

# VICTORY FOR LOVE



"Are you really married?" Odette asked because she simply had to know.

**CHAPTER IV**  
Dr. Warner upon meeting the postman offers to deliver two letters to Mrs. Maturin, owner of the Pole Star House. One of these letters is from the British government ordering her to hold herself ready to take evacuees unless she prefers to take care of dependent relatives. Mrs. Maturin is much upset over these orders, but dutifully mails an advertisement to the London Times offering accommodations for four people "in a hotel far from military objectives. John Wynter reads the ad and decides to go to Pole Star House. He tells his chief about it and departs. Monsieur Victor, a Frenchman, arrives at Pole Star House. Odette Hannan visits Jim Frazer, the lame cobbler.

"You've got a brother a prisoner, miss?" Jim Frazer was caught off guard. Odette Hannan and he had thought she was a spy. A brother at Dunkirk and now a prisoner of war! His damaged foot began to stab and ache; he sat down suddenly on his wooden stool.

"What's the matter? You look all in anyhow?" Odette Hannan came nearer to peer into the white face.

"I don't know, Miss," said Jim Frazer steadily. "I think it was thinking of anyone being a prisoner of war. When you've been one

yourself you know what it means. "Yes, I know," Odette was pressing in the waves of her yellow hair with trembling hands. "It gets me like that sometimes. Well, if you're all right, I'll get along."

When Netta saw Monsieur she knew what she had imagined about him was correct, and in some way she felt frightened. Her greeting was diffident and restrained. "Well how nice of you to come," Netta knew her voice was queer, but she could not help it. She led the way into the charming heather-colored sitting room, feeling as if her hands and feet were too large. Rather fussily she dragged up two chairs.

"Permettez," Monsieur, who had remained in the hall to take off his coat and hat, now entered, fully resolved to exert himself and be pleasant whatever it might cost him. Looking extremely well groomed, he seized a third chair by its cushioned back and smilingly invited Netta to sit down in it. "Oh, thank you very much, merci beaucoup," Netta sat down with a jerk. "Pas de quoi," said Monsieur gracefully.

"She talks French quite well said Joan chattily. She was thinking that Netta looked very nice and that Monsieur knew it. He and Netta were talking away in a mixture of French and English and Monsieur had lost that expression of profound melancholy.

Monsieur went up into the village this morning," Joan cut in suddenly.

"But yet," Monsieur explained "I bought some shoe laces, and on the way home I met a very charming young lady. Tres exotique," ended Monsieur, smiling.

"Exotic," Joan was pondering. "Oh, yes, that must be Odette Hannan," she said. "I like her too and think she's lovely, but Netta doesn't."

"No, I don't care for Odette Hannan," Netta said, "but that's because I don't trust her. What is she doing here to begin with?"

"There's something so odd about that. I agree that she had a shop in London and was bombed out of it, but she is quite young and she could easily go back. She could drive an ambulance or something."

"Yes, I agree that there is something odd about Odette Hannan but, all the same, I like her," said Joan. And then they all began to talk about Odette Hannan. For the moment Monsieur forgot the horrors lying crouched behind his mournful brow. These two charming women, the one so naive and so eager, and the other, she with the copper head and the strong resolute mouth. Three was courage behind that resolute mouth with its firm lips. Lips mad for love, thought Monsieur dryly.

"How was it they had missed it?" "And now for a nice evening with lovely fires," said Joan as she and Monsieur walked home. She barely had time to fit the key in the lock before the door was opened.

"The lady arrived, mum," said Grace agitatedly. Shutting the door she stood there looking distracted.

"Arrive! But she wasn't coming until tomorrow!"

"She said she said today, mum!" "She didn't," Joan suddenly felt hostile. Or did she? "Oh, it's my fault," Joaneried. "I made a muddle of the dates. Grace, what is she like?"

"Very much the lady, mum. Seemed to think she ought to have been met at the station."

"So she ought," Straightening her hat, Joan groaned. "I'll go see her and get it over."

Mrs. Manvers-Pollock was a lady accustomed to make her presence felt, so she proceeded to do so as soon as she stepped from the train and found that there was no one to meet her. But after all the inconvenience of finding a taxi—she found Grace's welcome charming. So was her own bedroom; even Mrs. Manvers-Pollock could find no fault with that. And the tea was delightfully arranged in a very pretty drawing room by a lovely fire—this also an unexpected pleasure. Therefore, when Joan, looking up into Mrs. Manvers-Pollock's hard, long face and wondering how on earth she would be able to bear her, almost abjectly apologized. Mrs. Manvers-Pollock said unexpectedly, "Oh, well, let's forget it." Unexpected, because Mrs. Manvers-Pollock generally drove home any advantage she might happen to have. But as a matter of fact she was agreeably surprised with Pole Star House.

"Have you any other visitors? Do sit down, won't you?" said Mrs. Manvers-Pollock graciously. "No, thanks very much. I should sit down if I wanted to," said Joan simply. "Yes, we have one other visitor and are expecting a second. A Frenchman—a Monsieur Victor."

"Free?" "Oh, no, he pays," explained Joan hastily.

"I mean Free French." "Oh, I see," Joan chuckled. "How funny! I thought did you mean did I take him for nothing? Yes, I expect he is a Free Frenchman; I never thought of asking him. Would he be loose like this if he wasn't?"

"He might be. He might be a spy." "A spy! Oh, no! Not Monsieur," chuckled Joan. Wait until you see him; you'll know in a minute that he isn't one."

"How?" "Well, I don't know exactly how," said Joan awkwardly. "Oh, dear, I must go and take off my hat; we've been out to tea, Monsieur and I have. Such fun; we loved it. Something quite new for him to scramble up a hill to a tiny cottage and have tea with a novelist."

"What novelist?" inquired Mrs. Manvers-Pollock, deciding that for a woman who ran a hotel Mrs. Maturin was too much at her ease. "Netta Jackson. She wrote 'A Knight in Muffin'."

"A dreadful book!" exclaimed Mrs. Manvers-Pollock. "Dirt. I never read dirt on principle."

"I see." And then with a pleasant word or two Joan excused herself. This hard-faced woman had hunted for all the improper bits and missed the lovely ones! Later in the evening with Mrs. Manvers-Pollock settled at her Patience cards and Monsieur in the library reading "France Libre"—she asked Dr. Warner what he thought of Monsieur.

"I should say that he had gone through a good deal. If he wishes

to tell us, he will. Don't probe."

"No, no, of course I shan't. But it's all too easy," Joan commented. "Things will go wrong when the new man comes I feel they will."

"Oh, let's forget about the paying guests," said Dr. Warner lightly.

"Will they spoil things?" asked "Spoil what?" Suddenly feeling reckless, Dr. Warner held out his arms. "Don't make it difficult for me darling," he said. "You know exactly how I feel. Try to be content with that for the moment anyhow."

"Oh, I am, I am." With a rush Joan was in his arms.

John Wynter arrived at Stapleford, 20 miles due west of Battle Point, at about half-past three in the afternoon, and steered his car into the edge of a little narrow lane. It was well concealed because it was one of the approaches to the huge military airdrome that had recently been built among the rose and heather. A wonderful airdrome, camouflaged almost to the point of magic. Crushing out his cigarette he slipped his hand under the cushion of the seat and pulled out a blueprint. Yes, he could get in away to the left; he had his pass and that would admit him without any difficulty. Pushing the blueprint into an inner pocket, he pulled out the ignition key and got out of the car. It took only a minute or two to disconnect it and then, pulling his hat a little lower over his eyes he started to walk up the hill. The lane got narrower and he had to pick his way through a couple of giant elm tree roots, sprawling across the pathway. He would linger and smoke for five minutes or so and remember the joyous days of his youth when on an afternoon like this he would set off with a bag of buns in his pocket and hunt for rabbits and eat back as it was getting dark, and then have a gorgeous late tea with his mother, whom he adored. Happy, happy days, thought John Wynter, remembering that mother whom he had lost when he was fifteen, whose loss he had never really got over.

And as he stood there his thoughts took another turn. Strange things had happened when he was a boy; since he had grown up he recognized them as all pointing to the fact that he more or less possessed a sixth sense. A sense had been almost alarmingly valuable to him in his profession. But why was it invading him now? Someone; something in his vicinity. Danger... it was connected with danger. Shifting his hand round to his hip pocket he felt the snub nose of his automatic. No, not personal danger; he took his hand back again and then he looked upward. The boughs were thick above his head although leafless. In one place there were leaves; a thick mat of them caught among the twigs. Quite a good protection

"Hallo!" A white laughing face gleamed down at him. The young lady, whoever she was, had had a fright. The airdrome; John Wynter felt inclined to burst out laughing. So simple; how things fell into his lap! Red-handed! And it might have taken him weeks... months.

"Hallo, what's the game?" John Wynter took off his soft hat.

"Why, it's a mania of mine. Look, I'll show you now that you

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have caught me." Lithe as a cat in her gray flannel slacks and jacket to match, Odette Hannan

John Wynter looked at the came down hand over hand. Like a gray shadow with the cap pulled down well over her ears. "It's birds—I simply can't resist them. I watch them through these," Odette patted the field glasses, swinging by their strap. "I photograph them because of war, besides this is stranger and I oughtn't to have told you. Never mind; see my book of birds. Aren't they heavenly?" Talking rather fast in her husky voice, Odette pulled a little book out of her coat pocket; colored pictures; song birds.

pictures appreciatively. Also it gave him time. Had he been correct or hadn't he? If he had, she was very accomplished; her spontaneity was sublime. "Yes, charming," he said "I'm sorry I frightened you."

"Frightened me! You didn't," Odette's voice was charming.

"I really thing I must have a try," said John Wynter. With the easy spring of an athlete he had swung himself up to a lower branch. He would go up as far as she had gone and see what sort of view she got. Superb of course. He saw the tarmac and a Sunderland flying boat being wheeled out of a shed.

"Well," Down on the ground

again he smiled. "Not so bad for one of my age."

"Did you see the airdrome?" "Heavens above. I forgot to look!" John Wynter gave a great shout of laughter. "Never mind, it doesn't interest me. Besides I must get on my way; it's getting late."

"Where are you going?" Odette flushed.

"I'm going to Battle Point. Do you know it?"

"Why, I live there."

"Do you really?" Why did his heart suddenly turn over in his breast, wondered John Wynter, despising himself because it had done so.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

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