour," she said, "and I'll type that letter correctly. If you can find any mistakes in it, you can fire me!"

Kent hesitated. Mark smiled at her, then asked, "How about it, Kent? Give her a chance!"

She taunted the silent, thin-lipped man behind the desk, "That offer ought to appeal to your sporting instinct!"

Kent raised his narrowed, blue-eyed gaze to Cecile's flushed face. She looked like a Celtic princess as she stood before him, straight and

slim, her mass of Titian hair in startling contrast to her alabaster skin. Her blue eyes flamed at him.

"All right," he said brusquely. "But don't think I won't keep you to that bargain!"

There was something in the look he gave her as he turned back to his blue prints that puzzled Cecile.

Two hours later, she faced Mark Sheridan across the snowy damask of a table in the Madagascar's murky, rhumba-filled interior. Between them were the remains of their late supper—chicken sandwiches, a salad, dessert and coffee.

"Glad you came with me?" Mark's smile was filled with easy good humor. He was nodding to people at distant tables, smiling up at the dancers in the floor show. Every one knew Mark Sheridan, it seemed.

"I was starved," she admitted with a rueful laugh. "But I did deserve to stay late. At that, we got the letter off to Washington, didn't we?"

His hand captured hers. "Without any mistakes."

Cecile was too happy to notice the look in his eyes. She laughed gayly. "Don't ever tell him I told you that dad was an aviator, or that I was raised on engine talk. He probably thinks it was fool luck that helped me get that letter right, down to the last period."

Mark lowered his voice. He said, "You shouldn't know anything about mechanics and airplane motors. Not a girl with lips like yours, not a girl with red hair——"

Cecile smiled. "At least you've noticed I'm red-headed."

He questioned slyly, "Meaning that Kent never sees you? You can't expect that brother of mine to see anything but blue prints!"



Her heart beat unsteadily. She was thinking of Kent's bronzed, hawklike face bent over those papers back in the office. She said, "A girl likes to feel she's human."

Mark leaned closer across the table.

"Then why not melt a little for me to-night? I'm supposed to be fairly attractive. Besides, you ought to give me a break for not letting Kent fire you, even after you'd finished that letter."

"I made a bargain to stick," she told him. "I'll try to do that. But I am grateful to you."

He chuckled. "You did seem to get under his skin. I never saw Kent so positively riled as he was to-night."

They left the floor, people looking after them. Mark Sheridan was easily the handsomest man there. Cecile wondered why she couldn't thrill to the touch of his hand on her elbow.

She wondered what was behind Kent Sheridan's animosity. Why did he dislike her so?

Mark was still holding her hand when he said, "Don't worry, I won't let him fire you. We need more beauty and less brains around that office, anyway."

Cecile chilled. Slowly, she withdrew her hand. He did not notice her sudden, hurt silence because he

was smiling to an acquaintance across the floor.

So Mark shared his brother's opinion that a pretty girl didn't have a brain in her head! Or did he think she'd be willing to trade on her beauty to keep her job?

They danced, but she was a cool, impersonal being who drifted through the pulsing rhumba without warming to its heady throb. Her coolness both amused and baffled him. She was aware that his eagerness grew as the evening lengthened. But, again perversely, she wasn't excited by her conquest.

Her thoughts persisted on returning to that darkened office where she had last seen Kent's dark head bent over a pool of murky light.

"Tired?" Mark asked a moment later. "I'll call a taxi."

"Thank you."

They left the floor, people looking after them. Cecile's flaming head bobbed at his expensively tailored gray shoulder. Mark Sheridan was easily the handsomest man at the Madagascar. She wondered why she couldn't thrill to the touch of his hand on her elbow.

What was the matter with her? Why couldn't she forget that tired, bronzed young face back there at the plant?

Mark handed the check girl their stubs, and the head waiter came up behind them with, "Leaving so soon, Mr. Sheridan? Ah, and Madame Feli—"

He broke off. He stood staring in confusion at the sight of Cecile's flaming mass of tumbled hair behind Mark Sheridan's broad back.

"Next time"—Mark laughed easily—"keep your eyes open, Pierre!" He slipped a bill into the man's hand.

They were waiting under the marquee for their taxi when a gay

group alighted and came toward them. One woman, in an expensive gold evening wrap, saw Mark and gave a gasp of surprise.

"Mark!" she cried. "You here? So sorry to have missed you earlier this evening. Do drop in later tonight!"

She was a slender, dark-haired woman, exotic-looking. Her black hair was parted in the exact center, dark as a raven's wing. Her carmine lips curved in a petulant *moue*.

"Don't fail me, will you?"

And then, with a single penetrating glance in Cecile's direction, she was gone. Mark coughed uncomfortably.

"Friend of mine—Madame Felisse—charming woman."

Cecile knew now that she was the woman the head waiter had mistaken her for. Evidently, Mark Sheridan and Madame Felisse were often seen together at the Madagascar.

Sudden, mirthless laughter rose in her. She didn't know, either, why she felt so close to tears.

It wasn't until they were inside the taxi and riding through the park that he tried to kiss her. She knew what was coming, so she was prepared.

"You're like a flaming, scarlet poppy," he whispered, his lips brushing her ear. "Won't you thaw a little of the ice away from those lips?"

"Please!" Cecile thrust her young strength against his tightening arms.

He pretended to release her. "Well, if you insist—"

But almost at once, he tightened his arms and Cecile, caught unaware, felt his lips commanding hers. She went limp, enduring his kisses. And soon, as she had known he would, he released her. Men like

Mark Sheridan wanted combat, not passive resistance.

"You're a funny little devil," he chuckled. "First, you look as if you'd melt a Buddha. And then, all at once you're as remote as Mont Blanc."

Cecile smiled wryly. "That would make me a pretty well traveled young woman."

He helped her to the sidewalk in front of the brownstone house where she roomed with Nancy. He held her hand a moment.

"If I didn't have important business to-night," he told her, "I'd bet on Buddha. Well, good night, and don't let that hard-boiled brother of mine rile you. He's harmless."

Nancy was still up when Cecile came in, tossing her hat dejectedly upon the sofa.

"What's the matter?" she cried. "Did you lose your job?"

Cecile said, "No, they didn't fire me." She told Nancy about the day, omitting certain details.

Nancy sighed. "Gee, you're lucky! Mark won't let a pretty girl lose her job!"

Cecile flared. "Can't you understand that I might want a job so that I can be independent? Or so that I won't have to go on asking my family for money? I can hold down that job!"

"Sure!" Nancy winked. "But why not have a good time on the side?"

"Because that takes just a pretty face," Cecile told her. "And I'm going to prove to Kent Sheridan I have plain normal intelligence!"

She handed Nancy a magazine, picked up a pencil and pad.

"What's the idea?"

Cecile said, "You're going to read while I take dictation. I may have been bluffing when I got that job,

but I wasn't bluffing when I told Kent I'd keep it!"

Nancy pouted. "I don't see why you're so anxious to impress him one way or the other."

Cecile didn't answer that.

At ten o'clock the next morning, Kent's buzzer sounded for dictation. He did not glance up as Cecile came through the door, or he would have seen that she was dressed in a soft yellow sweater above her trim brown skirt. She was slim and lovely, and high color flamed in her cheeks.

"Take a letter to Vincent Richards, of Skiline Limited," he said abruptly. His eyes were bloodshot, and his face was haggard from lack of sleep.

"Yes, sir."

He went on in a tense, harsh voice, "This is to inform you that under no circumstances will the plans for the new Revolta motor be sold. We consider that the new engine, with its greatly increased speed, is worthy of government use only in the newest type fighter. Therefore——"

Her pencil flew. There was a nervous, disturbed tension in him that she couldn't fathom. A growing rebellion seethed within her. He needn't dictate so fast!

He finished the letter, stopped his nervous pacing. His blue eyes lanced her.

"Did you get that?"

Cecile flushed. "Yes. Is that all?"

He shook his head. "No," he said slowly, "it isn't!" He came around the desk to face her as she rose to her feet. His eyes were mere slits of hostile blue.

"This is off the record," he told her, "but were you out with my brother last night?"

Twin spots of color flamed in her cheeks. "Yes."

"Then maybe you can tell me where I can locate him," he shot at her. "There's a big government contract coming up and he's missing. We can't afford to antagonize this South American firm, either, with a representative coming into town."

She said, "All I know is that he said he had important business to attend to after he left me. We went to the Madagascar and I got home at eleven o'clock."

He looked at her a moment. Bright, hot, angry tears stood in her eyes. The sight of them seemed to make his face grow more bleak and cold.

"That will be all," he dismissed her curtly.

She turned and left the room. A moment later she saw his rangy figure disappear through the door to the flying field. She didn't know why she watched him climbing into the cockpit of a plane, or why she stood there with her heart in her throat while he stunted the plane over the field and finally brought it down in a power dive from a height of ten thousand feet.

A voice brought her around, eyes widening. She realized she was weak and limp.

"Pardon, but is Mark Sheridan here?"

She recognized the thin, dark man as the South American representative. And so, while Kent stunted the plane over the field and each new dive brought her heart to her throat, she tried everything in her power to keep the impatient visitor from leaving angrily and canceling his contract.

She was waiting when Kent came back to the office an hour later, his

face streaked with grease, and a fierce flame burning in his blue eyes.

"Señor Peralda was here," she told him, going into his office while he strode ahead, tugging the helmet from his head. "I tried to make him wait until you came in, but he had to catch a plane for the West. I promised him you'd deliver the hundred motors ten days later than the original date. He finally agreed to it, in your brother's absence."

His lean, bronzed face was turned toward her. Through suspicious eyes he looked at her.

"Why did you do that?" he asked finally. There was a queer, husky note in his voice she couldn't quite understand.

"Why?" she echoed in a dazed helplessness. "What else could I do? I'd do the same for any employer."

His face had softened, but now it hardened again. "All right," he said. "Just so long as you're aware that you violated every rule of the company." And he turned his back on her as she left the room.

Cecile shut the door behind her softly. She was thinking, "He isn't even human! He might have thanked me for saving a quarter-of-a-million-dollar contract! Why do I go on working here when he hates me?"

Then she saw Mark Sheridan. He was hastily thumbing through the correspondence on her desk. When he saw her he straightened guiltily. He carried a topcoat, hat and traveling bag.

"Oh, hello, honey! I was just looking over the morning's mail." She wondered what he had been searching for. There was nothing on her desk except correspondence concerning the new Revolta motor specifications.

He laughed uneasily. "I suppose



the raging lion is waiting for my scalp."

Cecile didn't smile. "Just a moment," she suggested, "before you go into his office. He might read a double meaning into this."

She reached up and dusted white powder off his lapel. Mark laughed, flushing, and looked down at her. He put a finger under her chin,

Mark stooped to kiss Cecile. She drew back, startled, as the door to the inner office opened. Kent stood there, his eyes taking in the scene.

tilted her head. "After this we'll have to be more careful, eh?" he asked.

He stooped to kiss her. But

Cecile drew back, startled, as the door to the inner office opened. Kent stood there, his eyes taking in the scene. Finally he said:

"When you've finished, Mark, I'd like to have a word with you."

With a last look at Cecile, he turned and went back inside. Mark followed him a second later.

Cecile stood there, her heart pounding unsteadily in her throat. She wasn't thinking about the powder on Mark Sheridan's lapel, nor was she wondering about his mysterious actions.

Instead, she was puzzled by the look that she had seen on Kent Sheridan's bronzed, hawklike face. There was something in those disillusioned blue eyes that left Cecile weak and shaken in spite of herself.

She thought, "I don't care what he thinks of me! Why should I?"

But she knew in her heart that she did.

It was nearly nine o'clock when she returned to her room, and saw a light burning in the window. Nancy had planned to spend the week-end out of the city, but this meant she had come back.

Cecile ran swiftly up the stairs, placed the key in the lock, then remembered that Nancy frequently forgot to spring the catch. She pushed open the door and stepped inside.

She stopped still on the threshold in frozen amazement.

All the lights were on in the room. In the center of the rug, the contents of every drawer had been dumped. And now, in the center of this mess she saw Kent Sheridan!

"Hello," he said calmly. "You're home earlier than I expected you."

She cried, "What are you doing here? Have you gone mad?"

He took out a cigarette, lit it slowly. He shook out the match while he studied her coldly.

"I'd like to find out what's become of the specifications on the new *Revolta*. They're missing."

She demanded, "I suppose you think I stole them?"—furiously.

He said, "You'll have to admit you've been dead set on working in our office. You even bluffed your way to get into our employ. As it happens, there are at least two dozen governments and twice as many private manufacturers who'd pay any amount to get those plans for a faster fighting plane motor."

Her eyes flashed. "So you accuse me of stealing your specifications? Isn't it a pretty cheap trick to try and get rid of me this way?"

"They're missing. You're the newest employee. All the rest are old employees of proven honesty."

"But I tell you, I didn't take them!"

He looked at her, and she read the despair in his eyes. His face was gray, haggard from lack of sleep under its bronzed skin. In spite of herself, she felt a surge of pity for the man who stood before her.

"I suppose it is hopeless." He shrugged. "They're gone. And Washington was to have them tomorrow! You've covered up cleverly, if you are guilty."

It was absurd, insane, impossible! She had merely tried to keep a job, and now she was charged with stealing the plans of a motor valuable to the government!

He laughed crisply. "I might have been warned—red-headed women are always mixed up in something like this!"

She choked back her fury. "Why not any woman? Why pick on me because I'm red-headed and know what I want?"

She stopped, suddenly, because her own words had given her an idea. Suppose—suppose a woman actually was guilty? *Madame Felisse!*

But she was Mark's friend. And he couldn't sell out Kent, his own brother, his own company.

Now Kent crossed the room in two swift strides. His fingers bit into her shoulders. He said harshly, "You're going to tell me everything you know. Where are the plans?"

His eyes were burning, desperate slits in a chalk-white face.

"No, I won't. Let me go!"

He shook her, so that her loosened hair fell in a flaming glory about her shoulders.

"Now, will you tell me?"

His voice was husky, his lips parched as he bent over her smooth white throat. Cecile's blue eyes were wet with tears—tears of anger and defiance. There was a desperate madness in them both—a battle between them that was more ageless and real than this quarrel over a set of blue prints.

"I won't!" she repeated huskily, softly.

Their nearness fired both of them so that suddenly, he crushed her to him. Her lithe body melted against his, and his lips seared hers in a long, delirious moment of desire. For a moment she fought him with all her splendid, wild young strength, then she was still, passive.

She felt the steellike pressure of his arms, realized that her heart was pounding with a fierce, wild exultation. His kisses first burned her lips in mad abandon, then softened until he was kissing her tenderly.

He released her. "Cecile," he began hoarsely, "I——"

Her palm, small and firm, struck his cheek with a stinging report. His surprise made him release her suddenly, so that she fell back against the sofa, her two hands supporting her. She was panting, and her hair was a cloud about her shoulders.

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She heard his laugh, low and wondering. She shivered.

"Whatever happens," he said, "I'm not sorry for what I did just now."

And then he was gone. Cecile stood there, not moving. She knew only one thing clearly: Kent had kissed her, and she had discovered that she loved him!

But close on the heels of that thought came another. Quite obviously, Mark was mixed up in an intrigue with Madame Felisse. How much she had to do with the disappearance of the specifications was not clear. But she must find out, go to Mark's separate bachelor establishment if necessary. She must try and save Kent!

She didn't hesitate. She loved Kent hopelessly, miserably. Now she knew that she could never go on working for him, in sight of that lean, bronzed face, within sound of his voice.

She found Mark Sheridan's apartment on the top floor of an exclusive apartment building. The elevator man who took her up said, "There's been a lot of people in and out—a party, likely."

The door was open. Cecile stepped inside the vacant foyer. She saw another door ajar and went softly inside, wondering where the servants could be. And then she heard the sound of voices beyond the little darkened room.

"You can't fail us now, Mark!" It was Madame Felisse's voice! "Can't you see what it would mean?"

And then Mark Sheridan's voice, pleading, "I tell you, I can't bring the specifications here. They're locked up in the office. Kent thinks they're in the safe. He won't know they're missing until to-morrow morning. You can have somebody

else steal them. I won't! They're in the——"

Cecile heard only a murmur of voices after that. She stepped back in the darkness, whirled to flee. At that instant her elbow brushed a vase. It crashed to the floor in a thousand pieces. Cecile turned and ran.

With shaking fingers, Cecile unrolled the specifications. She had taken a taxi to the plant, used her pass key to gain the suite of offices occupied by Mark and his brother. She knew the combination of the safe. Fortunately, the time lock was not on.

But the specifications weren't there! It wasn't until she had searched frantically through Mark's desk and office that her eye lit on the golf bag hanging on the hatrack. The umbrella strapped to its side contained the missing blue prints and specifications.

Now she had time to slip them into the safe, set the time lock twenty-four hours ahead——

She whirled, a cry in her throat, just as a shaft of light nailed her slender figure to the wall.

"Cecile!"

Mark Sheridan stood there in the doorway. Instinctively, she whirled and ran toward the safe. But he was quicker. His hand closed over her arm, swung her about.

"You can't have them!" she cried. "They belong to Kent!"

But he didn't hear her. He spun her away roughly from the safe and seized the papers.

"Give them to me," he said huskily. "Don't you realize they'll kill Carlita and me if they don't get them?"

Cecile cried, "It would be better than to have this happen to Kent!"

He stopped. He stared at the

sight of her, her hair tumbled about, her shoulders, her blue eyes defiant.

"You love him!" the handsome man said slowly. "You love Kent."

"Yes!" she whispered in the semi-darkness. "Yes, I do!"

A noise in the outer office brought them both about in startled surprise. They stared at a distant patch of brilliance. Mark gasped, "It's Kent, coming here. He can't find us!"

But Cecile was quicker this time. She seized the specifications and thrust them into the safe. She spun the knob. The time lock was on!

"Don't forget," she warned the man beside her, "we came together."

And then Kent stood there, looking at the flushed, disheveled girl who stood at the safe. He didn't send a second glance at Mark. ? the watchman and two plain-cloth men behind him, Kent said:

"That'll be all. You can go now."

Cecile explained, "After the fuss you made about the Revolva specifications, I thought I'd better get Mark and come down to see that they were put away in the safe. You'll find them all right, though I did happen to put on the time lock for twenty-four hours."

Mark Sheridan muttered, mopping his neck, "You won't need me any longer. I'll go now."

They let him go. When they were alone, Kent came over and took her gently by both arms. His eyes were tender now, and understanding.

"Look here," he said, "won't you ever make a real mistake so that I can fire you?"

A flame of defiance still burned within her. "You'd like that, wouldn't you?" she asked bitterly.

He turned, picked up the umbrella and hung it on the rack again. "Some one else almost made a regrettable mistake to-night, but fortunately the government men who

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“Dearest Diary”

By

Eleanor Roberts

leprosy in the family, or that my grandfather had fits!

He told me I must get rid of you immediately! He said men simply abhor girls who keep diaries. And that as an up-and-coming young lawyer, he had been in enough courtrooms to know what he was talking about.

In fact, he said an awful lot. Most of it was very uncomplimentary to you.

You know, George has ambitions. He wants to be a State's attorney, or something, some day.

He said he didn't care to have any details of his love life recorded in a green leather volume, and tucked away, along with a little bundle of sachet, and a lot of pink undies, in the bottom drawer of my bureau.

He looked very mad when he said it. And as for me, I was simply boiling with righteous wrath and indignation.

So I told him that if it gave me a little pleasure to write down certain romantic happenings, along with my thoughts and emotions regarding them, I certainly intended to keep right on doing so. Then in time, when I became an old married woman, and my husband

April 22nd.

Dearest Diary:

George and I quarreled last night. And actually broke our engagement!

All because of you!

I happened to mention, very casually, that I was keeping a diary. I told him I bought you three months ago, shortly after meeting him at Mary Rice's birthday party. And I wish you could have seen his face when he heard the word, "diary." It was livid.

He couldn't have been any more horrified if I'd told him we had

neglected me, I could refresh my memory along those lines.

And that, inasmuch as my emotions had never gotten me into trouble so far, I didn't see any particular harm in recording them!

George became very angry at that.

"You little idiot!" he cried. "Of course you don't think at the time you write it, that any one will ever read your diary, but you never can tell when an accident, or a scandal, or some peculiar twist of fate will land you in the public eye. Look at that prominent movie actress, who, when excerpts from her diary were read aloud in front of a judge and jury, caused a scandal that shook the very foundations of Hollywood, quite as much as if there'd been an earthquake. And all because this foolish woman didn't know any more than to write indiscreet happenings down on paper——"

I drew my breath in sharply as I listened to him.

"So you think I may have some indiscreet happenings to record in my diary?" I demanded, feeling my temper rise with every word I uttered.

"Whether you have, or not," George said, getting up from the davenport, where we had been sitting before the storm broke, and eyeing me with great dignity, "you can either give up writing in that absurd diary, or you can stop seeing me."

Well, dearest diary, I have a little pride. And I am not going to let any man, not even a fiancé, dictate to me in such a high-handed fashion.

So I watched him pick up his hat from the table, and let him go home, without saying one word to stop him. Although I will admit that I cried a little when he had gone.

Oh, dearest diary, I am so miserable. I don't know what to do. I

never knew before that George was such an opinionated, obstinate, unreasonable creature. I merely thought it was conservatism. Or anæmia, or something.

Well, I am learning about life and men. I know that if I give in to George now on a simple issue like this, married life with him will be unendurable.

April 25th.

Dearest Diary:

Three days have passed. And I haven't heard a word from George. I guess he really meant it when he said he wouldn't be back until I sent word to him I had actually burned you.

Why in the world should I burn you? What terrible deed could you be guilty of? I don't see why he should be afraid of a harmless, green leather volume. For all he knows, I could be filling you full of weather reports or cooking recipes, or some other equally exciting data.

But he feels that a few careless sentences written in a diary when the writer is in a sentimental or impulsive mood, can do a great deal of harm if placed in the wrong hands.

Can you imagine! I always thought George was a brave person, who would stand up for me, no matter what I did. And it turns out that he is only a coward, after all. Afraid of a pen in the feeble hands of a woman. He says a diary is a foolish risk that might blast his happiness and success in life in the twinkling of an eye. Did you ever hear of anything quite so ridiculous?

Dearest diary, I'm so unhappy. Should I take you down cellar, and put you in the furnace, offering you as a burnt sacrifice on the altar of our love, and then call George up, and explain to him at great length that he was right, and I was wrong?

No, no, a thousand times, no! Mr. George Perkins is not only a very unromantic and unchivalrous male. He is also very silly. If he had an ounce of common sense in his head, he'd know that when a girl is in love she always feels a trifle poetic. And since it is very hard to compose good verses to express her feelings, she writes in a diary, instead.

April 27th.

Dearest Diary:

I'm so blue I could die. I sent George back his ring, special delivery, to-day. And I haven't had a single, solitary word from him.

Just by purchasing a tiny, green leather diary I made him think I am no longer nice, or decorous enough to become the wife of a future State's attorney.

April 28th.

Dearest Diary:

I called up the office of Doctor Richard Craig this morning, and made an appointment through his secretary, to see the doctor to-morrow afternoon at two thirty. He's that new psychologist, who's all the rage these days. Every one is talking about him. Going to his lectures. And reading the books he writes.

All the debbies I know are rushing to him to be psychoanalyzed. You know, he's a mind doctor. He asks you a lot of questions about your past. And from your answers he figures out what's wrong with you. And what you should do in order to put yourself right with the universe.

Mary Rice has been to see him. She says he's frightfully good-looking. He's supposed to be able to solve all kinds of matrimonial and emotional problems. So I'm going to see him, and tell him about you,

and George and myself. And ask him what I should do.

April 29th.

Dearest Diary:

Well, I've met him. And is he handsome? Tall, and dark, and distinguished-looking, with broad shoulders like a football player. And the nicest brown eyes you ever saw in any one. He looks to be in his early thirties. A nice, interesting age for a man.

He isn't married. I know. I made some discreet inquiries.

I think he likes me a little. He says my problem interests him greatly. But that he will have to devote a lot of time and thought to it, and it will undoubtedly be necessary for us to have any number of consultations before we finally reach a satisfactory solution.

Oh, dearest diary, I'm so thrilled! He doesn't think it's silly of me to keep a diary. He says most normal women need a "confessional" of some kind. And that's what psychoanalysts are for.

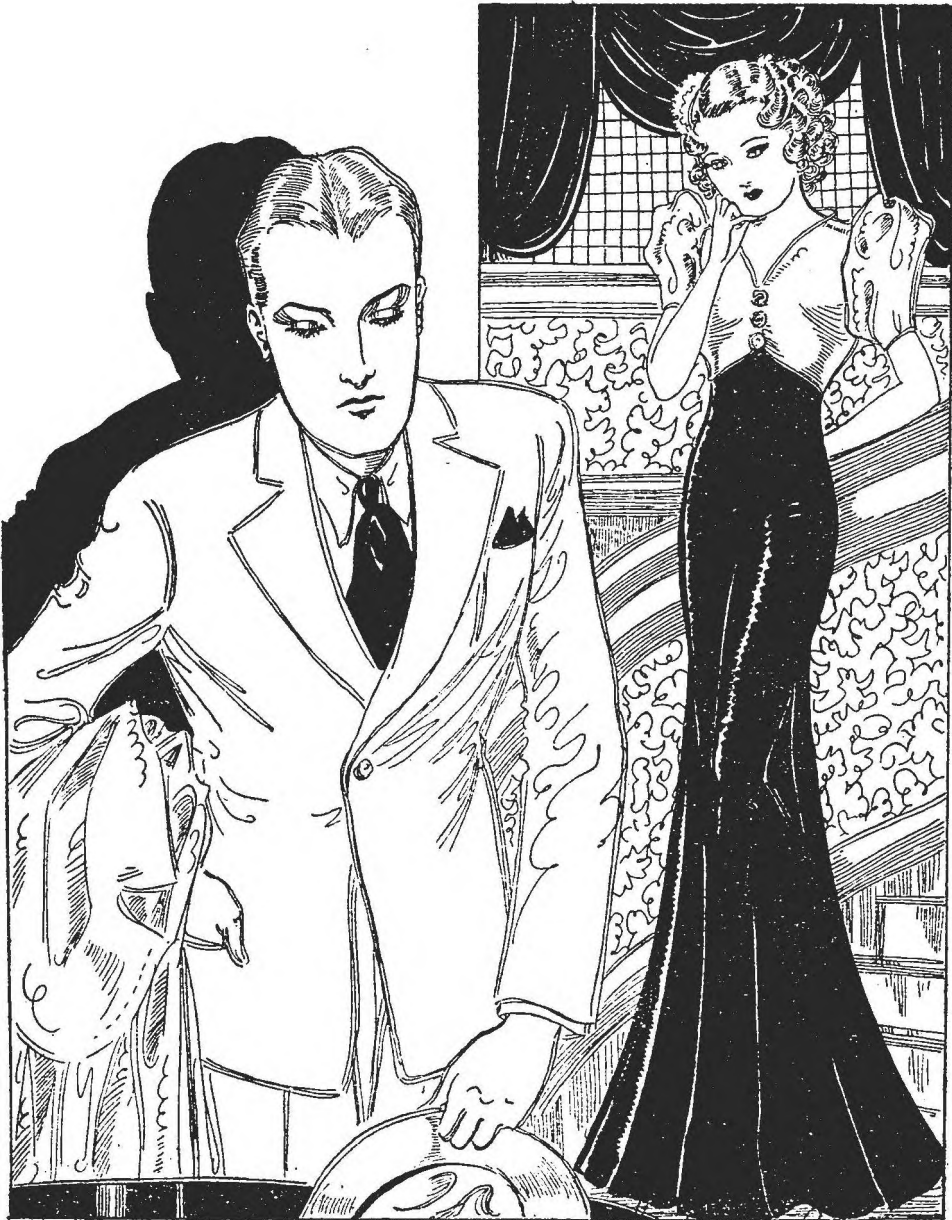
He told me to go right on writing in you. Because he says it would be wrong for me to smother my instinct toward self-expression, merely because of some false apprehensions of George's. He says there is no need for me to repress my emotions, either, when I am writing. He says it's been when people start to repress any vital, primitive emotion that the trouble starts. He says George sounds like a case of "arrested development" to him.

It is certainly nice meeting some one who understands the situation so thoroughly.

May 2nd.

Dearest Diary:

Doctor Richard Craig took me to dinner this evening. He wants me



I watched him pick up his hat from the table, and let him go, without saying one word to stop him. Although I will admit that I cried a little when he had gone.

to drop the formality of "Doctor Craig," and call him "Dick."

He dances astonishingly well for a psychologist. I was surprised.

We discussed you, a little. And the fact that I haven't heard a word from George for over a week. Dick says he wishes he could see what is

inside my diary that is causing all this trouble.

On the way home in the taxi he held my hand. At first I thought he was just trying to comfort me. But when he kissed me I found out differently.

"Kissing you like that makes me want you so that nothing else matters," he said huskily.

I admit it was a wonderful kiss. He held me so tightly that I could hear his heart throbbing above my own. And, oh, diary, was I thrilled!

I certainly could love a man like Dick, even if he did talk occasionally about neuroses, and psychoses, and I had to pretend I understood what he was saying.

May 5th.

Dearest Diary:

George called me up. He has been out of town on business he said. He seemed surprised when I didn't say I had missed him. He wanted to see me. And take me to dinner. But I told him I couldn't make a date with him. Because I had one already. Then I hung up. Before he had a chance to ask me anything about you.

May 7th.

Dearest Diary:

Dick and I went for a long ride in the country being that it was Saturday, and he didn't have any appointments with patients in the afternoon.

It was wonderful in the country. Blue sky. Sunshine. And fruit trees in blossom.

I wore my new gray-blue tweed suit. The one that makes my eyes look bluer, and my hair more golden. With a blue felt hat I bought yesterday and charged to father. Will he rave when he gets the bill? But, after all, I figure when a girl is out

husband hunting she is entitled to a few luxuries, in order to bolster up her spirits.

Dick and I had dinner at a lovely place Dick knew high up in the hills, where we could look down on the lights here in town. It was lovely. The place was practically deserted, we got there so late. We turned on the radio, and danced outside in the dusk, on a big enclosed porch.

Oh, diary, I am so happy. I think Dick Craig is falling in love with me a little! And it is quite the nicest thing that ever happened to me.

For all of a sudden, while we were dancing around the porch, dancing very close, the way two people who like each other a great deal always do, he said:

"How in the world did you ever come to think of keeping a diary, anyway?"

I was so surprised I didn't have time to think up any really startling answer, so I told the truth, instead.

I merely said I thought that if I wrote down my emotional reactions where George was concerned, maybe in time I would come to understand him a little better.

Dick said that when two people were really in love such a procedure generally wasn't necessary!

He said it sounded to him as if George was a little too conservative, and perhaps a trifle too cold, for a girl with my deep sensibilities and highly emotional nature.

It almost sounded as if he were jealous of George!

I wonder!

May 10th.

Dearest Diary:

Dick Craig came to the house to see me. So did George. They met in the living room. I introduced them. They mostly stood glaring at



After reading what I had written about falling in love with him, Dick took me in his arms and said: "Darling, I love you. I want to marry you. Furthermore, I want you to promise me that you will always write down everything you do in this diary."

each other. And not saying much. It was most embarrassing.

But I am the sort of woman who knows how to handle such a situation. I made it very clear to them both that I hadn't expected to see George. That my date was with Dick.

So George left. Rather sullenly. Looking at me as though I were the sort of woman a man couldn't trust.

Dick says he is more and more convinced that I did the right thing in coming to him, and that George would not be the proper husband for me, at all.

George is a little too "mulish," I admit. Though I think "dogmatic" is the proper word for it. It's quite all right, dearest diary, for a woman to let her husband think he is bossing her. But quite another thing, if he actually does it.

Dick and I were all alone, after George left, my father and mother having gone out for the evening to play cards at the Wilmsteads.

Dick insisted that I show him my diary.

I did. I asked him not to read the last few pages, but he disregarded my request. He read that part a little ways back, where I wrote about his making love to me in the taxi. Then he laid you down on the table, and taking me in his arms, he said:

"Darling, you're the most adorable patient a psychoanalyst ever had. I love you. I want to marry you. Furthermore, I want you to promise me that you will always write down everything you do in this five-year diary."

I promised, of course. But later on, between kisses, I asked him why he asked me to?

He told me that if a diary really included "everything" the way I

meant it to, it would serve as a kind of absent chaperon, or an extra conscience, where I was concerned.

Can you imagine yourself, dearest diary, in the rôle of a guardian angel?

He said I probably wouldn't want to go on gay parties, or stay out late nights with strange men, or anything, if I knew I was duty bound to record all such happenings in the pages of my diary.

So you can plainly see how much more intelligent Dick's attitude toward a diary is, than that of George. I certainly wouldn't want to marry a man who couldn't see both sides of a question. George is too narrow-minded. That is his biggest trouble.

Dick says a man only starts dictating to a woman when he is jealous, and afraid of losing her. He says most girls confess their thoughts and emotions in a diary, until they have a real husband to confide in.

Dearest diary, I think he's right. There are some emotions too sacred to be put in writing. But after all, you are only a green leather book, and you will never know what they are. So you'll simply have to take my word for it!

Dick is the most marvelous lover in the world! I am mad about him. He wants to marry me right away. He doesn't believe in long engagements. And neither do I. Not since meeting him. The quicker I have him for a husband the better pleased I'll be.

Just think, dearest diary, if it hadn't been for you, he might never have known how much I really love him. At least, it would have taken him longer to find out!

George said a diary is the bunk. But I think you're grand!



Design For Love

By Ethel M. Lockwood

LOLITA moved languorously across the thick, black velvet carpet to the rugged-looking young man near the cellophane-draped shop door.

"Felice tells me"—she flung a

quick glance at a black-satin-clad girl with dead-white skin and a wide, red mouth—"that you have a complaint to make, and you want to see me personally. What is it?"

For a long moment, he surveyed

her coolly. Lolita was not accustomed to cool stares from men. Her eyes, an odd greenish-gray, lit up with indignation, and her platinum-blond head tilted arrogantly.

"Are you the proprietor?" he asked, with a quick reddening of his face. "You look so young."

"My age could not possibly interest you!" Lolita's trim figure stiffened.

Again the quick flush on the young man's face, this time accompanied by a grim smile. "I'm sorry, but it does. I thought you were a despicable, mercenary old woman. But I'm going to give you the works, just the same.

"My sister is June Lathrop. She took the money her grandfather left her, and came to Hollywood to crash the movies. She hasn't crashed anything yet, except the bank roll. And I understand a great deal of it went for clothes, purchased in this shop. Her latest idiocy, I have just learned, is opening a charge account here, with the idea that she can pay her bill when she's a star. June won't be a star, and I don't want to have to pay her bills."

"Your sister is of age, isn't she?" Lolita hated herself for answering so brusquely, but she couldn't seem to help it.

"Yes." The young man shrugged broad, tweed-clad shoulders.

"Then you should worry." She turned away. "It isn't up to you to pay June's bills!"

He strode after her and caught her wrist, his face almost as red as his hair. "Naturally, I'll pay them!" he said fiercely. "It would hurt my conscience not to."

"How quaint!" She jerked free, stung by a desire to slap his face. Of all the crude, ill-bred persons she had ever met!

And she had met plenty. Lolita hadn't always owned a gown shop in Beverly Hills. She hadn't always been known as Lolita, exclusive style expert.

Back in Medford, Iowa, they had known her as Lola, the Barnes kid. Her mother had been dead ever since she could remember, and her father had run a restaurant down near the depot. She had a flair for making gingham dresses that set off her slim figure to perfection. She had waited on table for her father, cajoling ten dollars a week out of him, which she carefully saved until she had enough money to attend a dress designing school in Chicago.

Life had been bitterly hard those first two years in Chicago. She had been cold, hungry and lonesome. Then she had been graduated as a full-fledged dress designer, and Paul Stoermer, who owned the school, fell in love with her and loaned her the money to come to Beverly Hills.

Although Paul wanted to make love to her, he recognized her talent for what it was, and bided his time. He was still biding it when Bill Lathrop barged into the swanky yellow-and-white shop.

"Five thousand dollars," he went on, "is a lot of money in any language, and I happen to know that's what June has poured into this place the past six months. She's pretty, but there's nothing outstanding about her talent. Now, you——" He stopped with a jerk, reddening a shade deeper than he had previously. "If you went into the movies, you'd make a hit. You've got something."

For a long, awful moment, Lolita felt as if she were sinking through the carpet, and that it was tightening around her throat, choking her. "Well, I never——" she gasped.

He swooped down with his long

arms, and caught her hands. It was an awkward, boyish gesture that fitted in with what Lolita, in her mounting anger, thought of as his "uncouth appearance."

"You can't help it because June's gone haywire over clothes, but won't you just sort of discourage her in the future? You know, a woman can't dazzle her way into a moving picture contract—not with clothes, anyway."

Lolita freed her hands with one angry movement. "A woman can do anything with clothes if she knows how," she said, as she fought to master the most terrifying emotion that had ever swept over her. "She can win position, fame, love! Oh, I have never been so insulted!"

"Yes, you have." Bill's glance measured her from head to foot. "Some day we'll be friends, and you'll be sorry you flew at me like a she-tiger. Because"—his well-shaped mouth widened in an amiable grin—"I like you."

Lolita fumbled for a two-edged answer. But before she found it, he was gone. Her hands and feet went cold, and there was a crazy fluttering in her throat.

"Felice!" she called loudly.

Felice popped out from between the yellow velvet curtains that separated the showroom from the fitting section. "Yes, mod-dom!"

"Change the show window!"

"I changed it yesterday, mod-dom." Felice's mouth hung open like a round, red doughnut.

"Oh, all right." Lolita charged toward the rear of the shop, and sat down at her dainty, white-enameled desk. In front of her lay a pep talk she had been drafting for Felice. "Clothes may not make the man, but they do make the woman. To win a man, you must wear the right kind of clothes——"

The words blurred. She caught up the sheet of paper and wadded it into a little ball. "Of all the idiotic, unnecessary experiences," she muttered, as she flung the ball on the floor.

Lolita had practically finished her business day—a particularly profitable one—when June Lathrop burst in, in a tantrum.

"Bill told me what he said to you! Oh, I could kill him if he weren't so swell! You've been so grand to me, and you've taught me so much about clothes and poise, and everything, that it would just break my heart if you got peeved at me."

Lolita regarded the girl with suddenly quickened vision. She was a slim little thing, and her neatly set permanent was as glossy and uninteresting as a seal's back. Her eyes were blue and prettily fringed, and she had a nice mouth. But to imagine she might be moving-picture-star material was straining the imagination pretty thin. Odd, she hadn't thought of that before.

She smiled at the dewy-eyed girl, and patted her sun-tanned arm. "I'm not the least bit peeved. I can't agree with you that your brother is swell, but you're not to blame for what he is or isn't."

"Then you'll come up to the apartment to-night, won't you?" June brightened with suspicious quickness.

"Apartment?" Lolita blinked.

"Yes. Bill said it would be all right with him, and I was having some other friends in, anyway."

"I don't believe you were as distressed as you appeared to be when you came in here, just now." Lolita's face was suddenly frozen.

"Well, no." June grinned. "But I thought it would be a good way to get you to listen to me."

"Humph!" Lolita snorted. And

to herself, she said, "And I was on the point of agreeing with that odious brother of hers about her lack of acting ability!"

"Please!" June's eyes filled with tears. "Don't be angry, and do promise me you'll come to-night!"

"I can't! I'm sorry." Tinkling ice would have sounded soft and warm, alongside Lolita's voice.

"Well"—June turned slowly toward the door—"I'm not going to take that 'no' definitely for an answer. If you change your mind, remember I live in Apartment 16, at the Holton Arms on Sunset."

"Thanks," Lolita said stiffly.

At half past eight that night, a taxi drew up to the entrance of the Holton Arms, and a young woman got out. She wore an informal, ankle-length dinner dress of silver-shot blue lamé, with a tiny hat and tuxedo-cut coat to match.

"Miss Lolita Barnes," she told the Filipino house boy, who opened the door of Apartment 16.

Lolita felt as if she were walking on air, about to strike an air pocket. "I'll show him!" had been her thought in attiring herself to the hilt and setting out for the Lathrops'. However, she wasn't so sure about showing him. She had never met a man exactly like Bill, and she wouldn't want to risk betting anything on his reactions.

But whatever they were, she wanted more of them. She had never been so stimulated by any one.

She had made a good guess when she visualized him in a street suit. Some of the other young men in the long, pleasant room wore tuxedos or white mess jackets, but Bill had on an ordinary blue lounge suit, and looked perfectly at home in it.

June greeted her with squeals of delight, introduced her to every one,

and wound up with Bill. "You know each other, and I'm glad, because you're both such swell guys."

"Glad to see you." Bill wrapped his long, brown fingers around Lolita's and gave her a vigorous handshake. "I told you you'd be sorry, some day, for kicking me out of your shop."

"But I'm not!" Lolita freed herself and glared at him. "That is, I didn't come here to apologize, if that's what you mean. After all, I'm a business woman, and it's no crime to make money." The explanation sounded silly, but it was the best she could do.

"Well, anyway, you're here." He grinned. "I have an idea you do a lot of bluffing in that shop of yours. You're not half as blasé as you pretend to be."

Lolita's heart thumped in sudden alarm. It had taken her a long time to acquire the veneer she flaunted as Lolita, fashion expert. It had been a long time after she left Medford, before she could convince herself that the well-known knight on a milk-white charger would not ride up and carry her off to eternal bliss, some day.

"Aren't you being rather juvenile?" she drawled, to hide the fear his cool, level look set up in her.

"So you won't talk, eh?" He chuckled, his brown eyes twinkling. "Suppose we just admit that I'm not your type of man and you're not my type of girl, and be friends anyway?"

"Let's." She shrugged, and lay back in the big, cretonne-upholstered chair he had pulled over to the wide window for her.

"Like the view?" he asked, as his glance followed hers out over the light-studded landscape.

"Yes." Her voice was suddenly soft and wistful.

"I guess it's all right." He draped his long frame over a portion of the wide window seat. "But I like my outdoors practically on me. I guess you knew that from the way I look."

"Yes, I knew it."

June had turned the radio in on a dance program, and the room was suddenly filled with whirling couples.

"Dance?" Bill asked.

"Why, yes." Lolita drew her veneer around her, and arose with a leisurely, languid air.

"You won't find me very good," Bill warned. "But I'll try not to step on your toes."

Lolita slithered into his arms with all the allure she possessed. His dancing wasn't bad, but it was scarcely good enough to arouse all the exhilaration that crept over her. She closed her eyes, and let her senses play tricks with her. His coat lapel smelled faintly of fragrant pipe tobacco, coupled with a clean, woody odor she couldn't define. It made her wish she could climb a high hill, with her hand in his.

The dance came to an end, and her fleeting dream with it. Another young man claimed her. He wore a white mess jacket, and had a jaded look.

"I say"—his heavy-lidded brown eyes burned into hers—"you're the sleekest-looking proposition I've seen since I came to California. Most of the girls out here are so—er—gauche, don't you think?"

Lola Barnes wanted to snap back at him, but Lolita, modiste, held the reins now. "Possibly," she drawled.

He held her close, his liquor-scented breath on the back of her neck. "June tells me you have a swanky gown shop down on the boulevard, and that you make more money than a lot of the film stars."

"I'm afraid June exaggerates."

"Anyway, I must drop around and see you sometime." His laugh was thin and brittle.

"Yes, do," she answered indifferently.

From then on, the evening went into a rapid decline for Lolita. And at eleven thirty, when she left, Bill was nowhere to be seen.

"He had to go out unexpectedly," June explained, as she caught Lolita's roving glance. "A telephone call or something."

"I wasn't looking for your brother!" Lolita warmed with sudden anger. "I came to see you."

"Oh," June said.

A half hour later, Lolita hung the blue lamé on a hanger and got ready for bed. "Walked out on me!" she told herself grimly. "Well, it serves me right. Somewhere I read about vengeance not being any of our business."

The following morning, when she came down to work at ten o'clock, Paul Stoermer was waiting for her. "What happened to our theater date last night?" he demanded. He fixed his pale-blue eyes on her, and stiffened his square jaw. "You were going to meet me down at my office at eight o'clock."

Lolita felt a funny, drained-out sensation at the pit of her stomach. She had had a date with Paul, and she had forgotten all about it!

"Now listen, Lolita," he went on, "I've hung around for three years. I bought this shop and, according to our contract, if your volume of business comes up to the mark we set for it by the first of October, I have to give you half interest in it. I'm crazy about you, just as I've always been. Up to now, you've been a square-shooter. But a girl doesn't

stand up a friend the way you did me, last night, unless there's another man in the picture. I hope you won't make it necessary for me to say any more. Will you have lunch with me?"

"Of course." Lolita warmed with sudden friendliness. Here was a man she understood. He was at

least ten years older than she, and there were times when she was positive he had touched up the thin spot on the top of his head. But he was frank, wholesomely so. And she was not in a mood to wrestle with riddles.

The lunch was a pleasant relief from her regular shop routine, and



Sitting on the edge of the pool, Lolita was practically lost in the screeching and splashing of her companions. Not for a moment was she left alone with Bill.

afterward, she showed Paul the shop books.

"Keen!" he told her. "I used to get jittery about giving up my school and sinking so much money in the dress shop racket, even if we are pulling a good income out of it. But it sure looks good to me now—a darn sight better than my real estate business. You're one level-headed girl, Lolita. Hold it."

Lolita thought of that conversation many time during the weeks that followed. Business dropped off, which was normal for late summer, and she began to wonder if she would reach her quota by October. She hoped so. It would give her a feeling of independence she could never have, so long as she was operating entirely on Paul's money.

He had been increasingly persistent in his attentions after the forgotten date, and Lolita, involuntarily, had been thinking a lot about Bill.

She had seen him four times since that first night at the apartment, each time through some arrangement of June's. Bill remained annoyingly cool. Not that she cared, Lolita told herself. But she had used up practically all her summer profit outfitting herself in expensive clothes, and it would have been only decent of him to have come through with a, "Nice dress you're wearing," occasionally.

She had allowed June to run up a bill of six hundred dollars. June had been tearful and determined.

"Listen," she had told Lolita. "Sim Staley's practically promised me a part in the next Greta Knowland picture. He says I'm just the type."

So June had gotten the clothes, and Lolita was uneasy.

The second week in September,

Bill sauntered into the shop and asked her for a date. "June and her gang are going to drive out to Palm Springs on Sunday. I thought maybe you'd like to go along with me—in my car, of course."

Lolita suddenly felt as if she were running a temperature. "Why, yes, I guess so," she said. "Do you live there?"

"Part of the time. Well, s'long. See you Sunday."

So he lived at Palm Springs part of the time! Maybe that was why she hadn't seen him oftener!

She hadn't been one to play with romance, experimentally. She wasn't in love with Paul, and most Hollywood love affairs burned out so quickly.

But maybe there was something to the old dreams of love and kisses—if you could get them from the right person. She could visualize Bill's strong mouth, with the mischievous, upward quirks at the corners. He would kiss strongly, as if he meant it. The region of her heart became a great aching void, and her eyes filled with tears.

"Bill, you big oaf," she whispered, "I'm in love with you!"

She selected a gay, yellow silk sports dress for the trip to Palm Springs, and took along a flowered print play suit, consisting of a sleeveless blouse and a pair of shorts. As accessories, she chose a big, floppy blue linen hat and a pair of bright-blue sandals. For the two outfits, she had to charge sixty-nine dollars and fifty cents against her personal account at the shop. The act left her with a slight chill. If Paul were to have another impulse to look over the shop books, he'd probably want to have her committed to an insane asylum. The last time he had said:

"Where are you doing business

now, Lolita, in the shop or in your hotel room? You must have as many clothes in one place as in the other."

Then Bill phoned her that they'd probably go in swimming, so she went out and spent ten dollars more for a coral-and-white bathing suit.

"Positively the last nickel I'll blow to dazzle you, Bill Lathrop!" she said with grimly tightening lips.

The ride to Palm Springs could scarcely be called an event of major importance. Bill's white flannel suit was a bit shabby, and he was wearing tennis shoes. "I like to be comfortable," he had explained, as his glance took in Lolita's chic yellow silk. "I thought you might ride out in your bathing suit. Some of the other girls are going to."

"Where do we swim?" Lolita asked, to keep from saying what she thought about girls who rode around in automobiles half naked.

"Oh, I've got a little pool out at the ranch."

Just inside the city limits of the swanky desert town, June and her noisy crowd, packed into half a dozen cars, overtook Bill and Lolita. They went by, shouting lustily, and twenty minutes later they wound up at a sprawling ranch house, as white as the desert sunshine, with a red tile roof and a tile swimming pool.

"We bought this ranch, originally, for grandfather," Bill explained as he helped her out of the car. "We thought a milder climate might benefit his health. Then, when June went crazy, I thought it would be a good place for me to stay and sort of keep an eye on her. As soon as she comes to her senses, I'll take her back to Illinois and return to my job in my father's stove factory."

Lolita found herself caught up in the whirlpool of girls who swirled up the wide veranda and into the house.

By the time she had shed the yellow silk and pulled on the scanty new bathing suit, she had recovered her composure.

Bill was in the pool by the time she came out of the house, and she was practically lost in the screeching and splashing of her companions.

It went on like that all day. Not for a moment was she left alone with him.

On the way home, an incredibly big moon rode a balloonlike white cloud, and romance wrapped her in ever tightening arms. But Bill kept aloof—that is, at first. After they had passed through Palm Springs, and were on the desert road to the main highway, he said:

"Most girls expect a fellow to put an arm around 'em on nights like this."

Lolita wanted to answer sharply, but her longing for him was too great. "Well," she drawled, "why don't you?"

His arm encircled her waist with surprising quickness, and she snuggled against him with a sigh. "Want a kiss?" he asked.

"Certainly not!" She stiffened.

"You don't sound very convincing." He pulled the coupé to the side of the road. "Let's have one, anyway."

Lolita's desire to give him a stinging slap in the face got off on a bad start as her pulses leaped in answer to the emotion that possessed her. She felt as if she would just die if Bill didn't kiss her!

His firm lips pressed hers with a strange, palpitating warmth. She lowered what feeble defenses she had left, and let her lips talk back to him in their own language.

He kissed her twice. "Well, we'd better ramble, don't you think?" he said matter-of-factly, as he raised his head.

So that's all her kisses meant to him! Lolita's eyes filled with angry tears. "As you like," she answered haughtily.

After he had the motor started and the car back in the road, he attempted to slip his arm in place around her.

"I think I can struggle along without that now," she said airily.

"You mean, you didn't like the kisses?" Did she imagine it, or was there a catch in his voice?

"Oh, they were all right—a bit amateurish, perhaps, but show promise." Her cool tone belied the grim line of her mouth.

"Oh," he said, and stepped on the gas.

Paul dropped into the shop the following morning. "I thought I'd take a run out to the desert next Sunday." His voice was suspiciously oily. "Can you come along?"

Lolita jerked up. Her glance shot past Paul to the office door. Felice stood there, a tight smile on her full, wide lips. "That gown for Corinne Garford," she said, with an apologetic cough. "Will it be ready in the morning?"

"Yes." Lolita frowned. "I told you that yesterday, if you remember." Felice disappeared, and Lolita eyed Paul with new interest. "Are you, by any chance, having Felice watch me?"

"Certainly not." He gave her a one-sided smile. "Are you doing anything that calls for watching?"

She burned with anger. He could always turn her questions back on her, to her own detriment.

"You don't happen to have a date for Sunday already, do you?" Lolita had a feeling he was measuring her to the last inch of air she breathed.

"No," she snapped. "I'll go with you."

He had scarcely left the shop when the telephone rang. June Lathrop was calling. "I got that job with Sim Staley—a contract—two hundred dollars a week to start! I'm simply out of my head, Lolita, with excitement. Bill's burned up—he's going back home!"

"I see." Lolita sat down at the desk and leaned weakly on one elbow. Then, when she could break in on June's excited chatter, "Sorry, I have a customer. Good-by."

It was a busy week, and Lolita was glad of it. You can't be too lovesick when you have to stand on your feet practically all day, purring and crooning to the ladies of the film capital. But it paid, handsomely.

On Sunday morning, when Paul called for her at her hotel, he seemed to be vastly pleased with her. "Sometimes I wonder how you do it. I don't believe you ever miss making a sale."

"Oh, yes, I do." And she thought, "I haven't been able to sell myself to Bill Lathrop."

Paul had a limousine waiting at the hotel entrance. At the wheel sat a thuglike individual with shifty eyes and a thick, hairy neck.

"What's the idea?" Lolita asked sharply. "Isn't your own car good enough for you any more? And do you have to have some one drive for you?"

"This is a very special occasion. Didn't I tell you?" She thought she detected a note of menace in his voice.

She was dressed in white silk crêpe, a coat suit with a red chiffon blouse and a tiny red hat. It was one of the smartest outfits she owned. She didn't know why she had put it on. Certainly it wasn't the right kind of day for it.



"Yes, I am in love with you," she shrieked, tears starting afresh. "Now go ahead and laugh if you think it's so funny!"

The sky was an ugly, muddy gray. Gusts of wind caught up bits of gravel along the roadside, and flung them at the speeding limousine. Off to the southwest the mountains were wrapped in a mantle of gray, with a black rock jutting out here and there.

They had gone through Banning, on the highway that led past the Palm Springs road, and on into the Imperial Valley, when Lolita, tingling with growing rebellion, demanded to know where Paul was taking her.

"To Mexico, angel!" He reached out with a sudden hungry gesture, and snatched her into his arms. "We're going to Mexico to be married. No use screaming." His glance followed hers to the hard-faced chauffeur. "Chuck is deaf and dumb."

Lolita's startled eyes caught the driver's reflection in the rear view mirror. He was grinning.

Raw, devastating anger seized her. She pounded at Paul with clenched fists. "You would think up a melodramatic plot like this! And

if you and your gangster friend do succeed in forcing me into a marriage ceremony, what then? You can't keep me tied up in a feudal tower. Sooner or later I'll escape, and the law will take care of you. Don't be juvenile!"

His face went an ugly, mottled red. "So what?" he snarled.

"So you'd better take me back, and confine yourself to more civilized ways of winning a woman."

"Civilized ways?" He bent over her, lips twisted into an ugly leer. "I've tried everything I know. Now you've gone nuts over that Lathrop guy, and you're gradually giving me the air."

"You have been talking to Felice?" Lolita, crouching in her corner of the luxurious seat, glared up at him.

"And if I have? Is it any more than I have a right to do? It's my money you're using to make a name for yourself. You wouldn't have a rag to wear if it weren't for me!"

"How would you like to have the business, free of me and all my claims—free for you and Felice?" It was a random shot, that last one, but it struck home.

"Don't get the idea that Felice has been trying to oust you, or that I have been playing around with her." He jerked at his necktie nervously.

"I don't care about you or Felice or the shop!" Hysteria half choked her. "Just stop the car and let me out. I'll find some way to get back to Beverly Hills!"

Paul pulled a folded sheet of paper out of his pocket. "Will you sign away your claim on the shop now?"

"Had it ready, didn't you?" she sneered.

He whitened to the lips, and the fountain pen he held out to her trembled.

"I'd think you would shake," she said tensely, as she scratched her name on the bottom of the page. "Now let me out!"

"Sure you want to get out?" Paul's glance was mocking. "Sure your desert lover will be glad to see you when you manage to hook a ride over to his ranch?"

So he knew about the ranch, too? "Of course I'm sure," she retorted venomously.

"In that case, you shall arrive in style. Turn around, Chuck, and drive to the Lathrop ranch. You'll find it down the road a few miles, past Palm Springs."

Oh, why hadn't she told him to take her home? Lolita went sick at the thought of the trap she had laid for herself. Suppose Bill treated her coolly—suppose he humiliated her in front of Paul?

The Lathrop ranch house looked bleak and uninviting. Could it really be the same place she had visited the sunny Sunday before? Lolita, tense, excited, got out of the limousine.

"Get going, now!" she commanded Paul through white, set lips. "And keep out of my way in the future, or I'll tell some lawyer how you tricked me out of my share of the shop!"

The heavy tires squeaked on the loose gravel, as the driver made a quick turn and the car sped down the road. An old Mexican man came out to meet her.

"Señor Lathrop?" she asked huskily. "Where is he?"

The old man threw up his hands expressively. "Gone," he said, "to the house of his father in Illinois. To-day, he go."

"I see." For a moment, relief flooded her. "I wonder if you could drive me over to the highway, so that I could catch a bus to the city?"

The old man shook his head. "Maria and I are here alone," he said. "We have no car."

"I see." She saw only too well. There were several sand-filled miles between her and Palm Springs, another long stretch of road between Palm Springs and the highway. The hotels wouldn't be open yet, but she could find some means of transportation.

"You weel remain here until your friends return?" the Mexican asked.

"No. They will not return. I will walk to Palm Springs."

"Do not do that, señorita!" He shook his grizzled head. "The wind is treacherous. You do not understand."

"Oh, yes, I do." She nodded cheerfully, and strode down the sandy road.

Yes, she understood—understood she had been an utter fool. Why hadn't she been honest with herself and Paul, and asked him to take her home to Beverly Hills?

She had gone only a short distance when she began to feel the tug of the wind at her thin skirts. Then, almost immediately, there was a great whirlpool of sand bearing down on her. She tried to sidestep it, but it was too wide. The current of air whirled her around and around. Then it lifted, and she dropped weakly to the sand beneath her.

She got up and trudged on. Suddenly, she remembered stories she had read, of desert sand storms that came up without a moment's warning. Her hat blew off. Her high-heeled pumps sank into the sandy road, and pulled at her legs until they throbbed and ached. Sand whipped up into her face, and made her eyes water.

She turned back toward the ranch house, but it was lost to view. Fear

caught her up and tore at her, along with the howling wind. In desperation, she took off her pumps and dropped them in the sand. In a few moments, the sand had cut through her chiffon hose, and her feet were bare.

It was close and hot. She took off her coat and carried it. But it flapped and slapped at her until she threw it away. The wind blew with increasing viciousness. Her blouse twisted this way and that. She felt it give way at the shoulder and, a moment later, one sleeve was loose, waving like a banner.

She screamed in terror, and cried in long, choking sobs. Half-blinded by the hurricane, she did not see the automobile until it was practically upon her.

Then some one held her in strong arms—a man—and without a word, he lifted her into the car. When she looked again, she saw Bill Lathrop sitting beside her.

"You!" she shouted wildly. "Why didn't you stay home, so I wouldn't have had this terrible experience? I hate you!"

"I'm sorry you hate me." Bill started the car, and it leaped down the road. "I'd gone into town to say good-bye to you before I started for Illinois. At your hotel, they said they thought you'd gone out to the desert. So I came back."

Lolita subsided. Weary, heart-sick, tear-stained, she let Bill lead her into the living room of the ranch.

He pulled a bell cord, and a bright-eyed old Mexican woman appeared. Her eyes bulged as Bill motioned to her.

"My friend has met with an accident, Maria. See if you can find some clothes for her, and run a warm bath."

"*Si, señor.*" Maria smiled, and departed.

"What were you doing here?" Bill asked abruptly.

Lolita told him about Paul and the shop. "Like a fool, I let him drive me over here, instead of into town. You see," she explained, "he accused me of being crazy about you, and I let him think I was."

"Well, aren't you?" Bill grinned.

Lolita stamped her bare foot on the polished floor. "Yes, I am," she shrieked, tears starting afresh. "And it makes me so mad, I could shoot myself! Well, go ahead and laugh if you think it's so funny!"

Bill swept her into his arms. "I don't think it's funny, darling, because love is never funny, and I'm in love with you. Oh, Lolita!" His eyes were adoring. "You're the loveliest thing I've ever seen!"

"Lovely?" Lolita swallowed her sobs, and stood looking up at him in sheer awe.

"Absolutely adorable!" he said in a husky whisper. "I knew you'd be like this, if I could ever get down under those high-powered clothes to the real girl! You'll marry me, sweetheart?"

"Uh-huh," Lolita gulped.

"Señor!" Maria's voice brought them out of the dreaming ecstasy of a kiss. "I have here the trousers of my cousin, Herando, and a blue shirt. But they are clean." She held up the garments for their inspection.

Bill looked dubious. But Lolita, from the heaven of his arms, smiled radiantly. "They're lovely, Maria. I'll adore wearing them."



GIVE ME LOVE

GIVE me a compass
By which to steer
My life; through tempest,
Through fog and mist.
I am so weary
Of waiting here—
Lonely—unloved—
And unkissed.

Give me a beacon,
Or just a star—
One of the legion
That gleams above.
Something to guide me
To where you are—
Show me—the way—
Give me love.

MARJORIE HUNT PETTIT.



As Man And Wife

By Alice Marie Dodge

NO good is gonna come of this fool trip," old Kate Davis grumbled to the lovely young girl who sat beside her at the wheel of the smart green roadster flying along the lonely road.

There was excitement in the gay laugh that came from Nedda Alston's red lips. "I know it sounds crazy, Kate. But it's a challenge I simply can't overlook. Read that letter again, will you, please?"

"You've had me read it about ten times already," Kate returned, taking a large square envelope out of her bag. Slowly, she read:

"DEAR NEDDA ALSTON:

"I will not be on earth when you read this, for I am a sick man and my days on this sphere are numbered.

"When you hear from my lawyers, I want you to go to my house at Oceancrest and stay there a week. Take a maid with you. You will find plenty of food awaiting you. At the end of the week

some one from the law firm will come and read my will to you, if you are still there.

"Do this for one who never ceased to love your mother even though she belonged to another.

"Sincerely yours,
"BAYNE ADAMS."

"If I'm still there!" trilled Nedda. "I'd like to see any one keep me away!"

Kate snorted. She had been housekeeper in the Alston home for twenty years and considered herself a privileged character. She had stayed on to take care of Nedda after Mr. and Mrs. Alston were killed in an automobile accident.

"That Bayne Adams," she mused, "always was kinda queer. That's why your mother wouldn't marry him. I'll bet he's up to no good now even if he is dead. My advice to you is to turn this car right around and hit for home."

"Katie! Katie!" Nedda laughed. "Haven't you any sense of adventure?"

"When you have gray hair and fallen arches you prefer your own fireside to lookin' for adventure."

"To think," Nedda said, growing pensive, "that Mr. Adams was in love with mother all those years!"

"I heard he thought a lot of that young Morgan chap you were engaged to," Kate observed, and gave Nedda a quick look.

A flush spread over the girl's smooth young cheeks and her blue eyes snapped under the ounce and a half of felt and feather that was her hat. "If I thought Kent Morgan was mixed up in this, I'd turn around so fast it would make your head swim."

"Now you're talkin' sense!" applauded Kate. "There's a storm comin' up, sure's you're alive. Listen to that wind."

Nedda set her lips grimly. "On

second thought, I've decided to keep on. Kent Morgan can't scare me away."

"You seem to hate him now as much as you once loved him."

"And then some!"

Nedda thought back to the quarrel that had separated her and Kent. It had all started when he scolded her for driving her car recklessly.

"You act as if you're trying to keep up with the wind," he had said hotly.

"I won't be dictated to!" she stormed.

"That's right! Keep on being a spoiled brat all your life!" he flung back at her.

"Blah!" was her retort to that.

One angry word brought on another until they broke their engagement. Now Nedda was engaged to Geoffry Marchand, a young lawyer she'd met shortly after her break with Kent. Geoff's passionate love-making had swept her off her feet. Nothing else seemed to count now except a future as Mrs. Geoffry Marchand.

The car was climbing a hill toward Bayne Adams's home. It was a rambling old house set on a high bluff that jutted over the rocks and water. A more weird place couldn't be imagined. There wasn't a sign of life about it. A hard wind was driving in from the Pacific, howling and moaning. The gale was joined by faint echoes of the sea dashing below.

At the rear of the house was a large building that looked as if it once had been a carriage shed. In this, Nedda parked her car. The wall on one side of the building was open, revealing a dark passageway that looked like a gaping mouth ready to swallow them.

"Just like Bayne Adams to have some crazy thing like that!" scoffed

Kate. "If we get outta this place alive we'll be lucky."

Nedda laughed. She wouldn't have missed this adventure for anything. Perhaps Bayne Adams had remembered her in his will. Funny way he had of letting her know it, though.

"I'm sure glad I brought along a gun," Kate remarked as they went into the house.

"A gun! Where in the world did you get it?" Nedda asked.

"Borrowed it from my brother. He was a night watchman once and had permission to carry it."

When darkness fell, Nedda was glad that Kate had brought the gun. The isolation and weirdness of the place would have daunted a more valiant soul than Nedda Alston. Rain was pouring down now, lashing viciously against the windows, and the wind was rattling loose boards, pouring its chill breath in through the cracks.

Nedda asked Kate to occupy the twin bed beside her in one of the spacious bedrooms. The pistol, an evil-looking, snub-nosed weapon, lay on a table between them, beside a flashlight the cautious Kate had also brought.

Around midnight, Nedda was awakened out of a sound sleep by a noise that was not made by the elements. A man was coming into the room through the window. Still dazed with sleep, she snatched the gun and fired blindly. The man slumped against the wall.

"I'm not a burglar," he groaned. "I——"

"Kent Morgan!" Nedda cried. She leaped out of bed and threw a frivolous negligee of satin and lace about her slender young form. Then she switched on the light.

"You shot me in the arm," he said

shakily. He was dripping wet. Rain ran down his hat and glistened on his cheeks.

"I only meant to scare you, not shoot you," she faltered.

"I'm not so sure of that," was his curt reply. "You always did have a devil's temper!"

"Really!" Her voice was charged with sarcasm, but her lips were quivering from the sight of blood on his right coat sleeve.

"This is no time to fight!" Kate flashed, climbing out of bed.

"That's right," agreed Nedda. "Take off your coat, Kent, and I'll do something for your arm."

They found it was only a flesh wound, but an ugly one that made his arm almost useless for the time.

"Why did you come here?" Nedda asked while she was dressing the wound.

"I've been wondering the same thing about you," he replied. "I came because Mr. Adams requested me in a letter to come and stay a week."

Revelation flashed like lightning through Nedda's mind. Bayne Adams hoped to patch up the engagement between her and Kent by throwing them together for a week! Well, he had started off on the wrong foot as far as she was concerned. She had begun a new life with Geoff.

"Mr. Adams didn't request you to break in a window at midnight, did he?" she inquired tartly.

"Of course not! My car was stalled about fifteen miles from here. Couldn't get it fixed till to-morrow, so I thumbed a ride as far as I could and walked the rest of the way. I rang the front doorbell, but it seems to be out of order."

"If you ask me, I think there's somethin' out of order about the whole place!" Kate interposed.

"I didn't know it was your window that I——" Kent began.

"Oh, skip it," Nedda cut in.

In another hour the occupants of the strange old house were in bed, Kent in a room next to that of Nedda and the housekeeper.

Morning came with a faint breeze and a slight drizzle of rain. But the skies looked very black, as if a new storm were on the way. Nedda ate breakfast in her room so that she would not have to share the intimacy of the breakfast table with Kent. At lunch time she decided to do the same.

In mid-afternoon, clad only in a wisp of a silk slip, she was sitting before the mirror, combing her hair when Kent spoke outside her door.

"Nedda, I want to talk to you," he said.

"You and I have nothing to say to each other!" she retorted.

"If you don't come out here, I'm coming in there!"

"Oh, a cave man!" she taunted.

The next moment the door was jerked open and he plunged into the room, tall, straight, and as handsome as a young god in his anger. There was a bulge under his right coat sleeve where his arm was bandaged. Nedda leaped to her feet. He strode to her and grasped her wrist with his left hand.

Something passed through her like an electric current. Her heart beat faster and seemed to thud in her ears. She felt utterly confused by the emotion and resented it with her whole being. Kent Morgan could never stir her again, she told herself. She was in love with Geoff.

"Haven't you any decency, barging in here like this?" She jerked away from him and reached for her negligee.

"I'm not interested in you enough to know whether you're dressed or not," he replied coldly.

She gasped audibly.

"I told you we have nothing to say to each other," she snapped when she recovered from her surprise.

"We have plenty to say to each other. You have probably guessed, as I have, that Mr. Adams hoped to bring about a reconciliation between us."

"So what?" she demanded.

"We've got to find a way out of it—out of a reconciliation, I mean." There was a sternness in his manner that she had never seen before.

"Suits me," she said coldly.

"This situation," he went on, "is no more pleasant to me than it is to you. I am going to be married in the spring."

Nedda gasped again. She had heard nothing about his attentions to another girl. "Do I know her?" she blurted out, and wished she could recall the words the moment they had left her lips.

"No," he said curtly and added, "I hope we can come to some agreement about dividing whatever Mr. Adams has left us rather than——"

"Don't worry," she interrupted swiftly, "I'll not hold you to any clause that might be in the will about us sharing it as husband and wife."

He bowed stiffly. "Then the only thing we can do is to stick it out for the week specified in his letters to us."

Kate announced from the hall, "Car comin'! I think it's that young Mr. Marchand."

"I'm sure Mr. Adams wouldn't like that!" Kent ejaculated.

"I don't care what he'd like," Nedda cut in. "I told Geoff to come out to see me." She could have



"Kent Morgan!" Nedda cried, as she heard a man groan. She leaped out of bed and switched on the light. "I only meant to scare you, not shoot you," she faltered.

added that she didn't expect him so soon, though.

"You would do something to gum up the works," Kent retorted. "You'll probably lose out for not following Mr. Adams's instructions."

"Please get out!" she said imperiously.

"With pleasure!" He strode swiftly from the room.

Nedda put on a warm brown jersey dress that clung to every outline of her beautifully rounded form,

then went to the living room where Geoffry awaited her.

"Nedda!" His caressing voice seemed to reach out and claim her before he drew her into his arms. He kissed her, gently at first, then with an intensity that sent liquid fire blazing through her veins.

She heard some one coming along the hall with a firm tread. Reluctantly, she withdrew from Geoffry's arms. Her breath was fluttering, and ecstasy was flowing through her. And

yet, somehow, Geoffry's love-making was not quite enough. He stirred her deeply, but something she could not put a name to was lacking.

In another moment Kent entered the living room. He gave Geoffry a quick, sharp glance.

"Aren't you a member of the law firm that drew up Bayne Adams's will?" he shot at the young attorney before Nedda could introduce them.

Geoffry changed color, but he spoke casually. "I believe our senior member handled Mr. Adams's affairs. I know nothing about them."

"But you are interested in the way the will pertains to Nedda," Kent said bluntly.

"Kent! You are insulting my guest!" Nedda's blue eyes were brilliant with anger.

Kent laughed, but there was no mirth in his laughter. He started to speak, then evidently changed his mind. A heavy silence fell upon the room.

Nervous reaction took Nedda to a window. Kent followed her.

"Something tells me you made a big mistake in inviting that fellow here," he said in a low tone.

"Nothing I'd ever do would be right in your eyes!" She whirled and walked away from him. Yet she became aware of a strange, stirring sensation such as she had experienced in her encounter with him a short time before.

Geoffry, she noticed, was standing where she'd left him, his lower lip caught between his white teeth. She started toward him, but stopped dead still when the window at which Kent was standing was shattered by a bullet from outside. It passed very close to Kent's face and was embedded in a davenport.

Events happened with startling rapidity after that. Kate screamed wildly in the kitchen. Before any

of the trio in the living room could go to her, two evil-looking men marshaled the housekeeper into the living room with drawn guns.

"Stick 'em up!" the fellow who seemed to be the leader ordered harshly.

They had no recourse but to obey the command.

Nedda heard Kent groan and knew he was thinking of the arm she had disabled. Oh, what a fool she'd been to fire that gun so recklessly! But, she reflected on second thought, there was Geoffry to protect them. Funny, she'd forgotten him.

"You come with me!" the leader said to Kent, jerking at his injured arm so hard that an involuntary ejaculation of pain escaped the young man.

"Winged, huh?" the outlaw jeered. "Well, you won't give us much trouble. Get goin'!" He pressed the pistol against Kent's ribs.

"Where—where are you taking him?" Nedda demanded wildly, running to Kent's side.

"Get back and shut yer trap!" the outlaw ordered gruffly.

All at once the world was swimming around Nedda Alston. Like the crash of cymbals, the realization burst upon her that she'd never stopped loving Kent. Her heart was going out to him now in passionate yearning. She threw her arms about him as if to shield him from the brutal men. One of them tore her away.

Turning desperate eyes to Geoff, she cried, "Can't you do something?"

"What can I do?" he asked and pointed to the man who had leveled his gun at him.

"Can the chatter!" the other man commanded, and took Kent out.

"Where is he taking him?" she sobbed hysterically.

"Mebbe," sneered the fellow who had remained to keep guard, "we're gonna let him stew in his own juice. Now shut up!"

Nedda burst into tears. But they were tears of rage, not surrender. Through a window she caught a glimpse of Kent being taken into the carriage house. A kind of wild anguish broke in her. The thought that Kent's wounded arm made him unable to defend himself kept striking into her mind like a sharp stil-etto.

She tried to talk to Geoffry in whispers, but their watchful keeper ordered them in no uncertain language to sit on opposite sides of the room.

His companion returned within the hour and commanded Kate to prepare some food. He kept watch over her in the kitchen while she cooked.

Oh, what had he done to Kent?—Nedda wondered frantically. She tortured herself with unanswerable questions. Had the outlaw shot Kent, thrown him into the sea, or made him prisoner in that mysterious tunnel leading from the carriage house?

Kent's arm! Kent's kisses! Would she ever feel their rapture again?

Then she remembered that he'd told her he was going to be married in the spring. Even if they escaped from those terrible men, he would be lost to her.

A new storm broke. Wind rushed past the house and rain pelted against the windowpanes. Surely, Nedda thought, this was some horrible dream. But a glance at the outlaws, who didn't miss a move any of their prisoners made, told her it was only too real. What did they want?—she wondered. They hadn't said a word about money.

At nine thirty the leader said, "You people go to bed. But no monkey business, mind you! I'm gonna be on watch, and I've got eyes in the back of my head."

"You two dames sleep in the same room," the other added. "And you won't find yer gun there. I'm keepin' that."

"What are they holding us for?" Nedda managed to whisper to Geoffry as they left the living room.

"Ransom, I suppose," he whispered back.

"But what have they done with Kent?" she asked.

"Stop that!" the outlaw leader rasped.

The moment the door of their room closed behind Nedda and Kate, a key grated in the lock. Nedda went to the window and looked out into the blackness of the night. The sound of the raging gale and dashing waves below came to her ears.

"I told you no good was gonna come of this trip," Kate reminded her, and lay on the bed without removing her clothes.

Nedda said nothing. Her heart sank another degree nearer hopelessness. She sat on the edge of her bed, staring into space. She had to get out of this house somehow. She had to get to Kent.

Soon, Kate was snoring lustily. Stealthy footsteps sounded outside the door. Cold chills chased up and down Nedda's spine. She held her breath in sheer terror when the steps paused.

Kate's snores filled the room louder than ever. Then the steps died away. Nedda sighed in relief. She tiptoed to the door and put her ear to the crack.

"Sound asleep," one of the outlaws said. "Some break for us, this



"Where are you taking him?" Nedda demanded wildly, running to Kent's side. She threw her arms about him as if to shield him from the gunmen.

storm. They couldn't get a block away in it."

"They never even suspected you," she heard the leader remark with a chuckle, and she wondered what he meant.

"You certainly bungled your chance to get Morgan when he was standing by the window this morning,"

Geoffry Marchand's unmistakable voice replied. Nedda gasped with surprise.

"Don't worry," the leader said cheerfully. "The high tide will finish him around midnight if it hasn't already."

"But we got to be sure that he —" Geoffrey began.

"It'll get him all right," the outlaw interrupted. "Highest tide of the whole year to-night."

Nedda stood there, stunned and stricken. They had confined Kent in a spot where he would be drowned! Geoffrey Marchand wanted him out of the way. And she was the cause of it all. She had placed Kent in Geoffrey's power by inviting Geoffrey here.

The situation moved her to desperate action. It was but the work of a moment to throw on her coat and pick up the flashlight which the outlaw evidently hadn't thought worthy of confiscation. She was going to try to save Kent, no matter what the consequences to herself might be.

Almost noiselessly, she raised the window and slipped outside. A break for her, too, this storm. The outlaws wouldn't dream she'd venture into it. Hurrying through the driving rain and piercing wind, she made her way to the carriage house, uttering silent prayers that she wasn't too late.

Inside, she switched on the flashlight so that she could see the yawning hole in the wall. Gingerly, she stepped into the tunnel and called Kent's name in a low tone. No answer came to her.

She moved forward slowly in the dimness. Groping through that unfamiliar, dank passageway, she had the sensation of going through a dense jungle with crawling, poisonous things all about, ready at any moment to dart out at her.

"Kent!" she called softly. Still no answer came.

She could hear the waves dashing in madly from the sea. Perhaps, she thought despairingly, Kent was already dead. The mere suggestion

seemed to have claws that tore at her. Soon she found herself treading in water that grew deeper as she proceeded.

"Kent! Oh, Kent!" she sobbed.

Suddenly, his voice came to her from around a turn in the tunnel. In her great relief it seemed that all her veins warmed, melted. She flew to him and found him tied, hand and foot, to the wall of the passageway. The water was above his knees and his teeth chattered with cold.

He held the flashlight with difficulty in one of his shackled hands while she worked at the heavy ropes that bound him. It was painful for her slender, white fingers to undo the cruel knots, but her desperation and love for him gave her strength.

"Kent," she said as she worked, "if I ever get out of this mess alive, I—well, I feel I've learned things. I realize now that I have been a spoiled brat."

"No time to discuss that now," he returned crisply.

She had his hands free by this time, and he untied the ropes around his feet and legs himself.

"We'll take your car out of the shed by hand to the top of the hill, and it will roll down without any noise," he said as they hurried out of the tunnel.

"We can't leave Kate."

"What about your boy friend?"

"He's—he's in with those crooks."

"I thought so," Kent said grimly. "You stay here. I'll go after Kate."

Nedda waited beside the roadster in the carriage shed while he went to the house. Minutes passed. But he did not return. Fear mounted in her. Something had gone wrong. She must see what had happened.

She stepped out into the rain and stopped dead still when a wave of yellow light played upon her.

"Just a minute, sister!" the outlaw leader commanded, coming toward her from the house with a flashlight in one hand and his gun in the other.

He took her into the living room. Kate was there, but the other outlaw and Kent were not present. Geoffry ran from his bedroom, pretending alarm and surprise at the new happenings.

"You are in with these crooks!" Nedda fired at him in an angry, tear-choked voice.

"Why, Nedda! You must be crazy! I——" he began, and was interrupted by a volley of shots outside.

Nedda went cold all over. The outlaw had shot Kent, she thought, and plunged frenziedly toward the kitchen door, disregarding the sharp commands of the leader.

In the kitchen, she almost collided with a man wearing a policeman's badge. He stopped her mad flight, demanding to know where she was going.

"Kent!" was all she could say. "Where's Kent?"

"Right here!" Kent entered, followed by three more officers who had the outlaw in tow.

Swiftly and expertly, the policemen snapped handcuffs on the crooks, including Geoffry Marchand.

"It's lucky for ~~you~~ people," one of the officers said, "that this Marchand bird's firm got wise to him. He was here to bump off some man and grab a girl for himself."

"Yeah," another of the policemen took up the story. "Seems, according to the will, that if either the man or girl outstayed each other, the one remaining would get the money,

but if they both stayed the required time they'd share it equally."

At last, Nedda and Kent were in dry clothes, facing each other in the living room.

"I want to talk to you," he said quietly.

"I guess we have plenty to say to each other," she returned.

"We'll stay until the end of the week and share the money equally." He was regarding her searchingly.

"Then"—her voice broke, and all she felt for him was in her eyes, sweet and shameless—"then you can marry that—that girl."

"You adorable idiot!"

Her breath caught. He had called her that in the old days. To know his love again, to feel his arms, his kisses! A wild yearning filled her.

"Nedda"—his face was close to hers, and there was a glow in his eyes that made her quiver with rapture—"Kate advised me to invent that girl because she felt sure you'd only imagined you didn't love me any more." His warm, sinewy hands grasped hers. "Was she right, Nedda?"

"I'll say she was! Kent, I've been a fool."

"Oh, yeah!" he mocked with tender scorn. "A fool who risked her life to save mine! Oh, my darling!" He caught her into his hungry arms and spoke huskily against her trembling mouth, "From now on, we're going to share everything as man and wife! We're going to be married the minute our week here is up, so that you can never get away from me again."

"As if I'd want to!" She lifted her face and gave him her lips.





Sentimental Interlude

By Jean Johnson

FIVE minutes before her afternoon broadcast, a call boy announced, "A Mr. Reed on the phone, Miss Daley. Will you speak to him?"

A slight pucker between her violet-blue eyes, Emily replied, "Yes, I believe I have time," in the warm Southern voice which had won her the name of "Carolina Songbird."

This very hour a week ago, a call from Leon Reed, informing her that he'd come on an earlier plane than

she'd expected, had lifted her into rainbow-hued clouds. But the disappointing events of that night which she'd dreamed would be one of joyous reunion had changed everything. Those long months on the road, away from her, must have broken the sweet, intimate current that once had flowed between them. He was no longer the same Leon she'd promised to marry back in Norville, their home town, and wept over on a station platform.

There was a taut note in her query, "Yes, Leon?" as she picked up the receiver. After listening to his breezy suggestion that she jump into a taxi after her broadcast and meet him at a certain cocktail bar, her pretty, heart-shaped face clouded and she shook her short, black curls impatiently.

"Oh, Leon, I thought you were going to meet me here and come home with me for a few quiet hours. I'm so tired of rushing around!"

"But, honey," he argued, "you don't want to miss the Arcadian Room. Veddy, veddy swank, I hear. Famous murals."

Funny how Leon in his newly acquired man-about-town rôle could make her feel like a visiting schoolmarin from the sticks. You'd think that she hadn't been a New Yorker for a whole year now. After all, he was the new arrival.

"Right now my eyes are much too scratchy to do more than blink at pictures," she replied, and did sound a bit schoolmarmish, she had to admit. "I simply must have a short rest before our evening treat!"

"O. K., sleepyhead"—an edge to his voice. "I'll pick you up at your place around seven then."

But he didn't. At eight thirty Emily was moving restlessly about her tastefully furnished two-room apartment, hating everything in it. What a sentimental fool she'd been to think that the homy charm of her living room, the deep-cushioned, comfortable chairs, the dinners she'd planned to cook for Leon would appeal to him after tiring months of dismal hotel rooms in small towns. It didn't seem possible that the man she'd been going places with this past week had written:

I sure am fed up with this existence. At least one of us is enjoying a sane, ordered

life! Sometimes, though, I'm not so sure I was a bright lad to spare you the lot of being a traveling salesman's part-time widow. Hope I can soon find a way to get back to you.

That opportunity had come when an uncle of Leon's died and left him fifteen thousand dollars. As a result, he immediately threw up his job with the Kruger Tire Co. and wired from California:

GET READY TO DO SOME STEPPING
HONEY CHILE STOP YOUR FAVORITE
BOY IS PLANING EAST TO CARVE WAY
TO FAME AND FORTUNE STOP

Breathlessly, she'd counted the hours before she would see him. She bought a crêpe gown of periwinkle-blue because Leon once said that that shade gave her eyes the depth of purple pansies, and had her hair dressed a smart new way. Then she bought glistening blue cellophane drapes for the windows, and filled vases with daffodils and gay tulips.

But when she ushered him into her apartment and asked excitedly, "Isn't this a lot better than the old days when we had to meet on street corners, or in parlors that were always full of our relatives?" his lack of enthusiasm had sent her heart plunging downward. He'd given the mellow-toned room little more than a cursory glance before suggesting that they have a drink and start out for an evening of celebration. So, of course, she made no mention of her own plans for a home-cooked dinner, and hours of being alone together.

At the time she'd thought he would quiet down when the thrill of being able to take her to smart restaurants and night clubs had worn off. But apparently, Leon was still going strong.

By nine o'clock angry red spots were burning over her cheek bones,

and the hollow feeling in the pit of her stomach expanded with every ticking second. It was two hours past her regular dinner time, and she was hungry. How dared he keep her waiting all this time?

Childishly, she snatched up the silver-framed photograph of an attractive, lean-faced young man and shook it. But the next moment her eyes were wistful, and her finger was tracing the curve of a flexible mouth that used to kiss so thrillingly.

She was gloomily munching soda crackers when the young man in question finally turned up at nine twenty in a high mood. A soft gray felt tilted rakishly over his dancing brown eyes before he whipped it off and spun it across the room. A curling lock of chestnut-brown hair tumbled boyishly over his wide forehead. And the teasing, audacious smile which had won her heart in their school days, twitched his lips.

But Emily did not return that winning smile. Tired and irritable from her long wait, she fought back the urge to shake some common sense into this youth who seemed to think he had the world by the tail.

"Did you enjoy the murals?" she inquired in a taut voice.

Leon blew a kiss to the ceiling. "Lovely! Gorgeous nymphs skipping ropes of posies in a kind of woodland strip-tease act. Yards and yards of seductive pulchritude flitting all around the room." He squinted twinkling eyes at her. "Jealous, darling?"

The lightly spoken "darling" made her heart ache dully. But she said quickly, "Jealous of some cheap bar-room paintings? Don't be stupid, Leon!"

The twinkle died in brown eyes that were regarding her with a new alertness. "Your beauty sleep hasn't

sweetened your disposition, home girl," he drawled.

Emily faced him resentfully. There'd been a time, not so long ago, when he wouldn't have called her "home girl" with that biting inflection.

"I couldn't sleep," she told him. "And I've been expecting you since seven."

He cocked his head on one side and observed, "My, but she's mad! And all because I've had a good time she was too contrary to share. Snap out of the glump, cross patch!" He produced the square box he'd been carrying under his arm. "See, I brought you a peace offering."

Biting her lip to keep back tears of exasperation, she opened the box and turned the waxed green paper. The blithe assurance of men! They did things that twisted your heart, then gave you flowers to make you smile again. The fresh perfume of the violets teased her nostrils, but still she did not lift them to her face. She was recalling how, the night of his arrival, he'd led her into a florist's shop and said, "Sky's the limit! What's it to be, honey—orchids?" And when she'd laughed and protested that she wasn't the orchid type, he had agreed readily that maybe she was right, and that violets would be more suitable.

She put the box on the table. "Possibly I am in a glump," she said, a catch in her voice. "You mightn't be so full of sparkle yourself if after turning in at three a. m. night after night, you had to answer an alarm and be in voice for a nine o'clock broadcast."

"Do people really listen to old-time melodies at such an infernal hour?" Leon threw his slim length into a chair and scowled at the toes of his shoes. "You've sure turned into a kill-joy, Emily! And you

needn't be so hoity-toity about your important contract. Landed a job myself to-day. That was the special reason I wanted you to meet me this afternoon. As it was, I lifted a glass or two with your friend, Benny Weston. And when a girl he knew joined us, it wasn't so easy to duck away."

A showgirl, probably, she surmised, with deepening apprehension. Chorines were bound to flock around a live-wire press agent like Benny Weston. She shouldn't have gone out of her way to introduce Leon to Benny that night they'd run into him at a night club. She might have known they'd be good drinking companions.

"Remember the beauty's name?" She tried to sound casual.

"Magdeline Doe. Says she's rehearsing for a new revue."

"I've seen pictures of the face and figure," she reflected. "Those legs of hers are insured for fifty thousand dollars. Like them?"

Leon's eyebrows arched. "Say, is this a third degree? The beautiful creature was swathed in a mink coat, so what chance had I of examining the legs?"

Emily laughed nervously. "Benny should have tipped you off that the lady in mink posed for most of those aforementioned seductive nymphs."

The young man whistled. "Well, what do you know? So you've already seen the murals!" he teased.

"I haven't. But I read the papers." She made a swift gesture intended to dispel the provoking image of Magdeline Doe, her precious legs and flaming tresses. "Leon, tell me more about this new job! Is it in New York?"

He nodded. "Yours truly will move into a brokerage office in Wall Street," he told her importantly. "Stocks and bonds on a commission

basis. And now that I have some spare cash on hand, I may do a little speculating on the side."

"Oh!" An exclamation that expressed her disappointment. "I did hope you'd found something less dependent upon luck and chance. A job with a regular salary."

His pleasant features darkened. "There you go turning on the cold shower again! I shouldn't think you'd sneer at the chance element. Seems to me you came to New York to spend a few days with a girl friend just about the time she'd decided to marry an out-of-towner and go off the air. So after she arranged an audition for you, didn't you slide into a sweet contract to warble on a morning and afternoon program? Didn't that have the earmarks of a lucky break?"

"But, Leon, market speculation is different! It's so terribly risky."

"Now you're talking as if I'd said I was going to spin a roulette wheel! Forget I said anything! You've got me all depressed."

Emily shrugged helplessly. It was useless to reason with him while he was in this defensive state.

"I'm sorry I cramp your style," she said shakily, and hoped he'd make some gallant, loverlike denial that she did anything of the kind.

But he didn't. He ground out his cigarette and stood up. "Gosh, I was feeling swell a few hours ago, and now the old gloom clouds are getting thicker every minute. Come on, let's get going before I break down and weep!" And when the only move she made was to pick up the violets and start peeling off the green tin foil, "What are you doing that for? The stems will stain your dress."

"I'm not going to wear them, Leon." A gathering thickness in her throat made it difficult for her to

speaking firmly. "They'll last longer in water. I've decided not to go out to-night."

Hands thrust belligerently in his pockets, he stared hard at her determined face. "What's the idea, Emily? Be yourself!"

"I am being myself," she insisted. "I'm pretty much the same girl you were fond of back in Norville. And I may be more of a gambler than you are. You may recall that I was willing to marry you when things looked pretty black over a year ago, just before you went on the road and I came to New York. Then you were the one who held out for the solid rock foundation——"

"And now that everything is rosy with me," he broke in bitterly, "you aren't so keen to marry me. You've been holding me at arm's length for days, as if I were a stranger."

"You've been behaving like one," she accused. "You were different that first night you came back. You—you frightened me. I never dreamed a few thousand dollars would go to your head like this! We just don't care for the same things any more. You've gone Broadway! I hate the hot, noisy dives and blaring music you seem to crave. I guess you need a peppier playmate. Magdeline Doe ought to suit you fine." As she turned away quickly, the violets swam in a purple blur. She trembled when he came up behind her and caught her arms at the elbows.

"Honey, we don't want to crack up like this! Can't you understand why——" He broke off abruptly and released her. "Oh, what's the use? Maybe you've got the right angle on us. We're not tuned in on the same wave length any more. Somehow or other, you make me feel in the wrong all the time lately, and no man likes that!"

"Then we'd better say good night, Leon." And though she was stiff with fear, she did not turn around. Surely he wouldn't take her at her word and walk out that door, out of her life! It was unthinkable! Why did he expect her to be the tolerant one always? Long ago, she'd spoiled him by making the conciliatory moves after their childish quarrels. But they weren't children any longer. She was twenty, he twenty-three. Wasn't it his turn to make allowances for the fact that ragged nerves caused by hunger and fatigue had put hasty words into her mouth? If only he'd take her in his arms and melt her resistance with some tender word!

The brusque closing of the door struck her eardrums like a blow. Leon had walked out on her! It was over then. Weakly, she dropped into a chair, the damp violets clutched in her hands.

Emily awoke the next morning with a heaviness of heart that could only have been treated by the ringing of the telephone and Leon's cheery assurance that their quarrel of the night before was already a thing of the past. But he did not telephone. How, she wondered miserably, was she to get through a day that held no promise of a meeting with him at the end of it?

She had her first news of him through Benny Weston late that afternoon. The press agent hailed her in the elevator as she was leaving the broadcasting studio. Upon reaching the street, he fell into step with her.

"Mind if I interrupt your meditations, little songbird?"

She raised troubled eyes to his thin, sardonic face. "You're welcome, Benny," she said. "I'm not exactly bubbling over with sweetness

Suddenly, Emily saw Leon dancing with Magdeline Doe. Oh, maybe this jealous torment would lessen if she definitely put another man in Leon's place! Frantically, she groped for Benny's hand.



and light to-day." She found it easy to chat with this wiry, red-headed man. And she sensed that he liked her because she'd never asked any favors of him.

"Pardon a personal question," Benny Weston was saying, "but have you fired the home-town sweet-heart?"

"Why do you ask that?" Agitation made her voice low and breathless.

"Oh, because I happened to run into him and Magdeline Doe in the wee sma' hours. Your friend was in the act of buying one of those park-cruising one-horse shays. If the lad has tucked away any greenbacks for

a rainy day, you'd better warn him away from little Magdeline!"

Jealous fear tore through Emily. She said stiffly, "Leon is old enough to look after his own interests. Anyway, we're washed up." It made her feel faint to think of them driving through the park with the fresh scents of a springtime world conspiring to create a romantic mood. She could visualize Titian hair against his shoulder, provocative scarlet lips lazily smiling an invitation.

When her companion suggested that they stop for a drink she said hurriedly, "I—I'd rather go home." In her present shaky state she might burst into tears in some public place.

"Then may I tag along?" he wanted to know.

The prospect of taut hours sitting alone, waiting for the telephone or doorbell to ring made her consent gratefully and add, "I think I have some ingredients for cocktails, if you don't mind mixing them. Leon usually——" She broke off, a lump in her throat.

"To be on the safe side, we'll stop in at a liquor store," Benny said with the air of one taking charge of a situation.

Later, with one of his potent concoctions melting the aching tension that bound her, Emily rested her dark head against the back of a chair and closed her eyes.

"Cozy little nest you have here," Benny remarked. "Why haven't I been asked up before?"

Because of Leon, she might have said. Instead, she answered, "It didn't occur to me that you'd be interested in my private life. You know so many really clever people."

He stretched out his legs and contentedly blew smoke rings.

"You're an incredibly unspoiled child! And this is one swell chair. This is the first time I've relaxed in

days. Wish we didn't have to go out to dinner."

"We needn't," she said. "I could phone the market at the corner. It hasn't closed yet."

"Do that," he prompted with enthusiasm.

But as she phoned the order, she could not fight down the feeling that something was very wrong with this domestic picture. Why couldn't that be Leon sitting in the chair she'd bought for his comfort? Benny was the only outsider she'd ever asked into her apartment, and his being here made her a trifle nervous.

With her head spinning from the cocktails, it was a wonder the meal she prepared was so edible. Certainly Benny found no fault with anything. Sipping her coffee, Emily was struck by the irony of his appreciating the very things she'd wanted Leon to like. He remarked upon the good taste she'd shown in her furnishings. He said she was very lovely and appealing sitting there across the table, but much too far away!

She laughed self-consciously. "Now, Benny, you know I'm not your type of glamour girl!"

He smiled crookedly. "Glamour girls are part of my business. Believe me, Emily, you're a refreshing change. You're real. Come, let's be comfortable." He got up, took her hand and led her over to the divan. And when they were seated, "I could fall hard for you, if you gave me half a chance. You like me a little, don't you?"

Her heart was beating rapidly. The strange, burning look in Benny's gray eyes disturbed her. And awareness of his arm across the back of the divan filled her with an uneasiness that was mixed with excitement. Had Leon felt this tug of another's

physical drawing power when he'd been driving with Magdeline Doe?

Thrusting back that thought, she answered impulsively, "Of course I like you, Benny. You've always been very kind to me."

His hand slid down until it touched her shoulder. The warmth of it through the thin silk dress sent a tingle along her nerves.

He said thickly, "I could be more than kind if you'd break down and try to love me a little. That possible?"

"I—I don't know," she faltered, confused. Oh, why hadn't Leon telephoned?

Then, without warning, Benny forcefully lifted her into his arms, swept tumbled black curls from her puckered brow and set his lips on hers in a cautious, experimental kiss designed to test her resistance. She did not shrink away, though the shock of his touch numbed her for a moment. Then, determined to get past the barrier her love for Leon had set up against other men, she relaxed and freely offered Benny warm, clinging lips in desperate abandon.

Her unexpected yielding was flame to Benny's mounting emotion. Crushing her against him, he drank the sweetness of her young lips in slow, practiced kisses that roused her sleeping senses until gradually, fearfully, she became vibrant and responsive beneath his caresses. But even with this new, wild fever surging through her, she found herself longing for Leon's embraces, his teasing kisses that had hinted of raptures to come.

When Benny whispered hoarsely, "You're sweet! You wouldn't fool me, would you?" she knew that while she'd been momentarily swept away, she did not love this man.

Tears on her cheeks, she pulled free of him, murmuring, "Sorry, Benny. I'm not used to drinking so much."

His face somber, he lit a cigarette, and drawing fiercely on it, said with gruff kindness, "Go on and have a good cry. Here's a nice large hanky." And later, "Now powder the nose, my girl, and put on your snappiest gown. The sentimental interlude is over. We're going places."

In the course of the next few hours, Emily felt as if she were being blown along by a strong wind. In and out of glittering bars and night clubs, a dazzle of colored lights shifting before her eyes, music throbbing in her ears, restfulness in her blood, and a dull, insistent aching in her heart.

Around two o'clock Benny said in her ear, "There's your man!"

Looking in the direction indicated, she saw Leon's shining brown head in profile at a table, and her heart bounded. He was alone, thank Heaven!

"Benny, is this why——"

"Sure," he cut in crisply. "I called his hotel room a while back. No answer. But I figured he'd turn up somewhere." He got up and stood over her, pulled her to her feet. "We'll dance past his table. The rest of the reconciliation act is up to you."

But Leon was no longer alone by the time they reached the dance floor. A stunning, red-haired girl who wore a lavish spray of white orchids on the shoulder of a revealing black lace gown had joined him. And Emily noted with sick dismay that the table had been set for two.

For only an electric moment, as Benny capably guided her near that table, did her hurt blue eyes hold

Leon's widened brown ones. A muscle twitched in his lean cheek and he started to rise, but Emily checked him with a meaningful glance at Magdeline Doe. Then she looked up into her partner's inscrutable countenance. No use trying to read Benny's motives. He was too smart for her.

"Leon's been aching to buy orchids for some one," she forlornly voiced her thought. "Now he ought to be satisfied."

"Well, Magdeline's the gal for him then." And when the orchestra ceased playing, Benny Weston asked, "Ready to go?"

Emily had set her chin stubbornly. "Not yet. I won't have Leon thinking I can't stand seeing him with another girl." She added recklessly, "I'm thirsty, Benny. Buy me another drink."

"Better go easy, baby," he cautioned. "Remember what you said about not being used to heavy drinking!"

"But what's the sense of being so darn careful?" she cried on a ragged note. "Anyway I feel safe with you."

He ordered drinks, and when the waiter had gone, eyed her quizzically. "I'm safe enough as long as I know where I stand," he told her. "But there are limits. I mightn't behave the next time we're alone."

Embarrassed, she avoided meeting his sharp, questioning gaze. There was Leon dancing with Magdeline Doe! Oh, maybe this jealous torment would lessen if she definitely put another man in Leon's place. Why not Benny? Frantically, she groped for his hand. Bending walls and swimming lights weren't so terrifying if you held onto some one.

"Please don't leave me, Benny!"

He pulled his chair nearer. "I'm nuts about you, kid. You could

write your own ticket where I'm concerned." Then, "Time to go," he whispered.

"All right, Benny." And still holding fast to his hand, she left the room without a backward glance.

At the door of the cloakroom he said, "Be back in a few minutes. Don't you run out on me!"

"I won't." But her voice shook.

When Benny returned there was an odd smile on his lips, and a hard, concentrated look in his eyes that frightened her. Chill struck her heart with the realization that she knew practically nothing of the workings of this man's mind. And yet this stranger, in the span of a possessing kiss, might soon crash through the last of her defenses and take command of her life.

Holding her arm tightly, he did not speak again until they reached the street. As he headed toward a taxi, his fingers pressed hers so hard that she winced.

He said rapidly, "Emily, I've wanted you badly enough to play villain to get you. But now that Magdeline's turned on the old allure, as prescribed by me, I find I can't let her get away with her act any more than I can take advantage of you when you're all muddled." With that, he opened the taxi door and lifted her in.

Before she could say anything, he had vanished. And when she tried to follow him, she found strong, hard arms about her. A hand stifled the scream that rose in her throat. The cab started and swerved around a corner, tilting her head so that she stared up into her captor's face, fitfully illumined by street lamps. Then she recognized that strained white face as Leon's, curiously older, wiser, and the fight drained out of her. Leon! She'd had a bad dream,

but it was over, and now she was where she wanted most to be.

When he freed her mouth she gasped, "How did you get here?"

He was holding her securely close, as if she were a little girl who, through heedlessness, had hurt herself and needed comforting before she was scolded. There was a grim line about his mouth, but his eyes were understanding, tender.

"Benny Weston tipped me off that you needed looking after. Say, what's the idea of going on a drinking bat when you're not with me? Is this the way you carry on when I'm not around?" His tone was rough with emotion that was not altogether anger.

"It's the first time," she sobbed against his chest. "You shouldn't have left Miss Doe!"

"Oh, Weston said he'd take the beautiful menace off my hands."

"Menace? You liked her well enough to rush back to her after you left me last night, and drive her around the park until morning!"

His jaw hardened. "Stop pulling away from me!" And when her not very vigorous struggles had ceased, he explained, "I didn't run back to her. I practically fell over her in my hotel lobby. Some friends she'd expected to meet hadn't shown up, she said. So as I had time on my hands, I took her out. Later, she got tight, or pretended to, and asked me to take her for a drive in the open air."

"And I suppose you'll say you didn't get a thrill out of kissing her?" Then, recalling her own surprising reaction to Benny's kisses, she added quickly, contritely, "Well, what if you did?"

He was smiling wryly. "It was just a brief—very brief—sentimental interlude. I didn't like the scent of her face powder, or the taste of her

lipstick. I kept on thinking of how soft and clean your lips were. Anyway," he caught himself up sharply, "I was on to Magdeline's game by the time I left her on her doorstep. She's up to her neck in debt and probably figured I was the kind of fool who'd pull out a check book if I lost my head over her. But I'm not quite the sap I've been acting lately!"

This was the old, sincere Leon who used to tell her everything about himself. Thankful to have found him again, she pressed closer—so close that she could hear the throb of his heart.

"Before you ask," his voice rumbled on above her bent head, "I'll tell you why I went out with her again to-night. She telephoned me to-day to remind me that I'd asked her to dinner. I hadn't, but when I got to thinking that maybe you really wanted a vacation from me, I let the date stand. Before Magdeline hung up, she hinted that orchids were her favorite blooms, and would I drop into her apartment for cocktails?" He paused, shook his head. "One glance at that joint of hers, and my gift of orchids was a 'hail and farewell' gesture as far as I was concerned. Clothes and junk thrown all over a room that hadn't been cleaned in weeks! I guess you've spoiled me, honey. Your place is so swell and homy."

Surprised, she lifted her head and looked at him. "But, Leon, you never once told me you liked a thing about my apartment. And that hurt me!"

The cab had stopped. Searching in his pocket for change, Leon said, "I'll answer that one when we're upstairs."

And though she insisted she was quite capable of walking, he carried her up. Arms tightly clasped about



Though she insisted she was quite capable of walking, he carried her up the stairs. Arms tightly clasped about his neck, she clung to him, thrilled by his strength and sudden mastery over her.

his neck, she clung to him, thrilled by his strength and sudden mastery over her.

Inside her charming living room, he directed, "Look at this place! Can't you imagine what I thought

when I saw it? I'd wanted to give you a nice home myself, but you'd gone and spiked my guns! Do you think I was wild with joy when I heard about your radio engagement? Was I supposed to like the idea that you made more money than I did?"

"Oh, Leon, I never thought——"

"Well, I did a lot of thinking on the way East. And when I saw how smart-looking you were that first night you brought me here, I was scared. I thought you'd gone beyond me. So I took you to a few ritzy places you hadn't seen before. Then I did try to be a man-about-town, as you said. I guess all this nonsense comes of our not having had any money to spend for so long. Lately, I've been wishing we were back in Norville, broke but in love. I've never wanted any girl but you, and I've scared you off. Sweetheart, can't we get back?"

"It's all right again, Leon," she whispered, putting her hands to his face, pulling his head down. "I've been stupid not to understand you better. But I do love you! Oh, Leon!"

He answered the pent-up longing of her cry by straining her tightly, joyously, to him. He answered the quiver of her eager lips by claiming them with a long kiss that held all the rapture she'd ever dreamed of. No dark undercurrent of doubt dimmed the glory of their mutual surrender. And as Emily gave him back his hungry kiss there mounted a clean flame of ardor that burned away even the memory of heartache.

Leon's hands shook when he carefully set her down on her bed in the smaller room, and took off her slippers.

"You must get some sleep, dearest, if you expect to answer that morning alarm." His voice was rough with feeling. "I know I've been a sore-head about your job, but I do realize that a contract isn't to be disregarded. And I hope you'll bear that in mind when you say 'I do' later on in the day. Afterward, we'll go out of town and look for some real violets. Now, hurry and get ready for bed."

Shortly after, when she was cozily tucked in, the bridegroom-to-be dropped down beside her bed and tenderly laid his cheek against her hand.

"I've made a lot of boners, darling, but I'll come through as a husband, I promise you. I'm not taking that job in Wall Street. Found another opening in an automobile agency here—one with a regular salary that will pay the rent of this place, I guess. As for your radio career—well, that's up to you."

"I don't want a career, and I won't sign another contract. Won't sign anything," she murmured drowsily, "but our marriage certificate. Leon, I'm so wonderfully happy! It's going to be more thrilling than I imagined, being your wife. Do you know, you never really kissed me until a few minutes ago?"

There was tender restraint in his good-night kiss. "Gosh honey, I love you! Tell you what, I'm going to park myself on that divan in the other room. Then you'll be so thoroughly compromised that you'll have to go through with marrying me, in case you change your mind by morning."

"Not a chance," she breathed, and her kiss proved it.





The Pretty One

By Jennifer Ames

A SERIAL—Part IV.

CHAPTER VIII.

SO you walked out on the job, eh?" Mr. Rickardson said grimly. "Did you let them know at the store what you were going to do?"

Jacqueline shook her head. "Oh, no, I came right here. I—I knew this was my place—with you and mother."

"Do you realize you've probably made your sister lose her job?" he commented and went on before she had time to reply: "You took the job. But you hadn't the backbone to carry it on. I knew you wouldn't have. When you heard I'd arrived and thought I might be offended, you rushed right here. You didn't

even go to the store and tell them you weren't coming. Am I right?"

"I—I could phone them from here." Her hesitant, frightened voice showed her bewilderment. What was he driving at? She had thought at first he was angry with her for having left his roof, for not having been content with all he was doing for her. Now he seemed angry with her for having given up the job. A job she loathed already. She loathed everything about it. The endless standing. The customers. The other girls she had to work with.

"I've had my lesson. I want to come back, Mr. Rickardson," she pleaded.

Mr. Rickardson brought his fist

crashing down onto the table. He brought it down with such force that all the silver and glassware shivered and his coffee cup jumped at least two inches.

"Then you're darned well not coming back!" he shouted. "You wanted a change. Well, you're going to get it. Do you hear me? You thought you'd like to earn your living. Very well, you're going to! You're not going to play at earning it either. You're going to earn it in grim earnest. I don't approve of people taking on a thing they can't carry through. If you take my advice, you'll get back to that store as fast as you can, make some reasonable excuse and get to work quickly. You'll need both the job and the money before you're through."

"But, Mr. Rickardson," she pleaded, her eyes full of frightened tears, "I don't want to go back!"

"And here's something else for you to bear in mind," he went on as though she hadn't interrupted. "You're not going to get another cent out of me. You've had plenty! You've been sponging on me ever since you grew up. I don't like young girls who are lazy and idle. I am going to tell your mother and sister that if they give you a cent, I'll wash my hands of the whole family. You wanted to work, well, you shall work. But this time, my girl, you're going to work in earnest."

"Now get out," he finished. "I want to eat my breakfast in peace. And by the way," he added as she was about to melt through the doorway, "there are some flowers for you in the hall. I see you are still keeping in touch with your fortune-hunter friend."

"Howard has sent me flowers?" she cried. For the moment everything else was forgotten. Mr. Rick-

ardson's threat to cut off her allowance and force her to go back to that terrible job, the way he had insulted her, everything but the fact that Howard had sent her flowers.

She ran into the hallway and there they were, the tissue paper falling over the chair like a cascade of frozen water, the faint, fragrant scent of the flowers filling the air.

"Oh"—she fell on her knees before them—"how absolutely lovely!"

She picked up Howard's card and fingered it.

"He cares enough to send these," she thought. "Perhaps he's sorry for what he said to me. Perhaps he didn't mean it to be so final, after all. Perhaps I was a fool to run away as I did in the middle of lunch."

"For the red-haired princess whose eyes are hazel instead of green and who, luckily, has no snakes for guardians," she read upon turning over the card.

She stared at the words. Howard's writing, but the words didn't make sense. "For the red-haired princess whose eyes are hazel instead of green," she repeated the words aloud in bewilderment. Then she picked up the box and looked at the name on the cover.

"Miss Jill Wilson," she read.

Her blue eyes widened and darkened angrily to violet. Her color receded, leaving her face absolutely white. "Miss Jill Wilson," she repeated. And, suddenly, she was running up the stairs, her small hands clenched, her lips set grimly.

Jill had only awakened. She was sitting up in bed, sipping hot chocolate and eating toast. She was feeling marvelous. What joy it was to be able to have a delicious breakfast brought to her bed, to know she could lie here as long as she wished

and then have a lovely warm bath. To know there was no hurry or bustle, no busses to catch, no customers, no Ma Perkins to placate.

Jacqueline literally burst into the room.

"Jacqueline!" Jill cried and stared at her, knowing at once that something was very wrong by her white, strained face, her blazing eyes.

"What's the matter, Jacqueline?" she cried again. "Have you"—she thought of the worst thing she could think of—"have you been fired?"

"Been fired!" Jacqueline cried scornfully. "I haven't been there to be fired. I haven't been near your precious store to-day!"

"But—but why?" Jill gasped. "Are you ill? Did you let them know you weren't coming in?"

"I didn't," Jacqueline snapped back at her. "I didn't think I'd ever have to go back. But it seems"—her lips tightened grimly—"I am going back. What a snake in the grass you've proved to be, Jill! I wish I'd never met you again! Had you all this trickery in mind when you persuaded me to take your miserable job while you came here to enjoy what is mine by right? Mine! Do you hear me—mine!" she repeated the word hoarsely.

"And not content with turning my stepfather against me, telling him some fool story about how I wanted to work," she went on be-

fore Jill had a chance to reply or even to defend herself, "you have to go and vamp Howard, when you swore to me you wouldn't even speak to him! What have you to say to that?" Her voice rose hysterically.

Jill's bewilderment gave way to a sense of horror. Could it be Jacqueline standing here accusing her of

all these things? Things which were not only untrue. They were fantastic!

She sprang out of bed. She ran over to the elder girl and shook her by the shoulders.

"What do you mean by saying that I've turned Mr. Rickardson against you? What do you mean by saying I've tried to vamp Howard?"

"Oh, so you call him Howard!" Jacqueline said. Her lips curled scornfully. She pushed Jill away from her as though she couldn't bear to be touched by her.

"Oh, for Heaven's sake calm down and talk sense, Jacqueline!" Jill cried. "What do you mean by rushing in here and accusing me of things I haven't done? I haven't tried to vamp Howard. I saw him the other night. He called to see you. I happened to be here. I told him just what I thought of him for having treated you as he had."

"I'm likely to believe that," the elder girl muttered, "when downstairs is the box of flowers he's sent you with one of his cards. He's

THE STORY SO FAR: Jill Wilson, salesgirl, who has not seen her mother or sister since she was a tiny girl, reads in the paper that her mother has recently married a millionaire. Jacqueline, Jill's sister, attends a fashion show in the store where Jill works and becomes ill. Jill, recognizing her, takes her to her apartment. Jacqueline is disillusioned because of her broken engagement to Howard Aitkin, society sportsman. Unhappy and bored, she suggests that she and Jill change places. Jacqueline goes to the store and Jill goes to her mother's apartment, to await the older woman's arrival from Paris. Howard calls to see Jacqueline and meets Jill instead. Jill's stepfather, Arthur Rickardson, in poor health, decides upon a sudden trip abroad. Reading that he is in town Jacqueline comes back to the apartment.

written on the back something about a red-haired princess whose eyes are hazel instead of green. A likely tale that you merely stood up for me! Obviously you used all the tricks you knew to get him for yourself. And you seem to have succeeded!" She laughed bitterly.

"A box of flowers for me from Howard Aitkin!" Jill whispered. "But how—how do you know?"

Jacqueline tossed her head.

"They were open. I suppose that old fool opened them. He's always poking his nose into things that don't concern him. He thought Howard had sent them to me. I think that's one reason he was so mad and said he'd stop my allowance. If you're a good sport, you'll go down and tell him the flowers were intended for you. You'll tell him, too, that this whole thing, this ridiculous idea of changing places, was your idea."

"But it wasn't," Jill said slowly. "It was your idea, Jacqueline."

"I wasn't myself when I made the suggestion," Jacqueline said stonily. "You knew I was overwrought."

Jill could scarcely believe she had heard her right.

"But you were enthusiastic about it," she stammered. "You told me you wanted to try earning your living."

"Well, I've tried it and I don't like it," Jacqueline said shortly. "The first day wasn't so bad. But yesterday I nearly died. And if you think I'm going on, day in, day out, week in, week out, wearing myself to the bone, while you luxuriate here on my allowance, you've got another thought coming!"

"But I don't want you to go on if you don't like it," Jill said quietly. "I'm prepared to go back."

"But I can't come back here. That's the point!"

Jill straightened and stared at her.

"What's to prevent you?"

"Old Rickardson. I don't know what you've said to him. Anyhow, he's in a vile temper. He caught me coming in and told me I could get out as quick as I'd come in. He told me to go back to my job, that I wasn't going to have any more money of his. And if mother or you gave me any, there'd be a row."

Jill subsided onto the bed. "He told you that?"

The elder girl grimaced. "And what's more, he meant it. He makes extravagant threats and insists upon sticking to them. He always has been like that."

Jill sprang to her feet. "I'll go down and see him. If I make out it was all my fault, that should make a difference. I'll tell him, too, that Howard sent the flowers to me."

Jacqueline was looking slightly more pacified, but at the mention of Howard, she flared up again.

"What's the real meaning of this, Jill? Are you going to go on seeing him?" And when Jill hesitated, she came toward her and grasped her arm.

"You've got to leave him alone," she said hoarsely. "Do you hear me? I—I won't stand for your playing around with him!"

"I've no intention of playing around with him," Jill said quietly. "Nevertheless, I'm not going to have you dictating to me. You had your chance with Howard and you lost it."

"You mean you're going out deliberately to get him?" Jacqueline demanded and went on quickly: "If you did, I'd kill you or I'd kill myself!" She had become quite hysterical. "I tell you, I'd kill you!"

Jill was remembering that How-



"What a snake in the grass you've proved to be!" Jacqueline cried, as she burst into Jill's room. "Not content with turning my stepfather against me, you have to go and vamp Howard, when you swore to me you wouldn't even speak to him! What have you to say to that?"

ard had said: "I don't like hysterical women." And suddenly, watching Jacqueline in her tantrums, she found she had a very real sympathy for him. She didn't like hysterical people either, she decided.

"Do pull yourself together!" she begged. "I haven't any intention of vamping Howard. You forget about Johnny. You know I—I'm very fond of Johnny."

"You mean you're in love with him?" Jacqueline demanded.

"I don't know," Jill said slowly. "I only know I'd hate to have him hurt. I'd never forgive the person who hurt him either."

She looked so intent and fierce that Jacqueline felt a little shiver go through her. No, she decided, Jill would never forgive any woman who hurt the man of whom she was fond.

CHAPTER IX.

Even Jill's persuasive powers weren't able to make Mr. Rickardson see reason. Or, rather, he imagined he had seen reason, perhaps for the first time in his life with regard to Jacqueline.

"I admire your loyalty to your sister, my dear," he said. "But, believe me, she isn't worth such loyalty. You'll find that out if you don't know it already. I can understand that she wants to come back here, that she's fed up with the job. That's what I expected. And you were fool enough to think she'd ever stick to it! I knew it was just another of her stunts. She is always rushing off in a state of hysteria and doing some mad thing.

"Let her stick to this job. Let her do a bit of honest work for a change. If she makes a go of it, a real go of it, I might be induced to change my mind. And as for you"—his voice

sharpened—"I want you to stay here. Understand that? I want you here near me. You're the first alive thing I've seen for many a long day. And to think you're actually my own stepdaughter! When do we start out on this sight-seeing expedition, eh?"

Apparently he had dismissed Jacqueline from his mind. But Jill couldn't let it rest at that.

"I used to get eighteen dollars a week at Handle's," she pointed out. "I had to make that do for everything—food, clothes, rent, any little pleasures I had. Jacqueline's been used to spending that much for a day's amusement. Don't you see how miserable she'll be? She couldn't possibly make ends meet."

"I see your point," he said slowly. "Yes," he chuckled, "it might be a bit hard for Jacqueline to have to live on eighteen dollars a week! I'll tell you what I'll do, I'll double her salary for her, so long as she's working. That's a fair proposition, eh?"

Jill had to agree with him. What would she not have given in her long struggle if some one had offered to double her salary!

"She should be able to live on that," she agreed.

"She'll darned well have to," he boomed. "And I'm going to make one provision. You'll have to swear to me that you won't give her a cent of the allowance I am going to give you."

"All right, I won't give her any of my own allowance," Jill promised, after a slight pause in which she was weighing him up to see if there was any use in her continuing the argument. She decided there wasn't.

She turned and went upstairs to tell Jacqueline what she had done. She hadn't expected Jacqueline to be pleased; but she certainly hadn't

expected her to fly into another of her rages, even a worse rage than she had been in before.

"Eighteen dollars extra a week!" she cried. "It's very kind of him. Very kind of you both to arrange it! Is that what you suggested, an eighteen-dollar allowance? I might have expected it! What's the use of eighteen dollars extra a week to me?"

"It'll certainly help with your salary," Jill said quietly. "Please, Jacqueline, don't be so upset about it. Please don't think it's my fault. Maybe you'll like working better once you are used to it."

"Did you like it better, even when you were used to it? Used to it for years?" the other girl demanded.

"I don't suppose I did," Jill murmured.

"You see!" Jacqueline said triumphantly.

"You ought to do something about letting Miss Perkins know you're not coming in this morning," Jill suggested presently.

"I'm going back there now," Jacqueline said. Her red lips tightened. "I've got to go. You've seen to that, Jill!" With that she stalked out of the room, slamming the door after her.

Jill started after her, then sat down on the bed again. Suddenly all the pleasure in this new life was gone. Jacqueline was thinking dreadful things of her.

Jacqueline, her own sister, whom she had longed for so often during the past ten years! For one wonderful afternoon and evening they had found each other. Now all the joy was gone.

Slowly, the tears ran down her cheeks. She was sitting there, rubbing her eyes with a handkerchief when there was a soft knock on the door. It opened. Mr. Rickardson

stood watching her for several moments.

"Well, well, my dear," he said and she could scarcely believe it was his voice, it was so gentle, "don't take it to heart so. I know Jacqueline. I know her mother. They don't like being crossed in things."

He came toward her and rather clumsily patted her shoulder. The gesture was foreign to him and a few moments later he felt heartily ashamed of himself. Jill was still weeping. She felt overwrought and unhappy. Impulsively, she rested her head against his shoulder.

"You're awfully kind," she muttered.

"Kind!" he exclaimed. "Kind—me—kind?" It seemed a new idea to him and one which he half welcomed and half resented.

"Of course," she said. She blew her nose. "Hasn't any one told you that before?"

"Can't say they have," he said and added with a poor attempt at his former blustering manner: "Of course I'm not kind! Sheer nonsense. You ask my wife."

Jill smiled through her tears. "I don't have to ask her."

To use Mr. Rickardson's own phraseology, they "Did the town up swell." They visited, in one day, the Tower of London, the Houses of Parliament, the British Museum, Kew Gardens and Hampton Court. Jill discovered that he had the same zest for sight-seeing as he had for business. He never wasted a moment. He was all for hurrying from one point to the next. Afterward, they dined together in the grillroom of an expensive hotel.

It was a new and enthralling experience for her. She had often seen the outside of that swanky hotel, never in her wildest dreams

had she pictured herself dining there.

Mr. Rickardson shouted at the waiters, but they didn't seem bothered. He didn't shout so much, Jill noticed, as he had when she first met him. Perhaps he felt happier. Perhaps he had found in this little girl from another world a sympathy he had never found in the whole of his lonely life. Hitherto, he had rather resented doing things for women, spending money upon them. He had come to regard them as a lot of parasites.

But he found he didn't mind spending money on Jill. He wanted to spend more and more money on her. He wanted to be her self-appointed guide in this new fairy world of wealth she had stepped into.

"We'll go out again to-morrow, my dear," he said as he patted her hand affectionately. "We'll have a great time."

Jill slept badly. She was still worried about Jacqueline. If only Jacqueline would understand it hadn't been her fault! If only she would appreciate that Jill had done everything she could. But there was the evidence of the flowers. She felt that she herself might have misunderstood.

Howard Aitkin telephoned her the next morning.

"I thought nicely brought-up little girls wrote a note of thanks to gentlemen when they sent them flowers!" he reproved her.

"Maybe," she said shortly. "But I'm not a nicely brought-up little girl. Any bringing up I did myself."

"Good for you," he said, "and to be quite candid, I think you've made a darn good job of it."

"You needn't say the obvious," she retorted coldly.

"Not even if the obvious happens to be true?"

She had no answer to that. She merely said stiffly:

"Thank you for the flowers."

"Did you like them? Are they in your bedroom?" he demanded audaciously.

"They are in the drawing-room," she said. "But if you say anything further they will soon be in the kitchen sink!"

He laughed. "You're a bit difficult this morning. What's the matter? Had a bad night?"

She had had, but she wasn't going to tell him so.

"What have you been doing?"

"Mr. Rickardson is here. I've been taking him around town."

"No wonder you're in such a bad temper!"

"It has nothing to do with him. I like him."

"No!" he ejaculated. "Well, I didn't dislike the old boy myself, not even when he refused Jacqueline an allowance if we married."

Jill felt she should say "good-by" and replace the receiver. But, curiously, she didn't want to say good-by or to replace the receiver. She wanted to go on talking to him, even though it meant fighting with him. Was it merely because to fight with him stimulated her? She could feel her heart beating more rapidly, her pulses throbbing unevenly.

"When are you going to see me?" he demanded.

"I'm not going to see you."

"Of course you're going to see me," he said shortly. "And quite soon. When?"

"I've told you I'm not."

"Is it because of Jacqueline that you're not going to see me?"

She said "Yes," before she realized what she was saying.

"I'm glad to know that." She

heard him give a faint chuckle. "Then most certainly you are going to see me."

She said angrily: "Good-by, Mr. Aitkin."

"Listen very carefully," he said. "This is my number—Park 0007. When you want to see me, you'll phone me. Do you understand? I'll be waiting."

She heard him replace the receiver.

She was furious with him. She determined that nothing would induce her to call him up. But she felt a little wistful as she walked away from the telephone. For she knew in her heart that had it not been for Jacqueline she would have called him.

That morning Mr. Rickardson insisted upon taking her to the London branch of his New York bank and making arrangements that an allowance should be paid to her monthly. It was a far more generous allowance than she had ever dreamed of.

"But you shouldn't," she protested breathlessly. "You can't give me all that money for—for doing nothing. I—I wouldn't feel I had any right to it!"

He laughed, a hearty laugh that almost shook the entire bank building. When he recovered, he said: "Imagine a woman telling a man he is giving her too much money. My experience of 'em is, they're always telling you you're not giving them enough!"

They left the bank and stepped out together into the sunshine—the huge fat man with the very red face, the small, beady eyes, and the slim, lovely young girl with the bright-red hair. People looked at them because both, in a way, were striking to look at.

"Gosh!" Arthur Rickardson exclaimed as he stood in the middle of Trafalgar Square, fanning himself with his large-brimmed hat. "I don't think London is such a bad place after all!"

That night he didn't feel so well.

"Must have been overdoing a bit," he grumbled. "Maybe those darned old doctors aren't such fools as they seem. Think I'll take it quiet to-night, my dear. Have something to eat in bed, then I'll feel fine again for the morning."

Jill agreed that that course might be wisest. She went down into the kitchen herself and ordered his supper. Then she fell to wondering what she should do with herself. Oh, if only Jacqueline hadn't behaved as she had! If only she could have gone and seen her. Maybe if she did, everything would be all right.

Her breath came quicker at the thought. Why not go see Jacqueline, take the bull by the horns, as it were? Jacqueline could snub her if she chose, but Jill had taken more than one snub in her life.

She had promised Mr. Rickardson not to give Jacqueline any money, but suddenly an idea came to her that made her laugh out loud. Not money—food! She would raid the pantry, take all the choicest food she could find.

Hastily, she packed as much as she could into a suitcase. Treadlightly was upstairs. His wife, having no dinner to cook, had retired to her room.

She took a taxi. She figured she would arrive around seven, just in time to stop Jacqueline getting a meal. Oh, surely Jacqueline wouldn't still be angry!

Looking up, she saw the light in the room. She struggled up the stairs with the heavy case. She



Jill's slight body slumped heavily against the doorway. "Oh, Johnny!" she whispered. She put a shaking hand over her eyes. "You haven't any faith in me?"

knocked on the door and waited for the invitation to come in.

But there was no invitation. Instead the door was flung open and

Johnny stood there. Johnny in his shirt sleeves, obviously in the act of beginning to cook supper.

"Why, Johnny!" she cried, her



small face breaking into a smile, her hazel eyes shining brightly. "Oh, Johnny!"

But there was no answering smile on his good-looking face. He stood looking her up and down with angry condemnation in his eyes.

"What have you come back for?" he demanded harshly at last.

She fell back a step.

"But, Johnny, why shouldn't I come back? I—I've come to see Jacqueline. I've brought all sorts of things for supper. Oh, marvelous

food I took out of the larder while old Treadlightly was upstairs."

A small laugh came from the opposite side of the room.

"I've heard of conscience money," Jacqueline's voice said coldly, "but I've never heard of conscience food before. That's a new one on me!"

Jill was too taken aback to do anything but stammer:

"I don't understand. What do you mean, conscience food?"

Jacqueline had appeared now. She stood tall and straight beside Johnny in the doorway.

"You can take your old food back," she said. "We don't want it, do we, Johnny? I like your nerve!" Her small face whitened furiously. "Cheating me of my allowance, cheating me of my rightful place in my mother's house, and coming along here with food, imagining I would accept it gratefully and forgive and forget. Well, I'm not forgiving and it will take me a pretty long while to forget. I don't want your paltry offerings to right yourself with your conscience."

"But it wasn't that! It wasn't that at all," Jill cried, hoarsely. "Jacqueline, don't be such a fool. Try to understand. I don't want your allowance. But Mr. Rickardson insisted upon giving it to me. What can I do?"

"You needn't have lied about me in the first place," Jacqueline returned curtly. "Oh, I know you lied. You must have, to put him in the state he was in. Well, you're welcome to all I've had, all the clothes, all the luxuries. But don't come around here trying to make up with us!"

"Us!" Jill gasped. She looked from her sister to Johnny. "Us!" she repeated. Suddenly her eyes were agonized. She was trembling

all over. "Johnny," she whispered, "you don't think——"

"I don't know what to think," Johnny put in bitterly. "Things look pretty black against you, Jill."

"But, Johnny, you must understand," she pleaded again. "You know me. You know I couldn't do the things Jacqueline has been accusing me of."

She waited breathlessly. Her eyes were upon him, pleading with him. He would know she hadn't lied. He would know she wasn't capable of deceit. He had known her for years. He knew all her plans. He knew all the secret hopes and dreams in her heart. He loved her. Hadn't he told her so often?

She waited. So much hung in the balance. She felt sick with fear and an awful dread.

"Johnny, you don't think——" she began again when the pause had become unbearable.

"I don't know what to think," he repeated. "At least, I don't know what to think about Jacqueline and the allowance. But I do know you've been playing around with that Aitkin fellow, the one that let Jacqueline down. She told me he'd sent you flowers. She saw them. And he'd written a lot of nonsense about your being a princess. If that doesn't mean you've been playing around with him, what else does it mean?"

Jill's slight body slumped heavily against the doorway.

"Oh, Johnny!" she whispered. She put a shaking hand over her eyes. "You haven't any faith in me?"

Something in her voice tore at his heart. He didn't want not to believe her. He wanted to believe in her more than anything in the world.

He took a step toward her, when Jacqueline intervened.

"Don't be a fool, Johnny," she said through tightly set teeth. "She'll deceive you just as she's deceived me. She'll lie to you, say anything that comes into her head to get her own way. I tell you, she admitted liking Howard. She wouldn't promise me not to go out with him either. Of course, if that's the sort of girl you want, you're welcome to her!"

Jill didn't wait to hear any more. She left both of them and ran down the stairs. She ran blindly as though something horrible and terrifying were pursuing her. Lost dreams were pursuing her, broken faith, a love that had failed at the very first test. She felt she only wanted to get away, to get away from Jacqueline's white, scornful face and Johnny's miserable indecision. She ran down the five flights of stairs as fast as she could, afraid of pursuit, and yet as she reached the front door, she stopped.

She stood poised, hesitant, hoping against hope to hear a man's footsteps following her. But no footsteps followed her! And, after a few minutes, she went out.

She must have been mad, quite mad! Afterward, she never knew what prompted her to do it. But she walked straight to the corner and went into the nearest phone booth. She searched in the telephone directory with fumbling fingers, saw through a haze of tears the name "Howard Aitkin."

When she heard his voice at first, casual and faintly impatient, saying: "Hello, who is it? Please speak louder," it cost her an awful effort to say, ungrammatically:

"It is me, Jill."

His reply came low and soft and not at all surprised: "Jill—Jill Wilson. Well!"

"You needn't be superior about it," she said sharply. Though he hadn't been superior and she hoped he hadn't noticed the tears in her voice.

"Oh, I'm not superior," he said. "I'm grateful."

"You're not grateful," she retorted. "You're crowing over me in a mean, superior way. You're saying: 'I told you so.' At least, 'I told her she'd call me.' Well, I've called you, so there!"

"What is all this about, Jill?" His voice sounded grave and concerned.

Her anger had subsided somewhat. It was stupid to have phoned him, and then been furious with him because she had!

"I don't know," she said weakly. "I—I was just feeling a bit blue. It was silly to have called you. Good-bye."

"Hey, don't go, Jill!" His voice was sharp, insistent. "You mustn't go yet. I've a feeling you need me and I'm not being vain or conceited or anything foolish. I'm not even being a man. I'm just being a decent sort of human being who is trying to understand. Let's forget we're man and girl. Let's just be two human beings. You're upset about something and I'd like to talk to you. Can I come to the apartment, or will you come to mine?"

She didn't want him to come to the apartment, because of Mr. Rickardson. He might hear about it and it might send his blood pressure up again.

She heard herself say, to her own amazement: "I'll come to your apartment." And before she could contradict herself, he had hung up.

All the way in the taxi, Jill kept asking herself what on earth had made her do it.

"I won't go in when I get there," she told herself. "The whole thing

is absurd and I've never been to a man's apartment before."

Still girls did that nowadays, quite nice girls, and no one thought any the less of them for it. They dropped in on their men friends for a drink and a cigarette and that was that. She'd read about it; she'd seen it in the movies. All the same, it is a very different thing seeing and reading about it, and doing it yourself!

But when the taxi finally drew up before the apartment house, it seemed foolish to have nerves about going in. Besides, what a little idiot he would think her if she didn't turn up! And it would be nice to talk to him, or have him talk to her. It would be nice to sit in an armchair and have some one to keep one from thinking, from thinking of a young man's unhappy face, from hearing a young man's voice say: "I don't know what to think. Things look pretty black against you, Jill." It would be nice to escape just for a brief while from the knowledge that the man she loved had failed her. He might apologize, she might forgive him, but she knew in her heart that something was gone which she could never recapture.

Howard was in full evening dress. She stood in the doorway and said: "You were going out? Why didn't you tell me?"

"I needn't go out for over an hour," he said and smiled. "I'm not expected until eleven. Come in."

He held out his hand to her. She didn't take his hand, but she followed him into the apartment. It was a nice apartment, pleasant and restful, essentially a man's apartment. There were deep armchairs with low tables beside them. There were plain, beige curtains and a thick beige carpet. There was a cocktail cabinet at one side of the

room with a glittering array of glasses and bottles. There was a square-shaped couch and odd-shaped bookshelves. There was a case of silver trophies, which she guessed he had won racing cars or yachts or playing polo.

His brown eyes twinkled as he saw her looking around.

"The modern *Bluebeard's* den. Aren't you afraid to step inside? You know what worldly-wise men like myself do with innocent little ladies like you?"

He was making fun of her but she didn't mind. She laughed and felt grateful that she could laugh.

"Do I look as innocent as all that?" she asked.

"You don't look in the least innocent," he told her. "No girl with your shade of hair ever does look innocent." He warned to the subject as he poured her a glass of sherry.

"Blondes look innocent and know everything there is to be known. Black-haired girls look like vamps and usually sit up all night nursing their sisters' sick babies when they have croup. Red-haired girls——" He paused and in the pause she looked expectantly toward him.

"Yes?"

He smiled. "They are a bit of an enigma. They may know nothing and they may know as much as the mummies in the Egyptian tombs." He broke off as he handed her the sherry.

"I'm giving you sherry. Cocktails are too blatant. Besides, sherry is the best appetizer. I don't believe you've dined."

She shook her head. "I haven't. How did you know?"

He smiled. "One doesn't think of food when one is living intensely." He nodded his head wisely and

added: "You look as though you'd been living pretty intensely for the past hour or so. What's happened? Has the great ogre of a stepfather thrown *Cinderella* out of the fairy palace?"

She shook her head. "Oh, no! I told you I liked him. We're great friends."

"Then what——" His eyes narrowed slightly. "Jacqueline?"

Her small face whitened, then colored. She nodded.

"Yes."

"Not so pleased with the changed circumstances, eh? Wants to come back home again?" He added quickly: "Don't think I'm merely curious. I'm interested in her and in you." He might have added, "especially in you," but he thought it wiser not to.

"She wants to come back, but Mr. Rickardson won't let her," she told him bluntly.

He grimaced. "That must be a bitter pill for her! I didn't imagine she'd enjoy earning her own living."

"She shouldn't have said she would then," Jill protested. "If she hadn't, none of this muddle would ever have started."

He asked: "Why, is it such a muddle for you, Jill? I had hoped it wasn't."

She didn't reply at once. Instead, she walked away from him and sat down on the arm of a chair. She didn't know quite how to answer him. She had enjoyed these past few days. She had loved going out with Mr. Rickardson, feeling free from work, feeling she had money to spend, feeling she could go out and buy lovely clothes. But—— There was Johnny's face to-night, his words to her, the feeling that she had lost something, something beautiful she could never find again.

"What happened to-night?" he prompted gently. "Or don't you want to tell me?"

"I—I suppose it was rather stupid," she said and told him how she had packed a suitcase with food and taken it to Jacqueline's place.

He came toward her when she finished. He was smiling, but it wasn't a smile that could possibly hurt any one.

"I think it was charming," he said. "And instead of your lovely, impromptu feast, like a midnight supper at boarding school, what happened?"

She said lamely: "They didn't want it or me."

"They?" he caught her up sharply.

She hadn't wanted to tell him about Johnny. Suddenly she felt resentful because he had asked.

"Oh, a young man was there. I—I used to know him."

He didn't question her further, but her tone of voice told him a lot. He thought: "Poor kid!" and wondered if there was any experience more tragic than to play lady bountiful and have your generosity thrown back in your face.

He felt the young man had been more to her than merely a young man she used to know. Her eyes told him so. Her sad, disillusioned hazel eyes. He was conscious of a strong sense of resentment against this young man, whoever he was. He was amazed he should feel it so strongly. For, after all, he had just met this girl.

"Look here," he said, "have another drink and let's talk of something more cheerful. Let's plan what we are going to do in the future. All sorts of gay things are happening now, parties, dances and the like. I can take you to any number of them."

She was up in arms immediately. "But I couldn't possibly go with you!"

"Don't be a little idiot." There was a note of affection in his voice. "Of course you can. If you hadn't in your heart every intention of coming with me, you wouldn't be here. I liked you when we met. You liked me. In nine cases out of ten, that sort of thing is mutual. You think you shouldn't go with me because of Jacqueline. And yet the other night you told me yourself that you exonerated me. At

least, you said you didn't think I should have married her."



Howard felt that Johnny had been more to Jill than merely a young man she used to know. Her eyes told him so. Her sad, disillusioned hazel eyes. He was conscious of a strong sense of resentment against Johnny.

"No, I don't," she agreed slowly. "Well, then"—on an impulse he held out both his hands to her—"let's be playmates, Jill. Do you remember what I said on the phone? Human beings, not a man and a girl?"

"You're sure——" she began uncertainly.

He laughed outright, such a merry laugh that she joined in.

"Of course I'm not sure. You're far too lovely for me to guarantee anything. I only said we'd try it that way and see how it worked out. But honestly"—his lean, attractive face grew serious—"there's a lot of nonsense talked about the difference in sexes. As though, when a man and girl are together, they are ever conscious of it. Let's be friends, playmates. Don't let's observe all the old stupid conventions. If you want to call me up, call me up. Don't think you're making yourself cheap. You can't, if we're merely friends.

"If you want me to take you out, ask me to. I'll tell you if I'm otherwise engaged. I'll even put you off at the last moment just as I would a man friend. Though"—he slanted a grin at her—"I don't think you need worry greatly on that score! Don't you think that's a very sensible way of behaving?"

"Yes, I do," she agreed.

He stood before her, his hands in his pockets.

"Then it's a bargain?"

A sense of recklessness swept over Jill. Jacqueline had been horrid to her. Johnny had failed her when she had needed his trust. Why shouldn't she be friends with Howard Aitkin? Why shouldn't she take the good time he offered her? It wouldn't be more than a good time. She sprang to her feet, the

old Jill reasserting herself, courageous, undaunted.

"Yes, that will be fun," she said. "And now I must leave you to go to your dance."

"I wish you were coming with me," he said. "But other nights, Jill, plenty of other nights."

"Plenty of other nights," she echoed after him quickly.

And that was how she determined it should be as she rode back to the apartment. All fun! She needed fun.

She let herself into the apartment with her key and went straight up to her room. She had got into bed and had picked up her book when there was a soft tap on the door. It opened cautiously and the gigantic form of Mr. Rickardson appeared.

He was wearing a scarlet bath robe that made him look more enormous than ever. He came in on tip-toe, his finger to his lips. He looked like a ponderous elephant doing a circus trick.

Jill started up.

"What is it, Mr. Rickardson?"

"It's your mother," he whispered hoarsely, and sank down onto the bed. "She's come back from Paris. She arrived to-night."

Jill almost sprang out of bed.

"Mother's here!" she gasped. "Here in the apartment?"

"I'll say she is!" he groaned, running a hand through his thick gray hair. "She arrived around eight thirty or nine with more baggage than I've ever seen in my life. She's been having a fit ever since."

"What—what about?" Jill faltered. Was her mother furious because she had come?

"Oh, about everything," he said. "She began by upbraiding me for not having let her know I was coming. How inconvenient it was and

all that. Then she had a fit when she heard about Jacqueline. She couldn't have been more upset had I told her the girl had been put in prison!" he chuckled glumly. "She accused me of cruelty and heartlessness. She said any judge in America would give her a divorce on that score alone. I said, 'Go and get one.'" His lips twisted ironically. "That seemed to take the wind out of her sails a bit."

"But me!" Jill insisted. She couldn't keep back the question. "What did she say about me?"

"Oh, she was curious about you," he told her. "Wanted to know what you were like. Wanted to see you at once. It threw her into another rage when she found you weren't in."

"I'm glad she—she wasn't annoyed about my being here," Jill said quietly.

"No, she wasn't annoyed. She was too curious to be annoyed. And, darn it all"—his voice rose—"she should be curious. Her own daughter, after all these years."

"When am I to see her?" Jill asked. Her throat was dry.

"In the morning," he said. "She's inclined to be hysterical, like Jacqueline, you know. When the scene was over and she'd quieted down she said she'd take a sleeping powder and get some rest."

"Thank heavens!" Jill gasped. It would have been almost too much to see her mother that night after all that had happened.

He winked at her. "I thought you'd feel like that. As a matter of fact, I arranged it. I said you mightn't be back until early in the morning. I made up some fool story about your having gone to a dance."

He heaved another sigh and got his enormous body off the low bed.

"Well, my dear," he said, "I'll be getting back to bed. I thought I'd better creep in and tell you."

The word "creep" was so funny, Jill almost laughed. But he was a dear. Impulsively, she stretched out her hand and touched his arm.

"Thank you so much for coming in."

He took her hand. "I almost wish she hadn't come; we were having a great time together. Bless me, if I wasn't beginning to feel young again. And I was almost on the point of telling every one in my New York office to go to the devil."

"We'll still have fun together," she insisted quickly.

He sighed: "It won't be the same. You don't know her as I do!"

The sunlight had barely touched Jill's red head on the pillow, bur-nishing it to a deep-copper color, when she was instantly awake. She awoke with the sense that something was pending. In the first moment of wakening she couldn't decide whether it was a good thing or a bad thing. Then she remembered that she was to see her mother again after more than ten years.

She was so excited she couldn't stay in bed. She was dressed before eight and there followed an eternity of waiting until finally, when it was near ten o'clock, her mother summoned her to her bedroom.

Jill knocked and her mother's voice said: "Come in, Jill."

It was the same voice, so much the same that suddenly she felt like a little girl again; a little girl with a white, freckled face and short red hair, and she was going in to see her mother, Faith Wilson, who was her father's partner in vaudeville.

But the illusion vanished after she opened the door. But for a mo-

ment it had been so strong that she had half expected to step into some back bedroom in a cheap hotel, a bedroom with a battered chest of drawers, a cheap washstand, a moth-eaten carpet, and stockings and undies hanging out to dry on a line stretched across the room.

Faith Rickardson's bedroom was an entirely different affair. Decorated in pale gold, almost the exact shade of gold as her hair. The palest green curtains, the palest green sheets.

A lovely room! Funny she should notice the room first. Her extreme nervousness kept her attention off the woman who sat up in bed.

"Why, Jill, my dear child, come and kiss me!" Faith cried. She held out her arms. With a half laugh, half sob, Jill ran into them.

For a few moments everything was blurred. But presently, when she had dried her eyes somewhat ashamedly on a corner of the sheet and Faith had dried her eyes, too—quickly because she knew how detrimental tears were to one's complexion—Jill saw that her mother was still beautiful. Yet her beauty was beginning to show signs of wear. Tiny crow's feet were discernible under her eyes; the corners of her lips drooped petulantly as though, despite her wealth and the ease in which she lived, life had proved on the whole a disappointing affair.

Her skin was like parchment, her hair still that pale silver-gold. But, looking at her, Jill had suddenly a horrible feeling that at any moment it might go and leave her suddenly old.

"Just to think of you a grown girl, Jill!" her mother kept saying. "And I remember that morning I went away, you were a thin, scraggy kid. You weren't even pretty."

LS—8B

"I know," Jill nodded. "I—I remember hearing you say that Jacqueline was the pretty one." She laughed as she said it. She laughed louder, because the hurt was still there.

"Jacqueline is pretty but"—the elder woman drew a deep breath—"you're lovely, Jill."

Jill's vivid face flamed. That was a wonderful thing to hear from her mother after she had carried that hurt about with her for years.

"Your father was right," the elder woman went on. "He said you would be like the ugly duckling. And, tell me, do you think I've changed? Do you think I look any older?" Her voice had sharpened, almost as though she defied Jill to say she did look any older.

"You are very beautiful," Jill told her quietly.

Faith sighed and relaxed against the soft white pillows.

"Yes, it is amazing how I've kept my beauty," she mused. "Mr. Raymond, a—er—a friend of mine, was only saying the other day that I looked as young as a girl of twenty. It's all sheer nonsense about women losing their looks as they grow older! If they do, they deserve to lose them. They haven't taken sufficient care."

"But can't one take too much care?" Jill asked and wished a moment later she hadn't said it.

Faith turned and stared at her. "How do you mean, take too much care?"

"Oh, I don't know," the girl stammered. "I just thought that if one thought too much about one's looks ——" She broke off in acute embarrassment, not knowing how to finish her sentence.

But Faith knew what she had meant to say. She cast a sharp, angry glance at the girl.

"You're talking like a very young girl," she said with a brittle laugh. "And a rather stupid one, too. One can't take too much care of one's looks. A woman's looks are her chief, almost her only asset."

Faith made Jill walk about the room, turn this way and that way. She looked at her from every angle. Jill felt like crying: "But there's more to me than mere looks, mother! Don't you want to know about me, the real me inside?" But apparently it was Jill's looks which interested Faith.

"You are really attractive," was her considered comment. "Of course you'll need the rough corners smoothed out. But I shouldn't be surprised if I didn't do something quite brilliant with you. I mean, in the marriage line."

"But, mother," Jill protested, "I don't want to get married. Besides——" She paused abruptly. She had almost said: "Besides, there's Johnny." But was there Johnny? And after last night, did she even want to see him again?

"Nonsense," Faith said. "All girls want to marry. They want to marry well. It's the best career open to them."

"Then you've still faith in marriage?" Jill heard herself ask.

Faith opened her large blue eyes and stared at her daughter.

"Of course I have," she said sharply. "I'll admit my marriage to your father wasn't very successful. He had no money. But Chris did very well with his musical shows. And, as you know, Arthur is extremely wealthy. I have everything I want. What other career could have given me so much so easily?"

"I didn't mean the money side of marriage," the girl said slowly. "I meant——" Again she paused.

Faith threw back her head and

again Jill heard that shrill, brittle laugh.

"Oh, I know what you mean, child. Your head is full of romantic notions. But marriage isn't a matter of romance. At least it shouldn't be. It should be a matter of hard logic. We women have so much to gain, everything to lose. If you want to indulge yourself by falling in love, do so, by all means, but don't let it interfere with your eventual marriage."

Jill said nothing. She disagreed entirely with everything her mother had said, but what was the use of arguing?

"We must buy you clothes," Faith went on. "Clothes," she sighed, "are such a job. They take up three quarters of one's life!"

"They've taken up a good deal of mine," Jill commented grimly. She was thinking of the inexpensive gown department at Handle's. She added by way of explanation: "I used to work in a department store."

Faith frowned and nibbled her lower lip. "Ah, that reminds me. Poor Jacqueline! Isn't she working in some dreadful shop now? Arthur told me something about it last night. Of course, the way he treated that poor child is inhuman. Personally, I think he's a little jealous of her. Jealous of her claim on my affections, I mean. That to me is the only explanation. Imagine turning the poor child out of the house!"

"But Jacqueline said she wanted to work for her living," Jill protested.

"I know, I know," her mother said impatiently. "That's typical of her. She's always rushing off in a tantrum, doing some mad thing and feeling sorry about it immediately afterward. The only thing she

ever stuck to in her life was her engagement to Howard." She sighed again. "And that didn't get her anywhere in the end."

"Mother"—Jill came toward the bed slowly—"did you like Howard Aitkin?"

"Like him?" A slight frown appeared on her smooth brow. "Well, he was charming and I thought he'd make a most spectacular son-in-law. Every one in New York was mad about him. He's always in the newspapers and gets just the right kind of publicity. I really think Arthur might have afforded him as a son-in-law. But apparently he didn't want to. I was sorry for Jacqueline. She had set her heart on the man and behaved, after it had been broken off, in a most unreasonable way. Perhaps it won't hurt her so much if she has to earn her living for a while. And now"—she smiled at Jill in a friendly way as though she had put all thought of Jacqueline for the moment out of her mind—"I'll get dressed and we'll go shopping."

"But I was going to show Mr. Rickardson around the Temple this morning," Jill cried.

"Nonsense!" Faith said shortly. "Arthur hasn't any interest in such things. He's interested in nothing but business."

"I think you're wrong," Jill said quietly. "I took him out yesterday and he was very interested in everything I showed him."

Faith was staring at her. A slow color had mounted to her cheeks.

"You have the impudence to contradict me about my own husband?" she said. "Don't be a fool, child. Get along now and be ready to accompany me shopping in an hour's time."

There was a pause. A sense of antagonism had crept into the atmosphere. Jill knew it was madness to defy her mother on this, their very first, meeting. But she had promised Mr. Rickardson and there was something about him that made her feel she'd hate to break a promise to him.

"I'm sorry, mother," she said. "I'd love to come with you shopping any other time. But I have promised to go out with Mr. Rickardson this morning."

"You can get out of it," her mother said sharply.

"I don't want to," Jill replied firmly.

There was another pause. Faith's dark-blue eyes narrowed. What was all this? She couldn't believe that Jill actually wanted to go out with that old bore she had married. Herself, she never wanted to be out with him more than five minutes. Was the girl playing some subtle game? She was her own daughter, but what did she know about her?

"You will come with me, Jill," she rapped out shortly.

"I'm sorry," Jill retorted, "but when I make a promise, I try to keep it, mother." She turned and walked out of the room, shutting the door behind her.

TO BE CONTINUED.





Cinderella— 1937 Edition

By Peggy Gaddis

SALLY sat demurely at her desk and her fingers sped busily over the typewriter keys. But her attention was centered on the office door through which, in a little while now, Gary would come swinging, his eyes searching her out. His very look a caress that would bring the hot color stinging into her cheeks and a look of such joy in her eyes

that Gary had told her it was all he could do to keep from scooping her up into his arms and kissing her there before the entire office force.

And what a sensation that would have created! Because Gary was the only son and heir of old "Fire-eater" Cole, who owned the vast works of the Cole Manufacturing Plant and several million dollars

worth of real estate besides. And Sally was merely a stenographer in the offices of the huge plant. An orphan, earning her own living since she was sixteen and had "graduated" from the orphanage, Sally was scarcely the girl the old man would have chosen as his daughter-in-law. Not by a darned sight! But it happened that Gary was the sort of man who chose his own wife and the heck with anybody who disagreed with his choice!

The night before in the dimly lighted vestibule of her rooming house, Gary had taken her into his arms and held her close against him and his mouth had sought her own in a kiss as different from the light, gay kisses he had occasionally snatched from her as a warm, velvety, rose-fragrant June day is different from a cool autumn night. And Gary had said, his lips against her ear:

"Darling, you're so little and so sweet and so valiant. I'm crazy about you, darling! What are you going to do about it?"

And Sally, her voice shaken, her eyes wide and soft and starry as she clung to him and gave him back his kisses, whispered, "What can I do, darling?"

"Well, you can marry me," answered Gary promptly. "It's being done, you know, all the time. People who are in love with each other. You do love me, don't you, sweet?" His voice was a plea and a shout of triumph and a lover's declaration of faith in his beloved, all rolled into one sound that was like the chiming of golden bells deep in Sally's ecstatic young heart.

"I adore you," she told him with a beautiful simplicity and crept a little closer in his arms. A long time afterward she said, shaken, "Oh, but, darling, your father?"

"What about him?"

"He'll have seventeen different kinds of fits!" Sally pointed out, appalled at the bare idea.

"Afraid he'll have to, then. On account of I'm marrying you regardless of anybody or anything except you and me!" said Gary firmly and to prove he meant it, he kissed her again. "Don't you worry your little head, lamb! From now on I'm doing the worrying for this family!" he added tenderly.

When at last he tore himself reluctantly away, he assured her that he was going to break the news to his father the following day and that evening they would set the date. Small wonder, then, that as Sally sat demurely behind her desk, her notebook open before her, her fingers flying over the keys of the typewriter, she was turning out copy that looked something like this: "amskfog or bu ns jdjf g9m\$."

Gary came at last. His eyes searching for her, finding her, caressing her. It seemed to her that everybody in the office must know their secret. Must hear the loud beating of her heart. Gary hesitated a moment at her desk, smiling down at her and there was a particularly caressing quality in his voice as he said briskly, "Good morning!" and then under his breath, "Sweetheart."

She could not answer him. She could only look at him, her heart in her eyes and after a moment Gary went on into his father's office and the door closed behind him. Sally trembled a little for him. For like practically the entire force of his employees, Sally was desperately afraid of the old man. He had a truculent temper over which he maintained practically no control at all. He had been known to send three stenographers weeping to the rest room in a morning's dictation and

his tongue was one that he used as a whiplash. She knew that he would all but howl with rage at the thought of his son wanting to marry a stenographer in his office. Not, Sally had to admit honestly with a little wince, even a very good stenographer!

An hour passed. And then suddenly the buzzer on Sally's desk barked at her. So unexpectedly that Sally jumped and gave a gasp as she stared at the thing as though it had been a rattlesnake singing its deadly song. Doris Morgan, at the next desk, looked up and said commiseratingly:

"Poor gal! I'll have your hat and coat ready when you come back."

But Sally couldn't muster up enough courage to answer. The buzzer spoke again and it was as though her employer himself had opened the door and barked at her.

"Better take it on the lam, sister. The longer you make him wait, the tougher the old boy gets," Doris warned her.

Scarlet, Sally caught up a notebook and some pencils, drew a long breath, braced herself and disappeared into the private office. Her employer sat behind his desk. A big man, ruddy-faced, heavy. Obviously a man who was fond of the good things of life and did not stint himself at the table. He was glaring at her, his eyes cold and shrewd and angry, between the folds of his ruddy cheeks and bushy black eyebrows.

"Good morning, Miss—Evans, is it?" he barked at her and waved toward a chair. "Sit down. You and I are going to have a little chat."

Sally was grateful for the chair, for her knees were shaking so that it would have been difficult for her to stand. She tried to look composed though her agitation shook red flags

of color into her cheeks and her eyes were frightened.

He leaned toward her and the morning sunlight glinted on the fat diamond in his neck. He was of the type that loves jewels and wears them, defiant of public opinion or such small things as good taste. Sometimes it surprised Sally that he could have been Gary's father.

"Miss Evans," he began sternly, "we needn't beat about the bush. What do you want? Don't set your figure too high and I'll write you a check."

Sally stared at him, wide-eyed.

"I don't understand, Mr. Cole," she gasped, and so nearly called him "Fire-eater" that she was cold with horror.

He made an impatient gesture with a pudgy hand whose nails were glossily manicured.

"What's it worth to you, in dollars and cents, to let my son alone?" he barked. "Is that clear enough?"

A cold rage slid over Sally, stiffening her shaking knees, cooling the hot color in her cheeks.

"A great deal more than you've got, Mr. Cole," she told him evenly. "I love Gary and he loves me. And against that, you haven't enough money to offer one single argument that would even faintly touch me."

The older man looked at her grimly, his lip curling with disgust.

"Gary hasn't a dime in the world except what I give him," he stated coldly. "And I don't mind telling you that if Gary marries you, neither of you will ever see one cent of my money."

Sally laughed at him. Clearly. Frankly, her eyes openly derisive for now, suddenly, she wasn't afraid of him any more.

"Are you trying to scare me? I'm not afraid of being poor! Why should I be? I've never been any-



"Gary hasn't a dime in the world except what I give him," Mr. Cole stated grimly. "And I don't mind telling you that if Gary marries you, neither of you will ever see one cent of my money."

thing else in my life, yet I've managed to have a lot of fun," she pointed out coolly.

"Sure, you've been poor, but what about Gary? He's been rich ever since he was born. He's had every-

thing in the world he wanted. Being poor will kind of go against the grain, don't you think?"

Sally said defiantly, "We're in love, Mr. Cole, and we're not afraid."

"You're not, maybe. Oh, I don't suppose Gary, the young fool, would be, either, now, to talk about it. But living in a dingy furnished room, living off the small salary that his wife could earn—that's what Gary will have to do, you know, for he couldn't earn a dime to save his life! He's never been trained to work."

There was frank satisfaction in the man's voice and Sally went a little cold. He was right, of course. Gary would hate being poor. Gary knew nothing about poverty. He would miss his smart roadster, his beautifully tailored clothes, his generous allowance, all the luxurious things to which he had been accustomed all his life. And she knew it was equally true that there was very slim chance that Gary would be able to earn a living for himself, let alone for the two of them. To get through life, with Gary fighting helplessly and hopelessly for them both, against the world of labor where there was work only for the skilled—— It made her a little sick to think of it. Her employer, watching her expression, chuckled in triumphant satisfaction.

Sally looked straight at him.

"You're pretty proud of the way you've brought Gary up, aren't you, Mr. Cole?" she asked evenly.

"Sure! He's had the best of everything. College. Trips abroad. He's had all the things I never had, and he's missed all the tough spots I went through to get where I am to-day. That's why this crazy marriage with you is out of the question. I tell you, Gary was never trained

to be self-supporting," Fire-eater was saying, when suddenly Sally found herself on her feet, leaning across the desk, her indignant young face with its accusing blue eyes very close to his.

"Then you ought to be ashamed of yourself!" she accused him hotly. "You owe Gary a profound apology! You've done him the greatest injustice a man can do his son. Instead of boasting about what you've done to Gary, you ought to be down on your knees in shame and remorse!"

Gary's father was so completely taken by surprise that he could only stare at her, his mouth opening and shutting as he fought for speech.

"Why, you—you——" he gasped and half arose.

Sally laid forceful hands on his wide shoulders and shoved him back into his chair.

"Sit down!" she snapped sharply. "And mind your blood pressure. Here—take this!"

She had often seen his secretary push a tiny box of tablets unobtrusively toward him when he was in one of his rages, and now she thrust the box toward him and poured a glass of water from the jug on his desk. Too amazed, too utterly dumfounded for speech, he obeyed her. And almost strangled on the tablet when he realized he had obeyed her.

"Young woman, you're fired!" he roared when he had swallowed the tablet.

"Oh, no, I'm not. I've quit," snapped Sally, her eyes blazing. "But before I go, there are a few other things I think I might as well tell you. Maybe I won't get another chance. You've injured Gary almost irreparably by depriving him of the chance to be independent, to earn his own living——"

"I've plenty of money for Gary, as long as he behaves himself. There's no necessity of his being self-supporting——"

"How do you know there isn't? How do you know you'll always be rich? What's to keep you from getting in a jam and losing everything? Other men as good—yes, and some of them a darned sight better than you, have. How did you know Gary might not have to get out and shift for himself?" blazed Sally. "You call yourself a good father, don't you?"

"I certainly do! Why, you——"

"Sit down!" snapped Sally and thrust him back into his chair again. "Well, I think fathers like you ought to be locked up somewhere until their sons are safely trained to look after themselves. You'd have been arrested if you had crippled Gary physically. But you've crippled him in a way that the law can't punish you for, but you ought never to have another peaceful night's sleep until you make amends to him."

A little gust of tears shook her. She fought it down. But with it went the courage of her anger that had made her bold and hurl such terrible truths into the ruddy, astounded face of the old man who was feared and cordially hated by at least ninety per cent of his employees.

For a stunned moment she stood staring down at him while the anger ran out of her like water from a smashed glass. She grew wide-eyed, pallid, and terror laid its hand upon her. What had she done? Oh, what had she done? She had insulted and outraged Gary's father. She had ruined forever, any chance that she might once have had to be Gary's wife. His father would never forgive her now. Gary would hate her,

too, when he heard what she had done.

She turned suddenly and ran across the room. As she fumbled with the knob, Fire-eater called out to her savagely.

"Here, you—come back here!"

But Sally had the door open and was gone. Straight across the outer office and to the locker room where she snatched up her coat and hat. Struggling into them, she fairly ran down the corridor and into an elevator. She was fighting so to down her tears that she was not conscious of any one about her. She hurried home and in her own room she flung herself down across the bed and wept tumultuously. She had lost her head and it had cost her heart. For of course, Fire-eater would tell Gary what she had said; and Gary would be angry with her. He would find it hard to forgive her. Oh, what could she have been thinking of?

The landlady knocked on her door a little later and announced that there was a gentleman downstairs to see her. She clambered off the bed, dashed cold water into her face, powdered her nose and brushed her hair. She couldn't remove the traces of her tears but the parlor was dimly lighted and anyway, nothing seemed to matter a whole lot any more.

As she opened the door and entered the room, Gary came swiftly to her and caught her in his arms. He kissed her swollen eyes before he said, a hint of laughter in his voice, "Darling, what on earth did you say to dad?"

"Oh, Gary," she sobbed wildly, hiding her face against his shoulder, her voice muffled, "I don't know what got into me. I—I must have lost my head. I know you must hate me. Can you forgive me?"

"If he doesn't, I'll give him a larruping myself," said another voice, and Sally gasped and whirled about, to face old Fire-eater himself, standing in the doorway, regarding her with a look she had never seen in his face before.

"Oh," she whispered, stricken, and tried to shrink out of sight. "I'm—I'm—sorry, Mr. Cole——"

"If you apologize, young woman, I'll spank you, too, while I'm giving Gary his going-over," snapped Fire-eater, and his shrewd eyes were suddenly very kind, very warm, almost a little affectionate. "I don't know when anything has given me the kick that your explosion did. It seemed to—well, to sort of blow the dust off a lot of things in my mind and let in the sunlight. Because, my dear, I realize you were entirely right."

"Wh-h-at?" gasped Sally, quite sure that she had suddenly gone mad.

"You are the only person who has had the courage to tell me the truth, my dear," said Fire-eater in that gentle voice that sounded a little rusty as though he never used it

very much. "It wasn't a very palatable dose, but an old doctor I used to know once said that it's the bitter pills and the unpleasant doses that do you the most good. Maybe he was right. Anyway, you were, about the injustice I've done Gary. So I hope that you will marry Gary, with my hearty approval and my blessing, for whatever it's worth. And then maybe, between us, we can make amends to Gary for what I've done to him."

"You're both talking in riddles," protested Gary, who was obviously considerably in the dark about what had happened in the office. "The only thing that makes sense is that part about your marrying me. Will you, darling?"

"May I, really?" Sally asked old Fire-eater, who didn't look at all like his nickname now, somehow.

"Please do, my dear," said old Fire-eater in that strangely gentle voice and bent forward to touch his lips to her cheek. And then he went out and left them alone, in the heavenly perfection of their love from which every shadow had now lifted.



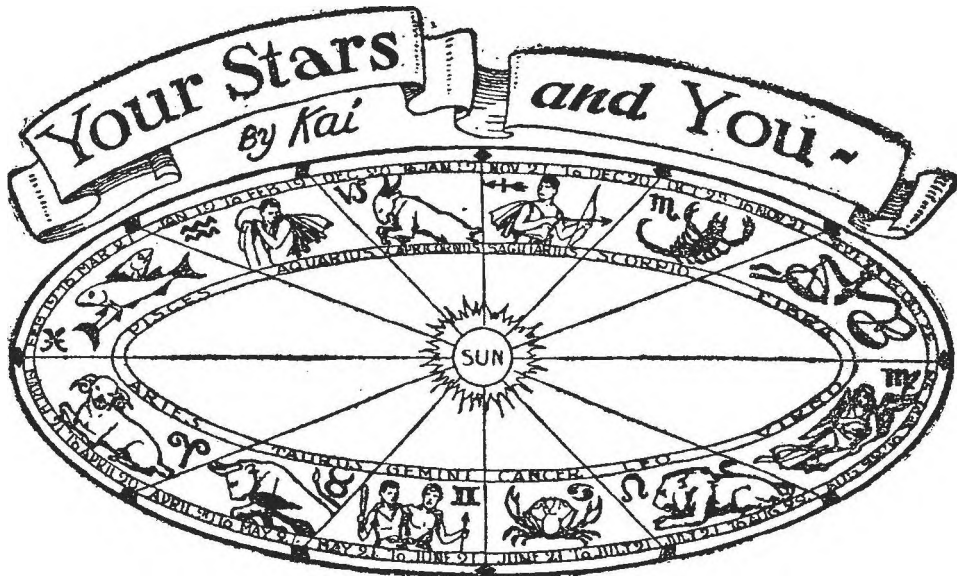
PROMISE

WEAVE a magic spell about me;
Weave a spell of sheer delight.
Tell me you will never flout me—
And we shall never rue this night.

Take me in your arms and hold me;
Take me gently to your breast.
Tell me you will never scold me—
And we shall count this moment blest.

Promise you will never leave me;
Sacred pledge you'll not forget.
Tell me you will not deceive me—
And we shall never know regret.

JOSEPH RODMAN MANCH.



YOUR WEEK

The major influences during the week are not many. There will be a tendency to extravagance in money matters, and in matters involving property you may be inclined to ignore its real value. It will be well, therefore, to postpone unnecessary business transactions not of a routine nature, until your judgment in such matters will be better. It is not a good week to transact unnecessary business with near relatives. You should avoid unnecessary traveling. Social life is apt to prove disappointing this week; it is apt to cause unexpected expense; you may meet the wrong kind of people, to your annoyance. In employment matters, your judgment may not be as good as usual, so be careful of your speech and actions and attend strictly to business. Some employment benefits may come through the voluntary actions of employers. In love affairs, you should avoid activities that might lead to embarrassing situations, especially toward the latter part of the week. Avoid placing yourself in a position where your freedom of action is restricted by others who are not concerned with your welfare. Avoid ill-considered, hasty marriages; if married, guard against sudden flare-ups that might result in separation. It will be just as well for married couples not to unnecessarily discuss domestic finances during the week. By being conservative in financial matters during the week, they may remove a possible source of misunderstanding and disagreement.

DAY BY DAY

Hours mentioned are Eastern standard time. If not using that time, make correction to the time you are using.

Saturday, July 31st

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During the early-morning hours, the unexpected may happen in money matters, probably with mixed results. Love, marriage, and employment benefits may be received. Avoid unconventionality. Between 11:00 a. m. and noon, mark time in money matters. Watch your speech carefully. Between noon and 1:00 p. m., business and financial benefits may be received. The later afternoon hours will be quiet. Between 9:00 p. m. and 10:00 p. m., financial benefits may be received. Near relatives will do you favors. Between 10:00 p. m. and midnight, mark time in love affairs and avoid courtship. Avoid extravagance in money matters.

Sunday, August 1st

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During the early-morning hours, mark time in employment matters. Be careful of your speech. Avoid misunderstandings with near relatives. Financial benefits may be received. The later-morning hours will be quiet. Between noon and 2:00 p. m., near relatives may do you favors. Avoid extravagance in money matters. Curtail social activities. Between 5:30 p. m. and 7:00 p. m., mark time in love and court-

ship. Avoid misunderstandings with near relatives. Between 7:30 p. m. and 9:00 p. m., love and marriage interests can be advanced. Near relatives will do you favors. Between 9:00 p. m. and 11:00 p. m., business and financial benefits may be received.

Monday, August 2nd

♂

During the early-morning hours, unexpected financial benefits may be received. Mark time in employment matters. Avoid unnecessary business dealings with near relatives. Do not write love letters; do not make social plans. The later-morning hours, the afternoon hours and the early-evening hours will be quiet. Between 10:00 p. m. and midnight, avoid extravagance. Do not travel unnecessarily. Mark time in love and marriage matters. If possible, end the day's activities before midnight—better by 9:30 p. m., if that can be done.

Tuesday, August 3rd

♂

During the early-morning hours, you may be put to unexpected financial expense. Avoid misunderstandings with near relatives. Do not plan social activities. Mark time in love and courtship. The later-morning hours will be quiet. Between 1:00 p. m. and 2:15 p. m., employment benefits may be received. Between 2:15 p. m. and 3:30 p. m., mark time in home affairs. Watch your speech carefully. Avoid misunderstandings. Curtail social activities. Mark time in love and courtship. Avoid extravagance. Between 4:00 p. m. and 5:00 p. m., near relatives may do you favors. Home benefits will be received. Between 9:00 p. m. and midnight, your judgment may be poor in employment matters and business transactions. Some employment benefits may be received, if you do not miss your opportunity by ill-advised speech or actions. Your love interests may be advanced through some peculiar incident, seemingly trivial in itself but which may later develop into something of importance.

Wednesday, August 4th

♀

During the early-morning hours, unexpected financial benefits may come to you. Some home benefits may be received; avoid misunderstandings in home life, especially over love affairs. Mark time in love and courtship. Between 11:00 a. m. and 12:30 p. m., employment and home benefits may be received. Between 3:00 p. m. and 4:15

p. m., avoid extravagance in money matters. Mark time in home affairs. It is not a good time to transact unnecessary business not of a routine nature. Between 4:15 p. m. and 6:30 p. m., watch your speech carefully. Mark time in employment and home matters. Avoid misunderstandings. The evening hours will be quiet.

Thursday, August 5th

♀

During the early-morning hours, love and marriage interests can be advanced. Home benefits will be received. Between 9:30 a. m. and 11:00 a. m., love interests can be advanced. Financial and home benefits may be received. Between noon and 1:30 p. m., mark time in employment matters. Do not permit social activities or visiting to interfere with employment duties. Between 2:00 p. m. and 3:30 p. m., you may be put to unexpected financial expense. Curtail social activities. Between 4:00 p. m. and 5:30 p. m., love and marriage interests can be advanced. Business benefits may be received. Between 9:00 p. m. and 10:30 p. m., love and employment benefits may be received. It is a good time to catch up on your social correspondence; also to write letters of application for employment.

Friday, August 6th

♀

This is a day to be extra cautious. During the morning hours, mark time in love and courtship. Avoid impulsive actions, as they are very apt to be later regretted. Avoid unconventionality. Curtail social activities. You may be put to unexpected financial expense. Those having the care of children should take extra precautions to watch over them at this time. Railroad men should not forget safety practices or accidents may happen. Those driving automobiles, should drive with the care they would exercise if they expected to meet a fool at every intersection and two on every curve. Between 1:00 p. m. and 3:00 p. m., mark time in home affairs. Curtail social activities. Employment benefits may be received. Between 5:30 p. m. and 7:00 p. m., watch your speech carefully; do not become sarcastic; mark time in love and courtship. The evening hours after 7:00 p. m., are apt to be quiet.

The influences affecting the particular zodiacal group to which you belong are given in the "Born Between—" section of this article, which you should also consult.

IF YOU WERE BORN BETWEEN

March 21st and April 20th

(Aries ♈)

—Aries people born between March 21st and 26th should avoid falls and possible head injuries this week. Mark time in home affairs. Be alert in employment matters. Best days for you this week are Sunday and Thursday. Mark time on Tuesday. If born between March 27th and 31st, avoid falls and possible head injuries. Mark time in home affairs. Be alert in employment matters. Love interests can be advanced. Best days for you this week are Sunday and Thursday. Mark time on Tuesday. If born between April 1st and 5th, love interests can be advanced. Unexpected financial benefits may be received. Best days for you this week are Sunday, Monday, and Friday. Mark time on Wednesday. If born between April 6th and 10th, be alert in employment matters. It is not a good time to transact unnecessary business not of a routine nature. Avoid extravagance in money matters. Best days for you this week are Monday and Friday. Mark time on Wednesday. If born between April 11th and 15th, avoid the transaction of unnecessary business not of a routine nature. Curtail social activities. Best days for you this week are Monday and Friday. If born between April 16th and 20th, mark time in love and courtship. Near relatives will do you favors. Avoid misunderstandings in home life. Best days for you this week are Monday and Tuesday. Mark time on Thursday.

April 20th and May 21st

(Taurus ♉)

—Taurus people born between April 20th and 26th will find this an excellent week in which to advance love and marriage interests. Home benefits will be received. Employment interests can be advanced by alert thinking. Financial benefits may come to you. Best day for you this week is Tuesday. Mark time on Thursday. If born between April 27th and May 1st, love and marriage matters will be under mixed influences; some benefits may be received; some obstacles may be encountered. Business, financial and employment benefits may be received. Best day for you this week is Tuesday. Mark time on Thursday. If born between May 2nd and 6th, the unexpected will happen in money matters, probably to your detriment. Mark time in love and marriage matters. Avoid unconvictionality. Curtail social activities. Best

day for you this week is Wednesday. Mark time on Friday. If born between May 7th and 11th, business, financial and employment benefits may be received. You will find it an excellent week in which to advance love and marriage interests. Best days for you this week are Saturday and Wednesday. Mark time on Friday. If born between May 12th and 16th, business and financial benefits may be received. Love and marriage interests can be advanced. Best days for you this week are Saturday and Wednesday. Mark time on Friday. If born between May 17th and 21st, mark time in love and courtship. Be careful around too energetic lovers. Also be careful around fire, sharp instruments, hot water, and steam, and do not unnecessarily expose yourself to disease. Best day for you this week is Thursday. Be careful on Saturday and Sunday.

May 21st and June 21st

(Gemini ♊)

—Geminians born between May 21st and 26th should mark time in employment matters this week. Be careful of your speech. Avoid misunderstandings with near relatives. Business and home benefits may be received. Best day for you this week is Thursday. If born between May 27th and 31st, mark time in employment matters. Avoid misunderstandings. Love and marriage benefits may be received. Best day for you this week is Thursday. If born between June 1st and 6th, unexpected financial benefits may be received. Love and marriage interests can be advanced. Best days for you this week are Sunday, Monday, and Friday. If born between June 7th and 11th, mark time in employment matters. Business benefits may be received. Best days for you this week are Monday and Friday. If born between June 12th and 16th, business and financial benefits may be received. Near relatives will do you favors. You may profit in connection with a journey. Best days for you this week are Monday and Friday. If born between June 17th and 21st, mark time in love and courtship. Social interests can be advanced. Home benefits may be received. Best day for you this week is Thursday.

June 21st and July 23rd

(Cancer ♋)

—Cancerians born between June 21st and 27th should avoid falls and possible bodily injuries this week. Watch your speech carefully. Avoid misunderstandings in home

life. Employment benefits may come to you through alert thinking. Best days for you this week are Sunday and Thursday. If born between June 28th and July 2nd, avoid falls and possible bodily injuries. Watch your speech carefully. Mark time in home affairs. Employment benefits may be received. Social interests can be advanced. Best days for you this week are Sunday and Thursday. If born between July 3rd and 7th, unexpected financial and home benefits will come to you. Love and marriage interests can be advanced. Best day for you this week is Wednesday. If born between July 8th and 12th, employment benefits may be received. Avoid extravagance in money matters and home life affairs. Curtail social activities as they may prove disappointing. Best day for you this week is Saturday. If born between July 13th and 18th, avoid the transaction of unnecessary business not of a routine nature. Best day for you this week is Saturday. If born between July 19th and 23rd, love and marriage interests can be advanced. Near relatives will do you favors. Home benefits will be received. Best days for you this week are Saturday, Sunday, and Thursday.

July 23rd and August 23rd
(Leo ♌)

—Leo natives born between July 23rd and 28th will find this an excellent week in which to advance love and marriage interests. Business, financial, employment, and home benefits may be received. Best days for you this week are Sunday and Thursday. If born between July 29th and August 2nd, you will find it an excellent week in which to advance love and marriage interests. Business, financial, and employment benefits may be received. Best days for you this week are Sunday and Thursday. If born between August 3rd and 7th, you may be put to unexpected financial expense. Love and marriage matters will be under mixed influences; some benefits may be received; some unexpected annoyances may arise. Best days for you this week are Sunday and Monday. If born between August 8th and 13th, business and employment benefits may be received. Love interests can be advanced. Best days for you this week are Monday and Friday. Mark time on Saturday. If born between

August 19th and 23rd, mark time in love and courtship. Be careful around too energetic suitors. Also be careful around fire, sharp instruments, hot water, steam; do not unnecessarily expose yourself to contagious or other diseases. Near relatives will do you favors. Home benefits may be received. Best days for you this week are Monday and Tuesday. Mark time on Saturday and Sunday.

August 23rd and September 23rd
(Virgo ♍)

—Virgo natives born between August 23rd and 28th will receive home benefits this week. Be alert in employment matters. Best day for you this week is Tuesday. Mark time on Sunday. If born between August 29th and September 2nd, be alert in employment matters. Love and marriage matters will be under mixed influences; some benefits may be received; delay may occur in some of your plans. Best day for you this week is Tuesday. Mark time on Sunday. If born between September 3rd and 7th, unexpected financial and employment benefits will be received. Pleasant surprises will be received in love and marriage matters. Best day for you this week is Wednesday. Mark time on Sunday and Monday. If born between September 8th and 13th, be alert in employment matters. Employment and business benefits may be received. You may profit in connection with real estate. Best days for you this week are Saturday and Wednesday. Mark time on Monday. If born between September 14th and 18th, business, financial, and employment benefits may be received. Love and marriage interests can be advanced. Best days for you this week are Saturday and Wednesday. Mark time on Monday. If born between September 19th and 23rd, love affairs will be under mixed influences; some benefits may be received; and opposition may be encountered. Avoid misunderstandings with near relatives. Do not travel unnecessarily. Employment benefits may be received. More harmony will prevail in home life. Best days for you this week are Saturday, Sunday, and Thursday. Mark time on Monday and Tuesday.

September 23rd and October 23rd
(Libra ♎)

—Librans born between September 23rd and 28th should avoid falls and possible bodily injuries this week. Mark time in love and marriage matters. Employment benefits may come to you as a result of

mental alertness on your part. Best days for you this week are Sunday and Thursday. Mark time on Tuesday. If born between September 29th and October 3rd, avoid falls and possible bodily injuries. Employment benefits may come to you as a result of clear thinking. Love and marriage matters will be under mixed influences; some benefits may be received, but delay may be encountered or obstacles may have to be overcome. Best days for you this week are Sunday and Thursday. Mark time on Tuesday. If born between October 4th and 8th, the unexpected will happen in money matters, probably with mixed results. Love and marriage interests can be advanced in some respects. Avoid unconventionality. Best days for you this week are Sunday, Monday, and Friday. Mark time on Wednesday. If born between October 9th and 13th, employment benefits may be received. Avoid the transaction of unnecessary business not of a routine nature. Curtail social activities. Best days for you this week are Monday and Friday. Mark time on Wednesday. If born between October 14th and 18th, avoid the transaction of unnecessary business not of a routine nature. Be conservative of your money. Avoid extravagance in marital affairs. Best days for you this week are Monday and Friday. Mark time on Wednesday. If born between October 19th and 23rd, you will find it an excellent time to advance love and marriage interests. Avoid misunderstandings in home life. Best days for you this week are Monday and Tuesday. Mark time on Thursday.

October 23rd and November 22nd
(Scorpio ♏)

—Scorpio people born between October 23rd and 28th will receive employment and home benefits this week. Mark time in love and courtship. Best day for you this week is Tuesday. Mark time on Thursday. If born between October 29th and November 2nd, mark time in love and marriage matters. Employment benefits may be received. Best day for you this week is Tuesday. Mark time on Thursday. If born between November 3rd and 7th, mark time in love and marriage matters. Avoid unconventionality. You may be put to unexpected financial expense. Best day for you this week is Wednesday. Mark time on Friday. If born between November 8th and 12th, you will find it an excellent week in which to advance love and marriage interests. Business, financial, and employment benefits may be received. Best day

for you this week is Wednesday. Mark time on Saturday and Friday. If born between November 13th and 17th, business and financial benefits may be received. You may profit in connection with a journey. Love interests can be advanced. Best day for you this week is Wednesday. Mark time on Saturday and Friday. If born between November 18th and 22nd, mark time in love and courtship. Be careful around too energetic lovers. Also be careful around fire, sharp instruments, hot water and steam. Avoid unnecessary exposure to disease. Home benefits may be received. Best day for you this week is Thursday. Mark time on Saturday and Sunday.

November 22nd and December 22nd
(Sagittarius ♐)

—Sagittarians born between November 22nd and 27th will receive business benefits this week. Your judgment will be poor in employment matters. Watch your speech carefully. Home benefits may be received. Best day for you this week is Thursday. Mark time on Sunday. If born between November 28th and December 2nd, your judgment will be poor in business and employment matters. Be careful of your speech. Avoid misunderstandings. Love and marriage interests can be advanced. Best day for you this week is Thursday. Mark time on Sunday. If born between December 3rd and 7th, the unexpected will happen in money matters, probably with mixed results. Love interests will be under mixed influences. Some benefits may be received; avoid impulsive actions and hasty marriages. Best day for you this week is Friday. Mark time on Sunday and Monday. If born between December 8th and 12th, mark time in employment matters. Business benefits may be received. You may benefit in some manner connected with a journey. Social interests can be advanced. Best day for you this week is Friday. Mark time on Monday. If born between December 13th and 17th, business and financial benefits may be received. Social interests can be advanced. Best day for you this week is Friday. Mark time on Monday. If born between December 18th and 22nd, love interests will be under mixed influences. Some benefits may be received; some opposition may be encountered. Do not write love letters. Be alert to take advantage of favorable opportunities. Social interests can be advanced. Home benefits may be received. Mark time on Monday and Tuesday.

December 22nd and January 20th

(Capricorn ♑)

—Capricornians born between December 22nd and 26th should be careful to avoid falls and possible bodily injuries this week. It is not a good time to deal in real estate. Mark time in home affairs. Employment benefits may be received. Mark time on Tuesday. If born between December 27th and 31st, avoid falls and possible bodily injuries. It is not a good time to unnecessarily deal in real estate. Love interests will be under mixed influences. Some benefits may be received, but delay and obstacles may be encountered in some manner. Employment benefits may be received. Mark time on Tuesday. If born between January 1st and 5th, unexpected financial and business benefits will be received. Love and marriage interests can be advanced. Mark time on Wednesday. If born between January 6th and 10th, business, financial, and employment benefits may be received. Love and marriage interests can be advanced. Best day for you this week is Saturday. Mark time on Wednesday. If born between January 11th and 15th, business and financial benefits may be received. Love and marriage interests can be advanced. You may profit in connection with a journey—your own or that of some one else to your advantage. Best day for you this week is Saturday. Mark time on Wednesday. If born between January 16th and 20th, love interests can be advanced. Near relatives will do you favors. Mark time in home affairs. Best days for you this week are Saturday and Sunday. Mark time on Thursday.

January 20th and February 19th

(Aquarius ♒)

—Aquarians born between January 20th and 25th will find this an excellent week in which to advance love and marriage interests. Friends will do you favors. Home benefits may be received. Employment interests may be advanced by alert thinking. Best day for you this week is Sunday. Mark time on Thursday. If born between January 26th and 30th, love and marriage matters will be under mixed influences. Some benefits may be received. Avoid extravagance. Curtail social activities. Employment interests may be advanced by clear thinking. Best day for you this week is Sunday. Mark time on Thursday. If born between January 31st and February 4th, mark time in love and marriage matters. You will be put to unexpected finan-

cial expense. People will ask to borrow money and things from you. Avoid unconventionality. Best days for you this week are Sunday and Monday. Mark time on Friday. If born between February 5th and 9th, be alert in employment matters. Business benefits will come to you. Friends will do you favors. Best day for you this week is Monday. Mark time on Saturday and Friday. If born between February 10th and 14th, business, financial, and social benefits may be received. You may profit in connection with a journey. Best day for you this week is Monday. Mark time on Saturday and Friday. If born between February 15th and 19th, mark time in love and courtship. Near relatives will do you favors. Curtail social activities. Best days for you this week are Monday and Tuesday. Mark time on Saturday and Sunday.

February 19th and March 21st

(Pisces ♓)

—Pisceans born between February 19th and 24th will find this an excellent week in which to advance love and marriage interests. Mark time in employment matters. Be careful of your speech. Avoid misunderstandings. Home benefits will be received. Best day for you this week is Tuesday. Mark time on Sunday. If born between February 25th and March 1st, love and marriage interests can be advanced. Mark time in employment matters. Be careful of your speech. Avoid misunderstandings. Best day for you this week is Tuesday. Mark time on Sunday. If born between March 2nd and 6th, unexpected financial benefits may be received. Love and marriage interests can be advanced. Pleasant surprises may come to you. Best day for you this week is Wednesday. Mark time on Sunday and Monday. If born between March 7th and 11th, mark time in employment matters. Business and financial benefits may be received. Social interests can be advanced. Best day for you this week is Wednesday. Mark time on Monday. If born between March 12th and 16th, business, financial, and environmental benefits may be received. Love and marriage interests can be advanced. You may benefit in connection with a journey. Best days for you this week are Saturday and Wednesday. Mark time on Monday. If born between March 17th and 21st, love interests will be under mixed influences. Some benefits may be received, but opposition may be encountered. Avoid misunderstandings with near relatives. Home

benefits will be received. Best days for you this week are Saturday, Sunday, and Thursday. Mark time on Monday and Tuesday.

Note for "Born Between—" readers: The week referred to begins with Saturday, July 31st, and ends with Friday, August 6th. Compare with information given in "Your Week" and "Day by Day" to see what the general influences are.



MORE ABOUT LEO PEOPLE

If you were born between August 8th and 13th, you are fortunate in having friends who bring opportunities to your attention, usually with beneficial results to yourself. You are sympathetic and generous, usually successful in marriage and happy in home life, with well-trained, courteous, and respectful children. You are cheerful, artistic, intuitive, imaginative, and versatile. You have the ability to adapt yourself to changing conditions. You are inclined to be too tense and should set aside a portion of your time to relax; get by yourself for a few minutes each day, try to stop thinking, and let the tension go out of your muscles. When you sleep, don't carry the day's activities to bed with you but train yourself to completely relax, mentally and physically. You like to be busy at all times and have much determination, which you use to good account in gaining success. Sometimes success is deferred but usually it comes in time. Should you enter the medical profession, you should give special attention to the practice involving children and matters incidental thereto. So far as possible, you should follow work for which you are best fitted, rather than to adhere to a determination to succeed in something for which you may not be entirely fitted. If you can find that you are not working to the best advantage, do not hesitate to remedy the situation by doing something else at which you can meet with greater success. You may travel extensively, possibly in foreign lands, probably in the line of your work. You should avoid overeating.

If you were born between August 14th and 18th, you value your word highly. You are honest, trustworthy, interested in the welfare of others as well as your own, and you may take an active part in furthering the interests of the common weal. Should you become a lawyer, you may at-

tract considerable attention by the fluency of your speech and the clearness of your thought. You may become prominent in politics through unselfish civic service. You have the respect of people generally. You may travel extensively, either in the line of business or in search of pleasure or excitement, or possibly combining the two in some exploratory way. You have good executive ability. You may succeed in governmental work. You are frank and generous. You like to read and to think, and if you can do so in some natural spot, so much the better. You find happiness in serving others, not as their servants, but in making life more worth living for them. Your memory is good, your mind well-trained, you are quick of perception and your intuition is well-developed. You understand human nature quite well and are tactful in dealing with others. You are peace-loving and harmoniously inclined, sympathetic and discreet.

If you were born between August 19th and 23rd, you are adventurous and like to travel. You may visit foreign countries. You are generous, sympathetic, good-naturedly argumentative, patient, modest, and friendly. You have much determination and may meet with material success as a result of it. Should you become a lawyer, you may gain prominence as a result of your able showing in the courtroom. You have good executive ability, which stands you in good stead in any official position which you may occupy. You have the ability to take advantage of opportunities. You may engage in some line of work requiring the use of mathematics; may become a mining engineer, in the development of gold properties or other mineral prospects, or if you are not trained in such field, you may still be connected with its activities in some lesser capacity, working under some one who is. You are socially popular. You may become active in movements for the promotion of the common good in some practical manner, such as the organization of welfare associations, the establishment of playgrounds or centers of recreation, et cetera. Your material actions are tempered by your spiritual outlook on life. You have a practical philosophy, according to which you successfully live. You may become wealthy. Marriage usually brings you happiness, largely because you make a very good marriage partner. Your friends are numerous.

(Leo article to be continued next week.)

bring about marriage and by being mentally alert to them, you can probably contract a satisfactory marriage. There is some prospect of your forming a hasty marriage, which, if you do, will probably result unsatisfactorily. You should, therefore, guard against ill-advised impulses. Most of the influences in your nativity conducive to marriage during the next two years will be good, but don't act hastily or you will probably be doing it under the urge of adverse influences.

rita, born March 30, 1916, 6:00 a. m., South Dakota: If you love writing, as you say, and feel that you will be useless otherwise than as a writer, by all means make a business of it. You wouldn't expect to become a lawyer or a doctor or even a first-class stenographer, without spending considerable time qualifying yourself; and you must not expect to succeed as a writer without at least an equivalent amount of hard work. I think you can commercialize your writing ability, if you will write and keep writing; but you must get over that "blue mood," which you say possesses you after the rejection of a manuscript. Take rejections as a matter of course. There are lots of reasons why a manuscript may be rejected other than on its merits. How long it will take you to succeed, will be largely a matter of how hard you work and how persistently you send out manuscripts. I am inclined to think that you have done a great deal of reading and have unconsciously absorbed a style that is not your own. Quit thinking in terms of the other writer's language. Think for yourself and crystallize a style of your own. You use too many words, for one thing, in my estimation. Print paper costs money and editors like to make every inch of it count. Use simple language—it won't fill up the page so quickly but will tell the story just as well and tell it in a way that readers of meager education can understand. Success to you.

Miss O. P. K., born April 23, 1919, 10:00 a. m., New York: You ask if you should wait two years for the boy you love; but you did not send me his birth data, so I have no way of forming an opinion as to the harmonies and discords between you. You will come under excellent influences conducive to happy marriage about the latter part of January and first part of February, 1938. About March, 1939, you will come under influences that may result in a love disappointment, or if marriage

takes place at that time, it is likely to prove unhappy.

Mrs. D. T., born April 7, 1919, about 8:00 a. m., Oklahoma: Your question is one that it is against the policy of this department to answer. I'm sorry. I suggest that you and your husband consult your family physician, if you have not already done so.

Mrs. P. D., born April 5, 1913, New York: You state that you have a young son whom you adore with all the love that you have in your heart and soul. If that is true, then you should consider what effect your proposed action will have upon him. I think that his welfare should take precedence over your desires. You had your chance at the man you loved but forced out of your life through unwarranted jealousy, and it seems to me rather poor sportsmanship to now abandon your husband, who loves you and has been good to you, merely because this other man, after seven years, has reappeared upon the scene. From what you tell me of his character, I doubt if he will have anything to do with you, even if you do leave your husband. I doubt if you will find happiness anywhere, if you break your child's heart by separating him from his father.

E. M. OF CHICAGO, born January 19, 1915, between 6:00 p. m. and 7:00 p. m., Utah: If my memory of places serves me rightly, you were born in a town that has but one street—and a narrow one at that. About the first half of October, 1937, you will come under influences that should prove beneficial in getting a satisfactory job, if you have not already obtained one by that time.

Mrs. T. R. M., born February 28, 1909, about 9:00 p. m., Pennsylvania: There is some indication that you may take a long journey about the first half of September, 1937.

M. L. S., female, born February 5, 1886, about 7:00 a. m., Wisconsin: You will come under beneficial influences that should assist you in gaining employment at about the following times: Middle of December, 1937; latter part of May and first part of June, 1938.

G. I. M., female, born February 7, 1902, about 3:00 p. m., State of Washington: You will come under beneficial influences

that should assist you in gaining employment, at about the following times: First half of September, last half of October, and first half of November, 1937.

Miss C. R. J., born June 22, 1919, 2:25 p. m., California: You ask me to describe the man you will marry and the approximate date of the marriage. The type of person that one marries frequently depends on the time in life when the marriage takes place, as sometimes several types are attractive and one's views change with passing years. In your case, there is apt to be more than one marriage during the course of your life. The types of men most likely to strongly attract you are: (1) fiery nature, inclined to jealousy, somewhat quarrelsome; (2) lover of ease, pleasure, and beautiful things; (3) headstrong, explosive, unmanageable; (4) mixed types that may have temporary fascination for you. About March, 1939, you are apt to be attracted toward type (1). Should this not result in marriage, about October, 1939, you may become attracted to a home-loving, magnanimous individual, possibly given somewhat to display. You may meet with obstacles to your marriage, or may not be entirely satisfied after marriage, should you marry at that time. If still single, about the latter part of June and first part of July, 1940, you may have opportunity to marry a quiet, reserved, steady individual, not given to emotional display, averse to much social activity—a worthwhile character, in many respects, but who will restrict your activities within channels of his own approval; probably will make you an excellent husband, should you marry such a person, but his good qualities you might overlook under the restraint that marriage to him would bring about. If you get past this last-mentioned time without marrying, other influences affecting marriage will come at about the following times: First half of July, 1942, probably type (2); may be employment obstacles; last part of June and first part of July, 1943, probably obstacles; first half of September, 1944, excellent; last part of March and first part

of April, 1945, excellent; middle part of April, 1945, good; probably type (3); last part of December, 1946 and first part of January, 1947, may be obstacles; August, 1947, excellent.

R. V. P., born August 3, 1917, 4:00 a. m., Michigan: You have recently passed through beneficial influences conducive to a happy marriage. If marriage has not already taken place, or does not come about in the near future, you will again come under influences conducive to marriage at about the following times: Middle of December, 1939, probably obstacles; middle of April, 1942, excellent.

A. M., female, born March 9, 1918, between 11:00 a. m. and 12:30 p. m., Alabama: About the first half of September, 1937, you will come under excellent influences conducive to a happy marriage.

L. C. L., female, born December 23, 1915, 6:00 a. m., Missouri: You will come under influences conducive to marriage at about the following times: Middle of August, last few days of August and first few days of September, 1937, good; last half of April, 1938, excellent; last half of July, 1939, excellent; first half of September, 1939, may be obstacles.

Miss C., born November 29, 1916, between 5:00 p. m. and 5:30 p. m., Missouri: You have recently been under influences conducive to marriage. If these influences have not resulted in marriage, or do not soon do so, you will again come under influences that will affect marriage matters, at about the following times: Middle of May, 1938, probably unsatisfactory; middle of June, 1938, may be obstacles; last half of April, 1939, good; middle of August, 1939, good; last part of December, 1939, and first part of January, 1940, good; first half of May, 1940, probably unsatisfactory; first half of April, 1941, probably unsatisfactory; last half of October, 1941, probably marriage at this time, if not married sooner; last part of June and first part of July, 1942, good.

Editor's Note: Questions are answered only through *Street & Smith's Love Story Magazine*. Each reader is allowed to ask one question. Be sure to give the following data in your letter: date, month, year, and place of birth, the hour of the day or night, if possible, and sex. Address your letters to KAI, care of this magazine, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y.



Do not mail letters to these Pen Pals after August 6th.

TRINIDAD, a country where bamboo and hibiscus trees run riot and add an exotic touch to the countryside; where vegetation varies from sugar-cane fields to coconut groves, and where a great asphalt lake still remains a marvel to those who see it. Jean Gloria lives in Port-of-Spain and will tell you countless interesting stories about her part of the world. Pen Pals everywhere, get busy and write to her to-day!

DEAR MISS MORRIS: May I enter your Corner? I'm a girl eighteen years of age, live in Port-of-Spain, Trinidad, and feel sure I can make my letters colorful and interesting. I like parties, dancing, outdoor sports, making friends, and writing and receiving letters. I hope to hear from Pen Pals all over the world, so hurry, girls, let me hear from you. JEAN GLORIA.

A short-story writer from the West.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Despite the fact that I like dancing, music, making friends, and enjoy good times in general, I am a lonely young woman of twenty-four. I'm a short-story writer, live in Montana, and have lots of interesting things to tell about the West. Girls, write and tell me all about yourselves, your hobbies, and interests. You'll find me a true-blue, sincere friend. MONTA.

This lonesome widow will appreciate your letters.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Won't you help me find some Pen Pals? I'm a young widow of twenty-four, have four small children, considered good-natured, friendly, and would very much like to hear from married Pals and widows all over the country. Please, every one, give me a chance to be your friend. I have plenty of time to answer letters. LONESOME DIXIE.

Niki wants to hear from high-school Pals.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Who wants to hear from a New Yorker? I'm a girl of sixteen, with black hair and eyes, and very anxious to correspond with high-school girls in this country and abroad. I'll exchange snapshots and promise prompt replies. I enjoy dancing, outdoor sports, and am also interested in dramatics. NIKI.

This girl really needs your cheer.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm so lonesome I don't know how to pass the time. I'm a girl of nineteen, keen about sports and aviation, but at present I am staying in a sanitarium because of poor health and, believe me, Pals, it is very lonely here for a girl who likes to keep busy. So won't you all send your letters my way?

YVETTE T.

A tomboy from Texas.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: One more lively sixteen-year-old-girl looking for Pen Pals.

I'm often referred to as a tomboy, but it doesn't worry me. I'm keen about sports, and enjoy anything that can be put under the heading of fun. Girls, won't you sling some ink my way? I have oodles of interesting things to write about.

TEXAS TOMBOY.

Boys, help him pass the time.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: May I enter your Corner? I'm a young man of twenty-six, live in a small Southern town, and get lonesome. I would appreciate hearing from Pals all over the world, especially from South America. I enjoy sports, music, the theater, making friends, and like to write letters.

OLIVER.

Barbie has lived abroad.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Pen Pals everywhere, how about taking me for your friend? I'm a peppy teen-age girl who loves fun and sports. I've lived abroad for seven years, and will gladly tell you all about it, and more about myself in my first letters. All Pals between fifteen and eighteen are welcome, and I promise to answer every letter I get.

BARBIE.

She's ready and waiting.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a Greek girl of twenty living in New York City, and would love to hear from Greek girls in California, Florida, and Chicago, although every one is welcome. I am working as waitress, like plenty of good, clean fun, and intend to do a lot of traveling first chance I get. Maybe I'll meet some of you personally.

GREEK GIRL.

Who wants to hear all about Maine?

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Is there room in your Corner for another lonesome girl? I have brown hair and eyes, live in Maine, am interested in every one and everything, and hope to hear from girls of any age. I promise to answer all letters and be a true-blue Pen Pal. Girls, give me a chance to write to you.

CAROLINE C.

Every one between seventeen and thirty-five is eligible.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a stenographer of twenty-six, married, and very anxious to hear from single and married Pen Pals all over the world. Every one between sev-

enteen and thirty-five will be more than welcome. I live in Iowa, and feel sure I can make my replies lively and interesting.

MOINESETTE.

She loves to skate and dance.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Girls of sixteen or over, how about dropping me a line? I'm a girl with dark eyes and light hair, very fond of skating and dancing, and a confirmed letter writer. I live in Ohio, like to meet people, make friends, and will answer all letters. Why not take me for your Pen Pal?

MEDA.

Akron Vi wants older Pals.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Won't you help a widow of forty find some one to correspond with? I have one child, and get very lonesome. Don't let my age frighten you away, Pals. I enjoy dancing, riding, love a nice home, and am fond of keeping house. I make friends easily, and will answer every letter I get.

AKRON VI.

He gets a lot of fun out of life.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'd like some Pen Pals, too. I'm a young American-Polish man of twenty-one, with blond hair, blue eyes, have traveled all over the United States, and have lots of very interesting things to write about. At present I am living in Pennsylvania, and get rather lonesome. I usually get lots of fun out of life in general, am considered friendly, easy-going, and enjoy meeting people.

ZYGMUNT.

Girls, you'll surely like Adelle.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Please print my plea in your Corner. I'm a blue-eyed young woman with dark hair, tall, slim, enjoy sports, dancing, bridge, traveling, and collect books and stamps. I want to hear from Pals between twenty-five and forty. I am now living close to New York City, and will answer all letters received.

ADELLE.

Fifteen-year-olds, send a letter to this Pal.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm very anxious to correspond with girls of my age, fifteen. I am fond of outdoor sports, have many interesting hobbies, and will gladly exchange snapshots with any one who writes to me. How about it, Pals? I'm eager to hear from every one of you.

LITTLE AUDREY.

Girls, lend Jinny a hand.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I've never had a Pen Pal and would love to write letters to lonesome girls all over the country. I'm a teen-age girl with gray eyes, brown hair, a cheerful disposition, and will try hard to make my replies peppy and interesting. Pals, give me a chance to write to you. I'm sure we can be friends. JINNY.

Bonnie M.'s work is very interesting.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: No one can be more anxious for Pen Pals than I, so here's hoping every one will answer my plea. I'm a young woman of twenty-seven, live in North Dakota, have been married and divorced, like to dance, enjoy outdoor sports, and my work is decorating novelties. I also collect match covers, and hope to hear from at least one Pal in every State in the Union. BONNIE M.

Exchange post cards and snapshots with her.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: After reading your Corner, I've decided to ask you to find room for me. I'm a good-natured girl nineteen years of age, have brown hair and eyes, enjoy sports, and will exchange snapshots and picture post cards with any one who answers my plea. Come on, girls, let's get acquainted! CECELLA.

New Yorkers, here's a future visitor.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a young Jewish man twenty-four years of age, live in Canada, and hope to hear from Pen Pals in New York as I'm thinking of visiting that city before long. Of course, everybody is welcome, and I promise to answer all letters that come my way. Let's go, boys! OTTAWA JACK.

You can write to her either in English or Swedish.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: This is a plea from a middle-aged woman who has been a shut-in for several years. I have a good education, am considered friendly, good-natured, and you can write to me either in English or Swedish. I like to read, crochet, and do all kinds of fancy work. Please, Pals, whatever your age, drop me a line. ALMA MARIE.

Two Pals at a throw.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: We are two young girls fifteen and fourteen years of age, interested in sports, making friends, writing letters, and promise prompt replies. We want to correspond with Pals of any age, regardless of where they hail from. Won't all you girls please hurry and answer this plea? We live in Pennsylvania.

MAREY AND JEAN.

Time hangs heavy on her hands.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: May another lonesome girl enter your Friendliest Corner? I'm twenty-one, fond of reading, hiking, listening to the radio and writing letters. I live in a small town in New York State and get very lonesome. So please, girls, regardless of age, don't hesitate to write to me. GRAY-EYED MARGE.

Two lonesome Pals from Missouri.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: We are two very lonely girls from Missouri, eager to correspond with Pen Pals all over the country. We have oodles of interesting things to talk about, and promise faithfully to answer all letters. How about it, Pals, won't you sling a little ink our way? We'll be waiting. BLONDIE AND REDHEAD.

She's anxious to hear from Pals far and near.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm especially anxious to correspond with girls from foreign countries, but every one is welcome. I'm a New York girl of twenty-two, have blond hair, brown eyes, interested in every one and everything, and promise prompt replies. Who'll be the first to write to me? VILLAGE QUEEN.

Another New York Pal.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: This is an S O S from a golden-haired girl of sixteen. I live in Brooklyn, New York, and my chief hobby is collecting handkerchiefs. I'd love to exchange snapshots and handkerchiefs with girls all over the world. I'm interested in sports, and adore writing long, newsy letters. ARLETTE.

Two lively girls from Oklahoma.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Pals, how about giving two lonesome girls a hand? We are in our teens, can tell you all about life in

the West, enjoy outdoor sports, horseback riding, will exchange snapshots, and promise speedy replies. Let's go, girls!

OKLAHOMA KIDS.

Give her a chance, Pals.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: It would make me very happy to hear from Pals who really appreciate sincere friendship. I'm a girl of seventeen, live in Iowa, enjoy dancing, movies, horseback riding, and will gladly exchange snapshots with all who write to me. Pals, give me a chance to show you what a good friend I can be.

HAPPY SALLIE.

Here's the Pal you've been waiting for, girls.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: This is my first plea for Pen Pals, and I'm hoping to hear from every one who reads my plea. I'm a girl twenty-five years of age, interested in art, collecting stamps, poetry, reading, most outdoor sports, and anything else that keeps me busy and happy. I adore dancing, too. Girls, if you want a faithful correspondent, be sure to give me a break.

WAITING MARIANE.

A Nebraska high-school girl.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Calling all Pen Pals! I'm a high-school girl, fond of outdoor sports, live in Nebraska, will gladly exchange snapshots, and would especially love to hear from Pals in Hawaii, the Philippine Islands, England, and Canada. Please, girls, don't pass me by.

LETA L.

She collects autographs of movie stars.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Please find me some Pen Pals. I'm a girl of sixteen, live in Canada, collect autographs of movie stars, and can tell lots of interesting stories about this part of the world. Come on, girls, let's be friends. I'll answer all letters that come my way. ONTARIO JEAN.

She can play the piano.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Have you room in your Corner for a sixteen-year-old Colorado girl? I live in the city of Denver, and feel sure I can make my letters really interesting. I'm fond of outdoor sports, collect pictures of movie stars, and can play the piano. Pen Pals everywhere, please give me a chance.

GEANETTE.

Lenn knows about life behind the footlights.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a young man in my early twenties, have appeared professionally on the stage, interested in art, singing, dancing, and can play the piano and organ. I also write stories, plays, and enjoy making friends. All letters are welcome, and prompt replies are guaranteed.

LENN.

A lovely souvenir to the first Pal who writes.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a young married woman of twenty-five, live in Chicago, and would love to correspond with single and married Pals of my age. I'll send a lovely souvenir to the very first Pen Pal, and promise to answer all letters received. I have a son two years of age, but manage to find time for the things I like to do, and writing letters is my pet hobby.

MABELE.

She longs for Western Pen Pals.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Do you think some of the Western Pen Pals would care to write to me? I'm a young girl with brown hair and eyes, fond of swimming, dancing, writing letters, and am simply crazy about the West, especially Utah, Oregon, Arizona, Colorado, and Texas. I will answer letters promptly.

CHRISTINE W.

This lonely bachelor enjoys making friends.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: One of the real joys in life, I think, is being able to make friends. I'm a lonely bachelor of forty, live in Canada, and would appreciate hearing from Pen Pals of any age, regardless of where they hail from. I hope you will find room in your Corner to print my plea, because I'm really anxious to hear from a few sincere correspondents.

JAMES F.

She writes poetry and short stories.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a lively, ambitious young girl with brown hair and eyes, and want to hear from girls everywhere. I enjoy outdoor sports, collect stamps, write poetry and short stories, and planning to become a journalist some day. Please, girls, let's get together. I live in

Missouri, and would love to have you tell me all about your hobbies and interests.
SUGAR CREEK DEE.

Wouldn't you like to hear all about cowboys and ranch life?

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Here's hoping you'll print my plea. I'm a married woman twenty-one years of age, have traveled in the West, can tell lots of interesting stories about cowboys, ranch life, and also about my home State, Texas. I enjoy dancing, hunting, fishing, making friends, and writing letters.
PECOS LOU.

She's especially fond of dancing.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: This is another S O S for Pen Pals who like to write letters. I'm a friendly young girl fond of outdoor sports, especially dancing, live in Winnipeg, and hope to hear from Pen Pals all over the world. Please, girls, don't hesitate to drop me a few lines. I'll tell you more about myself later.
MERLE W.

Pals, send a letter to Alabama Boys.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: We are two very lonesome young fellows in our teens, like outdoor sports, including horseback riding, ball games and boxing. We'll exchange snapshots with any one, and hope to hear from at least two Pals in every State in the Union. Boys, hurry and write to
ALABAMA BOYS.

Are you her birthday twin?

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I've made a number of friends through your Corner, but now I have time for more letters, and would like to hear from girls whose birthday falls

on April 12th. My hobbies are collecting stamps, picture post cards, and I hope to be a singer some day. I enjoy sports, and promise prompt and lively replies to all letters. Girls, please write to
APRIL'S CHILD.

Western life fascinates her.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Won't some one take me for a Pen Pal? I'm a teen-age girl, considered good-looking, fond of sports, and would love to be a cowgirl because Western life simply fascinates me. However, the nearest I'll probably ever get to it will be in letters—if some of you Western Pals will take pity on a lonesome Ohio girl and drop me a line. Who'll be the first?
CURLY OF OHIO.

Discuss outdoor sports with him.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Who wants a Pen Pal from Oklahoma? I'm a young fellow in my late teens, like horseback riding, dancing and outdoor sports. I'll exchange snapshots, and will answer letters promptly. Fellows everywhere, write and let's discuss outdoor sports. I can tell you much that is interesting about life in the West.
DAVIS.

She's especially interested in interior decorating.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I want to hear from high-school girls of any age. I'm a peppy Arkansas girl, go to high school, enjoy skating, hiking, outdoor sports, making friends, and best of all, writing long, chummy letters. I'm especially interested in interior decorating. Please, Pals, write to me. I'll exchange snapshots.
ETHELYN.

Miss Mary Morris will see to it that you will be able to make friends with other readers, though thousands of miles may separate you. It must be understood that Miss Morris will undertake to exchange letters only between men and men, boys and boys, women and women, girls and girls. All reasonable care will be exercised in the introduction of correspondents. If any unsatisfactory letters are received by our readers, the publishers would appreciate their being sent to them. Please sign your name and address when writing. Be sure to inclose forwarding postage when sending letters, so that mail can be forwarded. We are not responsible for money (coins) sent through the mail.

Address Miss Mary Morris, Street & Smith's Love Story Magazine, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y.



THE FRIEND IN NEED

Conducted by

Laura Alston Brown

Well-known Authority on Love and Marriage

HAS the modern girl less charm than the girls of another generation? Beryl claims that never before have women had to scheme and plan as they now do in order to attract the attention of men. What is it that has changed man from the pursuing cavalier to the elusive male? The answer is—the same force that has changed women from helpless, clinging-vine creatures to independent, self-sufficient individuals. That force is modern economic conditions. Men and women are on a par, both work side by side, and very often it is the woman who gets the larger pay check. No wonder there is a dearth of big he-men in this modern age. No wonder men are not especially keen on marriage. They resent the weaker sex's independence, and women's equality with men, if not superiority, discourages the *Galahad* type of love-making.

However, read with me Beryl's letter and see if you agree with her.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: I have often noticed letters from girls who moan about how hard a time they are having finding

men and getting married. I'm a business girl of twenty-two and, I suppose, have the same trouble, although at this time it doesn't really worry me because I have a wonderful position and marriage is not in my present scheme of things.

It seems to me, however, that one of the reasons why modern girls have such a hard time getting their men is because they don't know how to cultivate charm and are not as appealing as were the girls of years ago. For instance, my grandmother is certainly an old lady but she has far more charm than any young girl I know. For some mysterious reason, when boys come to see me and she happens to be in the room, they act as if they would just as soon spend the evening with her. The same goes for my mother; everybody adores her.

Then, too, so many girls to-day are in the business field that men have become used to them, know all their little tricks, and when they go out with a girl there is nothing especially exciting or marvelous about the date, except if they happen to be extremely in love or engaged to be married.

Another thing that is all wrong is that men are spoiled and far too much catered to. Most girls don't hesitate to telephone a man. Did girls do that twenty or more years ago? My mother thinks that although there were fewer girl college graduates in her day, almost every girl had more than one beau trailing her. When men break dates they are eagerly for-

given, and the so-called romance goes on and on. I know three girls who have been engaged for at least three years and are still in the dark as to exactly when they will get married. It is not because the boys in question are not earning enough to provide homes for their wives, either. It's just that they like their freedom too well—the men, I mean.

Girls go riding with boys and permit themselves to be petted and pawed over as payment for being taken out. I've met many young men and had loads of dates, but as none of the boys seemed serious I made it clear that cheapening love-making was out of my line. I sincerely hope I don't sound like a prude. I'm really very jolly, good-natured, and well-liked.

Do other readers think as I do? If my letter is printed, I would love to hear what other girls think of my ideas and point of view, and whether or not they agree with me.

BERYL.

Is it really much harder for the modern girl to find a husband than it was for the old-fashioned girl? I believe that girls to-day are as much, if not more, charming than the girls of yesterday. But what do you think, family? Let us have your opinion.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: I'm a good-looking girl, smoke and drink once in a while, and love to make friends. I have recently broken up with a boy I went with for nearly two years, and started going to dances with a group of boys and girls, though I had no particular escort. Then I met Bob and fell for him. We went out a few times together and he asked me to go steady with him. He acted funny—I mean, he gave me the impression that if I didn't say "Yes" he would probably drop me, and I didn't want to lose him.

However, although we were quite happy together, he never wanted to take me dancing, and sometimes said that I liked dancing more than I liked him. That was not true, and I tried to convince him he was wrong, but he wouldn't believe me, and finally I had to stop going to dances. All this time he was telling me how much he cared for me, and now I don't know what to think.

Real trouble started when he broke a date with me to go to a party to which I was not invited. I didn't care about his going out without me, but he didn't even

tell me that he was not coming to see me, and I waited three hours for him. I hate to have my evenings spoiled waiting around for some one who is not coming.

After that, he started running around with boys and seemed to have no time for me, although he still claimed he was in love with me and wanted me to continue being his steady girl. But there was no fun in that. He broke dates with me, and didn't seem anxious to take me anywhere. But he always had time to go places with his boy friends.

Three weeks ago I told him I didn't think he cared much for me because he hardly ever came to see me, and he said I was the only girl in the world for him. But since then he hasn't mentioned love when he came over, and I can't help thinking that he doesn't really love me. Should I continue waiting around for him as I have been doing, or would it be best for me to have other boy friends? I'm still fond of him and hate to think of not seeing him any more, but my mother says I'm young and shouldn't tie myself down to any one for a while—at least, not until a boy comes along with an engagement ring.

I would more than appreciate your advice.

BROWNIE.

Some young men are so intent upon what they call having a good time, that they fail to stop and reflect as to what true love really means. To them, anything from liking a girl to being infatuated with her is covered by the word "love." Judging from your letter, it seems to me that this boy cannot be very much in love with you if he is so thoughtless of your feelings.

But perhaps a dose of his own medicine might wake him up. Try to appear indifferent as to whether or not he comes to see you, and date other boys. Pretend that you do not miss him, and once in a while, when he wants to see you, say you already have another appointment. If he objects to your dating other young men, tell him that since he seems to be having a good time with other friends, you see no reason why you should stay cooped up at home. If he fails to become more attentive,

it will mean that he is not really in love with you and, in that case, it would be foolish on your part to spend any more time worrying about him. There is always lots more fish in the sea, you know.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: I followed your advice, and am now going steady with the young man I love, but what worries me is that I'm not sure he really loves me. Here is the trouble.

Before I started going with Jerry he was engaged to another girl, and when she jilted him he was heartbroken. And although he claims that he now loves me, often when he comes to see me he talks about this other girl, and says that he loved her in a different way than he loves me. But I can't understand that. Do you think he still loves her and is merely going with me in order to forget her?

Another thing that puzzles me is that I have heard he dates a young woman I know, but whenever I mention her name—I used to be friendly with this girl—he insists that I stop talking about her and that I mustn't be friends with her any more because she has a poor reputation. I have begun to doubt his love; sometimes I think he dates this girl.

Recently, he has been telling me that when a man and girl are in love, love is the only thing that counts, and that he sees no reason why we should wait for marriage. But I told him I've always been a good girl and can't see things his way, although he says he will love me all the more, if that is possible. I don't know what to do. I love him so much I would do almost anything for him, but I have decided to write and ask you for advice.

Lately, although he insists that he loves me, I have not been very happy. Do you think I am wasting my time on him? I'll appreciate your opinion. **WORRIED.**

Whenever a man makes an effort to convince a woman that he will love her more if she will disregard conventions, it only shows that he is selfish and loves no one but himself. You doubt his love for you because, subconsciously, you know that he does not love and respect you as a man should love and respect the woman he intends to make his wife. And although it may cause

you considerable heartache, the best thing to do is to make it clear to him that he is not the type of man who can make you happy, and drop him.

Whether or not he is still in love with the girl he was engaged to is something I cannot tell you. But if he persists in talking about her, obviously she is not out of his mind. It also shows that he is not as much in love with you as he wants you to believe.

Judging from all you say about this young man, this romance does not seem very encouraging, and I would suggest that you have other men friends before you decide to marry any one. Marriage, as most of us know, is such an important step in a girl's life, that it is better to go slow and be sure, than rush into it and be sorry. So take your time, and don't marry any man unless you can feel reasonably sure that he is the one with whom you can be happy. And, remember, an uncertain lover makes a poor husband.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: When I was seventeen I ran away from home and married a boy of whom my parents didn't approve because he never came to our house. But I was in love with him and used to sneak out to see him. He was twenty-one.

I thought he loved me and that we would be happy after we were married, but because I used to sneak out to meet him, he now thinks that I am not to be trusted, and that when he is away from home I sneak out to meet other fellows, which is not true. He is so jealous that he often accuses me of things I wouldn't dream of doing. I'm not a flirt—never have been. I'm a good housekeeper and cook, and try hard to get along with him, but no matter what I do he isn't pleased.

When he gets mad he beats me up. I've left him several times, and each time he came after me and begged me to go back to him and give him another chance. But he doesn't change; he's just the same as ever. I feel as if I can't possibly go on like this. My people can't help me; they tell me I've made my choice and will have to put up with him.

He never wants me to go anywhere, not even to a movie, and yet he won't take me out. I get so lonesome I'm simply sick about everything. I used to be popular and can have lots of friends now, but he says I should be satisfied to stay home now that I have a husband.

When we were first married I was madly in love with him, but now I feel as if I hate him, though I'm afraid to talk back to him. I'm young, not yet twenty, and feel as if my life were over. I think I deserve a little pleasure, don't you? Is there anything that I can do to change my life, or must I go on being miserable? Please advise me, as there's no one else I can tell my troubles to.

ANNA J.

No wife should permit her husband to mistreat her in any way. A woman should always remember that she should stand up for herself, and if she demands respect and consideration, she will get it. Why not make it clear to your husband that he cannot treat you as a slave? The next time he goes into a tantrum and begins to accuse you of flirting, laugh it off, and try to show him how silly it is on his part to cultivate such ideas. If he remains unreasonable, leave the room, or go to a movie or for a walk, until he cools off.

As for not being able to have friends or go anywhere, you have as much right to a reasonable amount of personal freedom as he has. Invite your friends to your home, whether your husband likes the idea or not. After all, you are not a child to be told what you can and cannot do. Once you show some independence, he will get used to the idea that he cannot bully you.

I don't mean that you should quarrel and make scenes. Talk things over whenever his temper doesn't run away with him, and assert yourself in a quiet but determined manner. If you act as if you are afraid of him, it will not help establish a more understanding relationship between you.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: Do you think seventeen is too young to marry? I'm a high-school girl and have always been rather independent. But my parents, especially my father, are very strict and won't allow me to bring boys to the house. So for about a year I have been sneaking out to meet a boy I love. He is twenty-three, has steady work, and tells me he loves me.

I am very unhappy because my parents are so unreasonable. All the girls I know are allowed to have friends. I don't expect to be able to go everywhere and with any one, but I can't even go to a party. Of course, I realize that sneaking out to meet a boy is not the right thing to do, but I am being forced to do this. My father tells me I can have boy friends when I'm eighteen, and not a day before. He doesn't know that I'm in love with this boy.

Please don't tell me that I'm too young to be in love. Lots of girls of my age are married. We are planning to get married next year, when I'm through school. This boy doesn't date any one else. He used to be wild and ran around with all kinds of girls, but now he has changed so much that I'm more than ever sure he really loves me. I have high ideals of love and the man I want to marry, and he is trying to live up to my ideals. Don't you think we will be happy?

He is begging me to marry him when I graduate next spring, but my girl friends tell me to wait. Between him and my girl friends, I don't know what to do. If we could date like other young people, and if he could come to our house, it would be a lot easier for both of us. But this way, meeting on street corners, holding hands in the movies, is making things rather hard for us. He has a married friend, and I could meet him at their home, but if any one found out and told my parents they might suspect the worst, and I couldn't stand it if any one thought I was doing something wrong.

Is there any way I can make my parents see things from my point of view, and do you think I should go ahead and marry this boy when I'm through school? Please don't think I'm only a silly schoolgirl. I'm rather grown up for my age and know what I'm talking about.

JANET OF ST. LOUIS.

Yes, my dear, lots of girls of your age are married, but it doesn't follow that they are happily married, or that they and their husbands are as well suited to one another as they

might be. Of course, there are always exceptions to the rule. But it is rather hard for a sixteen-year-old girl to choose the right man, because at that age a girl hasn't had much experience in making comparisons among men and picking out the one with whom she can be really happy.

A year is not a long time. Wait until you are graduated, then think it over as to whether or not you still want to marry this young man. Meanwhile, both of you should feel free to have other friends and not remain tied to each other.

It is unfortunate that your parents fail to realize that by being too strict, they are merely driving you to meet your friends outside the home. Couldn't you talk things over with your mother first, and ask her to appeal to your father? Surely he wouldn't want you to meet your friends on street corners! Better yet, why not ask him this question yourself? Your parents mean well, but they ought to remember that youth will find its own way. Perhaps if your father became acquainted with this young man he would withdraw his objections. Don't be afraid to face facts, or to talk matters over with your parents.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: I'm a very lonely, unhappy girl of twenty, and hope that you will be able to help me find a way to lead a happier life.

I'm living with my mother and stepfather. My mother is very sweet and good, but my stepfather is mean and selfish, always ready to quarrel about the smallest thing, even if he is in the wrong. Mother and I are a little afraid of him. He doesn't like me to have men friends, and after my unhappy experience I would like nothing better than to meet a man who would be sincere and offer me a home.

Last year I fell in love with a boy who lived in a near-by town. He seemed to be the type of man most girls dream about. He came to see me quite often, and then my stepfather told him to stay away. That only made us meet on the sly, and

sometimes we even went to his apartment because there was no other place for us to stay. Of course, I didn't realize what these meetings might lead to, and in the spring I found out that I was to become a mother.

I told him about it, and he said that just as soon as he found a job we would be married. My mother was very good to me, but my stepfather was meaner than ever. He went out with a gun after this boy, trying to make him marry me right away. This boy said he would, but instead of that he left town and I haven't seen or heard from him since. I tried to tell my stepfather that he ought to have minded his own business, and that it was his fault this boy left town, but he only told me to shut up.

My baby is two months old, and I am at a loss what to do now. My stepfather is always nagging, but my mother is very good to me and takes care of the baby. I feel as if I have nothing to live for. I still love my boy friend, and can't help wishing he would come back. I don't know where his parents live; he was staying with a friend in the next town when I met him. They don't know where he went, so I have no way of finding out what he means to do. Maybe he will never come back.

I would like to go away, but I hate the idea of leaving my mother alone with my stepfather because he is so mean. Sometimes I think if I could somehow make a fresh start, I would be happier, but I don't know how to go about it. The people I used to be friendly with before this happened have turned away from me. I haven't any friends, stay home all the time and feel so miserable I'd like to die, although, of course, I know I have to go on for my baby's sake. Is there anything I can do to get out of this awful situation? My stepfather says no man will marry me now. Do you think that's true? Please give me some advice. DISCOURAGED BEA.

Life is never so hopeless that we can't do something to make it worth while again. I understand, of course, that under the circumstances, you don't like the idea of leaving your mother. But you have your own and your baby's future to think of, and should try to make something of your life. Pay no attention to your stepfather's statement that no man will want to

marry you after what's happened. The best of us can make mistakes, and some day, if your baby's father fails to come back and keep his word to marry you, I'm sure you will meet a man who will be trustworthy and eager to make you really happy, and who will not object to giving your child a name.

I see no reason why you should put up with your stepfather's tantrums and unreasonable attitude, when you can live your own life. It will not be easy, but if you can find work, perhaps you could move elsewhere, and have your baby with you. If that is not possible, you might be able to send your mother something toward the baby's support, and then your stepfather will not have so much to grumble about.

No matter how hopeless your life may seem now, you must not give up hope that, somehow, you can make it more pleasant. It is up to you, Bea. But don't forget, you must start the ball rolling yourself. Sitting still and waiting for something to happen is futile. You can have a happier life, but you must make up your mind to get busy and do something about it. One mistake need not spoil your entire life, unless you let it.

So cheer up, and disregard the fact that old friends have turned away from you. If your mother does not mind looking after the baby for you until you can arrange to take care of it yourself, I would suggest that you try to find work in another town, and stop worrying about the future. By keeping busy you will have less time to think about your unhappy experience, and the future will take care of itself. Keep up your courage.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: Ever since I married I've had to work, practically support my husband, and pay all the bills because

he seldom has steady work. I'm getting very discouraged. I'm twenty-two, and employed as practical nurse. I am hoping that before long I'll have the opportunity to enter into training and become a graduate nurse. I am not very strong, and that is holding me back.

But to get back to my problem. It's so hard to be patient, worrying about bills, food, clothes, and the fact that my husband is not very ambitious. If I were not willing to work, we would often have gone without food. He is good in other ways, like helping me around the house when I'm sick, but if he would hold down a job we could be much more comfortable. I can't understand him at times. He smokes a lot, and sometimes when there was no money to buy cigarettes, he would tell me to go to a neighbor and try to borrow a few cents.

Since we've been married he has never spent a cent on clothes for me, mainly because what he earned was only enough for the things he needed. He doesn't drink or run around with other women, and I'm glad of that, but I do think a man should try to find work so that his wife could stay home and keep house. Before we were married he had a good job and said he'd never want to see me go to work. But a few months afterward, he gave up his job because he wanted to work outdoors, and ever since then he has had only temporary jobs.

We have no children, and I'm not actually sorry, because life would be all the harder. While I don't mind doing my share, I get so tired of carrying all the responsibilities. I don't know what to do about this situation. If we separate, it will not help because divorce is out of the question. I know I'm not perfect, but I try hard to make my husband happy and can't understand why he seems so indifferent where household expenses are concerned.

Please tell me what you think I ought to do. At times I get so disgusted, life doesn't seem worth living. But I'm anxious to do the right thing.

SANDIE.

It certainly is not fair of your husband to expect you to shoulder all the expenses of keeping up the home. If he were disabled in some way and couldn't work, that would be a different story. But if he can work, it is time that he stopped taking an unfair advantage of you.

I would urge you to have a seri-

ous talk with him and try to make clear the fact that you cannot go on forever like this, and that you expect him to keep the promise he made at the time of your marriage. The least he can do now, if what he makes is not enough to cover all bills, is to share expenses.

If your husband refuses to make a serious effort to find a permanent job, or to contribute toward the household expenses when he is working, I suggest that you try more drastic measures. In that case, suppose you deliberately give up your own position and make it clear to your husband that it is his obligation to support you? Certainly, you should not encourage his lack of ambition by continuing to bear the financial burden on your shoulders.

But I am sure that such action will not be necessary. He will, no doubt, see things from a different point of view if you explain your attitude clearly. Be firm and try to make him understand that if he persists in his actions, both of you will become more and more unhappy as time goes by.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: My trouble is that the girl I'm in love with is keeping me on the string along with two other fellows, and I can't seem to induce her to make a choice. I've been dating her for a year, and know she was very fond of me. I'm still as much in love with her as ever. When I first started going with her we used to be very jealous of each other, and she sometimes accused me of dating other girls, but I didn't.

Anyway, at a dance about six months ago, she met two young men and took a

liking to them from the start. Each of them has a car, and they date her as often as they can. I didn't know she was going out with these boys until recently. I haven't a car, and can't spend as much money when I take her out as these other fellows do. I've asked her time and again to make a choice instead of keeping us on a string, but she always tell me she doesn't know which one she likes best.

For about a month she has been dating one boy more often than me, and I'm beginning to think it's hopeless to hang on much longer. I still love her and don't care to date any one else, and would certainly like to know if I should keep on going with her until she decides whom she cares for, or if I should stop seeing her. I know she is fond of me, but it burns me up when I think that she may like one of these two other fellows better.

I'm fairly patient, but you know a fellow gets tired of waiting without any sign of hope. Please advise. BART.

Don't you think it is quite possible that this girl really likes all three of you, and is not sure which boy she likes best? Why not give her the benefit of the doubt? I would suggest that you continue to be patient, and keep right on being friendly with her. Date her whenever you can, but it may help a little if you dated another girl once in a while. If this girl happens to be in love with you but does not realize it, the danger of losing you to another girl may wake her up. More often than not, a little competition brings good results. So don't get discouraged, or be afraid that she may already be in love with one of the other boys. If she were, she would not keep all of you on the string.

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