

DAGGER

by Mary Dahlberg

Chapter 28

THE DUC TELLS OF HIS LOVE

De Pontoise waited upon Dagger the next day. He was his usual self, except for a slightly tense look about his mouth, and a tinge of color in his cheeks, mirrored in Dagger's own. There was, too, a formality in his manner which he had abandoned since they had established terms of intimacy. Soldierlike, he went abruptly to his subject.

"My Tante spoke with you yesterday," he said.

"Yes, Raoul."

"I regret that I must seem precipitate," he continued; "but as you have no relative within reach

"I am my own mistress," she replied kindly. "Anything you have to say may say to me, but perhaps I should warn you—" she hesitated—"I told the Princess—"

"Please," he interrupted. "She repeated your conversation. Yet I have a hope that you will do me the honor to consider seriously what I have to say to you."

Dagger bit her lip. "This was going to be even harder than she had anticipated."

"I am glad to listen to you," she said.

He bowed, with the stiff dignity which so became him in moments of embarrassment.

"You permit that I address myself directly to you?"

"If you will," she replied faintly. "I am afraid that this will only make for your unhappiness."

"No, no," he denied. "I find happiness, at least, in being afforded the opportunity to tell you that I love you."

She closed her eyes, so poignantly did she feel the light that shone in his. He did love her, loved her splendidly. Why was she unable to return a love so fine? Must she live under an evil star, which would lifelong deny her the happiness which came to other women no worthier than she?

"If I might answer you as you wish, Raoul!" she exclaimed.

"Perhaps you will yet," he returned, undaunted. "I have loved you since the first afternoon I saw you. Doubtless it is enough that I say that, but if I may, I will add that I have never met a woman I would rather offer my name to. You will not misunderstand me, Dagger. We think the same about these matters. Rank is an opportunity to you, not a means of gratifying social ambition. And you and I might achieve more together than separately."

"I am sure of it," she agreed. And as he started forward eagerly, "No, Raoul, that means only so much. You see, I cannot love you."

"Perhaps not as I love you," he amended; "but I will teach you to love. It will come. Our hearts shall kindle it."

"Not mine," she strove for phrases not too cruel. "I shall never love again."

"You? So young?" he was startled. "But there are long years before you."

"What have years to do with that?" she retorted passionately. "It is suffering, knowledge, that makes age."

De Senac regarded her uneasily. "If I have trespasser," he said. "I must apologize. Your husband is not long—"

"Not he," she denied. "There was another?"

"Yes." And after an interval—"Howard."

De Senac looked away from her, and she was at pains to keep her eyes down lest they see the pain in his face.

"I might have known," he said, more to himself than to her. "You have spoken of him. And you are of the same breed." His heels clicked together. "You will for-

give me if I say one thing more. Dagger?"

"It is not easy to say. You will not misunderstand me? Merciful! I thought much of Howard. He was my friend. So I would not belittle your feeling for him. But he is dead—"

"Not to me," she cried with a passion of conviction that shook her voice. "He is as much alive in my heart as he ever was. I married Jack because I thought Jack was like him—and because I wanted to forget. I suppose. I learned my mistake—it was mine, not Jack's. I won't make another one, Raoul. Oh, believe me, I should only ruin your life, any man's life, if I promised to marry again."

"There is no hope for me?" he asked.

"I am as much Blaine Howard's wife as if I shared the same grave," she answered.

"Not that!" De Senac shuddered. "It is unthinkable that one so young and alive should be united to a dead man's memory. Ah, Dagger, think again! Take time—travel. But wipe this thing from your heart. It is monstrous!"

"Not to me," she denied gravely. "But if you ever conquer it may I not come to you again?"

She was moved by the note of pleading. Not like Raoul de Senac to plead with anyone.

"If I ever do," she agreed. "But I shall not."

"You will let me come and see you?" he pressed. "This shall not make a barrier between us?"

"Never, Raoul. But as for seeing me—I shall be here."

The misery in his face was pitiful.

"Have I driven you from Paris?" he asked. "I had meant so to make it yours."

"You have done more for me than anyone else," she answered. "You even made me forget my mission."

"And what is that?"

"A pilgrimage," she smiled forlornly, with an effort brightened her expression. "I am going to visit three other of Blaine's friends. There are four of them. You were the first. Did he tell you of them?"

De Senac nodded.

"Those he sought to interpret a philosophy of life? But yes! I have some recollection of them. But they are not easily come at, Dagger. One is in Algeria, a gun-runner, a secret agent. That is not so difficult, to be sure, and I can give you letters to my administrators—"

"Thank you, but I want no letters," denied Dagger. "A pilgrim makes his own way."

"A dangerous business," de Senac deplored. "There is an old Buddhist monk in India, I recall. India is not so safe for white women as it used to be. And Chang, who rules in Sung-lu, is as much bandit as prince. You should not go alone."

"A pilgrim is sacred," insisted Dagger.

"But what is your purpose?"

"I don't know exactly. To freshen my memories of Blaine, perhaps. To brush my feet in the paths he trod. To brush my wits against the wits that sharpened his. To grow more like him, to understand him better."

"And he is dead!"

"To me it is as if he were alive. I think he will become more alive as I follow his paths."

De Senac was speechless before the fervor of her expression.

"This is the spirit of a Jeanne d'Arc," he murmured. "And what a French woman you would make!"

Dagger laughed softly.

"How like a Frenchman to say

(Continued on Page 7)

LITTLE ORPHAN ANNIE

The Apathetic Scholar

By Harold Gray



REG'LAR FELLERS

Good Bad Luck

By Gene Byrnes



TAILSPIN TOMMY

Back At Three Point

By Glenn Chaffin and Hal Forrest



DUMB DORA

A Man You Can't Fool

By Paul Fung



BRINGING UP FATHER

By George McManus



MUTT AND JEFF

One A Bag Of Flour Won A Medal Too

By Bud Fisher



SOLUTION OF YESTERDAY'S PUZZLE

1. Units of weight
2. All comb.
3. form
4. Contemptible
5. person
6. Merry-making
7. Color of a
8. horse
9. Japanese cash
10. Note of the
11. scale
12. Hunch
13. Austrian law
14. historian
15. Pronoun
16. Hang
17. Current of air
18. Tail course
19. grass
20. Precatory
21. school ending
22. First noun
23. Niche of cave
24. Inhabitants of
25. shell
26. Excessive with
27. acid
28. Small explo-
29. sion
30. Dry
31. Front of the
32. foot
33. Process of
34. forming crys-
35. tals
36. Small mound
37. Wicket
38. Blk-worm
39. Remains
40. Nine teeth
41. Splendor
42. Thing
43. Brother of
44. Jacob
45. Director abn.
46. Cognat
47. Eastern gar-
48. ment
49. Part of a
50. church
51. Green
52. Worker in
53. metal
54. Immature
55. Persian fairy
56. Small letter
57. Dimension
58. Note of a dove
59. Fowl
60. Surface a
61. street
62. Have the cov-
63. erage
64. Copper coins
65. abn.
66. Steep fax
67. Craving
68. Add fruit
69. Sound of a
70. clock
71. Period of time
72. Chinese weight
73. Ignited
74. Coral islands
75. Wigwag
76. Unnatural
77. muscular con-
78. striction
79. Employers
80. Mad
81. With plum
82. Casual appen-
83. dage
84. Precious
85. Metal coating
86. Mineral spring
87. Western state
88. abn.
89. Very soft mus-
90. abn.

OCEAN REWED
SYSTEM TERE
AR ERODING EN
GET OWEGO HRS
ENOS EWE LANE
ENTER RHONE
NOR OCA
MAKES STAGE
SAGE ETA LEAP
PRE WEAVE STY
ON REPROVE IR
RELETS REPINE
TRAPS SINGS

63. Kind of bird
64. Breaks sud-
65. denly
66. Trial
67. Summit
68. Italian curves
69. Meadows
70. Football posi-
71. tions
72. Bring forth
73. young, as
74. sheep
75. Before long
76. Little earling
77. wave
78. Unit of work
79. Heavy
80. Marked with
81. the one hand
82. Encourage
83. DOWN
84. Kitchen imple-
85. ment
86. Artificial lan-
87. guage
88. Luster
89. Russian vil-
90. lage commu-
91. ties
92. Indian trophy
93. of victory
94. Alterative
95. Hostess crowd
96. Spoken
97. Accasion
98. Colored paper
99. used at natal-
100. vity
101. Encourage

