

THE OTHER MAN

by RUBY M. AYRES



TENTH INSTALLMENT
Dennis looked to the window and stood looking out into the street. "Of course," he said after a moment.

"You needn't come," Pauline said breathlessly, and waited. "I can go by myself quite well," she added as he did not speak. "If you'll send a wire and see me off—"

"Do you think you need go to-day?"

"I'm sure. You see these letters have been sent on from home, so that makes it a day late."

Dennis turned round. "If you'd like me to come with you—"

She was so thankful to him for suggesting it that she broke into eager refusal. "Of course not! It would be ever so dull for you with Daddy away."

She slipped out of bed; she had quite forgotten her new negligee, but for the first time Dennis noticed it.

"Where did you get that thing?" he asked.

"What thing? Oh, this." She colored with pleasure. "It's rather nice, isn't it? Barbara chose it, she's got such wonderful taste. I know you don't think so, but she has all the same."

"It's not so bad," Dennis said grudgingly, and then with awkward grace, he added, "It suits you."

"Oh, do you think so?" She ran to him and lifted her face to be kissed. "It's such a shame your holiday is being spoiled," she added a moment later. "What will you do without me?"

Dennis thrust a hand into his coat pocket.

"I heard from Stornaway this morning—he's coming to town for a few days. He wanted us to dine with him to-night." He broke off and added, almost too urgently: "Stay till to-morrow."

"Oh, I'd love it, but if mother is ill—I'll pack now. You go and look up a train. Barbara will be sorry, won't she? We'd planned so many things."

Dennis did not answer; he stood watching her with moody eyes.

Suddenly he went to her and took her by the arms.

"You're a good little soul," he said.

"I love you," Pauline said with shining eyes.

She felt perfectly happy, even though she was leaving Dennis. She was sure he would miss her terribly, but after all it was only for a few days, and then they would be together again.

"Good-bye!" For a moment Barbara's heart seemed to stand still. What had happened?

"Good-bye—what on earth—"

"It's mother—she's not very well," Pauline explained. "I'm going to stay with her for a few days. I'm awfully sorry, but—"

"Shan't I see you again?"

Barbara's voice was a little breathless. Wouldn't she be able to say good-bye to Dennis?

"I'm going by the twelve-five train—it's the best. Dennis has booked a seat and is coming to see me off."

Then he was not going with her. Barbara's pulses quieted.

"The twelve-five from where?" she asked.

"Grand Central."

"I'll be there to see you off."

"Will you? You are a darling, Barbara. You'll look after Dennis for me, won't you? Dr. Stornaway is coming up to town for a few days, so Dennis will have him, but I shall be much happier if I know you are looking after him as well, Barbie."

"I don't imagine he will, though," Barbara said quickly.

"Of course he will! I thought you'd put that idea out of your head. I'm sure he really likes you Barbie."

Barbara gave a short laugh. "I'll do my best—if you really want me to," she said reluctantly.

"Thank you so much. Then you'll be at Grand Central."

Barbara turned away from the phone. She felt angry; she felt as if she had deliberately taken a treasure from a child's hand, as she put on her hat and coat and sent for a taxi.

Pauline was a fool to leave Dennis in New York. Didn't she know, couldn't she see the way the wind was blowing? It was absurd to be so blind and trusting.

She reached Grand Central a moment before the train started. Pauline was already seated. She looked somehow like a child going back to school after a happy holiday.

"Don't lean out of the window," Barbara teased her, "and wait till the train stops."

Pauline laughed. "I'll send you a wire directly after I get home, Dennis darling—and you'll write to me."

He made a grimace.

"You used to write lovely letters when we were engaged."

Barbara laughed mockingly.

"What a shame to throw his nasty past in his face." But she was bitterly jealous of that past and of the letters he had written to Pauline.

The guard blew his whistle, and Pauline leaned out of the window and put her arms round her husband's neck.

"Good-bye, my precious, take care of yourself. Take care of him, Barbie."

"He's quite capable of taking care of himself," Barbara said coolly.

She stood silently beside Dennis till the train was out of sight; then she spoke. "I'll take a taxi. I'm in a hurry."

"Where are you going?"

"To lunch with Jerry."

"That's not the truth," Dennis said calmly. "I ran into Barnett at the station ten minutes ago and he told me he was going down to Windsor to the races."

Barbara bit her lip and made no answer. Dennis hailed a taxi and followed her into it.

"Romano's, please," he told the driver. "You'll lunch with me," he said as they drove away.

"You're very positive," she sneered.

"I am—as positive as I am that you never intended lunching with Barnett." He laid his hand on hers, but she drew it sharply away. "Why did you tell me such a fib?" he asked.

She shrank away from him into the corner.

"I feel such a cad," she said almost violently.

"How do you imagine I feel?"

"I don't think men have any conscience when they want a thing badly enough."

"As badly as I want you, you mean?"

She did not speak, and he went on: "You've made mistakes, Barbara haven't you?"

"Dozens."

"And paid for them?"

"Bitterly."

"Well—I'm paying now."

"You've got a vivid imagination."

"Have I?" He caught her hand suddenly and raised it to his lips. She had taken off her gloves, and he held her palm against his lips as if it were something unutterably precious, almost sacred.

Barbara closed her eyes. This was what she had wanted; this was what she had longed for and almost prayed for, for months, and yet now it had come she was not happy.

She thought of Pauline, speeding away, and again that terrible feeling swept over her that she was robbing a child of its dearest possession.

"If you want me to lunch with you, you must behave," she said coolly, and put on her gloves.

The taxi stopped and they got out. They were given a corner table in an alcove.

He ordered a lunch and the waiter went away.

"When one comes to think of it," Barbara said considerably, "why should you like me?"

"Love you," he corrected obstinately.

She went on as if she had not heard.

"I am nothing you admire—you say I drink too much and stay out too much at night. You think I have too many men friends."

"I don't think, I know."

"Yes, but I think you'd better sit up and try and look less interested in me. I'm rather well known here."

"You seem to be well known everywhere we go."

She sighed. "I am. How can I help it? It's my life."

"I wish I could take you out of it."

"Dennis, don't be foolish," Barbara sipped her cocktail. "It's good," she said. "Well, here's to you."

"And to you, and to everything that might have been, and may be yet," he said obstinately.

Barbara drained her glass and set it down.

"Everything that never will be, she said firmly. "What sort of a wretch do you think I am? Pauline is my friend."

"She is my wife, but it makes no difference to the fact that I love you."

"You thought you loved her when you married her."

"I did love her. I do love her in some ways, but it's not the love I have for you. I can imagine that it is possible to love many women as I love her, but only possible to love one as I love you."

"You should write a book," Barbara mocked him.

"I suppose you've heard everything I can say to you from other men," he said savagely.

She shook her head. "No. None of them have ever been like you."

Lunch was brought.

"Will you dine with me and Stornaway tonight?" Dennis asked.

"Certainly not. I don't like Dr. Stornaway, and I know he doesn't approve of me. You forget that we met in the hospital when you were there."

"He knows nothing about you."

"No, but he imagines he does."

"Pauline requested you to look after me," he reminded her with a glimmering of a smile.

Barbara grew suddenly grave.

"Have you ever thought what would happen if Pauline ever knew—ever found out—?" She stopped, and he broke in quickly:

"Found out—what?"

"That you talk to me like this."

"You mean that I love you, and that you love me?"

"Well—have you ever thought what she would do?"

CONTINUED NEXT WEEK

CHINESE FORCED BACK
Chlumenkow, a pass through the great wall of China about 12 miles north of Shanhaikwan, was the scene of another conflict between Japanese and Chinese troops Friday in which the Japanese emerged victorious.

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