

# SO BIG

By EDNA FERBER

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WNU Service.

Chapter XII

In town Dirk lived in a large front room and above on the third floor of a handsome old-fashioned three-story residence house. He used the front room as a living room, the alcove as a bedroom. He and Selina had furnished it together, discarding all of the room's original belongings except the bed, a table, and one fat comfortable faded armchair whose brocade surface hinted a past grandeur. When he had got his books ranged in open shelves along one wall, soft-shaded lamps on table and desk, the place looked more than livable; lived in. During the process of furnishing Selina got into the way of coming into town for a day or two to prowling the auction rooms and the second-hand stores. She had a genius for this sort of thing; hated the spick-and-span varnish and veneer of the new furniture to be got in the regular way.

She enjoyed these rare trips into town; made a holiday of them. Dirk would take her to the theater and she would sit entranced, strangely enough, considering the lack of what the world calls romance and adventure in her life, she did not like the motion pictures. "All the difference in the world," she would say, "between the movies and the thrill I get out of a play at the theater. My, yes! Like fowling with paper dolls when you could be playing with a real live baby."

The day was marvellously mild for March in Chicago. Spring, usually so coy in this region, had flung herself at them head first. As the massive revolving door of Dirk's office building fanned him into the street he saw Paula in her long low sporting sweater at the curb. She was dressed in black. All feminine fashionable and middle-class Chicago was dressed in black. All feminine fashionable and middle-class America was dressed in black. Two years of war had robbed Paris of its husbands, brothers, sons. All Paris walked in black. America, untouched, gayly borrowed the smart habitments of mourning and now Michigan boulevard and Fifth avenue walked demurely in the gloom of crepe and chiffon; black hats, black gloves, black slippers. Only black was "good" this year.

Paula smiled up at him, patted the leather seat beside her with one hand that was absurdly thick-fingered in its fur-lined glove.

"It's cold driving. Button up tight. Where'll we stop for your bag?"

He climbed into the seat beside her. Her manipulation of the wheel was witchcraft. The roadster slid in and out of traffic like a fluid thing, an enamel stream, silent as a swift current in a river. When his house was reached, "I'm coming up," she said. "I suppose you haven't any tea?"

"Gosh, no! What do you think I am! A young man in an English novel!"

"Now, don't be provincial and Chicagoish, Dirk." They climbed the three flights of stairs. She looked about. Her glance was not disapproving. "This isn't so bad. Who did it? She did! Very nice. But of course you ought to have your own smart little apartment, with a Jap to do you up. To do that for you, for example."

"Yes," grimly. He was packing his bag—not throwing clothes into it, but folding them deftly, neatly, as the son of a wise mother packs. "My salary'd just about keep him in white linen house-coats."

"I'm going to send you some things for your room, Dirk."

"For God's sake don't!"

"Why not?"

"Two kinds of women in the world. I learned that at college. Those who send men things for their rooms and those that don't."

"You're very rude."

"You asked me. There! I'm all set." He snapped the lock of his bag.

"I'm sorry I can't give you anything. I haven't a thing. Not even a glass of wine and a—what is it they say in books?—oh, yeh—a biscuit."

In the roadster again Paula maintained a fierce and steady speed for the remainder of the drive.

"We call the place Stormwood."

Paula told him. "And nobody outside the dear family knows how fitting that is. Don't scowl. I'm not going to tell you my marital woes. And don't you say I asked for it. . . . How's the job?"

"Rotten."

"You don't like it? The work?"

"I like it well enough, only—well, you see we leave the university architectural course thinking we're all going to be Stanford Whites or Cass Gilberts, tossing off a Woolworth building and making ourselves famous overnight. I've spent all yesterday and today planning a drygoods box that's going up on the corner of Milwaukee avenue and Ashland, west."

"And ten years from now?"

"Ten years from now maybe they'll let me do the plans for the drygoods box all alone."

"Why don't you drop it?"

He was startled. "Drop it! How do you mean?"

"Chuck it. Do something that will bring you quick results. This isn't an age of waiting. Suppose, twenty years from now, you do plan a grand Gothic office building to grace this new and glorified Michigan boulevard they're always shouting about! You'll be a middle-aged man living in a middle-class house in a middle-class suburb with a middle-class wife."

"Maybe—slightly nettled.

They turned in at the gates of

Stormwood. A final turn of the drive. An avenue of trees. A house, massive, pillared, porticoed. The door opened as they drew up at the entrance. A maid in cap and apron stood in the doorway. A man appeared at the side of the car, coming seemingly from nowhere, greeted Paula civilly and drove the car off. The glow of an open fire in the hall welcomed them. "He'll bring up your bag," said Paula. "How're the babies, Anna? Has Mr. Storm got here?"

"He telephoned, Mrs. Storm. He says he won't be out till late—maybe ten or after. Anyway, you're not to wait dinner!"

Paula, from being the limp, expert, fearless driver of the high-powered roadster was now suddenly very much the mistress of the house, quietly observant, giving an order with a lift of the eyebrow or a nod of the head. Would Dirk like to go to his room at once? Dinner at seven-thirty. He needn't dress. Just as he liked. Everything was very informal here. They roughed it. (Dirk had counted thirteen servants by noon next day and hadn't been near the kitchen.)

He decided to bathe and change into dinner clothes and was glad of this when he found Paula in black chiffon before the fire in the great beamed room she had called the library. Dirk thought she looked very beautiful in that diaphanous stuff, with the pearls, her heart-shaped face, with its large eyes that slanted a little at the corners; her long slim throat; her dark hair piled high and away from her little ears. He decided not to mention it.

Dirk told himself that Paula had known her husband would not be home until ten and had deliberately planned a tete-a-tete meal. He would not, therefore, confess himself a little nettled when Paula said, "I've asked the Emerys in for dinner; and we'll have a game of bridge afterward. Phil Emery, you know, the Third. He used to have it on his visiting card, like royalty."

The Emerys were drygoods; had been drygoods for sixty years; were accounted Chicago aristocracy; preferred England; rode to hounds in pink coats along Chicago's prim and startled suburban prairies. They had a vast estate on the lake near Stormwood. They arrived a trifle late. Dirk had seen pictures of old Phillip Emery ("Phillip the First," he thought, with an inward grin) and decided, looking at the rather anemic third edition, that the stock was running a little thin. The dinner was delicious but surprisingly simple; little more than Selina would have given him, Dirk thought, had he come home to the farm this week-end. The talk was desultory and rather dull. And this chap had millions. Dirk said to himself. Millions. No scratching in an architect's office for this lad.

At bridge after dinner Phillip the Third proved to be sufficiently the son of his father to win from Dirk more money than he could conveniently afford to lose.

Theodore Storm came in at ten and stood watching them. When the guests had left the three sat before the fire. "Something to drink?" Storm asked Dirk. Dirk refused but Storm mixed a stiff highball for himself, and then another. The whisky brought no flush to his large white impassive face. He talked almost not at all. Dirk, naturally silent, was loquacious by comparison. But while there was nothing heavy, unavital about Dirk's silence, this man's was oppressive, irritating. His paunch, his large white hands, his great white face gave the effect of bleached bloodless-bulk. "I don't see how she stands him," Dirk thought. Husband and wife seemed to be on terms of polite friendliness. Storm excused himself and took himself off with a word about being tired, and seeing them in the morning.

After he had gone: "He likes you," said Paula.

"Important," said Dirk, "if true."

"But it is important. He can help you a lot."

"Help me how? I don't want—"

"But I do. I want you to be successful. I want you to be. You can be. You've got it written all over you. In the way you stand, and talk, and don't talk. In the way you look at people. In something in the way you carry yourself. It's what they call force, I suppose. Anyway, you've got it."

"Has your husband got it?"

"Theodore! No! That is—"

"There you are. I've got the force, but he's got the money."

"You can have both." She was leaning forward. Her eyes were bright, enormous. Her hands—those thin dark hot hands—were twisted in her lap. He looked at her quietly. Suddenly there were tears in her eyes. "Don't look at me that way, Dirk." She huddled back in her chair, limp. She looked a little haggard and older, somehow. "My marriage is a mess, of course. You can see that."

"You knew it would be, didn't you?"

"No. Yes. Oh, I don't know. Anyway, what's the difference, now? I'm not trying to be what they call an influence in your life. I'm just fond of you—you know that—and I want you to be great and successful. It's maternal, I suppose."

"I should think two babies would satisfy that urge."

"Oh, I can't get excited about two pink healthy lumps of babies, I love them and all that, but all they need is to have a bottle stuffed into their mouths at proper intervals and to be bathed, and dressed and aired and slept. It's a mechanical routine and about as exciting as a treadmill."

"Just what do you want me to do, Paula?"

She was eager again, vitally concerned in him. "It's all so ridiculous. All these men whose incomes are thirty—forty—sixty—a hundred thousand a year usually haven't any qualities, really, that the five-thousand-a-year man hasn't. Somebody has to get the fifty-thousand-dollar salaries—some advertising man, or bond salesman or—why, look at Phil Emery! He probably couldn't sell a yard of pink ribbon to a schoolgirl if he had to. Look at Theodore! He just sits and blinks and says nothing. But when the time comes he doubles up his fat white fist and mumbles, 'Ten million,' or 'Fifteen million,' and that settles it."

Dirk laughed to hide his own little mounting sensation of excitement. "It isn't quite as simple as that, I imagine. There's more to it than meets the eye."

"There isn't! I tell you I know the whole crowd of them. I've been brought up with this money pack all my life, haven't I? Pork packers and wheat grabbers and peddlers of gas and electric light and dry goods. Grandfather's the only one of the crowd that I respect. He has stayed the same. They can't fool him. He knows he just happened to go into wholesale beef and pork when wholesale beef and pork was a new game in Chicago. Now look at him!"

"Still, you will admit there's something in knowing when," he argued.

"Paula stood up. "If you don't know I'll tell you. Now is when. I've got Grandfather and Dad and Theodore to work with. You can go on being an

architect if you want to. It's a fine enough profession. But unless you're a genius where'll it get you? Go in with them, and Dirk, in five years—"

"What!" They were both standing, facing each other, she tense, eager; he relaxed but stimulated.

"Try it and see what will, will you, Dirk?"

"I don't know, Paula. I should say, my mother wouldn't think much of it."

"What does she know! Oh, I don't mean that she isn't a fine, wonderful person. She is. I love her. But success! She thinks success is another acre of asparagus or cabbage; or a new stove in the kitchen now that they've brought gas out as far as High Prairie."

He had a feeling that she possessed him; that her hot eager hands held him though they stood apart and eyed each other almost hostilely.

As he hesitated that night he thought, "Now what's her game? What's she up to? Be careful, Dirk, old boy."

As he lay in the soft bed with the satin coverlet over him he thought, "Now what's her little game?"

He awoke at eight, enormously hungry. He wondered, uneasily, just how he was going to get his breakfast. He had said his breakfast would be brought him in his room. He stretched luxuriously, sprang up, turned on his bath water, bathed. When he emerged in dressing gown and slippers his breakfast tray had been brought him mysteriously and its contents lay appetizingly on a little portable table. There were flocks of small covered dishes and a charming individual coffee service. A little note from Paula: "Would you like to take walk at about half-past nine? Stroll down to the stables. I want to show you my new horse."

The distance from the house to the stables was actually quite a brisk little walk in itself. Paula, in riding clothes, was waiting for him.

She greeted him. "I've been out two hours. Had my ride. You ride, don't you?"

"I used to ride the old nags, bare-back, on the farm."

"You'll have to learn. Then I'll have some one to ride with me. Theodore never rides. He never takes any sort of exercise. Sits in that great fat car of his."

They went into the coach house, a great airy white-washed place with glittering harness and spurs and bridles like jewels in glass cases. It gave Dirk a little hopeless feeling. He had never before seen anything like it.

Paula laughed up at him, her dark face upturned to his.

Something had annoyed him, she saw. Would he wait while she changed to walking things? Or perhaps he'd rather drive in the roadster. They walked up to the house together. He wished that she would not consult his wishes so anxiously. It made him sulky, impatient.

She put a hand on his arm. "Dirk, are you annoyed at me for what I said last night?"

"No."

"What did you think when you went to your room last night? Tell me. What did you think?"

"I thought: 'She's bored with her husband and she's trying to vamp me. I'll have to be careful.'"

Paula laughed delightedly. "That's nice and frank. . . . What else?"

"I thought my coat didn't fit very well and I wished I could afford to have Peel make my next one."

"You can," said Paula.

Chapter XIII

As it turned out, Dirk was spared the necessity of worrying about the fit of his next dinner coat for the following year and a half. His coat, during that period, was a neat olive drab as was that of some millions of young men of his age, or thereabouts. Most of that time he spent at Fort Sheridan, first as an officer in training, then as an officer training others to be officers. He was excellent at this job. Influence put him there and kept him there even after he began to chafe at the restraint.

In the last six months of it (though he did not, of course, know that it was to be the last six months) Dirk tried desperately to get to France. He was suddenly sick of the neat job at home; of the dinners; of the smug routine; of the olive-drab motor car that whisked him wherever he wanted to go (he had a captaincy); of making them "snap into it"; of Paula; of his mother, even. Two months before the war's close he succeeded in getting over; but Paris was his headquarters.

Between Dirk and his mother the first rift had appeared. "If I were a man," Selina said, "I'd make up my mind straight about this war and then I'd do one of two things. I'd go into it the way Jan Snip goes at forking the manure pile—a dirty job that's got to be cleaned up; or I'd refuse to do it altogether if I didn't believe in it as a job for me. I'd fight, or I'd be a conscientious objector. There's nothing in between for any one who isn't old or crippled, or sick."

Paula was aghast when she heard this. So was Julie whose wallings had been loud when Eugene had gone into the air service. He was in France now, thoroughly happy. "Do you mean," demanded Paula, "that you actually want Dirk to go over there and be wounded or killed?"

"No. If Dirk were killed my life would stop. I'd go on living, I suppose, but my life would have stopped."

They all were doing some share in the work to be done.

Selina had thought about her own place in this war welter. She had wanted to do canteen work in France but had decided against this as being selfish. "The thing for me to do," she said, "is to go on raising vegetables and hogs as fast as I can." She supplied countless households with free food while their men were gone. She herself worked like a man, taking the place of the able-bodied helper who had been employed on her farm.

Paula was lovely in her Red Cross uniform. She persuaded Dirk to go into the Liberty bond selling drive and he was unexpectedly effective in his quiet, serious way; most convincing and undeniably thrilling to look at in uniform. Paula's little air of possession had grown until now it enveloped him. She wasn't playing now; was deeply and terribly in love with him.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Cost of "Lifting" Oil

The bureau of mines says that from 20 to 90 per cent of the total cost of producing petroleum may be charged to lifting the oil. Although the lifting cost ranges from less than three cents a barrel at flowing wells, producing several hundred barrels a day, to \$3 a barrel, at wells producing less than a fifth of a barrel a day, the lifting cost per well may range from more than \$1,000 at large flowing wells of the type recently discovered in Oklahoma, Texas, Arkansas and California, to less than \$10 at many of the old wells pumped only a few hours a week, as in most of the oil fields of New York and Pennsylvania, where the average daily production per well per day is less than one-fourth of a barrel.

Uncertain

Max—Well, old thing, are you coming to the show tonight?  
Maxine—Oh, I don't think so, unless my husband objects.

## FILMY FROCKS FOR SCHOOL; PRINTED FABRICS POPULAR

MANY pretty processions of frocks for girls from six to fifteen or sixteen are daily passing in review before inquiring mothers. While they are looking for graduation dresses or frocks for the little festivities of closing school days they will get full information as to present styles for the dress-up frocks of juveniles and are sure to note that colors, in beautiful shades, have usurped the place of white to a great extent. The shops are showing pastel tints along with white for graduation frocks of crepe de chine, georgette, chiffon or fine voile. Pink, blue, lavender and white have proved themselves the most popular

"Money talks," and when its subject is dress styles for the midsummer season it talks "straight from the shoulder." Now that merchants have staged many special sales of dresses for matron and maid they are well convinced as to just what Mrs. American Lady and Miss Summer Girl have set their minds upon—they know what they have spent their money for. First and above all they have demanded printed fabrics in colorful patterns, in silk, silk and cotton mixtures and in cotton materials.

These printed materials, made up in the simplest manner, dominate the styles for midsummer in dresses that



For Last Days of School.

colors and are chosen for both the younger girls and those in their teens. For the younger girls the majority of these filmy frocks are sleeveless or have very short sleeves, as shown in the model pictured. This is a voile frock with scant frills of val lace in two rows above the hem, terminating at the sides under loops of satin ribbon. It is one of many models in which the armseams are finished with lace ruffles. The small turnover collar is finished with hemstitching and a bow of ribbon with long ends is posed on the left shoulder where the frock fastens. It would be pretty in

hang almost straight from the shoulder. Very little trimming is required on them and they are shown in both short and long-sleeved models, nearly all of them provided with a narrow girde that ties loosely at one side below the waistline. They are informal in style—even in the silk fabrics—and they are very becoming to their wearers. A pretty example of the printed silk frock is pictured here with front and back panels edged with narrow lace and an application of flat folds of crepe de chine in a plain color at each side. The narrow girde made of the silk and lined with the crepe de chine



A Popular Slip-On Model.

any light color or in white over a colored slip.

Nothing is prettier than georgette for graduation frocks and it proves to be a durable fabric as well and fine voile merits any fine needlework that may be lavished upon it, as it is practically indestructible. With pretty flaring skirts, tucks, lace and ribbons all features of the summer mode and flowerlike shades of lovely colors distinctly fashionable, a class of girl graduates ought to be as enchanting to look at as a blooming garden of flowers. Among the showings there are dresses of cream-colored net covered with fine tucks and combined with lace.

JULIA BOTTOMLEY.  
(© 1918, Western Newspaper Union.)

### Help That Achy Back!

Is backache making you miserable? Are you tired, nervous, "blue"—utterly played out? Have you suspected your kidneys? Your kidneys are the blood filters. Once they fall behind in their work, there's slow poisoning of blood and nerves. Then it's apt to come backache, headaches, dizziness, and other annoying kidney irregularities. Don't wait! If your kidneys are sluggish, help them with a stimulant diuretic. Use Doan's Pills. Doan's are recommended the world over. Ask your neighbor!

### A North Carolina Case

Mrs. W. J. Shelton, Boulevard Ave., Spray, N. C., says: "My back ached and when I stood long my back gave out and I suffered from nervous headaches, too. My kidneys didn't act right. A friend told me Doan's Pills would help me, so I began using them. About one and a half boxes drove away every symptom of the attack and I was cured."

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### Odd Fishing

Several hundred Indians, including women and children, assembled at Fisher Bay, at the mouth of the Nans river, in early spring, awaiting the arrival of the oolichan, according to word from Prince Rupert, British Columbia. The annual run of the fish usually lasts a month. The Indians come from great distances to fish for them through the ice, and out of the catch they make oolichan grease, which they use in place of butter. In previous years as many as 1,000 of the Indians have assembled at the mouth of the river, but this year there were not more than 300.

### Royal Gorge in Films

Motion pictures of the Royal gorge in Colorado, one of the scenic spots of the United States, are being taken for exhibition throughout the world. A special train has been necessary to make the picture properly. The wheels of the cars had to be perfect so as not to mar any of the camera reproductions.

One application of Roman Eye Balsam will prove how good it is for sore eyes. Costs only 25 cents. 373 Pearl St., N. Y. Adv.

### Torch Fights Forest Fires

A new apparatus for fighting forest fires consists of a kerosene blowtorch, useful for beating back fires, says Popular Science Monthly. By its use all the firing, it is claimed, can be done by one experienced man, thus reducing the attendant danger to a minimum.

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