



by MARGARET E. SANGSTER

SEVENTH INSTALLMENT
Tony, his eyes alight—"But it doesn't mean anything, it's just that I'm a new sensation!"

"Well, here we are," said Tony. "Any last statement you'd like to make to the press, Miss Church? Before entering the church?"

Ellen essayed a smile. She was realizing that she wouldn't be Miss anything much longer.

"Keep back the reporters, big boy. For I'm to be queen of the May!"
Tony was answering seriously, "you haven't any flowers!"

And then they were in the church, and it was dim and cool and sweet and somehow very lonely. And Ellen ceased suddenly to think of Tony, and thought instead of her mother. Lying in a cool, sweet, lonely place. Of her mother—who had warned her, with that sad, whimsical mirth, against the very thing she was about to do.

The minister had come swiftly into the room. A minister who wasn't at all odd; who looked at Ellen as if he liked her and who shook hands, firmly, with Tony. The minister examined the marriage license, and said to Ellen—"You're very young, aren't you?"

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his lips asking questions against her lips... And her lips answering those questions...

"Mrs. Brander!" As she sat across the suavely white luncheon table from her new husband—nervously sipping a tomato juice cocktail and trying not to quake both inwardly and outwardly—Ellen endeavored to tell herself that it was really her name, now. And then she realized that Tony's voice was speaking. A light voice—a gay voice.

"Oh, she said, summoning up what courage she could. "Oh, so you're still there!"
"And will be," answered Tony, "for the next fifty years, at least!"

It wasn't such a gay luncheon, after all. Not exactly the sort of a luncheon that a boy and a girl might have together, after a chance meeting at a jazz party.

In a short while it was over. And Tony, rushing around the table so that he—and not the waiter—might pull back Ellen's chair, was saying—



It wasn't such a gay luncheon, after all.

"What now?"
Ellen's winklelike eyebrows were dark smudges in her white face.
"Why, now," she said "now, you know, Tony! I'm going on to Dick. To pose for him."

She paused, but the thunderbolt didn't fall, not as she had expected it to—not as it fallen before. Tony's voice was low, and didn't say anything at all harsh.
"How long will you be?" he asked. "You'll let me drive you to his place, of course. This Dick Alven's I mean. And I'll stop for you, if I may, after the posing is done."

It was his compliance that hurt. Ellen again felt the rush of tenderness toward him, wifely tenderness, that she had felt in the little chapel. She was eager to release the thing that was disturbing Tony, to tell him that, as far as she was concerned, the posing was done, now! That she didn't care if she never saw a studio again. That she didn't even care if Dick—dear, honest, faithful Dick—were quite swept out of her life. She wanted to look into the eyes of her husband, to look so long that her whole soul would be lost in their blueness, but—

"It'll take about two hours," she said. "I'm due there at three. Yes, you can drive me to the place, Tony. And you may," she didn't want, somehow, to give the permission, but there wasn't any way out, "you may stop for me, at five."

In silence they entered the red car again. In silence they drove once more up the proud avenue. At Ellen's bidding Tony turned off, at last, into a side street—into a small alley. And then he stopped the car in front of the building that she indicated.

"I suppose," he said with a childish wistfulness, "that you'd not like to have me come up, and wait for you in the studio? I'd be very quiet."

But Ellen shook her head in swift terror, a terror that was inspired by a certain sense of embarrassment.

"Not now, Tony!" she said. "Not till five. I'll be down here, at the door, waiting then."

Only Ellen—wearily climbing the stairs to Dick's high attic studio—didn't know how long Tony sat in the red roadster, beside the front door of the studio house. With his hands clasped tight on the wheel, and his mouth not very firm, and his eyes staring straight ahead at nothing at all.
Just before she knocked on the door of Dick's studio, even as her hand was raised for the knocking, Ellen remembered her wedding ring. She couldn't have forgotten it—not really—it was such a galling, glittering small ring. She drew it off so sharply that one of its blue stones scratched her littlest finger of all, and folded it into the corner of her handkerchief, and placed the handkerchief in her pocket. She transferred the other ring, the great solitary sapphire, to her right hand. She felt like a feminine Judas as she did it.

ing. In long strides, he had crossed the room to Sandy's side. As he stood there, he looked very formidable, for all his gauntness.
(Continued next week)

The children are told it is very important for them to sit up straight, and as we have never noticed them slumping down in their seats at Thanksgiving dinner, all we have to do to keep them straight is to serve turkey every day.

The stars are said to influence our destiny, but somehow when we have allowed the stars to cultivate our gardens and keep the job going, they didn't seem to influence the destiny of these activities so much.

"Oh, I must run," she said. "I really must, Dick. I've a date for five. I must—"

Claire hitched her skirts the merest fraction of an inch lower. "I suppose," she said, "that the red Rolls, at the curb, is waiting for you?"

Ellen was staring toward the screen, but she stopped short at Claire's words. Stopped for a blank second as Cinderella must have stopped when all of her loveliness was turning back to rags.

"It's not down there already?" she asked. "Why, I said—"

Claire was laughing. Her laughter blew, like thistledown, against the sound of feet—the sound of feet, once more, climbing the stairs.

Again Ellen's heart stood still. For this time the tread was unmistakably masculine. Again she, herself, stood still, with her eyes on the door. Knowing, even as she waited, that the anxious eyes of Dick, the scornful eyes of Claire, were upon her.

And then the door opened and Ellen, with relief bubbling up to her lips, found that she was laughing.

Only she shouldn't have laughed, really—not at Sandy! For Sandy's face was as lugubrious as it was angry.

"I thought maybe I'd find you here," he told Ellen. "Say, you're a peach, you are! I hunted all over the whole hotel for you."

Ellen didn't say anything. She merely stood, in her white buckskin suit, and rocked back and forth with the storm of her mirth. Only it wasn't just good clean fun, that mirth—it was something of a mental upheaval.

"I'd like to know how you got like that, all of a sudden. Going so loose, I mean. After all, I've been pretty regular—"

"No, Dick, I'm darned if I'll can it!—It hasn't always been the easiest thing in the world, letting you get away with murder, just because you're supposed to be a wide-eyed innocent. And then you treat me like a sap!"

Suddenly Dick had laid aside the palette with which he had been toy-

ing. In long strides, he had crossed the room to Sandy's side. As he stood there, he looked very formidable, for all his gauntness.
(Continued next week)

The clock chimed again in the Tower. It was four forty-five.

"Almost done?" she ventured nervously. But Dick didn't answer, which meant that he wasn't.

There was a shuffle of feet on the stairs. Ellen started, her nervousness growing, before she realized that the shuffle was too light to be made by Tony's feet. It must be a girl who was coming.

It was a girl. It was Claire, perfectly groomed from her slippers of suede to her soft straw beret.

"I didn't expect to see you here," she said, "after what I heard! I thought for once that I might get a break and find Dick by himself."

Ellen hadn't heard the last part of the other girl's speech. Her whole being stood forward, on tip-toe, to catch the first part of it.

"What have you heard?" she asked, in a breathless little voice.

"From the tone of her," she said, "you'd think our ewe lamb had something on the old conscience,

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