

AWAKENED WOMAN

By Elinore Barry

TWELFTH INSTALMENT

Synopsis: Joyce Ashton, poor stenographer, suffered loss of memory in a skidding taxicab accident in Chicago. One morning two years later she woke, after a fall from her horse, her memory restored, to find herself, as Frills, the wife of Neil Packard, rich California fruit packer. She determined to tell nobody of her predicament, but set about learning what she could of her life in the interval. From the conversation of her friends and letters in her desk she gathered that she had been a heartless, pleasure-loving young woman. One letter that troubled her was from a woman signing herself Sophie, blaming Frills for not giving a home to a baby Sophie was caring for. Could it be her baby, Frills wondered! She also found herself involved in an affair with a man named Manzanita. In San Francisco, where she went while her husband was away on business, she met Robert Ainsworth a poet whose work she had always admired. When Joyce returned home, she decided to be pleasanter to Neil than Frills had been. But this line was dangerous, too, for Neil was pathetically anxious to win back Frills' love. Now go on with the story:

FOURTEENTH INSTALMENT

"And you live here all alone and write?" asked Joyce.

"You forget, Claud Alfred," replied Ainsworth with a smile.

Joyce giggled at the fiction of Claud Alfred. Why had she known from the first that there was no Claud Alfred Tremayne?

She found out, among other scattered items of information, that this shack was his real headquarters, from which he went away every few months and stayed in San Francisco, New York, New Orleans, St. Augustine, Boston or various middle west cities. He had now been at the shack for three months and expected to stay until he finished his present book, which would probably be about two more months.

"When she reluctantly decided she must start back to Manzanita, Ainsworth suggested riding part of the way with her, to the point where he would branch off onto the road to Manana. He saddled Rosita and his own, a strong-looking dapple gray, who came to his call from the far end of the corral.

"Drawing rein at the parting place Ainsworth gave her an inquiring look and Joyce knew that he was about to ask her if he might not go to see her.

"I'll—I'll come out again soon," she said quickly and spurred her horse to a galloping start. She waved her hand without looking back.

Joyce rode home in a daze. Mechanically she undressed, bathed, dressed again, and ate her dinner. After dinner she retreated to her room and settled herself luxuriously on the couch.

She lay in her blissful trance. She held both of Robert Ainsworth's books, fingering them, stroking them with worshiping fingers, opening the covers, glancing at the first sentences and then putting off the delights of reading.

She wondered how the shack looked at night, what Robert Ainsworth was doing at that moment while she lay and thought about him.

Did he sleep on that wide couch under the window, or out of doors in the hammock under the pines with the multitude of stars gravely keeping watch overhead in the deep velvet of the sky?

As she came to this thought something seemed to grip her heart, and she clenched her hands suddenly.

She was in love with Robert Ainsworth!

Thank God, Neil was away. Joyce had never valued the luxury of privacy and undisturbed quiet more than on this particular night. She wanted to forget everything and everybody except Robert Ainsworth.

During the next day, however, the inevitable reaction occurred. Doubts and fears plunged her down disastrously from the heights of exaltation to frequent moods of black uncertainty and hopelessness. Where could this end, this delightful, this miraculous meeting? She was married to Neil Packard. Yet even as she forced this undeniable fact upon her consciousness there stole into her mind the disturbing thought, "But that was why I was holding Neil off all this time . . . I was waiting for Robert!" How could she be Neil's wife now? Every heart beat was lifting her on an irresistible wave of longing and sweeping her toward the other man.

Joyce was in bed before Neil got home that night and the next morning, a little ashamed of her cowardice, she remained in her room until he had left for the day, pretending to be asleep when he knocked gently before he finally departed. She got up as soon as she heard his car roll out of the drive, dressed in her riding habit, and ate a hurried break-

fast. She pretended to herself that she was simply going for a long ride. She told herself that it was too soon to make another call on Ainsworth and that she had no intention of doing anything so foolish. She certainly did not want him to think she was pursuing him! Yet, somehow, about noon she found herself at the foot of the trail. Suddenly she heard horse's hoofs behind her.

"Hullo," exclaimed Robert Ainsworth, coming up at a gallop. "I was just thinking as I rode along that to have to eat lunch alone on such a day was enough to make the angels weep!"

Joyce's heart lightened at a bound. Deep gratitude flooded her at this casual but warm reception. She smiled happily, all her doubts dispelled. She was glad, glad, glad that she had come! And during the three hours she stayed with Robert Ainsworth, eating lunch with him, helping him wash the dishes, and listening to his nonsense, she continued to be glad.

The conversation was kept, as if by mutual consent, light and bentering, impersonal.

"I've finished *Glittering Pavement*," she remarked in a pause, "but I'm saving *The Rose Adobe* a little longer. It's such riches to have two books by Robert Ainsworth at once! You can't think how I adore your writing. I wish I could express myself better," hoping he would not think her stupid; "of course, you don't need any praise from me, but I do want you to know how much I enjoy your books. Everything you write is so satisfactory . . . it has such strength . . . there always seems to be something to bite on." She paused, suddenly overcome by the futility of her groping for words and looked at him, appealing to his tolerance and understanding of her difficulty.

He smiled at her and in his smile there was no trace of condescension nor mockery nor bored disgust. It was a cheerful, completely understanding, even a grateful smile. It warmed Joyce to the tips of her toes, made her feel as if he had accepted her as a friend, an equal, not just a girl who might be flirted with.

"Nice girl," he commented briefly. "Strength . . . something to bite on. You couldn't say anything to please me any better than that."

When she was leaving Ainsworth said, "Do you think you can find the way if you drive out sometime? I'm sort of looking forward to meeting Dickie. You'll bring him sure, won't you?"

"Oh, yes, I can find that back road and I'll bring Dickie. But . . . but I can't help worrying about . . . about interrupting you?"

"Forget it! While Claud Alfred's away I do as I damn please in the matter of visitors. I often work at night, too, you see. There isn't much else that's more tempting to do out here so I tear off quite a bit each twenty-four hours just whenever I feel like it. No particular hurry, either."

She dismounted from Rosita just as Neil drove his car into the garage. When he joined her and they turned toward the house together, he said, "Been out long, Frills?"

"Why, most all day. It was so lovely and I had my lunch, so I kept on going further and further."

"I was sort of hoping you'd feel like a ride with me but—"

"Oh, I'm sorry, Neil. But I really am tired. I went pretty far."

"Want to go over to Paul's tonight?" went on Neil, "he's leaving in a couple of weeks now, he said today. Got most of his plans all made. I'll miss old Paul."

Joyce bit her lips and frowned as she tried to decide what to do.

"You go on over to Paul's, Neil. I'm going to be so sleepy from my long ride that I'd yawn my head off. I know, and that would be so annoying to Paul," she said finally.

Neil did not urge her and at dinner, after his first few attempts at conversation had met with vague, absent-minded replies, he finished the meal in silence.

The next morning during breakfast Joyce said suddenly, "Neil, I'm so sick of that hideous yellow Dusenbergs. I wish I could turn it in and get a different one. Would you mind?"

Neil grinned. "Well, I never did care much for it myself. Sure, you can do whatever you like about it."

"If . . . if I drove the Dusenbergs up to the city today, do you think I could make the exchange right off without too much red tape?"

"Oh, yes, I don't believe you'd have any trouble. How about running up and taking in a show tonight and driving back tomorrow? I've got a little business to see in the city and I'd like to drive up with you," suggested Neil.

Joyce sighed inwardly. She did not want to go to a show. She had looked forward to the drive alone, a chance to dream uninterrupted . . . But after all she owed Neil a debt that seemed to grow greater in proportion to her regard for Robert Ainsworth.

"All right," she said.

To her disappointment Joyce found that she would have to wait a couple of days in order to obtain the car she wanted. And when they ran into Ross and Clarice Emery, Neil suggested their staying up in San Francisco a second night and making a party to go to the theatre together.

The following day they started back at about noon and drove to Manzanita in the new roadster, a beautiful car, but entirely unlike the "Easter Egg," for its mirror-like enamel surface was a deep blue, almost black.

Three whole days since she had seen Robert Ainsworth! That was the thought which pushed all others into the background as they approached Manzanita.

So impatient was she to see Ainsworth again that it was not yet noon the next day when she arrived at the entrance to the wood road and guided the new Dusenbergs carefully down through the pines to the rustic garage.

When Joyce arrived at the shack she found Ainsworth engaged in giving his horse a thorough currying. He stopped and came to welcome her and Dickie, displaying a most satisfactory amount of enthusiasm.

After a stick had been thrown for



Hello, \$120,000
Miss Louise M. Popp, 29, N. Y. telephone operator, threw the switch and said "hello" to \$120,000. She was informed that she had won \$120,000 amount with a ticket on the Derby winner.

spot.

Toward the end of the afternoon they happened to be inside the house for a moment, standing in front of the bookshelves wide Ainsworth hunted for a volume of poems which he had mentioned and from which he wanted to read to her.

Joyce watched him as he bent over the bookcase, his eyes running swiftly over the titles along the shelves. Her heart filled with sudden pain. She loved him! She adored him! This feeling which surged through her was the kind of love she had dreamed about, for which she had wistfully yearned as a young girl. Instinctively she recognized it. Was love always partly pain? Ainsworth was speaking but she hardly heard what he was saying.

"Oh, damn the luck! I must have left it in the city last time. I'll get it when I go up next week if I can remember to . . . I want to read you the one on the Eucalyptus Grove. You'd like it . . ." He turned.

Joyce looked up into his face silently. His expression changed abruptly. Suddenly he put his hands on her shoulders. "Why don't you bring your aunt along as a chaperone?"

he demanded. He was smiling but to Joyce's amazement his voice shook. "You . . . you can't expect me to stay impersonal much longer, you know," he continued now very softly. "Not while you're so . . . while you're such a sweet child. I . . . I can't keep my hands off you, you lovely . . . adorable . . . beautiful—" Very gently his one arm slid around her shoulders, and he drew her close to him. Then he bent his head and laid his cheek against hers as he murmured the last words. His arms tightened around Joyce's yielding form.

CONTINUED NEXT WEEK

NOTICE OF ADMINISTRATION

Having qualified as the administratrix of the estate of J. R. Eggers, deceased, all persons having claims against said estate are hereby notified to present them within twelve months from the date hereof or this notice will be pleaded in bar of their recovery. All persons indebted to said estate will come forward and make settlement.

This June 5th, 1933.
MRS. LELA EGGERS, Admx. of
J. R. Eggers, deceased.

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