

SHOT HIS SWEETHEART ON A RECKLESS DARE

Extreme "Caveman" Methods Finally Break the Unruly Spirit of His Cruel Soul-Mate

Love blossoms and blooms just as a beautiful flower, but Orietta found that, when the blooms begin to show, there is danger of love dying unless it receives the proper amount of care.

By DON BRYAN

Orietta Arthur was the kind of girl who tries to hold the love of one man while she flirts with a dozen. She cared more for Richard Bert than she did for all the others combined, and she thought he knew it. Moreover, he cared for her. She did not doubt that she was the only girl in his life—the only one he had ever loved or would ever love. Yet she was

too sure of him, as she demonstrated by making dates with all the new young men that came to town and breaking those she had made with her sweetheart.

She never asked his pardon for these encroachments, but went right on doing the same thing over and over again. He never openly resented her decisions, kept his thoughts to himself, being by nature taciturn, and she was not allowed to see for a single moment where she was sailing her ship of happiness, because the man who lived in her bosom was an uncharted sea. Had she even dreamed that there was danger of losing him she would have resorted to entirely different tactics.

Both Orietta and Richard Bert were patrons of the elite, children of fairly well-to-do colored people, prominent in their set, and popular to the point of being favorites. They were both pleasing to the eye, congenial, and clever. Bert was preparing himself by correspondence for a law practice, and Orietta was learning beauty culture. They sometimes helped one another in the evenings when there was no other place for them to go—no parties, dances, amateur theatricals or attractions to demand their attention.

They said that in Skidmore, Missouri, Orietta was the best dressed girl that the townspeople had ever seen. She imported her expensive frocks, and her father, a wealthy farmer, owned a most expensive car.

But there wasn't anything to be done about Orietta's habit of giving strange men dates. She was interested in life, enjoyed it to the golden hilt, and didn't tolerate interception with her plans. She wanted a free rein, and she told them so, parents were made to understand, and her friends knew better than to criticize her actions.

Just the same, however, many people sympathized with Bert when one, Dagger Hart, came to town. They thought she was rather overdoing the thing. Hart was a baseball player and also took part in the band, playing a difficult instrument.

His occupation, which kept him busy at the mill and which made him indispensable to the community, did not permit him to dress during his working hours as a Romeo, but he sure made up for lost time when night came and his work was done. He gained the reputation of being the most stylishly dressed man in town.

To Bert's chagrin, the girl continued to shower Dagger Hart with attentions. It appeared that she ran after him more than he ran after her, which caused the citizens of Skidmore to talk more than ever. Many sarcastic things were said about the girl by the older heads. Those of her own age were reticent, however, because they did not seek to incur her enmity.

Bert had taken everything in stern silence but now he suffered a revulsion of feeling, and once when he caught the stranger and his girl on the front porch of her aunt's home where a fashionable party was in progress, he walked up, grabbed her by the wrist and whirled her to her

feet. When Dagger made a move as if to rise he said:

"You stay where you are, Dagger. This is my affair!"

And Dagger sat there motionless while Bert dragged Orietta away to a summerhouse.

"I've got a gun in my pocket," Bert hissed, "and I mean to use it on you. For five years you've made my life a hell on earth. I love you, I care more for you than I do for life, and seeing that I am about to lose you, I aim to stop the proceedings permanently. Do you hear?"

Orietta threw back her head and laughed. "You're lying about the gun," she retorted. "You wouldn't kill a fly."

His grip on her wrist tightened. "Do you love me, Orietta?"

The question was soft, like velvet, but there was steel underneath the sound.

She laughed again. "Now you're trying to imitate the star in last night's movie," she taunted.

"You'd better answer me," he averred. "I'm in a dangerous mood, Orietta."

"Go on, and shoot," she challenged him, "and see who cares—"

Then he whipped out his revolver and shot her in the head. He shot her while still holding to her wrist. As she fell backward, he caught her. Too late, he inexpressibly regretted his action.

"You fool," she murmured, struggling to keep her strength. "You've killed me, and I love you. Don't you know me well enough to know that I care for you, Dick. Take me to the house and call a doctor . . ."

He carried her all the way to the house and when a doctor came he learned that his bullet had gone a little wild. The wound would not prove fatal.

Then he wondered whether she would forgive him for what he had done. While he was thinking about this, the sheriff came and arrested him. He was taken away to the county jail.

Orietta didn't believe that a man in love with a woman could shoot her with a pistol, and she became alarmed. She cared more for Bert than ever. That shot had awakened her deepest love. When she had felt the cold lead tearing through her head, sent there by the man she loved, her eyes were opened to her past mistakes. She would never do the reckless things over again she had done in the past, and she was nervous because she didn't think she could make him believe her when she told him. But she felt constrained to try.

"Love is like a flower," she mused on her sick bed. "It blooms and then, unless you take care of it properly, it dies. Maybe for the want of sunshine and encouragement, Bert's love for me is dead."

She made a quick trip to the county jail when she was strong enough to do so and had it out with her lover. She confessed that she regretted her sins and wanted him to forgive her. He said he would marry her there in jail if she would have him; and they were married.

He was never tried for shooting Orietta. What court could try a man for shooting the woman he loved, and who loved him?

But Orietta was a different girl after that. No more wild escapades.

EXPENSIVE DRINKING

A Nova Scotian weekly recently reported that a local citizen charged with being drunk was fined \$50 or six months in jail, when he appeared before the deputy magistrate, and that another citizen charged with using obscene language and acting in a disorderly manner obtained the same sentence.

In our town one might be sufficiently disorderly to secure six months in the hoosegow, but just imagine a six months' jail sentence for being stiff-necked.

But, of course, we have prohibition down here.



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