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"THREE WIVES"

By RALPH
MATTHEWS

A SUPER-SERIAL OF BALTIMORE SOCIETY

Leslie Kayne, a Young Baltimorean,
Disappointed in Love, Has Run Away
to New York to Forget the Past

Disillusionment Has Made Him a Cynic.
His Pal, Al Freeman, a Prospective
Bridegroom, Disagrees with His
Arguments Against Marriage.

"Nasty night out, eh?" queried Leslie Kayne as Al Freeman beat the snow from his overcoat with his hat, closing with a bang the door of the former's bachelor apartment.

"You said a mouthful," replied Al cheerily. "I got all of this in a short distance from the 135th Street subway here, hardly a block."

Leslie Kayne's fingers stopped in the middle of a bar of a jazz number. He relit his cigarette which had gone out unnoticed, and closed the piano. "Hang your things in the closet there, Al, and tell me what could have dragged you out on a night like this?"

Al was visibly excited about something. He looked at his watch nervously. "I am just coming from taking Grace home and I—that is—she has promised to marry me."

"Well you surely have my sympathy old man," grunted Leslie, displaying little emotion, much to the disappointment of his friend. "But at that," he added, "a worse thing than that could have happened to you, although I can't imagine what."

"Just like you with your sarcasm about marriage," growled Al, "I should have known better than to have told you first—of all people. Why man matrimony is the most heavenly state a man could enter."

"And sometimes the most hellish," replied Leslie, proffering Al a bracer he had concocted from his well stocked cabinet.

"There must be some cause for your antipathy against marriage; you have kept your secret long enough, and darn you, Les, you've got to tell me to-night."

"I will Al, on one condition, if you promise not to interrupt me with inconsequential questions. Here's the decanter. If my yarn gets boring take a drink, but don't stop me."

"I promise," assured Al, settling in his Morris chair.

"I was a student at Howard Law School when I met Gwendolyn," he began almost listlessly. "Her name was Maynard then, but it's Clifford now. Rupert Clifford was my class-mate, and if I ever hated a man wholeheartedly it was he. Not because he won Gwen. I disliked him before he ever met her. He was just a cad, and he held no more love for me than I did for him. That's why he married her—not that he loved Gwen; a man like that couldn't love any woman. He was indulged by his folks, who got theirs, I understand, when oil was discovered on their land somewhere near Tulsa, Oklahoma, and his capers around Washington were the talk of the town. I, myself, went to law school because mother insisted. Father had built up quite a reputation around Baltimore as a legal light, and I was destined to follow his footsteps, but I despised it. I hated the profession; I hated Howard, but Gwen was in Washington, and I tolerated it to be near her. I always wanted to be a song-writer, to write, to write tuneful melodies, just like I was doing when you came in. I had planned it all out. I was to write songs and she was to sing them. She had a marvelous voice. We were to work our way to Broadway—but for that damned Rupert! He had a car—he wore fine clothes—he had a smooth tongue and above all he had a desire to do me a dirty turn. He met Gwen, courted her, swept her off her feet. His car, his money—his lies won her! It was commencement day in '22. That night Gwen promised to

run away with me when her people objected to the match. I waited in Union Station from 7 until 11 o'clock. I was afraid to leave for fear she might come during my absence. Finally I went back up on the hill. The Frat House was vacant, but up at the main dorm I found a few of the gang who lived a good way off, and were not pulling out until the next day.

"Have you heard the news?" they cried, as I entered the room where they had gathered.

I confessed my ignorance and inquired what had happened.

"Why, about Rupert Clifford eloping to Alexandria with Gwen Maynard?" they asked.

"I was shocked. I cursed and stormed. Could I have laid my hands on him then, I would have killed him. But that's over now. Yet I shall always hate marriage and hate women—one in particular."

"Have you ever seen her since?"

Leslie hesitated. "Yes, I saw her day before yesterday, at least I think I did, right here in New York. I was eating in Tabbs on Lenox Avenue, when I looked up suddenly to see a girl's face pressed against the frozen pane. It looked like Gwen. I paid my check and rushed out, but she had disappeared. I searched the adjoining shops, and walked as far up as 140th Street, but she had gone. That was the first time in four years—since that night."

"Your story interests me Kayne, and I suppose your experience has made you like other men who have been disappointed; you are perhaps cynical enough to say that you don't believe in true love anymore," laughed Al.

"Well, yes and no. Any sensible person would concede that there is some sort of attraction that one sex has for the other, but I do not believe that any particular selection is arranged by destiny, but wholly by conditions, economic or otherwise, in which you are just likely to get the one intended for you as not. If you mean, do I believe that any one woman is put on earth to be the mate of any one man, I almost emphatically do not."

"But your mother and father lived together for twenty-five years, wasn't that true?"

"Not necessarily. Marriage is a thing in which two people unfitted for each other, but do not realize it until it is too late, are joined together, and after they get acquainted they stick it out to avoid the scandal of divorce. They become merely martyrs to conventions. Of course, I could not expect you, a prospective bridegroom to agree with me."

"No!" replied Al, wistfully. "Because I know Grace and I were intended for each other. Don't you believe matches are made in heaven?"

"Not any more than I believe a business partnership or a love and dance tea are conceived there. It's just a chance combination that may be a success or may not. If your theory is true and God is just, provided you believe in such a being, why couldn't my predestined mate be a Chinese or an Indian or a white woman as well as a black woman? No, prejudice and other worldly conditions play a greater part in the selection of a wife than heaven does."

"What are your views on divorce?" inquired Al, lighting another cigarette and crouching further down in his chair.



"Gwendolyn," said Kayne, "what brings you here and on a night like this?"

"They should be made as easy to obtain as possible. You pay two dollars for a marriage license before you are sure you really want each other, then why should you have to pay five or six hundred to separate when you know darn well you don't? It isn't fair. Why should two people be forced to live together after that magnetism, either spiritual or physical, which drew them together ceases to exist?"

"But Les, I know that Grace and I shall never tire of each other."

"Your argument is as foolish and as light as some of the songs you write. I wouldn't be surprised if you favored illicit love affairs."

"That's just what I am talking about now. I contend that the only illicit love affair is when the parties concerned are not in spiritual accord with each other. Our modern marriage is the most prevalent form of illicit love that I know. When a man and woman are fed up on each other, when quarrels ensue, when they wrangle and fight in spite of the fact that they are legally married, they are living in adultery."

"True love, Leslie, never dies. Why I know men who have killed their wives after 25 years of married life when they proved unfaithful."

"That wasn't love, Al, that was pride. Pride alone kills, you cannot kill a thing you love. It is that idea of possession that marriage gives a man over a woman, body and soul, that leads to murder. Perhaps she is only answering a natural call of her true mate. Our unwritten law gives a man license to kill with impunity the man who invades the sanctity of his home when he himself, by his actions toward his wife, has opened the door and invited him in. Men ex-

day, and I'll bet you will be married before I am and I am already engaged."

"I promised myself that night that I would not practice law nor marry the best woman on earth, and I intend to keep both."

"We'll see," said Al, as he left the apartment and started out into the blustery night.

A girl clad only in a very short top-coat attracted his attention as he reached the landing. She was scanning intently the names on the register in the vestibule. "Strange place for you, young lady, thought Al as he recalled that all of the apartments in that building were occupied by men. He would not have given her a second glance had he not noticed that her finger became stationary at the name of Leslie Kayne. There was a wedding band on that hand. He tarried on the steps until he saw her start slowly up the stairs. She had a hacking cough and was thinly clad for such a night.

"That jolly old joker," mused Al as he dashed toward the sub, woman hater? "Ugh!"

Leslie had just laid his faultlessly creased trousers over the back of the chair, slipped into his pajamas and was tightening his bathrobe preparatory to making his final rounds of inspection for the night. He scanned his figure in his dresser mirror as he passed with a pleased expression. New York had not been so cruel to him. He was living in fine style, had a little money in the bank, and above all, he was alone. No one to pry into his affairs, that's why he preferred an apartment to a boarding house. The numbers had turned up for him occasionally, and this very week a new revue was using two of his arrangements at the Lafayette. He looked at a souvenir postal card that was stuck in the corner of the mirror. It showed a scene in Baltimore, one of the monuments. He shrugged his shoulders. "Well old burg, I don't know when I'll see you again."

He liked the whir of the big city, the heterogeneity of Harlem, the hullabaloo of the taxis, the rattle of the subway; it was all music to his ears. He had no little reputation around the night clubs as a tickler of the ivories. He was suddenly started from his soliloquy by a gentle tap on the door of his den. He opened the door wondering. A girl was standing in the hallway, her face was drawn and haggard, her gloveless hands were gray from cold, her hat almost covered her eyes. She walked, almost staggered into the room.

A bridge light was poor and it was not until Leslie switched on the big light in the center of the room that he could make out her features.

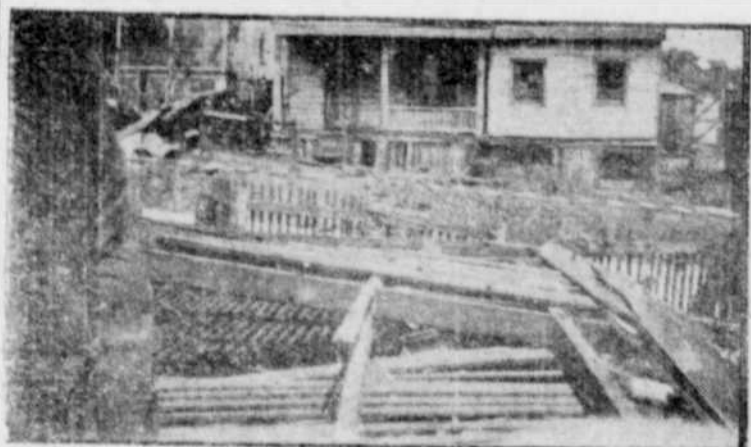
"Gwendolyn!" he cried, "what brings you here on a night like this?"

She opened her mouth to speak.

"Leslie," she said—she swayed, then sank to the floor. Leslie sprang to her side. She had fainted.

(To be continued)

Hurricane Takes Another Roof



The home of Mrs. Willie Mason, at 87 Polk Street, Lynchburg, Virginia, which was in the path of the hurricane that struck that city last week. Many beams and much shattered glass can be seen at the left of the photo.