

BROKEN

RUBY M. AYRES

SEVENTH INSTALLMENT
WHAT HAS GONE BEFORE

Giles Chittenham swears to avenge the death of his young half-brother Rodney, driven to suicide by the notorious Julie Farrow who had spurned his love. He will make Julie love him, then throw her aside as she threw Rodney. He meets her in Switzerland, goes with her to the hotel on the St. Bernard Pass, and succeeds in winning her love. To his amazement, he discovers that he has fallen overwhelmingly in love with her himself! And he is married, to an American girl with whom he has nothing in common.

Then he discovers that this girl is not the same Julie Farrow who ruined Rodney, but her cousin of the same name. She scorns him when he confesses his love and his inability to marry her. They meet later in London, where she is going the pace that kills. Another man, Lawrence Schofield, wants to marry her, in spite of her wild life.

Through his friend, Lombard, Giles Chittenham meets the "other Julie," the notorious woman who had ruined Rodney's life.

NOW GO ON WITH THE STORY.

She sat beside him, and her voice and her laugh, and her little tricks of manner sometimes made it seem impossible that she was not the same woman who had come so happily to his arms in the cold bleak room of the little hotel high up in the mountains.

She told Giles frankly that she had been a little nervous of meeting him.

"I thought perhaps the family hatred had extended itself to you," she said bitterly. "Life is very unkind to some of us, Mr. Chittenham. I am glad you do not hate me as badly as I had expected you would."

Chittenham hesitated. "When I was on the other side of the world my hatred for you was a very real and vital thing," he said gravely. "I used to hope for an opportunity to, well— He shrugged his shoulders and smiled. "Avenge" is such a melodramatic word, isn't it?"

"There is no other word that gives quite the same explanation," she answered. "Don't you still hope for it?"

"No."

"What made you change?"

Giles looked away from her down the crowded little restaurant, and in an aching imagination, he saw again the bare ugly room of the mountain hotel, and heard the wind howling as it flung the soft snow against the windows.

"Something happened—" he said. She did not answer at once, then she said quietly:

"Well, whatever it was, I'm glad I don't want to be hated any more. I don't think any one—even your mother—could hate me any more if she knew what I know."

"What do you mean?"

Julie lowered her voice.

"If you would like to drive home with me afterwards I will tell you."

"What is it you were going to tell me?" Giles asked after they got into her car. He felt an immense curiosity in this woman, and also an inexplicable pity for her, which somehow angered him.

According to all accounts she was worthless and heartless, and yet . . . once before he had blundered into tragedy through listening to and believing the things other people said. The car stopped.

"We are just home," Julie said. "Come in, and I will tell you."

Julie threw herself down into a big chair with a sigh.

Giles said nothing. He stood leaning against the mantel-shelf looking down at her, vaguely conscious of something tragic that seemed to have stolen into the room during the last few moments. Suddenly Julie raised her eyes.

"I'm glad you don't ask thousands of questions," she said. "You're such a restful person, Mr. Chittenham. I can be quite sure that you won't say 'Oh, my God!' or anything like that when I tell you that I am going to die."

"I don't look like it, do I?" she queried whimsically. "But it's true, all the same. It's quite signed and sealed, with no hope of a reprieve. I've been to every specialist in London who would take my money, and they all say the same thing. There could be an operation, but I won't have it. I hate the idea of the knife, especially as it can't be a cure—but only just a way of prolonging life for a little while. I don't think I want to prolong it either. It's not been such fun when one looks back."

"What are you going to do then?"

"I'm going abroad. Couldn't bear the idea of dying here in London, where so many people know me, so I'm going right away where I shan't know any one, and nobody will know me. What do you think of it, Mr. Chittenham?"

"I think you're a very brave woman," Giles said, and suddenly he leaned down and took her hand. To his surprise the tears welled up into her eyes and splashed on to her frock.

"That's foolish of me, isn't it?" she said. "And they're not because I'm frightened . . . these tears! It's just because the way you took hold of my hand reminded me of some one . . ." She drew a hard breath as if of pain. "Some one I really loved. There was a man I once really loved, Mr. Chittenham."

"I'm sure there was."

"He died . . ." Julie sat very still for a moment, then she gently drew her hand away. "That finished me, in the same way that something of the kind has finished the other Julie too. He died, and then it was as if I died too, all that was best of me at least, and all the hateful rotten part lived on! My cousin Julie is like that now! It must be in the family. Perhaps you don't know her well enough to see it or recognize it, but I do! I knew directly she came home from Switzerland . . . We've never been great

friends—I told you she didn't approve of me! But the day after she came home—about six weeks ago, I suppose it must be, or more—she came to see me, and said: 'I want to ask your pardon for all the hard things I've said to you and thought of you. You've been right, and I've been wrong all the time. It's no use trying to be good—it's no use trying to lead a decent life. The only way is to get every ounce of pleasure possible, never mind at whose expense. That's what I'm going to do in the future—that's what she said.'"

"I said: 'You poor little fool!—there's no man in all the world worth breaking your heart over'—she wouldn't admit anything, of course, but I knew!" Julie laughed softly. "And now there is something I want you to do for me. Will you be kind to Julie?—the other Julie? I'm sorry for her. I know just what she's going through. I've been through it all myself, you see. And I think you could help her. You're the sort of man who understands. If you'll just be friends with her—"

"I'll do anything I can, but . . ."

"She's got amongst a horrible set of people," Julie said. "Not really vicious people, but silly and worthless. They make her drink too much, and swear—and sit up all night, and she's not that sort! She won't be able to bear it as well as I used to. I saw her the other night. She's got hold of a new friend—"

"You mean—Schofield. He's not a bad fellow—"

"No. It's a girl—a common little American—"

"Yes—a girl named Sadie Barrow—why do you know her?" for Giles had made a sudden convulsive movement.

"No—yes . . . at least . . . no. I don't know her." Not know her! Sadie Barrow? His own wife.

So Sadie had come to London without acquainting him of the fact. Giles Chittenham felt cold with anger.

How the devil must be laughing at this successful double-cross which had not only brought Sadie to England when he least wished to see her, but had thrown her across Julie's path.

Confound all women! Chittenham thought, then he looked again at the one sitting crouching in the chair before him. He stooped impulsively towards her and took her hand.

"I should like to be your friend, too, if I may. I should like to be able to help you."

"Thank you, and, Giles—"

"Yes."

"I was never quite so wicked as people have made out. It was not my fault about—Rodney. I told him so many times it was useless—why, he was only a boy compared with me—a spoilt, weak boy."

"I am afraid he was."

"So don't think too badly of me." She drew her hand gently away.

"And now—please go. I'm so tired."

She did not look at him or rise from her chair, and Giles walked reluctantly to the door, pausing when he reached it to look back. It seemed horrible to leave her like that—alone. Horrible to think that of all the friends and lovers she had known there was not one to stand by her now and hold her hand as she went through the dark valley lying before her.

A day or two later he saw a small announcement in a newspaper to the effect that she had gone abroad, and would be absent for some time, and that no letters would be forwarded. It was the same night that his mother rang up on the telephone to inform him that she was giving a party.

"When?" he asked, ruthlessly cutting short her voluble explanations.

"Tonight. Twelve midnight. Giles. There'll be ham and eggs and hot coffee about four."

"Good Lord!"

"Don't talk like that. It will be such fun. Every one's coming!"

"Who is 'every one'?"

"Doris, of course—she's bringing a party. And Lawrence Schofield—"

"What made you ask him?"

"To please Miss Farrow, of course. They're always together! I really believe they will make a match of it."

"I thought you didn't like Miss Farrow?"

"Well, just between ourselves, I don't! But I find that one must be broad-minded in these matters. You see, it takes all sorts to make a world."

"It certainly does. Who else?"

"A lot of people you don't know."

She rang off and Giles turned away from the phone with a shrug of his shoulders. It was only when he was in his mother's house that he suddenly realized that in all probability Sadie would be there also. For a moment he hesitated, a sudden chill feeling at his heart, then

he philosophically pushed the idea aside and went on.

She was almost the first person he saw when he entered Mrs. Ardron's crowded drawing-room.

She was talking to a group of people which included Julie Farrow and several others whom Giles knew slightly, and it was Julie who first caught sight of him and waved and airy hand.

Giles went straight across to her. He did not know in the least what sort of reception to expect from his wife, but after he had greeted Julie and the others whom he knew, it was she who said in her insistent way:

"Present your friend."

It was Julie who obeyed.

"Mr. Chittenham, Miss Barrow"

"Pleased to meet you," Sadie said impudently.

There was a twinkle in her eyes for which Giles could have shaken her.

Schofield was with Julie beaming happily upon every one.

"We haven't met lately, Mr. Chittenham," Julie was saying. "Where have you been hiding? So kind of your mother to ask me here tonight."

"So kind of you to come," Giles answered formally. He could see that Sadie was maneuvering to reach his side, and presently they were a little apart from the rest.

"Isn't it a scream? Sadie demanded. "Fancy meeting you in your own mother's house, and she not knowing that she's entertaining a daughter-in-law unawares?"

"You are at perfect liberty to tell her if you choose," Giles answered coolly, though inwardly he was raging. "I have no doubt that you have told other people already."

Sadie gave a little scream of repudiation.

"Tell any one! Not me! It would cook my goose once and for all if it was known that I'd got such highly respectable relations. No, thanks. Freedom for me all the time and if there's anything left over, freedom again."

"Why have you come to London?" Her face changed subtly.

"Not to find you, my lambkin, so don't worry. I've come to have a good time and don't you interfere, or it will be the worse for you"

"Sadie the situation is impossible—"

She laughed in his face

"Rubbish! Don't pretend you want me to come back to you."

Sadie shrugged her naked shoulders. "Times change!" she said. She moved away from him, her scantily-clad body swaying with a little impudent movement.

Giles watched her with hard eyes. And this was his wife! This common little . . . he pulled his thoughts up sharply, ashamed of them. After all he had once thought her good enough to marry.

Giles turned again to Julie.

"I suppose it would be utterly useless for me to ask you to drop this damnable play-acting?"

"My dear man, what on earth do you mean?"

"What I say. You're never natural for a single moment. You hate

this sort of—of piffle—as much as I have it. You despise people like—like these people here—"

Julie laughed serenely.

"I brought Lawrence and Sadie

Barrow. By the way, what do you think of Sadie?"

"Is she a new friend of yours?"

(CONTINUED NEXT WEEK)

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