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POPULAR

FALL
ISSUE

LOVE

*New Romances
of Modern
Youth*

BUY WAR BONDS
AND STAMPS
FOR VICTORY!

FEATURING
**LOVE'S
SECOND
CHANCE**
A Fascinating
Complete
Romantic
Novel
By
**JOYCE
HILTON**

A THRILLING
PUBLICATION





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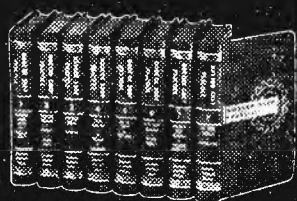
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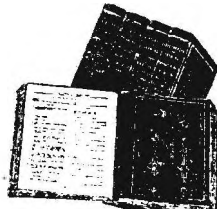
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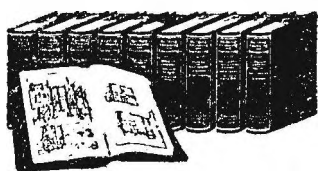
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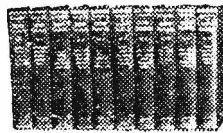
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POPULAR LOVE

Vol. XIII, No. 2

MARTHA TRASK, Editor

Fall, 1942



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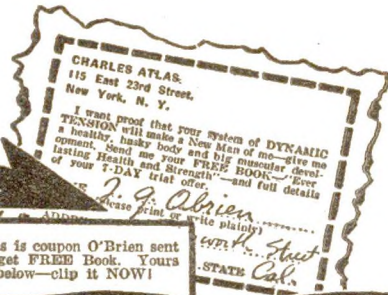
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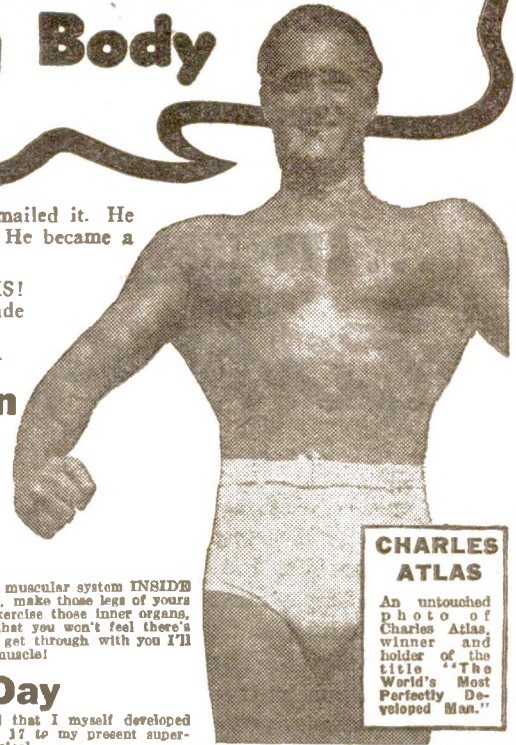
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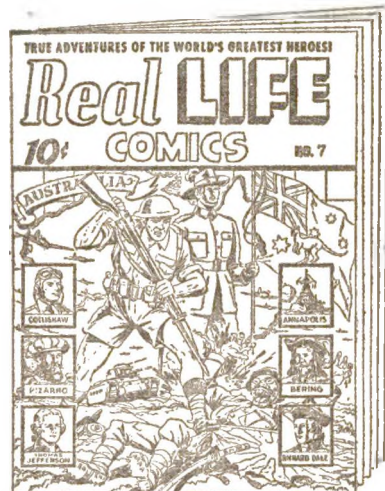


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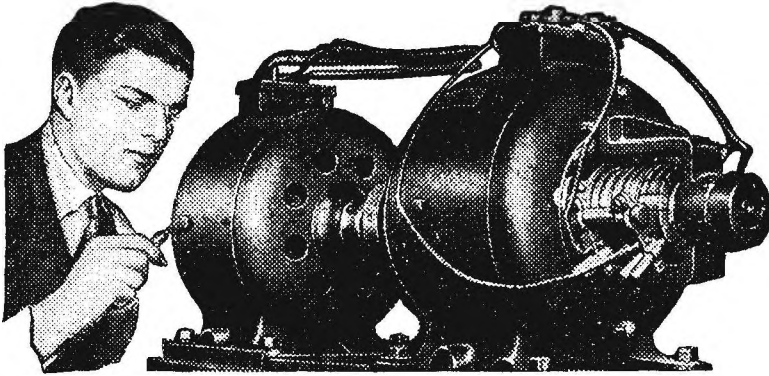
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"Are you going to the Coes?" Peggy asked Keith

LOVE'S SECOND CHANCE

By JOYCE HILTON

When Peggy and Keith hop the plane that carries them away from it all, their mad escapade leads to more adventure and intrigue than they bargained for!

CHAPTER I

CHANCE MEETING

PEGGY YOUNG turned for a last look at the airport as the door of the airliner was slammed shut, and the motors roared. She saw the young man across the aisle then—noticed, without seeming

to do so, that his handsome face was a picture of gloom. That moody expression, she thought, must be a good match for her own. He, alone, among the plane's passengers, had something in common with her for everyone else was smiling or cheerful-looking.

Presently, she forgot him, saying

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Bayard introduced Peggy and

good-by with her eyes to the city of her dreams, her broken dreams. Nostalgic memories tore at her heart; bitter memories.

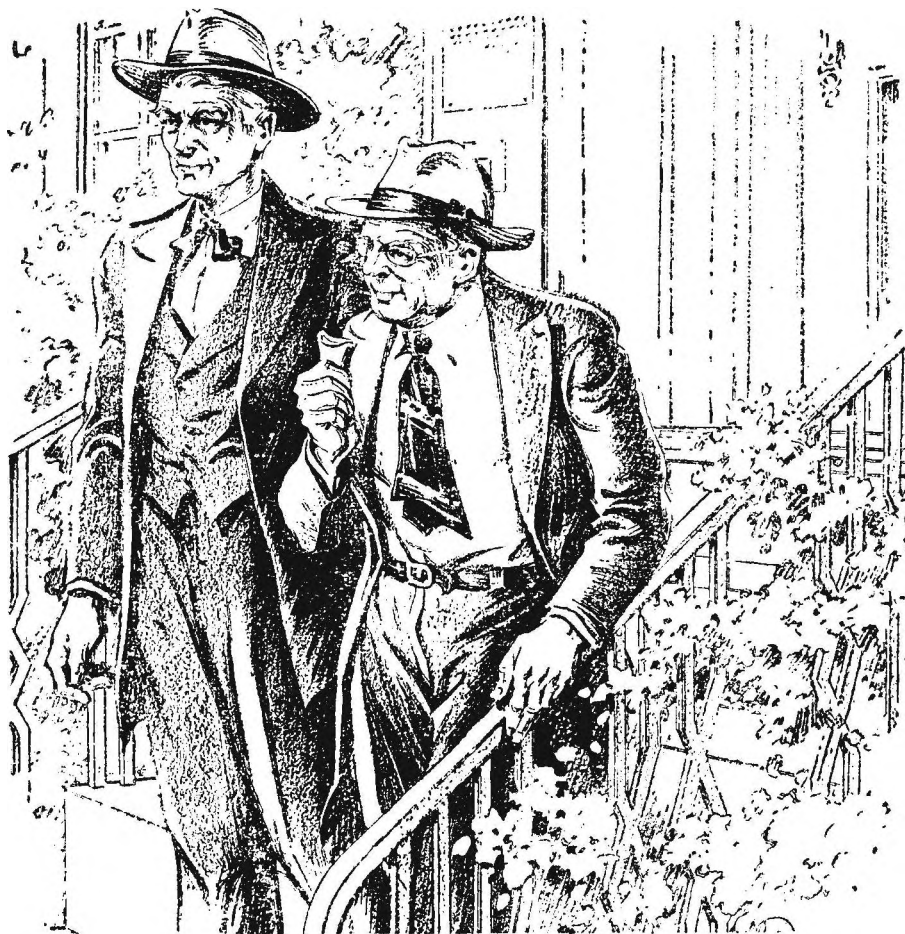
The planes were lined up on the runway, nose to tail, waiting their turn to get into the air. To Los Angeles and to Atlanta they were going—to Miami and Montreal—and some to South America.

As always, the promenade of the great terminal was lined with fascinated spectators, the eternal romantic-minded escapists whose grandfathers had similarly hung about railway stations.

Equally enthralled onlookers watched from the Kitty Hawk bar, and from the restaurant terrace,

watched the fantastic lights against the sky as the flying monsters slid down from the darkness overhead like prehistoric pterodactyls.

The silver ship wheeled out, turned in a sharp circle, then, with motors roaring, skimmed along the ground and began to rise in a slow, careful climb, the focus of a thousand up-turned eyes. As the somber-faced man and dejected girl looked down, they saw an Atlantic Clipper plowing through the basin of the anchorage off the far end of the field, splashing water from its huge bow like an ugly duckling of the sea. Then they were soaring above the pinnacles and towers of Manhattan, its myriad windows flashing.



Keith with casual nonchalance

As the ship crossed the Hudson and its Palisades, the two young people strained for a last look at the vanishing metropolis. The man gave what seemed to Peggy a wry farewell salute, then turned, just as Peggy sank back into her seat.

Their eyes momentarily met. She recognized a flicker of interest in his glance, and turned away. Her reddish-blond hair, engaging nose and slim figure had excited masculine interest on first sight too often to be a novelty to Peggy. The fact that the young man was exceptionally good-looking, in a rugged sort of way, made little difference. Peggy had too much on her mind to be interested in men.

She forgot all about the young man, lost in her somber thoughts, until they reached Pittsburgh. There, as they strolled up and down outside, stretching their legs, she noticed that he was covertly watching her, although not attempting to flirt. She saw that he was tall and rangy, and might be interesting.

They were off again. When dinner was served, they dined on trays, across the aisle from each other. Both were elaborately indifferent, yet nevertheless very much aware of one another as young people will be. To Peggy's mild gratification, when the airliner had left Columbus, Dayton, Indianapolis and St. Louis behind, he was still aboard. Then, again she for-

got him, lost in her gloomy thoughts.

EIGHT hours out of New York they arrived at Kansas City, the end of the plane's run, and all the passengers filed out. It was about eleven o'clock at night, and raining lightly. Peggy was to take the El Paso plane and then change again at Albuquerque.

Peggy sought out the covered passenger entrance where her plane was scheduled to land in about twenty minutes. By the time she reached there, someone brought up her bags and hat-box. She stood beside them, watching a big plane come in from the north, and make a landing. It was lonely out there in the rain, but she was too depressed to care.

"Is this where I get the San Francisco plane?"

"Yes, sir. It's due soon now."

Peggy turned. It was her neighbor of the New York plane. He half-smiled at her, looked away, lit a cigarette. They stood there, both waiting. He had set down a bag and a briefcase next to her own baggage.

A new roar sounded overhead, then an airliner arced down, its motors momentarily idling, its red port light and row of lighted windows gleaming as the pilot followed his runway to the concrete apron in front of his landing stall. Blue flames shot from exhaust stacks, as attendants ran up steps to the plane's door.

"Do you suppose that's our plane?" asked the young man, politely.

"I think so," said Peggy. "It—"

Before she could say anything more, a couple came rushing toward them, the man loaded down with two bags and a briefcase, the woman carrying a small dressing-case. They were young and attractive, but there was an air of agitation about them.

"I beg your pardon," said the man, "but are you the two who are taking the plane for Albuquerque?"

"Why, yes, I believe we are," Peggy's companion said. "Why?"

The man set down his bags and briefcase.

"I understand you two have the only vacant places left on this ship." He looked anxiously from one to the other. "I wonder if we might ask a great favor of you?"

Peggy and the tall young man looked at each other, then at their questioner.

"We've just flown down from Canada," explained the stranger, "en route to Colorado. Our seats are on the one o'clock plane, but I've just found a wire here that the person we're visiting has had a heart attack, and is in a bad way. They want us to hurry, and unless we get off now, we'll miss the next Denver plane out of Albuquerque, and be delayed heaven knows how long!" He hesitated, apologetically. "I was wondering whether you might not be kind enough to give up your seats to us, under the circumstances, and take the next plane to Albuquerque, instead."

The young man with Peggy shrugged.

"I don't mind." He looked at Peggy. "As for this young lady, however—"

The pretty young woman broke in.

"Please say you will!" she begged Peggy. "It's frightfully important, and—"

"I don't see how I can refuse," Peggy said slowly, "under the circumstances."

"Better hurry aboard, folks!" one of the airport attendants near the waiting airliner called to them. "She's taking off in a couple of minutes!"

"You're both so kind!" said the man with relief. "There's no time to go through the red tape of changing our seats officially. Since all our tickets call for passage through Albuquerque, it doesn't really matter. You just take our places in the next plane. They're both in the name of Mayfield."

The tall, rangy young man nodded.

"My seat is in the name of Webster

—Keith Webster. Good luck to you.”

“Mine’s Young—Peggy Young,” said Peggy.

“All abo-o-ard!” came warningly.

“Thank you both again!” Mayfield told them.

He picked up his bags and briefcase quickly, and started toward the ship. The heavy door was slammed shut behind them, and the steps run back out of the way.

CHAPTER II

TWO-FACED LADY

PEGGY and the man named Webster watched the plane they had intended to take skim along the rain-wet runway, begin to climb the invisible ramp of the midnight sky and vanish into the unknown.

“Well, that’s that!” said Keith Webster, philosophically. “There’s our good deed for the day.” He looked at Peggy. “I’m sorry you have to wait a couple of hours.”

“No one’s meeting me,” Peggy told him. “Anyway, what else could we have done?”

“Well, we’ve a couple of hours to kill,” Webster smiled. “Won’t you come and have a cup of coffee with me, Miss Young? Or a drink?”

Peggy hesitated, then nodded. Why not? He was attractive, and she was lonely.

“Thank you. Hot coffee would be nice.”

“Let me take those bags, and check them.” He took their bags, and Peggy picked up his briefcase.

“I’ll carry this for you,” she offered.

She walked on to the door of the all-night restaurant-café. He joined her there after checking the bags.

“Oh, I forgot to give you the briefcase to check!” Peggy remembered. “I’m so sorry!”

“That’s all right, I’ll carry it.”

He took it from her, and put it under his arm, his eyes on her face.

They went into the lunchroom and found seats overlooking the flying field. The restaurant was nearly empty, which somehow made them seem cozier, more friendly.

“How about a Western sandwich?” Webster asked.

Peggy brightened. “That sounds marvelous. I am a bit starved.”

He ordered, and for a moment they were self-consciously silent. Then Peggy broke the strain.

“Are you going to the Coast, Mr. Webster?”

“Yes—after a stop-off or two. Are you?”

Peggy frowned. “No, I’m going to El Paso, my home.”

“Oh—I thought you were a New Yorker!” He was surprised.

“I’ve lived there for two years,” she told him. Her eyes took on a far-away expression. “It’s a heavenly place to go away from, and a more heavenly place to come back to—if you know what I mean.”

“Yes, I think I do know.” Webster nodded, as they were served sandwiches and coffee. “Do you like El Paso?”

“I hate it!” said Peggy. “There’s just my father, and a step-mother. I don’t mean my step-mother is a story-book villainess. It’s just that we don’t get along together. And my father and I were never close either. But,” she shrugged, “it’s the only place I can think of to go, now that I—I guess I’ve lost interest in a career.” She laughed a little wryly. “Funny, isn’t it, how you’ll tell intimate things about yourself to a stranger? I wonder why.”

“Because,” he hazarded, “I suppose everyone likes to open up to somebody, sometime or other. . . . Have a cigarette?”

“Thanks.” She took one, and they talked on idly, becoming acquainted, growing more at ease.

Peggy told him, with a faint trace of bitterness in her voice, how she had left Texas for New York two years before, hoping to go on the stage. Unsuccessful, she had drifted into modeling work, with spells of jobs as salesgirl. The past two years came back so vividly, she wanted to talk about them and herself.

KEITH WEBSTER told her things about himself, too, but Peggy did not realize then, how general was his information. In fact, it was not for a long time that she did realize it, or recognize how vague had been the information he had given about this Western trip of his. So vague that he might as well have said nothing about it at all.

"I've worked in a brokerage house," he told her, grinning. "Press-agented a night-club, sold insurance, written advertising and radio scripts, and worked last in a travel agency." His voice took on a tinge of bitterness. "What I've wanted to do most of all, was to join the army. But I guess that will have to wait for a while. There are reasons, though I'm a double orphan, and a poor relation."

Peggy thought she would like to know those reasons, but of course she couldn't ask. Instead, she said:

"I saw you wave good-by when we flew over Manhattan. I couldn't help noticing your expression, and wondering—"

He looked away. "If you must know, there was a girl. She married somebody else, several months ago."

"Oh, I see," Peggy nodded.

"You don't—you can't! It wasn't just the girl. It was the general set-up." His mouth was grim. "The man she married is rich. That's fair enough. But what burns me is that I know he made his money crookedly. She knows it, and so does everybody else. But no one cares.

"He's still respected and catered to, and can buy what he wants—in-

cluding a wife. How he made his money doesn't matter, as long as he has it." He ground out his cigarette butt, his eyes tortured. "It's a crazy world."

Peggy saw that he was disillusioned, and hurt to the core of his idealistic young heart. She felt a spirit of kinship with him, a keen desire to comfort him.

"That's life, though, isn't it?" she asked.

"Sure," said Keith, cynically. "And since that's how life is, that's the way I'm going to play it. I sound like something out of a cheap play, don't I?" He stared into his empty coffee-cup. "I've had chances to make money—big money—by pocketing my scruples. But that was out. Maybe I was just a plain sap. Well, I've about made up my mind to start all over again, with the Golden Rule and the Marquis of Queensberry out. I'm going to look out strictly for Number One."

"Maybe you're right," said Peggy. "Maybe it doesn't pay to be unselfish, and play fair with other people—with men."

She was thinking of herself now, and of those past two years, feeling the bitterness of it. But she couldn't tell him, she couldn't tell anybody about the man and girl who had broken her heart. The rich man she had loved, the man she had been so sure loved her, and the gold-digger who had taken him away from her.

Peggy had wanted only his love, which was ashes in her mouth now, and that other girl had taken everything—given nothing. Peggy's roommate had told her she was a romantic fool, but she had decided she would rather be a romantic fool and run away from it all than be a gold-digger.

"If you had to live your last two years in New York over again," Keith Webster asked her abruptly, as if he could read her mind, "would you live them the same way?"



Keith kissed her, softly at first, then possessively

"No," Peggy admitted, candidly. "I wouldn't. For I've been taught a lesson I needed. Women *can* get what they want out of life—and the worse you treat men, the better they like it."

"So now you're going to blitzkrieg every male who crosses your path." He grinned.

Her answering smile held little mirth.

"I'm through with romance. When I marry, it's going to be a man who can give me everything in the world I want. The moon, if I want it."

"What about love?" asked Keith, curiously.

"From now on," said Peggy succinctly, "I'll take spinach!"

An airport attendant hurried into the restaurant. Excited, he spoke to the counterman, but his raised voice was meant for anyone who cared to listen.

"Heard about Flight Forty-seven?"

"No, what?" The restaurant man turned a startled face.

"Crashed—just this side of Wichita! Albuquerque plane—left this airport about forty minutes ago. Burned to a cinder, with everybody in it!"

PEGGY and Keith looked at each other.

"How awful!" said Peggy, shocked.

"Albuquerque!" Keith wheeled on Peggy. "Good Lord, that was our plane! We just missed being killed. *Us!*"

Peggy went white, and he caught her by the arm.

"Steady, now!"

"I—I'm all right." Peggy moistened her lips. "But to think that we—that it might have been—"

"I know," said Keith, low-voiced. "Except for a trick of fate, an accident—"

"Those people who took our place, those poor Mayfields!" Peggy choked up. "Oh, it's too horrible!"

"Look here, can we have a drink?"

Keith called to the counterman. "We almost took that plane ourselves!"

"Sure thing!" said the counterman sympathetically, and produced a bottle and glasses. "I feel like a snort myself!" He poured three drinks, and downed his own quickly. "If you've got any religion, brother, you'll get down on your knees and say, 'thank you, Lord!'" He grinned, weakly. "I'll go out and see if there's any more news on the radio. Mind watching out, for me?"

He went out. Keith and Peggy, left alone in the great room, looked at each other, as they drank the liquor. Their horror was still reflected in their eyes.

"I can't believe it!" Peggy shuddered. "It's incredible! Those things happen to other people!"

Keith nodded somberly.

"Mayfield and his sister happen to be the other people tonight!"

"How do you know they were brother and sister?" Peggy asked, trying to regain control of her nerves.

"I just got that impression," Keith admitted. He looked up quickly as the counterman re-entered. "Any more news?"

"They're all gone," said the counterman. "They don't know what happened yet, but investigations won't do those poor devils much good any more. We'll know by the morning papers who was on board."

He went out again, and Peggy and Keith looked at each other once more, the same thought in their minds.

"Our names—" she began.

"We'd better report what happened to the airfield authorities," he said slowly. "They'll have to notify the Mayfield family." He stooped, and picked up his briefcase, and got a good look at it for the first time since he had taken it from Peggy at the restaurant door.

"Look here!" he cried. "This isn't my briefcase! Mayfield must have taken mine, by mistake, when he picked up his bags out there. Yes—"

see here? His initials—'P.M.' "

Peggy stared, fascinated. It was hard to realize that this little leather case belonged to a man so suddenly dead.

"What a shame you lost yours. But still, it's better than if—"

Keith nodded soberly, staring at the bag.

"I still can't believe it," said Peggy. "Those two people, taking our places, and *that* happening! Why, just think. At this moment we're the only two people on earth who know they're really dead." She shivered. "It makes me feel—spooky. Let's take that bag to the authorities here, right away!"

"No!" said Keith quickly, and there was an odd expression suddenly in his eyes, as if something had just dawned on him. "I want to know more about those Mayfields. Call it a newspaperman's curiosity, if you like. But I—well, I just have a feeling, that's all."

"What are you going to do?" Her eyes were on his.

"Open this bag, and see what we can find out. We'll examine it together." He looked around, noted a row of booths across the room. "Let's take our coffee over to a booth."

HE TOOK his own cup, and led the way. Peggy hesitated, then followed him. He was already examining the bag when she got there.

"Here's luck!" he said. "It's not even locked—only strapped."

Keith emptied the contents of the briefcase upon the table, between them. There was a miscellany of letters and papers, baggage checks, a large note-book, and a bundle of letters tied up with a mauve ribbon.

Peggy watched Keith hastily run through the loose letters, telegrams, and papers, putting aside the little bundle and the book. He scanned a few, some more carefully than others, read one through with attention. He kept his eyes lowered on what he was reading, and she could not see his

expression—which would have startled her if she had. Nor could she have known with what an effort he had repressed a start when he had read one name and address.

Those lowered lids of his were veiling a sudden fire in his eyes that those who knew him would have recognized for what it was—a battle light, a realization that Fate had tossed at him a chance at something which might hold as much danger as would flaming guns. And it must be grasped and faced with reckless daring.

"Who was he?" asked Peggy impatiently. "What's it all about?"

"Seems his name is—was—Philip Mayfield," Keith said, as coolly as though he had not read something that had kindled a fire in his veins. "Most of these letters are addressed to him at a London address, a few to Quebec. Seems to be an American, but had been serving in the British forces until he was invalided home. . . . Pardon me while I read this letter from Colorado. May be where they were going."

He took up a letter, and read it quickly, but with care.

"I was right. It's from a man named Charles Estabrook, written to Mayfield in London. It mentions a check enclosed for expenses."

"He mentions how anxious he is to see him and Janet, and says he's looking forward to their first visit to Skytop." Keith looked up. "That's odd. This Estabrook doesn't write as if he's a relative. Wonder why he sent them money to come to see him?"

He opened the little bundle of letters, glanced at one or two, and whistled. Then quickly opened the little book, and riffled its pages.

"Hmm," he said, "this seems to be a diary. Mayfield's, evidently. I didn't know men still kept them."

"What are the letters tied with the ribbon?" Peggy asked curiously.

"Love letters, apparently. From Estabrook to a Boston lady—Miss Fanny Whitehead." He shuffled

through them, rapidly. "Some are addressed to a Mrs. Arthur Mayfield, in England, twenty-five to thirty years ago. Say, she must have been Mayfield's mother! Here, look at them."

Peggy, who had foresworn romance forever, looked intrigued.

"But, we oughtn't really to read them, ought we?" she protested.

He grinned. "I'm a newspaperman, and you're a woman. We're both curious by nature, so why pretend? Anyway, I've got an idea about something that affects both of us. Please read those letters, while I read the diary."

He fell to reading the diary, and finally Peggy began on the letters.

CHAPTER III

NEW HORIZONS

KEITH was the first to finish reading. He stared out of the window onto the shiny glare of the wet, flood-lighted airport field, and again there was a strange expression in his eyes.

"These letters were to Philip Mayfield's mother," Peggy said suddenly. "The man who wrote them was in love with her long before she was married and went to England to live. Two of his letters written to her there congratulate her on the birth of a boy and a girl. He mentions planning to send a pearl necklace to keep for the little girl until she grew up. Sounds like he has money, doesn't it? But he is—or was—an astronomy professor at Harvard. I thought professors were poor."

"Maybe he inherited money," Keith hazarded, "and gave his life to science. There are people like that."

"He sounds like a darling."

"He's out in Colorado now, at a place called Skytop," said Keith.

"This diary says he invited the Mayfields to visit him there, sent them the money. Apparently, he's never met either of them—and their mother is dead."

"Poor old man! What a shock it will be to him to learn what's happened tonight!" Peggy shook her head. "Why, Mr. Mayfield said he'd had a heart attack! This news may kill him!"

"Maybe," said Keith Webster in an odd voice. "And maybe not."

"He'll have to know, won't he? It'll be in the papers, anyway, after—"

"Not if we keep quiet," he said slowly.

"I don't understand." Peggy stared.

"Listen! From this diary, and a phrase or two in the old man's letter to Mayfield, it's apparent the Mayfields were pretty much alone in the world. It probably won't make too much difference to anyone whether the truth is known for a while yet, anyway." He leaned forward, his eyes on hers. "There's no one to give a hang whether I died tonight in that crash or not."

Peggy's eyes grew wide, her lips were parted.

"And you said yourself," he added, "that your death would make little difference to anyone except your father—and you two have never been very close. Do you follow me?"

"What do you mean, my 'death?'" Peggy hardly breathed the word.

"You and I missed taking that plane and getting killed tonight for some reason. Get it? And I think I know why."

Peggy merely looked at him, amazed.

"Why?" he repeated. "Because Fate has decided to take a hand in our lives—and maybe sometime you'll know why, as I know now! A good reason—the best!"

Peggy couldn't believe she was hearing right. She stared at Keith as if he had spoken to her in some

foreign tongue. For how could she ever realize how elated Keith was, how he had seized on this tragedy as the biggest break of his life? It was a break that not only meant much to him, personally, but one that had far-reaching possibilities for others—millions of others.

He had not known how he was going to accomplish something he had set out with firm, grim determination to do—and here it had been dropped right into his lap. It was an opportunity that must not be missed! It must be taken advantage of, at all costs!

But Peggy only looked at Keith as if he had suddenly gone crazy—for how could she understand.

"What do you mean?" she breathed.

"Just this," he said swiftly, eagerly, his plan forming rapidly in his mind. "Both of us have pretty much made a mess of things with our lives, haven't we? Both of us have determined we'll run our lives differently. Well, here is a chance to start from scratch—to take on entirely new identities. We'd be fools not to take advantage of it."

THEN Peggy understood.

"You mean that we take the Mayfields' places? You must be mad!"

"Why not?" He seemed in deadly earnest. "I'm a newspaper man, used to going here, there, anywhere where there's adventure. And you—instead

of going back to your stepmother's house to brood, why not take this chance?"

"Of course I can't swing the scheme without 'Janet'. We can always go on, if it doesn't pan out. Besides, we may be doing a rather fine thing by keeping the truth about the disaster tonight from Professor Estabrook until it's safe for him to know."

"But we'd never get away with it!"

"Why not? He's never seen the Mayfields. The risk of anyone being out there who knows them is negligible. You're an actress, and I have imagination. Why shouldn't we put it over, for a while, anyway? Who knows what it might lead to?"

"To the penitentiary, maybe," Peggy suggested, wryly.

"We'll not be doing anything criminal. Whatever we do will lie only between ourselves and our own consciences. All we have to do is to take that Albuquerque plane, using the seats that are in their name. In Albuquerque, we can easily exchange our own tickets for a Denver plane.

"At the very least, we'll both have a pleasant vacation. I may run across something in the line of my business that I'll be glad about all my life, and you may meet someone worthwhile. What say we try it?"

Peggy was silent for a long minute, digesting his remarks. He was silent, watching her. He thought he

[Turn page]

NO FINER DRINK.

... under the sun or moon



could read something of her reactions, too, in her lovely mobile face. But he was far off the track.

What she was really thinking, deep down, was to wonder why this man could sway her as he did. She was so conscious of him, so aware of the throbbing of her pulses when he looked into her eyes. It sounded crazy, on such short acquaintance, but it was true.

Because of the nearness of this one tall, rangy man, the other man back in New York might not have existed. But this man must not know that—nor should she allow him to sway her against her will or better judgment.

"But I don't know you," she objected, feebly. "After all, you're an utter stranger to me."

"So were the Mayfields to Professor Estabrook," he argued, "even if he did know their mother thirty years ago. Look here—think it over, while we fly to Albuquerque. If you decide not to, we can tell the airport authorities there how we changed places on Flight Forty-seven. We can pretend we didn't know about the accident until we saw the morning papers."

"That's fair enough," said Peggy.

Through the hours that followed, Peggy struggled with the problem, struggled with the temptation. She reviewed, over and over again, the past two years; her heartbreak and broken pride. She thought of how she must go back home, to face the petty irritations her stepmother always managed to throw in her way. And then what? What was there for her in El Paso?

There was much in what Keith Webster had said, she decided. And his idea of their having a second chance at life. Didn't this look like it? Didn't miracles sometimes happen? Why else should the tragedy have happened to the Mayfields?

It would be an adventure—one doubly alluring, shared with Keith—but dared she undertake it? Gradually she reached her decision.

Keith had not mentioned the subject aboard the plane, nor did he when they landed in Albuquerque. He took Peggy to breakfast, and bought all the morning papers, as they went in, dividing them with her. Anxiously they scanned the front pages.

BLACK headlines told of the airliner's disaster of the night before. There were photographs of the charred wreckage, and a list of the names of the victims.

"'Keith Webster, of New York,'" Keith read aloud, slowly, and looked at her.

"'Peggy Young,'" said Peggy. "In cold print. I can't believe it."

"Well?" he asked, meaningly.

Peggy made no pretense of misunderstanding him.

"I've been thinking it over, all night," she told him. "I thought about those love letters—about that dear old man, waiting for those poor Mayfields to arrive." She drew a deep breath. "I'll do it."

His face lit up.

"You may be saving his life, you know."

Peggy shook her head.

"Why pretend? I don't know just what opportunity you may be expecting at Skytop, but I may get a second chance, as you said." She smiled. "I'm going to stick by what I said, too, about living life differently."

He thrust out his hand.

"Then we're partners!"

She hesitated, eyeing him quizzically.

"But only partners, mind. This adventure stays platonic."

"That'll be the easiest part of it," he declared, and grinned boyishly. "Wait and see."

Peggy gave him an odd look, a feminine look. . . .

While in Albuquerque, Peggy and Keith read and digested all the Mayfield papers, and carefully discussed the story they were to tell. It seemed fairly certain that Professor Esta-

brook had been out of touch with his former sweetheart and her family for years. The outbreak of the war, and the siege of Britain, and Philip's war record after that, had evidently inspired him to invite the young people to come back to their own country, and stay with him for the duration.

Neither would attempt, they decided, the dangers of a too Anglicized accent. After all, the Mayfields were Americans. There were other details to be worked out. The rest, they would have to trust to their wits—and luck.

Two hours later, they flew northward. And now that the die was cast, and the adventure begun, Peggy knew indecision, panic and regret.

She had embarked on this undertaking for several reasons. For one thing, it had appealed to her love of adventure, and tempted her when she was at a loss what to do next. Then Keith's argument that this was a chance to begin her life completely over again, coming hard on the coincidence of the tragedy, had appealed to the fatalistic streak in every romantic woman.

Finally, although she tried hard not to admit that even to herself, there was Keith! There was something in Keith Webster at once boyish and devil-may-care that struck a sympathetic chord in herself. Some blind, inexplicable instinct made her want to stay near him, to go where he went, never be away from his twisted little smile. She could not understand it. It was simply there.

They flew over canyons and buttes, mountains and glacier meadows, cascades, lakes and forests. Peggy covertly studied, instead, the young man beside her. Was she making a mistake, joining him in this fantastic adventure?

Beyond, to the west, rose the eastern slope of the Rocky Mountains, and below them the great foothills of the mighty range. What was she going to find in Colorado?

Unexpectedly Keith turned and smiled at her, pointing downward at the magnificent scenery. She smiled back, but none too convincingly.

"Getting cold feet?" asked Keith.

"Once I start something," said Peggy, "I finish it."

"That's good!" He grinned. "Look—here's Denver!"

It was true. The airliner was already arcing down to the airfield.

Almost before they knew it, they were stepping out into the dazzling Western sunshine. Peggy felt a little pounding in her throat.

"Janet Mayfield" and her brother had almost reached the end of their journey.

CHAPTER IV

THE GREAT DIVIDE

LEAVING the plane, Peggy and Keith walked uncertainly across the landing apron to the passenger exit, where a small group was awaiting the airliner's arrival. From Professor Estabrook's letter to the Mayfields, they knew he was to have met them at the airport, but since his heart attack, they were uncertain if they would be met at all. If not, they planned to go on to Skytop by motor or train.

"Mr. Mayfield?"

A man was approaching them, smiling cordially, as he waved. He was tall, bronzed, and wore a clipped mustache. Although he was dressed in a somewhat Western manner, his clothes bore the mark of a good tailor, and his whole bearing was that of an Easterner. Only his Stetson and boots were definitely of the country.

He probably was in his middle thirties, and his hair was prematurely graying at the temples. Peggy decided that he was good-looking—almost too good-looking.

Although he addressed Keith when he spoke first, he was looking at her, with eyes that were at once bold and appreciative.

"This is Philip Mayfield, I believe? I'm Harvey Bayard, a friend of Dr. Estabrook's." He gave Keith his hand. "And this, of course, is Mrs. Mayfield!" He removed his hat, smiling at Peggy. "Welcome to the West!"

Peggy blinked, and gulped. "Th-thank you!" She was a little dazed, aware of the startled look Keith flashed her.

"How is Dr. Estabrook?" Keith asked quickly.

"Much better, this morning," Bayard told them. "He is over his heart attack, resting quietly—or was, when I left the observatory late last night. He's so anxious to see you both, however, that I promised to bring you out there to him first, before I took you home with me."

He correctly read the surprise in their faces, though he was unable to understand another expression in Keith's face that flashed there, then was instantly gone.

"You're to be my guests," Bayard went on smilingly. "I'm not only the professor's nearest neighbor—my place is only three or four miles down the pass from the observatory—but we're old friends of years' standing. The accommodations at the observatory are not too comfortable, particularly for a woman, so I insisted on putting you up." He held out a hand hospitably. "If you'll give me your baggage checks, Mayfield, I'll have my man get your things."

"Did you hear what he called me!" breathed Peggy, as Bayard strode away. "I'm not your sister! I'm your wife!"

"How was I to know!" Keith muttered.

He was confused, and with good reason, for with all his secret planning there was something for which he had not bargained. He had been so

sure that he could protect her against any and all eventualities that might arise, that as far as she was concerned, the whole thing would be nothing more than an interesting, perhaps exciting, adventure. And now this! He didn't know what to say.

"You ought to have found out, you idiot!" she told him furiously, a glassy smile on her face for Mr. Bayard's benefit. "This is a pretty kettle of fish! What are we going to do now?"

"I don't know. But for Pete's sake don't give it away until we've decided what to do!" he begged.

"I'm going to tell him that—"

"Hush!" he warned. "Here he comes!"

They both were ready with answering smiles when Bayard came back.

"Bill's getting your bags," he told them. "Shall we go? The car's just outside."

A SPORTY-LOOKING convertible sedan of expensive make waited for them. They got into the tonneau while the cowboy named Bill stowed away the bags, then took the wheel. They headed northwest, toward the Switzerland Trail.

Bayard pointed out the snow-capped line of mountains on the horizon ahead.

"That's the Snowy Range, that we're heading for. I've a hunting lodge up there, not far from the observatory. It's in the most out-of-the-way spot imaginable. In a way, it sometimes seems to be cut off from the world, but at least I can be near Dr. Estabrook.

"I've been worried ever since the professor came here—the altitude, of course, and his heart—but though he's retired now, no one can ever stop him from working at his astronomy. It's his life. And naturally being the astronomer in charge of the observatory, he has a chance also to take charge of the coronagraph himself. That's his pet."

"What's a coronagraph?" asked Peggy, more to make conversation than anything else. She desperately wanted time to think.

"A coronagraph, Mrs. Mayfield," Bayard told her, "is a combination telescope and camera that creates an artificial eclipse when it photographs the sun. It's a rather recent invention. Dr. Estabrook, who's been chasing eclipses all over the world for years, you know—he's one of our greatest astrophysicists and astronomers—came from Harvard last fall to take charge of the new one here at the observatory. He was particularly interested and enthusiastic naturally, because this is the highest astronomical station in the world."

For some reason Keith had shown keen interest the moment the coronagraph had been mentioned, and it did not all seem to be for the reason that he, like Peggy, was anxious to keep the man talking on any subject except themselves.

"I wonder just why," he said, "this observatory with its new coronagraph was located in Colorado. There are higher places in the United States, aren't there?"

"Oh, yes, but the chief advantage of this location is because it's up on the Great Divide, where a cloudburst that occurs every day, lasts about an hour. It washes the sky an intense blue, clear as any in the Western Hemisphere. Motes of dust can make lots of difference on a telescope lens, you know. And especially with the necessity of missing no single thing if the coronagraph is to be depended on for accuracy in determining the weather—often for as much as two weeks ahead—a clear sky is important."

"Besides"—Bayard laughed a little—"well, there's our isolation up here, and astronomers are mighty queer about not being disturbed. It would be next to impossible for anyone who had no business up there to get within miles of the observatory."

"I'm sure we're flattered, and highly honored at being allowed here," murmured Peggy, but the side glance she gave Keith said wordlessly that she wasn't feeling either flattered or honored.

"Do you folks hunt, by the way?" Bayard changed the subject, to ask.

"If you mean foxes," volunteered Keith, "I'm afraid I haven't my pink coat with me." He was well aware of Peggy's annoyance.

Harvey Bayard grinned.

"Oh, I meant typical Rocky Mountain game."

"He knows you did," said Peggy, coldly. "He was just trying to be funny." Her annoyance at poor Keith was growing.

"We must see that you bag a grizzly and a couple of wild mountain sheep and deer, for their heads. As mementos of your visit here."

"A white bearskin would be lovely in my wife's boudoir before the fireplace," said Keith. "She could lie on it and see pictures in the fire." He was still resenting the "Idiot!" she had thrown at him.

"Or pictures of men in striped suits, making little rocks out of big ones," she said sweetly, and turned to their politely mystified host. "Do tell us more about the observatory, Mr. Bayard."

CLEVERLY, Peggy drew him out. Bayard spoke enthusiastically of the old astronomer, under whom he had studied, in Harvard. Now Bayard's law firm was handling Professor Estabrook's estate, and whatever other legal affairs the old man had.

"The professor's one of the most lovable men living, and a great scientist," he said, "but he's also one of the loneliest. I've never seen him more eager for anything than he is for your visit. He never married on account of your mother, you know, Mayfield."

"Yes, I know," Keith said humbly,

and threw a glance at Peggy.

She didn't know just why that look touched her heart, as furious at him as she was. But it did, and she came to the rescue.

"Are you married, yourself, Mr. Bayard?" Peggy asked the first question that popped into her mind.

"No. I'm afraid I'm a confirmed bachelor." He laughed. "You're in a nest of bachelors, Mrs. Mayfield. I have two other guests, from the East—Charlie Ames, my associate, and Sherman Childs, of New York." He threw Keith a smiling look. "I hope you haven't a jealous husband."

So he would like to be flirtatious, would he? Peggy glanced at Keith. He was the one who was annoyed now. She laughed inwardly.

"Heaven's no!" she said airily. "Philip's a very modern husband, indeed. Aren't you, Philip dear?"

"Ultra-modern, you might say," said Keith, unexpectedly. "I don't even mind Janet's looking around for a new husband, as long as he's solvent enough!"

HE WAS not too meek, Peggy was glad to see. Well, they might be in for it, here in Colorado, but at least it would not be without excitement.

After a long drive, they reached the entrance to Bayard's ranch and private game preserve. A station wagon was parked near the gate.

"The road to the observatory is new, and pretty narrow," said Bayard, "so we'd better switch to the station wagon. Bill will take your baggage to the lodge."

In the station wagon, their host took the wheel, and shortly turned off into a road that led up the pass.

"How blue the sky is!" Peggy marveled.

"The Indians hereabout used to call the Arapahoes of the Continental Divide, the 'Men of the Blue Sky'," Bayard told her. "You see why, now."

"Look—there's a runaway horse!" exclaimed Peggy.

A pinto mountain pony, saddled and bridled, but riderless, was picking his way, zigzag fashion, down a trail on the mountainside.

Bayard smiled at her. "He's a return horse," he told her. "Release one of those ponies anywhere in these mountains, and they'll find their way back home, somehow."

Peggy fell silent, letting the men talk. There was so much for her to think about. It was an odd feeling to pretend to be married to someone she had known less than twenty-four hours. But somehow Keith hadn't seemed like a stranger, almost from the time she had met him.

His wife! An odd thrill swept her, in spite of her attempts to force it from her consciousness. What would it be like actually to be his wife, to feel his strong, protecting arms about her? Somehow, she was sure they would be protecting.

There was a far-away look, a softness in her lovely eyes at these thoughts. Then determinedly she shook them off. How foolish to let them spin through her head, even for a moment! Keith was not thinking such thoughts of her. All he wanted out of this was that "opportunity" he had talked of so eagerly.

It was an odder sensation, still, to wonder into what strange waters their dangerous deception might carry her. Had she made a terrible mistake? Should she, somehow, back out of her agreement now?

But how? If she didn't quit now, how would she handle Keith in the rôle of her husband. Would he need handling?

Of a sudden they rounded a bend in the road, and there was the observatory, looming above them, its white dome-shaped roof silhouetted picturesquely against the silent blue. Below, lay a breath-taking vista of mountain scenery. But Peggy could think only of the ordeal that lay before her. Oh, why, *why* had she ever embarked on this adventure?

"Last stop," said Harvey Bayard, as he cut off the ignition switch of the station wagon. He made a broad gesture. "In case you're interested, you're now standing squarely upon the Continental Divide!"

CHAPTER V

PEGGY IS ECLIPSED

TWO men emerged from the observatory, and came to greet the party. Bayard introduced them. The short, balding, bespectacled man was a Mr. Prescott, the Weather Bureau meteorologist stationed at the observatory, and acting as second assistant to the professor. The other, tall, rangy and possessed of a peculiar, unfamiliar drawl, was Kenneth Holland, Dr. Estabrook's chief assistant.

Peggy and Keith, taut with anticipation when told how anxiously the professor was awaiting them, followed the men inside. They entered via a little vestibule directly into the main room of the observatory, its ceiling a great arch with little round windows in the dome.

In the center of the floor stood the coronagraph—Peggy recognized it at once—a large telescope with a complex camera attachment that much resembled a big anti-aircraft gun.

They passed on through, to be shown immediately into Professor Estabrook's study, a small, unpretentious room, with a littered worktable, a confusion of maps and books and charts, a chest of drawers, and a bed, in which the astronomer sat propped up on pillows, a Lincolnlike shawl about his shoulders.

He was a beaming-faced man, with a thatch of silk-fine white hair, and bushy white brows arching above keen dark eyes. When he smiled, as he did now at sight of them, his face grew cheerful with hundreds of wrin-

gles. Peggy warmed to him instantly.

"Philip, my boy!" The old man held out his hand welcomingly to Keith, shook it vigorously. He smiled at Janet. "And this is the lovely Miss Janet Gray from Omaha whom you married! My dear, Philip's glowing written descriptions of you didn't do you half justice!"

Peggy sat down beside him when Bayard brought up a chair for her.

"You children must pardon me not being up to greet you properly," the old astronomer said, "but the medico insists that I stay in bed a day or two, and Holland refuses to let me disobey him. What kind of a journey did you have?" He smiled benignly. "Without incident, I hope?"

"It was—lovely," said Peggy.

"We're delighted to find you so much better, sir," put in Keith. "When we heard about your attack we—er—were very worried."

"It was nothing," deprecated Estabrook. "The altitude, you know, sometimes—"

"Well, all that matters is that they're here, and you're feeling fit again, Professor," said Bayard briskly. "And you're going to stay in bed for at least a week!"

"Fiddlesticks!" The old man smiled at Peggy and Keith. "It was only bad luck that got me down yesterday, of all days. But when I heard over the radio today about that airliner tragedy, and realized that only a delay of a few hours in your schedule—of which your telegram earlier had informed us—had prevented you from being aboard the ship, I knew that Dame Fortune had been generous. You children did just miss taking that ship out of Kansas City, didn't you?"

"Yes, we just did miss taking it, sir," said Keith. "But a miss is as good as a mile, isn't it?"

"I remember, once flying over the Andes, when we were chasing an eclipse down in Peru—"

"Doctor's orders are 'no talking,

plenty of rest," interjected Bayard firmly. "Mr. and Mrs. Mayfield have only stopped to say hello, Professor, and you—"

"Nonsense! Do you realize I've been waiting for years for this moment? Philip and I—"

"I also realize that the Mayfields have been traveling for days, and must be very tired," retorted Bayard. "I'll bring them back tomorrow, Professor, in the morning when you're more rested."

The old man was contrite. He took each by a hand.

"Many thanks for coming so far to see an old man."

There was a mist in Peggy's eyes. She suddenly reached over and kissed him on the cheek.

"I'm glad we did, Professor—so very glad. We'll see you tomorrow."

"Thank you, my dear. Holland will show you about the observatory. I want to talk to Harvey a bit before he leaves."

He smiled after them as they left the room, then turned to Harvey Bayard.

"Did you bring it with you?"

The attorney nodded, and removed a typewritten paper from his inner pocket. Professor Estabrook took it with a sigh of relief.

"Do you know," he said, "that attack gave me quite a scare yesterday. I should have done this long ago. I've meant to, but put it off until Fanny's boy got here. He's a fine boy, isn't he, Harvey? Doesn't resemble Fanny much, but he's got all her charm." His eyes looked back fondly over thirty years. "And his wife—she's a pretty thing, isn't she?"

"Mrs. Mayfield is very beautiful," said Harvey Bayard. He went to the door, and stopped there. "As your attorney," he said, "it's my duty to remind you that before you sign that paper, you want to be sure you want to do this."

"If I change my mind, I can always tear it up," chuckled the professor.

IN THE main room of the observatory, Holland, the astronomer's assistant, was explaining the function of the coronagraph to Peggy and Keith. She stared at the telescope, listening, but her mind was full of her own confused thoughts.

Now that she had seen what this visit meant to that dear old man, she was glad she had come. But what complications might evolve out of that marriage masquerade!

But Keith wasn't thinking of any of that now—a glance at him proved it to Peggy. He wasn't thinking of the old man, of the fact that he had just acquired a "wife", nor of anything else at the moment except that coronagraph. He was interested only in the telescope, and listened intently to what was being explained to him.

"The sun, you see, like a great dahlia," Holland was saying, "is ringed with petals of light. Often the corona is racked by violent eruptions that produce violent magnetic storms through the earth's atmosphere. But it is practically impossible to detect such phenomena with an ordinary telescope because the sun's brilliance obscures its crown.

"But now, with this coronagraph, however, with which artificial eclipses can be created and photographed, astronomical science has given a great gift to the world, because"—he paused to let the effects of his words sink in—"with the instrument we can predict magnetic storms in advance and even forecast weather at long range."

"Isn't that marvelous!" Peggy paid tribute. "I should think, now that the Nazis and the Japs and all the others can't get weather reports from this country, that they would want a coronagraph of their own. But one in other places wouldn't do them any good, would it? And, of course, they couldn't possibly get up here?"

"Not a chance," said Holland firmly, "not a chance in a thousand years. This observatory is as well

protected as a fort by its natural approaches and also by guards."

Peggy noticed, though, that just before Holland answered her, he had given her a somewhat startled glance. And Keith was looking at her queerly, too. She hoped she hadn't made a *faux pas*. But in the strange situation she was in, she wasn't sure just what minute she might say something or other that was better left unsaid.

She had no time to think of that now, though. Her greatest anxiety was to be alone with Keith, to have a talk. Bayard emerged from the professor's quarters just then.

"We're ready, Mr. Bayard!" She gave him a radiant smile. "Frankly, I'm dying for a bath!"

Harvey Bayard assured her she could have one in less than half an hour. They left with him, heading down the pass in his station-wagon.

BAYARD'S hunting lodge, a picturesque sprawling structure of logs and native stone set in a grove of limber-pine and spruce high on a mountain, was larger than Peggy had expected it to be. She and Keith exchanged involuntary glances, as Bayard ushered them inside.

The two-story main room was dominated by a huge stone fireplace, and great plate-glass windows gave out in three directions upon breathtaking views. Crossed snow-shoes hung above the mantel, and about the walls hung mounted heads of big-horned Rocky Mountain sheep, of antlered deer and moose. On the floor the skins of white grizzlies and black bears served as rugs.

It was a masculine abode, yet a luxurious one. Peggy and Keith had not expected anything like this.

"This is Mrs. Woodley, my housekeeper," said Bayard, as a spare, black-clad woman with pince-nez came forward to meet them. "Mr. and Mrs. Mayfield, Mrs. Woodley."

"How do you do?" The housekeeper's accent was definitely New

England, her very appearance oddly out-of-place in this Rocky Mountain lodge. "You must be fatigued, Mrs. Mayfield."

"I am a little, thanks," said Peggy.

She instinctively disliked the housekeeper at first sight, with a woman's prescience. But she could find no reason for that feeling.

The housekeeper led the way down a gallery, and Peggy and Keith followed her, as their host called after them that they would all meet for cocktails before dinner. Mrs. Woodley opened a door, and stepped aside.

"I'm sorry we couldn't lay out your things, Mrs. Mayfield, but your bags were locked. If you would like anything please ring for Wong or myself."

Peggy thanked her, and stepped quickly into the room, followed self-consciously by Keith. Mrs. Woodley vanished, closing the door behind her.

It was a luxurious room. There was a fireplace, a bath to one side, a dressing room to the other, and magnificent views from the windows. But those two only noticed the large, double bed!

Peggy turned on Keith, shapely fists on her hips, her eyes blazing.

"Well, isn't *this* cozy!" She added, hastily. "The situation, I mean—not the room!"

Keith, embarrassed, was plainly trying hard not to show it.

"I'll ask Mr. Bayard to give me another room," he said quickly. "I'll pretend I suffer from insomnia, or something. I'll think of some excuse!"

Peggy began to pace the floor.

"I practically curled up and died when he first called me Mrs. Mayfield!"

"It's a tough break," admitted Keith. "I—"

"You said the woman was Mayfield's sister. How do we know *she* won't pop up? Now what are we going to do? We can't stay here like this, pretending to be married!"

"Why can't we?" he fired at her,

unexpectedly. "As long as I—er—sleep somewhere else?"

"You mean, you want me to—"

"Who'll know the difference? It's rotten luck, but we can't very well change it, without showing ourselves up for a pair of impostors, and letting the professor know the truth. You saw how happy he was to see us. How do you think it would effect him to find out who was really in that wreck last night?"

"And what about that new life you wanted, the chance to be a real man-hunter?" His lip curled. "Bayard seems to be just what the doctor ordered—wealthy, important. Or one of his bachelor friends might be your meat. It's a perfect set-up, as far as you're concerned."

"That's all very well, my fine-feathered friend," Peggy said sarcastically, "but what good does that do me as long as they think I'm married?"

"You can always get a divorce, can't you?" he retorted. "Anyway, if you were unmarried, these bachelors might be afraid of you."

Her lovely eyes narrowed.

"I suppose it wouldn't break your heart if one of them wanted to marry me so badly that they'd pay you to give me a divorce!"

"For two cents and a twisted collar-button I'd wring your neck," he told her helplessly.

"Where are all those scruples you said you were throwing in the ash-can?" she asked sweetly.

"I never said I meant to go crooked," he told her coldly. "I simply said—"

"From now on I'm looking out strictly for Number One!" she quoted, her eyes twinkling. Then she suddenly smiled at him.

"I wonder why we fight so much? It can't be because I dislike you. I never would have come on this junket if I did."

Keith grinned sheepishly. It made him feel better, a lot better, to see her

taking it like this. She certainly was the thoroughbred he had sized her up to be. And smarter and lovelier.

He couldn't tell her, yet, just why he had so impulsively asked her to come along, but he was sure that if she did know the reason she would have gone into this thing wholeheartedly, without a single question.

"What do you say I shave and change, then turn the bathroom over to you?" he suggested. "I'll ask Bayard about the extra room, after dinner."

"Good. I'll start unpacking."

SHE headed toward her bags, and she anticipated her, raising the heaviest and laying it on the bed. Of a sudden he gave an exclamation.

"What is it?" she asked.

"Look at the initials on your bags." He pointed toward the initials "M. Y." stamped on each bag.

"M' stands for Margaret," she told him. "But they've always called me Peggy."

"Your name is supposed to be Janet Gray Mayfield."

"Oh!" She stared at the initials. "Then they should be 'J. G. M'! What shall we do?"

"We can't scrape them off, without it looking odd," he mused.

He glanced around, and his eyes fell on a desk upon which lay pens and ink, stationery, and a little box of postage stamps. Inspiration came. Hastily he pasted a row of stamps over the initials upon each of her bags, then dipped his thumb in ink, and smudged the stamps.

"There! They'll look like Customs' seals, or something. Luckily Mayfield's initials are on my briefcase, and my own bag hasn't any."

Keith took that bag into the bathroom, and shaved, showered, and changed clothes in record time.

"I'll go now," he told her. "Thanks for the loan of the bathroom."

"No," Peggy objected. "You'd better wait for me. If you run into Mr.

Bayard, you may say something to each other that I should hear. I'll try not to be long."

Peggy vanished into the bathroom, carrying her dressing-bag and an armful of clothes.

CHAPTER VI

WIFE BY CHANCE

IT WAS nearly an hour before Peggy emerged. She had purposely done a good job. Keith, smoking at the window, turned, and stared.

"How do I look?" Peggy asked demurely.

Keith swallowed hard. She was wearing a smart summer print dinner-gown that revealed her supple lines and, for the first time, he saw her without a hat. It was a revelation.

"Your hair," said Keith. "It is red-blond, isn't it?"

"Natural, I'm afraid," said Peggy. "Do you mind?"

"And your mouth," he went on, wonderingly. "It's different."

What he meant, but did not say, was that it was more seductive-looking.

"Just a change of war-paint," she told him airily.

But he still stared.

"Why, you're beautiful!"

"I'm glad you think so." Her eyes were mocking. "You want your wife to be a credit to you, don't you, Mr. Mayfield?" She tucked her hand in his arm. "Shall we join our host?"

A little dazed, Keith accompanied her to the big room. For the first time, her nearness gave him a dizzy feeling: And he had thought her lovely before. Lord!

They were a gay group at the dinner table—all but Keith. He couldn't understand himself. When he had more important things to consider, all he could think of was Peggy.

She was enjoying herself immensely. Both Sherman Childs and Charles Ames were definitely attractive, and put themselves out to be agreeable to such a pretty girl. As for Harvey Bayard, Peggy knew immediately, with a woman's sure knowledge of such things, that she had made an instant and indelible impression upon him.

After dinner, they gathered about the fireplace over coffee and liqueurs. While Ames and Childs continued to make themselves pleasant to the fascinating Mrs. Mayfield, her "husband" inveigled his host into the gun-room, on the pretense of an interest in Bayard's elaborate collection of firearms. After a while Keith brought up the subject that had been on his mind all through dinner.

"I say, Bayard, might I ask a favor of you?"

"Certainly, old man. What is it?"

"I wonder if you happen to have another spare bedroom?"

Bayard, who had picked up an antique pistol from its case to show Keith, put it down abruptly.

"Another bedroom?" Bayard was puzzled. "Is anything wrong with—"

"Not at all!" Keith said hastily. "You see, I suffer terribly from insomnia, and when I read, or become restless, it keeps Mrs. Mayfield awake. So we try to have separate bedrooms, if possible, whenever we can."

"Oh, I see." Did Bayard look skeptical? "That's unfortunate. There are only three master bedrooms in the lodge—mine, which you have, the one I'm occupying, and the third which Charlie and Sherman are sharing."

"Maybe I can sleep out here on a couch, or something," Keith suggested desperately.

"You'd be too uncomfortable, old man. I'll tell you what. I'll send a man down to town tomorrow to get a cot and have it set up in the dressing room of your suite. Tonight I'll give

you a sleeping powder so that you'll not disturb Mrs. Mayfield. "You'll probably sleep like a top anyhow in the mountain air."

"Thank you," Keith said unenthusiastically.

When Keith escorted Peggy to their room later that evening it was with heavy feet. The moment their door was closed she turned on him, her bright smile vanished.

"Well?"

He told her, tersely, what Bayard had said, and showed her the little bottle of sleeping tablets which his host had passed to him, during the course of the evening.

Peggy stared at it, and then at him, horror-struck.

"You're not going to—take them—and stay *here!*"

Keith shook his head hastily.

"Certainly not! I'll just wait in here for a while, if you don't mind, until they've all gone to bed, then I'll take a pillow and a couple of blankets and go out and sleep on the couch in the lounge. Unless you think it might be a better idea if I slept in the bathtub."

"The couch, by all means!" said Peggy decidedly. "But be sure you're up before anyone's about, and get the blankets out of sight."

"Don't worry—I'll be up with the birds," Keith assured her. "Leave your door unlocked, so I can throw the things into the room."

"I hate to have people look at me when I'm asleep," she said flatly.

"I won't," he promised. "And I'll shave in the outside lavatory."

THE next half-hour dragged by. Keith found a checkerboard and suggested a game.

They played grimly, pretending an interest in the game neither felt. They were excruciatingly self-conscious, intensely aware of each other; of the intimate silence; of the nearness, each to the other, which each was trying to force away.

At last Keith judged it safe to leave. Blankets and pillow on one arm, a few toilet articles in hand, he stole out on tiptoe into the hall.

"Good-night," Peggy whispered.

"Good-night!" Keith mumbled grumpily.

She gently closed the door, smiling to herself.

Keith grunted, and tiptoed down the corridor to the main lounge. The fire in the fireplace was dying out, but there was enough light from its glowing embers to see by. He made up a rough bed on the couch that fronted it, and tried to make himself comfortable. But the night that followed was one of the most uncomfortable he had ever known.

The couch was too short, the covers too scant as the room grew icy cold. Long before he fell asleep at last, in the unfriendly hour just before dawn, his muscles were stiff with unexpected aches and cramps.

Keith awoke with a start to bright sunlight. He sat up, with a muffled groan, and could have sworn he heard light footsteps in the service passage across the room. He had overslept! Leaping to his feet, he swept up the bedclothes and his other possessions, and raced to Peggy's room, letting himself in soundlessly.

Peggy, as if afraid he might come in and see her after all, was almost invisible in her own bedclothes. He tiptoed past her to the dressing room beyond. A haggard visitant.

Peggy, watching furtively, smiled. . . .

Harvey Bayard was at his desk, going through the morning mail, when his housekeeper came in. His guests were all down at the stables, watching the horses being saddled. He would join them soon.

"Yes, Mrs. Woodley?"

"Mr. Harvey, there's something I'd like to tell you about."

She had been with his family long before he was born, and still called him by his first name.

"What is it?"

"It's about Mr. and Mrs. Mayfield."

"What about them?" He was immediately alert.

"I thought you ought to know, Mr. Harvey," she said primly, "that Mr. Mayfield was asleep on the couch in the lounge when I came in early this morning. He awakened, just as I slipped out, and ran back to their room as if Satan himself were after him. I thought it very odd."

"It's not odd at all," Bayard told her. "He suffers from insomnia, and asked me if he could have an extra room or bed last night so as not to disturb Mrs. Mayfield. I told him I'd get him a cot for their dressing room today, and gave him some sleeping pills for last night."

"Then why didn't he use them, and sleep in his wife's bed like a Christian, instead of freezing, cramped up on the couch? You should have seen the way he looked when he got up!"

"Maybe," Bayard shrugged, "they had a quarrel. You know how married people are sometimes." But his eyes were thoughtful.

Mrs. Woodley sniffed.

"It couldn't have been much of one, then, or they wouldn't have been on such good terms when I brought in their breakfast tray," she said. "He was dressed, and she was in bed wearing a bed-jacket."

"Well, why not?" He smiled. "They're married, aren't they?"

"Are they, now?" suggested Mrs. Woodley, with peculiar intonation.

"What do you mean?" he asked slowly.

"There's something funny about those two, Mr. Harvey." Mrs. Woodley's eyes were agitated behind her pince-nez. "You're a man—you don't notice—but a woman can tell. When they're alone together, or think no one's looking, they don't act like a married couple. But that's not all!

"I couldn't help but notice yesterday when I thought to unpack for her, that the initials on Mrs. Mayfield's

bags were somebody else's." Her thin mouth was grim. "'M. Y.' they were. And her name's Janet Mayfield, isn't it?"

"Yes. But she probably borrowed them from someone. Really Mrs. Woodley—"

"I thought of that," said she. "But what do you think has happened now?" She drew a deep breath. "Those initials have been covered up! Somebody's stuck postage stamps on them, and smeared them with ink. I just saw that when I took fresh towels to their bathroom. What do you think of *that*?"

He looked at her, impassively.

"I prefer not to think about it. It's obviously none of our business, Mrs. Woodley." His voice was firm.

"I only thought you should be told."

She sniffed, tossed her head, and walked out.

HARVEY BAYARD bit his lip. Her news had startled him more than he would admit. He arose and walked up and down. He was remembering odd little things he had noticed perhaps only with his subconscious mind, the day before. But they were suddenly coming back to him. Puzzling bits of conversation between the Mayfields, the tail-ends of looks exchanged between them. Could it be that Mrs. Mayfield was not Mayfield's wife, after all?

He stopped dead, thinking hard. Of course, it was none of his business if Mayfield were traveling with a woman not his wife. But if so, where was his wife, and why the deception of Dr. Estabrook? More important, as far as Bayard was concerned—who was this girl?

Suddenly he went to the telephone, and gave a New York City number.

"Get me Mr. Standish Cartwright. A person-to-person call, from Harvey Bayard."

Minutes passed. As he waited, he speculated. If she were not Mayfield's wife, and they were not occupying

the same room for quite another reason than the insomnia excuse Mayfield had given . . .

"Hello, Stan? This is Harvey . . . I'm fine, thanks . . . Look, Stan, you've got pull in the State Department. I want to get a copy of a passport photograph of a Mrs. Philip Mayfield, but the passport may be in her maiden name—Janet Gray, of Omaha. Got that? I'd be ever so much obliged, if you could rush it to me air-mail." He hesitated. "It's a legal matter, an establishment of identity for Mrs. Mayfield . . . Thanks, I'll do the same for you sometime . . . When are you coming out to get a grizzly? . . . Fine! Thanks again."

Harvey Bayard hung up. Thoughtfully he pondered, then, making sure through the window that his guests were still down near the stables, he went to the Mayfields' room.

He stepped in, tentatively, and looked at their luggage. What Mrs. Woodley had said about most of the bags was true. Only one—evidently Mayfield's—had no initials at all. Then his eyes fell on the well-worn briefcase. Under its lock were stamped the initials "P. M."

He heard a servant approaching and hastily tiptoed out of the room. For some unaccountable reason he felt cheerful, rather than not.

CHAPTER VII

SUSPICION

BAYARD rode up to the observatory with Peggy and Keith on horseback. When they entered, they found Dr. Estabrook not only out of bed, but seated in an armchair which was placed on a small platform on rollers at the telescope. His thin body was clad in a dressing gown, and his eye was glued to the view

finder. He looked up, smiling his welcome.

"Good morning—good morning! You've come just in time to take a good look at Venus!"

"Do you study stars in the daytime, too?" asked Peggy surprised.

"Planets, yes, my dear. Both Venus and Mercury are best observed in the daytime. When they are high in the heavens, as they are now, there is a minimum of turbulence of atmosphere to distort the telescopic images." He motioned to Peggy. "Take a look, Janet. What do you think of your rival?"

Peggy looked through the telescope.

"Why," she exclaimed, amazed, "it's as bright as the Star of Bethlehem!"

"Some folks think that it was." He chuckled. "We astronomers know that Venus was abnormally low in the eastern heavens in the year Four B. C., and Christ was born anywhere from Four to Twelve B. C. Anyway, there was an amazing triangular-shaped juxtaposition of Jupiter, Uranus and Mars, low in the eastern sky of Palestine, at about that time.

"The ancients were probably as amazed at the sight as we would be, and likely called the three shining planets so close together, a star. A friend of mine at the Berlin-Babelsberg Observatory in—"

"You're supposed to be resting," Bayard broke in. "Why aren't you in bed? Holland knows the doctor said—"

"Holland doesn't know I'm out," the old man admitted guiltily.

"You're going straight back to bed," said Bayard firmly. "Venus can wait."

"I never keep ladies waiting," said the professor, chuckling, but permitted himself to be returned to bed.

Peggy tucked him in. He smiled at her, patting her hand.

"It's nonsense, of course, but I'll admit I am tired. This altitude isn't the most desirable for my condition."

"Then why stay up here, sir?" asked Keith.

Professor Estabrook shook his head, and set his jaws firmly.

"No," he declared, "it's impossible for me to leave the observatory now, even though I have full confidence in Holland, and know that he can do my work as well as I can—perhaps better, since he's younger. No, I'm afraid—the small sigh he gave seemed to be pitifully quivery, Peggy thought—"I suppose I am getting old, not needed much any more. Not with two assistants like Holland and Prescott. Why, Holland even knows as much about the coronagraph as I do myself.

"But"—his keen old eyes lighted up—"how can I leave now, when there's to be a total eclipse of the sun on the eighteenth! Can you imagine me missing it, with this new telescope and camera to my hand? It's important, you know. A genuine eclipse is the only opportunity we have to prove whether light rays are deflected by a strong gravitational field, as Einstein says. I'm writing a paper on it."

"Your health is worth a thousand papers," insisted Bayard.

"Don't worry. I'm going back East shortly, anyway, and taking these children with me." He twinkled at Peggy. "You two are not ever going back to England, if I can help it. I've got plans for Philip, back in Boston." He smiled at Bayard. "Which reminds me—I want a private word with you, Harvey, before you leave."

"Have it now," said Peggy quickly. "We want to look around." She tucked her arm in Keith's, with a bright smile, and led him out.

PEGGY and Keith left the observatory, and strolled over to the rock parapet along the edge of the clifflike drop to the pass.

"Look at that view!"

Peggy gestured downward, to where the forest edge at timberline

appeared like an unending shoreline as it swept away for miles along the steep and uneven sides of the mountains.

"Just think—we're standing on the very summit of the Great Divide! I wonder how the pioneers felt when they first crossed it?"

"I suppose they knew that it meant leaving the past behind, too," said Keith. "That it divided the old from the new, the past from the future."

"Isn't that what it means, for us, too, in a way?" she asked, thoughtfully.

She was intensely aware of him, there beside her, and thrillingly it came to her, with a jarring shock to her complacency, that perhaps she didn't want the new, after all—whatever it might be—if that should mean leaving Keith Webster somewhere behind with the old.

"Our Continental Divide is back there in Kansas," he told her, frowning.

She looked at him, her eyes a question.

"You ought to be glad you came," she told him sternly. "Didn't you hear what the professor said? He has plans for you. I wonder what they are?"

"Sounds like a good job, of some sort," Keith said, and his lips twisted a little wryly. "Maybe he wouldn't want me to have it, though, if he didn't believe I'd already done my bit in this awful world mess. If he knew that I haven't been in any man's army, yet, why—"

"He could give you a wonderful job, though," Peggy insisted. "Mr. Bayard says the professor owns large blocks of stock in some of New England's biggest companies—stuff he inherited—and they have war contracts now. Maybe this is just that 'opportunity' you were talking about. Maybe you were right to take a chance."

"And what about you?" he demanded.

"What do you mean?" Peggy gave him a sidelong look.

"Harvey Bayard. You know what I mean. You know he's gone off the deep end about you. I can tell the way he looks at you."

"Can you, now?" she asked innocently.

"He's a gentleman all right—the perfect host, and all that sort of thing." Keith paused, scowling. "But there's the wolf underneath. He's one of those wealthy men-about-town types. If he knew you weren't my wife—"

"You don't think he'd want to marry me?"

"He might, if you played your cards right." Keith shrugged, but his jaw was set. "After all, you're a beautiful girl, and you're clever. You could probably land him."

"You think he's worth landing?" she asked sweetly.

Unaccountably, she was suddenly furiously angry with Keith. And as angry with herself.

"By all means," Keith flung at her. "He's rich—his law firm is one of those family affairs that have been handling Back Bay trust funds for generations." His face set, he did not look at her. "Bayard seems made to order for you, doesn't he? At that, even Ames or Childs would do in a pinch."

Peggy's lovely face hardened.

"We didn't exactly come to Colorado for the ride, did we?" she asked levelly.

"No, we didn't," Keith said shortly.

He seemed relieved, Peggy thought, when Bayard appeared, just then, to summon them within.

THEY returned the next day and the next, their visits becoming longer each time. They came to grow very fond of the white-thatched old scientist with the birdlike eyes. It would have been hard not to, for he was always so happy to see them. Peggy nursed him, waited on him,

catered to him, and Keith helped her, as much as he was permitted.

Estabrook loved to talk about the past—particularly about Philip Mayfield's mother—and they learned all the exact details they needed to know about the Mayfields, merely by listening, with here and there a tactful word inserted that was more a remark than a question. That was how they learned that Philip Mayfield's sister had died when a child.

Peggy and Keith looked at each other with faint relief in their eyes as they heard that. One less hurdle to face.

Peggy, particularly, was enjoying herself these days. They rode the mountain trails and picnicked, began to tan in the hot Western sun, and slept like logs at night in the winey mountain air.

Her personal relationships grew more intriguing daily. Ames and Childs paid her gallant compliments. Harvey Bayard, under her subtle encouragement, gave every sign of becoming more and more interested. And daily Keith grew more jealous. Of the three, the last, oddly enough, gratified Peggy the most.

If there was any flaw at all, it was caused by her own restlessness at such times as Keith would leave her and go off alone on long treks over the mountains, carrying a hunting rifle, and with a dog following him. He seemed to get satisfaction out of those trips, glad to leave Peggy to her swains.

When he would come back, she would be glad to see him—so glad—but she wouldn't let him know that. He was usually abstracted at such times, too; thoughtful. Almost as if he were disappointed in something. Was he disappointed, too, in this Peggy Young, who was pretending to be his wife?

Bayard had purchased the cot, and now Keith was sleeping in the dressing room off Peggy's bedroom. It was a situation that was at once embar-

assing, and piquant, and both knew it.

One night, Keith, unable to sleep, reached up and turned the handle of the door between the two rooms, opened it. The moonlight was streaming through their windows onto the floor.

"Are you asleep?" he asked.

"No," said Peggy, softly. "Are you?"

"No. It's this moonlight, I think."

For a moment there was silence, as they lay in their respective beds, invisible to each other, yet only a few feet apart.

"If you weren't supposed to be married," Keith finally said, "you could be out in that romantic moonlight, working on Bayard. It's a shame to have your style cramped like this."

"I've thought of that," she told him coolly, and smiled in the dark. "Tell



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"I can see the moon from where I lie," said Peggy. "It looks like a face in the sky. A sort of surprised, questioning face."

"It's a dead, dry world, without wind or water or sound," Keith said shortly. "The professor says so. He says it's so near, that with modern telescopes we could see objects the size of Grand Central Station, if we wanted to."

"Who wants to?" asked Peggy. "Leave a maiden some illusions, can't you?"

me, Keith, do you ever think much of your old girl, any more?"

"Not for days," he admitted, with some surprise. "How about you? Don't forget you almost as good as told me there was a guy in New York who had given our Nell the run-around."

"There's nothing as dead as a dead love. Tripe, maybe, but true, thank heaven." She gave an audible sigh. "I love it out here, don't you?"

"You girls get over things quickly, don't you?" His voice was annoyed.

"Only a few days ago you were running away from New York because—"

"That was several days ago. We women are realists, my fine-feathered friend. It's you men who are the romantics." She wondered if he believed her, listened for his answer. "Don't you think so?"

"I never thought about it," said Keith, shortly. "Good-night!"

He reached up and closed the door.

Peggy stared at the moon for a long time. Could it be that Keith was falling in love with her? Did she really want him to? Her heart said one thing but—well, hadn't she vowed that never again would she listen to her heart? She wondered if she would. She fell asleep, wondering.

CHAPTER VIII

SEEN IN THE STARS

HARVEY BAYARD, the next day, suggested that the Mayfields ride up to the observatory on their daily visit without him. They knew the trail well, by now, and he wanted to stay home and wait for the mail to be brought from town. He was growing more impatient to hear from the friend whom he had telephoned in the East. With mixed emotions Bayard watched them ride away on the pinto mountain ponies, which with their riding kit, he had loaned them. A wary bachelor of long standing, and a man of the world, he still was close to earth enough to realize that there was no controlling certain of the human emotions.

He was falling in love with the girl he knew as Janet Mayfield. It was a pulse-quickenning, yet by no means comfortable, sensation. If she were Mayfield's wife—was she in love with her husband? No one knew better than a lawyer like himself, how often

wives fell out of love with their husbands, to eventually marry other men.

And if she were not Mayfield's wife, as Mrs. Woodley so sourly suspected, then who was she? And why was she here? Philip Mayfield had brought her, of course, and if she was not married to him it had been for some reason not quite clear to a man-of-the-world, as proved by those incidents of the couch and the cot in the dressing room.

The objects of his thoughts reached a bend in the road, and turned to wave to him, before they rounded it. He waved back, his face expressionless. Then he heard a motor laboring up the mountain road. He saw his own car approaching, with Bill at the wheel, back from town with the mail.

Ten minutes later Bayard was eagerly opening the air-mail-stamped letter for which he had been waiting. There was a small photographic reproduction in the envelope. He snatched it out, and held it up to the light. The first glance was enough to tell him the indubitable truth. The photograph was definitely not that of the girl who had ridden away with Philip Mayfield.

Smiling cynically, Harvey Bayard studied the picture, curiously. Although the real Mrs. Philip Mayfield was attractive, she was by no means as pretty as the false one.

"That explains part of it," Bayard muttered. Staring at the picture, he thought idly: "I wonder where *she* is now?"

Still wondering, Bayard went reflectively into the lodge. As he moved along, he took out his friend's letter and, with the action, a second small photograph tumbled into his palm. It was also a passport photograph—that of a man. He looked at it intently. It was the picture of an utter stranger. He turned it over, and saw scrawled on the back in Cartwright's handwriting, the notation:

This is Philip Mayfield's picture. The

State Department sent them both, so am sending it along.

The lawyer stopped short, flabbergasted. So they were both impostors!

His jaw set, and a hard gleam came into his eyes. He would deal with the man, at least, summarily!

The first thought that flashed into his mind, naturally, with his country at war, was the one word—spy! This man who had been posing as Philip Mayfield had had the run of the observatory, as isolated and well guarded as it was.

But that didn't make sense. Of course, the weather reports were important, vitally important, to the Government and the conduct of the war, but this man or any other couldn't get them or learn a thing by just walking around looking at the coronagraph. And Bayard could swear the fellow hadn't even been any too near the thing.

Besides—well, there was something about this man who was posing as Mayfield that told Harvey Bayard that the fellow was a true American, of good American stock. It must be some other game than a spy game that these two were playing. But what?

Then Bayard's native caution asserted itself. He would put detectives to work before he took any steps; find out what had happened, check up on the real Mayfields. He would play with his male guest as a cat does with a mouse.

As for his "wife" . . . Bayard's eyes took on a faraway look. This was a complicated business! But an intriguing one.

Thoughtfully, Harvey Bayard walked into his house. He had plenty of long-distance telephoning to do. . . .

KEITH and Peggy rode leisurely up the mountain, close to the wide and silent sky, saying little, pretending to be absorbed in the scenery. The night before Peggy had stayed

up late, playing bridge with Bayard and Ames and Childs. Keith, who detested bridge, and had felt himself *de trop* anyway, had gone early to bed, but not to sleep. He had heard the echoes of their laughter and ladinage as they played, and had heard her later, come in and go to bed.

Both had lain awake far into the night, on either side of that closed dressing-room door, staring through their windows at the moon climbing over the Rockies. Acutely aware, intensely conscious of each other and the door between. . . .

There was a cluster of clouds massing overhead, but sunlight still, where they rode, and bright sunshine on the pioneer trees, rusty cliffs and far-off waterfalls, below.

They rode on, toward the summit, leaving timberline behind, and suddenly, like a bowl of water inverted in the sky by a giant hand the rain came down. A few drops, a brief drizzle, a downpour, then a veritable deluge.

The two pinto ponies stopped dead, and Peggy and Keith slipped off them almost automatically. Keith saw a cavelike depression under an arch of rock not far away, and pointed.

"Run for that cave!"

The very heavens seemed to open, just then, and the two let go their horses' reins and scrambled across the rocky terrain toward the cave refuge. As they reached its shelter, soaked and panting, they heard the pounding of hoofs and turned, in time to see their ponies loping off down the trail, bridle-reins dangling.

"They're running away!" Keith swore whole-heartedly. "I'll never catch them, now!"

"Don't worry—they're 'return horses', and know the way back. But I guess we'll have to walk from here up to—" Peggy suddenly gave a little scream, and clutched at him. "Look out!"

Taking her into his arms, almost automatically, Keith whirled about.

Just above them, on a narrow ledge along the mountainside, a wild Rocky Mountain sheep appeared, coming toward them. It was a ram, with huge curving horns, its coat heavy with rain, its little eyes fierce.

Even as Keith caught sight of it, miraculously skimming upon the bare surface of the mountain wall, it came on, its wicked little hoofs flashing, seemingly about to jump down upon them.

Peggy, frightened by the unexpected apparition, burrowed against Keith's chest, her arms around his neck. Even as Keith twisted himself about, to protect her with his body, the ram jumped. He sailed out into watery space, and disappeared.

"It's all right—he's gone!" Keith gulped. He patted her back.

"Are you—sure?" she mumbled.

She lifted her face, still clinging to him, and their eyes met. He was suddenly aware of her soaked, slim figure in his arms, of her lovely wet face close to his own.

Keith's arm tightened, almost without volition. He kissed her. Softly, at first, then hard, possessively, as if he had been hungry, starving, for that touch of his lips on hers. Peggy did not resist. She only went limp, for a moment, in his arms, then quietly pushed him away. She was faintly smiling.

"What-a-man Webster!" she said sardonically, and pushed the wet hair back from her forehead. Her eyes did not meet his, though for inwardly she was shaken to the core of her being. "What about that platonic pact of ours?"

Keith colored. He could still taste her rain-wet lips, in memory, and was confused as he had never thought he could be.

"I'm sorry," said he stiffly.

"Are you sure you didn't plant that prehistoric beast up there?" she inquired, and laughed unsteadily. "I never was so frightened in all my life!"

"I was kind of startled myself," he admitted, not looking at her either. "This must be the daily cloudburst Bayard spoke of. Didn't he say it lasts an hour?"

"Yes, and we'll catch our deaths of cold if we stay here soaked as we are, and wait for it to stop raining. Why don't we walk the rest of the way to the Observatory? It's not far."

"I was going to suggest that," he told her.

They waited until the downpour slackened down into a steady rain, then made their way through it to the trail. They began to walk up the mountain, bending against the rain. At the next turn of the road, they saw the dome of the Observatory against the lowering sky, perhaps a quarter of a mile above them.

Soon Keith was forced to lend Peggy a hand, scrambling up inclines as they made short-cuts. It was a warm rain, and they were not cold, but they were soaking wet and winded, long before they reached the summit, still hand in hand.

UPON their arrival, the professor discovered their condition, with shocked surprise, and bustled around like a motherly hen, getting them out of their wet clothes into dry ones, and making them hot toddies. Estabrook was quite himself again, and told them that they must stay for dinner and have a real visit with him. He would send word to the lodge, and they could drive back themselves in the Observatory truck.

After dinner, Professor Estabrook took them to the great telescope, had the section in the roof slid open, and showed them the spring heavens. The immense black bowl of the sky was studded with millions of stars, seemingly close enough to be touched.

And as the professor lovingly disclosed their wonders, making the firmament come romantically to life, Peggy forgot the inner conflict that

had been tormenting her all afternoon. She, like Keith, watched and listened, fascinated, as they walked with the old astronomer down the luminescent Milky Way, heard him tell of fallen meteors, of comets that had astounded civilizations.

"But what do you astronomers see up there that's really new?" asked Keith, and the professor smiled.

"Nowadays," he said, "with our powerful telescopes we see suns that glow and fade as if some hand were turning up or down an impossibly immense gas-flame. We see double stars with revolutions so complicated that even the mathematicians are stumped. We measure masses and luminosities at a distance so great that we must use light years!" His voice grew faraway.

"And we ask ourselves questions: What is the grand plan, behind all those billions of stars? Where are we headed? How long will it be before we can catch a faint glimmer of the truth?"

"But science must have discovered something!" cried Peggy.

"Well, for one thing, Shaplow of Harvard who diagrammed the Milky Way, has concluded that, just as our planets revolve around our sun, so the whole visible universe is revolving around some remote, invisible, unknowable center—some stupendous Immensity with a gravitational clutch so powerful that our whole system cannot escape it." He walked up and down, animatedly.

"But that's not all. The modern astronomer says that not only is our earth not the center of the solar system, but that the solar system is far from the center of the universe, that it is not the 'center' of anything, and matters about as much as a speck of dust on a plate-glass window."

"But what is the center, then?" demanded Keith.

Estabrook shrugged.

"Who knows? According to Einstein, there is a definite limit to the

size and mass of a star, so something besides an impossibly gigantic sun must be at that unseen place. It is that incomprehensible cosmo—that Great Plan—for which we are eternally seeking." He repeated, "The Great Plan."

"It makes you dizzy to try to think of it!" said Keith.

"It also makes one realize, my boy, how unimportant are the things we humans consider important!" said Estabrook, gently.

"It makes you feel awfully insignificant," said Peggy. "Tell me, do you think the stars really affect our lives?"

"You're talking about astrology, my dear—not astronomy. How much truth there is in astrology, I don't know." He twinkled at her. "We scientists never state a thing is true, you know, until we're sure. But my dear, I do believe that the only thing that can most affect one's life is oneself. Each of us is the sum of our living, or habits we've formed. And inherited traits can't be changed."

"Do you mean that if a man had his life to live over again, and decided he would not make the same mistakes that he couldn't do it?" asked Keith.

"I doubt it." The astronomer chuckled. "We had an old gardener when I was a boy, who used to say that if everyone in the world could hang their troubles on a fence, and were then given their choice of exchanging their own troubles for somebody else's, that eventually they'd take back their own again." His face wrinkled as he smiled. "But there's the pedagogue in me—lecturing again!"

"But suppose the world won't give you a fair break, when you're willing to play the game fair, yourself?" Peggy said earnestly. She looked at Keith, and away again. "What then?"

"Life only gives you what you give life, child," he told her. "Be yourself, dear Janet—and be happy. Make Philip happy. For happiness with the

one you love"—there was nostalgia in his voice—"is the only thing worthwhile on this planet. Money—glory—material things. If only you young people could realize how unimportant they are!"

He caught himself, and smiled at Peggy, and patted her hand, paternally.

"Don't worry, my dear. Philip is going to be more than successful—a husband for any wife to be proud of. Meeting you two has been like discovering a son and daughter. And I am going to take a foster-parent's privilege by giving you a worthwhile start in life. A selfish idea, I admit, but it will keep you near me." He smiled from one to the other.

"One of the largest textile firms in Boston, Philip, is holding open a fine job for you, a position with a substantial salary and an opportunity for rapid advancement. Harvey Bayard, as my attorney, has arranged it."

"But, Professor—"

Keith was embarrassed, had never been so much so in his life. There was such a lot he wanted to tell this kindly old man, such a lot now that he ought to know. But how could he? Besides, his hands were tied, as completely as if he were physically strapped to his chair.

"I'll tell you the details some other time, my boy." The professor covered a yawn, and smiled apologetically. "The altitude seems to make me tire very easily these days. If you children will forgive me, I think I'd better retire early tonight."

The were instantly solicitous, insisting on saying good night then and there.

"Harvey Bayard said something about taking us on a hunting trip for a day or two," Peggy remembered. "Would you mind, Professor?"

"Certainly not, child. Go, by all means! But don't forget to be back by the eighteenth—that's Friday. You'll want to witness the eclipse of the sun with us." Again he smiled

at them. "After that, we'll go East. You'll like living in Boston, my dear. I've a huge barn of a house in Back Bay that's been lonely long enough."

Impulsively Peggy kissed him, and Keith wrung his hand. They said their good nights, then, and went out into the starlit evening.

CHAPTER IX

"I HAPPEN TO KNOW—"

AS PEGGY walked over to the rock parapet, her mind was full of confusions and contradictions, her emotions in a state of flux. The old astronomer's remarks had impressed her deeply, made her wonder if he were not right, after all, and she and Keith wrong.

Too, she was in a mood to be romantic. Keith's kiss that afternoon had stirred her strangely, and Peggy was not a girl to be affected easily by a kiss. It had brought to the surface, at least for her to recognize, all the stirrings of her recalcitrant heart that seemed bent on making her wonder what it would be like to be in his arms, to feel his lips on hers.

Now she knew. But she must fight it. Then, there had been the strange magnetism between the two of them, since she had known him.

"I feel like a heel," Keith, beside her, told Peggy abruptly.

Peggy nodded.

"I know. But badly as we feel, we're really doing him a kindness. He would have taken the truth about the Mayfields—the accident—very hard." She was silent a moment. "Keith," she plunged ahead then, to say abruptly, "I want you to know that I appreciate the way you've behaved since we learned that we're supposed to be married. Other men might have tried to—well, be sticky!"

He stared into space.

"Today on the mountain, when I kissed you—" He hesitated.

"Yes?" she said softly.

"I suppose I ought to apologize. But I'm not really sorry I did it."

She was pleased, but masked her pleasure. That would be no way to fight the tender feeling she was determined to conquer.

"Why not?" she said.

"Because I liked it," Keith admitted, grimly. "You were so soft and beautiful. That is, you seemed so frightened—" He corrected himself, trying to sound unconcerned, but knew that fell flat. "Oh, what's the use! What difference does it make, anyway?"

Peggy smiled a small enigmatic smile, and lifted her lovely young face to the firmament. It was a moonless night, and the stars were like so many brilliant electric bulbs, the Milky Way a silver neon sign spanning the enchanted heavens.

"Look at the stars!" Her white face was silver in the starlight. "Telescopes and mathematics are all very well for astronomers. But I'll take the stars' romance for mine."

Keith smiled indulgently. His head was reeling, his heart pounding, because of her nearness, but he was fighting to disguise it.

"There's the North Star up there," he indicated. "See the Big Dipper pointing at it?"

She pointed to another.

"Venus," she said. "That's my star. The professor said so the other day. Remember?"

"He also said it was a planet, not a star," he reminded her.

"There you go, being technical! You haven't any romance in your soul!"

"Haven't I?" he exclaimed fiercely.

He looked at her, and she looked back at him, mockery in her eyes, the soft starlight on her face. She seemed to be almost waiting. His lips tightened.

"No, you're right," he said. "I

haven't. And you should leave romance in the ash-can, too, if you know what's good for you. Have you forgotten your resolutions so soon?"

Peggy was silent for the space of a full moment.

"Thanks for reminding me." She turned, with an abrupt movement, just in time to see a fiery flash in the sky, just above the Observatory dome. "Look!" she exclaimed involuntarily. "There's a shooting star!"

"Did you make a wish?" he asked with a wry little grin.

Peggy shook her head.

"No, I think I'll personally attend to making my wishes come true, my fine-feathered friend. . . . It's getting late. We'd better be going, hadn't we?"

They got into the Observatory truck, and drove down the mountain, off the Great Divide. Peggy said little all the way home. The mockery was gone from her eyes—but so was the stardust. . . .

THE Peggy who started off on the hunting trip in the mountains the next day was not the girl who had dreamed under the stars the night before. It was the new Peggy, the sensible Peggy who has listened to Keith's scheme on that memorable night in Kansas City, and had been impressed by the urging that for her there might be a second chance.

The others might be out to shoot grizzlies and wild Rocky Mountain big-horn sheep, but Peggy was secretly out for bigger game. With her lovely lips set in determination, she meant to make the most of these three days of propinquity, as the only woman in a party of admiring males, to win Harvey Bayard.

Like the others, she carried an express rifle—she even managed to bring down a black bear the second day—but her real weapons, though secret were far more potent. A woman's silken weapons, craftily used.

Only Keith, watching her, knew

what was going on, and Peggy knew that he knew. It made her use those weapons a lavish godmother had given her with an almost savage pleasure.

Even without the little drama that was being played out, beneath the surface, the hunting trip, from the beginning, proved as exciting as any girl could have hoped for. Here Peggy was, in the most rugged section of the Continental Divide, and the majestic scenery, the unbelievable sunrises and sunsets, offered ever-new marvels.

Each morning Peggy awoke and got from her sleeping bag with the exhilarating feeling that fresh excitement was ahead for the day. And she was not disappointed.

Peggy, like the rest, slept snugly in a sleeping bag, but Bayard had also provided her with a little tent, which she occupied alone. Though she and Keith were supposed to be married, he managed so that he slept outside with the others.

There was a coolness between them that grew, with the days. Bayard suspected it, however, but even he did not realize that Peggy deliberately wanted him to do that. She was managing to be in his company most of the time; prettily letting him show her how to handle firearms properly, letting him teach her how to track, learning from him, rather than from Chester, the guide, how to make flap-jacks for breakfast, and properly grill fresh-caught fish.

She was, incidentally, enjoying herself immensely. And, with the perverseness of a woman, she knew that not the least of her enjoyment was seeing Keith's glowering face. He didn't know much about women, she thought. He couldn't hide his jealousy.

Nights, they dined on bear steaks and venison before a roaring fire, and yarned.

Bayard, who had been coming to Colorado for years, told them of path-

less forests, of unvisited gorges, unnamed lakes, unknown localities; of Specimen Mountain that was a dead volcano, of geologists working in the glacier meadows nearby on glacial records and lakes, studying the moraines and uncovering the stories of two separate ice ages.

Chester, the guide, hard-bitten and garrulous, told them of snowslides and forest fires he had known; spoke affectionately of the tricks played by the thaws with the yearly coming of the warm, westerly Chinook wind. He had a wealth of anecdotes of Indians and pioneers—of Arapahoes, Shoshones, Blackfeet and Cheyennes, of Kit Carson and John C. Frémont.

ON THE afternoon of the last day of their hunting trip, they went bear-hunting and separated in couples, not far from each other, yet out of ear-shot. Bayard and Peggy ensconced themselves in a thicket among some rocks.

From where they sat, she could just make out Keith in his own hiding-place with Chester, the guide, across the clearing. She saw Keith look toward her, several times, and smiled inwardly.

She turned, to find Bayard looking at her with an oddly smiling expression. She smiled back, tentatively.

"Do you know, you're a very beautiful girl, Janet." He was looking at her with a curious intentness.

"And what am I to say to that?" she laughed. "Except thank you?"

"If you weren't married to somebody else," he told her, lightly, but with an undercurrent she felt, "there are many things I would love to say to you myself."

Peggy's eyes met his, then dropped.

"That's sweet of you," she murmured, but her heart was pounding, half with elation, half with fear. Was his declaration on the verge? Did she really want it? Should she inveigle it from him? A strange reluctance touched her.

"I'll bet you say that to all the married women you know," she said, with a forced light laugh. "It's so safe!"

"I wouldn't say that exactly," Bayard said slowly. "You see, my dear, I happen to know that you're not Janet Mayfield."

Peggy went cold all over. Slowly she turned her head to look at him, the color drained from her face. And she saw, at once, that there was no use in denial.

"You—said—"

"I know that you're not Philip's wife," he went on, matter-of-factly. "Where she is, I don't know. But I know that you're not the Janet Gray he married." He smiled. "Who are you, anyway?"

Peggy drew a deep breath, compounded partly of relief, and oddly that relief was not for herself at all. At least, he did not suspect Keith!

"So you know I'm not—Janet."

She moistened her lips. She was a little frightened now, but somehow she must see it through, no matter what he thought. After all, she had wished this on herself. She couldn't blame Keith. She was a free moral agent—still an American, free, white and twenty-one.

"How do you know that?" she asked slowly.

"I took the liberty of sending for Janet Mayfield's passport picture," Bayard admitted. "Something happened that made me suspicious."

"Wasn't that rather rude?" she demanded. "Suppose I had been—"

He nodded, smilingly.

"Yes, it was. But don't forget that I'm Dr. Estabrook's lawyer. It was my duty to clear up my—doubts." He hesitated. "Why Philip brought you here, I don't quite understand. If he were in love with you, or acted like it, I'd understand. But I happen to know—"

"You happen to know a great deal, don't you?" she asked him, defiantly.

He smiled faintly.

"At least, I know all about his sleeping on the couch in the lounge, the first night you two came," he told her. "And why he wanted the extra bedroom." He looked away. "I don't exactly understand, but I'll admit I was glad it was that way, after I realized another truth."

"Why?" she asked, her throbbing voice low. "What truth?"

"That I happen to have fallen in love with you," Harvey Bayard said evenly. "I wouldn't have told you this, or even admitted it to myself, if I had thought you were married to Philip. That's what I meant, saying I was glad."

"Isn't that rather unwise?"

PEGGY found herself regretful, rather than triumphant, and she should have been overjoyed, she tried to tell herself angrily. Wasn't this what she had been angling for?

"Unwise?" she repeated. "Falling in love with a stranger? And one who turned out to be an impostor?"

"Preposterous, if my Puritan ancestors had anything to say about it," he agreed calmly. "But they haven't. Neither have I, for that matter. It just—happened."

"But you don't know me, Harvey!" she protested. "You *do* know I'm an impostor, but what else? I may be a—a—crook, a criminal—anything—for all you know!"

He flashed her an odd look.

"That's quite true. But you also happen to be the loveliest girl I ever met. And the only one I've ever met that I find I would want to marry." He smiled his peculiar smile again. "Since that happens to be true, there are some things I'm afraid you'll have to tell me." He hesitated, then shot his bolt.

"Perhaps it's best we completely understand each other. You see, I've been partly pretending. I know more than I've told you. I also know that 'Philip Mayfield' isn't Philip Mayfield. That you're both impostors.

Peggy caught a sharp, quivering breath, and her face turned paper-white this time. Her heart seemed to stand still. Keith! He knew about Keith!

She was more upset by his discovery that Keith was not Philip Mayfield than by Bayard's confessed knowledge that she, herself, was sailing under false colors.

"You—know—" she quavered.

He nodded.

"Yes. I'm sure of what I say. But I'll have the proof in a few days. The most important fact I want to know now is—*why*? Hadn't you better tell me the whole truth now?"

PEGGY drew a long breath. There was nothing to do, she saw, but tell him. It did not seem such a difficult thing to do now, not after his declaration of love for her.

It was almost with relief, then, that she poured out the whole story to him, there in the sun-dappled thicket on the mountainside, within almost plain view of the unrealizing Keith. Bayard listened intently, his eyes on her lovely face.

"And there you have it," she finished, and drew a great sigh. "I'm glad you know."

"So that's how it is," said Bayard.

He hesitated a long moment, his eyes impersonal as he studied her, saw the truth in her own clear eyes. There was silence in the clearing.

"Are you going to tell the professor?" she finally asked, in a small voice. That was what she really dreaded.

Bayard shook his head, quickly.

"Not for a while, perhaps, until he is completely well. It would be too great a shock for him to know about the real Philip Mayfield's death." His eyes were opaque as he looked at her. "You realize, of course, that I could have Keith jailed as an impostor, nevertheless, on the grounds of intent to fraud?"

Peggy shivered.

"You wouldn't do that!" she cried.

"I don't know. It's my duty, as Estabrook's attorney."

"But the poor boy didn't mean actually to. . . . Oh, I know—you surely must know that *all* he was looking for was that 'opportunity' he was talking about so vaguely, and—"

"What happens to Keith depends entirely on you—er—Janet," he cut in coolly.

"What do you mean?" she demanded, her eyes wide, startled.

"I've my duty to my client, of course. But on the other hand, there's—what I feel for you."

"Yes?" she breathed.

"Promise to marry me," Harvey Bayard said slowly, "and I'll drop the whole matter. Help your friend Webster get a good job, even. But if you don't. . . ."

She stared at him, swallowing hard.

"You're threatening me?"

He shook his head, quickly.

"Not in the least. I love you, and I want you as my wife. Everything's fair in love and war. I'm only taking an advantage—a lover's advantage!"

His lips were smiling, but in his eyes was firm determination.

"Think it over, dear. Carefully.

But you must give me your word of honor that you won't breathe a word to Webster, under any circumstance, that I know his real identity. By the same token, I won't let him know that I suspect anything."

Peggy gave him her word. Anything to help Keith, to protect Keith!

"But it looks as if it were only beginning!" she wailed to herself.

The words of her promise to Bayard were still echoing when there was a noise in the clearing. Turning quickly, she saw a black bear lumber out into the sunlight. Even as she exclaimed, Bayard, beside her, swiftly put his gun to his shoulder, drew bead, and fired, pumping several shots into the animal's body. It fell to the ground, clawing and roar-

ing, dripping dark-red blood.

"I'm sorry, darling!" Bayard said penitently. "I shot before I thought. That should have been your bear." He smiled at her. "I simply couldn't resist it!"

She saw the cold light in his eyes, and shivered, despite herself. What he couldn't resist, he got, she thought, forlornly.

Without a word, she went out into the clearing to meet the others, who had come running at sound of the shots. To meet Keith, with eyes averted.

CHAPTER X

PROBLEM—AND A SHOCK

FOR the rest of that day, Bayard was the quintessence of courtesy to both Keith and Peggy. She went around in a fog, her mind engrossed. So much had happened—and Keith was blissfully ignorant of it all! She ached to tell him, yet there was her word, given to Bayard. She dared not break it, for many reasons.

That night they lounged about the campfire near a small lake somewhere above Glacier Gorge. Chester, who had resurrected an ancient guitar, was singing to his own accompaniment a dolorous rendition of "When It's Springtime in the Rockies," as-

sisted in the chorus by Ames and Childs.

Bayard, who had excused himself, was sitting apart from the rest, busily writing by lantern-light. Peggy, watching him, apprehensively wondered what it was he was writing.

Keith had disappeared. Peggy could not help but wonder where he had gone. This was the third or fourth time he had done a disappearance act on this trip. Was she to blame? Had she goaded him so, in accepting Harvey Bayard's attentions, that he couldn't stand it any more, and had to go off alone? Perhaps to get her out of his system?

That would be best, of course, but wildly Peggy didn't want him to. And she *did* wish she knew where he had gone.

Peggy stared dreamily into the fire, as she listened to the nostalgic song. Not only was she wondering where Keith could be, but she was thinking of the new problem of Harvey Bayard and Keith, of Bayard's declaration, and half-veiled threat.

When she had told her story to Bayard she had somehow not been able to bring herself to tell him that she had come on this adventure with Keith for anything more than the adventure—that the truth of the matter was, that, being disillusioned with romance, she had wanted to marry for money.

Had he guessed that, anyway?

[Turn page]

NO FINER DRINK...



Bayard was shrewd. It was an odd feeling to know that she could marry him, for the lifting of a finger, to marry his wealth, his position, his security. And he did love her. There was no doubt about that. Bayard was the kind of man who knew what he wanted, who would go after it, and toss the whole world aside—his world—to get it.

Yet there was Keith. Keith and that kiss in the cave. A kiss could enmesh a girl's heart the same way a quicksand can trip a man's foot. Was it the memory of that, which had entrapped her? Or the piquant propinquity these past few nights. Or just that inexplicable attraction she had felt for Keith, right from the start? And how much had that kiss meant, exactly?

Of a sudden, Keith himself materialized out of the night and dropped down beside her. He looked terribly tired, as if he had walked a long way through the mountains, after that strenuous day. They were out of ear-shot of the others.

"Hello," said Peggy, rather more friendly than she had been for days.

"I've been walking—thinking a lot, too," said Keith, staring at the fire.

"What about?"

"About you, principally, when I shouldn't have been," Keith said quietly. "About us both. I want to apologize for the sulky way I've been acting." He did not look at her. "If you must know the truth, it's because I've been jealous of Harvey Bayard."

Peggy's heart seemed to do hand-turns. She could feel its furious thudding.

"Jealous?"

"Yes. You see, I'm in love with you myself. I have been, I guess, ever since that night in Kansas City. But I didn't know it until I kissed you that day. And now—"

"And now—what?" she asked softly.

He stared doggedly at the fire.

"Well now, you know, that's all. I

only want to tell you how sorry I am I talked you into this. It was a silly thing to do, for a fine, sweet girl like yourself. The thing of it was that I thought I had a reason—a justifiable reason—and I guess the coincidence of the plane, and your talk about what you would do with another chance—I guess I put that into your head, too. . . . Well, the combination was just too much for me."

"You needn't apologize too much, as far as I'm concerned," Peggy said softly. "The trip has worked out all right for me. Harvey practically proposed to me this afternoon!"

He turned quickly.

"But he thinks you're married!"

She remembered, belatedly, her promise, just as she was on the point of telling him what Bayard knew.

"He thinks we've seriously quarreled," she said quickly. "That perhaps we may divorce."

"Oh." He looked at the fire again. "You'd be a fool not to marry him."

"You think so?"

"I know so." His voice was dispirited. "He can give you everything. I can't give you anything—not now. And because of certain—er—circumstances, I don't know when I can. And I'm sorry for the cracks I made about him, at the Observatory. That was only jealousy, I guess."

PEGGY was aching to tell him what had happened, but she did not dare. If she had ever doubted it before, or tried to make herself believe she doubted it, she was realizing now that Keith meant more to her than she had ever dreamed. More than any man in the world ever had meant, or ever would.

She knew, too, that Bayard's threat to jail Keith was a potent fact to be faced—and averted. And she knew, wildly, that she must do that, and do it alone. Keith could do nothing to help himself, for he could not fight against something he knew nothing about. And she could not tell him,

because there was her promise.

She felt happy and depressed at once. Happy because Keith loved her, which meant so much—so much! And depressed, because of his danger from Bayard. She could only protect him by placating Bayard, until she could think out what to do. And she dared not tell Keith anything now, for fear of upsetting the whole apple-cart. She must have time to think.

She was just wondering what she could do, when of a sudden, she heard a shout, from somewhere to the southeast. The group around the fire-place stopped singing, abruptly. They all looked in the same direction.

The shout came again, and then, hard on its heels, the flickering beam of a flashlight was seen, not far away. They heard the clatter of hoofs even before they saw the nearing horse-man.

Chester, the guide, was the first to recognize the man who was riding toward them.

"Why, that's Blackie, from the ranch," he cried. "Wonder what's up?" And the guide called, as the cowboy from the ranch dismounted: "What's the matter, Blackie?"

"Been tracking you all day," Blackie said, grinning. "Was making camp for the night, when I saw your fire across the lake, and followed it around." He looked at Bayard, who had strode up. "Got some news for you, Boss. Mr. Prescott sent me, from the Observatory."

"What is it, Blackie?" Bayard was tense.

"It's the professor," said the cowboy. "He's dead."

"Dead?" Bayard was stunned. "When—what happened?"

Peggy pushed forward, a sudden ache in her heart, and clutched at Keith's arm.

"He never woke up, this morning," said Blackie. "Mr. Prescott said to tell you it must have been his heart, again." He added, solemnly: "Mr. Prescott said to find you, and bring

you back. But I guess we'll have to wait until morning, now."

Bayard nodded, momentarily speechless. He turned then, and found Keith and Peggy facing him, the girl white-faced, the man shocked.

"You mustn't take it hard," he told them. "Dr. Estabrook would not want it that way." He bit his lip and stared past them, into the dying fire. His eyes were faraway. "I'm glad it happened—in his sleep."

He turned, suddenly, gave Peggy an odd glance, and walked away into the shadows.

PEGGY and Keith looked at one another. The rest were still gathered about the cowboy Blackie.

"I'm glad he went away, not knowing," she said softly. "I'm glad we came to Colorado." She looked at him. "I'm glad you made me come."

Keith raised his head, and stared at the sky.

"I'm glad I got to know him," said he, jerkily. He turned to her. "You'd better get some sleep. We'll probably be breaking camp before dawn."

Peggy nodded, and with a murmured good night went to her tent. Silently, she undressed, and crawled into her sleeping bag. Through the open tent-flap, she could see the stars. The millions, the trillions of stars. Her eyes filled with tears. All those cosmic answers the professor had wanted to know, he must know, now—even what lay behind the Great Plan. He must even know the truth about the Mayfields. About herself and Keith.

What a situation she and Keith had deliberately placed themselves in! She was an odd admixture of emotions, tonight. Happy, in a bitter-sweet way, to know that Keith loved her. Flattered, despite herself, that Bayard wanted to marry her. After all, wasn't that what she had wanted—to marry a wealthy man?

Peggy thought back over her life, over her career in New York, her

ill-fated love-affair. Her resolution that night, in Kansas City. She and Keith had gambled, and she, at least, had won. He had said she would be a fool not to jump at this unexpected second chance that life had given her, and she guessed she would. If only she had not fallen in love with Keith!

Then she remembered Bayard's threat about Keith that was hanging over her, and her heart froze. She had to marry Bayard whether she wanted to or not, if she was to save Keith from serious trouble! Bayard was a clever lawyer. He would never have threatened, without knowing that he could make his threat good. She was vague about what law she and Keith might have broken, but Bayard would find something.

Yes, she would have to marry him. If she did, maybe then Keith could get that "opportunity" he wanted, too. Maybe Bayard would get him the job the old professor had talked about.

She lay there staring at the stars, and her eyes filled with tears. She wished the professor had not died. Not just yet. And she wondered what Keith was doing—now. . . .

AT THAT very moment Bayard and Keith were sitting together by the dying fire, conversing in low voices. The others had all gone to their sleeping-bags. Both had lighted their pipes and for some time after Bayard had joined the thoughtful Keith, they sat and smoked, there, silently.

"I loved the professor," said Bayard at last. "So would you have, if you had known him long enough."

"I can believe that," Keith said slowly, his eyes still on the fire.

"I'm glad you got here in time to come to know him," the lawyer told him. "It's important, in a way, for he liked you very much. In fact, he came to be very fond of you." He spoke with a queer emphasis.

"I'm glad to hear that," Keith said.

Bayard hesitated.

"You'll know, sooner or later, so I might as well tell you now," he said. "Dr. Estabrook had me draw up a new will for him, when he recovered from his last attack. He signed it, shortly after he met you." He puffed at his pipe. "Under his old will, he left his entire estate to the Astronomical Foundation. But under his new will, he left half his estate to you."

He gave Keith a sideward sardonic look. Keith looked up in utter astonishment.

"You'll have nearly seven hundred thousand dollars, after the inheritance tax is paid," the lawyer went on calmly.

Keith found his voice at last.

"He left that money—to *me*?" He was stunned.

"To his old sweetheart's son," said Bayard. He knocked out his pipe. "As his attorney and executor, I think I can turn over your share of the estate to you in liquid condition as soon as the will is probated. I shall be very happy to be of any further service to you, of course, when that is done."

Keith, giving him a sidelong glance saw the curious expression in his eyes. Keith felt his own mouth go dry.

"I—I hardly know what to say," he managed to mumble.

"Of course!" Bayard rose, his face a mask. "We'll talk about it some other time. In the meantime, congratulations."

"Thanks," said Keith, rising in turn.

"We'd better get some sleep," Bayard suggested. "I want to get back as quickly as possible. There is a great deal to do. Good night."

"Good night," said Keith.

He went to his sleeping-bag like a man in a dream. But not to sleep.

"Good Lord!" he said to himself. "Good Lord! Now what have I got myself into! I'll have to tell him. . . ."

But I can't—yet. That might upset everything. So far, nobody has any suspicions. . . .” He laughed dryly. “I've got to get back there on the jump. And *he* thinks he has a lot to do!”

He pulled the sleeping bag close around his neck.

“Good Lord!” he mumbled.

A coyote howled in the mountain distance.

CHAPTER XI

SURPRISE FOR BAYARD

WHEN Keith and Peggy arrived at the Observatory late the next morning, a shabby hearse was parked outside. The coroner and the undertaker from the next town were there, awaiting Bayard's arrival before taking the professor away.

Peggy and Keith, with Harvey Bayard, went inside. Prescott was in the big, domed room, walking about restlessly, but there was no sign of Holland, the professor's chief assistant. Prescott was plainly annoyed over Holland's absence.

“I can't imagine where the man can be,” Prescott said irritably. “He went some place—I don't know where, but probably the professor sent him—not long before Dr. Estabrook went to bed early last evening, for the last time. Holland didn't come back all night, and isn't here yet. He doesn't even know the professor is dead. But he did know that the professor was depending on him, as well as me, to help with the eclipse.”

Peggy looked surprised at that, and a little shocked. So did Bayard. But when Peggy glanced quickly at Keith, she saw one of those odd expressions flit across his face. It was just as if, for some peculiar and unfathomable reason, Keith was not surprised at all.

Prescott's mood changed quickly.

He stopped his restless pacing and went over and sat down in the arm-chair on rollers, adjusting the great telescope. The slit in the roof was open, and the sunlight streaming in.

“You're just in time for the eclipse,” Prescott told them quietly. “It's due to begin any minute now.”

Bayard nodded, but led Keith and Peggy into the professor's room. He lifted the shrouding sheet, and Keith instinctively put his arm around Peggy, as they looked down. The old astronomer, his white thatch as unruly as ever, seemed to be sleeping. Peggy swallowed a sob, and turned blindly from the room. Keith followed her.

Prescott looked up from the telescope. There were a few others in the room now, and they were staring up through the slit in the roof, wearing smoked glasses that Prescott had handed around.

“Would you like to take a look through the telescope?” the old astronomer's assistant offered.

Peggy, overcome, shook her head, and headed for outdoors. Keith took two pairs of sun-glasses from Prescott, and followed her. She walked over to the rock parapet, Keith in her wake.

“Here,” he said, “take a pair. He wanted us to see this, remember.”

She took the glasses, and donned them, as he had. Together, then, they craned upward, staring at the sun. Already they could see the edge of the dark disc that was the moon impinging inexorably upon the blazing face of the sun.

Silently they watched the slow progress of the phenomenon. They knew it was being photographed from inside the Observatory, knew that millions of eyes, like theirs, were watching it, from valleys and plains and mountain tops.

When the shadow of the moon began to move off the sun and the world began to lighten again, Peggy took off her sun-glasses, turned away.

"It's a pity he missed it," she said, her voice choking.

Keith nodded. "I had a talk with Bayard last night," he told her, abruptly. "After I talked to you, and the news came."

"What did he say?" Her voice was tense.

"Professor Estabrook made a new will, after we came here. He left Philip Mayfield—a fortune."

Peggy stared at him.

"No!"

Keith laughed mirthlessly.

"Bayard says he can turn it over to—Philip Mayfield—as soon as the will is probated."

PEGGY drew in a deep breath. Oh, she had to tell him now!

"But you can't! Harvey Bayard—"

She caught herself. That solemn promise to Bayard not to tell Keith! She wanted to—terribly—and it must have been instinct that urged her not to break that promise. Not just yet, anyway.

"Are you going to marry him?" Keith asked.

She hesitated, her eyes looking into his piteously. It was amazing, how her bones turned to water from his mere nearness. That was love.

"I—I don't know," she whispered, her heart breaking. "I've got to think it over." She looked away. "Maybe I will. Wasn't something like that the reason I came into this thing with you, anyway? Well, this is—my second chance."

He was silent a long minute.

"You're right. It is." His face hardened. "And this chance that's been thrown my way. . . . What am I going to do about it? It's not the opportunity I was looking for, far from it, but it looks as if I've *got* to take it. At least until I can do something else about it. What else can I do, and not let you in for losing the chance *you* want so badly.

"They think we're the Mayfields, and once I say I'm not Philip May-

field, so can't take the money, they'll know you're not. . . . Then blooey goes your chance to marry a rich man. You've helped me out—more than you know, and I can't let you down now. Once you're safely married to Bayard—" He shrugged.

Peggy stared at him, aghast. If only she could tell him that Bayard knew the truth!

"You mean you'd go on pretending to be Mayfield? Take the legacy? But that's dishonest! It's criminal!"

"Is it any less dishonest marrying a man for money, than taking it under false pretenses?" he asked harshly. Then his voice softened, despite himself. "I suppose I sound like a cheap villain in a melodrama. Well, I'm afraid I'm not. I'm just trying to be a realist." His moody eyes were avoiding hers.

"Don't worry, though. Whatever you tell Bayard about me, I'll keep my mouth shut about all those nice little resolutions you made in Kansas City. That's your own business."

Peggy yearned over him, divining what tortures of jealousy he was suffering, yet not daring to tell him the truth.

"Think it over, first, Keith," she begged, "before you make up your mind you'll go through with this, even if you think you're doing it for my sake. Don't worry about me. I'll get along. Promise me! And promise me, too, that you let me know your decision, before you go through with it. Please! It—it all sounds too much as if you *wanted* to go through with it, and somehow I can't believe—"

He looked at her, hesitated, then nodded.

"Very well. But my mind is made up."

Just then Bayard emerged from the Observatory. Peggy turned away quickly, and walked over to the station wagon. Keith waited until Bayard had climbed in beside her, then slowly got in himself, in the

rear seat. The shabby hearse was already backing up to the Observatory door.

"We're taking the professor back East tomorrow morning," Bayard said. "I'll get the tickets. You two will be my guests in Boston, of course. Won't you, Mayfield?" His eyes held a curious expression.

"You're very kind," said Keith.

There was nothing else to say. For not yet, for Peggy's sake, could he tell them that it might be a long time before he ever saw Boston, or that while they were on their way he would still be here, though they would now know it, taking advantage of his real "opportunity."

They drove down the mountain for the last time. . . .

THERE are hours that seem like days, and there are days that seem like hours. To Keith, the remainder of that afternoon of the eclipse seemed the longest period he had ever known. For, though Keith Webster was used to facing crises, used to making quick judgments and acting on them instantly, he was utterly unused to facing a crisis with an emotional background, or one that had for him such a personal interest as the present one.

In the first place, he was compelled to admit that he was completely, irretrievably in love with Peggy. So much in love that all he had cherished in his life before this was nothing beside his devotion to her. For her sake, he would do anything; for her happiness he would hurl everything else to the winds, even take a chance on dishonesty—if it would do her any good—though it would mean abandoning his pride in his own good name forever.

As for Peggy herself, he was certain that his case was hopeless. Though that did not lessen his determination to see through, to the bitter end—for her sake—what he had started.

His intentions, in the first place, as far as she was concerned, had been so different. He had never meant to get her into difficulties, and all in all his action had been justifiable, he had thought. In many high places he would have been applauded for quick thinking.

He had seen a chance to carry through a certain plan that *had* to be brought to the right conclusion. He could never have done it in the way he had, without her. And now that she had a chance to gain what she most wanted in life, he couldn't let her down. Not if, by keeping his mouth shut and carrying through this Mayfield hoax, for a time, he could get it for her.

But two things he had not foreseen when he and Peggy had gone into this thing. He had never dreamed that someone was going to toss a fortune into his lap, a fortune he might be forced to take, dishonestly, even for a short time. And he hadn't known he was going to fall in love with Peggy Young.

Some men who turn to dishonesty for the first time, do so from necessity or through fortuitous circumstances. Few, like Keith, find deliberate dishonesty easy. His greatest apprehension was the prospect of losing his self-respect.

And what was Peggy thinking of him, after he had said he might take that fortune? Especially when he had said he was doing it for her. That was much as Adam had acted and talked after he had eaten the apple.

All afternoon he stayed away from the lodge, fighting out his battle. For hours he told himself that it was right for him to carry on the deception, to take the fortune and, by continuing to be Philip Mayfield for a time, to give Peggy her chance.

Yet, in the end, as he sat watching the sun set in the silent reaches beyond the mighty mountains, Keith knew inevitably what he would do. Not even for Peggy could he go

against the rule of life that had been set down for him long before he ever was born; the rules that had been upheld, and passed down to him by the generations of his upstanding American forebears and made him the kind of a person he was.

His decision reached, he was in a fever to bring matters to a climax, the adventure to an end.

He went back to the lodge, to find that everyone was dressing for dinner—the last one in that house for some of them, for some time to come.

Keith had no stomach to sit around a table with them again; no heart to watch Peggy playing up to Bayard further, knowing what he knew. He would tell Bayard the truth, and quietly go.

He had accomplished what he had come here in the first place to do. Now he could leave, get in touch with those who were expecting to hear from him, wind up that business that had brought him here, and go on about important affairs that were calling him. And try to put Peggy out of his mind and heart. He must forget her.

But there was his promise to Peggy, to tell her his decision. His overwhelming desire for her to know that he was decent. He went to her room, raised his hand to knock at the door, then hesitated, his hand in mid-air.

After all, why rub salt in his wound? She would know he had let her down, once she knew he was gone. And he could not bear the thought of seeing her again, knowing it was absolutely good-by, that she was going to marry Bayard. He would rather always remember her as he had seen her up there at the Observatory, atop the Continental Divide, with her profile etched against the mountain sky.

"Good-by, darling," he whispered. "Be happy." And he turned away from her door.

CHAPTER XII

"NOBLESSE OBLIGE"

KEITH went down the gallery to Bayard's study, knocked lightly, and heard his host's summons to enter. He went in.

The lawyer greeted him cordially, if with watchful eyes.

"Hello, there. Been out for a walk? We missed you."

Keith came directly to the point.

"I'm leaving in a few minutes for Denver, Bayard. There's something I want to say to you first, though. Something you ought to know. In fact, several things which may surprise you."

The lawyer's eyebrows arched, then his eyes narrowed.

"Is that so?" He smiled, pleasantly. "Well, spill it."

"You think I'm Philip Mayfield," Keith said steadily. "Well, I'm not. My name happens to be Keith Webster."

Bayard looked at him expressionlessly.

"You're—not Mayfield?"

"No, I suppose I'm an impostor." Keith hesitated. "It's quite a story. I think you'd better let me tell it to you in my own way, before you ask questions."

The lawyer hesitated, then nodded.

Quietly, trying hard to be casual, Keith told Bayard of what had happened that night in Kansas City when the real Mayfield had taken his own and Peggy's seats on the doomed airliner. Keith did not spare himself in telling how he had persuaded Peggy to undertake this adventure with him, had talked her into considering it in the nature of a lark, and had got her around to believing that she actually would be doing a big favor to a heart victim like Professor Estabrook to keep him from learning of the trag-

edy for just a little while, at least.

But Keith did not tell Bayard—at first—about what his own reasons for the deception had been, nor how he had pounced on the “opportunity” to get to Skytop, unknown, when he saw it. That would come later, but it must be told to Bayard now.

If Bayard was the true American Keith believed him to be, and truly in love with Peggy, as of course he was, Peggy’s part in the whole business would make no difference to him.

Keith told, frankly, how he and Peggy had examined Philip Mayfield’s briefcase, how they had found material for their posing, and of how they had fallen into the error of imagining themselves posing as brother and sister, instead of husband and wife; of their embarrassment since.

Harvey Bayard heard him through in attentive silence. He was like a cat playing with a mouse.

“Why didn’t you tell me this last night, when I told you about Dr. Estabrook’s legacy?” he asked, unexpectedly.

“Because,” Keith confessed, “I thought I had a reason—a good reason—for keeping quiet for a time. Two good reasons, in fact. Because of one of them, I must tell you frankly that I played with the idea of going on with the deception for a time, of taking the money and letting you continue to believe that I was Philip Mayfield. But I couldn’t do it, even for what I believed the best reason in the world. Perhaps what I’ll tell you now will better explain to you why I couldn’t go on with the Mayfield business. I—”

He reached into his pocket, and when he held out his hand to Bayard, palm up, in it lay a glittering badge. Bayard stared at it as though he couldn’t believe his eyes.

“Secret Service!” he said, and whistled low. “I’d never have believed it! You! But what—who . . . I don’t understand!”

“It’s simple enough,” said Keith. “The Department had learned that, in some way, the enemy, both Berlin and Tokyo, were getting as complete reports on the weather, with the most accurate advance information, as though their own weather bureaus were set up in this country.

“We’ve had men checking everywhere to find out where they might have come from. My own assignment was to Skytop, but when we checked up on the observatory we discovered it was *not* so simple for a stranger to get anywhere near.

“And because of the peculiar situation here, it was necessary that any investigation should be made without arousing suspicion. Dr. Estabrook and you, yourself, Mr. Bayard, are—I mean he was—above reproach. The other people connected with the observatory appeared to be also, but those weather reports were coming from *somewhere*, and Skytop seemed to be the obvious place, after every other place was thoroughly eliminated. So—”

“Don’t tell me we’ve been harboring spies!” Bayard ejaculated, his eyes flashing, fists clenching at the thought, everything else forgotten for the moment. “In spite of all our isolation, our guards, the care we have taken?”

KEITH nodded soberly.

“I’m afraid you have been, Mr. Bayard. A spy, at least. I’m glad the professor never knew. It would have broken his heart—a man he trusted. I was suspicious of a certain man as soon as I saw him, as soon as I heard his peculiar drawl that he attempted to make Southern, and saw his deep interest in the coronagraph. But—”

“Great heavens!” cried Bayard. “You don’t mean—”

Again Keith nodded. “I do. Holland. You noticed he was missing this morning. Well, that was because he was—and still is—in a certain cave where I found him last night

when I disappeared from the hunting party. He was busy with a short-wave radio—I had hunted all over the mountains for it before—with a ready Luger beside him, the weapon well known to men of his nationality. He is German, as you may have guessed. He had been as thorough as all the other Nazis and had taken a long time to win the professor's complete trust.

"But he had no time to use his weapon. He was not expecting company, so I had little difficulty with him. I left him there, handcuffed to the strong metal standard for his aerial that was imbedded in the rock floor. He won't starve. I left food and water where he could reach it. And I left *him* because I wanted to send for men to get him off the mountain without exciting the professor, if possible.

"I've already phoned the men. Holland's probably on his way down the mountainside with them now. But I think, Mr. Bayard, now that the professor is dead, that the Government will take over the observatory and that dangerous coronagraph."

Bayard shook his head, all but speechless.

"It doesn't seem possible," was all he could say.

"But I suppose you *can* see why I was so anxious to come to Skytop incognito?" asked Keith. "And why it seemed like a God-sent opportunity when those briefcases were switched, and then that plane accident. . . . But, of course, there had to be *two* Mayfields, so—"

"Does Miss Young know anything about this?" Bayard asked quickly, and Keith shook his head.

"No, not a thing. I was afraid to take anybody into my confidence, for obvious reasons. One single word, one slip, might have ruined everything. But"—his jaws set firmly—"I can say this. If she *had* known, she wouldn't have had to be persuaded to come on an 'adventure.' "

Harvey Bayard nodded soberly.

"You're right," he said. "You're very right."

Keith straightened, and grinned. "And now," he said, "there's my case. What are you going to do with me? I suppose you could prosecute me, if you wished. I don't imagine you will, frankly since you are a good American, and since I've made a clean breast of things.

"This—er—shall we call it confession of mine has at least saved you a lot of trouble. And I'm not really sorry I did it," he added defiantly. "At least, the professor died happier than he would have, if he had known the truth about the Mayfields' death."

"You're right," approved Bayard.

HE WAS feeling pleased, quite satisfied the way things were working out. His suspicions about this young Webster and Peggy being in love with each other were evidently unfounded. Keith was clearing out, leaving the field entirely to him. Bayard felt he could afford to be magnanimous. It would impress Peggy, when he told her.

"Under the circumstances, I'm glad you did, too," he went on, "since no real harm has been done—and a great deal of good to our country. And—er—say, Webster, did the professor ever speak to you about that job back in Boston he had arranged for you?" As Keith nodded, he continued: "It's still in my power to get you that job, Webster, under your real identity. I'd be glad to."

"Thank you," Keith said a little stiffly, "but when I leave the Secret Service—there's the Army."

"I'm sorry." Bayard rose, and offered his hand. A thought occurred to him. "Are you—do you intend to say good-by to Miss—to Peggy?"

Keith shook his head.

"I'd rather not, if you don't mind. I'm in a hurry. I'll . . . Well, perhaps you'd say good-by for me."

They looked at each other, under-

standing. Bayard nodded.

"I think you're right," he said. "If you like, Bill can drive you into town, at once. You can easily make a plane connection for wherever your next assignment will take you."

Keith thanked him, acquiescing.

In less than ten minutes, Bayard heard the station-wagon driving away. Taking Keith out of his life—and Peggy's. He breathed a sigh of relief and smiled. Then went slowly to find Peggy.

CHAPTER XIII

A KISS ON THE MOUNTAIN

BAYARD found Peggy, at last, in the gun-room, curled up over a magazine she was not reading. She was staring, instead, at the mountains outside the great window. A pale, sad-looking Peggy.

She looked up quickly when he entered, with anticipation, and could not help showing a faint disappointment at sight of him. She had been hoping it was Keith. She had not seen Keith leave, on the other side of the lodge.

"Hello, there," she greeted Bayard.

"Hello, yourself!" He smiled at her. "Did you see Keith before he left?"

She sat up abruptly.

"Before he left? What do you mean?"

He sat down beside her.

"He's gone—for good." He did not look at her. "He came to me about half an hour ago, and told me the whole story—everything."

He did not tell her all that Keith had told him. Once she knew what Keith's real mission to Skytop had been, her romantic mind would take her thousands of miles away from Harvey Bayard's arms. That part of Keith's story could come later—when

Bayard held her secure as his wife.

"He did!" She gave a sigh of relief, her eyes suddenly shining. It was as if a great weight had been lifted from her. "Oh, I'm so glad!" Then her face fell. "But you say he's gone?"

"Yes, he thought it best to go off quietly. He asked me to say good-by to you."

Peggy looked suddenly out the window, so that he would not see the hurt in her eyes.

"I tried to get him to change his mind," Bayard said smoothly. "But he was in a hurry to get away. I even offered to give him that job in Boston that Estabrook wanted him to have. But he refused."

"He would," Peggy said softly. "He's a very fine person, Harvey, no matter how he may have been tempted. I'm just realizing how fine. Only a little bitter and disillusioned and lonely." Her eyes were faraway. "All that time, he never once—" She fell silent.

"I'm a rather lonely man myself," Bayard told her. He took her hand. "But since I met you—"

"But now that you know the whole truth—"

"It doesn't make any difference," Bayard informed her. He smiled. "I understand."

"But you don't, Harvey!" she told him desperately. "Did Keith tell you the real reason why I came with him? Why we did this?" She faced him defiantly. "That he wanted an opportunity, as he called it, and I wanted a chance to live my life over again? That, for my part, I had determined to marry a rich man—any rich man? That I was tired of being poor, tired of being a fool where men were concerned, tired of believing in romance?"

"You've been hurt," said Bayard. "I'll make it up to you. I can give you—"

She shook her head.

"I'm sorry, Harvey, but it's no use.

I can't marry you. I know that now."

"If you're angry at me for threatening you, for threatening Keith—"

"It's not that, Harvey. I just can't marry you. Not even if it is true that perhaps I'm a fool not to, after what I've been through. But I don't love you. I never could." Her mouth twisted wryly. Her eyes were haunted. "Keith isn't the only one on whom the joke was played."

Harvey Bayard, wise in the ways of women, and the world, looked long at her.

"You're really in love with Webster, aren't you?"

"Yes, I am." She nodded. "But he doesn't know it." She smiled uncertainly at him.

He hesitated only shortly. He was a gambler, and he knew that he had lost. He could lose like a good gambler.

"Webster's in love with you, too," he told her. "I could tell. I've been watching him."

"I know he is," she admitted. "I've been a fool. But I guess it had to be this way, and it's better so." She looked at him pleadingly and asked anxiously: "Can I catch him before he gets to Denver, do you think? I've got to!"

"I'll drive you myself," said Harvey Bayard. He was a sportsman to the very end. "Good hunting, my dear."

He offered her his hand. And if there was an ache in his heart, his smile hid it. This, he thought, was love, real love. Without question she was going to the man of her heart, even though, as yet, she believed he might have had in him a crooked enough streak to have wanted to take a fortune, dishonestly, when chance offered.

When she discovered the truth about that man, found out how fine and honorable he really was, then would come her greatest reward. If there could be greater reward than love. . . .

IT WAS a bright, moonlit night, and Keith, waiting near the edge of the airfield, could see the dim hulk of the Snowy Range in the west, the mighty mountain rim that was the Divide. Gloomily he ground the glowing butt of his last cigarette underfoot, waiting for the signal to go aboard the airliner, which was squatted like a giant firefly out upon the landing apron of the field.

"Is that our plane, Mister?"

Keith whirled about at the sound of that voice. And there was Peggy, her bags at her feet. The same girl in the same tailored suit to whom he had spoken on that rainy night in Kansas City days ago—centuries ago.

Peggy saw Keith blink.

"Where—what—when—how?" he spluttered.

"Your train pulled out just before we got there," Peggy told him casually, "so Harvey drove me down. I just said good-by to him, outside the terminal. Although it might only be *auf wiedersehen* . . . It all depends."

"But how come?" he demanded.

"I was in a hurry," said Peggy. "I had to ask you a question."

"What kind of a question?" He was devouring her with his eyes.

"It's about a kiss in the rain. What's a girl to think, when a man kisses her on a mountain in the rain? And more specifically, on the lips. Hard, as if he meant it. What would you think, if you were an impressionable young woman?"

"It depends on the man," said Keith, judiciously. "What kind of character has he?"

"None to speak of, in particular," said Peggy. "He's utterly selfish and unscrupulous. The kind of man who never heard of the Marquis of Queensberry or the Golden Rule, and probably never wants to."

"And what kind of female might she be?" he asked softly.

"A bird of a feather," she told him, huskily. "A gold-digger. A hard-hearted Hannah who's out to marry

money — anybody's money." Her voice broke. She was at the end of her tether. She asked: "Tell me, you big lug, do you love me or don't you?"

"I told you once—up there on the mountain. . . ."

"Then will you marry me? Right away?"

Keith stared at her, trying to find words. She got them first.

"Oh, don't be worrying about a little old job—if you've got to get one. You will, and we've plenty of years ahead, haven't we? We're young, aren't we?" Her voice softened. "And we love each other, don't we? What else could possibly matter?"

Keith gave a great sigh, a happy sigh, and took her in his arms.

"Nothing, lady — absolutely nothing!"

Peggy was suddenly giddy with happiness. She looked up at him, her

face silvered in the moonlight.

"Harvey, outside there, still wants you to take that job the professor wanted you to have. He says you owe it to me." She smiled. "But me—I'll go where you say, anywhere. As long as it's with you."

He started to say something, to explain, but stopped short. He was too happy to explain anything now. There was plenty of time ahead for that. Years, hadn't she said? There couldn't be too many of them!

An airport attendant near the airplane shouted over to them, as the motors suddenly roared.

"All aboard!"

Keith smiled down into Peggy's eyes, holding her close. He lowered his face, seeking her lips.

The roar of the airplane propellers merged ecstatically with the roaring in Peggy's heart.

Next Issue's Novel: SALUTE TO LOVE, by MONA FARNSWORTH

You owe it to yourself to try

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"Tell me about Cazada—and the girl you left behind you"

SENTIMENTAL PILGRIMAGE

By LEONIE MASON

*A gallant London girl steps out with a memory—
only to walk straight into the arms of romance!*

HE WAS young and blond and lonely, and when he first saw her she was sitting by herself at a small, glass-topped table with two pink gins in front of her. He watched her covertly from between his eyelashes and, from a dis-

tance, liked almost everything about her.

He liked the small, cheeky black hat and the slimly tailored black suit with a buttonhole of scarlet geraniums. Especially he liked those geraniums after rafts of girls who wore

carnations or gardenias or, when they could get them, orchids.

He liked her wide mouth, that matched the flowers, and the way her short nose tip-tilted. He liked her air of complete indifference to the other people in the hotel lounge. Few women, he thought, could sit alone at halfpast six in the evening without looking either embarrassed or nervous.

He wondered idly on the sort of man who would appear, presently, and drink the second pink gin.

For a moment he indulged in dreams. The man would be someone he knew—Tex Hillier from Toronto or Peter le Grande from Montreal. He would come into the lounge and sight him and say:

"Aw gee, there's Jerry Fletcher. D'you mind if I ask him to join us, honey?"

But it was unlikely in the extreme. Both Tex and Peter were in the Army, whereas he wore Navy blue, with two wavy stripes round his sleeve, and Canada stamped across his gilt buttons. Both Tex and Peter had answered his wire inquiring if, by any chance, they had leave at the same time as he had, with an unpromising "No".

He finished his beer and strolled across to the reception desk to buy an evening paper. It was too early for dinner and he couldn't think of anything else to do except to sit here, drinking and reading. The reputation London had for being a wow of a place in which to spend one's leave was sadly undeserved, he thought. Maybe, if you knew people, or where to go, it might be different.

Someone had been seated at his table in his absence, but the table next to the Pink Gin girl was vacant. He sat down there, and ordered another beer.

Suddenly she leaned forward and poured the second pink gin into the vase of early daffodils on the table in front of her. She did it quickly,

deftly, but as she put the glass back she caught his eye.

He grinned.

"That's a heck of a waste of good liquor," he said.

She shook her head.

"Not really," she said, "it was a gesture, that's all."

A PART from thinking she was the best looking girl he had seen this side of the Atlantic, he was interested in the reason for a gesture that entailed pouring pink gins into flower vases. He picked up his beer and stood up.

"Mind if I sit here and talk until your friend turns up?" he said. "I'm going crazy on my own."

For a moment she hesitated.

"This isn't a pick-up, I promise you," he said quickly. "I'll retire to prepared positions the moment your friend appears."

She laughed.

"You see," she said, "there isn't a friend to arrive. I'm not meeting anyone."

He sat down beside her.

"Well, that's swell," he said. "That's the swellest thing I've heard in months."

She thought, quickly, "Well, why not? He's lonely, and he's come a long way to fight for us and, after tomorrow I shall never see him again. This is the last night of my old life, so it might as well be shared with someone else.

"Okay, Canada," she said aloud. "Sit down and talk."

"To begin with," he said, "my name's Jerry Fletcher."

"Mine," she told him, "is Iris Dedd."

"That being that," he said, "how-do-you-do and without being unduly curious I'd like to know if it's a habit of yours to pour pink gins into vases."

She laughed.

"No," she said. "But you see to-night is something of an occasion. I've joined the A.T.S. and this is my

last night as a civilian. The—the person I should have spent it with couldn't get leave so . . . Well, did you hear that song, 'I'm Stepping out with a Memory'?"

"Sure," he said, "I get you. Something about ordering two drinks and two dinners and a couple of seats at the theater. I remember." He took a sip of his beer. "You're going to find it mighty difficult disposing of the second dinner in a vase of daffodils, aren't you?"

She laughed.

"I should think so. I shan't try. I shall just leave it on its plate and ignore the interested stares of the populace."

"That's the trouble about this country," he said. "Do anything a bit out of the normal and everybody stares at you. Now in Montreal if I chose to go around ordering dinner for six and sitting down alone to it I doubt whether even the waiter would raise an eyebrow."

"Canada sounds a nice country," she said.

"It is," he agreed, "it's the grandest country this side of heaven. Though you've not got such a bad little island here yourself. Look, Miss Dodd, I've an idea. How about letting me understudy the guy who couldn't get leave. I mean you'd be doing me a big favor by letting me trail around with you tonight, honest. I came up here on leave a week ago and I'm bored stiff."

"Bored stiff?" she said. "In London? Nonsense! You can't be."

"I take it you're a Londoner?" he said quietly.

She nodded.

"So you know where to go and what to see. Oh, I don't mean the Tower and Westminster Abbey and the bomb damage in the city. I mean the bright lights and the shows and all the fun. I've heard so much about it, but I'm hanged if I can find the places."

"She looked at the clock over the

revolving doors.

"We're too late for a show now," she said. "No, we're not. 'Rise Above It' at the Comedy doesn't start until seven. Have you seen it?"

"No," he said. "I saw 'Blithe Spirit' and a couple of films. It was a riot but you needed someone with you to laugh with."

She pulled on her gloves and called a page boy over and asked him to get a taxi at once. The Canadian was a little awed by her air of assurance. So this was what a Londoner was like. Sophisticated, poised, debonair. Now he could understand the stories he had heard of the blitz. He couldn't conceive of anything liable to ruffle Iris Dodd's nonchalance, or to make the slightest dent in her morale.

"By the way, this is Dutch," she said, as they walked across the hall.

HE LIFTED one eyebrow.

"Dutch?" he said. "It's double dutch to me."

She laughed. "Sorry. I mean we're going fifty-fifty on this evening, so will you please take mental notes on what you spend and let me know."

He thought, "I shall do no such thing," but he was wise enough not to argue with her then.

In the taxi he asked, suddenly, about the blitz.

"Was it terrible?" he said. "Last winter?"

She shrugged, and instinctively held her chin a little higher.

"It was all right," she told him.

He thought of one of the phrases that Mr. Churchill had made famous—"Grim and gay." He had never, until then, realized how appropriate it was.

"That's why I've joined up," she said suddenly. "To try and give them something back for their impertinence. I'm hoping to get into the anti-aircraft side. If my mathematics and my instructions ever bring down a plane, I'll be quits with them. I couldn't volunteer before because it

took me nearly a year to train an older woman to do my job and I wasn't allowed to leave until I had. Here we are."

He paid off the taxi driver and followed her into the foyer. He saw her back view at the booking office and presently she handed him two pink tickets.

"I thought I'd buy these in case you suffered from a lapse of memory later on," she said, smiling innocently. "You had a look in your eye

"I'll consider it," she said. "I wonder if you'd like the Hungaria. You can dance there as well as eat and it's—part of my pilgrimage."

"I'm sure I'll like it," he said. "Which way?"

"We cut into Lower Regent Street and turn right," she told him. "It's too near to take a cab."

Walking up he was surprised that Iris Dodd's remark about her pilgrimage had upset him so much. It had been like a sudden touch of cold

DEEP IN MY HEART

*One kiss is ever on my lips,
One smile to light my way,
One word of love is graven in
My heart of hearts to stay.*



*One kiss, one smile, one word of love,
Ah, precious legacy—
To have and hold till freedom's won
And you come back to me!*

—HELEN ARDSLEY.

when I suggested going 'Dutch' that I don't quite trust."

He flushed a little. She was as quick as a flash, this Iris Dodd.

When they came out of the theater she turned to him.

"Enjoy it, Lieutenant Fletcher?"

He nodded. "It was swell, and having someone to laugh with made all the difference. Where do we go from here, and could you consider calling me Jerry?"

water. He thought, incredulous, "Steady, Jerry. You're going crazy. You can't fall seriously for a dame, however cute, in three and a half hours." He reminded himself, sternly, that he was understudy to some guy who couldn't get leave. He thought, "Later I'll ask her if she's engaged to him."

He did, sitting across from her at a small table on the dance floor.

"This guy who couldn't get leave,"

he said, crumbling his roll into small pellets. "Are you engaged to him?"

Iris looked vaguely surprised, then she said quickly:

"No, not exactly. Jerry, for heaven's sake don't do that, Lord Woolton will have you clapped into jail under regulation Eighteen-B."

He felt a faint ray of hope. He decided not to delve any deeper into the matter.

"Tell me about Canada," she said, "and—the girl you left behind you."

He grinned at her, disarmingly, and she thought suddenly, "But he's enchanting with that blond hair and those thick, fair lashes, and that look in his eyes of having been staring at far horizons. It's just as well, my girl, that you are leaving London tomorrow. You know what happens to girls who fall for sailors!"

"Canada?" he repeated. "That's a swell country for you. The towns seem cleaner and wider somehow than they do over here."

He leaned his elbows on the table and told her something of his life, painted word pictures for her, added a flippant, amusing story of the time he went out shooting grizzlies in the Rocky Mountains and nearly got killed for his sins.

"I'm talking a heck of a lot," he ended. "Let's dance. And, by the way, there isn't any girl."

Absurdly, her heart was pleased.

Presently, he asked her where she was going to be stationed with the A.T.S., and she named a town on the West Coast.

"You mean it?" he said, "Iris, that's tremendous. That's where I sail in and out of with monotonous regularity." He touched wood superstitiously.

She thought, "Yes, and perhaps I'll meet you once and then you'll forget. It's absurd and crazy, but I think you're the nicest person I've ever met in all my life."

"And what's more," he said, "my leave's up tomorrow, we could travel

down together."

She laughed.

"We could," she said, "and shout snappy remarks to each other down the corridor. Naval officers travel first class. A.T. privates definitely do not!"

Suddenly she looked at her watch.

"Time to move on," she said. "The pilgrimage calls for coffee at the Corner House."

"Darn it all!" he thought. "Every time I start to forget this man of hers who couldn't get leave, she reminds me of his existence. He must be a terrific bloke with a swell line to make her so goofy about him."

He asked for the bill and paid it, and they made their way out into Regent Street.

Jerry took Iris' arm because it was so dark, and they moved cautiously toward Piccadilly Circus. A long way away a searchlight stabbed the sky like a questing finger, reminding them that there was a war.

They lingered over their coffee and then Iris started to put on her gloves. He had a cold feeling in the pit of his stomach. This evening, which he had enjoyed more than anything in all his life before, was ending and there wasn't a thing he could do about it.

He wanted to take her hand and tell her that he loved her, truly and absolutely. He wanted to beg her to stay with him until it was time for their train in the morning—to just wander around the half-empty streets, to stare at the stars reflected in the river to have breakfast in some all-night café. Just to be with her.

But he couldn't. He had a suspicion that if he showed her he cared at all she would be frigidly polite and final. He was an understudy for somebody else, that was all.

"What now?" he said, when they had reached the pavement.

She hesitated and said, gaily:

"Well, strictly speaking it ought to be a taxi and twice around the park, slowly."

"That suits me!" he said. "That's swell!"

He hailed a cruising taxi and helped her in.

"Twice round the park, slowly," he told the driver.

The driver looked at him sourly. He opened his mouth to speak about the petrol shortage and then he got a gleam of gold braid and the impression of a cap worn at the Beatty angle. His son had been at Dunkirk and there just wasn't anything he wouldn't do for the Navy.

"Hop in, sir," he said. "Anything you say, Admiral."

He engaged his gears and shut the sliding glass panel behind his head.

JERRY slipped his arm through Iris' and held her hand lightly.

"How'm I doing?" he asked, keeping his voice gay.

"Beautifully," she said. "Although you ought, strictly speaking, to tell me that I'm the most beautiful thing you've seen in a month of Sundays and that you love me dearly."

"Right," he said, "how's this. Iris, you're the most beautiful girl I've ever known in all my life. I love you, so help me. I guess I loved you from the moment I first saw you in that hotel lounge wastefully pouring away liquor. You're all the things I've ever dreamed about." He put his arms round her and kissed her hard on the mouth. "Iris—darling, will you marry me?" His voice was shaken.

Her voice sounded a little husky, too, when she replied.

"Jerry," she said, "you're over-

playing your part. You didn't have to go as far as that."

"Darn my part," he said. "I'm not an understudy any longer. I'm playing lead now. I mean it, every word of it." He kissed her again. "And now I suppose you'll throw me out of this cab."

"No," she said. "You see, I hoped you meant it. I . . . It's crazy, isn't it, after knowing you seven hours, but I would like to marry you if the offer's still open."

"I'll say it's still open, honey," he said. "But listen. You're not being carried away are you? You won't regret it tomorrow? How about this bloke who couldn't get leave? What's he going to say?"

She grinned.

"There isn't any bloke," she said. "At least not any definite one. He was a sort of composite picture in my mind of half a dozen friends I used to go out with. He just stood for civilian life and the old days, like that statue on the Old Bailey used to stand for Justice."

"But what about 'twice round the park' and 'I-love-you-dearly'?" he demanded.

"That," she told him, "was just a bit I put in."

He opened the sliding panel that separated him from the driver.

"Hey!" he said. "Fourteen times round the park, or, if you're short of petrol, we don't care a lot if you stop and take a short walk."

"Okay, Admiral," the taxi driver said. "Just give a shout when you want me, will you?"

When Myrtle and Bill Tried to Teach a School Girl a Lesson They Found They Also Could Learn a Lot About Love—in

GIRL SNATCHER

By LETA ZOE ADAMS

A Delightful Short Story Coming Next Issue!



WHEN you glance down at the delightful tan you labored to get, and which looked so dazingly healthy, and you notice that it's slightly faded and out of place, you know that fall is here. Autumn spells activity, even more than you have already been doing—defense work, canteen work, nurses' aides—and you even find time to squeeze in a couple of football games and festive dinner parties.

With all this lively energy comes the need and desire to buy new clothes and to complement the new fall wardrobe, you must appreciate the necessity of "new faces" During the humid summer heat, your oil glands worked overtime and now your skin suddenly feels dry and drawn because there is much less moisture in the air.

Fine little lines may show about the eyes and across the forehead. Something must be done about it—and the three *musts* are cleansing, nourishing and protecting.

Your usual brand of cold cream will take care of the cleansing process. Use a heavier cream for massaging and a cream base before powdering. Before you know it, you will look new again.

How to Wear Flowers

If you are one of the lucky girls who rate invitations to a big game, it should challenge you to make the most of your looks on the red-letter day.

Whether the man in your life wires you flowers to wear on the football special, or calls in person to take you to the game, you owe it to yourself and to him, to give concentrated thought to wearing your flowers where they'll do the most for your personal style of good looks.

For perfect grooming, choose your lipstick with an eye to complementing, not quarreling, with your flowers. If the blossoms you wear to the stadium are purple orchids, a lipstick with a bluish-red tinge will be most flattering.

If pink roses or the pinkish, daisy type chrysanthemums are used for the big game corsage, it's smart beauty technique to use a lighter shade of lipstick.

If your uniformed beau sends you one

of the patriotic corsages of red, white and blue flowers, blue eye-shadow will add an extra bit of glamour. If you are the proud possessor of one of the large-sized fur muffs, you'll make an effective picture with an extra size stadium corsage of flowers pinned to it.

Pin your flowers on with an eye to accenting your best features. And wait, you can transform your posies into a headdress later on, if you go "formal" to a victory dance.

Lapel corsages give drama to your fur jacket, whether it's coonskin, sheared beaver, opulent mink or dyed muskrat, and you can transfer them to the neckline of your frock for the occasion after the game.

Vital Vitamins

Have you taken one of the Nutrition Courses offered by the Red Cross as a patriotic measure to keeping fit and feeding your family the proper vitamins? And do you know the purpose of these vitamins?

The five vitamins are A, B, C, D, and G—you need them all for health and charm. Each vitamin is vital.

"A" helps to keep skin, hair, eyes, ears, nose, throat, bronchial tubes and lungs healthy. These influence your appearance. And you will find Vitamin A in milk, butter, eggs, liver, green leafy, or yellow vegetables, cod liver oil or other fish oil.

Vitamin B helps to keep nerves steady and the digestive tract regular. These influence your poise and disposition. It can be found in dark breads, dark cereals, etc.

riched bread, green and root vegetables, egg yolk, lean pork, nuts, milk, fruit and yeast.

Vitamin C helps to keep gums and teeth in good condition. Your appearance and your comfort is affected. Eat citrus fruits, berries and other raw fruit, tomatoes, raw vegetables such as carrots, green peppers, yellow turnips, cabbage and white potatoes cooked in their jackets.

Vitamin D helps everything else do its part. Be sure you get it. It's found in cod liver or other fish liver oil, Vitamin D milk and direct sunlight.

Vitamin G helps to keep your skin fresh and glowing and puts a gloss in your hair, promotes vim and vigor. It helps give you "oomph." You can find this one in liver, kidney, beef, pork (lean), eggs, milk and yeast.

And minerals are very important, such as calcium which plays an important role in providing good health and charm—good teeth, good digestion, steady nerves are but a few.

Milk is the greatest source of calcium and adults need at least two glasses a day. If you don't like just plain milk—try this Top-of-the-Stove Baked Custard.

Beat together 1 cup milk, 1 egg and 2 tablespoons sugar in top of a double boiler. Sprinkle nutmeg on top. Cover and cook over hot water, not allowing water to touch upper part of pan. Use low heat. Test custard with knife. If knife comes out clean, custard is done. Serve warm to cold. Makes two or three helpings.

Office Etiquette

For you gals who are just embarking on your career in an office job remember that an office personality is just as important as a social one. Be as friendly, gracious, helpful and well-groomed in the office as you are at any social gathering.

Don't let constant association with your fellow workers break down the desire to put your best foot forward. Remember that the woman who is successful in business cultivates a pleasant disposition and keeps herself attractively groomed and dressed.

You will not be minus becoming make-up or a well-fixed coiffure. You will not bemoan the fact that some one else gets all the "breaks" or gives a snappy reply to a well-meant request to do a small favor.

You will not borrow other people's working tools and forget to return them. And you will not be an idle gossip.

Canning Bees

You gals who planted victory gardens should be harvesting about this time of year and you can do your patriotic bit right at home by canning as much food as possible. Lots of girls I know are giving canning bees. It will help stretch the na-



tional food supply and banding together in groups is not only fun, but speeds up the work.

Two people can double up on shelling and paring while the others assemble the canning equipment, wash jars and put them on to sterilize in a deep kettle of water.

Another member of the party washes vegetables, and so on, until the entire process is completed. It takes the drudgery out of the work and turns it into a smart kind of way to have an afternoon tea.

Hallowe'en Fun

Are you giving a Hallowe'en party this year? It might be fun to entertain some of the boys on leave with this one, Hallowe'en in Spooky Town. Send this invitation:

Heaps of fun we have in store,
Gypsies, goblins, ghosts galore;
All that's left of us to do
Is send this note, inviting you.

Goblins, witches, ghosts, black cats, owls, skeletons gather in Spooky Town on All-hallows' Eve. They wander through Sheet Lane where dim blue and green lights, colored blubs, shine eerily. Strange figures extend limp hands—gloves stuffed with cotton. Heads come in contact with clammy bats—sponges slightly dampened with ice water and tied to strings. Weird sounds are heard.

Here and there are candles that go out

for no reason at all. The secret is, they've been cut off at various lengths from the top and heated, then stuck together again.

From the Witch's Hat

When the guests arrive, girls draw small envelopes from a witch's hat; men draw their envelopes from a hollowed-out pumpkin. One girl's envelope may read, "Girl Whose Dog Was Lost," and contains this instruction, "Find Dog Pound Keeper." A man's envelope might be marked "Dog Pound Keeper," and tell to "Find Girl Whose Dog Was Lost."

Other characters to be linked up are Spooky Town's Burglar and Spinster, the Mayor and the Telephone Operator, Chauffeur and Back-seat Driver, Ice Man and Society Leader, and so on. In this way, partners are matched for the first dance.

Give the Burglar a toy gun; the Mayor, a broom; Dog Pound Keeper, a toy dog; Ice Man, a toy truck. Men cut in on girls by handing over their trade symbols; girls cut in on men by doing the same. In this way the symbols are kept in circulation and your party gets warmed up.

Wishing Games

To dip into the future, fill a large tub almost full of water. With a drop of hot wax fasten a small orange candle in a walnut shell. Every one writes a wish on an orange-colored slip of paper, folds it lengthwise, and prints his name on the outside.

Place slips around the outer rim of the tub. Stir water briskly and set in it a walnut shell with a lighted candle. If a slip burns all the way, the wish comes true; halfway, there's a delay. If slip doesn't burn, the wish is hopeless.

Have a Gipsy Fortune-Teller wandering through Spooky Town. She carries two decks of cards, one of which is dealt out to the players, and chants such questions as Abracadabra, abracadabra—"tell me who stole the other fellow's sweetheart," or "who is green-eyed with jealousy." She holds up a card from her deck.

The one with the corresponding card must hold it up and admit that the fortune fits him.

Fortune Cake

For supper spread an orange and black crepe-paper cloth on a buffet table, and use

orange candles in black holders. Your guests will help themselves to:

Assorted Sandwiches		
Pickles	Carrot Sticks	
Green and Ripe Olives		
Fortune Cake with Orange Icing		
Coffee	Wainuts	Apples

To make the fortune cake use your regular layer cake recipe—but bake tiny symbols wrapped in waxed paper in the cake—such as a tiny slipper, thimble, coin, ring, button, tiny doll, etc.

The Black Cat's Story

After supper, gather round for the Black Cat's Story. Give guests slips of paper with parts—sound and lighting effects they are to produce. One or two may be given the same part. Sound effects for Whistling Family and Haunted House are made by every one—so tell players what these sounds are before the story begins.

Dark and Stormy Night	Whoo-oo
Raven	Caw-caw
Whistling Family	Everyone whistles
Haunted House	Everyone groans, sighs or moans
Skeleton	Rattle dice
Clock struck twelve	Count to 12
Thunder	Bang pan with spoon
Lightning	Work flashlight
Wind	Whee-ee or whistle
Mysterious footsteps	Slap folded paper on floor
Rooster on fence	Cock-a-doodle-doo
Mules in the meadow	Hee-haw
Dawn breaking	Drop pan on floor

Some one with a good voice reads the following story:

'Twas a DARK AND STORMY NIGHT. The RAVEN shivered. The WHISTLING FAMILY in the HAUNTED HOUSE were expecting the SKELETON. When the CLOCK STRUCK TWELVE the door opened and in spite of THUNDER, LIGHTNING and WIND and the RAVEN'S CROWING, MYSTERIOUS FOOTSTEPS were heard. The HAUNTED HOUSE shook and the WHISTLING FAMILY trembled. Nearer came the MYSTERIOUS FOOTSTEPS, echoing through the HAUNTED HOUSE and terrifying the WHISTLING FAMILY. The MYSTERIOUS FOOTSTEPS advanced into the room. The WHISTLING FAMILY almost fainted. But just then the green cheese moon peeped in through the window, the MULES IN THE MEADOW made themselves heard, the ROOSTER ON THE FENCE announced that DAWN WAS BREAKING. And all was still.

Of course, the longer you make your story, the more fun it will be and you can send your guests home giggling and trembling at the same time.

Stocking Care

Nice stockings are so very precious these days, I think you should all learn how to really take care of them. And good care does not only mean in your laundering method.

Put your stockings on by rolling down from the top to the toe. Slip the rolled stocking over the toes and instep, adjust

the reinforcements to their correct positions and smooth the heel in position with seam at dead center. Unroll the stocking straightening the seam up the leg. Be sure that the seam is straight above the heel. While seated, fasten garters halfway down



the welt. This will assure sufficient stretch and help to prevent stockings from bursting at the knee.

Prevent snags and runs by being careful with rings and rough fingernails. Cotton stockings snag just as readily as silk, nylon or rayon but they do not run as easily as the others. Rough linings in shoes and garters with too little stretch are demons for causing runs.

All kinds of stockings should be laundered immediately after wearing. Perspiration and soil weaken the fibers. Wash them with soaps that are free from alkali. They should be washed in warm, not hot, water, at a temperature not over 100 degrees.

Dry them without putting undue stretch on the material. For example, it's better to dry stockings by laying them on a flat towel, rather than hanging them on a line. But if you do use a line, hang them from the foot. Don't expose them to direct sunlight or put them on radiators to dry.

Everyday Hairdo Success

One thing that this war will teach us to do many more things for ourselves in the way of grooming, hairdressing, massaging—even clothes pressing and cleaning perhaps—to say nothing of manicuring, pedicuring and shampooing.

Learn how to take care of your own hair. It is foolish to go to the hairdresser

once a week and have your hair look unkempt and apologetic the rest of the time. Here are some rules to make your hairdo an everyday, rather than a once-a-week success.

Don't be afraid to brush your hair thoroughly twice a day. Properly set coiffures will look better for the brushing.

Learn to part your hair with a firm, swift stroke, not a timid wiggle with the comb. After you have done it several times you will begin to feel the place on your scalp where the part should go.

Remember that one great secret of a neat coiffure is a trim, brushed-up hairline. After you arrange the hair, stroke it upward from the hairline to give a smooth sheen.

Brush your hair thoroughly and competently each night before going to bed. Don't leave your hair wild and untamed all night. Arrange it in place before you hop into bed.

Learn from the hairdresser the rudiments of setting your particular type of hair. Then, once a week, dampen it slightly and arrange it in ringlets with hairpins under a net before bathing or doing your housework. If you are rushed, don't dampen it at all. Just set it in dry ringlets under a net. Never think you can arrange your coiffure by dampening and brushing it into form. It will fall into kinks or lank strings instead.

Wartime Habits

Are you learning wartime habits? They are quite different from your peacetime routine.

You are going to carry home all but the heavy things instead of having everything you buy delivered to your home.

You are going to buy a week's supply at one time instead of requiring many different deliveries made to your home during the week.

You are going to carry a market basket when you shop.

You are going to ask the grocer to economize on paper bags instead of allowing him to wrap everything in separate bags.

You are going to make more use of dried fruits as a dessert.

You are going to start or do more canning, drying and preserving of home-grown fruits and vegetables.

You are going to turn over for salvage all old rubber and metal and rags.

You are going to choose the kind of

shoes that look attractive and wear well, instead of shoes that just look attractive

You are going to buy War Stamps and Bonds this month and the next and the next one after that.

Do's and Don't's

I know you are doing lots of war work—and more additional work than you have ever done—but don't let it get you down—don't let it make you tired and droopy looking. Remember your make-up do's and don't's.

Don't use too much foundation cream: you cannot remove excess successfully.

Don't apply foundation cream over a skin that is not scrupulously clean.

Don't apply rouge over wrinkles. It only accents them.

Don't use mascara on your lower eyelashes.

Do remove all trace of cleansing cream with an astringent lotion or with cotton pads dipped in cold water.

Do apply a make-up base in a flattering skin tone. Apply a little at a time and blend.

Do keep your rouge high, blending the edges and avoiding areas that show wrinkles.

Do use eyeshadow if your eyes are not deep-set.

Do apply mascara to your upper lashes if you would make the most of your eyes

Hints to Harried Housewives

Try putting a lemon in hot water before cutting. It will yield double the amount of juice.

Add a few thin slices of white soap to water before putting flowers in. They will keep fresh for almost two weeks.

If you add a little baking soda to dried peas or beans when cooking, it is not necessary to soak them overnight. They will soften in half the time, too.

Bread crumbs, not too stale, rubbed over scorched cloth, will make the burn disappear.

When whipping cream that is light you can add a small amount of lemon juice. It will make it thicken more easily.

A Word of Advice

When you are troubled over some slight or petty thing these days, just ask yourself: "What does this small thing matter in view of the important tasks ahead of us in our battle for democracy?"

"It's Not Her Audience Which Matters to a Bride. It's the Picture That Her Husband Will Carry Afterward, in His Heart—"

That's what Liza Trainor was brought up to believe. But when her own marriage approached, she faced bitter disillusion. Read the engrossing story of Liza's romance in

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"I'm going to forget you as soon as I can, Joan"

She Found Her Man

By ETHEL MURPHY

Joan Clayton's masquerade is harmless—but she learns that the one man always wants a girl to be her real self!

JOAN CLAYTON picked up the telephone that was ringing frantically on her desk. When she heard Charles Burke's voice on the wire her eyes brightened.

"Hello, Charles, darling!"

"Joan, listen carefully—this is business." Charles sounded worried.

"That man from the Phillips Assembly Plant is getting into town on the evening plane!"

"But, Charles, he's three days' ahead of his scheduled visit!" Joan cried in dismay. "And you and Karin are both out of town!"

Karin Daley took care of publicity

and contacts for Charles' real estate company, and when their out of town clients came to town, it was always Karin who entertained them.

"That's why I'm calling you, Joan," Charles said impatiently. "I can't possibly get away from this conference before tomorrow. So it's up to you, Joan! I want you to meet this man at the airport and keep him away from the Roberts people until I get back to town. They're trying to sell Phillips a site, too!"

"I'll do what I can," Joan said.

But she knew the Roberts Real Estate Company had some resourceful men working for them. Almost as resourceful as Charles himself. And Joan didn't like meeting strange men.

"His name is Brian Foster," Charles went on. "Be friendly and interested in him. You know how Karin and I planned to entertain him while he was in town, so go on up to Karin's apartment, pretend you live there. Karin won't mind. I'm counting on you, Joan!"

Joan's heart leaped up. She was Charles' secretary, and for a year now she had been engaged to Charles. It made her feel warm and close to him to know he was counting on her in anything as important to him as this.

"I won't fail you, Charles!"

THE connection was broken, and she hung up. She caught her breath as she looked at the watch on her slim wrist. The plane would be in in about twenty minutes. She didn't have much time to lose.

She knew that her nose was shiny, and her red-brown hair had burst into soft, free curls. But there was no time for make-up now. She got her hat and coat and dashed out of the office.

It was a cold, early winter day and she drove fast. She dodged around a truck, and almost got picked up by a cop.

The plane was already in when Joan got to the airport. She parked and went inside hurriedly. No one could give her any information at the desk and she pushed her way through the crowd, and out onto the runway. The wind was strong, and she had to hold onto her hat. Suddenly she ran into a man who had turned away from the chained enclosure.

"Oh, I'm sorry," she cried.

"I'm the one to apologize," the man said.

She started to hurry on, then she looked back at him. There was something about him that would make anyone turn and look at him twice. Not that he was so handsome. But he was so nice-looking, and he handled himself so well.

"Can I help you?" he asked. "Were you looking for someone?"

His voice was deep, pleasant. Nice eyes too, she thought. Very blue. Steady. Joan took off her hat and held it in her hand.

"Yes, I was looking for a man," she said worriedly. "He must surely be around somewhere. I've never seen him. He's an executive, so he's probably important-looking, and middle-aged, and bad-tempered, too. His name is Brian Foster."

The man laughed. "I think you've found your man! I'm Brian Foster."

Joan almost lost her breath in surprise and consternation. Oh, darn, she'd given him a bad impression of her right at the start! But at least she hadn't let the Roberts men get him.

She smiled at him. "Why, that's fine!"

"I think so," he said slowly.

His eyes went over her slim figure, her wind-blown curls, her small nose with the sprinkle of freckles that she hadn't had time to cover with make-up. The look in his eyes made her feel confused, and a ridiculous little lump was in her throat.

"I'm Joan Clayton, Charles Burke's secretary," she explained. "He asked

me to meet you here. He's out of town. He's awfully sorry."

"Oh, that's all right. I'll see Burke tomorrow." He grinned. "And please don't hold my age against me, and I'm afraid I don't look very important, but I was never in a better humor in my life!"

Joan flushed. "I—I'm sorry for what I said. But most executives are sort of middle-aged, and, well—"

"I know," he laughed.

THEIR eyes held for a long moment and Joan's heart jumped around wildly. Everything about this man excited and quickened her pulses. Then suddenly there seemed a special kind of understanding between them. They both laughed, and Joan felt better.

"I have my car," she said breathlessly. "I'll drive you to your hotel."

His bags were put in her car and Joan sighed with relief as they drove away from the airport. The Roberts men hadn't shown up, and she hadn't minded meeting this man at all. She thought she had managed things quite well.

As they drove downtown Joan pointed out things of interest to Brian, but she had a feeling that he didn't hear much she said. But he kept on looking at her as if he couldn't stop. The street lights were coming on, and there was frost in the air. Joan loved nights like this, and her eyes sparkled.

She told Brian that she had worked for Charles for two years. But it didn't occur to her to tell him that she was engaged to Charles.

She remembered how Charles and Karin had planned to entertain Brian while he was in town. Charles had told her to go up to Karin's apartment and go through with their plans. They were to have cocktails at Karin's apartment, and then dinner at some smart restaurant where they could dance, and where Brian could meet some of the smart, sophisticated

people that Karin and Charles knew.

When they came to the hotel where Brian was to stay he said quickly:

"Oh, wait! Will you have dinner with me this evening?"

She sighed with relief again. He was making everything so easy for her.

"Oh, yes, I'd like to," she said, her eyes shining.

She gave him the address of Karin's apartment and drove away with her heart in her throat. She knew that Brian liked her. He wanted to see her again!

She went up to Karin's apartment on winged feet. Joan always caught her breath when she first entered Karin's apartment. It was so exactly the kind of apartment a smart, successful girl like Karin would have. Smooth. Streamlined.

Sometimes Joan wished that she could live in a smart apartment like Karin's. But of course she couldn't, because she lived with her mother in a small gray stone house in a not very fashionable suburb. The house had been left them by her father, and Charles didn't approve of the house or the neighborhood.

Once he had suggested that she take an apartment of her own. But she had said firmly that she couldn't, because her mother would be dreadfully hurt if Joan left her before they were married.

Joan explained to Karin's little maid why she had come. Then she telephoned her mother that she wouldn't be home tonight. She would have to wear some of Karin's clothes. There just wasn't time to go across town and get something of her own.

"I want to wear something that will make me look a little like Karin," she said to the little maid. "As if I'd been places."

THE little maid got out a dress of flame-red with a cream-colored velvet jacket. It was a dress that took your breath away. Glamour plus.

Then Joan told the little maid that she had better fix the cocktails, because Joan didn't know much about making cocktails.

She was ready when Brian came. Her heart stood still when he came in. He was nicer looking than she had thought at the airport. She liked the slow way he smiled.

"Hello," he said. "Remember me?"

"Wait, don't tell me!" she cried gaily. "Now I know! That man at the airport!"

Brian's eyes went over her slim figure in the red dress, her brown curls that were sleek and smooth now. He was still smiling, but Joan had the strangest feeling that his smile had changed, was forced. Disappointed. But she told herself that she was being foolish, because she knew she had never looked as lovely in her life.

He said that he liked her place, and she said she liked it here, too. But of course she couldn't tell him that she didn't live here, that she had just borrowed this apartment for the evening because Charles had told her to.

The little maid brought cocktails, and they talked about light, gay things. Now and then Joan had to go and answer the telephone. So many people were calling Karin. They wanted to know when Karin would get back to town, or they thought she was Karin, and wanted to take her out.

"I'm sorry I have an engagement," she said each time, then she would hang up quickly before she gave anything away to Brian. She couldn't tell him that they were another girl's friends.

After awhile they went to a club where Joan knew Karin liked to go. There was a good orchestra, and plenty of orchids around, and champagne bottle popping. Brian and Joan found that they danced perfectly together.

"I'm usually not much of a dancer,"

Brian said with his slow smile. "All the girl's wear their oldest slippers when they go dancing with me."

"As if I believe that!" Joan cried.

He was charming and gay and amusing and attentive. But somehow she had a feeling that he spent a great many evenings like this, dancing with pretty girls, telling them that he liked the way they laughed, or the color of their eyes. Evenings that didn't mean much to him. No more than this one did.

When she saw any one she knew she said, "Hello, Phil, or Jerry, or Kirk," with a bright smile. Then she would introduce Brian. These were the kind of people that Charles had wanted Brian to meet.

Phil and Jerry and Kirk looked at Joan in surprise, then their eyes lighted with admiration. They could not understand why they had never seen how lovely Joan was. A lot of men wanted to dance with her.

Brian took her home at last. He said the evening had been lovely, and she had been a little angel to bother with him.

BUT in Karin's apartment Joan felt let-down, blue. It had been a nice evening, but there had been a little illusive something between them at the airport this afternoon that had escaped them tonight.

But she hadn't failed Charles. She had done exactly as he had told her. And Charles and Karin would be back tomorrow and take charge of everything. She wouldn't see Brian again.

She still felt blue when she awoke next morning. She turned over and Karin was sitting on the foot of her bed. She sat up with a start.

"Oh, hello, Karin," she stammered. "I guess you're surprised to find me here?"

"Oh, no," Karin said quite coolly. "Charles wired me about everything, and I took the night train. Charles chartered a plane and flew in this

morning." Her eyes were mocking. "But I don't think we should have rushed. You managed things quite well. And you seem to have made quite an impression last night too. Celeste tells me that half a dozen men have called up this morning to find out if I could get them a date with you."

Joan didn't know what to say about that. She lay back with her hands behind her head.

"I tried not to fail Charles," she said. "He said he was counting on me. I'd do anything for Charles!"

Karin got up quickly and walked across the room. She was tall and slim, with black hair and green eyes. Sometimes Joan had a strange feeling that Karin hated her. She got out of bed quickly.

"I'll get my things and run along now."

"No, wait!" Karin cried sharply. "You can't do that! Charles said you were to stay here. I have a friend who will take me in. It would be rather silly to let Brian Foster know that you—er—borrowed another girl's apartment. He might want to know why. He might think we were—well, trying to put something over on him."

Joan stared at her. "It was just for one night. I didn't know I'd ever see him again."

"You'll see him again!" Karin said dryly. "He sent flowers this morning. Roses. Two dozen of them. He wants you to have lunch with him."

"Oh!" Joan gasped. "Oh, well!"

Karin went to her closet, and took out a severe black dress.

"Wear this today. After that red dress you wore last night I don't think you'd better wear that tweed suit of yours. It makes you look too woodsy. A man like Brian Foster likes his girls to look sophisticated."

Joan didn't like the black dress. But she didn't argue with Karin. She already felt much better because she was going to see Brian again. Not

blue at all any more.

In the privacy of his office Charles kissed Joan, and said he was proud of the way she had managed things. Charles had never been in a better humor in his life. There was a drive and force about Charles that Joan had always admired, he never let anyone get ahead of him.

Joan had lunch with Brian. That evening Brian and Karin and Charles came up to Karin's apartment for cocktails. Joan wore another of Karin's dresses—a gold lace dress with a black velvet jacket. She felt strange playing the hostess, and there was a mocking light in Karin's eyes that upset her.

AFTER awhile they all went out to dinner together. At first Brian danced almost exclusively with Joan because he said they danced so well together. But it was not long until more people joined them, and there were always two or three men wanting to dance with Joan. She could see that Charles was proud of the hit she was making.

This evening was much like the last one had been. Music and laughter, and orchids, and champagne bottles popping. But empty, somehow. Meaningless. Nothing much that mattered, or went very deep. And that night when Joan went to sleep there were tears on her cheeks, and she didn't know why she was crying.

Those next three days when Brian was not in business conference with Charles, Joan showed him around town. They drove, danced, had cocktails in the best bars, had dinner with Charles and Karin.

But Joan could not shake off her mood of restlessness, and when she got home at night she didn't sleep well. She told herself she should be having a good time. She had always wanted an apartment like Karin's, she had wanted smart friends, and striking clothes.

But somehow the perfection of

Karin's apartment was a little wearing, and she wished that Brian knew she didn't live there. But when she had said something about going home Charles had almost lost his temper, and told her flatly that she couldn't do it. It might spoil everything at this stage of the game, make Brian distrustful of them all.

One night Joan and Brian got separated from Charles and Karin and their crowd at a club. When they were tired of dancing they went out on a little flagstone terrace, leaned against the rail. They didn't say anything for awhile, and Joan thought it seemed a little like that first day at the airport.

Abruptly Brian threw away his cigarette.

"I've had a week here," he said. "But I've finished my report on that site, so there's nothing to keep me. I'll be getting on my way tomorrow."

"Tomorrow!" Joan cried involuntarily. A little chill caught at her heart. "I—I'll hate to see you go, Brian."

He laughed shortly. "You sound as if you meant that, Joan. But I guess you do. You hate to see any of your men go away. You have so many men. You won't miss me long."

Suddenly he reached out and pulled her against him. His arms were hard and strong. He put his hand under her chin and raised her face to his.

"I haven't kissed you," he said harshly. "I didn't mean to kiss you! But I have to kiss you—just once!"

Before she could move, or say anything, his lips came down on hers, strong and warm and tender. Joan was swept to dizzy, breathless heights of ecstasy. Nothing in all her life had been like this.

At last he let her go, stood back.

"That's what I mean," he said huskily. "I was afraid if I kissed you I'd get to like your kisses too well. If I stayed on here I might fall in love with you. And I don't want to fall in love with you!"

JOAN'S eyes were wide, incredulous.

"You're like heady wine to me," Brian went on. "You're lovely, sweet, exciting, intoxicating. But I've met a lot of girls like you. Play girls, out for a good time, another conquest. I like to take girls like you out, but I don't want to fall in love with you. It's just not in my scheme of things. I'm going to forget you as soon as I can, Joan."

Joan drew a long, quivering breath. She felt as cold as ice. Then she had never been so angry in her life.

Brian was charming, gay, attractive. But that was all. There was no real depth to him. He liked to go out with pretty girls, have a good time. But he didn't want to get serious about a girl. It wasn't in his scheme of things. He had told her so. He wanted to be free to have a lot of girls.

There was a tearing ache in her heart. Her hand flew up and she slapped him hard.

"Maybe that will help you forget me!" she cried.

Then she started crying. She couldn't help it. She turned and ran across the little terrace. She got her wrap and went out a side entrance and got a taxi. In the seclusion of the taxi she sank into a sobbing heap. She had never been so humiliated in her life.

Why, the sheer insolence of him! He had talked as if she wanted him to fall in love with her. Why, the vegetable! She would like to tell him that she wouldn't marry him if he was the last man in the world. Why, of course she wouldn't. She was going to marry Charles!

She sat up with a start. She'd had so many things on her mind that she had forgotten she was engaged to Charles. Her red mouth set. She wished she had told Brian that she was going to marry Charles. That would show him that she cared nothing about him.

She paid the taxi at Karin's apartment and went up in the elevator. She would get into her own clothes, and go right home.

She marched into Karin's apartment, and Charles and Karin were there.

Charles sprang up. "Why, Joan, we were waiting for you. Why didn't Brian come up?"

Joan stood very straight. "Brian didn't bring me home! I—I went off and left him!"

Charles looked at her blankly. "Joan, you don't mean you walked out on Brian Foster!"

"Yes," Joan said.

Charles had to believe her.

"For heaven's sake, Joan, you haven't made Brian Foster angry, and ruined this deal for me?"

"He—he kissed me!" Joan said.

"He kissed you?" Charles echoed blankly. Then his face darkened with anger. "Why, the nerve of him! I'll break his neck. I'll show him he can't play around my girl!"

The buzzer sounded. Karin went and opened the door, and Brian walked into the room. There were little lines around his mouth.

For a moment no one said anything at all. Then Karin said:

"How nice! We're so glad you came up."

Brian's eyes were desperate. "I came to tell Joan that I love her, and that there's no use trying to forget her. I've been a fool! I want to apologize if I said anything to hurt her."

FOR a moment Joan's heart almost stopped, then she remembered the things he had said to her. Her red lips tightened.

"Tell him, Charles!"

Charles just gulped.

"I'm engaged to Charles," Joan rushed on. "We haven't announced our engagement because Charles thought it was better to wait until the emergency was over and he could take me on a long honeymoon."

Now Brian would know that she cared nothing about him. He would know that she had been engaged to Charles all the time, and that she was not the kind of girl who just wanted to have a good time and have a lot of men around her. And Charles would throw him out of here.

There was a moment of stark silence. Joan looked at Charles expectantly. But Charles didn't move. He didn't look angry now. But he certainly looked worried.

"Now, wait," he said. "We're all going too fast. Joan is—well, so impulsive. It's hard for a lovely, popular girl like Joan to make up her mind just what man she wants to be engaged to. She may think she loves one man one day—and change her mind the next." He laughed indulgently. "We can never tell about our Joan!"

Joan stared at Charles incredulously. Why, he wasn't going to admit that he was engaged to her! He wasn't going to throw Brian out of here! He was going to smooth things over, keep Brian from getting angry. He was making her sound exactly the kind of girl Brian thought she was. Her eyes looked sick.

"I think we all need something to drink," Charles said genially. "Joan will help me."

Joan had to follow him helplessly. In Karin's shining little kitchenette he caught her arm in a hard grasp.

"Joan, you little fool! What do you mean putting me in a spot like that? You know if I told him we were engaged he'd think it was funny we hadn't said anything about it before. I don't like this any better than you, but we've got to play along. You can send him on his way later!"

Joan's eyes still looked sick. Charles resented this whole thing, but he couldn't afford to offend Brian. He wouldn't let anything come before his company or the money he was going to make. He didn't care if he had to use the girl he loved. She

could see clearly what Charles was like now, and she no longer admired his drive and force, or the way he never let anything get ahead of him.

He got out cocktail glasses, and they went back to Karin's living room. Karin and Brian were talking as if nothing had happened. Presently Brian said good night and left.

Then Joan stood up.

"I'm going home," she said. "I want to see Mom."

Charles looked annoyed. "For heaven's sake, Joan, don't start being difficult again. If I hadn't done some quick thinking we would have been in a spot."

"I suppose so," Joan said. "But I was wrong when I said I loved you, Charles. I don't love you! I'm not going to marry you! I can't give you back your ring because you've never let me wear it!"

"Joan, you don't mean that," Charles cried. "You're just angry, but you'll feel differently tomorrow."

"I will not!" Joan cried.

SHE picked up her wrap, and Charles tried to stop her.

"Joan, you can't do this. You said you loved me. Doesn't that mean anything to you?"

Karin laughed mockingly. "It doesn't always mean anything when someone says they love you. You should know that, Charles, because you told me once that you loved me! That was before you met Joan. Remember?"

Charles flushed. "Karin, this is between Joan and me."

But Karin didn't have to say anything else. Joan thought she must have been blind not to have seen it. Karin loved Charles. She had thought he loved her too, then he had fallen in love with Joan. But Karin loved Charles too much to go away, or maybe she had thought she could get him back. Well, Karin could have him. Joan didn't at all care that she had lost Charles.

She went out of the room. Down on the street she got another taxi, and as she got in someone got in quickly behind her, and gave the driver a quick order. It was Brian.

Her small form was taut.

"Haven't you done enough to me?" she demanded.

"I'm sorry for everything," Brian said. "I couldn't stand to see you cry, or know that you were hurt." His voice shook. "Did you—did you care about Charles?"

She looked at him quickly. She knew that he had believed her when she had said she was engaged to Charles. He had known she was telling the truth.

"I—I guess I made a mistake about Charles," she admitted.

"I waited for you to come down," he said. "I knew you'd go home." His eyes glowed. "Karin told me everything while you were helping Charles with the cocktails. She said she thought I should know, and I promised to hold nothing against him."

"Our house isn't in a very smart neighborhood," Joan said. "Charles doesn't like it. He told me to take you to Karin's apartment. But I didn't like Karin's apartment any too well."

Brian caught her hands tight.

"Joan, I fell in love with you that day at the airport! A girl with the wind in her hair, and freckles on her nose. Lovely and natural and free. The kind of girl I knew would some day come walking right into my heart. When I saw you that night you weren't like that. You were another girl. I saw right away how you lived, that you didn't have anything real. I didn't want to fall in love with a girl like that."

His arm was about her, close.

"But when you left me tonight, I knew I couldn't live without you. I had to go after you and tell you how I felt."

(Concluded on page 90)

LOVE GAME

By SYBIL ALLEN

Judy thought she knew all the rules—until her heart ran astray!

A MAN'S hand came down over Judy's shoulder as she sat at the piano, and snatched her fingers from the ivory keys.

She knew that hand. She recognized its brown squareness, the light hairs on the wrist, the red onyx ring on the little finger.

"Why, Judy Martin!" the man's voice said.

She knew that voice, too. Its depth and richness and the laughter that lurked in it.

She looked up into a pair of gray eyes, all crinkled at the corners.

"Yes, Mr. Lawton," she said, trying not to show the annoyance she felt.

Gwen paid her to play at these cocktail parties. She had to be polite to the guests, even to this man she had every reason to hate.

"I scarcely knew you, Judy. You were only a child the last time I saw you."

Not too much of a child, she thought, but she held her tongue. She had been sixteen; old enough to understand about Alva.

"How is Alva?"

The words were a thunderclap to Judy's ears.

"Why, she's—she's fine!"

Judy lowered her black lashes. He had the nerve to ask about her sister in that offhand way! Gentle, loving Alva, plowed under with memories of Cliff Lawton in the Martin cottage at Northport.



"Gwen and I want to dance," Cliff told Judy

He smiled.

"Can't we find a quiet corner and some drinks, Judy?"

She shook her black curls.

"Later, perhaps, when the cocktails get working and there aren't any lulls." She waved a slim, tapering hand vaguely. "I'm supposed to fill the gaps."

"Gwen knows her atmosphere." His eyes approved the slight, scarlet figure, a vivid etching against the white grand piano. "If we can't have the corner, can we have the drinks?"

Judy nodded, her hands automatically seeking the keyboard as she watched him push through the laughter and gaiety to the luxurious bar. There was a nonchalant swing to his wide shoulders, a bold tilt to his brown head that was insufferable.

She didn't want the drink he had gone to get for her. She wanted time to think. She saw him stop to talk with Gwen and her mouth tightened. Cliff was an incurable flirt.

He was flirting with Gwen, flattering her.

But he had just been flirting with her—Judy! Alva's sister! It was not only in bad taste but humiliating, when she knew Alva's loyalty to her lost love.

"Let him flirt," Judy thought grimly. "Especially with me. I'll lead him on as he led Alva and then I'll even up the score."

Her black eyes shone with her impulsive decision.

Darling Alva! She never mentioned Cliff any more. But Judy knew from Alva's quiet brooding, and the way she lived only for her and Dad, that Cliff's shadow blocked Alva's every step.

CLIFF was back presently, holding out a glass. Judy motioned with her head for him to set it down.

"Liebestraum," he requested, listening, and Judy realized that her fingers had wandered into the haunting melody of Liszt's dream of love.

Alva's dream of love, too. The dream that Cliff Lawton had destroyed.

Judy glanced at him and saw him bent toward her. Saw, too, that she—or perhaps the song—had scratched beneath his suave nonchalance. There was a mellowed softness lurking in his gray eyes.

She felt a thrill of anticipation in the triumph that would be hers when he would put his heart in her hands. She would crush it as he had crushed Alva's. She would teach him a lesson not to play with hearts and discard them like withered flowers.

Or so she told herself.

Cliff rushed Judy the following weeks. Cozy dinner parties. Shows. Dancing at the Rainbow Room. Picnic parties aboard his beloved boat *Pilgrim*. Late drives along the black ribbon of the Hudson River. Judy felt light-headed with her success.

Her moment of triumph drew nearer. Cliff asked for more and more of her leisure. She pretended to like it—drawing him on to where he had drawn Alva.

She was humming one night while she combed and recurled the dark sculptured curls. She frowned into the mirror. Cliff was taking too long.

She suggested a drive through Central Park after their dinner.

"I've been having a glorious time these last few weeks," she said, with just the right shade of appreciation.

Cliff reached over and touched her hand.

"It seems incredible, Judy," he said slowly. "I've fallen in love with you."

"Incredible?" Judy tried to keep the relish out of her voice.

"Love is always incredible to the man who believes himself a bachelor."

He pulled the car to the side of the road and stopped.

"Little Judy Martin, do you mind that I love you?"

She did not resist as he drew her within the circle of his arms. This was the way he had held Alva, she thought, and the way he had talked to

Alva. She had to endure the touch of his arms, even his lips, and then throw him aside as he had thrown Alva aside.

He made no move to kiss her and Judy relaxed against him, aware that she had held her body rigid. Then she felt his lips against her hair.

"When you played 'Liebestraum' that night at Gwen's, I felt my heart open and shut tight again and I knew you were locked inside. I love you, Judy."

SHE stirred in his arms and raised her face.

"I—I—"

She didn't have to say she loved him. She didn't love him; she hated him because of Alva.

This was her moment. She kept her face raised to his, waiting for his kiss, veiling her eyes as his voice came tenderly prompting.

"Do you—could you love me, Little Judy?"

Alva's lost face was before her in vivid outline. She felt the mad racing of her heart and the blood whirling in her brain. She had planned this moment and it was perfect!

She burst into laughter.

He released her and she laughed again.

"No, I don't love you, Cliff Lawton," Judy said evenly. "I—I hate you."

For one incredulous minute he searched her face. Then with a quick movement he bent over her, forcing her head against the cushioned back of the car. She pushed with futile hand against his solid strength. He was smiling, but only with his mouth, his eyes reaching down with long fingers, tearing at her heart. The smile spread then to his eyes.

"You're a liar, Judy. You *do* love me."

She shrank further into the cushioned back as his face came steadily closer, closer until his lips were on hers. She felt that kiss tingling to her

fingertips, sweeping her into a swift current, new unchartered channels with no light to guide her.

She closed her eyes and felt the tears on her face. He must have felt them, too.

"Little Judy, forgive me," Cliff whispered. "But I had to make you see."

She looked at him and turned her head away from the urgent plea of his eyes. Her lips moved mechanically in the speech of triumph she had prepared.

"I see only what I saw long ago. My sister Alva and what you did to her. You made her love you. You took her heart and crushed it with your heel. I see Alva living without a heart, without hope, because she loves you and she knows you have forgotten her."

He winced.

"Judy, you don't understand."

She didn't hear.

"Now you'll find out what she has suffered. You'll have a sample of what you've been handing out."

"But, Judy—"

"I planned this moment and I don't intend to spoil it. I have enough mental discipline to keep from loving you."

He laughed, a short, brittle laugh.

"You planned this moment because of Alva!" He was looking far into the distance, carefully choosing his words. "And you call me unfair! It was a rotten game, Judy."

He started the car abruptly, heading into the night, while she sat small and still beside him, his bitter words whirring in her brain, in time with the powerful motor.

MUCH later Judy lay wide-eyed and wondering in her lonely room on East Fifty-seventh Street. Where was the triumph she had planned? She couldn't even share it with her sister over the week-end. It would only lessen Alva's self-esteem to know.

She decided it was one of those se-

cret triumphs to be kept behind the locked doors of her heart. But even that was denied her. The attic of her heart was full: full of the tenderness Cliff had shown her before her outburst. Full of his bold attraction when he forced his kiss upon her. Full of that kiss itself, hurtling her through space, bewildered.

Judy sobbed and felt the weight of her empty arms. Cliff was right when he said that she loved him. Mental discipline was a poor weapon pitted against love. She did love him, with all the bitterness stored up against him turning viciously upon her, taking its toll in the dull throbbing ache that was her heart.

She turned and buried her head in the pillow. Cliff might have loved her but he despised her now.

"It was a rotten game, Judy," he had said.

The torment elaborately prepared for him was strangely her own. He need never know, she reasoned. But his heart had known she loved him when she hadn't known, and his eyes were wise and knowing, too. Then perhaps he knew she had fallen into the darkness planned for him. Now, while she writhed, he knew and laughed at her.

She crept from her bed and went to the window. Even if tonight had never been— If it were to be lived again without any bitterness, there was still Alva.

She couldn't present Alva with Cliff for a brother-in-law. Life was difficult enough for Alva now.

Judy went back to bed, where she lay staring at the wide expanse of ceiling. Her life would be like that without Cliff: flat and dull and empty. Instead of avenging Alva's hurt, she was taking her place beside her sister in the shadows.

He's broken my heart too, she thought.

The days passed without a word from Cliff. Judy was planning to spend the week-end with Alva and

Dad at Northport, when she received a summons from Gwen to play that Saturday. She shuddered at the thought of a probable meeting with Cliff. She had been a fool to imagine herself immune to his attraction. But she couldn't let him know how deeply she had hurt herself by trying to hurt him.

She had to go and face him, smiling and pretending she didn't care. It was ironic to know that the *game* of pretense was only beginning when she fancied herself pretending all along.

Her lips trembled as she wielded the lipstick and she smiled wanly. War paint. There was a spiritual uplift in the thought.

JUDY played gay melodies at the white piano that night, trying to bolster her crushed spirit, and was soon lost in the center of a boisterous group singing lustily.

Suddenly she knew that Cliff was behind her. She hadn't seen him but her heart told her he was there. She forced her attention on her playing, striking the pale ivory keys with a careful firmness.

The song ended with the usual back-slapping and applause and the gaiety drifted off in the direction of the bar.

Cliff didn't go with them. Judy knew that as she sat with her hands gripped together in the lap of her white gown. She waited tensely for him to speak and saw Gwen coming toward them.

Gwen's sleek blond beauty headed straight for Cliff.

"Cliff, darling! You've neglected me shamefully."

"Neglected my charming hostess?"

Cliff's words came glibly and Judy clenched her teeth. A hot flame of jealousy swept her, turning her sick at the pit of her stomach. Indignation came next. Indignation at the nonchalant charm Cliff turned on and off as easily as if he controlled it with a

spigot. He was an outrageous flirt!

"Judy." He bent over her carelessly, his face brushing her hair. "Will you play one of the Strauss waltzes? Gwen and I want to dance."

Gwen, clinging to Cliff's arm, smiled at Judy.

"Strauss is divine, isn't he?"

Judy stumbled over the introductory chords of the "Blue Danube" and felt Gwen's raised critical eyebrows in her direction. She flushed as her fingers shook on the ivory keys. Mental discipline. She needed it now, all she could summon.

With a superb effort she found the right notes and swung into the lilting melody while Cliff and Gwen whirled on the polished floor. A sidelong glance told her the others were watching the dance, and a quick stab of flame pierced her heart. Every nerve in her slim body clamored the wish that it was she and not Gwen whom Cliff Lawton now held her lightly in his arms.

Judy didn't know she had quickened the tempo to a breathless pace. She only knew she had been a fool to come here tonight, a target for Cliff's mastery at the game of love.

Hot tears stung at her eyes as she finished the waltz and slipped quietly away from the white piano.

She got her wrap and left a note for Gwen. She couldn't bear to stay another minute, with Cliff so near and yet so very far away.

She was in the foyer when Cliff's voice cut through to her.

"May I take you home, Judy?"

"No, thank you, Cliff," she said frostily, drawing her wrap tighter about her. "I wouldn't think of taking you away from the others."

"From Gwen, you mean, Judy." His eyes were steady on hers, laughing a little. "I found out what I wanted to know, Judy."

She stood stiffly.

"What was it you wanted to know?" she said archly.

"You were jealous of Gwen. That's

why you're leaving. You do love me, Judy!"

She flared up at that. "Jealous of Gwen!" she cried.

She wasn't now. It had left her with Cliff at her side. But she had been, and he knew she had been. Cliff always knew. She felt insufficiently small beside him in the foyer, the triumph in his voice feeding her anger at her lack of control.

Judy's voice was thin-edged as she went on.

"You imagine yourself quite a heart-throb, don't you, Cliff?"

"I'm not a complete fool, Judy." His square jaw set. "I'm honest enough to know I'm in love for the first time in my life, and I've been trying to make you see—"

SHE swayed and leaned heavily against the wall. She had to push him away mentally to keep from throwing herself into his arms. It didn't matter, she thought dully. It didn't matter how definitely Cliff made her realize that she loved him. She couldn't acknowledge it, because of Alva.

She couldn't turn Alva as sick with jealousy as she had been, when Cliff and Gwen had danced together. And she had to spare herself the humiliation of having Cliff know how she felt.

Judy threw back her dark curls and laughed.

"Cliff, you're funny! I told you I had enough mental discipline to keep from falling in love with you, and I meant it."

She stifled the whisper from her heart. "Oh, Cliff," her heart said, "I shall miss you every minute of the rest of my life."

She forced her eyes to his.

"Why don't you go along and peddle your charm where it will be appreciated?"

He controlled himself with a visible effort.

"Judy, I'd like to wring your pretty

white neck for what you're doing to me."

She had to get away before she betrayed herself. She couldn't bear to see the deep hurt bared in his gray eyes.

Judy gripped the doorknob until her knuckles showed white.

"See you around, Cliff!"

It was the best she could manage with the weight of her heart dropping, dropping, and she eased the pain with her hand.

Gwen's blond beauty came bearing down on them.

"Why, Judy, where are you going?"

"I've a headache, Gwen. I left a note for you."

Gwen shrugged and turned to Cliff.

"Cliff, darling!"

But Cliff brushed rudely past her. Gwen turned to Judy with an air of injury.

"Now what on earth's the matter with the man?"

"I wouldn't be knowing," Judy said through tight lips as she opened the door and slipped outside.

JUDY wept into her pillow that night, the jigsaw puzzle of her mind a hopeless muddle. None of the pieces fitted together. Cliff had hurt Alva. She had hurt Cliff and dug for herself a deep black chasm of tomorrows. Empty days of going through the motions of living while all the time a part of her had died.

She told herself vaguely that it would pass. After awhile she would forget, but there was a haunting fear, remembering that Alva had not forgotten. The aching, tearing pain of love denied—would it never leave her?

She decided to go home to Northport. She hadn't seen Alva for weeks, since devoting her week-ends to her futile campaign. It might be easier in Northport, away from the carelessly strewn memories of Cliff left haphazardly all over New York.

It might. And it might not.

Judy's step quickened that Saturday at the sight of the white cottage with its neat hedge. It reached out for her with a warm welcome. Home and Alva.

She threw herself into Alva's outstretched arms, arms only five years older than her own, but arms that had given comfort over and over through the motherless years.

"Judy, darling! Is something wrong?"

Alva always knew about her, knew almost without the telling. She shook her dark curls.

"Nothing wrong, except that I've been terribly busy and all of a sudden I got homesick."

Alva nodded.

"I'll fix some tea," she said.

Judy went around the homey kitchen, touching the bright curtains, the painted kitchen chairs with their checkered gingham pads, the pile of fresh linen Alva had finished ironing. It was good to touch things. Things that stayed in place and didn't bounce back and smack a person between the eyes.

ALVA tucked away a wisp of light brown hair with a nervous hand and smiled, that tender smile reserved for her sister.

"Come. Sit down, Judy. There's something about a cup of tea that makes talking easier."

Judy shook her head.

"There's nothing to tell," she said quietly.

Alva stirred her tea busily.

"It's a man, isn't it, Judy?"

Judy felt the tears spring up behind her eyes. She couldn't tell Alva. She couldn't tell her about Cliff!

"I know how you feel," Alva said in her patient way, and her face flushed as she went on. "But you mustn't be like me, Judy. You mustn't let whatever has hurt you spoil your life. It's all wrong to bottle things up tight inside," she added shyly.

Judy leaned across the table. She

could scarcely believe it with Alva talking like this, Alva who had Cliff bottled up inside her.

"I know what you're thinking," Alva nodded, and her face flushed a bright pink. "There's a new minister here now, Judy. You haven't met him. He's a wonderful man. He says that everybody is lonely and hurt sometime in their lives. It's a part of our character building and gives us a true insight into life. He's a wonderful man," she finished lamely.

Judy gasped. Alva's scarlet face, her halting voice, her downcast eyes— An hysterical laugh rose to Judy's lips.

"Alva! You're in love with him!" Alva nodded.

"Yes," she said happily. "We talked about it last night. Judy, you'll be my bridesmaid, won't you?"

Judy's heart leaped and fell back in place with a dull thud. The jigsaw puzzle of last night danced merrily before her eyes and she laughed, a metallic laugh filled with tears. She had spurned Cliff's love because of Alva. Because she hadn't wanted to hurt her sister. She had belittled him and laughed at him.

"Judy!" Alva was alarmed.

Judy couldn't stop laughing. She had blamed Cliff for jilting Alva when he had known they weren't suited to live their lives together. Alva's gentle, quiet ways didn't fit the pattern of a wife for Cliff, but they were perfect for a minister's wife.

"Judy!" Alva fussed over her anxiously.

It was a full minute before Judy got control.

"Then you don't love Cliff any more, Alva?"

"No, Judy. I told George—" She seemed to linger over the name. "He made me see I'd been selfishly holding onto something that never really was. Cliff never loved me, Judy. I see now it would never have worked out, and I'm glad because of George."

Judy gulped and swallowed. Cliff

hadn't explained about Alva. She wondered now if it was out of respect for Judy's loyalty to her sister.

"Oh, Alva!" she groaned. "It's such a mess."

She told her then, all about it, while Alva gasped and shuddered.

"I did that to you, Judy?" She shook her head, her eyes glistening with unshed tears. "Judy, darling, I'm so sorry."

I'M SORRY, too, Judy thought. Sorry that I wouldn't trust Cliff. Sorry that I made him so miserable. Sorry that I wrecked my life.

She went back to New York the next day. She had to find Cliff and tell him. Just to still the throb of her guilty conscience.

But she couldn't find him. He wasn't at his office or at his club. His apartment was locked and all she could learn from the superintendent was:

"Mr. Lawton's gone away."

Frantic, she called Gwen.

"Do you know where I can find Cliff Lawton?"

Gwen stalled and Judy knew she was curious. She really didn't know where Cliff was.

It was late when she reached the rooming house on East Fifty-seventh Street. Her fine dark brows were drawn into a straight line.

That last night at Gwen's had been too much for Cliff. Obviously he had pulled up stakes and gone away. But where? How could she find him and tell him what was in her heart? Even if she did find him, would he laugh and turn away as she had done?

She closed her eyes. She didn't know, but she knew she couldn't sit here doing nothing when she should be looking for Cliff.

There was a blinding flash of light in the darkness of her thoughts. Cliff and his beloved boat! She had forgotten the *Pilgrim*. He must be leaving on a cruise.

Judy almost fell down the long

brownstone steps in her mad rush to the curb and a taxi.

"The Hudson River Yacht Club, and hurry!" she instructed the cab driver.

The sun was setting behind the backdrop of the Palisades, shooting rays of fire into the dusky sky when Judy arrived.

She stood, a tiny figure, on the float, looking out across the choppy white-capped river to where the *Pilgrim* lay at anchor. She breathed a sigh of relief that she was not too late—a sigh that stopped halfway when she saw a tall, broad-shouldered figure in slacks and sweat shirt. He came around to the prow of the boat and began to pull up anchor. It was Cliff! He was leaving!

She cupped her mouth in her slim hands.

"Cliff! Oh, Cliff!"

Her voice carried across the water and he turned toward shore.

"Hello!"

"Cliff! It's me, Judy!"

He passed his hand across his eyes as if he did not believe it was she who stood there.

"Judy!"

She watched while he lowered the dinghy. Watched each movement of that muscular figure etched against the twilight as he rowed toward shore. Then he was beside her.

"Is something wrong, Judy?"

His voice was quiet, the voice of a man who goes slowly for fear of taking too much for granted.

"Oh, Cliff, it *was* wrong—but not now! If you still love me—"

Her face flushed as every nerve in her body ached to have him take her in his arms.

"Judy, darling!"

He reached out for her, drawing her close, and this time there was no ghost of Alva between them as his lips crushed down on hers.



BUY WAR BONDS AND STAMPS

and

SAVE YOUR FREEDOM!

SHE FOUND HER MAN

(Concluded from page 82)

Joan's heart was warm and glad. Brian was not a man who liked to play around. He was fine and real and solid and strong. Now she knew what the little illusive something was that had escaped them since that day at the airport. Now she knew why she didn't care if she had lost Charles.

"I wanted a real home with flowers growing in the gardens," Brian said. "And wood smoke coming out of the chimneys, and dogs and things. I

wanted a girl who liked those things too."

"Oh, Brian, I do!" she said. "I do!"

His arms tightened about her.

"Joan, do you think I could make you forget Charles?" he asked softly.

"I can't even remember Charles when you hold me like this," she whispered. "I—I love you, Brian!"

Brian looked as happy as she felt. When he kissed her she knew that indeed she had found her man.



Yours Truly



Conducted by
MRS. WINIFRED HOPE

POPULAR LOVE is conducting, as a special service to readers, this new correspondence department which will assure you of many friends with whom to exchange letters.

Banish loneliness! If you are interested in making friends, write to Mrs. Winifred Hope, care of **POPULAR LOVE**, 10 East 40th Street, New York.

Introduce yourself.

Write an interesting short letter that will make others curious to know more about you. Be sure to sign your full name and address.

Give us the nickname under which your letter is to be published. It will be only under this name that other readers will know you—their letters will be forwarded to you, and a direct contact between you and your new friend will be thus established.

Women and girls may write only to women and girls, and men only to men. No letter will be forwarded unless a stamped envelope is enclosed.

Mail us your request for letters **NOW!** Do not neglect to give your name, age, sex, and supply at least one reference.

Dear Mrs. Hope: I would like to become one of your family of pen pals. I am a girl of fourteen, have brown hair and blue eyes. I love every kind of sports. I like music and dancing. I would like to hear from girls between the ages of fourteen and seventeen, so come on, write to me. I promise to answer promptly.

DOLORES, No. 1338.

Dear Mrs. Hope: I am a girl from Pennsylvania, fifteen years old, a sophomore in high school. Have brunette hair (with some reddish color) and brown eyes. I like all kinds of sports. My hobby is writing to pen pals.

SUSAN, No. 1339.

Dear Mrs. Hope: Would like to correspond with a few broadminded fellows between the ages of twenty and thirty. I am a wireless operator on the New England coast, so that if there are any that are interested in this section of the country write me a line and who knows but it might be the means of developing what I might call a beautiful friendship.

JOE, No. 1340.

Dear Mrs. Hope: I am a girl of fourteen with dark blond hair and blue eyes. I would appreciate it if some one would write to me. I am considered pretty and would exchange snapshots. I like all sports and good movies. Please write.

GINGER, No. 1341.

Dear Mrs. Hope: I wish to join your band in the parade to friendship. I am an American girl of fourteen. I love sports and my hobby is collecting snapshots and interesting new items concerning my friends. So let's join the friendship caravan.

SHIRLEY, No. 1342.

Dear Mrs. Hope: I have been reading your correspondence article for quite some time and would like to join. I am a girl seventeen, have dark brown hair and eyes. I love all kinds of sports, especially swimming. My hobby is horseback riding. Please, everybody, write. I'll answer all letters promptly and will exchange snapshots.

LOUISE, No. 1343.

Dear Mrs. Hope: I am a Michigan girl of sixteen, a junior in high school, and have brown hair and blue eyes. I enjoy all sports and writing letters. I promise to show my appreciation by answering all letters from pen pals.

BEATRICE, No. 1344.

Dear Mrs. Hope: I am a bachelor in my forties, five feet seven inches tall, have brown eyes and light hair. Have a pleasing personality, broadminded and friendly. Am interested in making real friendships. I promise to answer everyone who writes.

JACK, No. 1345.

Dear Mrs. Hope: I am a young girl of fifteen and I have brown hair and brown eyes. I have had many experiences and many exciting things to tell, if someone will write to me. Please send someone to write to me. I am about five feet two inches tall, and I love to read French novels and write letters. My favorite symphony song is the Blue Danube Waltz and my favorite orchestra leader is Glenn Miller.

FANNY, No. 1346.

Dear Mrs. Hope: As I read your magazine, I would like to get acquainted with other readers. I have been in the cafe business for many years. I am forty-one years old, like all sports, and read lots. I promise to answer all letters.

BILL, No. 1347.

Dear Mrs. Hope: I am a girl Argentinian, interested in all sports and plays. I would like very much to have high school girls write to me.

JO, No. 1348.

Dear Mrs. Hope: Would like to hear from pals all over, who are interested in letter writing and travel. I am twenty-six, six feet tall, have light brown hair, and weigh 165 pounds. I am quite broadminded and will answer all who care to write.

ROY, No. 1349.

Dear Mrs. Hope: I am a lonesome soldier and am in search of a true blue pal. I am fond of all outdoor sports, the theater, music, and art.

JOE, No. 1350.

[Two Pages]

Dear Mrs. Hope: I am thirteen, have blonde hair and blue eyes. My favorite sports are horse-back riding and swimming. My favorite pastime is art and reading.
STORY. No. 1351.

Dear Mrs. Hope: I am a young woman of thirty-one—have dark brown hair, hazel gray eyes, five feet four inches and very plump. I've been happily married for six and a half years—no children. I've been in a wheelchair for the last eighteen years due to infantile paralysis. I love to read, crochet, embroider, but most of all I enjoy pen pals. Everyone, regardless of age, whether far or near, normal or invalid, if you want a sincere pen pal that is well noted for writing "long letters," write to me.
DOTTIE. No. 1352.

Dear Mrs. Hope: I am a widow, five feet seven inches tall, dark hair and eyes, and weigh 160 pounds. I am in business here, but get rather lonesome for pen pals. Would like to hear from someone around my own age, fifty-eight to sixty.
MABEL. No. 1353.

Dear Mrs. Hope: I am a girl of nineteen years, with black hair and dark brown eyes. Collecting flowers and postcards are my hobbies. I would like to write to someone in Hartford, Connecticut, as I will be living there soon.
LAURA. No. 1354.

Dear Mrs. Hope: I am a girl of sixteen with red hair and gray eyes. My favorite sports are dancing, tennis and roller skating. I would like to hear from girls all over the country and promise to answer each letter faithfully.
DOROTHEA. No. 1355.

Dear Mrs. Hope: I am a young girl of eighteen. I am married. I enjoy swimming, dancing and roller skating. I collect snapshots and movie scrapbook. I have also won a beauty contest and was in a diving exhibition twice. Would like to hear from girls around my age, married or single.
BUNNY. No. 1356.

Dear Mrs. Hope: I'd like to have a lot of pen pals from everywhere. I am a young married woman of twenty-four. Interested in all sports and hobbies. I will answer any and all letters, so please write everyone.
FLORENCE. No. 1357.

Dear Mrs. Hope: I am a young girl of seven-been and would like to hear from girls all over the country. My hobbies are ice skating, horse-back riding, howling and swimming, and I just love to write letters. I have a boy friend in the Army, so it is very lonely. I will answer all letters.
LA RUE. No. 1358.

Dear Mrs. Hope: I'd like very much to crash into the overland mail and rope myself a couple of pen pals. I am a fellow twenty-seven years old with brown hair and hazel eyes. My hobby is fishing, and my pastime dogs. I would like to hear from fellows my age.
BILL. No. 1359.

Dear Mrs. Hope: I am a young man of twenty, dark wavy hair and brown eyes. My interests lie in the theater, stage, opera and good music. I should like many new friends, especially New Yorkers, because I go there quite often, but everyone is welcome. I shall answer all letters.
STEPHUN. No. 1360.

Dear Mrs. Hope: I would like to hear from middle-aged men, bachelors, or any fellows who would like to write friendly letters.
JOSEPH. No. 1361.

Dear Mrs. Hope: I am a young Frenchman serving in the U. S. Army. As I have no one in this country, I would enjoy writing to some one. Please, everyone, write to me.
CAPTAIN JOHN. No. 1362.

Dear Mrs. Hope: I am a very lonesome soldier and would like to have some pen pals. I live in the North, but now I am at camp in the South, and it is very hot. My hobby is writing and collecting pictures of pen pals all over the country.
NORMAN. No. 1363.

Dear Mrs. Hope: I am a young widow thirty-five years old, brown eyes and brown hair. I live in the country. I would like to correspond with some good pen pals. I like most sports. I will try to answer all the letters I receive.
LEE. No. 1364.

Dear Mrs. Hope: I am seventeen years old and married to a sailor. It's very lonesome for me and I would like to have lots of pen pals.
BOBBY. No. 1365.

Dear Mrs. Hope: I would like to hear from some pen friends who would like to exchange letters and snapshots. I am fifty years old, an employee of a hospital and sanitarium and would like to have lots of pen pals.
AL. No. 1366.

Dear Mrs. Hope: I am a girl of sixteen, and have light brown hair and dark brown eyes. I would like to correspond with a girl near my age. My hobby is collecting snapshots I like most sports, but roller skating is my favorite.
MILDRED. No. 1367.

Dear Mrs. Hope: I am a young bachelor twenty-five years of age who would like to make the acquaintance of someone who would appreciate a real friendship. I have blue eyes and brown hair. Am interested in physical culture, music, outdoor life and stamp collecting. Am friendly, broadminded and get along with all.
JOE. No. 1368.

Dear Mrs. Hope: Is there room? I am not a bit unpopular, but I want some real sincere friendships. I am a young man, thirty-five, with dark hair, blue eyes, fair complexion and a very pleasant personality. I have had numerous occupations, but remain to my old standby—nursing. I have studied med-naturopathy, philosophy and psychology, and many other things which have to deal with human beings, and character, and can talk about most anything.
JOSEPH. No. 1369.

Dear Mrs. Hope: I am a fourteen-year-old girl with dark brown hair and dark brown eyes. My hobby is reading. I also enjoy sports and singing, and am interested in journalism. I will exchange snaps and answer promptly.
ETHEL. No. 1370.

Dear Mrs. Hope: Would anyone like to be my friend? I am twenty-eight years old, married, and have three children. I would like to write letters to anyone who cares to write.
WINNIE. No. 1371.

Dear Mrs. Hope: I would like to join your correspondence club. I am a fellow of twenty-two, have brown hair and brown eyes. My hobbies are photography and collecting stamps. I like all sports, especially baseball.
LOU. No. 1372.

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Kerry swept Chandra against his heart, and his lips blotted out her heartache

Double Wedding

By RUTH BROWN

Their first "hello" was a good-by kiss, and Cupid had to back-pedal to bring Chandra and Kerry together!

THE counter of the station coffee shop curved in a horse-shoe shape, so that Chandra Dexter and her sister Adrienne were sitting directly opposite the strange young man.

"My, my!" Adrienne murmured, her deep blue eyes sparkling behind their long bronze tipped lashes. "Do you see what I see—or is it an optical illusion? I wonder whatever brought that to Meadowdale!"

Chandra wondered, too. The stranger was young, perhaps twenty-eight or nine, with a thin, interesting brown face topped by two wings of



burnished, almost blue-black hair. His eyes were gray and singularly penetrating, due, perhaps, to their enormous black pupils, which seemed to look not only at the two girls, but through and through them. The hands manipulating the cheap coffee shop crockery were slender and well shaped—clever, creative hands.

Adrienne was still staring, raptly, when Chandra spoke.

"You'd better concentrate on your sandwich, and forget about tall, dark and handsome," she said decisively. "Don't forget my train leaves in exactly eight minutes."

"I know," Adrienne responded dreamily. "Chandra—I'll admit I've been pretty resentful. The fact that we've only enough money for one of us to go to New York and study art, and that you won the toss-up.

"Somehow, I've always felt that I should be the one to go, that I'd make more of my opportunities than you would. But now—well, I'm rather glad I'm staying here." Her blue eyes still dallied on the dark young man's face. "After all, there may be more than one kind of opportunity."

"Nonsense," Chandra said, flipping open her compact and beginning to repair her make-up. "That young man is probably only in town between trains. I'm afraid you're building yourself up to an awful let-down, sis."

"Well, we'll see," Adrienne murmured reflectively, as she slipped down from her stool and followed Chandra out to the station platform.

THE train pulled in a minute later, and Chandra hugged her sister warmly and prepared to board it. She was already halfway up the Pullman steps when she heard a male voice shouting behind her. Turning, she saw a long-limbed figure in well-cut tweeds covering the platform with gigantic strides.

It was the stranger from the coffee shop, and he was waving something in his hand.

"You left this on the counter," he told her, reaching the train. "I thought you'd probably hate to lose it."

Chandra saw that the object was her small enameled compact, which

she had been using just before leaving the coffee shop.

She extended one small gloved hand and took it from the man's thin, sensitive fingers.

"Thanks so much," she murmured. "It was very good of you, Mr.—"

"Abbott. Kerry Abbott," he grinned, with a flash of teeth that were startlingly white against the bronze of his face. "It was lucky that I noticed you'd left it and darned unlucky that just when I have the opportunity of getting acquainted with a very charming young lady, the young lady has to be leaving town."

Suddenly Chandra felt that it was unlucky, too. She began to see what Adrienne had meant about there being more than one kind of opportunity.

Some sixth sense told her that she would have liked this Kerry Abbott very much upon closer acquaintance, but now she'd never know.

"It is too bad," she agreed demurely. "But my sister Adrienne isn't leaving, and perhaps she could do something to make your stay in Meadowdale pleasanter. I'm Chandra Dexter—my sister and I are the last of the Dexters who practically founded the town."

Kerry Abbott's quick grin flashed from Chandra to Adrienne and back again.

"That'll be great. I'm sure Adrienne and I'll get along famously. But there's one thing missing in this set-up, and I don't get it. When a beautiful girl goes on a journey, there should be a young man at the station to kiss her good-by. How come there isn't?"

Chandra colored under his bantering tone.

"Maybe because there isn't any young man in the girl's life," she countered. Suddenly Chandra knew that she wished there were. She wished there were a young man exactly like Kerry Abbott in her life, but wishing didn't make it so.

His gray eyes danced daringly at her.

"Then, in that case I won't be trespassing if I do the honors!"

BEFORE Chandra was more than half aware of his intention, his long arms went around her. Kerry was on the level platform, and she two steps above it, and it brought their faces exactly level. The brilliant dark pupils of his gray eyes seemed to burn completely through her for a fraction of a minute, and then his mouth took possession of hers.

It was all over before Chandra knew what had happened, and a second later the train was pulling out of the station.

From her seat in the slowly moving Pullman, she looked out and saw the two of them, Adrienne and Kerry, moving away with arms companionably linked. They looked back at her once and waved smilingly, and then the train gathered speed and they were out of sight.

Weakly, Chandra sank back and tried to segregate her scattered emotions. A half hour before, she would have told you that she hadn't a single regret about leaving Meadowdale, that she was glad and grateful for the opportunity to leave it. But now—she brushed cool fingertips across her mouth, where Kerry's kiss still burned—now she wasn't so sure.

She was being pretty silly about it all, she told herself. A chance encounter with a handsome stranger in a railroad station, a casual kiss dropped thoughtlessly upon her mouth, was all it was, really. She was exaggerating its meaning and importance out of all proportion but she couldn't help it. She knew she'd gladly get off the train again, give up all idea of New York and art school just to be near Kerry.

But Adrienne had the innings this time, as she nearly always did. At the thought of her sister, a tiny pang

of what she hoped wasn't jealousy pricked Chandra's conscience.

People said of the Dexter sisters that they were very much alike, and that was so, as far as it went. They had the same softly curling brown hair, but Adrienne's danced with overtones of gold. They had the same deep blue eyes, but Adrienne's lashes were tipped with bronze. They had the same healthy, creamy complexions and short, well-modeled noses, but freckles marched over Chandra's in straggling disorder.

In short, Adrienne was a year younger edition of her sister, but with glamour added.

Kerry Abbott was the first man Chandra had ever seen that she felt she could have become interested in, and now Adrienne was going to have him, too. It didn't seem fair. Chandra wished devoutly that Adrienne had won when they had flipped that coin to decide which of them should go to New York. But it was too late to think about that now. She, Chandra, had won, and now she had to see it through.

FROM the very first instant, the friendship between Kerry and Adrienne flourished. Adrienne's letters told Chandra that, and the post-scripts that were appended to them in a bold masculine hand, Kerry's own. Oddly enough, it seemed that Kerry was an artist. A successful one, too. He was spending a month in Meadowdale for the purpose of painting the scenery. He was helping Adrienne with her work, seemed to think that she had considerable talent.

But not all of their time together was spent in working. Adrienne's letters were full of picnics and movies and evenings of fun and dancing that she and Kerry shared together. Every time Chandra read of them, the now familiar little jealous pang twisted at her heart.

Her work at the Art Institute was

perfunctory and, she knew, uninspired. Her evenings were dull and full of the nostalgia of homesickness. All in all, Chandra began to feel that she had made a great mistake in coming to New York at all. Being continually confronted with Kerry's name at the institute didn't help, either. It seemed that he had worked and studied there during his own student days and was a director now.

It all seemed a shame, because, once the money for the art course was exhausted, Adrienne's chance to do anything with her own talent would be gone forever. When she thought of that, Chandra worked harder and really tried to accomplish something, but somehow ambition and the creative spark vanished into some unnamed limbo along with everything else.

A month crept slowly by, and then a letter from Adrienne shattered the dullness of Chandra's existence like a bombshell.

"Kerry has been pulling wires to get me a scholarship at the institute, and at last he's succeeded," Adrienne wrote exuberantly. "So I'm coming on to New York right away, and Kerry is, too. He's finished his work here. Oh, won't New York be grand, with all three of us there—" and so on through a half dozen pages of superlatives.

Chandra thought it all over, uncertain whether to be glad or sorry. Certainly it would be nice to be with Adrienne again, nicer still for her sister to have her chance at the institute. But to have to watch Adrienne and Kerry romancing—that wasn't going to be quite so nice. Because, of course, neither of them could be expected to know that Kerry's careless kiss that day at parting had left such an indelible impression upon her.

But maybe, she thought hopefully, maybe when she saw Kerry again, she'd find that the way she felt about

him was just an illusion, sponsored by a too fertile imagination and the dearth of presentable young men in Meadowdale. Fervently, Chandra hoped that it would be true. It *had* to be true, for all of their sakes.

She met them at the Grand Central station on a Friday evening, her heart in her mouth, in a new and quite insane red hat that she'd bought to bolster her morale.

Adrienne was flushed, bubbling, entrancingly pretty as they came up the ramp to where Chandra waited. She had almost forgotten how really lovely her sister was, Chandra thought. And there was Kerry, every bit as tall, every bit as strikingly handsome as Chandra remembered him, with his brilliant, penetrating eyes and quick, flashing, effortless smile.

ADRIENNE threw herself into Chandra's arms, talking excitedly, laughing, dimpling. Something—or someone—was making Adrienne very happy, Chandra thought dully, and she was quite sure that that someone was Kerry. She disentangled herself finally from the younger girl's embrace and extended one hand to him, feeling very stilted and formal as she murmured words of greeting.

But Kerry wasn't having any of that. He took the proffered hand only as a means to pull Chandra closer to him, and lifted her from her feet in a gigantic bear hug.

"We've missed you, Chandra," he told her in the split second before his lips claimed hers for a second time.

It was just a kiss, every bit as brief as the first one he'd given her, but Chandra's soul was in turmoil as he put her down again. If only Kerry hadn't done that! But he had, and this time Chandra knew for sure the way things were, the way they'd always be. No man's touch would ever be able to move her as Kerry's had. She was in love with him, finally and

irrevocably, and at all costs Kerry must never know it.

An hour later, Kerry left the girls alone together in Chandra's tiny studio apartment.

"You won't want a third person around tonight," he grinned. "After a month's separation, you'll want to take down your hair—I know what girls are like! But get set for a big time tomorrow night. I'm bringing my best friend, Wayne Tabor, to meet you. You'll go for Wayne. He's a grand guy, apart from having all the money in the world."

Adrienne's wide blue eyes were narrowed thoughtfully as she said good night to Kerry. Later, drifting about the small combination living and bedroom in pajamas, unpacking, she spoke musingly to Chandra.

"Wayne Tabor—I wonder if he's connected with the Tabor drug millions? Kerry said he was rich. Chandra, I'm going out in the morning and buy a new evening dress. You can't impress a millionaire in a Meadowdale gown!"

Chandra looked at her, startled.

"But, Adrienne, I thought that you and Kerry—I mean—"

Adrienne chuckled mischievously.

"I know just what you mean, darling! Of course I like Kerry. He's swell, but personality won't buy mink coats! Kerry's all ready to propose to me the minute I let the conversation turn in that direction. But I'm not going to let it, not until I'm sure I can't do better. Kerry's successful enough as an artist, but he *does* have to work for all he gets, and if I can feather my nest any better—"

The rest of her monologue was drowned in the rushing of water as the bathroom door closed after her.

CHANDRA sat stunned where her sister had left her, scarcely able to think coherently. Adrienne was revealing a predatory, mercenary side to her nature that Chandra had never suspected, and she wasn't rel-

ishing the exposure. She'd pictured Adrienne as being overwhelmingly, romantically in love with Kerry, and he with her, but she'd never remotely imagined a one-sided, calculating affair like this.

And Adrienne proposed to keep Kerry dangling until she was quite sure there weren't better bargains to be had in the metropolitan marriage market!

Chandra's first instinct was to prevent it, by fair means or foul. She could throw herself at Kerry's head, do something to get him away from Adrienne, who didn't really love him at all. But a minute's sober reflection showed her that she had missed the point, which was that Kerry *did* love Adrienne. It was Kerry's heart she'd be breaking if she did anything to separate them, and not the resilient little organ that did duty in Adrienne's breast.

The best thing she could do would be to keep this Wayne Tabor as interested as possible, leaving the field clear for Kerry with Adrienne. Not, Chandra thought wryly, that she was apt to be very much good at interesting smart young New York millionaires, but at least she could try.

The next evening, as the two girls dressed for their date, Chandra's heart sank all the way to her toes. The way Adrienne looked tonight, Wayne Tabor wouldn't even know Chandra was in the vicinity.

True to her threat, Adrienne had bought a new evening dress, a brilliant, strapless creation of soft white velvet. She'd had her soft curls washed, and, Chandra suspected, rinsed with some concoction that made the soft tendrils more gold than brown under artificial light. Beside all that, some inner bubbling excitement was tinting her cheeks and sparkling in her blue eyes. She made Chandra, in the black crepe dance dress she'd brought from Meadowdale, look drab and dowdy by comparison.

Presently Kerry arrived with a blond young giant in tow.

"Chandra, Adrienne — this is Wayne Tabor, the prize I promised to bring you if you were good girls! Didn't I tell you they were knockouts, Wayne? Did you ever see so much feminine pulchritude being monopolized by one family?"

Wayne didn't answer at once. His dark brown eyes, which contrasted strikingly with his fair hair, had fallen upon Adrienne, and after that they never once left her sparkling face.

Chandra's spirits drooped still more. She should have known that was the way it would be, she told herself disconsolately, and in her worry and heartache she drew still further into the stiff shell she had built around herself. She followed the others, almost unwillingly, down to the waiting taxi, and then they were embarked on a hilarious and extensive tour of the city's most famous night spots.

FROM Chandra's point of view, the evening could scarcely have been called a success, although Wayne and Adrienne seemed to be enjoying themselves hugely. But Kerry was quiet and distraught, and, seeing the troubled look in his gray eyes, Chandra's heart ached worse than ever. He was, she thought, already beginning to regret having exposed Adrienne to Wayne Tabor's laughing, insouciant charm. It had been a sound idea, bringing Wayne around to make a foursome of the affair, but plainly the foursome had not developed as Kerry had expected.

It was nearly three o'clock when the two girls were once more alone in the studio, but Adrienne was still sparkling.

"Isn't Wayne wonderful?" she bubbled as she undressed, scattering her evening finery indiscriminately over the furniture. "Without a penny, he'd be everything a girl could ask

for, but with all that money thrown in—"

An almost uncontrollable desire to spank Adrienne boiled within Chandra, but she managed to control herself.

"I still like Kerry better," she answered coldly.

"Oh, sure, Kerry's all right," Adrienne concurred carelessly.

But from the dreamy, far-away expression in her blue eyes as she finished preparing for bed, Chandra knew that her sister's thoughts weren't on Kerry.

The ensuing two weeks were a nightmare to Chandra, all the more dreadful because of Adrienne's lighthearted enjoyment of everything.

There were flowers every day from Wayne Tabor—flowers for both girls, but Chandra knew that hers didn't count. They were only a polite gesture, because she was Adrienne's sister. There were also nightly excursions to the city's glamor spots, excursions which always included Chandra, because Kerry, grimly determined, refused to be left out, so Chandra couldn't be.

Watching Adrienne being her most fascinating, flirtatious self for Wayne's benefit, Chandra was sure that the whole thing was going to end in disaster, and her heart ached with renewed agony.

Late one afternoon, getting ready to leave the institute for the day, Chandra was surprised and startled to find that Adrienne had already gone. It was an unprecedented occurrence. The two girls always left together and walked the few blocks to the apartment. However, Adrienne had left a note, and Chandra's heart failed her as she read it:

Dear Sis:

I'm leaving early, because Wayne wants to drive me up the Hudson to a place he knows for dinner. After all, how can a girl make a man propose if she's never alone with him? You and Kerry can keep the home fires burning—see you later.

Adrienne.

Chandra wondered dully if Kerry had had any inkling of what the two were planning. She felt sure that he hadn't, and her heart dropped still further as she thought of having to tell him.

She cooked herself a simple meal, and got into a candlewick housecoat. At least, she told herself grimly, tonight there'd be no necessity for wearing her out-dated evening frocks and being an unwanted addition to a group of people who were all interested in one another, and not in her.

Shortly before nine o'clock Kerry came, and Chandra let him in, her eyes rebellious. She tried valiantly to conceal the pity she was feeling for him beneath the surface brusqueness of her manner.

SHE didn't ask him to sit down. She only told him, as briefly as possible, what she knew of Adrienne's whereabouts, and tried not to watch his face as she did it. It seemed, somehow, indecent to spy upon his emotional reactions, to see his disappointment reflected in his eyes.

But Kerry evidently had more control than she'd thought, because his eyes were enigmatic, his face impassive.

"That so? Well, that sort of puts us on our own. Like to go out somewhere, Chandra?"

"No," Chandra told him curtly. "I'm really glad to have an evening at home for a change. I've been doing too much."

"Well, that suits me, too," Kerry retorted amiably. Without waiting for an invitation, he divested himself of his hat and topcoat, and deposited his tall frame comfortably in an easy chair. "Got any makings, Chandra? We might have a drink."

Hot with rebellion, Chandra went into the kitchenette and mixed the drinks. Since Kerry had come to see Adrienne, and since Adrienne wasn't here, why couldn't he go away again, decently and quietly? It was sheer

cruelty to force her to spend an entire evening here with him alone. And Kerry was quite capable of staying put until Wayne and Adrienne returned, no matter how late the hour. In fact, his air of indolent permanence assured her that it was precisely what he was contemplating.

She prayed silently that the other two wouldn't be so very late after all and served the highballs.

"You don't like me, do you, Chandra," Kerry said abruptly over his second one. "Why?"

Chandra was completely taken aback. She felt her face grow rosy with embarrassment as she struggled with a reply. Because you couldn't say, "No, Kerry, I don't like you, because I love you. Love you terribly, and much good it will ever do me."

So she stammered away with an attempt at lightness.

"Why, whatever gave you that idea, Kerry? Of course I like you. Why shouldn't I?"

"I don't know why," Kerry said soberly, "but it's plain enough. You freeze up whenever I'm in the same room with you. I suppose I'm a fool, Chandra, but I had hoped—" his words tapered off gloomily, and Chandra didn't ask him to go on.

SHE knew well enough what he'd hoped. He'd hoped to marry Adrienne, which would make him and Chandra brother and sister, and things were so much pleasanter when brothers and sisters liked one another.

"Nonsense, Kerry," she retorted lightly. "You're just imagining things. I'm just not a good mixer, like Adrienne. It's nothing personal."

The sound of Adrienne's key in the lock brought the tension to an end. Chandra heard it with an overwhelming sense of relief. Whatever happened, she must at all costs avoid any repetition of this intimate scene with Kerry. It was more than her frayed nerves could stand.

Adrienne's small, piquant face was glowing beneath her wind-ruffled, gold-brown curls as she came into the room with Wayne close at her heels. He, too, looked exuberantly happy.

With a swift little rush, Adrienne threw herself into Chandra's arms.

"Oh, sis, I'm so glad you're still awake! I just had to tell someone tonight or burst. Wayne and I are engaged—isn't it wonderful?"

She'd known it, Chandra thought chaotically, from the first second Adrienne had entered the room. And it was all wrong. Adrienne wasn't in love with Wayne, no matter how much of an act she was putting on. She only wanted Wayne's money. And Kerry, poor Kerry—her heart contracted painfully as her agonized blue eyes veered in his direction.

She saw a small muscle tighten ominously in Kerry's jaw, and his whole body seemed to tense as he got to his feet. The compelling gaze of his gray eyes wasn't for Adrienne, though, nor were his words. They both were centered on Wayne.

"Wayne, you can't do it! When we planned all this together, I didn't expect you to carry things this far—"

A flushed, uncomfortable look spread over Wayne's handsome face, and Chandra could see her own expression of puzzled bewilderment reflected in Adrienne's eyes. What, she wondered confusedly, did Kerry mean by "planning all this together"—all what? And why shouldn't Wayne marry Adrienne, if it was what they both wanted?

"I didn't know, then, that I was going to fall in love with Adrienne," said Wayne. "Really in love, I mean."

Kerry's answering voice was stern.

"All the more reason, then, why you should tell her the truth. Tell her now, Wayne—or I shall!"

Adrienne found her tongue excitedly.

"What is all this double-talk?" she demanded. "Tell me what? Kerry,

you're acting like someone out of a third-rate melodrama. What is this deep, dark secret that Wayne's omitted to tell me? Whatever it is, I warn you that it will make no difference between Wayne and me!"

"I wouldn't be too sure about that," Kerry retorted grimly, "until you hear it. Go on, Wayne, spill it!"

Wayne must have felt the utter implacability under Kerry's voice, for at once he began to speak, hurriedly.

"Adrienne, it's nothing, really. Just about all those millions that I'm supposed to have—well, I haven't got them. I'm just a moderately successful painter, in the same class with Kerry."

NO ONE said anything for a full minute. With her eyes on her sister's face, Chandra broke the silence at last.

"But what was the idea, pretending to be rich? How could it possibly matter?"

"It was all Kerry's idea," Wayne said. "Somehow he got the idea that Adrienne was pretty mercenary, and he was trying to prove something or other."

Swiftly Adrienne went to his side. Her tiny white hand rested like a butterfly on Wayne's sleeve.

"Well, he succeeded, Wayne," she said softly. "He succeeded in proving that I was only kidding myself along with my mercenary ideas. It wouldn't matter if you were flat broke, Wayne, not a bit. I may have thought I was making a play for your imaginary millions, but somewhere along the way I fell in love with *you!*"

Wayne's arms went around her then, holding her close, and Chandra felt a lump gathering painfully in her own throat. That had been the real Adrienne speaking, her own sweet, sincere little sister, and Chandra was unspeakably grateful that the newer, harder Adrienne had vanished—for all time, she was sure.

Adrienne would find her happiness with Wayne, had, indeed, already found it, and Kerry—well, some day he would get over Adrienne, just as some day she, Chandra, would get over him. Life moved on, and you moved with it, no matter how cold and numb you were inside.

Because she couldn't bear to look at Kerry, Chandra went swiftly out through the swinging door to the kitchenette. She couldn't endure seeing what the sight of those two in their lovers embrace would do to him, and besides, she wanted to think.

Wayne had said that his masquerade as a millionaire was all Kerry's idea. Kerry had wanted to prove something, but what, exactly? In view of the way Kerry felt about Adrienne, it didn't make sense.

SHE leaned against the kitchen wall, and holding her throbbing temples between her hands, tried desperately to concentrate. There, a minute later, Kerry found her.

"It's positively indecent to stay in there with those two," he told her, and amazingly, he was grinning. Chandra looked at him with wonder in her eyes.

"I don't see what you're smiling at," she told him childishly. "Another man gets your girl, and you go around grinning like a Cheshire cat. One would think you were pleased about the whole thing!"

"Of course I'm pleased," Kerry retorted. "And as for Adrienne being my girl—how do you get that way? There's only one girl in the world that I'd like to call mine, and she won't give me a break. Why won't she, Chandra?"

He put his hands on her shoulders and stood looking deeply down into her eyes. Something was blazing in his. Something that disconcerted Chandra, frightened her, yet thrilled her to the very core of her being.

"You're asking me?" she countered weakly.

His hands tightened.

"Yes. Because you're the girl."

The sense of unreality that surrounded Chandra deepened, became more acute.

"But you—you were in love with Adrienne."

"Adrienne," Kerry said grimly, "has been throwing herself shamelessly at my head ever since you got on that train and left us in Meadowdale. I'm a fairly intelligent fellow, Chandra, and it didn't take me long to realize that she was just playing up because I was probably the best matrimonial chance that had ever come her way.

"So I got the idea of throwing a red herring across her path by providing what would seem like a much better chance. That was where Wayne and his fictitious fortune came in. And apparently she fell for it. But little sister's stock has risen a good many points in my estimation in the last half hour. She wasn't nearly such a predatory fortune hunter as she made herself believe."

"I still don't see how I get into the picture," Chandra said, a little unsteadily.

"You've been in it since the beginning, when I gave you back your compact and kissed you good-by," Kerry told her. "In fact, you're the whole picture! Why do you think I ever bothered with Adrienne, wangling her a scholarship and everything? Only so that I could be near you, and try to make you care for me. And then we got here, and you've been freezing me ever since."

"Only," Chandra whispered, "because I thought you loved Adrienne. Oh, Kerry, it's been that way with me, too, ever since that day at the station—"

Kerry's arms went around her, tightly, compellingly.

"What a lot of time we've wasted, sweet, misunderstanding each other. But now that Adrienne is safely off

(Concluded on page 113)



By SYLVION

THE August Number 8 girl, like the well rounded and evenly balanced numeral 8, should keep her romantic life on even keel and never allow temperament to make her too strong or too weak. Impulsiveness or sudden emotional outbreak will carry her to regretful extremes.

She can ruin her love happiness by overdoing her affection or allowing temper to put words in her mouth which she will regret for the rest of her life. Poise should be her policy.

She is the girl of possession and action. She speaks her piece and lets the chips fall where they may. She has a mind of her own and likes to make other girls' minds agree with hers. And the same thing applies to her man. She more often will make up his mind for him than vice versa.

But there is a certain amount of luck that follows the Number 8 girl. Her personality gets her by when others might fail—she is so confident that others think she is right even when she isn't sure of it herself.

Happiness in Achievement

Her greatest happiness is achievement in anything she makes up her mind to do. She goes out to meet love, more often than waiting for it to come to her. Some men don't like that trait—but the man who does like it, can be happy with such a girl, unless of course, she becomes the master rather than the mate.

The best motto for the Number 8 girl is

—poise brings happiness, as well as power. Don't be overconfident unless the facts are all on your side. And be prepared for the unexpected.

A Typical No. 8 Girl

Mildred Stevens was a proud Number 8. She was quite talented as a speaker and active as a Welfare worker in her town. Everyone respected her.

Her latest efforts were in behalf of the poor children of the community who needed a hospital in their section. She had been working for some time to get the city council to pass the bill. Many signatures were needed.

Perhaps the main reason she worked so hard was her interest in Doctor Oursler, who had been appointed school physician. She had fallen in love with him the first day she met him, although she wasn't sure she was ready to admit it. If she was to get him to propose to her, she felt that she would have to show him that she was the kind of a wife a young doctor should have.

The way he had treated her assured her that he was interested in a serious way, but there was another girl, the Mayor's daughter, Beth Babcock, who was worrying Mildred a lot. Beth had the advantage of a notable father.

This promised to be a real love battle. Beth had belittled Mildred's activity in the proposed hospital. At a party one night, both girls had waxed warm in argu-



ment in front of Doctor Oursler. Beth claimed that the city couldn't afford the new hospital. Mildred claimed it could. Then Beth had snapped:

"Maybe you think you could get Dr. Oursler appointed head of it, so that he might be under obligations to you."

This had hurt Mildred deeply. She felt it had cheapened her in the doctor's estimation. But being proud, she wouldn't stop now, even though Doctor Oursler had hesitated about taking sides.

Seeing It Through

It was the day before the meeting of the city council which was to consider the appropriation for the hospital. Mildred stopped at the doctor's office. She had worked herself almost ill. She had a bad cold and the doctor told her that maybe it would be better if she didn't speak at that meeting. She had done enough by getting all those signatures. "Let the councilmen fight it out themselves," he said.

Even though she wanted to throw herself in his arms and forget the whole thing, her nature wouldn't let her. She had made up her mind to talk and win the battle for the doctor. Achievement is paramount with the Number 8 girl. No matter if he did think she had a selfish motive, she had to go through with it.

So in order to fight off the temptation to side with the doctor and leave it to his better judgment, she forced herself to say: "I hope you don't believe what Beth Babcock said. You don't have to fear being under obligation to me."

He looked at her sharply, then dropped his eyes. He did not answer.

"All right," she said. "Silence means consent. I shall speak tomorrow night, if it kills me. You can think what you wish."

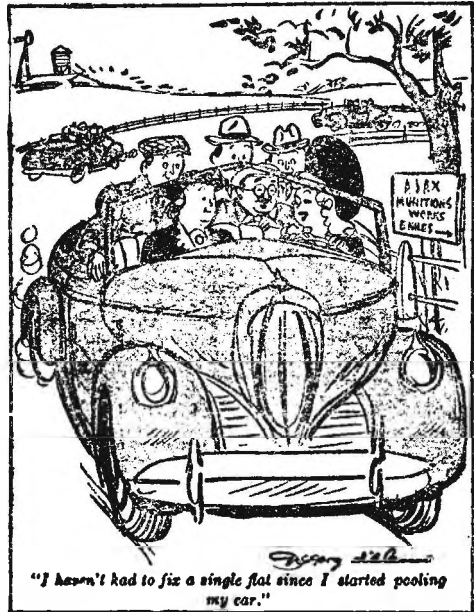
Then she left his office and went home to bed. There were tears to accompany her rising fever.

Her Pride at Stake

She stayed in bed till the following afternoon. She was weak. Had the doctor called that day she would have collapsed in his arms and begged for his kisses. But he didn't call. She felt that she had lost him by her impulsive talk.

Well, it was too late now. Her pride was at stake. She would appear and talk even though her voice was hoarse.

It was a dramatic moment. Mildred saw the doctor at the rear of the council cham-



bers. Beth Babcock was sitting beside him. A few minutes before she would be called on to speak, her throat seemed to be on fire. She had to get a drink of water. She went out to the lobby. When she got there, the doctor was beside her.

She tried to speak to him, but only a whisper came out.

"Just as I feared," he said. This time he looked at her pleadingly. "Let me look at that throat." And as she opened her mouth he took an instrument from his pocket. "I brought this, just for this emergency." Then he proceeded to spray her throat, and in a jiffy her voice had returned.

He led her over to the far side of the lobby where no one could see them. "Listen here, you sweet little bundle of fire—you can talk if you want to. Your voice might last and then again it might not. But whether you believe it or not—I am more interested in your throat and in you, than all the hospitals in the world. My only interest in persuading you not to talk tonight, was to protect you for yourself. I want my wife to be healthy, and to stay healthy. I don't want her talking with a squeak the rest of her life."

Give and Take

Mildred saw seriousness in his eyes. She loved him—she couldn't defy him. And then he added: "You need me just as much

as I need you. That's the best way to get along. You don't have to prove what a real wife you can be. I saw that many months ago. Tonight I'm master."

She wilted now for good. "Yes, Doctor," she said. "We'll let the hospital speak for itself. Take me home."

And that ride home in his car didn't need any kind of a voice for love to express itself. The Number 8 girl had learned her lesson of give and take—and it was sweet in its revelation. It was nice to be bossed after all by the man you love. Give and take also applied to their kisses.

The No. 9 Girl

The September Number 9 girl differs from the balanced Number 8 girl, because the numeral 9 has comet-like qualities—a ball of fire going places and doing things. This girl moves fast—is energetic, dramatic, romantic, passionate, but more or less has the natural ability to control her speed. After all, a fire which is always blazing doesn't need sudden energy to burst it into flames. And that is the difference between the Number 9 and the Number 8.

The thing that the September Number 9 girl must take into consideration if she would get the most out of her love life is to keep practical about practical things and not let unreality and the world of make-believe take the place of reality.

While some people think that all the world is a stage the Number 9 girl must not believe that she must always act or pretend. She has to be real when she

faces realities. Day dreams are good if she doesn't let them hoodwink her common sense. There are times when she must keep her feet on the ground—otherwise she will get an awful bump, especially when her ideal turns out to be just a human being.

Talent and Luck

Julia Ormond was a typical September Number 9 girl. Even as a child she was dramatic, always pretending to be a great actress. But when in high school she hadn't become the Number 1 actress of her class and had to be content with a minor part in her school plays, she refused to believe that she wasn't a gifted actress.

"I'll show them, someday," she told herself, "I'll get a break," little realizing that talent is one thing and luck is another.

Then when she passed twenty and had not set the world on fire she refused to admit it was lack of talent rather than hard luck. She wouldn't listen to a friendly critic's advice that she try for radio singing rather than the stage, for she did have a sweet voice.

So she stuck it out, and one night at a party she met Franklin Fox, the popular movie star. He was attentive to Julia after he saw her take part and sing in a little impromptu sketch. His flattering statement that she had talent made Julia happy.

Madly in Love

Because he was the first one of the theatre who had recognized her as a gifted

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actress, she fell madly in love with him, although he had not shown any affection other than gentlemanly friendship. And after he had escorted her to several parties she was sure he was going to propose sooner or later. She looked forward to her double triumph—in love and on the stage! At last Fate was being kind.

But when Fate did step into the picture, Julia found out how practical Fate can be. It happened at a party one night. Julia arrived escorted by Franklin. As they both walked into the room, a beautiful girl, about Julia's age, jumped from her chair and rushed to Franklin's arms, kissing him affectionately.

Julia, bewildered and hurt, stood trem-
[Turn page]

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bling awaiting the inevitable humiliation. This girl must mean a lot to Franklin the way he embraced her and kissed her. "My darling," he had said.

Then turning to Julia, he smiled. "Haven't you met Gloria?" he asked. Julia shook her head.

"Well, Julia," he beamed—"May I present my treasure—my daughter?"

Julia Faces Reality

Julia tried to act unconcerned about her first feelings, but gradually she faced reality as she talked with Gloria. Franklin Fox was close to fifty although he looked thirty-five. He had two other daughters and one son. His wife was the actress Constance West, who had been touring for some time with a road show. The newspapers had never played up Franklin's home life on account of his manager not wanting the public to know the age of the movie star.

It was a hard pill for Julia to swallow, but the hardest one was when Gloria said: "Yes, Julia—Daddy has often mentioned



You give to someone you know when you give to U S O

you in his letters. He said that you had a lovely voice and someday you would get a break in radio. Being seen with him, you know, will help your prestige. Daddy has helped many a young girl get her start."

Radio singer! Not an actress! That was the talent he had meant. And Gloria woke up.

Thus it was that Julia made up her mind to forget the stage and seek a radio career which she did with success. She is now a celebrated radio star on a national hook-up under another name. And only a few weeks ago the newspapers announced her engagement to the director of her program. She finally faced realities and made the most of them. Every Number 9 girl should follow that example.

The October Girl

The October Number 10 girl is still different from the Number 8 and 9. Although the Number 10 has the numerical characteristics of Number 1, the October girl is not quite as independent as Number 1. The October girl must have companionship in everything and depend on another person to help make up her mind.

She is courageous and loyal but sometimes stubborn, especially when she wants to do a certain thing her way and her friend tries to argue her out of it.

Maybe this stubbornness is another word for pride—but whichever it is, when the October girl closes herself in her shell of self-assurance, she often misses the viewpoint by failing to see the true picture which would benefit her considerably.

So if there is any lesson the October, Number 10, girl must learn, it is this: "When a friend's opinion differs from yours, try as hard to understand that viewpoint, as you do to convince your friend of yours. In other words, seek the best, whether it is your idea or your friend's. Nature has advocated cooperation for the October girl, rather than self-assertion and decision."

An Artistic Type

Eileen Campbell was an October Number 10 girl. She had been going for a long time with Stanley Lawson, whom she cared for deeply. He was employed in the local bank and Eileen expected to marry him sooner or later. But Eileen was ar-

[Turn page]

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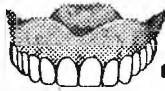
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tistic. She had studied interior-decorating
and often argued with Stanley that he was
too wrapped up in practical banking to un-
derstand the artistic side of life.

Stanley was perfectly willing to follow
her advice when they furnished their own
home, but once in a while he would assert
himself when it came to an opinion on
other matters.

Thus, when Eileen told him that she had
a chance to work for Dewitt Wallace, the
famous designer and interior decorator, in
a larger city some twenty miles away, Stan-
ley advised against it. Because he couldn't
give her any concrete argument, Eileen be-
lieved him selfish.

Stanley told her he could see that she
found employment locally and that his
bank would finance her in a studio of her
own if she wished. But no—Eileen wanted
to work for the glamorous Dewitt, and
that was all there was to it.

Thus, they had a serious argument and
Stanley stopped calling. Eileen pretended
she didn't care. "He'll get over his preeve
when I make good," she said—and bought
her first month's commutation ticket and
started to work.

[Turn to page 110]

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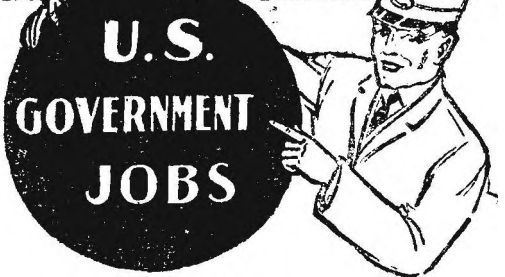
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LOVE NUMEROLOGY
(Continued from page 108)

Then came a fatal night three weeks later. The moment Eileen came home, her father who was the manager for an investment firm called her in. The first thing he said to her was: "Did you infer to Dewitt Wallace that my firm would finance him in a large loan for his business?"

Embarrassing Revelations

Eileen said she hadn't. Then her father continued, "Well, today, Wallace called on me and asked for a loan saying that he would make you secretary of his company if I put it through for him. Do you want me to?"

At first, Eileen seemed proud, but her father's expression made her wonder. What was behind it all? Had Wallace hired her just to help him get that loan?

Then her father startled her. "I'm going to call up Stanley Lawson. He should know about Wallace's financial status."

Eileen wanted to tell her father not to do it, but she hadn't revealed her quarrel with Stanley. Now she was in an embarrassing position. But she did want to see Stanley—at least her heart did, even if her mind was stubborn.

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So Stanley came over. He acted cold and business-like, for Eileen's father was a depositor in Stanley's bank and this was a business call.

When Stanley heard the whole story, he smiled and looked at Eileen. He spoke both to her and her father. "When Eileen told me she was going to work for Wallace I tried to advise her against it, but under business ethics I couldn't tell her that Wallace was facing bankruptcy and maybe was hiring Eileen just to get an in with you, Mr. Campbell. But I can tell you now, because you are one of our best patrons. Eileen wouldn't have believed me anyway, and after all, I wasn't sure of his intentions, but now I am."

A Valuable Lesson

That was enough for Eileen. "Please forgive me, Stanley," was all she said. But that was sufficient and the father understood too, for he walked out of the room as Eileen and Stanley embraced.

Another October Number 10 girl had learned her lesson of cooperation and understanding of the other person's viewpoint.

Have you a Number 8 or 9 or 10 in your Numbergraph? If you have, then [Turn page]

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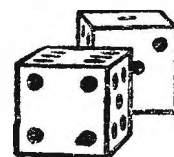
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Dear Sylvion: I was born on February 29th, but celebrate my birthday on February 28th. Does this affect my Numbergraph?
BESS SILCOX.

Dear Miss Silcox: No. Your Numbergraph is based on February 29th, the vibrations of the day you were born, which affected you accordingly. It is your psychic birthmark, so to speak.

Dear Sylvion: I have been told that the United States will have an important change in policy in 1945. What is that prediction based on?
MAX DUER.

Dear Mr. Duer: It is based on the end of the 13th cycle of 13 years which is 169 years, from 1776 to 1945. And the United States has been influenced by 13 from the very beginning. It will probably be a change for the better.

Dear Sylvion: Does a child usually have similar numbers to its parents or grandparents?
JOSEPHINE WALTERS.

Dear Miss Walters: More frequently one of the grandparents.

Dear Sylvion: I understand that each year shows a certain letter more prominent than others. What is the outstanding letter for 1942?
JACK HIEBLER.

Dear Mr. Hiebler: Prominent letters for 1942 are those corresponding to Number 7, namely G, P and Y. Those should be lucky. People with those initials should expect better breaks.
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Coming in the Next Issue

DOUBLE WEDDING
(Concluded from page 101)

our hands, I'll make it all up to you, Chandra."

He swept her against his heart, and his lips came down on hers, blotting out all the heartache and insecurity of the past weeks in one joyous, blinding moment.

It was a long, long kiss. How long Chandra never knew. She only knew that it was interrupted, at last, by low musical laughter from Adrienne and Wayne.

"Well, it looks as if it might be a double wedding, after all," said Wayne.

"That's just what it does look like, from here," said Kerry.

His brilliant eyes were asking a question. She let her own blue ones answer wordlessly in the affirmative.

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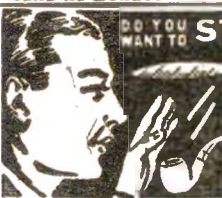


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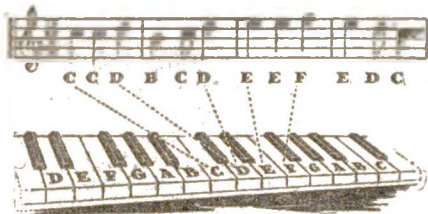
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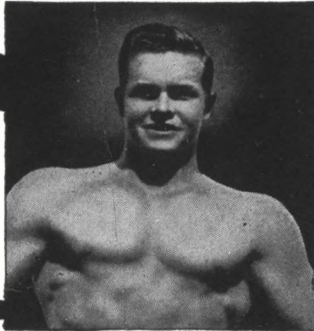
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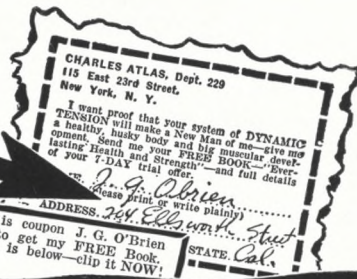
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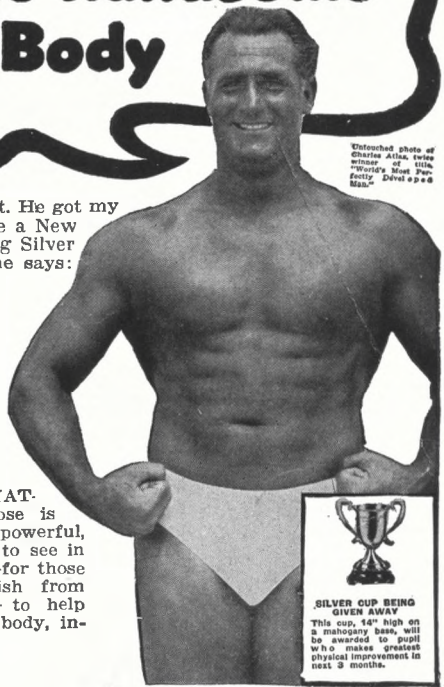
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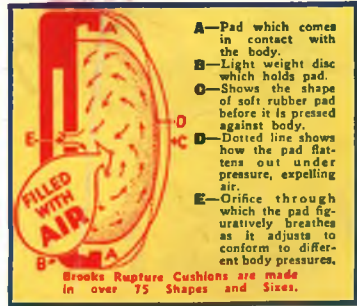
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