



CHAPTER XIII

It was ten o'clock. Belle Fleur seemed, strangely silent. Lotus stood on the broad gallery outside her bedroom and saw the stars reflected with startling clarity in the waters of the swimming lagoon. From the bayous came the hoarse croaking of frogs and the occasional plaintive whimper of a swamp owl.

Stacy had not yet returned from New Orleans.

His father, Lotus thought and hoped, had retired to his own room with a book.

She wondered suddenly if this wasn't the moment to do a little snooping. The servants, to all appearances, were in their quarters behind the house and she would have the spacious old rooms to herself.

She had seen Stacy use a flashlight that was kept in a drawer of the first floor hall table. She would need it for what she planned to do. As she tiptoed down the hall, light gleamed from under Curtis Corbin's door. She found the flash and decided to examine the library first.

She played her light over the room and examined the contents of the massive library table drawers. It seemed a purposeless search, as she was not sure what she was looking for. If Corbin were a dope smuggler, he could have dozens of hollowed-out books filled with the stuff and she would have to examine each one separately to find out. It was much too big a task for one person.

The door to Curtis Corbin's study was open and she moved across to it. Den was rather a contradictory term to apply to this room she decided, for it was as large as the library.

She moved the bright spot of light across the walls; and eyes gleamed back at her!

The walls were covered by the stuffed and mounted heads of various animals; it was their glassy, taxidermist eyes that had frightened her.

Quickly, she rifled through the contents of the desk. The papers all referred to business, deals

which meant nothing to her. She moved the light around again. This time it fell on a large packing box, from which excelsior and shredded newspapers protruded.

She peered in and gasped. . . . The boa constrictor lay coiled up in its bed of straw, its skin gleamed naturally. Though she knew it was dead, it was several moments before she could bring herself to examine it.

Leaving quickly, she tiptoed into the dining room, and obtained a steel knife from the buffet. Returning to the box, she ripped out several of the stitches with a few quick jerks and reached into the opening.

Her fingers closed on more excelsior. Though she continued to feel around, stuffing was all her exploring hands contacted. With a deep sigh of disappointment, she returned the snake to its original position.

Suddenly her ears caught the sound of soft, shuffling footsteps descending the stairs. Curtis Corbin was returning to the library!

Suddenly, the front door was thrust open and Stacy came in.

"Hi Dad!" He sounded as though he were forcing himself to be jovial.

Curtis Corbin's answering voice was cool and deliberate: "Well did you make any progress?"

"Of a sort. Aline and her grand-aunt are coming out here tomorrow for a three-day visit."

There was a strained silence, then . . .

"Now, listen, Dad, Rosa is not bad. She's just different from your brand of feminine society."

"That's neither here nor there. There's no way we can explain her presence here. The Cartier women will be insulted. It'll ruin everything."

"I don't care if it does. This romance is your idea, not mine."

"Well you'd better make it yours, I think I told you what would happen if you didn't carry out my plans. You've lived a soft life Stacy. You might find earning your own living not an easy proposition."

There was an ugly pause. When next he spoke, Stacy's voice was modified.

"Well, they practically insisted on coming—there was nothing I could do. I'll fix things up O. K. —I'll give them a sob story about Rosa being sick and alone, and they'll think we're being kind to her. I'll explain it to Rosa; she's a good kid she'll play along."

"She'd better," Corbin's voice rasped, "or we'll find some other solution for her."

The next afternoon Lotus watched the arrival of Aline Cartier and her spinster grand-aunt from her own gallery.

The aunt was a finely-drawn portrait of what Aline could expect at sixty—slight, erect, with an aristocratic head borne proudly on her slim, aging shoulders.

Curtis Corbin strode down the terraced brick steps to greet them.

Lotus noted with amusement that he had undergone a strange metamorphosis of character. Now he was very much the gentleman of the Old South. He had donned a silk pongee suit and a flowing black tie. In his fingers was the ever-present expensive Havana cigar—which was not an affectation. He bowed low over Miss Cartier's hand, as though he were about to kiss it. Evidently the same idea occurred to the older woman, for she withdrew it from his warm clasp with haste.

Lotus shrank back into the shadows as the foursome neared the house. Her thoughts were seething. It had never occurred to her that the Cartier family had been the previous owners of Belle Fleur. And considering the dispicable manner in which Curtis Corbin had acquired it, how could Aline and her grand-aunt bring themselves to visit her?

Stacy must have done his job well—evidently Aline had fallen head over heels in love.

When the group was in the house, Lotus slipped down the stairs and across the grounds to her rendezvous with Stu Lawrence.

He was there in the pirogue, looking as ill-kempt and fierce as

ever. His eyes were an amber color, and from the shadow of the cypress and the swarthy of his bearded face, they peered back at her like some wild beast's. To her dismay, she felt her heartbeat quickened at the sight of him.

She told him about the snake and the new arrivals at Belle Fleur, then, though she longed to linger, left hurriedly, for fear Lachene would discover her.

Since that first meeting with Lawrence, the gardener always seemed to be somewhere in the background when she thought she was alone—suddenly appearing to cut the grass or prune the bushes or pick flowers for Belle Fleur's Sevres vases. She was certain that Curtis Corbin had assigned him to watch her.

As she re-entered the house, she was introduced to the newcomers.

From their lack of astonishment, she realized that Stacy and his father had already prepared the Cartier women with their sob story, but in spite of this, the older woman was unable to prevent a faint frown of displeasure from wrinkling her forehead.

In the garden below, Stacy was making love to Aline Cartier, even urging an immediate marriage. He was suggesting that he bring a minister to Belle Fleur to perform the wedding during their visit, so that old Mr. Cartier could not interfere. To Lotus' dismay, Aline was peculiarly acquiescent to everything he said.

In a moment the elder Miss Cartier entered from her own bedroom.

Her voice was inclined to be high and at this moment indignation made it shrill . . .

"Aline, I'm astonished at Stacy inviting us here when that Miss Kirkman is around—it's sheer effrontery!"

"Hush, she'll hear you!"

"Oh, I've nothing against the girl personally—she's really quite pretty and charming, but a cabaret entertainer, and unchaperoned!"

"But Mr. Corbin explained all that—he said she was sick and had no friends or any place to go."

Need For Nurses Is Cited To High School Graduates

Throughout the entire country there is a perceptible slowing down of business. Unemployment is increasing. Both large and small corporations are beginning to lay off workers. In almost all industries there is need for fewer people, and, in a few months, this trend will probably increase, and with it unemployment will increase.

In hospitals, however, and among sick people, there is an increased need for nurses. More nurses are needed to care for the sick in hospitals and in private homes. There has never been a time in the history of America when a graduate nurse had the choice of so many different positions or so many different locations. Everywhere nurses are needed.

Young women who enter this profession now will graduate at a time when nurses are badly needed, and they will have the opportunity of entering any of the fields of nursing in which they may be interested. It is one of those opportunities of a long lifetime that does not come around very often. A young woman who wants to start a nursing career this year will not have to worry about getting a job. She will have her choice, because nine out of ten hospitals need nurses badly. Some hos-

"Humph! Looks healthy enough to me. And Curtis Corbin doesn't strike me as an exactly kind-hearted individual."

There was a pause, then Miss Cartier said in a querulous tone, "What were you and Stacy talking about in the garden all evening?"

"He wants me to marry him, Tante."

"Marry you, eh? Let me look in your eyes, child—you're not deeply in love with him, are you Aline?"

"Noooo, but it would mean getting Belle Fleur back in the family."

(To be continued)

pitals have had to close up entire floors because of the lack of nurses and have been forced to turn away many of the sick who needed hospital treatment so very badly.

70,000 nurses, or more, are needed today in the United States. New hospitals are being built, and others are being planned for construction in the near future. Throughout the country the demand for medical care is growing rapidly and, as it increases, more nurses will be wanted.

Nursing is a highly respected profession in every community. A nurse finds great satisfaction in knowing that her work is indispensable and that she is needed to help in almost every phase of great human drama the nurse plays a major role. She is ever a force, not only in relieving the sick and suffering, but in bettering the social conditions of all the people. In entering the field of nursing, however, a young woman should not be deceived and feel that the life of a nurse is like a Hollywood picture. Nursing means real work and personal effort. It requires a physically strong body and an emotionally stable mind. She must realize that her first consideration must be her patients. She must know how to be calm and cheerful no matter how weary she may feel and no matter how difficult her patients may be.

Nursing is not without glamour. To take part in the tremendous battle for lives, to save the sick and the injured requires the same courage that it takes to distinguish oneself on the field of battle in time of war.

A young woman who takes up nursing and studies and works and develops her talents to the best of her ability will develop into a high type of nurse and will be recognized by those around her and with whom she works as a high type of individual.

In very few fields of endeavor can a young woman rise to the heights of usefulness and appreciation, both of herself personally and her work, as she can in the field of nursing.

In material things, the nursing profession is one of the better paid professions for women. The salary scale for graduate nurses varies in different states but, on the whole, it is good everywhere. Considering the fact that a nurse can get her nursing education at practically no cost makes this one of the most attractive and desirable of all professions.

All kinds of fields are open to nurses. In the various branches of hospital work, general nursing, emergency room, obstetrics, pediatrics, surgery, anesthesia, office work, physiotherapy, hydrotherapy, teaching in training schools, superintendent of hospitals, heads of hospital departments—all of these fields are open to the able and qualified graduate nurses.

In the health program that is being developed in North Carolina, Public Health Nurses can do pioneer work in local communities. To many young women such a position would be a challenge and would stimulate them to worthwhile accomplishments for themselves as well as the community at large.

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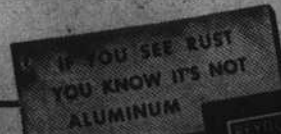
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