

JO ELLEN

By ALEXANDER BLACK.

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(Continued From Yesterday.)

"The girl," persisted Cannerton, "is a timid thing who hates to be noticed. So she wears a red hat. She is extremely modest, so she strips herself to the waist."

Cora reached wearily for her hand bag.

"I'm off," she said.

"What I like about Cannerton," said the nice way Miss Rever has of disapproving of me."

"Nice? Why she simply has to let you rumble along."

"It's better than that—better than saying it. More advanced. You could learn a lot from her."

"I admit it. But not with you around. Thank you,"—Cannerton had paid the bill—"thank you for a delightful intrusion."

"He's a dear," said Cora as they came out of Gronson's, "for all his nonsense. And now I know you must get back to your office some time or other we're going to get together—really."

Jo Ellen felt that she had been stung at the table. Yet being silent seemed to be about the best part you could play, unless you were to say things you wouldn't like yourself for.

That was one good thing about a lunch. You could always be eating. She hadn't thought that Cannerton who had parted from them inside the restaurant on a pretext of speaking to a man he had seen, might catch up with her before she reached the office.

"You wouldn't hate to please me, would you?" he asked, twisting his cigarette in the long white holder.

"Not if it wasn't inconvenient. I get you. This wouldn't be inconvenient. It came into my head while I was—how did Cora put it?—rumbling—and seeing you sitting there. I wish you could find a way of not letting Eberly forget that Giebler thing—I don't want to speak of it to him again. It's delicate with me. Very delicate. You'll know precisely how to do it. If Eberly doesn't come through inside—well, say a month, anyway—the jig's up for me. And you wouldn't like to see me smashed."

"I don't see what I could do," said Jo Ellen.

"You don't, just at the minute. But you will. You're close to the throne. At the right moment get it under his eye. When it's settled you'll have one more slave—and anything else you want."

Jo Ellen looked at him sharply, and he made a deprecating gesture.

"I don't mean that, not in any wrong way. I'm not so much of an idiot as I may sound. What I mean is, you might want to ask a little favor of me some time. How could I see you to do a kindness unless—unless I hinted at how grateful I would be? I'm not really asking you to pull anything. Simply to come as near reminding him as you can."

"You're his memory. Many a secretary's a good deal of a conscience too. If we let him have his own memory, let us say that you're his recollection. There's a subtlety. But I'm not joking. If I could tell you how much this Giebler thing means to me—"

"Don't tell me," said Jo Ellen.

"Describing to Marty an incident—or a group of incidents—like this was quite impossible. Merely sketching it left him free to cut through with some questions that could have the effect of implying an intentional omission. If she tried to evade anything, simply because it was hard to get it all out, he looked as if she had sinister reasons."

"They're a tough lot," he said. "They'd be tickled to make you like the rest of them. I can see that."

"You're very wise, Marty."

"O I can see. I think you see it yourself. Cannerton! He's the one you told me was stewed that way, and you thought he was funny. I can imagine the kind of a rouser he is. And these amiable, quiet, Tough. All alike. Living around with a string of husbands. Painted up. You must make them uneasy. They won't be satisfied until they get you like them."

"I hope you won't worry. They don't bother about me."

"This Cora what's-her-name. What's she after?"

"She just seemed to feel friendly."

"That's it, that's the way they begin. Gosh, Jo Ellen! You're innocent!"

"It's good I've got a husband to watch over me."

"There's the trouble. The damned cripple can't watch over you. You're slung into that Broadway riddle. Noisy, noisy. 'What you're not ready to say, but you're coming to it, is that you don't quite trust me.'"

He glared at her angrily.

"Who said anything about trust? You're slipping that in. Trust me, haven't I? What can I do? Who's to stop you doing as you want? How do I know what you do? I got to take what you tell me. I got to sit around here while you mix with the gang of them, and then be sweet about it."

"You're not very sweet," declared Jo Ellen, in a tone he recognized as dangerous.

"His face grew ugly.

"You're learning, all right. You're getting their ways. I can see you changing every day. Noisy, noisy, noisy. Loaded on me, the useless broken-down one, the poor sump who dares to think about—about your wifely honor."

"Wifely honor" rather lightened the strain for Jo Ellen; it was so obviously out of a book.

"He may have seen her lips twitch. 'Is that funny?' Probably it is, to you. Those people all laugh at such things. Marriage and decency—a great joke. That's the way they have it. I'm old-fashioned. Being straight's old-fashioned. If they knew about it they'd think this was a holly joke. The husband doubled up in the house. Put away safe. The red-headed wife—"

Jo Ellen looked at him squarely.

"You're going pretty far."

He brought his hands down jerkily on the arms of the chair. "O my God!" And he began to whimper.

Marty's contrition took various forms. When he tried caresses, and she drew away, or abbreviated the contact, he believed that she was sulking. Extraneous praise of her cooking or of some fruit she brought him, often seemed to lead toward peace. Wondering when Jo Ellen's advantage was coming again had some advantages as a device. Perhaps he was most successful when he asked no questions and stressed some remark to the effect that she must be tired. She seldom admitted being tired.

Marty had one grave for which she was grateful. It appeared that he didn't discuss her life with his people. It was evident, too, that the question of the future had been debated considerably, and that he had been influenced to the extent of becoming less positive in his allusions to the established character of the present arrangement. It was after Arnold Pearson had carried him downstairs and wheeled him as far as the river that Marty reverted to the advantage of an elevator. The elevator in his father's building didn't run all the way to the roof apartment, but the roof was a sort of playground in itself. Very likely there wasn't any view in the world quite so fine.

His mother's visit on a Sunday afternoon had a flavor quite different from that of any earlier visit. She was especially pleasant with Jo Ellen—invited herself to supper, and helped companionably with the preparation and the clearing away of that meal. In the course of the kitchen talk she brought up the subject of the change.

"You shouldn't have the burden of all this on your shoulders," she said. "It's too much. You'll wear yourself out, and that would be pretty bad. Downtown would have a lot of advantages, don't you think? I could fix up that corner room for you and Marty."

She didn't emphasize the special advantage to Marty. This she had doubtless laid before him—the advantage of not being alone during the day. There was no good answer to the general argument; and the money question was not to be left out. They couldn't go on this way with forty dollars a week.

Jo Ellen had not been forced to a decision. Marty's obstinate determination to carry out their original plan had left her free to drift. When he began to show signs of wavering, and at last of restlessness, she had gone far enough to know that the roof was inevitable. Probably she had misjudged Mrs. Simms. That Sunday visit had been a revelation. The actual moving downtown always had the effect of having happened suddenly and of being accomplished with a sensational swiftness.

On a certain evening, after being up very late packing the night before, you went over to the Sixth avenue elevated instead of taking a Seventh avenue surface car. You got off at Rector street when downtown had been pretty well drained of life, with the towers rising about you and shutting off the lowered sun from the patient spire of Trinity. You went all the way up in the slippery shaft, then mounted a flight of steps from the last office floor and entered a short passage that led straight to the Simms door.

(To Be Continued Tomorrow.)

(To Be Continued Tomorrow.)

THE NEBBES

WHAT'S RUDY CARE ABOUT MONEY?

Directed for The Omaha Bee by Sol Hess



Barney Google and Spark Plug

After That, What's \$10,000 Extra to Barney.

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JERRY ON THE JOB

MR. FIGSBY IS SUCH A HELP

Drawn for The Omaha Bee by Hoban



New York Day by Day

By O. O. McINTYRE.

New York, Aug. 12.—The other day by sheer accident I was an inconspicuous guest at a dinner attended by members of an extremely swankish set. It was very high-hatted and piping hot. My social education progresses slowly. Like "The Hairy Ape" I don't belong.

In a pinch I can look at my wrist-watch without removing my coat and refrain from tucking cutlery up my sleeve at the strange table. Outside of this I imagine I am wholly de trop and about as popular as a four dollar carpet in a symphony orchestra.

It was an extremely well groomed crowd and the ladies gave the eye muscles more workouts than are usually prescribed by leading optometrists, formerly opticians. I was quite sorry I wore my brown cap. I kept my eye on the neighbor to the left to follow him in selections of knives, forks and spoons.

There was a knife-wheeler waiter for every two plates. I didn't mind that if one hadn't keep watching me all the time. There was so much high flown talk of the rigors of the Riviera and the difficulty of getting de luxe suites on liners.

I didn't join in that. After all there was eating to be done. And writers must eat. (Sotto voice, "why?") Talk finally veered to poetry, adored poetry. I used to recite "The Face on the Barroom Floor" and listeners would cry and say: "How pathetic, I'll have another beer."

But discussion centered around a new poet, Percy Doak. Perce, it seems, wrote "Les Chien de Blah" which in Spanish means "Howdy, brother, Howdy." He was hiding behind the palms to give his own reading and they yanked him out—ribbon cuff links and all. He was just too cute.

Then we went in for Art. And we certainly made it hum. I wanted to do a match trick but refrained. After all I was just an outsider and didn't care to run away with the party. A jolly little evening and I hope they come to my house sometime.

Up near the Mall in Central Park each afternoon there sits a kindly, silver haired old man. Around him on his bench are dolls of all description. Those who see him, smile, tap their heads and move on. Cracked no doubt. He is a wealthy retired manufacturer and is merely acting as custodian of dolls for the children who come there to play. He never leaves until each child returns for her charge.

A new touch among the Avenue fashion plates. White ties of crepe silk or worn in the colored shirt and collar. A white handkerchief peeps from the pocket. Very, very Valentino.

There is a man who walks northward on the Avenue daily wearing golf trousers and a pink silk shirt. He is hatless, but his eye is oiled up with a monocle. He appears absolutely oblivious to the stars and titters. I am told he is an advertising copy writer and most of his day is taken up writing jingles for soups and hose supporters.

He has female support in his eccentricity of dress in a young woman whose hair is clipped very close. She parts it on the side and goes without headgear. She wears a mannish blouse with wing collar and four-in-hand tie and her feet are sandaled. She is accompanied by an over-rouged brunet with an Egyptian coiffure. They are said to be instructors in a private bathing pool on West Forty-second street. They also carry walking sticks.

(Copyright, 1924.)

The Days of Real Sport



ABIE THE AGENT

Drawn for The Omaha Bee by Hershfield

