

# AWAKENED WOMAN

ELINORE BARRY

THIRD INSTALLMENT SYNOPSIS

When Joyce opened her eyes one morning to see a fruit-laden orange tree from the end of the luxurious sleeping porch where she lay in bed, she couldn't decide what had happened to her, for the last thing she remembered was a skidding taxicab in Chicago on a sleeting November day. And when she saw the circlet of diamonds on her wedding finger, and when a man who called her Frills came to bid her an affectionate good-bye before leaving home for a hurried business trip, warning her to be careful after her fall from her horse the day before, she was even more puzzled. The gorgeous house that was evidently her home, the faint brown stains on her fingers—she had never smoked—and the initials on her toilet articles, F. L. P., added to her bewilderment. But—"It's heavenly," she said. "I'd be perfectly happy to spend a whole day right here."

There were also several letters lying about in this litter, Joyce, pick-

NOTICE OF TRUSTEE'S SALE

Default having been made in the payment of the indebtedness secured by that certain deed of trust to me as Trustee for Jefferson Standard Life Insurance Company by T. W. Davis and wife, Etta Davis, on June 10, 1924, and recorded in the office of the Register of Deeds of Surry County in Book 11, at Page 8, I will, under and by virtue of the power of sale contained in said deed of trust, and at the request of the cestui que trust, and for the purpose of discharging the debt secured by said deed of trust, proceed to sell to the highest bidder, for cash, at the courthouse door in Dobson, Surry County, North Carolina, at 12:00 o'clock, M., on Wednesday, April 26, 1933, the following described property, to-wit:

Lying and being on the North side of Pine Street in the Town of Mount Airy, adjoining the lands of W. W. Burke and Mrs. Mollie Hogan and others and bounded as follows, viz: Being Lot No. 7 on the North side of Pine Street and beginning at a stake corner of Mollie Hogan's lot runs North 13 1/2 degrees West 180 feet to a stake; thence South 73 degrees West 67 feet to a stake corner of Lot No. 6; thence South 13 1/2 degrees East 180 feet to Pine Street; thence with Pine Street North 73 degrees East to the beginning.

This the 23rd day of March, 1933. JULIAN PRICE, Trustee. Smith, Wharton & Hudgins, Attys. Greensboro, North Carolina, 4-20

ing one up glanced around at the door feeling an almost irresistible impulse to lock it before she read the letter. Then she forced herself to remain seated. "You've a perfect right to read these letters," she said to herself out loud, "don't be a fool! Even if any one did come, I guess... I guess... I'm Mrs. Neil Packard!" Yet the uneasy feeling persisted that the girl named Frills Packard might at any moment come in from the other room and scornfully demand an explanation of her actions. "Oh, what's the matter with me? There can't be another Frills. Frills Packard is as dead now as... as Joyce Ashton was yesterday. She can't come in."

Joyce opened the first letter resolutely. A newspaper clipping fell out. On the heavy, pale lavender paper with deckle edges was a short note in a sprawling feminine hand. It began without any preliminaries: "Looks as if you had some party! Wish I'd been there. You might hand this clipping on to Laurine. I hear she's been trying to find out where Mait was while you were at Nita's. Watch your step, Frilly! C."

Not trying to digest the meaning of the note, Joyce hastily read the newspaper clipping: "A great deal of righteous indignation is being felt among the citizens of the Valley Road district at the actions of a certain prominent society woman and her week-end guests. When all other amusements failed to provide the necessary thrills, a new game was instituted and carried out between two and three o'clock Sunday morning. This game was a species of follow-your-leader, played in motors with no headlights, and only the usual rear lights on. The bright moonlight was presumably responsible for the fact that there were no casualties among the players, for the driving was undoubtedly of the most reckless character, and the leader led the party a merry chase over banks and sidewalks, across fields and lawns with utter disregard for the property of other people."

"It is understood that the hosts of this party paid liberally for the damage sustained and that the matter was satisfactorily adjusted—so that it will not be taken into the courts. The young woman who originated the sport and drove the leading car is the wife of a well-known Manzanita citizen. Her partner in the game was a man from the same place whose name is said to be frequently mentioned in the same breath with hers."

As Joyce finished reading, a wave of horrified shame flooded her. "How perfectly disgusting! I sup-

pose they were all drunk as lords, Frills worse than the rest. No wonder Neil is worried about 'reckless stunts'... I should think he might be! I'd like to know who 'C.' is and who's 'Mait'? This," she thought "is a pleasant revelation! All the signs have pointed to Frills being a bit lively, but this is a little too much."

Just then the telephone rang. There was an instrument on the desk, gray-enameled like the furniture, and Joyce quietly lifted off the receiver and listened in. After a moment's silence, she heard the maid answering on the instrument downstairs. A man's voice inquired, "May I speak to Mrs. Packard, please?"

"Mrs. Packard gave instructions that she didn't feel up to seeing or speaking to anyone today."

"Oh? ... Well, listen Roxie, tell her it's Mr. Maitland, will you, and ask her if I can't speak to her just a minute."

"All right, sir." Joyce hastily but cautiously replaced the receiver and getting up, went out onto the sunny sleeping porch. In a moment she heard the woman's voice at the bedroom door, and going in, listened to her message.

"Just... tell him I—" she hesitated.

"Tell him I'm asleep," she said finally, looking down at the carpet and feeling a guilty reluctance to meet the maid's eye. Then, when the woman had left, she returned to the desk telephone and listened again.

"Mrs. Packard is asleep, sir."

"Oh, she is? Well, when she wakes, tell her I called. And ask her to call me, please."

"Yes, sir." Click... click. And then Joyce hung up her own receiver, breathing a sigh of relief at her narrow escape.

Hardly had she leaned back in the chair when the bell rang again. She listened anxiously. A rather coarse feminine voice replied to the maid's quiet "Yes?" saying, "How's Mrs. Packard this morning, Roxie? Can I speak to her? Tell her it's Kate Belmain."

"Sorry Mrs. Belmain, but Mrs. Packard is sleeping and gave orders not to be disturbed."

"Oh, well, I'll call again later... Say, Roxie, in a conversational tone, "wasn't she the lucky girl not to get smashed up in a fall like that? I felt sick when I heard about it. Didn't break a thing, did she?"

"No ma'am, she hit her head, but I guess it wasn't a bad blow." "Well, I'll tell the world she's

lucky! Well, tell her I called will you, Roxie."

She seems on intimate terms with the family. Her voice sounds middle-aged and... fat... uncultured," thought Joyce, critically. I wonder who else will call up? All I need to do to learn who are the friends of Mr. and Mrs. Neil Packard is to sit here and listen to the telephone conversations! I'm finding things out anyhow. I know now that the maid's name is Roxie and that 'Mait' is Mr. Maitland and that there's a couple named Art and Kate Belmain."

She continued her explorations, which disclosed three more bedrooms, each with its own bath—one decorated in green, one in orchid, and one in pale yellow. "I'm lucky there aren't any guests in the house," she thought thankfully, finding nothing but unoccupied rooms. "I'd hate to run into somebody staying right in the place. Well, I'll go back to my boudoir and see if I can dig up any more news of what the charming Frills has been perpetrating. Wish I could discover what the date is and how long it has been since I... I left Philadelphia."

She sat down on the chair at the desk and picked up one of the letters. The postmark on the first was too blurred to decipher, but the second one was clearly stamped. She stared at it bewildered, a sudden feeling of faintness seizing her. "Why, I left Philadelphia in November... That means... Oh, it can't be possible! April—nearly two years! Where have I been all that time? Oh, I can't understand it, it frightens me... I don't like it... Oh dear... Oh dear..."

Suddenly her overwrought nerves gave way, and slipping to her knees in front of the couch, Joyce buried her face in her arms and began to sob desperately, terror and loneliness possessing her entirely.

When Joyce awoke, she lay for some moments collecting her thoughts.

So it had not been a dream. It was something actual and inescapable which she had to face.

She sat up on the couch, wide awake now, and soberly tried to decide what to do next. As she stared about the room, she realized that the sun was no longer shining in. How long had she slept? There was no clock in the room. She remembered having seen, however, among the contents of the blue leather case on the dressing table a small diamond-set wrist watch. Returning to the bedroom, she caught sight of herself in the mirror. Her dress was badly rumpled, her hair stood up in curly confusion and her face was streaked from the tears she had shed.

Four o'clock. "Phew, what a long nap! I feel a lot better, anyhow. I wonder if anyone else called up. Oh dear, that Belmain woman said they were coming over this afternoon. They'll probably be here soon. I think I'll put on a different dress and see if I can get anything to eat. I'm perishing with thirst, too."

She pulled the crumpled dress over her head and went to the closet door to pick out something else to wear, when, suddenly, she heard voices downstairs. Stopping short, she tiptoed softly over to the door which stood ajar. She could hear a woman speaking.

"Well, I'm glad she's been able to sleep, Roxie... No, I'll just run up myself. She'll want to see me, if she's awake, of course... I just want to find out how she is and if I can do anything for her... Did you say she'd had anything to eat today?"

That must be Laurine! The voice moved nearer as if its owner were approaching the stairs. Joyce, in a panic, looked wildly about for some escape. Couldn't she have one day to herself? She thought of locking the door. Then, afraid to delay another second, she dashed out to the sleeping porch, pulled down the covers of the neatly-made bed and slid between the sheets. With thumping heart she half-buried her face in the pillow, shut her eyes tightly and tried to compose herself into a state where she could breathe quietly.

Firm steps sounded approaching the door, and a voice said, "Frills? Where are you... Oh!" The voice trailed off into a soft murmur as the speaker evidently discovered the sleeping form in the bed.

The caller stood quietly by the bedside for such a long time that Joyce grew nervous. Why didn't the woman go away? Couldn't she see that Frills was asleep? Or did she guess that she was shamming?

Just as she felt that she could not stand it a minute longer, and must either giggle or choke, she heard her unseen caller depart.

"Thank goodness!... My, I'm roasted!" She threw off the covers and got up cautiously, creeping into the room to listen to what happened downstairs. She heard the same voice speaking but could not distinguish the words. Finally, however, the front door opened and closed.

So rested and so much more confident did she find herself that she decided to go downstairs, risking the meeting with any callers who might appear.

Roxie was by one of the windows reading a newspaper. Seeing Joyce she stood up.

"I slept longer than I expected to," said Joyce, "and I'm hungry,"

she said, finding it impossible not to slip into a conciliatory tone and attitude. "Is there something to eat I could have, I wonder?"

"Why, of course, ma'am," replied Roxie promptly, "would you like a regular lunch or just tea?"

"Tea, please." The very thought was luxurious.

"Certainly, ma'am. Would you like sandwiches with it, or just cake?"

"Oh, sandwiches, please, I'm so hungry. And I wonder if..." she went on, uncomfortably convinced that Frills never asked for anything in this apologetic fashion, "—er—I'd like some orange juice to drink, too."

"Yes, ma'am. Will you have it out on the terrace or up in your room?"

Joyce decided hastily that she would take a chance. "On the terrace, please."

She enjoyed the food almost more than her breakfast, reflecting with half-ashamed amusement that her appetite was good in spite of the shock of awaking to find herself Mrs. Neil Packard! Ought anyone in her terrible predicament enjoy food so enthusiastically?

She was just draining the last drop of orange juice and wishing regretfully that she had more, when a man's voice at the doorway start-

led her so, she nearly dropped the glass.

"My Lord, Frills, since when have you taken to drinking orange juice?"

A man crossed the terrace with quick steps, sat down on a chair close beside her and leaning forward looked at her with an expression of lively concern.

"Did I startle you? Sorry! I guess your nerves are jumpy after what happened. How do you feel, sweetheart?"

Joyce had been completely taken by surprise and, in her confusion of excited apprehension, his entrance upset her so thoroughly that she could scarcely speak.

CONTINUED NEXT WEEK

BIRTH RATE DOWN

Despite Premier Mussolini's "more babies" campaign, the birth rate for Italy is declining, according to Undersecretary Arpinati of the ministry of the interior.

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