

BENJAMIN never would have gone to the party anyhow if it had not been for Dian Wakefield.

He had seen Dian once already; and that was enough to make him willing to do anything. He had been passing a house with a high flight of brick steps and an iron railing in front, when two people came out. One was a military-looking woman, all starch and pointed nose. The other. . . .

Benjamin was a sufficiently correct young man, but when he came to himself he was clinging to the railing and staring as if he had never seen anything so lovely before. In fact, he never had. The other was a small person in a suit of hunter's green, with a tow-colored fur collar under her lifted chin and a green hat with a gold buckle at the side. He found that he knew these things afterward. At the time he was aware only of the girl's face, a keen, bright imp of a face, incredibly young. Her eyes

were fearless eyes, laughing under tipped-up lashes, and a wayward twirl of dark hair blew in the wet wind against her cheek.

Under her arm the girl carried one of these very large rubber animals, such as are used by children for riding in the surf—more sea-serpent than anything you could mention. The next instant it slid out and came bounding down the steps; it seated itself in a pool of slush at Benjamin's very feet.

Benjamin picked it up. He whipped out his handkerchief and wiped it all over, very slowly and carefully.



"She took my hat," said Dian surprisingly. "Thought it was an apple. A greening"

When you're hopelessly in love, and hopelessly handicapped, there are times when—

It's Swell to be

"Naughty! Chester, how could you?" There was a vibrancy in her clear voice. Then she was looking up at Benjamin—a pixie out of a fairy book in a wind-swept city street. "Thank you very much," she said. "I'm afraid you've spoiled your handkerchief."

"Not at all," said Benjamin in confusion. "I mean, it doesn't matter." He added whimsically: "Chester might take cold if he got his feet wet."

"He is subject to colds," she said demurely.

After she had gone, Benjamin found that he was still clinging to the railing. A fat old darky woman was sweeping the walk.

"Who was that?" asked Benjamin. He placed his lunch money in the palm that appeared on top of the fence. "I—I mean the young one."

"Dat, suh? Dat Mis' Dian Wakefield. She done gone down to de horspital, suh."

"What hospital?"

"De Sta'k Memor'l Horspital, suh."

Benjamin spent the rest of his lunch hour walking round and round the Stark Memorial Hospital. But nobody came out. Nobody, that is, of any consequence.

The next day he was invited to the Kanes' party.

Now it was a sufficiently inconvenient time for Benjamin to be invited anywhere: just after he had spent all the money from his last commission, and just before he could collect anything on his next. His evening clothes were in the pawn shop. His overcoat was sold. And he had given his studs to Wade Powell as security on a loan. Of course the Kanes knew all the right people, and Benjamin needed to meet everyone that he could. Benjamin F. Lowe was an architect—and a very good one, too—but he lacked that facility in recommending himself to patrons needful for success. The trouble was that Benjamin never felt . . . important. He would have stayed away from the party altogether if he had not hoped to meet Dian Wakefield.

Benjamin borrowed back his studs, and retrieved his clothes from Abie's Irish Pawn Shop. When he had put them on he stood in front of the mirror and tried to think how he would

look to Dian Wakefield. Red hair, crisp at the ends—it would curl if you didn't look out for it; a wide straight mouth, rather grave; gray eyes, not grave at all, in a thin brown face. He was not handsome, but he looked exactly what he was—an awfully nice young man.

It was the devil's own luck that just as he was ready to go there should have come up a rain. Benjamin had thought to get on without an overcoat. You can always pretend that you are one of those virile men who wears no coat because he likes the cold; but it is absurd to pretend that you are a duck and like water. Benjamin did the only possible thing. He borrowed a coat from Wade Powell—who happened to be out at the time.

NOW Wade Powell was a good fellow—but you know how these artist chaps are. His coat was a too exquisite garment . . . and it was lined with red. Benjamin did not like red linings. He would not have liked them even if he had not had red hair. He hurried away from the Kanes' butler, who had flung it wrong-side out across an arm, and hoped no one would notice that he and the coat had come in together.

It was that which gave the party such a bad start. And when it developed that Miss Dian Wakefield was not there, then Benjamin went and stood by himself in a corner and acted exactly the way he felt: stand-offish and disgruntled. After the first, people left him pretty much alone. He drank a lot more highballs than he needed, because there was no much else to do.

Only once he roused himself. That was when his hostess introduced him to Mrs. Wakefield. Mrs. Wakefield had Dian's dark good looks without her animation, and very lovely clothes.

"So—your daughter isn't coming?" Benjamin stammered.

"You've met Dian?"

"Well," blundered Benjamin, "I've met her, as you may say, but I didn't exactly meet her. That is . . . I mean . . ."

For some reason Mrs. Wakefield was not pleased. There was something closed and tight about her expression. "No," she said. "Dian isn't coming. She had to go—somewhere else."

She moved away presently, and Benjamin had another highball. As soon as he decently could, he said his farewells and went.

When Benjamin emerged from the Kanes' door, he found rain sweeping down the street in a solid wall of water. He was still hesitating in the shelter of the portico when Mrs. Wakefield called to him. "Ride?" she asked. "You'll never find a cab a night like this."

"Why—thanks," said Benjamin, not knowing how to refuse. He perched on the edge of the seat, with his coat clamped between his knees, and wished that there were not so many lights and that they would not move round and round in circles.

"Where to?" asked the chauffeur.

It was hard afterward for Benjamin to understand why he said what he did. To be sure his address was on the wrong side of town—but that was not a reason. There might be a scene about the coat—but that would be later. Probably it was that third drink from the

Crazy

By
Ruth
Burr
Sanborn

end. "Stark Memorial Hospital," he said.

Mrs. Wakefield looked up at him sharply from under black lashes that tipped the way Dian's did, only not so pleasantly. They flashed along lengths of shining pavement; the streets all slanted uphill tonight, so it was like driving up the side of a house. The Stark Memorial Hospital loomed ahead.

"Which entrance?"

"This one," said Benjamin. He stepped out. "Thank you for bringing me up the hill." He put out a hand so that the hill should not tip over backward onto him. As soon as Mrs. Wakefield drove away, he could turn round and it would be all right.

To his horror, however, he saw that she was not driving away; the chauffeur brought the car close to the curb and switched off the ignition. Hitherto Benjamin had had no intention of actually going in. Now he saw that he must.

Just beside the door there was a sign: Psychopathic Division. Benjamin would not have chosen the psychopathic division if he had known. He thought the emergency entrance was more what he wanted. Still it didn't matter. He placed his thumb firmly on the bell.

THE door was opened by the night porter, a determined man with a cold bright eye. Benjamin whispered to him urgently.

"Look here," he said. "Let me in a minute. There are some people outside that I want to get away from. . . ."

He pushed against the door, and to his relief it swung for him to enter. "Right this way," the porter said obligingly.

Benjamin hesitated. "I don't want to trouble you. As soon as those people go, I'll get along. . . ."

"Not at all," said the porter cordially. "No trouble. Glad to have you come. It will be more comfortable inside." Benjamin was delighted to find that they had such kind attendants. He passed down a corridor into a small, sanitary-looking office.

"What's your name?" the man asked him.

"Benjamin Franklin Lowe." Benjamin could not have explained exactly why he gave his name in full; usually he was pretty reticent about what that F. stood for.

"Benjamin Franklin?"

"Yes," said Benjamin firmly.

The man picked up the telephone. "Casey speaking," he said presently. "Anybody there that could identify the feller that walked out on Corrigan this afternoon? . . . I d'know. Might be. . . ."

There was something about this conversation that made Benjamin uneasy. "I guess I might as well be moving," he said carelessly.

"Don't hurry," Casey urged him. "I want you to meet a friend of mine, Dr. Jeffers; he's coming down now."



Benjamin did not like this talk about apples. It confused him. "I know you," he cried. "You're Dian Wakefield. You tell them who I am. . . ."

Abruptly Benjamin did not want to meet any friend of Casey's. He turned and plunged toward the door.

There was a confused interval after that. At the end he found himself seated in a hard chair, with Casey holding his hands uncomfortably behind him; Dr. Jeffers, a gloomy, black-browed man in polished white, with a wry look like a taste of his own medicine, was bending over him.

"Let me go," roared Benjamin, struggling.

"There, there," said the doctor soothingly. "Just take it easy."

"But I'm all right, I tell you," cried Benjamin. "I. . . ."

"Of course you're all right," said the doctor. "Just relax." He was talking

low to Casey. "They brought him in during the day and the night staff hasn't seen him. Dr. Sharpless and Dr. Ruen committed him. We'll have to wait till they come in. . . ."

"He says he's Benjamin Franklin," said Casey.

"I thought that one was George Washington."

"He might be Benjamin Franklin by now."

"True," said Dr. Jeffers. "Hallucination of greatness." He made a note on a pad.

"I'm Benjamin Franklin Lowe, the architect," said Benjamin.

"There, there," said Dr. Jeffers. "Of course you are." He lifted the corner of Benjamin's coat and looked at the lining. Made a note on the pad.

"He said," went on Casey, "that there were some people chasing him. He wanted to hide in here."

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In a blue cloche and coat—all Madonna until she smiled

"YOU are not listening to me," said Jean Laferche, and Terry did not hear him say even that. Terry was looking at a girl on the other side of the restaurant. Terry often looked at girls, though it was not always his way, when looking, to go dead on the discourse of a fellow male. This girl, however, wore a shadowy hat, and one had to be attentive to catch the seconds when she looked up. At these intervals she showed a face so contradictory that one could not avoid wanting further glimpses in order to puzzle it out.

Madonna eyes and a gypsy chin. A sad face, an eerie face, except when she smiled, and then—It was Puck on a rampage when she smiled. As a matter of fact, when she smiled Terry smiled too. But she was not smiling at him. She was smiling at the man opposite her, quite absorbed in him and in her lunch.

Suddenly the girl looked up and laughed. Terry laughed too.

Jean Laferche viewed his guest with puzzled eyes. Then he turned about. "That," he said, "is Cydalise Ducharme."

His tone held a warning if Terry had been able to get it.

Terry Douglas, red-headed and six feet one, gentle of eye and of voice, with a chin like a battering ram, had come to New Orleans to attend the Hardware Men's Convention. From his father he had carried a letter to Jean's father, fellow hardware man. Laferche, senior, had extended to Terry the princely hospitality of the Creole and had given to Jean a week's holiday in which to show Terry the town. The task had a royal flavor for Jean. Desiring today that Terry should taste the best pompano in the Vieux Carré, he had taken him to Jacquin's. Terry, having enjoyed the pompano, Jean was telling him how it had been prepared, down to the minutest bay leaf.

AND Terry was not listening. But he heard Jean say, "That is Cydalise Ducharme."

Almost at once the man and girl went out.

"Do you know her?" asked Terry.

Jean gave his slight shrug. "Oh, but yes!"

"I'd like to meet her."

"You have not time," said Jean. "I am taking you to the races."

"I have time for everything," said Terry.

And Jean, who had humored his every other sight-seeing whim, gave his slight shrug. "Oh, ver' well," he said.

And that was how they came to be sitting directly after siesta in the Ducharme patio. The call had not been easy to arrange, but Jean was not one to acquaint his guest with the peculiar difficulties he had overcome.

The patio was shut from the street by great iron gates. Aging pomegranate-colored walls surrounded it, and here and there were orange and oleander trees, and squat wine jars bubbling with flowers.

Terry sat where he could look through an open door upon a curved stairway. Down that stair presently would come the girl he had desired to see. In the meantime he and Jean talked with Madame de Lansac.

"Tell me about where you leevie, Mister Dog-lass," she said to Terry, and Terry launched obediently upon the statistics of Indiana.

"THEES is my granddaughter, Cydalise," she remarked when he had done, and Terry turned abruptly.

All Madonna today. All Madonna in a yellow gown, hair like black wings folded over her ears. A sad face. An eerie little face. . . . Terry was silent while Cydalise took the vacant chair near him.

Madame de Lansac began to talk with Jean, lapsing now and then into French, and, remembering the visitor, drawing again on her scant English. Cydalise had taken up a wreath of magnolia leaves and, opening a box on the table between her and Terry, disclosed a pile of wax flowers. She began to weave these into the wreath, her fingers moving leisurely—slender fingers, white as the flowers.

Madame de Lansac remarked, indicating Cydalise.

"Tomorrow is the birthday of her Uncle Ulysse."

"That's fine," responded Terry, sensing festivity.

"And Cydalise," continued Madame, "will lay a wreath on his tomb."

Terry in confusion picked out a flower and handed it to Cydalise. She thanked him, her eyes for an instant meeting his, a singular quirk at the corner of her mouth.

"Good evening, Léon," said Madame de Lansac.

The young man who had been with Cydalise that morning had joined the group. He had a reed-like grace and slenderness, with blue-black hair and a small black mustache. Madame introduced him, but Terry did not catch the name. He sat down in the hammock beside Cydalise.

Madame asked Terry what he had liked best in New Orleans. Terry,

The Jazz Heart

Love will grow in almost any soil, but there are places where it thrives so fiercely that when it bursts into bloom the report is fairly deafening—for instance, Old New Orleans

By Margaret Belle Houston

speaking from the surface of his memory, answered that he had been most impressed with the pompano at Jacquin's. Madame looked pleased. Cydalise looked pleased. Léon nodded and leaned back in the hammock.

A black boy came up with cups of coffee. Cydalise laid aside the wreath. When the sugar was passed Terry held out his cup to her. She dropped in the lumps—one, two, three. . . . Perhaps she would talk to him now.

But the coffee finished, Jean rose to go. Madame de Lansac held out a hand. Cydalise held out a hand. Léon rose from the hammock and bowed. The grilled iron gates closed behind them. They were in the street.

"Who is Léon?" Terry asked.

"Léon is the nephew of M'sieu' Ducharme. He is the cousin of Cydalise."

"Oh, her cousin!"

Jean looked at him. "Léon is a Zumárraga. Léon Zumárraga. They are engaged."

"Engaged? To her cousin?" Terry became aware of an unsuspected repugnance to alliances between relatives.

"That frequently happens among us," Jean informed him. "Cydalise is a Ducharme, and what is a Ducharme to do?"

Terry did not ponder this.

"Engaged!" he repeated, and stopped in front of a drugstore. "Let's have a soda," he suggested.

Over the soda Jean said:

"I can myself see the suitability of the arrangement. But Léon is intrigued with a little artist—a blonde from somewhere in the North. He sees her often. I will show you her studio. It is ver' interesting. She does patios ver' well."

"Does Cydalise know this?"

"About Miss Murphy? Why should she know? Léon will not marry Miss

Murphy. His uncle would not permit it, even should Léon wish to be foolish. M'sieu' Ducharme's sister died when Léon was born, and left her son to his care and guidance. He loves his daughter ver' much—Ducharme. He would not permit her to be disappointed."

"What does Miss Ducharme like?" asked Terry. "Dancing, driving? What does she enjoy?"

"Her tastes are ver' like Léon's," Jean assured him. "They will get on. While Léon played in the orchestra at the Alhambra he always took her there. He had passes then. But that of course is over now they have put in a machine."

"I shall ask her to go to the Alhambra with me," said Terry.

Jean left off fishing for the cherry in his glass to look embarrassed. "Madame de Lansac," he said, "catches cold at the Alhambra. They have the iced air. Neither will Madame de Lansac ride in an automobile."

SO HE must take Madame de Lansac where he took Cydalise, accepted Terry. Léon might take her alone because they were engaged. Very well, he would take them out to dinner. It would be at one of those places where they danced between courses. In this way he would have Cydalise to himself at intervals. He would invite Jean so that Jean could talk to Madame while he and Cydalise were dancing. Alluring as this prospect may have been to Jean, Jean was obliged to acquaint Terry with the truth. Madame's indigestion . . . Madame was on a very special diet. She dined nowhere but at home.

Terry sighed. "Where is Miss Ducharme's uncle buried?" he asked.

"In the old St. Louis cemetery," answered Jean. It was a safe subject.

Illustrated by
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