

"THE PRIZEFIGHTER AND THE LADY"

From the Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Picture Now on View at Loew's Palace

CHAPTER EIGHT

BELLE lay awake, waiting for Steve to come home. It was quite late when she heard her bedroom door open softly and saw Steve, tiptoed unsteadily in, his shoes in his hands.

"Hello," she said in a dull voice. "I didn't want to wake you." He glanced foolishly at his shoes.

"I've haven't been asleep," Steve put his shoes in the closet and started taking off his coat. He kept his eyes averted from Belle and tried to talk casually.

"Gee, what a waste of time! All those sports writers got stowed and the Professor started hittin' it up, and I just couldn't get away. Anyhow it'll mean a lot of free publicity."

"There are some clippings on the bureau," she said. "Well, where'd you get these, baby?"

"The Professor brought them. He was here for dinner and spent the evening with me." In the tense silence that fell between them, Steve kept his back turned, bowed his head and fingered the clippings. Belle did not even look at him. The silence was becoming unbearable to Steve and he turned to his wife impulsively.

"Listen, baby..." he began, and fell silent.

"What's the matter, Morgan? Haven't I been doing my job?" "Listen, Belle..." Steve was uncomfortable and confused. "This dame doesn't mean a thing to me."

"She's... she's just like all the rest." "Like all the rest of them?" She quivered his attempt to protest. "Oh, a woman knows those things without being told if she loves a man. It hangs around in his eyes..."

"and she tries to kid herself that the rest of the world doesn't see it. I've known all along, Morgan." "This is all I'm going to say and then we'll forget it. I'm going to keep on doing my job..."

"being your wife..." because I love you..." and I'd rather do that than anything in the world."

"Gee, you're a great girl, Belle!" "I won't be if it ever happens again," she warned him. "I've got too much fool pride, I guess. If I mean anything to you, Morgan, don't ever let me hate you. It won't be very nice."

"I won't give you another chance," said Steve, and meant it at the moment.

BUT there was a girl in the chorus that appeared with Steve Morgan, premier contender for the championship crown, in his first personal appearance at the Globe theater, who looked at him continually.

At the end of the first week, she said to Steve as they left the stage for their dressing rooms: "There goes the first week. Are they holding us over?"

"Uhuh. Two more weeks." "Three weeks of 'Gettin' Ready for Love.' Lot of preparation, isn't it?" Her smile was arch and inviting.

"I think it's too much, don't you?" responded Steve. "There's a drink in my dressing room."

"All right." Her voice had softened. "Let me get out of this costume."

Belle, who had been shopping, stopped at the theater on her way home to pick up Steve. The doorman said he was still in his dressing room and she went straight to it.

There was no answer to her knock. She called.

"What's the matter, Steve? Oh, hello, baby. Just a minute." He unlocked and opened the door. "I was half dead and didn't hear you. She started to enter, but he said, quickly, 'Listen, honey, will you do me a big favor...'"

"You've been drinking, haven't you?" She pushed determinedly past him and drew aside the curtains that shut off the little anteroom.

"Come on out, let's all have a drink," said Belle to the shrinking girl behind the curtains. "That is, as soon as you're dressed for company."

Steve grabbed her shoulders. "Belle, don't make a row." "Take your hands off me! Take them away! I don't like the slime!"

She backed away to the door as the girl came out, wrapping her negligee about her.

"Belle," pleaded Steve. "Let's talk this over." "We had our talk some weeks ago. I'm through."

CHAPTER IX

BELLE went straight to Willie Ryan at his cabaret office.

"Willie, I'm a young girl with blond hair and straight legs—pretty straight—a funny voice—and a personality, I'm told—and I want a job."

"I have a vacancy that ought to fit you like a glove. I used to have a girl here who looked a lot like you. Everybody was crazy about her."

The sound of the voices of the Adopted Son and of Hogan raised in argument came to them and then Steve Morgan's angry voice saying: "Get out of my way!"

Then the door burst open and Steve bounded in followed by Hogan and the Adopted Son.

"Come on, Belle, we're going home," said Steve.

"Beat it, Morgan, while you're still got a chance," said Willie.

"I'll beat it when I get what I came for."

Steve was seeing red. He started for Belle, but Hogan and the Adopted Son got in his way. Steve swung once with his right fist and once with his left and the two men landed in opposite corners of the room.

He whirled back to Belle and found Willie's gun poking him in the stomach while the Adopted Son shoved another in his back. Belle shrieked, buried her face in her hands and moaned.

"Please don't kill him, Willie! Please don't shoot him, Willie! Please don't!" Willie pocketed his gun, waved his henchmen from the room, and said to Belle, "You can go with him if you want to, Belle," said Willie, gently.

round. Not a chance, Steve, not a chance."

STEVE looked at her stupidly a moment. "I guess you're right." He left Willie's office quickly, his head hanging.

At the door closed after him, Belle collapsed to the floor in a half faint. Willie picked her up and placed her on a couch and chafed her hands. She opened her eyes after a moment or two.

"I'm ashamed, Willie. What's the matter with me?" "Let's forget it. You lie there for a while." He left the room, beckoning Hogan and the Adopted Son to follow him.

In the adjoining room, he ordered Hogan to call the sporting desk of the Tribune, and the Adopted Son to take Belle a drink and stay with her.

"Hello, Joe," said Willie, into the phone. "Willie Ryan talking. Yes... Say how's that deal for Morgan's fighting for the championship coming along?... Oh, yeah... How much of a guarantee does the champ want?... Hasn't the Professor been able to raise it?... Oh, I see... Well, there'll be a certified check for that guarantee in Carey's hands tomorrow."

Yes, but don't mention my name in your story... Spill it whenever you want to... Right." He hung up.

"I think you're nuts, boss," said Hogan. "She don't want any more of him."

"No more'n I want a sucker born every minute. Listen, I want you to start the short-enders working on Morgan himself—get all the purse money you can drain for bets on his own fat head, because I'm going to swell it for one grand and glorious bust! I'm going to cut that guy down to her size and then buy them a little cabbage patch and call it a day."

CHAPTER TEN

WHILE the Professor studied the articles of the fight between Steve Morgan and Primo Camera in the office of Jack Dempsey Promotions, Inc., Steve stood by, surly and morose.

"Now that the financial side is satisfactory," Dempsey was saying, "I think we're all ready to sign. What do you say, Professor? Here's a pen."

"Now don't hasten me, Jack, my boy," replied the Professor. "You're not fighting Willard at Toledo."

"How about you, Steve? Everything rosy?" asked Dempsey.

"What have I got to say about it? Come on, sign it and let's get out of here!"

"What's the matter? Catching a train?" smiled Dempsey.

"He's probably got a blond staked out somewhere," said one of the reporters.

Steve pushed his way toward the reporter. "Looking for a split lip?" he asked, dangerously. The Professor, evidently worried, stopping him.

"Stephen, boy... All right, Jack. Suits me." He signed the articles of agreement and then Camera's manager attached his signature.

"Now," said Dempsey, "the boxing commission will name one of two men as referee the day before the bout. It'll either be Haley or Eddie Woolf."

At once the Professor and Camera's manager were up in arms. They didn't want either man.

"What difference does it make who you get?" exploded Steve. "Just get somebody that can count up to ten!"

"CUT IT OUT!" said Dempsey, sternly despite his laugh. "I'm buying this night. I'll referee the fight. Any kicks about that?" That suited everybody, and Dempsey continued: "Everything's set then, Primo, bring your bunch out here. Erskine's got some pictures of those training quarters he's spotted out on Long Island. Steve, stick around. I want to talk to you."

After Dempsey, Primo and the others had left the office, Steve went quickly to the telephone and called a Riverside number. He had to repeat the number and became angry. Before the call could go through, the Professor returned, grabbed the phone from his hands and slammed it up.

"You're going to stop calling numbers like that for a while, Stephen."

"Who says so?" Steve's voice had turned ugly.

"I say so." The Professor's voice remained even, but it had become stern. "You and I are getting up to Gus Martin's tonight. You've got two months ahead of you of the hardest training you've ever done in your life."

"I should get in a sweat over that big push-over!"

Steve reached again for the telephone, but the Professor, with surprising strength, threw Steve back against the wall.

"You poor, blind mutton-head! You've let the finest little girl that ever lived slip out of your fingers! Are you going to do the same thing with the championship?"

"We don't need that pipe dream to make me win." Steve slapped the Professor across the face as he tried to keep him from the phone, flooring the old man.

Steve glared down at the Professor who looked up dazedly, and then said in pleading tones: "Boy... I'm the Professor—your friend."

"You're nothing to me from now on. I'm managing my own fights." Steve stalked angrily out of the room as the Professor got up slowly, wiping a tear from his eyes. He turned his back as he heard the door open and someone come in. The genial voice of Jack Dempsey asked: "Where's Steve?"

"Jack," said the Professor, without turning to face him, "could I borrow a bottle of Scotch?"

"Sure, if the newspaper boys didn't finish it all." Here's a bottle left. Feeling like celebrating, eh?"

"No," said the Professor, taking up the bottle from the desk. "Young Gaffney went back to his grave." Dempsey looked at him, mystified, and watched the drooping figure of the Professor as he walked slowly to the door, fumbling the bottle of Scotch into his pocket.

STEVE kept the words he had spoken in wrath to the professor; he became his own manager, merely hiring a man to attend to the various business angle that developed.

(To Be Continued)

OUR BOARDING HOUSE

—By Ahern



FRECKLES AND HIS FRIENDS



WASHINGTON TUBBS II



ALLEY OOP



BOOTS AND HER BUDDIES



TARZAN THE APE MAN



OUT OUR WAY

—By Williams



—By Blosser



—By Hamlin



—By Edgar Rice Burroughs



—By Edgar Rice Burroughs



—By Edgar Rice Burroughs



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