

TOMORROW'S PROMISE

by Temple Bailey

CHAPTER VII

Synopsis
Anne Ordway, nineteen, is shocked when she realizes that their old friend, David Elliott, is in love with her beautiful mother, Elinor. She adores her mother, and her father, Francis. One night she and Garry Brooks find a young man making coffee over a fire in a meadow. Later this stranger sees someone through a second story window in Anne's house take something from a dressing table. Next morning Anne's pearls are missing and Garry suggests the young man may have taken them. He is identified as Charles Patterson, much in the news because of his wife's sensational divorce proceedings against him. Elinor confesses taking the pearls, and Vicky, Anne's companion, redeems them from a pawnbroker. Elinor and Francis tell Anne they are to be divorced. Anne goes to stay at Vicky's farm home.

Vicky dared not tell Francis how much she herself missed what she had left behind in his old house—the games of chess with him at night, the talks and walks, his confidences about Anne. Now that she was away from him she realized how important was the part he had played.

Anne had heard nothing from Charles Patterson. She had not, indeed, expected him to write. It was enough to feel that in some subtle, mysterious way he was linked with her life. She re-read his two letters, and at night looked up at the stars and dreamed. But the time was at hand when she was forced to face reality. Coming early one morning to breakfast, dressed and ready for a ride, she was the first to get the Baltimore paper and there, staring out from the front page, was a picture of Charles' wife, Margot, very smart and smiling as she gave to the court the evidence which made of Charles something a little less than a brute and a bouncer.

Mothers Help Girls

When girls are weak, run-down, nervous, subject to periodic pains, many a mother knows those may be only symptoms of functional dysmenorrhea due to malnutrition which many find are relieved by CARDUI. It helps build physical resistance through improved appetite and digestion. Also reported by many is that CARDUI, taken just before and during "the time," helps to ease the pain.

Vicky, hunting for Anne later, found her face down across the bed. "My darling, what is it?" Anne flung the paper towards her. "Vicky, if it isn't true, why does he let her do it?"

"A false sense of gallantry, my dear. Men like Charles take the blame, although they know they are not at fault."

"But the world will believe all she says of him."

"Yes. That's the burden he will have to carry."

Anne retrieved the paper and studied the picture. "She doesn't look kind. She's hard and cruel. Oh, how could he marry a woman like that? How could he?"

"He probably mixed her up with his dreams," said Vicky dryly. "Men do that—and women—"

Again Anne flung the paper from her. "Well, I shan't mix anybody up with mine. I shall never marry. I'd be afraid. Even if I should want to, don't ever let me marry, Vicky."

Charles Patterson had seen that picture of Margot as she stared from the front page of the morning paper. For the first time her smile did not set his pulses pounding. He found himself meeting her gaze calmly. A little hard, those sparkling eyes. A little heavy, that round young chin. A little thin, those lips that at the last had spoken with such scorn.

"What's the use of going on when we are both bored to extinction?"

"But we promised, Margot, 'as long as we both shall live'."

"Neither of us meant it."

"Didn't we? I think I did, Margot."

She had asked with a touch of curiosity "You mean that you'll always go on loving me?"

"I'm not sure. But I shall always feel that you're my wife."

She had shrugged her shoulders. "That's the trouble. You've been too serious about it, Carl. So I am going on to other adventures."

Other adventures? He hated it all. He knew what the world would think of him. Mental cruelty? She had called it that because he would not let her own his soul. She had insisted that he must live his life in the way she wanted it, and the way she wanted was an unending merry-go-round.

Before his marriage he had written books about his travels, vivid books, and the world had liked them. He had thought Margot would give him inspiration, but she had soon tired of listening while he read to her. "Why should you keep your nose to the grindstone, Carl, when you have enough money?"

"But it's a part of me, darling."

"I'm a part of you, aren't I? And just having me to play around with should make you happy."

"I thought you were proud of my success."

"Success?" She had shrugged her shoulders. "Writing a book doesn't mean much in these days, does it?"

Well, God knew, he had been weak enough at first to give in to her, but the time had come when he had to write or be maimed mentally. He told Margot that, but she would not believe him. So he had gone to his island and had worked alone, and in due time Margot had brought suit for divorce, with the expectation of fat alimony. She would undoubtedly get the alimony for Charles had refused to fight. He could have brought countersuit much damning evidence, but he was glad to be rid of her at any cost, glad to be again back on his island with his old negro, King, who was caretaker in his absence, and cooked and valeted when Charles was in residence. There was also a red setter, Ruff. Charles needed no other company except that of the wild ducks who, finding food and shelter, were staying on through the winter.

Charles, too was staying on. Here in this quiet place he lived with the thought of Anne. It was strange how his mind went back to her. Their time had been so short together.

Christmas was two weeks away. Charles, talking it over with King, said, "I'll have my oysters and turkey right here, and run up to Baltimore for mince pies and fruit cake."

"Well, I hope you eats something," old King told him. "You needs fattenin' up, Mistuh Charles."

"Fattening up isn't fashionable."

"Humph," King said, and carried out his tray.

He came back to the dining room to say, "I might trim us all a tree."

Charles shook his head. "We'll have to put things in our stockings," he said, and stared out of the window at the dark waves tumbling up against the horizon.

The first Christmas after his marriage he and King had trimmed a tree for Margot. It had been a lovely tree—a young pine out in the open. He and Margot had lighted it in the dark of the morning and Charles had said, "Perhaps some day, darling, there will be a child to light it for us."

And Margot had said, "Don't be silly," and the glow of the candles had seemed to fade.

After dinner Margot had railed against the loneliness of the island. "You told me it would be romantic," she had complained to Charles, "but it isn't." She wanted to be where people sang and danced, and when they went back to town she told her friends that Charles' island was a "dead hole." He had never taken her there again.

And now Christmas was almost here and King took his master in a speedboat to the mainland. Charles kept his car in the town garage and rode to Baltimore in time for lunch at the old exchange which deals in the delectable wares of Maryland gentlemen who preserve the epicurean southern ideals of cookery.

Having ordered mince pies and fruit cake, Charles made his way to the tearoom. Waiting there to be served, he saw at a nearby table two women, their backs towards him, Anne and Vicky!

Charles rose and, crossing the intervening space, stood back of Anne's chair. "Here I am," he said.

As she whirled around and looked up at him, he was shocked at the change in her. Her face was thin and colorless, her eyes dull, her voice tense as she greeted him: "How nice to see you!"

"Don't say it like that."

"How should I say it?"

"As if you were really glad. Not as if you were a little block of ice." He shook hands with Vicky. "You're glad, aren't you?"

"Of course, and so is Anne. Aren't you, darling?"

"I don't know. Why should I be glad about anything? And I'm too honest to pretend."

Charles waited a moment before he spoke. "So that's it," he said at last. "You've been reading about me in the papers, and you believe it."

She flushed. "No, I don't really believe it. Only, after Mother and Daddy and everything, it was a last straw." She broke down and hunted in her bag for her handkerchief.

Dabbing her eyes, she heard Charles say, "I refuse to be a last straw."

He was smiling straight into her eyes and suddenly she smiled back at him. "I'll be good," she said.

He gave the order to the waitress and said to Anne, "Now, tell me all about yourself."

"You tell him, Vicky."

They had come that morning, Vicky informed him, to see a doctor. "He thinks Anne needs a decided change. He is suggesting that I take her to the south of France."

sternness: "You must not talk like that. 'Time marches on,' as they say in the movies, and we've got to keep step. We can't stop and say 'things end here for me.'"

"There isn't much reason to go on, is there?"

"Yes. I am going to tell you about that later." He turned to Vicky. "May I take Anne for a ride? Haven't you an errand or something?"

"If I didn't have, I'd invent one," Vicky told him.

So when luncheon was over Charles carried Anne off, with the snow coming down as they drove towards the park.

Charles said, "I'm glad it's snowing."

"Why?"

"It shuts us in—together."

"Please don't say such things."

"What things? I'm not making love to you, Anne, if that's what you're afraid of."

"I'm not afraid," she said shakily, and there was silence until, when they reached the park, Charles stopped the car in a secluded spot where, with the snow drawing its white curtains about them, they were safely hidden from curious eyes.

It was then that he said, "I have brought you here, my dear, because I have something to say to you. I think you know how much you mean to me. My little note told you that. If I were free I should try in every way to win you. But I am not free. Perhaps I shall never be. The courts may say that Margot is not my wife, but in a way I shall always be tied to her. It is a feeling I can't explain. But it exists—like the albatross about the neck of the Ancient Mariner." He waited a moment, then went on: "How- ever, that is neither here nor there. What I want now is to know how I can help you."

"No one can help," she said. "It is just that I believed in everybody, and now there is no one."

"Yes," he said, "there are two of us—Vicky and I. We will never let you down."

She began to cry silently. He put his hand over hers. "Tell me about it."

She told him, and before she had finished his arm was about her, her cheek against his coat.

She whispered, "I've been so afraid."

"I know what it is to be afraid."

Anne lifted her head and looked at him. "Why," she asked,

"did you come into my life if you have to go out of it?"

As his eyes met her troubled gaze, his self-control gave way. "Why should I go out of it?" he demanded passionately. "We both know what we want, Anne. Why shouldn't we take it?"

(Continued Next Week)

SINGERS TO MEET AT WILKES COURT HOUSE

The regular semi-annual meeting of the Wilkes County Singers association will be held at the county court house in Wilkesboro on Thanksgiving day, November 30, beginning at 10 o'clock a.m. All singers are cordially invited to attend this meeting.

This is a day set apart to give thanks for the many blessings of life and there is no better way to observe it than singing praise to God, the giver of all good gifts.

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