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by David Garth

SYNOPSIS: Allaire West is just arriving at her father's Virginia estate as the sun rises. Allaire has lived very speedily, although with fewer deviations from the proprieties than either her father or mother. But in the tropics Allaire has met briefly one Terry Willett, and she never has been the same carefree girl since. Terry is a young engineer, and although Allaire does not know it, Terry is at the moment in the States. The girl is looking over the West estate.

Chapter 17.

CONVERSATION PIECE

ALLAIRE'S father and mother hadn't cared a farthing for tradition or memory. They'd purchased the estate as a happy compromise between her mother's love of Washington society and her father's reverence for Kentucky as a more suitable location for his racing stable.

And they'd done their best to remodel it into a showplace—long sweeping wings to accommodate more guests added to the original mansion, destroying its simplicity and solidarity; the old driveway winding its leisurely course through thick-growing evergreens changed at great cost of money and trees into a gleaming paved double drive; the picturesque coachhouse demolished to make room for an eight-car garage. They would have to pick that one spot.

But even at that they'd failed to wreck the atmosphere of the old place entirely. They had failed in other ways too—for her mother had long since retired to her home in Washington where from behind the bulwarks of her own social circle and private income she made sophisticated nose-thumbing gestures at her husband, except when something with social and displomatic lure like that polo trip brought them together again.

And Allaire's tall slim father, his best polo days over, had settled down here either to break his neck in a fox hunt some day or else drink himself to death, either of which he would probably do very gracefully.

It was sunrise alone that gave Westlands any dignity.

In the distance through a grove of trees she could see the red roofs of the stables—smart modern buildings surrounded by a covered tanbark track and adjacent to a private three-quarters of a mile exercise course.

A couple of her father's brood mares were running up and down near a white fence. Be too bad if he ever bred a Derby-winner—he wouldn't have anything in life to live for.

Allaire smiled slightly and sent the car into motion. She flashed in through the gates, sped up that long cement drive, and stopped under the portico. Homecoming! It hadn't been home to her for years.

The drive was full of cars so she knew some sort of a party was on, but the great house was quiet as she entered. Everybody seemed to have retired, although Ray was usually a night owl.

But no, there were still some stragglers clinging to the ghost of the evening. Allaire paused on the threshold of the living room. A man was asleep on a divan with his hands folded across his chest. A girl in green evening gown had evidently just awakened. She was walking around uncertainly.

Allaire had never seen her before in her life. Her father's policy of perpetual open house brought many strangers in with the tide.

"What are you looking for?" she asked politely.

"The door, I think," said the girl in green. "Party seems to be over. Look at me walking around like a perfect sap." She giggled.

ALLAIRE obligingly guided her to the staircase.

"There you are," she said. "Good luck and good morning."

"I'll take the luck and you can have the morning," said the girl.

Allaire went back to the living room and pulled a bell cord. Blythe, the butler, appeared, stifling a yawn as he saw who had summoned him. She gestured at the recumbent form on the divan.

"Please put him to bed," she requested. "And then go to bed yourself. The party," she added, "seems to be over."

Blythe and his unconscious charge having woozily disappeared, the girl sighed as she glanced about the room. . . .

She'd always liked this room. It was wide and high-ceilinged and had a huge stone fireplace. There were pictures of famous racehorses on the walls, and trophy cases of silver loving cups, blue ribbons, and other mementos of horse shows and steeplechases. She'd won a lot of them herself.

But the spirit of the room was jaded with trays of empty and half-filled highball glasses, bottles, silver pails of melting ice, and ash trays crammed with cigaret butts—many of them rouged.

Their odor combined to defeat effectively the fresh clean scent of gardens and lawns trying to get through the terrace doors.

As she stood there her father came in from the tap-room. He had a woman on his arm—a slim woman with very pale face, eyelids painted golden, and an evening gown not in the best of taste.

Allaire recognized her. She was a famous movie actress. Or she had been once.

"My God" exclaimed her father "Where did you come from?"

"Drove from Washington," she returned. "Hello, Tala."

"Hello, Allaire darling," said the pale woman.

Ray was just beginning to recover from his surprise.

"I haven't seen her for weeks," he told Tala. "Fact. And now she shows up all of a suden."

"I want a room and bath," said Allaire politely. "Southern exposure and American plan. And do you allow children?"

"I think," said Tala lazily, "I'll go to bed. I don't feel good for a thing."

"Goodness," commented Allaire "is as a morning cloud and as the early dew—it goeth away."

"Put me down as early dew," said Tala wearily. She left the room and Allaire looked at her father, dark eyes ironic.

"Still paying tuition for night school, Ray?"

HE sat down without answering. He looked tired, but he was still handsome, thick iron-grey hair, slate-blue eyes in a tanned face, and athletic figure. He'd never be fat and he would always have the gift of wearing his clothes with distinction.

"What have you been doing lately?" he asked.

"The usual thing," said Allaire. "Theatre parties dinner dances, a few night clubs, and a lot of small talk. Got sick of it and went to Washington to see Nell." She shrugged. "Got sick of that too."

Ray chuckled.

"Pretty terrible, isn't it? Who's Nell got on her string now? Some polished young under-secretary from the Bolivian Legation with white spats and pencilled mustache?"

He laughed again. "Lord, what a bunch of Don Quixotes hang around her. She fills their skins with sherry and they all go looking for windmills. Don't blame you for leaving."

"Ray," she returned, "it's no better here and don't you forget it."

"You always were inclined to be snooty." Her father picked up the brandy decanter. "You're the proudest person on this green earth."

The girl in white polo coat gave an impression of a young Diana with burnished hair and a quick lithe strength. She blended in with the world of grace and rhythmic beauty represented in those gleaming tall silver cups and the pictures of clean-limbed racing perfection.

And Rayburne West, with the early morning sun streaming on his evening clothes and the smell of brandy and that pale woman's perfume about him, seemed a natural completion to the canvas of bottles, glasses, melting ice, and ash trays.

He seemed to sense that in her cool level glance, for he suddenly set his glass down and looked at her with some irritation.

"What's come over you?" he demanded. "You used to ride all day, dance all night, and pipe every man to mast for miles around. Don't try to kid me, Allaire," he requested. "You can't put your hair in pigtails and make a bee-line for the nearest convent all of a sudden. You've raised plenty of hell in your time."

"I know." She inclined her head. "Although I hope my particular brand was never in bad taste. But I've suddenly realized what I used only to suspect—the best years of my life are going by, wasted in silly inane motions that have no significance whatever."

She absently twined a finger in a small tendril of blonde hair at her forehead. "I want to feel worth while," she said quietly. "Does that sound like Chinese?"

"No," he said. "I understand perfectly. You'd like to be the pioneer woman traveling with her mate in a covered wagon shooting at Indians with one hand and holding her baby in the other. Very admirable, my dear. Every bored woman feels like that once in a while. Too bad there aren't any more covered wagons."

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Allaire, tomorrow, makes another sudden decision.

STRANGE AS IT SEEMS—By JOHN HIX

For further proof address the author, inclosing a stamped envelope for reply. Reg. U. S. Pat. Off.

Strange as it seems, the old saying that the way to catch birds is by sprinkling salt on their tails is literally true in regard to pelicans on Great Salt Lake. Here many birds have been trapped by the formation of heavy salt crystals on their tail feathers. The water is so briny that salt readily crystallizes out of it, forming a crust on anything that is alternately dipped in the water and then dried. Many pelicans have been trapped by the lake's salt, because the burden of crystals was too heavy for them to fly away.

Italy's training of boys for war is nothing new in the history of arms. Ancient Sparta was even more thorough than Mussolini. They began their selection of soldiers-to-be at birth.

Newborn babes were exhibited to public view, and if they were deemed puny or unfit, they were allowed to die. Others were brought up in strictest care. At seven years all boys were taken from their mothers by the state. Under government care they were taught physical training, perfect discipline, hardihood, and the science of war.

One of the tests to which boys were annually subjected was a public flogging. It was a test of courage to be able to stand the beating without an outcry—and some of the boys actually died under the lash without a whisper. This rigid training continued until they were 30, at which time they were allowed to marry, but still remained under public supervision and training until they were admitted to citizenship at the age of 60.

They were encouraged to fight, undergo hardships, lack of food and clothing, and could not possess gold or silver, nor leave the city without permission. At 60 they were released from public discipline—having given 53 of the first 60 years of their life to the state.

Tomorrow: The King's New Year.

Use Mail Tribune want ads.

THE WORLD AT ITS WORST By GLUYAS WILLIAMS

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BEN WEBSTER'S CAREER—The Threat! By EDWIN ALGER

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DR. TOMPKINS WINS FELLOWSHIP AWARD

Mrs. A. Orin Schenck recently received word from her sister and brother-in-law, Dr. and Mrs. Charles A. Tompkins of Martinsville, Ind., that Dr. Tompkins has been awarded a fellowship in the Indiana University school of medicine in the department of pediatrics, diseases of children, at the Riley hospital in Indianpolis. He is the first to receive the fellowship.

Mrs. Tompkins will be remembered by her many friends in Medford as Miss Carita Gifford, who made her home with Mrs. Schenck. She graduated from Medford high school and later from the Ashland Normal, and taught in Jackson county for two years.

DOGS QUARANTINED IN TOWN OF SANDY

OREGON CITY, Ore., Jan. 2—(AP)—Dr. Courtney Smith, county health officer, clamped a dog quarantine on the town of Sandy where two children today were undergoing pasteur treatment for rabies after being bitten by a mad dog.

Dogs of the district must be either leashed, muzzled or kept indoors for three months, Dr. Smith said.

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