

NEW YORK'S

# Brownstone Girl

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**L**IKE THAT GREEN, distant lady who stands out there in the water at Manhattan's gates, Carol Reed (25, five-foot-six, single, very attractive) also carries a torch for liberty — for a kind of feminine freedom, that is, which Carol came to New York four years ago to find, and found.

It amounts to this: one 2½-room elevator apartment on East 53rd Street; a telephone ringing with more invitations to drinks and dinners and parties than Carol can keep up with; an address book full of Grade A and Grade B contacts in the New York women's magazine world, the right to see whom she likes and go where she likes and get home when she likes — three conditions which wore a rosy, faraway aura a decade ago when Carol was a high school girl in Pittsburgh, or even a few years ago when she was going to Bennington.

For Carol, you see, is a full-fledged, five-star, success-scintillating member of Manhattan's Up-

town Bohemia. Her spiritual arena is an area bounded on-the north by smooth-running taxicabs and smart bars; on the east by young and not-so-young — but all very “interesting” — men; on the west by boats and planes and trains that can whisk a girl off to Westport for a weekend or to Paris for the standard Left Bank tour; on the south by Greenwich Village, where the tradition which Carol lives by has its roots.

Carol glides about like a long, flashing fish in this metropolitan goldfish bowl, looking, to those who gawk longingly at her in restaurants or on the street, like life's golden girl. But Carol cried last night. She cries at least once a week, and Hubert is usually there when she does.

Hubert is Carol's soul confidante, a pudgy, pink-faced young man who publishes poems in *The New Yorker* (as well as in *The Kenyon Review*) and who treasures his admitted, but seldom practised, homosexuality as

"a precious link with the ancient Greeks" (we're quoting *him*). Every real Uptown Bohemian girl has her Hubert to confide in on slow evenings; he's as much a part of her surroundings as the framed Toulouse-Lautrec poster on the wall, the Billie Holiday albums under the phonograph, the shelf of books that always includes Joyce's *Ulysses*, with its two-year-old bobby-pin bookmark about a third of the way through, and the Modern Library *Sanctuary*, a holdover from her college days when it was all the rage among the freshman girls. Hubert, who has a cozy reputation in Carol's set for his caustic volubility and his *double-entendres*, adds just the right amount of sugar and spice to one of Carol's blue evenings.

CAROL CRIED LAST night because she can't love Paul, the well-heeled young advertising executive who wants to marry her. Like a lot of sharp, eager Gotham men who've paddled in and out of Carol's life in the past few years, Paul was attracted there as much by the amused detachment with which she appeared to regard life, love and sex, as by her shining, cleanly scrubbed good looks. She was not the usual clothes-horse zombie, the flesh-and-blood manikin that many American women, aping Hollywood and the fashion magazines, tried so hard to be. She had a mind, and seemed more interested in

showing it than either her profile or her chest. What also intrigued him was her independence: he thought an affair with her would lack the deadening weight of responsibility that girls with families and family futures presented. Just how wrong he could be soon became apparent to him when he found out what Carol's "problem" really was — but by that time he'd already left his heart on Carol's pillow and his mind in Carol's care.

She had a defiant way of arranging to be out with someone else at the very moment a man in love wanted to talk to her most. And she took a cool delight in shattering all moments of passion by bringing up her "lack of affinity for men." Though she could do these things with a detached air that precluded cruelty, Paul's predecessors had, one by one, left her as they found her, and drifted on to newer Carols with similar problems. But Paul, poor poodle, made the mistake of discovering that he owned a conscience and a heart — even though Carol seemed to want no part of them. What rocked him most, however, was Carol's preference for that mincing little scribbler in whom she confided.

"I know I *ought* to love Paul," Carol told Hubert, the scribbler, over their fourth Scotch-and-soda last night. "I know it would be the best thing in the world for me if I could love Paul and even marry

him, God help me. Don't you think Dr. Pollock would tell me to — if he ever consented to tell me *anything*?"

Dr. Pollock is Carol's analyst. Almost everyone Carol knows (including Hubert) is going, has gone, or is planning to go to one kind of mental healer or another: like the five-thirty cocktail, he's a standard prop in the Uptown Bohemian world. Carol goes twice a week, at fifteen dollars per hour-session — the kind of price that is bound to keep a girl at her typewriter, tapping out that overdue article on "Parties — With and Without Couples" for *Glamour* and wading drearily into that pat newlyweds-meet-a-problem short story for *McCall's*.

"My dear," Hubert answered, making the ice in his glass tinkle, "I don't think Dr. Pollock would be likely to tell you any such thing. I think he'd be much more tempted to suggest that you snap on your bow tie, do your hair in a boyish bob, and *be* what you're afraid you *are*."

"Oh God, Hubert — *no*," Carol moaned, pretending to be engulfed by the idea but actually shivering deliciously in secret over it. "Do I *have* to be one? It's so complicated."

For Carol, it all started at Bennington during the war. There, pretty nearly all the really bright, really artistic girls — the girls who wrote stories or poems, painted pictures, or at least *wanted* to do some-

thing of the sort — decided they had some vague, but terribly smart peculiarity called "lesbian tendencies," and that the only men worth talking to were homosexual. It gave them a rich, goose-pimpling feeling of liberation — the same one that the First World War female generation had gotten out of the thought of rolling its stockings, and petting, and drinking bathtub gin.

Within the hothouse fastnesses of Bennington and Vassar and Mills and Sarah Lawrence, this queer tingle of liberation seemed an original answer to a young lady's most paralyzing problem: how to be "truly" oneself and "truly" creative in the face of such perils as husbands, babies and general domesticity on the one hand, and the depersonalizing threat of mass-market glamor on the other. If you could decide that you were a lesbian, of course, the domestic problem disappeared by itself. And you were challenging men with something a lot more unique and much more personal than a fashion frock or a frozen pose. You had really managed to crawl under the barbed wire that surrounded their camp and challenge them on their own ground at last.

Not that Carol's friends at college — or Carol herself — ever did much more about their thrilling "inclinations" than chatter, shudder, whisper three or four celebrated names they'd heard gossip about, and raise a few eyebrows. But even

such meager titillations really did give them some relief from the overpowering ogre of the faceless, mindless futures which society, one way or the other, seemed to be pushing them into.

It is true that after graduation the great majority of Carol's classmates accepted society's values concerning their maturity and drifted into marriage, or went back to their hometowns where they lost themselves in mediocre jobs a thousand miles removed from the special college world they had created. But the daring few, Carol among them, made the break and came to Manhattan, where they found, in '46 or '48 or '51, two versions of a new, feminine bohemia in the making. In spite of the Dylan Thomas-like poems she had been writing for the past few years, Carol sensed immediately in which version she belonged: the uptown set.

FOR A YEAR she worked as a *Life* researcher, a job she hated, and quit the day she sold an article to a fashion magazine. Now her freelance income has about it a bohemian uncertainty, and her life has taken on a bohemian irregularity. The only difference is that the checks which the men who buy her drinks and dinners pick up have very unbohemian-like totals on them, and the clothes she wears, the apartment she lives in, the weekends she goes off on are hardly the kind of

thing an old-style bohemian can afford. For something has happened to Bohemia since the war: part of it has moved uptown and become *chic*. Aging society matrons mix happily with it at ballet theater openings.

Such professional Park Avenue adolescents as Truman Capote and Theodora Keogh write its literature — precious little novels about apparitions and homosexuals with precious little in them — and psychiatrists and psychoanalysts confess its sins. The chief membership requirement is a jumbo-sized contempt for all the mediocre, machine-made aspects of modern life — from the vacant-eyed glamor girl who stares out from every magazine cover and movie poster, to the stuffy, stodgy, predictable world of business and family. Carol conforms and agrees to the membership requirements, and yet now and then she vaguely hears, in a life that on the surface seems to be a high-powered, lubricated world of fun and freedom, a certain hollow ring.

Strange that Jill Jamison, who was a member of Carol's snobbish little clique of poetry-writing young females at Bennington, should have scorned this new world of Uptown Bohemia, and settled for the old, Downtown one. Strange because while Carol, who aimed at the moneyed bohemia, comes from a mere haberdasher's family in a middle-class Pittsburgh neighborhood,

Jill Jamison was born in Manhasset, Long Island, and her father, though never what you could call "rich," did very well in real estate and belongs to a country club. Jill could belong to a country club too, or live on East 53rd Street like Carol, if she chose. But she prefers her cold-water place on Vandam Street, below Greenwich Village.

Jill is only five-foot-two, an energetic towhead with big blue eyes and a determined mouth. She rented this warehouse loft as casually as if it were a furnished apartment on Sutton Place, and with the help of one or two friends, plunged in and painted it, installed a spaceheater, suspended a couple of bamboo shades from the ceiling to divide the room's 100-foot sweep of space, and settled down to living the life of the *Downtown* Bohemian—a term which designates more a spiritual than a geographic difference in a city where, as the housing shortage continues, a true-blue Greenwich Villager like Jill may have to settle for Yorkville, the Upper West Side, or even the Lower East Side, while an "uptown" girl like Carol may find herself living as far downtown as Brooklyn Heights. Jill has a telephone in her loft, but it seldom rings. Like her friends (two extremely serious abstract painters with beards, a girl who fashions lamps out of old beer bottles and new tin, the arty owner of an arty bookshop on Christopher

Street, and a Negro poet who used to be an office boy at PM), Jill cultivates the casual quality of her life. She scorns a regular job, refuses an allowance from her father—although he does come through now and then in a pinch—and earns money sporadically by working part-time in her friend's bookshop, or typing for a novelist she knows, or baby sitting. She keeps her vision pure, and occasionally even finds time in her casual life to write a casual story or poem, which she sends to the nonpaying literary quarterlies, and usually gets back. Her friends call her up in the middle of the night to ask if they can bring their bottle and come over, they're feeling so fine (she seldom refuses); or she meets them at her Village hangouts, Minetta's Tavern and the San Remo—almost never by appointment, though there's an unspoken agreement that around ten or eleven at night at least some of her group will drop by.

Those "lesbian tendencies" that bother Carol so much no longer bother Jill Jamison at all. She got over them by having an affair with the girl who makes lamps out of bottles and not liking it very much (they're still good friends, however), so that now, although she buys half her clothing at an Army & Navy Store, and has her silky hair chopped short, she accepts her womanhood with resignation. She doesn't really like men very much

either, in spite of the half-dozen half-hearted affairs she's had since the war. What she's after is a way of life: the chance to feel that she's in the avant-garde of the avant-garde, which is very avant-garde indeed, and a long way ahead of Carol.

Jill knows that most of the things Carol lives by are already old hat and really quite "bourgeois" in their acceptability. Kafka is boring rather than profound, Calder's mobiles and Henry Moore's sculpture are tiresome monstrosities, Freudian analysis is passé (even Reich's orgone boxes are beginning to show signs of wear), and anyone who would frame a Toulouse-Lautrec poster and hang it on her wall —! As for Carol's thrilling discovery that there are lesbians and fairies running around loose (which both girls shared in college): Jill merely turns her pretty head away in pity for someone so far behind the times that she doesn't know that *everyone* in the *world* is *bi-sexual* — so what's all the fuss about?

Jill feels there's nothing in America worth staying around for; that the place in which to be is Rome. She'll probably go there to live this year or next, if she can muzzle her pride long enough to ask her father for the money. Or maybe something else will happen to her: maybe she'll tire of her drab surroundings and her erratic, poorly-paid jobs, and move uptown, next door to Carol,

where she'll find work as a publisher's reader or a copy writer, or free-lance like Carol by turning out machine-made short stories and pieces for the big magazines. So many of her friends — painters, dancers, musicians, writers, intellectuals — have already made the move that it has become a commonplace, as routine in the feminine Manhattan bohemian world as the radical-into-Republican switch is for college pinks when they go into business.

**T**AKEN TOGETHER, Jill and Carol provide the two slightly-contrasting profiles of New York's new woman. What the Gibson Girl was to the turn-of-the-century, the flapper to the twenties, the sallow, serious, hornrimmed intellectual girl to the thirties, Jill and Carol, bohemians, are to the fifties. They may be a minority when weighed against the thousands of young women who merely pound typewriters in offices or wheel baby carriages in Central Park, but their revolt influences every female in America under thirty, makes such costumes as dirndls and ballet slippers and jeans fashionable in spite of what Paris tells American women to wear, coaxes thousands of college girls into thinking, not that a man or a family or even an ordinary career is important, but that only a new way of life, like Carol's or Jill's, is worth having.

Is it? Carol and Jill can't answer, for they haven't taken time out to question it. Their attitude forbids consideration of such a state of mind as "happiness," that outmoded word which has had to give way in their vocabulary to "fulfillment." Yet their search for "fulfillment" has led them into an arid no-man's land where love can't flourish and money all goes to the doctor-confessor. They once thought that the trap of their futures gave them a choice of two poisoned baits: the pose-deadened "dream girl" and the domesticity-dulled work horse. But their flight from one trap led them into another. By playing with the idea of giving up their womanhood and thus escaping its problems, they played right into an analyst's hands.

The story sometimes has a happy ending — one so corny that a few years ago Jill and Carol would have trembled at the thought. But at 28 or 30 or 35, they will probably be swept up by an anxiety that was hovering just beneath the surface of their lives all the time. They'll suddenly want, after all, to get married (just about anyone will do) and take a well-traveled road that less imaginative girls took in the beginning. With luck — and if they wait till they're 35 they'll need luck — they *will* marry, and have children, and disappear, bless them, into the very world of pots and pans and predictables which they took such pains to avoid — never really to solve the problems that their longing to be "themselves" once made so obsessively urgent.



***In the  
Mercury's  
Opinion***

# **Eight Senators Are to Be Commended**

THERE HAS NOW been time for reflection on a remarkable failure by the United States Senate. On May 3, 1951, the Joint Committee on Armed Services and Foreign Relations of the Senate convened in momentous session. Twenty-six senators assumed the responsibility of investigating the conflicts and confusions which had been brought to a head by the firing of General Douglas MacArthur.

This Joint Committee sat for seven weeks and heard two million words of testimony from the highest military and civilian authorities of the government. In effect, the committee was a tribunal sitting in judgment on the Asiatic policy of the United States from 1944 to 1951 — a policy which has resulted only in disaster and disillusionment.

At the conclusion of this hearing the American people expected — and properly expected — a reasoned majority judgment. The people did not conduct the hearing; the peo-