

# VERNA, THE IRRESISTIBLE

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perfect. If I had my paints and brushes down here I would certainly do a portrait of her."

"Why, Margot!" exclaimed her mother, "you wouldn't bother to waste your time painting a servant girl, would you?"

"Oh, I say, Moms," Margot replied, "don't be silly. The girl is ravishingly pretty and a real artist is drawn to beauty, no matter where it is or what

its color may be. One must not be narrow about such things, Moms. Many of the most handsome people in the United States are colored."

"All right," said the old lady, "but it just don't seem right to me. I never heard of such business down in Georgia."

### Her First Real Encouragement

Two or three days later, Verna was in the dining room setting the table and singing, at her work as usual. She was crooning softly but her astonishingly beautiful soprano voice seemed to fill the room with the atmosphere of spring and flowers. Suddenly the door opened and Margot Yancey came in with a look of puzzled enthusiasm on her face.

"Was that you singing, Verna?" she asked with ill-concealed excitement.

"Why, yes," Verna replied, wondering what was up.

"Well, you have a splendid voice," gushed Margot. "You're just wasting your time here, my child. You'd ought to come to New York and have that voice cultivated, my dear. It's just wonderful; just wonderful!"

"Do you think I could make a living singing?" Verna inquired timidly, as a vision of a brighter future opened up before her.

"Don't be silly, Verna. You have an exceptional voice," Margot assured her. "You can make a fortune with it if you go about it the right way. Have you ever thought about going to New York?"

"Yes, Ma'am," said Verna, "I've always dreamed about it, thinking possibly I could do well there if I got

a good chance."

"Well, now you're more sensible than most folks and much smarter than I thought you were. If you ever do come to New York, come right to my studio at this address (she handed Verna a card from her handbag) and I'll look out for you. Understand?"

"Yes, Miss Margot," Verna was overjoyed, although she tried to conceal it as much as possible. Here at last was an opportunity and she already had over one hundred dollars saved.

She was in such good spirits that when Dr. Meyers drove up to the house that evening and asked for her, she did not have the heart to turn him away.

"So you've found me at last, eh?" she commented, smiling wryly.

"Yes, I have," he remarked soberly, "and I hope I won't lose you again. Why didn't you tell me where you were going? You came out here and buried yourself. What's the idea?"

"Well, Doc, I wanted to be away from everything. You ought to understand that, after what I told you about my ambitions, but, of course, you won't."

"Maybe not," he conceded, "but what I am particularly anxious for you to do is to let me take you to the big Elks' ball tonight in Welch. It's going to be a swell affair and I know you'll enjoy yourself. I would have asked you before, but I just found out today where you were—the boy who works next door told me."

"I'll go, Doc," said Verna, "if you'll promise me there'll be no mauling. As long as you just treat me as a good pal everything is all right."

"I promise to be good. Beautiful," he grinned. "I'll wait out here until you get ready."

An hour and a half later Dr. Meyers and Verna entered the large auditorium where the dance was being held. Already the place was well filled. They checked their wraps and as the orchestra was playing a hot dance number they went right to the floor.

On the second circuit of the hall, someone gripped Verna by the arm and restrained her. She turned to

see who it was and there before her stood Dick Colvin! He looked very natty in a well-fitting dinner suit, better, in fact, than she had ever imagined seeing him.

"Verna, Honey," he almost shouted, "I'm sure glad to see you."

"How do you do, Dick," she replied very coolly. She had not forgotten his antics. "You're looking well. How are the folks at home?"

"Oh, they're all right," he said, "but can I have this next dance? I've got a whole lot to say to you."

"There isn't anything for you to say to me, Dick. I've heard it all before."

"Don't you think you'd better go ahead?" queried the angry Dr. Meyers. "The lady doesn't want your game." He pushed Dick aside and started to lead Verna away.

With a curse and a lunge, Dick crashed his great, hard, hamlike fist into the Doctor's face and he fell with a dull thud.

Immediately, the hall was in an uproar. Around the two a crowd had gathered. Dr. Meyers was soon up on his feet and giving a good account of himself.

Verna stood aside, shocked, disgusted and mortified. When she could do so unobserved, she ran over to the check room, got her wrap and slipped out into the cool night. As she waited for the late bus to come by to take her back to her service place, she thought again for the first time in a long while of the charm Grandma Nash had given her. She reached into her bosom and felt of its smooth surface and knew that again she was being warned of impending danger.

She must get away. After this evening she could not remain. She thought of the dull anger in Dick Colvin's eyes and she shuddered. He was the kind that would kill, and she wanted nothing to do with him. It would probably be best to go away. She thought of New York City and what Margot Yancey had promised, and resolved to go there.

(To be Continued Next Week)

Does Margot Yancey prove to be a sincere friend to Verna? See the next installment.

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## Wooded by My Brother-in-Law

Continued from Page Four

smoke-filled air and the inadequate ventilation must have affected me badly, because I grew dizzy and everything swam before my eyes. I fought to retain consciousness and as I fought, I could see as through a haze the leering smile of Philip DeVous. Suddenly I felt a strong feeling of anger welling up within me. This must be a trick of Phil's! I was sure of it when he suggested that I go up to one of the parlors and lie down until I felt better. How could I know whether it was safe or not?

"No, no!" I protested. "Take me home, Phil." His only answer was a broad, insinuating, rather calculating smirk.

The orchestra started again, the lights dimmed, couples sought the floor and rocked and shuffled to the syncopated tunes. Walters, trays balanced aloft, scampered about, while over all, like an ancient high priest superintending an orgy, the orchestra leader snapped his baton and grinned indulgently.

### Raid and Run

Then a crash! Somebody breaking in! Walters scurry out the back way. Some one yells "Police!" My heart seems to stop beating for a minute as crash follows crash. The front door gives way. The blue-coated host pours in.

Patrons and entertainers are running in all directions. Police are shouting orders. Clubs rise and fall. Curse follows curse. I slump down with fright behind our table!

I looked around for Phil, but he was gone! Then I noticed an altercation near a side window far down near the rear of the place. Phil had deserted me, and, trying to save himself, had run into the arms of a policeman. The officer yanked him by the collar, Phil lashed out with his fist and caught him on the point of the jaw. The officer fell. Others closed around Phil, clubbed him and dragged him out the front door along with other patrons.

Weak from the whole experience, and yet aware of the terrible predicament in which I would be if the officers found me, I stealthily pulled the table cloth down until it hid me completely from anyone who might look into the booth. Then I waited.

### Back Home

The place was soon empty, the patrons and employees taken to the station house, and the front door locked. No one had seen me. The cabaret was in darkness, but remembering the lay of the place, I walked



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The Woman's Tonic

Continued on Page Seven



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