

BEAUTY'S DAUGHTER

By Kathleen Norris



CHAPTER IX—Continued

"Oh, yes, plays backgammon very well," Spencer answered, with his characteristic little bitter smile twisting his mouth. "But she gets no particular thrill from playing with me."

The drawing room was almost dark when they reached it, but Serena immediately snapped up the lights. Only one lamp had been burning, and in its light and that of the fire Quentin and she had been sitting in big chairs, at the hearth. Had they been there all these long two hours, Vic wondered?

Serena detained Quentin for a moment at the door.

"Are you working tonight? Sometimes I see your light quite late? Last night you were late."

"Last night I was playing bridge with three men," Quentin told her.

"She watches his light," Victoria thought, disappearing into the outer blackness with a farewell nod over her shoulder.

"If you're working tonight," Serena said to Quentin then, without the slightest expression in her voice or her face, "come over when you finish and I will give you a cup of chocolate."

"Good-night!" Quentin said. He followed Vicky down the porch steps. When they reached their room he said that he thought he would do a little work: fifteen minutes, maybe.

The next morning at breakfast Vic said to him casually: "You didn't go back to the Morrisons' last night, did you?"

"Well, yes, I did," Quentin answered, looking off his paper. "I'd meant to take her a book and left it on my dresser. I ran over with it, and she was making chocolate. She says she often has a little supper, after he's gone upstairs. We sat in the kitchen awhile."

Well, what was a wife to say to that?

After that night there was another change. And this one, to her sinking heart, seemed to Victoria much more ominous than the first. Quentin was always good-natured and gentle now; absent-minded; uninterested in what went on at home. He no longer defended Mrs. Morrison, or seemed especially to want to exchange family courtesies, dinners, and evening meetings, with the house next door. Whatever his relationship with Serena had become, he was content never to mention it; it was their own affair now, his and Serena's, and needed no apologies, no justification.

From Vic's confused thoughts there emerged surprisingly one concrete fact: she loathed Serena; she would have been glad to hear of Serena's violent and sudden death. And this made it increasingly hard to endure Quentin's simple revelations concerning her neighbor.

"She's always been just a little girl," Quentin would say. "She says she still likes to get a kitten and a plate of apples and a good book on a rainy afternoon and curl up in the attic and read."

"Just try to imagine it, Vic, this woman who has been adored and spoiled by some of the most famous persons in the world! Rothe-say Middleton, for example—you know that every woman in Hollywood is trying to get him? She tells me that when she married Morrison she told him that she had to spend one week every year with Middleton, and no questions asked! She said Spencer almost lost his mind trying to reconcile himself to the idea, but in the end he gave in."

"Not much to his credit," Vic might submit dryly. But, fortunately for her, Quentin was usually too much absorbed in his subject to see anything amiss.

"Well, he couldn't have gotten her otherwise! And when I think what that fellow has put her through—"

"Spencer! How do you mean 'put her through'?"

"Why, my God, Vic, he was climbing right to the top in diplomacy when he got hurt! They were to go to Spain; that's one of the fat places! There's lots of money; nothing could have stopped him! She was packing her trunks when he was hurt."

"Well, I don't suppose he especially enjoyed it."

"She told me," Quentin said in a tender undertone, not hearing one word of what Vicky had said—"she told me that just before the smash she had been planning to buy a certain white shawl at the Sea Captain's Shop in Shanghai. She says it was the most gorgeous thing she ever saw and that when their plans all changed, and before she knew whether Morrison's eye was going to be saved or not, she used to go every day and take a look at the shawl. So when it was all over and

he'd resigned from the diplomatic staff, she went up there one last time and kissed the white shawl good-by!"

"Somehow," Quentin said, lost in his own thoughts—"somehow the thought of her going in there and laying her face against that shawl—well, it gets you! I mean she's nothing but a little girl."

"And you're nothing but a little raw blind baby!" Vicky might think hotly. But she never said it aloud. No, he was in the grip of a fever now, and there was no saving him until it went down. He could neither hear nor understand until then.

One day Vic met in the street a woman who stopped her with a smile. A pretty woman, but wearing too much rouge and powder, lipstick and mascara, a woman suggesting a gallant retreat from youth and beauty.

"Marian Pool!" Vicky said. Marian was animated; the beautiful eyes worked with their old fire; she had an "adorable cattle king" in tow. "My dear, he owns half of Brazil!" she said in an aside, introducing a copper-colored stout old person who spoke only a stilted English and used that almost entirely for labored compliments to Marian. Marian was still beautiful, Vicky thought; she was not much more than forty, but ten years ago she would not have wasted any time on Senor de Raa.

Now she was working over him industriously, laughing at his lame jokes, allowing the fat paw to squeeze her own pretty hands.

"Watch me get a present out of him. He shipped his wife and daughters on the last steamer, and he's going wild," said Marian, drawing Vicky with them into Marsh's beautiful shop. She called the attention of the cattle king to the cabinets of jade jewelry. Vicky, who had left Gwen with a dentist for half an hour's straightening of teeth, looked interestedly at one of the world's finest collections of oriental jewelry and porcelain, brocade and teak and ivory, brass and enamel. A middle-aged salesman presently drew her aside.

"Excuse me, madam, but did your friend speak of you as 'Mrs. Hardisty'?"

"I'm Mrs. Hardisty," Vic said. "And your husband is Dr. Hardisty? I thought so. There was something I wanted to ask you. This is very unprofessional," the woman broke off in a tone of smiling and eager apology. Vic could only continue to look expectation and surprise. "You see," the salesman pursued, "Christmas is very close, and someone was looking at a present for you in here yesterday, and I thought . . ."

She had led Victoria into a small adjoining salesroom where there were a teak table and some chairs. "Do sit down," she said, "and I'll explain. Your husband was in here yesterday looking at some of our lovely things, and he picked one out for your Christmas present. Now, often when a gentleman does that," Mrs. Mooreweather went on confidentially, "I like to give the lady just a little hint, when I can, because sometimes, as we all know, tastes do differ, and when a present is very handsome—and this is handsome—it's so easy to give a gentleman just a little hint, and say, 'I think your wife would surely prefer that,' and then she gets what she wants, and we please a customer."

While the amiable endless patter had been streaming on, Victoria had been smiling vaguely, hardly listening.

"Now, this must be a secret. Where is that? I thought—oh, yes, I know where it is!" Mrs. Mooreweather was saying, as she drew in and out of their frames great deep black drawers filled with silken beauty. "This must be a little secret between you and me," she ran on.

Victoria did not hear her. Her head was spinning, and her mouth filled with salt water. Her brown hands were lying on the royal folds of a white Chinese shawl.

After a while she was out in the street again, walking in a business-like way toward the White House. The familiar shops and corners went by her; flashing in winter sunlight and cold shadows, moving with forms and sounding with the horns of cars and the chip of feet.

Victoria felt dazed and weak; she felt that her knees would give way.

"Oh, my God, my God, my God!" Victoria said, half aloud.

She couldn't stand here like an idiot; passers-by would notice her. She walked irresolutely toward Geary street, turned back. She had had something to do—something to do at three o'clock—oh, yes, Quentin had asked her what she wanted for Christmas, and she had said that he would meet her some after-

noon to pick it out, and she had told the children that grown-ups didn't like surprises as much as they liked getting just what they wanted. And then—only yesterday Quentin had suggested that she pick it out herself.

She had said she would go in at three and pick out the electric refrigerator.

Her Christmas gift was to be an electric refrigerator.

Another oriental art shop. Victoria went in.

"You have a beautiful shawl in the window—the red-and-yellow one. What price is a shawl like that?"

"That one, madam? Shall we take it out of the window? That one is \$325."

"It's beautiful. But not today, thank you. It isn't as handsome as the white one." Vicky thought, wandering aimlessly out into the sunshine again. "It isn't anything like as handsome. What will he write on the card? But no, I won't bear it. I won't bear it!"

She felt sick, sore, as if every bone of her, mental, moral, and spiritual, had been jarred and hurt. She couldn't even select the refrigerator. Feverishly, in a sudden need to be home and with her children, Victoria picked up Gwen, very chatty and gay, went to the garage, got into her car, and threaded her way through the south-bound traffic toward the Peninsula.

The trees were bare, and the roads looked cold. Smoke went straight up from all the little houses; Christmas wreaths showed in their windows. Victoria shuddered; it would be good to get home.

But when she was in a cotton dress, and fairly smothered by the enthusiastic reception from the nursery, even then the sense of sickness and shock did not heal; even then she sat blankly, Maddy in her lap, the other children circling about her in the glow of the nursery fire, with her eyes staring into space. Quentin loved another woman. Quentin loved another woman . . . A more beautiful woman than she could ever hope to be. A strange, mysterious, fascinating woman . . .

"The doctor will not be home for dinner, Mrs. Hardisty. Miss Cone just telephoned. He has an operation at nine."

"Thank you, Anna." And the jealous agony, lulled for a moment,

she lay thinking, her throat thick, her head confused.



She Lay Thinking, Her Throat Thick, Her Head Confused.

began again, fierce and tearing and irresistible. After a while Victoria was in her own room and idly handling the telephone.

Suddenly, shamed color in her pale face, she called the hospital. Was Dr. Hardisty there? Was he to be there? No operation that evening?

"You can get him at his home, Atherton eight eight eight," a pleasant girl's voice presently said.

Vicky waited awhile, and the cold-bound winter world and the wind whining over the oaks and the blighted gardens seemed to wait, too. Presently she telephoned to Serena.

"What are you two doing tonight?"

"My dear," said Serena, "I've just ordered an early dinner for Spencer—why don't you be a darling and come over and play backgammon with him? I've been called to town. A dear old friend, Mary Catherwood, is at the Fairmont, and she wants me to come in and dine late with her. I'm disgusted—such a frightful night, but what can you do?"

There was more of it. It was very convincing, but not quite convincing enough. When the conversation was ended, there was nothing for Victoria but vigil. Restless, feverish, sleepless, the hours of the night began to go by. It was a still night, the eve of Christmas eve, with the world tightened under a frost, and every outdoor sound echoing like a pistol shot.

Ten. Eleven. Midnight, and no Quentin. At half-past twelve Victoria, drowsing with her reading lamp shining full in her eyes, started up with a frightened sense that everything was all wrong. Fire—accident—calamity . . .

Then she heard what had waked her; his car on the drive. She knew the sound of the engine and the scrunch of the gravel; her heart, heavy and sad as it was, felt something of reassurance and calm. She

snapped off her light, composed herself as if asleep. He mustn't feel himself watched.

She heard him come upstairs; he wasn't going to put his car away? Poor Quentin, perhaps it had really been an operation then, at the City and County hospital, or the emergency; perhaps he was completely blameless, tonight at least . . .

CHAPTER X

Other sounds, Victoria sat up in bed with her heart pumping. Everything was all wrong, cold, terrifying, shaken again. For Quentin, cautiously coming upstairs, had only put out his porch light, had snapped out the drive light. Now the car lights were up again, and the car itself was slowly wheeling on the drive.

Victoria, not knowing what she did, was on her own upper porch, trembling with cold and fear and despair in her thin wrapper, with her feet bare and her eyes straining after the departing car.

She saw the car turn, saw it leave the gates again, saw it turn toward the Morrisons' house. It stopped at the side door, and presently a house light went up, and then the car lights were put out. Shrubs shut the doorway partially from the window porch where Victoria stood with all her world going to pieces about her, but she could discern two figures silhouetted for an instant against the open door. Then it closed, and presently the downstairs light went out, too, and the cold Christmas countryside and her life and her love and her faith were all plunged into cold darkness.

An iron winter sky was low over the world when morning came without sunrise; Vicky, waking at seven, shivered wearily down again into her warm blankets. It would be good to stay in bed on such a morning, she thought, still caught in dreams—what morning was this, anyway? Good heavens, this was Christmas eve—with everything to do . . .

Then she remembered, and the gray dark morning seemed darker, and her bones, her head, her whole being seemed to ache with the bitter necessity of coming back to consciousness. Ah, if she could only stay asleep, and go on from sleep to death, beautiful, warm, friendly death . . .

She lay thinking, her throat thick, her head confused, her heart and mind in confusion. Quentin, Quentin and Serena Morrison.

Victoria suddenly felt that she was suffocating, strangling. She flung off the blankets, reached for her heavy wrapper even while she was groping with her feet for her fur-lined slippers.

"B-r-r-r!" she muttered, going to the opened window, shutting it with one swift gesture. The garden below the window lay bleak and bare under a fine frosting of white; a delicate powdering of frost covered the bricks of the walks and lay like lace on the soaked bronze red of the leaf pile under the oaks.

She splashed her face with cold water, brushed her hair, looked at the ghostly vision in the mirror.

After a while she went downstairs, to sit holding her coffee cup at the level of her mouth, an elbow resting on the table, her eyes far away. She could eat nothing, but she managed a few swallows of coffee; managed a question to the maid:

"Did the doctor have his breakfast, Anna?"

"No, ma'am. He had a cup of coffee standing in the kitchen, he wouldn't sit down. He had an eight o'clock at the Dante."

"Did he say anything about dinner?"

"He said he'd have Miss Cone telephone."

All the Keateses would be coming down tomorrow to have Christmas dinner with all the Hardistys. There would be presents for all the little Keateses upon the little Hardistys' tree. This was Christmas eve. Hateful, unendurable, empty, Christmas eve and Christmas day must somehow be endured.

She mounted the two flights of stairs to her mother's room. Magda always stayed in bed in the mornings; this morning she had a fire, and was cozily ensconced in her pillows, with her light burning, and her breakfast tray on her knees.

"You look tired," Magda said, with a glance.

"I started trimming the Christmas tree night before last," Victoria said. "I had to get some more things for it in town yesterday."

She stopped, remembering Marsh's and the white shawl. The sick reluctance to believe it all took possession of her again.

"Quentin gone?"

"He went early—I didn't see him."

(TO BE CONTINUED)

Basal Heat Production

The once accepted general law that basal heat production is determined by the rate at which heat is lost cannot be valid. Possibly because of some activity of the ductless glands, most heat is generated when an animal least needs it. A living animal is like an engine. It burns up food like fuel and converts it into muscular energy. Also, it stores up some fuel in the form of fat and tissue and draws on it in time of need. All this is called metabolism. The idling rate of the human engine, when it is doing nothing more than breathing easily, is called the basal metabolic rate.

Correct Vacation Toggery



VACATIONING they will go—Vera, Mom and Flo. And they will enjoy themselves the more because their wardrobes after Sew-Your-Own are just exactly right.

Mother in this model will be mistaken for daughter many a time because her design and dots are so very youthful. She will have various frocks in various materials developed on this theme, and in one of them, at least, the dots will be red.

Dates for Dancing.

Vera, to the right, has a date for dancing and when her escort admiringly effuses some such nonsense as, "That gown must have come on the last boat from Paris" she will toss her dark head and say, "No foreign frocks for me. I Sew-My-Own." Her dress of soft flowered material with demure braid at the neck and hem almost makes a sweet old-fashioned

girl of her, but the tailored collar and trim cut label her the sophisticated young thing that she really is.

Only a snappy sophomore can fully appreciate just how smart are those buttons down the back of the model to the left. Her yoke and neckline are "Oh, so new, my dear"; her plaid as British as she would like her accent to be.

Best of good vacation wishes

Best of Good Vacation Wishes

Best of good vacation wishes

Character and Friendship

CHARACTER forms friendships and friendships form character. Friendship is based on something shared together, and so it comes about that friendship which could be the most beautiful thing in life, could also be one of the most dangerous. It was by our friendship more than by anything else that we ascended the ladder of life, rung by rung from earth even to Heaven. When our friendships were based on the best in us, that gave us the opportunity to gain the victory over what was worst. — Dr. Temple, Archbishop of York.

to the three of them from Sew-Your-Own.

The Patterns.

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Pattern 1998 is designed in sizes 34 to 46. Size 36 requires 4 1/2 yards of 35-inch material. With long sleeves 4 3/4 yards of 35 inch material is required.

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I HOPE DADDY HURRIES UP... SO WE CAN START!

HIST! THERE THEY ARE! GET 'EM, GLOOMS!

SAY, YOU'RE NOT STILL EXPECTING ME TO GO ON ANY PICNIC, ARE YOU?

WHY, JOHN... WE'VE BEEN WAITING FOR YOU!

WELL, GO AHEAD AND WAIT! I DIDN'T SLEEP MORE THAN TWO WINKS LAST NIGHT... AND I FEEL TERRIBLE!

WELL... IT IS HARD TO FEEL SORRY FOR YOU! THE DOCTOR TOLD YOU COFFEE-NERVES CAUSED YOUR SLEEPLESSNESS... BUT YOU WON'T PAY ANY ATTENTION!

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