

Fiction

Through the eyes of love

by Barney Sabath

IN HER PINK SLIP, Sally Parker stood before the bedroom mirror brushing her brown hair. She could hear Warren in the living room explaining to old Mrs. Krayle that six-week-old Warren, Jr., had never before been entrusted to a baby-sitter.

Listening, Sally felt guilty. She knew she should want to escape from the small apartment for an evening. And since she'd worked in Warren's office before they were married, she ought to be looking forward to seeing "the gang" again.

Actually she did want to see them, but wished it could be through a one-way screen—so they needn't stare politely at her once-perfect Size 10, now a dozen very apparent pounds heavier. She'd managed to lose 15 excess pounds, but these last 12 just refused to go.

Warren appeared in the doorway, his handsome reflection smiling in the mirror. "Come on, Pudge. Time for us to go."

He handed her the new black dress which lay across the bed, and she pulled it over her head, wishing for a sudden headache, a dizziness—any excuse to stay home. For even a black dress couldn't camouflage the pudginess that had earned her her nickname.

She remembered the morning Warren had brought her and the baby home from the hospital. He'd kissed her lips and murmured, "Welcome home, Pudge." And though she'd kept the smile on her face, something inside had frozen and she'd silently resolved to lose the extra weight in a few weeks.

She'd intended to exercise, to eat less—to whittle herself down to the long-lost Size 10. But the days flew by in a pattern of diaper-changing, formula-making and house-cleaning, with no time to consider herself.

Though he had frequently suggested they go out, she had felt shame for her heaviness and had offered excuses. But now they were starting out on an evening, and she must struggle to be gay.

She put on her jacket, then tiptoed into the darkened dinette that doubled for a nursery. She planted a soft kiss on the round pink face, and with happy surprise felt her husband's hand taking hers, and his lips against her ear.

In the car she tried to keep her voice light. "Darling, I know I'm not exactly a sylph, but I'm going to slim down in

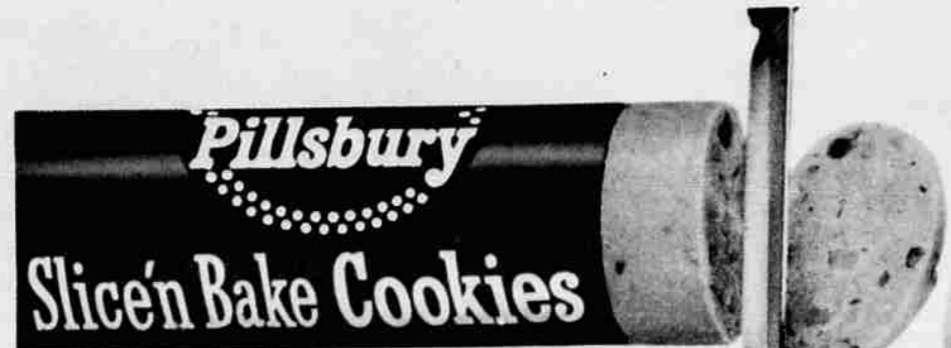
the next month. Just watch and see."

Warren said nothing, but reached for her hand and pressed it. She felt herself getting a trifle indignant.

"I mean it," she insisted; then her

voice became a shade wistful. "Please—at the party—don't call me Pudge." Over the purr of the motor, Warren's laugh was indulgent, just a touch skeptical.

In the Phelps' living room, Fran



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Phelps took Sally's jacket, and the girls gathered around and exclaimed how wonderful Sally looked and how lovely her dress was. Of course, she didn't believe a word of these compliments and

changed the subject to young Warren. "I'm a doting mama," she said without apology, opening her purse to bring out a batch of snapshots.

Soon the men moved off toward the

game room for cards, and Sally became the center of the girls' chattering attention. She felt a sweet glow, realizing how much she'd missed seeing them lately, and how much she loved them.

They told her of the recent movies they'd seen, and of the new bachelor who had joined the office sales staff. "Lunch-time shopping expeditions aren't the same without you," Kay told