

# COQUETTE—The Interesting Story of a Cruel Flirt BY Leon H. Hardwick

An Unusual Short Story Complete in this Issue



She threw back her head and looked at Lowell through her long, curved eye lashes, and Lowell swore he had never seen eyes as beautiful as hers.

The telephone bell rang out sharply. Lola Thayer looked up from where she was lying curled up on the sofa with an annoyed expression on her face. Emitting a short curse, she tossed aside the book she had been reading and reached for the telephone.

"Hello," she spoke in her customary casual manner. "Yes? Oh, Wayne, of course. No, I'm very sorry but I'll be terribly busy to-morrow night and I couldn't possibly go.

No, honey, my whole week is all taken up. I'm very sorry. I'll tell you: I'll call you up when I can get an open date. Yes dear heart," this she said mockingly. "I'll try my best. Oh,

sure; you know me, Wayne, boy. Yes—good-by."

The receiver clicked back on its hook. Lola yawned sleepily and lay back on the sofa. The call she had just received came from that young pest, Wayne. He had been very little use for Wayne because of his youthful foolishness and his ardent declarations of love for her. With Lola, he was just another young fool that had fallen for her undeniable charms and she simply tempted him along just enough to keep his love for her aflame.

Lola Thayer was a flirt first of all. She was a lovely woman who tried to win men's hearts for self-gratification and to soothe her own vanity. Next, she was extremely beautiful. With her black, wavy hair, her smooth rich, copper colored skin, her long curling eye lashes and small tempting lips she formed a perfect picture of loveliness. And the enticing little ways about her plus her subtle charms and personality tempted even the most strong-willed of men.

Her charms seemed to cast a spell over her admirers, and after they had completely fallen for her, as she knew they would, then she merely played on their heart strings to her own enjoyment. A certain little toss of her pretty head, a meaning wink from her sparkling eyes and the men fell harder than the house of Usher. Lola had never really been in love although she had had a few infatuations with a few that had gained her fancy for a moment.

Wayne Hartford's case with Lola was indeed deplorable. Wayne was just a lonely, impractical, idealistic

young fellow who liked to indulge in occasional day dreams. In his boyish dreams he had often pictured his ideal girl many times and now at last he seemed to find the girl of his dreams in Lola. The first time he had seen her, he had fallen violently in love with her as had numerous others. Wayne's love was of the kind that was totally blind. Despite Lola's little tricks of poking fun at him, he still loved her.

"Lola, won't you marry me, dear? You know I love you awfully much," Wayne had insisted time and time again, and always he was met by the same evasive answer.

"Oh, forget it, little boy, and run home to mama," she would reply with that charming little smile of hers. "You just imagine you're in love with me. You'll soon get over it." Although she knew full well Wayne couldn't and wouldn't get over it.

And this was Lola's method of coquetry. Envy and hated by the women, admired and worshiped by the men, she was very vain and selfish as most beautiful women are. Lola liked to toy with men's emotions. She would let them run the gamut of affection for her and then cast them aside to make room for newer victims. Some called her a beautiful and wicked woman with a heart of stone, but the lovely Lola simply laughed.

Then into town breezed Lowell Hartford, Wayne's older brother. Lowell had a reputation of being a heart breaker. With his cool, suave manner, his disarming smile and handsome dark face, he stirred many women's hearts. He had the proverbial way with women.

A gentleman of many affairs, Lowell was what they call a man of the world. Not very sporty, he nevertheless had that subtle air of self-confidence and audacity that never failed to impress the ladies. There was a firm look of determination on his face that warned others not to try to take too much liberty with him. And he was a very clever young man.

Wayne confided all his troubles to Lowell. He told of his passionate love for Lola and of her taunts. Of how he had told her of his love and how she had deliberately laughed in his face.

Lowell became slightly angry at Wayne because of his glaring foolishness. "But, Low, you don't understand," Wayne whimpered. "I love the girl. Oh, I know, I've tried my best to hate her but I can't. God, I can't do it."

"Wayne, you're just an overgrown baby," Lowell replied, "and a very senseless one at that. From what I gather from you, this Thayer woman sure has got you running around in circles. But c'mon, brace up, kid, and show her you don't care anymore."

Wayne dejectedly dropped his head. "But I do care," he said resignedly. "I tell you I love this girl. Love her more than I've ever dreamt I could love a woman before. Can't you see I've got to have her. I can't go on like this forever."

There was a short pause and Wayne sank into a chair. Lowell shrugged his shoulders and then frowned and that determined look about him became more pronounced.

"And you say this Miss Thayer has a mob of men crazy about her? Well, well." He took a cigarette out of his case and lit it. "I'd like very much to meet this beautiful siren you speak

of. Wonder if she could become interested in me?"

Wayne contracted his eyebrows. "You say you want to meet her?" he asked earnestly. "Say, listen. Dot Moore and her sister are throwing a party tomorrow night and I know

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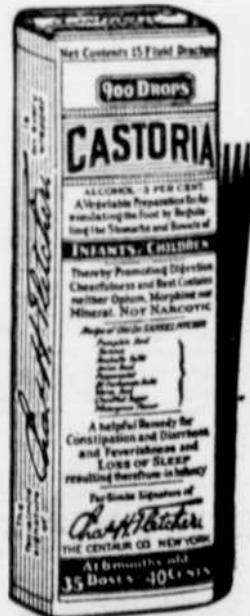
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