

BELoved IMPOSTOR -

By ANNE KILBORN COLE
Illustrated by Kemp Starrett

THE door banged after Leila and Pat. She could hear the click of Leila's gold sandals on the stairs and Pat Hanlon's deep, rumbling laugh.

"I hope you trip! I hope your taxi twines around an 'L' post! I hope—you get a big run in your stocking!" and she threw Leila's discarded mules at the closed door. For it was not the first time that Leila had walked off with Trudie Porter's latest young man; Trudie with her red-brown curls and a mouth made for kisses that never came.

Kisses might have come if it had not been for Leila, her roommate. Leila's glamour hypnotized most men before Trudie could do much about it. Even Pat Hanlon, who had seemed so devoted at first. But it had lasted such a short time, only until Leila had gone to work in her slow, sure way. And now it was Leila who went dancing with Pat.

The telephone interrupted her gloomy thoughts. Trudie answered it grudgingly.

"No, Mr. Atherton, I'm so sorry," she cooed. "She's ill . . . Yes, a cold . . . No, she couldn't possibly see you tonight . . . Yes, indeed, I'll tell her."

She dropped the receiver savagely. Bah! She was sick of doing Leila's dirty work. Here was Leila breaking her date, off with Pat, and tomorrow a box of flowers would come with sympathy from Clark Atherton.

THE phone rang again. "All right, all right," she grumbled. Maybe this time she would tell the truth. She felt reckless.

"Hello! Is that you, Leila?"

The man's voice was a strange one, a full, deep voice that sent shivers down Trudie's spine. It excited her. She hesitated, trying to place it.

"Hello, hello! Am I speaking to Miss Leila Graham?"

A daring thought flashed through Trudie's mind. With heart hammering, she made her voice low, intimate and inviting, as Leila would have done.

"Who is it?"

"Three guesses! I'll give you one hint—Juneau."

"Oh! Juno the goddess or Juneau, Alaska?"

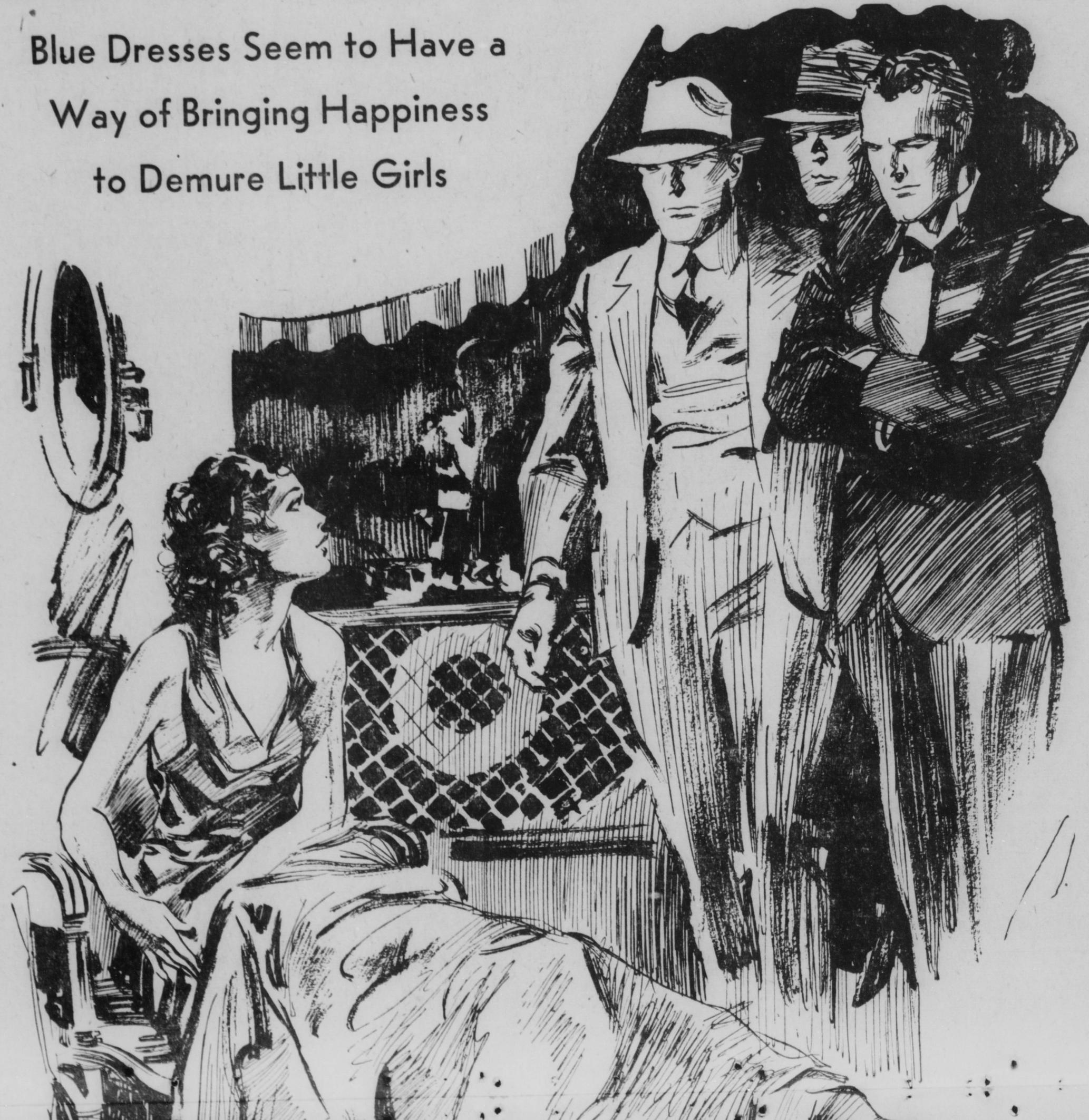
"Bright girl. You know your geography. Can I come right up? I've just got into town."

"Certainly. But don't be too quick about it," she dared, breathlessly.

"It can't be quick enough, Lee! We have a good many years to make up. I'll give you half an hour."

Half an hour! Not much time for a big evening like this. It must be the old-home-town sweetheart—she couldn't remember his name—the engineer.

Blue Dresses Seem to Have a Way of Bringing Happiness to Demure Little Girls



"No, I'm an office manager at L. K. Havemyer's."

"Then where did you get that dress?"

"I—I borrowed it from my roommate's closet."

"Humph! Pretty good story. That dress was stolen. Better change the record, girlie."

"Stolen! But—"

"Yeah, stolen, and not the first one, either. You've been smart enough until this time not to wear them too soon."

"But I didn't steal those dresses, I tell you. I'm not Leila Graham."

"You were dancing with Pat Hanlon, and she's been seen with him frequently. No, no, sister, try again."

"But I had just asked him to get me a cab to take me home. You see the man I came with—"

BRUCE stepped forward. "Let me explain. I was with Miss—er—Porter the whole evening. We had been dancing. I had to leave her for a few minutes to make a phone call. I suppose she got nervous waiting alone—and asked this man to take her home."

The detective grunted. "Pretty long phone call."

"It was. The booth was occupied and I had to find a phone outside. I was talking to Mr. Henry Jamison, who was to sail with me at 1 A. M. I wanted to catch him before he left his home to ask him to bring Mrs. Jamison with him. You see I was hoping—er—expecting another guest, a lady, Miss Porter, to be exact. Mr. Jamison's in the cabin now, you can question him."

Again the man grunted. "Miss Porter, will you stand up there under that light? Now, let's see. What color would you call your hair?"

Bruce answered. "The color of Autumn leaves—velvet ones."

The man passed a big hand over his face. "That isn't platinum?"

"I should say not."

"Well, we've been told to trail a platinum blonde named Leila Graham who worked as a model for Anderson's, wearing a blue satin evening dress which she lifted from them just yesterday. They have had spotters out for her for some time. But we've still got to find Leila Graham."

"Oh, but Leila couldn't have taken these things. She always said she got them cheap," Trudie cried.

"If you know what's good for you, Miss Porter, you'll find another roommate—and don't borrow any more dresses."

Then he turned to Bruce. "I don't know where you're heading, but if Miss Porter is going with you, you better stick around until this thing clears up."

"I was planning a little trip to the West Indies, but I'll wait until Miss Porter is fully exonerated."