

SERIAL STORY

LADY BY REQUEST

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CHAPTER 1

THE offices of Durbin and Thorpe were exactly like any other successful law firm's—the usual, rather musty, book-lined affair. But to Diana Tucker these rooms represented security of the most desirable sort on this, the last afternoon of her two week notice.

Her dismissal had not come exactly as a surprise. She had been nervous and ill-at-ease ever since she had taken the job. Mr. Durbin had been kind and considerate, admonishing her to talk things easily and calmly, but dispositions had become the nightmares of her existence, and dead wills, and codicils anathema to her soul.

Richard Thorpe, the junk partner whose personal secrets she was really supposed to be, has not been so patient with her mistakes. Diana had disliked him instantly. An extraordinarily handsome man with a slave-driver complex.

Diana knew that he had numerous "affairs" with women posing as clients, and when she first came into the office, she made the mistake of refusing his invitation to dinner rather coldly. Thereafter he had become her tormentor.

Miss Montgomery, a caustic young lady with fawn-colored hair, an assertive manner and 10 years' legal experience, had come a week before. Efficiency fairly oozed from Miss Montgomery's lacquered finger tips, and since her coming Diana had been relegated to such unimportant tasks as greeting clients and opening the mail. Of course, Miss Montgomery could have done all this too, with scarcely an extra flicker of her mascaraed lashes.

ALONE for a moment in the outer office, Diana walked to the window and looked out. The first snow of the season swirled in eddying circles about the heads of pedestrians in Center street eight stories below. Lights from shop windows made little spots of brilliance on the sidewalks in the fast-gathering gloom.

She thought of how things looked at home now—she'd probably be back at the farm in a few days. Desolate, windweped barrenness—and after this taste of another life, desperate loneliness.

Not that Diana did not love her home. The spacious clapboard house had always been her special haven. Her hard-working mother and father, her sister and brothers were more than dear to her. But her father had said, when he watched this loveliest child blossoming into womanhood, "We won't be able to keep her much longer, Dora. Beauty like hers is made for a much finer setting!"

The outer door opened and Richard Thorpe came in, followed by a tall man who walked with a long swinging stride and carried a brief case. Nodding briefly to Diana, they passed into Mr. Thorpe's private office and closed the door.

Diana wondered if the tall man was a new client. Another lawyer perhaps. There was something striking, distinguished even, about his appearance. She had seen that he had a strong, jutting jaw and blue eyes which swept Diana briefly.

She turned back to her contemplation of the street below. Before another moment had passed, she would be one of the hurrying throng—but without a destination. During her two months with Durbin and Thorpe, she had not managed to save anything. She had needed shoes and a winter coat. Dresses to make her presentable at the office. Food and shelter. During the last two weeks she had been exceedingly frugal. She had eaten fruit in her room for breakfast, a sandwich at noon, rarely allowing herself one good meal a day—and for a girl whose appetite was formed on a farm, this entailed some sacrifice.

There was \$8 in her purse now. Mr. Durbin would give her a check for \$20 more—and when that was gone...

They'd be glad to have her back at the farm. She was really needed there. Her mother was always complaining because of the fact that when her two daughters were old enough to be of some help they had left—Elsa to marry a young garage mechanic in Forston, and Diana to study at the business college in town.

There was Bill Jackson, too, who ran the store at the crossroads and who wanted to marry Diana. Her mother always said she couldn't see what more Diana wanted than Bill and the comfortable home he would give her. Diana often wondered, too. Yet she'd said:

"Please, Bill, I must have a try at making my own way."

"I'll wait," he answered, "until you come back—and you will come back. The love of the land is bred in your bones, Diana."

reality, and she hastened to get her notebook and pencil. She didn't like taking dictation from Thorpe any more than he liked giving it to her and knew that if Miss Montgomery had been free at the moment he would have called her. But Diana sprang to do his bidding with alacrity, knowing it would mean that she might stay in the warmly lighted rooms an hour or so longer.

Richard Thorpe's private office was more pleasant than the outer one. It was bright with burnished polo trophies and maps and charts of its owner's travels, and when the sun shone it was all delicately striped with light from venetian blinds.

He began to dictate the opening sentences of an "agreement between Laird and Burton, publishers, parties of the first part, and Stephen Curt, writer on economics, current history, and politics, party of the second part, for the publication in book form of a series of articles heretofore appearing in the National News."

Diana's eyes left the notebook and traveled to the figure standing at the window looking out on the winter scene as she had done. Everyone knew about Stephen Curt, one of the country's most popular and highest paid writers and political commentators. He was younger than she had thought he would be—not a great deal over 30, she decided. He had dark hair that curled imperiously back from his brow and blue eyes that looked like a frozen-over lake.

"Miss Tucker, if you do not intend to take my dictation, please say so!"

OUT OUR WAY

By J. R. Williams



RED RYDER



LITTLE ORPHAN ANNIE



BOOTS AND HER BUDDIES



WASH TUBS



FRECKLES AND HIS FRIENDS



ALLEY OO!



OUR BOARDING HOUSE, with Major Hoople



THIS CURIOUS WORLD

By William Ferguson



CANADIAN PROVINCE

HORIZONTAL: 1, 8 Depicted portion of Canada. 14 Set again. 15 Open (poet.). 17 Slow (music). 18 Upon. 19 Compass point. 20 Edge. 21 Nova Scotia (abbr.). 22 Either. 23 Street (abbr.). 24 Transpose (abbr.). 25 Near. 26 Southeast (abbr.). 29 Withers. 33 Fixed look. 37 Ascend. 38 Having ears. 39 List of names. 41 This province has many villages. 43 Male. 45 Dress edge. 47 Article. 48 Witticism. 12 Self (pl.). 13 Inner part. 16 Print measure. 27 Constellation. 28 Third month. 29 South America (abbr.). 30 Mission. 31 Worm. 32 Placed. 33 Perceive. 34 Convert into leather. 35 Head again. 36 Editor (abbr.). 40 Without (prefix). 42 River (Sp.). 43 Courtesy title. 44 Much — is used here. 45 Craze. 46 Market. 48 Small aperture. 5 Roman road. 51 Let it stand. 52 Incline. 56 English money of account. 57 Road (abbr.). 60 Upon. 63 Music note.

