

AWAKENED WOMAN

by ELINORE BARRY

FINAL INSTALLMENT

"Roxie knew you better than I did," Neil said slowly. "I guess that's a setback for me all right. . . I was so bowled over by what you told me that day with that Ainsworth fellow that I didn't know what to believe. I began to think I just imagined I'd been married at all!"

Just then Joyce saw Roxie moving capably about the dining room, and running to her, she flung her arms impulsively about the older woman.

"Roxie, you darling!" she cried. "Sam told me how wonderful you've been—"

Roxie beamed and flushed with pleasure. "I didn't do nothing!" she said confusedly. "But, my, it's good to have you back, Mrs. Packard, we've certainly missed you! And now do come in to dinner if you and Mr. Neil are ready."

"Where's Dickie?" she asked Neil, when they were seated. "I haven't seen him since I got back!"

"Oh, that's right—I must send for him. He's been living with Sam since you left. Moped about the house so dismally that we thought he was going to cash in, poor chap. I couldn't do anything with him. He kept looking at me reproachfully, as if asking what I'd done with you. It gave me the creeps."

"Funny little Dickie!" said Joyce.

Conversation lagged. Joyce did not want to ask any questions covering the time of her absence, thinking she might turn Neil's thoughts toward his mother, and cause him pain. She likewise did not want to tell him anything about her life in San Francisco during that time; it now was resuming the unreality of a bad dream, and she had no wish to revive the memories by talking about it. So she ate silently.

All at once she was aware that Neil was regarding her thoughtfully, with a brooding stare unlike the matter-of-factness she remembered in him.

"Anything wrong, Neil?" she asked nervously.

"No, dear, I was just thinking how wonderful it was to have you back."

"Oh, Neil, you mustn't say things like that to me! I know it's only your kindness, your natural sweetness—" Joyce's voice choked up, and she left the table. Neil followed her into the living room.

"Well, we won't go into that just now, Frills, if it bores you," Joyce was about to remonstrate with him for his misconstruction of her words, when he went hastily on. "By the way, I found something that'll probably interest you—a diary kept by you—by Frills—beginning about the time of our arrival home in Mazanita after our marriage."

"Can I see it, Neil?"

"Sure, I'll get it, just a minute." And he went rather wearily out of the room.

Joyce was worried at the change in Neil. He seemed to have lost all his enthusiasm, all his spirit. "I hope he's not really ill," she thought miserably. "Of course his mother's death was an awful blow. Perhaps a little time. . . Her mind was running along this course when Neil came back."

"May I look at it with you?" he asked. "I didn't read much of it. Somehow it seemed—not quite right. I thought I'd put it away and read it with you—when you came home." He spoke so quietly that Joyce barely caught the words.

"Neil," she said impulsively, pausing before she opened the book, "I do feel at home here!"

He smiled, a sudden sweet flash that warmed Joyce to the heart, and gravely they opened the diary between them.

It was nearly midnight when they laid the book aside. Fascinated, they had read every word of the bold handwriting that danced over its pages, and, fascinated, they had suffered with the curious, lost spirit that had cried out her secret fears in her journal.

"Oh, Neil, it's so terrible!" cried Joyce. "I knew Frills had been a bad lot, but I never thought of her as suffering somehow—I, never thought of her as doing all these things deliberately, in a sort of crazy effort to get back her identity—to remember!"

"Yes," said Neil, "I don't know much about these things, but I should think the medicos might explain that second blow—the time

you were thrown from Fire Queen—as a sort of mental snapping, due to the pitch you'd worked yourself up to."

Frills' diary filled in most of the gaps in the story that Neil had gradually pieced out that day for Joyce. From the scattered notes she learned that Frills had been conscious of her loss of memory, but all filled with the conviction that, at once, some day, it would come to her whom she was, where she had come from—her whole place of life.

"Some deep instinct," the diary said, "kept me from telling anyone. I felt that I must discover it, must work it out, for myself."

And then later, came an entry that made a very deep impression on Joyce. "I know I did wrong to marry Neil Packard without telling him. He's too good a man to be treated so meanly, but I just couldn't tell it. I couldn't tell him. And I had to marry him—not agin in a lifetime am I likely to meet a man so surely depending that which can be relied on. In this crazy world it's something to know that loyalty of that sort can be secured!"

As the diary went on, the entries became more and more excited. "I'm cheating Neil!" Frills cried. "He's got a right to a wife who's more than just a unit existing for the time being! I've got to get back to my memory! Perhaps drink will do it. Bring on the wine cups—I'll try 'em!"

. . . Why do I take so much perverse pleasure in shocking people around here? Maybe when I get back my memory I'll find I was a smalltown school teacher, or somebody who never had a chance to express herself! Well, I'm expressing myself all right these days! All I've got to do is think of something reckless and wild, to be seized with an insane desire to do it! . . .

And then, all at once, "Arthur Maitland—ugh, how I hate him! Why do I endure him around me? God knows! I flirt with him like a common street woman—yet I love Neil! Why do I do it? Sometimes I feel as if it's to try Neil's patience, to see how much he really will stand from me. There seems to be no limit to his affections!"

. . . I've gone almost the limit and it's done no good! What did I think it would do? God knows! Neil knows—I can see from his face that he knows there's been too much to that affair between Arthur Maitland and me. If he'd only knock me down—a blow, they say will bring back one's memory. But Neil won't—he never will. I'll have to kill myself first. Perhaps that horse, that surly brute Fire Queen. But I have a charmed life—A charmed and a damned one! How is this thing going to end?"

And the last entry in the book, in sprawling, blotted characters: "I've been rotten over that baby of Sylvia's. Of course Neil wants it brought on here. But a child—why should I wreck a poor child's life as I'm wrecking Neil's? It's better off where it is—I'm a lost soul now."

"Neil," said Joyce at last, "Neil, doesn't it help to know that Frills did care about you? She did love you."

Neil did not reply to her question, and Joyce saw that he was trembling like a leaf. "Do you think—do you think, Joyce, that things might come out as mother hoped they would? Do you think you could feel that this was home? I shan't bother you much myself, but we might bring on Lawton's child, and do our best with it, between us."

"Oh, Neil, I feel as Frills said,

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that in this crazy world it's something to know that loyalty like yours exists! . . . Do you want me, now, knowing all this? It's been a sorry business, and it seems to me you've been the victim!"



Joyce saw that he was trembling like a leaf.

"No victim about it," he said er than the rest of the world, and shortly, "I mean—I do want you—for him to turn into—into just a cad seemed all wrong. I'd rather be able to think of him without expressing herself!"

"Ainsworth—Robert Ainsworth!" Joyce suddenly had a bitter, that he simply couldn't bring the idea. "Neil," she said, "I think I myself to take your wife away. . . see now what Robert Ainsworth Neil liked. "All right with me, felt that day! I think he must have darling; think anything you please, felt ashamed of his part in the as long as you don't think of him

affair—I think he must have seen it all, have realized what a splendid person you were, and have felt that he simply couldn't run off with your wife!"

Neil looked at her sideways. "Sounds like the bunk to me. What on earth makes you think that?"

"Well, you see, Neil, I never saw him after that day in the woods, and you remember he behaved so queerly, rejecting me by his silence!" Joyce had to swallow hard to keep back the emotion that surged over her at the memory, but she went quickly on.

"I'd always felt so sure that he was an exalted being, somebody fin-

too much!" Joyce regarded him tenderly. "Neil," she said softly, "May I make a confession to you? I've fancied myself to superior to Frills, but I wasn't really nearly as— as keen. It's taken me a terribly long time to find out what she knew all along. . . Neil, dear, you're the finest person I've ever known in my life, and I—I love you." THE END.

STOLEN—TWO HOUSES

Kansas City, Kas.—C. W. Brenneisen has reported to police the theft of two houses along with their gas and electrical fixtures and plumbing. The houses, one-story frame structures valued at \$800 each, were located on adjoining lots owned by Brenneisen.

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NO!—NOT FATTE



NEW YORK—Just to prove to themselves and their sisters everywhere that beer and mayonnaise are not fattening, girls of the chorus of the New Roxy Theater in Radio City went on a diet including beer and the new World's Fair Sandwich, made of 1/2 cup of chopped bacon blended in two teaspoons of mayonnaise on toasted or untoasted bread. Picture shows chorus girls back stage with beer and sandwiches being weighed in by Madam Sylvia, famous Hollywood beauty specialist.

STOWAWAYS BACK IN U. S. A.

New York.—Disinclined to talk about their experience, Meta V. Chapman, 19, of Trenton, N. J., and Anne Timpko, 29, of Tamaqua, Pa., were landed in New York after spending 20 days in a German jail on charges of stowing away on the liner Bremen when it left here June 9.

TO PAY. LOANS IN CURRENCY

Budapest, Hungary.—The government decreed here that henceforth all payments on dollar mortgage loans shall be paid in Hungarian currency into the government transfer fund at the current rate of exchange voted by the National Bank of Budapest, not on a basis of gold dollar parity as heretofore.

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