

READY MADE WIFE

BY CORALIE STANTON

SYNOPSIS: Rex Moore meets the bitter news that Laurie is marrying her employer, Mark Albery, as the pretended marriage of Rex and Rex can be disposed of. Rex discusses his proposed Pacific flight with Albery, who commands most of the air routes of the world. Rex leaves Albery's office high up in a huge hangar, and almost falls through a hole in the ceiling. Rex and Albery stare at each other in horror.

Chapter 29 DISAPPOINTMENT

ACROSS the six foot gulf, the two men looked at each other. Rex Moore had, in his miraculous act of saving himself, landed on the farther side.

"If anything had happened to you, my dear fellow, I should never have forgiven myself," said Albery. "I am responsible for my men."

"Oh, don't worry!" replied Rex; and, just to show that nothing had happened to him, he leaped over the opening and landed lightly by his employer's side. "You can give me another drink, if you like," he said. "I could do with one now. And then I'll get off to bed."

Mark Albery sat on in his chair for some time after the airman had gone.

There were papers in front of him on his desk, but he was not looking at them. There was a contemplative expression on his face. His eyes were almost shut.

The madness in his brain, fed by the accident, was increasing, was growing beyond control.

While Rex Moore was alive, Laurie would not give a thought to any other man. He knew that beyond a doubt.

If Rex Moore had fallen down on to the floor of the hangar, he would have been dead by now.

He would have been out of the way. The next day Rex Moore again came up to Albery's office in the hangar, and laid on his employer's desk a little bundle of bank notes.

"This is the other half of the money you lent me," he said. "Thank you very much."

"You didn't take long paying it back, Rex," said Albery. He spoke with indulgence, and yet a touch of sarcasm. It was the first time he had called the airman by his Christian name. It seemed as if the accident of the night before had changed their relations.

"I've been lucky in getting several more articles to write," was the reply. "Journalism seems a paying game."

"When you're a public idol, certainly!" remarked Albery, with genial cynicism. "It's a different story when you've got nothing but your brains to sell. Try it, my boy, apart from flying!"

"I know all about that," was the young man's quick rejoinder. "I owe it all to you. I couldn't pay for my flights by writing about them. I have to wait until I'm tired of it that you needn't worry about money; put in Albery complacently. Then, his voice changed. "You're worth far more than money, Rex. You're an asset—you belong to the nation—to England."

And, apart from the personal madness in his brain, he was speaking the truth. He needed this man more than he needed any man upon earth. And yet he wished him dead.

"Rex," he added earnestly, "I definitely want you to put off the Pacific flight. I'm sure it will be best for you, as well as for me, if you wait until we're quite certain about the new fuel. If it comes off, it'll be the biggest triumph for you. If it doesn't, you can do the flight all the same."

Rex Moore shrugged his shoulders; his angry mouth looked petulant as a child's. But, of course, he did know what it would mean to him if the new fuel turned out a success. He would be the first man to fly at a speed hitherto believed impossible. Although he hated this inaction, he could not deny that it was worth waiting for.

"That's settled, then," said Albery. "By the way, I didn't sack the chap who left the trap open last night. You asked me not to, for one thing. And it turned out to be Flood, the foreman of the hangar, one of the men we could least spare. He was in a terrible state when I told him what might have happened to you." "Yes, I've seen him," Rex replied carelessly. "He's a good fellow, I know. He seemed frightfully upset."

And he said he had strained his arm rather badly and was afraid he couldn't manage the trap alone, and all the others had gone. I'm glad you didn't sack him, Mr. Albery. He won't do it again."

Rex Moore was in London on the following Sunday. He rang up Mrs. Steele from the Chelsea flat, which he was still occupying, at Albery's urgent request, or, rather, command. Albery said it was necessary for their plans that Rex should use it when in London, after Laurie had left.

Rex did not want to see Mrs. Steele, but he could never get over his bad conscience where she was concerned. He had behaved to her with such rank ingratitude.

She was at home, and invited him to come to lunch, with that throbbing emotion in her high-pitched voice that made him so uncomfortable. "I thought I was never going to see you again," she said, when he arrived. But this time there was no reproach in her voice, only unshamed delight, which made him feel very small and unworthy.

He explained how busy he had been, as they sat in the sitting-room of her luxurious suite. And then, realizing that he might have had the decency to pay her some slight attention, such as sending flowers, or an invitation to a meal and a show, he ended up awkwardly:

"I'm afraid I'm not fit for civilized life, Wanda. I must seem abominably ungrateful."

"My dear, I know how you only live for your job," she answered generously. "As long as you don't try to pay me back what you think you owe me with money! That hurts too much. I have a terror of opening a letter again, like that last one you sent me!"

HER eyes were misty; her large, eager red mouth trembled, as she gave him a smile of pathetic tenderness.

The man was touched. They talked of all sorts of things over the delicious and light luncheon. Wanda skillfully led him on to his own subjects. He told her about his preparations for the Pacific flight, and she said she would love to travel to South America with him on her way home. Perhaps she could arrange it, as he was having to postpone his departure.

He did not tell her about his accident of the middle of the week. For some reason that he did not quite understand, he would not allow himself to think of it. It was too fantastic, and at the same time too dull. He had looked death in the face many a time, but never in an ignominious way like that.

It was not until the end of the meal, when the coffee was bubbling in the glass globe on the table, and a box of cigars was laid by Rex's side before the waiters withdrew, that Wanda Steele asked him the question he had been waiting for.

"Is it true—what one hears, that you and your wife have parted?"

"How did you hear?"

"From several people I have met. He gave a rather doleful laugh.

"I didn't think we were important enough."

"But, of course, you are, Rex! The public is wild for the slightest bit of news about you. I was very much surprised."

"Yes, it's true. You see, it—well it wasn't fair to her. I mean my coming back like that. After all that time—without letting her know."

"You mean she wanted to leave you?"

"Of course. She was very sporting about it. She did her best."

"What are you going to do—get a divorce?"

"Yes. What else can we do?"

"I see!" Wanda burst out indignantly. "And you'll take the blame Rex, and she'll marry Albery!"

"I am to blame," he said simply. "How did you know about Albery?"

"Anybody with eyes could see that he's crazy about her. And, of course, he's a great catch for a girl like that!"

She had slightly forgotten herself. She flushed and apologized. "I didn't mean anything against her, Rex. I know how chivalrous you are. And she seemed a nice, quiet little thing. But I can't help being angry with her for letting you down."

"She hasn't let me down, Wanda. Please, I'd rather not discuss it. We have agreed that it would be for the best to part."

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Tomorrow, Rex commits himself and his future.

TUNA SHIPS HELD BY MEXICO FREED

SAN DIEGO, Cal., Aug. 19.—(AP)—Release of the 18 southern California tuna boats seized by Mexican "mystery ships" at Magdalena Bay, after the Mexican vessels had taken them, under armed guard, some 130 miles

off of their courses, was reported here Saturday by Fred Schellin, president of the American Tuna Boat Association.

In making the wholesale seizure of vessels, valued at \$1,200,000, Mexican officials alleged that there were irregularities in their fishing licenses. It also was intimated that there were supposed to be certain fictitious licenses in existence, and it was these that the commander of the Mexican vessels were seeking. Juan Durate, commissioner in charge of the local office, said that "It's a case of honest

ship owners suffering for the sins of dishonest ones."

A Boy's Dog.
FAIRMONT, W. Va., Aug. 19.—(AP)—Forty dogs taken in a roundup that followed a rabies scare escaped when a small boy pried the lock of the pound gate to rescue his own pooch.

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STRANGE AS IT SEEMS—By JOHN HIX

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One of the strangest military weapons of the world has ever seen, was Orban's cannon, a monstrous field piece cast in the middle sixteenth century by a Hungarian founder, for Mohammed II to use in the siege of Constantinople.

The gun had a 25-inch bore, it shot stone balls—and it took so long to reload after each shot that it could only fire seven times a day. Immense quantities of powder were required for each shot, and the barrel was thoroughly greased before each firing—yet the firing range was only about a mile. The noise range was much greater—it could be heard for 12 miles.

Strange as it seems, this huge gun required a personnel of about 650 men to operate it. It had no carriage, and had to be dragged over the ground on rollers. Two hundred men were required to stand on both sides of the gun, handling the rollers and weights. Another force of 250 carpenters and workmen marched ahead to strengthen bridges, and build roads, and in other ways prepare the way for the cannon. A hundred head of oxen furnished the motive power.

The sound of the shot was much more terrifying than the shot itself—people of Constantinople were

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REDS TOLD JAPS PLOT NEXT WAR

MOSCOW, Aug. 19.—(AP)—M. Ercole of Italy told the congress of communist international today that Japan planned to occupy all of the soviet Union's far eastern territory and establish a protectorate over all China.

War against Russia, he asserted, will be Japan's next move in an attempt to establish a hegemony over the entire east.

The congress, which is in the fourth week, is expected to end after another week.