

AWAKENED WOMAN

by Elinore Barry

Ninth Installment

The story so far: Joyce Ashton, poor stenographer, in a sizzling taxi-wreck accident in Chicago, saved her life by jumping after a fall from her horse to find herself, under the name of Frills, married to Neil Packard, rich California fruit grower. From letters in her desk she learned a new thing about her life in the two-year interval, and realized that she had been a heartless, reckless young woman and that she is seriously involved in an affair with a man named Maitland. She decided that at all costs she would end it, but she found Maitland hard to manage. Her troubles were further complicated when she read a letter referring to a baby—was it hers?—that the writer, Sophie, thought Frills ought to have with her. Much to the surprise of Sam, in her husband's employ, she asked for a dog and he got her one.

NOW GO ON WITH THE STORY

Shortly after ten o'clock Sam brought the car to the front door and stowed away her two suitcases.

The bank teller at the bank greeted her with a friendly smile. "Good morning, Mrs. Packard. Sam, this was some little tumble you took. How do you feel after it?"

"Oh, I'm all right," replied Joyce hastily. She pushed her chair back at him and stood on tiptoe with breathless impatience while he deliberately counted out the money. Then she seized it, thanked him promptly and almost ran out to the car again.

When they were well out of the town, humming swiftly along the gravel roads, Joyce felt her nervous fear evaporate under the stimulus of an irresistibly marvellous, thrilling ride. This was going to be fun, she reflected happily.

They reached the Frills place about noon. Joyce had packed her suitcase with a few necessities for her first night in the city. As soon as she was installed in the room, she proceeded immediately to carry out her plan of attack.

The days passed rapidly. In the mornings Joyce went over to the bank, and in the evenings she went to the movies. She was much to be surprised, she thought, in learning to handle a machine.

She spent the afternoon of the first day in the city in the park. Her first day in the city was so different from the day back home that she felt a greater pleasure.

One day she overheard some girl in the Chinese restaurant, talking to a Chinese waiter, and her interest aroused, she set out to explore these exotic places.

One evening she went there for dinner, pleasantly weary after a day of riding and driving the car.

Dreary and contented, she presently wandered out of the restaurant, to realize a moment later that she had left her book on the table. She retraced her steps.

A man was sitting at the table she had occupied, and she was disconcerted to find that he had picked up her book. "I say, is this yours?" He was on his feet in an instant. "Please sit down. I want to talk to you about it. This is really very extraordinary."

Joyce sat down, her embarrassment vanishing. She felt at home with this man, as if she already knew him well enough to be casual about the meeting. Why should she feel that with a man she'd never seen before? He grinned at her with such informal friendliness that Joyce thought he must, surely, be a friend of Frills Packard. And yet—and yet—he was so unlike the Manzanita men! She stared at him, frankly curious.

He was much taller and looked almost as young as Neil. She guessed his age at about thirty-one or two. A splendid physique undoubtedly, with wide shoulders and strong arms. As for his face, the details of it impressed themselves on Joyce so strongly in the first few minutes of their meeting that she felt she would never lose the picture.

"I'm afraid I'm not altruistic enough to give the book to you," laughed Joyce. "Robert Ainsworth is one of my favorite authors, and I've wanted to get hold of this book for years, but never could. It's out of print, you know."

The little Chinese waitress, subtly smiling, approached. "Some tea?" she asked.

Joyce rose hastily. "No, no, I must go."

"Then I'll go with you," he said at once, thrusting a bill in the hand of the little Chinese girl, and following Joyce, who was a little bewildered but glowing with pleasure.

They walked for over an hour, and Joyce discovered that her new friend had read nearly every book that had been written, and that his enthusiasms were largely hers. He agreed eagerly with her opinions of Robert Ainsworth, whom, he said, he "revered above all other moderns." He praised Ainsworth so lavishly in fact, that Joyce had a sudden sense that he was making fun of her, and for the first time she felt a slight hostility toward him. She could not bear her admiration for Ainsworth, whom she considered so gifted a writer.

Hastily getting her bearings, she discovered that they had gone in a circle and were again near the Y. W. C. A., and she therefore led their steps in that direction.

"Good-bye," she said "and it's been

great fun talking with you. I'm only sorry you don't—quite—feel as I do about Robert Ainsworth. Under the circumstances, I shall have no compunctions about claiming my book!"

"Oh, but I do share your enthusiasm!" He bowed somewhat mockingly, and held up the book. "But you will let me sign the title sketch?" He propped the book up on his knee, and wrote in it, slowly, meticulously; waved it about with maddening deliberation to blot the ink; then handed it to her, closed.

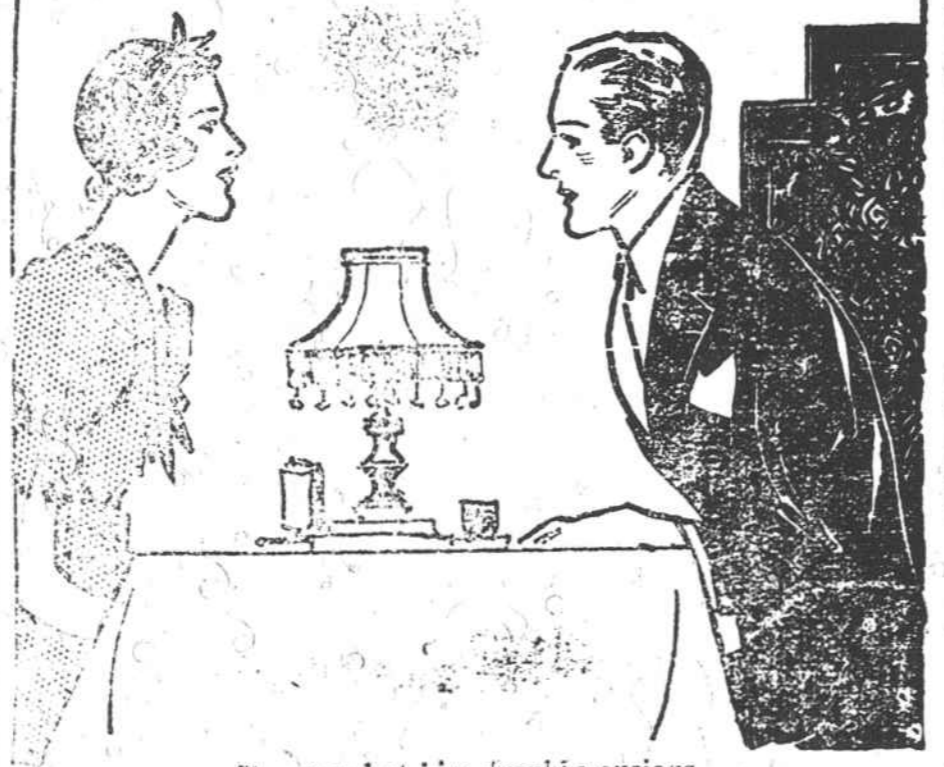
"Good-bye, Miss —?"

"Joyce Ashton," she said without

started out for the West of which she had, to be frank, only the vaguest general knowledge.

As she lay in her bed in the Y. W. C. A., Joyce smiled and frowned alternately at the thought of how her plan had turned out.

Thirteen days after she had left Manzanita, Joyce received the word that ended her solitary campaign to fit herself for taking the position of Frills Packard again. The morning mail enclosed a laconic telegram from Neil: "Arrive Manzanita Monday evening." This was Monday morning. Joyce im-



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mediately got Sam on long distance and asked him to drive to the city for her.

On the way home she questioned him with forced interest about all that had happened in her absence. Sam obligingly inquired what news he could think up; Dickie had won the love of both Joyce and Marcia; Rosita was in New York; Sam had exercised her a little every day; but she was fairly good and Mrs. Packard would find her help; there had been a small fire

at the packing plant but almost no damage had been done; and so on, a list of trivial items to which Joyce listened with an interest that grew in spite of herself.

Dickie was at the gate to meet them and his joyful welcome filled Joyce with a quite disproportionate sense of the pleasure of coming home. But when she entered the big luxurious bedroom she was struck for the first time by the dismaying realization that soon she would be unable to flee to it for refuge and escape.

She unpacked hurriedly and had a bath, careful to take a negligee in with her and to lock the bathroom door. It was horrible to feel that at any moment a strange man might enter that bedroom, and that she could not order him out! Suppose he came before she finished dressing! In a panic she jumped out of the bathtub and dried herself hastily.

She dressed in the huge closet, thankful that its size made this possible, and was completely ready before seven-thirty.

Dickie followed her downstairs and they went through the front door together. Just as they stepped outside a big blue touring car came up the driveway. Joyce felt a curious tightening in her throat as she recognized Neil Packard.

"Hullo there, darling, how've you been?" cried Packard, jumping out of the car. "I was hoping you'd write again. It was great to get that letter from you." He came up with a broad, eager smile on his face and bent over her. Joyce forced herself to lift her face obediently for his kiss, but moved away hastily to prevent a second.

"You were lucky to get even one," she said lightly, but her heart thumped so hard it made her breath come short. "Look, who's here! Dickie, speak to the gent!"

"So that's your new dog, is it? Hullo, feller, you're a cute cuss, all right. Come here, boy!" Dickie was quite ready to make friends, for he appeared to regard every man in the light of a potential playmate. He began now a little eager whining interspersed with short barks.

"That means he wants you to throw a stick for him," she explained, "he has one great passion in life, and that's to be given something to worry and run away and play tug-of-war with."

Her voice faltered a little at the end when she looked up and met the puzzled expression on Packard's face.

"Dinner's almost ready," she went on hastily, abandoning Dickie as a topic of conversation, "you haven't had any, have you?"

"No, and I'm hungry as a bear. Hope Marcia's got something good for us. Who's here tonight?"

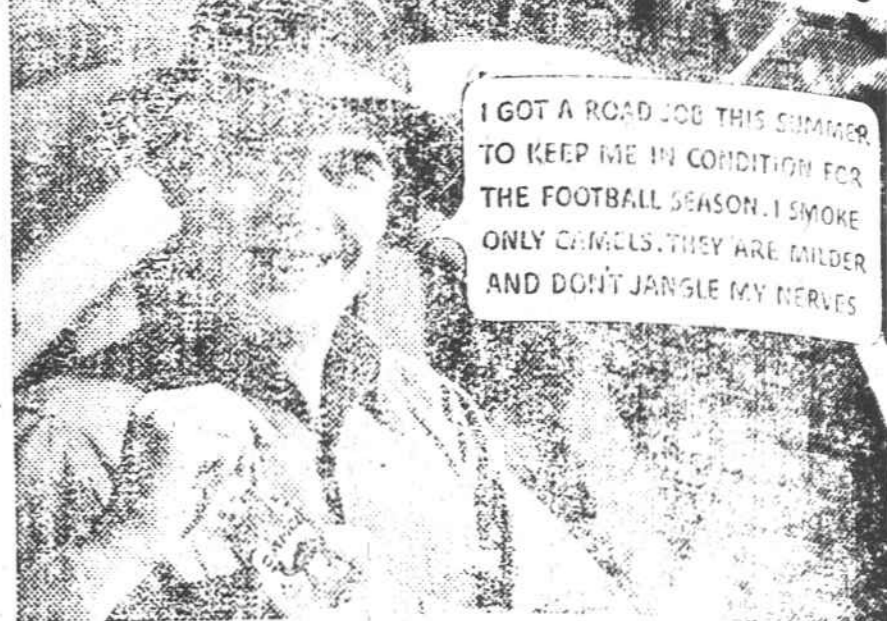
Continued Next Week

SYLVIA-DILLSBORO SCHOOLS OPEN FALL SESSION TODAY

The schools of the district will open this morning for the first time since the summer vacation. The following are the principals of the schools: Frills Packard, Louise Mason, and others.

A list of names of school children and their parents is provided, including names like Frills Packard, Louise Mason, and others.

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