

Thrilling Tales of Love and Adventure

Away Into Deep Oblivion

By Elsie Endicott



As long as she could remember Janet had lived in a worse for wear cottage on High street, in Medbury, with Mrs. Dean, Tom, Peggy, and Betty. Her parents, dying in her childhood, hardworking widow Dean, a lifelong friend of her mother's, had shouldered the responsibility of her upbringing, in spite of the advice of Medbury folk to search for kindred somewhere in Kansas.

Advancing years proved that her kindness had not been misplaced. Janet not only returning her care with a beautiful devotion, but from the time she was twelve years of age, adding her mite every week to the Dean's slim exchequer by "choring" for old Mrs. Wickham who lived on the hill. And when she was nineteen and Mrs. Wickham put her on a regular wage her gratitude—as she told Mrs. Dean, "every last cent of it" was to go to her—was pathetic.

Mrs. Dean's answer was made known to Tom, Janet's chum, in one of their confidential talks back of the wood pile. "Tom," she exclaimed, "do you know mother won't take more than \$3 of my \$7? Isn't that awful?"

"I should say not!" snapped Tom. "The Dean's don't impose."

Janet's eyes, which reminded one of wild violets, opened wide.

"Tom Dean," she cried, "the idea of talking about the Deans imposing on me! Don't I owe everything to your mother? Wouldn't I have been shipped off to strangers in Kansas if it hadn't been for her? Why, you Deans are all I have, all I want!"

She paused. Tom was looking at her in the queer way she had noticed lately, which always made her want to run away from him. She continued hurriedly: "Speaking of Kansas, I think I'll save my leftover \$4 every week, and when I have enough, go out there and hunt up my wonderful relatives. Shall I, Tom?"

Tom's gaze was far distant. As she put her question he brought it to bear on her. It was the "queer" look again, only intensified a thousandfold. It thrilled her and made her heart hammer. She felt frightened and happy all at once. "Go to Kansas!" Tom whispered. "Do you think I'd let you?" He was leaning very near her, his hands seeking hers.

Suddenly she was no longer little Janet, his chum, but a woman conscious of his love, conscious of her own.

After a time she said: "We can't marry for years, Tom."

"I'm to get an increase in the fall," he reminded.

"But it won't be enough to take care of four and save something besides," Janet argued. "We'll never leave mother and delicate Betty, you know. Anyway, mother'd never give her consent until we could show a bank account. That's what she did with Peggy and Jim Donlin. They had \$500 to start out with. I guess it won't be a speck different with you and me, Tom."

"When it's so hard to save the first hundred," groaned Tom. "Janet, do you know the taxes are overdue? And the house is a sight for want of paint, and—"

"If we don't have it shingled soon," put in Janet, "we'll be going to bed with umbrellas over our heads. I guess it's a long wait ahead of us, Tom."

"Janet," pleaded Tom, "can't you think of something pleasant as an ending of this wonderful hour of ours? Hang taxes, leaky roofs and all the rest of it?"

"Yes," said Janet softly. "I think it's an awfully pleasant thought these hard times to know that we have even a leaky roof we can call our own. I guess about all you and I'd better do for the present is to be thankful for what's what. And as far as my going to Kansas is concerned," she added,

seeing what was on Tom's mind, "at \$4 a week that's away in the future."

It so happened that it wasn't, however. It was only a month from that "wonderful hour" that Mrs. Wickham died, leaving Janet a thousand dollars. And, strange to say, when the amazing legacy was under discussion Tom was the one to broach the trip to Kansas.

Mrs. Dean, who had not been taken into their secret, looked surprised. "Do you really want to go to Kansas, Janet?" she asked.

"Ask Tom," Janet replied, smiling.

Tom, his brow furrowed in a painful frown, told of the proposed visit to the unknown relatives. Immediately his mother became enthusiastic.

"You'll go, Janet," she said firmly. "What's more, you'll go real stirring—just to show these folks who've never noticed you that you've got along quite well without them. Mrs. Miggs isn't busy these days, and she's a real stylish dressmaker. Tom—"

But Tom had left the room. Ever since he had heard of Janet's legacy he had appeared depressed. Janet watched him curiously as he shambled off toward the wood pile, their haven when anything troubled. Then she turned to Mrs. Dean and listened cheerfully to her wonderful plans.

They put them into effect the mo-

ment Janet received a check from Mrs. Wickham's lawyer. Tom seldom entered the house that a multiplicity of parcels did not litter tables and chairs; and to have Janet alone for a few moments was an impossible thing. If she was not shopping she was at Mrs. Miggs' for a fitting or at some one of the neighbors who were giving parties in her honor—now that she had money and was about to travel.

Tom grew almost morose in those exciting, bustling days. Constantly there dwelt in his mind the thought that Janet would not come back from Kansas, and all his efforts to appear cheerful were futile, so he kept out of the way as much as possible.

Janet was to set out on her trip the end of September. The month had just been ushered in when she said to Tom one evening: "Tom, you haven't taken an atom of interest in my pretty things. I want you to come now and really look at them."

She led the way to her tiny bedroom, so close to the low-ceiled, leaky roof, where the new clothes hung on pegs around the walls. She took down her traveling suit first. "Do you like it, Tom?" she asked. "Folks say it's very becoming, and I'm so glad! I wanted it to be unusually pretty, because—"

"Well, it is," Tom cut in. "Don't worry, you'll cut a shine when you ar-

rive in Kansas." His lips smiled; his eyes did not. His mother coming in, he slipped away as they mutually admired it.

Of course, he went out to the woodpile to fight things out in the twilight. He knew Janet would not come back! As she was pretty and bright her relatives would be proud of her, make much of her and lavish upon her pleasures that had never come into her starved girlhood. Would it be strange, then, that hard-working Medbury days should slip into the background for good and all?

Someone quietly sat down beside him. "You were in a dreadful hurry," Janet reproached. "There were so many things I had to show you. This is one of them. Will you read it, Tom?" She held a paper toward him. He opened it slowly and stared at a tax bill receipted. Before he could speak she laid another over it—an estimate on roofing. Still another was spread before his astonished eyes—a price for painting. She laughed softly as he looked at her speechlessly. "Isn't it fine, Tom, to be able to do things?" she asked gleefully.

Tom had turned from her and was staring silently over the old garden. Suddenly she knew he could not speak. Her arm stole around his shoulders.

"Tom," she whispered, "she was proud of me in my new suit," he blithered. "I—I mean, she looked around so sweetly she whispered again, 'I hope like Kansas, though we don't have to go there.'"

Her voice trailed away just as her hands fast in his, his eyes fiercely. "Janet, Janet, will you let me think I'm going away, while all the time I was just—oh, so gladly, Tom—for—"

With a cry of rapture he had his arms, and Time, Kansas, things, went whirling away into a blissful oblivion.

A House and \$5,000

By Annette Angert



CATHERINE LINN always knew her great-aunt Fredrika was eccentric, but she never knew how eccentric until the affair of the house. Since her father's death Catherine had supported her mother and herself as a stenographer. They lived in four rented rooms and just managed to be comfortable. Mrs. Linn always was in poor health, but she did the housework and a little sewing and dreamed of the time when Catherine herself should marry happily. Catherine herself sometimes dreamed of that time, but to her it was obscured by interminable distance. Jefferson Ford was not earning enough for three and he had no immediate prospects. They were friends rather than acknowledged lovers. Being brave and young and hopeful, they waited.

To be sure, Catherine had Aunt Fredrika, who was wealthy and who might have done something for her poor relatives. But she never had, and Catherine did not expect that she ever

would. Though Aunt Fredrika lived in the same town with them, she never came to see them. She had her own interests, the chief of which at present was her new house. It was part of her eccentricity that she should suddenly grow tired of the house in which she had lived for a half century, and should set about having a new one built. Catherine had heard about the new house, but she had never seen it, because it was entirely out of her way.

One rainy fall evening, when she was sitting alone with her mother, somebody came upstairs and knocked at their door. Catherine thought it was Jeff, who occasionally came in for an evening. She was, therefore, startled when she opened the door and saw Mr. Potter, the lawyer.

When an hour later he departed Catherine felt as though a cyclone had passed over their humble domestic machinery, for the lawyer had come to tell them that Aunt Fredrika had left the new house to Catherine on condition that she live in it and maintain it properly. She must not sell, mortgage or rent it; it was for her use alone. As for Aunt Fredrika herself,

she was already on her way to California, where she expected to spend the rest of her days.

The next afternoon Catherine got leave of absence from the office and went with her mother to look at the house. It was almost out of town, on a street that straggled over an eminence—a slightly place in summer, but bleak and cold in winter. The house was substantial, roomy and essentially modern.

Mrs. Linn screamed with delight when she saw the hardwood floors, the fire place, the electric lights and up-to-date heating plant. "And to think it is our home!" she said.

Catherine did not reply. She was thinking fast, and with every thought the new house seemed to be more and more of a white elephant on her hands.

Upon the broad veranda her mother paused ecstatically. "Just see how far I can watch you coming home!" she exclaimed.

Catherine sighed. It would be pleasant for her mother to watch her than for herself to walk the dreary mile from her work.

The next week they moved in. Their

poor little housekeeping essentials made but a pitiful showing in the new house. "We ought to have new curtains at least," Mrs. Linn said.

So they got the new curtains, and, with them, shades. The windows outside looked very well. But there was no furniture enough for half the rooms.

After two months had passed she began to sit up nights to figure. And the more she figured the more frightened she grew. The house was taking everything. It was like a greedy giant that must be constantly appeased.

One afternoon Jeff walked all the way home with her and she took him into her confidence.

"I'm worried," she said. "Why, Jeff, I can never earn enough to keep this house going! And mother doesn't seem to understand."

"Cath," said Jeff, "wouldn't \$70 a month—"

"Oh, you poor boy!" Catherine laughed, with a sob at the bottom of her voice. "How far would \$70 a month go toward taking care of three people and that house, when it's all two can do to live on fifty?"

"Confound the house!" exclaimed Jeff. "I wish she had never given it to you. I suppose, though, it's worth a lot if you hang on to it."

"So mother says. She's terribly in love with it. But for her I'd leave it tomorrow, Jeff."

"If I could only get a raise," sighed Jeff.

The winter wore on. It was extremely cold. Catherine resigned herself to the struggle. They were never warm; they were never well fed, and yet the money went as fast as it was earned. But no amount of economy could have cured Mrs. Linn of her passion for the house. She confessed that the ambition of her life had been to have a nice new house, and now that she had one which completely suited her she would endure anything rather than give it up.

"Mr. Potter says it is worth \$5,000, Cath. Think of it! I never expected to live in a \$5,000 house."

Spring brought hope to Catherine. Light and fuel bills would diminish. And they would make shift to have a garden.

Jeff, however, was more down-heart-

ed than ever. "No hope of a raise," he groaned.

In May Mrs. Linn took the grip and went to bed very ill. A nurse and a doctor came. Catherine was in despair. How was she ever to meet the expense of this sickness?

"Now, see here, Cath," Jeff said. "This thing has got to end somewhere. You are worrying and working yourself to death. Your mother won't give up the house; I always said that I'd never let my wife work, but I guess I shall have to. Honey, let's get married and pool our money."

The first day that Mrs. Linn was able to go out the three drove to the minister's in a cab and Jeff and Catherine were married.

A week later on a Sunday afternoon as they sat indoors together enjoying the light fire that Jeff had made in the fireplace the door opened and in walked Aunt Fredrika. She looked stout and rosy. After greetings and explanations she sat down by the fire and looked about her.

"Well," she asked, "how do you like the house?"

"Very much," replied Mrs. Linn, "al-

though Catherine thinks it is a expensive."

Aunt Fredrika smiled. "The very conclusion I was afraid," she said. "I told you, Catherine, when I be house I expected to live in it. The bronchitis and the doctor and warmer climate. However, later cured my bronchitis, and a cure I might have had to live for this locality. I've come to stay. And as I've sold the old I want to make you an offer. I'll give you \$5,000 for the house. Aunt Fredrika!" cried Catherine. "Is yours and you are welcome to it." "You shut up, Catherine," said Fredrika, her old eyes twinkling. "I'm running this business, if you please. Unless you'll take the \$5000 keep the house. It comes to will added Aunt Fredrika. "The house could be no match for me."

So Aunt Fredrika got the \$5,000. Catherine got the \$5,000. A bungalow that was built with a sum is so expensive to maintain they are all able to live very comfortably on Jeff's \$70.

All the New York Doin's

By Walt Gregg



MRS. FRENCH looked eagerly forward to her daughter's visit to the old home. Edna had been married six months after a cyclonic courtship. She had met Lou Dent at New York. He had followed her home and the next thing was a wedding. Of course, Mrs. French had expected Edna to marry, and she wanted her to marry well. Lou Dent seemed most desirable as a son-in-law.

He earned a good salary and he was altogether a fine young fellow. To Edna he had been something more than a romance, he had been a way out. She always had longed to get away from Westmore and live in a city. Her letters since her marriage assured her mother that she was very happy—so happy in fact that there had been no time for her to come home. She had urged Mrs. French repeatedly to come to the city, but Mrs. French never had been to New York in her

life and she was afraid that even Lou could not take care of her there. So after six months Edna was coming back to make her visit in her new capacity to her mother.

Mrs. French made eager preparations. She had led a colorless life. Since Edna's birth the one notable event she had known was Edna's marriage. And since Edna's marriage nothing so interesting had happened as this prospective visit.

She told all her friends and neighbors that Edna was coming and was so proud and happy and childishly excited that she could scarcely rest.

Then at last the great day came. She was up early. She could not eat any dinner. Edna's train did not arrive until 4:30, but at 2 o'clock she was dressed. She thought with secret enjoyment that she looked rather nice. Miss Cummings had trimmed her hat over and she had had the extra full taken out of the skirt of her second best frock.

She walked to the station. It was scarcely half a mile and the weather was good. She arrived ten minutes ahead of the train and had to stand on

the platform and wait. Everybody came to speak to her.

"Looking for Edna, Mrs. French?" She had a nod and a smile for each. And then she heard a far-off toot and the train came in. She ran up to the steps of the day coach and stood waiting and trembling. But no Edna descended. Her heart was beginning to sink when she heard a voice behind her: "Why, mother!"

She turned. It was Edna and yet not Edna. Her daughter had changed. Not even Flora Hempstead when she came back from Europe had looked so elegant and different from ordinary girls. Mrs. French caught her breath. Then she kissed Edna through her lace veil. "My darling."

"Why didn't you come down to the sleeper?" Edna chided. "The idea of expecting me to get out of the day coach!" She turned to give a coin to a porter who had just set two immense suitcases at her feet. "Where's a cab, mother? I must have a cab. Don't they have any here?"

"You forget, dear, that this is a suburb," murmured Mrs. French, bewildered. "There's Mr. Pell. I'll get

him to take your baggage. And, surely, you won't mind walking."

Edna laughed and they set forth briskly.

"Look around dear, and see what's changed," Mrs. French said. "Mr. Pomeroy has painted his store and Mrs. Green is putting up a new house. And the last wind blew down the big elm at the corner there. Don't you miss it?"

Edna laughed again. "Oh, mother, just as if I didn't live three blocks from Broadway! If you only knew how a suburb looks to me after New York. How's Tom?"

Mrs. French told her. As they turned into Pink street, she said with a quaver in her voice. "There's home, Edna."

"Yes," Edna replied hurriedly. "I shall be glad to get in. My left shoe pinches horribly."

Before supertime Mrs. French realized that Edna had changed unbelievably. She could talk of nothing but New York and what she did there and what she saw there. She noticed nothing at home save to disarrange it.

"What do you think of my new suit?" Tom asked at supper.

Edna regarded him critically. "I bet you got it at Barker's," she said. Barker kept the gent's furnishing establishment and was considered very up to date. "It looks it."

"What's the matter with Edna?" Tom asked irritably the next day. "Nothing we have or do suits her now. Things used to be good enough for her. She's done nothing but find fault since she got here. I did speak up a little when she got after Louisa at breakfast this morning. And now she's pitching into you. There's some things I can't stand, mother."

"Oh, she isn't pitching in exactly," Mrs. French said. "She thinks I ought to have some new clothes. Nothing I have is good enough and I thought—"

she gulped. "You know I had everything fixed over on purpose—"

The gulp became a sob. "I don't see what ails her, Tom."

"I know what will ail her if she don't shut up," Tom growled fiercely. So a few days hurried on and poor Mrs. French was just beginning to believe that there was nothing in the

world so disappointing as one's own married daughter, when Lou Dent rushed into the house one afternoon, hearty, rosy, big voiced and jovial.

"Hello, mother!" he cried, kissing Mrs. French. He looked around. "Say, this looks good to me, after what I've been getting in the city the last three days. Thermometer up to ninety and not a breath of air stirring. Our little seven by nine flat smells like a furnace. I sat out on the fire escape till 3 o'clock last night. And then I bolted. You expect hot weather in July and steel yourself to stand it, but when it strikes us in September—"

Edna watched her a moment, then she went to see that the city was all in a commotion. "Edna, you see a man want to chuck the city forever. The country's the place to live. You see I've been in New York all my life and I know."

At supper he was still loud in his praise of everything. The chicken, the baked beans and Louisa's bread got their full share of compliments.

"It's from hand to mouth in the city all the time," he said. "Edna says she

likes it and I presume she will while until the novelty wears off. She'll begin to see that the city isn't so hot after all. I never had a real apartment six stories up. I'm here's where you get the city right here. I married a cousin so I'd have a home some time. I want you to see that the city was all in a commotion. "Edna, you see a man want to chuck the city forever. The country's the place to live. You see I've been in New York all my life and I know."

Mrs. French looked at him and she realized that the jolly son-in-law of hers could do a great deal better than she. Edna could never get so far away from home as she would not—and could not be back.

The Mystery That Happened

By Will Seaton



MILDRED started guiltily when the door bell rang. All the morning she had struggled with a yet as unsolved problem of house-keeping, and the marks of the strife were, literally, plastered all around her. And here was Mother Rand, the best housekeeper in town, waiting for admittance. Jim's mother. It was she who had objected to her son's alliance with the bright and bonny Mildred on the ground that as Jim had his way to make in the world and needed a wife with more housewifely qualities than the ex-school teacher possessed.

"Why," said Mrs. Rand, solemnly and forebodingly, "I doubt if she can make a loaf of bread." Mildred agreed. She had been trying, ever since her marriage, with mysterious and in-

explicable results, seeing that she had followed conscientiously every precept of her up-to-date cook book. The first batch had become liquid and to Mildred's amazement, had poured out of the pans all over the oven. The next had been as hard as nails, resembling sheet iron tablets when baked, rather than anything approaching the appearance of the staff of life. This time trouble had marked her for its own from the start. The mixture on the board before her resembled a huge, bulgy, lumpy cannon ball, rather than the toothsome dough which evolved from her mother-in-law's gifted hands with a celerity which seemed magical to poor, bewildered Mildred.

There were marks of the fray all over the little kitchen. A trail of flour reached from barrel to table, and Mildred's hands and apron bore tokens of the mix-up. Hastily donning another apron and wiping her hands she opened the door and admitted her mother-in-law, who blandly announced her intention of accepting a standing

invitation and making a visit of several days.

In such case, Mildred meditated, she must get rid of that mass of unbaked bread before Mother Rand, as she surely would, insisted on helping get dinner. Various plans suggested themselves and were rejected. Once, when an alleged cake had been cast over the fence, had not Fido amiably ambled in with the detested and discarded derelict in his mouth? Again, when a batch of biscuits in the oven, had, somehow, been miraculously changed into bombs, the children next door, finding them cast away, had with allowable curiosity brought them in to ask "what are they?" No, Mildred decided that, this time, her mistake must be concealed that could not possibly meet the detection. A scheme occurred to her fertile brain. Good. She would bury the miserable failure. Failures, she reflected, merited burial and no resurrection.

When dusk offered her a kindly concealment Mildred "sneaked" out into

the back yard and with guilty haste and much perspiring dug a shallow grave in which with some uncomplimentary and muttered remarks she interred the inoffensive but offending mixture. Smoothing the ground down she stamped viciously upon it, saying: "There, you'll never trouble me again."

Mother Rand was gracious. She made no comments on the lack of homemade foods on her son's table. If she noticed the predominance of "bakery's stuff" she held her peace. But Nemesis is never idle.

The disagreeable old agent of retribution was right on his job, and, unsuspecting, the happy Mildred was soon to be aware of that fact.

The next morning she saw Jim and his mother looking intently at something on the ground out in the yard, and Jim, with wonder in his voice, was calling: "Come, Mildred, come and tell us, if you can what this is." Her heart sank but she went out. To her horror the bread with malice aforethought had decided to raise. This be-

ing impossible except in an upward direction the mass had bulged to the top, carrying, fortunately, enough of dirt and leaves with it to hide its identity, but giving the impression of some gigantic mushroom growth.

"Remarkable!" exclaimed Jim, who was punching the mysterious substance with a cane, in an attempt to discover its nature. His mother might have suspected, but she had come out without her glasses and was at a disadvantage.

"Can you guess what it is?" asked Jim; "as for me I never saw anything resembling it in all my life."

Mildred could have enlightened the general ignorance, and if Jim alone had been concerned she would have told the whole story, but Mother Rand! Never. So she gazed at the trembling heap and made no sign.

"Don't touch it, James," cautioned his mother. "It might explode."

At this Mildred felt a wild desire to laugh and only conquered it by the alarm she felt when Mrs. Rand sug-

gesting getting a box and taking a piece of the mass to her husband, who was an expert in naming unknown quantities. "Oh, Jim, don't let her," and with a shriek of unrestrained laughter she told him the whole, in-criminate story.

"And, oh, Jim, if she finds out I'll emigrate!" she threatened. "For I'd never be able to face her again!"

Jim recognized the exigencies of the occasion. The bread was accomplished stood handy. Grabbing it, he uprooted the whole batch of soft and quivering stuff and with a mighty toss sent it spade and all, over the convenient fence and down into the bushes where, it may be mentioned, Neighbor Jordan's hens later found it and gorged themselves to repletion.

Then the guilty couple fled to the house to indulge in surreptitious merriment which threatened to become hysterical when Mother Rand, alarm and amazement combined on her countenance, came hurrying in to announce

wildly that "that mass of bread" it was, in gone. James, who knew it was explosive. "Lucky I take any of it!"

At the table, while his mother maintained with him, Jim's bread, would be seized with the contortions of the face so noticeable that his mother asked him: "If he had toothache?"

Mother Rand never knew. Her daughter-in-law was as accomplished cook as she was a woman with unmoved face often in contact with the stove. The elder was now to listen to the mysterious strange story of the bread's disappearance in "Jim's yard" and its mysterious disappearance.

Not to be told. "See here, you old rascal, you tell me this horse was a horse I bought him." "Well, the feller that sold me didn't say nothing about it, thought it was a secret."