

THANKFULLY YOURS

By MARGARET A. SWEENEY

Matilda Bennett, slim, short and stocky, sat alone in her basement kitchen. Outside, against the shining window with its cross curtain of dainty duff, the rain slashed and streamed in torrents. Miss Bennett, having just finished her midday meal, gazed idly at the storm-lashed window, and her thoughts, from thirty years of habit, began to center about her "rooming guests."

Between the window and her brooding eyes there slipped the picture of a slim young man in a tawny raincoat, dripping wet. He carried a violin case, and his rather handsome face was white and sullen.

The picture faded, and Matilda arose briskly, and took a black tin tray from the shelf behind the stove, and upon it she placed a large yellow bowl which she filled with hot soup and covered with a plate, heaped with butter sandwiches.

Then she climbed the four flights to the top floor where, breathless, she paused to rest. The black tin tray in her trembling hands had become smeared, and the little woman wiped it clean and rearranged the sandwiches before she knocked at the door of the "front square room."

"I didn't see you go out this morning, and I just remembered that you had a bad cold when you came last night," she explained to her new guest. "Now—now don't thank me at all, but sit right up and take this while it's hot."

The young man upon the white iron bed squirmed to a sitting position, and the woman placed the black tin tray upon his lap.

"I have the rooms on this floor to tidy up," she told him, "and I'll be in for the tray on my way down."

When the door had closed behind her the young man ate ravenously and drank the soup in great gulps; and long before she returned, the last crumb had disappeared.

"That soup was just fine," he greeted his landlady when she entered, "and, believe me, I—I appreciate—"

"How is your cold—I forgot to ask you, Mr.—Mr. Dunlap?"

"Thank you; it—it isn't cold. I'm subject to a—slight throat trouble, and in wet weather my voice becomes husky."

"I'm glad it isn't a cold." Miss Bennett lifted the tray, and from the doorway she spoke again: "The day after tomorrow is my birthday and I—I always invite my rooming guests to have dinner with me on that day. I hope you can come."

"That's mighty good of you, and—I thank you. I really have no home. I—"

"Excuse me; I hear my telephone bell." The little woman hastened away, leaving Dunlap staring at the closed door.

"Rooming guests!" There was derision in his husky voice. "Rooming guests! Well, she is all right," he whispered to himself.

Toward midnight, while drawing the parlor shades, Miss Bennett saw Dunlap go out. She watched him cross the street, his tawny coat collar turned high, and the rain beating down upon the soft rim of his black felt hat. And the thought came to her: "I'm glad that I brought him that soup. He is young, and he looks troubled, and he has no home." And, ever mindful of the comfort of her "rooming guests," she added: "I must tidy up his room before he returns."

Her thoughts still upon him, she went to the small desk in the parlor and opened the book where her lodgers, as the law requires, had registered. She read again: "John Philip Dunlap, violinist, former address 14 Staba avenue, Boston."

Miss Bennett was about to climb the stairs to the top "front square room" when the newsboy brought the evening paper, and, pausing in the hallway to glance over the headlines, Miss Bennett read:

\$2,000 Reward! Messenger Missing.

"John Dunn, messenger for the Thurlow Trust, has disappeared with \$30,000 in United States bonds. Dunn is twenty-two, slight of build, medium height, brown hair and blue eyes. His voice is noticeably husky. Two thousand dollars' reward is offered for information leading to his arrest or to the recovery of the bonds. He—"

Matilda Bennett hastily made her way to the top floor. Upon the dresser in Dunlap's room she found a note addressed to her. She read:

"Dear Madam—If you had known that I am a thief, hiding in your home from the police, you probably would not have been so kind to me."

"Well, at heart I am not a thief, for I have been sorry every minute since I took what did not belong to me. It is my first attempt at stealing, and it will be my last."

"The \$30,000 in bonds that I stole is in the violin case in the closet, and will you please call up the Thurlow Trust tomorrow morning and ask them to send for it?"

"I am going away, provided I am not caught and sent to jail, to begin all over again, and I am going to try to be the kind of a man that you, no doubt, thought me to be when you brought me that nice hot soup today, because you thought me sick with a cold."

"Some day when I have made good, I'll come and have dinner with you."

"Thankfully yours,

"JOHN DUNN."

THE EXPERIMENT

By MOLLIE MATHER

Patricia's guardian sighed. It was not the first time that his niece had brought from him this sign of distress.

"My dear Bob," he said, "I don't see how I can influence Patsy to marry you, though that is the dearest wish of my heart. You have those staid qualities that Patricia's willfulness needs. Why is she averse to you?"

"Averse?" Bob exclaimed, indignantly. "Why, Pat loves me—as much as she can settle down to love anybody."

The man leaning against the desk smiled.

"When she will, she will," he quoted. "and you may depend on it. When she won't, she won't, and there's an end on't."

"Did you ever try making Patsy jealous? I've heard that is a great remedy for tardiness in love."

"I've thought I'd like to try her out on that," Bob said.

A stenographer entered the office at this moment, and gathering up some notes left the room.

"I will see you presently, Miss Orme," the lawyer said. The young woman smiled. Bob wheeled about as she smiled.

"Jove!" he exclaimed, "what a graceful, ladylike girl. Poise, Barney, poise, in every line. Where'd she come from?"

Barnett Adams sank into a chair.

"I've just thought of a possible plan, Bob," he returned. "Better stay a few minutes. Miss Orme is a particular friend of Pat's. You have not been privileged to meet her, because the girl forewears society in general."

She was Patricia's college chum. It was Pat who persuaded me to employ her, and Miss Orme has made good in the business world. Occasionally Pat brings her to take dinner with us. Miss Orme is always eager to show her gratitude to me for my interest in her behalf. Also, she knows our delightful, provoking Patsy well. And is as anxious as I for her future welfare. All of which," added Barnett Adams, "leads up to the plan which I am considering. It might be well to ask Pat to invite her friend to the house for several evenings—and if you happened in, that would appear only the natural thing. Miss Orme forewarned, would, I think, be able to resist your dangerous fascination, Bob, if you should devote yourself to her for a short space of time. If our difficult charge shows signs of jealousy—well, then, press your advantage."

Bob, passing out later through an adjoining office, glanced toward the smooth, dark head of Miss Olive Orme and thought that his task would not be a hard one.

"Of course I'll ask Olive, the dear," Patsy warmly assured her uncle that evening—and in return for my willingness, you'll come out of your shell, guardian Barney, won't you?"

"It's one thing being a bachelor by preference—and another to be selfish in your own satisfaction. I'll let Bob come, and we will have a jolly evening together."

The evening, when it arrived, was not as jolly as anticipated. And there seemed to be no reason for this. Patricia, at the piano, could not understand what was the matter. Uncle Barnett had come obligingly "out of his shell"—or out of his usual comfortable place in his study, and Olive Orme was her gay, old-time, college self. Bob was apparently charmed with this heretofore unknown friend of Patsy's, and ignoring Uncle Barney, lingered to chat at her side. Patricia remained at the piano. She was alone—a novel experience for the popular young woman. When Miss Orme arose to go, Bob, with a hurried excuse to Patricia, went with her.

"Wouldn't do to let the girl go home alone," he whispered.

Patsy gathered up her music. "Good-night," she abruptly told her guardian. Patricia's guardian was sadly distressed—and the ball which he had started rolling was now impossible to stop.

Without invitation the formerly distant Miss Orme came frequently to Patricia's home to spend an evening, and on these evenings Bob also would be sure to appear.

Back in the office the employer regarded his stenographer with increasing coldness. And while Miss Orme appeared to be perplexed by this attitude, she was not distressed. After a succession of sleepless nights Barnett Adams felt called upon to ask his former favorite a question. He summoned Bob.

"Your plan?" he asked caustically. "May I be permitted to know if it has had the desired result, or have you become indifferent regarding that result?"

Bob grinned.

"Those two precious girls have been taking us in," he said.

"Seems that Olive dropped a hint of our experiment and they decided to play up to us. However, Patsy is going to marry me. Says she had no idea that I could play the flirting game so expertly, and cannot afford to take further risk. And Patsy also says," added Bob, the grin widening, "that the experiment has shown her the state of your feelings toward Olive. And as far as Olive is concerned—Pat thinks we might make it a double wedding."

"You can't beat Patricia," her lover added proudly.

THE TIMID JANET

By JANE GORDON

"You will not be afraid," they said to Janet as they left her alone in the big silent house. Stephen lingered. "I hate to leave you," he regretted, and sighed wearily.

"It's that everlasting business. Interfering even with my pleasure in your visit. The office men will not work overtime—so I have to."

Janet reached up to help her fiancé on with his fur coat. "Is the revolt as bad as ever?" she asked.

"Worse," Stephen Ware told her. There are two or three men among the workers who are firebrands. It takes all my diplomacy to deal with them."

Mrs. Ware turned back to chide her son. "If you are going to drop us at the reception, Stephen, you will have to hurry. The car is at the door. You will not be afraid, Janet?" she repeated her question. "I am sorry this sudden cold of yours prevents you from going with us."

Janet, the guest of her fiancé's mother, lied bravely. "Oh, I shall not be afraid," she said.

The auto rolled out of the drive. Janet, humming in an assurance which she did not feel, went back to the comfortable chair by the fireplace and endeavored to become interested in the book which Stephen had told her would make her forget her solitary condition.

Annoyed at her own cowardice, Janet sat up to listen. Eleven o'clock! The book dropped from her grasp. Smiling, she reclaimed it, pausing before resuming her reading to adjust her hair before a panel mirror against the wall opposite.

A man, back in the shadows of the music room paused too, breathlessly. He was a broad young man with a cap pulled down over his eyes—watching the girl's every movement.

The man crept toward the impressive dining room. Its buffet was laden with costly silver; the silver candlesticks at either end bore the "Ware" monogram. He advanced toward the silver-lined buffet. Then, threateningly, he swung around. The heretofore absorbed young woman was rising to her feet. Through the curtained doorway the burglar watched her move toward the telephone.

She seated herself so composedly before the telephone stand that the man hesitated.

Janet gave a number. "Taxi service," she explained to central. The burglar waited, his threatening revolver in his hand.

"Yes, please," the girl's voice was saying. "I would like to be called for at once. I am going on to a dance after the reception. Have just decided to go. Hurry over at once, to 48 Park lane—48 Park lane—in five minutes! All right."

Joe Gant drew back against the wall as she passed him on her way to a clothes closet which opened from the living room. She found there an opera cloak and a small hat which she adjusted, sitting down, then, to await the expected taxi.

Joe decided to wait too, until she should be gone. Then the house to himself—Stephen Ware's house—to plunder.

She would have to pass this curtained recess on her way to the door. Joe moved stealthily toward the dining room; he looked back—and encountered the girl's eyes in the panel mirror. Something in her gaze told him that she had discovered him in that manner a short time previously.

Boldly he stepped out into the light. "I don't think," he said quietly, "that I will let you go. You've been too clever. Your taxi man can ring."

"He won't ring," Janet heard herself coolly answering. "The man will force entrance, for it was not a taxi that I called, but the police."

The burglar came forward menacingly. "I heard you say—" he muttered. "You heard me," she explained.

"When I covered the telephone mouthpiece. You also heard me when I asked the police to hurry over at once—in five minutes. They knew what that meant. I think I hear them now. It will make it harder for you, Janet. I have added, 'to be found with that pistol.'"

The burglar stared at her, his attitude quickly changing.

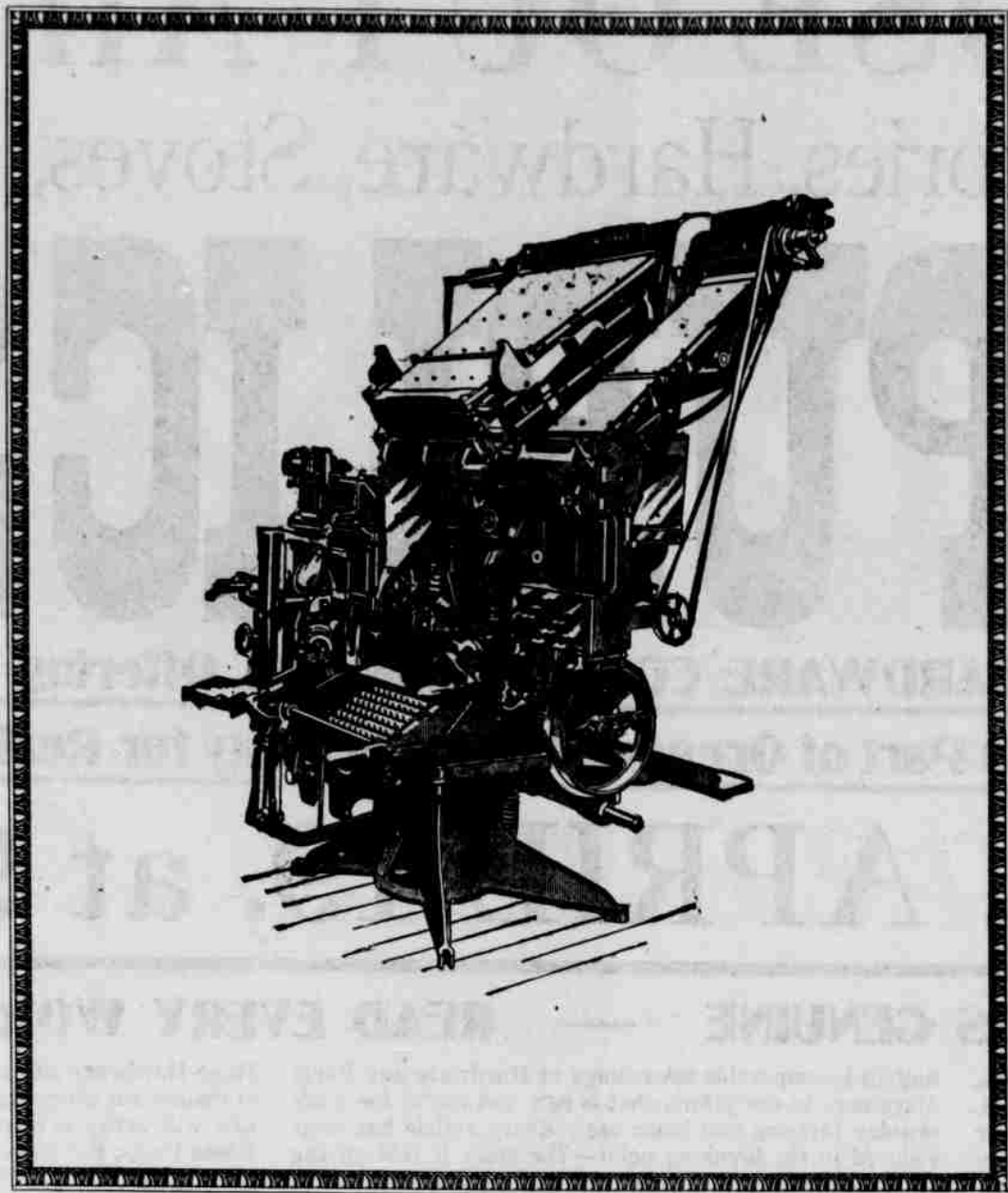
"You've got to let me out of here," he demanded. "I did not come of my own account. I was sent by our society. We work for Stephen Ware, and he gets rich out of our labor. We wanted to take from him some of our earnings—let him see how it feels to be robbed. I've got a mother who will go crazy when she reads this, in the paper—and I've got sisters at school. I'm telling you the truth."

"Then," Janet said, "you are one of the firebrands that are ruining Stephen Ware's men. You are most unjust. I happen to know. Straight, conscientious work will bring you the reward that you prefer to fight for. Will you be Stephen Ware's friend after tonight? Will you be your own friend? I shall claim your promise."

"I will," breathed Joe Gant.

Janet was greeting the police officer. "I must beg your pardon," she said ruefully. "I am from Lynden village. I called the police station to-night when I should have called a taxi."

"And there was something about her," the officer later explained to his mates, "that would make a man forgive her if she'd called out the whole force."



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