

Saint and Sinner

By ANNE AUSTIN

(Continued From Page 1)

the linoleum of the dining room floor, to plump herself down as close beside her mother as possible.

"How are you this morning, Mugsy darling? Did your bad little girl wake you up when she came home last night? I walked so carefully and I tucked in so easy to kiss you good night! You were sleeping like a lamb, and I just barely touched your forehead, like this!" Cherry leaned forward and gave her mother a butterfly kiss upon her heavy, sagging cheek. As the other children said resentfully, Cherry had her mother "wrapped around her finger."

"Yes, honey, you did wake me up," her mother confessed, in her patient, complaining voice, but it was with a doting love for the beautiful girl who was bending toward her so solicitously. "But I knew it would worry you, if I let on, so I just kept my eyes closed. Played 'possum on you! I never slept a wink all night! And my head's just splitting this morning. I declare, life don't seem worth living, when you're sick all the time and poor as a church mouse."

"Well, Mother, such is life!" Mr. Lane pushed back his chair, dropping the sprawled sheets of his paper to the floor.

"Jim Lane, if you say that to me again, I'll—IT divorce you!" Mrs. Lane struck the table sharply with her clenched hand. "That's all you ever say—well, such is life! Such is life!" she mimicked bitterly. "I'm sick and tired of the sound of the words! If you had more gut-up-and-git to you, such wouldn't be life in the Lane family! Such is life! Huh! Make me sick, you do!"

"I do the best I can, Martha," Jim Lane said in a low voice, as if he would like to exclude the children from their never-ending quarrel. "I'm tryin' my best to land that Hathaway contract. Two six-room-and-bath bungalows."

"Daddy," Cherry said, the musical sweetness of her voice edged slightly with contempt. "I do wish you'd quit working on the jobs yourself. I tell the girls and the fellows I go with that my father is a—construction engineer, or a contractor, and then they see you in overalls, carpentering."

"You shouldn't say things that aren't true, Cherry," Faith said quietly, as she slipped into her father's vacated chair and drew the platter of cold bacon and eggs toward her. "Father is a carpenter, and a good one, and it's just extra-ordinary on his part that makes him land a small bit of contracting now and then. I hope you get the Hathaway contract, Dad. What's your bid?"

"Six thousand, three hundred and fifty," her father answered, straightening his bent shoulders and looking down at her with boundless pride and affection. "Your figuring helped me a lot. Ain't so good at figures myself. But I think Holloran is going to underbid me—crooked as a dog's hind leg—Holloran is. He'll get the job at the lowest bid, then ring in a bunch of extras. Don't see how he gets away with it. He reached for his sun-yellowed straw hat that lay on the sideboard. "How will you swing that big deal, Dad?" Faith asked, her eyes wisely following his stooped, old-before-its-time figure as he walked slowly toward the living room door.

"Dear Dad!" The lumber yard's willing to carry me for materials, and Pa will go on my note at the bank for pay roll and incidental expenses," he told her, his eyes brightening with hope. "Might have a meat pie for dinner tonight, honey if you ain't got nothing else planned. I've asked Hathaway to drop in for supper. Might help me land the contract, if you fed him good. Decent young chap, Bob Hathaway. I've been tootin' your cookin' up to him, Faith, so do your darndest!"

"I wish you wouldn't use such language in front of children," Jim Lane complained wearily, as she scraped butter upon her fourth piece of toast and reached for the jam pot.

Joy Lane giggled. "Dumdest! That's an awful old fashion cuss word! You ought hear Long yell 'em off! Mom—daddy! I've been tootin' your cookin' up to him, Faith, so do your darndest!"

"Such is life, Mother," Jim Lane chuckled, as he left the dining room. "Faith, it does look like I could have a decent egg, considering the fact that I have to work hard all day! This one's broken and the yellow's as stiff as glue!" Cherry pushed her plate from her in disgust, her lovely face petulant and aggrieved, like a sulking child.

"If you would get to the table when breakfast's ready, your egg wouldn't be cold," Faith retorted. "I'll fry you another one. How do you want it? Sunny side up or scrambled?"

"Scrambled, in butter, with cream," Cherry gave her order languidly and watched her mother, almost completely bare arms above her head in a great yawn. "Oh, Mugsy, I learned a new step of the Charleston last night over at the Warrens'. Look!"

Cherry sprang up from the table, spread her petaled, crisp green organdy skirt, so short that it showed her dimpled knees in their gleaming white silk stockings, blew a kiss to her mother, then began to fling her tiny feet and her graceful arms in a mad abandon. Junior gibberingly whistled, "Yes, sir, that's my baby!" clapping his hands to accentuate the tempo. Joy jumped up and joined in, her thin little sticks of arms and legs making a grotesque burlesque of Cherry's graceful performance.

"Say, kid, stop! You got that all wrong!" Junior interrupted. "Here, it goes like this!" His long legs began to weave the intricate figure with practiced ease, his arms swinging madly, then crossing themselves as he bent forward in the last African frenzy of the dance.

"You're good, all right!" Cherry, breathless, watched him admiringly. "I guess you learned it from that fast Fay Allen!"

"Young lady, you lay off!"

She's just as good as you are any day in the week, and especially Saturday night!" he emphasized meaningfully as he flung his long, thin body back into his chair and reached for his coffee cup.

Cherry flushed, so that the lovely apricot tinting on her cheeks deepened to a ripe richness. "If you say another word, Long Lane, I'll tell Mugsy you saw on the River Road! Now, Smarty, I guess that'll hold you!"

Her golden-yellow eyes blazed at him like two hot metal disks, her long, curling, bronze lashes spread like two rows of silken fringe upon the milky whiteness of cheek and eyelids.

"Check!" Junior grinned sheepishly, with a sidelong glance at his mother, who adored him only a little less than her beautiful 18-year-old daughter.

"Children, children!" She rapped automatically with her knuckles upon the table.

"I don't see how you can eat eggs scrambled with cream and butter, and stay as thin as you are," Faith Lane commented, a little enviously, as she set the hot plate down before her sister. "I'd get fat."

"I dance it off," Cherry laughed.

"Um! That tastes good! You are a good cook, Faith, you sweet old thing! If I stayed at home all day, jolling around the house, I'd get fat, too. Of course, you aren't really fat—just plump!"

Her secretive yellow eyes took in the splendid womanliness of Faith's tall, beautifully proportioned, but entirely unflapper-like body. "I only weigh ninety-five," Cherry added complacently, as she poured cream into her cup of hot coffee.

Faith reddened, then raised a forkful of cold egg to her quivering mouth. Lolling around the house! A tear welled out of each eye and traveled slowly down her pale, slightly olive-tinted cheeks. The tip of her rather large, softly indefinite nose—neither pug, Grecian nor Roman—quivered like a hurt child's.

Cherry poked a rosy-tipped finger at her sister's tear-marked cheek. "Don't be a cry-baby, Faith! I'm sorry! Didn't mean it—whatever it was I said. Chester Hart thinks you have the finest figure of an girl in town, go there!"

"Chester ain't been around so much lately," Mrs. Lane remarked, in her complaining voice. "I thought you and Chester was going to make a match of it, Faith. But Lordy, I don't know what I'd do without you, me sick and all!"

"Don't worry, Mother!" Faith's chin went up sharply. "No danger!" "I could tell you a thing or two about Chester, the blue-eyed 'boy friend,'" Long began, but Cherry's little high heel came down sharply on his instep.

"Gotta beat it!" The youth pushed back his chair so violently that it clattered to the floor. He let it be. "You'd better get a move on, Cherry, if you don't wanna lose your job. It's 8:25 and it takes forty minutes to get to town on the street car. But I guess you'll gold-dig an auto ride. Some technique, kid! I've watched you. Oh, them come-along eyes! Oh, the sweet, helpless little baby dirl! 'Oh, mister, please!'"

"Oh, let me alone!" Cherry set her coffee cup down with a clatter. "Mugsy, if you don't make Long quit picking on me—"

"Run along, Junior. What about your job?" Cherry's obedient mother turned her complaining voice upon her son.

"Ain't got one," the boy grinned at her from the doorway. Then, before she could question him further, he had ducked and run, slamming the front door behind him.

"Well, of all things!" Cherry's musical voice was sharp with irritation. "That boy can't keep a job to save his life! I believe he fires himself. I don't see why he had to lose his job the same day I lost mine—damn the luck, anyway!"

"You've lost your job!" Faith cut in, almost sternly. "Oh, Cherry!"

"Don't 'Oh, Cherry!' me!" the girl cried indignantly. "I don't guess it's my fault if Mr. Preston has to go and get fresh! I—slapped him in the face, and—gee, Mugsy, you oughta seen how comical he looked, with the print of my hand right smack across his cheek! And then, well, I walked right out on him! Frank-o-ding!"

"Mama's poor little girl!" Her mother opened her fat arms wide and the "poor little girl" snuggled into her embrace.

"I wonder—if—if you couldn't keep them from getting—fresh, Cherry, if you tried a little bit harder," Faith said slowly, her eyes, ashen with angry tears, fixed on her cup of cold coffee.

"Oh, it's easy for you to criticise me!" Cherry cried, struggling to a sitting position in her mother's enormous lap. "You don't have anything to do but stay at home all day! Pretty soft for you! I could kill myself working for a measly little old \$20 a week—"

"Which you spend entirely upon yourself!" Faith cut in. "You don't pay a penny for board, and Junior pays only \$5 a week! No wonder Dad looks like he'd lost his last friend. And then you give him the devil for being a carpenter! He's got to work to feed us all, hasn't he?" Tears choked off her voice.

"Children! Children! Faith, I'm ashamed of you, when your poor little sister has gone through an awful experience with that old Preston! Old snake in the grass! I suppose you'd rather she had—had let him take advantage of her! Oh, dear! Life is just one thing after another!"

"To hear Cherry tell it, every man she works for tries to take advantage of her!" Faith dabbed angrily at her streaming eyes with her napkin. "First there was Kirkpatrick, and then old Dr. Mullins, and then that young architect—"

"Faith!" Cherry's voice was shrill with indignation. "I won't stand for your insinuations! I guess if you had to work with a lot of old hewies, every last one of 'em wanting to take me like this! Oh, Lordy, I should think they'd all want

OUT OUR WAY—By WILLIAMS



BOOTS AND HER BUDDIES—By MARTIN



Lordy! I'm getting gas on my stomach again! If life ain't one thing after another!" She lay back moaning, her eyes closed.

"Such is life, Mugsy!" Cherry, gay again, called over her shoulder as she flitted, like a green-and-gold bird of paradise, toward the hall between living room and bedrooms. She paused on the threshold to call out to Faith:

"Don't sulk, darling! And by the way, Dad's idea about a meat pie is the bunk. Make it southern fried chicken and waffles, and some of your heavenly apricot sherbet for dessert. Dad introduced me to Bob Hathaway on Cain St. the other day, and—oh, boy! About thirty-looks-like Ben Lyons, lots of money, and a bachelor! What could be sweeter? Don't worry, Mugsy, darling! I'll get another job at the agency today!"

The telephone shrilled and Cherry's light body darted to answer it, as if she had been expecting a call.

"Oh! Hello, Chester! Why, you old sweetie! Of course! You bet! Yes, I sort of thought you'd give me a buzz! Noo! Oh, quit kidding! I didn't, either! Honest, I didn't! Get home at half past twelve! He didn't do any such thing! The idea! Yeah, she's here," Cherry's voice sank to a confidential undertone.

"I think she's suspicious. Oh, don't worry! As Dad says, such is life! You'll hurry, won't you, Chester? I'll wait on the corner of Myrtle and Vine for you. No, better not come clear to the house. Poor old Faith! Oh, Chester, I'm sorry, not tonight! Ye-es. Oh, just a friend of Dad's. A handsome young plute! Bob Hathaway—you know who he is! Bye, Chee! In ten minutes!"

(To Be Continued)

"The VANITY CASE"

A Tale of Mystery and Love

By CAROLYN WELLS

BEGIN HERE TODAY

MRS. PRENTISS sees mysterious lights in the Heath household one night and the next day Harbor Gardens, Long Island, is the scene of a tragedy. MYRA HEATH and the disappearance of her husband, FRANK HEATH, are LAWRENCE (NAN), her to Mrs. Heath's fortune, and FRANK HEATH, a beautiful, vain, and ambitious man, who was never more colorful, yet when her body was found she was heavily bruised. She was a collector of glass, and it was rare old bottles from her collection that the murderer used to kill her. Candles were burning at her head and feet, and near by was a card marked "The Work of Perry Heath."

At the Country Club the murder is discussed by SAM ANDERSON, Heath's rival for the club presidency; AL CUNNINGHAM, who is trying to solve the crime; and others. Meanwhile, TODD BUNNY RUCK, Myra Prentiss' nephew, has met Bunny and fallen in love with her.

Bunny is amazed to get a phone call from Heath. He phones her again, saying "Cunningham is suddenly convinced to Buck that he saw Bunny sending the message after the murder. Most questions all the servants and tell them to keep quiet."

Anderson writes Cunningham to his house and there, while waiting for his host, Cunningham is suddenly confronted by Perry Heath, who disappears as mysteriously as he had appeared. Shortly afterward Anderson comes in and he and Bunny are talking about not detaining Heath.

Buck determines to clear Bunny and has a talk with her. But she refuses to be truthful. He declares his love but she is not interested.

NOW GO ON WITH THE STORY

CHAPTER XXXVII

Buck looked after Bunny, sorely tempted to follow, but concluded not to, feeling it was better to let her think things over by herself.

He went back to his chair on the porch, where sheltered by the clustering vines, he sat and smoked num-berless cigars.

His aunt came out and said, in her crisp way:

"Come, Toddy Boy, it's late. You can think about her in your dreams instead of catching your death of cold out on this porch. Come along in."

"No, Aunt Em. You run along to bed, and I'll go up when I get ready. Leave the door open, I'll lock it when I go in."

"Oh, all right, have your own way, but if you get hay fever, don't blame me!"

"I won't. Good night, auntie dear."

"Good night, Boy. You'll find anything you want in the pantry—if so be, you can think of anything so prosaic as food!"

Buck smiled at his aunt's intui-

OUR BOARDING HOUSE—By AHERN



FRECKLES AND HIS FRIENDS—By BLOSSER



tion, and left her rallery unanswered.

He sat there for hours, unheeding the flight of time. He ceased smoking, and sat, almost motionless, giving himself up to dreams far removed from detectives and murder mysteries.

How sweet and dear she was! And that little wistful smile—that alone betokened her utter innocence. If she had a secret, it was that she was shielding somebody else—from some mistaken sense of duty.

Well, he would discover her secret—he had a right to, for his motives were all for her good, his interests only hers, from now on and forever.

Some day, this awful investigation would be at an end, some day she would be free to go or come as she pleased. Then she would go home, and he would follow. He would meet her people, interview her father, and all would be shipshape and proper.

Whether it was the mental picture of the wedding feast, or the increasing chill of the night air, something turned his thoughts to the pantry his aunt had so casually referred to. He was just contemplating a move in that direction, when he saw some one coming out of the front door.

The door had been closed, though not locked, and the one who came through it was Bunny—yes, surely, Bunny.

He sat very still, his eyes almost starting from his head. Was she, could she be, walking in her sleep?

No, he saw at once that she was not.

She had on a dark frock, and black shoes and stockings, and she walked slowly, looking about her as she stepped.

She could not see Buck, as he sat back in the shadow, and he made no sound, so that she did not even pause to look that way.

She went softly, slowly, but steadily on, to the edge of the porch and down the steps.

As she went down the path to the side gate, Buck rose and quietly followed her.

He felt no hesitancy about doing this, he was her protector and he meant to watch over her.

It was not necessary to be very cautious, for the soft lawn deadened his steps, and apparently she had no thought she was not alone.

Across the lawn she made for the small piece of woods that was not far away.

In the shelter of a tree Toddy

waked, and then as she went into the woods, he cautiously followed, but at a distance.

He had no wish to pry, but also, he must see that no danger came to her.

As she disappeared in the deep shadows, he edged nearer, and saw, with a sudden pang at his heart, that she met somebody, and that somebody was a man.

Like a flash, Buck remembered the letter Bunny had received at lunch time. How she had read it without comment, but with, he remembered, a heightened color, and a queer little frown.

Could it have been from this man, making an appointment for this meeting?

Buck was sure that it not only could have been, but was.

His heart was torn with fears. He tried to keep his faith in Bunny, but she had left the house secretly, and very late. She had come to meet a man who was waiting for her in a dark, lonely wood.

It didn't seem as if much more were needed to make the girl blame-worthy beyond power of explanation.

He watched through the darkness, not daring, nor indeed wishing to go nearer, and it seemed to him that the two human shadows merged into one. As if Bunny had been lost in the man's embrace and as if she made no resistance to such conditions.

Toddy turned sick at heart. This was the girl he loved, worshiped, adored, to the point of idolatry. But this was also the girl he honored, respected and believed innocent of any guilty knowledge or connivance in her friend's death.

What was the truth? For once Buck's power of discernment was at fault.

He knew not what to think—what to believe.

More than willing to give Bunny every possible benefit of the doubt, how could he believe her in all ways innocent, when she would do such a thing as this?

He tried to find an explanation. But if this interview were in the interests of law and justice, why so secret the meeting? Why so late an hour? So stealthy a departure from the house?

It was inexplicable. Tod began to feel a rising anger—yes, even his Bunny could arouse his resentment at this treatment of his proffered help. Why hadn't she confided in

him, and let him go with her to see this man?

Then he bethought himself of another explanation, and his wrath turned to great and grievous woe.

Suppose this man were Bunny's lover! Suppose it all had nothing to do with the murder mystery, but that this chap, confound him! had come from Bunny's home with messages of warnings or help of some sort in her dreadful dilemma.

Maybe they were affianced sweethearts, and the girl had only been flirting with him, and he had to admit, she had done very little of that. Indeed, she had really repulsed him, and it may have been only his imagination that made him hope she would yet turn to him with love and affection.

He knew little about her, his intuitions might not be true ones, maybe she was the typical flapper of whom he heard so much and so often.

Well, he must know a little more, and with a feeling of defiance of his own better nature, he crept softly nearer the pair in the woods.

They now sat on a fallen log, earnestly engaged in conversation. He could not make out the tenor of their talk. He hated himself for trying to, but he edged still closer, and thought he could see only shadowy outlines of their figures, he at last managed to make out a few words.

"Don't you care?" Bunny said, passionately, her voice raised a trifle, as if in amazed agony. "Have you no pity, no regret? Oh, I don't know what to do!"

"Don't do anything, dear," the man's voice said.

Buck could not place that voice, it was unfamiliar, though he realized he might have heard it before.

"But I can't be still and say nothing—you see—I noticed the putty"

The man, at that, clapped his hand across her mouth.

"Hush!" he said, "I fancied I heard a sound. Somebody may be about."

(To Be Continued.)

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