

BURNED FINGERS

By KATHLEEN NORRIS

CHAPTER 12

The slow months wore away through Christmas, the new year came in, and in February spring was in the air. Acacia bloomed, grass pushed up on empty corners, the sun shone in a blue Italian sky.

March rains and winds swept by. April brought shining, still heavy evenings.

"Betty," yawned Jennifer, "why doesn't something happen? It's time for something to happen. Things happen to other people. Why don't they happen to us?"

"Sometime you'll fall in love with someone," Betty said, turning the dial slowly. "And then maybe you'll wish you hadn't wanted something to happen. I don't mean crackpot like poor what-his-name—Gene Evans. But that other man who used to telephone you—Borrows. You said he'd let you down. What happened?"

"I don't know where he is now," Jennifer made her voice sound suddenly indifferent, casual. Suddenly she got to her feet.

"I'll tell you what," she said. "I'm going to take those dish towels upstairs and hang them out. And then I'm going to bed."

She wrung the soaking towels with vigorous twists of her hands, tossed them into a pair, climbed the iron ladder from the back porch.

The moment her head emerged from the square trap door in the roof she was out in the blackness of the night under the great throbbing arch of the stars.

"Oh, stars—stars—stars!" whispered Jennifer, her hand automatically busy with the clothespins while her eyes were turned toward the throbbing vault above her and the misty shining scarf of the Milky Way.

She went to the low cement parapet that fenced the roof and stepped up as she had many times before to the neighboring roof and on to the other roof, starting overhead at the tapestry in silver and velvet black that was the sky.

At the corner there was a grocery with two flats above it, and beyond that on the left a large building whose ground and second floors were occupied by an auctioneer.

The third floor of this building rose half a story higher than the grocery building on the corner; it was apparently a sort of loft, with glass doors opening on a brick terrace, now checked with long oblongs of light from the room within.

Jennifer, amazed to see lights here at this hour where there had never been any signs of occupation before, e-faced herself against the wall and took a slow, wide view of the lighted room.

She had never seen a studio before but she had read of them. There were easels, canvases, a model platform in view, and a lot of them, all in dire confusion, for the occupant was obviously in the process of moving in, a hundred other objects.

The man seemed old to Jennifer. His hair was white and tinged with light fluffy hair, his thin face was lined. He wore paint-splattered slacks and a smock, a pipe was between his teeth, and he was watching her with a steepled, with shrewd keen eyes, he gave an immediate impression of unconventionality, independence, and a sort of lean and wiry virility.

Jennifer grew more and more absorbed in watching him. She jumped and started back as he said conversationally:

"Come in if you want to. What are you doing out there at night? It's nine o'clock at night any way."

"I came up to hang out some dish towels," she explained. "But it was such a beautiful night I walked on the roof. I didn't know anyone lived here."

"Nobody has until today. Come in and sit down. I'll take a breathing spell. Your name is?"

"And you're fourteen?"

"I'm past nineteen. I look awful."

Jennifer murmured, suddenly conscious of her appearance.

"Well, my name's Montgomery Smith. And there you have my history. An impressive start and a sudden tizzle into the commonplace."

"This isn't commonplace," Jennifer said. "It's a studio, isn't it? It seems very fascinating. And this terrace—you could do anything with that."

"Have breakfast out there?"

"I never thought of that. But it would be wonderful to have breakfast out there."

"It's a north light, you see?"

"The stars, you mean?" she asked.

"No, North light. An artist," he explained, "always likes a north light."

"Oh, and have you got one?" she asked, still uncertain.

"The Lord has provided me with one," Montgomery explained. "The sun neither rises or sets in the north. The light on your model is always the same."

"Can't I help you?" she asked.

"You wouldn't want to put those books on the shelves there?"

Jennifer stacked books with anxious care; she turned them right side up, put all the shorter ones on the top shelf.

"Do you need any help with that piano?" she asked as her companion hurried his whole thin body against the case of an old-fashioned square instrument.

"Jennifer, in what academy of

learning are you enrolled?"

"I'm working. All I did was finish high school."

"That's more," he said, "than I did."

"You!" she exclaimed, incredulously.

"I stopped in the middle of the third year. An aunt of mine left me thirteen thousand dollars. I immediately took a trip around the world, and studied for four years in Paris. So, you see, you know more than I do."

"I don't know anything," Jennifer answered seriously. "I wish I did, I am always wishing I was one of the girls whose families let them travel, teach them things. Riding, feedback, and things. And playing the harp. A girl I know can play the harp."

Montgomery said, "You've nothing to worry about. Very few persons ride horses nowadays. You can learn tennis, and as for the harp—well, you might as well learn how to milk a reindeer."

"Girls look beautiful playing the harp."

"Well, you might manage it some other way. Now talk—that's different," the man went on half seriously. "Talkers are born, not made. All you have to do is say what you're thinking quite naturally. Sooner or later somebody'll listen. But of course you play the harp—well, you might as well learn how to milk a reindeer."

"Perhaps your harp-playing friend couldn't make coffee?" he suggested.

"I don't know that she could," Jennifer said, laughing.

"You see? You can do things she couldn't do. But as for education, Jennifer," the man said, "immensely enjoying a steaming cup of coffee, and rapidly butting crackers, 'here's something you'd like to know' for some time; how much do you have to know of a thing to be considered pretty well up in it?"

"For instance if I spoke of Berlin," "Ah, the beauty of that! Millet, Gaie in the Pergamum Museum, or if I spoke of Wagner and you asked for the 'Siegfried Idyll'—I'd think you were pretty well up on museums and German operas wouldn't I?"

"And would I be?" Jennifer exclaimed with conviction.

"The question is, how much more than just those phrases would you have to know?" the man said. "Suppose, now, you got up twenty little remarks—smartly remarks, touching on every conceivable thing from heraldry, say to Robert Browning—from Minnesota to Paul Revere. Suppose you wrote them down and memorized them. Then next week you worked up twenty more, and so on for—oh, twenty weeks. Twenty times that, that's four hundred, isn't it?"

"But I was thinking that, tonight," she put in eagerly as he paused, "and thinking that it would take me years and years just to read those books you have here. And then I wouldn't remember them, and even then people wouldn't talk about things I knew but millions of other things."

"I don't mean study those things, for you're quite right—it would take years, and then the conversation would be eternally getting away from astronomy or geology or whatever you've mastered. I mean regular little parrot speeches. Like, for instance, I ask you to fix my books. You say you don't know how to arrange books, but you have the books so dull but that you may learn."

"Why do I say that?" Jennifer asked dutifully.

"Because that makes the hearers think you have a knowledge of Shakespeare," Montgomery said. "They never go any further! You rip off a dozen words in German and someone hears you and tells someone else that you're a linguist. You see a pretty little and say 'What a little Romney!' And it—by George, this would be a very interesting experiment!" he ended, breaking into his own soliloquy enthusiastically. "Not a book in the whole course, just a flock of cultural phrases. I wonder how far we'd get with it? Every time you see a picture of Venice you say 'Ah, Guardi! Guardi! what aren't you responsible for? If any one speaks of Swinburne—'

"But would anyone?" she put in earnestly, and he laughed.

"Well, it doesn't have to be Swinburne or any other one poet."

"Now I'll tell you, little Miss Jennifer," Montgomery said, "you trot alone home—it's almost ten o'clock. Here, I'll go with you; I'll at least get you onto the roof. You think it over, and if you like, come back any evening, you can tell me the night if I'm here—and we'll start the 'Smith Capsule System.' Tell your mother that I'm very respectable, that my aunt Sarah lives in Portland and is married to a minister and is entirely in good luck, and that I'm twice your age and then just four more years. Here's my flashlight. Let's get going."

Once or twice, as they stepped up or down on the levels of the roof, he grasped her hand, and after she was in bed that night she thought what an extraordinary experience a handclasp was what a thrilling thing a studio could be how her warming it was to have a friend.

(To Be Continued)

STEVE ROPER



FOGO



ORPHAN ANNIE



LIL ABNER



HOPALONG CASSIDY



MUTT & JEFF



REX MORGAN, M. D.



DONALD DUCK



MARY WORTH



RADIO PROGRAMS

TUESDAY—P. M.						
Time	KGW	KOIN	KEX	KSLM	KGAE	KOCO
5:00	News	News	News	News	News	News
5:15	Head of Life	Coma Get It	Edison	Edison	Edison	Edison
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WEDNESDAY—6 A.M. TO 11:45 A.M.						
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HEAT TREATMENT
Indianapolis (AP)—Workers at the Indiana Gear Works don't complain about the current heat wave. Whenever the temperature goes over 95 degrees, the management passes out free beer.

President John H. Buehler said about 98 per cent of the 700 workers drink it.

TRUMAN HOME
Independence, Mo. (AP)—Former President Harry S. Truman returned home late Saturday after a flying visit to Wyoming and Minnesota. He inspected National Guard air units at Casper, Wyo., and National Guard units at Camp Ripley, Minn.



Crossword Puzzle

ACROSS	37. Small knot	38. Home of Adam and Eve	39. Cutting comp.	40. Elliptical	41. Half score	42. Compass	43. point	44. Round roof	45. At home	46. Thoroughfare	47. fare; abbr.	48. Fowl	49. Deface	50. Ovale	51. Greek letter	52. Mail	53. Do wrong	54. Obliterate	55. Thin chambers	56. Stops	57. Utter																	
DOWN	1. Hang down	2. Trouble	3. Black bird	4. River in Italy	5. State positively	6. Show to another chair	7. Measures of type	8. Steamship; abbr.	9. Appointment	10. Unclose	11. Church seat	12. For what reason	13. Rose	14. Lone fish	15. Near	16. Garments	17. Shirk	18. Sift as river	19. Periods of low price	20. Fragrant	21. Metric measure	22. Minute particle	23. Place	24. Closed	25. Medley	26. Charms	27. About	28. Pinch	29. Present	30. Cuts off	31. Stitch	32. Rather than	33. Period of time	34. Boundless expanse	35. Endeavor	36. Sift	37. Plural	38. Termination

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
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89	90	91	92	93	94	95	96	97	98	99
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