

Prudence's Daughter

By ETHEL HUESTON

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IN NEW YORK

SYNOPSIS—PART ONE—At a merry party in the studio apartment of Carter Blake, New York, Jerry (Geraldine) Harmer, Prudence's daughter, meets Duane Alerton, wealthy idler. He admires her tremendously and she likes him. But Alerton gets a bit exhausted, with unfortunate results. Jerry, resenting his assumption of familiarity, leaves the party abruptly. The story turns to Jerry's childhood and youth at her home in Iowa. Only child of a wealthy father, when she is twenty she feels the call of Art and asks her parents to let her go to New York for study. With some misgivings they agree to her going. In New York Jerry makes her home with a Mrs. Delaney ("Mimi"), an actress who, with Theresa, a painter, occupies the house. Jerry takes an immediate liking to Theresa, and the two seem likely to become fast friends.

CHAPTER III—Continued

She set herself briskly to unpacking her small bag, folding things neatly away in the small drawers of the chiffonier. The two photographs in their handsome frames, Prudence and Jerry, she placed conspicuously on the dressing table. And then she suddenly took up the picture of her mother, and looked at it intently, questioningly, almost passionately. She shook her head at last with sharp impatience, and placed it opposite that of her father once more.

"I don't get you, Prudence," she said.

In her intense moments, Jerry referred to her mother always as "Prudence," using the word not so much as a name, but rather as a statement of principle, a code of worship, a creed of religion. When she said, as she did very often, "I do not get you, Prudence," she meant only that Prudence was a depth of philosophy she could not fathom. It irritated her. If Prudence had been a scintillatingly brilliant, intellectual woman, Jerry felt she would not have minded her inability to reach the innermost recesses of her mother's thought. Prudence was no such thing, Jerry knew it.

After her unpacking, sweetened and refreshed with a perfumed bath in her tiny tub, she ran up the dark stairway to the third floor, turned back and tapped softly upon the door.

"Oh, d—n!" she heard, muttered fiercely, from within the room. And then apologetically Theresa called, "I spilled the ink! Come in, Miss Harmer, I can't get up for a minute. The place is a mess. I've just had a scrap with Mimi, and I'm a wreck. She wanted to clean up before you came, and I wouldn't let her, and we are both furious."

Theresa was down on her knees briskly mopping up the ink with a fresh towel. Jerry stood in the doorway, and looked about the room with eager girlish interest. If her studio downstairs appeared small to her, this one she thought quite unendurably so. There was no rug on the floor, nor curtain at the window. The couch was a tumbled mass of blankets and wrinkled sheets with a box of paints and half a dozen magazines thrown upon it. The teacup was on the floor, its contents untasted. And there was a big easel turned to catch the best light. Theresa, just getting to her feet again, looked with amused eyes upon Jerry's frank inspection.

"Do—do you—"

"Uh," Theresa nodded. "Sleep here, work here, eat here—die here, too, I fancy. Haven't made my bed in heaven knows when. Mimi used to come in to do it for me, and bothered me to death, so I kept the door locked on her now. If you hear her pounding to get in, and me shouting for her to go away and mind her own business, don't be alarmed. It's a frequent occurrence. The place is a mess, Miss Harmer. I am almost ashamed of it myself."

She swept magazines, books and paints from a small straight chair and shoved it hospitably toward Jerry.

"Cigarette?"

"No, thanks."

Theresa lit one for herself nervously, tossing the burned match on the floor in a corner and tugging at the cigarette with a deep breath, almost gulping. She pulled off her smock.

"Excuse me a minute, and I'll wash my hands." As she washed, and then brushed back her dark tousled hair, which she did not take time to comb, but only fastened securely with additional pins, and scraped the paint from her skirt, she ran briskly on in the quick jerky fashion that Jerry found so fascinating.

"I don't usually work like this. I'm trying to get it finished—want it for an exhibition. I think it's rather good. The devil of it is that I have to dig along—for a meal ticket—while I'm trying to turn out something decent at the same time. Heaven knows I eat little enough—it shouldn't be hard to earn the kind of a living I usually live. Do you like Italian cooking? Or French? There are a dozen nice little places within a block or two. Oh, and there's a wild little Russian place—would you prefer that?"

"Oh, any place at all, I shall love any of them, all of them for that matter—wherever you wish to go. I'm really ashamed to take you away from your work, I know you are only stopping to please me."

"Oh, I dare say it's a very good thing. Come to think of it, haven't

had a real dinner in heaven knows when. I'm sure I'm hungry."

She drew a small modish hat snugly about her ears, swept a wave of dark powder across her face, touched her lips with a bit of rouge and said she was ready. As they made their way carefully down the dark and winding stairs, Mimi's silken voice drifted out to them from behind a closed door.

"Oh, you had boy, I believe you're trying to make love to me!" Theresa laughed. "Little fool," she said. "Come in any time you like, day or night, you'll get a dose of that from Mimi. She runs them in relays, like the six-day bicycle race. Lord knows where she gets them—there don't seem so many men to spare."

Theresa took her to a small, quiet, basement room, where they had a generous, quiet, Italian dinner. They ate in silence. Theresa was hungry, very tired, and Jerry was stirred and breathless. There were others in the dining room, mostly girls, smartly dressed, all thin, all weary-eyed, all smoking.

"Don't you know them?" Jerry asked. "I thought every one knew every one else—in the Village."

"I don't know anybody," said Theresa. "I used to be 'way up on the West side, I came down here to please Mimi. But I like it."

The days that followed were happy, dreamy, fascinating days for Jerry. Rhoda telephoned to her twice, with profuse and tender apologies for her neglect, and said she was coming to see her right away. But she did not come. Jerry spent a great deal of time with Theresa, but Theresa was always working, always tired to distraction. Mimi, although she continued as warmly affable and friendly as at first, had little time or inclination for pretty young students of art beneath her roof. She slept until noon every day, had callers to tea every afternoon, and went out with some one every night in the week.

Jerry made proper arrangements for her lessons, and was enrolled in one of the beginners' classes of Graves McDowell, who, having previously acquired a reputation, was now eking out a hard existence by instilling the rudiments of his profession into young aspirants. Jerry attended his classes with a nice regularity and promptitude, and patiently did her utmost to follow his instructions. He told her kindly that she was doing very well indeed, let her come and go as she liked, and paid as little attention to her as possible.

She bought an easel of the most elaborate design and arranged it prettily in her small studio, where it quite overshadowed the modest, plaything bits of furniture already there. And she painted a little every afternoon, pleasantly, comfortably, complacently, without any of the hectic excitement which throbbled about her.

Even with all that, she seemed to have a great deal of time at her disposal. On the fifth day of her calendar desolation, she telephoned to her Aunt Connie's residence in Englewood, hoping to thrill the household with the news of her presence, and joyously anticipating a merry week-end in the lovely suburb with a tender aunt, a friendly uncle, and two folksome young cousins. She was greeted with the cold information that the entire family had gone to Europe on a hasty business trip, and the maid left in charge of the house did not know when they planned to return. Jerry felt quite saddened and abused. She was sorry she had not sent word in advance of her coming. She was sure Aunt Connie would have waited for her, would have postponed any kind of a business trip to Europe for the sake of being an oasis in the desert for "Prudence's baby."

Left entirely to her own resources, she managed as best she could, reading a great deal, riding solemnly about town on the busses, visiting the shops. It was the climax of her loneliness when she went to the movies, alone. Finally, on a happy thought suggested by a timely advertisement, she rented a small piano and paid a fabulous sum to have it raised to the studio, where she gave it practically her entire floor space, shoving the easel ignominiously into the background.

Jerry was fond of music. She played the piano extremely well, and sang also with real feeling and much sweetness. She was beginning to wonder if perhaps she should not have chosen music in preference to painting as a career. There seemed to be so much drudgery about art, a thing she had not before remotely suspected.

Then, one afternoon, quite without warning, Rhoda La Faye ran in, caught her in both arms and kissed her a dozen times with fervent protestations of delight at seeing her. Rhoda was pale, with feverish spots of crimson burning in her cheeks.

"Come, get your hat," she said brightly. "I have finished the picture. Devereaux says it is very good."

While she talked, she rummaged carelessly through the boxes and drawers of Jerry's dressing-table, fishing out gloves and hats and veils, hurrying Jerry, and almost at once they were running downstairs together, laughing, hand in hand. Jerry's drooping spirits were soaring to the sky once more.

In striking contrast to the confusing untidiness of Theresa's studio, Jerry

found Rhoda's immaculate to the very point of spotlessness.

"Oh, how tidy you are!" she cried, frankly amazed and bewildered by the spotless orderliness of it.

Rhoda laughed. "Oh, I am a perfect old maid. I know it, everyone says so. How Theresa can find her easel in that messy place of hers, I can't imagine. I couldn't work in such a chaos. I never pretend to touch a brush or a pencil until everything is apple-pie perfection. Coffee cup on the table, hair pin on the floor, handkerchief on the mantel—can't do a thing. I get the wiles right away. Look, Angel-face, do you like the picture?"

She turned the easel about for Jerry to see the picture over which she had sweated her heart's blood. Jerry stood before it, awed, admiring. A curious thing it was, a narrow bit of city street, showing gray and grimy between high gray and grimy walls, with just two bits of flaming color—an inch of blue sky between two grays, and a scarlet geranium showing bravely in a sixth-story window.

"I—I think it is wonderful, Rhoda. It makes me feel—sorry, like crying. Does—it somehow make you think of Iowa?"

Rhoda laughed gaily. "It does not! Anything but!"

"Yes, but you never met my mother, did you?" Jerry asked, surprisingly, and Rhoda did not understand. The picture was New York, plain and unvarnished, and Jerry was lonely for Prudence.

"They say it really is good. Thank God it's finished! It's a competition you know—a year's scholarship, travel in Europe, everything! I wonder if Theresa is trying for it? Has she shown you her pictures, Jerry?"

"Nothing—not a thing," said Jerry. "She never asks me so much as to look at the easel when she is working."

"Perhaps she thinks you aren't interested. Ask her. She won't mind showing you. She has three or four exquisite things—not finished. She works on a dozen at once, as the mood strikes her. I can't do that—one thing at a time for me—and I eat it, and drink it, and breathe it, and sleep it, until it's over. That's why I'm such a wreck."

While she was preparing a dainty supper on her electric grill, with which she could really work culinary.



While She Was Preparing a Dainty Supper on Her Electric Grill, She Explained the Frenzied System of Art She Was Obligated to Pursue.

wonders, she explained the frenzied system of Art she was obliged to pursue.

"You can't make a living at real Art until you're old, and withered, and haven't any teeth," she declared. "I don't care how good you are, you can't make a decent living! Gee, you're lucky, Jerry, that you're not obliged to earn your bread and butter. You can pursue Art for its own sake, and that's all the fun there is in it. Otherwise, it's just grind, grind, grind, like digging ditches, or mining coal, or scrubbing floors. Well, anyhow, I'm one of the grinders. Haven't a cent but what I earn. So I peg along with illustrations, advertising, anything I can get on the side. And when I have enough to pay the rent in advance a few weeks, I jump into something like this, head over heels, trying to attach a few leaves to my wreath of laurels while I have a little hair to wear it on!" She gave her brisk bobbed head a defiant toss as she spoke.

After their supper, deliciously cooked, charmingly served, they went uptown to a theater, and after a sandwich and hot chocolate at a corner drug store, returned home, luxuriously like the plutocrat she insisted Jerry was, in a taxicab.

Jerry felt much better. For the first time, she was quite pleased with herself. She was glad she did not take Art with killing seriousness, as Theresa and Rhoda did. Why, those girls sat up, many times, night after night, until two and three o'clock in the morning, painting passionately away as though their very lives depended on it. There was no sense in such maddening

immoderation. Jerry was grateful for her mental balance, her artistic equilibrium. Pictures were all very well, of course, but Jerry thanked heaven that she had been spared a passion that would surely be productive of weary, dark-circled eyes, twitching, nervous lips, and twisting nervous fingers!

She said something of that sort to Theresa one night. It was a night when Theresa, staggering away from her easel, had stumbled, fallen half-fainting to the floor. Mimi had pulled her up on the couch, given her a cup of the eternal tea, and then asked Jerry to sit with her a while, to keep her from working. Mimi herself had an engagement, and was just hurrying away.

When Jerry relieved herself of her opinion on art in general, Theresa looked at her somberly, with her great, dark, weary eyes.

"Didn't you ever sit up all night working over a thing you couldn't get just right?" she demanded.

"Never," said Jerry comfortably.

"Didn't you ever forget to stop for your dinner when you were especially interested in something?"

"Certainly not. I just put the brush down, and have my dinner, and then come back to it afterward—or the next morning—or whenever I get around to it."

"But sometimes you can't come back to it," objected Theresa. "You lose the feeling when you stop—you can't come back."

"You just imagine that," said Jerry pleasantly. "You shouldn't let yourself get so excited over things. You wear yourself all out for nothing. I can always come back to it when I am ready." And then she added, fairly, "Not, I must admit, that anything of mine is anything like yours or Rhoda's. Far from it! But I am only a beginner."

"That's what we all are," said Theresa wearily. "Just beginners. And so we shall be all our lives, until we die, and afterward, too, I fancy." Jerry was beginning to feel a growing impatience with both girls, their intensity, their passionate nervousness, their ardent eagerness. She found it a little tiresome. They were always going about, looking at pictures, each other's, or somebody else's, and then arguing desperately, for hours at a time, over tones, and colors, and values. She found herself wishing there might come a time, just once, when they would sit down, deliberately, for tea, without hovering, poised on the edge of the chair, ready for flight at the first favorable moment.

Jerry thanked God for moderation with increasing fervor day by day. She attended her classes with nice regularity every morning, worked at her easel an hour or two every afternoon, and then she manicured her nails, had a cup of tea and a toasted muffin and went out for a bus ride.

She had been studying Art in New York for over six weeks when Rhoda swept in on her late one afternoon with the happy announcement that they were going to a party.

"Carter Blake's studio, over in Brooklyn," she explained gaily. "I haven't seen him in months. He just telephoned that he has signed a huge contract with International this very morning, and is having a wicked party to celebrate it. And he invited you, most particularly. He's a darling thing, and you'll adore him."

Jerry was properly thrilled, properly eager.

Now that Jerry has really got down to work, does she really like it? And what next?

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Fifty-Fifty

It was pay day and the bookkeeper stood in the manager's office to claim extra pay for extra work.

"Mr. Grasp," he said, toying nervously with a piece of red tape, "during the last week I have been doing the work of the pay-roll clerk, who has been ill."

"Well," retorted Mr. Grasp, "what of it?"

"Why, this being pay day, sir," said the bookkeeper, "I thought it might be right to mention it."

"Quite right," said the manager. "Let me see, your salary is \$40 and the pay-roll clerk's is \$20."

"Yes, sir," replied the bookkeeper, beaming expectantly.

"Then," computed the manager, "working half the week for yourself entitles you to \$20 and half the week for the pay-roll clerk entitles you to \$10. Here it is."

American Colony

American Samoa, comprising the islands of Tutuila, Aunu'u and others, has an area of 57.9 square miles; population of 8,824, including 296 Americans. The capital is Pago Pago on the island of Tutuila. This town is the most valuable harbor in the South Pacific. It was ceded in 1872 by the native king to the United States as a naval and coaling station. American Samoa is 4,160 miles from San Francisco. The natives are Christians and are regarded as the highest type of the Polynesian race. All of the land of the islands is privately owned. The chief product is coconuts. Fruits are also grown, but not exported.

MY FAVORITE STORIES

By IRVIN S. COBB

Spreading the Feast for the Stranger

When Sam Blythe was a Washington correspondent he went into New England to sound out public opinion on one or another of those crises which, politically speaking, are forever threatening the liberties of the American people. I forget now just what particular crisis it was, but, at any rate, for the moment it was of deep concern to the public at large and Sam's job was to get a slant on the prevalent sentiment in certain states.

Among others, he called upon the retired political leader of New Hampshire, who lived in a small but comfortable cottage in a little town. The old gentleman felt a deep concern in the vital question of the hour, whatever it was. He argued and he expounded, and he produced documents in support of his views. Noontime approached and still he was nowhere near through with what he had to say. So he insisted that Blythe should remain with him through the afternoon.

Having sampled the cuisine of the local hotel at breakfast, Blythe promptly consented. The old gentleman excused himself in order to inform his wife that there would be a guest for the midday meal and also to get some important papers bearing on the subject under discussion, which were stowed away, he said, in a room upstairs. Going out, he left the parlor door ajar.

Through the opening Blythe heard a voice, evidently one of the mistress of the household.

"Samantha," the lady said, raising her tone in order that she might be heard by the cook in the kitchen, "my husband has invited a gentleman to stay for dinner. Take those two large potatoes back down cellar and bring up three small ones."

A Thing Not to Be Explained

It is narrated of two colored men that they set forth one night to borrow a hog. Not until nearly daylight did they succeed in borrowing one from the piggery of a planter. Having slaughtered the prize they decided that it should be left in the cabin of one of them until the following night, when the other would come to claim his share.

During the day the present custodian, while immersing the carcass in a barrel of brine to prevent it from spoiling, decided that he needed all the meat for himself. Accordingly he removed it to a suitable hiding place and then, returning home, awaited the arrival of his partner in the enterprise of the night before.

About eight o'clock the second negro arrived, carrying an empty sack over his arm.

"Whar's de meat, Sam?" he asked, as he entered the cabin.

"In dat barrel of brine over yonder behind de back do'. Jes' go over and hep' yousef' to yore sheer."

The caller rolled up his sleeves and immersed his arms in the brine.

"Tain't no meat here," he said, after a thorough search.

"I ain't s'prised one bit," said Sam. "Rats is gettin' so bad 'round here I don't know what I'm gwine do. Dey carries off ever'thing. I spects dey was eatin' dat pork w'en I heard 'em nibblin' today w'ile I was layin' down tryin' to sleep."

His friend stiffened suspiciously.

"How come dey could nibble a hole in de barrel, eat all de pork an' still de brime don't run out?" he demanded.

Sam took a deep breath.

"Dat," he said, "is de mystery."

The Real Point of the Joke

Two American performers, filling vaudeville engagements in London, took lodgings together in a house on a side street back of Covent garden. Late at night, following the first day of their joint tenancy, they left the theater in company and, having had a bite and a drink at a caphouse set out afoot for the new diggings. One of the pair undertook to show the way. The trouble was, though, that for the life of him he couldn't recall the name of the street where the house stood nor the number of the house itself. For nearly an hour they wandered through deserted byways seeking their destination. Finally they happened upon a street which wore a familiar look. And sure enough, half way down the block stood the house where they were quartered.

With glad cries of relief the tired pair hurried to it. Here a fresh difficulty arose. They had no latch keys. Coming away that afternoon neither had thought to ask their landlady for a key. However, the second man figured he could pick the lock. He worked at it vainly for another half hour while his companion nagged about. Finally in disgust and despair he gave it up as a bad job, and the two of them went to a hotel, where they spent the remainder of the night.

Now comes the point of the story: The man who could not remember the name of the street, nor the number of the house was Barton the Memory Wizard. The man who could not master the lock was Houdini the Hancuff King.



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Saving a Life

Melba Miller, age three, of Letts, Ind., found a baby bird. She took it into the house and said: "Mother, may I keep him as a pet?"

With mother's consent, she carried it around a while, and said to her: "Do you think it will die?"

"I expect so," mother replied. Melba stepped out in the yard. She returned a moment later without the bird.

"Where's your bird?" asked mother. "I gave him to the cat."

"Why?"

"I was afraid it would die," solemnly answered the child.—Indianapolis News.

Greek to Her

An amusing conversation was overheard in one of the busses a few days ago.

It was Mrs. A. who spoke: "After going out with the thirteen orphans and the twins yesterday, I felt that my duty was accomplished."

Mrs. B, remembering that the yesterday spoken of was Thanksgiving, said: "Well, I should say your duty was done. At what orphans' home were you?"

Mrs. A. (rather surprised) remarked: "I was at no orphans' home. I was at my own home playing mah-jongg, my dear."—Chicago News.

Mardi Gras Centenary

New Orleans already is planning for the centenary of the Mardi Gras. Since 1827 the Mardi Gras, a season of festival and merrymaking that has become famous, has been an annual event. The revelry and elaborate display draw thousands of visitors yearly and the 1927 observance will likely outdo all previous programs.

Japan Aerial Sightseeing

Major Matsunaga, who made an aerial trip to view the famous cherry blossoms of Japan, is organizing an air trip association of 100 members, which will have a balloon for trips to various places of note.

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