

A Young Man Comes to Call

(Continued)



"To the movies," Tommy almost whispered.

"And afterward?"

"We'll come home then." He tugged at his collar.

It didn't sound like there was any intention to play games with the car, but how could he be sure, looking at the eyes that wouldn't look at him? Of course, the movie house was only two blocks away. He picked up the paper and turned to the movie schedule.

"Well, then," David glanced at his watch.

"Feature's over at 10:25. Driving straight home ought to get you here no later than 10:30. Right?"

"Uh, well, you see, we were going to the drive-in, and it doesn't usually let out until—"

"Drive-in?"

"Yes, sir. They got a good movie we wanted to see."

That was another thing he had read about, he thought. About not watching the movie and so on. Sure, a lot of people went to them on warm Summer nights and made a picnic of it and it was great fun. But what about the others? How do you know this kid isn't one of them!

David stood up and wandered over to the door. Tommy did not even have to be a delinquent. Consider just the matter of his age: seventeen, when all the confusing, tearing, overheated urges and emotions struck with the greatest impact.

He looked at the car standing at the curb. The car without fenders or hood, and a chromed engine gleaming. It wasn't too late to stop it. All he had to do was tell the boy to go.

Olivia came down then, smiling.

"You should see your daughter, like a princess."

"Olivia, I don't like—"

"Wait." Olivia grabbed his arm, and he looked up.

IT WAS A FRIGHTENING, beautiful, and breathless moment. Yesterday, a sprite with a laughing, dirty face. Tonight this, looking like all the princesses that ever were!

"Daddy. Mom. How do I look?"

The answer caught in his throat, and Olivia kissed her. Then Shirley went to Tommy.

"Zowie," he said, forgetting himself for a moment, then staring at his shoes.

David Forrester felt an unreasoning fear, seeing them together and moving toward the door. He started forward to stop them, but something in Olivia's face kept him from doing it.

He watched them go out and then sat down near the door, the whole thing tearing at his insides. He didn't know what to think. Olivia stood there with rose-colored remembering in her face.

"Just a minute," he heard Shirley say. "I want to button my jacket. Hey, what's the matter?"

"Nothing." Tommy's voice was low.

"Come on, a guy doesn't go around with a long face for nothing. What's wrong?"

"Look, maybe we'd better call it off."

"Call it off?"

"Don't be mad. It's—well—I guess I'm afraid of your dad. He doesn't like me. You'd think I was a criminal or something! I was never so scared in my life. I'd better go."

"Tommy!" Shirley's voice was wavering and hurt.

David stood up and looked at Olivia. Tommy was afraid, afraid of me, as—yes! As I was afraid of him! Afraid, and wishing there had been a high wall to keep him away—him and all boys.

"David!" Olivia begged.

David took a deep breath, opened the door, and stepped out into the warm air. He lit a cigarette nervously and looked at them standing there.

"Thought you had gone."

"Daddy," Shirley said, close to crying. "I'm not—"

"Well, as long as you're still here," he said, not letting her finish, "I forgot to give you a key. I don't think your mother and I will last until midnight."

Tommy's eyes widened, and he looked confused.

"Something the matter, Tom?"

"I, well, I thought you said 10:30."

David smiled. "Well, it's been so long since I've been to a drive-in. I guess I forgot about them having to wait until dark to start. Naturally, during the Summer, they're going to be late getting out. Right?"

"Yes, sir. That's right."

He looked at Shirley and found a smile growing in her face.

"Well, have a good time. And Tom—"

"Yes, sir?"

"Would you mind coming earlier next time and showing me your car?"

"Heck, no! I'd be glad to."

"Always wondered what the duece made those hot rods go. Had a stripped-down model T when I was a boy, but we didn't have all these modern—"

"Dad!"

"All right, all right. I'm going in. Enjoy yourselves!"

new end paper permanent...

Just
add water...

these fabric
end papers...

Give
fool-proof
fail-proof...

permanent
waves!

