

# Thrilling Tales of Love and Adventure

## Miss Nobody Of Nowhere

By Annette Auzert

It's niche in the hallway the telephone bell began to ring violently. It broke the darkness of the place and brought Miller, who was smoking in the dusk, out of his reverie with an angry start. He rose, took down the receiver and gazed meditatively at the wallpaper. "Hello," he said. "Is this — Madison?" "Yes." "Is this Mr. William Lindlay Miller?" "It is," said Miller, "and his eyes lost their meditative stare. The voice was a woman's, and it was unusually sweet, with a soft magnetic quality that provoked an instant interest. At her next words Miller stiffened with surprise. "It's really Billy! Billy Miller! Isn't it funny how easy it is to get you on the wire? Until now you've always seemed so far away—so absolutely unattainable." Miller frowned. "Who is this?" he demanded sharply. The voice rippled a little. "Of course you'd ask that, but I can't tell you because I'm no one you ever saw or even heard of. If we do unconventional things we must be careful. Call me 'Nobody'—Nobody of Nowhere."

Miller slammed the receiver into the rack. He sat down on a chair, and a brindled terrier came and sat in front of him and thumped a stubby tail on the rug. "Here's a moss," said Miller with a wry smile. "Fritz, a lady is coming to see us—an anonymous and uninvited lady. But she had a pretty voice." At 11 o'clock he threw all the cushions at Fritz and cast himself upon the couch in disgust. The evening had been uneventful, and he could only conclude that some one had been trying to play a stupid and pointless joke. On the third day after, which was a Sunday, Lokari, Miller's Japanese, woke him from his morning doze with a summons to the telephone. Miller went to it, and yawned. "Hello," he said crossly. "Good morning, Billy." Billy jumped. "Of course you won't recognize me." "I believe I've heard your voice once before." "O, that is nice of you to remember. One's mind is often cloudy on Sunday morning, too. What do you think?" "I believe you're a woman, so I'd best not tell you what I think," said Billy. "I suppose all this is some kind of a joke on me." "O, please don't think that," it pleaded. "If there is any joke about this, it is all on me, and it's a very miserable joke at best. I can't tell you what it is, and please don't try to guess. Did you wait for me the other night?" "I was home all the evening," said Billy, cautiously. "And who came?" "Nobody." "Nobody?" "Nobody at all." There was a pause. "I said I was nobody," reminded the voice, gently. Billy hung up with a slam and went back to bed. He tried to sleep, but could not. "I said I was nobody," repeated the voice, insistently. "Stuff! growled Billy, and turned on his other side.

This was the beginning of Billy Miller's courtship. It raged up every two or three days, sometimes in the morning and sometimes in the evening. At first Billy was annoyed; later he became resigned, and then interested, so that at last he found himself listening eagerly for the telephone bell. He had relinquished the joke theory. It did not seem probable that any one would persist in a joke for six weeks when there was no satisfaction to be gained. The owner of the voice told him that she had wanted to know him and could find no other way. Billy began to believe her, but he was not a vain man, and he wondered. At the end of three months Billy was in love. Sometimes he wrestled wordily with "Central" and found that her calls had come from one of the hotels on the avenue, or a pay station on the upper West Side, but his knowledge did not help him at all. He felt that his position was ludicrous. She knew how he looked, knew where he lived, knew everything about him. He grew nervous and restless. "I saw you today," she told him once as he stood glaring helplessly into the transmitter. "You came out of your club and drove south in a cab. It was about 4 o'clock." "Just about that," said Billy, with a miserable laugh. "Where were you?" "Crossing the avenue half a block above." "Will you be there tomorrow at the same hour?" She gave the negative he expected. "You know I can't." "I know you won't," he said, bitterly. She had laughingly reproached him for not recognizing her in passing. "It was on Broadway," she said. "The girl was very pretty." "My cousin," said Billy, bluntly. "She was too pretty for a cousin. I hated her." "I hate her, too—at times. I hate everybody these days, because they're everywhere and you're nowhere," he

argued. "Of course, because I'm nobody—Nobody of Nowhere." "Will you ever be Somebody of Somewhere?" "No, never." "Do you mean that?" he asked earnestly. "Every letter of it, so please don't argue." "I can't," he said hopelessly. "You're too unreasonable and illogical." "I'm not trying to be logical. I'm following my own instincts. I'll try to explain those, but you won't understand because you're a man." "Five years ago when you were in college I saw you for the first time. Some one told me your name and— and things about you. After that I saw you a number of times in different places. I wanted to know you, but I couldn't think of any way until one night this wicked old telephone tempted me." "I was afraid at first and I thought and thought and considered just what chance there was of my ever meeting you in the natural course of events. I decided that there was about one chance in a hundred, so I rang up your phone number and forfeited that chance." "But ringing you up was an admission and I can't deny what it implied. Ah, Billy, can't you understand? I've made advances which only a man can make with any decency, and considering everything I shall never, never meet you face to face and say 'This is I.'" "You will," said Billy suddenly. "You'll meet me tomorrow at Dawson's Art Galleries." "Not tomorrow, or ever." "I have something to tell you." "You must tell everything over the wire. I can't meet you." "Very well. Are you listening?" "Yes." "Then it's just this: You'll have to consider me some in this affair. Perhaps you never anticipated the present situation. You saw me and you cared enough for what you saw to make advances, which, as you say, no girl should make. Well, I've only heard you; but I care enough now to be

ready as soon as you will let me, to make the most serious advances a man can make. Do you understand?" "I—I don't know." "Then I'll put it plainer. I've seen hundreds of girls, but I never wished to marry them. It's only since I've talked to you that I've cared to think what marriage might mean. I don't know who you are, where you are or what you are, but I'm staking everything on what I believe you to be. Now will you meet me tomorrow?" "I can't," said the voice faintly. "I can't—I can't," repeated Billy. "You must," he cried. "Dear Billy, no, no, no." There was something that sounded like a sob, and then silence. Billy dashed the receiver at the instrument in helpless rage. The following afternoon he went to Dawson's Galleries. Why he went, he could not have told, except he was moved as the drowning man is moved to grasp a straw. There he saw a girl in a big black hat, whose glance was softly impersonal. Billy looked at her and wondered. There was another woman who returned boldly his bright questioning gaze, and Billy shuddered as he turned away. "She can't be like that," he protested inwardly. "It isn't possible," and he thrilled suddenly at the memory of the voice with a sob in it. "I'd stake my life on that voice," he thought, and looked again at the girl in the black hat. Suddenly he walked across to where she stood before a large painting. He leaned forward and looked keenly into her face. "So you came after all," he said. The girl retreated in genuine surprise. "You're mistaken, I think," she said, and turned her shoulder upon him. Billy apologized and left the gallery with hot cheeks. "It wasn't her voice," he told himself, "and I'll never try that again." Late that night he left his club. The clock in his hall struck 12 as he closed his own door. His eye fell upon the telephone book lying on a table under

the instrument, and the sight of it brought back all his trouble with a rush. He took it up, ruffling thin, closely lettered pages with an unhappy frown. "I'd call up every number in the book if it would do any good," he said, thoughtfully, and was about to put it down again when the bell began to vibrate close to his ear. He reached quickly for the receiver. "Hello! I didn't suppose it could be you so late." "I know. It must be midnight, but I—I wanted to speak to you." "I wish you'd want to do something more than speak. I went to Dawson's this afternoon. Were you there?" "No." "I've been thinking things over ever since our talk last evening." "Are you going to meet me?" "No; I rang up to say 'Goodbye.'" "What?" "Goodbye, with a capital I, Billy—for always." "Without my ever knowing anything more about you?" "I can't help it. I'm sorry, sorry, that I ever called you up. I never thought that you'd take me seriously like this. But after what you said last night, we can't go on." "But you can't end it now after a whole year of—of—"

"Of what? Of nothing at all. You can't care for a mere voice. You'll soon forget all of it." "I won't!" he cried savagely. "It isn't the voice I love. I know your whole personality. I can tell when you're sad or happy or sick or well. You care, too. You said so. If you ring off for always now, I'll believe forever that you did this for a vile joke on a vulgar bet." "You can't think that," she said, gently, "when you remember some of the things I have said." "Then I'll forget them." "Very well; I suppose that is best. Say 'Goodbye' Billy." "No." "Goodbye." "I tell you I won't say 'Goodbye.'" There was no answer. He leaned tensely against the telephone. Only the whirring of the motor in his ears. He stood and hung up the receiver. He could not believe that he had rung off for the last time, and a chill fear that she had left so. Three weeks passed, and each week was eternity. On an afternoon in January he leaned against a pillar in the lobby of one of the big hotels up the wide marble staircase was late in the afternoon, dressed with thorough grace, and was passing. A slender figure came down the stairs and paused at the figure of a graceful, well-groomed girl, whose eyes, shining through her veil, rested upon him. He saw her hesitate a moment as she crossed the lobby, passing that she touched his hand, and fingers closed over something. He opened them and discovered square white pasteboard envelopes that flashed a woman upon his consciousness. It was a name that he had ever known, a single word written across the envelope was "Nobody."

## The Fruit Of Years

By Will Seaton

ASSERSBY often gazed admiringly at the little plot of ground, laid out with geometrical precision and cared for so painstakingly. Flowers, mostly old-fashioned varieties, everywhere ribboned the walks and formed gay carpets in triangles and squares and stars. Inside the white paling, and quite overtopping it, was a hedge of rare pink roses, but the garden's crown of glory was the little cottage in its center, mistily pretty back of its screen of vines. The old lady who lived there was as noticeable as her garden. Her blue eyes held the look that only a great sorrow can give. Sometimes she paced for hours seated upon her small porch. Again she worked among the flowers, her snow white hair making a strange contrast to her brilliancy. There always was an attitude of expectancy; sometimes her lips moved, and the refrain was invariably the same: "Will he ever come?"

Often, too, her thoughts were of the time when she and Robert, her husband, had been a part in the great scheme of things. Life then had not resolved itself into "just waiting." All day Robert had worked in his office, and she kept the cottage and cared for Bob, their only child, so happy and so grateful for her blessing that no day ever seemed long. Then a change came. Slight at first, a mere hint—that confinement was injuring her health; that she was giving too much time to the child. Later there was open criticism and recrimination. Little Bob was selfish, disobedient, and willful, and she, his mother, could see no fault. His father presently, in her mind, came to be unnatural and strangely shortsighted. It was not till Bob was sixteen that she began to really worry. Even then she stood between him and his father, concealing all she could, feebly protesting against his idleness, his dissolute companions and his frequent absences from home and school. She stinted herself that she might give to him, and not till his debts were beyond her ability to pay did she permit

a knowledge of them to reach her husband. Robert had been furious. "The fault is your own," he told her. "You have spoiled the boy. Against my judgment and wishes you have persevered in a course that may ruin him for life." "No, Robert," she had protested, "mother love never yet ruined a child. It never will. Leave my son to me." But that evening there had been a scene. Robert had laid bare his son's every fault, every weakness, ending with a scathing rebuke and a demand that henceforth, he live in accordance with a new order of things. And Bob, with thinned lips and gleaming eyes, had left the house without a word, while she, with aching heart, shuddered at the look on the faces of father and son and remained silent. That was the end. She never saw him again. After a sleepless night she learned that he had been seen boarding a westbound train. He was without money, she knew and no reasoning could comfort her. Vainly she told herself that after a while he would come home. Her husband's assurance that what-

ever ability he possessed would develop more quickly and surely among strangers did not appeal to her. Hers must be the guiding hand. "He went as a tramp," was her constant moan, and soon she became obsessed with the idea. She thought of him as a tramp, she dreamed of him as a tramp, she scrutinized the faces of all the tramps who came to her door and sent them away comforted for his sake. When the years had piled up—eight, ten, twelve—and she had not heard from him she gave up hoping. Then Robert died, and she was, indeed alone. Unable to endure the loneliness while surrounded by familiar scenes and faces, she drifted to a distant city, and after a while, with the longing for the old home strongly upon her, bought the cottage with its plot of ground. Gradually the old life asserted itself, and presently cozy nooks spoke to her of Robert and Bob. Then, by a sudden resolution, the garden became a replica of that other, where memory still lived. One morning she sat on her porch with a magazine in her hand. It was

this day twenty years ago that had brought such grief into her life, and her wounded heart bled afresh. In vain she tried to read. Article after article proved meaningless; and the portraits appealed to her. "Leaders of the New Congress" closely held her attention. "None of them is handsome, as I thought my son would be when a man," she mused, turning the leaves. But the position they occupied brought the thought of the study and energy required to reach a pace like theirs, and she fell to dreaming how her son, now a man, would look. Would his face have the low, ignorant, vicious expression of many of the tramps she had seen? "I see where I failed," she moaned aloud. "Somehow I could not understand that work and study were necessary. In my ignorance I ruined my boy." A fuchsia, heavy with its purple bloom, slipped from its prop and fell. She got up to raise it. Suddenly her gate latch clicked, and glancing up, she saw a doctor coming in. She had seen him pass several times lately, go-

ing to a nearby house, where there was a sick child. "I noticed your garden and came in for a better view. I hope you will pardon the intrusion." "You are very welcome," she told him. "Many of the blossoms are at their best. The hot sun brings out their beauty. If you like I will pick some for you." "Thank you. You are very kind. It reminds me of my mother's garden. The rose hedge, the shape and arrangement of the beds and the flowers themselves. You have a beautiful and an artistic home." "Not a home. Home is where there is love and companionship. I have neither." "You live alone?" "Except for my flowers. My husband is dead and my son, whom I, in my ignorance, ruined, left home, a tramp. I think of him always. Sometimes he is in city slums, again in railroad camps, or in prison. My son, whom I would have died to save! If I could only know! But he's never written nor sent me a word." She turned, her hands full of flow-

ers, but they fell to the ground. The doctor, with hand folded arms, was intently looking at her. "Mother!" he whispered. Later, when they could talk, her that for a long time he had been sullen and angry; that, ashamed, that when he had on a genuine reformation he had faced his parents without the usual

## All Mixed Up

By Walt Gregg

WHEN Electra Day unexpectedly fell heir to \$10,000 through the will of some half-forgotten relative, everybody in Westmore was interested, for everybody knew that \$10,000 must seem a vast fortune to a girl who had never had ten cents which she could spend foolishly all her life long. Electra was nearly fifty. She had gray hair and sweet brown eyes and a faint color in her delicate cheeks. She wore her clothes the longest of any woman in Westmore, she worked the hardest and she got the least pleasure out of life. Just two things had Electra in abundance, and these two were good health and patience. The one her parents had endowed her with; the other she had acquired through the varied experiences of a difficult life. Electra had lived very hard, but she had lived it valiantly in the sight of all Westmore. Her father and mother had been poor, but proud. Their one great desire had been to live in a large house. They got the house in time for Electra to be born in it, and when they died they left it to her, providentially unmortgaged. But they left nothing else. Electra had grown up with great respect for the house. When it came to her she resolved whatever came to keep it. She fixed it up in the best way she could and began to keep boarders. Sometimes no more than one. She managed to live, to pay her taxes and bills, but that was all. And she worked like a slave. At 5 o'clock each morning she was in her kitchen, and often it was 10 at night before she crept, aching in every bone, to her bed in a little bare room. The bot-

chambers were sacred to the boarders. "Electra," Miss Jewett said, "I wouldn't work the way you do for anything. Why don't you sell, rent or give away that house? I could get you a splendid job as housekeeper, where you'd have decent hours and companionship. As it is now, you're scarcely stopping long enough to sleep." "I suppose I am foolish," Electra replied, gently. "I've often thought of it. Sarah, I could sell the house. Perhaps, even, I could rent it though it's pretty big for one family. But, do you know, I love that house? I'd hate to see strangers in it." "Oh, I know all about that," Miss Jewett said, impatiently. "You ought to have married Miles Reed. He'd never have gone roaming off to Oregon then. I've always held that up against you, Electra, and you know it. Miles was my cousin, and I thought a lot of him. And he thought his eyes of you. Now he's way out there, and I expect any day to hear he's dead." "Well," sighed Electra, "I couldn't help it. Mother was sick and I had to stay with her. I did want to go West with 'em, but may be it's as well as it is." "No such thing," cried Miss Jewett. "Life would have been altogether different for you if you'd married Miles. Now, you're working yourself to death for a house that you haven't a soul to leave it to." Nevertheless, Electra kept the house. And one day while she was shaking a rug out of an upstairs window with her head down in a towel the post-letter that told her of her legacy.

should be sensible and get all the comfort out of this money you can." "I'm going to," Electra replied. She was a little dazed from the suddenness of such tremendous good fortune, but her quiet face had a look like that of a prisoner who has walked out of a dungeon into the light and air for the first time in years. "I'm just going to, Sarah. I've thought it all out. Why, last night I scarcely slept a winkle. I was too happy to sleep; I wanted to think. And I don't mind telling you my plans. They're not new plans. I began to make them years ago when I used to dream of having a lot of money—just girl nonsense, you know, but still—"

She paused with a long breath and a smile. "Well, Sarah, it does seem as if that dream was coming true—part of it, anyhow. You see, I've always lived in this house and been poor in it. Why, sometimes when father was living we scarcely had enough to eat. Since he and mother went I've kept boarders. I've been a slave to other people; they've had my best rooms and I've slept in the attic or in that back room over the kitchen. All the money I got had to go into food and fuel for other's accommodation. I haven't really had a home for myself. Well, that is all past now, Sarah. I'm going to have this house fixed up and painted inside and out. I'm going to have all the rooms papered and a big window cut in the parlor. I'm going to have a furnace and books and I'm going to live here alone. My land, I've been so crowded lately that it seems to me I can't get space enough. I'm going to sleep in the best bedroom and sit in the parlor, and I'm going to read and grow posies and go to church every time the bell rings and give tea parties to all my friends—"

## 'A Little Goose'

By Elsie Endicott

I'VE two tickets for the game tomorrow, Betty," Billy Morrel said, speaking over the telephone. "Yes?" Betty's tone was non-committal. "I'll be over about 2:30." Here he was interrupted. "You really needn't bother, Billy, for I'm going with Tom," and a sharp little click told him that she had hung up the receiver. Billy gasped. Ever since he first met her in their freshman year he had taken her around and now—! "Just like a girl," he thought grimly, "because Tom Lyle is captain of the football team and gets his picture in the paper every so often. Oh, hang it! I'll just show her a thing or two!" She needn't think she was the only pebble on the beach (though in truth she was the only pebble on his beach). He'd ask some other girl to go. There was Marjorie—she didn't college and Marjorie was one nice girl, although she seemed a bit surprised she consented. "It's nice of you to ask me, Billy," she told him. "I didn't expect to go." "The niceness is on your side, Mary," he assured her gallantly, though in his heart he had the grace to feel cheap—it was sort of mean to ask one girl just to spite another. The game was a fine one. Their side scored a goal and a touchdown and the school cheered long and loud. At his side Marjorie bubbled along cheerily, but somehow he couldn't put Betty out of his mind. What had he done to offend her? It wasn't like her to flare up this way. He must have

done something—but what? So wrapped in thought was he that he didn't notice that Marjorie's chatter had ceased till he felt her hand on his arm. "I know you are thinking about Betty," she said in her earnest little way, "and I think I know what the trouble is." Betty was tall and fair and most girls thought him "awfully good looking," but Marjorie's heart was at Harvard with one Harry. "Haven't you sort of fallen into the habit of taking Betty as a matter of course?" she began. "Don't you always ask her to let you walk home with her or do you just accept that privilege as your right? Oh, don't think me 'butting in.' Marjorie's sensitive face flushed. "But often and often that is just the trouble and no girl likes to be taken for granted, Billy." Betty drove her hands into her coat pockets and looked at her, light beginning to dawn on his face. "By Jove, Marjorie, I'll bet you're right! It's mighty good of you to put me wise. Girls are all Chinese puzzles to me," and Billy wrung her hand in his joy. Marjorie smiled a pleased little smile. "I'll be watching for results now," she told him. But all was not yet ended. It seemed when he sought an interview that midday's time was all taken up for at least a century. But Betty's nice voice pleaded so hard and so earnestly that she relented and told him he might come home with her from meeting the fight after next. Impatient Billy would have sworn that there were at least 48 hours in each of those days. He caught brief glimpses of her sun-gold hair flashing through the corridors at school, but had opportunity for never a word with my Lady Disdain until the ap-

pointed night. Betty of course was wailing. Tom with a little shake of his head said: "Not tonight, Tom," and she hand (a very cold and dainty hand nevertheless) through his hair. "Why, you didn't even ask me if she would after he had asked about the fifteenth time," she said. "But she never said a word." Betty punctured the seatmate's kias. "Billy!" she gasped. "Do you like Tom better than he demanded." "Do you like Marjorie?" "Little goose! Marjorie is a girl, but not for me. Now ask question." Betty's head dropped. She raised it proudly. Her big eyes straight into his and her very sweet as she answered. "I just like my own, own, own there!" He covered her two little hands with his big brown one, and drew him. His bare, blonde head bowed and his nice boy voice with emotion. "Oh, little, little girl, I love you," he said. And only Betty and the tree at the gate heard him. Where It Came From. One day the children in school were given a lesson on cow. The next day a cow was brought in for their inspection. The big nut came to the school. She happened to shake it and something inside. "What's that?" she asked. "That's milk." Rosie took another look at it and asked: "Did the cow lay it?"