

DEVIL-MAY-CARE

by ARTHUR SOMERS ROCHE
ILLUSTRATED BY DONALD RILEY

What's Gone on Before

It at party in Palm Beach given by Mr. Cooper Clary, Leeson, an attorney, meets Lucy Harkness, known as Devil-May-Care because of her adventurous life. In a game in which partners are chosen for the evening, Lucy is won by Tim Stevens, who has a reputation as a heart breaker. Leeson is a bit jealous. Tim Stevens tells Lucy they are going aboard his boat, the Minerva, and she accedes in order not to be a quitter. Asked if she is sorry that she won her company, Lucy says she is not and that evidently fate arranged it. Tim thereupon tells her to stop looking regretfully after Leeson.

Aboard Stevens boat, Stevens tells Lucy he loves her, to which she replies with contempt. He becomes angry, and she becomes afraid of him. Stevens tells Lucy that he will not let her go until she has promised to marry him. To escape him she leaps into the water from her cabin window, swimming a short distance under the water.

Lucy reaches land and meets Dr. Fergus Faunce on an island. He takes care of her and takes her home. Everyone is worried about her, and when she meets Stevens he is frantic, regretful and still ardent in his love. Leeson informs Lucy that Stevens must raise a quarter of a million dollars or go to jail at five o'clock. Lucy goes to her bank and raises the sum.

Lucy goes to Stevens to help him, but he refuses to take money from a woman to whom he is not married. So Lucy marries the man she hates, and promptly runs away from him, going to her friend Fergus Faunce, and tells him what she has done.

Stevens sets out in search of Lucy. Meanwhile, Dr. Faunce and Lucy launch a new boat. A hurricane wrecks them on their first trip. Lucy is saved, and finds herself on board the Minerva, wondering what has happened to Dr. Faunce.

Dr. Faunce is aboard the Minerva also. Stevens threatens to kill Faunce unless Lucy sticks to him. To save Faunce she accedes, but expresses hate for Stevens. A few minutes later she startles her by saying he doesn't want her, and never will!

Now go on with the story.

And, once they had been reduced to words they became something which study. And observation and study told her that those motives were things that could not be carried out into deeds.

She knew now that had not the storm lifted her into the arms of Faunce into the cabin of the Minerva she would have returned, herself, within twenty-four hours, to wherever her husband might be. For she would have realized, without Stevens' analysis of her intent, that in injuring him she must inevitably do dishonor to herself. Not the mere picture of dishonor which public scandal would evoke, but that real dishonor which is of one's own soul. Revenge must inevitably mean dishonor, for revenge is ignoble in itself.

No more thought of revenge, then would enter her head. Rather, she would scheme to discover a way out of this blind alley into which desire for revenge had led her. Tim would not divorce her; he would not permit her to divorce him. But there must be some way out. Also, there must be some answer to this puzzle created by Tim's sudden business energy.

There was only one person who could possibly advise her and that was Fergus Faunce. On these occasions, since her return to Palm Beach, when she had seen Faunce, they had kept their conversation on the safe middle ground of impersonalities. They had enjoyed each other, but only as casual acquaintances enjoy one another; there had been none of the soul-revelation which had characterized their previous friendship. Well, she would try to return to that ground which they had occupied together before. She didn't know just what she wanted from Faunce, but whatever it was, he could supply it. Wasn't he the kindest and wisest man in the world? And didn't she need kindness and wisdom? Well, then...

Lucy came upon Faunce, stretched luxuriously before an open fire—there was the faintest hint of chill in the air,—smoking his pipe and reading from a small volume. He rose at her cheery hail, took her hand, and led her to camp chair.

"Is this your island? Or, rather, doesn't my husband own it?" He thoughtfully knocked the ashes from his pipe and slowly refilled it.

"Curiously, my dear, is sometimes the beginning of wisdom."

"Just what do you mean by that?" she asked.

"Just what do you mean by wanting to know whether or not your husband owns Mango Key?" he countered.

"Oh, Fergus! I have a right to know! Is he swindling his friends? Even my maid has invested all her savings with him! Is he robbing her and everybody else? I want to know."

"If you're worried about your maid, then worry about me, too."

"You mean to say that you've in-

vested—Fergus!"

"I had a lease on this island which could not be cancelled by sale. So when Stevens put the situation before me, I relinquished my lease for a certain amount of stock."

"And that's why you speak so kindly of him. Because business—Oh, Fergus! that you should put money before me!"

"That isn't fair, Lucy. Money means little to me. I'll admit I'm willing to make some. But putting you second to anything, save fair play... I haven't Lucy I want to talk to you."

But she shook her head and rose from the camp-chair.

"I don't want to listen. Please, Fergus let me go."

Leeson did not take dismissal so easily as she had hoped. When she refused his third invitation to luncheon he telephoned and asked her if he might drop in for tea. She granted permission, and as they sipped the tea and nibbled the cakes, she told him, quite gently but nevertheless firmly that she was a married woman and even if she weren't she'd not be at all interested in him.

"Why don't you marry Elsie Darragh?" she asked.

Young Leeson's face was miserable. "Shouldn't I be a fine cad to marry a girl I didn't love?"

She laughed bitterly.

"I married a man I didn't love."

"And are you happy? Certainly not. Good Lord, Mrs. Stevens! I..."

"I know you're a way above me, but... well, I could never understand why... after what I'd told you..."

"And you were certain of your ground?" she asked.

He shrugged.

"Our client's case was unimpeachable. Of course, I shouldn't talk to you this way, but..."

"I shouldn't have let you come here, shouldn't have put into words things you hadn't said to me, but you're a nice boy, and I could see..."

"I wasn't conceited, was I? You see, if I thought you really loved me, I'd not have mentioned it. But you aren't in love with me. You're piqued, about that race in the swimming pool, you don't like Tim, and so you imagine

that you care for me?"

"Imagine!" he said angrily. She nodded.

"That's all it is—imagination. Now, let's be friends."

He smiled wanly and took her hand. "I'll try," he said.

He came upon Lucy one evening at the Everglades. She'd dined inside with the Lars Petersens, and was now one of the gay party seated outside in Orangerie, as the lovely dancing place is named.

"Your husband is the main person in the Lucy—is it St. Lucie?—development. Guess I've said enough."

She shrugged carelessly.

"If you don't wish to tell me; if you think it's not to be repeated. Perhaps you've gathered I'm not particularly fond of Tim, haven't you?"

She could not have told, had her life depended on it, why she made this remark. It was a vulgar remark sneering at one's own husband, and no one save Fergus Faunce and Tim himself had ever heard her state, since marriage, that she disliked Tim. Her actions may have informed people, but not her tongue.

"I always wondered... you knowing what you knew... well, you won't mind learning that he's going to learn a little lesson tonight."

"How?" she asked.

Caution that had been unleashed by a combination of circumstances, came back to him.

"Oh, well you will know tomorrow."

She shrugged indifferently. Then she laughed cynically.

"Why do you laugh?" he inquired.

She was tremendously, overwhelmingly tolerant as she replied:

"After all, Mr. Leeson, you're a very bright man, and all that, but... Tim Stevens... But I mustn't hurt your feelings."

"You don't think I could out-manuever him?" he demanded.

She shrugged again.

"Hardly."

Caution gnawed right through its leash now and fled yelping away.

"Well, I have! His Lucy—or St. Lucie—city isn't worth a hoot unless he has a waterway. There's a cloud upon the title to Seminole Creek, and

the bridges across it. My clients claim they have an option on the land east of the creek, Stevens claims it's his. But tonight we're destroying the bridges across the creek, and tomorrow morning, bright and early we're beginning work on a dam that will reflect the creek, farther inland, so that it will flow through our property, give us a waterway, and deprive him of his. It means that our property back from the ocean, will be worth treble what it commands today, and that Stevens' land will decrease proportionately."

"But why destroy the bridges?" she asked.

"Because the bridges give him access, by motor car, to the property east of the creek, and we want to delay his development. It will take him weeks to replace the bridges, even if the court decides against us, and says that we don't own them and and not the right to destroy them. So you see while he's rebuilding bridges we'll be laying our development, can offer it to the public so much earlier. It ticks Lucy—St. Lucie, is it?—and makes Clarytown."

"Does Mr. Clary know about this—and his wife?" asked Lucy.

"I don't know how much Mrs. Clary knows, but you can bet that Copper knows all about it. Why, it's mostly his scheme. He said that the public wouldn't bite at two developments, both so grandiose, so near together, so... get ours ready first."

"But the courts may say the bridges are Tim's, eh?"

He laughed.

"And we'll pay him damages for destroying his property. They may even make us destroy our dam and return the creek to him. But we'll have been selling our property to the public and getting in some cash returns on our investment. Stevens, who's up to his neck this minute and who must get in some public money, will be out in the cold. We'll buy him in on our own terms."

"I see," she said. She smiled brightly. "Lucky that Tim and I aren't a

loving couple, isn't it."

CHAPTER VI

A fire gleamed by Faunce's cabin, and there, in its light, sat Faunce and Tim. Engaged, they seemed to be, in amicable discourse over pipe and cigar. This was an amazing thing; the Lord knew these two had no reason to like each other. But it was not to be pondered on now.

"Leeson... Clary going to pull down bridges over Seminole Creek. Leeson told me... Just saw Clary... trackful of men... Hinder your work... make you sell out..."

"Bless you! you don't need to tell me why!" cried Stevens.

He stared at her.

"But why do you... what do you care..."

"Damn it," she shrieked. "I can want to see fair play without being psycho analyzed, can't I? I want a fair fight, and—"

Stevens laughed boomingly.

"All right Lucy! You'll see a fight. Come on."

He looked at Dr. Faunce. He spoke with a rapidity and assurance that dazed his wife. He seemed to grasp all angles of a situation in a moment.

"Eve Clary—and Lord knows he's pulled plenty raw deals—wouldn't start anything like this without old John Law behind him. Probably has a sheriff or two; I'll be legally in the wrong. Doctor. But they'll get away with anything over my dead carcass, and no way else. So... how about you?"

The freight gleamed on Faunce's whimsical mouth.

"Why spoil what promises to be a cheery party, by talk of illegality?" he laughed. "I've always disliked the law, anyway. Let's slap it on the face tonight."

Stevens great arms described a semicircle and his palm thwacked resoundingly on the surgeon's back.

"Atta kid! Any one with nerve enough to dig out an appendix has plenty heart. Let's go. Got a gun?"

(Continued Next Week.)

OPTIMISTIC FORECAST FOR 1930 BY BREWER

C. M. Brewer, vice president and general manager of Mountain States Power Company in his annual review and forecast, says:

"A resume of the activities of Mountain States Power Company for 1929 indicates a substantial increase over the preceding year. Throughout the territory served, which includes over one hundred communities located in six states, a steady and consistent growth has been in evidence. Agricultural conditions have been good, particularly in the Oregon districts, and give promise of satisfactory returns for the coming year.

"In reviewing the growth and development of the territory served by this company during the past year, it is with a feeling of optimism that we look forward to 1930 which it is contemplated will bring at least a normal increase in connected load and number of customers served."

DRAMATIC CLUB OFFERS COMEDY ON WEDNESDAY

"Mix and Stir Well" is the name of the play which has been selected by the dramatic club of the high school to be presented during the assembly hour on February 19, next Wednesday. The play is written by Katherine Mariland Taylor and is being directed by Mrs. William Baker. It is a very humorous comedy.

The cast of characters is as follows: Phil Grant, played by Freeman Squires; Jane, his wife, Ruth Bettis; Peter Doake, Phil's employer, Gerald Morrison; Mrs. Peter Doake, Julie Pollard; Jim Doake, their son, John Lynch; Bryce Kennedy, Ralph Hughes; Lola Kennedy, his wife, Dorothy Rollins; Alice Williams, Louise Williams; Mrs. Perkins, Fay Parsons; Gentleman Joe, the burglar, Lloyd Mattison; Sick Dick, Joe's partner, Hersey Tomseth.



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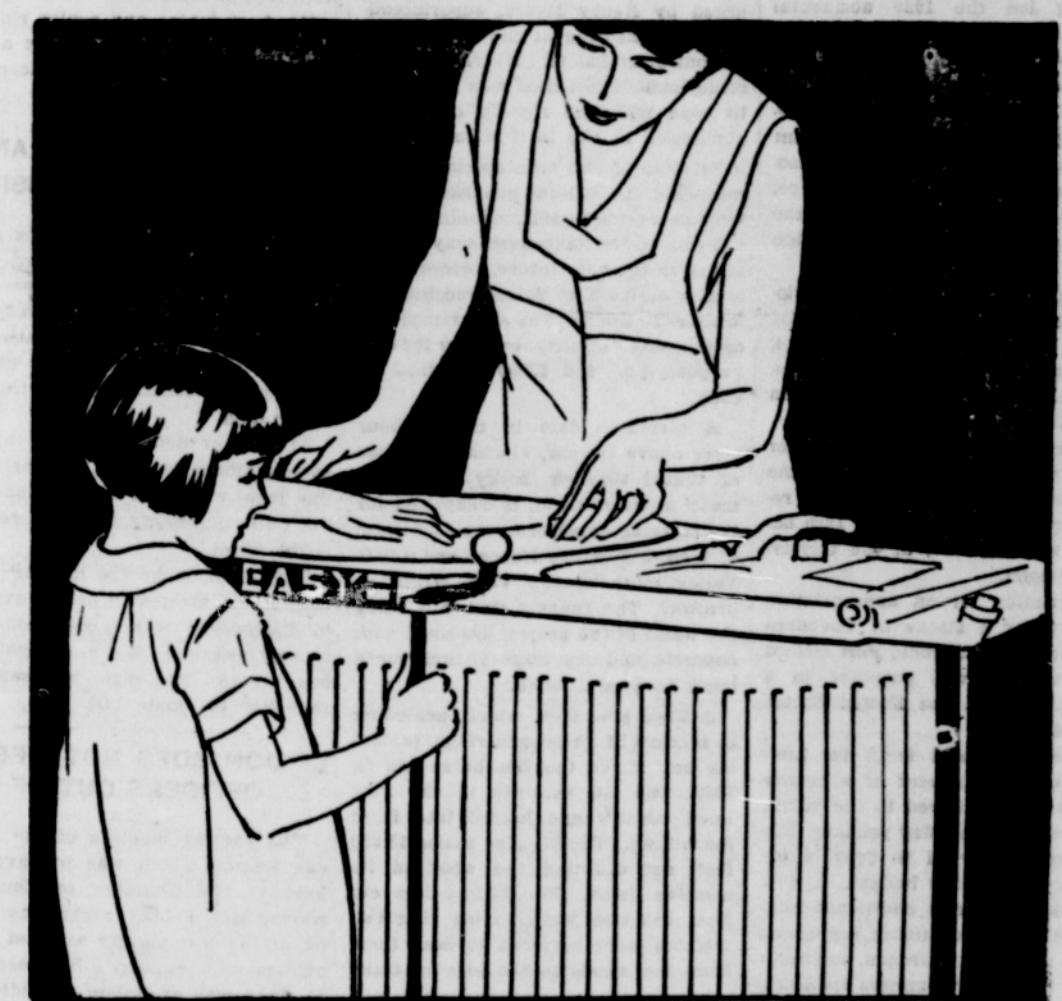
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