

# Summer School Brought Me a Beautiful Love

WEEK-END TRUE STORY

## I Would Still be Monotonously Married in a Little Southern Town if.... Read this Frank Confession of an Unhappy Woman



Ramon (on the extreme left) was very handsome

**L**IFE is queer! One goes along in an ordinary sort of way and then all of a sudden something very unusual happens that may alter one's whole existence. Life is, after all, just a series of incidents like a row of wooden soldiers; one only slightly agitated moves all of the rest. What you do today or tomorrow may decide when, where and with whom you will end your days. To fight against it is almost futile, since this merely starts another chain of incidents that may have a worse result.

Take me, for example. Five years ago I was successful in being appointed teacher of English in the colored high school in our little North Carolina town. I had been planning to go to Chicago and take up social work but the appointment kept me at home. Elverson is a staid, religious, highly moral, uninteresting and boring place where the only recreations are church socials, bridge games and the radio. I had grown to detest it but I had to stay because my widowed mother needed me and the money I was making, to keep up the old home.

Things happened pretty rapidly after that appointment. As one of the attractive and best-dressed colored girls in town, I became the cause of a bitter rivalry between the bachelors of the town. They were largely an ordinary crew and I couldn't be bothered with them.

It's an awful thing to be tied down for life with a dull man!

Unfortunately that's how I ended eventually and on the advice of my mother, Jim Blaine was the most eligible of the flock of suitors. He had money, a thriving general store, a large number of rent houses and the esteem of the community, but he was stodgy, fifteen years my elder, rough and uneducated. If it had not been for my mother's sickly condition and the pitifully small amount of money we had in the bank, I would never have married Blaine. To make a long story short, my

school appointment at home kept me there, made me lonesome and easy prey for Jim Blaine. If I had gone to Chicago it would have been different. Anyway, he proved to be a coarse, ill-mannered brute, extremely jealous and yet incapable of arousing love in my breast. Instead, I came gradually and reluctantly to loath him. I hated to have him put his hands on me, and yet I had to submit to his unwelcome caresses. I couldn't quit. There was little Jim to think of, and besides Elverson was the only place I knew. So I stuck it out, teaching at school, preparing meals, going to church, being a dutiful wife and . . . and detesting my husband.

Well, the situation remained the same, until this past summer. The principal of my school had hinted that it would be a good idea for me to go to summer school as I was the only one of the faculty that had not attended. He did not know that I would have gone every summer had it not been for my husband's jealousy and suspicion. He would not give his consent until the principal urged him to do so. I selected Columbia University. I had always wanted to see New York City and enjoy some of the pleasures of Harlem.

It was a tug of war to get away but I finally made it. What a thrill to get on a train going away from Elverson, my husband and the hypocritical gossip and bores of my home town! Three months' vacation in the great metropolis of the New World! How thrilled I was at the prospect! All night I stayed awake thinking about it. Greensboro, Danville, Lynchburg passed, then Washington, a change of trains and finally the huge Pennsylvania Station at 33rd Street, New York.

As I said, life is queer. When I arrived at the colored Y.W.C.A. on 137th Street, I found there was no room vacant—I had forgotten to make reservation. As luck would have it, however, I met in the lobby of the dormitory, Sybil Thornton, a girl with whom I had gone to school at Shaw and who was a school teacher in New York. I explained

my predicament. She suggested that I take her two-room apartment in the exclusive Park-Lincoln Apartments since she was going to California on vacation. It was agreed and soon I was located.

I knew practically no one in New York and at first it was pretty lonesome. Then one Friday night a reception was given for summer school students at the 135th Street Branch Library where several writers and poets were scheduled to address us. I went joyously, eagerly, and there I met the first man who ever really attracted me: Ramon de Bendo.

He was so different from any man I had ever met that the comparison was startling. Tall, erect, slender, athletic, very dark with well-moulded features, long, slender, delicate hands; long, curving eye lashes, gracefully curved eyebrows and flashing white, even teeth; he was the very perfection of Negro manhood. We danced all evening together after introducing ourselves in that charmingly informal manner of New Yorkers. We ate ice cream and drank lemonade while we told about ourselves.

He was the only son of a wealthy Brazilian exporter in Rio de Janeiro finishing his senior year at Fordham University. He spoke of himself modestly and paid me the most gallant compliments on my beauty and culture in delightful English just slightly mellowed by his native Latin tongue.

It was a matter of love at first sight with me. Ramon was the first man I had ever met whom I deemed my equal. I could not help but compare him with my coarse, uncouth, brutal husband, Jim Blaine, and smile wryly at the tricks fate plays on us. Where Jim was indifferent and inattentive, Ramon danced attendance upon me and catered to my every wish, and yet he was always the cultured gentleman, never the slave. Where Jim spoke to me in the language of the store and livery stable, Ramon addressed me as a courtier speaking to a noble lady.

That first night as we came away from the library, he breathed an "I love you!" in my ear. How it thrilled me! How it aroused dreams of a fairy castle atop a verdure-clad knoll under the deep blue skies of the tropics! I felt at last that I had met my affinity. I was in a Seventh Heaven of delight. I let Ramon kiss me at my apartment door.

I knew it was wrong; knew it was a violation of my marriage vows; knew I was deceiving my husband; knew that all Elverson would con-

demn my conduct if it knew, but it didn't know and couldn't know, and even if it did I didn't care! So long had I suppressed my youthful longings and cravings for true romance while tied down to a brute fifteen years my senior, that I could do so no longer. They had to have some outlet, and . . . well, I promised myself to be discreet.

Alas, it was so difficult to be discreet with Ramon! All of the volcanic fires of the world seemed to be in his blood. He fairly dripped passion, the strong, vibrant passion of the lands of perpetual sun. I felt

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