

# The Younger Set

By **ROBERT W. CHAMBERS,**  
Author of "The Fighting Chance," Etc.

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brightened up—"I dare say she'll choose the best to be had. It's a pity, though."  
"What's a pity?"  
"That a charming, intellectual, sensitive, innocent girl like that should be turned over to a plain lump of a man."  
"When you've finished your eulogy on our sex," said Lansing, "I'll walk home with you."  
As the two men entered their own door and started to ascend the stairs a door on the parlor floor opened, and their landlady appeared, enveloped in a rolled crimson kimono and a false front which had slipped sideways.  
"There's the sultana," whispered Lansing, "and she's making sign lan-

costume of peculiar exotic gorgeousness, sat stuffing a pipe with slugs and pouring over a mass of papers pertaining to the Westchester Air Line's property and prospective developments.  
"Come in, Phil," he called out, "and look at the dinky chair somebody sent me." But Selwyn shook his head.  
"Come into my rooms when you're ready," he said and closed the door again, smiling and turning away toward his own quarters. As he lighted his pipe there came a hesitating knock at the door. He jerked his head sharply. The knock was repeated.

"You are a little rough with me, almost insolent."  
"I—I have to be. Good God, Allice! Do you think this is nothing to me."



For a moment they confronted one another.

## Chapter 9

**S**ELWYN walked swiftly to the door, flung it open full width—and stood stock still.

And Mrs. Ruthven entered the room, partly closing the door behind, her gloved hand still resting on the knob.

For a moment they confronted one another, he tall, rigid, astounded; she pale, supple, relaxing a trifle against the half closed door behind her, which yielded and closed with a low click.

At the sound of the closing door he found his voice. It did not resemble his own voice either to himself or to her, but she answered his bewildered question:

"I don't know why I came. Is it so very dreadful? Have I offended you? I did not suppose that men cared about conventions."

"But why on earth did you come?" he repeated. "Are you in trouble?"

"I seem to be now," she said, with a tremulous laugh. "You are frightening me to death, Captain Selwyn."

Still dazed, he found the first chair at hand and dragged it toward her.

She hesitated at the offer; then "Thank you," she said, passing before him. She laid her hand on the chair, looked a moment at him and sank into it.

Resting there, her pale cheek against her miff, she smiled at him, and every nerve in him quivered with pity.

"World without end, amen," she said. "Let the judgment of man pass."

"The judgment of this man passes very gently," he said, looking down at her. "What brings you here, Mrs. Ruthven?"

"Will you believe me?"

"Yes."

"Then it is simply the desire of the friendship for a friend, nothing else, nothing more subtle, nothing of offrontery, nothing worse. Do you believe me?"

"I don't understand."

"Try to."

"Do you mean that you have differed with—"

"Him?" She laughed. "Oh, no. I was talking of real people, not of myths. And real people are not very friendly to me always, not that they are disagreeable, you understand, only a trifle overcordial, and my most intimate friend kisses me a little too frequently. By the way, she has quite succumbed to you, I hear."

"Who do you mean?"

"Why, Rosamund."

He said something under his breath and looked at her impatiently.

"Didn't you know it?" she asked, smiling.

"Know what?"

"That Rosamund is quite crazy about you. There's no use scowling and squaring your chin. Oh, I ought to know what that indicates. I've watched you do it often enough, but the fact is that the handsomest and smartest woman in town is forever dining your perfections into my ears."

He drew up a chair, seated himself very deliberately and spoke, his unlighted pipe in his left hand:

"The girl I left—the girl who left me—was a modest, clean thinking, clean minded girl, who also had a brain to use and employed it. Whatever conclusion that girl arrived at concerning the importance of marriage vows is no longer my business. But the moment she confronts me again, offering friendship, then I may use a friend's privilege, as I do. And so I tell you that loosely fashionable badinage bores me. And another matter—privileged by the friendship you acknowledge—forces me to ask you a question, and I ask it, point blank. Why have you again permitted Gerald

to play cards for stakes at your bouza after promising you would not do so?"

The color receded from her face, and her gloved fingers tightened on the arms of her chair.

"That is one reason I came," she said, "to explain."

"You could have written."

"I say it was one reason. The other I have already given you—because I—I felt that you were friendly."

"I am. Go on. Please explain about Gerald."

"Are you sure," raising her dark eyes, "that you mean to be kind?"

"Yes, sure," he said harshly. "Go on."



Their landlady appeared.

auge at you. Wigwag her, Phil. Oh, good evening, Mrs. Greeve! Did you wish to speak to me? Oh—to Captain Selwyn—of course!"

"If you please," said Mrs. Greeve ominously, so Lansing continued upward; Selwyn descended. Mrs. Greeve waved him into the icy parlor, where he presently found her straightening her "front" with work worn fingers.

"Captain Selwyn, I deemed it my duty to set up in order to inform you of certain special doings," she said haughtily.

"What doings?" he inquired.

"Mr. Erroll's, sir. Last night he evidently found difficulty with the stairs, and I seen him asleep on the parlor sofa when I come down to answer the milkman a-smokin' a cigar that wasn't lit, with his feet on the angelus."

"I'm very, very sorry, Mrs. Greeve," he said, "and so is Mr. Erroll. He and I had a little talk today, and I am sure that he will be more careful hereafter."

"There is cigar holes burned into the carpet," insisted Mrs. Greeve, "and a mercy we wasn't all insinuated in our beds, one window pane broken and the gas a blue an' whistlin' streak with the curtains blowin' into it an' a strange cat on to that satin dozydo, the proof being the repugnant perfume."

"All of which," said Selwyn, "Mr. Erroll will make every possible amends for. He is very young, Mrs. Greeve and very much ashamed, I am sure. So please don't make it too hard for him."

She stood, little slipped feet planted sturdily in the first position in dancing, fat, bare arms protruding from the kimono, her work stained fingers linked together in front of her. With a rolled thumb she turned a ring on her third finger.

"I ain't a-goin' to be mean to nobody," she said. "My gentlemen is always refined, even if they do sometimes forget themselves when young and sporty. Mr. Erroll is now abed, sir, and asleep like a cherub, ice havin' been served three times with towels extra. Would you be good enough to mention the bill to him in the mornin', the grocer bein' snifty?" And she handed the wadded and inkly memorandum of damages to Selwyn, who pocketed it with a nod of assurance.

"There was," she added, following him to the door, "a lady here to see you twice, leavin' no name or intention otherwise than business affairs of a pressin' nature."

"A lady?" he repeated, halting short on the stairs.

"Young and refined, allowin' for a automobile veil."

"She—she asked for me?" he repeated, astonished.

"Yes, sir. She wanted to see your rooms. But havin' no orders, Captain Selwyn, although I must say she was that polite and ladylike and," added Mrs. Greeve irrelevantly, "a art rocker come for you, too, and another for Mr. Lansing, which I placed in your respective settlin' rooms."

"Oh," said Selwyn, laughing in relief, "it's all right, Mrs. Greeve. The lady who came is my sister, Mrs. Gerard, and whenever she comes you are to admit her, whether or not I am here."

"She said she might come again," added Mrs. Greeve as he mounted the stairs. "Am I to show her up any time she comes?"

"Certainly. Thank you," he called back. "And Mr. Gerard, too, if he calls."

He looked into Boots' room as he passed. That gentleman, in bedroom

this wretched mess we have made of life? Do you think my roughness and abruptness come from anything but pity—pity for us both. I tell you? Do you think I can remain unmoved looking on the atrocious punishment you have inflicted on yourself—tethered to—to that—for life—the poison of the contact chowlin in your altered voice and manner. In the things you live for, in the trivial, commonplace ideals that your friends set up on a heap of nuggets for you to worship? Even if we've passed through the sea of mire, can't we at least clear the filth from our eyes and see straight and steer straight to the anchorage?"

She had covered her pallid face with her miff. He bent forward, his hand on the arm of her chair.

Her gloved hand, moving at random, encountered his and closed on it convulsively.

"Do you understand?" he repeated.

"Yes, Phil."

Head still sinking, face covered with the silvery fur, the tremors from her body set her hand quivering on his.

Hearstiek, he forbore to ask for the explanation. He knew the real answer anyway, whatever she might say, and he understood that any game in that house was Ruthven's game and the guests his guests and that Gerald was only one of the younger men who had been wrong dry in that house.

No doubt at all that Ruthven needed the money. He had been picked up by a big, hard eyed woman who had almost forgotten how to laugh until she found him furiously muzzling her diamond laden fingers. So when she discovered that he could sit up and beg and roll over at a nod she let him follow her, and since then he had become indispensable and had earned up on many a soft and silken knee and had sought and fetched and carried for many a pretty woman what she herself did not care to touch even with white gloved fingers.

What had she expected when she married him? Only innocent ignorance of the set he ornamented could ac-

count for the horror of her disillusion. What splendors had she dreamed of from the outside? What flashing and infernal signal had beckoned her to enter? What mute eyes had promised? What silent smile invited? All skulls seem to grin, but the world has yet to bear them laugh.

"Phillip?"

"Yes, Allice."

"I did my best, w-without offending Gerald. Can you believe me?"

"I know you did. Don't mind what I said."

"No, no, not now. You do believe me, don't you?"

"Yes, I do."

(Continued next week)



Allice.

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| No. 41.....11:27 p m | No. 42.....9:50 a m  |
| No. 43.....8:22 a m  | No. 44.....11:27 p m |

Nov 39 and 40 run between Lincoln and Broken Bow only, and not on Sundays.  
Freight trains Nos 47 and 48 carry passengers but are run as extras

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Train No 42.....9:30 a m  
Train No 44.....7:30 p m  
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## A BREEZY TIME.

A musical comedy of more than usual merit will be given at the Opera House on Xmas evening, December 25th.

The Lenark, Illinois, Gazette of November 11th has the following to say concerning the show: "The Fitz & Webster Company, of 15 people, presented 'A Breezy Time' before a large and appreciative audience at the Opera House last Monday night. This is one of the best companies that ever showed in our city and the manager has booked them in their new play for the coming season."

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