

AWAKENED WOMAN

by ELINORE BARRY



FIFTH INSTALLMENT
"I don't care who comes, I'm going out!" she decided recklessly. "On a glorious day like this it would be a crime to stick indoors. If this isn't a pleasant change from Philadelphia in November! It's all so marvelous!"
She went down to the dining room buoyantly, careless of whether or not it had been Frills' custom to appear so early.
After serving breakfast, Roxie lingered. "Will you be home for dinner, Mrs. Packard?" she asked. "Marcia would like to know if there'll be guests, and how many to expect, and what you'd like to order."
"Yes, I'll be here for dinner, but

I'll be alone. And tell Marcia to have anything at all, it doesn't matter what, just so I don't have to decide myself."
She went out immediately into the garden and made her way around the dining-room wing of the house in the direction of the garage, sniffing delightedly at the exotic fragrance of the orange blossoms.
She was amused to notice a head dodge back behind the yellow checked curtains as she passed the kitchen. "I just know they're wondering what can have happened to Frills," she thought, smiling. "Well, they'll have to keep on wondering. I hope at least that they won't find the chance too unpleasant. Now, let's see—Oh, there's somebody! I wonder if that's the 'Sam' Neil mentioned?"
"He looks young and somehow not like an ordinary servant," she thought as she approached. "I wish he'd look up. Shall I say good-morning to attract his attention? I don't dare call him Sam till I'm sure he is Sam."
Her impression that he was not an ordinary servant was confirmed when the young man suddenly turned around, and seeing her, broke off in his whistling and exclaimed, "Good-morning, Mrs. Packard! Gee, I'm glad to see you out. How are you? Feel all right?"
His attitude, though deferential enough, had nothing servile in it. He spoke in an easy manner, as if questions of varying social levels had never disturbed him.
"Oh, yes, I'm all right," replied Joyce, feeling relieved that this was going to be easier than she had expected. "I did get kind of a bad crack on the head, though it's better today. . . . Is Fire Queen in the stable?" (She had one thing to thank Maitland for—he had told her the name of the horse.)
There was just the hint of a grin on the young man's face as he answered, "Mr. Packard gave orders before he left for me to take her over to MacBready's ranch yesterday."
"Oh?" Joyce frowned, not, as Sam probably thought, in anger at this news, but in baffled annoyance at having to stop and consider every remark before she dared make it.
"Mr. Packard had me bring Rosita over from MacBready's for you in case you want to ride. She's one fine little mare, lively as a kitten, without the mean streak of Fire Queen. Want me to saddle her up?"
Furnished with a plausible excuse for not riding, this would have been an excellent chance for Joyce to have remarked angrily, "no, if I can't have Fire Queen, I won't ride at all." Instead she answered, "I'm not going to ride today, but I'd like to see her."
"Sure, I'll bring her out," and Sam disappeared into the stable where she heard him speaking in low clucking tones with a soothing note in his voice. Sam was a nice young man, but she fancied he had looked a little disappointed at the quiet way she received the news of losing Fire Queen.
Sam came out leading a daintily-stepping chestnut mare, with a white star on her mild forehead. She muzzled against Sam's shoulder

with her soft nose, while he explained to Joyce, "Rosita's always been a pet at MacBready's and she's used to being made much over, aren't you baby?" He stroked her fondly, pushing her off when she playfully nipped his sleeve. "Here, get out, girl, pick on some one your own size. Isn't she a beauty? Look at her lines, she hasn't got a fault anywhere."
"She is a beauty," agreed Joyce, with enthusiasm, coming closer and patting the horse's neck timidly. "She looks as gentle as can be," went on Joyce, wondering whether Frills wouldn't have been disgusted with this very mildness.
"Sure she does," agreed Sam, "but say, get on her, and she's got all the life you want and don't you forget it. Say, that mare's got one of the fastest trots of any horse around here, and the smoothest canter you ever saw."
Joyce stepped back a little. In spite of Rosita's good character, she seemed disconcertingly big, and Joyce had a foolish fear of being stepped on suddenly. She lingered while Sam led Rosita inside again.
There was a varnished wooden station wagon standing on the gravel drive while inside the garage she could see a long low car, very sporty-looking, with brilliant canary-yellow body and disk wheels.
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"Why don't you go to Allen Kennels and pick out something you like?" suggested Sam after a moment.
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away? I want to know how you slept and how you feel now. All my love to my Frills, from her adoring Mait."
"Too much fervor!" murmured Joyce critically. She felt only a detached sort of disgust, as if she were reading a vulgar love letter addressed to another. She shook the letter impatiently. "All your fine passion is wasted on me, Mr. Maitland!" she said aloud.
"Well, let's see what else I have here? After Mait's passionate composition everything else will seem tame."
The next letter made her sit up with a jerk. There was no address, and Joyce hastily turned the envelope over and examined the postmark curiously. "New York, N. Y.," she finally made out.
In an angular, precise handwriting, in pale ink the astonishing letter read:
"My dear Florence: Although you seem to lack interest in hearing about the baby, I feel it no less than my duty to keep you informed of her health. She is a most engaging little mite, showing, even at her tender age, a decided personality and charm.
"Although truth compels me to admit that you are probably not the most suitable person to bring up a child, still I cannot understand how you can possibly feel that the sort of pleasures which fill your life are more important, more satisfying, than the care and bringing up of this dear little baby. I will send you a few lines each month. Please extend my faithful greeting to Neil, Sophie."
Spellbound, Joyce read this letter, which flowed along without a single paragraph to break its smooth stilted sentences. The significance of its contents came as such an unexpected blow that she felt weak and shaken.
"A baby! It can't be true! . . . I never even heard of that. . . . Could Frills have had a baby in that time? Let me see, yes, it could have happened. . . . the baby could by now be as much as five or six months old! . . . Oh dear, Oh dear, to think of me having a baby . . ."
She sat and read the letter again and again trying to realize the incredible fact that she, Joyce Ashton, was a mother.
Joyce glanced up and saw a man coming down the path toward her. She took a deep breathe to restore her courage and looked him over with surprising calm as she hastily put the letters aside.
Continued Next Week

a rook party. After several hours of playing delicious ice cream and cake was served to the following: Pauline and Mabel Yost, Ethel, Suther, Earl Lipe, Charlie and Marvin Sloop, James Moose, Foil Suther and Ray McCorkle.
Miss Ruth Litaker, of Mt. Ulla, visited Mabel Wilhelm last weekend.
The Patterson Club Women served luncheon to the county officials Monday, April 3rd. The Easter suggestion was carried out beautifully.
Miss Jackson, teacher of Patterson school, is directing a play, "Wild Ginger," to be given at the commencement exercise. The cast includes a large group of young people of this community.
Mrs. C. M. Litaker is now at the home of her daughter, Mrs. W. L. Wilhelm.

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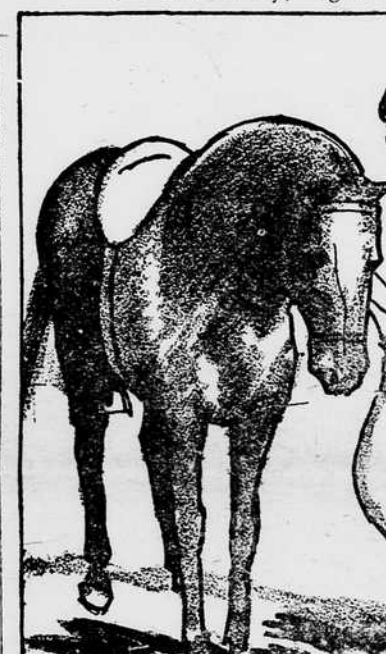
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The upholstery was a bright lavender leather, and there was a great deal of shiny nickel about it. "I wouldn't be found dead in a thing like that," thought Joyce.
Sam, returning at the moment, caught sight of her expression. He looked puzzled and asked, "What's the matter, Mrs. Packard? Anything wrong with the car?"
"Nothing—except that it's all wrong," retorted Joyce, continuing to smile. She felt recklessly inclined to go on and tell him what she really thought about it.
"Well, I'd get tired of those jazzy colors myself after a bit," said Sam frankly, "but it's a darn good car. Shall I back her out for you?"
"No, thanks, I'm not going out today." She still lingered, however, as if she were not quite sure of her decision.
Suddenly she remembered something she had wanted, and forgetting everything else, she asked eagerly, "Do you know where I could get a dog?"

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