

Contributions from the student body.

Article

Verse

The Man of Habit

He Struggles with Memories

By Jens Lindholm.

Professor Carson, long-faced and shabby, looking as though he had never known anything but the drab routine of the classroom, entered and closed the door. He made his way solemnly to the desk.

The noisy chattering of the students quieted. A pedagogic air of somberness hovered around the little professor. His presence seemed to add to the dullness of the room. Heavy silence predominated for a moment; then he heard a whisper: "That's him. That's the slave driver. He's not human."

The professor frowned absently, and the whisper stopped. Indifferent to the students, he sat at the desk shuffling attendance cards in his pale hands. It was useless to call the roll, he decided. This was the first day of the semester. Transfers and changes of registration would make his classes a hopeless jumble for at least a week. He began to outline the plan of his course in a soft, unattractive voice.

Prosaic dreariness.

The students listened half-heartedly, shifting nervously in their seats. Outside the windows, the red leaves of autumn blew across the campus. The warm sunlight reflected from the white, bare walls of the room as if seeking to put life and light there. But the room could not be helped by the sun. Prosaic dreariness belonged to it.

As he talked, the professor lifted his eyes to the class, looking from face to face for some sign of interest. Most of the students were sprawled in attitudes of boredom, gazing thru the windows as though wishing themselves away from all academic places. He was used to that, but one face was turned toward him. Dark eyes looked straight into his for an instant; red lips seemed to smile encouragement. Without knowing why, he smiled back and went on with his explanation.

A remnant of remembrance.

That girl's face! It brought something back to him! A wave of poignant feeling swept over him. Some remnant of a half forgotten experience trembled at the brink of his consciousness. He felt suddenly confused, as if he had forgotten something—something more important than his whole life.

Head down, fingers fumbling with the cards, the professor felt the strong pulsation of an old and disturbing emotion. The girl's face, her dark eyes—somewhere in his mind there was a replica of her. He was seized by an overwhelming desire to remember. Where had he seen her before? Where had he known her?

Memory opens gate.

And suddenly his memory opened its gate. He saw the picture vividly. His youth! Those joyful days before the war! Those passionate restless days when he had known love. He remembered that face now. With swift clear strokes his memory painted the form of the girl he had loved. . . .

Even in their school day they had been in love. They had gone thru the four years together, taken their degrees together. When the war came he entered the army, and they were engaged to be married. Those glorious days with—Dorothy!

He had gotten one day of leave. One priceless day! And he went to the little summer resort where she and her family were vacationing. With picnic basket and canoe the two of them went to the end of the lake, to the little island where no one else would be.

Guitars were popular then. How well she played! He lay stretched out on the sand, proud of his uniform, and his love, happy with the whole world, listening to her. No rag-time for her! She spent the lazy afternoon singing in her rich, contralto voice, not popular tunes but warm, indolent songs. Songs of the gypsies. And her voice thrilled in his blood as strong as love itself.

It's a perfect day.

She stopped her song and looked over at him. "It's a perfect day, Carl. One that we'll never forget. Look how the clouds rise straight from the lake."

He stretched luxuriously, and

smiled at her, and she went on: "Somehow I feel that it's the most perfect day the world ever saw. I don't know why; maybe it's because you're here."

How beautiful she was! "Are you hungry yet?" She asked the question shyly, knowing that food was far from his mind; but she was proud of the lunch her basket held. She wanted him to enjoy it. The whole world hung upon his answer.

He pondered a moment, watching her. Though they couldn't say what they felt, he knew her feeling then. To him, every gesture she made, every rise and fall of her breast was more expressive than any words she could say. Willingly, he grew hungry.

Lunch for two.

They ate their lunch like two people entranced, sitting side by side. It was everything that a man could want—sandwiches, and olives—the bottle of red wine that her father had slipped into the basket. Never before had he tasted wine like that—smooth and full, with glimpses of old Italy in its depths. Her lips took on a warm, moist sheen as she

drank her little portion of the red liquor. He could not resist that; he leaned over and kissed her—held her so closely and felt her smooth palm against his cheek. They ate that meal with the gods.

"There sits Jupiter," he said, "and there is Jun, and here," he touched her hand. "You're Venus." "But what of you?" "Me? I'm only a mortal lover." "No, you're Apollo." They laughed at that. Apollo dressed in khaki!

Venus and Apollo.

But it did seem to both of them that the gods of the old Greeks were present. The island belonged to them. The bright sunshine on the sand was theirs. And their love, too, was something more than mortal. They enjoyed that day for each of them knew too well that they might never see one another again.

It was late at night when they returned across the lake. The dark waves lapped softly against the canoe. The night was dark. Sitting at the stern, he could see nothing of her but the warm cameo of her face.

They did not go back to the

hotel where her family was staying, when they reached the shore. The widening path along the beach called lover's lane, beckoned to them both. They were afraid to part and the blood burned too hotly that night.

Holding her tightly, reverently, he said goodbye to her in the early morning.

"You'll write me often, Dorothy?"

She smiled into his eyes. "Every day, Carl, every day that you are gone."

The following day, his company boarded ship for France. Twenty years ago, and he had never seen her again.

He coughed, and the students quieted expectantly. Then a sudden thought alarmed him. What if this girl were—? Could it be that she was his own daughter? The cards were still in his hands. He began to call the roll.

Monotonous rollcall.

The students answered to their names, slowly. They were obviously amused by his behavior. He knew they would laugh at him later.

He steadied his voice as he ap-

proached the C's. If what he feared were true . . . In a cold, emotionless voice, he read the words that scrawled across the little card: Carson, Dorothy Carson.

The girl answered quickly, and the rich timbre of her voice burned its way into his memories. He read on, calm and controlled—disinterested; but his brain had become a bedlam of thought. She was the daughter of that other Dorothy of long ago! But her last name was his own!

He ran swiftly through the other names. Then in a vain attempt to sound friendly, he said: "The class is excused for today, but remember that we begin our work next week."

He felt strangely out of place as the eyes of the students searched his; then their faces brightened and they began to gather their books together. The room emptied quickly, but as the girl passed him, he stopped her.

"Do you live in town, Miss Carson?"

"No, Professor Carson, I live with an aunt in Maine."

"Your parents are New Englanders then?"

She shook her head. "No, my mother died at my birth; my father never returned from the war."

"Thank You."

He lifted his hand, and started to say something; then changed his mind and muttered an inaudible "Thank You." The girl hastened out to meet her friends.

The professor stood as though stunned until the halls were empty. Then he walked through the halls to the little cubicle that served him as an office. He locked the door, seated himself at his desk, and stared blindly at the papers.

What a fool he had been! Because her letters stopped, he had decided that he was forgotten. He had returned from the war bitter and disillusioned, and he had never gone back to her city, nor searched for her. And she was dead! She had died bearing his daughter, and he had deserted her!

He deserted them both.

He had deserted them both! The thought that there was a new and younger Dorothy—flesh of his flesh—without even the right to the protection of his name, was like a great clot on his brain.

In his heart, the love that he had thought forgotten, burned more brightly than ever. Shoulders slumped, arms hanging loosely at his side, he relived again all the old memories. The day waned, and the sun set. But he remained there, silent. In the darkness of the room he fought to put down those memories, the happy memories.

Abruptly, he stood up and snapped on the lights. He returned to the desk and opened a drawer. The razor-blade he used for cutting clippings from magazines glinted up at him impassionately. He sat for long minutes staring at it. His fingers touched it. The steel sent a shudder running the whole length of his body. For a moment he trembled violently as though he were chilled through and through; the pain and the guilt of his memories pressed down upon him. One touch of the blade and those things would be ended.

The mood burned itself out. Reason claimed him and the struggle ended for a moment. He looked up from the drawer and closed it. He peered near-sightedly over the desk and picked up a book; Dante's "Divine Comedy." Pedant-like, he propped the book against others, and read. His face smoothed into its habitual lines. It softened and grew placid, once more the face of a prosaic man—a teacher. There was no sound in the room but the muffled hiss of his lips as they formed the words of the

The Lady in The Case

She turned a cold shoulder

By Randy Stewart.

It was a perfect night for murder, or whatever happens on such nights. Dark storm clouds fled across the sky, chased by a wailing autumn wind. The moon, as if afraid to show her face, took refuge behind every passing cloud. The evergreens in the cemetery swayed and sighed, their shadowy outlines adding to the general atmosphere of mystery and unreality. In short, it was the kind of night when sensible people stay at home and like it.

As the bank clock in the small suburban town chimed 11:30, a small black coupe drove into the cemetery, picking its way along with only the aid of a spotlight. It halted near a freshly filled grave. A figure immediately clambered from the car, walked over to the new headstone, and played a flashlight over the inscription. Seemingly satisfied with what he had found, he went back to the automobile.

"Yeah, Joe," he muttered, "this is the one all right. Nice we found it so soon too. If we hurry, I think we can get the body and be out of here in a couple hours. . . . Well, come on, come on! What are you waitin' for? We haven't all night. Aren't afraid of ghosts or something, are you?"

"Take it easy, Hank. Take it easy," retorted the second. "I'm just going to get my pipe lit before I get out in that wind. The dame'll wait, y'know."

Fitful moonlight

As the match flared up, it revealed the face of a rather handsome young man, one who might perhaps pass as a college student. His pipe lit, the man unhurriedly got out of the car and walked around to the rear of it. He paused for a moment to look carefully in every direction. By the fitful light of the moon, he surveyed the scene; then shrugging his shoulders as if satisfied, he opened the rear deck lid of the coupe. Removing spades, shovels, and certain other tools was but the work of a few seconds, and moving over to where the other man stood by the grave, he silently handed him a spade.

They began digging, from time to time glancing warily about them. For some 15 minutes, the two figures bent to their work in silence. Then the one called Hank stopping digging. Leaning on his

spade, he said, "I never thought I'd be doing something like this when the boss hired me. Can't say as I care for it particularly either, especially on a night like this."

"So what?" said the other, taking advantage of the chance to rest. "I'll admit it isn't any picnic, but it's at least different. We might as well enjoy it." As he paused, the moon temporarily lighted the landscape, and he leaned close to the grave marker. "Say, according to this," he chirped, "this dame was only twenty-one when she died last week. Wonder if she was good looking?"

"I doubt it"

"I doubt it," replied Hank pessimistically. She probably died of heart failure when some guy gave her a second glance. I'll even go so far as to bet a dollar she looks as plain as mud."

"Well, I don't know how plain that is, but I'll just take your little bet. Wait'll I light this hod again and we'll get to work."

And with that, both men started digging again, neither of them speaking for more than an hour. Then suddenly Hank's shovel struck metal.

"Well, it won't be long now, chum," he piped, "and then you pay me, cash on the line."

"Don't race your motor, lad," Joe replied easily. "Climb up and get me the screwdriver and flashlight, and jumped back into the open grave. "Here you go," he said. "I'll hold the light while you unscrew the lid."

Joe grasped the screwdriver and set to work. In a few minutes he had the lid unfastened and ready for opening. "Okay," he smirked. "Now, just wait'll I straighten my tie, and I'll do the honors."

Lift the lid

"Come on," said Hank, "quit clowning and lift that lid. I'm dying to find out who's the best guesser. Here, let me do it—it was my idea in the first place." So saying, he lifted the heavy lid, while Joe held the flashlight. One glimpse inside and Hank dropped the lid shut, overcome at what he had seen.

"What's the matter, fellow?" chided Joe. "Is she that bad?" "No, no! That's what got me. Man, she's beautiful! Why did this have to happen to me? Now I won't be able to sleep for thinking about it."

"Don't let it get you, son. Busi-

ness is business. Come on, open it again and we'll take her and leave. . . . There, that's it. . . . gosh, she is beautiful, isn't she? I hate to think how she'll look when they finish with her. Let's get it over with; it's beginning to get me too. . . . You climb out and I'll hand her up to you. . . . All right, easy now. Don't muss up that nice hair-do of hers."

Set her between us

"Don't worry about me. I know how to handle women. . . . Now how are we going to do this? We'll have to set her between, won't we? I wish we could have brought the big car."

"Yeah, that would have been better all right, but we'll have to do the best we can. Here, I'll get in first and you hand her to me. . . . All right, now put away the tools and we'll head for the city."

The black coupe moved out of the cemetery without lights. Pulling onto the highway, Joe switched on the headlamps and drove swiftly along the road. After a while, he glanced sidewise at the girl propped between them and said sarcastically, "Maybe the lady would like some music, Henry. Turn on the radio. I could go for some myself."

The other did as he was bid, but when the radio blared forth with "Body and Soul," he switched it off. "That's adding insult to injury," he muttered. "Let's talk about the weather. . . . Say, when is that post-mortem exam anyway? Tomorrow morning, isn't it?"

A cold shoulder

"Yeah," Joe answered, "The boss said some question has come up concerning this girl's death, and the examiners want to get it over with right away. If I didn't value my job, I sure wouldn't have consented to come out here tonight."

"Me either," said Hank earnestly. "This working nights for an undertaker and going to school in the daytime is no snap. You really have to get down and dig if you expect to get anywhere. By the way, I'll pay you that buck tomorrow, if you don't mind waiting till then."

"Oh, forget it. Oh, forget it, fellow; I'm satisfied. It isn't every night a guy can take out a gal like this one."

"I think you've got something there, Joe," laughed Hank, and grinning, he added, "but I notice she's sure giving you the cold shoulder."