

In the dim light of her boudoir June looked herself over—a simple white silk gown like an inverted lily, an orchid from Henri's last bouquet—could that starchy-eyed, exquisite creature wearing dress and orchid really be herself?

Two minutes now! And maybe Henri would be early—impatient like herself, he might be coming, the romantic lover of their own lovely romance.

"Oh, thank you, Life! Thank you, thank you, Cupid," she whispered fervently, eagerly, her impatient slim feet dancing to the wide old casement.

It was silly, their eloping. She giggled, thinking about it. Loving Henri for being so utterly silly. From whom were they eloping—friendly Marion who thought they were the "best-looking couple she ever saw"? Marlon's husband, Comte de Leusse, who was older and busy with politics and had never even seen Henri? Ridiculous! They were eloping because climbing from a medieval chateau on a moonlit midnight into the strong arms of an ardent, dark-haired lover had been June's idea of a perfect romance from the moment Henri had suggested it.

Her watch pointed to the hour. Anxiously she thrust her head from the window and peered down below into the shadowy grounds. That old moat Marlon had laughed so much about looked dark enough now and forbidding. But here on this side the chateau was bathed with soft moonlight and even as she looked June's heart leaped with happiness. Henri! Coming from out the shadows.

But there was something unfamiliar about him. . . It—her eyes widened—it wasn't Henri! No. . . not Henri! It was a shorter man, crouching as he slowly moved close to the wall of the chateau. He was moving like a cat about to spring upon a mouse. She leaned farther out. . . And there was the "mouse"! Another dark figure down in the illages. . . That wasn't Henri, either. And the mouse hadn't seen the cat. He was looking through a window. She couldn't tell what window it was he saw through it. She was glad her room was on the second floor. If they ever looked up, she would be able to discern their features.

SUDDENLY from the shadows she saw a third man approaching warily, a gun gleaming in his hand. Neither of the other two saw him. He moved toward them cautiously. He—! He was Henri! Henri! June pressed a slender hand against her mouth to hold back the exclamation.

"Oh, Henri, darling, what are you doing?" she whispered to her own unruly heart, and with clenched hands murmured, "He mustn't get hurt! Nothing must hurt Henri!" And over and over the word echoed within her. "Henri!" Henri! The most wonderful name she had ever heard—the finest—the best— Suddenly there was a scuffle. The sound of men's voices, low, guttural "Blime me if it ain't the Duke!" Cock-

ney English' It was the "cat" speaking, but his hands were up. "Look, Spike! So you read about the bloody jools an' 'orned in a lead of me. Then 'ere's the Duke! Ever find a good 'aul 'e didn't git in on?"

"Merci!" It was Henri's voice, only sharp and gruff, too. "I've known for over a week you'd be coming—"
"Yeah?" The mouse's voice was sul-
lien, furious. "I knowed you was 'ere, too, but I thought this time hit was a dame. Pretty smart, hein' yuh? That's wot you wanted us to think. Blimme if I'd—"

"Par bleu!"
A shuffle. A shot.
June leaned forward breathlessly. All three of the men were standing again. The "cat" and the "mouse" were facing Henri, the "mouse's" arm dangling limply.

A DOOR opened somewhere and a woman came running. . . It was Comtesse de Leusse calling. "What is this?"
She paused breathlessly. "Henri! What in the world—?"

"Sorry!" Henri's voice down there with its slight attractive accent made June's pulses quicken, even now when a great fear was beginning to drive all the nim-
bleness from her dancing feet and the rhythm of joy from her heart.
"Sorry," Henri was saying. "Comtesse, I am with the French police. You see, ever since that first party and the society columns full of descriptions of your jewels, I have been watching for these two. They are famous, international crooks. Sort of competitors, you might say—"
Marlon gasped suddenly. "And tomorrow!" she said, "the two de Leusse necklaces were to go back to Bar-
ton—"
"So, they had to come tonight," Henri agreed. "You see, I had to have some excuse for being on hand—something they wouldn't suspect—that would make them careless—so I—well—Miss Harrington—"

June didn't wait to hear any more. She staggered a little, backing into her room, feeling faint—feeling almost as if she might be dying. It was so unreal and horrible! And yet so plain! He'd suggested eloping. They'd talked it all over the chateau grounds so that Henri would be doing tonight—! Oh! She sank back miserably into a Louis X chair, her breath catching in a sob. He didn't love her!
"He just—" she whispered to the room which had seen her so radiant a

few moments before—"ne just—" she choked—"used me for an excuse!"
June paused uncertainly. She didn't want to go in on a scene like this.
"Besides," Henri's voice scorned. "It was your idea that I was an aristocrat. You introduced me as one. I knew you American women. You wanted to make an impression on your guest. I—what do you say?—played up to it. And you—"
"An ordinary cop!" Marlon repeated. Her voice full of disgust. "And you dared hang around making love to a little school teacher—!"

"School teacher!" Henri laughed coldly, surprise in his exclamation. "And you told me she was from one of America's wealthiest families! At least for my deception I had a purpose. My Government pays me to protect property by any method I can. But you—'one of America's oldest families'—!"

AT HIS second frigid, scornful laugh, snapped in June's breast. Like a young golden goddess, head erect, but eyes gleaming with suppressed tears, she burst into the room.
"Sorry I overheard!" She heard her own voice sharp and clear like the breaking of fine china. "I guess we were playing" a double game, Lieutenant Ecomard. You, a policeman on duty thinking the girl you were persuading to elope with you was wealthy. All the lovely vows of eternal love you made were for the ears of a couple of cockney criminals who might be listening—"
June's voice almost broke. In a great wave of despair she plunged on.

"Well, you gave me my adventure, anyway. Even if I am a school teacher, and even if my mother does run a boarding house in Marysdale, I haven't been as dumb as you thought! After all, I had my own little fun. I did feel a little guilty letting you plan that elopement! It was so ridiculous!" June's cheeks were flushed and her mouth straight and small.
"You didn't really think," she went on slowly, looking at the humorous arch of Henri's eyebrow, her glances traveling over his broad shoulders where her head had so recently leaned, down to his strong arms which had held her so close—she mustn't think of those kisses—
She mustn't!

"You didn't really think I took that wild suggestion seriously? You didn't think—" For the flickering of an eye-lash she looked into Henri's dark quizzical eyes and caught her breath. "You

"It was my business to gain entrance to your home—!"
June paused uncertainly. She didn't want to go in on a scene like this.

"Besides," Henri's voice scorned. "It was your idea that I was an aristocrat. You introduced me as one. I knew you American women. You wanted to make an impression on your guest. I—what do you say?—played up to it. And you—"
"An ordinary cop!" Marlon repeated. Her voice full of disgust. "And you dared hang around making love to a little school teacher—!"

"School teacher!" Henri laughed coldly, surprise in his exclamation. "And you told me she was from one of America's wealthiest families! At least for my deception I had a purpose. My Government pays me to protect property by any method I can. But you—'one of America's oldest families'—!"

AT HIS second frigid, scornful laugh, snapped in June's breast. Like a young golden goddess, head erect, but eyes gleaming with suppressed tears, she burst into the room.
"Sorry I overheard!" She heard her own voice sharp and clear like the breaking of fine china. "I guess we were playing" a double game, Lieutenant Ecomard. You, a policeman on duty thinking the girl you were persuading to elope with you was wealthy. All the lovely vows of eternal love you made were for the ears of a couple of cockney criminals who might be listening—"
June's voice almost broke. In a great wave of despair she plunged on.

"Well, you gave me my adventure, anyway. Even if I am a school teacher, and even if my mother does run a boarding house in Marysdale, I haven't been as dumb as you thought! After all, I had my own little fun. I did feel a little guilty letting you plan that elopement! It was so ridiculous!" June's cheeks were flushed and her mouth straight and small.
"You didn't really think," she went on slowly, looking at the humorous arch of Henri's eyebrow, her glances traveling over his broad shoulders where her head had so recently leaned, down to his strong arms which had held her so close—she mustn't think of those kisses—
She mustn't!

"You didn't really think I took that wild suggestion seriously? You didn't think—" For the flickering of an eye-lash she looked into Henri's dark quizzical eyes and caught her breath. "You

didn't think for a moment I'd have gone if you'd come bringing that silly lady—!" She stopped because she didn't dare trust herself to go on.

Henri's slight bow and smile included both the Comtesse and June.

"**W**HEN everything is all right. You had your—adventure. I apprehended the two thieves my Government has been pursuing. No harm is done!"

June tried not to think as she looked at the handsome policeman before her about how gentle his voice could be, how serious and breath-taking his love-making. She couldn't mistake the finality with which he was dismissing their "affair."

"Good night," she said in a small dignified voice, and pretending not to notice his extended hand, she moved slowly to the hall and fled up the stairs impatient to be alone—to bolt the door and shut out everything but her memories, and to weep her heart out uninterrupted.

So this was what unhappiness meant? This terrible ache—this utter desolation.

And even now she knew, as her sobs abated and she thought with leaden heart about Henri, that his flimsiest explanation would be enough to bring her eagerly into his strong, fierce embrace again. For all life had come to mean Henri—aristocrat or policeman. What did that matter? And because she couldn't have him, how could she ever bear to hear his name again?

How could she face Marlon in the morning?
Suddenly June was dreadfully homesick. She blinked back tears fiercely. There was the little bag packed for elopement. Why not leave tonight? Good old America! Good, kind protective little Marysdale!

Gone was the dancing sparkle in her eyes as she slipped from the white dress she'd donned with so much care only a little while ago. She donned a chic dark blue suit, held the orchid close for a moment, and then flung it quickly far out the window into the night.

AN HOUR later a slim blue-eyed American girl was showing a gray-haired gateman her ticket to Venice. Venice had been a magic word in Marysdale, the epitome of fairyland when the Wheeler representative had awarded her the trip. Now it was only a weary extra journey she had to take to reach the Italian Conde liner which would carry her home.

smiled.
And June smelled the fragrance of a clean kitchen and New England clam chowder.

"One of the boarders is still eating," Mother whispered importantly, bustling her into the house. "He's awfully nice. Some foreign aristocrat, they say—think of it! Found it out from his passports. Why an important man like him'd come to Marysdale—"
Mrs Harrington put her arm around her daughter fondly and led her to the dining room where the one boarder still ate. "Mr. Ecomard, this is my daughter, June."

Mr. Ecomard stood his full six feet and bowed, his napkin in his left hand and his right hand slightly extended. "Miss Harrington," he acknowledged, his dark eyes searching her face anxiously and a quizzical smile lighting his face.

"Henri!" June breathed, her lips parted slightly, her eyes deep pools of amazement.

And Mother Harrington, whose years superseded her power of observation, bustled gayly to the kitchen, hurrying Myra back with chowder for June and pie for the foreign gentleman.

So over golden-flaked apple pie in June's own small home, their eyes feasted on each other hungrily.

FINALLY when Myra had left and Mother's voice could be heard directing Jed outside, Henri spoke quickly.

"I went back to explain the next morning—when we could be alone. I couldn't tell you in front of the Comtesse. . . And you were gone!" He paused with a sharp intake of breath, his lips suddenly close to her hair. "The chateleine gave me your address. . ."

"Darling!" June murmured. "I came to ask you," he hurried on, "does it matter very much whether my family are aristocrats?"

And June, looking into his serious handsome face, knew that nothing mattered. Nothing but Henri.

His hand inclosed hers. "But you see they are. I am the only son of the Marquis de Ecomard."

"Then you weren't a policeman?"
"But, of course! I am connected with the Secret Service. Even aristocrats—if they have sense—work, cher!"

June, remembering a little nook in the garden, forgot to touch her food. They were alone in the tiny garden as the first evening star twinkled on the horizon. And they faced each other holding hands, eyes eloquent.

"June!" he breathed tensely. "Could you ever—?"

"Henri! Then you do—?"
And June as she again felt those strong arms about her and looked up into the ardent classic face of Henri knew that Marysdale and Venice and every place would always be lovely and romantic.