

## Prairie Avenue

**Synopsis:** Ned Ramsay has promised his Aunt Lydia that he will try to persuade Sonny to give up his mistress and divorce. Almira is unaware of Sonny's infidelity. When Ned spends the week-end with them he finds their palatial summer home overrun with guests and returns to town without completing his mission. He and Celia (now a duchess on her first visit to Chicago since her marriage several years ago) are romancing while the duke is in Newport. Ned joins the Kennerley family and several guests to attend the American Derby. Sonny's mistress sees him and greets him much too warmly. Almira is escorted home by Ned. Sonny writes Ned he must see him at once. Now go on with the story.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

THE CHICAGO CLUB, which up to now Ned had known only in its rushed midday aspect, all cigar smoke and munching millionaires, was a desert this hot Sunday night. His host had made the gesture of ordering supper served in a private room, but there was no one about save the waiters and one or two regular residents, old bachelors bower sink deep in armchairs in the lounge, surrounded by papers that ought, one felt, to be yesterday's.

Sonny looked nervous but resolute as they came to table; as soon as the cherry-stone clams had been whisked away to give place to a mountainous platter of chicken salad he plunged into business.

"Lord, Ned, what a nasty mess! I don't know what you think of me, but I do know what I think of myself. Why, I'd give my right hand . . . but it's too late now: The fat's in the fire, I guess."

The whole story came out pell-mell, uncomplicated by excuses or attempts to disguise the ugliness of the facts. It was true that Sonny had a mistress. But it was not true that he wanted to divorce his wife in order to marry Daisy Branson.

"Lots of fellows in my position do what I've done. But I'm a Kennerley, so the whole world gets to hear about it. Perhaps you don't realize that Mira can't have any more children. I mean she mustn't; Dr. Mallard's forbidden it. I almost lost her last year when the twins were born. 'T's been a wonderful year meaning to her without meaning to."

years—better than anything else. You've got to help me, Ned. I've known—better, even, than I hoped it would be when we married. Mira's my anchor, my compass, my—everything, really. I'd rather die than distress her. Please believe me: It's the truth, as sure as I'm sitting here talking to you."

As Sonny paused to mop his brow, the waiter appeared with iced coffee. The two young men held themselves in, staring straight ahead, unable to speak a word till the door had shut again. Then Ned said slowly: "I do believe you. But what are you going to do about Miss—Branson? That was all very well as long as Mira didn't know, but after what happened yesterday there's no use pretending—"

"By George, I can't imagine what happened to Daisy! She's never done a thing like that before. I suppose it was her brother's fault—if that boulder was her brother. He was drunk as a lord, wasn't he? And I guess she'd been drinking, too. Oh, after this, she's got to go. Don't think I can't see . . . If there was talk before, there'll be 10 times more now. The Maxwell's was right next to ours; Maud and Dan must've heard the whole thing. The only way to stop it is to make a clean break."

"Can you do that?" "Of course I can! I don't care what for Daisy and she doesn't care that for me."

"Does Mira know what you plan to do?"

"I tried to tell her last night—but she wouldn't listen. The poor darling was awfully upset. She locked herself in her room—I haven't seen her since. I tried again this morning, but she still wouldn't let me in. All I can think of is Mira, and what I've done to her without meaning to."

"It's been a wonderful year meaning to her without meaning to."

Years—better than anything else. You've got to help me, Ned. I make, but there was no mistaking home along the avenue through the warm grey night. The air was so thick that it seemed to press upon him, and so humid that even the stars had trouble in shining.

In the circumstances Ned felt justified in assuring his friend he would do what he could. "Mind you, I promise nothing." But he would talk to Almira and, if Sonny liked, to Aunt Lydia. Ned—explain the whole thing as best he was able. All he asked in return was that Sonny should engage to seek an immediate interview with Miss Branson and terminate their relations as he had already proposed to do.

Sonny was ready for anything, amazingly braced by Ned's calm assumption that matters were not past mending. He would get hold of Daisy tonight if he could, or at the latest tomorrow. Depend on it, Ned would have word in the course of the day.

The evening ended quite cheerfully. Ned refused a lift home on the pretext of wanting a walk. When Sonny had left him he turned north to the Annex and asked for Celia. After a moment the maid's sleepy voice answered: Madame la Duchesse had gone out to dinner—no, she could not say where—no, it was impossible to tell when Madame was likely to return.

Strangely downcast, he strolled

it can be. How on earth do you stand it?"

She herself was not going to try very much longer; she would be leaving shortly to join her husband in Newport. Pierre had begun to get lonely; besides, they'd only a fortnight more in the States, and there were still so many places to go, people to see.

"But don't worry, Ned; it'll be all right."

(To Be Continued)

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### Prof. Diemer Named To Butler Faculty

Prof. James S. Diemer, Northwestern University faculty member and former teacher in Arizona State College, has been appointed assistant professor of English at Butler University, President M. O. Ross announced.

He rang off with a feeling of utter frustration. It was the past all over again—how would one ever be sure of Celia?

The rest of the day he sat about aimlessly, waiting to hear from Sonny. He did not like to leave the house for fear the cat would follow through in his absence.

It grew hotter and hotter; the air seemed hard to breathe, exhausted as one imagined the atmosphere on the moon. Driven by a wicked wind from the southwest, a constant procession of clouds crossed the brazen and lustreless sky. The clouds were edged with violet, thunder rumbled ominously in the distance; but the storm refused to come nearer.

About the middle of the after-

noon Sonny called to say he'd

had trouble in finding Daisy;

they were to meet, however, in

an hour at her apartment

and go for a drive in the park.

"I'll just have time to settle things

with her before dashing home to

make for my room. Let's hope Sonny

means what he says. We must

pray for the best. Ned; that's all

we can do till tomorrow."

As Ned had expected, Aunt Lydia was waiting for him. She listened with narrowed eyes to his account of the dialogue, and when he had finished gave a long sigh.

"Thank you, my dear; you've been most splendid. I couldn't

make an appointment with Miss Branson and terminate their relations as he had already proposed to do.

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The next day, which was

hotter than ever, Ned rang up the Annex as soon as he dared after breakfast. This time Madame de Longuyon was at home. Her voice floated over the wire, cool, detached, and faintly amused. She quite understood about last night and only hoped he had been able to talk some sense into her wretched brother. To tell the truth, she had got back from the country in a state of fatigue so complete that she had gone straight to bed and taken supper on a tray. The fib of dining out was freely confessed.

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