

# RUNAWAY JUNE

By George Randolph Chester and Lillian Chester

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## FIRST EPISODE

### The Man With the Black Vandyke

#### CHAPTER I.

**T**HE quivering center of all the intense agitation in Brynport was Bouncer. That energetic collic could remember no occasion so exciting as this in the Moore household, but as every one seemed thoroughly satisfied Bouncer helped in the happiness until his tall ached.

Once, and once only, Bouncer had been able to get past old Aunt Debby. This time he caught that coal black cook with her hands full of snow white dough. She lost her dignity and her center of gravity and sat down on the floor with a plump which jarred the house as Bouncer plunged beneath her flaring skirts, but she saved the dough. Bouncer meanwhile was up the back stairs, and a brown and white streak had flashed into the daintily cretonned room of his friend, mistress and play-fellow, pretty June Moore. Here all was billowy confusion. June herself, standing by the long, low row of fleecily curtained windows, was the nucleus of all the frothing white. Her girlish cheeks were flushed, and her eyes were wide and shining, and a fat dressmaker, with her lip in her mouth and a maze of diabolical wrinkles in her brow, was on her knees completely encircling June with pins and pulls and twitches. A browbeaten dressmaker's helper, with a flaming red spot in each cheek and her yellow hair dragging to denote her repressed agony and with her bosom stuck full of pins and needles and things, was standing rigidly to one side holding an orange blossomed veil. June's mother, in a very special dress and with her hair done in the most painful precision of which a Frenchman was capable, stood just in front of June, wringing her hands and helping with her eyes in all the sacred ceremonies.

Marie, Marie of the broom and duster, black haired and red gummed, waited near, with a wile grin and moist eyes, to have things hung upon her when there was no more space upon the little white bed nor any of the chairs. Over by the door, talking incessantly, was Iris Blethering, June's bosom friend.

For only a moment Bouncer was permitted to gaze upon this puzzling scene. When he sprang too near the central figure of it all, with the perfectly natural and commendable intention of leaping upon her to show his undying affection, there was a combined shriek from six women, and five of them put him out.

Well, it was a strange world, and by way of setting his mind at ease Bouncer ran six times around the house and chased a cat up a tree and

exchanged loud views with all the neighborhood children who hung upon the fence waiting to see the bride.

There were pink bridesmaids at every window, and a nice, regular father, garden and silk hatted and Prince Alberted, walked up and down the porch, looking at his watch until eternity dragged by, but when the end of time was come the limousines began to move, and Bouncer, with a yelp of welcome, sprang to his regular seat by the side of the first driver. Jerry pulled Bouncer's ear and shut the long pointed muzzle in a gasolined fist and gave him other rough tokens of friendliness; then the door opened and there came out a deecy vision in whom the neighborhood children found it difficult to recognize June Moore, but flmy robes and pale cheeks were no disguise to Bouncer.

"Bouncer!" June Moore, in all her important finery, stooped swiftly down and took his head between her white gloved hands and looked into his wistful eyes and touched her cheek, for an instant, upon his silken ear and whispered to him of all the world, her very last girlish secret. Then Aunt Debby, now divested of dough, dragged Bouncer back and locked him in the shed, while June Moore rode away never to be June Moore again!

What was this new world which she was approaching? No bride knows and no woman. June sailed contentedly. Ned—how he had filled her world! And how happy they were to be!

Why, they were at the chapel—the pretty little gray chapel loaded with vines. And there was Ned at a window of the Sunday school room and



June

looking so strained and uncomfortable. And there were the ushers in the doorway. She hardly knew how she was suddenly transformed into a procession.

Why, here was Ned close beside her and trembling! In a mist they knoeked and said responses, and Ned put a ring on her finger. His own fingers were cold and clammy, but his voice was clear and earnest as he promised to love, cherish and protect her as he bestowed upon her all his worldly goods.

Some one in the church was crying softly—Iris Blethering, the bosom friend. Husband Bobbie was comfortably patting her hand. There was a general dabbing of handkerchiefs. Bright eyed little old Grandma Moore smiled and smiled through it all, a gay little grandma, with as smart a gown as any there. Ned's father, a strong faced, handsome man, sat stolidly with his arms folded and went over the ceremony with his lips, word for word. Bouncer trotted down the aisle, wagging his tail, his blue ribbon torn and the marks of the earth under the shed upon his fluffy coat.

Then the organ pealed again, and beneath the vine swung portals which June Moore had entered on the arm of her father, June Warner, on the arm of her husband, now emerged into the world of caroling birds and gay sunshine. And so they were married!

Then the bustle and confusion began again—the mad scramble into traveling clothes and the going away amid showers of rice and the earnest godspeeding of friends and the semihysteria of Iris Blethering, with Bouncer barking his indignant protest somewhere in the muffled distance.

Just before June came downstairs to her trim little traveling suit of blue her mother had slipped something into the hand of the daughter. It was the symbol of every woman's tragedy. It was a purse stuffed with crackling bills.

At last they were alone, launched upon the sea of life! They were in the tiny drawing room with a white toothed porter stowing things into racks and hanging things on hooks and sticking flowers everywhere.

Ned had clasped her in his arms and had covered her blushing face with kisses in that first realization, and now she sat by the window, her head pillowed contentedly upon his shoulder, and outside the world they had known up to this point in their lives was slipping past them. A tiny cinder darted into her eye. Her first instinct was to grab her handkerchief, and the search for that resulted in a little cry of dismay.

"My purse!" she gasped. "Too bad!" Ned's voice was full of sympathy. "Anything in it?" "My money," she replied. "I

## AT SHERRY'S Run Each Thursday and Friday, Commencing This Week

with all at once a panic springing into her heart.

"Is that all?" he laughed. "Well, little wife"—and he laughed again at her swift blush—"why am I here?" "I know," she faltered, "but"—She

stopped, confused, and cast down her eyes at her interlacing fingers.

He studied her a moment in perplexity. "I'm just the same as your purse, except that you can't lose me," he told her, dwelling with fond eyes upon her long lashes, her smooth, round cheeks, her red lips. He reached into his pocket with bluff heartiness and produced a roll of bills just as the porter came in with two snowy pillows. "Good work, George!" approved Ned, and, catching two bulging eyes fixed



The Going Away Amid Showers of Rice.

upon the roll of bills he held in his hands, Ned stripped off a dollar. "This is my letter of introduction," he observed as he passed it over.

Ned turned to June, smiling, as the porter went out of the door and took three bills from the inside of the roll.

"I think you'll feel happier carrying this around."

He stuffed the bills into her clasped hands. She tried to close her hands against it with a sudden instinct which she could not fathom, tried to draw away from the money, but his fingers were the stronger, and, laughing, he kissed her and straightened up to put the balance of the money in his pocket. She looked at the bills, while a slow flush of crimson came up over her face. Why should this have embarrassed and humiliated her? It seemed absurd for this was a part of marriage.

Ned sat beside her and put his arms around her, and she held up her lips to be kissed. Suddenly she buried her head on his shoulder and cried. Something had been swept away from her, something had been broken. The man had given, and she had received.

#### CHAPTER II.

**T**HERE was a shadow on the Pallades, the grayness of a cloud which had not been there as they had started upon this journey. Money—the woman's money. It had been all right for June to coax her mother and wheedle her father, but they were mummy and daddy. Yes, Ned would give her all he could afford, but that was it—he would give it to her! She would be the recipient of his bounty, or, worse still, would be paid for being his wife! She suddenly arrived at the startling fact that this was the status of every wife. It was a most disquieting thought, destructive of self respect. It was unbearable.

Ned Warner felt the precious head on his shoulder become heavy. Poor little girl! Getting ready to be married was wearisome work. Well, little wife's terrible tribulations, such as separating from home and friends and Bouncer and being made to give an account of herself, were all over. Ned braced himself against the arm of the seat for fifteen minutes, while the tired head drooped lower and lower. Poor little girl! Her neck would be stiff from that strained position. He moved ever so gently, but the gentleness was an unnecessary precaution. When he tried to shift her she slid into his arms without a flicker of her eyelids and lay there sleeping like a baby, her long

bushes curving on her cheeks, her red lips half parted. Ned Warner was amazed at his wonderful luck. Who was he to deserve such a peerless creature as this?

He lifted June's feet into the other end of the seat. She gave herself one pretty shrug, which settled her into the graceful lines of perfect rest, put a plink palm under her round cheek and slept straight on. Ned covered her with a cloak, kissed her cautiously on the outermost surface of her cheek and strode out to the smoker.

He was back in five minutes to see how she was resting. The pretty little bride had not the rosy flush of sleep which he had expected to see. Her face had the pallor of weariness, and her beautifully curved brows were knotted as if in distress. He thought that the light in her eyes disturbed her and drew down one of the blinds.

That troubled knitting of June Warner's beautifully arched brows had not been due to the light shining in her eyes, but to the lurid flame which had sprung up in her mind, and that flame danced itself into the figures of wedded dreams. She saw Ned tipping the white toothed porter; then she saw Ned, with equally hearty generosity, giving her three bills. The difference was \$20!

Ab, the tantalizing fragrance of fresh cookies! She was in her mother's kitchen, and old Aunt Debby, black as midnight and round as a barrel, was drawing a pau of the delicious cakes from the hot oven.

Wonderful cookies, those! June was just reaching for one when, much to her disappointment, they were not there. The familiar old kitchen was not there. Why, this was the kitchen of the new apartments, the nest which was waiting for Ned and herself after the honeymoon! June was in a big white and blue dotted apron, struggling in the baffling art of making cookies. Some one came in. Ned—his eyes shining as the fragrant cakes were drawn from the oven! June turned them over on a white cloth. Ned burned his fingers on one of the cookies, and he burned his tongue, but he was highly pleased with the taste, and he gave June some money. He patted her on the shoulder. Again she saw her mother paying Aunt Debby and patting that valuable cook approvingly on the shoulder.

In her dream June saw Ned's office, a stiff, prim place, as stolid as the elder Warner. There was a nice looking stenographer, quite obviously great friends with a nice looking young secretary, and there was a nice looking office boy. It was evidently Saturday night, for Ned presently rose from his desk and walked over to the nice looking stenographer. He handed her the envelope containing her pay, and they exchanged a frank smile and a few pleasant words. "Pretty good pay the stenographer received. She earned it. Ned handed the nice looking secretary an envelope. They exchanged a few pleasant words and a frank smile. Ned handed the nice looking office boy an envelope and laughingly squeezed the boy's chin and ruffled his hair. The boy grinned delightedly and popped the envelope into his inside pocket. Then Ned walked over to June and handed her an envelope. It was larger than the others. He bowed to her very courteously as he presented it. He spoke a few pleasant words, but did not smile frankly, and she cast down her eyes. There seemed to be a distinct understanding that she had not earned her envelope.

A poor, shivering old woman sat huddled in a doorway. Ned stopped, looked at the old woman a moment and then walked across to her and handed her a coin. He was very magnanimous about it in spite of his compassion. He broadened his chest with the exhilaration of the good deed; then he smiled down at his wife most generously. Yes, his wife, for the old woman was gone, and June, in luxurious furs, but huddled, was in the doorway. It was she to whom he had given the coin!

A wan and tattered, pinched and hungry looking little boy stood mutely beside them, piteous appeal in his upturned eyes, and held out his clawlike little palm. Ned, beaming with kindly good will, placed a coin in the outstretched palm and put his hand in benediction on the head of June, for it was she, and not the wan little boy, who stood there piteously begging!

What wonderful scene was this? A bleak, wild country with huge, strange birds flying over it and no human habitation in sight. There were human creatures, though, two of them—a big, ponderous jawed savage with matted hair, who carried an enormous club over one shoulder. Behind him trudged a smaller figure, a woman, with matted hair hanging to her waist. In her nose was a ring, and to this ring was attached a leather thong, the other end of which was in the man's hand. He was taking home his bride! Music, the wedding march, the little gray, ivy hung chapel at Brynport. Was that Ned coming down the aisle? Was that June just behind him? Was there a leather thong in Ned's hand? Oh! Was the other end of that thong—

There was a sudden jolt and screeching noise, a rattle and a bang and the sound of hissing steam. June Warner jumped wildly to her feet and gazed around the little compartment. There were the flowers, the boxes of candy, the scattered rice. Comprehension came to her slowly, for she was still half in her dream. The train had stopped. She snatched up her cloak, jumped up on the seat and brought down the paper bag which contained her prim little traveling hat; then she jerked open the door. In the opening she stopped with a sudden flash of memory. Ned's money, the first of his

generous bounty, the first of her pay for being Ned's wife. She jerked it from her belt, threw the three bills on the seat, ran down the steps, jumped to the ground and sped across the tracks to the opposite platform. She had no idea of where she was going, but anywhere would do.

As the train started to pull out she had a mad impulse to run after it to have it stopped, to call Ned, but there was no movement in her.

Across the tracks in front of the station a man, tall, splendidly groomed, black Vandyked, stood watching her intently.

#### CHAPTER III.

**N**ED WARNER, as the train pulled out from that momentous station, was in the wash room of the smoker, with a pleasant smile on his lips, making the most elaborate toilet of his existence. He was to have the honor of dining alone for the first time with his charming wife.

Thoroughly complacent, he strolled back through the car to awaken the sweetest girl in the world.

"June!" he called and turned to bend over her seat.

She was not there! He hurried out to the vestibule. Not there! And now for the first time he saw the three ten dollar bills on the seat. One of them was slightly torn; all of them were crumpled.

Frankly he rang the bell; then he rushed out to meet the white toothed porter on the way.

"Where's my wife?" he demanded. The porter's eyes widened until they made his teeth look gray.

"Deed I don't know, boss!" he replied, as scared by contagion alone as if he had been accused of throwing the pretty little bride out of the window. "Honest to the Lord, I don't know!"

The delicious search began from that instant. In about two minutes the conductor, the brakemen, all the porters and half the passengers were searching for June Warner.

Ned, in his most lively vision of all, saw her dropping off the train, crushed and mangled beyond all recognition.

No vision, however, portrayed to him his bride slowly crossing the tracks toward the black Vandyked man! As she approached the man gave her a sharp scrutiny, smiled and strolled across the station platform to the bulletin board. New York local was due at 4:10. An express was due at 4:20.

June Warner was helpless and bewildered. She had no money, no friends. She could not even telegraph. Why had she done this foolish thing? Her dream! She saw herself again standing in the posture of a piteous beggar and accepting Ned's gifts. She saw Ned tipping the white toothed porter a dollar and then, with the same jovial generosity, handing her thirty. The touch of that money still burned her fingers. Foolish as her revulsion might be, it was keen and real nevertheless, and until she had thrusted out this question with the woman which had suddenly grown up in her she could not make of her marriage with Ned the sacred relationship which she had held as her ideal. The black Vandyked man passed quite near her, gazing at her with a smile. She walked around him.

Where should she go? Home? She could see her father and mother plying her with question upon question, driving her to tears with their worried insistence and their utter lack of understanding.

If not home where then? As if from the setting sun the answer came to her—just New York. So big and so latent upon itself that friends may dwell around the corner for years and never know.

Ned at that moment was extracting slow information from a half deaf and



She Jumped to the Ground.

totally dumb old woman with a cross grained disposition. Yes, she had seen a young woman get off the train at a station back there. She didn't know if the station was Farville or not, but the girl had rice in the brim of her hat.

June Warner, alone on the station platform, had grappled meantime with the first problem of her independence. That problem had to do with the means of getting to New York, and it was concretely expressed in her beautiful little gold watch.

In the meantime Ned's train had drawn up at the next stop, and he had the station master in Farville in a minute and was inquiring for a lonely bride.

"Why, yes," kindly answered the station master at Farville, in answer to that description he had been looking around here on the platform, and she's just getting on the down train," reported the station master. "There's a tall fellow with pointed black whiskers. He's helping her on the train."

A black Vandyked stranger! Ned almost recoiled. So that was why she had left the train!

"Stop them!" he yelled. But the phone was dead. Station masters are busy people.

A train thundered in—a down train. Ned looked at the bulletin board. The New York express. It arrived in New York at the same time as the local. The first passenger to board that train was a peripatetic faced young man, swinging four pieces of white ribboned luggage.

June, paying but little attention to the man who had helped her, turned nervously into the car, a day coach, and viewed the interior with despair. In that coach there were only two passengers, a man and a woman, sitting together.

"Would you like to buy a watch?" invited June in her smallest voice, as she confronted the rigid woman and held out her merchandise.

"No," returned the woman without moving a muscle. Only her feet wobbled. The man cast at the merchandise a look of contempt.

"It's a very nice watch," urged June. "It's a solid gold case and I don't know how many jewels. I only need money enough to get to New York and hire a taxi. Then I must find some work."

The black Vandyked man's eyes lighted. "I don't want it," observed the woman, looking straight ahead, while the man's glance of contempt strayed from the merchandise to the vender.

"Very well," nodded June, and a grain of rice fell from the brim of her little blue hat and bounced in the rigid woman's lap.

The woman turned sharply; then she half rose and looked at the top of the hat. There was more rice on it!

"Let me see that watch," she said jeily. One lid contained a picture of June and her dog, and the other the date of the gift and her name and address.

"How much do you need for this?" "She wants about \$10, ma'am." This was from the pale faced conductor, who was so broad and stuffy that he was an offense to narrow aisles, but his eyes were full of twinkles.

The rigid lady snatched the watch and turned to her husband. "Dan!" It did not seem possible that her voice could take on a wheedling tone, but it did. "I want \$10."

The man turned to her with cold disdain. He produced \$10 from a light bound wallet, and instantly into June's mind there flashed that picture of her standing before Ned a piteous beggar!

The runaway bride took a seat by herself and was presently given the discomfort of knowing that the man was grumbling at the woman incessantly for having bought the watch. The black Vandyked man went over to them, and she saw him pay some money, and then he came back to June with the watch in his hand.

"Of course you won't permit me to present you with this?" he pleasantly observed. "If you care to send for it later, however, I will be very glad indeed to give you my card."

"Thank you," she accepted, and, taking the card, put it in her belt. "You are very kind."

It was not until they were nearing the station in New York that he spoke to her again.

"Pardon me," he said, bending over her. "If I can be of any service to you on your arrival I shall be very happy indeed."

"There is nothing, thank you," she replied, smiling up at him. "You are very kind."

At that particular moment the New York express overtook the local and slowly forged ahead, and Ned Warner, peering feverishly into every passing window, saw the suave, black Vandyked stranger bending gracefully over his wife, and June was smiling up at him. Then Ned, against his will, passed on.

The express, however, was delayed a moment, and the local pulled in ahead of it. Ned was the first passenger out of the express, and he landed on the platform just in time to see the Vandyked man and June going through the gate side by side. Ned rushed after them, but it was not until he reached the Vanderbilt avenue stairway that he saw them again. June was darting through the door and just behind her was the man. He was smiling. With a rush Ned rounded the balustrade and went up three steps at a spring. He arrived only in time to see June speeding away in a taxi cab and to see the black Vandyked man starting after her in another. He jumped into a third one and shouted, "Chase them!"

"Hold on there!" rasped a breathless voice, and a plaintive porter plied Ned's white ribboned luggage on top of him.

Away through the tangled traffic, across Forty fourth street and up Fifth avenue rushed the three taxis at break-neck speed.

(To be Continued.)

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