

...other car. You her up at his remodeled
wily wife a week, though
and kissed him shamelessly.

He swung off sideward. Long after the
dust obscured the bobbing crest of his
hair, as he galloped along behind, she
could hear his voice, jaunty, unbroken
by their parting: "Good-by, Mary Lee.
Mary Lee, she rolls along, rolls along,
rolls along. Mary Lee, she rolls along.
Good-by, Mary Lee."

MARY LEE was glad to get home.
There was the umbrella trees' deep
shade across the lawn in the morning
and the hum of bees in the bougainvillea
on the front porch and from up the block
the contented click of croquet mallets
against wooden balls as the old men
played and gossiped.
But hours were interminable before the
week was up. Mary Lee wanted to tell
some one about Flip, but didn't for an
awful fear that he might fall to come
She was busy, getting ready if he should
An old friend phoned and came by. Jodi
Willett gave her a welcome-home break-
fast. It was hard to drop back into the
easy swing of Monte Seco social life and
Mary Lee had so much to do... dresses
to make and new hats and coats to be
found and shoes for certain outfits. She
hardly had time even to run up to the
Valley Brook Country Club and see the
old crowd.

But Philip Carney didn't appear in a
week. Mary Lee's heart ached. "I was
right," she thought. "It wasn't love
Oh, please, Flip, come. I love you so
much. There's no doubt at all about
that."
The morning of the ninth day she
headed for Valley Brook. She'd play
and forget. The sight of Nelda after-
san, Vic and Jodi, Wingate Post... all
of them... soothed the ache in her
heart. She belonged here. Oh, but she'd
missed them!

She dashed up the wide steps laughing
and calling... to stop short. Some one
quite tall rose from the railing. His red
mop burned fiercely as he turned polite,
unrecognizing eyes toward her.
"Mary Lee," Nelda was introducing
them, "this is my house-guest Philip
Carney, on old pal of Bud."
In the face of his coolness Mary Lee
only murmured politely. "Mr Carney"
He smiled charmingly and bowed. Oh
quite correct.
He said: "Nelda's forgotten to tell me
your name."
Nelda laughed. "Sorry, stupid of me
She slipped a possessive hand through
Flip's arm. "This, Flip, is my dearest and
best friend, Mary Lee Lynn, the school
marm returned."

Then the radio began to blare and the
group fell away into couples, dancing
"Now," Mary Lee thought as Flip took her
hand. Mary Lee loved to dance
"So you're a teacher, Miss Gietun," he
said. "What do you teach?"
"Flip," whispered Mary Lee.
"Oh, swimming teacher, eh? Back flips
or front flips?"

Mary Lee's logical mind turned the
problem of her love over and over, and
still found no good reason for Flip to
love her. With her, things never hap-
pened without reasons. And looking at
Flip critically under her tip-tilted eye-
brows she was doubly sure it couldn't
be love. Not real love. Not mighty sweep-
off-the-feet passion—this quiet deep
fondness she had for him.
"Let's be frank," said Mary Lee.
"All right," he agreed. "There's a
slight vacancy between your eyeteeth and
incisors which drives me wild when you
laugh. And, speaking of laughing, why
don't you more often? It's delightful—
like some one breaking all the golden
bells of heaven! And there's a cleft in
your chin, Miss Lynn, which I find dis-
turbingly and..."

MARY LEE shook her head. "Be seri-
ous for a minute, please. We're way
off here, Flip, where we haven't any real
chance to judge each other. No yard-
stick."
"Yardsticks," grunted Flip. "I don't
need one. You come exactly to my
heart."
"Please," begged Mary Lee. "I don't
want to make a mistake, dear. After all
... you were pretty lonely up here till I
came along, and I... Well, we have to
weigh this carefully."
"Mary Lee," he said reproachfully, and
then, "Does love have to be weighed and
measured? I thought it was one of those
infinite things—like the universe." He
was serious at last, tremendously so.
Mary Lee's well-disciplined scientific
training refused to leap the hurdle of her
textbook. She answered gravely: "But,
Flip, there is a limit to everything. Even
the universe. Science is now able to de-
fine..."

Philip Carney rose and walked away
He didn't stop at the end of the patio
nor the corner of the building. He went
on restrainedly into the night. And he
didn't come back. Mary Lee waited a
while then cried herself to sleep. It was
so awful—her last night there.
The next morning Flip checked her
out. He gave her a prim receipt for her
check. He hoped she would have a pleas-
ant ride. He began sorting the mail.
"Flip," said Mary Lee, fighting to keep
a quaver from her voice. "Flip, aren't
you... I mean, last night I..."
"Oh, yes," he said. "I thought I'd met
you somewhere before. Fancy seeing
you again. What a small place the uni-
verse is!" He drew circles on the new
desk blotter and would not look at her.
"Flip," insisted Mary Lee. A spark
of anger steadied her now.
"Look here, Miss Lynn." He threw
down the pencil and shook his finger at
her. "Don't say 'Flip' that way again.
I'm neither a pancake nor a trained seal.
The station bus is waiting."



"Such a serious little school marm," said Flip, but his voice was gentle. Above a yellow moon looked down He came to her and took her hands.
Mary Lee bit her lip, then rallied. "Flip listen. I..."
"Yes, Miss Lawn."
She decided to adopt his key "Lynn is the name," she said. "Have you been here long?"
"About ten days," he answered. "Ten days, fourteen hours and a few old min-utes to be exact. I believe in being accu-rate, don't you?"
"You have not," choked Mary Lee. "I've only been here nine days. Unless... unless you flew?" She left it a ques-tion, but he did not explain. She was angry, hurt, self-accusing in one. She might have known Flip would "tease" this way. She'd show him she could kid too. She laughed lightly and glanced up.

HE WAS grinning and winking im-pishly at some one behind her. He did not even see her smile. She turned and looked; it was Nelda. The music stopped and Nelda joined them, twinkling at Flip.
"I ought to warn you, Mary Lee," said Nelda. "Philip is a perfect devil. All the girls are heartbroken since he came. He's had three proposals..."
"Four," Flip corrected her. "You now behold only the wreck of a once lovable human, Miss Bonn. Who did this das-sardly deed? Who left this rotting hulk on the sands of time? I ask you, who?"
"I know," said Mary Lee, too angry to cry. "A woman."

"Right," he said. "In the blush of my youth I did blush once... it was a woman that told me there was no Santa Claus. Again, it was a woman who said the moon was not made of green cheese more than that, she told me the univers was..."
Mary Lee drew back. "Any woman that could tell you anything ought to have a medal," she said. "It's been so nice meeting you." She ran out of the Valley Brook and took the car around some-ward curves on two wheels. She expected him to follow, her, somehow, but he didn't.

Mary Lee had never known days could be so long and purposeless. There was no point in anything... mail or powder-ing her nose or even breathing. Sunday, Monday, Tuesday.
The Wednesday paper brought her bolt upright in the front-porch ham-mock. Wingate Post wrote the Keyhole Gossip. He began startlingly:

FRIDAY came, and suddenly it was eve-ning, one of those moon-struck nights when anything might happen. Mary Lee was frightened, but she pretended not to be. She fretted up and down her bed-room with the lights off, her new cob-webby dress swirling and trailing about her. Moonbeams cut broad swathes across the floor, turning it argent as water. When she paused at her dressing table it turned her oval face to a small pale moon itself in the black pool of the mirror.

Curfew echoed up the Monte Seco Val-ley at 9:30. Mary Lee had been waiting for it. She caught up the flame velvet evening wrap and ran down the stairs "Good-by," she called hastily to her par-ents in the front room. They must not have a chance to ask her who was taking her and where. She had phoned for the city taxi before and it was waiting at the

corner under the umbrella trees. "Pat-tersons," said Mary Lee, breathlessly. The Patterson gardens were soft and lyrical under the moon's fingers. Mary Lee dodged through the hedge and up the footpath. There was a pool over-arched by wisteria, ringed with Iris. Mary Lee stumbled into this doubtful haven and shivered. The light was full of soft whispers, scraps of laughter, little tags of words and the distant throb of music. Mary Lee shut her eyes and called:
"Flip. Philip Carney." After a pause she tried again, louder.
It was minutes before he came out on the terrace and looked around. He ruf-fled his red hair with perplexity and moved along the balustrade.
"Flip," cried Mary Lee, just loud enough.
He reached the pool and stood looking at her, tongue-tied, strange for a mo-ment. Then he chuckled softly and said her name.
"Flip," she would not move an inch toward him around the pool. "You're going away, aren't you? Or maybe I came because I had to hear it from your lips that you don't love me, I mean."
"Such a serious little schoolmarm," said Flip, but his voice was gentle. He came to her and took her hands. She rushed on, frantically.
"I... I'm admitting my idea was crazy, Flip. I loved you all along, so deeply, so terribly, but I... I was so afraid you couldn't mean it... about loving me. You see, no exciting, delightful person ever fell in love with me before." After a long silence she asked: "Were you just fooling, Flip?"
"Still he didn't answer, only held her eyes with his. "Flip," she insisted, trem-bling, "have you found out it wasn't love after all? It... it was just loneliness and the forest and long warm days to-gether and... moon and... stars and..."
"Stars," he said, sternly. "What do you want to drag them in for? Just whirling gaseous masses growing by ac-cretion and traveling in orbits."
"Don't," she said.
"Come, come," said Flip. "Let's be serious. What possible effect could the moon have? It's just..."

MARY LEE drew back her hands and moved away around the pool. "No, oh, no," she whispered. "The moon is a lonely lady, Flip. She's lost her love, and... and come to the party to find him. See..." She pointed down into the pool at the wavering image among the lilies.
"She'd better be careful," said Flip cal-iously, "wading like that. Water bugs. Skippers that flit like spiders and slimy little snails."
"She'd wade twice as far and twice

...out, Win Post and, far away, Nelda and Flip.

"Hello," said Mary Lee. "I'm crash-ang. Item for your column, Win." Even the ones that went on dancing watched sideways and listened. Mary Lee was cool and sure, not afraid any more of anything. She walked proudly along the bright room toward Nelda. "I've come to protect my prop-erty," she said.

Nelda was flushed and radiant. She didn't seem to understand. "Mary Lee," she cried. "Oh, I'm so glad."
Somehow all at once Mary Lee couldn't go on. What if Nelda really loved Flip? What if Flip loved Nelda? What if... "Are you," asked Mary Lee, "are you announcing your engagement tonight, Nelda?"

Even the music stopped. No one seemed to breathe. Nelda's chin lifted. She laughed a brittle, half-frightened laugh and put her hand on Mary Lee's. "Yes, Yes, I am."
"Mary Lee, you nut," called Win Post and pushed toward them through the crowd.
"Here's happiness," said Mary Lee to Nelda. She faced Flip, icy calm, still managing to smile.
"Congratulations," said Mary Lee. How proud and happy he looked! "I... I started to wade," she added, "but it was too far, too deep and... too mucky. You know, nasty warty frogs and..."

THEN Flip kissed her. "It doesn't mat-ter," she thought. "I'll never be able to again." She threw all her cautions and pride to the winds and kissed him back. He held her tightly and every one was laughing and shouting.
Nelda said: "We had to wake you up somehow, Mary Lee. So Win and I... Flip knew Bud Patterson in college. When he showed up and told us about you..."
But Flip picked Mary Lee up and marched down the room away from them. Win started to follow them, but Nelda held him back. "Silly," she said, "now's our time / You tell them, Win, in case they haven't guessed."

Flip, still carrying Mary Lee, reached the foot of the Patterson hill and started across the golf course.
"How far... Flip, how far are you going to keep this up?" she protested gently, cuddling her head against his shoulder.
"Am I being silly?" he demanded.
"No, I love it."
"I'll keep on all night if I want," said Flip. "For no reason at all. And all day tomorrow and the next day and Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday! I don't believe in limiting anything. What have you to say about that?"

Mary Lee sighed and shut her eyes. "Why stop with Wednesday?" said Mary Lee.

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