

Moon Madness

BY
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(continued from last week)

Thoughts of him dominated the hours and she found herself day after day waiting impatiently for the night of the full moon.

The day before it was due she spent in packing and tonight she would know again the exquisite pleasure of watching the moon rise . . . with him.

Tonight she would wear a grey dress. She took one from her closet and hung it carefully over the back of the only chair in her small room, then searched in the dark little closet for grey slippers to match.

It was yet early in the afternoon and several hours must pass before time to dress for the evening. Joan moved about the room restlessly, but could find nothing else to pack. Everything was carefully put away save the few things she absolutely needed.

"I believe I will go for a walk," she thought to herself, "it will help pass the time. And then, it will be my last walk until I come again. I love this old place, every inch of it. I hope to enjoy one more season in the old house before it is remodelled."

Most of the guests were taking their usual afternoon naps, so Joan left the hotel unobserved and walked into the woods, turning here and there with no particular thought as to direction.

The day had been sultry and now threatening clouds tossed themselves in billowing, fantastic shapes, across the face of the sky. Joan walked aimlessly on, neither thinking or caring in which direction her feet were taking her. The rising wind cooled her. She found a moss-covered stone and seated herself to rest, allowing her thoughts to run riot. She leaned her head against the trunk of a tree and sat there, forgetting the count of time, until the sun sank from sight, leaving in its wake clouds black and threatening.

Suddenly a flash of lightning seemed to split the sky asunder and a peal of thunder reverberated through the hills like the report of heavy artillery. The storm was on! Thoroughly frightened, Joan sprang to her feet and turned in the direction she thought would take her to the hotel. She began running as large drops of rain fell heavily through the leaves overhead. She could hear the rain increasing in volume as it drew nearer and the wind was already bowing the trees earthward, hissing through the leaves and branches like something powerful and alive. The roaring increased and the large drops which had been splashing upon Joan's flying form, changed into a down-pour. Lightning leaped across the sky, running downward in her path like fiery serpents.

"What shall I do?" Joan moaned helplessly as her strength began to ebb. She caught her foot in an enormous root and fell face downward on the soft, wet earth.

It was growing so dark she could not determine in which direction to go, but ran aimlessly on and on, tears intermingling with the rain pouring down her cheeks.

She had told no one at the hotel of her intended walk and if she were missed from the supper table, those who missed her would of course think that she was safe in her own room. No one would bother to make sure.

She began sobbing softly like a frightened child. There was no use in calling. No one would be out in such a violent storm, and even if it were so, her voice could not be heard three feet away.

She stopped and when the vivid flashes lighted the woods, tried to get her bearings. It would be awful if she should fail in finding her way out of the woods and be obliged to spend the night in the darkness and storm, but what could she do?

Her hat had been blown from her head long ago and her dress was so twisted about her body, walking was difficult, but on and on she hurried, fast as her soaked garments and trembling limbs would allow.

The next flash revealed a huge oak, the spreading limbs of which might serve to break the down-pour, and reaching its friendly shelter, Joan leaned heavily against the trunk and closed her eyes wearily.

Suddenly, above the roar of wind

and rain, her strained ears caught the distant honk of an automobile. Facing the direction from whence came she began running again.

"If I can only reach the road! Oh, dear Lord, let me reach the road!" she prayed. She fell, screaming to her feet to begin running again.

A warning honk from the car it rounded the curve, and she reached the road and threw her arms within the radius of the light of the oncoming car and threw up her arms wildly.

She looked like some wind-swept her hair blowing across her face, garments twisted tightly about her slender form. As the car slowed she realized help had come to her at last, she gave a little cry and fainted dead away.

From somewhere high above out of the darkness and rain she heard a voice. Someone was calling her cold, wet hands and feet to her in some strange language she could not understand clearly, she did not mind. She felt comfortable, protected.

As her dull brain clearly realized that the voice was calling her and she wearily opened her eyes.

"Thank God! Oh, my dear my Moon-lady . . . how came you so far from home, and alone?" a voice asked wonderingly, "I knew instantly the owner of this stranger."

The wind had taken her breath she found herself looking at a man that she had known. The car lifted her into the car and she felt her head was pressed against his breast. Dully she began to call what had happened to her, but she could not speak. She closed herself, still with her face. In a flash she recognized "Guy! . . . You!"

"Yes, sweet, and the car is given you to me. I will never go from me again. My heart is waiting for you, Joan, and it will not be denied one of your wishes. You have always known me, I wanted you, dear, but I could not speak until I had made you worthy of you."

Joan watched him with a new expression in her own eyes. She went on: "It was all that first night of the storm, I keep from revealing my name, but I had to make you know that you are my Moon-lady."

Joan was sitting up and the man was deliberately driving the car in the road.

"Two miles back from the hotel, between North and South Street. You have wandered far from the hotel. Do you know me . . . and love me?"

"I think I have known you since I was a child. It seems now that I have known you for you all my life."

"Then you are my Moon-lady. I guessed well." She did not question him. The car sped over the road until they came to a stop at a line which had been marked by the line where the road crossed the river.

The man who had been driving the car nodded his head at her and words from Joan's lips were heard by the woman followed.

She came into the room and the master of the hotel, a few minutes later Joan was alone.

Once more in the car, her band wrapped her head and her wet form, she felt like a lover-like at the moment.

way back Joan looked at him quietly and with a great joy had never known after so many years.

As they reached the Head Joan's car long enough to peep from behind the wheel and the light of her face revealed her happiness in the moment.

He whispered to her: "Moon-madness is a wonderful thing."

And the man's words were heard by the youth, ardent lover. He pressed a long kiss to her forehead.

The clerk's words were heard by the youth, ardent lover. He pressed a long kiss to her forehead.

The clerk's words were heard by the youth, ardent lover. He pressed a long kiss to her forehead.

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