

Forgotten Sweetheart

BOB WESTON, son of a millionaire, is in love with JOAN WARDING, pretty Memphis girl. He has come to Memphis in connection with a textile plant under construction for his father's company.

BARBARA COURTNEY, society girl, whom he knew in New York, is scheming to win him away from Joan.

PAT, Joan's younger brother, is infatuated with JERRY FORRESTER, son of her employer, MISS WARREN, hopeful that her two daughters will marry well and escape the drudgery that has been her lot. She has made every effort to give her daughters advantages.

Through Barbara, Joan is invited on a house party. Barbara realizes Joan will be ill at ease among so many strangers and hopes Bob will be disillusioned. From the very beginning of the house party things go wrong for Joan. She has nothing in common with the sophisticated, wealthy girls who take it for granted that Bob is in love with Barbara.

Probably all Joan's unhappiness because of Barbara's possessive attitude toward Bob, too, grows from the fact that she is hurt. Joan accepts the attentions of JIM WARTFIELD, a dancing partner of her father's, determinedly says, "I'm not interested in you."

Now go on with the story.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN (Continued)

Joan was about to say, "I don't drink," but stopped. Across the table, Barbara had touched Bob's glass with her own, saying, "Here's to a good girl but not too good, for the good die young and I do hate a dead one."

"Barbara, my child, where did you resurrect that ancient toast?" Fred gibed. That was my grandmother's favorite."

"I just happened to think of it," said Barbara.

Joan's thoughts were traveling a new path. "If I had been more like them he would have liked me better," she told herself.

She lifted her glass, smiling at Jim.

"I thought you were a young woman with ideas about life," he said. "What made you change your mind?"

He added, when she did not answer, "It's sensible to let the stuff alone."

As Joan put down the goblet her feeling of depression lifted. Later she was even more light-hearted, laughing a great deal.

It was this young, clear laughter that caused Bob to frown down at his plate. People were smiling at this too-ray Joan. What was the matter with her? Attracting attention so boldly?

Dinner was over, and Joan rose from the table. She stumbled slightly and stooped to untangle a fold of her dress from the chair. Jim put a steadying hand on her arm.

Bob heard Charlie saying to Sally, "Our little friend hasn't learned how to hold her liquor."

A colored orchestra in the alcove under the stairs began playing. Joan, swept from the arms of one man to another, felt as if she were in a different world.

Even as she was cutting in frequently, Charlie was bringing up new men and introducing them. Jim seemed always just at her elbow. She felt gayer than she had ever been in her life, yet paradoxically, there was a tightness about her heart, a pain somewhere.

"All I needed was to be like the others," she thought. But the thought did not bring happiness. Only that tight feeling again about her heart.

BOB, standing with the stag line to keep his eyes away from the slender figure in white, the long skirt swirling about as she danced. He had never seen Joan looking lovelier, more vivid, more shining. It was as though all the light in the room was concentrated on the slim form.

He would cut in the next time she danced past and he would tell her exactly what he thought of her strange behavior. Then a voice spoke behind him.

"The little girl from Memphis seems to be waking up. Guess it takes old Jim."

Bob did not hear the rest of the sentence. He had walked away from the group. Joan floated by and he met her eyes, nodding coldly.

He had the next dance with Barbara. She welcomed him with a radiant smile, pressed his hand, and whispered, "Bob, I have a raging headache. Will you sit out the next dance with me?"

Some one claimed her, and he stood back again, watching Joan. This new, strange Joan, having a whirl. Her dark eyes shining recklessly, her lips too scarlet. Held too closely in Jim Wartfield's arms.

He cut in, crushing her against him savagely. Joan felt his arms tighten violently, possessively around her, and responded with a lift of the spirit, a surge of happiness.

Their steps felt together rhythmically. Her head was close against his shoulder. But when she glanced up at him his face was set and cold.

"He doesn't like me any more," she thought. The happy mood slipped from her, replaced by one of dull misery.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

JOAN and Bob barely had circled the room when Jim put his hand on Bob's arm, cutting in on the dance. Bob made his way toward Barbara. The orchestra was playing a slow waltz. Barbara's bright head nestled close against Bob's shoulder, a smile curving her lips. The music stopped and they left the floor.

"I've been trying to get a word alone with you all evening," Jim told Joan, "but you're too popular. Listen, I'm out of cigarettes. Will you go with me to get some? There's a little store a few miles away that stays open all night."

Joan hesitated.

"Please come!"

"Why not?" she answered, thinking of Bob and Barbara leaving the dance floor, going through the door leading to a dimly-lighted porch.

"Don't bother about a wrap," said Jim. "My overcoat is in the car."

A few minutes later they were spinning along the smooth highway. The small store, windows bright even at this late hour, loomed up suddenly. Jim drove past.

"Your cigarettes?" said Joan.

Jim laughed. "In my pocket."

"In your pocket?"

"Don't be silly, Joan. You knew that was an excuse."

"I certainly didn't!" Joan answered. "You said you wanted them."

"There were plenty at the house, even if I hadn't been well supplied. And I am." He reached into his pocket.

"Strike a match for me, Joan."

He checked the car's speed. Joan struck a match and as it flared up she saw his bright, feverish eyes.

"Thanks." He pulled the car to one side of the road, stopping it.

"You know very well why I brought you away," he went on. "I wanted you here with me—away from that crowd. It isn't your crowd, Joan. And I'm crazy about you!"

His arms were about her suddenly. He was lifting her face to his. Joan, resisting fiercely, said: "If you kiss me, I'll never forgive you, Jim."

"You don't think I'd lose this opportunity?" He was laughing.

"I liked you," Joan said steadily. "You seemed decent and understanding. I thought you were the best friend I had there."

His arms dropped. "Well, have it your way, then. If I were just a little drunker, I wouldn't listen to you."

He started the car, and Joan relaxed in her seat. The engine began jerking. Jim pulled out the choker and jammed it in again. The car moved along a few feet jerkily, then came to a standstill.

"No gas, Joan," Jim said slowly. "There's nothing to do but walk to the store and get some."

"I'll go with you," she said. They walked along in silence until they reached the curve in the road.

"Hell!" said Jim. "The lights are out in the store." He turned and looked at her, as two white slippers were worn and groaned.

"I'm all kinds of an idiot! We'll have to walk."

"How far is it?" asked Joan.

"Nearly three miles."

"Let's start," she spoke bravely, steadily. But she was thinking miserably. "This is what comes of jealousy. I'm paying the piper."

"Where's that good-looking Joan girl?" Fred sang out.

"With Jim on the porch probably."

"Not on the porch," said Barbara. "They drove off in Jim's car an hour ago."

"Probably went to the store for cigarettes. I know those old tricks of Jim's," said Carol easily.

"Or a coca-cola," suggested Charlie Ross with a laugh.

"Or an aspirin," some one else offered cynically. "Jim probably needed one. He certainly didn't need any more liquid refreshments."

Rage burned in Bob's heart. To think of Joan going off with that jug-head, letting herself in for a lot of gossip and infernal speculation!

HE went out on the porch, starting down the black stretch of road toward the neighborhood store. He looked at his watch. It was 1 o'clock. A half hour later he looked at his watch again.

Some of the others came out on the porch. "I can't imagine what has happened to them," Carol was saying.

"We are being very silly," said Barbara. "Nothing's happened."

"They'll be coming in presently," Enid said.

"They always do," said Charlie in his tired, wise voice.

There were steps on the drive—a white blur in the darkness. And then, as the light from the porch reached out, a dark shadow beside the white.

Joan and Jim!

They came up on the porch. The gay girl of two hours before had vanished. Joan's hair, blown by the long walk in the wind, was in disorder. There were deep, weary shadows under her eyes. Her shoulders, under the man's coat, sagged forlornly.

Jim's face showed again, too. His hair was rumpled. His eyes were bright and feverish. Searching the faces on the porch, he said contemptuously, "A royal reception. Don't say you were really alarmed about us!"

"The gas ran out," he added slowly. And then, as one one spoke, "Now, some darn fool laugh!"

"But evidently your liquor didn't," This from Charlie.

"Comedy isn't your role," Jim said.

"Nobody but a damn idiot would drive off without enough gas in his car," said Bob.

"Lay off, will you, Weston?" said Jim dangerously.

Bob stepped forward, but Barbara caught his arm. "Please, Bob, you are making it hard for Carol."

"Come on in," said Enid, striving for gaiety. "I have a dance with some one."

Joan slipped out of the big coat and handed it to Jim. "I'm going up," said Joan. "Good night."

She went inside and up the stairs slowly. As she reached the top she heard Carol's voice:

"I shouldn't have invited her. Barbara warned me. Blood will tell you, know. What could you expect from a girl whose father was a thief and a suicide?"

Joan put out one hand steady-ly herself against the railing. Wave upon wave of humiliation and shame poured through her. Shame most of all for herself. She had brought this upon herself, trying to be like the others, seeking cheap popularity. Trying to win Bob—when he wanted Barbara!

As she entered the room the group moved apart quickly. Carol said stiffly, "You must be tired. Is there anything I can do for you?"

"Nothing," said Joan steadily.

"Hurry," Sally said to Enid.

"Don't dawdle so. We're wasting a heavenly waltz." Enid tasted powder on her face and followed without a word.

"They know I heard," Joan thought. "But it really makes no difference to them."

JOAN began undressing mechanically. Once, passing the mirror door, she saw a strange girl with tragic eyes, all the blood drained from her face. She felt tears against her lashes.

And three days before she had driven from Memphis, sure of happiness ahead.

Some one knocked at the door, but before she reached it an envelope was slipped through. Joan stooped and picked it up. On the envelope was written "Joan," and inside was a brief message.

"I've been damning myself for letting you in for this. I'm fed up with the whole bunch and leaving for Memphis about 7 in the morning. I hope you can forgive me, Joan. I'll call you tomorrow night at your home."

JOAN stood looking at the message thoughtfully. It was Jim, not Bob, who was concerned about her. Bob had gone back to dance with Barbara. He was completely indifferent to her unhappiness. Probably he bitterly regretted bringing her here. Carol—when she thought of Carol! Joan's heart contracted again. Carol, with the veneer of friendliness removed, her eyes angry and hostile.

(To Be Continued)

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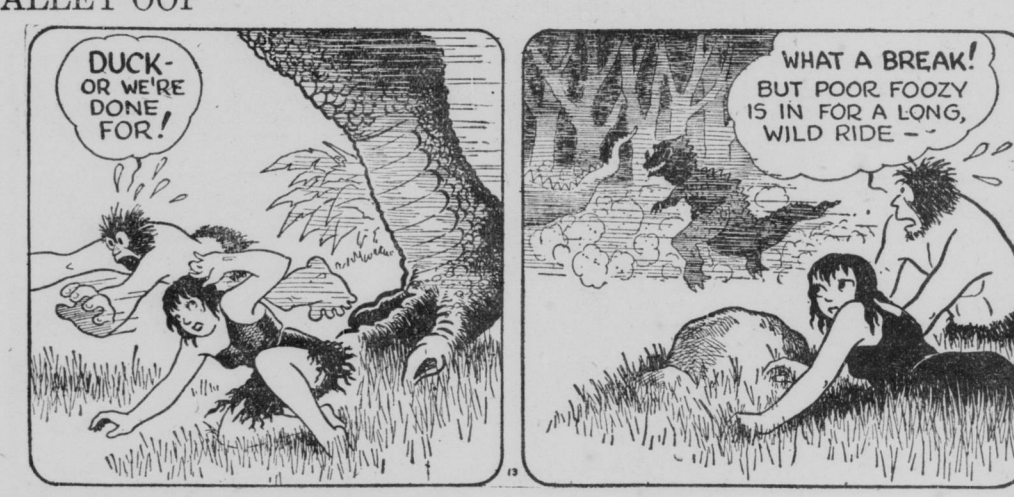
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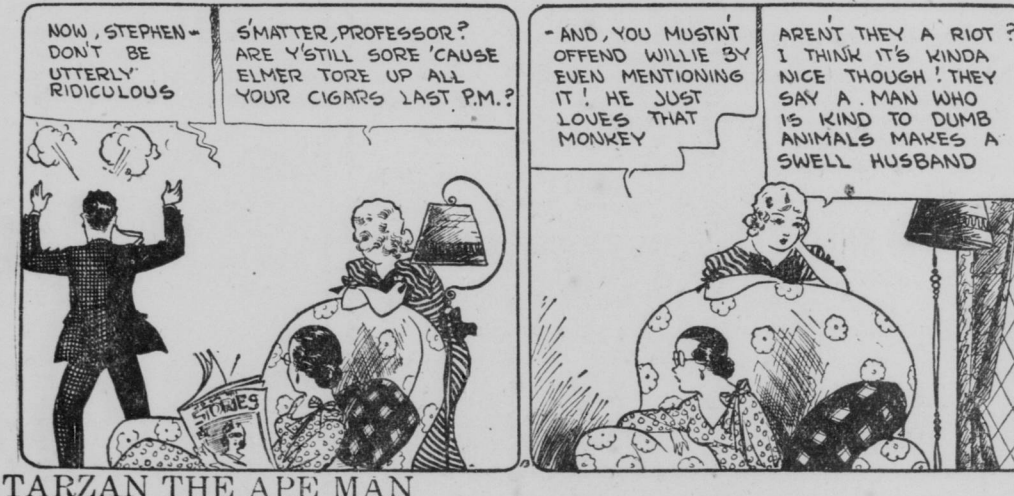
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BOOTS AND HER BUDDIES



TARZAN THE APE MAN



There's No Need for Any Woman to Be "Out-of-Fashion"—If She Will Do ALL Her Shopping Downstairs at Ayres (See Page 2)

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