

CONTRACT

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Love Was More Important
to This Night Club Singer

Than the

Spotlight of
Acclaim

LARRY BENTLEY was foremost of the little cluster about the entertainers' entrance. His mouth was open. His eyes were wide with surprise. He watched, as every one from the cook's helper to the most bejeweled customer was watching, the figure of the slim girl beside the piano. He listened, as they all listened, and if he trembled a little more than any other of Virginia Gordon's thrilled audience, it was because he was losing a very important bet.

When she had finished her song she looked toward Larry. Her eyes shone. Her face was flushed, radiant. She started toward him through a wave of deafening applause, not the least of which was contributed by that young man in white tie and tails.

Then she was called for an encore and another. After that she ran off the floor in his arms.

"Darling!" she exclaimed breathlessly as they pushed through the cooks and busboys gathered in the alley to the dressing rooms.

His voice was husky. "Jiminy! You've been holding out on a pal! Where did you learn to sing like that?"

Impetuously, she kissed his cheek. "Come in a minute, Larry," she said and pushed open the door of her room.

He followed, grimacing broadly yet with just a tinge of furtive pain in his eyes. That bet had seemed such a good idea.

He shut the door against the familiar strains of the orchestra swinging a tune.

"Well," he said, "I concede the bet. I've been doing the yodling in this place so long, I guess I got swell-headed. I never thought there might be other voices beside mine."

She looked back at him through the mirror where she was trying to effect an arrangement between heightened natural color, flushed with the enthusiastic acceptance of her song, and her make-up.

"Larry," she said happily, "don't talk like that. I love your voice."
"We made a little bet," she reminded

Geegee grinned down at Larry as he danced with Ginny. He waved his baton. "How about giving us a song."



Jiminy, you're awfully cool about this. After all, it's a big thing."

"Yes," she agreed, "a big thing."
"Then," he said, "get excited! Be happy! Smile!"

"My, Larry, you look so tragic. Why don't you do the same? Personally, I withhold those emotions for something really important."

"Important!" he exclaimed. Then the discussion dropped as he took her coat from the check girl and held it for her.

"Where to?" he asked hoarsely.

"Oh-h, we might ride around. Or come to my apartment, Larry. I'll make coffee. You mentioned a while ago that you had something to say, after I had my contract."

He looked at her curiously, doubtfully, after they were in the cab.

"Sa-ay, what in the world's got into you?"

"I DON'T know what you mean. Perhaps," she suggested brightly, "my success has gone to my head. It is success, you know, to jump suddenly from a mediocre dancing job into such a position as that with Geegee. And did you notice the way Geegee looked at me? After I sang, I mean. He wasn't so respectful before."

"All right," said Larry gruffly. "You've got your contract. And maybe you've got Geegee. Only remember," he cautioned, "he's already got as many wives as the law allows."

"Larry?" she asked after a moment.

"Yes?"

"Are you glad?"

"Glad about what? Geegee?"

"Of course not? Are you glad I'm

successful about the contract?"

"It's lucky. It's a good thing. It's—"

"But are you glad? You haven't done anything for the last five minutes but growl."

He turned on her savagely.

"I am not glad!" he said loudly. "I'm unhappy! I wish you had mumps today! I wish—"

"You're shouting," she reminded him sweetly and he shut up like a clam.

After they were in the apartment he watched her morosely. She had an expert manner of managing even such things as pouring water from a kettle to a percolator. The odor of coffee began to fill the room. Then she brought out little squares of toast with jelly spread on them.

The whole atmosphere of this late supper was so domestic it was like turning a weapon in a new wound within his breast. After the sixth or seventh little square of toast he grinned a little ruefully.

"Forgive me for barking tonight, Jiminy."

She arched her eyebrows and poured another coffee for him.

"Should I? It did seem rather beastly. Especially after you had virtually jilted me."

She was gone a full five minutes and when she returned she looked neither less nor more beautiful than she had been before. In fact, no change was evident from the standpoint of masculine eyes, but that may have been due to the ways of maids and mirrors.

When she did sing, she gave a better performance than she had earlier in the evening. She was encored twice and Larry was jubilant. Geegee's eyes were moist with enthusiasm.

"I want to talk with you, Miss Gordon," he said as he handed her down the steps. "And you, too, Larry."