

the day. The punch air...
ing of Old Man Winter, who is paying
us a belated visit. I'm one of her guests.
Answer to the name of Edward Brooks—
"Ted, to you." He shot a swift smile at
Polly.

And that smile, those fiery-blue eyes
did something to Polly, made her heart
behave ridiculously. The car became a
thing of shining silvery wings slinging in
the wind.

"How does it happen I never met you
before?" Ted demanded. "My error, but
how in time did I make it? Where have
you been—abroad?"

A thread of pure gold ran through
Polly's laugh. "Abroad, my eye!" she
said elegantly. "I'm no lily of the field.
I'm a business gal."

"How come?" he asked, grinning at her.
"The answer is old. Ladies must live.
And now you are wondering why am I
bound for a house party on Thursday
when I should be in the office?" The
veiled-brown eyes glistened at him.

"Well—people will die, you know, and
that's what my boss did. The offices of
Bretton Advertising are closed until Mon-
day, and Polly Ayers, secretary to the late
president, is going to have four days of
play."

She saw that he still was curious—
or—interested. Marcia, of course, had
never spoken of her—why should she?
"Marcia and I went to Miss Patterson's
School. Since graduation my road made
a detour. Marcia and I, living different
lives, haven't seen much of each other.
Last week in town we ran into each other
—literally—she almost knocked me down,
she was going places in a hurry, and she
asked me here for the party. I intended
to come Saturday but wired her last
night that I could come today."

Ted's mind was busy. Miss Patterson's
School. Sure, Polly was a little thor-
oughbred, any one could see that. No
doubt her father had taken a swell
beating—like his father had—Polly was
in an office now, and gay about it. No
self-pity there. Swell girl. More guts
than he had. Oh, well—

"Listen, Polly, the first dance tonight
is mine, see?"
"All right," her voice glowed.
"Don't forget. I don't want a campaign
promise. There's going to be a stampede
when the other fellows see you."

"Poof!" she scoffed. "Don't feed me
that."
"There's only one of you, Polly Ayers."
He turned in the wide graveled drive.
Ahead lay the country house, a wide,
rambling house built of wood.

As she mounted the steps in the wake
of a manservant who carried her bag,
Ted drove his car to the garage. When
he had shut off the ignition he sat staring
at the bare wall ahead of him. Finally
he shook his head. His eyes were stripped
of laughter and his lips were grim.

"She's not for me." He drew a deep
breath, repeated the words aloud. They
seemed to hang in the still garage with
painful finality. Ten minutes passed,
still Ted sat in his car staring at the
wall that stared back at him with blank
eyes. Finally he put shining dreams
behind him, left the garage.

When he entered the wide old hall,
crisply.

Polly was running down the stairs. He
gave one look at the radiant girl clad in
a flaming orange sport suit and his heart
turned over.

The girls, Marcia and Polly, sat in
Marcia's room that evening. They
had a few minutes before dressing time
and were recalling school days. The topic
finished, Marcia asked lazily:

"Why don't you marry, Polly? It's a
crime, a girl like you slaving away—"
"Crime! Well—they haven't sent me
up for it," Polly laughed. "And, anyway,
I won't marry just any man. I'm waiting
for a man to carve his name on my
heart."

"LOVE?" Marcia asked scornfully.
"There are many better reasons
for marriage than love."
"It will be the only reason for my
marriage, when I do." Polly thought of
Ted's fine face, of his long, graceful
body; of his lazy, laughing voice; his
ice, and a little song trembled in her
veins, sang in her heart.

Marcia was saying, "I've been brides-
maid seven times to girls all my own
age. I'm becoming a joke." She pulled
a cigarette end from her long jade
holder and tossed it on an ashtray.

"Which of the men here do you like
the best, Polly?"
"They're a fine bunch. I like them
all," Polly said guardedly.

"But I think Ted Brooks is outstand-
ing, don't you?" Marcia persisted.
"Well, the best looking."
"Oh, that! Every one raves over Ted's
looks. But he has everything else—
except money. He's flat. Everybody
knows it and no one cares. Ted is Ted.
He has ten times as many invitations as
he can accept, week-ends, house parties,
yachting cruises—everything. I imagine
his living doesn't cost him a cent."

"What does he do?" Polly asked with
careful carelessness.
"What do you mean 'do'?" Marcia
asked sharply. "Work? Ted has no
profession, never worked a day in his
life. He was raised as a rich man's son—
haven't you heard of him, Polly? You're
so out of things since you went in that
old office."

Polly had a fleeting thought. Marcia
in her luxurious, effortless living must
think money was to be picked from
bushes. How in the name of heaven
was she—Polly—to live if she didn't
work?

"No, I haven't heard of him. I never
read the society pages any more. But
why shouldn't Ted work? He could do
something. He's Harvard, he said."
"I can imagine Ted Brooks standing
in some man's office, hat in hand, asking
for a job," Marcia said dryly.

"How do his parents live?" Polly asked
crisply.

"Father is dead, crashed in a plane.
His mother lives in London with the
daughter, Lady Harriet Beechfield. She
married her title before finances went
haywire—fortunately."

Polly rose, threw her cigarette in the
grate and yawned.
"Time to dress," she observed, looking
at the silver clock on Marcia's desk.

Marcia threw an arm over Polly's
shoulders. She was fond of Polly. Too
fond they had drifted apart. In the
future she intended to keep a tighter
rein on their friendship. Ask Polly to
a lot of parties. This crowd here had
opened their arms to the girl, had rated
Polly was a knockout. So gay, friendly
and, of all rare things, frank she was.

"I'm going to pick out a man for you,
Polly. I want you to marry money,"
Marcia said as Polly turned to the door.
"See you later." The door closed behind her.
On her way to her room she thought,
"Thanks, Marcia, but I've picked my
own man, and he'll go to work, too.
Bonds, insurance, real estate—there's
lots of things that young man can do,
and he'll do it, too—when he has the
incentive."

She laughed softly, nodded across the
hall at the room Ted occupied and said:
"You don't know I'm going to make
myself your incentive, do you, darling?"

POLLY gave a last complacent look in
the mirror. She nodded her head
to the girl who looked back at her.
"You look pretty nifty tonight. But
you ought to. When you think of what
that gown cost you ought to get heart
failure—spendthrift."

Ted was in the big living room, as
most of them were, when she came to
the archway, stood poised, looking over
the room.

Ted's gaze winged to her own and
they stood a moment, faces still, eyes
deep in each other's.

Then some one rushed to her with a
cocktail and others came in and dinner
was announced.

Marcia had annexed Ted, but at least
he sat opposite her, and the flowers ar-
ranged in low bowls made no obstruc-
tion. How well he looked in dinner
clothes! How high he held that fine
blond head! Polly literally had to tear
her eyes away from him. She looked at
the table with its service.

Lovely to live like this. She had
almost forgotten how lovely it was.
Dinner went gayly to its end. Dancing
would start now. Impatiently Polly
waited for that first dance—for Ted's
arm around her and her head against
his heart. She wanted to hear its beat.

Would it be quick and warm and sweet,
as was her own heartbeat?
In one of the big double living rooms
the rugs had been rolled back, the furni-
ture pushed against the walls. The radio
was beginning its dance program.

And Ted was hurrying across the room
to her. Her heart shook when she heard
his footsteps on the bare floor. He
reached for her and she went into his
arms. Yes, her head just touched his
heart. A heart that was making a
clamor. No doubt there was music
from the radio, but she danced to her
own hidden music. The movements of
their young bodies was as poetry caught
in action.

"YOU dance well." She lifted starry
brown eyes to his, tilting back her
head that she might see him.
"When I go to bed tonight," he smiled
at her. "I'll say 'Amen' to a perfect
day."

"Why perfect?" Her eyes were pro-
vocative.
"You know the answers, Polly."
She had no reply to that, for some one
said: "please," and she was whisked
from Ted's arm.

"Darn it," Polly stormed silently,
"breaking in on a Perfect Moment!"
When she danced with Ted again, she
could not recapture that moment. He
was impersonal; it was as though the
petals had fallen from a lovely rose and
the rose lay bare, stripped of beauty.

At midnight they had a buffet supper,
each guest filling his and her plate with
the thing they fancied and bringing it
to the living room where a three-foot
log blazed on the hearth. It was cheery
and cozy in that big room.

Supper over, some one began to tell
ghost stories and Ted, grinning, snapped
out the lights. The glowing firelight
shone on those sprawling near the
hearth, but the corners of the big room
were veiled with shadow.

Polly, who had been sitting in one of
those corners, rose, intending to go
nearer to the firelight. Ken certainly
was telling a shivery tale. She felt her-
self seized in strong young arms, felt
clinging, burning with magic fire.

As suddenly as she had been seized
she was released. She fell into the chair
behind her, as a vague, shadowy shape
moved away swiftly. She could not see
where it went.

When Polly had regained her breath,
she fumbled through the darkness to the
firelight. Swiftly she looked at the
men. Was Ted among them?
She saw him sitting on the floor by
the hearth, face raised to Ken, listening
to Ken's tale. Polly smiled. A secret

ecstatic little smile, for at the corner of
Ted's mouth was a tiny red mark.
Snow began to drift soft as fleece
from a black sky. Gently it spread its
pure white blanket over the frozen
ground. Late April was playing tricks
at this mountain resort. With an artist's
love of beauty it covered every ugly
thing and gave bushes an exquisite robe
of fairy white. It brushed against the
windows as though peering in at that
sleeping household.

The next morning its advent was hailed
joyously. "Snow!" they shouted as though
they had never seen that lovely miracle
before. "Sledding today. Ted, you steer.
Dick, you be end-man. Marcia, we can
christen your new bobbed. Three cheers
for good ole' snow."

It was fun whizzing down from the top
of that long hill, trudging up again, but
there was little opportunity to see Ted
alone, Polly reflected. At luncheon he
sat beside Marcia's mother. Not once
did he look her way.

After luncheon they sprawled around
the fireplace for an hour, then piled in
a two-seated sleigh, drawn by a farmer's
horse, and drove gayly over the snow-
laden lanes singing "Jingle Bells" at the
top of their lusty young voices.

Ted drove and Marcia, in a thick
white sweater, beret and white wool skirt
was crowded close beside him.
"This is the life!" Ken shouted. "The
great outdoors. Freedom, space—"
"You idiot," Ted chuckled, "we're in
the Maine Hills. You're thinking of the
great untamed places—if any."

IT WAS all very gay, very jolly, but
there was a decided letdown for Polly.
She was in the second seat "and playing
second fiddle," she told herself with a
little twist of her lips. Marcia was in
the spotlight today.

She didn't regret in the least. When
they turned back to the house. Tea-
time now. Surely Ted would put a chair
beside her own. But apparently Ted
did not care for tea.

"So long," he called. "See you all at
cocktails," and Polly heard him taking
the stairs two at a time.

Later, Marcia came into her room,
walked around restlessly, picked up a
book, put it down, straightened some
flowers in a vase and finally said, ab-
ruptly:

"I'm engaged, Polly. But don't men-
tion it. I'm announcing it at a dinner
when we go back to town. And I want
you to come."

Silently Polly looked at her. Where
was the luminous quality of a just-en-
gaged girl? "Are you happy about it,
Marcia?"

"Well—I'm not unhappy. It's time
I'm getting married and of all the men
who have asked me I think I will hit
it off better with Ted than any other.
Ted. A sword lifted itself with invisible
hands and pierced Polly's heart.

Others stood at the foot of the hill
watching the little figure skim down the
hill like a bird of brilliant plumage. She
was coming along fine when something
went wrong. The terrified eyes of those
watching her saw her swerve, fall and
crash into a tree near the hill.

They started up the hill, eyes on the
motionless figure in its flaming orange
costume; like a splash of vivid sunset
against the white snow.

"She doesn't get up—she's hurt," Mar-
cia said swiftly. But she spoke to Ken,
for Ted's long legs were outdistancing
her and Ken.

Polly opened her eyes; whose arms
were holding her so convulsively? She
lifted her head. "Ted?" she asked won-
deringly.

"Polly, are you badly hurt? Darling,
are you in pain?" he cried frantically.
Polly's eyes were dazed as she looked
at Ted's gray, strained face. "I'm all
right, Ted. The breath was knocked out
of me, that's all. I don't hurt any place."

He gave an inarticulate little sound,
held her hard against his breast. "When
I saw you crash against that tree some-
thing died in me, Polly—"
"And something bloomed, too," she
murmured, face against his.

"Yes," he said eagerly. "Polly, I never
knew I loved you so—terribly. Nothing
else matters, darling. If you'll have me,
I'll work for you. I'll get a job; you
watch. I'll go places—in time—"

"Well—evidently Polly wasn't hurt,"
came Marcia's voice. An astonished
voice with an incredulous thread in it.
Polly drew away from Ted's arms. They
had forgotten Marcia!

"Are you two 'that way' about each
other? But what an unnecessary ques-
tion."
Ted released Polly's sturdy little shoes
from the broken skis, helped her to her
feet and stood with his arm around her.

"I never knew I loved her so much—
until—is it all right with you, Marcia?"
Marcia looked keenly from one face to
the other, then down the hill at Ken,
who was making slow headway, for Ken
was a bit overweight.

"So I'm a jilted woman, am I?" She
looked at Ted and chuckled. "I'm glad
you discovered your love for Polly before
Lohengrin pealed over our heads. It's
all right, Ted; in fact, it's right as rain.
Polly will put some ambition in you."

"MARCIA, you're a brick!" Polly cried
unsteadily. Her eyes were lumi-
nous, her cheeks, lips like popples.

"Love agrees with you, Polly. I think
I'll wait for something like that. After
all—" Marcia looked thoughtfully
across the white and shining landscape.

"Well, well," Ken puffed, "you're not
hurt, Polly? That's good news."
"Congratulations, you porpoise," Mar-
cia commanded gayly. "I'm going to be
bridesmaid again."

Polly's and Ted's eyes held like a
caught breath—in each other's eyes they
saw their love marching like a victorious
army, banners flying.