

LADY BY REQUEST

BY HELEN R. WOODWARD

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THE STORY: "I don't like it," says Mr. Tucker, former father of beautiful, red-headed Diana, when she comes home to tell him that famous Stephen Curt, writer and commentator, has asked her to marry him for six months and \$10,000 so that he can save a \$200,000 inheritance he will lose unless he weds before he is 35. "I don't like it, but we will see when I meet him," Diana, freed from her job in a law office in the city after resigning advances from her employer, Richard T. Thorpe, is heard to say, considering the offer because Stephen has told her that the woman he loves is married to another man, and because she does not want to leave the city, return to the farm, perhaps marry Bill Jackson, a man she does not love. Stephen is coming down to meet her family the next day for a family party, but she has her doubts about his administration for the man.

STEPHEN MEETS THE FAMILY

CHAPTER VII

ON Tuesday afternoon Diana walked down to Bill Jackson's store at the cross-roads. Her mother had gone off to a missionary meeting at the church and she had become so bored with her own company that she could stand it no longer.

Bill greeted her effusively. "Well, this is an honor. Take the chair by the fire."

He pattered about making her comfortable, hanging up her coat and hat. Diana laughed. "I haven't come to stay a week, you know, Bill."

"Now that I've got you here I won't be letting you go soon." She glanced about at the orderly shelves. There was a little of everything in Bill's store. A "general" store, it was called. Canned goods, produce, hams, dry goods, thread, fishing tackle, overalls—the people of the countryside could buy almost anything they needed here. Bill was an excellent storekeeper—gentle, friendly, talkative. They all liked him. He was one of them. And Diana knew that the business was slowly but surely making him wealthy.

As she sat by the fire, she watched the customers come and go. She knew most of them and they all called greetings to her. They were interested to know why she was home, when she was going back. "It's not curiosity," Diana thought, "just friendly interest."

During the lulls in business, Bill came and sat beside her and talked. He spoke interestingly and well. You'd think he'd had a lot more than a high school education. That was because he read so much and kept abreast of the times. They laughed about things that happened when they were in school. He told her about some of the boys and girls that she'd lost track of. He was in his element here in his own domain. Any constraint that had been present in his manner the night before had completely vanished. Here Bill Jackson was king.

FINALLY he stood looking down at her, his eyes earnest and intent, his mouth a little grim at the corners. She saw a pulse beating nervously in his brown throat.

"I don't suppose it's much use to say it again, Diana, but you know I love you."

"Thank you, Bill. I cherish that. But you're right. It's no use. I'm sorry."

She saw his shoulders droop and was terribly sorry for him. "Oh, Bill, why does it have to be like that between us? It's so pleasant just being friends with you—like this afternoon. Why don't you fall in love with someone who likes this sort of life and will make you a good, contented wife?"

He said, his jaw tightening. "You know anyone else after you would be like twilight after a lovely sunset?"

She was touched and the quick tears came. "That was a beautiful thing to say, Bill. But you've got to get over me. You can't go on like this always—hoping—because I'm afraid I'll never really love you like you want me to. You see, there's something—I can't tell you just yet."

"You're in love with someone else?"

"No—it's not that."

"Then you can't stop me from hoping."

Later Joey Cowan, the boy who helped in the store, came in to relieve Bill and he walked home with Diana, stayed for supper. They played Chinese checkers with Mr. and Mrs. Tucker until late.

Once more in her featherbed nest with only her nose exposed to the cold air, Diana drifted off to sleep thinking, "Tomorrow, Stephen's coming."

Yet there was nothing strained, no appearance of striving for adjustments to his surroundings in his manner. Easy, charming, distinguished. Diana glowed with pride in him and the thought that they were at least friends. "Liked each other on sight," Stephen had said. She'd treasure that, no matter what their future relationship might become.

After the meal her father said, "Would you like to go out to the barn with me, Mr. Curt? I'd like for you to see the new calf." And Diana knew that they would discuss the marriage in her father's stronghold.

She watched them go and wondered what would be the result of the conference. Would she want to go through with the strange affair if her father still could not place the stamp of his approval upon it? And what of Stephen Curt? Would he want to call everything off if her father did not approve? Would his apparent respect for Mr. Tucker color his future actions? Diana felt like a culprit who must await the verdict of a returning jury.

They stayed in the barn for some time and Diana began to grow nervous with the thought that they would not get back to town for the 6:30 broadcast if Stephen did not hurry. It was a good three hours' drive and already it was nearly 2 o'clock.

At last they came back in and both men were smiling. "If you're ready, Diana, we'd better start," Stephen said.

"We'll be listening to your

broadcast tonight," her father assured him.

"Don't be surprised if you hear some of your own opinions," Stephen laughed. "You know, you've given me several new ideas."

He helped Diana into her coat and they all stood there saying goodby. Just before Stephen opened the door her father put his arm around Diana.

"Why don't you tell your mother before you go, Diana, that you're marrying Mr. Curt very soon?"

(To Be Continued)

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THIS CURIOUS WORLD

By William Ferguson



ANSWER: A volcanic rock tower in Wyoming; a basaltic rock formation in Ireland; a constellation of stars.

NEXT: Six hundred miles with a camel.

SOUTHWESTERN STATE

HORIZONTAL

1 Depicted state.

7 Much is grown here.

12 Kind of moth.

13 Quick sounds.

14 Horseback game.

15 Universal language.

16 Italian coins.

18 Convulsive tic.

19 Bronze.

20 Blurred spots in printing.

21 Automobiles.

22 Otherwise.

23 Manuscript (abbr.).

24 To pierce with horns.

25 Cursorial bird.

26 Roof finial.

28 Aged.

29 Salt.

31 Witticism.

34 Revoke.

35 Kind of flour.

36 Constellation.

37 Sheltered place.

ANSWER TO PREVIOUS PUZZLE

IRVING BERLIN
TOO GOOBER MET
INITIAL AGE PAR
I SAW B TOAD RA
PA RIFLE TRAM
AND REEDS TRAPS
NOOSE SUN HENRI
ANGEL SCUM
LISTED EGO
LA ASIANP
ERR SADED
YEA NOISE
LANY BONDSTODAY

VERTICAL

1 Is indisposed.

2 Excite.

3 Those who mimic.

4 Negative.

5 Mineral spring.

6 Like.

7 Folding beds.

8 Palm leaf.

9 Toward.

10 Mineral-bearing rocks.

11 Organ of smell.

12 Peels.

17 Cud-chewing animals.

18 Roman household god.

19 Treat with alum.

21 Kind of fish.

22 Measure of type.

24 Merriment.

25 Enthusiasm.

26 Age.

27 By.

28 Coquettish glance.

30 Distant.

32 Unit.

33 Make lace.

41 Each (abbr.).

42 Priced.

43 Coniferous tree.

44 Roman road.

45 Skin opening.

46 Newspaper paragraph.

47 Hope kilns.

49 Matching group.

50 Russian village.

52 Red Cross (abbr.).

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55 56

OUT OUR WAY

By J. R. Williams



RED RYDER



LITTLE ORPHAN ANNIE



BOOTS AND HER BUDDIES



WASH TUBS



FRECKLES AND HIS FRIENDS



ALLEY OOP



OUR BOARDING HOUSE, with Major Hoople



By Fred Harman



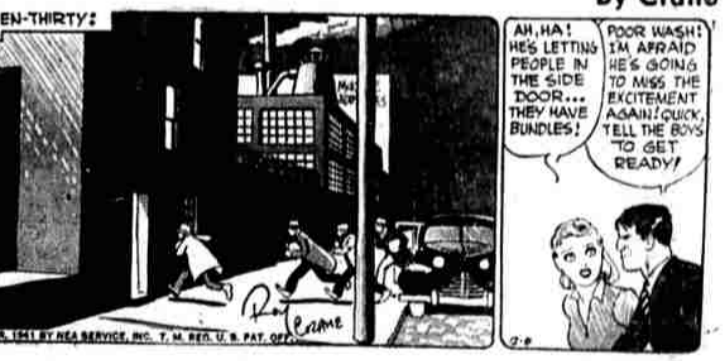
By Harold Gray



By Martin



By Crane



By Blosser



By V. T. Ham'in

