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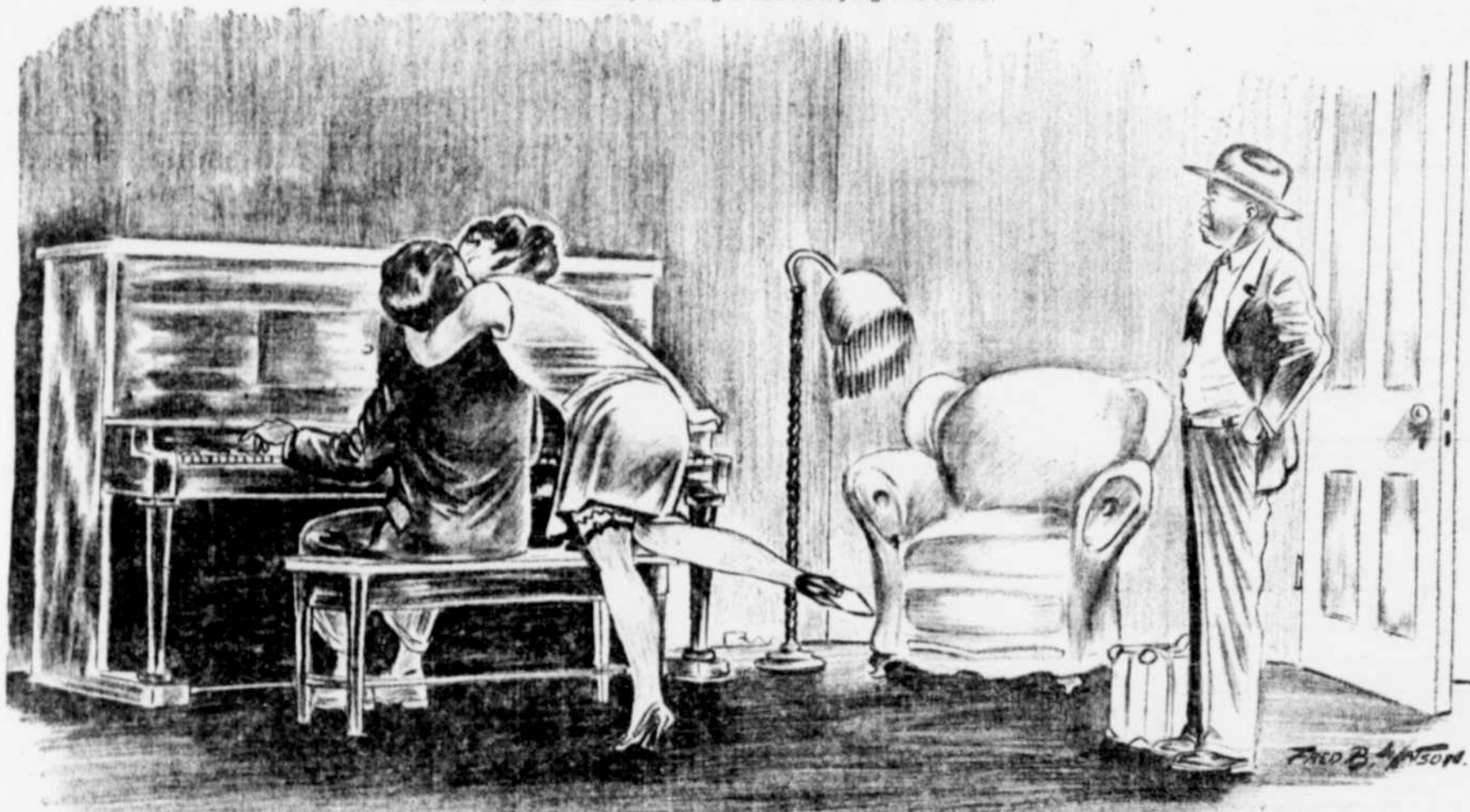
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BLUE RIBBON FICTION IS FOUND EVERY WEEK IN THE FEATURE SECTION

"LIGHTNING" A Story of the Free Underworld The Story of A Free and Easy Girl who Changes "Husbins"

His Wife, in His Home, Kissing a Man Playing His Piano.



By DUKE KAMEHA

"Th' house fell down an' yuh can't stay heah no mo'," sang Joe Lee, while manipulating th' ivories, as John Washington, better known as "Shine" entered what was once his place of abode.

Marie, who had opened the door for her former common-law husband, was now standing by th' piano looking wise.

"Boy, what does Y'all mean; does yuh mean tuh throw out 'sinuashuns at me?' asked 'Shine,' who had just returned from th' workhouse after sojourning in that hostelry for 60 days.

"Ah does'n't mean nothin' diffint. Why? whatcha mean? Is yuh come back from jail lookin' fer trouble? Ef'n yo' is, boy, dat's mah name!" said Joe resuming his little ditty:

"Th' house fell down an' yuh can't stay heah no mo'."

Mah Husban'

"Now, dearie, yuh heah'd what mah husbin' said; why dontcha go an' void trouble," warned Marie as she sat carelessly on the piano bench beside Joe, at th' same time throwing her long, brown skin arms around Joe's neck.

"Shine" stood gazing at the couple undecided just what steps to take. Was it true this woman whom he had brought from Virginia to Detroit, and for whom he had slaved in Uncle Henry's foundry day after day for two years and for whom he took the rap when the prohibition agents swarmed down on his home and confiscated a gallon of "lightning" and 20 bottles of home-made beer? She knew he didn't drink and he wouldn't think of selling intoxicants, although he was kept in debt.

What Kept Him Broke

He thought it was the extravagance of his wife that kept him broke—but

"Th' House fell down an' yuh can't stay heah no mo,'" was the song Joe Lee sang when he stole John Washington's wife, Marie, and she joined in by singing "Yuh use tah be mah man, but ah has a new man now," and the door opened to admit "the Law"

it was Joe Lee! His wife was giving his earnings to Joe Lee, the fellow he had befriended some two years previously by letting him room with him for over three months, that cold winter, when work was scarce without charging him a penny. Now he tells him: "Th' house fell down an' yuh can't stay heah no mo'." thought "Shine" as Joe played at the piano, singing his ditty, and Marie joining in: "Yuh tell 'em Joe."

Lightning

"Honey," broke in "Shine," feeling that they might be kidding him because it was the first day of the New Year, especially when Marie got up from the piano bench, filled two glasses with "lightning," gave one to Joe then raised the other high in the air, looked first at "Shine," then said: "Ole things an' ole loves is pass'd 'way wid th' ole year," then looking at Joe continued: "an' new things an' new love is come wid th' New Year." She then drained the glass of its "lightning," reached over

and kissed Joe. Then switching into the kitchen she started in to prepare supper and left "Shine" with the word "Honey" said, and what was to follow still in his open mouth.

Joe pulled up his coat from behind, thus exposing the handle of a .38 special; then he resumed his ditty.

From the kitchen a typical plantation voice vibrated through the house:

"Yuh use tah be mah man, but ah has a new man now."

"H-m-m-m. Say, Joe," ventured "Shine," reflectingly, "whatcha mean by dat song? an' . . ."

Ah Pays Rent Now

"Ah means," cut in Joe, "jest what it says. Ah pays rent heah now an' yuh gotta fin' a roost sum udder place; so yuh better be movin'," warned Joe as he rose from the piano bench, then made his way to the kitchen where Marie was frying pork chops and making hot biscuits.

There was a suspense. The minutes dribbled away. "Shine" tried

to move. Something seemed to hold him in his tracks. He felt as a passenger making his voyage on the ocean and was ship-wrecked. He was confused. In there was the woman he loved preparing supper for his enemy! To let matters stand as they were and leave the house would brand him as a coward. To put up a fight for the woman he loved and his "home" would result in his being returned to the work-house, where there was work to do and plenty of the real devil to catch.

The Law

A knock was heard at the door! Two unbreathing minutes crawled away. Then "Shine" turned, walked over to the door and admitted the "law!"

Joe started out the rear door and ran into the "law's" arms. He was relieved of his .38 special, handcuffed and taken to the "wagon." Marie in the meantime dumped the remainder of the "lightning" in the sink just as the "law" walked in, thus destroying the evidence. Nevertheless she was promptly made to don her hat and coat and along with "Shine" was led to the "wagon."

The Wagon

The "law," after turning the house tippy-turvy turned away for the responsible and important task of conveying the prey to the calaboose; and away rolled the "wagon" with a clang of the bell and the curious glances of neighbors.

Marie looked at Joe bouncing around on the seat; and what real bouncing it was as the "wagon" seats are not covered with springs—neither does it have such luxuries as shock absorbers. Joe flushed. A little tune rang in his ears, but this was time for some fast meditation, not for songs, for he figured he would probably have time in the future to sing the "Jail House Blues," or any other

Many a story tells of the unusual attraction a piano plunker has for lovely females. This is one of them. Marie kept her husband poor giving his earnings to Joe Lee and— Read this story to see what happened.

blues he cared to, and of which he had quite a large assortment.

Who is in a Mess?

"Us sho' is dun got in a mess," sighed Marie, breaking the silence.

"Us sho' is," agreed Joe sorrowfully. "Yuh sho' has," ventured the cop near the door, sensing the humor.

"Y'all mout be in a mess but ah got papers in mah pocket dat sho's who ah is an' whar jest cum fum," said "Shine" calmly.

de Pistle

"Yes, an' deedy mistuh police," broke in Joe, "he am 'sponsible fer awl er dis heah mess. Dat pistle b'longs tuh him. He jest got out er de work house an' sayz he's gonter 'venge de ones dat am 'sponsible. So ah takes de pistle fum him tuh keep him fum shootin' de officers 'sponsible fer him gwinin' dare an' jest as ah dun it heah cums y'all an' ketched me wid it."

"Dat's de truf mistuh police," sanctioned Marie.

"Ef'n dat's de truf mistuh officer, dare ain't no lies an' natchally dare is a hole lot fum de way dey speaks," declared "Shine" passionately.

Just then the wagon drove into the Northwestern police station, where there were several more ofay members of the "law" restins up and indulging in talking politics. They were seated and in a few minutes a big ofay with

A piano plunker took his girl, but "the Law" brought her bac' again.