

CONVICT'S DAUGHTER

WRITTEN FOR AND RELEASED BY CENTRAL PRESS ASSOCIATION

By RUTH RAY KANE

CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

LONA WAS like an excited child as she showed Jim about the rooms she had rented for their first home.

"Isn't it perfect?" she asked, when they had come to the tiny kitchen.

"It's great, girl," he agreed. "And you look swell in that apron. Sort of like—home, isn't it?"

The longing in his voice touched her. "Oh, Jim!" she said, and clung to him. "It's so good to be happy."

"You are happy, then, girl?" It almost seemed as if he were reassuring himself.

"Of course I'm happy. I'm so happy I could almost cry. Think of it! No more looking for work, no more boarding houses, no more being lonesome."

"Maybe you've jumped from the frying pan into the fire," his voice was teasing. "Just wait until you have to get up at six o'clock and get my breakfast. And cook and scrub and make beds, and—what else does a housewife have to do?"

He paused, inquiringly. "It's a terrible life, the women all say. . . . From early morn to setting sun, a woman's work is never done."

He chanted triumphantly. "See what you've let yourself in for?"

She laughed as she set out gleaming white dishes on the red and white linen tablecloth. "I'm going to love every minute of it," she proclaimed, confidently.

It was a truly delicious meal. From the steak, sizzling with butter, and oozing juice, to the fragrant steaming coffee that came from the tiny dipolator in a golden stream, everything was perfect.

Watching Jim enjoy it, Lona's pride stirred justly. She had, she felt, outdone herself.

"This is swell, girl," Jim told her approvingly, as he pushed back his plate and reached for his pipe. She had it ready for him, together with the evening paper, and she made a great ado of establishing him in the easy chair in the living room while she cleared off the table.

He objected at first, insisting upon helping her with the dishes, but she brushed aside his scruples.

"You're spoiling me," he told her, solemnly, pulling her down on his lap for a moment before he let her have her own way.

"I'm warning you," she told him. "But in his kiss she read that he was secretly delighted at her solitude. She'd keep him that way, she vowed, as she went back to tidy up the tiny kitchen.

She had the place back in exquisite order when the click of Dinah's chair sounded in the hall outside, followed by a tap on the door.

A gray-haired, sweet-faced woman, with some of Dinah's own beauty still clinging to her lined face, Lona knew before she had spoken that she was going to like Mrs. Morris.

"We've come to make sure you're comfortable over here," the woman told her, when introductions had

been completed. "If there's anything needed that's not here, you're to tell me. It's the first time we've rented these rooms, you know, and I was a little afraid the equipment might not be adequate."

"It's perfect," Lona assured her. "You're not to worry about us. Mrs. Morris, we're going to like it here. I feel lucky to find such a place."

"I'm glad you've come." The woman's eyes went to Dinah's bright head and back to Lona. "Dinah, here, has been telling me about you," she offered. "It will make me feel easier to know there's someone in the house when I'm away. Someone she likes having."

"I'm glad Lona will have company, too," Jim said, then, and he and Mrs. Morris looked at each other in sudden understanding that made Lona feel very young; as if she and Dinah were two children who needed to be cared for.

"They talk as if we were a couple of infants," Dinah broke in, laughing impishly in mock disgust.

"You are," Jim shot back at her, and she laughed in earnest. Neither of you are past the spanking age."

"Just you try spanking us!" she bantered, and Lona knew that Jim's swift acceptance of her on an equal footing with Lona, despite her encumbrance, had won her sturdy heart.

"I've been thinking all afternoon about that party we were talking of at lunch," she brought out, then. "Would the evening after next suit you? That would give me two days to raise the crowd on the telephone. There's nothing going on that night, either. It's an open date."

"That would be just right," Lona told her. "And I think it's wonderful of you to go to all this trouble for us. I—appreciate it."

"It's fun," Dinah's blue eyes snapped. "I love having parties. Besides, it isn't any trouble for me. I don't have to work. I just sit here in this chair and do the bossing. Do you dance?" She turned to Jim suddenly.

"Slightly," he admitted. "May I engage the first dance with you now? That is, if you must have dancing!"

Dinah's laugh was a silvery tinkle. "It's nice of you to be so gallant," she told him. "But you can't dance with a wheel chair."

"They went on that way for the rest of the visit. As if they had known each other always, Lona thought, as she lay that night in the old-fashioned bed. It pleased her to think that Jim liked Dinah and that Dinah approved of him, a pleasure that amused her when she recalled that this morning she hadn't even known Dinah existed.

And now, here she was, lying awake, thrilled because of a party promised her by a stranger.

She was more excited over this party than she had thought it was possible to be, over anything so trivial. It had been so long since

she had taken part in any social gathering. Her last real party had been in Bridgewater before the thing that had turned her life awry had happened.

She had been escorted that night by the very man her father had to shoot, she recalled now, with a shudder. It had been a troubled gathering, alive with the undercurrents of what was to come.

Dismay took hold of her as she thought back over it. Ought she to be so free with these people here in Brighton? Was it, as she had always felt since those old black days, too dangerous, after all, to have friends?

Oh, but things were different, now, she told herself. Such thoughts were morbid. Nothing dreadful was going to happen to her again. She was done with horror. Listening to Jim's even breathing beside her, she succeeded in pushing back the memories that for a moment had crowded into her mind.

Pulling herself again into a pleasant sense of expectation, she finally drifted off to sleep.

She was soon to learn that when Dinah said party she meant just that. The next two days were a flurry of preparations. Not that there was to be anything elaborate or costly about the affair. It was, of necessity, simple. But it seemed that here in Brighton, as in all small towns, there was a definite routine to be followed in getting together "the crowd."

First there was a succession of telephone calls. It seemed to Lona that Dinah had sat with her ear glued to the receiver for a solid morning when she announced, finally, that everyone had been reached, and all but two had accepted. The most important of the acceptances was, Lona was assured, that of "Pinky" Malone. He, it developed, was the local piano player. Without him there would be no dancing. The music being assured, there was the matter of refreshments to be considered next.

"Chicken salad," Dinah proclaimed without hesitancy. "Mother's famous for her chicken salad. They'll expect it. With hot biscuits and pickles."

"Why, that's a meal, Dinah!" Lona laughed. "They must eat well in this town."

"There must be punch, too. Bobby Graves will bring over the stuff and spike it at the last minute," Dinah confided with a wink. "Mother's dry, you know. She won't serve any drinks. But, of course, if she doesn't know—"

"But, Dinah, if she objects—"

"Oh, she just pretends she doesn't know. It's a great joke. Bobby always mixes the punch and nobody asks what he puts into it. You see, all our mothers are dry. This is a dry town. That is, they vote dry, but—"

She broke off, and laughed, and Lona laughed with her. There were so many delicious little contradictions about this place.

It had been so long since

(To Be Continued)

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CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

LONA LOOKED as pleased as an excited child when the evening for Dinah's party came finally, and she stood before her mirror patting the waves into her brown hair.

She was wearing her wedding dress, and her cheeks glowed with a flush that made her eyes look as dancing as Dinah's own.

"You're as excited over this shining as you were over your own wedding," Jim complained as he struggled with his tie. Peering over her shoulder, his eyes met hers in the mirror, and she bowed to him demurely.

"Do you think they'll like me, sir?" she asked, and laughed as his big arms closed suddenly about her slim body.

"Like you?" His voice was husky. "I'm afraid they'll like you too well, girl. I've half a notion not to let you go. You're mine, do you understand that? Mine . . ."

"Jim, you're hurting me!" Secure in his possessiveness, she struggled away coyly. "You'll muss my dress. Let me go! You're like a big bear," she scolded.

"A bear that likes his honey," he shot back nonsensically, and they both laughed again. She had never laughed so much in her life, Lona thought, as she lifted from its box the trim corsage of rose buds Jim had brought home for her to wear.

"Like it?" he asked, serious again, as she fastened the fragrant corsage to her belt.

"It was sweet of you to think of it, Jim," she told him. "I'm glad you brought one for Dinah, too. She loves it." She stood on tip-toe and gave him a kiss; a trim, tantalizing little peck on the forehead that brought a protest.

"Is that all I get?" he chided her. "Next time I'll bring you a bouquet of wild flowers."

They were still giggling like a couple of children as they went, hand in hand, across the hall to the Morris living room. From behind the closed door the sound of voices and the hubbub of laughter indicated that the gaiety was already under way.

For a moment the fear of people Lona had developed in her long, lonely years of reticence almost overcame her, but she shook it off determinedly. Was she to be that way always, she wondered? Always to bear the scars.

It was a crowded living room into which they were ushered by a smiling Mrs. Morris. Dinah, enthroned in her chair like a reigning queen, was silhouetted against the draped windows. She pulled Lona over to her possessively and went through the introductions with an air.

It seemed odd to hear herself called Mrs. Bennett, Lona thought, as she nodded and smiled, and tried to associate the names she had heard in Dinah's chatter of the past few days with the laughing young people about her.

The girl in blue with the straight black hair must be Ethel Harmon. That would be Louis Davis beside her. He ran the garage on Main street. Over on the divan was a curly-haired boy named Jones.

"One of the Jones boys, you know," he told her, solemnly, as they were introduced.

Out in the dining room, hovering over the great punch bowl which graced the white-clothed table was another young man, tall and anxious looking. He was making a great ado of stirring and tasting, and Lona knew he must be Bobby Graves. Pinky, the piano player, was not yet in evidence.

Two of the girls were sisters. They dressed alike in demure ruffled frocks and seemed comically inseparable. They were Evelyn and Madelyn Arnold, daughters of the Brighton undertaker. "Ev" and "Mad," the rest called them. Sitting beside the Jones boy on the divan was a stately young woman in a black dress, smoking a cigaret with ostentatious ease.

"Mrs. Davis," Dinah named her. She was the wife of the garage keeper, and she eyed Lona's simple frock with a frankly appraising look. Her lazy glance quickened when Jim was presented to her, and she took a nonchalant puff of



"I like them tall, dark and mysterious looking," she drawled.

her cigaret before she ground it out on the ashtray beside her and sat up with a suddenly determined air that brought a laugh from the crowd.

"Alice always goes for every man," Dinah explained quite matter-of-factly and with no trace of malice, and the woman smiled agreement.

"I like them tall, dark and mysterious looking," she drawled in a throaty voice.

Jim bowed stiffly. "At your service, madam," he offered, and they all laughed again.

They were a merry, carefree gang, Lona found, as she sat beside Dinah's chair and smiled at the antics of the Jones boy, who was trying to draw her out on the dance floor. Before the party began, the rug had been rolled up neatly, and beneath it, the polished floor lay bare and gleaming.

They had begun to dance to the unsatisfactory music of a radio program while they waited for Pinky to put in his appearance. He was, it seemed, unaccountably late.

"He promised to be here at nine," Dinah told them, frowning a little. "I can't imagine what's keeping him."

"He'll be fined if he's not here in fifteen minutes," Bobby Graves consulted a wrist watch firmly.

"The only piano player in town and he has to be late. It's outrageous! We ought to drink up all the punch on him." He suited action to words by draining his glass and going back for more.

When he returned he had an inspiration.

"You look like a pianist," he told Lona. "Bet you're holdin' out on us. Come on, give us a tune."

"Sorry," Lona laughed. "I'm afraid I'm not a musician. I can play 'Chopsticks' and 'A Maiden's Prayer,' but you can't dance to those."

"How about the husband?" he crossed to Jim hopefully.

To Lona's surprise, Jim allowed himself to be coaxed to the piano. Ushered by the irrepressible Bobby, he draped his long frame on the bench with a half apologetic glance at her amazed face.

"They laughed when I sat down at the piano, especially my wife," he bantered. "You see, I've never told her about my past."

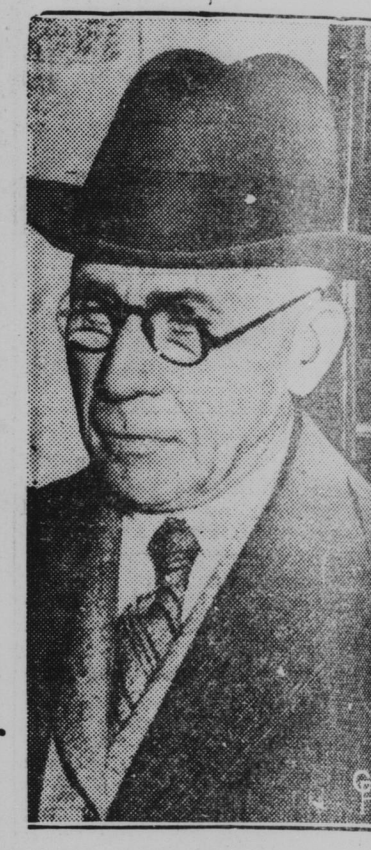
"Lad-les and gen-tlemen!" Bobby insisted upon ceremonious. "I am ex-TRE-ME-ly happy to present to you the attraction of the evening. We have with us tonight in the flesh, a real, live, cowboy singer and yodeler, who will entertain you with some genu-INE songs and—er—yodels, fresh from the range."

In Hilltop Retreat



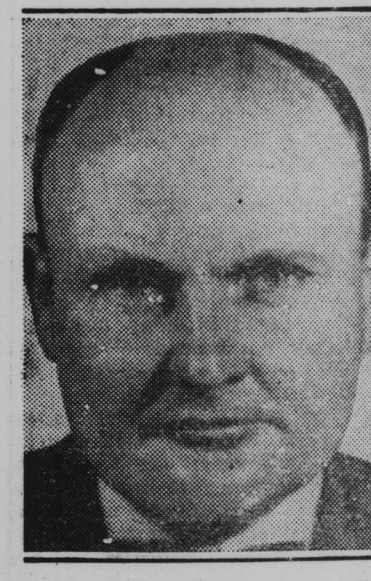
Actress Hedy Lamarr and her producer-husband, Gene Markey, spend honeymoon in their isolated hilltop home near Hollywood, three miles from their nearest neighbor.

To Flee Jersey



Samuel W. Rushmore, 68 (above), millionaire inventor, is having 1,250 trees felled on his Plainfield estate as mark of protest against New Jersey politics, notably appointment of Frank Hague, Jr., to Court of Appeals bench. Rushmore said he would offer his \$220,000 home to Father Divine as hospital for his "angels" and then travel—anywhere to get away from Jersey politics.

Deported by Mexico



Baron Hans Heinrich von Holleufer (above), of Germany, was ordered deported from Mexico by President Lázaro Cárdenas after the baron was charged with Nazi espionage and propaganda activities. Ordered out of the country with him was Paul Grabinsky, also charged with spying. (Central Press)

Heads Air Fleet



Valentina Stepanova Grizodubova, 28 (above), has been named chief of the international airlines department of the Russian Soviet civil air fleet. Last year she commanded an all-woman crew on a 3,717-mile non-stop flight from Moscow into the Far East. (Central Press)

Break-Up of the Czecho-Slovak Republic



Latest Hitler moves on what was Czecho-Slovakia are indicated in map. Joseph Tiso, pro-Nazi, emerges as Premier of newly-created Slovakia, backed by Germany. Bohemia and Moravia is all that remains of the Czech republic. Ruthenia is now known as Carpatho Ukraine, where Hungarians fought Czechs for control of the strip of land. (Central Press)

Rule the New Slovak Nation



These two smiling men are "in the saddle" of the new and independent state of Slovakia, which declared its independence from Czechoslovakia. Left, is Dr. Joseph Tiso, pro-Nazi Premier, and right, Dr. Ferdinand Durcansky, Foreign Minister. (Central Press)

Claim 80,000 Square Miles In Antarctic for United States



By Central Press VANCOUVER, B. C. — Eighty thousand square miles were added to United States territory by the recent Lincoln Ellsworth Antarctic Expedition, according to the three sun-tanned young explorers pictured as their party arrived in Vancouver aboard the Canadian-Australian liner Aorangi. Smiling the pleasure at nearing home, the trio are (left to right): Fred G. Seid, of New York City, radio operator; Burt J. Tre-rice, of Nova Scotia, pilot; and Dr. H. T. Rhoads, of Everett, Wash., expedition surgeon. Dr. Rhoads announced that the new lands explored have general mineral possibilities. They are not volcanic. Ellsworth made contact with the new territory at the 69th latitude south and the 79th longitude east. Some 500 miles east of Enderby Island. Several narrow escapes from disaster were experienced by the explorers. The closest came when ice stove a large hole in the bow of the 400-ton expedition ship Wyatt Earp, which the crew were able to patch up before the vessel could fill. Germany also is claiming lands in the Antarctic as result of a recent expedition there in the Schwabenland.