

CONSCRIPT'S WIFE

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not a word of truth in it. Martha and I never—Bill!"

"Come on, Martha," Bill repeated in exasperation. "He walked out without a backward glance, without a word to the man who had been his friend for so many years. Helplessly, her heart like a stone inside her, Martha went with him. There was nothing else to do."

She felt stiff and cold, weary with a weariness that dimmed even thought. Suzanne had threatened this, and now she had done it. With a few impassioned words—in a searing moment she had brought the whole world tumbling down around their ears. It would bring her no nearer to Paul. And it had driven a wedge, cruel and all but insurmountable, between Martha Marshall and the man she loved.

She remembered, as Bill led her to the car, Paul Elliott's voice saying, "Have I ever tried to make love to you? Bill's my friend, he trusts me..."

It was all ruined, now. What Paul had tried to save, the friendship he had valued, the whole delicate and precarious structure which alone had sheltered them gone. Because Suzanne's ungovernable jealousy had had its way, at last.

Bill was starting the car when she remembered Helen. "We must see Helen."

"Not now."

Suddenly the numbness left her. "Bill," she whispered. "Bill, you've got to listen to me. You can't go on, with those poisonous words in your mind. Let me explain. Let me tell you..."

"Explain?" How cold his tone was! "What is there to explain?"

"Bill," she said desperately, catching at his sleeve. "Bill, please, listen to me. Everything she said was wrong. It wasn't like that at all. She didn't want Paul to take me out, she didn't want him to come up to the apartment, because she wanted to go with him alone. Don't you understand?"

"She's in love with him, crazy with it. You know she's always been in love with him and he isn't with her. And when he just tried to keep me from being alone—she imagined things. She came to me, told me that people were talking. I never told you, Bill. I didn't want to worry you."

"Worry me!" he said bitterly. "That's rich, that is."

"Darling, don't. Listen. I'm trying so hard to explain. You must believe me. There was nothing—nothing—"

SIDE GLANCES



They left a nice, comfortable apartment in the some people don't know when they're well off!



THE FIRST PICTURE TO REACH THE UNITED STATES showing Admiral D. Leahy, new American ambassador to France, since his arrival at Vichy. This radioed from Berlin, shows him, right, with Marshal Henri Petain, French chief of state, and Pierre Flandin, French foreign minister, left. High honors were accorded Leahy upon his arrival.

They were still parked at the curb in front of the hospital. People passed, glanced at them. But they were unaware, as oblivious as if there were no one else in all the world but themselves. Bill, his eyes dark wells of pain, gripped the steering wheel until his knuckles went white.

"Are you trying to tell me, Martha, that—that Paul never—never made love to you?"

"Never!" she swore. "Oh, darling, never! Do you think I'd let him? He was just a friend—just your friend!"

"My friend! You were engaged to him when I met you! You were wearing his diamond. I never could afford a lot of things. He lent you his car to come up and see me. The car I bought wasn't good enough."

"But, Bill, you know that meant nothing—the car—" She fought off the hysteria which was making her talk too fast, too shrilly. She turned squarely on the seat, lifting her eyes proudly to his. "Look at me, Bill. I have nothing to hide. Nothing! I swear to you, Paul never did a single thing, never said a single thing, he couldn't have done or said if you were there!"

Something deep inside her throbbed with the truth, with the memory of Paul's voice saying he loved her. But it had been only once. For that one time, must she be crucified this way? With everything in her, with all the strength of her love, with all the hope of his faith in her, she was willing her husband to believe.

"Bill, if there'd been anything sly or secret between us, do you think Paul and I would have been such fools as to be seen together openly? Don't you think we'd have tried to meet secretly—not to let anyone know?"

Bill Marshall shook his head, like a man in a daze. "I don't know what to think. I've always loved you so. I never dreamed—"

"Oh, darling, darling, there was nothing to dream about!" She put her arms around his neck. "Bill, if I cared for Paul, could I pretend like this with you?"

For a heartbeat, cold fear clutched at her. Was Bill stifening? His face was drawn. Would he reach up and tear away her clinging arms? Then, with a little cry, she felt his arms tighten. Relief, sharp and unutterable, drove her fear away.

"Bill! Bill, darling!"

"Oh, Martha! His arms were fierce, glad, suddenly asserting their possession once more. His mouth came down warm against her own. Long and hard, he kissed her. A kiss that went on and on, a kiss that was like a vow, compounded of love and faith renewed and fleeting doubts dispelled.

"Forgive me for even—asking—" he begged humbly. "I should have known—it couldn't be true. Not you! Oh, Martha, you're so sweet, so real, how did I dare—But when a man's away from his wife—when you've had nothing but letters and memories—"

She caressed his lean cheek with the palm of her hand. "Hush, darling. Let's never, never speak of it again. Let's forget it ever happened."

But it came to her. Sunday night, as she took Bill to his train, that forgetting wasn't so simple a matter as that. For, as they sat together in the quiet station, Bill took her two hands in his. "I want you to promise me something, Martha."

"What is it?"

"I want you to resign from Air Transport. Suzanne was wrong—but one thing she said was true. People are bound to talk. I—I think it'll be better if you don't see Paul again. Martha, promise me you'll stay here with Helen and Eugene. Promise me you'll stay until I get out of the Army."

(To Be Continued)

EASILY TAMED
Recent experiments show that a rhinoceros quickly becomes tame and gentle in captivity, even though it may be full grown when captured.

CARRIED OWN SPICES
Fashionable gentlemen of the 17th century carried spices in their pockets, ever ready for use in flavoring food or drink.

During October, 1940, 5,560,709 automotive pneumatic casings were shipped. Of this number 140,025 were exported.

LITTLE ORPHAN ANNIE



1-30-41

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ALLEY OOP



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OUT OUR WAY



THE STRIPES



THE STRIPES



THE STRIPES



THE STRIPES

