

The Leading Lady

By GERALDINE BONNER

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STORY FROM THE START

While despondent over the enforced hiding of her fiancé, Jim Dallas, slayer in self-defense of Homer Parkinson, member of an influential family, Sybil Saunders, popular actress, is engaged to play Viola in a charity performance of "Twelfth Night" on Gull Island, on the Maine coast. After the play, which is a big hit, Wally Shine, official photographer, learns something of the jealousy existing in the company.

CHAPTER I—Continued

The photographer shouldered his camera and went toward the house. He skirted the side balcony, the wide-flung doors giving a glimpse of an entrance hall, and turning the corner emerged upon the land front of the long capacious building. Hayworth showed across the channel in a clustering of gray roofs from which smoke skeins rose straight into the suave rose-washed sky. The water rushed between, a swollen tide, threads of white dimpled eddies, telling of its racing speed.

The door on this side of the house opened directly into the living room. No hall within or porch without interfered with the view; the path ended unceremoniously at the foot of two broad steps that led to the threshold. On the lower of these steps Shine found a lady sitting smoking a cigarette. This was the Maria of the cast, Mrs. Cornell in private life. Shine had found her as easy as himself, good humoredly loquacious and not involved in the prevailing discord. An admirable person to clear up mysteries. He sank down beside her on the step and took the cigarette box she flipped toward him.

"Wouldn't you think," she said, "a man as rich as this Driscoll would fix up round here better?"

Shine, who had artistic responses, had long learned not to intrude them on the uninitiated.

"I guess he liked it wild," he suggested, and lit a cigarette.

Shine had been in the grove of pines, a growth of stunted trees filling in a hollow. He had followed the path through it, up the slope to the summer house and beyond to where the bluff dropped away in a sheer cliff to the channel. They called the place "The Point" as it projected beyond the shore line in a rocky outthrust shoulder, gulls circling about it, water seething below. He looked there now, let his glance slip along the curve of headlands till it reached the two girls, perched on a boulder like a pair of bright-plumaged birds. He was thinking how to approach the matter in his mind, when Mrs. Cornell went on:

"I don't see what anyone wanted to build a house here for—cut off this way. It's too lonesome. With the tide at the full as it is now you can't get ashore without a motor boat. You know that current's something fierce."

He looked down at it, its rushing corded surface purple dark:

"Looks to be some current."

"It would carry you out and 'Good night' to you. Gabriel who runs the launch told me. Set's right out to sea some way. And the rise and fall to it—I couldn't tell you how many feet it is, but you'll see for yourself tonight if you're awake—all the channel bare, nothing but rocks and mud. And across the middle of it to Hayworth, a causeway. That's the only way you can get ashore at low tide. High or low you're pretty well marooned. It's seclusion, all right, if that's what you're after."

Shine was after information and with the talk running on tides and causeways he saw no chance of getting it. So he tried to divert the garrulous lady:

"That's Miss Saunders and Miss Tracy out there looking at the sunset."

Mrs. Cornell answered with emphasis:

"Yes, they're friends."

"Aren't you all?"

"Some of us knew each other before we came here," was her cryptic reply. Then she added pensively: "Six months ago you'd never have found Sybil Saunders looking at a sunset. She was the brightest thing!"

"Awful misfortune that what happened to her."

She gave a derisive sound at the inadequacy of the word:

"Hah—awful! Took the heart right out of her. If you ever saw a girl in love it was she—bound up in him. Everything ready, the wedding day set, the trousseau made." Tears rose in her eyes and she dove into her tight-fitting bodice for a handkerchief.

"Never to be worn, Mr. Shine—that's life."

Shine gave forth sympathetic murmurs and Mrs. Cornell, dabbing at her eyes, furnished data between the dabs:

"Two men drinking too much and

then a fight, and before anybody knew, murder. If there hadn't been a brass candlestick near Jim Dallas' hand it would never have happened. Honest to God, Mr. Shine, there was nothing evil in that young man. But the Parkinson family are camped on his trail. The evil's in them, if you ask me, with their rewards and detectives."

"I wonder if she knows where he is."

"I guess there's more than one wondering that," the lady murmured.

Shine looked at the page's figure on the rock. She carried the thing stamped on her face. He had noticed it particularly where he had taken the photographs of her in the living room. Once or twice the mask had been dropped and he had seen the drooping lines, the weariness, and something like fear on the delicate features.

For a space they smoked in silence. Round the corner of the house the tall figure of Stokes strolled into view. At the sight of them he nodded, walked down to the wharf and dropped on a bench.

Shine lowered his voice:

"What's the matter with him?"

Mrs. Cornell met his eyes; her own were narrowed and sharp.

"What makes you think anything is?"

"His whole makeup—something's wearing on him."

She blew out a long shoot of smoke and, watching it, murmured:

"Yes, it's out on him like a rash. He's crazy about Sybil, if you want to know what's the matter with him."

"Oh!" It came with an understanding inflection, the haggard glances rising on Shine's memory.

"Can't hide it, doesn't want to hide it. There's no shame in him, tracki—"

after the girl. And it's not as if he got any encouragement. She can't bear him; that's why she has Anne Tracy out there, afraid if she sits alone five minutes he'll come loping up. You'd think if he didn't have any pride he'd have some feeling for his wife. She's half crazy with jealousy, burning up with it. These purple passions are all right in books, Mr. Shine, but believe me they're not comfortable to live with."

"I felt it."

"I guess you would, it's in the air. All of us cooped up in this place where you can't get off. Sybil and Joe Tracy ready to fight at the drop of the hat and Flora going round in circles and Stokes like one of those fireworks that starts sputtering and you don't know whether they're going to explode or die on you. I tell you I'll be glad when we get out of here tomorrow morning."

There was a footfall in the room behind them and Mrs. Cornell turned to see who was coming.

"Oh, Flora," she said. "Come out and take a look at the sunset. It's something grand."

The woman stepped out and stood beside them. She had changed her costume and her narrow blue linen dress outlined her too slender figure. Shine thought she would have been pretty if she had not looked so worn and thin. He noticed the brightness of her dark eyes, brilliant and quick moving as a bird's. There was red on her cheekbones, a flushed patch that was not rouge. Mrs. Cornell's expression recurred to him, "burning up"—the meager body, the hot high color, the dry lips resolutely smiling, suggested inner fires.

"Yes," she answered, "it's a wonderful evening."

"Take a cig." Mrs. Cornell offered the box.

"Sit down, there's plenty of room." Shine moved up.

"No, I can't sit down. There's something about the air that makes you restless—too stimulating, maybe." She raised her voice and called to her husband, "Aleck, aren't you coming in to change your clothes?"

Without moving, the man called back:

"Not yet. There's no hurry."

She turned to Shine with a little condescending air of wifely tolerance:

"Mr. Stokes has been shut up so long in town he can't get enough of the fresh air."

"He's enjoying the scenery, too," Shine answered, and saw her eyes travel to the two figures on the rock.

"Oh, that of course—that's the best part of it." Then in a tone of bright discovery: "Why, look where Anne and Sybil are! Have they been there long?"

"Ever since I've been here." Mrs. Cornell's voice was more than soothing, bluffy reassuring as the voice of one who tells a child there is no ghost.

"And ever since Mr. Shine got through the pictures! Wallowing in the beauties of nature like the rest of us."

"Won't you wallow, too?" Shine

indicated the long unoccupied space on the step.

She shook her head:

"I like moving about. Something in this place gets on my nerves, it's like being in a jail." On a deep breath she shot out, "I hate it," and stepped back into the room.

"Going?" Mrs. Cornell veered round to follow her retreating figure.

"Yes. I enjoy the scenery better when it hasn't got people in it."

They looked at each other; a still minute of eye communication.

"She's all worked up," he murmured.

Her answer was to point to the two girls and then to Stokes:

"Now she'll keep her eye on them from somewhere else—probably the side piazza. That's the way you are when you're jealous—the sight of it kills you and you can't stop watching."

"Lord!" whispered Shine into whose life no such gnawing passions had entered. And he thought of the girl in the page's dress who was afraid to sit alone, and the man on the wharf brooding within sight of her, and the woman who was hovering round them like a helpless distracted bird.

CHAPTER II

The launch was on its way back for those of the actors who were leaving. Gabriel, squatting by the engine, calculated the distribution of his time. After he'd taken them across he'd have his supper and then go back for Joe Tracy, who was leaving on the seven-fifteen for his vacation. When Joe was disposed of, Gabriel was to meet two Boston sports who had engaged him for a week's deep-sea fishing at White beach, twenty-five miles down the coast. It was a strenuous program for the old man and he grumbled to himself about it, the grumbling gaining zest by anticipations that some of them would be late. By the time he drew near the island he had grumbled himself into a state of irascible defiance against anyone who would dare upset his plans.

To warn them of his coming he sounded the whistle and its shrill toot acted like a magic summons. A group of men, bearing suitcases and bags, emerged from the entrance and ran down the path, Bassett following.

Gabriel quieted down—they were all ready and waiting—and then saw Joe Tracy come round the corner of the house in his Sebastian dress. The old man muttered profanely—why wasn't the d-d cub getting ready? And as the boat made its landing, he called out:

"Say, you'd better be gettin' them togs off. I'll be back here for you at a quarter to seven."

The boy, leaping lightly from rock to rock, grinned without answering. The picturesque dress suited him, he looked almost handsome, and with the feathered cap on his golden wig set rakishly askant, he moved downward with a taunting debonaire swagger. Gabriel didn't like him, anyway, and now his impudent face, framed by the drooping blond curls, looked to the launch man malignantly spiteful.

But Gabriel wasn't going to go till he'd made things clear. He appealed to Bassett, whom he had privately sized up as the only one of the outfit who was like the rational human males of his experience. Besides he had seen that Joe Tracy respected, if not feared, the director:

"I'll be back here at quarter to seven for the Tracy boy, and I'm tellin' him he's got to be ready. I can't waste no time settin' round waitin' and if he's not here on the dot—"

"That's all right," Bassett put a comforting hand on his shoulder and turned to Joe. "You heard that, Joe?"

The boy answered with his sneering grin:

"What's got the old geezer? Does he think I'm as deaf as he is?"

Gabriel's weather-beaten visage reddened. He was not in the habit of being called an "old geezer" and he was not deaf. But the actors, all in the boat, were clamoring to start. They had a train to make—get in, ancient servitor, and turn on the current. In a chorus of farewells the boat chugged off.

The three men left on the wharf went up the path to the doorway where Shine and Mrs. Cornell had resumed their seats. Shine was struck by their difference of type—if you went the world over you couldn't find three more varied specimens. The only one he liked was Bassett, something square and solid about him and a good straight look in his eyes. And he'd a lot of authority—the way he managed this wild-eyed bunch showed that.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

The striking bit of "Big Ben," London's most famous clock, weighs 13½ tons.

Current Wit and Humor



LIFE IN FORT MINK

After Mrs. Teofus had kissed her husband effusively, she promptly asked for five dollars, which he as promptly refused.

"Pig! I lavish those affections upon you. I kiss you, and yet you refuse me those five dollars."

"Here are those five dollars," responded the Fort Mink philosopher and guide. "Now I can't afford any more kisses just at present."

THEN THE IRON FLEW



Wife—Here I've been pressing clothes all day! I'm weary of ironing!

Hubby—Sort of ironing boned I suppose?

Now Plays a Harp

At sixty miles
Drove Tommie Sharp;
There came a train—
He plays a harp.

Undertook Mr. Jones

Jim and Andy were discussing the death of a friend.

Jim said—Andy, who gwine to bury Mr. Jones?

Andy replied—I don't know who gwine bury him, but Mr. Smith undertook him.

(Mr. Smith was the undertaker).—The Outlook.

Another Broken Heart

Motorist—I'm sorry I ran over your hen. Would a dollar make it right?

Farmer—Waal, better make it two. I have a rooster that was mighty fond of that hen, and the shock might kill him, too.

Swimming in It

Parson—Did poverty drive you to your criminal ways?

Prisoner—Not at all. I was simply coinng money.—Sydney Bulletin.

Throw That One Out

Bill—Every time I look at you I have thoughts of revenge.

Mae—Oh, why?

Ellie—Revenge is sweet, you know.

SCRAPS WITH HIS WIFE



She—Do you have many scraps with your wife?

He—Almost every night at supper—whatever is left over from dinner, you know.

Oh, My Cherries

Robin Redbreast said to me
"May I build a nest in your apple tree?"
"Sure," said I, and I heaved a sigh—
"But stay away from the Cherry Tree."

Tempest Brewing

Mr. Stinger—Jane, I am going to take that car out in the yard and fix it, or bust it.

Mrs. Stinger—Why, John, just think of the neighbors—and you baptized only last Sunday morning.

Paging Mr. Lincoln

"You're fired!" stormed the hard-bolled boss.

"Fired? How you talk!" sneered the stenog. "I supposed they sold slaves."—American Legion Monthly.

Engineer Cressy Praises Tanlac

Fermentation, Bloating, Nervousness and Constipation Relieved. Health Restored. Gains 26 Pounds

"Tanlac did me so much good that I have been boosting it whenever I could," says B. Cressy, 959 Ellis St., San Francisco, a well-known electrical engineer. "Stomach trouble was the seat of my trouble. Whatever I ate did not digest. I would lie in the pit of my stomach and ferment, cause gas that bloated my stomach and pained me. Often this trouble was so bad I could hardly breathe. I was always constipated and lost weight fast. Of course I was nervous and at night I never slept soundly."

"Then a lady advised me to take Tanlac. I did, with wonderful result. It relieved all stomach trouble, gave me an appetite, cleansed my system of constipation and built up my strength. I have gained 26 pounds since taking Tanlac. And never felt better."

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Mitchell Eye Salve AVOID dropping strong drugs in eyes sore from alkali or other irritation. The old simple remedy that brings comforting relief is best. 25c, all druggists. Hall & Buckel, New York City
For SORE EYES

Liner Has Nine Decks

Constructed of a special steel, which is said to have high elastic qualities, especially suitable to battle ocean waves, a liner was recently launched at Malton, Italy. It has nine decks, is 631 feet long and has a gross tonnage of 24,000 tons.

Dr. Peery's "Dead Shot" not only expels worms or Tapeworm but cleans out the mucus in which they breed and tones up the digestion. One dose does it. Adv.

All Set

"When are we to have our dance?"
"Oh, in about another hour."
"I'll be gone by then."
"That won't matter. So shall I."—Sydney Bulletin.

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