

They sat on the couch, their feet propped on magazines on the coffee table. Thornton, who rarely took a drink, sipped his highball with an apprehension which soon vanished



The Love Man

By JOHN D. WEAVER

It's hard for a man—even a sensible man like Thornton—to resist the blandishments of fame. People kept telling him he was old, and he had to prove he wasn't

The Story: THORNTON SAYRE had once been a matinee idol, but he had renounced the glamorous world of the theater when his wife, KAY SHELTON, died in childbirth, and he had settled down in the sleepy Midwestern town of Rockport to raise his daughter, CAROL. He entered into partnership, in the real-estate business, with Kay's brother, JEFF; maintained a rather placid relationship with the widow across the street, STELLA BAKER; and, in general, seemed content to drift into a comfortable and stodgy middle age. This tendency to vegetate was a source of considerable sorrow to Carol, who had reached the age of eighteen and longed for excitement, and to Stella, who wanted to marry him. Thornton wanted to marry Stella, too, but she suspected his motive was more convenience than romance.

Then, suddenly, Thornton's quiet life was disrupted. For days, he seemed upset, and finally announced that he had to go to New York on business which he refused to explain. When he had gone, Carol discovered a batch of passionate love letters that had been forwarded from the office of Thornton's old agents in New York, BOWLES & LEVITT. The letters had been torn up, but Carol and her boy friend, DICK CARNEY, pieced enough of the scraps together to learn that the letters were all of recent vintage.

Stella and Carol decided to make a flying visit to New York to find out what sort of mess Thornton had got himself into. And in New York the awful truth came out. Thornton's past had risen to confound him. His old movies, made twenty years before, had suddenly become enormously popular on television, and poor Thornton was besieged by middle-aged women and people who wanted to exploit his revived romantic appeal. They even had a name for him—The Love Man.

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THORNTON refused to take part in any radio or television programs, although his agents, Bowles & Levitt, had been overwhelmed with requests for guest appearances and for transcriptions of potential radio and television packages, not to mention the movie offers, which Thornton would not even discuss.

"I just want to clean up this mess and go home," he told Stella one night when she was fixing his hot milk. He had asked her to buy an electric hot plate and a saucepan, because the hot milk from room service was always lukewarm.

"It'll blow over, dear," Stella said.

Thornton glanced up from a fresh batch of amorous fan mail. "What do you mean?"

"These things always do. Like flagpole sitters."

"I'm afraid I don't see the connection," Thornton said, somewhat sharply. "Why flagpole sitters?"

"I didn't mean it the way it sounded. I just meant—"

"It doesn't matter." He had gone back to the letters, studying them as though they were part of some lesson he was having trouble learning. "What's the name of that singer Carol listens to all the time?"

"Which one?"

"He whines."

"Oh. Perry Como."

He nodded, then went on reading the letters.

"What in the world made you think of him?" Stella said.

"The fuss people make over him. Not people so much—just women. I was wondering why."

"He's sexy."

"I remember Valentino. Same thing."

"Oh, he was very sexy."

"There must be more to it than that."

"When a woman's lonely, dissatisfied . . . That's a safe and harmless way of taking a lover."

He thanked her for the hot milk, but didn't drink it, just sat staring at it as though it, too, were part of the problem he was studying. "I don't really need it. It's just a habit."

"I know. There's nothing wrong with your stomach."

"I never thought of myself as being—well, you know, sexy."

He began to sip the hot milk, and Stella came very close to understanding why he drank it. It was part of the protecting wall he had thrown around himself. She didn't know why he felt the need of such a wall, but she did know it could be penetrated, and eventually would have to be destroyed.

WHEN Thornton asked Sam Levitt if someone in the agency would mind taking Carol sight-seeing, Sam gave the assignment to one of the young men in the talent department, Bill Ainslee, whose work at Bowles & Levitt consisted of charming talent away from rival agencies, holding clients' hands through the crisis of a new opening or a new divorce, and wangling house seats to hit plays for Hollywood visitors. He drove a large yellow convertible and his manners and clothes seemed to Carol terribly New York. When he turned to tip the doorman an expense-account dollar, Carol hurriedly slipped off Dick's Delt pin and dropped it in her purse.

"Well, what do you want to see?" Bill said.

"All of it."

"It's a big town."

"I don't care. I want to see everything—Broadway, the Bowery, Wall Street, Brooklyn Bridge. Everything."

They covered Fifth Avenue, Central Park and Riverside Drive, then crawled through the incredible traffic of the theater district to Sardi's, where Carol ate veal scaloppine, drank red wine and met two actresses. After lunch they drove through the narrow, crooked streets of Greenwich Village and Bill pointed out the little house where Edna St. Vincent Millay had once lived.

"I can't hold it all in my head," Carol said. "It's too much."

"We'll do it again sometime," Bill said, and smiled down at her, so sure of himself he made her feel squirmy. "What happened to your pin?"

"What pin?"

"You were wearing it when you got off the elevator."

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ILLUSTRATED BY LIONEL GILBERT

THAT

In 1950, Mickey was a green

TOM GREENWADE is a hunter by instinct, avocation and profession. It is his pleasure to flush quail and other small game in the hills of his native Ozarks and his business to beat the bushes for young ballplayers wherever they may be found. He believes that he found one of the very best virtually on his own doorstep, which didn't come as a complete surprise to Tom, since he once came home from a day in the woods to find Harry S. Truman in his own kitchen.

Greenwade is a Nimrod of such repute around his home in Willard, Missouri, that it seemed only natural that Mr. Truman, in his pre-Presidential days, should pop over from Independence to seek Tom's assistance in arranging a hunting trip. But in some circles, potential big-leaguers are considered harder to come by than future Presidents, and Greenwade would sooner talk of bagging outfielder Mickey Charles Mantle, the nineteen-year-old Yankee property, than of going a-hunting with Harry.

It seems safe to say that no rookie ever started a season in the big time with so little public notice and such enthusiastic professional fanfare as Mantle. Joe DiMaggio had established himself as a star in the Pacific Coast League before he ever wore a Yankee uniform, and the bugles that blew for Clint Hartung when he came out of the Army to join the Giants were sounded by nonprofessionals. It was the ballplayers themselves who beat the drums for young Mickey—the World Champion Yankees and the members of such teams as they played in their extensive spring barnstorming tour.

Mantle came to the Yanks' Phoenix training camp this spring as a shortstop from the Joplin, Missouri, club of the Class C Western Association. He was not even on the Yankee roster, but was attached to their American Association farm at Kansas City. By opening day, he was in right field in Yankee Stadium, playing alongside DiMaggio, before more paid admissions than he had seen in his entire first season in organized ball, 1949.

If the jump Mantle made was a prodigious one, the pressure he was under was equally great. He had no more than 20 games to his credit in the outfield when he opened the season with the Yankees.



HUGH BRODERICK

A converted shortstop, Mickey Mantle (r.) got constant outfield coaching from the great Joe DiMaggio when he began the season as a Yank

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