

# SHINING PALACE

By  
**CHRISTINE WHITING PARMENTER**

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## THE STORY

**CHAPTER I**—James Lambert tries in vain to dissuade his beautiful foster-daughter, Leonora, from marrying Don Mason, young "rolling stone," whom he likes but of whom he disapproves according to his conventional business-man standards. He tells her, "Unless a house is founded upon a rock, it will not survive." Leonora suspects the influence of her half-brother, Ned, always jealous of the girl since the day his father brought her home from the deathbed of her mother, abandoned by her Italian baritone lover. Don arrives in the midst of the argument, and Lambert realizes the frank understanding between the two.

**CHAPTER II**—Sitting up late into the night, Lambert reviews the whole story of Nora as a child, at boarding school, studying music abroad, meeting Don on the return trip. In the morning he delivers his ultimatum, to give Don a job with Ned for a year's showdown. When Nora suggests the possibility of running away with Don, Lambert threatens disinheritance. Don agrees to the job, but before a month is over, his nerves are jumpy, he cannot sleep at night, he is too tired to go out much with Nora, and admits to her that he feels stifled. Nora soothes him with her music. He falls asleep and his face is more peaceful than it has been in many weeks.

**CHAPTER III**—Nora grows quieter, and broods over Don, complains to her father of Ned's spying on him, and decides that rather than see Don's spirit broken, she will run away. She urges her father to put an end to the futile experiment. James Lambert is obdurate and angry. Lambert tells her that if Don quits she will quit with him; that he will be through with her. He adds that if she tires of her bargain it will be useless to come to him for help.

**CHAPTER IV**—With the coming of spring, Don is full of unrest and wanderlust, and takes long walks at night. One evening a poor girl speaks to him, and in his pity for her, he gives her money. A car passes at that moment, flashes headlights and moves on. A terrific heat wave ushers in the summer, and Nora refuses to go to the country with her father. Ned, meanwhile, insinuates to his father about Don's evenings away from Nora, but Lambert refuses to listen. Meanwhile, Don broods over the undermining of his morale.

**CHAPTER V**—At the height of the heat wave, when Don is finding everything insupportable, Ned speaks of having the goods on him, having seen him give a girl money. When Ned scoffs at the true story of the episode, Don knocks him down, and is through. He calls Nora who insists on running away with him to get married, realizing it is her job to restore Don's faith in himself. Her good-bye to her father is met with complete silence.

**CHAPTER VI**—Don and Nora go to Maine and settle down in the studio of Carl Venable, a famous artist friend of Don's, whose daughter he saved from drowning. Nora writes her father. There is no answer, except her baggage, containing her entire wardrobe, and \$1,000 hidden in a gold mesh bag.

"I can't help wondering about the man who carved these posts," he observed dreamily. "I can't help thinking how I'd feel myself if, after creating anything so good, it was left neglected in such a place. You see, the chap who did this carving put his heart into it. He must have, or the work wouldn't be so perfect. For all we know, it may have been his masterpiece. And he was carving to the glory of God, Nora—something he thought permanent—something he thought would be a part of that old church long, long after he was gone and perhaps forgotten." Don paused, flushing a little as he met her eyes. "Am—am I an idiot, Nora, to want to save it for him?"

She answered, rising: "You are a dreamer; but I love you for it, Don." Don lifted the rusted hasp and putting his shoulder to the heavy door, found it unlocked.

"And you're a marvel to understand," he told her ardently. "Most any other girl would think me crazy. Lend a hand with that end, dear, and we'll have it safe inside in no time. Gee!" (as they laid their burden down) "what a peach of a barn! I'm going to climb into the cupola. I've a longing to look out of those colored windows."

"And risk breaking a leg so we can't start tomorrow?" retorted Nora. "Really, Don, I believe there's no one in the world just like you. One minute you're a thoughtful idealist; then—presto, change! A bit of colored glass transforms you into a little boy!"

Yes, that was Don! Nora was thinking of this when, hours later,



Don lifted the rusty hasp.

she lay try. . . yet unable to close her eyes as she watched a harvest moon brighten the room. That was Don—a dreamer who saw into the hearts of others. His imaginative sympathy might run away with him at times, as it had today, perhaps; but without that quality—without his unflinching capacity for seeing "the other fellow's side," would he be able to regard her father without bitterness?

Her father! Leonora had put the thought of him behind her during the last few hours. Their supper had been a gay affair. A bowl of late purple asters adorned the table; her biscuits were fluffy as could be desired, and even James Lambert would have praised the soup! Since they must rise at six o'clock they had turned in early; but it is one thing to go to bed, and quite another to drop at once into refreshing slumber. And now the old ache—the nostalgia of the afternoon was back again. Strange, she pondered, that Don, sleeping so peacefully beside her—Don, who understood people so well, so quickly, shouldn't have known by instinct that to go so far away while the black cloud of her father's anger lay between them, would hurt his wife. Yet she was glad, too, that he hadn't guessed, thought Nora, with all the inconsistency of woman. Why mar his happiness in the adventure? If she could keep a stiff upper lip till they were once away . . .

"Nora—are—are you awake, dear?" Don's voice was cautious, as if he feared to rouse her, and Nora turned.

"I thought you were asleep yourself, Don."

"I wasn't! I've been lying here thinking—trying to see the thing we ought to do. I know what's troubling you, dearest. I knew this afternoon, only I wanted time to think a little before I spoke. It's your father, isn't it? You hate to leave him?"

"Oh, Don!" breathed Nora, turning her face into the shadows. She must not cry. He mustn't know how much she wanted to.

He said, gently: "I understand, dear. It's only because he is still angry. You're afraid something might happen to him—that he might need you when you couldn't come. Isn't that it? If you were friends the parting would be so different. It's the terrible misunderstanding that makes it hard. I was a dumbbell not to see it sooner, Nora. Why didn't you tell me?"

"How could I?"

Don managed a little laugh which broke the tension.

"You couldn't—you being yourself—and I being I! But you should have, Nora. As I see it, marriage is a sort of compromise. We can't, either of us, expect to have our own way eternally. But until this afternoon I didn't imagine for one minute that you weren't crazy for an Italian winter. You're a better actress than I thought, my dear; and in the future I'll have to watch my step! But it's never too late to change our plans, you know. That's one of the reasons life's so thrilling. And I've been thinking about the West. There are places—"

Nora sat up suddenly, drawing his head down against her breast. "If you think that I'll let you change . . ."

She was crying now. Somehow

Don raised his head and got his arms about her. He said, with more unselfishness than truth: "But I won't mind changing—not a little bit! There's a lot to interest us in the Southwest, and you've never been there. If those tears will help you, Nora, why keep right on, but they're almost killing me! As I was saying—"

Then Nora laughed. It was an hysterical laugh, perhaps, but it cleared the atmosphere.

"You can keep on saying things all night," she told him, "but we're sailing tomorrow. Once we really get away I shall feel better. Have you forgotten those articles you're going to write for that London editor? Have you forgotten you've a family to support? Of course we're going to Capri!" With every word she was getting back her courage. "And besides, I wrote Dad we were sailing. I thought perhaps he'd come to the boat, Don. Don't—don't you think he might come to the boat?"

"He might," Don echoed; and to himself: "How can he stay away? How can he hurt her so? How can he?" Yet somehow, he knew instinctively that Nora's father was not yet ready to forgive.

They sailed next afternoon, a bright, clear, sparkling day that cheered Nora immeasurably, despite James Lambert's absence from the scene. Standing beside the rail, her eyes searching the thronged pier hungrily, hoping until the final whistle sounded that she would catch a glimpse of his familiar face, the girl's mind went back to her last sailing. She saw again the crowd of youthful friends waving farewell—Ned, moved by one of his rare impulses (those impulses which made him almost lovable) arriving breathless with a box of roses—kissing her like a real brother . . . And her father—dear Dad! trying so hard to put a cheerful face upon this parting she knew he hated—saying: "Don't stint yourself, Nora" (as if she ever had!) . . . "Remember my London bankers if you need money." (As if she wouldn't!) . . . "Be careful about the drinking water in those filthy places." (To Dad all Europe was unsanitary) . . . "Be sure to cable as soon as the boat docks."

It all came back; and suddenly Nora was conscious of a great loneliness. Her carefree girlhood seemed left far, far behind. Ahead lay motherhood—mystery—that ultimate struggle which she must face alone. The thought frightened her, as one is sometimes frightened at a stark glimpse of the inevitable. She turned, seeking the reassurance of Don's presence; but he had discovered a friend among the passengers: a little woman who, Nora thought, looked like a missionary.

And then, almost wondrously in that last confusing moment—breaking through shouts of "All ashore" and shrieking sirens, the certainty that though she could not see him her father was somewhere amid that throng—too proud to speak, yet loving her too greatly to stay away, fell on the girl's bruised heart like balm.

The gangplank was up now—the boat moving. Nora pressed closer to the rail—raised her arm high—waved a white wisp of handkerchief and shouted with a hundred others: "Good-by . . . Good-by . . ."

"Who was it, dear?" The voice was Don's. His hand closed over her possessively. Such a strong hand! "Who was it, Nora? I saw you waving. Find someone you knew in all that jam?"

His wife looked up. Her eyes were wet, but with a deep sense of thankfulness Don saw that they were happy eyes.

"I—was just—waving," said Nora simply.

(Continued Next Week)

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