

Make-Believe Bride

by Ruth Harley



EIGHTH INSTALMENT

"Of course you'll make good, Maris. Don't start acting silly now." Patsy spoke firmly, for Maris was verging on a hysterical state, after all her excitement. "Come, let me fix this," and keeping her interested in what she was doing, Patsy managed to get her calm again.

"There, you look swell!" exclaimed Patsy. "I can't think why Jimmy's so long in coming tonight. I did think he'd be here to see you before you left. It's too bad that Rod's still in the West."

But even as she spoke, the bell rang and a moment later Jimmy was standing awestruck, looking at Maris. "Going to beat us to it are you?" he questioned looking around. "I must say Rod didn't lose any time. Just saw Charley Goroom and he said Rod's gadget's going over big."

"Oh, Jimmy," laughed Maris hysterically. "I'm not a real bride tonight. I'm just going to wear this gown at the exposition—to advertise Fayson's crepe."

He turned with incredulous eyes to Pat. "What's the girl's saying? She means she's not going to marry Rod?"

"Oh, sure she'll marry Rod when the time comes, honey, and be glad to," answered Pat. "Only it won't be tonight, for she's just a pretense bride tonight."

"Now I see a light, Patsy. Well, say, she should make a hit all right. Better not let anyone run away with you, Maris. Think Patsy and I had better come along?"

"Oh, no, there's no need for that. I know you'd rather stay at home. Gee, I bet that's my taxi! Where are the flowers?"

"They're in the ice-box, Jimmy. Get them, and wrap them up in the paper that's lying on the table, so they won't drip on this magnificent cloak." Then Pat caught up the evening wrap of glistening white and silver lame and draped it about Maris' shoulders.

But when she reached the sidewalk, it was not a taxi driver, but a liveried chauffeur who opened the door of the luxurious sedan which old Fayson usually rode in to his office. When he raised his eyes to hers, for a moment he looked as though he had seen a ghost. But, remembering his place, the look of surprise was quickly followed by the impersonal glance that is the mark of the well trained servant.

As Maris leaned back against the softly upholstered cushions and glanced about her, she felt as though she was at last in her proper setting. All sorts of luxuries were revealed in the fittings of the car and in the vases were delectable hothouse blooms whose delicate fragrance suggested exotic loveliness.

The car drew up to the curb. A man in livery hastened to open the door, and escort Maris within the hall. As she crossed the threshold, Stan stepped forward and eagerly clasped her hands.

"I'm so glad you've come. I wanted to call for you myself, but I've been in a frightful rush ever since you left."

"Well, it will soon be over," answered Maris.

"Oh, yes, and I hope we put it across. You see the old man has been rather skeptical about my ideas, but I think he's beginning to see the light." Then as Mrs. Bryce approached, he added, "The other girls are in the dressing room. Mrs. Bryce will introduce you." Then with a whispered, "You look lovelier than ever," Stan hurried into the hall.

Counds of music drifted to her through the half-opened doorway, and as the visitors hurried back and

forth, Maris felt a strange thrill of excitement sweep through her. This was what she liked—music. Soft lights, gaily dressed women with attentive escorts, and the pleasant tingling sensation that made her feel something wonderful was going to happen.

But in a moment she was in the dressing room and Mrs. Bryce was presenting her to the other girls, and giving them all some last minute instructions. There was frank admiration in their eyes as she took her wrap off and stood revealed in the magnificent gown that was destined to usher her into a thrilling adventure.

Once in the hall, they presented a series of tableaux, but it was not till Maris appeared in the role of a wistful bride, that a sudden roar of applause brought the spectators hurrying to the Fayson salon. Time and again she was recalled. At last, as she stepped down from the platform and sauntered slowly among the crowd, she saw Stan.

"You did splendidly," he whispered, as he caught her hand. "You were the hit of the evening. I'll see you later." And squeezing her hand he hurried away.

Then as she raised her eyes, she caught sight of the girl who had passed her in her limousine, but the once smiling eyes were now like two little daggers. Suddenly Maris felt afraid of her. But light-heartedly she turned to one of the debs who had been in the show with her.

"It's been awfully good fun," the girl said to her, smiling sweetly, "although I can't understand why Rowene didn't come." Then glancing upwards she caught sight of Rowene's friend and darted toward her. For a moment Maris was hemmed in by the crowd, but as she struggled to move forward, the girl to whom she had just been talking

exclaimed as she glanced at her spitefully. "So that's the reason Rowene didn't come. Little gold-digger," she hissed, "and we were all so nice to her, thinking poor old Rowene had had one of her frightful headaches again."

"She might well have a headache when the man she was engaged to has probably been fooling around with his stenographer for dear knows how long," retorted the other girl with a cruel glance at Maris. "She's given him up. I asked Stan the minute I got here, for I passed this girl on the way and almost mistook her for Rowene."

"Well, if that's Stan's type Rowene'll be happier without him." Again she turned with a withering glance at Maris.

But the gleam in Maris' dark eyes was not lost on a young man nearby, who hurried toward her and tried to speak to her. However, she had had enough, and without even waiting to see Stan again, she slipped into the dressing room, got her wrap and hurried home in a taxicab.

So that was what they thought of her—Tears trembled on Maris' long dark lashes, but she would not let them fall. She would not let those girls have the satisfaction of knowing they had hurt her. And now as she stood at the door of her apartment she was glad she had held her head high when she had hurried down the stairs and reached her taxi.

Her wonderful evening had brought her nothing but disappointment. All the triumph that she felt in her reception by the spectators was poisoned by the chatter of the girls. What right had they to talk like that? How dared they hint that there was anything between Stan and her? She'd hardly spoken to him—and even if she had

romantic dreams about him, certainly no one in the office had ever had occasion to link her name with his?

She caught back a sob. She would not let Patsy know of the bitter aftermath to her glorious evening. While they had been waiting to go on the improvised stage, the girls had been charming and friendly. They'd raved about her gown, too, had talked as though Rowene had been kept away by sickness. Was that the reason Stan had given for her non-appearance?

Everything would doubtless have been lovely if only that other girl—Vi Kent—had kept her mouth shut. But Maris knew instinctively that those girls saw the line that separated a girl who worked in an office from one who was born to wealth.

Yet as she opened the door, a faint ray of hope flickered in her mind. Stan was so pleased with her work. He had said he would see her again. Perhaps if she hadn't dashed home so impetuously he might have brought her back in his car, but the thought of staying a minute longer where those girls

would have been guilty of such rudeness, such lack of fine feeling. Of course Milly was a bit of a vamp and didn't hesitate to take every chance of making a hit with the men, but never as long as Maris had known her had she done anything so contemptible as had those girls whose parents' names illuminated the pages of the Social Register. Perhaps, though, they weren't all like that.

Somehow she had always envisioned the daughters of the four hundred plus as lovely girls, whose manners and general conduct were something superior to the girls she worked with. Milly had told her that was all boloney, that they were ahead set; but, as she studied their pictures in the papers, she was sure Milly knew nothing about what she was discussing.

"But now, Maris' soft lips curved in a smile of derision. "I bet Milly's right," she thought.

Soon Maris opened her windows wider and slipped into bed. But she could not sleep. From one side to another she tossed, then turned over her pillow; but still sleep would not come. Her brain was working

with tireless activity. "Gee, if I don't get to sleep soon I'll be hearing the milkman," she murmured to herself. "This will never do I must try and forget those vicious society buds. I can't afford to let their gall keep me from sleeping."

Then, suddenly, as though a hand had pulled back a curtain in her memory she saw as plainly as though she were there, the dark Ramapo Hills and the wide waters of Greenwood Lake. A year ago Rod had taken her to spend the day. It had been a crisp autumn morning when they reached the lake and as they got in the rowboat he'd engaged, she was glad she'd worn a coat. But as the day advanced it was once more like summer and when they landed on the shore to eat their lunch, there was no need of any extra wraps.

Continued next week.

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Presidential Ballot Reveals Preference For Roosevelt

(From The Pioneer)

In the presidential ballot held during the chapel period on September 25, the Solid South again stood firm, as Catawbas line Roosevelt, with 187 votes, took the first Catawba straw vote with a plurality of 64, Landon receiving 123 votes. Thomas, the Socialist candidate, trailed with 3 votes.

A decisive victory for the champions of the New Deal started the Democratic donkey on a victory parade when the student body voted its approval of Mr. Roosevelt's governmental policies.

Trailing the Democrats by 64 votes, the ticket of Landon and Knox did not seem very impressive. Evidently, the policy of rugged individualism finds fewer advocates in Catawba than was expected. But, with 123 votes for Landon, the Republicans of Catawba may still be a threat to the New Dealers.

Three courageous Socialists, undaunted by the arguments and platforms of the New Dealers and the G. O. P.'s, bravely marked their chapel slips with a bold "Thomas." No ballots were cast for Lemke, representative of Father Coughlins Union party.

Watching the trend of the student's political convictions by means of several similar ballots before the coming election, the Pioneer will determine whether college students embody the general political decisions of the country. It must be remembered that Catawba is in the South, the great stronghold of the Democrats, and this may account for the Roosevelt sentiment. However, a large percentage of the student body came from Pennsylvania, a Republican state, and this may account for a variation in the results of the next ballot to be conducted by the Pioneer.

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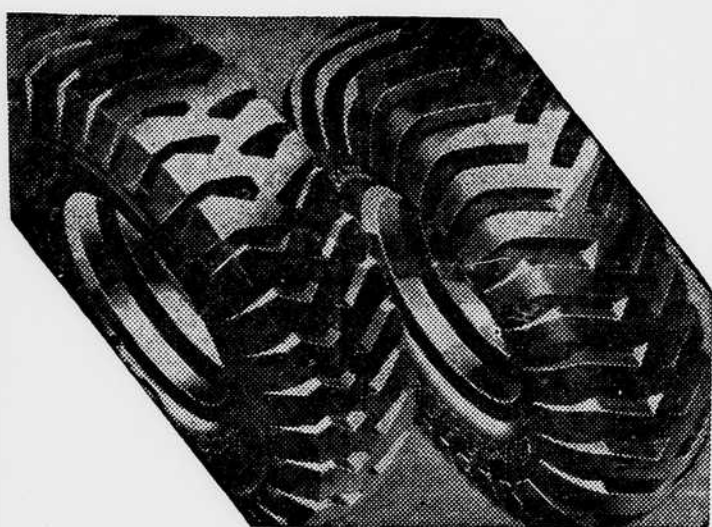
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