

The Lucky Lawrences

By KATHLEEN NORRIS

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SYNOPSIS

The luck that had brought the Boston Lawrences to California at the beginning of the gold rush has deserted the present generation. From a 4,000-acre ranch, their holdings have shrunk to a small farm, and the old family home in Clippersville. The death of their father forced the three eldest children to work so that Sam and little Ariel might continue their education. Phil, now twenty-five, had gone into the iron works, Gail to the public library and Edith to the book department of Clippersville's largest store. Seventeen-year-old Ariel is becoming a problem, and Phil is fascinated by "that terrible" Lily Cass, whose husband has deserted her. Young Van Murchison, son of a wealthy family, returns from Yale, and Gail has visions, through marriage with him, of the turning of the Lawrence luck. Dick Stebbins, Phil's best friend, has the run of the house. Ariel is sneaking out of the house at night for joy rides. Phil suggests, to the girls' consternation, that they invite Lily Cass to the house. Gail goes with Van for a week-end with the Chippys, his uncle and aunt.

CHAPTER IV—Continued

Ariel, after some interested questions regarding the day's plans, had said suddenly:

"Did you notice what happened to the Challenge last night?"

"No," Gail had said with a puzzled, expectant glance.

"I got rid of it!" Ariel had announced to a conspirator's tone.

"Got rid of it? What for?"

"Because," Ariel had murmured, with a cautious glance about for possible eavesdroppers, "because it said that Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Chipp had gone down to their Los Gatos place on Tuesday and were opening it for the summer."

"Oh—" Gail had stammered, with a suddenly deepening color and a sickly laugh. "Oh—"

Her voice had dropped flatly. She, the mentor, the guide, the example of this little sister, had stood shamed and detected, trying to find amusing what was a most painful and humiliating moment.

"I don't blame you!" Ariel had said. A quick protective instinct to add lie to lie had shaken Gail. But she was too unused to falsehood. She had stood silent, presently saying in a troubled voice:

"I was sorry to— to have to do that. But it isn't—it isn't as if Phil were my father. He has no right—and Edith has no right—"

"Neither of them," she had recommenced, with a little difficulty, "neither of them understands how much—how awfully one wants to go places—do things."

"Phil, who runs around with Lily Wiber!" Ariel had helped her scornfully. And the younger sister had given her a sudden, passionate kiss. "I love you, Gail!" Ariel had said quickly.

But this rare demonstration from cool little Ariel had brought no responsive happiness to Gail's heart. To have Ariel protecting her, abetting her in deceit, in dealing with what was not open and fair, had given her a wretched sensation that the solid ground was falling beneath her feet.

Even the scornful reference to Phillip had alarmed her. After all, Phil was the head of the family; Phil was sacred. There was no law nor order anywhere if Phil was to be scorned.

Driving along the country roads that were smothered in spring beauty, Gail's spirits rose. Nothing could prevent her from having a week-end in a Los Gatos country house now. On Sunday evening she would join the family at the dinner table, on Monday morning she would be back at work, and everything would return to normal. But she would have this wonderful memory as so much pure gain.

She was always in a gale of high spirits when she was with Van, anyway; it was impossible to be otherwise; he was the gayest of the gay.

She questioned him as they drove along.

"Who else will be on this house party, Van?"

"On this house party," Van responded cheerfully, "will be, first, mine host and his buxom wife, Dame Martha. They will draw the ale, heap oaken logs in the great fireplaces—"

"Oh, for heaven's sake, you idiot!"

His shout of joyous laughter.

"No, there'll be the Chippys," he began again seriously, "and three or four good auction players—they have to have those. They'll play all this evening, all tomorrow morning, all tomorrow night, and all day Sunday. In between games they'll eat, drink and ask if anyone wants to swim badly enough to take the bother of undressing."

"Then there'll be Lucia Tevis; she's a cute kid; she's eighteen. She goes to Vassar next fall."

"Miss Mary Tevis' niece?"

"Yep. Then there's Mary Spence; she's from Boston, visiting Lucia; she's a keen girl, too. And Jim Speedwell and Fred Hunter—Fred's a polo man, but he broke his arm, so he's resting—and Bill Billings, and maybe his sister, and the Duchess—Lenore Phipps—Mrs. Phipps. She was Lenore Murchison."

"She's your half-sister?"

"Yep. Step-sister. My mother married her dad, when she was about—oh, well, she's a year younger than I am. But she's lived mostly with her grandmother. She's getting a divorce!"

They drove through Los Gatos, sleepy in late afternoon sun and ringed with wooded hills, and turned southwest on the boulevard that led to the ocean, twenty-six miles away. The car mounted slopes, rolled smoothly under mighty oaks, left the paved highway for a comfortable dirt road.

Few houses were visible now. But the gates bore names: "El Nido," "Hillways," "Jackson Farm Road," "Hidden Paradise Road." The gate into which Van at last turned the car was marked "Far Niente."

There were fruit trees here, scattered in among the natural forest trees; there was a tennis court, dappled with shade and light and draped in a banksia rose vine heavy with golden bloom. Flower scents were everywhere, beauty was everywhere.

Under a loaded rose vine, on one of the porches, four persons were playing bridge. Gail, as she and Van approached, recognized one of these as her hostess.

Mrs. Chipp looked up at them sharply, and without changing her position concentrated her cards in her left hand and stretched a hand toward Van.

"Oh, hello, dear! How d'you do, Miss Lawrence?" she said, in a quick aside. "Van, they're all swimming, and there's nobody here to— Excuse me just one second, Hilyer," she interrupted herself, speaking to one of the players. "Van," she went on, "I'm not sure where the Duchess has put Miss Lawrence. But you take her up to the girls' cottage and just let her park herself somewhere until the Duchess explains. Will you do that, like a darling?"

Resolutely, Gail would not let herself feel that it was rude, that it left anything unsaid, undone.

"I'll be all right!" she said, with a smile and a nod, walking off with Van. Mrs. Chipp made no answer.

Van led the way to one of the cabins, a brown, enchanting place with geraniums and lobelia in the window boxes, and a wide open door into a central sitting room.

"Take any of these rooms—gosh, they're all full of suitcases!" Van said, peering in at doorways. "Here—here's one—this must be you. Make yourself comfortable. Are you going to swim?"

"I think not. Not—well, maybe I will!"

She decided against the swimming, and walked out to meet Van, ten minutes later, looking her prettiest in a white frock, white shoes, a white hat. The boy lingering in the garden path, waiting for her, was trim in a black bathing suit, with a towel across his shoulders.

Boys and girls, as wet and sleek as seals, were sprawled in the late sunshine on the grassy ramp beside the pool. They were drinking a pale yellow drink from tall ice-filled glasses; a cocktail shaker stood on the grass.

Gail found herself the only person who was not drinking in the group. The circumstances seemed to alienate her from them. She listened, smiled, made herself appear at ease as a low-toned conversation that had evidently been interrupted was begun again among the girls.

The men merely rolled in the sun yawned and exchanged monosyllables. "You did not." "Quit that!" "Say, listen . . ." Gail heard, over and over again.

The girls, Lucia, Mary, and Lenore, murmured interestedly. "Oh, come on," said the Duchess suddenly when there had been a good deal of this. "We'll never get dressed!"

Immediately they were all running down the path to the cabin, Gail with them. The only one who took any notice of her was the Boston girl, named Mary Spence. Mary spoke now and then kindly to Gail as they all began a flurry of dressing for dinner.

They left their bedroom doors open and ran back and forth lightly clad or not clad at all. Lenore and Lucia shed their bathing suits on the strip of lawn outside the cabin, and slipped into thin cotton kimonos, brief and almost transparent, to wander about

brushing their hair, rubbing themselves with towels, and gathering garments and cosmetics.

Gail, who was not going to change, sat on the upper porch step a few feet above the path and stared at the beauty and luxury of Far Niente as it lay on the slope below her, and pretended to be satisfied and absorbed in what she saw. She knew now that all the vague, shy fears she had felt in anticipating this visit were going to be more than justified. She knew that Mrs. Chipp was not going to be nice to her, that the girls were entirely indifferent to her, and that she should not have come.

Her clothes were not right, her training was not right, her background was not right. She simply did not belong here, and they were all more or less conscious of it. This nice Mary Spence, herself a stranger in the group, was being cordial merely on general principles. It was nothing to her that these Californians had social distinctions between themselves; they were all the same to Mary Spence.

"I shall have to work!" Gail told herself grimly. She must work, talking, smiling, keeping herself occupied, for all this endless evening and all tomorrow and most of Sunday. It sounded like an eternity.

Suddenly she noted two of her companions in the cottage, Lucia and Lenore, walking with two boys named



"I'll Be All Right," She Said With a Smile and a Nod.

Bill and Jim, down the path to the house. They must have left the cottage by the back door, which faced toward the men's cabin. Perhaps the boys had called them.

That left only Mary in the house, and if she also slipped away Gail would have to go down to dinner, at some spot unknown, all alone. Her heart began to beat hard in nervous anticipation.

Presently a middle-aged woman came up the path toward her, and with a not unamiable half smile for Gail stood still, a few feet away, calling, "Mary!" Gail recognized her as one of the card players.

"Yes, Mrs. Billings!" Mary called, putting her head out of the porch door.

"Mary, you know what I asked you to do?" the woman said.

"Oh, yes!" Mary answered.

"Will you do it now, dear?"

"Oh, yes; instantly!" said Mary, running out of the cabin. She and Mrs. Billings, conferring, went rapidly down the path together. Gail swallowed once, with a dry throat. Then she got up and began to saunter slowly after them.

She encountered the boy named Fred Hunter in the path, and fell upon him with all the boldness of desperation. She laughed with him, narrowed her blue eyes in their thick black lashes at him, and when he said somewhat nervously that he had been going up to the cabin to wake Van, whose aunt felt sure he had fallen asleep, Gail said gaily that she would go, too.

They awakened the drowsy, surprised Van, and they all laughed together, and Gail, still holding firmly to the now manageable Fred, waited for Van on the porch of the men's cabin. She walked down to the house between the two of them, disposing of Van's good-natured attempts to shake young Mr. Hunter by a determined, if light, hold upon the latter's arm.

At dinner, which began immediately, she was between the two young men. So far so good.

But it was work. It was bitter, hard, endless work; all struggle, no relaxation anywhere. She was conscious of carrying a heavy handicap.

The girls were all against her. They ignored her; they looked bored when she spoke; they deliberately carried the conversation into channels where she must be ill at ease and unfamiliar.

Gail fought on. Her cheeks blazed, her blue eyes shone. She lost all consciousness of Van as the man for whom she was beginning to care, of the beauty of the place and the summer night, of the novelty of dining here with these fashionable folks. It was all a blur, through which she was determined to hold her own despite them all.

When Lenore, at the end of the long meal, during which they had all eaten, drunk, and smoked too much, said provocatively to Van something about needing him to conspire with her upon something that would surprise the others, Gail countered by saying that she and Mr. Hunter wanted to get up a charade.

"That's what they call it now, is it?" one of the boys said, and Gail joined in the loud laughter. The infatuated Hunter was by this time incapable of any emotion, even surprise, and he and Gail went down to a marble bench on the lawn, where she held him as long as she could, listening to his fatuous vague words, and laughing and keeping him laughing as if it were the greatest fun in the world. Later she annexed Bill Billings, and fell into a deep-toned conference with him about airmen and air records, pretending to be so absorbed in the conversation that when Van came to get her to dance she had to call a few last words over her shoulder to Bill.

They were dancing on a sort of platform, with vines trailed up over its latticed top. The moon shone down between the leaves, the radio droned and choked and droned again. Gail danced well, and loved dancing, and was happy for a few minutes.

Suddenly they were all disputing as to whether they should play bridge or go down to Mockerson's. Mockerson's was a roadhouse over on the Halfmoon Bay road, sixty miles away.

"Come on, let's go dance at Mockerson's! Maybe the place'll be raided."

"I am the captain of my fate, folks, I am the master of my soul!" Van observed, rising with a wine glass in his hands. "In the fell clutch of circumstances, what d'you think I do? D'you think I wince, or cry aloud? I don't—"

He was hauled down.

"Well, do we go to Mockerson's?"

"Listen. Let's not, and say we did!"

"Well, I'll tell you a story!" Jim Speedwell said unexpectedly. He told it.

TO BE CONTINUED.

St. Augustine, Oldest City in United States

St. Augustine is the oldest city in the United States. It has preserved relics of its antiquity with impressive dignity. Don Pedro Menendez landed there at the mouth of the Matanzas river on September 6, 1565. Life in the little colony consisted of a series of battles with Indians and with corsairs. Sir Francis Drake and his English fleet of 26 vessels attacked, sacked, and burned the settlement in 1586.

Standing in good state of preservation in that ancient city is Fort Marion, built in 1756 and said to be the oldest fortress in the United States, notes a writer in the Chicago Tribune. It is maintained as a national monument operated by the St. Augustine Historical society.

The structure is of coquina, a dark gray rock peculiar to this vicinity. The walls, rising 25 feet from a moat, are rectangular with a bastion at each corner. On the northeast bastion is a watch tower 25 feet high.

Guides take visitors through case-ments, chambers, off a courtyard 103 feet by 109 feet. One of these, not much bigger than a clothes closet and devoid of any source of ventilation when the door is closed, was described as an execution chamber—execution by suffocation. "Doctors have estimated that a man can live here for only 12 hours before exhausting the air," said the guide.

Acoustics Play Tricks

Noise plays many tricks. In the great cathedrals of Milan, Cologne and St. Peter's an organ note lasts so long that any rendition is a confused jumble. In St. Paul's in London and in the Hollywood Bowl it is possible for two people 90 feet apart to have a whispered conversation, owing to the acoustics.

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PROSPECTIVE MOTHERS

Mrs. Elsie Crenshaw of 1813 Ellis St., Augusta, Ga., said: "Before the birth of my first child I was in misery with my back, when I sat down it was hard for me to get up. I was weak and cramps in my limbs made me very restless at night. I took Dr. Pierce's Favorite Prescription and my whole system was strengthened by this tonic and I was able to sleep again."
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