



NINTH INSTALMENT

Ellen found that the hatred of the massed friends was concentrating upon this unknown person who bore the label, not the name, of Jane.

He was talking to someone else. "The Sans Souci," he was saying. "Oh, as soon as you can make it. Don't dress. No, of course, I'm not kidding. Call up Jane, herself, if you don't believe me. It's someone you don't know! Someone you never heard of..."

Ellen was leaning against the screen. Claire hadn't a right, but she asked questions anyway. For once Ellen was grateful to Claire for an intrusion.

"Who is the Jane person?" asked Claire. "Why don't you ask her to the party? Seems as if she's got a real reason for wanting to meet Ellen."

Tony's tone, filled with the excitement of news-spreading, answered. "Jane's a girl I've known all my life," he said. "We've always gone places together—our families were friends. Yes, you're right, she should be asked. I'll call her..."

It was while Tony was talking to Jane that Ellen came out from behind the screen. She wanted to watch her husband's face while he talked with this other girl. His—"This is Mr. Tony, James. Yes, I want to speak to Miss Jane," gave the cue. It meant a butler, and great familiarity with that butler. And then his delighted, "That you, Jane dear? Well, take hold of something, and prepare for a shock. Better sit down." And then, "Ready? Well, I'm married." And then, after a long pause, "Oh, but I couldn't have given you any hint, it was so sudden." And then, "I think you're being rotten, Jane. Of course, not a chorus girl..."

Ellen spoke. "Tell her, Tony," she said, and she didn't need the rouge now, there was plenty of color in her face. "Tell her it's even worse than she thinks. Tell her I'm a model." Tony, his brows raised, was staring at Ellen over the top of the phone. His voice was crisp when he spoke, finally, into the transmitter. "Got to go, now," he said shortly. "See you later, girl, at the Sans Souci..."

He laid down the phone. He turned to Ellen and made comment. "That's a dumb line to pull," he said.

"What's dumb about it?" asked Ellen hotly. "Being a model's the way I earn my living." "The way you earned it," corrected Tony.

"Their first quarrel," Claire said, sotto voice, to Sandy. Dick was suddenly standing beside Ellen. "Don't," he said sharply. "Don't act like crazy children—you've grown up now. This is important! If you love each other," his lips were twisted; he might have been suffering, "and you must love each other or you wouldn't have rushed into this marriage—why, love each other, now. Kiss each other..."

Tony's arms were about Ellen hungrily. She didn't care, either, at the moment, that Dick had turned aside—that Sandy's eyes were cast ceilingward. Tony was kissing her; she was kissing him. The Sans Souci should have been as gay as the Six Arts Ball, but it wasn't. It was a dark little place with only an aura of expense to keep it from utter dinginess. There was a cleared space for dancing. "At that," said Gay, "I think we'd have had more fun back in Dick's studio. Sandy was at the counter, ordering something. Tony had said—

"Have everything your own way, the house is ours, tonight!" Gay had her arm around Sandy's neck. Claire was talking with a group of men, men who had arrived with Gay. "Tony," called Ellen, "Tony! I've never had a drink in my life. May I, tonight, have champagne?" "It's illegal, drinking," said Claire, shortly, as she moved away. "Myself," said Tony, and he was looking straight into her eyes, "I don't need champagne, darling—not tonight. Do you? Let the others get lit, if they must. It's our wedding party—ours—yours and mine!" With a little nestling movement, Ellen was cuddled against Tony's side. No, she didn't need champagne—Tony was right. She was intoxicated on a sort of ethereal champagne. "It's our—" she began. There was a sound of battering against the outer door, of fits beating against panels, of feet kicking. His friend... The door opened, and they came in, and Ellen found herself wondering how Tony could have possibly reached so many in so

short a time. Tony rushed forward, irragged the friends over to meet her. Some shook her hand, some made wisecracks. Some of them, most of them, kissed her!

She met Tom. Tom had been an All American halfback only the year before. She met Herb—whose face was so familiar that she knew that she had seen it in many a roto section. She met the dark, chubby young woman whom Herb introduced as his "wop wife." She met Margie—as smart of looks, but not of brain, as Claire. She met Haris and Jim and Hilda. She met a score of others. And then she met—Jane.

Jane was tall where Ellen was short. She was long of hand and foot, aristocratically long; whereas Ellen's hands and feet were childlike.

Jane wore a straight dress of white satin, with long sleeves that great pearl. And she had a little came down in points over her hands and on one of her hands she wore a white velvet jacket slung over her arm. She looked like the bride—not Ellen. Ellen looked like a bride's kid sister.

Tony said, and there was only the merest trace of self-consciousness in his voice. "This is my wife, Jane. This is Ellen."

And Ellen found that she was haking hands with Jane. Jane's hand was very cold as it touched her own, but not so cold as Jane's voice.

"She's very pretty," said Jane, and Ellen might have been a child whom she was discussing, "very pretty. But I wouldn't have expected you to fall for the type, Tony!"

Gay had edged close. Gay had deserted Sandy, had already annexed Tom, the ex-halfback. She seemed ever more diminutive than ever against his bulk. "Sure she's pretty," agreed Gay, rudely. "So'm I. So are you. And we all talk, too, and eat, and not one of us is deaf and dumb!" "Gay," murmured Ellen, "don't." But Jane was laughing. "You're amusing," she said to



"Tell her it's even worse than she thinks. Tell her I am a model."

Gay. "Now, if it were you—" her tone implied that, had it been Gay, she might have understood.

The dim little man with the accordion was beginning to play. His music was dim; it was strange, passionate, throbbing music. It didn't belong in the heart of an accordion—or in a speakeasy. It made tears rush, unbidden, to Ellen's eyes.

Jane was over at the wooden counter, now. Laughing with Sandy—a high, unnatural laugh. Dick was at the bar, too.

Tony's arm was around Ellen's waist. "It was a waltz last night," he said, "remember?" And then, "May I have this dance, Mrs. Brander?"

They danced, their bodies close together, their hearts throbbing in time to the strange music. It wasn't fair—the music did things to one; it made forgetting a matter of course! Ellen felt that nothing, exactly, was fair. Why hadn't she been born like Jane—of normal, happy parents, who lived together in a house and had a bulter? Parents who wouldn't have died apart

tragically. "What are you thinking of," breathed Tony, into her ear, "Sweetheart?"

Ellen knew that she should have said the words he expected, but she couldn't.

"My mother!" she said. Tony might have been angry, but he wasn't. Instead, his lips touched Ellen's hair as they had during their first waltz together.

"I wish she were here, tonight," he said. "I wish mine were here, too. We'll tell each other about our mothers won't we, dear, one day?" It was his sweetness that was so disarming. That was the word—sweetness! It made her love him more than ever.

"Say," the boy's hand, holding hers, was hot and tense, his voice had thickened strangely. "Say, Ellen, let's cut away from here. They'll never miss us. We've got to get away. 'I'll never get to know you in this mad house! Let's go away—"

Ellen, too, was repeating the action of the night before. "I'll get my hat," she said. "No, they'll not miss us."

Into the magic moment cut the sound of Jane's voice as cool and frosted as the glass she held in her hand.

"Your friend with the beard," she said to Ellen, "has been telling tales out of school! He says you're the best model in the city. He says your legs will be a great loss to the profession, now that they're wearing a ball and chain!"

Ellen wanted to sob, aloud. She felt a flush rising over her chin. But she didn't sob—she said, instead—

"I'm not so sure that my legs live up to the advertising. But I am sure that they'll not be lost to art. Tony has said that he doesn't care if I go on with my work."

profession—" said Jane, "long?" "I posed," Ellen said, "for the first time, nude, on a fur rug. When I was almost a month old!"

Claire had sauntered over. Her eyes were on Dick.

"Honey," she drawled, annoyingly, "it's not your fight. Come away with mama."

Jane's eyebrows went up in a straight, dark line. "It's not a fight at all," she said. "Really, you're so quaint—all of you. I've never seen so many chips on so many shoulders. Tony, come over to a table with me. I want another drink. We'll have champagne together. It'll be a stirrup-cup!" Her tone said,

"You and I, we don't belong here—these people are aliens. They aren't our people!"

Jane's tone spoke plainly, so did her hand on Tony's arm. Tony had to go. He didn't want to go, but how was Ellen to know that?

"I want champagne, too," said Ellen, turning to Dick. "I'm a mar-

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