

old-home-town sweethearts—she couldn't remember his name—the engineer. Leila had thought he was pretty fine until she met a lot of men who were spending big money nearer home than Mexico or Alaska. For Leila, before she had become a photographer's model and almost as beautiful as she photographed, had sold with Trudie in the subway "ready-made" stores and had not looked unlike Trudie, either. But now her hair was silver-gold and her figure flowed in her gowns like molten metal. And she had lost that eager little-girl look that Trudie still retained.

Half an hour, and not a stitch worth wearing. In despair she turned to Leila's closet. She hated to borrow, because if Leila was not in a good humor she could be nasty about a tear or a spot, but—she stopped suddenly. Hidden back of the long row of lovely dresses was a new one, an extreme model in aquamarine satin, with a quaint little jacket and a saucy little bow of pansy-purple velvet.

Trudie laid it on her bed. Leila would be furious. But it was no worse than walking off with Pat Hanlon. She wriggled into it before her mirror and gasped at the transformation. The color did wonders to her skin, whitening it as if layers of her tired, everyday face had been peeled off. She pinched her hair into lovely golden highlights. Rouge, just a little. Lipstick. A trace of Leila's eye-shadow. A heavy antique silver ring with amethyst setting from Leila's box of keepsakes. Then the buzzer, and she was still groping for words to explain Leila's absence when she threw open the apartment door.

THE man who stood there hesitated only a second. "Leila!" he gasped. "You are so—so much more beautiful than I remembered."

Trudie could not speak. Her heart was beating so hard she was afraid he might hear it. She had not counted on this. And yet—

"Let me look at you." He took her two hands and drew her slowly to him. Then he looked long and searchingly into her face. Trudie raised her eyes to his and found them blue and kind, and looking at her the way she had always hoped some man's eyes would look.

"You've changed," he said slowly. "There's something more in your face. I have come back to find a fine woman. Lee, instead of the pretty girl I left behind."

So when he opened his arms to her again she threw all caution to the winds and forgot Leila entirely. It was not until a few moments later when he turned the big amethyst ring on her finger and said: "You remember what this means, don't you, Lee?" that what she was doing overwhelmed her. She nodded, too frightened to speak. This was dangerous, but as exhilarating as a speedboat.

"Then there's no one else?"

"No one."

"We can begin where we left off then, five years ago? There has been no one



The officer eyed Trudie skeptically, taking in the blue dress with the bedraggled hem and train. "Hm-m. What's your name?" he demanded

else for me, either. "You do love me, don't you, darling?"

"How could I help it?" Trudie heard herself saying eagerly. There was no drawing back now.

He told her then about himself, of hard Winters in the North, of a slag slide in Mexico when he was almost buried under tons of stone, of native riots, of money won and money lost.

"But I've made a little now, Lee. That is why I came home. I can give you the things you always wanted so badly. Folks used to say 'that Bruce Evans is a fool,' but I showed them."

Bruce Evans. So that was his name she hardly heard what he was saying.

"But you don't want to hear all this now. You're all dressed up and, if I know my Leila, you want to go places. Well, where shall it be?"

"There is a new place I'd like to try out," she said, remembering some talk at the office. "It's called the Big Show Boat, and it's down on the riverfront."

Trudie thought he seemed quiet as the cab bumped over the rough riverfront street. Once he looked at his watch. But when they reached the gangplank that led to the club he was the perfect escort.

Bruce seemed in a holiday mood. "This is just right," he said softly in her ear as he took her in his arms to dance. "Are you still in love with me?"

Trudie laughed into his eyes. "Don't ask unnecessary questions," she said.

A LONG whistle sounded from off the water, an eerie, warning sort of whistle. Bruce started and drew away to hold his watch under the light of a lantern.

"I didn't know it was so late," he said. "Listen, Lee, I must leave you for just a few minutes. Do you mind?"

"Is anything wrong?"

"No. I'll tell you when I get back."

He led her back to their table in the corner. A girl was singing on the stage. "Remember," he said, "don't move until I get back."

Trudie watched him disappear through the dimly lighted entrance way. He had not stopped at the checkroom and somehow she was faintly disturbed. What could have been his sudden errand at this time of the night?

The song ended. The lights went on. Trudie sat alone through a long dance. Then the dancers parted and she saw Leila across the room. This was bad. She must get away quickly. Her hands were wet with nervousness. If Bruce would only come quickly.

BUT still Bruce did not come. She drew back into the shadows and waited. Another stage act was on, a pair of black-face comedians, but she could not listen. She felt suddenly terribly alone and in some way in danger. Two men who had passed and repassed her table were now standing near the doorway and evidently watching her closely.

Then she saw Pat. He had been dancing with a small, dark girl, but another man had cut in on him.

"Pat!" she called in desperation. He whirled and came over to her table.

"Well, this is luck!" he said, bending over her chair. Before this night she would have been thrilled with his nearness; now it only meant liberation from a bad situation.

"Oh, Pat, I'm so glad! The man I came with had to go—suddenly. Won't you get a cab for me? I want to go home."

Pat shrugged. "Why home? I say, Trudie, you are looking tremendous tonight. What about a little dance?"

"No," said Trudie hurriedly. "I—I don't want to dance. Just take me out to the door and get me a cab, that's all I want."

"What's the matter with you? Don't be a piker. Leila's here, and Christine and Sam—"

She must do something quickly, for Leila had seen her. She could recognize first astonishment, then vivid anger in her roommate's face. If a borrowed dress could do that to Leila what would the sight of Bruce and her together do?

"Listen, Pat, I'm tired—and hot. Let's

go out on the deck," she said, linking her arm through his. He gave it a quick squeeze as they moved toward an open door. There was a knowing smile on his face that made her hate him. Hurry, hurry, she kept whispering to their lagging feet.

Then, just as they reached the door, luck was with her. The lights went out, completely this time, to set off more spectacularly the big spot that featured the crooner of the evening. Wrenching her arm from Pat's intimate hold, she ran along the darkened deck toward what she hoped would prove an exit to the street. But a blank wall blocked her way. There must be some way out, some way except where Bruce and those two silent men stood waiting.

Frantically she looked about for escape. A wharf lay some fifteen feet below. Under her hand lay a rope from one of the fake life preservers. She threw it overboard and dropped to the dock. Crouching in the deep shadows behind a pile of barrels she waited, her heart pounding like a winded runner's.

"She must be here somewhere," she heard a man's voice say. "There is no other way out. The little fool looked like a scared rabbit."

The voices died away. Footsteps retreated along the deck. She ran then, from shadow to shadow. There was a clumsy ladder at the end of the dock, leading to the street. Cautiously Trudie climbed, holding her bedraggled dress well above her knees. To her left bright lights showed the entrance to the club.

She turned right and ran close among the shadows, but not before she thought she heard some one cry: "There she is!" and again footsteps in pursuit.

She felt as if she were in a nightmare. Her lips were weak with terror, but she ran, spike heels stabbing her and wrenching her ankles on the rough stones. Her breath came in short, stabbing gasps. Before her an avenue of moonlight broke the shadows. She hesitated. What now?

Then to her right she saw another dock at the foot of which swung a lighted boat. No time to deliberate. Dropping behind a group of pilings she found what she hoped for, another ladder. The tide was out. The boat lay low on the water. It was not a hard matter to throw herself over the side. She had landed on the deck of a small but luxurious yacht.

It was dark there except for the glow

of soft lights from the cabin. Crouching on all fours, she peered in. It was empty. But beside her was a wicker chaise longue that seemed to hold out comforting arms, urging her to sink down until those pursuing footsteps passed her by. To rest—rest—rest—and cry until her heart would break.

Half an hour later Trudie was startled awake by a blast close by. For an instant she wondered where she was.

Then it all came back. Her heart ached and her head throbbed. The whistle screamed again. Suddenly she stiffened as a flashlight swept the boat, picking out the objects on the deck in startling clearness. She could see a man in evening clothes sitting on a chair looking at her.

Then the deck was dark again, and Trudie, shrinking back among the cushions, realized the boat was in motion. A voice amplified by a megaphone was calling something she could not understand. Signal bells sounded. The engines ceased and the boat drifted. There was no running now.

Another boat was pulled alongside and two men were climbing aboard. The man in evening clothes was at the rail talking to them.

"I have no one of that name on board. Here are my papers. You are free to search the boat."

Deck lights flashed on, the man at the rail was facing her and she saw it was Bruce. She saw, too, that some one had covered her with a light blanket as she slept. Her heart ached with the thought of his tenderness.

She rose, but the two men had already seen her. "I thought you said you had no woman on board," one growled to Bruce.

"I said, 'Not of the name you gave me,' officer. This young lady I know well, she is my guest, in fact, my fiancée."

The officer eyed Trudie skeptically, taking in the blue dress with the bedraggled hem and train. "Hm! What's your name?"

Trudie's eyes sought Bruce's face. He stood with arms folded, no expression other than a casual interest upon his clean-cut features. A dull pain crept into her heart.

"Gertrude Porter."

"Your address?"

She gave it.

"Who is Leila Graham? Do you know her?"

"Yes, I live with her."

"Do you model for Anderson's, too?"

ound 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."

"She better go into Anderson's first thing—" A man handed him a slip of paper from the boat alongside. "Wait, here's a radio now. It's O. K. You can go along. They got Leila Graham and the rest of the stuff right at home. That lets you out, Miss."

"Oh!" gasped Trudie. "Poor Leila! What'll they do to her?"

The detective chuckled. "If she looks anything like you," he said, "I guess she'll get off pretty easy."

When the men had gone Trudie sank to the edge of the chaise longue, Bruce gave an order. The engines of the yacht began to throb.

"You better put me ashore," she managed to say.

"I will, if you really want to go. But first—what does Pat Hanlon mean to you?"

"Pat? Why, I hardly knew him—it was all Leila with Pat."

"Then you were never in love with him?"

"Of course not." How could that flicker she had felt for Pat be called love in comparison with this flame that was consuming her now?

"That's all I wanted to know. I wouldn't run off with another man's girl. For I am running off with you. That is why I left you so suddenly. I had heard my captain's sailing signal, and I wanted to phone Jamison—as you heard me explain.

"When I got back you were dancing with Pat. He looked like a cat and you like a scared little canary. I went to cut in on you, but the lights went out. I heard Pat swearing to those others that you had given him the slip. Why did you run away? You were like a ghost among those shadows."

I WAS frightened, not only about Pat but because I had seen Leila and I did not want to face you. But now that you know—that I not only borrowed her dress but her name and her lover, even if it was just for a lark—"

"Was it just a lark to you?"

"What does it matter now? I deceived you purposely."

"But not for long. In fact, only for a few seconds. You see, Leila has a tiny scar over her right eyebrow—and you have none. Besides, Leila Graham never was nor ever could be as sweet as the girl I found tonight."

"But the ring, and—and all the things you said."

"I never saw the ring before. I was just playing the game at first. It was to have been a lark for me, too, until—well, I meant every single thing I said. For some unknown reason I have fallen in love with the dearest little impostor in the world. I think probably it is her spunk. An engineer's wife needs plenty of that."

At these words Trudie felt as if she had awakened from a nightmare to the beauties of a fresh April morning. And she lifted her lips for his kiss, for the kiss that was hers and hers alone.