

# The Thunder God By PETER B. KYNE

## The Story Thus Far:

JULIAN GRANNIS, electrical engineer, loves Gloria Justin, but, during the war, marries Mercedes Lindberg, Y. M. C. A. entertainer, cold and calculating. He is a scientist to whom money means nothing but opportunity, his ambition being to harness the lightning for the benefit of mankind.

Julian inherits from his uncle Jarlath more than \$600,000, and he and Ben Whitton, his closest friend, form a partnership, telling Mercedes nothing about the inheritance because Julian wants to use it for experiments and realizes Mercedes's extravagant ideas.

Ben and Julian are driving one Sunday when another car runs into them. Ben sees that Mercedes and Jake Brander are in the other car and, pretending to be hurt, urges Julian on to fighting Brander, thereby giving Mercedes a chance to get away.

Later Brander's wife tries to make trouble but Ben, impersonating Julian, calms her down and assures her that the friendship will not continue. Then Ben gives Mercedes her orders.

Julian knows nothing of this friendship of Mercedes's and is still in love with his wife though he half unconsciously realizes her shallowness.

Ben and Julian go to a party at Ben's apartment. The party is a great success. Julie spends the night. And Ben tells him a few facts straight from the shoulder about his wife and his life.

In the meantime Jacob Brander and his wife quarrel and decide on a divorce.

TEN o'clock Monday morning Julian Grannis got up in Ben Whitton's guest chamber, went out and strolled downtown to Ben Whitton's tailor, where he ordered such a wardrobe as he had never dreamed of possessing.

Next he went to a haberdasher's shop and with ruinous prodigality ordered a dozen fine shirts made to order—something he had never done before. He reveled in the purchase of new and expensive ties, socks and handkerchiefs; in a shoe store he purchased six pairs of shoes, and, in the knowledge that he could do all this without a thought for his bank account or his old age, he gleaned a thrill of juvenile delight.

His purchases completed, he went back to his hotel, arriving there about 12:30. Mercedes was still abed, reading a novel, and the remains of her breakfast occupied a portable table by her bedside. He looked at her with frank disapproval and thought that she reminded him of a well-fed and contented cat, basking in comfort. But there was about her too an atmosphere of carelessness, of indolence, and he resented this. Why did she have to let herself go this way?

She read the disapproval in his silence, in his all-encompassing glance about the room. "Your eye is worse, darling," she reminded him casually. "Have a good time at Ben's?"

"Wonderful. Met some delightful people there."

"Who were they?"

He enumerated them. At mention of Gloria Justin and her mother his wife's face clouded a little. "I wonder why Ben will be so commonplace as to have his secretary a guest at his parties," she mused.

"MY DEAR, Gloria Justin was never reared with the expectation that she would have to work for a living. She was a friend of Ben's years ago, and so was her mother. When she had to earn her own living and support her mother, Ben was kind enough to give her a job in his office. If he had not had the job to give and if she had not made good in it, she would not be in his office. But the fact that she is doesn't appear to Ben to offer grounds for depriving her of his respect and friendship or of depriving him of the privilege of being kind and hospitable."

"Well, I think it's awful funny, Julie."

"Your thoughts on the subject are in such a pitiful minority among those who know Gloria and Ben that I'm not even interested in discussing the matter. You know how I dislike to hear you criticize my friends."

"Oh, you and your friends! What friends have you? I haven't seen more than two or three since we married, and I must say they didn't impress me."

"I know that," he replied sadly.

"And I greatly fear you did not impress them." He dragged the breakfast table across the room and sat down on the side of her bed. "Let's have a little plain, friendly discussion, Mercy," he began. "You're not very happy with me, are you?"

"Why, darling! How can you say such a thing? Of course I am. Why

"Yes, you said you were quite happy with me, Mercy, but sometimes it seems to me that you are merely putting up with a bad bargain, tolerating me. Really I fear you find me a most uninteresting husband."

"You are provoking at times, Julie,

"Isn't it wonderful?" said Ben. "Why, this one job should mean a fee of not less than \$25,000"



Illustrated by  
HAROLD  
BRETT

do you ask that terrible question?"

"Because it has seemed to me that you aren't happy with me, that I bore you, that we haven't an interest in common, except a mutual love for good music. When a little patience and bravery was expected of you, you quit. You wouldn't be bored living up in the mountains with me, although your place was with me—"

"Julie, dear, please do not preach. I can stand anything except being talked at—talked down to, as if I were a mischievous child."

"Don't evade the argument, Mercy. Please do not beg the question. You ask me why I ask you an extraordinary question and when I attempt to answer you truthfully and the answer hurts, you interrupt and beg me not to preach to you. Now, I asked you if you were quite happy with me—"

"But I answered your question, darling."

but on the whole you are a most likable, lovable, loyal man and much too good for me."

"Oh, don't say that," he pleaded generously.

"Kiss me," she commanded.

HE KISSED her—with a sense of appalling futility in the caress. Then, knowing from past experience that he would get nowhere in an argument initiated by himself, he went to the desk in the next room and wrote her a check for \$1,000.

"I'm shooting that little old savings bank account all to pieces," he warned her. "I've ordered at least \$1,000 worth of clothing for myself—"

"But, Julie, won't that leave us terribly short?"

"Perhaps. I don't care any more. I'm tired of being a miser, tired of being cheaply clad, tired of repression and scheming in pitiful ways to save a dollar. That sort of thing robs a man of his self-respect, so I'm going to try appearing opulent."

"But why did you order your wardrobe without having me with you, darling! You know your taste is atrocious."

"No," he countered gently, "I do not know that. On the contrary your taste is not agreeable to me; that is, in the matter of my wardrobe."

"Are we going to live in this third-class hotel forever, Julie?"

How adroit she was at changing a topic of conversation once she realized she could not dominate it!





*Mercedes was enthralled at the prospect.  
"We can establish a home and be happy"*

"I imagine we will live here until we can afford to lease a house or an apartment, employ a cook and a maid and buy some decent furniture."

"I loathe this hotel," she complained.

"Well, you can't cook and you loathe housework, and, at least, in this hotel, you are spared both annoyances, Mercy."

Their conversation was interrupted by the ringing of the telephone. Ben Whitton was on the line.

"COME down to the office," he commanded. "I have a proposition I want to discuss with you."

"A man who has been in a fight always looks a thousand per cent worse the morning after," Julie reminded him, "and my eye has not improved. Also

I discover this morning a couple of bright yellow spots on my face, and I look like the devil, and I don't want to go downtown if it can be avoided. Suppose you run up here and explain your proposition."

"I'll be up directly after luncheon," Whitton replied.

Julie turned to his wife. "Snap out of it now, old lady," he half commanded. "This room looks like the wreck of the Hesperus, and I want you to be looking your best when Ben arrives. I have a particular reason for desiring you to be very nice to Ben, even if it hurts you. The old boy says he has a proposition to discuss with me. Some electrical engineering matter, doubtless, in connection with a civil engineering job that's drifted into the office."

Mercedes was instantly interested. "Possibly an opportunity to earn a fee as a consulting engineer," she suggested. His eyes glowed pleasantly. "It certainly would help a lot just now if a big fish should slip into my net."

"Indeed it would, Julie. I need a lot of new clothes so badly."

"Well, I've just given you \$1,000 to pay for those you have already bought," he reminded her.

She was bathed, dressed rather prettily and sitting with her husband in the little drawing-room when Ben Whitton ar-

You will note that I have already blocked out in blue ink the territory in question.

"There's a world of timber in there and, naturally, the railroad, seeking new fields to exploit, has for a long time had in mind the tapping of this entire territory, which is, at present, inaccessible to market. There's a national forest in there, and the Banning people, the Hale-Robinson Timber Company, and the Brander Timber Company have very large holdings in these two countries. It's stuff they picked up dirt cheap twenty or thirty years ago, but which, owing to its inaccessibility, hasn't appreciated much in value. Nor will it until a railroad builds in there.

"Now, the O. R. N. is the natural outlet for all this timber, when it is manufactured, and I imagine that the pressure of these huge timber interests has been brought to bear on the O. R. N., with the result that they have decided, if a practicable route can be surveyed—one that will not cost in excess of \$40,000 a mile to build—to tackle the proposition. Four years ago I investigated it for the S. P. and reported unfavorably upon the general route they would have to travel, but I'm morally certain that the physical difficulties which confronted the S. P. will not confront the O. R. N."

JULIE nodded sagely. This was a matter he could understand. "Did you make a thorough investigation of the collateral freight and probable passenger business that might accrue to the road if it built in?" he queried.

"Not a very thorough one, Julie, but the proposed line would tap half a dozen hamlets and, as you know, once a large lumber-manufacturing enterprise gets under way some fair-sized towns usually grow up around it. I do know that there are billions of fir timber in there, and the Hale-Robinson Timber Company and old man Banning have agreed to put in mills to cut half a million feet daily, provided the O. R. N. will build in. So I'm to survey the route and make other required reports."

"Where do I come in, Ben?"

"When these two huge sawmills are erected they will, if possible, be electrically operated. Electricity will be required for the lighting of the towns that always grow up around such a big plant, and a fair profit might be made by extending the service to more distant communities. I have been requested to secure your service in the matter of locating dam sites and sites for hydroelectric power plants and preparing estimates of the cost of construction, etc."

"Well, you've come to the right shop for that information, Ben."

Whitton looked up at Mercedes. "Isn't it wonderful," he said, "to think that on the very first day Julie and I are in business together a big, profitable job like this should drift into the office?" He slapped Julie across the back with his huge open hand. "I've been after this man for years to throw in with me. Why, this one job should mean a fee of not less than \$25,000, and the best salary you have ever received in one year was \$6,000, Julie!"

Mercedes was enthralled at the prospect. She hugged her husband. "Why not give old Ben a hug too," Julie suggested. "I think he rates one as a partner who produces."

Dutifully Mercedes implanted a light kiss on Ben's cheek, and the latter blushed.

Julie was thoughtful. "Here," he said, "is a splendid example of the manner in which adroit and patient men amass millions. These fellows probably bought this stumpage for as little as 50 cents a thousand feet, board measure—hence (Continued on page 51)



# Just his little Hobby

By MARIE  
BEYNON  
RAY

ONE was impressed first of all by her elegance—simplicity carried to the point of austerity. Black eyes in a sculptured face framed in a monastic, a Dantesque hood; a slim body sheathed in a nunlike costume which yet unmistakably emanated from a famous atelier; and, for all ornament, on her finger flashed the un-

nice shop. You see"—she leaned eagerly forward, pointing out her reprehensible extravagances on the long slip, "there are three evening gowns for \$850: so silly of me to buy dresses on my way to Paris but I wanted something fresh for the boat. And there's one of your beautiful fitted cases—Vuitton would take three months to make me one like that. That's \$350. Oh, but the worst of all is this chinchilla wrap, \$15,000. Chinchilla is my great weakness."

"And how did you wish to pay for these, Madame Orloff?"

"Well, you see, my trunks must leave promptly at five o'clock, and it is now"—she consulted a miniature diamond wrist watch—"ex-

A  
Short  
Short  
Story

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LOWE  
BIEDENMEISTER



"I was just thinking of  
the best way of arrang-  
ing it"

holy green of an enormous emerald, like the eye of some evil god.

"Pardon," she said, a faint accent brushing her speech; "perhaps I am intruding?"

"Certainly not." The manager rose hastily. "Won't you be seated?" A deferential "madame," survival of his early clerking, almost escaped him.

"I have a request to make," she said. "Please refuse it if you think you should, won't you?"

"I'm sure I shan't want to refuse."

"That's the trouble. No one ever does." Her eyes were amused eyes which, whatever their errand, he reflected, were certainly wasting time in a manager's office. Then, suddenly businesslike, she said: "You see, Mr. Brightson—oh, by the way, I'm Madame Orloff" (as though he certainly would know the name—and he immediately looked as though he did). "I'm leaving for Paris tomorrow and, as usual, I had many last-minute purchases to make."

She drew from her supple black ante-lope purse a long slip. "They told me, to save time, all my purchases could be marked here and I could pay for everything at once. But I find I haven't enough money." She opened her purse and showed him her poverty—several fifty- and hundred-dollar bills. "Less than \$800, I think—though I don't count your money very well."

"So you wish to pay by check, Madame Orloff?"

She shook her head.

"I've been very extravagant—in your

actly 3:45." She sat up briskly. "I shall have to rush. What I thought I might do, if it isn't too silly, was to take these things along with me and have my husband pay for them by check at the hotel. I thought perhaps you could send someone—a detective or something—to the Ritz with me to get the check. And also it might be more regular if I went to the bank with your man while he cashed it."

"Hum," said Mr. Brightson.

She wilted as if, after all, her request were too silly.

"Oh, I'm afraid I'm not at all businesslike! I wouldn't want to coax you to do anything unbusinesslike. May I say good-by?" She rose.

"No—no. Please be seated. I didn't say it couldn't be done. I was just thinking of the best way of arranging it."

He pressed a button. A clerk appeared.

"Please ask Detective O'Donovan to step in," he said.

"Oh, how good of you!" she murmured.

FIFTEEN minutes later Madame Orloff, followed by Detective O'Donovan, stepped into a limousine overflowing with packages. He was impressed with the evidences of wealth, the size of the bill in his pocket and the indisputable emerald.

"Must be worth at least \$50,000—a rock like that," he reflected. "Yes, what did you say, Mrs.—?" he asked in response to a murmur from the lady.

"I was wondering if it would be quite all right, Mr. O'Donovan, if I stopped a moment to say good-by to a sick friend?"

"Sure, it's all right. Why not?"

"It's a private hospital just a few streets from here—and I shan't be long. So nice of you, Mr. O'Donovan."

They drew up before an eminently respectable house in a street of eminently respectable houses. "Won't you come in and wait?" she asked.

"Sure, I can just keep an eye on the car from here—not that there's any need for that, lady"—with a clumsy attempt at gallantry.

So O'Donovan sat at the waiting-room window, keeping an eye on the car, with its immobile chauffeur. In ten minutes he heard Madame Orloff's voice as she descended the stairs.

"Be good to him, won't you?" she was saying. "I hate to leave him alone here while I'm away. Thank you so much for making all this unpleasantness so comparatively easy for me."

A man's voice replied: "Don't worry, Madame Orloff. No doubt by the time you return he'll be much improved. A mild case, as these papers indicate." Then O'Donovan heard a door closing.

"My Gawd, I believe she's forgetting me," he cried as he flung open the door to the hall. "Excuse me," he cried, almost knocking down a gentleman who

stood in the passage, and made a bolt for the street door. It resisted.

"What's the matter with this door?" he cried. Madame Orloff was getting into the car. She seemed to have completely forgotten him. The gentleman at his elbow smiled faintly.

"It's locked," he explained.

"Open the door!" yelled O'Donovan. "She's got \$18,000 worth of our goods in that car!" (The car was now halfway down the block.) "Open it, I tell you, or I'll blow it open!" he yelled, and put his hand to his hip pocket.

But he was swiftly and firmly seized from behind by two attendants.

"Oh, so it's a frame-up, is it?" he growled. "Well, let me tell you guys that I'm a detective from A—'s and—"

"Yes, yes, Mr. Orloff," said the smiling gentleman. "But let me assure you this is not a 'frame-up,' as you express it. This is a hospital, Mr. Orloff."

"I'm not Mr. Orloff. I'm O'Donovan, a detective."

"Ah, yes, we know that is your—shall we say *hobby*, Mr. Orloff? But you won't help the situation by being violent or by insisting on being a detective. It is on just those grounds that your wife, Madame Orloff, has had you committed to this asylum."