

TOMORROW'S PROMISE

by Temple Bailey



CHAPTER I

For the first time in her life, Anne Ordway was afraid. It was as if into the clear and serene night a great beast had suddenly stalked—a vast golden horror that filled the sky. She found herself fleeing from it, rushing up through the garden to the sanctuary of the house. Yet the thing had at first seemed so simple. Just a whisper of servants coming out of the dark—"If he finds out, it will be the end of her..."

Anne had been standing alone in the shadow of an ancient oak. To her right was the tall hedge that enclosed the garden. And it was from behind the hedge that she had heard the voices. "If he finds out, it will be the end of her..."

It was not until she had listened idly for a moment that she had known they were talking of her father and mother. Saying frightful things, things that couldn't be true.

And now, having reached the house, she had flung the door wide, slamming it hard behind her. She stood flattened against it, her arms outstretched as if to bar out the evil which had pursued her. Then suddenly she laughed and dropped her arms. For the room was unchanged. She had not known what she had expected, but here it was no different—her mother at the piano, the music arrested by her daughter's wild entrance, and Vicky and Anne's father at the chess table.

Her mother was saying, as she had said a thousand times: "Anne darling, what in the world?" Her father's head was lifted, and Vicky's calm eyes were lighted by a sort of wonder.

Anne's explanation went to all of them. "Something startled me and I ran."

The explanation, she saw at once, satisfied her father and mother, but it did not satisfy Vicky. Her mother went on playing and singing softly Marie Antoinette's song—"Moi pauvre jardinière du Roi."

"A gardener to the king am I. To please his majesty I try; His orders I'm obeying, 'tis true, 'tis true, Yet all my thoughts are straying—to you."

Her father made a move, and Vicky laughed and turned to Anne. "He's beating me dread-

fully." She held out her hand, and Anne crossed the room and sat on a low seat beside the table.

As she sat there she looked at her mother singing: "To say what long you've known is true, is true, I love but one alone, and 'tis you."

And as she looked, Anne thought of what the servants had said. Of course it was absolutely true. There was her lovely mother, her dark hair framing the white oval of her face, her slim neck in a white point against the dark velvet of her gown, her white pearls trickling, her blue eyes the only bit of color in all that symphony of white and black.

Anne's father rose from the chess table. "The last day of the month. We ought to be moving to town, Elinor."

His wife glanced up. "Why go in?"

He stood looking down at her. "There was a time when you could hardly wait till the summer was over."

A note or two tinkled. "Times change."

"Yes. And so do we."

"Have I changed so much?"

He gave a short laugh. "What do you want me to say?"

"Nothing." She turned back to her playing as he turned away.

To Anne, hitherto such small exchanges between her father and mother had meant little. They often talked like that, as if there hung between them some slight grievance, but tonight, in the light of that dreadful experience in the garden, their short dialogue took on an aspect of significance.

She shook the thought from her.

Her mother said from the piano, "The Dorsays are coming up presently for bridge." Then, as her husband returned, hat in hand. "Are you going out, Francis?"

"Yes."

"I wish you'd leave me some money."

"You've been having hard luck lately, I take it."

"Oh, such things go in waves—win today and lose tomorrow."

"Who is making the fourth?"

"David." Elinor had risen and was standing by the fire. "He motored up from Baltimore this morning. He's going to open his house."

"For heaven's sake, why?"

"Don't ask me. I'm not his keeper."

"But a big house like that—a thousand miles from nowhere."

"He's only a mile from us."

"You know what I mean, Elinor. He's all alone. You and I have each other and Anne and Vicky."

Anne's mother nodded. "Yes, he's alone, of course, but he says he is his own good company."

Anne, listening, was again aware of some sinister significance.

For it was of David that the servants behind the hedge had talked. Of dear delightful David, whom Anne had known since childhood and who had taken her to her first dance. And now she had been to many dances, and a year ago she had made her bow to Baltimore society and hadn't liked it.

For Anne, in spite of her nineteen years, had never really grown up. It had been, perhaps, because of Vicky. Vicky had come, a graduate nurse in her white linen, to look after the little girl of five whose mother was so bound by the demands of the social life about her that she refused to be bound by the demands of her baby. Vicky had been with them since then—fourteen years in which she had set Anne's little feet on a path which Elinor and Francis Ordway had never followed.

Anne's parents had recognized the value of Vicky's presence, and treated her as one of them. In Vicky burned a clear flame that lighted the house. It lighted, too, Anne's little torch. The torches of Francis Ordway and of Elinor, his wife, were lighted at other and less sacred fires.

Francis Ordway took a sheaf of bills from his wallet and counted them into his wife's hand.

"Is that all?" she asked as he returned the wallet to his pocket.

"It ought to be more than enough." He smiled.

There was a spark in her eyes. "Oh, well, if it isn't, David can carry me."

Again that sinister note! But Francis laughed. "Let him carry you. It may even things up a bit."

"What do you mean, Francis?"

"He owes me a lot of money."

She stood staring. "David?"

"I've a mortgage on his house. Didn't you know?"

"No. How should I?"

Francis bent and kissed his daughter. "You'd better go to bed."

"Why?"

"Beauty sleep."

"I'm beautiful enough."

They laughed together.

Anne had, indeed, no idea of going to bed. She had a rendezvous out under the moon. She was half afraid of the beast, but she was going. It was too late now for servants to be behind the hedge, and beyond the hedge on the hill would be Garry Brooks.

She had known Garrett all her life. The Brooks' estate adjoined the Ordways' and there were no fences between.

Anne sat smiling beside Vicky. Presently her father would go out and his big car would speed along the lonely road to Baltimore. Then while Vicky and Elinor were reading Anne would meet Garry on the little hill.

When the car came, Anne went with her father to the door. "Why go?" she asked. "It's much nicer here."

They were out now on the wide portico. "It would be nicer if I were—wanted."

"You are wanted, Daddy."

"By you? Darling child, I know." He kissed her and held her close. "Would you always love me, Anne, no matter what happened?"

She said "Yes" and clung to him. When he went on, her heart followed him. What could happen?

She turned and ran into the house, as if to outdistance the turmoil in her mind. Vicky was in the living room, looking on the shelves for a French novel. She selected a book and turned a smiling face. "What are you going to do while we read?"

"I may walk to the top of the hill."

"Again? What frightened you when you were there?"

"Oh—nothing."

Vicky let it go at that. There was obviously something in the air, but some day Anne would tell her all about it. She always did.

It was because of her conversation with Vicky that Anne came late to the hill and found Garry there before her. She went running to meet him and he caught up her hands and kissed them.

She laughed and drew back. "Silly, we came to look at the moon."

"I came to look at you."

"If you talk like that, I shall have to go back. Let's pretend we're sensible."

"Why pretend anything?"

"Isn't all of life just pretending?"

He was impatient.

"You know what I mean."

She was silent for a moment. Then she said, "Oh, Garry, isn't it enough just for us two to be alone in this wonderful world?"

"It's not enough for me." His arm went about her shoulders.

Eluding him, she sat down un-

der the great oak that crowned the hill. "Talk to me, Garry."

"I have only one theme. You know that, Anne."

She did not answer.

Garry threw himself down beside her. "Tell me you love me—"

She shook her head.

"Anne, you're mine; I'll show you a new world when we're married. We'll open up the old house on the hill, and you'll be the beauty of the countryside."

"I don't want to be the beauty of the countryside. Mother was for years. And now younger women are coming along and it's—dreadful."

"How do you mean 'dreadful'?"

"Oh, Mother hates it. To see them getting all the admiration."

"Your mother is still a great beauty."

"Yes, but marriage would mean more to me than being the toast of the hunt clubs. I'm not criticizing Mother. But I'm different." She stopped suddenly.

"What's that?"

His eyes followed her pointing finger. Sloping down from the hill to the east was a great meadow, amber and amethyst under the moon, and solid and black as an ebony cliff against the brightness loomed the pine grove. It was to the right of the grove that Anne pointed, where a spiral of smoke arose from the grasses.

Garry said, "Some one has built a fire."

"Let's go down."

"Not yet." The wrap which she had put on dropped from her shoulders. He drew it about her and thus had her in the circle of his arm. "Anne, tell me—"

"No."

She slipped from the cloak, leaving it in his hands, and ran ahead of him in the direction of the thread of smoke. Presently he caught up with her and together they crossed swiftly the dried and glimmering grasses. They found that the fire had been built in a bare place with stones about it. A coffee pot was rocking on the coals, its fragrance filling the air, but not a living creature was in sight except some sheep and a rabbit which sat as if petrified, the moon behind it making little lanterns of its ears.

Seeing the rabbit, Anne said, "Oh, look, Garry! The darling—"

At the sound of her voice, the small beast loped away and a man emerged from the blackness of the grove. He spoke at once. "I hope I'm not trespassing." His voice was pleasant and unharmed. At close range he showed himself somewhat carelessly attired in a white sweater and white flannel trousers.

It was Anne who answered him. "Anybody can trespass who makes such coffee."

"Would you have a cup with me?" he asked. "I've enough for all of us."

Garry spoke with decision. "Anne, we've got to get back."

She swept that aside. "We can always go back to the house, but we can't always have coffee in the meadow."

(Continued Next Week)

A Baby from Heaven

Bobby—Say, mother, was baby sent down from heaven?

Mother—Yes, Bobby.

Bobby—They like to have it quiet up there, don't they?

before the clerk of the Superior Court of Surry County at his office in Dooson within ten days after the completion of the publication of this notice which will be thirty days from the date hereof and answer or demur to

the complaint filed in this cause or the plaintiffs will ask judgment for the relief demanded in the complaint. This the 7th day of September, 1939.

F. T. LEWELLYN,
Clerk of Superior Court.

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- Wayne County authorities in September revoked the licenses of five retail outlets because of improper conduct of their establishments.
- Wilmington officials closed an outlet after attention had been called to its operation in violation of the law.
- A Mecklenburg County license was revoked and another license was surrendered following our petition to the County Commissioners.

It is our desire to continue cooperation such as this with the constituted law enforcement agencies of the state, its counties and its municipalities in bringing about conditions of which the industry, the authorities and the public may be justly proud.

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