

Mr. and Mrs. Sallie

being the Confessions of a new wife

Illustrated by Paul Robinson
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Gladys Baker

Alone With Jealously.
Perhaps the most poignant ache that comes to the heart of a woman is caused by neglect. Curtiss had hurt me many times by his utter absorption in business and it had been a long time since he had commented on a new gown I was wearing or noticed a change in the way I dressed my hair. But this was a new phase through which my emotions now passed—this realization that was forced upon me that he was able to find pleasure in going about to parties with some other girl. It did not seem to dampen his ardor in the least because I was always included among the guests.

As I sat alone in the gathering dusk a host of jealous thoughts rushed through my mind. I wondered if he could be falling in love with Letitia Evans. I heard of such things happening before. He seemed quite carefree and happy when she was near.

Now they had gone of together on a moonlight picnic all alone in the back seat of the long, high-powered car. With just the two couples out there on the mountain they would be thrown together most of the time. Eve Drennen and Bill Gillespy were engaged and would undoubtedly go off moon-gazing leaving Curtiss and Letitia alone. She was pretty too! I recalled exactly how she looked as she stood in the doorway waiting for Curtiss to come out and there was that intangible something about her, too, that appeals to men. Women called it personality or charm, for want of a more definite term. In my jealous mood I interpreted it as studied allure.

Although the heat of the day had been intense a sudden shower just before sunset had left the earth fresh and gleaming and just slightly warm. A lilac bush breathed its fragrance into the night and a caressing young breeze waited it tenderly toward the south. The moonlight, with fingers of love, had smoothed out the rough and jagged peaks of Shades mountain beyond and, under her gentle touch, their outlines were black velvet against a distant sky.

Suddenly I yearned for romance with all the enthusiasm of youth. I even fancied a Prince Charming who would come and whisker sweet nothings in my ear. I wanted to be told that I was beautiful and attractive and desirable once more. I longed to be reassured that I was not completely matronly and uninteresting and old.

What was it Curtiss had said? That I was "always thinking about house-keeping and food."

And what was it Letitia Evans had flung at me as they left on their moonlight ride? That I was "getting too anromatic for words?"

Ah, if they could only have known how weager I was for the very things that they too, were seeking out there on the mountain under the moon! Romance, adventure, companionship, and love.

Curtiss had been absolutely unappreciative of the effort I had made to help him win back the fortune he had lost. Letitia had realized what a strength it was for me to be contently unappreciated when I had known nothing but luxurious living before we were wed. Then too I had strenuously endeavored to become the kind of wife he desired most.

And what was the result?
None his interest was growing in another girl.

It had been no easy task this "letting down" to the conventional burndrop of married life. There was no doubt in my mind, I had been, myself, the butterfly type, and my married friends with whom I had been thrown, were disciples of the great god jazz. They had all had an ultra-modern view-point of life; they kept up a whirl of parties, there were gay dinners, bright conversation, entrancing dances, and they even countenanced flirtatious affairs. Perhaps, I thought, there was the most colorful sort of existence after all.

I realized, sitting there alone in the darkness, how I had, to all outward appearances, changed. I had relinquished the things that had formerly meant my idea of a "good time," and had been what the world calls a "model wife."

And yet, something had happened

to me tonight. A reaction had occurred, and I stepped from behind, what seemed to have been, a mask. All the longings, and emotions of the old Sallie had returned and I made a resolution that I would not become callous to all the thrilling, gladsome things of life. Nor would I sit calmly by and watch Curtiss' infatuation for this madcap girl. The situation was beginning to get on my nerves, which, with the protracted heat of the summer and the steady grind of housekeeping, were already overwrought.

Suddenly I decided upon a plan. Ellie Mitchell, my girlhood chum, had returned from several years' travel in Europe and had taken an apartment on Park Avenue in New York. In order to gain the consent of her parents, she was making a pretense of studying art. She had repeatedly urged me to come up and visit her and each time I had refused. "You must be getting stale," she had argued in her hurried scrawl, "some new plays, a few nights of opera and a snappy supper club or two will brush the cob-webs away."

She was undoubtedly right. I would go to New York. Curtiss was on his feet once more and did not need me to help him with his up-hill climb.

Of course he did not approve of Ellie but his own conduct, he had sacrificed his right to advise me about my friends. She was certainly much finer than Letitia Evans with her admission that "clothes, dances, and morals had changed." That Ellie was frivolous I knew perfectly well, but she was my very best friend, and I needed to move about in the care free environment in which she lived.

As for Curtiss he had shown me little consideration for several weeks and, so, regardless of what he thought I made up my mind to go to New York. From father had come a generous birthday check. I would spend it on lovely clothes—the sort of clothes I had worn before I had become the wife of Curtiss Wright, and so bedecked I would go to New York.

Decision brought a new interest in life and I sought my bed more pleased with myself than I had been in all the summer months.

I did not know how long I had been asleep when I was awakened by the sound of a car stopping and brakes being suddenly applied. I pushed back the green silk gauze from the window beside my bed and there in

the moonlight were Curtiss and a girl—but they were not in the car they had started out in, but Letitia Evans' roadster which she was driving herself.

There was an enveloping stillness and then I heard Curtiss' voice:

"But I don't think it's safe; your going home alone."

Then Letitia:

"Much safer than your going with me old dear."

Then they both laughed. Letitia had been drinking; for her laughter was strained and high. I had been on a few parties with her myself and I knew when she had had too much.

What could it all mean?

The changed cars, and that she would be much safer alone than with Curtiss seeing her home! I glanced at the little jeweled clock on my bedside table and with swift alarm I noticed that the hands stood at 3 o'clock. More than half the night was gone. A generation ago a young girl out with a married man at that hour would have faced certain disgrace and yet here was this spoiled child of fortune taking no care whatsoever to hide her indiscretion; and boldly laughing and talking as if she cared what I or the neighbors should think!

What excuses would Curtiss offer? Curtiss who had always been so dignified and prim.

I remembered my decision to go to New York but for some reason, my plan brought little comfort, and all I could think of was the unconventional scene which I had just witnessed outside.

The light flared up and Curtiss stood beside my bed.

(To be continued next week)

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