

A SWEETHEART AT THIRTY

The Story of a Woman's Transformation
BY MARION RUBINCAM

MARK SPEAKS

Chapter 21
It is a horrible sensation—this feeling that one is watched. It makes one feel like a criminal. I know that after I had overheard the village people gossiping about me, I began to find excuses to explain the most obvious things I did. If I went to the store on an errand—the way led past the Digg's there—I felt that all the neighbors thought I was going there to see him. A silly idea, yet it made me most uncomfortable.

Certainly I never encouraged Mark. Probably no middle-aged woman was wooed less willingly than I. It was not entirely because I did not like Mark; in spite of his inordinate vanity, he had many pleasant characteristics. Indeed, some of his vanity was rather nice; it had in it the pleased boastfulness of a small boy who has learned a new game.

But we could not renew our friendship, or rather I could not, because the element of self-consciousness was introduced by our gossiping friends. Mark quite evidently had come back to Henry Falls to find a new wife, at the same time that he was looking over his nephew with a view to taking him into his business.

"Combining business with pleasure," Violet remarked sarcastically one evening, when Jim came in to say that Mark was coming over.

"It's good business to get in, Billy. I suppose you mean—"Esther began. "No, I don't." Vi answered. "The pleasure part is unloading the work of his store on Billy; the business part of his trip is acquiring a wife and housekeeper."

Esther looked at her daughter with a blank expression. "I wish you would not say so many things to no one can understand," she remarked finally.

But I understood and smiled to myself at the girl's comprehension of the subject.

Mark arrived at half-past seven—it was a clear day, and it still was broad daylight outside.

"I thought maybe you'd like to go to a movie over at the Corners," he said, not getting out of his little car. And of course there was nothing to do but go.

"He's going to speak tonight. I know it," Esther said, sitting down indoors in great excitement, and I went in for a wrap. "Now, Enid, don't you be a fool and say no if he does. And you give him plenty of chance to speak, too. You know a woman can always make a man say it if she just lets the right moment come. Jim wouldn't have spoken for months if I hadn't known how to manage it."

I thought it best not to answer. But of course, riding along in the car with him I felt uncomfortable and could think of nothing to say.

That Esther's instinct was right, soon found out. Mark would talk of nothing but his business, his profits, his house, and finally he began about his present state of loneliness.

My hands were cold and damp from sheer nervousness. Here, finally, after 35 years, a man was going to ask me to marry him—the only man, by the way I had ever liked at all! But I felt no pleasant sensations at the prospect—only a nervous fear and a great desire to be back home again.

"Do you remember the drives we used to take?" he asked.

"Oh, yes," I tried to make my voice natural.

"And the picnics over here by the woods beyond the Corners?" he went on.

"Remember the day I kissed you, at one picnic?" he asked. I looked sideways at him, his curious small-boy profile, and the puffed cheeks and the many chins and thick neck. His skin was rough and red from the wind, and his collar was too tight. I hated him suddenly—this one-time sweetheart and present suitor of mine.

"No, I don't," I answered deliberately, though I did remember very well.

"Don't you? Well, I suppose after all these years you might forget. Yes, a long time," he meditated. "Or maybe," with a chuckle, "you don't think it proper for an old woman to remember such things as kisses?"

"Of course you know you are five years older than I am." It was the first defense I ever had made of my age.

"Yes, that's true. But a man keeps younger than a woman, I says. You



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have been home and sheltered now, and I've been out and hustling. I've been a man of the world—that keeps a fellow young." A smile curled up the corner of his mouth. "Yes, I feel pretty young, in spite of my 40 years. But I shouldn't have called you old." He apologized for his rudeness. "You are not sold—I guess you'd look better, too, if you had money enough to dress up some."

"Did you know I was going to ask you to marry me the very last time we drove along this road?"

"No," I answered, my voice tight in my throat. "That was 12 years ago."

"Yes, 12. And I married another girl. Well, I'm going to ask you to marry me now."

And so, after all Mark had "spoken"—and when it came, it was unexpected. And this was the manner of my first proposal!

Tomorrow—I Decide.

Heart Problems

Dear Mrs. Thompson: I have met a few fellows who are nice, but as they are shorter than I, I refused to go out with them. Is it because I am prejudiced to short fellows that I never met a tall fellow who is nice?

A. L.

Aren't you ridiculous to make an issue of a man's height. Of course, if you were much taller, I could understand your tallness. On the other hand you may be denying yourself awfully nice friendships that you will regret later, and maybe a perfect dear of a husband, short an inch or two.

Dear Mrs. Thompson: We are two girls, 13 and 14 years old. We are considered pretty. We have a number of boy friends who take us out occasionally. The boys all seem to want to go with us. Is it wrong for girls of our age to have beau's?

Should girls at our age put up their hair in the back, or let it hang down in a braid?

MONICA AND VERONICA.

Yes, you are too young to have beau's.

Keep your hair in a braid down the back.

"Florence": Your letter acknowledging the answers to your questions gave me great pleasure. I believe great happiness is in store for you because of your attitude toward the man you expect to marry. You radiate a charm which is sure to make him glad to hear from you again. I hope the young man gets his raise soon, because it will bring your great experience closer at hand, as you long for it to be.

Please accept my best wishes for your happiness.

Dear Mrs. Thompson: I am a girl of 18 and I have to work. I am trying to go to night school and find it hard to make ends meet. My father being dead, I try to help my mother as much as I can. Can you suggest anything I can do to earn extra money?

THANK YOU

There is nothing takes more courage and strength of will than to work during the day time and attend night school in the evening. It is a struggle that brings results, however. Keep a brave heart and stick to your purpose until you reach your goal.

If you are handy with a needle, you ought to be able to earn a little extra money in various ways. It is no near Christmas time that you could make hand-worked handkerchiefs, sewing aprons and bags for Christmas gifts. Instead of showing your goods in a store you would make more to call personally at different homes and show them your work. It also would be profitable to crochet rag rugs and make bed-spreads if you are artistic.

News of the Counties

HAGERSTOWN, Ind.—The body of private Leland Ledbetter, 26 years old, who died in France from influenza and lung trouble March 22, 1919, arrived here today. Funeral services will be held at the Buena Vista church in Randolph county Friday. Friends will

be present.

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Physicians Find Liquor Inefficient as Medicine

(By Associated Press)

NEW YORK, Nov. 10.—Only 300 of more than 3,700 physicians holding licenses to prescribe whisky have applied for renewal of their permits, although two months have elapsed since this privilege was granted. Dr. Charles R. O'Connor, federal director of prohibition for New York announced today. Physicians are finding other medicines more effective and satisfactory than liquor, he said.

THREE CHARGED WITH FORGERY TO GET WHISKY

CHICAGO, Nov. 10.—Warrants were issued Tuesday afternoon by United States Commissioner Mason for the arrest of Mike ("De Pike") Heitler, Mannie Greenberg and Robert Perlman on charges of possessing and selling liquor and procuring whisky on

forged government permits. The warrants were requested by Assistant Attorney John J. Kelly.

Heitler's name recently figured in the investigation of the theft of \$175,000 worth of whisky in which several Chicago police were alleged to have been implicated.



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