

# Lighted Windows

By EMILIE LORING

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## CHAPTER X

Harcourt picked up the belt and holster which he had dropped to the desk when he came in. The shoulder holster which held its twin was empty.

"Pascal!"  
No answer to his call. The boy was doubtless helping the Samp girls in their preparations.

Plump Miss Mary in a dove-gray taffeta, its balloon sleeves proclaiming it of the vintage of '94, its rose-point bertha suggesting a grandmother of parts, greeted him as he entered the Samp living-room.

"Well, now! Well, now! Janice is dressing, Mr. Bruce. Mary and I begged her to wear one of her lovely evening dresses for our party. She let us choose it from a trunk in the storehouse." She patted his sleeve. "Don't you look nice."

"That goes for you too, Miss Mary. You almost knocked my eyes out with your pretty dress." He bent his head and kissed her rosy, wrinkled cheek. "Thank you for arranging Jan's room. When did you hear the news?"

"You're the most heart-warming person, Mr. Bruce. I feel as though I'd been sitting in the sun after I've been with you." She smiled through tears, dabbed at her eyes. "Mr. Tubby radioed the news before he left the city. Such a surprise."

Janice was lovelier even than he had thought her. Her pale blue gown, silvery as the edges of a cloud, suggested a fairy loom. Slippers which matched her gown had bows of sparkling stones which were repeated in the clasp of a bag of antique brocade. She laid a mandarin coat, heavily embroidered with mauve and purple iris, carefully over the back of a chair.

He picked up the mandarin coat. "Taking this?"

"Yes. I'll use it as a wrap. Isn't it gorgeous? I found it in my room here. Tubby must have bought it for a wedding present when he went back to the city. He knew that I was mad about it. I suspect that it was frightfully expensive. It is taking goods under false pretenses for me to accept it. I ought to give it back, but I love it. Can he afford to buy a thing like this?"

"Probably not every day, but weddings do not occur every day at headquarters. Why hurt the donor by returning his gift? Let's go."

An orchestra, consisting of fiddle, flute and saxophone, agonized into the Wedding March from Lohengrin, as they appeared in the doorway of the Waffle Shop.

Janice laughed and parried questions, played her part brilliantly. No one could suspect from her manner that she was not the most gorgeously happy bride in the world, Harcourt told himself with a tinge of bitterness. Her radiance vanished like sunshine blotted by a cloud as Millicent Hale approached.

"Dear Mrs. Harcourt, how sweet of you to provide an occasion for civilized clothes. I am consumed with curiosity to know how you accomplished it. I've heard Bruce declare repeatedly that never, while he was in Alaska, would he marry. What brand of coercion did you use?"

The malice of the attack rendered Harcourt speechless. Was the little woman whom he had considered pathetically helpless like that? Was Janice as amazed as he? He glanced at her in concern. She was looking straight into the eyes watching her with cat-like intentness.

"It was a method quite my own, Mrs. Hale. You couldn't possibly use it." Harcourt came out of his trance of surprise, laid his hand on her bare arm. She shook it off, turned to extend her hand to Chester. Challenged gaily:

"Why the gloomy brow? Cheerio! This is a party, not a memorial service."

Before he could answer Tubby Grant seized him.

"Want you, Jimmy. Going to stage an old-timer. The Samp girls are stepping out in a quadrille."

"Salute Partners!" Miss Martha spread her plum-color taffeta skirts with work-worn hands and curtsied to the floor, recovered, made a deep obeisance in response to a shouted, "Salute Corners."

Her beautiful dignity set the keynote for the dance. The others kept watchful eyes on the sisters, who sailed through the figures with the grace of an angular and a chubby swan.

"Change Partners!"  
Millicent Hale was first to give out. She turned to Bruce:

"I haven't danced so much nor so hard since the winter I came out. Do take me home, Bruce. Jimmy has disappeared. Joe will be furious if I stay longer."

For the fraction of a second Harcourt hesitated. Why pick on him? Better to humor her. She might

make a scene. Anything was credible after her hateful attack on Janice.

"Of course I didn't need an escort this short distance, Bruce, but I had to consult you about Jimmy."

"Jimmy! What's the matter with Jimmy?"

"That's what I want to know. Today when I entered our cabin, he was threatening Joe with a pistol."

An empty shoulder holster hanging against a log wall flashed on the screen of Harcourt's mind and was gone.

"As I entered," said Millicent, Jimmy was saying:

"Send for her again and I'll shoot you. You've messed up my sister's life, that's enough. Get me?"

"I couldn't believe it was Joe huddled in his chair, livid, afraid. Joe afraid! As I looked at him I thought what a poor fool I had been all these years, not to stand up to him, not to threaten him. He is a bully and a coward, Bruce, and I've never before found it out."

"If you have lost your fear of him, it is a lot gained, Millicent. For whom did Joe send, do you know?"

"No. Unless—unless Jimmy found out about Tatima. Joe has made a fool of her with flattery. Nothing worse, I'm sure, but she follows him about like a dog."

"I'll speak to Jimmy. He will have to turn over his gun to me, if



"You can't lose what you never had, Millicent."

that is the use he is making of it."

"Talk with him, Bruce. Poor boy, he has never forgotten his experiences overseas. You will have more influence than anyone else." She laid her hand on his arm. "We all dump our worries on your shoulders, don't we? I shan't dare do it now that you are married. I feel as though I had lost you."

Under pretense of producing his cigarette case Harcourt stepped back.

"You can't lose what you never had, Millicent. Good-night!"

He heard her little gasp as he turned on his heel.

As he entered the Waffle Shop Miss Martha and Miss Mary, crimson faced from the exertions of the dance, with mammoth white aprons over their creaking taffetas, were serving the ice-cream which Grant had brought hundreds of miles in a plane. As he approached Janice he heard Jimmy Chester say harshly:

"He'll never send for you again."

Had Joe Hale sent for Janice? The suspicion tightened Harcourt's lips. The girl looked up at him. There was a hint of resentment in her voice.

"Oh, you have come back. Jimmy and I had decided that you didn't like the party, hadn't we, Jimmy?"

It was evident that she had seen him go out with Millicent. He answered evenly.

"I'm crazy about the party. Did you think I would leave before I had danced with my bride? The musicians have finished their gorge and are tuning up. By the way, Chester, be ready with a track-laying gang to go up the inlet at reveille. You have all the specifications. Short notice, but you can make it. Want to push the work while this weather holds." He held out his hand. "My dance—Mrs. Harcourt."

He was conscious of Jimmy Chester's pale, frowning regard as they moved away in rhythmic step to the music. He watched him until he left the room. Janice looked up.

"Sorry I was catty, Bruce."

He held her the fraction of a degree closer. "Were you catty? Millicent was raw to you, Jan, but don't lay it up against her. This last

year has set her nerves on edge."

"I wonder if a year here will do that to mine."

"You won't have a chance to find out."

"Won't I? Perhaps you will like having me here so much you'll beg me to stay."

His arm tightened. "Dance well together, don't we?"

There was a hint of strain in her laugh. "The fighting line again. Tubby wants me here if you don't. Yes, we are good. We might make a dancing team, if engineering fails."

"That's a thought. Sorry, but it is time the festivities broke up. All of us must be sons of toil again tomorrow. We, being the guests of honor, should make a move. That correct? I suspect Tubby of a theatrical climax. We will dance round to the door, vanish and escape."

As they stole surreptitiously from the Waffle Shop, the heavens still held a trace of the glory of the sunset. Above the broken crater spread a coppery glow.

Janice drew a long uneven breath. "It is more gorgeous than I had imagined." As they turned toward the H house, she said lightly: "Ever since I arrived as Jimmy Delevan, I have been consumed by curiosity to see the inside of your cabin."

He answered by throwing open the door. As they crossed the threshold a shower of confetti pelted them. It powdered their hair, lay like colored snow on their shoulders, one adventurous particle clung to Janice's eyelashes. She laughed unsteadily as she brushed it away.

"The trail of the resourceful Mr. Grant. Doubtless he expected you to carry your bride over the threshold, as big strong men do in the movies and points south."

Harcourt laid his hands lightly on her shoulders. "We will postpone that ceremony. Take off your wrap. The room is hot. Pasca keeps these fires roaring."

She slipped off the heavily embroidered mandarin coat. He laid it on the couch, crossed to the fireplace and lighted a cigarette. Arm on the mantel, he watched her eyes travel from the Indian blankets on the log walls to the Russian samovar as they rested on the Chinese pewter tea-service, linger on the rich pelts on the floor. They met his.

"Like it?"

"Love it. How did these rare things get into this wilderness?"

"Small trading vessels stop for any one of a dozen reasons. The captain or mate usually has something choice he will dispose of for a consideration."

"I'm mad about that Chinese pewter. We'll have tea every afternoon."

"Everything I have is yours, Jan." The huskiness of his voice sent the color to her face. That wouldn't do. He opened a door, snapped on a light, said grandiloquently, "Behold the kitchenette!"

She stepped to the threshold. "Pale green, and a gray-and-white linoleum on the floor. My word, but you are modern!"

"I told you that I lost my head over the H house. After we had finished the chimneys, they just naturally required bedrooms to utilize their other sides; bedrooms required baths; a house this size needed a kitchen. I have never regretted it. Planning and ordering kept Archie Harper busy and happy. He worked up to almost the last moment of his life, and now I have it for you." He nodded toward a lighted room. "Your things are in there. If you are not too tired I should like to talk a while, Jan."

"Except for the fact that my feet are shredded by ribbons—that wasn't a dance, it was a riot—I am not in the least tired. I will change my slippers and come back."

"I'll get your sandals." He pulled the fan-back chair a bit nearer the fire. "Sit here—"

As she hesitated he added, "Please."

He dropped to one knee in front of her. "Stick out your foot." He gently removed the high-heeled blue slipper with its sparkling bow, put on the sandal. "That better?" She nodded. "The other." He held the slender foot in his hand after it was shod. "Jan, you understand, don't you—Who the dickens is pounding like that? Is Tubby trying to be funny?"

"Someone is beating with both fists. Go! Quick!"

Harcourt pulled open the door. Millicent Hale stumbled into the room. "Bruce!" Her terrified eyes widened as Janice took a step toward her. She shut them. Sobbed. With arms outflung she braced herself against the log wall. Brilliantly swinging from her ears, on her green frock, quivered with light. She shuddered. Gasp for control. Harcourt caught her shoulder.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

# AROUND THE HOUSE

Always put knife in boiling water for a few seconds before cutting cake that has been iced. Then you will be able to cut without breaking the icing.

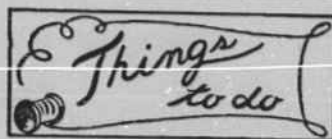
Use a clean sheet of wrapping paper to roll pies and pastry on. It saves a lot of cleaning up later.

Cover your recipe book with a piece of oilcloth. This will keep the cover from becoming sticky if touched by fingers soiled with cooking. The oilcloth can be washed easily when it is stained.

White enamel can be cleaned with turpentine. Rub with a cloth moistened in the turps; then with a dry cloth.

A teaspoon of flour mixed with the hot grease in which you fry eggs will keep them from popping.

Cut off the leg of an old stocking and stretch it over the new broom down to a short distance above the ends of the straws. This will prevent it from wearing out so fast and at the same time make it better for sweeping.



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