RUNAWAY BRIDE

By Helen Weishimer

© 1936 NEA Service, Inc.

CHAPTER I

MARCIA CUNNINGHAM was descending the wide stairway that led to the drawing room and the conservatory beyond. She wasn't due officially on that stairway for nearly two more hours. Yet she was walking slowly, yards of ivory tulle swirling around her ankles.

Her amber curls shone under the lace cap that held her train, and her wide gray eyes were dark and lovely. The brief, gay moment of slipping down alone, dressed in her wedding frock, didn't require the poise and restraint that would be befitting when 150 guests watched her measured approach.

"Here comes the bride—"

The orchestra was practicing behind the palms. Marcia paused to listen, standing in a pool of tulle. She had tried to go to sleep as her mother, her aunts, and the bridesmaids who were houseguests agreed a bride should do, before her wedding. Sleep wouldn't come. Counting sheep didn't help. The sheep turned into electric clocks and toasters and waffle irons, and a hundred other articles that were reposing on the gifts tables that held the wedding presents in the library. Anyway, Marcia reminded herself that she was marrying Bob, and that was something to stay awake and rejoice about. Bob, who had a way of laughing, smiling, talking that could bring the moon right down from the sky, if you wanted it to be sentimental about it. She was marrying him in one hour and 54 minutes.

She had got up at last, moved by a sudden impulse to wear her wedding gown and walk down the stairs alone. It was bad luck, so everyone said, for a bridegroom to see his bride in her bridal finery before he met her at the altar where a clergyman waited with a book. But he would never know.

So she had come down the stairs—Voices drifted through the long room. The caterer and the cook probably—or the butler and the gardener. The musicians stopped their music and the voices were clearer.

"Certainly I love you, Sylvia," Bob's voice was saying. "I love you and Marcia and half a dozen other girls. You girls set entirely too much store by what you call love. What difference does it make whom I marry—you or Marcia or someone else?"

The voice was light, a little amused.

"But you're marrying Marcia," a girl's voice answered dully, as though she had thought about it for a long, long time.

"Marcia's father's giving me a job with his outfit, and I'm fond of her, that's why." Bob spoke again. "As for you, Sylvia, I couldn't afford to marry you."

* * *

Marcia didn't move away. Bob was marrying her, then, for her money. All of the time that he would be standing with her before the altar she would know that he would have been just as happy with any one of six or seven other girls—just as happy with Sylvia, who was so soon to wear a rose tulle frock and precede her down the stairway and the ribboned aisle. Maybe this was a nightmare—she would wake up in a minute . . .

She heard Bob's voice again. "After all, Sylvia, we have to be practical about marriage today. This economic upheaval has knocked the props from under romance. No woman can own a man. Good Lord Sylvia, I'm not going to jail!"

Own a man? A woman who loved did not want to possess. She knew that love was a free-will offering. It built no walls. Two people stayed together because they wanted to, not because there was no other place to go.

"We'll still be in each other's lives, Sylvia dear." Now Bob was a little cajoling as though he sensed he had hurt where he had not meant to. "We'll see each other at people's houses, theatre, the club—"

"Oh, no Bob!" That was Sylvia. "I love you terribly. I'm not ashamed of it . . . but if you marry Marcia . . . and of course you are marrying Marcia . . ." Marcia knew that Sylvia must have motioned, then, to the palms, the white ribbons, the heavy flowers.

The girl who was marrying Bob stepped forward, walked down the ribboned aisle to the two who waited her coming, silent. The ivory train trailed along, forgotten.

"Sorry," Marcia said quietly. Her voice mustn't break. If it did, it would make such a brittle sound as it fell. "Or maybe I'm glad. It's better to—understand things."

"But, Marcia darling, you don't understand!" Bob stepped forward. "It's the emotional strain—you know how people swing into moods . . ."

"Yes, of course you know!" Sylvia supplemented with her lips, but her eyes showed that she didn't know at all.

"Yes," Marcia agreed. "It's rather tense for all of us. There isn't much time left for dressing, Sylvia. Better hurry, Bob."

* * *

Now to walk slowly, calmly. To straighten a bow and smell a rose. Not to let on that her world had crashed. She must climb the stairway, head high, just as though the tall steps led to something, instead of not going anywhere! Nothing could be important enough to matter much without Bob, and Bob could get along without her. He had said so. "What difference does it make whom I marry?" Those were his words.

"Sort of dumb of you, Marcia, not to guess," she told herself.

She wouldn't marry him. Yet the wedding cake was arranged in small silver boxes, the ices were molded into hearts and 150 people were even now dressing to wish the bride and bridegroom a long life of happiness together. Marcia was sitting on the edge of the bed when the house phone rang. It would be Bob, trying to make atonement. Maybe she should let him. After all, he didn't love anyone else any more than he loved her. . . . No, she couldn't compromise. She was giving too much. Love and marriage were something sacred. She removed the receiver and placed it on the desk so she wouldn't hear the repeated clamor of the bell.

A few minutes later the outside telephone rang. Marcia lifted it dully. Bob, incredibly, had gone outside the house, thinking that his strategy would destroy her. But perhaps he did love her really and didn't know it. . . . but people hurt when they did! She wouldn't be indulgent, foolish. . . .

But she answered the telephone.

"Marcia? Oh, my love! I'm nearly crazy. What did you hear? It must have sounded shastly but it was nothing but a goodby. You know that."

"Yes, I know. I was in a sentimental mood, too."

She loved him. She wished he would hang up. His voice was tearing her heart, ripping it as though it had been paper. A bride's heart should be whole. She wasn't going to marry him. She must remember that. She wasn't sailing with him to England and France on the tickets which were part of her father's wedding present. She wasn't living with him forever—or at least until they could afford a bigger place—in a white clapboard house in Connecticut, whose awnings were bright against a green hill. She must do something quickly.

"Let's skip it all, Bob," she suggested. "I understand. I'll see you later."

"Marcia, you're an angel from heaven!" She caught his relief.

"Tell me later, darling." Her voice was light, so light that she knew the man who listened would whistle in his shower as he dressed for his wedding.

She must do something, go somewhere quickly—somewhere so she could think things through before it was too late.

* * *

Half an hour later a slim girl in a rust frock and cape, handed with dark fur, was ushered into Wenda Andrews' room. Wenda, standing before the mirror, in a green tulle frock that resembled the white tulle one that was spread out on Marcia's bed, gave an audible gasp.

"Marcia, what in the world are you doing running around footloose?" As the rust-clad figure sank wearily into a chair, she grew more puzzled. "Marcia, honey, have you forgotten that this is your wedding night? The handsome, debonair Robert is giving you his name."

Marcia motioned to the green frock. "Take it off, Wenda. You won't be wearing it. There isn't going to be a wedding."

"Are you crazy? Is it a quarrel?"

"No, we'll still be concerned about each other's health when we meet. We just aren't marrying each other. Bob's love is parked around in too many places. But he was going to hang his hat in my house. That's all."

Wenda glanced at the cloisonne clock on the dressing table and pressed a button. "Quick, hot tea, lots of it," she told the maid. "Tell Cool to have the car ready." Then she turned back to Marcia and smiled. "Want to tell me about it?"

Marcia nodded. She made the story brief but complete. "—so the wedding's off and you have to go over to the house and tell my family. Tell them I'll see someone, I can't—go back."

"Men are queer," Wenda mused. "Drink your tea, Marcia. It'll warm you up. Men do utterly inconsequential things that look mountainous. They all like to think they are Don Juans. Maybe he was being dramatic. Your wedding's planned and he chose you. That's something."

"Something—but not everything. That's why I'm not going on, Wenda. He might not be willing to have his old girls tucked him."

"Maybe you're right—but I'm not sure." Wenda looked down at the green swirls of tulle. "I've always wanted to be a maid of honor. I've qualified as a bridesmaid seven times, but that's as near to the altar as I can get. Never an advanced position! But if the wedding's off—what shall I tell your mother?" She reached for a long white cape, thought again, and began to unfasten her frock.

"Tell I'll get in touch with her tomorrow, and I'm sorry."

"You'll wait here for me? Breakfast?"

"I'll wait. And don't take off your dress. Go as you are."

Wenda put her arms around the girl in the chair. "Cry, Marcia. It will help." Then she was gone.

For the second time that afternoon Marcia was alone in a room that carried the touches of a wedding preparation. Wenda had forgotten her flowers, and the old-fashioned nosegay, fastened with silver foil and looped with green tulle, lay on the dressing table by the slender jeweled vanity case that had been the bride's gift.

The hands of the clock moved slowly. The house grew quiet. Another car pulled out. Evidently Marcia's parents had started to the wedding by now. There was nothing in the world but time—hours and days and months and years, and there was nothing to do with them anymore. Nothing to do with them! Marcia jumped up and scribbled a note at the desk.

Wenda darling, you're a dear and I tried to wait. The jitters have me—presumptial jitters. I have my car downstairs and I'm going to drive. I'll telephone you tomorrow. Forgive me, Wenda, and thank you for everything."

She climbed into the roadster, stepped on the accelerator, and began to go faster and faster. She wondered what excuses her mother would make to the wedding guests—maybe she would pretend that her daughter had the measles or appendicitis. Everyone would be polite but no one would believe the story. She might have been driving for two hours or 20 minutes—she didn't know—when she came down Park Avenue on the east side of the green carpet of grass that runs through center of the street. It was dark, now, quite dark.

Maybe her father would put private detectives on her trail. He might be afraid that something would happen to her. If there was a chance that detectives would recognize her car she must dispose of it. She pulled in at the next garage and left it. She hailed a cruising taxicab.

"Drive," she commanded the cab driver.

"Where, lady?"

"You think of a place?"

"Okay by me."

A long time later the driver spoke again. "Gosh, lady, you're running up a whale of a meter. Don't you want to go some place?"

"No place. Just drive."

"But you aren't getting anywhere," he muttered, and sped on again.

"Central Park, isn't it?" She glanced from the window.

"We've been through it seven times."

"Make it eight." She had driven here with Bob, skated on the lake with him, bicycled in the spring when the debutantes had been gay with wheels and hoops and roller skates. She had taken a ride with him in a painted boat, on the little lake where the sailors took their girls when the boats came in. She must stop being a sentimental idiot! She had better see if her money was in her bag. Her father had given her a roll of bills that morning. "To buy yourself some beads and gloves in Paris—," he had said. Yes, here they were. Her hand touched something firm and smooth. Her passport. Two passports. Bob's was with hers.

Suddenly her mind began to function. She would go to Europe! She would sail alone! Alone at midnight, in the bridal suite.

"Pier Number 59, North River," she told the driver, one eye on the sapphire-studded watch on her slender wrist. "Hurry! The ship sails at 12!"

"But, lady, why didn't you say so?" the cab driver ejaculated, and suddenly sent the loitering car flying across town.

Marcia sat tense, holding the wrist watch, so she could tell the time. Now, they had turned into the street along the docks—she could smell the water—could catch the tag ends of the day's odors from the fish markets. Her pier—the lighted ship beyond.

"Maybe we're too late. It's 12," the driver warned her.

Marcia pressed a bill into his hand and ran across the floor to the elevator. There was one passenger on it, a tall young man whose face was browned as though he had been in the sun and wind for a long time.

Up, up, up. Slowly. Oh, why did all elevators that carried people to the floor that was on a level with the gangplanks proceed so calmly? It stopped. She got off and began to run. So did the young man. They could hear the waves of laughter and chatter on the pier. Chains were beginning to rattle as they grew nearer to the boat.

"Gangway!" the man called, and reached out a hand to her. Laughing, she took it, and followed his broad shoulders as he cleared a passage through the crowd. They were on the gangplank. They were on the ship!

"Your baggage, Madame, Monsieur?" a steward asked.

"It came on earlier," Marcia answered. She turned to thank the young man with the tanned face, but he had tipped his hat and disappeared.

She gave the number of her cabin to an attendant. "Monsieur?" Her eyes followed the man.

"I'm alone," Marcia answered, and quite suddenly a wave of longing engulfed her—a wave so fierce that it swept away all her resolutions, disgolved her courage, tore down her pride. She wanted Bob! Wanted him any way she could get him! And she had run away from him! She turned back to the gangplank. It was gone. The ship was moving slowly, quietly—

* * *

THERE were flowers in the living room of the cabin which Marcia entered—red roses and yellow roses and iris and narcissi and daffodils. There were small trays of canapes and plates of sandwiches and a big bowl of stuffed olives and another tray of olives wrapped in bacon. The cabin, quite patently, expected a party. Standing in the center of the room, warm and comfortable with rose-shaded lights and rose-upholstered chairs that were deeply inviting, Marcia realized the room had been prepared for the brief and gala entertainment of the wedding party and its guests before the boat sailed.

There had been no wedding, no wedding party, no guests. No bridegroom. She went into the bedroom and sat down on one of the twin beds whose silken sheets were so carefully turned back.

A maid came in and offered to unpack. Marcia watched her for a minute. Then she took off her hat, ran a comb through the tawny curls, powdered her tilted nose, and outlined her lips with deeper red. She put on her hat again and went to the quarter-deck. Leaning against the railing, music coming from another deck where people danced their way to sea, she watched the skyline beyond grow small in the dark distance. The white buildings whose lights had made the night bright for a long time faded at last. A wind came up and with it there was a touch of rain. She began to walk, around and around and around the deck. If she could grow tired she might be able to sleep. The orchestra had burst into a "swing" tune. The trumpet was improvising as it flung its wild music down to the sea. She might have been dancing there, with Bob—

Marcia went downstairs, turned on the shower, let the icy needles fall across her lithe young body, put on the flesh-colored silk nightgown with the real Chantilly lace, and climbed into bed. There was one time in the night that she wakened and thought she had been dreaming. She was in her room at home . . . tomorrow was her wedding day . . . she turned over sleepily. Then she heard bells ringing and remembered. Ship's bells. She was sailing alone on her wedding night! The tears that had been so far away all evening came then in a hot, swift storm. When they ceased she lay back, quiet at last. She slept until the stewardess called her in the morning.

"Perhaps Mademoiselle will breakfast in bed?"

Marcia stretched lazily. Why not? There was nothing for which to get up. Nothing. Her body was weak and tired, as though it could be moved only through supreme effort. Yet if she stayed in bed she could think.

"I'm going to the dining room, thank you," she said.

(To Be Continued)

Marcia paused, standing in a pool of tulle. She was marrying Bob . . . who had a way of smiling and talking that could bring the moon right down from the sky. She was marrying him in one hour and 54 minutes.

Oakridge Items

OAKRIDGE, June 18.—(Special)—Mr. and Mrs. Roy Putnam entertained their bridge club at their home Friday evening. High score for the past month's playing was held by Mr. Putnam and the low score by Walter Herman. Refreshments were served to Mr. and Mrs. E. E. Smith, Mr. and Mrs. A. M. Breese, Mr. and Mrs. Walter Herman and Mr. and Mrs. Putnam.

Mrs. Opal Jordan of Eugene visited at the home of her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Bob Clark Sunday.

Mrs. Luther Rogers and children left Sunday for a week's stay with Mrs. Rogers' mother at Day's River.

Miss Betty Adams has returned to her home here after a visit in Coburg.

Miss Luella Lawton has returned to Oakridge from Eugene where she has been visiting since the first of May.

Mrs. Frank Wilson and son Raymond went to Portland Friday and returned Sunday.

Mrs. Roy Hall returned Tuesday from a trip to Portland.

Mr. and Mrs. W. E. Jacobson and son Bert and daughter Miss Wilma Jacobson went to Eugene Minday evening. Mr. Jacobson will return Wednesday to his work here while Mrs. Jacobson and son will remain at the Jacobson home in Eugene. Miss Jacobson left for Portland and Hillsboro for a week's visit with friends.

Mrs. Fred Richter, Mrs. Walter Herman, Mrs. C. B. McFarland and Mrs. Charles Croner went to Westfir Tuesday to attend a meeting of the Tuesday contract club at the home of Mrs. Frank Davis. The group will meet next week with Mrs. McFarland.

Mrs. Roy Putnam and children Jay, Ky and Phyllis left Tuesday for a motor trip to Custer, South Dakota. They will be accompanied from Portland by Mrs. Putnam's sister and son. They will stop at Yellowstone national park enroute.

Rain prevented the baseball game between the Hills Creek Giustina team and the Oakridge I. O. O. F. team from being completed. Three innings had been played when a rainstorm stopped the game. The Oakridge team was ahead 3 to 2 when they quit.

Mr. and Mrs. J. J. Minniece have moved to Fall Creek. They occupied apartments in the Smith building while in Oakridge.

Lawrence and Charles J. Hills made a business trip to Salem Friday.

Miss Doris Walker of High Prairie was an overnight guest of Miss Madeline Richter Saturday.

Mr. and Mrs. Walter Wilkenson and daughter Marjorie were Eugene shoppers Monday.

SHOWER GIVEN

BELLFOUNTAIN, June 18.—(Special)—A number of ladies from the Bellfountain-Dixson community attended the bridal shower given at Alpine Thursday by Mrs. Christiance, Jr., of Bellfountain and Mrs. W. A. Christiance of Alpine, honoring Miss Estella Gobble, niece and granddaughter. Miss Gobble will become the bride of Leo Tonck at a home wedding June 26. Among those attending from here were: Mrs. J. R. Post and daughter Barbara, Mrs. F. A. Nystrom and daughters Mary Lee and Jacqueline, Mrs. Clarke Boles, Mrs. Earl Moore, Mrs. Clarence Bright and son Norman, Mrs. J. J. Lamb, Mrs. J. V. Mill, Mrs. Alva Martin, Mrs. Howard Likens, Mrs. Hubert Haworth and son Keith, Mrs. Pete Fuenish and Mrs. William Christiance Jr. and two children Gloria Betty and Carlyle.

USE WINSUM FOR SUNBURN
Stevenson's DRUGS

IT ALWAYS PAYS TO TRADE AT Williams Stores, Inc.

Williams SPLIT TOP
Look for the Gingham Band

SUMMER SPECIAL
Permanents $1.75 up
Complete
LOVE'S Tel. 991

MEALS CAUSED SO MUCH SUFFERING THIS EUGENE MAN WAS AFRAID TO EAT

"Van-Tage Did More For Me Than All Other Medicines Put Together!" Says Mr. Simpson, of Crow Stage. Had Been Miserable For Years With Stomach and Bowel Disorders—Now He Feels Years Younger—All His Suffering Relieved!

MR. C. E. SIMPSON, of Eugene, Who Is Now Endorsing VAN-TAGE, Says: "It Did More For Me Than Everything Else PUT TOGETHER! I Gladly Recommend It!" Read His Statement!

Another widely-known Eugene resident, Mr. C. E. Simpson, of Crow Stage, is now adding his name to the long list of local people who are publicly praising and endorsing VAN-TAGE. This is the "Amazing Mixture of Nature's Roots and Herbs and Other Splendid Medicinal Agents" now being introduced to crowds daily in this city by a Special Van-Tage Representative, known as The VAN-TAGE Man, at Stevenson's Drug Store, No. 2, 8 East Broadway. Mr. Simpson, well-known mill worker, 65 years of age, has been a resident of Eugene all his life. He wants all other suffering people to read his statement, published below, about the amazing action of Van-Tage in relieving him after everything else HAD FAILED! Read this local man's truthful statement, and find out what this Great Compound can do!

Never Knew What It Was to Eat a Hearty Meal

"For the past few years my health has been very poor and failing due to indigestion and constipation" said Mr Simpson. "My stomach was ALWAYS a source of misery to me, in fact, I never knew what it was to eat down and enjoy a hearty meal like an normal person does, for my stomach caused so much suffering all through me that I was almost AFRAID TO EAT. My food wouldn't digest, but would lay there in my stomach and cause gastric pains for HOURS after my meals, and I kept having terrible sick headaches and could feel so faint and dizzy at times that I could hardly get around. My bowels finally got affected from this poor digestion and I got to where I was almost constipated. My system seemed to absorb all kinds of poisons from these ailing organs and I was out of sorts all over. Never had any pep and felt weak and wornout all the time.

Now Eats With Relish; No Suffering After Meals!

"Then I heard about Van-Tage and started taking it and today, thanks to this wonderful medicine, there is a REMARKABLE CHANGE in me. It has done more for me than all the other medicines I have taken PUT TOGETHER, and believe me, I've taken lots of medicines in the past few years. Now I have a GREAT APPETITE and eat my meals with a relish, and none of that old suffering afterward. In fact, my digestion is better than it has been for years. My bowels now act NORMALLY, and my system is cleared of all the old poisons. Have much more pep and energy and really feel YEARS YOUNGER. I think Van-Tage is the finest medicine that ever came here, and I am giving this statement to let others know what this wonderful medicine will do. I will gladly recommend it to ANYONE!"

It Is Like Taking Several Medicines at Once!

VAN-TAGE contains over 30 ingredients. So, it is almost like taking several medicines at the same time. That is why this Amazing Formula has such a surprising action on suffering people. Some of its ingredients clear up and bloat from the stomach; others keep the bowels a great cleansing; others enliven the action of liver and kidneys, and still others act to relieve the pain of rheumatic and neuritic trouble. As a result of this General Action of Van-Tage, you soon feel better ALL OVER! And remember—due to the immense volume in which it sells, the price of Van-Tage is so reasonable that you can actually take this Great Compound for just a few cents a day. So don't put it off any longer. Get Van-Tage—NOW—and start taking it!

A Special Van-Tage Representative, known as The VAN-TAGE Man, is now at Stevenson's Drug Store, No. 2, 8 East Broadway, Eugene, daily meeting crowds of people and introducing and explaining this Remarkable Compound.

HEATHMAN

Portland's most modern hotels—located in the center of business and social activity, convenient to theatres, shopping and financial districts. Rates start at $2.25 with bath or shower. Harry E. Heathman, General Manager.

The HEATHMAN Park at Salmon — NEW HEATHMAN Broadway at Salmon

PORTLAND'S FINEST HOTELS

DR. PAINLESS PARKER

Don't Let Neglected Teeth Disfigure Your Face!

Don't let your teeth kill your chances of happiness or business success! Even the loveliest lips or the most beautiful face cannot make up for broken and decayed teeth . . and the unpleasant breath that usually goes with them! See your dentist or the nearest Parker office now.

DR. PAINLESS PARKER
DENTIST
7th STREET, COR. of WILLAMETTE
EUGENE, OREGON

SEATTLE, PORTLAND, SPOKANE AND PRINCIPAL CITIES ON THE PACIFIC COAST

For a Better Vacation
TELEPHONE AHEAD

Hotels and resorts want to make you comfortable—want to have your accommodations waiting for you. Why not telephone that you're coming? It saves you inconvenience and unnecessary travel expense, enables you to talk things over and confirm arrangements.

THE PACIFIC TELEPHONE AND TELEGRAPH COMPANY
112 E. 10th Ave. Telephone 3000