

"THE GOOD BAD GIRL"

—BY—
WINIFRED VAN DUZEN

Chapter 10

"Changed your mind, eh? Well, I suppose you know what a contract between us means!"

Winship White's gray, shaggy brows bobbed up and down over his tilted eyes. "Like nice running very fast," Mimi thought.

"No throwing me down in the middle of a picture. You star in 'Aurora' and you see it through!"

"Of course. I won't be unreasonable again. I understand now."

But inside the dressing room she sat on the wicker and crotone chair long with her hand burning against her face. "Honi soit—" But this! Get away—could she? Run past White out there moving step-ladders, pulling the cords from the glass roof. Rush past him; go back to Tranquility!

He called. "Better hurry. I want this light!"

No use running. Hurry. . . there were little red marks below her knees where she'd wound her stockings. She was shivering when she stepped around the screen.

White looked over his easel. "My word! You're nearly perfect! You're the best I've ever—"

"Honi soit—" Her feet were lumps of ice. Drag them—no, he was moving backwards, eyes narrowed. She might have been a block of stone.

"Excellent line, color—. A little thin through the hips—"

Heat rushed over her face and shoulders. "Galatea coming to life!" chuckled the artist. "Here! Don't you faint!"

"I—won't—"

He threw a robe around her and pulled forward a high model stand. She put her bare feet on the steps, climbed through a blur. He placed cushions at her back; slipped wedges and blocks under her elbows.

"Don't move if you can help it, please."

He twisted colors from little tubes to a big palette, hung a cup to his edge. Then he placed brushes and cheesecloth on the step ladder before the huge square of canvas opposite her pedestal, lighted a cigarette and scrambled up the steps in his rumpled, paint-smeared smock.

"Ready, Miss Marsh."

She hesitated and again felt the intolerable heat from her brow to her ankles. "Honi soit—" She let the robe slip.

White worked rapidly with a brush. The lines meant nothing to her at first; they were angular and lilac shaded. Then surfaces emerged and gradually a slender, graceful figure. She recognized the suggestion of a head; a short, straight nose.

"Why," she gasped, "it's me!"

White laughed. "A good model should share the credit for a picture," he said. "She has everything to go with its success."

It was an eerie experience, seeing herself repeated so before her very eyes. Not quite as she was, of course. The woman coming alive on the canvas was such a creature as she—Mimi—might be without her little imperfections; the certain small characteristics that made her herself.

That woman was the most beautiful thing she ever had seen. "White sees beauty—" White saw her like that. With those quick, keen glances from his tilted eyes.

She might learn to see others idealized so. She'd be happier . . . That hair in the picture was spun sunlight, and the eyes laughed like running water . . .

"Tired?"

"Oh, no." Yet when he said, "Well, rest now," she fumbled with the robe and slipped down the steps in a faint.

She was lying in the wicker and crotone dressing room when she opened her eyes. White trotted in, his arms wrapped around a steaming pot of tea.

"Why didn't you say you were tired?" How can I look out for you when I'm working?"

"You said not to move."

"Nonsense! I'm no ogre!" Then, seeing that tears were falling on the robe, he added more gently, "I hope it hasn't been so bad. The first time."

"You're been so kind! And I'm sorry and ashamed for what I said that day. I hope you'll forgive me!"

He went out chuckling.

Chapter 11

Mimi dropped into the habit of sitting with a book until Trixie came home sharply after midnight. Then they would talk for an hour or two over sandwiches and delicatessen beer. She rarely fell asleep before two o'clock. She began to understand what "regrets" meant; she grew moody and depressed.

Mornings she breakfasted chiefly on quantities of strong coffee and went to White's studio feeling tired and dull.

The curves went out of her face, she developed a gardenia-like whiteness of skin that contrasted strikingly with the brilliant color of her hair.

Afternoons, however, when she sat

before the easel White had placed for her in a corner of his big studio, a feverish excitement took possession of her. Then her eyes sparkled like yellow jewels and her smile flashed as she talked to White's friends—a singular assortment—who dropped in at the ten hour.

Many of them were artists, young and struggling like Merle Lengel, while others bore famous names. There were some who reminded her of Willy Perry; young fellows with too much money and plenty of leisure. They sent Mimi orchids and expensive candy and besieged her with invitations. Occasionally she dined with one or another of them. A few times she went to the theatre.

Bids to night clubs, "a little shindy over in the apartment," and week-ends on Long Island she refused no matter what efficient, chaperonage was promised.

And White watched her under his shaggy brows.

"I'd be wanting to marry you myself," he told her with his pudgy arm around her waist. "If I wasn't a hard-boiled bachelor. Stand 'em off, my dear! You're as beautiful as a white jade figurine."

"And New York's a game you can't beat!"

She'd heard that before. Trixie said it in those very words on her first night in New York. Well, she kept out of the game. Easy enough.

She was learning a lot from White. He was scathing in his criticism, but his rare word of praise meant something. She'd had been with him only a month, and already had done a picture that he hadn't advised her to tear up.

Nothing much; just a monochrome of that certain sinister house back home, brooding in the night. The house that looked like the Flying Fish. Merle recognized it at once.

Merle came often to the studio. So gentle and friendly—what a dear he was! With eyes like Daddy's . . . Perry came too, bringing unrest. Why did he have that curious effect on her? The moment he stepped inside the door she began to tingle. Something electric. Yet when he tried to hold her hand she laughed and pushed him away. She refused to see him outside the studio, though Merle frequently took her up St. Nicholas avenue and helped her scramble eggs or broil a chop.

One evening she found a letter from Aunt Kate. Home was lonesome without her! There's been snow that drifted the roads and they couldn't get to town. Collectors had come through and they'd sold a rush-bottom chair and a pewter candle stand. Funds were rather low . . . The old maid, Jinx, seemed to be grieving; he had a way of going to her room and lying on the braided rug. Had she found the right church?

Mimi was sobbing when she finished reading. "I'll send money home. How could I have forgotten! Sunday I'll go to church—"

It was one o'clock and Trixie hadn't come in. Her hours were uncertain lately and her moods unaccountable. She'd fly into a rage and then apologize, weeping.

Mimi got into bed but no sleep came. She kept thinking of Jinx, grieving on the braided rug. Her thoughts wandered to Merle, to Perry. The clock on the convent up the hill struck three. Tomorrow she'd be worn out . . . Then she thought of Trixie's nerve tonic. A little would make her sleep, no doubt.

Mimi found it in the corner of the drawer, and held the bottle in her hand, watching the white powder sift against the glass. Little crystals, sparkling in the light.

Her fingers were at the stopper when the door open softly. Trixie's eyes fell on the bottle; she leaped like a cat, hands at Mimi's throat.

"You dam' little dumb-bell! That's what you're up to, is it? I'll fix you!"

Mimi was flung across the room, she hit the wall with a violence that knocked her breathless. "Trixie's been drinking," she thought in that instant, and faced smirking, too red lips and maddened eyes.

"Trixie, listen to me! I didn't take any of it—honestly, honestly I didn't touch it! I was going to. I thought it would make me sleep!"

She forced herself to smile, to speak calmly. "You're tired, aren't you Trix? Was tonight hard? Let me take your hat—"

Trixie slumped on the bed, twitching.

"It's all right, baby," she chattered. "You're a good little dumb-bell. I leave you have it was it right for you." Her voice rose in a howl. "Get out! Here now! Say, get out here before I throw another fit!"

Mimi fled to her room and bolted the door. Trixie'd acted strangely before at times. Noisy—wild—but so like this! She was muttering at there; throwing things.

In a frenzy of terror Mimi pushed a table against the door.

(To be continued)

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Faith or Fidelity?

Joseph had just returned from the country. Mami, his sweetheart, who worked at the McDonald's residence, had not written him during his absence and he greatly feared for her health. Therefore, he went straight to the McDonald's house, even though it was after his customary bedtime.

As he came into the back yard, he noticed a dim light burning in the kitchen. He peeped in the window and behold—a couple locked in loving embrace.

"I guess Mami doesn't work here any more," said Joseph, and went on home to bed—Princeton Tiger.

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SHELBY, N. C.

West Shelby News Personal Happenings

Special to The Star

Mr. and Mrs. Lionel Crawford and little daughter, Frances spent the week-end with Mr. and Mrs. C. D. Weast.

Mr. and Mrs. J. W. Silver, little daughter, Mary Margaret, Mr. J. C. Hyder and Miss Daisy Hyder spent Sunday afternoon with Mr. Hyder's brother, Mr. Jim Hyder at Spindale.

Mr. S. C. Tate and family and Miss Mildred Ramsey spent Sunday in Caroleen.

Mr. and Mrs. Verner Hoyle visited his parents in the county Sunday.

Mr. Sam Dyer moved his family

to his father's near Zoar church, Monday.

Mr. and Mrs. Leland Jones, and small son, Lyman and Mr. and Mrs. Tom Bradley spent Sunday in Spartanburg, S. C. at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Summe West.

Mrs. M. E. McFarland and children spent Sunday in Caroleen.

Mrs. J. G. Ramsey who has been very sick at her home on Gardner St., improves very slowly.

Mr. and Mrs. Bob Padgett and children of Beaver Dam community spent Sunday afternoon at the home of Mr. and Mrs. C. D. Weast.

Mr. and Mrs. Joe Kennedy and children, Mr. and Mrs. M. G. Eaker and children and Mr. and Mrs. A. A. Ramsey visited the Caroleen M. P.

church Sunday.

Mrs. Summie West and children of Spartanburg, S. C. are spending the week here with relatives.

A Sea of Soup

A film director, doing color photography, gave a private showing of one of his reels. Through it were scattered some striking ocean bits.

These were highly complimented on all sides and more than one spectator stepped up to shake the director's hand.

"I never saw the ocean so green," declared one enthusiast.

"Yes, I rather fancy that ocean green myself," responded the director. I got that with a tank of pea soup."

—London Answers.

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FOR MOTHER'S DAY

Surely you are going to give Mother a Gift on Mother's Day, (Sunday, May 9th.) Then let me help you to decide upon what to give. Let me suggest something useful, some Gift that she will appreciate and cherish.

A Chest of Silverware—a really useful gift that will last for a lifetime. A beautiful Clock for the mantel, one that chimes if you like.

A piece of Silverware for the table or buffet. There are in fact, so many wonderful things from which to select your gift that it will be best for you to come in and look around. Remember to see

FRIDAY'S "STAR" FOR MOTHER'S DAY SPECIALS.

George Alexander

—JEWELER—
Shelby, N. C.