

My Husband Was Unemployed And I Needed Things, So—

Week-end
True Story

"Mary, I don't want to go to New York and I'm not going!" That's what my husband Henry said when I broached the subject for the tenth time one evening last summer.

We had been married for a year and were living with his mother and father. I hated our little town and all it signified. I wanted to get away from it, to go to the city of my dreams, to Harlem; but Henry couldn't see it.

"No," he explained. "I have a fairly good job here, I know the town, small as it is, and we can get along well here. Moreover, this is no time

life racing through her veins wants more color, more excitement, more gaiety, more society, more adventure than a small, straight-laced, gossipy, hypocritical, puritanical small town affords.

We Leave for New York

In the end I won, as I knew I would, because Henry is crazy about me and always yields to my every

desperate. We had but twenty dollars left, winter was coming on and we, especially I, needed many new things. Already I had had to sew up several holes and runs in some of my best stockings. Something had to be done and immediately, so, since Henry could not get work, I sought around and obtained a job as stenographer.

Attorney Matthew Dreazen, one of the leading Negro lawyers in the great city, a former state legislator, with offices in a huge office building on lower Broadway, became my employ-

paying all of the bills, and the best we could do for winter clothing was to get it at an installment place, and even then the payments were a strain.

My employer appeared cold and formally polite. He came silently and noiselessly through the outer office where we three girls worked and passed into his inner sanctum with a mere cordial "Good morning!" He gave me several letters and dictated a brief or two without seeming to notice my presence.

His manner piqued my curiosity. I knew he was no puritan because he always kept a big box of cigars on his desk and smoked frequently, and many times I detected the odor of strong drink in his office, especially when some well-known politician or wealthy client had been to visit him. The other girls said he wasn't married and that made me wonder more. On several occasions very fashionably dressed women entered his office and we would hear sounds of laughter and the click of glasses, but to us girls he was always the gravely courteous employer.

I had heard so much about the overtures made by big New York business men to their stenographers and secretaries that I was somewhat nonplused by Attorney Dreazen's be-

havior. With us he seemed absolutely cold and yet we had reason to believe that he wasn't. I had anticipated the usual attempts at flirtation

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"No," he explained, "I have a fairly good job here; I know the town, small as it is, and we can get along well here. Moreover, this is no time to be seeking new business fields in the midst of all the business depression and unemployment. For the Lord's sake, Mary, be reasonable." BUT I COULDN'T BE REASONABLE.

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But I just couldn't be reason-

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able. A pretty, eighteen-year-old girl with the quick, fresh blood of desire. Some of the gossips in our little town whispered that he was so infatuated with me because I am quite light while he is very dark, because I am very pretty and vivacious while he is very plain and slow, but I know why my husband is so wild about me and, of course, I'm not telling that.

Well, to make a long story short, we came to New York City. It cost us quite a bit of money to make the change and it meant the sacrifice of Henry's job but he was willing to do anything to please me and he felt confident that he could get a job paying quite as well or better in a short time despite the wave of unemployment.

How thrilled I was when we stepped from the train into the vast Pennsylvania Station! What massiveness! What splendor! Here, indeed, was the city of my dreams! How I thrilled at the experience of riding in the thundering trains under the ground and walking in the midst of the great crowds through the long, deep canyons of stone, asphalt and steel. I felt like a child with a Christmas toy.

We rented a room on 137th Street west of Seventh Avenue, not far from the center of Harlem and in a very nice neighborhood. What a contrast this was to my old way of living! Here were all of the conveniences of modern life, not just for a "few dictys" but for everybody. Here was freedom, tolerance and sophistication such as I had never imagined in my home town.

But alas! our optimism received a rude jolt. We had not dreamed that it was so difficult to get a job. Day after day Henry ran here and there, consulting the ad columns of newspapers, sitting in employment offices, following up "dead" leads. Night after night he returned with slower and slower steps and increasingly drooping shoulders to avoid my gaze and mutter that he had found nothing.

A Job, in the Nick of Time

A month ago our plight became er. A slightly elderly, gray-haired, debonaire, impeccably dressed, courteous, distinguished-looking man, he hired me as soon as I reached his office from the Y.W.C.A.

I had never worked in a law office before and the work came a little difficult at first. But I was rather apt in learning the work and so it was not long before I was fairly efficient.

To my great surprise, I was given twenty-five dollars at the end of my first week. The employment secretary at the Y.W.C.A. had said that the salary would be eighteen dollars. Why this sudden raise? Had my work been so satisfactory? How could it have been when for the first two or three days I had made so many obvious mistakes.

I did not communicate my surprise to Henry. He was much too blue for me to start him speculating. Men are awfully funny, you know. They are ready to suppose a thousand things about every incident. Besides, we had had a little quarrel about my going to work.

"I don't want any woman supporting me," he had declared angrily. "I've always made my living and I always will."

"But Henry," I had remonstrated, "what's the use of being silly? It is no fault of your own that you haven't obtained work. You can't take upon yourself responsibility for a condition of which you are guiltless. Nobody really is to blame, dear. Be sensible now, and accept conditions as they are."

Henry's Pride is Hurt

But he continued to mope. It was awfully hard, I realized, on the man's pride. Ever since he was thirteen years old he had made his own way and it galled him now to have to accept the bounty of his young wife. His feelings were communicated to me through the changed tone of his voice and the hopeless, bitter look in his eyes. Day after day went by and he failed to get work. I was

THE BLACK LILY

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But a hand was quickly clapped over her mouth.

The startling apparition was Chenah, returned.

At the slight noise the thum, thum, ceased. Everyone in the little group held his breath.

Chenah loosened the knife in his belt. John Northington fingered the small automatic in his hand. But after a long anxious minute the steps continued.

The Signal of Danger

"He will go to the end of the first entry-go which is some hundred feet beyond the turn," whispered Chenah. "I have held the watch here before. We must cross the trail at this point, and strike out by the long path. It is safer. It will take us longer but we can make it."

"Dolores get thou ahead and wait beyond the trail at the first fallen tree. We will follow with the litter. If there is any sound of returning steps, whistle thrice as the night bird cries and we will pause and wait."

Obediently the girl went into the shadows. They waited. But there was no cry.

Carefully then, the two men lifted the litter and stepped boldly out into the path. With stealthy care they crossed the clearer space and entered the shadows beyond. Just as they were about to go deeper they heard the cry of a night bird.

Three times it sounded.

Chenah gave a low word of command. The litter was lowered. Just as it left their hands, another figure loomed out of the darkness. Chenah did not wait. With a sudden panther-like spring, he was upon the looming shadow. With a gurgling cry the man sank to the earth beneath the onslaught. The long keen hunting knife of the novice was buried to the hilt in his heart.

With hurried movements of his hand, Chenah announced, "It is the other guard. He must meet the one we saw or there will come the alarm. Quick—help me with his coat."

In a minute the dead man's coat-like wrap was stripped from him and Chenah had wrapped its folds closely about himself and stepped away briskly, into the night.

In a few minutes the waiting pair heard a low guttural exchange of voices. Before the same length of time had passed again, Chenah was back with them.

"We must go quickly now. There will be a half hour before the next change is due. By then we must be well on our way. The hunt cannot begin in earnest till morning, but they will know that we have passed and pick up the trail about here."

There was no delay. With fast beating hearts and weary bodies, the little group of sorely beset fugitives started on their desperate venture toward a more desperate attempt to elude the danger that threatened them behind and before.

(To be continued next week)