

Perfect Stranger

By Jack Mosher

The first thing Celia Brandon noticed about him was the way he sat. As if, she thought, studying the man at the corner table across the top of her menu, he had been propped up in his chair and was likely, at any minute, to go sliding off on the floor.

"Does he come in often?"

"Yes-m, Miss," said her waiter. "Every night this-a week, he come. But he does not eat. He just-a sits and sits."

Celia examined her find more closely.

His hair was greying much too rapidly, and his clothes were much too shabby for Garibaldi's, which was on 52nd, just around the corner from the theatre district.

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ON ALL OCCASIONS CHEERWINE IS GOOD TASTE

"Perhaps," she said, "he hasn't the price of a meal."

"Then why does he come?"

The waiter's attitude, Celia felt, was a coldly commercial one. The way most folks with something to sell looked upon those who had no money to buy. And determined to put the waiter in his place, she said, "I thought his face was familiar. Yes, of course! It's Freddy Malone... Tell him," she said, "that I'd like him to join me."

"Yes-a, Miss!"

For a moment after the waiter had delivered this invitation uncertainly marked the man's lean features. But when Celia countered with just the right degree of warmth in her own—the degree one would extend to a man friend not seen in many years yet warmly remembered—he rose and came toward her table.

He walked unsteadily and she wondered if he might be intoxicated. If that explained his propped-up appearance of a moment ago. Then he was alongside, bowing just a little from the waist, and she was saying, "It's so good to see you again, Fred."

"Yes, isn't it," he said. "Thanks for asking me over."

His tones made her feel that he was hungry. It was as if every word he spoke was scraped from

the walls of his stomach, left some mark. And now that he was closer she could not mistake the suffering which lined his face.

More than food, she felt certain, was needed here. He needed good cheer. Someone to talk with.

"How about a Martini?" she said. "A pepper-upper, as they say."

He turned to the waiter, chuckling miraculously. "A pepper-upper," he ordered, "for the lady." Then, when the waiter had gone off and leaning closer across the white table cloth, "Look! It's damned nice of you. Having me like this, I mean. But I can't accept—"

"Forget it," Celia said, trying her utmost to spare him. "I don't know about you, but I'm hungry. Let's concentrate on dinner."

"Yes, of course. The dinner." "How about some sea food?"

"Not for me." He made a wry face. "I've just come from there. Maybe you took notice of my roll."

"I wondered what it was." "It's the genuine article," he assured her. "A Clyde-Mallory Line freighter just brought me back from the Far East... You see," he hurried on as if he had just so much time in which to tell it, "I struck it tough in Singapore. Went out there to work for a big oil company. It wasn't so big, because it folded a few weeks after I arrived. I was on the beach three months, broke to the wide, before I got this chance to work my way home—"

"Forget that now," Celia said, judging from his tones that every word must be an effort for him. "This Spagetti Italiane sounds mighty good to me."

"But I can't forget," he insisted. "And I think you should hear me out. Have you ever," he demanded, while Celia could find not a word with which to check him, "known what it is to be hungry, to starve?"

"I can well imagine, Celia interrupted, more firmly this time. "I've heard New York is no different than Singapore if it comes to that. But let's get on with ordering now, eh?"

"Yes, of course. Ordering." He sounded the least bit let down.

But he bucked up as the meal progressed.

"I must see more of you," he said. "You do me good."

"We do each other good, you mean."

"That's it!" He was as enthusiastic as a school boy attending his first grown-up date. "And look," he assured her, "I'll make up for tonight's dinner just as soon as I get placed."

"Don't mention it." "I could get a job in Mexico. There's a fellow—"

"But why not try here in New York?"

"In an office?" "Not necessarily."

"Then what?" "Had you ever thought of acting," Celia said as the waiter returned with a small silver tray containing a half dollar and three thin dimes. You know what they say? If you can't make a go of anything else you're sure to click on the stage. And it seems to me," she added, making a fine show of waving the waiter and the eighty cents away, "that with the experience you've had knocking around the world you could put a lot of punch into playacting."

"Maybe you're right. In fact, I know you're right."

"What do you mean?" He smiled broadly.

"Simply," he told her, "that I am stage. I've just been putting on an act here. Rehearsing for my new play, I need a girl to play opposite me. She's rich as all get out. Money doesn't mean a thing to her. That's exactly the kind of girl you are in real life. So how about coming around in the morning to sign a contract? I'm Noel Howard—"

"Noel Howard?" Celia didn't spare the name mentioned with

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Dale Carnegie

Author of "HOW TO WIN FRIENDS and INFLUENCE PEOPLE"

What kind of company are your children keeping? All of you probably have read, or had told to you, the story of the father who warned his son against some of his playmates, and the son who replied that even though those playmates might do some wrong, he would not follow their example. Then, the father took the boy to the storage bin, picked up a half-rotten apple and placed it in a box of sound apples. A week, later he took the boy back to that storage bin—and the expected had happened. The former good apples were now partly rotted.

Yesterday a woman who works now and then in my home asked to change her regular day for another. On the day she was supposed to come to my home, she found she would be allowed to visit her son. The son was in a house of correction! He was sent there when he was one month past his eighteenth birthday. I hadn't known about this, but I had known that the mother reared him in Harlem, New York's so-called den of iniquity. Harlem is considered such a tough section of the city that R. H. Macy's delivery man told me once that they never went there to make deliveries without an armed bodyguard in the van with them.

The mother said that her son had never spent a night away from home until he was sent away by the authorities; that his sentence was the result of the association with bad company which she had not been able to shield him from.

She said further that "the

awave around casting offices where she spent months trying to get a small part in his new production — in any production. "Then, listen mug!" she flung at him. "How about buying me another dinner right now? I couldn't eat a bite of that one for thinking I'd spent my last five dollars..."

at the service. Mr. Faircloth died at his home Friday.

He is survived by his wife, Bertie Faircloth, and the following children: Mrs. Eula Gwaltney, Oxford, Pa.; Mrs. J. B. Spencer, High Rock, Pa.; Mrs. Dudley Blevins, Konnarock, Va.; Ruby Faircloth, Darlington, Md.; Darrell Faircloth, Bel Camp, Md.

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Funeral Held For Millard Faircloth

The funeral service for Millard Faircloth, 73, Whitetop, Va., was held Sunday afternoon at the Greenwood church with interment in the church cemetery. Rev. Rudolph Ludwig officiated.

STRAYED OR STOLEN

Two B. W. T. Walker fox hounds. One male, 24" at shoulders, slender type, almost black back, tan head with wide stripe up back of head. Been gone about two months.

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