

But, Dad, you are a rich man, and part of your money will eventually come to me. Why not give me more now, for Tom and I will need it after we're married. Tom has only his salary. He has put all his savings in the house he has built."

Tom turned, stared at the brown-haired, brown-eyed girl. "What did you say?" he demanded.

"Dad will double my allowance, and he gives me \$200 a month now. And with your salary, we don't have to live in a little coop like that!"

Disdainfully the big brown eyes swept the little house.

"Do you think," Tom's voice came sizzling, "that I'm going to allow your father to support you after we are married? Nothing doing, Peggy. That's my job, and I don't want any help."

HE WAS sick with disappointment. The little home he had planned, had built so lovingly, Peggy called "a coop." He hadn't even let her see it until it was finished. He wanted to surprise her. Well—he had, but how! And that row of white lilacs—she hadn't noticed them, nor the red brick walk—

"Don't be fantastic, darling," Peggy laughed. "Dad has money. I'm the only child. Why shouldn't I help him spend a little? Tell you what, Tom. We'll rent one of those cucky apartments in that smart new apartment building and you can sell this house."

"Peggy, get an awful of this. We are going to live here, and you are going to take it and like it. Inside, that house is a little jewel. I've an electrically equipped kitchen for you. The work will be easy—"

"Work! Do you think I'm going to do my own work!" Her eyes were round and shocked.

"You'll have to—on my salary. For the love of Pete, you know what I draw. And we're going to live on it—and put a spot of it away every month. I want a savings account."

Slowly the little face hardened, the soft young lips set. "I'll do nothing of the sort. My allowance will pay the rent and services of a maid in that new apartment building. We can entertain there. Here—" again her eyes flicked the white painted shining little bungalow—"there isn't room to entertain a dozen people."

"The living room is larger than you think," Tom said dully. "Aren't you going in? Honestly, sweetheart, it's a honey inside. Please. Let me show it to you!"

Desperate pleading was in his deep blue eyes. He started to open the car door. Peggy laid her hand on his arm. "I'm not interested, Tom. I'm sorry to disappoint you, but I couldn't live in that house. And I don't like this part of town, either."

"It's the new subdivision. Property is going up here, right along."

"Then you can get a good price for it later on," Peggy said lightly. Tom's lips tightened. A hint of steel came in his eyes—blue steel.

Peggy's voice unlocked. "Sock him, Tom! He asked for it!"

"I'll never sell it," he said quietly she could not guess at the pain that stabbed his heart. "And from the day of our marriage, you don't take another dollar from your father."

They stared at each other. Stormy blue eyes, little flames beginning to dance in brown ones.

"I'll do just what I've outlined," she said, voice tight, "or else." She pulled off her glove, glanced down at the modest little diamond on her finger.

He saw the glance. "You can't threaten me, Peggy. When you're my wife you'll live here and I am going to support you."

"Here's the answer to that." She slipped the ring from her finger, held it in her little pink palm. "Take it. Our engagement is washed up."

With inscrutable eyes he looked at the bright winking diamond. To her astonishment he picked it up, slipped it in his vest pocket.

"And that's that." His voice came clipped, brittle, as he started the car. After ten minutes of frozen silence between them, he said:

"Shall I take you home, or shall I drop you some place?"

"I'm going home," she said, stonily.

SO THAT was all he loved her, was it! Well, she'd show him. She could live without him, too. Expected her to live in that dinky little house—do her own work—what a laugh.

Only she was not laughing. Her throat was hot and choking with the tears she fought back. To think that Tom would act this way—

She didn't want to see her help stealing a little sideways glance at him. How set was his face. Tom had a square, aggressive chin. All right, let him take it right there. He asked for it, didn't he? How funny—and dear—his hair looked. As though every red thread of it was bristling.

They turned in at the wide curving drive that led to her home. The big mellow house stood dreaming in the late afternoon sun. A lovely, a gracious home, that proclaimed in quiet dignity the wealth behind it.

"Good-by," Tom said briefly, and head high, heels clicking.

She heard voices in the library. Dad was home, talking to mother.

"Home so soon, Peggy?" Mrs. Whiteacre asked.

"I've been jilted," Peggy said, without preamble.

"Peggy! Has Tom dared to—" "I told him I wouldn't live in his five-room house. He said I'd do it and like it. He expects me to cook, wash dishes—he won't let me take a dollar of the double allowance you promised me, Dad."

Tragic young eyes looked at the man. He began to chuckle, then whooped.

"Good for Tom! I knew that boy had the right stuff in him."

Amazed, Peggy stared.

"See here, young lady," her father went on; "when your mother married me, we lived in three rooms. Your mother did the work, including the washing and ironing, and cooking and dishwashing—"

"But Peggy doesn't have to do what I did," Mrs. Whiteacre remonstrated.

"You're darn right I don't have to!" Like a spirited filly, Peggy threw back her head. "And if I never see Tom Darcy again, it will be too soon."

She stormed from the room. They heard her flying little feet running up the stairs.

She slammed the door, stood panting against it. The hot tears trembled on her long lark lashes and dropped to her flushed cheeks.

"I'm crying because I'm so mad," she assured herself. "Why should Tom expect me to live that way when I don't have to! I—wash dishes! She spread out her little flower-like hands—pink tipped like the petals of a rose, and as velvety. "The very idea," she whispered.

Perhaps Tom was sorry now, Peggy brightened. Her spirits lifted. Of course, Tom was sorry. Magically her tears dried. She would be firm—punish him a little—not too much—and then he would give in. She would see him tonight at Joan's party. Of course he wouldn't call for her after their row but she would go alone.

She would wear that new white lace gown. In that, she would simply slay Tom. It was such a flattering little gown.

He was already there when she arrived. He was standing at the end of the room, talking, laughing with Gloria. He looked briefly at Peggy, nodded, looked again at Gloria.

Gloria, her best friend, cutting in like that!

Peggy spent a few minutes greeting the



that poisonous telephone never relayed Tom's voice.

One night her father said: "I heard Tom got the contract for his firm to build the new schoolhouse. That boy is going places some day. He has a Grade-A mind."

"That reminds me," Peggy's mother said idly, "I saw him lunching with Gloria today. She looked lovely."

A little knife turned in Peggy's heart out she said lightly. "I'm going to her bridge party tomorrow afternoon."

When Gloria and Peggy were both dummies, the next afternoon, Gloria linked her arm through Peggy's and took her out on the porch.

"I want to tell you, Tom took me through his new bungalow, Peggy, and it's the darriest thing! Simply adorable inside. His grandmother had a big attic full of Early American and shipped the furniture to Tom. It's all ready now, except the drapes and little things He has the loveliest hooked rugs. And the dearest pewter candlesticks with tall blue candles on the living-room mantel. There's a big fireplace—I could live in that darling place forever! Even when Tom can afford a larger place I won't move—"

"I'll never let Bob kiss me. We'll have separate rooms. I read a story that was called 'Wife in Name Only.' That's what I will be."

Tomorrow night she was eloping with Bob. They would drive to Freemont and be married by a Justice of the Peace.

"No one can say it's a spite marriage, as they said about Grace when Larry walked out on her, for I'll be married before Tom and Gloria are."

IT SEEMED that the night stood still. It was dawn before Peggy's wide and somber eyes closed. The sun came gently through her windows and touched her face softly, as though in wonder that so young a face should bear such woe.

Peggy woke and a new day began. Relentlessly the hours marched by. Tonight she would be married to Bob! Her hands turned cold. But maybe something would happen on the road to Freemont. Maybe there would be a wreck. Peggy's spirits lifted. She would be hurt—not killed but—well, hurt.

She saw herself in a hospital bed, pale, lovely, surrounded by flowers. Heard whispered, anxious voices. Tom

PEGGY and Tom were not looking at each other as though their quarrel had been bridged. If he put on a good act there was still a chance for him.

"Move along, big boy," he said. "You're blocking traffic. Peggy and I have an important date."

"Why didn't Peggy say something?" Tom thought desperately. The color drained slowly from his face.

He stepped close to Bob, put his hand on the boy's arm. "Green light for you, young fellow. Get going."

Bob saw that Peggy was staring at him. She seemed to be waiting. If he fought for her that would make a hit with her. His fist shot out and Tom staggered under the unexpected blow. "And how do you like that, Tom Darcy?" he exulted.

Peggy's voice unlocked. "Sock him, Tom! He asked for it!" Excitedly she danced from one foot to the other.

Tom socked.

When Bob picked himself up Peggy said: "The green light is waiting for you. Tonight was a brainstorm—not a date, Bob."

Yes, she and Tom had made up. Darn girls, anyway. And he'd better beat it. Tom Darcy packed a wallop in that right of his.

Peggy and Tom stood silent, tense until Bob's car roared down the drive. Then Tom's long arms reached out and closed around the girl.

"Peggy, as Gloria is your best friend, I told her about our row. She said you loved me, but just wanted to have your own way. She said: 'We'll give her a dose of jealousy. It'll work like a charm.' But, Peggy, you know I love you. If you love me, why were you going to elope with Bob? I can't figure that out."

"Men are so dense," Peggy said radiantly. For a moment she cuddled blissfully in Tom's strong arms.

There was silence on the porch, for a dark curly head and a tousled red head were very close.

You can't kiss and talk at the same time.

Finally: "Marry me soon, Peggy? Please."

Radiantly she nodded. "I'll go to our darling little home tomorrow, Tom, and see about the drapes and things. And I must learn to cook. I'll get a cook book—"

"There's one there. It's a dandy."

They looked at each other and their laughter, young, gay, running over with happiness, went out to join the soft murmur of the sweet night wind.