

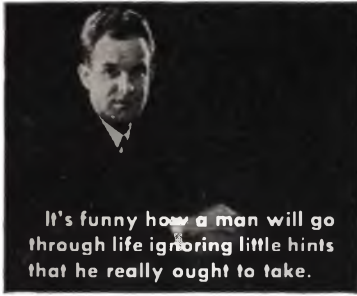
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Smart
Love Stories

MAY
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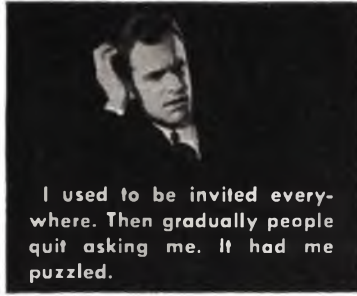


What is Chastity?

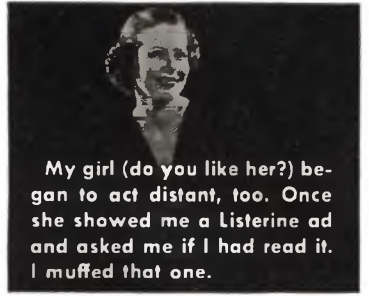
Alexander Redmond



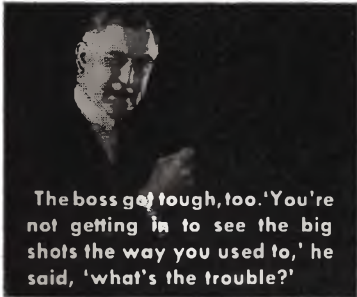
It's funny how a man will go through life ignoring little hints that he really ought to take.



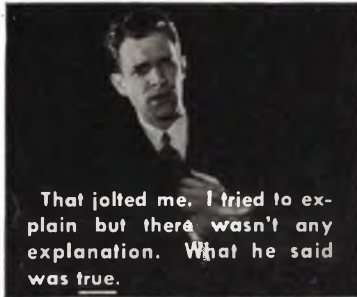
I used to be invited everywhere. Then gradually people quit asking me. It had me puzzled.



My girl (do you like her?) began to act distant, too. Once she showed me a Listerine ad and asked me if I had read it. I muffed that one.



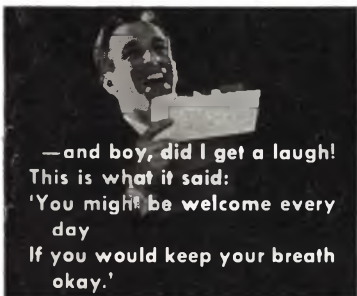
The boss got tough, too. 'You're not getting in to see the big shots the way you used to,' he said, 'what's the trouble?'



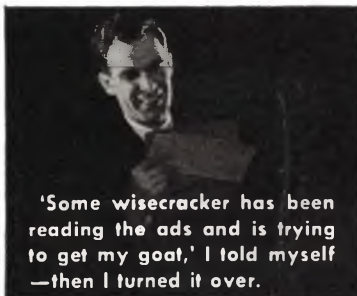
That jolted me. I tried to explain but there wasn't any explanation. What he said was true.



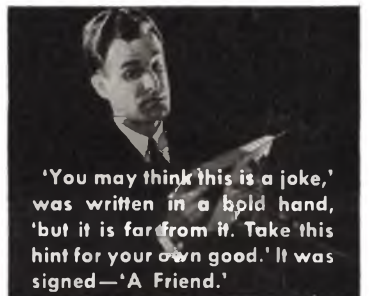
Then on Valentine's Day I got one of those ridiculous comics we kids used to send.



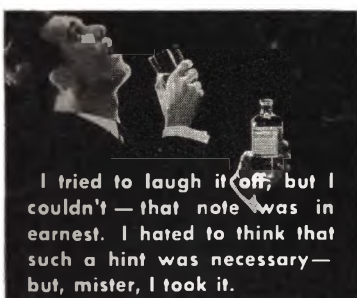
—and boy, did I get a laugh! This is what it said: 'You might be welcome every day if you would keep your breath okay.'



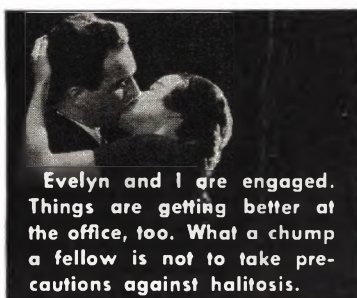
'Some wisecracker has been reading the ads and is trying to get my goat,' I told myself —then I turned it over.



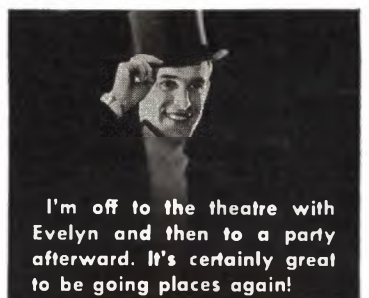
'You may think this is a joke,' was written in a bold hand, 'but it is far from it. Take this hint for your own good.' It was signed—'A Friend.'



I tried to laugh it off, but I couldn't — that note was in earnest. I hated to think that such a hint was necessary—but, mister, I took it.



Evelyn and I are engaged. Things are getting better at the office, too. What a chump a fellow is not to take precautions against halitosis.



I'm off to the theatre with Evelyn and then to a party afterward. It's certainly great to be going places again!

DON'T BE A SUCKER, STRANGER!

You may take it for granted that your breath is agreeable, *but is it?* How do you know at this moment that it is not offensive to others? The insidious thing about halitosis (unpleasant breath) is that you yourself never know when you have it. And even your best friend won't tell you.

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SMART LOVE STORIES

MAY, 1938

VOL. 7, NO. 6

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THE great silver plane, its non-stop flight from New York successfully behind it, banked and zoomed to a beautiful, smooth landing. One by one, as they stuck their heads out the door to disembark, the passengers caught at their hats, for a mischievous wind, typical of Chicago in April, skipped joyously over the vast airport.

Sylvia Newell stepped out of the plane and walked with the graceful swagger, indicative of her "I'm-on-the-crest-of-the-wave" attitude, across the field. A careless glance about told her that Lawrence Brandon was not there to meet her.



"If I can't make it, I'll call for you at the Viceroy about seven," he'd told her. Sylvia's mouth curved in a secret smile. Lawrence was one more on her list of conquests. The year before, when she'd met him in New York, he'd been stand-offish, hard-to-know. Now he was almost slavish in his devotion. The fact that Lawrence Brandon possessed a wife had not caused Sylvia one twinge of conscience.

"I guess you're the only one riding to town with me, miss," the chauffeur of the airlines car told her.

Sylvia was faintly amused.

"Don't tell me I'm the only one

who hasn't been met!" she laughed up at him.

"Looks that way, miss," he grinned at her.

The skirt of Sylvia's dull-green suit slid up her slim leg as she stepped into the big car. With a sigh she settled herself and unfastened the leather hook and eye that clasped the green jacket about her throat. Her yellow sweater repeated the gilt of hair curving sleekly under the green hat against her cheeks, then breaking into loose curls, that held the sheen of frequent brushings.

During the drive into Chicago, her mind was a parade ground for past events. It was her first trip to that city in seven years. Torrents of water had gone under the bridge since she was twenty. She thought about Rian North, the boy she'd been in love with at fifteen. How he'd kissed her after their last high-school dance. Strange she hadn't heard of him in all these seven years.

To her mind came the image of the girl she'd been. Father dead, herself left with no money, she'd gone to New York determined to make good and she had.

A friend of her father's, Alf Farnley of A. W. Farnley's Advertising Agency, had given her a job. That job had grown like *Topsy* until now, she was an account executive with an enviable reputation in the New York advertising world. What a grand way, she mused, to return to the city you'd left in comparative poverty and sorrow, an important executive on a business trip to clinch the deal between Farnley's and the Trent Cosmetic Co., one of the biggest accounts in the country. It was fun to return on the crest of the wave,

knowing that you were the picture of what a smart young business woman should be. Sylvia would have been the first to tell you that modesty is a pose, so why not admit your talents!

She remembered she was scheduled to call Mr. Trent to-night and have a talk with him as he was anxious to get the affair settled. "Skip it!" she advised the reflection of herself in her room at the Viceroy. "I can tell him I was ill or something in the morning." Besides she barely had time to dress before Lawrence would arrive. In her bath she congratulated herself on having learned not to let business interfere with pleasure.

WITH an exclamation of admiration, Lawrence Brandon rose to welcome Sylvia as she drifted into the lobby. Spring was in her hair, tiny circlets of spring flowers catching her curls up to reveal her ears and repeating themselves in the filmy chiffon of her dress that frothed out from under a short green wrap.

"Lawrence, how well you're looking!"

"And you"—his voice husky with tenderness—"but this is not the place to tell you about that. My car is outside. We're going to a new place that's just opened! It's quite a distance from here but you'll like the ride."

"You mean we're going some place where none of your wife's friends will see us," Sylvia wanted to say but didn't. She was merely amused at his deception. As they walked out of the hotel she experienced a thrill of pride in his smooth, gray-at-the-temples handsomeness. He was a big man with the look of softness that comes from easy living, but he

had the veneer of the sophisticate. It amused Sylvia to know how unsophisticated he really was when it came to her.

The Continental Club was thick with smoke, crowded when they arrived. At their reserved table Sylvia said, "Ringside seats! This is going to be fun. You know, I wrote you I was supposed to see Trent to-night, but why should I let business interfere with my social life?"

"The right idea," Lawrence agreed with her. "Trent's a friend of mine anyway. If he gets unmanageable, refer him to me."

"I'd like to see the client I couldn't manage," scoffed Sylvia.

"Let's order our cocktails, then we can dance. I've been waiting years to dance with you again!" he told her softly.

While they were dancing, Sylvia suddenly realized she was deathly bored. Why had she ever thought Lawrence Brandon irresistible? He was fatuous, on the aging side, really. She hated the hot clutch of his hand on hers, the pressure of his palm against her back. His conversation seemed to be limited to statements about how lovely she was which were worse than boring after their first recital. Somehow, she struggled through dinner, through the inane floor show.

"Sylvia," Lawrence told her at last. "I'm in love with you and you know it."

"Lawrence, you're tight! Please don't be silly." Her hand evaded his eager one. "Take me back to the hotel, will you? I have a thumping headache." Instantly solicitous, he drove her back to town and took her up to her room.

At the door she said, "Thanks for a grand time, Lawrence, I'm sorry I fizzled out on you."

"Sylvia, darling!" His arms smothered her. He was kissing her desperately.

"Lawrence, you're mad! Please go home!" She pushed him away and opened the door.

He followed her into the room. "We've got to have it out now, Sylvia. I love you and I want you to marry me."

"Have you forgotten the small matter of your wife?" she reminded him sharply.

"I'll get a divorce, Sylvia darling. I can't go on without you."

With a swift gesture she tossed her wrap on the bed and faced him squarely. "Lawrence, you'll simply have to go on without me, as you put it. As it happens, I don't love you, never have. I thought it was fun being friends!"

"Friends, hell!" he ripped the words out. "You know you're lying. Why don't you at least be frank and come right out with it? This is my exit cue?"

"Yes, it is, Lawrence!" she said lightly. "Thanks for a whirl."

"You're pretty sure of yourself, aren't you?" he flung at her. "Well, take care, my dear. Any one as cold-blooded and egotistical as you is riding for a fall. So watch your step!"

The door slammed behind him. She shivered a little at the menace of his tone, then shrugged it away. "Why did I ever get myself tangled up with him anyhow?" she asked of the darkness before she slid into bed.

Fat robins were sunning themselves the next morning when Sylvia walked briskly to A. W. Farnley's

Chicago office, where she went straight to the sanctum of Harry Penner. "Hello, Harry," she saluted him gayly. "How are you? You look gloomy enough to have had your tonsils out. I was sick as everything when I got in town last night so I didn't even call Trent. And I overslept this morning."

Pointedly he looked at his watch. "Sick as a dog at the Continental Club I suppose."

She flushed. "Come, come, don't be such an ogre. Can't a gal play hookey once in a while?"

"And while said gal is playing hookey," Harry Penner told her, "we lose the Trent account to North & Stanley. They're only a small Chicago agency but they certainly must have played a master stroke while you were out doing the town."

"Harry, you're kidding!" Heavily she sank into the nearest chair.

"I only wish I were." Harry looked gloomily out the window. The phone rang. "That's for you, Sylvia"—he didn't turn to look at her. "I had my secretary call Alf in New York when you came in. He's been wanting to talk to you."

Hands cold, Sylvia lifted the receiver. "Hello, Mr. Farnley."

The old man's voice rasped back at her. "I hear we lost Trent, thanks to you."

"I can explain, Mr. Farnley."

"You can't explain anything to me. When I started you out, seven years ago, you were a nice kid, ready to work and get places. Well, I've been watching you develop into a cocksure, egotistical female and I've been just waiting for your foot to slip. I'm fond of the girl you were, Sylvia, and it's for your own good I'm firing

you. When you're ready to be the worker you used to be, come back and see me. Maybe then, I can do something for you. Why I'm wasting money to tell you this long distance, I don't know!"

Rage danced along Sylvia's nerves, left her white and shaking. "You," she said calmly, "can go to hell!" And hung up. "Well, this is my swan song, Harry!" she flipped at him as she reached across the desk for a cigarette. "You probably knew it before I did."

"Sorry, Sylvia," he said.

"Probably the best thing that ever happened to me. Who'd you say got that Trent account? North & Stanley? Never heard of them! North—North," she repeated it reflectively.

"Rian North!" supplemented Harry.

"Rian North! Why, he's a friend of mine. Now, I wonder how he knew enough to strike last night while Trent was hot. I think I'll wander over and see for myself. Where's their office, Harry?"

When he'd told her, she drew on her chamois gloves and left. Laugh as she might, she was conscious of a sickish feeling in the pit of her stomach. Out of a job! But not for long, she reassured herself.

SYLVIA slithered past an indignant secretary into Rian North's office. He looked up from his desk in surprise. His keen gray eyes, the unruly crop of black hair, the remembered quizzical lift at the left corner of his mouth that made you want to laugh when he smiled, all took her back seven years ago to a boy and girl quarreling.

"Remember me!" she challenged him.

In a minute he was up and around his desk, a rangy length of man, his hands outstretched to take hers. "Once there was a girl who went coasting with me! Who roller-skated better than I did!" His voice held a reminiscent tenderness. "Who played hookey from school with me. Who kissed me after the high-school dance! We quarreled. I can't even remember what it was about, careers for women or some damn fool thing. She went to New York and became very successful, so I was told. We never looked each other up until now. Her name was Sylvia Newell and I've never forgotten her."

"What a memory!" laughed Sylvia. "Here I am in the flesh. This is the first time I've been in Chicago in seven years, so I came around to congratulate you." She took the chair he offered her and he leaned on the desk's edge.

"I hear," she laughed up at him, "you're a rising young advertising man who's just landed the Trent Cosmetic account, that A. W. Farnley's was in such a fuss about getting."

He laughed. "It was a stroke of luck and the psychological moment. What's your game, Sylvia, advertising?"

"I used to be with A. W. Farnley's. At the moment, I'm a non-partisan spectator. Tell me how you did it, Rian? I'm interested!"

Arms folded, he looked at her quizzically. "I'd much rather talk about the last seven years of your life, Sylvia."

"That will come later!" she reassured him.

"Well, here's the story: It seems

as though a smart advertising gal from Farnley's was scheduled to see Trent last night and sign him on the dotted line. But she failed to show up. She was night-clubbing with an ardent admirer of hers instead. That part of it I got from the ardent admirer's wife who had been reading her husband's mail and knew I was interested in the Trent account. I simply took a long chance, called Trent, and he was mad enough to see me." Rian stopped talking suddenly, and snapped his fingers in a manner of discovery. "Sylvia, you——"

Sylvia swung one slim leg nonchalantly as though she were enjoying his sudden discomfiture. "Yes, I'm the advertising gal in question, or was, I should say. Thanks to your little strategy I lost my job."

"Sylvia! I'm sorry as all hell. But you and Lawrence Brandon——" he fumbled. "It just couldn't be you."

"Lawrence Brandon and I happen to be good friends, nothing more. I've been writing to him off and on, telling him about my job. Just because you're stupid enough to believe his jealous wife is not my affair." She thought back swiftly to the last revealing letter in which she'd told him about the Trent and Farnley set-up. Thank heavens, she'd kept it in a thoroughly businesslike vein. She rose to face Rian North. "You knew who the advertising woman was all along. Mrs. Brandon surely gave you that bit of information, too! Don't try to tell me differently. We quarreled years ago. Evidently you still hold that grudge against me." She slapped her gloves against her bag. "I should expect to get my throat cut in this competitive racket



but I hardly thought you'd be the one to do it."

Rian's Irish temper was rising. "Lita Brandon did not mention your name! Do you think, if she had, I would have deliberately done you out of a job, Sylvia? You're just like you used to be, always leaping at conclusions."

"Am I, indeed?" she parried sweetly as she paused at the door. "I came to warn you, my childhood friend, that from now on, you had better watch out for me."

"If you'd tended to your knitting, my sweet," he reminded her, "this wouldn't have happened."

For want of a better answer she slammed the door shut. When she returned to her hotel, however, Sylvia was far from being defiant. She was frankly lonely and frightened. Lawrence Brandon certainly wouldn't call her after last night's little interlude. Nor would Rian North want to see her; he didn't even know where she was staying.

Midnight found her slouched deep

in a chair. The ash tray at her elbow told of hours of nervous smoking. Sylvia was thinking out her campaign. She had decided to stay in Chicago and take a certain job. "Never let it be said that a Newell gave up without a fight. I'll show Farnley," she said aloud. "I'll show Rian North, too."

LOOKING slim and lovely next morning, with only faint shadows under her eyes to tell of her sleepless night, Sylvia made her appearance at Rian North's office. "He expects me," she lied smoothly to his secretary.

When Rian looked up from his morning mail he saw the flowers blooming aslant on Sylvia's impudent hat first, then her smiling face. "Truce!" she begged mockly humble. "I came to say I'm sorry and can't we be friends."

"Sylvia!" He was up to greet her. "I'm sorry about my share in the affair, too. I thought about it all night and wished I knew where you were staying so I could call you."

Sylvia drew a deep breath of relief. "I feel much better now. I don't mind telling you my conscience tormented me all night." She made a rueful face at him.

"Had breakfast yet?" he asked her.

"Only coffee! Can you sneak away for a few minutes?"

Over breakfast, Rian surveyed her happily. "I've thought about you often, Sylvia. Wondered where you were! If you were married!"

So emphatically did she shake her head her hair danced against her cheeks. "You?" she asked.

"Heart free! Not even a best girl in the offing!"

Sylvia experienced a curious surge of happiness over that information.

"What's your next step now, Sylvia? I mean about a job?" His voice was grave.

Sylvia smeared a generous portion of honey on her English muffin before she answered. "I'm going to ask you for a job. Wait!" she stopped him from speaking. "I know you're a small agency and can't pay much, but I'd like to work for you, Rian. I'm good! Really I am!"

He broke into laughter at her forthright self-esteem.

"You're hired!" he told her. "Unless Hunt Stanley, my partner, objects and I don't think he will. Fifty a week is the best I can do at the moment. When I can raise you, I will."

"If you don't, I'll heckle you," she warned him. "A toast to our new combine."

Solemnly, they raised their coffee cups and clinked them soundly. "I've one condition to make," she told him, poking the tablecloth with her fork. "Don't broadcast that I'm working for you, Rian, please. I'll do a lot of the work at home when I find an apartment. Then, I'll sort of edge in and out of the office. I don't want Mr. Farnley to know till I've been with you long enough to prove myself. At that point, I'll thumb my nose at the old boy. As far as Trent is concerned I don't think it will do you any good to have him know I'm working for you. See my point of view?"

"All right, princess, if you want to travel incognito!" Rian assured her laughingly.

After much hectic correspondence,

Sylvia managed to sublet her New York apartment to a just-returned-from-Europe friend. On the near North Side she found a small furnished place which she individualized with a few things of her own choice.

She was relieved to learn that Hunt Stanley, Rian's partner, was a jovial, wise-cracking sort who from their first handshake took a liking to Sylvia. It was exciting to find that she and Rian worked well together. Each shared the other's enthusiasm for work. Each shared the other's complete disregard for such conventions as quitting on time.

They were working late one night when Sylvia pushed the pile of papers into the top drawer of her desk and slammed it shut. "I'm washed up for to-night, Rian. Wrung out like a rag."

"You took the words out of my mouth," he assured her. "Let's go some place and dance."

"Looking like this?" she exclaimed.

"As far as I can see you look ravishing. Come on, don't be one of those fashion-conscious females who



can't go anywhere until they've changed into another dress."

They had a favorite night club for it was one of five or six such evenings they'd spent together. "Let's not talk about work." Sylvia's mouth was wistful as she spoke. In the dimly lighted room, her eyes were grave.

"Fed up already?" He was anxious. "After just two weeks of working with me?"

"Just to-night, I'm wondering what's the use of it all, slaving in such a futile racket!"

"Slander, young woman, slander. Advertising's a noble profession and all that sort of thing."

"Only my brand of advertising isn't so noble!" she told him in a low voice.

"Here's your high ball, woman. Maybe this will make you feel a little more noble.

"Don't mind my mood indigo! I haven't had one for a long time." She laughed brightly while her heart cried, "What's happening to you?" They drank and danced and talked nonsense through a thoroughly gay evening.

When Rian left her at the apartment, he said, "Thanks for a memorable time, Sylvia. In fact, all my evenings with you are memorable. If ever two people clicked, darling, we're it!"

Sylvia's eyes darkened as though she were going to cry.

"Take off that sad face!" he laughed at her. "I'll tell you more about us at our next meeting."

When he had gone, Sylvia faced her mirrored self sternly. "Don't be a fool!" she flung at the serious-eyed girl. "You want to get back to New York, don't you, and to more money?"

Then, don't let that Irishman get you down. After all, what you're contemplating is no worse than what he did to you."

WHEN Lawrence Brandon phoned her next day, it was not exactly a surprise to Sylvia as she had left word at his office for him to call her. "I was horrible last time we met, Lawrence. I don't know what was the matter with me. I was upset, I guess, and took it out on you. Couldn't you meet me somewhere for cocktails so I can apologize properly?"

However, it was a distinct surprise to Rian who, after a quick knock, burst eagerly into her office in time to hear her last words. "Right, Lawrence, that little Russian place at five! Till then!" Her voice rang out, a clear, triumphant bell. Then she saw Rian.

"Lawrence Brandon?" he asked soberly.

She nodded.

"Sylvia, how can you when you know he has a wife? Lita's a grand girl for all her jealousy. I dare say any woman would be jealous with a husband like that."

Sylvia tried to laugh away his mood. "Oh, Rian, don't be so stuffy and watch-doggish. I told you before Lawrence Brandon and I were merely good business friends. I haven't seen him since the night I arrived in Chicago. He wants to talk over something with me."

All Rian could see of her behind her desk was the crisp white blouse that frilled about her throat and made her appear an excited child.

"Lawrence Brandon is not the type

of man to play comrade to a girl, Sylvia, and you know it!"

She slapped her pencil on the desk, stood up to face him angrily. "I don't know what you're insinuating, Rian North, but I do know that what I do with my time after office hours is none of your business!"

"You're quite right," he answered her, holding his anger in leash. "You'll have no further trouble with me. Here are the layouts on that fruit account. I wish you'd look them over at your leisure."

Alone, she fingered blindly through the drawings on her desk.

For the next few days, Rian spoke to Sylvia only on matters of business. Between them rose a barrier of resentment that could not be surmounted. Sylvia tried being gay, serious, wistful, frankly friendly. But none of her attempts succeeded in recapturing Rian's comradely attitude.

After several days of it, Sylvia, too, ceased any efforts at being friendly. "In the face of what I've done, they're false anyway," she told herself. She was alone one evening in her apartment when the desk clerk announced Mr. North.

It was a different Rian from the casual friend of a few days ago. Grimly he spoke. "I've come to tell you that I'm going quietly nuts thinking about you." Before she knew he had moved, he was beside her, holding her in his arms. Was whispering how much he loved her. Was kissing her mouth.

She clung to him, certain that if he let her go she would surely fall. "Oh, Rian!" she sighed.

He held her away from him finally to look at her. "I've been through seven kinds of hell since the night you went out with Lawrence Brandon!" he admitted.

"I'm sorry, Rian!" But she could not find it in her heart to tell him that if she had known how he felt she wouldn't have gone.

They sat on the small couch facing each other. He leaned forward to capture her hand. "Do you happen to be as goofy about me as I am about you?"

"I like you terribly, Rian!" Her hand in his fluttered nervously, words caught in her throat.

He prompted her gently. "You mean you're not quite sure about this thing called love."

Miserably she nodded.

"I can wait!" he told her. "You will love me, I know, because I love you so desperately it couldn't happen any other way."

"There are a lot of things I should tell you, Rian."

"That'll wait. I've a few confidences of my own to tell you, angel. You look tired and we've a big day to-morrow. Let's make a date for to-morrow night."

A prisoner relieved, she drew a deep breath and smiled up at him.

At the door, he pressed his face against her hair and whispered, "I'm going to make you so happy, Sylvia. Wait and see!" He kissed her lips and was gone.

Like a stricken person, she stood staring at the closed door. "I must do something about it to-morrow," she told herself desperately. "I don't love him but I can't bear to have him



"I've come to tell you that I'm going quietly nuts thinking about you." Before she knew he had moved, he was beside her, holding her in his arms.

hate me. Maybe I can do something to-night!" Rushing to the phone she called Lawrence Brandon's number.

"Hello!" she cried and was answered by a woman's icy voice.

"Mr. Brandon is not at home. When he does come home, it will be too late for you to call him," the woman added venomously.

"I'll fix it to-morrow!" Sylvia repeated over and over to herself. But when she went to bed her anxiety over what she had done, the memory of Rian's ardent face, kept her tossing and turning till dawn's pale fingers crept through the window to lie burningly across her sleepless eyes.

SYLVIA arrived at work before any of the others. In her small office she called Lawrence Brandon's office to learn that he had not yet come in. She was sitting with her hand on the phone, wondering what to do next when the office boy brought her a telegram. As she read it, her whole body went slack at the import of its finality. The printed strips of words made her realize the enormity of what she had done. It lay there, flat on her desk, yellow and accusing.

Rian, who had an appointment with a couple of artists, poked his head in to grin good morning at her and whisper, "Remind me to-night, to tell you how much I love you."

Forehead on her hand, her eyes would not move from Farnley's acceptance telegram. Acceptance of her treachery. Only no one except herself knew it to be treachery. She might as well make a clean breast of it to Rian, that was the only way out. "Then whatever he wants me to do, I will," she whispered. The door opened.

"I'm Lita Brandon," announced the small, dark woman who stood in the doorway.

"How do you do," breathed Sylvia in amazement. Then recovering herself. "Won't you sit down?"

Lita Brandon accepted the chair opposite Sylvia. From her small turban to her pumps she was dressed in a warm tawny shade of beige. Against that background the ebony of her hair, the red of her full mouth and a clip that might have been emeralds blazed in contrast.

"Exotic and sultry-looking," decided Sylvia to herself, "and what exquisite legs and ankles." She re-

membered having heard that Lawrence Brandon's wife had been on the stage.

"You're wondering why I came, of course." Lita Brandon's voice was effectively husky.

"I am." Sylvia was frank.

"I came to tell you to leave my husband alone. When I lose my temper I am not at all pleasant to deal with."

"I'm sure you're not," agreed Sylvia sweetly. "Still, don't you think that's a matter for your husband to decide?" What did she care about Lita Brandon's husband?—stormed Sylvia's mind, but to be humiliated, like this, warned!

"I knew you'd be this way, smooth, insolent and casual about the whole affair, Miss Newell."

"Then why did you come? I am not insolent. I merely object to being threatened." Sylvia's green eyes were angry.

"Very well!" Lita opened her bag and drew out a gun—a small, cruel, glinting bit of metal in her gloved hand.

"You'll do as I say," Lita warned her, "or——"

Her ultimatum was interrupted by the opening of the door and the appearance of Rian. "Why, hello, Lita," he said. Then glimpsing the weapon in her hand: "Why, what on earth——"

She broke completely then and would have fired but for Rian's fingers that were steel clamping about her wrist. "Lita! For God's sake pull yourself together."

Sylvia sat numb in her chair, hands clenched tightly in her lap. "It's like seeing a melodramatic play," her

thoughts whirled crazily. "They're the actors and I'm the audience."

Choking with sobs, Lita fell against Rian.

Rousing herself, Sylvia said, "I'll get you a glass of water."

Her words fired Lita to a fresh attack. She broke away from Rian and leaned against Sylvia's desk. "You'll get me nothing!" she spat at her. "I'm glad Rian came in. Now, he can hear my little story."

"Lita!" begged Rian, strong hands on her shoulders, but she shook him off.

"You're too low to shoot," she slapped at Sylvia. "You're one of these brilliant business women who go high-handedly through life snatching at whatever amuses you. Lawrence amused you! For the last year I've sensed his change toward me. Then I discovered it was you. I spied, I plotted to find out who you were because I hated you and wanted to kill you. I've never wanted to kill any one before." She paused wonderingly. "It's a horrible feeling. Like a disease it seeps into your blood. It gives you no peace." She pressed one hand to her head as though it were aching horribly. "When you called Lawrence last night, I knew I had to come here today or go mad!"

"Please, Lita," interrupted Rian. "Come into my office. I'll give you a drink and you'll feel better."

"Not till I've spoken my piece," she said harshly, "and tell you what sort of woman you have working for you. Through Lawrence she's wangled Trent into giving her their account. You see, I had a detective follow my husband the other night. Lawrence met her at some Russian

place. The detective was very clever!" Lita laughed brokenly. "He sat so near them he heard their entire conversation."

"Stop her!" screamed Sylvia's brain, but her lips were numb.

"She told Lawrence," went on Lita Brandon's relentless voice, "that if she got the Trent account she could write her own ticket with Farnley. He promised to talk to Trent and then take her to Trent, himself. Oh, she was very careful to tell Lawrence that she was only doing occasional free-lance work for you, Rian. From a telephone conversation she and my husband had at dinner time last evening, I surmised she'd landed the Trent account."

Rian was staring at Lita, who, without another word, walked out of the room. Sylvia remained quietly at her desk, panic pounding in her throat.

He spoke finally. "When I came in here a few moments ago, it was to tell you that I had learned Trent was withdrawing his account." His mouth twisted. "That's a good one. It certainly would have been no news to you." Wonderingly, he considered her as though seeing her for the first time. "The girl you were!" His voice was heavy with sadness. Then with contempt: "The person you are now!"

"I can explain everything, Rian," she blurted it out desperately. Her eyes fell on the telegram from Farnley on her desk. Leaning forward she let one hand drop as naturally as possible to cover it. But an ironic wind from the window was quicker and sent it fluttering to the floor almost at Rian's feet. As he picked

it up, the words burned in letters of flame up at him.

CONGRATULATIONS ON TRENT DEAL
STOP COME BACK AT ONCE ALL FOR-
GIVEN STOP SWELL PROPOSITION TO
OFFER YOU ALF FARNLEY

He laughed ironically. "My apologies for reading your mail. However, in this particular case, I think it's justified. What was it you were saying about explaining?" He was flaying her with his contempt and she knew it.

Fiercely she wanted to humble herself to him. "Let me tell you how it happened, Rian!" she begged him.

"I remember now!" he said with forced gaiety. "You did give me fair warning, didn't you? You said something about coming to warn me and that from then on I had better watch out for you. I congratulate you on living up to your threat." As though there was nothing more to be said, he turned away from her.

When his broad shoulders had disappeared around the door, she realized with the flash of sudden lightning that what she wanted most in the world was walking out of her life, and the fault was hers. For the first time she knew that she loved Rian North better than life itself.

THAT night Sylvia sat alone, thinking that this was the night she and Rian were to have been together. The bitter night hours lengthened her agony of self-loathing. "The girl you were!" Rian had said to her. Had she, then, changed so much? Looking back at herself she knew she had. She wished she might have the last few years of success to live over. There was only one thing left to her—to set about rectifying the jumble she had stirred up. Getting that account back to Rian was the most important thing.

Honeymoon Blues

THROUGH the frilled curtains
We watch the gate,
Puss Purr Mew and I
For you're five minutes late.
With a dainty paw
Puss draws aside
The curtain. We see
Your hasty stride;
You leap up the steps,
I open the door
And know the joy
Of your arms once more.
Your lips find mine
In a long, deep kiss,
Puss looks on demurely
And shares our bliss.
No happier time
Will I know in my life
Than this first day I welcome you
Home as your wife!

Helen van Dusen.

The next day she went first to Lita Brandon. "I've come to thank you, Mrs. Brandon, for showing me what I was. I decided I simply had to see you if I was ever to live with myself. I want you to know I'll never see your husband again. He loves you really.

You'll have nothing to fear from me ever." Her eyes begged for understanding.

Lita's mouth trembled. "You have courage to come to me this way. I, too, am sorry for yesterday. I almost made a tragedy for us all." She hid her face in her hands.

"But you didn't," soothed Sylvia. "To-day I realize how you felt. Because now I know what it is to be in love."

Lita looked at her. "Rian?" she asked.

Sylvia nodded. "But it's too late for him to do anything but hate me."

"Oh, I am ashamed!" cried Lita.

"Don't be, it's my funeral." Sylvia smiled wryly and extended her hand. Lita took it shyly.

Sylvia's interview with Mr. Trent was a harrowing one. He was a brisk, gray-mustached man with piercing blue eyes. Those eyes pierced her now as she laid her cards on the table and told him everything. "You see," she finished, "North & Stanley deserve your account. They can give you every inch as good a job as Farnley's. Please leave it with them. I know I deserve no consideration, but in spite of all that talk I gave you the other day when Mr. Brandon brought me in to see you, Farnley's can't do any better for you than North & Stanley."

Mr. Trent appeared stunned. "This is highly irregular," he said.

"You're putting it mildly." Sylvia answered. Because she knew she would weep if she stayed another moment, she left.

That done, she told herself she could only pray that events would shape themselves in favor of Rian. She moved from her apartment that afternoon because she could not, any longer, bear the room where Rian had first told her he loved her. In the days that followed she was a hermit seeking the healing power of seclusion.

Sick to the soul of advertising and everything connected with it, she answered an ad for receptionist in a radio station and got the job at twenty-five dollars a week. On her first pay day she budgeted her money

carefully. With a shock she realized how little twenty-five dollars had meant to her when she had been at Farnley's—a new hat, a new pair of shoes, a gadget for the apartment.

In the lobby of her office building that evening after work she almost ran into Farnley, who had swung through the revolving door with Rian. Her heart did a tailspin. Farnley's eyes met hers! Those shrewd brown eyes of his in their network of laughing wrinkles were grim. "Why, Sylvia!" he shouted, but she had streaked out down the street, to lose herself breathlessly in the big department store on the corner.

Upset by her encounter, she dreaded going home to loneliness. It was a warm May evening so she stopped in a restaurant for a salad and iced coffee. "You're too thin!" she told her haunted-eyed reflection in the restaurant's mirrored wall. In the big-brimmed wine straw hat, the slim wine dress printed with white four-leaf clovers, she was pale, listless.

What was Farnley doing in Chicago? What was he doing with Rian? A vicious circle of questions ate into her brain. She must escape them. She walked out of the restaurant and turned into the first movie she came to with a feeling of gratitude that it was a double feature and would kill at least three hours for her. As the movies unreeled, she scarcely knew what she was seeing. She was aware only that it wasn't interesting enough to distract her mind from the nagging problem of Farnley and Rian together.

She was weary three hours later, when, hat in hand, she opened the elevator door at her floor. Perhaps she'd be tired enough to stop think-

ing, she prayed. Turning the elbow of the corridor she saw Rian North sitting tailor-fashion, on the floor in front of her door, calmly smoking.

He was on his feet when he saw her. "I thought you never would come home," he complained. "I had one helluva time finding you. If it hadn't been for the elevator man in your office building who told me where you worked, I'd still be looking. When I learned you work at WCU I called a friend of mine there and he gave me your home address. When you hide out you certainly do a good job of it."

"Rian!" she moaned. No other words would come. She stood still looking at him, her hands, one holding her hat, one holding bag and newspaper, hanging limply at her sides.

"Gotta key?" he asked her. She rummaged through her bag for it and he let them in. When the door had closed and his arms were about her, she leaned against him, head on his chest as though she wanted never to leave the protecting circle of his embrace. "Why did you come?" Her voice was muffled against his coat.

"Because I love you, no matter what has happened. And because I learned from Lita and Trent how you

humbled yourself trying to right things." He kissed her and she clung to him. He led her to the couch where they sat close together.

"This is what happened!" he explained. "Trent told Farnley your story. After much negotiation, Farnley incorporated North & Stanley into his agency. Result: I now have a share in Farnley's and Farnley's has the Trent account. I'm moving to New York next week."

"Oh, Rian, I'm glad!" There were tears in Sylvia's eyes. "It makes me feel better about everything."

He took both her hands. "You know, darling, you look like some one I knew long ago, the girl you were."

She smiled. "That's sweet of you, Rian. I feel differently, too. When are you leaving?" She tried to make her voice bright.

"Next Monday! Too bad," he said, with a twinkle, "you can't work at Farnley's, too."

Her eyes widened with the hurt of that.

"Don't look so pained, darling! You can't work at Farnley's because you're going to marry me!"

She answered his kiss before she said, "I think I'll like you better than any account I ever worked on!"

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by russell m. coryell

What is Chastity?

LAST June, while visiting in a friend's home, I sat in at a family scene that simply couldn't have taken place twenty years ago. The daughter of the house, a college girl of twenty-two, announced her decision to spend the summer with a man she was in love with.

"We're going to take an apartment in New York," she said with calm determination. "We're going to find out how we get along together. We

may get married afterward—I don't know for sure. It depends on how we feel."

"But, Lou!" her mother cried. I could see the stunned look on her face. I have no doubt that her stomach had suddenly got the same hollow feeling that mine had. "Lou!" There was shocked protest, then a frightened look as there swept over her the realization that Lou was not asking permission. She was stating a decision.

Quiet and casual, but quite obviously prepared to go through with it even if it meant a break with her mother. And the mother did the only possible thing. With cheeks white as chalk, she pulled herself together and managed to smile. "Tell me about it," she said.

I could feel myself relax, and I could see that quiet, hard look go out of Lou's young face.

"Gee, mom!" she grinned. "I was afraid you'd raise hell!"

If she had raised hell, she'd have lost a daughter, for the subsequent discussion proved that Lou was not acting on impulse or runaway emotion. She had done some very serious thinking on the subject of sex and marriage. Her own mother and father were divorced. Her mother had married a second time and divorced the second husband.

"I'm not going to go through what you've been through, mom," Lou told her grimly. "I'm going to find out what the man is like before I marry him, not after."

Now I don't know what that mother really felt just then. I could see that she was shocked and hurt and afraid of losing her daughter. She had to think very fast and in modern tempo. There had been a certain cold, clear logic in what Lou had said. Lou wanted her mother's approval, but she was going to have her try at marriage before she was tied to the man, so her mother offered a compromise, the only thing she could think of at the time.

"New York is awfully hot in the summer," she said. "Why don't you ask Curtis to come up here to the country with us for the summer? You can have the left wing all to your-



selves and it won't give people the same chance to talk."

Curtis and Lou did spend the summer at her mother's—and they did get married.

And that little episode in the modern tempo impressed me deeply. It gives new values to old ideas. It was one mother's rather frantic solution to her daughter's sex problem, a compromise. And Lou threw a lot of light on the question of sex and chastity as seen from the modern viewpoint.

Liking and admiring Lou as I do, and believing her to be a clean, fine girl, it makes it necessary to alter some of the old-fashioned precepts.

When I was a boy, a girl was "good" or "bad," depending on whether she was chaste or unchaste. And chastity was practically synonymous with virginity. But, of course, that doesn't really cover the meaning of chastity since it doesn't include the chastity or unchastity of a married woman.

CHASTITY really appears to be a word designed to describe sexual relations that have been authorized by either church or State. Sex relations before marriage or outside of marriage are not chaste.

The morality of chastity, however, is not the same in all countries. It seems to be a matter of geography, varying in different parts of the globe and depending on national customs, religious and so on. Wife-trading is casual, proper and moral among certain Eskimo tribes. There is an African tribe in which a girl is not considered desirable as a wife until after she has proved her ability to be a mother, young men and women liv-

ing together promiscuously until the girl becomes pregnant, when she automatically becomes eligible for marriage, generally with an older man with whom she has not lived.

Morality, then, appears to be a matter of opinion—and opinions are changing. Divorce used to be frowned upon, but it isn't now. A woman who smoked, drank and used rouge used to be "bad" or "fast."

The curious thing about chastity is that it has been man who has fought most bitterly for the chastity of woman. And it has been a losing battle all down through the ages, including the age of chivalry when husbands and fathers locked their women up in girdles of chastity. There enters, you see, the strange paradox that men desire chastity only in their own women, and are most ingenious in discovering ways of robbing the chastity of their neighbor's women.

The fact is that nature has designed the sex urge to be so powerful that it will overwhelm all counter-urges. And a study of human laws relating to sex shows us that man has recognized his own inability to be honorable in sex matters. We grow up in the conviction that chastity is desirable. We make up our minds to stay chaste and then change our minds completely under the stress of sex attraction. Sex is without logic.

Nature designed the sex act for purposes of procreation, but man has found it possible to thwart nature, finding emotional gratification without resulting pregnancy. And we may just as well junk the old argument that what is against nature is wrong, for man's advance from the brute stage has been due to his ability to find ways of thwarting nature.

He thwarted cold by the use of clothes and by fire. He thwarted night by inventing electricity. He thwarted nature's design that he shouldn't fly by inventing the airplane. He thwarts death itself, many times, by his use of medicine and surgery. He thwarts pain by anæsthetics. He tries, even, to thwart life, through the use of contraceptives and abortions. But fortunately for the human race the sex urge itself is nearly uncontrollable, and is chastity's most bitter enemy.

As a matter of fact, from the very beginning chastity appears to have been more a theory than a practice. Unchastity has always existed. It is not a product of "modern" times. My own generation was not more chaste than the present and if I may believe the boasting tongue of age, the generation before mine was equally unchaste. Modern youth, I think, differs only in that it is franker. It admits unchastity and challenges us to prove why it should be otherwise. It charges us with hypocrisy. It asks us frankly: "What are the intrinsic merits of chastity?"

So let's examine chastity. It does exist and there are definite circumstances and causes productive of chastity. They are:

The desire to be chaste. The belief that chastity is "right."

No desire to be unchaste. Frigidity.

No opportunity to be unchaste. Surveillance.

The fear of consequences: Pregnancy. Disease. Scandal.

Not all these causes of chastity are laudable ones. There is nothing praiseworthy in being chaste if it results from lack of desire, and there is no virtue in chastity that is forced upon one.

The desire to be chaste, however, is an ideal. The attempt to live up to an ideal is laudable. There is growth of moral fiber whenever the spirit conquers the flesh. Therefore, it is virtuous to be chaste if one is fighting for an ideal.

The fear of consequences is perfectly natural. It is the instinct of self-preservation, without which we might leap from cliffs, play with fire, experiment with poisons, et cetera. Fear of disease is definitely laudable. Fear of pregnancy and fear of scandal are not laudable but they are logical. In fact, I think fear of consequences is perhaps the most logical basis for chastity. It is certainly the most widespread and probably explains why chastity among men has never been a serious issue. Aside from disease they have little to fear. It's the woman who pays the price.

Now, having examined the causes of chastity, let's examine the causes of unchastity. There are several:

The normal physiological sex urge or passion.

Curiosity—wondering what it's all about.

Vanity—to be as sophisticated as the rest.

Compassion—the generous impulse to give.

Self-justification—to prove herself pure to a doubting Thomas.

Any one of the above reasons may be the cause of unchastity. When two or more of them are combined at the same time a girl's resistance is that much less.

TAKE the normal sex urge and heighten it by curiosity, the mystery surrounding sex. Whet this with the excitement of secret discus-

sions. We find this condition particularly around the age of puberty. Surveys show that more girls lose their chastity at about the age of sixteen than at any other age. The romance of passion, the torment of curiosity, the right man, the right time, the right place. And we find an older man is usually responsible in the case of young girls.

In the case of young girls, we find that aggravated adolescent curiosity is the chief cause of unchastity. It also runs through a given clique of girls almost like an epidemic. One girl loses her chastity, takes a superior air, says: "It's nothing to worry about," and the other girls follow suit out of bravado, curiosity, or just not to be outdone.

Then there is the girl who gives herself because she wants to make a

man happy. She is frequently more or less indifferent to sex emotions herself, doesn't see what men like about it, but is good-hearted and willing. And, believe it or not, there are thousands of recorded cases of girls who give their chastity because some man accuses them of not being virgins, and refuses to be convinced with less than proof positive.

An analysis of the above shows that ignorance is behind a large percentage of unchastity. Modern youth is fighting ignorance. My generation, however, grew up in such ghastly sex ignorance that most married couples didn't even know sex gratification was supposed to be mutual. Young people married in complete ignorance of each other's sex qualifications, because in those days men didn't marry the women they had experimented with. Modern youth experiments more frankly, discusses more freely, and acquires more knowledge along sex lines. He enters upon marriage with much more adequate understanding of sex relations as related to married happiness.

One of the most horribly unhappy couples that I know is the case of a man and woman who were both without any previous experience at the time of marriage. They were stupidly ignorant of sex and their ignorance wrecked one of nature's most ecstatic moments. Frustration, disgust and fear for the woman. For the man, a sense of terrible inferiority. Psychologically, whether men know it or not, they suffer a feeling of impotency when unable to procure complete sexual satisfaction to the woman. Modern youth is not



likely to fail through ignorance of sex technique.

The automobile has supplied the opportunities that were lacking twenty years ago. Not that I favor the parked car and the tourist cabin that is so easily reached by automobile. They have already been cited by others as undesirable backgrounds for sex gratification. They are lacking in comfort and security. Love under such conditions is hurried, watchful, fearful, clandestine. But youth finds itself obliged to patronize such places because public opinion makes secrecy necessary.

We have a strange situation here. Public opinion stigmatizes unchastity and professes to abhor places that cater to clandestine meetings. But this is only public opinion in the mass. The same public, taken individually, is the best patron of such places of unchastity. Man believes in chastity for every one but himself.

This is the kind of hypocrisy that modern youth is combating. He has discovered that the moral issue involved in matters of sex is determined not by science or logic but by public opinion, a public opinion which

professes one thing and practices another. Why not be honest, they ask, and profess the thing we practice?

Modern youth recognizes the fact that the greatest factors for evil found in unchastity are: Disease and the psychological injury resulting from a sense of wrong-doing, sense of sin. They find that disease can be controlled; and they find that this sense of sin does not exist in countries where unchastity is not a social misdemeanor. They find also that the sense of wrong-doing, regret over the loss of chastity, is in mathematical proportion with the unpleasant consequences that result. Girls are chiefly "sorry" because discovery has brought scandal.

Right and wrong are not fixed quantities. They are determined by differing social philosophies. If we believe unchastity is wrong, it is wrong—for us. But man can more easily change his attitude toward chastity than his sex urge.

PSYCHOLOGICAL harm results from going contrary to public opinion. But public opinion is changing, for sex is becoming common



property, and chastity a parlor subject. The newspapers now dare to mention sex. The whole country is throwing off the taboo.

Chastity is becoming less and less a question of morality and more and more a matter of expediency. Every girl debating the issue with herself, or with others, must consider the proportion of undesirable consequences as against the desirable. She must know that no contraceptive is infallible. She must know that abortion is dangerous and disease always a possibility. She must know, as my young friend, Lou, did that a passionate attraction for a man does not necessarily indicate satisfactory emotional gratification from him. She should know, too, that the ecstasy of emotional compatibility does not guarantee a similar compatibility of character. She should remember, if purity is her ideal, that chastity has to be planned for. Unchastity needs no planning. It comes without premeditation, the result of an overwhelming flare-up of passion, the strongest urge that man is heir to.

Sex hunger and food hunger have points of similarity. The denial of one is called chastity. The denial of the other is called fasting. Each is

a practice of the ascetic seeking virtue. If you are determined to fast, you do not torment yourself by exposing yourself to temptation. You don't tease your desire by seeing or smelling or handling food. The same applies to sex hunger if you wish to remain chaste.

Petting should not be considered as a substitute for sex gratification. It is the prelude to it. It is possible to tease your emotions, exciting them to a given point, and then stopping. It is not only possible. It is an everyday occurrence. And the frustration resulting is one of the arguments brought forward—believe it or not—against unchastity. I find it, however, a stronger argument against our existing social system. And I ask you: Is petting chaste? If it is, it is only on a technicality.

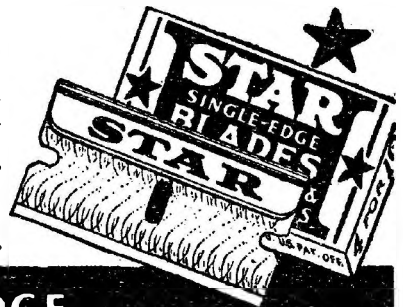
So what is chastity? We know it is something that man has fought for in his women but not in himself. And man's desire for chastity in his own women seems to have a purely selfish origin. Each man is vain enough to believe that his own children are a little better than any other man's. Therefore, he wants chastity in his wife—and seeks the unchastity of his neighbor's wife.



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In Name Only

I.

By GAIL SHERMAN

YOU'RE a wicked, cantankerous old lady!" cried Emily hotly.

Aunt Caroline all but gibbered with fury. She thumped her heavy cane

on the floor beside her chair and her eyes flashed as she cried furiously, "And you're an ungrateful brat!"

"Why should I be grateful?" Emily flashed. "You give me a tiny room that's hot in summer and cold in winter, that not one of your servants would occupy and you give me three meals a day that are neither very good nor very ample. And I am allowed the privilege of making my own clothes out of anything I can scrape up out of the attic. And in return for that I wait on you hand and foot and endure your bad temper that a paid servant wouldn't accept for any amount of money. Why should I be grateful to you? Just because you've made me your favorite football, to kick around any way you like, for the last eight years? Grateful? Phooey!"

Aunt Caroline reared her old gray head and her black eyes snapped. She was enjoying herself hugely. The only fun left in Aunt Caroline's life, beset by illness and pain, was a thoroughly hot, first-class scrap. Emily knew it and gave it to her.

But to the man standing in the doorway, the scene was one that made his gorge rise. He said sharply, "Aunt Caroline, Emily's perfectly right. You should be ashamed of the way you treat her."

Emily, startled because she had not been aware of him, whirled about. Her small, heart-shaped face colored. The fire died out of her blue eyes. Pain stalked there suddenly and a ghost of panic that would not be downed. She made a little ineffectual gesture when she found that speech was beyond her and fled through the open door that led out on the terrace. She went with flying feet down the terrace stairs, through the garden and down to the curve of the old fence

that flung a kindly moss-lichened stone arm about the orchard. There beneath a gnarled old apple tree she flung herself face down and wept as though her heart would break.

But she did not weep because of her life with Aunt Caroline. She was fond of Aunt Caroline. A fondness bred chiefly of pity for a woman who was old and sick and in almost constant pain. A woman who found her only outlet in quarreling and bitterness because she was ill and in pain and other people were young and healthy. Emily had realized this long ago and now she could carry on a quarrel that was a battle royal with Aunt Caroline, while her mind was occupied elsewhere. None of Aunt Caroline's abuse bruised Emily's soul for it simply slid off her consciousness like water down a drain.

Emily wept because to-morrow Kirk Scott, Aunt Caroline's nephew and the man who held Emily's heart in the palm of his hand—though he had no faint suspicion of that—was sailing for the Far East on a very dangerous scientific mission from which there was every chance in the world that he would never return. And the thought of that all but broke Emily's heart.

Kirk had followed her wild flight through the garden and down to the orchard. He dropped down on the grass beside her and patted her shoulder as though she had been a grieving child; not a young thing almost nineteen years old who loved him so much that the thought of him was an aching tenderness, a blissful pain in her quivering heart.

"Poor little Emily," said Kirk gently. "I hate going away and leav-

ing you here with Aunt Caroline. She's a tartar, if ever there was one. Emily, let me give you some money—a lot of money—so you can go away and live like a human being."

Emily lifted a tear-stained face across which there was a smudge of grass stain. "You're s-s-swell, Kirk. But you know I couldn't do that."

Kirk grinned, without mirth. "No, I suppose not. Although it seems silly I can't. Because I have more than I can ever use and you haven't any. And I'm awfully fond of you. You're such a sweet youngster, Emily."

Emily's heart climbed up into her throat. She looked at him with wide, all but worshipful eyes. Oh, if he would only put his arm about her. If he would only hold her close and say that he loved her. That he wanted her—— She checked herself sharply. No man who had been engaged to Lila Avery as Kirk had, could possibly take a second look at a shabby, unsophisticated thing like Emily Ward, she told herself grimly. And tears flowed afresh, despite her effort to control them by sinking her teeth hard in her lower lip and winking her eyes very fast.

Kirk, watching her, said suddenly, his eyes alight, "Emily, I've just suffered an inspiration!"

Emily blinked again, managed an unsteady smile and stammered, "Not really?"

Kirk grinned. "Well, treat me gently, angel, and don't hop on me with both feet like a hen on a bug until I get through telling you. I'm not subject to inspirations—especially inspirations like this one! Ready? O. K. I'm sailing to-morrow at noon

for the Far East. There's every chance that I won't come back—— Steady, youngster! We have to face facts if I'm to tell you my inspiration! Which is that if you were my wife, I could give you all the money I liked and make you my heir besides and nobody would disapprove."

IF the old apple tree above her head had bent low and offered her a spray of exquisitely fresh blossoms this August morning, she could not have been more surprised. Words were beyond her. She could only stare at him, wide-eyed, breathless, her heart hanging in her throat, her body shaken as by a sudden wind.

Kirk went on hastily, "Oh, of course I know you don't love me, youngster, but that's quite all right, because I don't love you either. Though I'm awfully fond of you. But it would simplify matters ever so much, don't you see? In case I do come back—I intend to, you know!—we can have the marriage nicely and neatly annulled. And the chances are ten-to-one that by that time you'll be in love with somebody else. You'll never have a chance to meet anybody else, the way things are now. And if I don't come back—well, it will be nice to know that you are handling my estate and being taken care of and all that. Not a bad inspiration, eh?"

He waited for her approval. But Emily could only sit huddled, her knees drawn up and encircled by her arms, her blond head lowered so that he could not see her face. Her eyes were closed and her teeth were sunk hard in her lower lip. So he didn't love her. Well, she had known that,

really, all along; she was a fool to hope for anything else. She should be grateful that he was fond enough of her to want to look after her. But her heart was so filled to bursting with adoration for him that the thought of his fondness was not very comforting. Husks are not very satisfying when one is starved for a full meal.

"I'm waiting for an answer, Emily," Kirk reminded her after a moment, a little annoyed that it should take so long for her to make up her mind. "After all, you silly kid, I'm simply offering to rescue you from Aunt Caroline's untender mercies and give you a place of your own in the world—and to set you free the moment I get home, if I get home."

Emily cried out uncontrollably, "Stop saying 'if I get home.' Of course you're coming home——"

Kirk chuckled and held out his hand to her. The cuff slipped back a little and her eyes fell upon that long, reddish scar. The scar Kirk had collected when he had saved her life three years ago. A scar the doctors said would never fade or heal; her heart was caught with shaken tenderness at the sight of that scar and suddenly, tears misty in her eyes, she bent her head and set her mouth against that scar.

Startled, uncomfortable, Kirk drew his hand back and lifted her to her feet. "You absurd infant," he said tenderly. "All right, do we hop off to the minister's? There's not much time you know."

"But Lila?" stammered Emily, putting into words the question that had tortured her since first he had

voiced his inspiration. "Maybe—maybe she'll change her mind and want you back, before you go?"

Kirk's mouth set. His handsome, lean face hardened and his eyes darkened until they looked almost black. "And if she did, do you think I'd go crawling back to her? Oh, no, when Lila expressed her opinion of me in no uncertain terms, together with her private thoughts on the expedition, Lila and I were all washed up. She's completely out of the picture."

Emily's heart sank to her heels. He still loved Lila, though he would bitterly have denied it. But the very bitterness of that denial was proof that he still loved her. Emily set her teeth hard and Kirk said briskly, "Well, what's it to be? I'm still waiting. Going to marry me and thumb your nose at Aunt Caroline?"

Emily fought hard for a gay answer and though it was a gayety that wobbled, she managed to say cockily, "After all, what have I got to lose? Lead on, *MacDuff*."

"Atta girl," said Kirk cheerfully, and tucked her hand through his arm. "It's ten thirty. We can be in town in thirty minutes and I know a justice of the peace who will dispense with this three-day-waiting business."

"I'll have to dress," protested Emily.

"Don't be silly, lamb. There isn't time. I've got to stop at my lawyer's to have certain papers drawn up," said Kirk and drew her toward his car.

Emily looked down at her crisp pink linen frock in dismay. "Oh, but I wanted to be married in white!" she wailed childishly.

Kirk chuckled. "Sure, with orange blossoms and a veil six yards long and sixteen bridesmaids and a tenor from the Met. to sing 'The Voice That Breathed O'er Eden.' Don't be a goof, child. It's not that kind of a marriage. This is strictly a business affair, and there's very little time. In you go!" He lifted her into his car and slid his lithe young body beneath the wheel.

Emily set her teeth and clenched her hands hard, staring straight ahead, fighting to down the tears. Kirk was a man and all men hated tears. And she didn't want to do anything that Kirk wouldn't like. But this would be the only marriage she would ever have. Because Kirk was the only man she would ever love. And she did want all the trimmings—and then a thought came to her. After all, what difference did the trimmings make? It was the man, after all, who was important. And she was marrying the one man in all the world she wanted to marry, so what difference did the rest of it make?

Kirk looked at her a trifle anxiously as his roadster sped along the highway. And Emily grinned at him, a small, valiant grin that made him say swiftly, "You are a sweet youngster, Emily!"

Emily's heart sang a little. If he was so angry with Lila that he never wanted to see her again—and he had said he was!—and if he was "awfully fond" of Emily, then didn't she dare hope and pray that some day he might learn to love her? After he came back from that expedition, of course. And her heart grew cold at the thought of that.

They were entering the city now. Kirk brought the roadster to a halt in front of a flower shop, said, "Back in a moment," and leaped out. He came out a little later, carrying a big square white box which he laid in her lap. It contained the loveliest and most extravagant bridal bouquet imaginable, composed of white orchids and valley lilies and tied with yards of tulle.

Kirk grinned at her cheerfully. "Never say I don't do right by my bride!" he told her firmly. "It's very becoming to you, youngster."

Emily clasped happy hands around the bouquet and beamed at him. A little later, in the chambers of a municipal judge, an old friend of his father's, Kirk was married to Emily. An Emily whose bare head was held proudly above a pink linen frock and whose arms were weighted by a beautiful, if incongruous, bridal bouquet that would have done justice to the most formal of church weddings.

"There!" said Kirk when it was over and, in obedience to the judge's request, he had kissed Emily lightly. "That didn't hurt a bit, did it?"

"Not a speck," answered Emily, her voice shaken a little.

Outside in the car he said cheerfully, "We'll have a bite to eat somewhere, then we'll look up my lawyer and there'll be things to sign and the like of that."

THE afternoon had a dreamlike quality to Emily. She listened to long legal papers, she signed where the lawyer told her to sign and she smiled at Kirk now and then. But the only thought that made sense in

her mind was the fact that she was Kirk's wife. Oh, he didn't love her and he was doing all this because he was sorry for her. And maybe if he knew that he needn't be sorry for her, that she didn't really mind battling with Aunt Caroline and living in a comfortless little room and all the rest of it, maybe if he had known that she had been crying that morning because he was going away, he wouldn't have thought of marrying her. And so she hoped desperately that he would never discover any of those things.

About four o'clock they were through with the lawyer, who shook hands with them, congratulated Kirk pleasantly and looked curiously at Emily in her simple linen frock, the afternoon sunlight golden on her hatless, pale-gold head, with the huge bunch of flowers beginning to look a bit dispirited.

On the way home Kirk stopped at a jewelry shop and, leaving Emily in the car, went inside. Emily drew a long hard breath. She knew what he was doing of course. Buying the wedding ring he had forgotten to provide this morning. She looked down at the seal ring on her slim third finger. That ring, with Kirk's family crest on it, that he had used in lieu of the wedding ring he had forgotten. She had to close her fingers over the ring to keep it from sliding off. But she wanted it, not some thin platinum circlet. She wanted it passionately because it was something of Kirk's. Something he himself had worn. In the long, lonely months of his absence she would capture a tiny breath of his

nearness by holding it close in her two hands.

Kirk came out of the jewelry shop and dropped a small white velvet box into her lap. Emily snapped the lid up. Her eyes widened. For there was an enormous square-cut diamond set in a thin web of platinum beside the platinum circlet that was encrusted with diamonds.

"You're such a kid, I thought you'd like a lot of glitter!" Kirk told her lightly. "But if you'd prefer star sapphires or anything else, you can take them back and change them."

"No," said Emily thickly and closed the lid of the box. "I'll never change them. But do I have to give you back this?" She held up the seal ring.

Kirk laughed. "Certainly you do. Aren't you the greedy little thing, though?" he teased her and slid his seal ring back on his hand. "Here—let me slip the others on."

He drove with one hand while he took the two beautiful rings out of their box and slipped them on the finger she held up. They were loose but he assured her the shop would gladly cut them to the right size. Emily looked at them through a blur of tears, unable to speak.

Kirk chuckled. "I'm beginning to be a little sorry I'm going away tomorrow," he told her frankly. "Because I can see that buying pretties for you, and showing you a good time would be like a perpetual Christmas Day and a three-ring circus all rolled into one."

"Don't go, Kirk," she pleaded suddenly, sharply, a little of her heart hunger creeping into her tone in spite of her efforts.

Kirk said quickly, "Don't be silly, child. I have to go. I want to more than I've ever wanted anything in my life."

He meant, she knew drearily, that he wanted to go more than he wanted Lila Avery. And he loved Lila! Small chance she had of holding him if the lovely Lila couldn't.

"I don't think, Emily, that you have the smallest conception of what it is that this expedition hopes to prove," he said quietly after a moment. "If we are successful in isolating this germ, the lives of thousands of people now living and hundreds of thousands yet to be born, will be saved. And all because this expedition of forty men and equipment made this journey. Do you wonder that I want to be a part of anything so utterly glorious?"

Emily drew a long breath and shook her head. "No, Kirk, I don't wonder," she said quietly. "And I'm sorry I asked you that."

He chuckled suddenly. "I can't wait to see Aunt Caroline's face when we tell her the news," he said, changing the subject as though he did not want to talk about the expedition.

"Maybe she won't like it," said Emily and looked troubled.

"None of that, now," said Kirk swiftly. "Don't you let her bully you, do you hear me? That's the main reason I suggested that you marry me—and that I had that will drawn up back there, giving you everything I possess. So that you can face Aunt Caroline on your own ground and tell her where she heads in. Remember, now."

"I'll remember," promised Emily.

But they should have known Aunt

Caroline well enough to know that her reaction would be different to anything they might expect. She merely glared at them savagely when they came into the room, just as she was having her tea.

"Aunt Caroline, we've some news for you," said Kirk, and held out to her Emily's hand on which the new diamonds twinkled bravely. "Emily and I were married this afternoon."

He waited expectantly for what in his own mind he called "the fireworks."

Aunt Caroline sniffed and said blandly, "So you finally woke up to the truth, did you? I've known that she was crazy in love with you for months but I didn't think you'd have sense enough to realize it."

Kirk looked as though he had just been kicked hard as he stared down at Emily's suddenly hot face. "That's not true, is it, Emily?" he asked swiftly, and his very tone was an urgent plea for her to deny it.

And because she would never do anything that would hurt him, and because somehow she knew that he did not want her to be in love with him, Emily lied with all the conviction at her command. "No, of course it isn't true."

"You're lying," stated Aunt Caroline coldly. "However, it's none of my business. I'm old-fashioned, I suppose. But I thought that when two people got married, that meant they were in love."

"Well, not in this case," Kirk said promptly. "It was a business proposition. I didn't want to go away and leave Emily at your tender mercies, so we were married and I have willed everything I have to her,



with an income that will provide for her handsomely."

"You're a fool," said Aunt Caroline calmly. "But you're of age. It's none of my business."

She turned back to her tea with a gesture that ordered them out of her room. Outside at the foot of the stairs, as Emily started up, Kirk caught her hand and held her for a moment.

"Look here, Emily," he said awkwardly, "what Aunt Caroline said just now sort of gave me a start. I feel like a fool to be asking such a

question, but if you are in love with me, Emily, I've done you a tremendous injustice. I thought we both



Kirk said, so that Lila could not help hearing the words, "Good-by, sweet—just for a little while. I'll come back to you!" He took Emily into his arms and kissed her ardently.

felt alike in the matter. I'd be extremely uncomfortable if I thought that——"

"That I loved you?" said Emily, and was remotely proud that she could speak so calmly. "But of course I don't, Kirk! So you needn't

feel unhappy about it. I'm ever so grateful for what you've done for me, and I've got to get dressed for dinner now."

Afraid to trust her self-control any further, she turned and sped up the stairs and to her own room, where she closed the door hard behind her and stood for a long moment, her slender back against the panels of that closed door. So the thought that she was in love with him would make him uncomfortable, would it? Then he was so far from loving her that there was little or no chance that he ever would. She had to face that fact

once and for all and do what she could about it. Which was, of course, nothing at all.

After a little she was able to bathe and to dress for dinner in one of the simple frocks that she had contrived for herself from the contents of all but innumerable trunks and chests in the attic. It was a frock of heavy white slipper satin. Made very simply because she wasn't an expert seamstress. But the slim youngness of her girlish body and the quality of the satin itself made up for that simplicity.

Her hair looked pale, almost taffy-colored above the faintly yellowed satin. Her cheeks were delicately flushed and her blue eyes were starry as she went down to the living room, where Aunt Caroline was busy with one of her endless games of solitaire. She looked up as Emily came in and said disdainfully:

"How very bridelike! Too bad you weren't equally so this afternoon. I can't think what Judge Slocum must have thought of you, in that pink linen dress and that ridiculous bunch of orchids."

"Where is Kirk?" asked Emily, ignoring the gage of battle Aunt Caroline had flung down.

"He's gone," said Aunt Caroline and chuckled dryly. "Why? Didn't you know he was going in town for the night, so that there would be no delay about his sailing on time tomorrow? Surely he said good-by to you, his little bride?"

Emily stood very still, while every drop of color seeped from her face and the starry glow vanished from her eyes. She felt sick and unspeakably tired as though she had been run-

ning a long time through a dense forest. And then she turned and went stumbling up the stairs to her own room, where she flung herself face down across the bed and lay very still.

EARLY in the morning she decided that she couldn't endure it not to be able to say good-by to Kirk. The thought that he might never come back was one that she put from her with both frantic, eager hands.

She got up and dressed. Her scanty wardrobe was undeniably shabby and offered very little in the way of glamorous clothing. But as she took up her shabby purse she felt the pleasant thickness of that check book that the lawyer had given her yesterday and her eyes lighted. Kirk had placed a sum of money that seemed huge to her account in the bank; arrangements had been made for a similar amount to be placed there each month. His ship sailed at noon. She had time to get to town and buy herself something very smart in the way of an outfit in which to say good-by to Kirk. He must take away with him a lovely picture of her. He must not remember her as he had last seen her in a slightly rumpled pink linen frock, her arms weighted with an incongruous bouquet of orchids.

Kirk's car was downstairs in the drive. He had transferred ownership of it to her yesterday and a long time ago he had taught her to drive. Forgetting that she had had no breakfast, she drove into the small town where yesterday she and Kirk had gone through that empty marriage service that could have opened the very gates of paradise in her

small, ecstatic face if only Kirk had loved her. She left the car at the garage where Kirk always left it when he was going into the city for the day, and she took one of the earliest trains that brought her into Pennsylvania Station just as the shops were opening. And for the first time in her life she headed toward the smartest shopping section, a light in her eyes and a tremulous prayer in her heart that she could make herself very, very lovely for Kirk's good-by.

It was after eleven before she reached the dock and there was such a crowd that at first her heart sank for fear she would not be able to find Kirk after all her eager plans and hopes. But as she climbed the gang-plank she saw a cluster of people not far from the railing and her heart turned over at the sight of Kirk's bare head and laughing face.

There were men and women, too, in that group. Some of them the men who were going with Kirk and their women, who were saying good-by and trying to deny the sickening thought that it might be for the last time.

Kirk glanced at Emily and then away before, startled, his eyes swung back to her again and he recognized her. His eyes widened, he stared as though he could not credit his recognition of her and then he came to her saying swiftly, "Why, Emily! I hardly knew you. How lovely you are!"

Emily glowed radiantly beneath the look in his eyes. And then—a woman turned and poor Emily's heart did a somersault and dropped to the tall heels of her extravagant slippers; for she was looking into Lila Avery's

flawlessly lovely face and inimical dark eyes. She saw the color fade slowly from Lila's face and heard her say in a swift, sharp aside to Kirk, "Then it wasn't just a gag—your marriage, I mean?"

"No," said Kirk grimly and his eyes were cold. "It wasn't just a gag."

The next moment he was introducing Emily to his friends; pleasant, older women who were friendly and gracious; younger women who were wives or sweethearts of Kirk's companions. Emily was drawn into the little friendly circle, glowing a little because of the warmth of the greeting accorded her; that greeting was because of their fondness for Kirk, she knew, and it made her feel warm and happy, somehow, despite the fact that Lila was there, standing a little to one side, looking on coldly, malice riding high in her beautiful dark eyes.

There came a startlingly shrill blast of the ship's siren and the banging of a gong that accompanied the dreaded "All ashore that's going ashore." There was a little breathless moment that veered on panic as wives and husbands, sweethearts clung to each other with the awesome feeling that that moment they had dreaded for weeks was inevitably upon them. That it couldn't be put off any longer. That it had to be faced.

Emily turned swiftly to Kirk, who caught her two hands and smiled at her hearteningly. Lila, looking on, was completely self-possessed. She answered Emily's questioning look by saying sweetly, "Oh, I'm going along, you know—that is, as far as Paris."

Emily's startled glance swept up-

ward to Kirk's face. She saw that it was set and angry as though he resented Lila's presence. And then he took Emily into his arms, held her very close as though the parting was as hard for him as for her. And he said so that Lila could not help hearing the words, "Good-by, sweet—just for a little while. I'll come back! I couldn't not come back, and know that you were waiting for me."

He kissed her ardently. Emily's soul flowed out to him on that kiss. Everything that ever had been faded into insignificance beside the lovely, the altogether incredible moment of that kiss. And then Kirk, his cheek against hers, his lips against her ear, whispered, his voice threaded with a little chuckle, "You're a grand little actress, Emily. We're giving her something to think about."

Emily was rigid for a moment in his arms as her heart sank downward. Then the whole exquisite moment, his arms close and hard about her, his mouth ardent and seeking upon hers, had not been because suddenly he had discovered that he loved her. That impassioned embrace, that burning, ardent kiss had been for Lila's benefit.

Through the sickening disappointment that swamped her bright spirit, Emily looked up at him and said very low, so that her voice reached no farther than his ears, "Good-by, Kirk—I wasn't acting."

And then before she could see that startled expression on his face she turned and almost ran along the deck and down the gangplank to the dock. There, surrounded by the other women whose men made up Kirk's party she stood watching through

tear-dimmed eyes as the ship swung slowly out into the river. Emily's heart contracted as she saw Lila standing shoulder to shoulder to Kirk. Small comfort as she turned away, eyes blurred with tears, to realize that Kirk had sworn he could never care for Lila again. Lila was very lovely, very seductive, and she had set her heart on Kirk. They had quarreled because she had protested against this expedition. Obviously, she had suddenly elected to go along as far as Paris in the hope of making peace with Kirk; the news that he was married would not be a serious blow to her plans. Lila was the type of woman to whom marriage is merely a convenience, to be shouldered or discarded at will. And Lila would be with Kirk for five days and nights, in the enforced intimacy of an ocean voyage—what could she not accomplish in that time?

EMILY returned to the ugly, old-fashioned Long Island home to find that Aunt Caroline had had her modest belongings moved into the big square chamber that had been Kirk's room. Emily found some small solace in living surrounded by things that seemed to breathe the very essence of Kirk's personality. It soothed the bitter, aching emptiness of her heart a little to know that the things she touched, the walls that surrounded her had known Kirk intimately.

She and Aunt Caroline lived very much as before. If Aunt Caroline was not quite as irritable, as difficult to live with as before, Emily was too preoccupied to be aware of it. She waited on the old lady, quarreled with

her when Aunt Caroline wanted to quarrel. But there was, for Emily, a dreadful flatness about the days that followed. Days that became weeks and weeks that became months. Their monotony was broken only by an occasional breezy letter from Kirk that Emily read and reread until the paper wore thin beneath her caressing fingers.

And then one day in late spring when the ache of missing him and wanting him was like a fever in her blood, a terse, brutally brief cablegram came announcing Kirk's death. There were no details. Simply the fact. And the thing that all but broke Emily's heart, after the terrible fact of Kirk's death had let her stunned mind grasp anything else, was that Lila Avery's name was signed to the cable, which came from Singapore.

Lila Avery had been with Kirk when he had died. The woman who had loved him with every pulse-beat of her blood, the woman who was his wife, had been miles away. But the woman who had not loved him enough to let him go on this mission with her blessing, had been with him at the last.

It was a double blow from which Emily found it hard to recover. She was prostrated with grief and shock. For a long time she wanted to die. But she was young and healthy and it is not easy to die just because one's lust for life no longer exists. She had lost all reason for wanting to live; but life went on and in spite of herself, she grew stronger as the effects of the terrific shock wore off a little.

Aunt Caroline was very gentle with her. They came closer to being friends in those weeks while Emily lay prostrate with grief than ever before in their lives.

Several weeks after the cablegram reached Emily, she had a caller. None other than Lila Avery, looking very dramatic and devastatingly lovely in the sort of mourning that only an extremely smart Parisian shop can achieve. Emily caught her breath before the insolence of that. Lila daring to wear mourning!

Lila said sweetly, "I came to you as soon as I landed, Emily. Kirk wanted me to. He felt he had done you a great wrong. He wanted me to do what I could to right that wrong."

Emily set her teeth hard and clenched her hands until the nails bit deeply into her soft pink palms. But her voice was steady if faint as she said politely, "Yes?"

The flicker of Lila's lovely eyes told Emily that this woman was her sworn enemy and that always there would be hatred between them. "Kirk married you out of spite," said Lila sweetly. "Of course you know that. He loved me—that was why he wanted me to go as far as Singapore with the expedition. He flew up to Singapore for week-ends and it was on one of his flights that he crashed."

She put a delicate black-bordered handkerchief to her eyes for a moment and Emily turned sharply away from the sight of Lila's grief. After a moment Lila went on, still in that sweet voice that dripped venom beneath its melody, "He wanted me to tell you, Emily, that you were not to grieve for him. That I was really

his widow, in everything but the name, and that since you have only the name, it's foolish for you to mope. He wanted you to go out, to have a good time, to marry again."

"Oh, no!" stammered Emily sharply.

Lila's eyes flickered for a moment and her voice was not quite so sweet. "But after all, why not? If you could have heard the things Kirk said—how bitterly he regretted the crazy impulse that made him marry you—though I tried to tell him that you were really to blame. You knew all along that he wasn't in love with you, you took advantage of my quarrel with Kirk. I didn't want him to go. I knew how dangerous it was. That was why I tried to stop him. But you knew that he was rich and that if he didn't come back, his money would be yours to spend, so you were anxious to hurry him off—he realized that, at the last, of course."

Emily shrank as though she were being whipped with tiny, sharp whips.

"Oh, no, he didn't think that—he couldn't! I loved him! I love him now. I'll always love him!" she cried out, but Lila said savagely:

"Stop it! You little fool! He didn't love you. He never loved you. And before we reached Singapore, he was bitter against you for the trap you had set for him. He hated you for it. Because if you hadn't leaped at the chance of marrying him, he and I would have patched up our quarrel on board the ship and we'd have been married when we reached Paris. We needn't have stolen our honeymoon in Singapore, as we did,

and because you forced us to steal all that loveliness together, he hated you—even as I hate you."

Emily huddled in her chair, sick and shaken. It couldn't be true. It couldn't, yet she knew that Kirk had loved Lila! And Lila had sailed with him. She pressed the back of her knuckles hard against her mouth to choke back the tears as Lila stripped a smooth black glove from one lovely hand and held it out to her. On the slim third finger of her left hand there was a handsome old seal ring. Emily flinched from the sight of that ring, as Lila noticed with mocking triumph.

"I see you recognize Kirk's ring," she said harshly. "I don't envy you those absurd diamonds he gave you. I'd a million times rather have this. Because Kirk gave me this with love in his heart and on his lips. And he gave you those because he loved me and couldn't have me."

Lila turned toward the door, but she hesitated a moment and then delivered her clenching blow. "I want you to know, Emily, before I leave, that you didn't rob me of a single thing when you married Kirk! Because I was his wife in everything but the name for those months of heaven in Singapore, you're welcome to what you got from him."

THE door closed behind her and the shadows of dusk filled the room. Emily huddled with her face in her hands, sick and shaking. Of course she had known all along that Kirk didn't love her. But she had thought him fond of her and that his last thoughts of her had been kind. To know that at the last he had hated

her because she had robbed him, at his own suggestion, of his dearest happiness was a crushing blow. She had wanted his love more than anything else in life. And the thought that instead she had had his hatred had cut her deeply.

He had even wanted her to marry again! Nothing else could have convinced her how far she was from having any chance of ever winning his love.

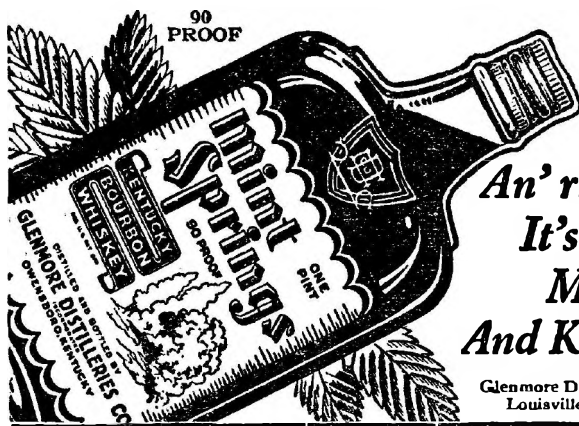
She writhed with pain at the memory of Lila's taunts; at the picture she had conjured up of some secret nest in Singapore where Kirk and Lila had played at marriage; play that could have been turned to the most glorious reality but for the fact that Emily had listened when he had impulsively asked her to marry him. Perhaps she should have been wise far beyond her years; wise enough to realize the folly of marrying a man who was as frank about his reason for marrying her as Kirk had been. But she had loved him too

much to be rational. Too much to look beyond the immediate glorious present.

A deep, rushing tide of bitterness swept over her. So Lila thought, as Kirk had thought before he died, that she was a callous little mercenary wretch? That she had leaped at the suggestion of marrying him so that she should have the spending of his fortune? She would have married him as instantly and as rapturously if he hadn't had two pennies in his pocket. But Lila could never be made to believe that and Kirk had died believing the reverse of her.

She had wanted to die and she couldn't die. Not even now when her heart lay in ruins at her feet. She rose suddenly, her eyes narrowed and almost ugly. Wounded pride, the frustration of her love that Kirk had not believed, all walked beside her and whispered in her ear as she picked up the telephone and with a finger that shook a little dialed the number of Kirk's lawyer.

TO BE CONCLUDED.



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By CARLA GILMER

SURPRISE PARTY



RIDING horses," said the weather-beaten sign beside the corral gate. Miss Charity Haynes leaned on the fence and looked them over. You might think a young lady named "Charity" would like knitting better than riding. But she didn't. Besides, she signed herself "Cherry."

Not bad-looking nags, decided Cherry. The sorrel was all right, but that little black mare was her horse. Well, what did one do? Oh, that must be the saddle-jerker coming. She turned to watch the young man riding up, and he called "good

morning" cheerily as he dismounted.

"Good morning," said Cherry. "Can I get a horse to ride?"

"Sure." He was young, brown, and good-looking. She felt he was taking her in, too, with a glance as brief as her own. He unlocked the gate. "That your trailer down in the grove?"

"Yes. Father likes to camp along."

"That one must be the last one they made—house, lot and bank account all built in."

"About it," she replied absently, her eye on the black mare.

"Got any choice?"



"The little black mare."

"Think you can ride her?" He was noting her expensive-looking riding clothes.

"Why not?" she returned coolly.

"Sure enough." What was there to laugh at? She was sure she caught a glint in his eyes, though his face remained perfectly straight. He went on: "You know, lots of people don't get on a horse except a few times in the summer."

"Well, I've been riding quite a while," Cherry assured him.

"O. K.," said the young man cheerfully, striding off toward the

horses. "Hi, Jenny!" He hailed the mare, who appeared to regard him coquettishly.

While he saddled Jenny, he talked jerkily to Cherry. His name was Rodney Penmarch, usually called "Rod." Yes, his people lived here and he had been just kind of choring around the last year or so. "Instead of tagging the C. C. C.," he added, with the glint again. "Sure you wouldn't rather have Pete, that sorrel? He's sure-footed as a mule."

"No, I don't want Pete. What makes you think I need them so sure-footed?"

"Why, I don't mean that at all," he assured her. "Give you a leg up?" Up she went, lightly. "Where would you like to go? Nice ride around that hill, and a good trail to Picture Lake."

"That sounds good." As she rode away he called: "When you get around the hill, keep to the left."

WHAT a morning! There were still spring flowers beside the stream, and the birds were singing. And what a romantic name, Rodney Penmarch, for a young man in overalls! And not bad-looking, either. Hey, what was the matter with Jenny? Jogging along like an old lady getting home from prayer meeting!

"Pete's sure-footed!" Cherry scoffed. "Why, this spinster can't get her feet off the ground!" Jenny gave a snort, as if to say, "That's what you say!"

By this time she was around the hill and a bit farther was the clearing where the trail divided as Rod had said. To the left it went on beside the stream, ascending through deepening woods. To the right it was dusty and less inviting. Cherry requested Jenny to keep to the left, but Jenny kept going calmly to the right. The surprised Cherry commanded, and Jenny spun around like a top. Cherry gave her a flick with her crop, and the fight started. Jenny spun and kept on spinning, the dust flying beneath her dancing feet, her eyes bright with mischief. Cherry's hat was off, hair blowing, teeth clenched, head about snapped off. But she stuck, getting madder with every revolution of the waltzing filly. Just as Cherry was sure she'd have to give

in and land on her head in a hazel bush, Jenny paused.

"Why, you darned contrary little beast!" gasped Cherry. Then a sudden thought flashed through her mind—that grin in Rodney Penmarch's eyes, that little inflection in his drawled, "Sure you wouldn't rather have Pete?" That wretched, good-looking cowhand had known Jenny would do this! He thought he'd play a little joke on a smart city girl! "Think you can ride her?" She'd show him. Her young hands were strong, she was cool again inside, and her will was set like steel. "Go on, spin, you little fool top!" jeered Cherry. "Spin your head off!"

Jenny slowed up, stood still. Generally, women gave right in, let Jenny turn right to go back around the hill and land at the corral from the other side. Jenny, with Miss Cherry Haynes up, took the turn to the left, and walked on sedately beside the stream. Suddenly, Picture Lake lay before them, serene and sweet in the lap of the green hills, curled like a kitten in a green willow basket.

HEY!" a voice hailed her, and she turned to see Mr. Rodney Penmarch himself. He was riding Pete, looked worried, and carried Cherry's hat in his brown hand.

"Hello!" She waved her hand innocently.

"Say! I'm glad to see you in one piece! Where have you been anyway?"

"Where have I been? I came out to ride, didn't I? Where did you think I went? Around the block?"

"Well, you pretty near scared me to death! Here's your hat. Yes,

around the block is exactly where I expected you to go."

She put on the hat. "What made you think I'd insured my life in your favor?"

"Your life?" he said in a different tone. He looked straight into her eyes, then off across the lake as if he saw her whole life in a panorama on those green shores. "I'm sorry. It was a stupid joke. I didn't think for a minute you'd get hurt."

"I didn't. I just lost my hat."

"You see, Jenny doesn't like women, and generally she brings them back in about ten minutes."

"And I thought so well of myself you couldn't resist."

"I said I was sorry. I had to go over to the house, and when I got back and you hadn't, I was scared and lit out after you."

"Thanks for the rescue."

"Not mad at me, are you?"

"You believe I can ride now?"

"You bet."

"Quits then."

Cherry invited Rod to inspect the trailer, and he exclaimed so properly that father invited him to lunch.

This Rodney was quite a lad, modest, humorous, no difficulty at all with his table manners. It looked as if he might be quite a help. He was. In fact, he looked in on them again that very evening, to put an expert touch on the camp fire, to offer to show father good places to take pictures, to make a date with Cherry to ride in the early morning.

IT went on like that—sunrise rides with Cherry on Jenny, the dew still on the grass and the quail calling in the ferns; long evenings talking about life and all the answers. One

day melted into another, forming a kind of dream world, tranquil and languorous in spite of all the riding, fishing, and laughter. They met Rod's mother, efficient and sensible, with Rod's eyes, young brother Phil, sister Mildred, little sister Jean.

Cherry was twenty-three, Rod twenty-five. Neither was flirtatious or self-conscious about their pleasure in each other's society. So they were surprised, one fine afternoon, more than any one else would have been, to find themselves in each other's arms. A very sweet kiss it was. They stood for a long moment so, not kissing again, but rather forgetting to draw apart.

Then Rod said: "I wasn't intending to do that."

"You're sure of that?" she returned lightly enough.

"I didn't know I loved you," he said simply, and slowly released her. "I just thought I liked you. I just thought it was grand going around with you. I knew you'd be going in another few days. And now——"

"And now?" She was not urging him on, just groping, too.

"I love you." A thrilling, conclusive fact to be faced.

"But, darling, is it so terrible?"

"I should have known," he accused himself.

"But oh, Rod, it's terribly sweet!"

"Darling, you care!" he cried.

"It seems that I do. Does it surprise you so much?"

He held her close again. "Don't you see, I really love you? I want to marry you."

"I might even do that," she whispered. "But let's not come to that right away."

"Hello, there!" shouted father,

coming into view up the trail with his camera. He was excited. "I snapped a bobcat back there! He was in a tree——"

ROD rode away gravely, and he didn't come back in the evening. Cherry supposed she was just as usual, but father did most of the talking, and presently observed casually: "What do you say we move on? I hear there are fine lakes over the Branchway."

She looked up, startled.

"What's the matter?" asked father mildly. "Rodney fallen in love with you?"

She started to say: "Oh, pops, don't be silly!" What she did say was: "Well, yes."

"Well, that's too bad," said father. "Rod's a pretty fine fellow."

"Of course he is," said father's daughter. "So why is it too bad?"

"You in love with Rod, you think?" father inquired still more mildly.

"Maybe. I'd know, wouldn't I?"

"Might," father conceded a sensible girl like Cherry. "I think we're about finished up here. Let's move on." Cherry didn't answer. "Can't do any harm to think things over."

Cherry recovered a bit. "Oh, come, it's not that serious, I guess."

"Serious complications," said father, "can often be averted by early treatment."

Cherry did not sleep well. Good Lord, she told herself, all stirred up about a kiss or two! Why, she'd known the boy two weeks! Marriage! Why had marriage ever been mentioned? All this fuss. Ludicrous, that's what it was. Yes, whispered a small voice, Cherry Haynes marry-

ing a country boy who would be as much lost in her world as she would be in his.

IN the morning he came riding up as usual, bringing Jenny, most amenable, expecting a lump of sugar. Opening dialogue was about the same, too.

Then: "By the way, Rod, how about those Branchway Lakes?" father inquired. "Think we'd like a few days around there?"

"Why, yes," said Rod. "That's pretty country up there."

"Guess we'll take a look at it. After all, we got this trailer to move around in."

"You ought to get some nice pictures up there," offered Rod.

Cherry touched Jenny with her heel. "All right, dad, we'll be back soon."

They kept off the main subject until they dismounted at Picture Lake, sat on a log. Then Rod: "Going, eh?"

"Looks like it. I'm sorry to go. It's been lovely here."

He looked at her with a slight smile. "That all?"

"Oh, Rod, let's not——"

"Just leave it lay—is that your idea? Forget it?"

"I shan't forget it."

"But what is there to say—is that what you mean? I know there isn't much. But somehow I seem to want to say it."

She made a little gesture. "Oh, Rod, my dear!"

"To go is the thing to do, of course. Didn't take your father long to see his nose before his face, did it? Sees I'm a serious-minded youth. And I can read his mind, too: 'It's

just young stuff and it wouldn't do at all and they'll get over it.'"

She smiled at that. "That's probably it."

"Yes, your father's right. It wouldn't do. I can see that. I know you'll never marry me, but you're the girl I'll want to have married."

"Oh, Rod, you're being too serious about it. Why, we've just met. We can go on being friends——"

He laughed, not very heartily. "Yes, I've read those yarns. The rich city girl and the poor country boy and the impulsive kiss. She goes away but can't forget him, and then he comes to town and his clothes don't fit and he doesn't know how to act and her friends raise their eyebrows and she's cured. And he goes home and marries little Sallie to whom he used to give his reddest apples."

"I've read other versions," said Cherry, giving him a kick.

"I know that one, too. Hal comes to call in a new suit that shows off his fine muscular figger. Seems he's a varsity man after all and has spent the snowbound winters reading Plato and Aldous Huxley."

"Oh, shut up," said Cherry.

"Father gets him a job in the bank and the next week he shrewdly makes a million dollars——"

"Oh, go jump in the lake," Cherry advised him. Rod went on: "Unfortunately, I'm not shrewd and I wouldn't make a million dollars in that many years."

"You think I'm like that?"—she wondered. "How can you love me then?"

"No, I don't think you're like that, Cherry. It's the whole situation. We couldn't trade in our whole place

for your trailer. Could you come and live with the Penmarches in the old house? Of course not."

"I don't see any reason why I should try."

"I wasn't asking you to. Then I'd have to live with you in the Haynes mansion. You think that would work better?"

"Don't you expect ever to make any change in your life? If I want a thing I think up some way to get it, not all the ways that make me seem a fool to want it."

He went pretty white at that. "You think a man's a fool not just to take what he wants when he wants it."

"He had better make sure he can get it," she reminded him sweetly, "before he starts arguing himself out of taking it."

"All right," he said grimly. "I deserved that. Half of last night I was in such ecstasy thinking you had even looked at me, that I had to spend the other half throwing bricks to bring myself back to reality." She did not answer. "You'll go home now, and I'll probably never see you again."

She bent to pull a blade of grass. "That will depend on how much we want to see each other. If I never see you again, it will be because you decided it that way."

"Cherry, meeting you was such a collision it knocked my whole world to bits. There's not a solid foot left for me to stand on. I don't know about you. I think you don't, either. When you get away the whole thing may seem different to you. It may fade out into something you'll just smile at. Darling, I'll come sometime to see if this really happened."

"It happened," she assured him.



"I know you'll never marry me," he said, "but you're the girl I'll want to have married."

LATER she remembered: "I want to buy Jenny, Rod. Will you let me? I want to keep Jenny, for a lot of reasons."

"Want to put her in your scrap-book?" Rod smiled. "No, you can't buy her, but I'll keep her for you. You can think of me talking to Jenny about you. You know, it was really Jenny who sent us spinning."

Jenny, nipping grass, heard her name in two familiar voices and lifted her head. Then the two voices began the sad, sweet business of saying good-by in privacy now, so that it could be passed off with a show of nonchalance in public.

In the morning Jenny got a parting lump of sugar, a pat, a kiss on the brow. "Good-by, Rodney." Father shook his hand heartily. "Look us up when you come to town. I'll send you some pictures to see how they turned out."

"Thank you, I'd like that. It's been mighty nice having you here, Mr. Haynes. Good-by."

"Good-by, Rod," said Cherry. "Thanks for everything. Take good care of Jenny for me, won't you?"

"I will." Gray eyes looked into brown eyes. "Good-by, Cherry."

The car moved forward. Rod was walking back to the corral and Jenny was still waiting at the gate for him.

THEN it was autumn again, and girls were sitting around tea tables giggling over summer romances. Cherry's description of her tussle with Jenny was received with shrieks of laughter, and Sue, Betty, and Maybelle simply adored Jenny's picture—taken with Rod by father—that sat on Cherry's desk.

"Remember Midge Thomas marrying that Lee Somebody?" Sue asked. "She was so crazy about him. Those affairs never work out, though."

"No, they don't," Betty agreed. "People ought to have the same background."

"Look, Cherry," Maybelle warned her, "you better cut that pretty cowboy off that horse's picture!"

Cherry laughed, too, but long after the girls had gone she wondered. If a man had manners and brains and got the same values you did out of things, wasn't that what really mattered? You didn't marry a man because he knew all the head waiters. She pulled herself up as if she were reining in Jenny. "You can't keep your own head, Cherry, my girl. You know you're in love with Rodney Penmarch and you wish he'd walk in this minute and kidnap you!"

It was that very evening that father achieved his daughter's attention with: "Ever hear from young Rod we met last summer?"

"Oh, yes," she answered. "Yes, I had a couple of notes from him."

"Nice boy," remarked father. "What's he doing this winter?"

"Oh, I don't know," she said bitterly. "Chores, I suppose."

"Bright chap like that ought to make something of himself."

"What?" daughter asked gloomily.

"Gosh, how do I know?" said father. "I might help him get into something if he wanted to come to town."

"Maybe he doesn't want to."

"Well, I can understand that, too. I don't know why a man would want to be shut up in an office when he can always have a lungful of fresh air. I've a notion to buy myself a ranch."

Daughter's comment on that was merely, "Oh!"

Upstairs, she examined herself in a mirror. "Am I looking pale or something? Dad's a pretty cute old boy." She made a face at herself. "Go on, idiot, spin your head off!" Then she cried a little, dried her eyes, dabbed on powder and rouge, and called up Selina Field to suggest that they go to the movies.

YES, she had had notes from Rodney. Among other things he had included this paragraph:

I'm coming to see you some day. Jenny keeps whinnying about you. Jenny never took me for any spins, but you did. And I can't seem to get straightened out again. I'm still in love with you, but that's no news, is it? I've thought and fought through the whole business ten thousand times. Don't think I couldn't bring myself to any solution. I could. But how would it work out for you? That's the point.

She replied that perhaps he had better come and take a last look before he offered the apple to Sallie.

But he did not come. He did not write again. So that ended it.

She began to plan a trip to Honolulu with Maybelle. Father said: "Well, might be a good idea." That made her so mad, knowing what he thought, that she decided she wouldn't do any such thing.

One week-end she and father went on a jaunt into the country. The countryside unrolled before them—hills grown green in the winter rains, with black-and-white cows grazing on them, orange groves, little towns

under the lace of pepper trees, eucalypti marching across a valley, solitary oaks.

"Pretty country!" Father turned into a side road. "If I remember, there's a little lake up here you don't expect." There was—a truly charming little lake—but it only brought back that other lake that was like a kitten in a green willow basket.

"Very pretty," Cherry agreed.

"Nice meadow," said father, more warmly, she thought, than the meadow warranted. Some horses grazing in it, and for heavens' sake! If that didn't look exactly like Jenny! She didn't know she had shouted it.

"Jenny?" father repeated mildly. "Well, if it doesn't!" He stopped the car. "Couldn't be, of course. Does look like her."

Cherry shouted: "Jenny! Hi, Jenny!" The little black horse lifted her head. Cherry scrambled out of the car, was at the fence in a leap, her heart pounding at her ribs. Getting so excited about a little black filly! "Oh, Jenny!" With a whinny, Jenny came amiably toward her.

"It is Jenny!" Cherry cried.

"Well, I'll be darned," said father.

JENNY—her Jenny! Rod had sold her. That meant doubly the end. He didn't even want to be reminded. Now nothing mattered. Cherry got back into the car.

"Let's go on to the house," father suggested. "See how it happened. I'm curious about Jenny." They drove on under the pepper trees and approached the house in a really lovely garden. "Kind of place I wouldn't mind having," father approved. "I'm just going to ask how they happened to get Jenny." He

hailed somebody coming around the house then: "Well, look here, Cherry, it's Rod!"

Cries of surprise and greeting. Cherry and Rod were a little shaky, father enjoying his joke. "Little surprise party! I'm thinking of buying this place, so I wrote Rod to come and see if it's a good buy. He brought Jenny along for you."

"Don't you think you're cute, dad? Pretending you didn't know!"

A good deal of laughing talk seemed to come to Cherry from a long way off, then she found herself alone with Rod in a charming patio. Somehow, they had lost father in looking through the house.

"I couldn't resist taking your father up on this," Rod said. "You know, I wrote you I couldn't seem to get straightened out again." He began prowling around the patio, not coming near her—just walking around like a man with a toothache.

"And now," she asked, "do you feel yourself straightening?"

He seemed to take in the whole establishment, the whole situation, in one short ironic glance. "I suppose I should," he said dryly.

"I suppose you thought you'd take

a last look before you offered the apple to Sallie."

"Happens to be no Sallie. No, I just had to see you again."

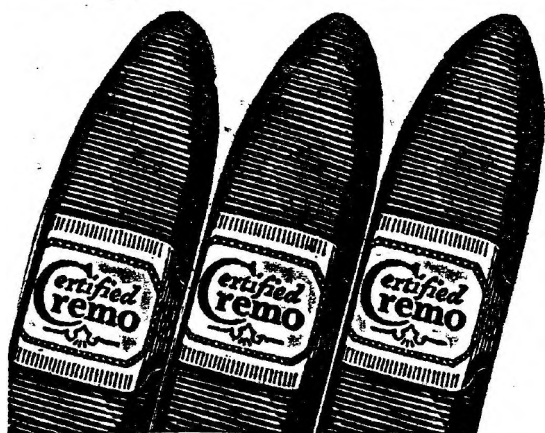
She said simply: "I wanted to see you."

"Did you, darling?" He paused before her. "Take a good look, Cherry," he advised her. "Now you see me again in all my crudity. I'd let you see my empty pockets, except that I don't want to spill my dollar and a half all over the place. You cured?" Of course, his white face rather spoiled the light effect.

"Of a lot of foolishness," decided father's daughter. "Stop that galloping around and listen to me. Don't get the idea that you can do all the talking. I guess I'm proposing to you, Rod. Better tell you in case no lady has proposed to you before. And there's no s-sense in my getting so out of breath about it!"

He was just holding her tight, not saying a word.

A long pause, then it was Cherry again, determined to have the last word: "Jenny hasn't anything on us when it comes to spinning, has she? B-b-but I don't see what we're both crying about!"



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CREAM O'THEM ALL



where *Ignorance*
is Bliss—

By PAULINE CRAWFORD

CRAIG SALTERS had lost his lovely young wife—but not by the hand of God. She had motored off and left him, to go to her mother in Santa Barbara. She

had said that she would never go back to him.

Craig felt aggrieved and abused. Never before in their two years of marriage had Jeanne displayed a

jealous disposition. She had understood the handicaps of being the wife of a successful young Hollywood director; it was imperative that he maintain friendly relations with the women stars of the company.

As for Lora Ramos— He had never felt less attracted by a woman in his life. That blond scraggy type left him cold. Only brunettes could get away with being tall and very slim—brunettes like Jeanne. It made blondes look haggard.

A thousand pities, of course, that Jeanne had entered his office that afternoon, at the moment when Lora was standing bending over him, her hands on the arms of the chair he sat in. Perfectly innocent and yet vaguely compromising. But it hadn't been his fault!

His sense of injury increased to bitterness and he felt his face grow hot at the vivid remembrance of what had followed. He had got out of his chair and the office, holding Jeanne firmly by the arm. It was too dark in the driveway where their cars were parked for any one to have seen what happened. He had tried to explain, protest, and Jeanne had turned upon him and slapped his face; slapped it hard. Unsporting for a woman to strike a man for he couldn't strike back. But Jeanne hadn't known what she was doing.

The sequel had been even worse. She had driven home and packed a bag. Her maid, Lucy, would follow later with the rest of her belongings. She had refused to talk to him. There was little he could have said in any case. A man can't alibi himself by telling his wife that the other woman has been running after him. He hadn't even flirted with Lora!

But he had to be decent to her if he wanted to keep his job.

A few days later he was reminded of the fancy-dress party for which invitations had been received from one of the big shots in the company. It was to be given in his palace in Beverly Hills. And dominoes were specifically forbidden. He and Jeanne had planned that neither one was to know what costume the other would wear. But all that fun had gone by the board.

Craig was bored with the idea of selecting a costume. There would be dozens of *Hamlets* and harlequins, priests, and paupers. His original mind dismissed all those stock figures from romance and history. Three days before the party, Lora Ramos waylaid him outside her dressing room. Rehearsals were over and he had no excuse for immediate escape. She wanted to know if he had ordered his costume. He told her he hadn't, a trifle sullenly.

"But, darling, you'd better hurry up!" She seemed impervious to his unresponsive mood. "You've got to go, and you've got to go in costume."

"So what?" he said ungraciously, not caring if he offended her.

"Don't be like that, Craig!" Her smile radiated forgiveness. "I'm only trying to help you, dear." Her large blue eyes widened with a sudden thought. She called to her maid and talked to her rapidly in French. Then she put her hand on Craig's arm. "I've just had a wonderful inspiration! Elise is a marvel. She says she'll make you a costume that won't be duplicated!"

Craig tried to be grateful. After all, Lora only wanted to help him. He gave her a friendly smile.

"I hope she isn't going to rig me out as a French poodle."

Lora laughed in delight. "Darling! You're a mind reader! Not a poodle but a pelican! Isn't that priceless?"

"A pelican!" Craig threw back his head and roared.

Elise murmured something and Lora translated. "She says you've just the figure for it—tall and not too broad. She's going to make it out of gray and white velvet, and some sort of feathers for your wings. It will certainly be unique, darling."

Craig agreed that it certainly would. Then an uneasy thought struck him.

"But, see here, Lora, we're not supposed to tell each other what we're wearing. Now you'll know me—wings and all."

"Who cares?" She laughed happily. "And you'll know me. I'm going as milady's powder puff. Elise is making it. It's ravishing. I'll be unique, too! Just wait till you see me!"

CRAIG'S costume caused a sensation and no one guessed his identity. No one recognized Lora either. When she drifted toward him and they danced together, it was a double incognito. He had had a few drinks and was in a reckless, defiant mood. That morning a stiff note had come from Santa Barbara, informing him that Lucy was to join her mistress at once—with all her things. It was signed Jeanne Baxter, her maiden name. That was another slap in the face, and it hurt more than the other one had.

Lora was undoubtedly a lovely creature, even if she were not Craig's

type. And she danced with exquisite grace; almost as well as Jeanne. Also she was amusing—until she tried to work on his emotions.

It wasn't that he had an over-active conscience or was being loyal. He didn't feel loyal. He felt bitter and free. Yes, free! The trouble was that each time Lora pressed a little closer against him, there came the sickening memory of the last time he had held Jeanne in his arms. And each time Lora whispered, through the creamy lace that hung over her red lips, how sure she was that he would like to kiss her, his heart contracted. Because there was only one woman he wanted to kiss, and that woman he might never kiss again.

Suddenly he felt Lora grow rigid in his arms. She stopped dancing and stared across the huge room at the main entrance.

"Look!" She squeezed his arm hysterically. "Do you see what I see?"

He followed her gaze. A woman had just entered and was standing alone. For the moment their view of her was unobstructed. She was Lora's height and figure, and her costume was identical! From a slim waist, wide ruffles of marabou fell in bouffant effect, almost to the floor. The bodice was of cream velvet and a close-fitting cap was of the same material. Short puffed sleeves of marabou completed the costume; unmistakably a huge powder puff! The mask was of cream satin-and-lace, and mitts of lace covered her hands and forearms. From beneath the cap, short blond curls were visible; exactly like Lora's!

Craig felt her trembling beside him with outraged pride and vanity.

He didn't blame her. It was rather a poser and a very odd one; suspiciously odd. It looked like dirty work at the crossroads. He hoped Lora wouldn't think of that. But she did.

"Did you ever!" she gasped. "Nobody's going to make me believe that's a coincidence! And if it isn't, then Elise has pulled something. She's been bribed! And I'll find out by whom if I have to tear that creature limb from limb!" She glared across the room and took a quick step away from him.

Craig was frightened. He seized her arm and drew her forcibly out onto the terrace. He wouldn't have put it past her to make a horrible scene. He said soothingly:

"You're crazy, darling. Nobody could bribe Elise to play a trick like that on you. Anyway—if you stop to think of it—there's nothing so remarkable in that powder-puff idea. As a matter of fact, I wasn't going to tell you, Lora, afraid to spoil your fun, but I saw a picture of your costume—more or less like it—in a French magazine. Maybe that's where Elise got her idea. And any one else could have got it, too." He took a deep breath after that.

Lora lifted her mask and scrutinized his face. He had removed his mask and he stared back at her, calmly and convincingly. The anger went out of her and she said:

"Well, that's that. Elise wasn't as smart as she thought she was. Better than her being disloyal. Anyway, it is a lovely costume, isn't it, darling?"

He was so relieved that he bent and kissed her. It was not a linger-

ing kiss and he was thankful that their privacy was interrupted at that moment. They returned to the ball-room and some one cut in and took Lora from him. He glanced about the room and saw the other powder puff dancing with one of the various *Romeos*. She danced with grace and youthful abandon. He felt a sudden curiosity about her. Then his heart beat faster as two possibilities struck him instantaneously.

There might be some one at the party who had recognized him and Lora. By grapevine telegraph the news might reach Jeanne that he had been constantly with the woman of whom she was so jealous. That would end forever any remote hope of getting her to return to him.

The other possibility was that he could divert his attentions to the second lady, avert gossip and have an alibi for Lora. To save her feelings he could tell her afterward that he had asked the other woman to dance, thinking she was Lora. But unless he kept his eyes fixed on the two of them, how could he tell them apart?

CRAIG'S powers of observation had been trained to acuteness. He noticed that from the top of the strange woman's cap there hung a tiny red tassel. It was scarcely noticeable. Lora had not seen it. Without further hesitation he approached the other woman and took her from her partner. As they glided out upon the floor, he said, not disguising his voice:

"Quite a clever costume! Only one other as clever."

A low, muffled laugh answered him, then a husky voice:

"Have you no curiosity as to

whether we're as much alike under our costumes?"

"Of course! I'm curious as the devil. Somehow, I don't think you're at all alike—whoever you are." He tried to see her mouth through the soft lace. "Do I know you, by any chance?"

"I'm sure you don't," came the soft husky answer. "But does it matter?"

It didn't, and he told her so. They danced, they chatted, they laughed together. Craig forgot about Lora, and almost—but not quite—about Jeanne. There was something about this woman that was strangely magnetic.

They sat at a table and drank champagne. Not that they needed it to stimulate and excite them, but it added to their mood. When she lifted her glass he tried again to see her mouth, but she used the bit of lace dexterously. Was her voice naturally husky or was she disguising it? But after all, why? The chances were they had never met before.

He lost track of the time. She was tantalizingly aloof one minute and seductive the next. It was three o'clock when she said that she must go home.

"And where is that?" he asked bluntly.

"Oh, I'm only a bird of passage. Stopping at a hotel in town. You can put me in a taxi. It's too far for you to take me."

His expostulations were violent and sincere. "Besides," he added, "you may be spoofing me. I want to make sure where you are stopping." He touched her arm lightly.

"Have you a suite, so that I could smoke a last cigarette with you?"

"Oh, no!" she said quickly. "Only a room and bath."

Out of his whirling thoughts and desires came a resolution.

"Would you," he said tentatively, "drop in at my place for a half hour? We'll have coffee." She looked down at her hands and said nothing. "Please do!" he urged eagerly.

Slowly she lifted her head. "Do you live quite alone?"

The question startled him, but he said quickly: "Yes, except for my two Chinese boys. And they sleep the sleep of the dead."

Her hesitation was barely perceptible. "All right. Let's go! I'll get my wrap."

He had made coffee and they had drunk it to the accompaniment of bread and butter and cheese. She had curled up on the divan, and Craig was in a deep armchair close to it. Not once had she permitted him to get even a fleeting glimpse of her features.

"I really should go now," she said softly. "It's been swell—the whole evening—ever since you asked me to dance."

He set his glass on a table and sat beside her on the divan. He did not touch her, but his head was very close to hers. He longed to drag that bit of satin-and-lace from her face, but something held him back. Then he said:

"When am I going to see you again? I can't let you just pop in and out of my life to-night."

"I've no idea," she said softly, staring into her glass.

"Don't you want to see me again?" he asked fiercely. She did not say a

word, and suddenly he lost his rigid self-control. He scarcely realized what he was doing when he seized her and kissed her lips. But the lace of the mask got in his way. "Damn it!" he muttered, and tried to tear it from her face.



He said: "When am I going to see you again? I can't let you just pop in and out of my life to-night."

But she was too quick for him. She sprang to her feet and stood trembling, pressing the lace against her mouth. He rose and stared at her somberly. Then he said slowly:

"I'm sorry—for more than one reason. I lost my head—call it momentary madness. I apologize. And there's something else. I let you think I'm a bachelor. I'm not. I've

got a wife—a mighty attractive one. But she ran off and left me recently. However, I adore the ground she walks on. No other woman, not even you, my beguiling stranger, could ever make me forget her permanently.”

HE turned from her and lighted a cigarette with shaking hands. Then she said, a little above a whisper:

“May I go to your room just a minute? Then I’m leaving.”

He murmured an “Of course” and went ahead of her to open the door into the bedroom. She shut it softly and he stood a moment staring at it, then crossed the room and flung himself into an armchair. His reflections and his drink absorbed him, mind and body, to the exclusion of the passing of time. He had no idea how many minutes had passed when it suddenly occurred to him that the strange woman was taking her time. He was about to go and knock on the bedroom door when there came a ring at the front one. Amazed and startled, he sprang to his feet, disposed of his glass and walked rapidly to open the door. Then he lost his breath in utter astonishment and confusion. There on the threshold stood Jeanne, without a hat, and wrapped in a mink coat. They stared blankly at each other. Craig was conscious of his own blank expression. Then she walked past him into the room and he closed the door mechanically. She threw off her coat. She was wearing a cerise evening dress that he remembered. She looked at him and said quietly:

“I seem to have taken you by surprise, Craig.” Her glance went over

the room and rested on the two glasses, the whisky bottle. Her eyes, steady and cool, returned to him. “I hope I’m not interrupting a little private party or anything of that sort?”

He moistened his dry lips. Words came with difficulty. He felt as if some one had him by the throat.

“And if you were, what about it?” He hoped he sounded cooler than he felt.

“Why”—she looked taken aback—“in that case, I’ll leave at once.” She approached the chair where she had thrown her coat, lifted it, and held it on her arm.

“No hurry,” he said quietly. “You might as well know what you already suspect. But it’s not as bad as it appears.” He walked deliberately to the bedroom door, knocked, waited, then, frowning angrily, he flung open the door and stared into an empty room.

“What the devil——” He strode into the room. Jeanne followed behind him. In the center of the room, on the floor, was the powder-puff costume.

The shock of amazement left him rigid and speechless for several seconds. Then he turned slowly and looked straight into Jeanne’s dark, questioning eyes.

“There was a woman in here,” he said chokingly. “God knows where she’s gone or why or what she’s got on. Maybe she had a dress under her costume. She’ll freeze without a coat.”

“Maybe,” Jeanne said softly, “she took one of my coats out of the closet.” She paused and a slow smile showed her teeth. “Maybe—she took—this one.” She fingered the coat on her arm.

Craig stared at her; amazement and incredulity changed swiftly to shocked understanding. But even in that second of revelation, his expression remained blank. Suddenly past, present and future stood out in sharp focus. He knew that all he held most precious was threatened by final disaster in this one vivid instant. It was the inspiration of desperation rather than wisdom and understanding of women—of this one woman—that gave him his cue.

Tall as she was he had to bend his head to hers. He smiled broadly and his smile ended in a laugh.

"Thought you put one over on me, didn't you, my sweet?"

It was Jeanne's moment of surprise. "What do you mean?" she stammered.

"I mean, precious, that I knew it was you all the time!"

She stared at him, bewildered. "You didn't!"

"Oh, but I did!" Then another inspiration came to his rescue. "You don't suppose I'd have talked that way to a strange woman about you, about loving my wife!"

For a second she faltered, then her last doubt and defense went down. She flung herself into his arms.

"Oh! I'm so relieved!" She spoke indistinctly because his lips were on hers, kissing her breathlessly. Then Craig remembered something.

"By the way, darling, how did you get hold of that costume?"

She laughed. "It really wasn't

poor Elise's fault. You see, Lucy is a great friend of hers. She found out about it and then copied it. Elise never suspected a thing. And Lucy found out about your costume the same way. We really have rooms in a hotel. It seemed the best way to keep my affairs to myself."

Suddenly he felt her stiffen in his embrace. She drew out of it, looked at him with misty eyes, and said tremulously:

"Oh! Then you said all those lovely things about me just because you wanted to make an impression on me!"

That was more than he had bargained for. Woman—the unpredictable! But he must stick to his guns now or go down in ignominious defeat. He had to think quickly. He threw back his head and laughed.

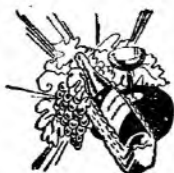
"What a girl! Wouldn't you rather know that I was trying to impress you instead of using you as a buffer against another woman's charms?"

Her dark eyes studied him intently, then they glowed softly with love and joy.

"Of course I would!" She nestled against him contentedly.

"Thank Heaven for that!" he breathed fervently, drawing her closer.

Over her head pressed against him, his eyes gazed into space with an inscrutable expression. Perhaps it was a reflection of his very secret and confused emotions.





CRESCENDO

By
CARMEN JUDSON

LIFE, to Norma Leeds, was a giant kaleidoscope, the vivid fragments gathering themselves into a perfect pattern, breaking up and reforming, refocusing themselves upon her mind.

At seventeen she was beautiful, in a long, slim way, with blue-black hair and slanted, sea-green eyes. Beautiful, in a way that made people turn to look at her, that made artists pay

top prices for the privilege of transferring that beauty to canvas. And she was hard.

She had to be. Too many times, a painter, tired of blending color, would try to introduce an element of passion into his work; but she would merely smile, remembering Althea. Althea hadn't been hard. Althea had believed in everybody, and in a year Althea's beautiful body had been fished out of the East River, beautiful no longer.

"I'll not let life do that to me," Norma told herself. "I'll never believe any man." But that was when she was seventeen. At eighteen she met Ivan Cartier.

There was something not normal about Ivan, but he was a genius. Garron had told her about Ivan first, saying only that he believed she might be the woman Cartier wanted for "Voodoo," a picture he had begun and never finished because no model seemed the right one for the pagan goddess Ayida Ouedda.

"See him, Norma. Tell him I sent you," Garron said, "but, youngster, watch yourself. He's dynamite. Ought to have a brain operation, but he says doctors can cut open the heads of convicts and finger their brains. He'll keep his headaches and his head."

She went to Ivan Cartier, more through a sense of curiosity than anything else. She had heard of his grotesques, which were not exhibited publicly. Garron himself spoke of "*La Madonna Perdue*" in a choked sort of whisper, saying he wished he had given birth to such a painting. Norma wanted to see the man of whom she had heard so much.

Yet, seeing the man, she forgot the artist. Ivan's somber eyes, his mouth that had a look of sorrow, his thatch of rumpled yellow hair, all gave him a hurt-child expression that touched her heart. It was not often she felt that surge of tenderness for any one, the desire to reach out a friendly hand to touch another hand. She wondered at herself, and hoped he would like her.

"Do you mind?" He was quite impersonal. "I think perhaps you might be what I am looking for, but I must see you in the nude. What I want is a perfect urn of flesh, a passion flower, a challenge."

She didn't mind. It was natural for her to strip her slender body, and she knew she was lovely. There was no immodesty about her, merely the consciousness that her job required a frank display of firm, round breasts and long, slender legs.

The actual work on "Voodoo" started in January. Three times Ivan Cartier plunged into feverish activity, only to discard what he had begun and start over, cursing the fingers which seemed to have lost their cunning for a time. Then, quite suddenly, he etched in bold strokes with his brush, and drove himself and her to the breaking point.

A week, two, a month, and Norma found herself saying hushed prayers at night; prayers that weren't meant to be prayers when they began, but always ended with: "God, let the picture be beautiful and perfect so every one will know about Ivan."

She didn't try to analyze her feeling at first. It wasn't until after Terry Roberts dropped into the studio one evening and waited for her to get dressed that Norma real-

ized she had fallen in love with Ivan. Terry was up from Miami, the first time she had come back since her brilliant marriage to Gordon Roberts, and she was crazy to go back to the Village with Norma, to pick up old threads and meet old friends. Terry's acquired fortune hadn't changed her; she was still the breezy, honest, level-eyed Terry who had shared an apartment with Norma and Althea in the lean days.

"Look, Norm"—Terry was absorbed in her own thoughts after meeting Ivan—"I don't like him. I'll bet my next quarterly allowance that Ivan Cartier smokes opium, marijuana, or uses a needle. You better watch him, honey."

"Oh, he doesn't! He doesn't at all!" Norma was quick to defend him. "Terry, he's ill. Pressure of some sort on his brain, but he's afraid of an operation. Garron says so!"

"You're in love with him, aren't you?" Terry never pulled her punches. "Oh, Norm, you're in for trouble. There's nothing to him! He has a paint pot where his heart ought to be!"

NORMA laughed then, but later, after Terry had gone back to Miami and "Voodoo" had been accepted by the critics; after Ivan had got drunk and sobered up again, beating his forehead with a closed fist, and resting his hot face against her cool hands, she knew Terry had been all too right. She loved Ivan as she had never expected to love anybody; loved him in spite of his faults, and sometimes she loved him because of those faults.

She knew he didn't believe in mar-

riage. He had made that clear in the very beginning, in a casual sort of way, as though he were generalizing.

"You know, Norma," he said, "marriage spoils an artist. I'm afraid of it. I've seen what it can do. I'll never marry any woman, no matter how much I may love her."

It didn't matter—at first. Norma believed in marriage as an institution, but she had given very little thought to marriage for herself. She would have told any one interested enough to listen, that she was more concerned with a career, with keeping her slim, white body young and beautiful, than she was in marriage. Yet, being with Ivan day after day, feeling his somber, golden gaze upon her, she realized love meant a great deal. And sometimes, carelessly, Ivan would say he loved her.

"But," he would add, "don't let me love you too much, small one, because I should only hurt you. Don't ever believe too much of what I say to you."

"I won't," she promised, knowing she lied to herself. "I never believe anything any man says. They tell me I am beautiful, but no one has ever painted me as I really am; not even Garron."

"Then I shall," he interrupted. "I have been thinking of another picture with you as my model. I shall paint into your green eyes the challenge I see there. I shall paint the defiant laugh on your curved, quiet mouth, and the—— Listen, Norma, I shall paint you with a leopard in your arms. That leopard shall represent life, and you, nude and desirable, thrusting your slim hands against his

drooling mouth. And seeing, people will know the beast is your master."

"You think that would be like me?" She felt curiously tired, frightened.

"It is like all women, my dear," he said slowly. "They know life is a beast, yet they lure him, yield themselves to him, and die with his teeth at their throats. My wonder is that they are so unafraid."

She watched him sketch in the first bold strokes, and later, as the magic of it grew into form on canvas, she heard him dream aloud.

"I shall call it 'Electra,'" he whispered, his voice a muted song with the merest suggestion of an accent. "Perhaps because all women are elemental, more or less. I should like to call it——" He laughed huskily. "Ah, no, my Norma, not even to you shall I reveal what I would like to call this painting."

She wanted to draw him out, make him talk of himself, but it was an unwritten law in the studio that first work go on without interruption, and days lengthened into weeks. Seven weeks of watching him, knowing she loved him, knowing Terry had looked into the future, and into Ivan, seeing only a paint pot where his heart should be; knowing he didn't believe in marriage; that he would never ask her to be his wife.

She knew, and still she found herself helpless to beat back the pulsing flame that burst into ecstatic fire the night he took her to the fantastic Russian café, and over spiced, hot tea, begged her to love him.

"Ivan"—her breath caught in her throat—"I am afraid of you. The picture is almost finished, and Garron wants me. I——"

He dropped his spoon with a sudden clatter, and his lips whitened into a thin, tight line. "You will not go to Garron. I, too, want you. I need you, and I shall not let you go. You are mine!"

She closed her eyes to shut out the sight of him, knowing she was already lost; that there was something about him that battered down all defenses, that stripped her spirit and left her naked and trembling before him.

"I know," he said, and his voice was harsh, "you would prefer honest marriage; but marriage is not for us, and love is. I'll hurt you many times, and I will be hurt, but at least we will have lived. We need each other. In our world, Norma, love is all that matters."

"Yes, I suppose so," she told him, and gave him her lips across the candle-lighted table. She didn't think of those others in the shadowed room; scarcely heard the plaintive violin crying a love song. She was only conscious of her desire for the feel of Ivan's mouth against hers, the warmth of his breath on her face, the sensuous, heady wine that pulsed through her veins at his touch. Nothing mattered, nothing counted except the desperate need for love, love that takes no stock of to-morrow and to-morrow, and all the to-morrows coming. Only to-day was sure! Only Ivan was real!

No one, nothing had ever seemed more real.

She wrote to Terry, offering no excuse for what she was doing, and was not surprised when Terry's big, masculine scrawl across a sheet of heavy vellum came back by air with

a word of warning, but with all understanding and sympathy.

Ivan is volatile, Norma. You'll suddenly discover you aren't his world. You'll be "yesterday's woman" in a little while, and it's going to hurt. I'm not telling you not to love him, because that wouldn't do any good. I am telling you that when you find out it's all over and you feel like doing what Althea did—don't. Whatever happens, however it ends, my house is open to you.

Reading Terry's letter, Norma wept for something she had had and lost. It was too late to turn back; too late for anything. She had given all her heart into Ivan's keeping, and if, some brilliant morning, she found herself discarded, she would want to die. She understood at last, how Althea had felt.

Garron, too, talked to her. "Norma, I've sort of watched you grow up in the Village, and to see you throw yourself away on Cartier—— He's not worth it!"

"I know," she said wearily, "but I love him. Even if it doesn't last, I'll have something to remember."

"Too much," Peter Garron gritted between set teeth, and his eyes misted. "You see, Norma, there have been others. And there will be still others, and you will suffer."

She touched Garron's hand timidly. "Don't hate me, Peter. Every woman is entitled to make a fool of herself once."

I VAN, absorbed in his work, holding on to her bright beauty, amazed at the passionate tenderness which flowed for him, seemed

strangely content. Less and less was he seen about the Village, less and less was he heard to complain of the violent headaches, and after a while the hum of Greenwich settled into a faint echo which died away, until nobody questioned and nobody wondered.

To Norma, life was complete at last. Ivan, holding her close, whispering little snatches of song under his breath; Ivan, dreaming aloud; Ivan, touching the keys of the piano with long, spatulate fingers, improvising music intended for her alone, was her world. It was as if she were a highly sensitized string which one haunting melody had touched with throbbing beauty. Ivan's vibrant voice absorbing her, making her a very part of him, dependent on him for existence.

How she loved him! How she laughed and wept with him, and recognized his genius! He lived furiously, and worked just as furiously. He never rested, nor would he let her rest. His mind brought forth macabre things that sent shivers of revulsion and delight down the spines of those who viewed them.

"Electra" he refused to show. "That," he said, "is not for sale. There will be others, marvelous others, but 'Electra' will always hang here in the studio."

Norma told herself it was because "Electra" had seen the birth of their love, that it was intimate and dear to him because of that, yet there were times when she hated it. The beast in her arms, with eyes as gold as Ivan's, menacing her! She wished Ivan would sell it, or give it away.

Then, quite without warning, there was Thalia and Richard Crane. They

came into the studio one evening, along with two or three others, and because Ivan was in a mellow mood, he pulled aside the black velvet hangings and showed "Electra."

"My best, I think," he said, and smiled oddly. "Usually I think my last effort the best, but there is something about this——"

Richard Crane said nothing, but Norma, coming upon him unaware, started back with a feeling of panic at the look on his face. An odd face, inscrutable and alien, with one cheek marred by a livid scar that might have been a satanic hand laid upon it in anger.

A sick feeling swept across her heart and she bit down on her lips to keep them steady. "You like it, don't you?"

He looked down from his tallness, and his voice was tense. "It is startling, to say the least. I was wondering just now if Cartier had conjured that face out of his own imagination, or if there might be a woman with that rebelliousness showing beneath a certain virginal quality about her. You were the model, of course?"

She nodded. "Is that the look Ivan gave me, Mr. Crane? I was supposed to portray a mixture of fear and challenge."

They walked slowly past other pictures, and when they came to the piano, Richard Crane touched the keys with reverent fingers. "You play, Mrs. Cartier?"

She shook her head, grateful for the quiet "Mrs. Cartier."

"May I?" He ran his hands along the keyboard as if he loved it, and Norma no longer wondered that the beautiful Thalia had been drawn to

him in spite of his repellent face. He was the soul of music come to life:

"Play, fiddle, play,
Play on the strings of her heart——"

The song ended, his own voice holding a lingering note as his eyes went to the picture on the farther wall. Norma's look followed his, and a shiver echoed along her spine.

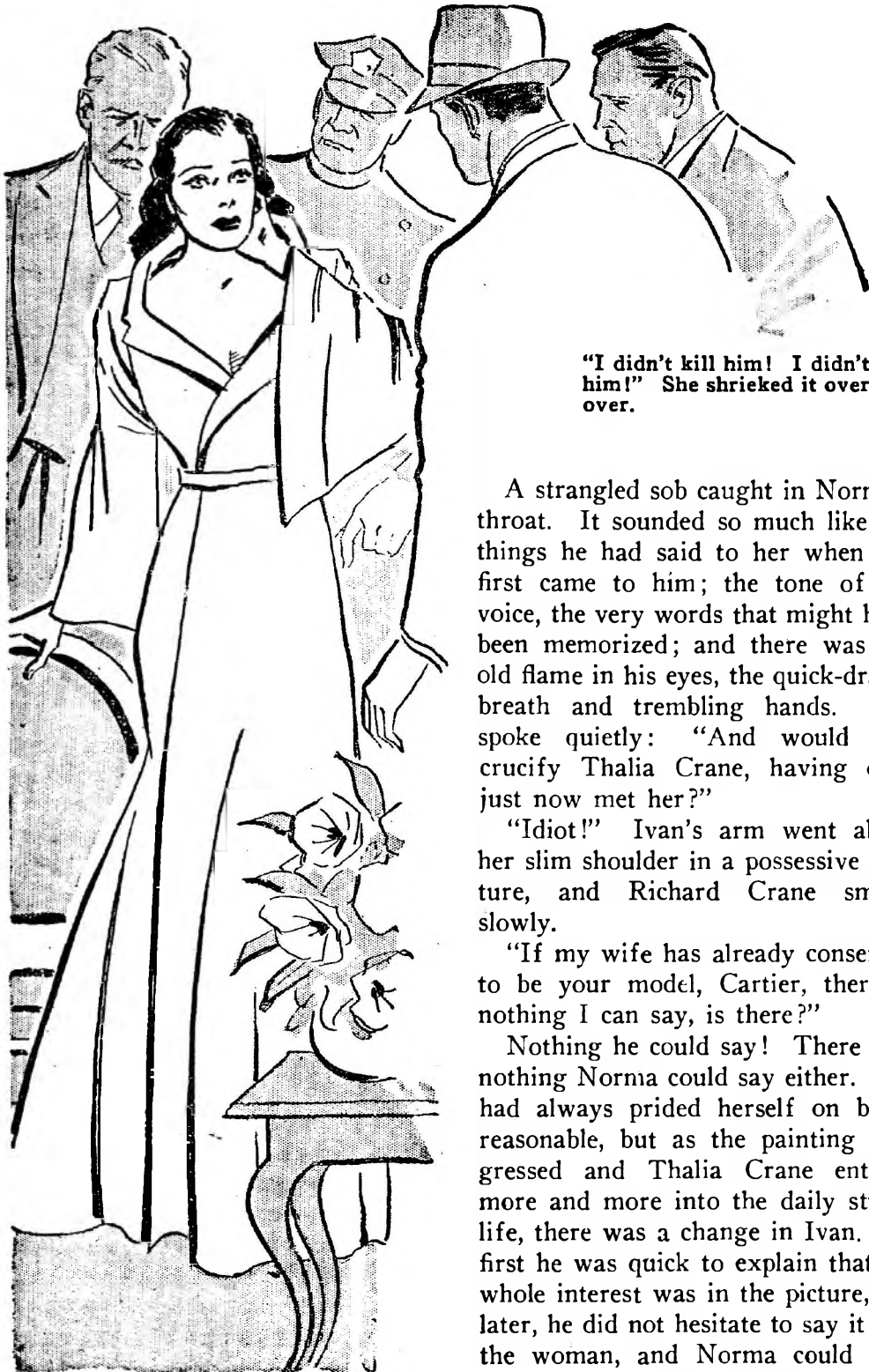
"'To each, a gift,'" she quoted, and added: "Color in Ivan's fingers—music in your own. Which gift is more divine, Mr. Crane?"

Ivan, coming up with Thalia Crane, interrupted whatever the answer might have been, and in Ivan's eyes was a vision. "Crane, your wife has consented to pose for me. Hers is the type of beauty I want for my 'Golgotha.'"

Richard Crane's lips tightened. "Again, Thalia?"

"Oh, Dick, don't be stuffy about it, please." Her full lips were like a wound across her dead-white face. "To model for Cartier is to be recognized as a perfect woman, and it isn't as though I had never posed before, you know."

Ivan himself spoke quickly. "Crane, your wife has something I have looked for and never found. I have visioned a poem in color. A bleak, barren hill with a tall cross and a woman, crucified by a horde of misty, unreal creatures resembling men. I have dreamed it a thousand times, but never before have I seen the model I wanted for my central figure, the woman who will dominate it with her wild, exotic beauty. I want a perfect urn of flesh, a passion flower——"



"I didn't kill him! I didn't kill him!" She shrieked it over and over.

A strangled sob caught in Norma's throat. It sounded so much like the things he had said to her when she first came to him; the tone of his voice, the very words that might have been memorized; and there was the old flame in his eyes, the quick-drawn breath and trembling hands. She spoke quietly: "And would you crucify Thalia Crane, having only just now met her?"

"Idiot!" Ivan's arm went about her slim shoulder in a possessive gesture, and Richard Crane smiled slowly.

"If my wife has already consented to be your model, Cartier, there is nothing I can say, is there?"

Nothing he could say! There was nothing Norma could say either. She had always prided herself on being reasonable, but as the painting progressed and Thalia Crane entered more and more into the daily studio life, there was a change in Ivan. At first he was quick to explain that his whole interest was in the picture, but later, he did not hesitate to say it was the woman, and Norma could only walk the floor and wonder and wait.

It wasn't a long wait. A month at most, and Ivan came to her, defiant and determined. "I've got to have Thalia, Norm. I can't live without her, and she feels the same about me. We've got to be together."

She looked at him for a long moment through a haze of angry tears. "You're talking about Thalia Crane, Ivan. Don't you realize she has a husband? Aren't you forgetting about me?"

"It doesn't matter." He was like a stubborn child. "Nothing matters except Thalia. She's through with Crane, and I'm through with you. I thought you guessed."

Norma laughed then, high, shrill, crazy laughter that rasped her throat raw, and something snapped. Thalia Crane, coming in from the other room, smiled with her red-granite mouth, but her eyes were pin-points of flame, and Norma snatched up a slim, silver dagger that lay on top of some opened letters. She was thinking of Althea, who had killed herself because a man like Ivan had stopped loving her; and she was thinking of Richard Crane, with his marred face and gentle manner; and of Terry who had told her she would sometime be only "yesterday's woman" and there wasn't anything she could do about it. But there was something she could do! She could kill Ivan!

She struck blindly, hoping the pointed weapon would reach his heart, but he caught and whirled her around, his fingers tangled in the softness of her negligee, his sharp nails, very like a woman's, leaving three bloody streaks across her chest.

A stream of oaths poured over her and his eyes blazed. "For that I

should like to break you with my hands, but I can't. Perhaps it is just as well. Now I shall feel no regret in leaving you."

She didn't hear him go. Suddenly there was only silence in the dim, high-raftered room, silence and the slow, labored beating of her own heart. After a long while she stumbled across the floor to the mirror, seeing the three red welts across her chest, the dead eyes that looked back at her, and behind her, showing through the parted drapes of black velvet, "Electra."

Like one who walks in his sleep, she went to stand beneath the canvas, realizing for the first time the amazing subtlety of the thing. Almost she could see the rippling muscles of the animal, feel the hot breath from its nostrils, sense the cunning in the vicious brain, and some bitter whim made her mount a low stool, and with a smear of blood from her own chest, wipe three crimson streaks across the pictured girl.

HOURS of waiting, of listening for a call that did not come; hours of throbbing agony that gradually settled to a steady, pulsing beat, and then, just as a gray day crept up over the skylight, Richard Crane came in quietly. He found her huddled on the couch, all the tears burned out of her dark, fathomless eyes, and he stood motionless before her, with a look so strange that she forgot her own pain for a moment.

"You loved him, didn't you?" His voice, so low, so alive with tenderness, made her less conscious of his marred face, and she was aware of a curious kinship between them.

"That's why I came to you," he

went on. "Thalia is entirely ruthless. She would take him without a thought of how you might be left."

Norma realized there was no bitterness in Richard Crane, no vindictiveness. It was almost as if there were a measure of relief in finding Thalia gone.

"Don't you care at all?" she moaned pitifully. "Don't you want to kill them?"

His face was a mask, but something in his eyes lived and suffered. "I did once. This isn't the first time Thalia has imagined herself in love, nor will it be the last. I imagine it is the same with Cartier. They are two feathers, blown on a vagrant wind. Their song of passion will come to an end, and each will sing again with somebody else. Can't you understand?"

There was nothing she could say then, and he went to stand before "Electra," his still face becoming even more of a mask.

"You did that?"—his lean finger touched the bloody marks.

She nodded. "The leopard used his claws."

He turned swiftly, touching her drooping shoulders. "Is there something I can do, Norma Leeds? Will you stay on here?"

She accepted a proffered cigarette and her brooding eyes misted. "He will come back to me sometime. He doesn't love her."

He smiled for the first time, a smile that robbed his face of all its ugliness. "We will meet again sometime, you and I. In the meantime, promise to call me if you should ever need me."

She promised, but in the blurred weeks that crowded in upon her, she

forgot Richard Crane. At first the awful ache of loneliness would not let her sleep, but gradually she realized a body must be nourished, and rent must be paid for shelter. She stayed on at the studio, because she knew she could not run away from memory. Ivan had been so much a part of her that she might strip the walls of every picture, blot his face from every printed page and stop her ears to every voice that said his name, and he would still tread through her heart.

There was work. Garron insisted he had been saving "Black Orchids" until she could pose for him, and Lucien Therron, under contract for murals, wanted her. Work was an anæsthetic, the only anæsthetic that could shut Ivan out and away from her. In time, Lucien, when he asked her to marry him, gave her back a bit of her old assurance, but she was honest with him.

"You see," she said, "I'm sort of burned out. You knew about me and Ivan. I loved him in a way I shall never love any one else."

Lucien would not accept her answer as final. "I'll never stop hoping, Norma. Sometime, when you realize he won't be coming back, I'll ask you again."

Terry, writing from Miami, urged her to put everything out of her mind for a time and come down where a clean wind might sweep through her heart and rest her tired body, but Norma couldn't make herself go. Terry was sweet and fine and generous, but, after all, if she left New York, if she didn't wait, Ivan might come back and she wouldn't see him.

That was all she wanted. Just to see Ivan again; just to be there if he

should ever grow weary of things as they were and come back. Just to make him know she loved him, that, with her, it hadn't been a shoddy thing she gave him.

And one night, as suddenly as he had walked out of her life, he came back into it again.

She had been through a hard day, hours of strained posing on a slim pedestal, and she was lying full length on the floor in the studio. She loved the open fire, the wide hearth of black marble that reflected pictures she conjured in the flames, and as she watched the log smolder into grayish embers, she thought her love for Ivan was like that—a flame that fed upon itself. She wondered what she would say to him if some day she met him on the street, slim and bronze and beautiful, as he had been when first she loved him. She didn't know! All she knew was that she wanted him.

And then, as quietly as a ghost, Ivan came into the room, with the blackness behind him like a curtain.

"Lo, Norma." His voice was the old, maddening drawl, and she gaped at his thin, wasted figure, the burning eyes that seemed so oddly vacant. She couldn't believe him real. Ivan was in Europe—with Thalia!

"Aren't you going to ask me to sit down, Norma? I bribed the janitor to lend me his key."

She shivered and pulled the folds of her dressing gown closer around her. "What do you want, Ivan?"

"You." He said it dispassionately, his unsteady hand offering a cigarette case.

She shook her head. "Did you think I would keep on loving you, Ivan? Did you think I'd just wait?"

She wanted terribly to cry, knowing she spoke the truth. It wasn't Ivan she wanted; not Ivan she had held in her heart, but a dream that dissolved with his return.

"Haven't you?" His vacant eyes caught and held her. "Haven't you waited, Norma?"

"I'm afraid not, Ivan." A slow smile curved her red mouth and twin stars were born in her eyes. "I thought I was waiting for you, but now I know differently. When you went with Thalia you took everything, and somewhere, you lost all I ever felt for you. Where is Thalia, Ivan?"

He shrugged. "How should I know? The Orient, possibly, with some other lover. I was a fool, Norma. It was you I loved. I wanted her, but that's over now. I want you—you!"

The passion in his voice, springing from nothing, frightened and repelled her. She didn't love him any more, she couldn't bear his touch again, nor his voice, nor what he said or thought or felt. She had gone hard inside.

"Well," she told him, "this is one time you aren't going to get what you want, Ivan. I'm through. I'm free of you."

"You're not!" His face was close to hers, his breath hot on her face. "You won't ever be free of me, Norma. I've always been crazy about you. Kiss me. Kiss me——"

His arms were about her, holding her against him; his body was warm against her own, and in that moment she wanted to let shrill laughter fight past her lips. It was funny—funny! Ivan, whom she had worshiped, whom she had wept for, holding her

like that, and she only wanted to laugh. Ivan was funny, and stupid, and utterly without charm.

The spasm of hysteria passed almost instantly, and fear took its place. Ivan's thin, seeking hands tearing at her robe, stripping her, forcing her back toward the couch! She fought at him, using every bit of strength she possessed, determined his mouth should not reach hers, that she would kill him if he did not let her go.

She tried to scream and couldn't, and suddenly she went limp, sagging against him, hoping he would think she had fainted. He lifted her, staggering a little under her weight. For a second his grip relaxed and her hand crashed back against the table, grasping the silver dagger that lay among the papers. She brought it around, its sharp tip against his throat, but passion made him heedless.

"Kill me, Norma! Go ahead! Death is just another great adventure. Kiss me first—and kill me!"

She never knew how she struggled out of his arms. She knew vaguely that he snatched the dagger and his teeth drew back in savage fury. She went mad, too, for a moment, blind with fear, and somehow she eluded him, dodging into the small kitchen where she slammed and barred the door between them.

His laughter followed, and his threatening voice. "I'll kill myself then, Norma. The pain in my head is driving me crazy, and I can't paint any more. Nobody loves me, and if you don't come out I'll kill myself. The knife is at my throat, Norma. Will you come out?"

He waited a moment, as if he were listening, then there was a dull thud, a crash. She pushed open the door and saw him sprawled in front of the desk, the telephone receiver dangling, and a vase of crimson roses overturned near his ghastly face; the dagger buried in his throat.

"I DIDN'T do it!" She shrieked it over and over to the shadows that etched themselves against the wall, and suddenly became people. She tried to fight off the agony and the awful fear that wrapped her in nauseous arms. She clung to a chair with trembling hands, as though pulling herself up out of torment, but the lids of her eyes seemed to be cut away so that she must see everything. The circle of stubby, pointing fingers. The exploding flashlights; the blood that slowly spread itself in a widening circle on the carpet beneath Ivan's strange, still face.

Horror followed on the heels of horror. People thrusting questions at her, not waiting for an answer.

"G'wan, tell us how it happened!"

"This bird comes back an' you croak him! Why?"

"He's dead as last year's mackerel, an' you done it! Why'n't you come clean, sister?"

"You lived with him, didn't you?"

"An' he gives ya the air for another jane. So you figure——"

"Dammit, he's dead, ain't he? In your apartment! An' you standin' over him. Would a guy stick his self in his throat! It'll go easier with you if you spill it all, sister!"

* On and on, through weeks of preparation for a trial. Lucien, sailing unexpectedly for London. Garron, standing by gallantly. The com-

ing of Kenneth Graham, criminal defense lawyer, with a reputation for acquittals and enormous fees.

"I haven't any money," she said brokenly. "How do you expect to be paid, Mr. Graham?"

"That's my worry, little lady. What we want to think about now is clearing up things for you. From now on I'm your counsel, and I want the truth, that's all. I've got to have it, so I can go ahead with some degree of certainty. Did you kill Ivan Cartier?"

Two crimson splotches burned on her white cheeks. "I didn't kill him, Mr. Graham, but how are you going to make them believe that?"

Kenneth Graham didn't try to make them believe she didn't kill Ivan. Rather, he based his defense on the "unwritten law." Terry Roberts, tall and slim and gallant, sat as near to Norma as they would let her, and after it was over; after a jury had listened and weighed the evidence and returned a verdict of "not guilty," Terry held out gracious arms, pleading with Norma to leave New York.

"Come to Miami with me, darling," she begged. "There is a spare room facing south, and nobody in the world using it. It's yours. Gord would have come, too, Norma, but — Oh, come on home with me and forget all this."

Norma wanted to slip quietly away from it, to hide her wounds under a blanket of southern stars, but something would not let her go. She remembered a face that merged itself with others in the crowded courtroom throughout the long battle, a pale, still face with one cheek oddly marked with crimson, but that face had been

her comfort. She had focused her eyes on Richard Crane's eyes, reading his belief, his faith in her, and it had helped. She had wanted to speak to him, to reach out her hand to him, but there had been so many others, and afterward he had slipped away. She wanted desperately to see him again, to explain very carefully, the things which had not been explained; to make him understand. She told Terry about it, in the seclusion of her hotel room, and Terry smiled wisely.

"You're already half in love with him, Norma. Better play safe and come home with me."

"I can't, Terry." The girl knew herself for a fool, but something stronger than she was, made her want to stay. She had to see Richard Crane.

She waited a long while; almost half a year, staying away from the studios in order to avoid talk. She moved into a small apartment, changed her name, and sought oblivion behind a five-and-ten-cent-store counter, hoping that time would heal the scars and let her feel that she might see Richard without causing too much talk. But the months brought small relief. The tabloids made a special little hell for her, hounding her for her story, and the girls she worked with recognized her and wanted to hear it all, over and over. She lived with it, fought with it and tried to kill it, but it was always with her, a black shadow that enveloped her wherever she went.

She thought incessantly of Richard, seeing his marred, tired face, hearing his low, vibrant voice, and there were times when she started out of her sleep, listening, because

she dreamed he said her name, but still she did not call him. She, who had been touched with pitch, must not defile him! She, who had loved so unwisely, must not let herself love again! But, surely, surely it could not be love that called his face up so vividly and let her see its scar! She, who had worshiped beauty, could not have learned to care for him!

Seven months of aimless drifting, of futile effort, drove her to Terry at last. Terry had written so many times, refusing to be pushed out of Norma's life. She pleaded again, for the thousandth time:

DARLING: Your room is still waiting, and now I've a very special reason for wanting you. There's a baby coming, and I need you.

We sold the cottage next door, but the man is pretty much of a recluse, and Gord is away so much of the time, I've simply got to have somebody, and it's you I want, Norma.

Terry needed her. That was what broke through Norma's bewilderment. If Terry needed her, that made things different. She would have to go. And if she never saw Richard Crane again, perhaps it was just as well.

Then she was with Terry, learning how to laugh again, learning how to live, in the first few hours, and there was Terry's misty-eyed look at the half-hidden cottage next door. "Norma, remember how we talked of Richard just after—after——"

Norma shut her eyes against the memory of it. "Yes, Terry, I remember."

"You've never seen him?"

"No. I wanted to, but——"

Terry was suddenly very busy with her hands and would not meet Norma's eyes. "Oh, I hope you like Miami. I hope you won't ever be sorry you came——"

AND later, standing in the big, cool patio, straining her ears to hear the hushed, half-whispered music in the house next door, Norma knew Terry believed she still thought too much about Richard.

Ah, well, perhaps she did. Beyond the autumn-colored crotons was a song, a lost song that drifted back on wings of dream. Richard could play like that! She thought of the night when he had first come to the studio with Thalia, the way his long, slim fingers caressed Ivan's rented piano keys, and her heart throbbed with old, unquiet pain.

She closed her eyes and let the liquid beauty of Shubert's "Serenade" filter through her like a heady wine. She pressed hot palms to her temples as the music ended, and a man's figure outlined itself in the square of yellow light that was his door. So tall, so like—Richard!

She turned faint, steadying herself with a taut hand against the parapet, as he came out and across the green sweep of grass, stopped beneath the arch and reached up to cover her fingers with his. "How long has it been since you sang, Electra?"

She caught her breath sharply. "I didn't kill him, Richard. You know that, don't you?"

"Yes." He leaned his cool forehead against her hot hands. "I know."

The night whispered about her. The clock in Terry's wide hall struck leisurely, nine—ten—eleven. Everything was hushed, unreal in the shifting moonlight; everything except Richard Crane's vibrant voice, his brilliant eyes and his lifted face.

"Come out, Norma Leeds! Never again Electra! Terry knows! She wants it like this!"

Norma went slowly, almost against her will. Across a shaft of moonlight, yellow as old lace, across the velvet shadow and through the crimson hibiscus hedge. He caught her restless, slender hands.

"Norma, I've waited so long. There's something I want to tell you—if you'll listen."

She lifted her flowerlike face, and a luna moth touched her cheek for an instant then fluttered away on magic wings. "What is it, Richard?"

So intently was she listening, so oddly quiet after her heart's turmoil, that she did not think it strange when his voice reached out and wrapped its liquid loveliness about her.

"Play, fiddle, play,
Play on the strings of her heart——"

Oh, she thought wonderingly, he doesn't need a fiddle to play on my heart. A while ago, I was a shattered lyre, but now he is touching me, making me come alive again. And he's ugly! His face is scarred.

"Play, fiddle, play——" His voice, demanding now, his eyes upon her, reading her soul, deadening her to all sound, all words, all thought except the spell he wove about her. It ended at last, and just as though he had not sung at all, he spoke, holding her hands against his heart.

"Do you know how lovely you are, Norma Leeds? I am a fool, perhaps, but I have sung to you night after night, willing you to come to me, wanting you——"

"Not as Ivan wanted me? Oh, Richard, not that way!"

He shook his head slowly. "My dear, I have loved you since that night long ago when I stood beneath a picture and knew you for the model. I was glad when Thalia broke the last bond between us, and I waited until I was free so that I might go to you proudly. I waited too long, perhaps, but I tried to help. Kenneth Graham——"

"Then it was you——" She swallowed hard. "It was you who sent Ken Graham. I always wondered."

He laughed down at her tenderly. "And I who urged Terry to write you again and again. I've been here a long time, Norma, waiting for you to come home. You see, I couldn't go to you back there. I've been patient, darling, but I can still wait if——"

She reached up and laid her fragrant hands against his scarred face, that was suddenly not unbeautiful. "A little while, Richard. Only a little while."

In that instant, scarcely able to realize what had happened to her, Norma knew one song had ended, and another was born in her heart; a new song that would have no bitter echo. A song in her heart! Richard's song and Richard's voice would heal her own scarred soul and lull all memory to sleep.

She moved her hand then, and in its place she laid her yielding lips. "Only until to-morrow."

LOVE in the

PLE-EASE!" Maxine grinned engagingly up at the lean masculine legs astride the locomotive. "If you insist on snapping me from that angle, do let me arrange my hat."

The man's camera froze and his long legs stiffened. But Maxine, tipping her sun hat at a perkier slant and arranging the skirt of her play suit so that only a flicker of tanned knee showed, didn't notice.

"Ready!" She raised a pointed chin and widened a pair of snapping black eyes. "Be sure and count so I can expose my teeth on three!" She exposed them as she spoke. They were white, even, and shiny.

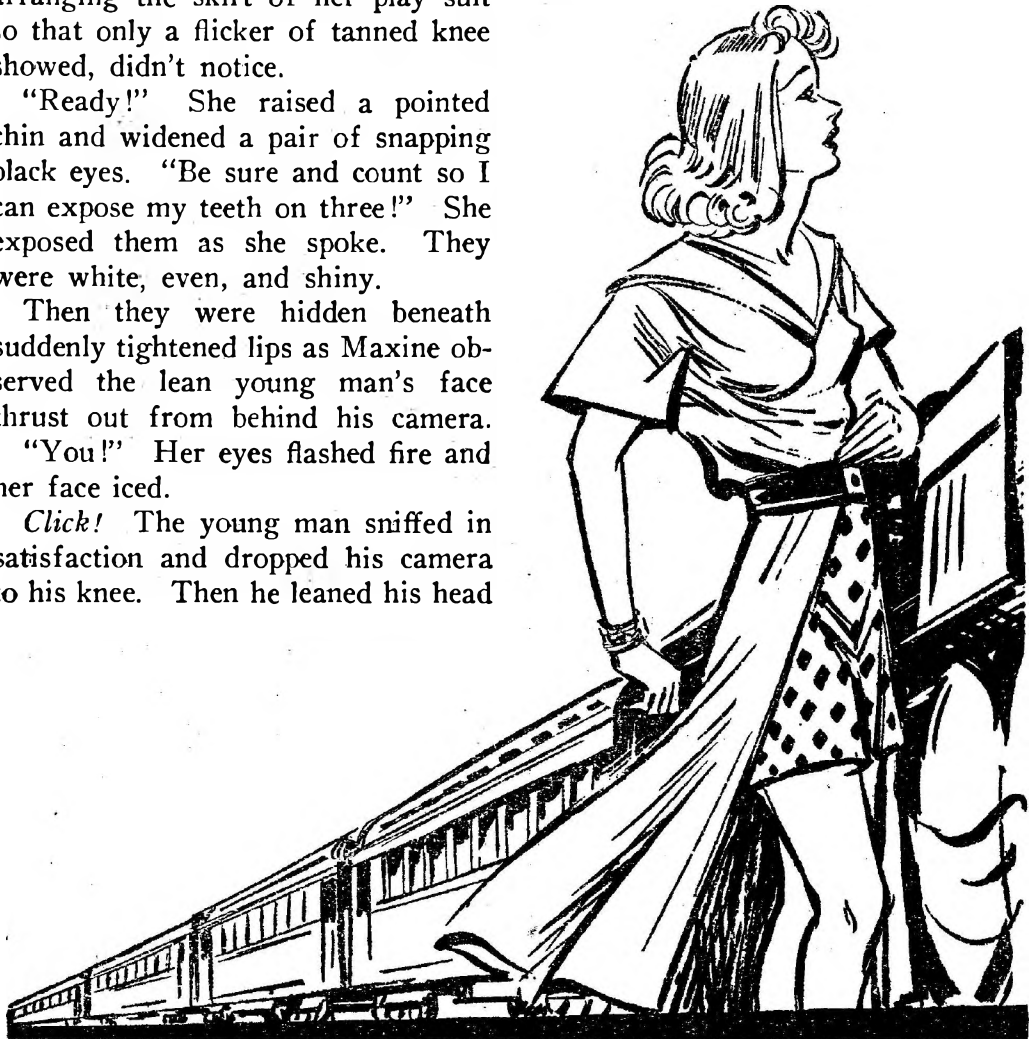
Then they were hidden beneath suddenly tightened lips as Maxine observed the lean young man's face thrust out from behind his camera.

"You!" Her eyes flashed fire and her face iced.

Click! The young man sniffed in satisfaction and dropped his camera to his knee. Then he leaned his head

against the locomotive's smokestack and observed:

"I've always wanted a picture of you in a rage, darling. Eyes like black agates, mouth a snarl, nose a



NEGATIVE

By ELLEN FARLEY



growl. Just to look at, in the seldom moments when I still get sentimental over you."

Maxine whitened beneath her creamy tan. "You beast! Taking that ghastly picture!" She clenched her fists. "If I'd thought, for one moment, that you'd be on this snapshot excursion I'd have never——"

"Set foot on a train tainted with Luke Reinhart's dastardly footsteps." The young man grinned nastily, though his gray eyes weren't amused as they surveyed Maxine's five-foot-three of slim curves, tanned skin, black eyes, riotous black curls.

"Liar!" he added cheerfully, squinting at the shadow of the watering trough in front of the squat country depot. "You probably came in hopes you'd get a look at me and my camera." He showed flashing teeth in a wide smile. "Been lonesome, honey?"

Maxine nearly melted beneath that "honey," lilted out in Luke's deepest, gayest, tenderest voice. Luke, for all his angularity, always spoke like a cello slightly off key. But she didn't melt, quite.

Not even if she had missed him, more than she would admit, even to herself. Not even if she had—she admitted that now, fiercely—gotten Frazer to come on this Berkshire excursion because, in the back of her mind was the hope that she might catch a glimpse of Luke.

"Lonesome?" Her laugh tinkled out between scarlet lips like ice water from a wine-red pitcher. "For what? Fighting with you? Listening to your insults because I had a special illustration to finish and couldn't keep my date with you? Date! That's funny. A date hiking through Grand

Central Station, looking for 'unique chiaroscuro effects,' for light seeping through shade. Bah!" Maxine's lip curled. "Lonesome for the wasp that stung my peace of mind?"

Luke chuckled. "Me, too, honey." His eyes had gone cold. "It's been pretty swell, staying out all night and not having to listen to you jaw your head off about how you'd be darned if you'd marry a man with a camera for a heart." He took up the kodak and tilted it at her, face going eager. "Hold it! The angle of your figure against that watering trough, with your legs sending out that long black shadow—— Say, I might sell this for an ad to the excursion train!"

Maxine, trying not to notice how chestnutty his head was against the black smokestack, scuffled her feet furiously, raising a cloud of dust. "You won't take me, darn you! When we were engaged, I got a stiff neck from more than enough of your trick shots, and anyway——"

GOOD grief, Maxine, where have you been hiding?" A new voice broke in, the faintest tinge of annoyance in its smooth modulation.

Maxine swung and gazed at the tall form approaching her from around the corner of the depot. Fighting with Luke, she'd quite forgotten Frazer!

"I am sorry." She turned her back on the figure sliding down the locomotive. "I came back to the train for some film——" Her voice broke off nervously. She hoped Luke hadn't heard. No such luck.

"Film!" His musical, sardonic voice was close to her ear. "Don't tell me you've taken up photography! You who berated, abused and tor-

tured me about my picture-taking, when——”

“When I was so loony as to be engaged to you!” She shot him a glare from hot, black eyes. Then she swung to Frazer, trying to feel glad because he was taller, heavier, and handsomer than Luke. “This is Mr. Reinhart, Frazer. You’ve heard me mention his work? Mr. Reinhart, Mr. Torrey.”

Luke grinned as they shook hands. Frazer smiled.

“I have seen some of your stuff.” Frazer’s tone was the least bit condescending. “Staff photographer for United Service, aren’t you?”

Luke nodded. “Right-o. And you’re publisher of the Torrey magazine string. Glad to know you. If you ever need a spread of good shots, let me know. My price is expensive, but not prohibitive.” He chewed on his tongue.

Frazer looked puzzled and somewhat ill at ease. Maxine raged. Luke could always puncture a stuffed shirt. No! Frazer wasn’t stuffy. He just seemed sort of dignified beside Luke’s breezy impertinence.

She came to Frazer’s rescue:

“You don’t go in for the trick stuff, do you, Fraze?” Her smile, sweet as honey, flashed toward him. “We”—just the slightest stress there—“prefer the artistic to the bizarre.”

Frazer shot her a thankful look, then pulled down his brows. “Right!” he intoned. “The Torrey string goes in for artists like Miss Bryon——”

“That’s me!” she sugared.

“Don’t apologize.” Luke grinned, raising one quizzical lid. “You can’t help it if your readers keep your string old-fashioned. But when you

do go modern——” He patted his camera with a browned hand.

Maxine flushed. Darn him! He could always get the better of any one. Poor Frazer, for all his handsome smoothness, didn’t have a chance. She opened her lips to scathe Luke. But then——

LUKEY boy!” The voice, Maxine decided even before she turned, must belong to a moron. It was lispy, wispy, and whiney. “I’ve been simply everywhere looking for you. A man on Bear Cliff said he hadn’t seen anything of a boy with chestnut hair. I told him you weren’t a boy exactly and it wasn’t chestnut, exactly. Sort of molasses. About twenty-five. But he said——”

The voice limped on as if each word were to be its last. Maxine, wanting to laugh and cry both at once, gazed at the girl. She was small, slim, lovely. Her body, like her lisping voice, was languorous. Her eyes were cornflower-blue, her mouth pale-pink, her hair a mist of silvery curls.

Maxine, who was tanned and alive, felt like a forest fire. She turned amazed eyes to Luke—the man who had fought with her because she trespassed upon his freedom—and found him observing the girl with a kind of dumb admiration.

Luke, adoring a moron! For there was no doubt about it—the girl just wasn’t bright.

Listen to her go it:

“The man at the waterfall explained that he hadn’t seen you, unless, of course, you had come down disguised as a fish. That was funny. I told him it was funny, but he didn’t

pay much attention. Lukey boy, you did say you'd be at Bear Cliff, didn't you? Or at the waterfall? You wanted to get rid of me!" She looked hurt and crestfallen.

Luke shook his head solemnly, the dumb look still on his face. "I certainly did not, honey. I wouldn't try to get rid of you for anything in the whole world. I just happened to think that a shot from the top of the engine might be unusual, so I hiked back——"

"Oh, Lukey boy! We're talking and not paying any attention to these people." This was accompanied by a careless look at Maxine and a lingering gaze at Frazer.

Maxine didn't know what Frazer thought of this moronic Venus. She didn't bother to look to see. What she was studying was Luke's face. He thought the girl was wonderful! Luke, who'd scolded her once for crying when he broke a date to take her to the Artists' Ball!

"That's right!" Luke spoke like a fish returning to water. "This is an old friend, Maxine Bryon. Her companion, Frazer Torrey. Aubrey Hall, secretary to Ted Knox—of the Knox films, you know."

Maxine came to attention. Knox films. That was the firm Luke hoped to interest in his new sensitizer when he had it perfected. Had he found the formula?

But then she was bowing to Aubrey and her wondering was dissolved in ire. Aubrey bowed, never looking at Maxine, as she showered the stars from her cornflower eyes in Frazer's direction.

"How do you do?" Nobody heard Maxine.

"I'm delighted, Miss Hall." Frazer looked it, too.

"This is a real pleasure. Really it is, Mr. Torrey. I really must shake hands with you. A real live publisher!"

She said it as if he were king of the jungle and she a little red hen. Maxine, ignored, gritted her teeth as she watched Frazer melt under that attack.

She glanced at Luke and found him standing practically open-mouthed. The girl had bewitched him!

He'd never looked like a fish, frightened out of his fins, when Maxine was his girl.

"Close your mouth!" She ground the words under her breath as she stepped close to him and away from the two absorbed in each other.

Luke looked startled. But he closed his mouth.

He soon had it open again, however, this time to say, "Listen, Aubrey, there's that shot at Bear Cliff I want to get. The shadow ought to be pretty tricky now."

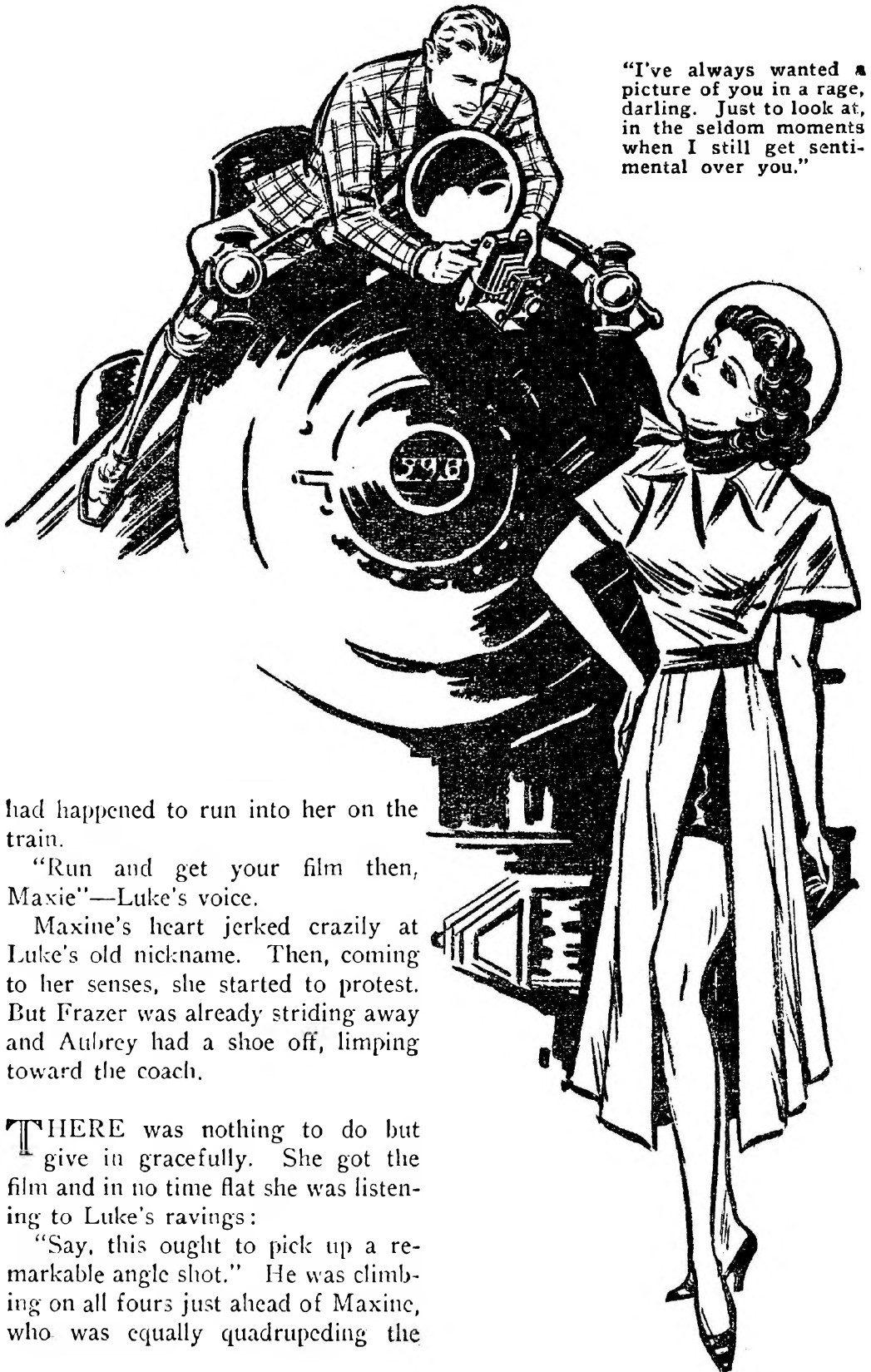
Aubrey turned, pouting. "Oh, Lukey boy, I don't want to go."

Frazer put in, "You said something about a picture from the cliff, Maxine, when you came back for the film. Why not run along with Reinhart? Miss Hall and I'll amuse ourselves."

"I've just got to take off my shoes," said Aubrey, looking prettily down at her slippers. "I'll run inside and rest."

Frazer added, "Right. And I'll hunt around for Miss Kenny. Don't want her to feel we're ignoring her."

Miss Kenny was an orange-skirted young lady from Frazer's office. He



"I've always wanted a picture of you in a rage, darling. Just to look at, in the seldom moments when I still get sentimental over you."

had happened to run into her on the train.

"Run and get your film then, Maxie"—Luke's voice.

Maxine's heart jerked crazily at Luke's old nickname. Then, coming to her senses, she started to protest. But Frazer was already striding away and Aubrey had a shoe off, limping toward the coach.

THERE was nothing to do but give in gracefully. She got the film and in no time flat she was listening to Luke's ravings:

"Say, this ought to pick up a remarkable angle shot." He was climbing on all fours just ahead of Maxine, who was equally quadrupeding the

steep embankment that inclined sandily to Bear Cliff.

"Angle shot! Trick stuff!" Maxine grated out the words as she ejected a tongueful of sand. "I should think that sometime, just once, you'd take a picture because it was beautiful. Tricky!" She clawed desperately at a scrub pine. "Honestly"—clinging to the stubby trunk—"if you saw St. Somebody-Or-Other come back to earth, you'd get her picture standing on her head on a well handle!"

Luke climbed over the edge of the cliff and peered downward, eyes sardonic. He sang out:

"I'm getting close to a hundred bucks a week for trick shots. And that's more than your artistic work at Torrey's is bringing you!"

She struggled up beside him, ignoring the hand he stretched out. "That's what you think. Listen, Lukey boy, I'm making exactly seventy-five a week. And next month I'm heading to Europe at a hundred per. Which," she added bitterly, "is what a gal can get if she's single and not tied to some domineering, obstinate——"

Her voice died away as she realized that she sounded as if she'd thought, at times, of what she had given up when they had called it a day. She unslung her camera from the strap over her shoulder.

"Me, too, sweet," Luke agreed, eyes looking levelly into hers. "There's nothing like being free and easy."

Maxine had a bitter taste in her mouth, thinking of Aubrey. "Free and easy, with a caramel sticking to one's arm!"

Luke, removing his camera from its case, shot her a quick look and

grinned. "Cute, isn't she? Jealous?" he asked.

She whitened. "Listen, boy, I haven't given you a second thought since——"

"I," he broke in casually, "was referring to Frazer. Seems as if he were taking a fall!"

Maxine boiled. He'd trapped her! "He likes a pretty face," she flung out. "That's all."

Luke grunted, eyes suddenly losing their unfriendliness. "He acts like a playboy to me, Maxie. I wouldn't trust——"

"He's a swell guy!" she defended. He was, too. Not as charming as Luke, maybe. Not so like a swift wind, gay, impudent, unconcerned. More like a—a pillar. Handsome, steady, upright. Maybe a little self-centered, a little pompous. That was all. What if he was more than nice to Miss Kenny? What if he looked at Aubrey with more than animation? Even a pillar should have some feelings, and a pretty face was a pretty face.

"Is he?" Luke sounded unconvinced.

"Swell," she repeated stubbornly. "I may be marrying him one of these days."

"Oh!" Luke was fussing with his camera. "You love him?"

"I haven't decided. But he's the kind of man any woman ought to marry."

"Yeah? Money?"

"I wasn't thinking of that." She stared into the valley below. "He understands that a woman needs attention and romance. He sends me orchids and he also wants me to go to Europe even if we're married be-

fore the job breaks. He's broad-minded and—and romantic."

Luke said, "I'm glad. Take a good man to like having his wife race around creation while he's remembering to send her violets at Singapore and gardenias at Peiping." He yawned elaborately. "You're lucky. I would never remember to send my wife orchids in Singapore, to say nothing of wanting her to gallivant to Peiping."

Maxine flung out, "No, you'd expect her to stay at home while you went snapping pictures of idiots dancing on their hands. You'd expect her to be glad when you wrote home from Paris that you couldn't possibly be home for Christmas as you'd planned the Fourth of July. You'd——"

"Seems as if I've heard all that before," Luke interrupted, closing his eyes and leaning his head against a pine-tree bole. "Except that you've got some new variations. What's the use of fighting over something neither of us wanted? We agreed, I thought, that you infringed on my freedom and I infringed on yours. You demanded too much—er, romantic attention. I demanded that any wife of mine would go with me or stay at home. No solitary gallivanting. What's the use of going over it again?" His voice was weary.

MAXINE, flushing, got to her feet. He was right. They had hashed and rehashed that controversy until she knew both sides by heart. Yet here she was, harping on it again, as if she hadn't found the perfect man, as if Luke hadn't found the perfect girl. Frazer for orchids and Aubrey for femininity.

She asked, not able to help herself, "You like Aubrey?"

He was standing, too, playing with the camera strap. "Sure. She's great."

Maxine said, "Not so—er, bright, is she?"

Luke grinned. "Aubrey's plenty bright. It's just that she acts dumber than she is."

"Oh," she murmured, "that is fortunate, don't you think?"

"Kitty, kitty," Luke rebuked mockingly. He was moving toward the left where a huge oak flung out its branches over the cliff. Maxine, flushing, stared toward the valley. She saw the depot, squat and red, the locomotive, a black beetle. She could even see figures ambling in the sun and shade. One, near the watering trough, looked like Frazer. If she wanted to put on that telescopic contraction she had paid thirty-five good dollars for and had the man at the shop put on, she could get a close-up that might be something. But she didn't know how the thing worked and she wouldn't ask Luke!

"Swell shot," Luke was musing from the other side. "I could climb into that tree"—he eyed the swaying branches of the oak near the cliff's edge—"take the scene through branches, and then bring out the figures down there with the infra-red filter I perfected."

Maxine, heart beating, swung. "Luke! You didn't—you couldn't perfect it!"

Luke, already squirming his long legs up the oak, shot her a grin. "Sure! I'm just waiting for a decent bid from Knox. Then"—he was out on the limb, camera balanced crazily—"I'm off to South America by plane. I've always wanted to show what kind of water shots I could get

with my chrome speed film. Bet I can snap everything but the fishes six fathoms down." He was focusing, neatly.

"But, Luke, that's wonderful! You've planned so, hoped so!" A throaty quaver in her voice brought her up short. She eyed him out there on the limb, unconcerned, indifferent. Biting her lip, she turned back to her contemplation of the valley. "Now"—her voice was nasty again—"you can afford to hire the Symphony Orchestra to balance their bassoons on the ends of their noses. What a tricky shot that would make!"

Luke's shout, from the oak tree, swung her around:

"I'm sick of your sarcasm!" No indifference now. "Who ever told you you knew enough about photography to criticize me? You and your artistry! Bah!" His angry face peered out at her from the leaves. "You couldn't take an artistic shot of Notre Dame if there were an angel balanced on every pinnacle!"

"Hah-hah!" She laughed hollowly. "Is that so?" She squinted challengingly up at him. "Suppose I take an artistic shot of this scene, here, just to prove to you——" She was thinking rapidly, recalling the instructions from her book of photography.

"Suppose you do?" He shouted so hard he tipped sidewise and had to clutch wildly at the limb with his knee. Face slanted lopsided, he bellowed, "And then suppose you try to sell it to some one? I'll bet you can't get fifty cents"—a grunt as he righted himself—"for it."

"I'll bet I can get fifty dollars!"

She fought her way to the edge of the cliff, mind racing. If only she

could recall what the book had said. Clouds. They were lovely, white, and downy. No. Clouds weren't rare enough and anyway she couldn't catch them. The locomotive—that was it—the locomotive reflected in the river behind it, and that girl in the red bandanna hiding in the shadow, her lovely legs an artistic contrast to the black power of the engine.

That was it. She peered into the finder. It would be beautiful. She'd show that insufferable Luke that she could do something more than draw ads—that he wasn't the only one who could squiggle a camera. Maxine seethed as she snapped the picture.

ALL the way home, sitting with Frazer, opposite Aubrey and Luke, she continued to seethe.

Outside, she pressed her legs against the green plush seat and smiled. Inside, her blood raced like a raging inferno. Inside, she wanted to grind Luke to a pulp and Aubrey to a mash.

She was even annoyed at Frazer, sitting with a cross-word puzzle under his nose. She was sorry she'd defended him to Luke, when he'd brought up the subject again, on their way down from Bear Cliff. "He's a philanderer," said Luke, "and you're a fool to marry him. Not that I care!"

He'd certainly spoke the truth in that last. He'd forgotten Maxine existed now that he was within the radius of Aubrey's moronic glow. He practically fawned on the girl. Where was his independence, his desire for freedom? She stared, furiously, at the expression on his face.

The idiot! Well, she didn't care. She and Luke were through—had

been for months, and would be forever. It was herself, now, her work, and Frazer.

He was the man for her. Gallant, charming, broad-minded. She looked at him now, then frowned. He was so absorbed in that puzzle.

"What's a four-letter word for a person lacking in brains?" he asked suddenly.

"Luke," said Maxine.

And that was the last she spoke to Luke or Aubrey. They got off at the next station.

"Left the car here," explained Luke, picking up his paraphernalia. Maxine tried not to keep staring at his lean awkwardness, his mobile mouth, his thin face. She tried not to notice the sharp pain in her heart when she saw him swing down a brief case from the rack—an old, worn brown one that she had given him over two years ago.

She tried to wave her hand carelessly when they started down the aisle, not even answering when Luke breezed, "Don't forget our bet, Miss Bryon."

"Bet?" asked Aubrey. "Did you play a game on the cliff?"

"Yes," Luke answered harshly as he swung off. "We played a game called, 'I-never-could-stand-you-and-I-can't-stand-you-now.'"

"Oh," she piped, "what a funny game!"

Maxine, gritting her teeth at the window, wondered how a girl could possibly be so dumb.

AFTER they had gone, she was silent. She just grunted when Frazer said, "Nice little thing."

But when he added, "Not too brainy, though," she turned and al-

most hugged him. He did have sense! Her kind feeling toward him lasted all the way back to her apartment.

But it faded when he said in his warm voice that was heavy with passion:

"Why don't you make up your mind, Maxine? You know I love you." He looked hungrily into her alive, piquant face. "I wouldn't ask a thing from you, except yourself."

She shivered at the desire in his voice. And then she knew she didn't love him, could never love him. Desire in Luke's mellow voice sent an answering desire flaming through her blood. But Frazer left her cold. She told him frankly that it was "No" and always would be "No."

It wasn't until after he'd said he was sorry and left, that she remembered that refusing Frazer might mean her job, might mean that she had lost the trip to Europe—the trip she'd longed for, for years and years.

It didn't matter. Yes, it did matter. But not enough. A girl couldn't sell herself for a job.

She walked back and forth, frantically. She had thought she had found some one in Frazer who answered all her demands in a husband. But she'd been wrong. No, not wrong.

It was just that no one could ever please her because she still loved Luke. She'd always love him, for all his impossibleness as a husband.

So what? At her window, looking out over the city, she asked herself if she had been a fool to give him up. A fool not to know that there'd never be any one else?

No. She had had to give him up.



She couldn't marry a man who had a camera for a heart. Luke had never even tried to pretend that she came first. And then, too, he had been afraid that she'd rob him of his freedom.

That was it. Each had been afraid that the other would be a hindrance to his comings and goings, and neither had been willing to give in an inch.

If Luke wanted to start for China, he didn't want a wife to hold him back. If she wanted to start for England to draw for a style show, she didn't want Luke objecting.

That was why they had parted. She had refused to give in, and she still refused! Anger rising, Maxine pulled furiously at the window cord.

It was right for a wife to demand

a life of her own. Luke had no business asking her to give up her sketching. But he hadn't. It was just that he'd insisted she wouldn't accept any offer that carried her away from him.

He wanted her to be like Aubrey—beautiful and dumb. What if she had been? Maybe the Aubreys of this world ended up carrying the masculine bouquets.

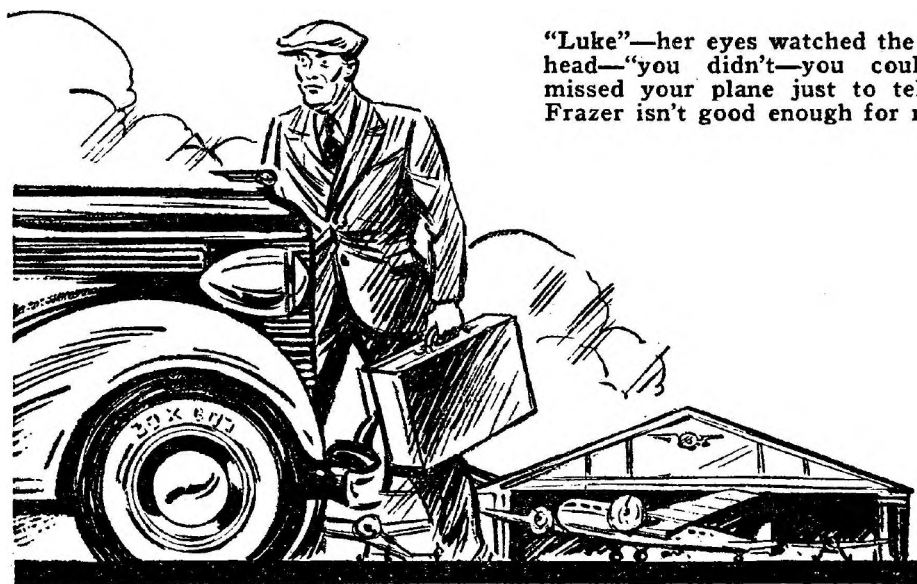
Thinking of Aubrey, Maxine's anger mounted. Her thoughts took her back over the excursion and up Bear Cliff to the bet she had made with Luke.

IT was two hours later that the telephone jangled. She hurriedly placed the negative on the drying rack.

Frazer was on the line:

"Maxine, I'm sorry to get you out of bed, but that style show opens in London next Tuesday. It's been advanced a week. That means you'll have to sail to-morrow morning. I've booked passage for you on the *Queen Mary*."

Sail! England! "But I thought——" He wasn't going to fire her!



"Luke"—her eyes watched the ship overhead—"you didn't—you couldn't have missed your plane just to tell me that Frazer isn't good enough for me!"

The picture she had made! Wouldn't it be grand if it were beautiful? If she could find a buyer— She hurried into the dark room she had rigged up in a closet off the kitchen. She unrolled the film and put on an apron. It was late, almost midnight. But she decided to develop that film if it took all night.

She opened her instruction book.

He laughed. "That I'd changed my mind? My dear, after all, you are a neat little artist, and I'm a business man first and a scorned suitor afterward."

"Oh, Frazer!" Her voice broke. She wanted to tell him that she would marry him, he was so swell. But she couldn't. After all, gratitude, even for a dream made true, wasn't love.

"I'll be ready," she said, and hung up carefully.

SHE was dashing around madly the following morning, throwing clothes into a steamer trunk purchased when Frazer first mentioned the London job months ago, when the phone rang.

Luke's mellow voice sent a stab to the pit of her stomach.

"'Lo, Maxie. I called to tell you that the bet is off. I can't wait. I'm on to South America in two hours."

"Oh," said Maxine, knuckles white as she clenched her hands. All night long, as she lay awake, she'd fought to stop thinking of him. Now she couldn't fight any longer. For his voice was in her ears, in her mind and heart. "I'm glad. We're both pretty end-of-the-worldish, aren't we?"

"You're off somewhere, too?" His tone was sharp.

She said:

"To London." Why did she want to cry?

"I see. You're going on your honeymoon?"

She forced a laugh. Let him think so, if he wanted to. He was probably kissing Aubrey good-by right then. "I'm off on the *Queen Mary* this morning. See you in Paris." She hung up.

For a long time afterward she just sat, staring in front of her. The bet was off. Funny, he'd call to tell her that! Unless he was afraid she had taken a good shot, afraid that he wasn't the only person in the universe who could refashion the world through a lens.

Jumping up quickly, she hurried into the dark room. She'd forgotten

the print after Frazer called the night before. She'd develop it now. If it was good, she'd mail it to Luke with a cool note—something to show she didn't care.

She took the negative from the drying rack. Her fingers flew through the instruction book. Her eyes skimmed the pages. And then it was done. She snapped off the red light and carried the developed picture into the living room. She went close to the window, studying the print.

She sickened with disappointment. It wasn't artistic. It was ugly! The locomotive right up front, covering the whole picture, blotting out the river. That girl bending over—over a brief case? Maxine frowned. Somehow, she had taken the shot with the telescopic lens! It was if she were within twenty feet of the girl—of Aubrey!

It was she, lovely as ever, and just as dumb. No! Maxine gasped. Aubrey's face, half turned to the camera, didn't look vaporish or dull. The lips were compressed, the nostrils pinched.

Maxine shivered and brought the picture nearer. Aubrey was searching through a brief case—a brief case with L. R. on the lower right-hand corner. Luke's brief case! Aubrey's right hand was hidden in the secret compartment that only Luke and Maxine knew about. Aubrey was spying into Luke's business.

But why?

Maxine's mind raced. Aubrey, playing dumb when she wasn't. Aubrey, working for Knox films.

She was after Luke's formula! Maybe she had it! But even so, Luke could be warned.

MAXINE grabbed a dress and slithered into it. Then she slipped the picture into her hand bag and streaked for the door, but there she stopped short. What time was it? She looked at the clock. Nine fifteen, and the *Queen Mary* left at ten. She could never make it. Then, without a second of indecision, she was out the door and racing down the stairs.

Luke wasn't at his apartment. The doorman said something about, "Mr. Reinhart was goin' to the airport at——"

Maxine flung herself into the taxi. "Roosevelt Field."

The big ship would be ready to take off—taking Luke to South America. Only, it mustn't be too late. Luke had lived for that formula. He would die if some one stole it. He mustn't be gone.

But he was. For, as the taxi swooped into the gate, Maxine heard the drone of the ship overhead. The taxi stopped and she got out, raising sick, wretched eyes.

And then she saw Luke. He was striding toward her, unseeing.

LUKE!" she screamed, and raced to him.

"What in the devil?" Luke shouted, dropping his bags. "I was just going after you. I happened to look at my snaps just as the plane was starting."

He reached for his pocket as Maxine reached into her hand bag. Each brought out a picture and thrust it under the other's nose.

"There, if you think so much of that Torrey guy——"

"There, if you think that Aubrey is so swell——"

They spoke together, paused, looked at each other, then began again simultaneously:

"See, Torrey's kissing that orange-skirted brunette——"

"Aubrey's going through your brief case——"

Again they paused, met each other's wondering eyes, dazedly exchanged pictures.

Maxine saw Torrey, ardently holding Miss Kenny in his arms, in the shade of the locomotive.

"But Luke"—her eyes watched the ship overhead—"you didn't—you couldn't have missed your plane to tell me that!"

Luke, grinning and awkward, was saying:

"When I took a look at that shot—— Say, I couldn't have that smoothie pulling the wool over your eyes, Maxie. He isn't one third good enough for you." He studied her picture, then, glancing at his wrist watch, "But, Maxie, you'll never make the boat!" His eyes were trying to shine. "You didn't miss the *Queen Mary*? And where's your fiancé?"

"I did and he isn't," Maxine answered confusedly. "He's not important. I decided that last night. But that Aubrey——"

Luke's grin was still spreading. "I got 'that Aubrey' last night. To the tune of fifty thousand. She swiped a fake formula and I caught her, red-handed. This morning, I put it up to Knox. A sale or a law suit. So it was a sale."

Maxine's mouth dropped. "Then you knew about her?"

"Sure. Just a spy. I led her on. Say, you didn't think"—he looked smug, masculine and adorable—"that

I fell for that dumb line? Listen, you!" He took her arm. "Close your mouth!"

She closed it, and Luke placed a swift kiss on her lips.

Then he said:

"Listen, Maxie, we've just got to stick together. No sense in this separation business. Why, honey, I'm just crazy about you!"

Maxine tossed out in a last defiance, "Maybe, after you're crazy about your camera."

"Taxi?" The driver had Luke's bags.

Luke pushed her into the cab and closed the door.

"Why, honey"—his eyes were warm and hungry—"you don't come after anything. That camera——" He looked around, his face falling. He flung open the door and waved crazily toward the heavens, where the plane was a dot in the east. "Stop!" he yelled. "I left my camera——" His shout died to a shamefaced mumble as the taxi driver drawled:

"Don't think he heard you, mister."

Maxine pulled Luke into the cab's snugness. Her face was incredulous, glowing. "It can't be true. You forgot your camera!" She breathed a sigh of complete content. "Never mind, honey, I'll give you mine."



Fair Exchange

HE gave me jewels, silks and lace,
 He gave me mink and sable;
 I tried to give him happiness——
 As much as I was able.

There was no thing his thoughtfulness
 Did not, in time, provide;
 While I—I only gave him love,
 Yet he was satisfied.

Marjorie Hunt Pettit.



Starlight

By RUTH D'AGOSTINO

II

JULIE stared at James Latham, her eyes wide.

"Jimmie accused of murder?" Her voice was hushed to an alarmed whisper when finally she spoke. "But that can't be."

"Perhaps it can't but it is," came wearily from the man.

Julie was silent. Her eyes were sparks of light, burning, vital. Her brain seethed. Young Jimmie was there behind the closed door of her bedroom. Should she tell his father that he was there and so could not have committed murder? But there her thought stopped. She didn't know what he had been doing or where he had been while she was at

the theater. She had no alibi for that time, though she was sure Jimmie, in spite of his impulsiveness, would never kill. But her faith in him could prove nothing.

And his father had warned him to keep away from her. Once more Julie paused on a thought as she gazed intently at Jayell. Had he felt as Jimmie said about her? Did he merely want to break them up and then hold her up for ridicule by deserting her, too? Or was he sincere?

She heard Jayell's voice again, not bitter particularly, just weary, tired:

"Good drink, high play, soft lips. They've been too much for the boy. But who am I to criticize? He comes honestly by his love of good living, dangerous living. But I was lucky. That's the trouble. You never can tell whether your children, inheriting your strengths and weaknesses will also inherit your luck. Don't ever collect yourself a family, Julie." He looked at her intently for a moment. "Perhaps if his mother had lived——"

His words and Julie's thought were interrupted by the buzzing of the house telephone. It was the doorman on the wire. His voice was both alarmed and apologetic.

"Two officers are on their way up to your apartment, Miss Star," he said. "I tried to make them wait for announcement but they pulled their guns and badges and shoved past us."

That left no indecision for her. She turned from the telephone quickly and went to her room to speak in a whisper to the two waiting there:

"There's a balcony outside that window that runs all the way around the building. Go to the last apartment on the next wall of this build-

ing. Alex Richetti lives there. Tell him I sent you and he'll let you go through his apartment and down to the street. Be sure to close this window after you."

Her voice was calm but urgent. She touched Cilla's hand just an instant with her own and then turned back to the living room and Jayell.

At least Jimmie would not be caught there by officers before he had time to gather his wits.

"Officers coming here," Julie said quietly to the waiting man.

"But they have no right to disturb you."

Julie smiled.

"I've been Jimmie's friend, you know. And I'm an actress. Of course they'll come here. I——" A banging at the door interrupted and Julie hurried to answer it.

It was apparent that the officers had expected to take her by surprise and startle her into saying things that would seal the case against Jimmie and involve herself. But it was an old game to Julie. An actress was prey to scandal. She had seen more than one decent chorus girl or entertainer yanked out of her bed at night and dragged to a police station to be unmercifully quizzed in connection with some crime. "Look for the woman," she felt had been changed to, "Look for the girl of the theater."

THERE were three men, but only two of them talked. The third stood looking at her oddly, speculatively, while his companions, taking it for granted that she knew nothing yet of the murder, tried to get admissions of jealousy, of an affair, of a possible motive in Jimmie's wish to be rid of all other women.

Before Julie had time to voice a reply, Jayell was beside her, bringing the officers who were about to start a rough search of her apartment to an abrupt and embarrassed halt.

The men seemed unduly startled at seeing Jayell.

"What does this mean?" he asked sharply. And then to the third man, less sharply: "Hello, Blake. Staying on the job, good boy! Julie, this is our ace police reporter, Paul Blake. Miss Star, Paul."

The officers had drawn back and there was subtle respect in their attitude as Jayell turned to them again.

"We thought"—fumbling with the words—"it was the young James that was a friend of Miss Star's."

"That's the trouble with you fellows," Jayell told them. "One-track minds. There's no reason for annoying Miss Star. Nor is there any reason"—he was looking very directly at the officer who seemed to be in charge—"for accusing any one until you know. It would be wise, it seems to me, for you to keep this whole thing quiet until you have facts. You wouldn't like this added to the list of the crimes you've bungled in solution by trailing the wrong person until the right one had completely covered his tracks? That would be a long list to publish in the paper, you know, and it might awaken some one to wondering why

his tax money was going to pay so inefficient a department. Take that suggestion to the commissioner."

"Yes, sir," came politely from the officer. "I'll do that, sir."

Paul Blake remained behind a moment to speak to his boss. He was smiling, a thin, dry smile.

"You know how to handle them, chief," he said quietly.

"I hate to do a thing like that, Blake," Jayell said, the weariness returning to his manner. "But I've got to resort to any method that will work right now."

"It's all in the game. They were trying to gang up on Miss Star"—with an appreciative glance at the lovely Julie.

"Stick with them, Blake. Keep me informed. We've got to clear this up before it gets out. I can't have Jimmie

living his life with a murder charge trailing him."

Blake was on his way with the officers. Julie read with ease the man's devotion to his chief. She turned to Jayell gratefully.

"Thank you," she said simply, but her voice was deep with emotion. "For me and for Jimmie."

He glanced at her questioningly and then stayed the words that would have come to his lips. This was no time to quibble over who loved whom. Jimmie's happiness, perhaps his life hung in the balance.

"Julie"—his voice very earnest—

SYNOPSIS:

Julie Star, Broadway actress, at a cocktail party with James Latham, Jr., slips away with his young father while the younger man is getting her a drink. Later they wind up at Julie's apartment and Jimmie is there waiting for them. He quarrels with his father, accusing him of simply wanting to cut him out and then throw Julie over, because he does not think too well of stage people. Julie is hurt and there is misunderstanding among all three when Jimmie finds himself accused of murdering one of the showgirls he had been playing around with.

"when a woman you've adored puts in your care a life that wells from the very depths of her love for you, you follow that life all your days. It's a thing you have no choice about. You just do if you have any decency at all."

"I know."

"And now, the question is where do we go from here? If I only knew where Jimmie was. He wasn't home, wasn't in any of his familiar haunts. It's well enough to put up a bold front with the police, but I admit to you that I'm utterly at sea. I——"

They both turned at a sound in the room and Jayell stopped speaking.

Jimmie stood before them.

"Here I am," he said. "What's happened? Were cops here? Well, aren't either of you going to say anything?"

"Jimmie!" Julie came out of her stupefaction first. "But I thought I told you to leave?"

"So you did, but I'm not taking orders from a woman yet. And I'm not sneaking away because dad is on the warpath!"

"How do you happen to be here, Jimmie?" his father finally asked. As Julie looked at them, Jayell seemed scarcely older. He had been twenty, he had told her, when Jimmie was born. Forty-five now, and a young forty-five.

"What's it to you? It's none of your business whose apartment I'm in."

"Jimmie!" Julie protested softly.

"I'm not so sure about that," Jayell said. "Look at yourself. Have you been drinking? Can you account for to-night? Do you realize you're being accused of the murder of Rita Braun?"

Jimmie stared at his father a moment and read in the man's face that there was no trick about this. His father was in deadly earnest and troubled.

"That can't be true. I haven't seen Rita Braun for a week!"

Julie felt a sense of pride in him; there was such fearlessness about him. And it would have been so easy to have slipped away and not let his father see that he had been there. He had good stuff, the boy.

"But you did know her?"

"Yes." Julie was glad that he didn't add what he might have, that many other men knew Rita Braun, too.

"And you gave her gifts which she probably has in her apartment?"

"Certainly. It was only the decent thing to do. Gifts and money."

"I see." Father's and son's eyes met levelly. "Well, at least you are honest." There was a silence. Then: "But you are in a spot, Jimmie. The girl left a note blaming you."

Jimmie started and for the first time showed signs of being disturbed.

"Rita wouldn't have done that," he said quickly. "She always played the game fairly. She knew what we meant to each other. There was never any pretense about that."

"Girls do change, though, and they get bitter and vengeful."

"Not Rita. It was all too clear between us."

"You mean that so far as real affection was concerned there was some one else with her?" Jayell asked hopefully.

"Yes. There always had been. It wasn't that sort of thing with us at all. I mean love. We just got along together. She was a swell play-

fellow. I'm sorry"—he shivered slightly—"she's dead."

"We may have something there," the older Latham said thoughtfully.

"What killed her?" Jimmie asked, still chilled by the thought.

"That has not yet been discovered. Some poison that is not immediately apparent. They're on that now."

Jayell rose. His eyes were haggard as they appealed to Julie. And there was something hurt in them that puzzled her until after he had gone.

"There's no use keeping you up with our troubles," he said gently to her. "Please forgive this intrusion"—a trace of formality in the words. "Perhaps you can understand my anxiety. You're coming with me, Jimmie?"

The youth hesitated.

"I'll stay a moment. I want to talk to Julie if she doesn't mind?"

"I presume that is your right. Please come directly to me then and don't talk to any one meantime."

IT wasn't until the door had closed behind him that Julie realized it. Of course Jayell had supposed Jimmie had been spending the night with her. She had been undressed. He hadn't known about Cilla. She had gone safely on her way. Well, she was glad of that.

It wouldn't do a young girl like Cilla any good to be found in a bedroom, even though it was hers, at such an hour with Jimmie or any other man. That then accounted for that subtle change in Jayell.

She turned to Jimmie a bit wearily herself.

"Cilla got away then?" she asked.

"Yes."

"Why didn't you go, too?"

"Do you think I was going to run out on you? I thought I was doing the decent thing. I could hear that there was trouble but I couldn't get what it was."

Julie stared at him, distraught.

"Dare I alibi you, Jimmie?" she asked. "What did you do to-night? Yes"—as if thinking aloud—"I will alibi you. I'll say you were with me the entire night. In my dressing room first, and then came here—it was a date for the night."

"I won't let you lie for me, Julie."

"I will though."

Suddenly he was on his knees at her feet, gathering her in his arms. "You do love me then, Julie? You do? Oh, Julie! But I won't let you lie for me. I've been all over to-night, just around town like a madman until finally I went there to the theater to you. I had to see you. I thought Jayell was cutting me out. There wasn't a person I know of who saw me so I haven't an alibi that I can establish actually. But I didn't kill Rita. It just wasn't that sort of an affair between us. I didn't kill her."

"I believe you, Jimmie. But we've got to have more than just that."

"That's all I ask." He would have kissed her, but Julie drew back.

"Don't, Jimmie," she said softly. "Not now."

Jimmie looked at her a moment.

"Why not now?" And when Julie didn't answer, but was in fact, as she seemed, preoccupied with her own thought: "It's not still Jayell?"

"You'd better trot along now, Jimmie. Jayell is waiting for you."

"It is him, then?"

"Jimmie," she pleaded, "don't you

see that there are much more important things now? It isn't a matter of whom you love or I love or any one else loves. It's murder and you the accused!"

"I'm not frightened, so why should you be? I didn't do it and people aren't hung for crimes they didn't commit. There's only one thing I want to know—is it Jayell or I?"

Julie looked at him calmly and considered her answer and spoke what she believed was the truth:

"It will probably be neither of you." After his tempestuous departure, Julie knew that she had said what she believed would eventually be fact. Jayell had subtly withdrawn when Jimmie walked from her bedroom. Not that it had been in anything he had said. But she had felt it like some intangible thing in the air. He suspected her manner of living. He would not want that kind of girl. And Jimmie, she knew, was not for her even if she loved him. He was attracted by the glamour of her. He wasn't deeply in love with her actually.

His easy life had prepared him much more for Cilla or her kind. He would eventually seek some such girl if not Cilla herself. So there was nothing there, Julie believed, upon which to build any happiness for herself.

As usual in such circumstances, Julie realized that she had done all the wrong things. She should have explained immediately to Jayell. Told him the truth and revealed the two young people in her room. But she had wanted to spare a family quarrel.

It was difficult to compose herself for sleep that morning, but she knew

she must rest. She had a heavy day facing her.

JAYELL looked up as James Latham, Jr., paused for a moment in the door of the living room of the fine old house on Gramercy Square. He had been waiting for his son.

"Come in, Jimmie," he said kindly if a bit wearily.

Jimmie stood in the door, sullenly.

"There's nothing we can have to say to each other, sir," he said.

"There's a great deal that should be said, Jimmie." The older man was still patient. "I want to help you."

"Help me!" exclaimed the youth bitterly. "You've taken the only thing in the world that I want from me. After that, there's nothing you can do."

"You don't seem to realize the seriousness of your situation, son."

"Nothing is serious to me except that one thing. She cared for me, was content with me until you came along. Why couldn't you have let me have her?"

"Jimmie, all your life haven't I given you everything you've wanted?" His hands moved in a weary gesture.

"And you're going to give me this!"—in blind bitterness. "Or at least you're not going to have her. You aren't. See here!"—he held out his hand, a small piece of metal in it. "Look at that! It's a key to Julie's apartment. And I have it! Well"—his young face marked with emotion—"do you still want her? Do you?" He threw the key toward his father and it fell just short of the chair in which the man sat. He waited a moment but Jayell made no

move to touch the thing. Jimmie turned then and went to his room.

Jayell remained motionless a long time. He wondered about this seeming stranger who was a son of his. Upstairs his daughter slept. His son and daughter. Two strangers. And yet he knew he must have seemed like that to his father during a certain period of his young life. They would both come out all right eventually, for they had good stuff in them. Their early training had been right and Jayell knew well how the first few years of childhood influence everything, like a pin point of aniline in a pitcher of water it spreads until it tones everything. They would be all right eventually. Because, of course, he would get Jimmie out of this if it took everything he had. That was merely being a father. Only he wished their mother had lived. He was suddenly desperately lonely. He hadn't known quite how lonely until Julie's small, lovely hand had rested in his and her exquisite young face, serious in that moment beyond her years, had lifted to his.

He rose finally and picked up the key. It seemed to scorch his hand, to hurt. A key to Julie's apartment and Jimmie had had it. He dropped it into his pocket.

JULIE was having her coffee when her maid told her that Alex Richetti had called several times.

"Tell him to come in," Julie said.

Alex walked along the balcony and stepped in through the window. He was a perfect movie-idol type with all the suave distinction that wealth and culture can add.

"I'm so glad you've come, Alex. I'm ragged, torn to bits. Play some-

thing for me. Something that will put me back together again. I need it."

Alex looked at her with gentle understanding, shook his head as if considering a child who refused to take care of himself and then seated himself at the grand piano. It was a fine instrument, kept at perfect pitch. Julie, self-taught almost entirely, still had an ear for true tone. For a space, relaxed in her chair, her soul attended responsively to Bach, to Brahms, to Chopin and then finally at the last lovely note of a Mozart sonata Alex turned to her.

"Now tell me," he said simply. And when Julie failed to reply, still sat with her eyes closed, he said: "Julie, you're so lovely. You're easy to play beautiful things for because you inspire them. Even your hands stir a man's imagination, your hands and everything else about you."

Julie opened her eyes and smiled at him.

"Now tell me," he said again. "This Cilla person is a darling, but why send her through my apartment? Not that I minded except that she was too youngly exquisite to do anything for but open the door and let her go on her innocent missions."

"Cilla is sweet," Julie said thoughtfully.

"Very! But that isn't why you sent her through my apartment at an ungodly hour of the morning. I had no chance to make myself presentable, to comb my hair. And I had much better-looking pajamas than the ones I happened to be wearing just then. I'd like to have looked my best for Cilla!"

"Alex, can I trust you?" All his banter vanished at the low, compelling

harmony of Julie's voice. He recognized an earnest tenseness.

"To the limit."

"Thanks, Alex. I need some one like you for I have only a vacuum where my courage used to be."

"Julie!" He was across the room, his fine hands taking hers. He was on his knees before her. "Anything that I can do. All I am and have is yours to command." All the light irony was gone from his voice, revealing only a man who was desperately fond of a girl.

Julie told him all that had happened since her meeting with Jayell, truthfully and reserving nothing. She knew that Alex had made something of a hobby of crime and its solution. With money and leisure, he had gone into it rather deeply, as he had his music. He had that kind of mind and temperament. Julie wondered if he read between the lines of her version her feeling for Jayell.

"I do what I can of course," Alex said seriously as she concluded. "I'll need your help probably in several ways. It will be interesting to see what we can make of this. I like being just a step ahead of the police in these things." There was something boyish about his interest.

"Thanks, Alex," said Julie simply, deep emotion in the words.

"Do I get a reward?"—with a wry little grin. But he didn't wait for her reply. Alex Richetti was tactful and of fine instincts. Though he had been Julie's ardent admirer he knew when not to bring that up.

IN her dressing room that evening there were russet chrysanthemums with Jayell's card. "In appreciation" was written on it. Something about

it chilled Julie. There was so definite a withdrawal in it.

There was also a note from Alex, left with her trusted dresser. It had been put into her hands, said the woman, by Alex himself and she had obeyed his instruction to the letter and not put it down a second until she gave it to Julie.

"Good girl, Louisa!" Julie said as she read the note.

Alex told her that he had found Rita Braun, the dead girl, had a roommate, Lizbeth Bart, and he must be assured that the girl would not come back to her apartment that evening because he wished to search it. Would Julie find a way of keeping her out? She hung out at a certain cocktail bar and generally dressed in sports clothes.

"You get it of course, sports girl, just a pal, no vamp at all, and the man who leaves the bar with her to go to her apartment around the corner is going purely to talk sports—it's quiet there, you know, the 'we can talk' sort of thing. Haven't you among your adorers some one fond enough to meet the girl and keep her out? She's susceptible to spenders."

"Louisa," Julie said thoughtfully, "if any of my boy friends call tonight please let them stay until I've seen them." She paused a moment on that thought. She was going to lengths to save Jimmie. To clear him. She glanced at the russet chrysanthemums. Would she go to so much effort if it were not for Jayell? Would she indebt herself to so many people? There was no time to answer herself. She had to give her undivided attention to her make-up.

When Julie returned to her dressing room for her first interval off-

stage during the first act Paul Blake was there. He rose as she swept into the room.

"You're not a bit more startled at my being here, Miss Star, than I am," he said, his eyes laughing down at her but with subtle flattery in them. "I like the theater and after meeting you I just found my feet bringing me here to-night, though I hadn't a reason in the world for saying I wanted to see you. When I saw your dress-

ing room I couldn't resist knocking and nearly fell over when your dresser let me in. I expected to be sent away with nothing less than a sharp reprimand!"

Julie was staring at him, thinking too deeply for words.

"I hope you don't mind," Blake said when she failed to reply. "You're—well, I've never seen any one as lovely as you in my life. I——" The police reporter amazed himself

"Julie, you're so lovely. You're easy to play beautiful things for because you inspire them." Julie lifted her eyes and smiled at him.



by being embarrassed in the presence of a lovely lady.

"Paul Blake!" Julie suddenly came to life. "I think you are exactly the person I need. I know you are!" She explained about Lizbeth Bart and asked Blake to find Lizbeth and entertain her and call her the moment he had located her and made her acquaintance.

She pressed money into his hands as he talked, a large roll of bills.

"Keep her from going home no matter what you have to do," Julie said. "This is for your boss, Jayell." She stopped just in time to keep from adding, "and the man I love."

Julie gave Louisa a quick command to call Alex as she hurried to the footlights. The man was waiting for her at the end of the first act. She told him quickly what she had done, that they could depend utterly on Blake.

"He adores Jayell," she said and missed Alex's quick look at her face.

"Swell work! I'll be on my way now and give the place a combing. Should find something. That note's a phony; people don't write notes when they're dying of poison." And he was off.

IN her concentration on her work, Julie had failed to change her instructions to Louisa and at the end of the second act found three young men glaring at each other in her dressing room. Each carried a bouquet. Each wore a fraternity pin, for Julie was the college man's special rave. College songs were sung to her and cocktail glasses smashed in her name.

She stared at them an instant and broke into the first gay laughter that had touched her lips that day.

"If you could only see how you look!" she said. "If it was that kind of play I'd march all three of you out on the stage just as you are. Only I'm not supposed to make my audience laugh in this."

The boys flushed under her laughter. Their passion was a serious one.

"Julie——" One of them started to rise.

"Better sit down, Tommy," came good-naturedly from the girl. "You've got a lot of confidence and a swell background of cocktails but it won't keep you on your feet!"

Terry O'Malley had just put his flowers into Julie's hands when the door of the dressing room burst open and Jimmie Latham stood in the opening, his evening clothes slightly disheveled. He took in the situation at a glance, snatched the flowers from the hands of the boys and threw them in a heap on Julie's dresser and proceeded to chase the boys out, speeding them with his own hands.

"Out of here, you babes in arms! Out of my way before I mow you down!"

Julie gathered the flowers and gave them to Louisa to put in water. She buried her face in them an instant. She loved flowers. Then she turned to Jimmie coldly.

"And now get out yourself," she said. "You have no right here. I thought Jayell was going to keep you in until this thing cleared."

"So he was. So he thinks he is. But bolts and bars don't keep me prisoner."

"Fool! Don't you know you're taking your life in your hands being out this way? You may be picked up by the police any minute. It's just a miracle that you weren't men-

tioned in the stories of that murder in the papers to-day. Just luck that your father happened to get on the job so quickly and hush things up for you. But no knowing how long he can keep them hushed. Have you no gratitude? No consideration?"

"Gratitude! What good is life, if I can't have the thing I want most?"

"You're acting like a spoiled child"—her hand was touching a bell. Louisa appeared. "Send Tim and Jensen in here," she said to the woman.

Jimmie started from his chair.

"Who are they? Whom are you sending for?" he asked excitedly. And when she didn't reply: "All right, don't tell me! You're not putting anything over on me!" He started toward the door, but Julie stood in front of it with a small revolver in her hand.

"Stand where you are," she said firmly. "Make one move and I'll shoot."

Jimmie stood perfectly still, staring at her. He had never met her manner of woman before. But to Julie emergencies which took quick and strong action, were merely life.

Jimmie stared at her, unbelieving.

"I never supposed you would be capable of this," he said slowly, finally. "You or any woman."

Julie smiled grimly. His ideas and ideals of her were being given a terrific blow. It would take a man much more experienced than gay and charming and reckless young Jimmie to understand the stern stuff of which her life had been made.

"I've always told you our lives were like two parallel lines. They never can meet," Julie said quietly as the men she had sent for appeared.

"Thanks for coming, boys," Julie said quietly and naturally, while Jimmie was a bit startled that she could speak with such naturalness to two tough stage hands. Cilla or his sister now—there would have been something in their voices that would have made a subtle distinction which the men would have felt and hated them for.

Not Julie. And it was plain that they adored her. Nothing that she might ask could be too much. They'd roll up their sleeves and attempt the impossible.

"Take this young man to my apartment and see that he stays there. Bind him, gag him, do anything you want, but get him there with as little fuss and noise as possible."

"We'll do that, miss," said the larger and sturdier of the two huge men.

Julie had to give up her vigil to take her cue, but before she left her dressing room she had time to smile sweetly at the helpless Jimmie. She was a little sorry for him. He was like a rebellious child. Lucky she had gotten him at the right time and could force safety on him. In his mood he was apt to do anything.

It took all Julie's marvelous gift for acting that night to be the gay star leaving her theater after another triumphant performance. The group of hero worshipers, of autograph seekers, seemed to increase steadily and because smiling so brilliantly was an almost superhuman task and she knew that her hands might tremble as she tried to give her autograph, she picked single flowers from her armful of scented offerings that she carried from her dressing room and threw them, one after the other, until

she hoped every one in the crowd had one. She remembered too well the days when she had adored the seeming great to be niggardly.

"Come back to-morrow, every one of you if you can," she cried brightly to them, "and I'll sign and sign!"

In her taxi she dropped the mask.

For she was neither gay nor happy nor a great star in that moment but a woman in love and very unhappy. Deserted. For there had been no word from Jayell, nothing but that cool note with the russet chrysanthemums, a note that seemed to be a chill releasing gesture.

Famie told her that Jimmie had been put in the guest room, a room which had no opening on any means of escape; and that one of the men who had brought him dozed in a chair in front of the door.

"Good!" Julie allowed the girl to help her with swift undressing and to draw the covers up after she had thrown herself on the bed.

MORNING brought a tearful Cilla to Julie's door.

"Bring her in here," Julie said as she allowed Famie to make a back rest of the cushions. "And bring some extra coffee."

Cilla paused a moment in admiration of the luxury life Julie led and then immersed herself again in her own troubles.

"My aunt was wild at my being out all that night," she said. "She won't even try to understand all the trouble I'm having. She's never been in love herself. Oh, if only my mother and father had lived. She says I've got to stay home now, be home every night, or she'll send me away to some school where I'll be

almost a prisoner. Miss Star, I'm going to run away. I'm never going back! I'm going on the stage and be a great star as you are. And then maybe she'll be sorry and want to know me and I won't speak to her. And then Jimmie'll want me, too. He hasn't even been to see me or called me up." Her voice ended in a long, miserable wail.

"I've got Jimmie here, Cilla. He couldn't have called you if he'd wanted to." Julie spoke quietly.

Cilla lifted suddenly angry eyes.

"But how mean of you!"

"Not at all. Your reckless darling needs to be saved from himself. I'm trying to do that. When I have finished, or done all I can, you may have him back again."

"May I see him? Oh, let me just speak to him!"

"No, this isn't the right time. Give him time to miss you. You've never done that. It's the sort of medicine Jimmie needs."

"You're just like my aunt!" the girl exclaimed rebelliously. "Now I am going to run away and be a star."

"Just like that," said Julie quietly.

"Well, look at you. You did it. If you did I can."

"Cilla"—Julie's voice was satin smooth—"as a little girl did you ever know hunger? Were you ever uncertain when you started home from school whether there would be a home still there with some one in it? Did you ever have a nickel given you and spend one precious penny of it for candy and save the other four until some time when you needed something more to eat? No?"—as Cilla shook her head.

"But what difference does that make?" Cilla asked.

"Well, it's just the sort of material girls like me build their careers on."

Julie wondered about Cilla after she had gone. She knew the girl was not half persuaded but she believed she was too soft and luxury-loving to venture forth. She hoped so.

Her last words to Cilla had been: "Go back to your aunt, child, and abide by her wisdom. You're fortunate to have her."

IN a scandal column of a morning paper Julie found something that startled her.

For all Jayell's influence something had leaked. And something dangerously right.

"The beautiful and exotic star of Broadway's outstanding current success has let her heart divide between a prominent playboy son and his still more prominent not-so-playboyish father, much to her own sorrow. Because the father, whom she was finding herself most fond of, has faded from the picture in favor of, and perhaps to save his son. For the son may be accused of murder almost any day now!"

Julie turned from the thing sick at soul. Her face was still white and stricken when Alex was brought in.

"What is it, Julie?" he asked in quick and sincere sympathy.

She handed him the paper and indicated the paragraph. He read it.

"Don't mind that," he said, smiling but with gentle understanding of her disturbed mind. "If any one guesses it's you, it will only make you better box office. But ninety per cent of the nitwits who read these columns and think they're being let in on the secrets of life, can't figure them out, anyhow. And more, my dear and

beautiful Julie, this is only a wild guess. A guess that comes close to the truth in some particulars as all guesses do. The man who wrote this had no facts to go on I'll wager, they never do. They make wild guesses and hope their guess will start something that will give them a clew to the real situation."


"You're always very wise, Alex," Julie said, much of the little girl that she really was in her weary, frightened words. "I hope you're right."

"One thing I know I'm right about. The father hasn't faded from the picture, Julie. No man who ever really cared for you could ever forget you."

"Thank you, Alex. You're comforting anyhow." She smiled faintly. "Have you anything to tell me? Could you discover anything?"

"Your man Blake did a swell job." He smiled wryly. "Trust you to have men about who are your willing slaves. But in this case even I won't complain—I who adore you, Julie." His own voice was suddenly low and earnest. "I had plenty of time to give the apartment that Rita Braun occupied with Lizbeth Bart a good search. There wasn't much to be found except evidence that each girl lived very separately. Her own cup and saucer and tiny saucepan in each girl's room. Each girl had prepared her own name card on the door. Each had her own laundry soap for washing out things. Not much in itself you're thinking, but it means to me that they weren't actually such close friends. Living together was not at all a matter of fondness but purely a means of economy."

"Yes?" Julie said as he paused. "But that brings so many women together."



He looked at her intently, and for just an instant she felt again that understanding between them, the understanding of his years and her experience meeting.

"You have something there. On the other hand, most of them like each other well enough to do little things for each other and to share the less important things."

"Perhaps you're right."

"I found a recently burned letter in the fireplace of a room that had once been a fine old parlor. Lucky it hasn't been cold enough, or this Miss Bart hasn't felt romantic enough or had a suitor who has wanted a fire."

"But why?" came hopelessly from the listening girl. "What good can a burned letter be to us?"

"Whoever burned it"—Richetti's face glowed with enthusiasm—"wasn't clever enough to tear it up."

I hoped for some such thing and was prepared. Thanks to modern science, my dear Julie, I can and did photograph the writing on that burned paper with the aid of violet and infrared light. This is modern photography!"

"Then you read the letter?" came interestedly from Julie. Just the knowledge itself of the progression of photography to such a point had roused her. Her mind was like that.

"Yes." Alex was speaking slowly as if he wished her to get every word. "I found that our Lizbeth Bart, who is a Southern girl, had asked a friend to send her a bunch of oleander about two weeks before Rita Braun was poisoned. The friend sent them. They probably arrived a few days before the girl died."

Julie stared at the man.

"Oleander!" she said. She remembered them well from her trooping days. All through the South they grew to giant proportions and bloomed luxuriantly. She had loved them in those barren days and had been almost foolishly happy when she found some one who gave her a bunch with their handsome, deep-green waxy foliage. "But I've had dozens of bouquets of them myself!"

"Yes, but you probably put them in water, my dear, and admired them. Lizbeth Bart didn't want the oleander because she was homesick for a sight of something from her Southern home."

"Alex, you're talking the most amazing riddles!"

"That's all I can say, Julie. I must wait with anything further until I have more facts. But believe me"—he was tenderly earnest—"I'm leaving no stone unturned."

"Alex, you're being marvelous. If there's anything, if you should go South where this girl lived, my money is at your——"

But he had her hands in his and dared to hush her words with the light brushing of his lips in a caress.

"I'm doing this for you, Julie," he said. "There's no one I'd rather spend my money on. I've hitched my wagon to an impossible star, I know, but I've got to go on this way. There's no need to tell you I'm doing this because I love you, adore you, with a singleness of passion that even I am amazed at. You know all that, Julie. And I know how hopeless it is. But I must go on—I must follow my star!"

LATER when Julie heard him at his piano, his strong, sure fingers wandering from the sad sweetness of Mozart to the poignant beauty of Chopin, Julie wished she could have loved him, that on that first night when she heard him playing and had slipped along the balcony and stepped in his window to sit enthralled in a huge chair until he turned to her, recognized her, dropped on his knees at her feet and offered her his heart, she could have given herself to him.

That had been one night after she came home from the theater when she had first shot across the horizon of New York as its newest and most brilliant star. Alex had been at her feet since.

But that wasn't what her heart longed for. The afternoon dragged. It seemed very little had been accomplished, after all, toward the solution of the girl's death. Julie knew suddenly that her eager impatience for Jimmie's clearance was not so much

for Jimmie as for Jayell. She wanted to lay that at his feet and say in effect: "See, I have done this for you. I, too, have found that you have to follow your star and you are mine!"

She came to the place finally where she had to call Jayell. She had to hear his voice. She found him at his office. His voice was kind and poised, but she caught the undertone of strain.

"Of course I'll come, Julie," he said. "Anything that I can do for you."

When he arrived, he took her hands in a gesture that tried to be fatherly, but it made him seem only younger, more weary, and made Julie wish more than ever that she could take him to her heart and comfort him. But that barrier was there, the chill thing that had grown up between them since his releasing gesture.

"You mustn't break like this, Julie." He tried to be comforting. "I know all too well how hard it is. The young people of to-day all live by guess and gusto and life finds it an amusing game to smash people like that, and we who love them are caught in the wreckage. It's cruel but it's youth to-day, Julie. Youth, except your kind." He paused to look at her intently and for just an instant she felt again that understanding between them, the understanding of his years and her experience meeting.

She tried to grasp the mood and hold it close to her heart. But it was gone instantly and he was Jimmie's father again.

"Julie," he was saying earnestly, "I've learned many things lately and the most important is that you never so work with the unpredictable as when you try to create a human being. Don't ever do it. Stick to your theater, create there. Compose! Write! Do anything but try to create a human being."

Julie looked up at him, stricken.

"Why are you saying this to me?" she asked.

Jayell paused a moment. He put his hand in his pocket then and withdrew it, held it palm upward. A key lay in the palm.

"A key to your apartment, Julie," he said quietly. Even then his eyes and voice were kind. No angry passion of never-denied youth there.

"My apartment?" she started. "But that can't be!"

"I'm afraid it is. Jimmie gave it to me."

"But it can't be!"

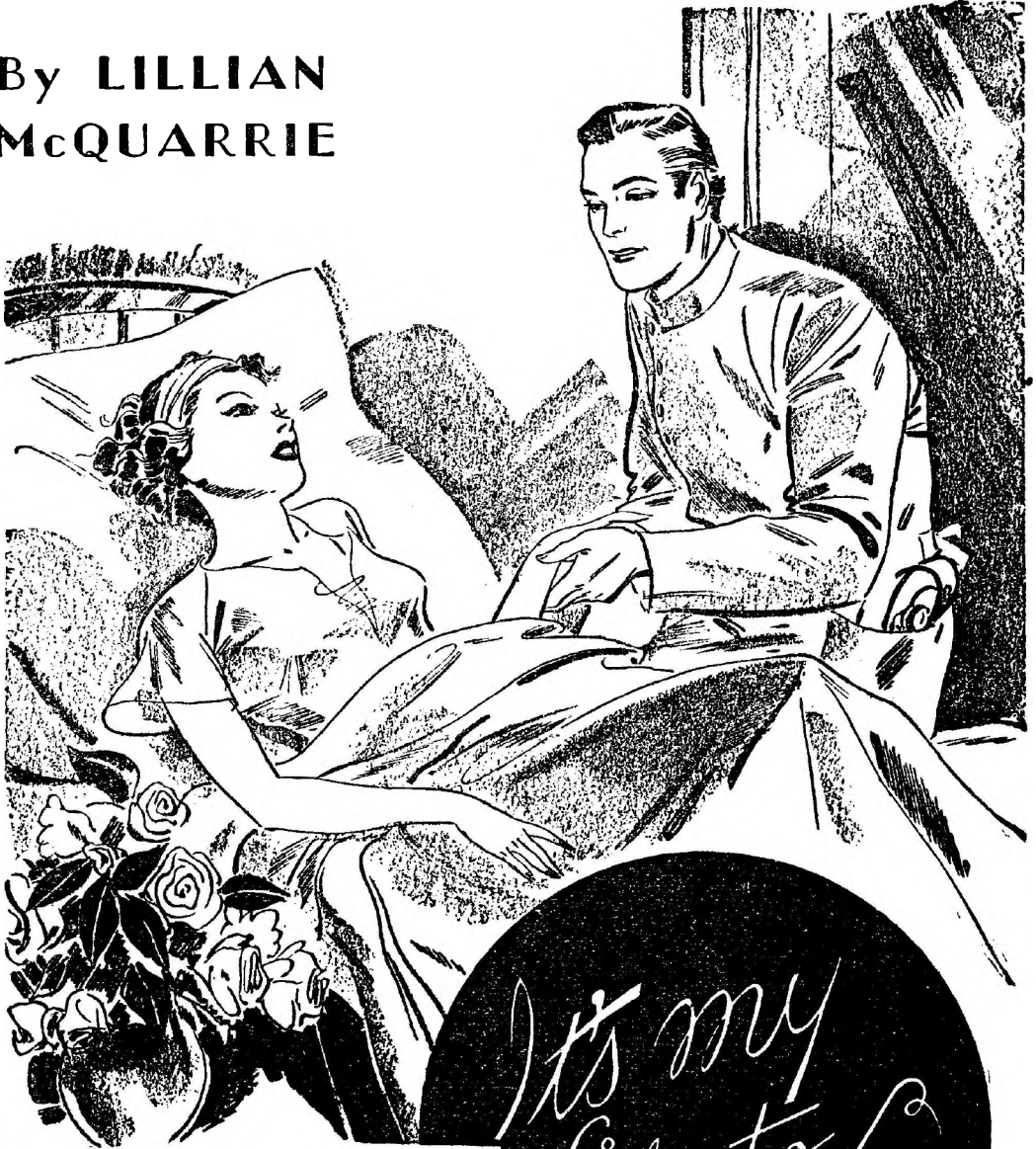
"Must we prove it?"—as if shrinking himself from that last test, that final knowledge of her Jimmie's having her key would seem to imply.

"Yes!" came firmly from her. "Because it can't be true. It can't be proven!"

"You dissemble perfectly, the skillful actress, Julie." He walked toward her door but she sensed about his movements a reluctance to face this final proof of her close association with his son.

He put the key in the door. It turned the lock. Julie faced him stricken. She felt as if a steel door had closed between them and she was powerless against the evidence. Jayell's scorn of her would be scathing.

By LILLIAN
McQUARRIE



SHE opened her eyes in the tiny white hospital room, bewildered. For a moment her slim fingers fluttered across the bandage on her head.

"Where——" she began, but a nurse bent over her. Yes, it was the same nurse who had been floating somewhere in the background during those dizzy, vapory dreams she had been having.

*It's my
Life to
Live*

"You're all right, Mary," the nurse said. "Doctor Jerry gave you the name. What is your real name?"

In a rush it came back to the girl,

flowing fiercely into her mind like a torrent. The onrushing car, the scream of brakes, and blackness. Then the gray, wavery light, like a smoke screen, with a man moving through it, in white, his lean, bronzed young face anxious, his healing hands working over you, pouring strength into you, strength you could feel before he touched you.

Suddenly the girl's body stiffened, and a low sob escaped her lips. She was trapped! Lying here, helpless, she could not hope to escape. They would catch up with her, Aunt Sue and Uncle Silas and Conrad Greenlee!

Everything was hopeless.

She heard the nurse saying, "Never mind, now, dear. Don't try to remember. Just be quiet. Doctor Jerry will be pleased to hear that you've regained consciousness."

Her crisp, white uniform made no sound as the nurse moved toward the door. "Try to sleep," she said. And then she was gone.

The girl sat upright. Had she told them she could remember nothing? She must have. That would be her cue. She must spar for time. She closed her eyes.

"Good morning, Miss Mary!"

She had not heard the door open. But he was coming toward her, this tall, grave-faced young man out of the mists of her dream world.

He took her cool hand, and his long, capable fingers found her pulse. "Normal," he said. "Normal this morning, Mary." He smiled and an April light came into his eyes. The girl's heart leaped for a moment, and then she bit her lip. Just a smile, she told herself, of a doctor for his pa-

tient. Naturally he had been anxious about her.

He drew up a chair.

"Do you remember anything?" His gray eyes pleaded, holding her violet ones by the force of his powerful young will.

She closed her eyes partly. "How long have I been here, Doctor—Jerry?"

"Four days," he said, his gaze steady, not for a moment acknowledging by a look or a gesture that it was remarkable, her knowing his name. "But you haven't answered my question."

"Naturally I remember something—you working over me with a deep crease between your eyes—like this!" She frowned, and the young doctor laughed.

"You've no idea how worried I've—we've been," he said. "But seriously, do you remember anything else—before you came here?"

The laughter died out of her eyes and she turned them toward the window beyond him. Her voice was low when she answered him.

"I can't seem to remember anything." It's a lie, her heart cried out. A lie. You remember, and you are ashamed.

Doctor Jerry said, "This is a strange case." He smiled, and looking up into his eyes the girl's breath caught in her throat. Did he know? Had he discovered her identity? Naturally, there must have been some publicity when she disappeared. Naturally, Aunt Sue and Uncle Silas must be investigating every case of amnesia reported anywhere. It was only a matter of time, now, if she remained here, until they would catch

up with her, and then they would take her back to Conrad Greenlee!

She shuddered. "When can I get up?" Her eyes, looking up at him, were violet stars, but her mouth was a pathetic line that drooped. "I don't feel as though there were any broken bones." She laughed, a light, evasive tinkle.

"You weren't injured, thank heavens. I'm checking you out today."

She looked up, startled.

"I'm taking you home with me. Mother will be glad to have you, until we can locate your people."

"No!" she said, suddenly, sitting erect. "I'll go on from here alone."

He bent nearer, puzzled. She could feel his breath on her cheek. "Then you do remember! Please, what is your name?"

She closed her eyes. Her heart was racing until she was afraid he would notice. "I—I can't remember!" It was a cry for forgetfulness.

As he removed the bandage from her head with skilled, careful fingers he said, "Never mind. Don't try, yet. It will all come back. The nurse will have you ready by noon. I'll be waiting."

HE left, and she sank back among the pillows. A clock ticked on the white dresser. Eleven o'clock. She must get away! He must not take her home with him! He must never find out who she was. He must never know she had married one of the richest men in New York for his money, and then had been a coward, afraid to pay the price! Doctor Jerry would hold her in the contempt only a fine, honorable per-

son can know for a cheap coward. How could he know Aunt Sue had engineered the wedding all New York must still be talking about? And even if he had found out that much, the fact still remained that she had fallen in almost eagerly with their plans.

Suddenly she was tired, with the same tiredness that had come over her after the wedding. The same weariness that had kept her from standing up, before the wedding, facing them all, and refusing to go through with the marriage. She had wanted to do that, with all her heart. But after those frenzied weeks of preparation her courage had failed, and she had taken Conrad Greenlee and his millions for better or for worse, while her heart had cried out against it all, her very senses revolting. But alone, a few hours afterward, in Conrad's beautiful old home that looked out upon the ocean, in Conrad's private study, terror had gripped her and she had come to life. She had walked over to his desk and studied the lovely face that stood in a silver frame upon it. The dark, sloe-shaped eyes of Conrad's former wife—Lola. She had been very beautiful. Conrad had barely mentioned the tragedy, but the girl, looking upon the lovely face, knew how he must have suffered. Lola had disappeared three years before, and a few weeks later her body had been washed up on the beach near her home. The maid had identified it, and Conrad had been spared that painful ordeal. No one would ever know just what happened. But its effect upon Conrad had been terrific. And Aunt Sue had mothered him immediately afterward.

And three hours after her marriage to Conrad, standing before the picture, the girl had said, "I won't! I can't for Aunt Sue, or even for you, Lola! It's my life to live!"

Flying was too dangerous, she had thought. They could identify her too easily. So she had taken a bus to Chicago, had bought a whole new outfit and discarded her soft gray suit and the gray accessories Aunt Sue had selected for her "going-away" costume. She had changed from bus to train, from train to bus, until she reached the California line. And every face she had seen had been Aunt Sue's, or Uncle Silas's, or Conrad's with the small eyes that peered out at you in a knowing way. Or Lola's face. Twice she had seen women that looked like Conrad's dead wife. And for a moment her heart had almost stopped beating.

In Reno she had walked the streets, while the other passengers ate a hurried meal. But the sight of another Lola in a restaurant had frightened her. Just a glimpse through a window, but she had run back to the bus station, her breath coming in quick gasps. Later, on the bus, she had remembered that the likeness was so vivid as to be terrifying, and she gave herself a sound talking-to. She must be losing her mind, she told herself. Even the bus driver looked like Conrad!

And then, a few minutes after she left the bus at Rockdale, to change to another train, a car had come swerving around the corner as she had crossed the street.

Suddenly, sitting here in the hospital room on the edge of her high, white bed, she knew that her greatest act of cowardice had been run-

ning away. She felt little and mean, and, somehow, she knew, the very fact that her eyes were open at last, had something to do with Doctor Jerry. She slipped out of bed and walked over to the clothes closet. Her legs were weak yet. But otherwise she felt all right. She must get away!

She opened the closet door, but a voice from the doorway behind her made her whirl about.

"Well, well! Walking already. You'll not need me to help you dress!" Draped over the nurse's arm she saw the brown tweed suit, her filmy blouse, the wisps of underthings she had bought in Chicago. And in the nurse's other hand were the smart oxfords with the low heels, her brown felt hat, the alligator bag.

The nurse talked as she helped the girl into her clothes. But Evelyn Summers heard nothing. Some day, she was thinking, and her heart raced, she would come back. She would see Doctor Jerry when she came again, and she would be free to make him love her. Yes, she might as well admit it. But love had come too late. But she could tell him, anyway, that he had, without knowing it, made her see herself for the little cheat she had been. And perhaps—

But he was standing in the doorway.

"All ready?"

"All ready," the nurse said.

HIS mother was just the sort of woman the girl would have expected to find in Doctor Jerry Carmody's home. She had soft, white hair, and eyes that looked out at you as his did, kindly, compassionate.

"So this is Mary!" she said, taking the girl's hands.

Doctor Jerry laughed. "Mary it is," he said. "And I hope you are going to feed us right now! I'm leaving town as soon as luncheon is over, for perhaps four or five hours. I'm driving into Nevada." He mentioned vaguely an "interesting case," and the girl, listening, wondered at the depth of his voice, with its thrilling undertones. If only she had met Doctor Jerry before she had gone through that ridiculous marriage ceremony. If only she could stay on here forever. If—if — But, of course, she was being foolish. Doctor Jerry had probably never seen her as a woman. She was an interesting case!

After he left, his mother took her up to her room.

"Try to rest, dear," she said. "Lie down for a little while and maybe you will remember——"

After she had gone, hot stinging tears blinded the girl. Why did they insist that she recall the past? This was enough. This soft, bright room with the filmy curtains and the gay cretonne drapes. This, and the memory she would cherish forever of the yearning tenderness in the young doctor's eyes as he had worked over her, that memory that was becoming clearer to her every moment. This, and the gentleness of his touch.

She slept, and when she opened her eyes again it was dark, and downstairs she could hear Jerry's voice. So he was back! She slipped down the stairs, unsteadily.

"Hello," she called.

He met her at the stairway and took her outstretched hand.

"You must eat," he said, "and join us out on the porch."

"Us?" Her heart almost stopped.

He laughed. "Mother and me. We're looking at the stars."

And while he fixed a light meal for her with his own hands, she said, "I feel like watching the stars, myself. It seems so long since I've seen the stars."

Jerry's mother said, when they came out on the long, low veranda that ran the length of the house, "It's getting late. I must turn in now. And I don't want my guest kept up until she's tired. Mind, now, Jerry."

Jerry chuckled deep in his throat as he arranged a chair near his own for the girl. And minutes later, seated near her, his pipe glowed red, contentedly, in the darkness.

A late moon was coming up, casting before it a golden dust behind the black rim of mountains.

The girl forgot the stars. "Hasn't any one inquired about me?"

He puffed for a few seconds, almost fiercely, she thought. Then he said quietly, "No."

"I don't know whether to believe you or not," she smiled. "It's a strange sensation, knowing somewhere some one must be looking for you."

"And," he finished, "not knowing anything about yourself."

She darted a quick glance at him. Did he know?

He laughed. And then his face in the dull-red glow became grave.

"There are a few things I know about you, though. I've watched you for hours when you didn't know it. Before you regained consciousness." He put his pipe down beside his chair.

"One thing I know is that you are a—very lovely person, Mary!" He rose and paced the floor. There was a tense silence. She could feel the air move as he passed her chair, and something of his personality, charged with the magnetism of him, flowed back to her. He was coming toward her now, but without touching her, the warmth of his body had entered hers. She felt alive, tingling.

He dropped to the ottoman beside her feet. Now his shoulder was against her knee. Her heart pounded.

He threw back his head, his boyish head with the hair she could feel between her fingers without touching it.

"Mary, you can't remember, but men have told you you were very beautiful. You were made to be loved, worshiped. But you have kept yourself fine and good. I have wondered—where did you get your strength of character? Your beautiful body? The quietness of your manners? Mary——"

His strong hands reached for her, gripped her. He was drawing her down, down into his arms. Pressing her to him, hard against his heart.

"Mary"—his voice was muffled in her hair—"for years I've waited for you——"

Now his lips were on hers, firm, burning, and against them her mouth melted in exquisite agony. His kiss held a passion that was almost pain, made fire of the blood in her veins, and she offered him her very soul in the kiss that she returned.

"You do love me! Mary, you do!"

She swayed in his arms for a moment, and then struggled to free herself. Her whole body ached with

longing to sink back into his arms, to acknowledge the love that she knew was his.

"Don't!" she gasped. "Please don't, Jerry. I can't—I can't——"

But his fingers slipped over her lips, and he held her, looking into her eyes, smiling.

"Such a child," he said, "with eyes like the flame of stars. I found you, Mary. And you're mine. No one can come and take you away from me."

Again she was against his hard-beating heart, and the misery in her surged into her tensed muscles until they ached. Oh, Jerry, Jerry, she thought. If you only knew!

"Marriage," Jerry was saying, "is a serious matter, darling. And the ceremony is sacred. Don't say anything," he said quietly, as she stirred, "until I'm through. And then I want your answer. When you give your word, before God, that you will love and live with me forever, will cherish me in sickness or in health, it— it means that you will, Mary. Do you think you will love me always?"

THE girl was successful in breaking away, this time. She leaped to her feet, her chestnut curls in wild disarray. Her eyes were dark, bright with her yearning. But she must steel herself against her impulse to cry out, "Oh, yes, Jerry! Yes, forever and ever!" Instead, she said, "I know what the marriage ceremony means, now, Jerry. But I—I——"

Slowly, as though she had struck him across the face, the light died out of his eyes and he arose, awkwardly. His pipe had gone out. His face was dim in the shadows beyond the path of white moonlight.

She tore her lips from his and leaped to her feet. "Don't!" she gasped. "Please don't, Jerry."

"Forgive me," he said humbly. "I was so swept away with my love that I could not think it could be otherwise with you."

She turned and ran into the house, up the stairs, stifling the sobs that shook her body. But he was close behind her. She closed the door, and sank to the bed, her shoulders heaving.

He opened the door a crack.

"Mary, I want to ask you a question. No, it isn't personal—not in that way. Mary, have you ever heard the name 'Evelyn Summers'?"

"Yes," the girl said, quietly, sitting up. It has come, she thought. And I must still lie—lie to the dearest person in the world.

"And do you remember anything about yourself, dear?"



"I don't remember anything, Jerry."

He closed the door softly, and she lay back, sobbing, on the bed. She must wait until he was asleep. Then she would leave, quietly. She would write a note.

But Evelyn Summers did not reckon with her tired body, with the fact that this was her first day out of bed since the accident, with her mind that was weary with thinking. She slept, and did not awaken until the sunlight was sending streams of light like dusty gold across her bed. And then she roused only at the sound of voices drifting up the stairs. They were coming up, Jerry and his mother. Evelyn Summers sat up quickly. And suddenly she knew that her mind was made up. Everything was clear now. She would tell Jerry she did remember. Had remembered from the first. That she loved him as he loved her, but that she was ready to go back to Conrad, to do the honorable thing. That was the gift of love, a sense of honor. She had been a coward, but that was over. And some day, somewhere, they would meet again.

The voices paused, outside her door.

Doctor Jerry said, "I don't know, mother. It's a strange case. She remembers everything except her own identity. Usually they have to learn everything over again. I tried an experiment on her last night. An emotional shock——" He knocked, but the girl could not answer, could make no sound. So it had been an experiment! He had told her he loved her to shock her into remembering! But it had sounded genuine.

Her senses whirled. He had said —— No, it couldn't be. He did love her! Just as she loved him, just as she would always love him.

"Mary!" his voice called. "Are you awake?"

The breath in her throat was hot and yet her hands were cold, trembling. She fought for control of her voice.

"Yes," she said, at last. "I'm up." The floor swayed beneath her feet when she stood up, and she brushed the curls out of her eyes, the chestnut curls that had a way of falling in loose spirals around her oval face. I hate him, she told herself, I hate him!

He opened the door. "You haven't been in bed all night," he said. "Was last night too much for you, Mary?"

"Not Mary—Evelyn Summers, Doctor Carmody." Her voice was cold steel. "The *débutante* who chose to marry a million dollars rather than to let down an aunt and uncle who had raised her. But"—she faced him squarely—"I didn't for a moment pretend a love I did not feel. Conrad took me without that. And then I found love, found the meaning of the word marriage, but when I looked up I discovered I was under a microscope, a guinea pig, posing for a scientist!"

Somewhere, vaguely, she could hear a motor, could hear it racing, and suddenly, very near, it stopped, and there were voices outside, voices coming up on the porch.

"You have taught me," she said, her voice low, her eyes turned away from him, "the meaning of the word marriage. And I want to thank you. My word has been given, before God, and I'm ready to go back——"

"Mary!" It was Jerry's mother, calling from the stairway. "Can you come down, dear?"

She turned, and suddenly, without quite knowing how it happened, she was in Jerry's arms. "Oh, Jerry, Jerry!" she cried. "Good-by. God love you forever!"

She walked proudly, her head erect, down the stairs and into the sitting room, into the presence of her people.

CONRAD'S eyes, beyond Aunt Sue, were accusing. So were Uncle Silas's. But a weight had been lifted from her heart and she smiled. Jerry was still in this world, under the same sun, and the same stars. And as long as she lived, she would never forget it for a moment. It is not the return of your love that enriches you. It is the glory of giving that makes your eyes shine like stars.

"Hello, everybody," she said. Aunt Sue folded her into her arms and sobbed.

"You'll never know what this has cost us, dear," she said.

"Listen," Conrad said quietly, "are you ready to come? Or will we have to kidnap you?" He smiled, but there was a menacing undertone she could not mistake. He was too well bred to make a scene, the girl knew. But it was an indication of what she could expect, during the rest of her days with him. He would never forgive her for this. She could read it in the eyes like slits that seemed to be spying on her.

"You must ask Conrad to forgive you," Uncle Silas said reprovingly, not offering to kiss her. Not glad she had been found. "You forget,"

he went on, "that Conrad has suffered a great deal."

"Oh, Conrad," the girl said suddenly. "I haven't forgotten. I really haven't. And I am willing to keep my word." She turned to them all. "I thought that it was my life to live, but it isn't. It isn't, ever, after you have given your word before God."

Doctor Jerry opened the door he had closed after the girl. "There's some one here to see you," he said. And before he turned, a woman had slipped around him, was coming toward Evelyn Summers. But her eyes were on Conrad. Her face was grave, and her dark, sloe-shaped eyes were pools of mystery.

Aunt Sue's hand flew to her mouth. She started visibly.

"L-Lola!" Conrad gasped. He sank into a chair weakly.

"I don't understand this," Uncle Silas said sharply.

"It—it is you, isn't it, Lola?" Conrad asked, his voice hoarse.

The laugh that escaped Evelyn Summers's lips was hysterical. She started toward the door. She must get away! Away from them all. Away from Jerry, too.

"It is I," the woman was saying in a rich, deep-throated voice. "I read in the papers about your second wife disappearing, and I couldn't let you go on thinking I was dead. The girl must have had some reason—more reason than I, for running away."

Evelyn Summers closed the door softly and ran toward the stairway. Her eyes were new lilacs, drenched by a sudden shower. Lola—alive! How it simplified everything! And

yet, things were more complicated than ever. Last night she would have given her right hand to have had this happen, but now it didn't matter. Nothing mattered, now. She ran up the stairs and into her room. She had closed the door before she saw him standing there, near the window.

He came toward her without a word. The girl stepped back:

"Jerry! I've said good-by to you! Why do you try to hurt me?" At her temples tiny hammers pounded, and she felt dizzy suddenly.

"Hurt you, my angel?" His arms went around her, tightened, and his voice was husky. "Hurt you? Why, I love you, darling, more than life itself! Why do you think I drove

up to see her, and insisted that she come here herself? Because I wanted to hurt you? Look!" He wiped the tears from her cheeks, and his strength was flowing into her, vibrating through her veins with the pulsing rhythm of his very heartbeats. "The sun is shining! Do you know what to-day is?"

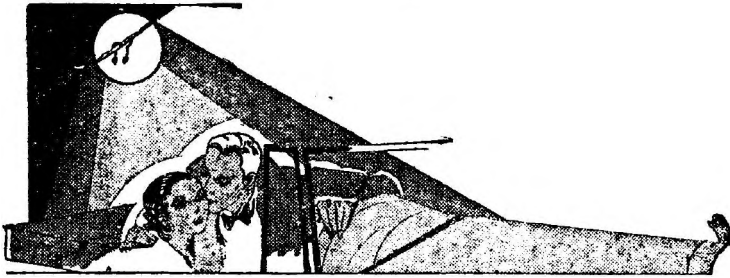
"No."

"Our wedding day, beloved!"

"But——"

"As soon as we clear up a few tangled threads, will you say 'yes' and mean it—Evelyn?"

"Not Evelyn, darling. Mary!" And when she could speak again, she answered his question. "Oh, yes, yes, yes, Jerry! Forever and ever!"



Was It The Moon?

I THOUGHT I saw a vision of romance,
 That night, with you, beside the blue lagoon—
 On silver-crested waves it seemed to dance.
 But then, of course, it might have been the moon!
 It must have been, because, to my surprise,
 Our song of love has ended all too soon!
 Please tell me—was that love light in your eyes,
 Or was it just the moon?

J. Harvey Thompson.

My Stars!

By JUNIUS B. SMITH
NOTED ASTROLOGER

IF you were born between March 21st and April 20th, you are a native of the zodiacal sign Aries.

Aries natives are very ambitious and they seek to excel in whatever they do. They try to be foremost in their achievements and often life becomes rather a game for them, in which the desire to win is of more importance than the results attained. They like to have their way and until the experiences of years have shown the value of coöperation, they are inclined to insist upon it regardless of consequences. Self-interest is likely to motivate their actions and only when they discover that it is to their interest to work with people rather than to consider only themselves, do they change their attitude in their association with others. Decisions are made in accordance with the effect upon themselves, as they see it, and often they are short-sighted. They think without consideration and frequently ignore important factors in arriving at their conclusions. They scarcely know the meaning of the

word meditation and have small patience with those who take time to make up their minds. Only the coming home to them of their mistakes makes them more cautious, lest history repeat itself. Their judgment is apt to be much better in their declining years than in their youth—which, of course, is more or less true of most people generally.

They are filled with vitality that must escape in some direction. Their mental processes are lightninglike. It is a combination that makes it exceedingly hard for them to practice self-control. Yet control of self, if they acquire it, will result in inestimable benefit to themselves. They will more readily acquire it by con-



sciously directing their energies into harmless channels and by keeping their minds busy at something useful all the time. The struggle for self-mastery is likely to be severe—seemingly hopeless in early life—but persistence will bring it about and, in the case of those who succeed, truly may it be said that “He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city.” But if the Aries native goes through life as a firebrand rather than a light to others, he will meet with opposition where otherwise he would encounter helpfulness.

Action quickly follows thought in the Aries native and these natives will succeed best in occupations that permit physical activity as well as quick decisions. They are mentally and physically fitted to work around dangerous machinery, as they can think and act quickly in an emergency. However, they are apt to ignore safety factors, the ignoring of which may contribute to emergencies that a slower-thinking but more safety-minded person would forestall.

They may be employed in the manufacture of machinery, surgical instruments, household cutlery, tools, metal appliances, and articles of a similar nature, or they may work with them. They make excellent soldiers. They are law-abiding, no matter how much they may dislike personal supervision. They are, however, loud in their agitation against legislation that attempts to regulate too minutely the lives of the people, particularly if they are among those unduly regulated. They are vigorous of speech and effective in the expression of their ideas. If provoked,

their words can cut like an unsheathed razor blade; and sometimes they are not hard to provoke. Friendships may be sacrificed through ill-advised words, not really meant when spoken, but hurting none the less; and many an Aries native would give much to recall a letter dispatched in the heat of misunderstanding.

Imagination at times plays mean tricks upon them and distorts their vision. They should be sure before they say the unkind things, and then not say them. They have excellent talents which they may use for the general good as well as their own advancement. They often become outstandingly successful doing things for which they have a liking. They are restless and doing nothing is about the height of monotony for them. New fields of endeavor have no terrors for them. They do not anticipate trouble or obstacles. If bridges are missing, they get across the best way they can. And perhaps it is just as well, for they have not the patience to climb step by step slowly to certain success but must take all barriers as a pole vaulter would clear a bar. They are extravagant, often to the point of wastefulness; but money, as a rule, comes to them easily, so they do not worry. Others whom they would help often are beneficiaries of their prodigal habits. They are seldom lukewarm in their likes and dislikes. If they weep, others are not permitted to see it. They consider emotional show a sign of weakness. But their hearts are often touched, nevertheless. An abandoned kitten will bring tears to their eyes. They are much more sympathetic than they are willing to admit.

WHILE Aries people generally have much in common, the expression of their traits will differ according to the position which the sun may occupy in the sign at the time of their respective births. For convenience of reference they may be divided into six groups, as follows:

Class A natives—March 21st to 26th.

Class B natives—March 27th to 31st.

Class C natives—April 1st to 5th.

Class D natives—April 6th to 10th.

Class E natives—April 11th to 15th.

Class F natives—April 16th to 20th.

Class A natives—March 21st to 26th:

Class A natives like to be first in whatever they do. They find zest in competition, whether in the forum, the political arena, business pursuits, athletic or other contests, or in actual warfare. They are eager to assume leadership, if given the opportunity, and frequently talk their way into a commanding position. They are convincing speakers, and when they "view with alarm" what the other fellow is doing, a considerable following is likely also to view with alarm the same practices. They are energetic boss busters and often do their bit in transferring emotional constituents from one political boss to another. They are active in civic movements, especially if there is something real to attack, like the smoke nuisance, poorly lighted streets, blind alleys, parking problems, and such things.

They are inclined to scientific study

and like mathematics, at which they sometimes become exceedingly proficient. They make good surgeons. They may hold public office or work for some one who does. Military life may prove attractive to them. They may pioneer in strange lands and take delight in facing dangers incident to the wilderness. They would make good trappers, big-game hunters, and forest rangers. They are restless and like to move about. They are likely to give up jobs as soon as the jobs become monotonous, and may change their residence frequently. Riches come to many of them. They are not much impressed by obstacles which they may meet on their road to success. They have faith in their ability and justify it by their accomplishments. They should hold their impulses in check when to do otherwise might result in embarrassing difficulties for them.

Class B natives—March 27th to 31st:

Class B natives are honorable and just. They try to go through life dealing fairly with those they meet. To take a mean advantage of any one is repugnant to them. They are proud and truthful. They become wise with the passing of the years and seek to convey their wisdom to others. Teaching in the classroom often becomes attractive to them. They are restless and impulsive. They fret when compelled to do work not to their liking, but are enthusiastic when engaged in agreeable employment. They have a good sense of values, however, and, when necessary, adapt themselves to distasteful circumstances until such time as they can alter the circumstances. When op-

portunity knocks at their door, it usually finds them in. Eventually they get to doing something that combines pleasure and profit and from that time on their material success is assured. Until that time, their financial condition is likely to fluctuate.

Once they discover the thing for which they are most suited, they are not content until they get to making their living at it. They do not supinely accept economic restrictions but do something about it. They may attain responsible positions, sometimes having many subordinates under them. When put in charge of others, however, they are not so content as when they have merely their own interests to consider. They have a good command of language and speak with earnestness in discussing matters of interest to them. If they become interested in advancing the welfare of the masses, their efforts may result in substantial reforms. They like to get by themselves occasionally in primitive surroundings. If inclined to jealousy, they should overcome it.

Class C natives—April 1st to 5th :

Class C natives should early learn the difference between obstacles normally encountered in one's journey through life and obstacles which are the direct result of one's own actions, for if not careful, they will expend much of their energy "lifting themselves by their bootstraps," so to speak. They are inclined to lose sight of the fact, if they concede it to be a fact at all, that it is often easier to get one's way by tactful coöperation with others, than by riding over them roughshod, without consideration for their feelings. The less antagonisms they arouse, the greater

their success will be in the long run. They naturally desire to rule and the opportunity to do so may come to them, either in a minor capacity or in a large way. If authority is thrust upon them, it is likely to be of longer duration than if acquired through their own planning. No matter how it comes, they are apt to be forceful in their administration.

They should choose aims in life that will build their success in a manner helpful to others rather than at the expense of others, or any success that may come to them is likely to be temporary. They should subject themselves to periodic self-analysis and cultivate self-control, for they will need it on many occasions. Mastery over self will be their greatest battle. They may meet with success in politics, probably as a result of political activity, falling into a sinecure. Their command of language is excellent and they may teach it. They may become successful writers, especially in the treatment of technical subjects. They may become physicians and surgeons. They may succeed in army life. Their major success in whatever line they eventually elect to follow, is apt to come to them after middle life. During their early years, they may meet with many setbacks. They are impulsive, generous, and often extravagant. They are cultured and at ease in business and social contacts. They often have an excellent knowledge of jewels and metals and may engage in commercial activities in connection therewith.

Class D natives—April 6th to 10th :

Class D natives may become successful in tilling the soil. They should confine their working with the earth to its surface and not take to

mining, for they have not the proper safety sense to guard themselves against probable injury underground. They are inclined to court danger and take unnecessary risks. In consequence, war becomes extra hazardous for them. They have good command of their thoughts. They are tactful and courteous. They may become successful in governmental work, particularly should they enter the diplomatic service. Their employment often is of a nature that requires traveling; or they may deal in products brought from afar. They may take to the sea as traders. Ocean voyages for scientific and exploratory purposes may prove attractive to them. Many of them like to be in virgin places and would make excellent forest rangers.

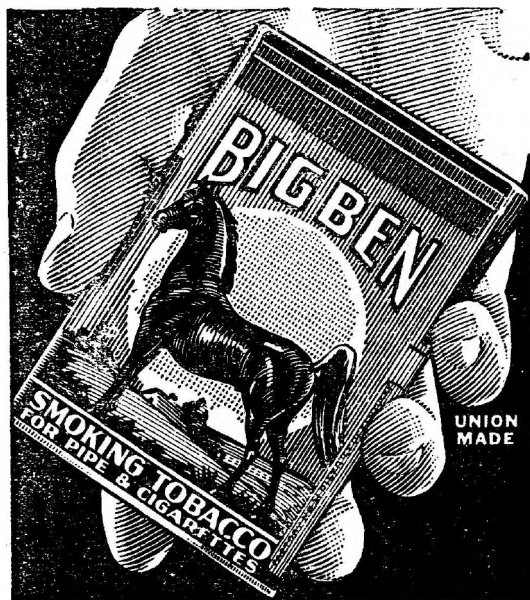
Class D natives are very determined and persevere under adverse conditions, to reap ultimate success when the tide turns. They are hard workers and make excellent assistants to those who appreciate good service. They do not burden others with their troubles and refuse to be downcast themselves, no matter how dark things for the moment may appear. They have faith in their eventual success. They make many friends because of their agreeable manners and considerate treatment of others. They should avoid speculation as riches, if any, which may be gained that way, are likely to take wings when most needed.

Class E natives—April 11th to 15th:

Class E natives are likely to engage in employment or business in which entertainment is an essential feature. Their connection with such enterprises is apt to be with the business end rather than doing the entertainment. The number of things

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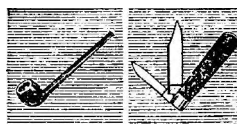
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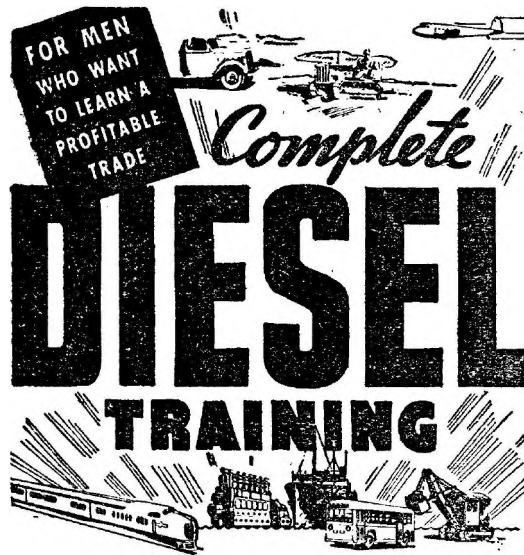


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of this nature with which they may become connected is quite large, ranging from cabarets to grand opera and from wrestling matches to the movies. State and county fairs are likely to find them present as concessioners. In an amateur way, they may try their hands at running church bazaars. They are apt to take a prominent part in the business management of literary societies. They may become writers and if so, their chief success from a financial standpoint is likely to come as a result of writing entertaining fiction rather than to devote their pens to the advancement of a cause. If writing for a cause, they are apt to magnify its importance in their own minds and make sacrifices that are scarcely to be recommended. Biographical writing touching the lives of historic persons of past generations, may become a fascinating subject for them. Genealogical research work may absorb their attention—first, because of its personal appeal, and later because of the needs of others who are willing to pay for what they have not the time and patience to do themselves.

They have the acumen to know how to go about finding lost heirs and, if the necessity is sufficiently great, as sometimes happens when estates of deceased persons are to be distributed, they may become quite successful in locating missing persons who are entitled to share in the distribution. They make excellent administrators, executors, and trust officers. They are very energetic and do well whatever they undertake. They may inherit wealth or otherwise come by it without effort on their part. Should this happen, they should not settle down to a life of ease but should continue to follow some useful occupation. As a rule,

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they have a true conception of their ability and know what they can accomplish and what is beyond their power to do. They have high principles. They are sincere, generous, impulsive, and emotional. They are steadfast in their attachments and quick to do good deeds, especially for those whose welfare they have at heart. They have strong passions; their emotions are easily aroused; and they may act impulsively—a dangerous combination for them in love affairs, unless they determinedly maintain their self-control and consider carefully the probable effect of what they may be inclined to do. In wars they may perpetuate their names in history.

Class F natives—April 16th to 20th:

Class F natives are ambitious, energetic, and industrious. They feel certain that success will come to them through persistent hard work. They are not dismayed by obstacles that may be encountered. As a rule they are very practical. Sometimes, however, they go it alone when their interests could be better advanced by cooperating with others. They are generally fortunate—too much so, in some instances, for their own good, as they may come into responsible positions for which they have not properly qualified, with possibility of failure. They have exceptional ability and usually get a chance to use it; but they should hesitate to abruptly enter new fields of endeavor about which they know nothing. Their interests are often linked with those of others, and friends are helpful in furthering their ambitions.

If possible, they should choose a line of work that is agreeable to them. Professional athletics and games of skill may bring financial



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success to them. They may become prominent in physical sports and mental pastimes. They can succeed in dairy farming and horticulture. Some major contribution connected with their work may bring them excellent financial returns as well as prove of general benefit. They are amiable most of the time, but under provocation, they may become disagreeable. They try to hide their emotions and under emotional stress they may do and say things that they do not really mean. At such times they have a sharp tongue, and until experience teaches them better, they are apt to use it ill-advisedly. Repartee, when they use it, is apt to be too caustic. It will be greatly to their benefit to always exhibit the pleasant side of their nature. Friendships foolishly lost may be hard to restore.

The foregoing descriptions apply particularly when unmodified by the positions of the planets at the time of birth. What may be the blend between planetary and sign influence can only be ascertained by casting the individual horoscope. Each person will react to sign and planetary influence according to his racial and inherited characteristics, his training and environment, and the angle at which the influence comes to him at the time of his birth. Matters over which an individual has no control, such as earthquakes, floods, tornadoes, wars, et cetera, will not show in his horoscope and he may or may not be affected thereby.

AS the ordinary calendar year is 365 days, while the earth travels around the sun in approximately 365 1/4 days, the time when the sun apparently enters or leaves a zodiacal sign varies from year to year. An

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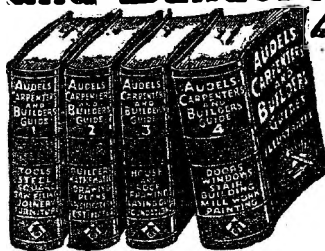
adjustment is made each leap year in an effort to keep the calendar and the earth's motion somewhat in agreement. To ascertain exactly where the sun was at the time of your birth, it would be necessary to cast your horoscope. If you were born on the border line between two signs, you are likely to partake of some of the characteristics of each. A similar observation may be made in regard to being born on the border line between two classes, whether they be in the same sign or in adjoining signs.

A person's horoscope must be cast in order to ascertain in detail the events that may happen to him during his lifetime. Groups of people, however, are affected in a general way by the positions of certain planets at a particular time and members of a group will be more or less affected by the group influence. During the twelve months ensuing from March 21, 1938, Aries natives will be beneficially or otherwise affected by the positions of certain planets, in the following manner:

Class A natives—March 21st to 26th:

During the last half of April and the first week in May, love interests can be advanced. Near relatives will do you favors. During the last half of May, business and financial benefits may be received. During the first three weeks of June, avoid cuts and burns. Mark time in home affairs. Money matters will be under mixed influences; some benefits may be received; but avoid financial extravagance. During the last week of June and the first half of July, business and financial benefits may be received. During the last half of July and the first week of August, love and marriage interests can be advanced.

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During the first three weeks of September, mark time in employment matters. During the last two weeks of October and the first week of November, mark time in love and marriage matters. Avoid cuts and burns. During the middle two weeks of December, be careful in courtship. During the last week of December, business and financial benefits may be received. During January, 1939, business, financial, environmental, and travel benefits may be received. Love and marriage interests can be advanced. During the first half of February, 1939, love and marriage interests can be advanced. During the last half of March, 1939, avoid cuts and burns. Mark time in love and courtship.

Class B natives—March 27th to 31st:

During the first three weeks of April, mark time in love and marriage matters. Avoid falls. It is not a good time to transact unnecessary business not of a routine nature. During the first half of May, love interests can be advanced. Near relatives will do you favors. During the last three weeks of June, mark time in home affairs. Be careful in courtship. Avoid cuts and burns. During the last week of July and the first half of August, love and marriage interests can be advanced. During the last three weeks of September, mark time in employment matters. October will be about normal. During the first half of November, mark time in love and marriage matters. Avoid cuts and burns. During the last half of December, be careful in courtship. During the last half of January, 1939, business and financial benefits may be received. During the first three weeks of February, 1939, business, financial, environmental,

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and travel benefits may be received. Love and marriage interests can be advanced. During the last week of March, 1939, avoid cuts and burns. Be careful in courtship.

Class C natives—April 1st to 5th:

During the months of April, May, and December, 1938, and January, February, and March, 1939, from time to time unexpected financial benefits may be received. During the months of April, May, October, November, and December, 1938, and January and February, 1939, you should be extra careful to avoid falls. Delays may occur in business matters and in the carrying out of some of your plans. Avoid bitterness; be careful of your speech. During the first half of April, financial benefits are likely to be received. During the first three weeks of May, near relatives will do you favors. During the last half of June, mark time in home affairs. Avoid cuts and burns.

July will be about normal. During the first three weeks of August, love and marriage interests can be advanced. During the last two weeks of September and the first week of October, mark time in employment matters. During the middle two weeks of November, mark time in love and marriage matters.

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During the months from April to August, inclusive, be alert in employment matters. Do not be upset by trifles. Keep your mind on your work during working hours. During the months from June to November, 1938, and during March, 1939, unexpected financial benefits may come to you from time to time. During the months from June to September, 1938, and during February and March, 1939, be extra careful to avoid falls. Delays may occur in business matters and in the carrying out of some of your plans. During the first half of April, financial benefits may be received. During the last three weeks of May, near relatives will do you favors. During the last week in June and the first half of July, mark time in home affairs. Avoid cuts and burns. During the last three weeks of August, love and marriage matters will be under mixed influences; some benefits may be received, but mark time in matters that do not go smoothly. During the last week in September and the first half of October, mark time in employment matters. During the last three weeks of November, mark time in love and marriage matters. Avoid cuts and burns. During the first three weeks of January, 1939, be careful in courtship. During the last half of Febru-

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