

Escape to Hollywood

By Kyle Crichton

THEY laughed when I sat down at the piano and sneered a bit when I started to play, but when I finished and rested my elbows on the black keys and began telling them of my visit with Hedy Lamarr—men swooned with envy all over the precinct.

Not only have I called on Hedy Lamarr, dear friends and neighbors, but I have come forth unscathed. My eyebrows are unsinged and anyone who says that he can smell the odor of burnt flesh about me is merely kicking the truth around for his own evil purposes. It is also untrue that the asphalt in the street before Miss Lamarr's house has buckled up and is lying in a steaming

caldron, a menace to all who pass by.

Nothing so hot as Hedy Lamarr has appeared in America since Theda Bara spent the week end at Yuma, Arizona, in July, 1916, and it may be comforting to have my report that it is possible to

Miss Kiesler of Vienna once acted in a movie called Ecstasy and thereafter found life in a castle dull. Her name is now Hedy Lamarr—and there is nothing whatever to connect her with dullness

approach within hailing distance of the lady without suffering the fate of the damned. In truth, even after her success in Walter Wanger's *Algiers*, she turned out to be a sensible person, living in the smallest bungalow this witness

has ever encountered in Beverly Hills. As a bit of consolation for the women of these United States, I may say that Miss Lamarr is extremely tall and has a figure that could be better. She is rather large of limb and has somewhat too much in the rear and somewhat not enough in the front . . . But the face! Let us have no more discussion from this point on; the girl has it and we may as well admit it.

As has probably been hinted elsewhere, Hedy Lamarr is the former Hedy Kiesler of Vienna, she who played the lead in a picture called *Ecstasy*. There's no dodging that issue; it's bound to come up. To get away from it as much as possible, M-G-M changed the Kiesler to Lamarr. The people who exhibit *Ecstasy* were just as accommodating; they changed the name to Lamarr also. It is now *Ecstasy* with Hedy Lamarr. You can't beat the movie people for resourcefulness.

When Hedy was fifteen she was nothing other than the daughter of Gertrude and Emil Kiesler, a banker of Vienna. Then she played a little trick on Papa and Mamma. They had a custom in the private school where she attended of signing tickets that recorded the absence from school of the little ones. The parents signed the slips for each hour of absence. Do you know what that vixen Hedy did? She added a zero to the numeral one, thus giving her ten hours out of school.

"Hooky, no?" says Hedy, pleased to this day with her deception.

That Ecstasy Business

There was method about it, however. She went over to the Sascha studios and got a job as a script clerk. By rigging up the absence report at school, she went to work. Then guess what happened! Somebody must have told you. All right, she heard there was an actress wanted for a secretarial part and she applied and her career was launched. The picture was called *Storm in a Water Glass*.

This pleased Papa and Mamma, so she went on to do a few others. Then came *Ecstasy*. When they got out there on location, they broke the news to Hedy. There would be a few scenes where she would appear naked. Did Hedy scream when she heard this! Did she carry on! But they were firm about it. She had signed a contract, and if she backed out now they'd make her pay the whole cost of the picture and see that she was blackballed from the industry.

As one Hollywood writer has since put it: "What could she do? What would you have done? Just what she did. What weapon has a 16-year-old girl to fight against such odds?"

That's practically the whole story of *Ecstasy* except that she quit the films after that, went on the stage and was doing *Queen Elizabeth* when a gentleman named Fritz Mandl began sending her flowers backstage. But Hedy paid no attention.

"Everybody sends flowers to the dressing rooms of actresses," she explains.

But Fritz was not to be put off. He called on Hedy's mother and said he wanted to meet Hedy. Since Herr Mandl was the munitions king of Austria and a figure of great importance in diplomatic and financial circles, the Kiesler family was flattered and Hedy was pleased.

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Miss Hedy Lamarr, who followed her reputation to Hollywood and cinched things for herself when her *Algiers* hit the box office

A SHORT SHORT STORY
COMPLETE ON THIS PAGE
ILLUSTRATED BY JAMES LEWIS



A hand was on his shoulder, wrenching him around, and a husky voice was rumbling. "For murder," ended the voice

In the Shade

By Stewart Robertson

MR. BLEECKER came softly down the stairs, feeling quietly proud that he did not seem to be in the least bit nervous, and assuring himself that everything would run as usual on this farewell morning. There must, above all, be no appearance of haste. Rounding into the lower hall, he noted that the electric clock registered seven-twenty instead of the customary quarter past, and he frowned a trifle at his tardiness before he allowed himself to think of the reason for those extra five minutes.

But first he walked briskly into the dining room and gave the window shades his customary jerk that sent them flying up to the rollers with a resounding slap. There was a crisp finality to the sound that Mr. Blecker liked, and, coupled with the warm morning sunshine, it seemed to mark the end of certain things and the highway to escape. And escape was very necessary, for his wife lay sprawled upstairs in the graceless unconcern of death with a bullet in her brain.

He stepped through his tidy kitchen onto the back porch of his little house, reached for the milk and the newspaper, glimpsing as he did so the flutter of a print dress disappearing through the doorway of the next porch to the east. He wished that he had been in time to catch Mrs. McLean, and then suddenly her cheery pink face looked out at him.

"Why, you're late!" she exclaimed, as though mentioning a phenomenon.

"Overslept, I'm afraid," Mr. Blecker assured her, and went back into the house. At seven-thirty-five he was munching breakfast and gazing bemusedly as always at the rich tints of the

dining-room rug enlivened by the sunlight. It was a gorgeous rug, seemingly as colorful as when he had bought it over the economical protests of his wife. Mr. Blecker shifted his slaty eyes to the watch propped against the sugar bowl before him. Twenty minutes to go; he must stick it out.

Precisely at eight he would close the front door behind him, and people would still be able to remark that you could set your watch by Mr. Blecker. Out at eight, back at six-thirty, with several other such well-scheduled stops spacing the business day, and now—forever out! Away from twenty years of being hampered by a semi-invalid who had long ago forfeited his short-lived pity; away from cursed economy and complaints—but no, she had never been one to complain; her warped idea of loyalty had prevented that. Just how she had endured his complaints so long was something that Mr. Blecker had never been able to figure out . . . but it was time to clean up. He rinsed the few dishes and swept the infinitesimal kitchen dust out across the porch into its receptacle, and, as he expected, Mrs. McLean was sweeping hers.

"What a system!" she said admiringly. "You have your whole life on a blueprint, don't you, Mr. Blecker?"

"Well," said Mr. Blecker, "someone has to have a system around here."

"How's the wife?" Mrs. McLean asked.

"Sleeping till noon, as usual," remarked Mr. Blecker without a tremor. "You know how she is."

Mrs. McLean regarded him with what seemed sympathy. "Indeed I do," she said vigorously.

Mr. Blecker wished her good morning, went in for his hat, and left the house.

Neat, gray-templed and fiftyish, he strolled down the sun-and-shade-dappled reaches of Maple Avenue, bowing sedately to the same neighbors who were doing the same things in the same places every morning. Mr. Blecker plumed himself upon his exit. Under cover of the cloak of habit a man could tread the corridor leading to oblivion until he arrived at the vanishing point—in his case the glittering shuttle of life in South American cities.

HE HALTED at the corner of Green Street at 8:07 and boarded the 8:10 bus. Money was all that he carried, but he regretted nothing except, perhaps, that lambent rug. Half an hour later he let himself into his office.

There was no need for hurry, since the plane for New Orleans did not take off until eleven, but there was most urgent need to take refuge behind the bulwarks of habit; therefore Mr. Blecker made a rite of dictating letters to his secretary.

Glancing obliquely at the truth, he feared the panic that might engulf him if he wavered from routine. . . .

The plane was throbbing sleekly in the sun as he came to the airport, and he marched purposefully toward it. Four hours to New Orleans and . . . Shadows lengthened on the ground beside him, growing ominously bulky as he neared the liner, and then Mr. Blecker felt the warm current of his life suddenly run cold. A hand was on his shoulder, wrenching him around, and a husky voice was rumbling.

"For murder," ended the voice.

Mr. Blecker scarcely heard it. He rode back to town and listened dully to the denunciation of the district attorney. Nothing mattered now. Nothing was of any importance save that he could not understand. . . .

"Well?" rasped the district attorney.

"I did it," admitted Mr. Blecker without remorse, but feeling an overpowering despair. "I did it, but will you kindly tell me how—"

"It was your next-door neighbor. Your house looked a bit out of character to her this morning and, after thinking it over a while, she tried ringing the doorbell and calling on the telephone. No answer at all. So she called the police, figuring that something was wrong."

"But why?" persisted Mr. Blecker wildly. "What made her think that?"

"It was the window shades in your dining room," said the district attorney. "You're in the habit of leaving the house every morning at eight o'clock. Right? Well, at eight-fifteen your wife used to slip downstairs and lower those shades to keep the rug from fading."