

GLORIA

THE FLAPPER WIFE

Gloria Meets Dick While She Is Resting In the Park.

THE STORY SO FAR
Gloria Gordon, beautiful flapper, married Dick Gregory, a struggling lawyer. Her idea of marriage is full and fine clothes, but no work or children. She refuses to work and lives a housewife. But Dick has to let the maid go, for Gloria has swamped him with debts.

She becomes infatuated with Stanley Vagum, an out-of-work actor, and follows him to New York. But he spins her. Then she tries to get a job as a chorus girl and fails. Discouraged, she comes home to Dick. He takes her back, but not as his wife.

Gloria begins to suspect that he is in love with his secretary, Susan Briggs. And the breach between husband and wife widens daily. Gloria discovers that Miss Briggs is in love with Dick. She orders him to discharge his secretary and when he refuses leaves him. Dick sends her \$50 weekly, but she returns it to him and gets a job as stenographer for Ulysses X. Forgan, a wealthy real estate operator. But Forgan makes love to her, and she gives up her position.

Gloria's family, headed by Aunt Dorcas, decide to have a counsel to settle her tangled affairs for her. Not knowing this Gloria goes with her father and mother to Aunt Dorcas' house for Sunday dinner.

By Beatrice Burton
CHAPTER LXVI
DICK walked slowly into the hall. He picked up the telephone and gave the familiar number of the Gordon home. He could hear Central ringing it.

Then, resolutely, he snatched the receiver back on its hook, and set the little instrument down on the table.

He stood there looking at it. With his hand raised to his lips, he pressed Gloria's handkerchief hard against them. That bit of cambric seemed to hold some of the fragrance of her in its scented folds. Her hair had smelled of mimosa flowers. . . . Dick put out his hand again for the telephone. But suddenly, he snatched it back, as if the little black instrument had been flame.

There was subdued panic in the speed with which he snapped off the lights, and left the house. He flung himself into the little black car, and backed it down the driveway. . . . "If I'd stayed a minute longer, I'd have called her up. . . . told her to come!" he said, disgustedly to himself, as the car rolled along the road.

He took out his watch and looked at it. Ten o'clock. . . . Too early to go to bed on a moonlit night like this.

He drove aimlessly around the dark streets where the trees made black shadows along the sides. . . . every street a Lover's Lane tonight! The same moon that had looked down on the lovers of Babylon and Nineveh looked down on the couples that were abroad tonight. . . . the immortal Two, a Man and a Girl. And then, almost without surprise, Dick found himself turning into the street where Gloria lived. He seemed to have known all along that this was where he was going. . . .

He passed the house, with his eyes straight ahead of him. But halfway

down the street, he turned in his seat and looked back at the gray, blurred outlines of it. There was a light in the window of Gloria's room. . . .

The blue car slowed down and almost stopped. Its brakes screamed in the stillness of the street.

Then, suddenly, it shot forward in salient flight. Its tail-light winked like a small, evil eye as it turned the corner.

NOT knowing whose car it was, Gloria heard it as she stood before her dresser, getting ready for bed.

She looked at herself in the mirror. . . . What was the good of all her beauty, she wondered, when Dick wasn't there to see it?

Her hair might just as well be drab instead of red gold in all its deep waves. And her mouth. . . . why should it be shaped for kisses, when he had grown tired of kissing her? Gloria turned away her head, so that she couldn't see her reflection.

She put up her hand, and turned out the light, with a vicious little movement. Then she lay down on the bed, and tried to sleep. . . . It was past midnight, before she finally dropped off.

The next morning dawned on the sound of slow dropping rain on the leaves outside her window.

She ran downstairs, through the early Sunday morning hush of the house, and brought in the newspaper. The "Help Wanted" columns. . . . they were what she wanted.

She went quickly through them, and marked two or three that looked promising. She'd go downtown first thing in the morning, and find something to do. . . . That was the thing, to keep busy! To keep from thinking!

When she heard her mother moving around in the kitchen, she dressed and hurried downstairs to help her.

"We won't have much for breakfast. . . . just some berries and toast and coffee, I thought," Mrs. Gordon said. "Your Aunt Dorcas always has such big dinners that we'll all be sick if we eat too much, now. . . ."

With a shudder, Gloria remembered that they were going to Aunt Dorcas' house for dinner!

At one o'clock they went. Aunt Dorcas, flushed and beaming, welcomed them with her best manner as Head of the House, Uncle Henry, small and silent, stood behind her. And as Head of the House, Aunt Dorcas took her place behind the platter of stuffed, roasted veal at the dinner table. Aunt Dorcas always carved, just as she always drove the family car.

Cousin Lulu and her young husband, George, were there, too. The new baby, the explained, was taking her nap upstairs on Aunt Dorcas' bed.

"What are you going to name her?" Gloria asked innocently.

Lulu and Aunt Dorcas turned reproachful eyes upon her.

"We're going to name her Dorcas, of course," Lulu said. "Why, she's the living amice of Mother. . . . hair eyes and all!"

Once more Aunt Dorcas beamed. Even the baby had deferred to her as head of the house. And all was well.

Gloria was afraid of Aunt Dorcas. "I do hope she doesn't get started on me and Dick, again," she said prayerfully to herself, as she ate the hot cherry pie that followed the meal.

But she soon found out that what the family had really come together for, was counsel. Aunt Dorcas with her finest military air, took the floor the minute they were all settled in the living room.

"Your mother tells me you've gone back to work, Gloria," she began severely. "What's the meaning of that?"

Gloria drew in her breath. "Why shouldn't I work, Aunt?" she asked. "I'm used to working."

"Doesn't this young Gregory intend to give you a red cent?" Aunt Dorcas went on with her investigation.

"He's sent me money. . . . but I gave it back to him. I didn't want it," Gloria answered in a low tone. She could feel the blood rising to her cheeks.

Aunt Dorcas looked at her with disgust. "Well, you are easy!" she exclaimed. "To let a man treat you the way Dick Gregory has. . . . And then to let him go scot-free without giving you any money at all! You are a ninny!"

Gloria said nothing.

"What are you going to do about it?" her aunt prodded her. "Don't you realize that it's no more than right that you should take his money? You're his wife!"

"Yes, and if Gloria divorces Dick she ought to get good, fat alimony!" Cousin Lulu broke in shrilly. "She's

a fool not to start suit tomorrow!" Gloria felt her mother's tender, wounded eyes pass over her. She heard her voice, soft and low after Aunt Dorcas' strident tones.

"No, there won't be any divorce," that soft voice said. "Such a thing as divorce has never been in this family. . . . There isn't anything for Gloria to do that I can see. . . ."

"There are several things she can do," declared Aunt Dorcas. She was like a lawyer giving an opinion. "She can sue young Gregory for alimony. Or she can go back to him, if she wants to."

SHE stopped suddenly. Gloria had risen and she stood facing them with fiery cheeks and eyes that were too bright.

"Haven't I told you before that that's the one thing I can't do?" she cried out. "I've been on my knees to Dick to take me back, if you must know! And he won't have me back! He's sick and tired of me! Don't I know. . . ."

Aunt Gregory nodded her large blonde head. "Then there's more to this affair of yours than anybody knows," she remarked sagely. "People don't separate unless one of 'em is in love with somebody else. . . ."

She studied Gloria with her prominent blue eyes as if she could read her thoughts if only she looked at her long enough.

The girl knew she couldn't bear to be in the room a moment longer. It was none of her aunt's business whether she took money from Dick or earned it typewriting.

And it certainly was nobody's affair whether she lived with Dick, but his and hers. . . .

She looked from her aunt to her Cousin Lulu with hostile eyes. "They don't want to help me anyway," she told herself the brutal truth. "They just want to find out all my business. . . . so they can talk me over afterward!"

She turned swiftly toward the wide doorway that led out into the hall of the house. "I've got to go," she said wildly. "I promised May Seymour I'd go for a walk with her. . . ."

It wasn't until she was out on the sidewalk that she realized that May Seymour wasn't in town. . . . probably never would be in town again!

"Oh, well, what if they do know that I fibbed to them?" she thought, furiously. "People who pry into every one's business don't deserve the truth. . . ."

But she hated herself for lying.

SHE walked slowly away from the house where the family were still holding their counsel. She imagined her Aunt Dorcas' rich voice saying: "Well, Gloria's having what old Aunt Fanny used to call the 'high strikes'. She's all

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ways so excitable. Can't talk over anything calmly!"

Glad of her escape, and soothed by her long walk in the sunshine, Gloria turned into Riverside park.

There were the usual Sunday crowds here, scattering newspapers, bread-crusts and egg-shells from their picnic baskets on the yellow-green grass.

With her eyes on the dusty, blinding ground, she walked on through the intense midsummer heat. At last she found an empty bench under a lilac tree, and sank down upon it, exhausted. She closed her eyes. . . .

She dreamed that she was in the hall of her own house. . . . her hoarse and Dick's. . . . and that he was there with her.

But between them, there seemed to be a high wall of fog.

And in her dream, Gloria was trying to pull the wall down, while Dick watched her. . . . gravely, just as he might have stood, looking at her, had the dream been life, itself.

The sense of his nearness was so real to Gloria that when she awakened and opened her eyes, suddenly, she wasn't startled by the man who stood beside her bench. It was Dick, himself!

"You!" Gloria said to him, thickly. "I was just dreaming about you. . . . I guess I was asleep."

"You guess you were? You know you were!" Dick answered. "If I'd been a thief I could have got away with this." He handed her her little head bag which had dropped to the ground.

"I suppose it's full of your week's wages," he added, dropping down onto the bench, beside her. "Or, didn't you get a job? Were you just bluffing me when you said you were going back to work?"

(To Be Continued)

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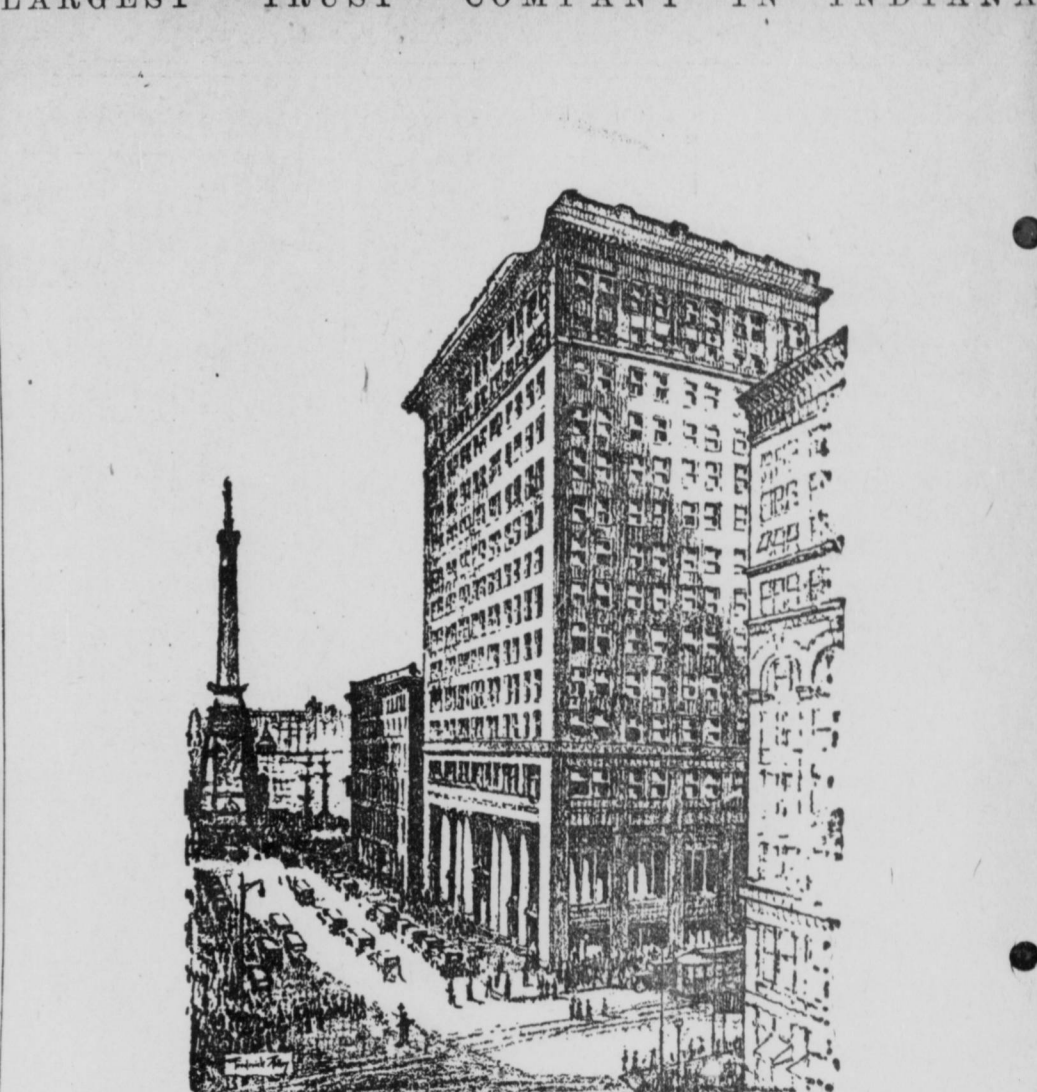
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