



Sing a Song of Jazz

BY VALMA CLARK

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ILLUSTRATIONS BY HARVÉ STEIN



ANGELA paused on the great staircase, and with a bare white arm cooling itself against the mahogany rail, looked down at the gathering of the Ladies' Betterment League which was filling her grandmother's three huge parlors. There were the sheen of restless silks and the gabble of many voices. The ladies had chosen this New Year's Eve of 1921 to initiate a clean-up programme in the town; and, congregated here in their holiday best, they were awaiting the returns.

Angela's moving eye collected the entire assemblage with scorn. At the spectacle of Peter Harned making himself agreeable to that little busybody, Mrs. Alvah Hutchins, her gaze paused. Couldn't gram pull even a hen party without including Peter to rustle chairs and tote

trays? Bah! It was Peter—Peter—too much Peter!

"The Black Horse Tavern first," came Mrs. Carmody's bass voice, drowning out the lighter chatter. "To have a place like that open in the same county with our daughters—our granddaughters—is contamination! I told Sheriff Hilton to report to me here directly after the raid." She stood in a little space respectfully cleared for her. A stationary figure in a rich brocaded black velvet, with a diamond brooch at her throat and a gold watch on her flat bosom, with a bony, firm face darkly moustached, she seemed the pivot for their pattern of shifting and excitable femininity. That nervous little Miss Trask in nose-glasses and purple changeable silk was her right-elbow woman. . . .

Peter first, then the others, discovered Angela. She stood, a little slim girl, with her pale, pointed face cast down, and

with a sheen upon her smooth flaxen hair. In her yellow-sashed dress with the clusters of old-fashioned nosegays—tight pink moss buds encircled with forget-me-nots—and with a tiny wreath of the same innocent flowers about her hair, Angela was the perfect picture of an old lady's nineteenth-century conception of what a young girl should be. No one could look more demure, more truly angelic, than this little nineteen-year-old, twentieth-century heiress of the Carmody wealth. But this impression was false, as all of Holly knew. To correct it, Angela had only to fling up her eyes—dark, glowing, passionate eyes with yellow glints of life and laughter in them.

"Well, well—come down, if you're coming!" boomed her grandmother, voicing the strain.

Angela strolled.

All of them—all of these old ladies—were feeling the danger, the thin ice of her mood . . . were watching her with a ghoulis expectancy for what she might do. Angela came slowly, groping for deviltry. Between her and Peter, the mistletoe, planted there by her match-making elder for the Christmas salute! Peter had made nothing from her, on that private occasion, by her grandmother's forethought; no, not even his gift of a chipped-diamond bar pin had melted Angela. But now, on this public occasion—

Suddenly Angela's little slim person became animate with mischief. She did a glissando on her slippered feet across the waxed floor to Peter . . . caught him by the bow-tie of his dress-suit, and pulled him down—half-a-league down, the hulking brute! She half-giggled the kiss against his honest surprise, against the sudden flaming red of his face.

He caught her, tight and hard—whew!

"That will do, Angela," said the bass voice drily.

But her grandmother was not outraged. So fatuous she was in her approval of Peter—faugh! The ladies were simpering. Probably the only proper shock she, Angela, had ever pulled—this abandoned affection of an engaged girl for her *fiancé*. Her error! She screwed a nasty face at Peter, pivoted on a sharp, yellow satin heel.

"Angela! Where are you going?"

"To tune up, gram."

She slipped into the fourth parlor—the sacred front one—and closed the door behind her. It was chilly in here. The four plaster heads of angels, which gazed down, in high relief, from the four corners of the ceiling, looked like death. A winter moon was on the portraits of the ladies of the family . . . and on the baize-covered symbol of their sacrifice, which occupied a central place in the room. There it stood—had always stood—never in its inanimate life removed from the shrine of these four walls.

Angela switched on lights, jerked off the cover from the great golden harp. The tradition—the inviolable tradition of the Carmody family. Master—not servant—of the Carmody women. Every daughter of the house must play it. They had started her at five, with an ancient music-master who travelled down to her from Rochester. He had rapped on her knuckles with a sharp pencil when she plucked too fast. Memories of the long hours of compulsory practice, golden hours of childhood when she had been shut in alone with only that gilded object for a companion, crowded Angela. The terrible despotism that stringed thing had exercised over all her life! She would never be free—really free—until she could subdue it. . . .

She seated herself. Angela never looked more like a little flaxen-haired saint than when she was bending to her harp. As docile she appeared as her great-grandmother, Charity Parkman, who was painted in currant-colored velvet, with the blond cap and bertha of the late eighteen-forties, in an attitude of subservience to this same harp. Angela squinted narrowly at the portrait of her great-grandmother. The lady had refused a concert career to play exclusively for her husband. Had she ever regretted? . . . Angela's grandmother, next in line, painted as a gentle-faced young girl—before she had grown iron character and a moustache—all in that softest "mikado" gray of the seventies, with deep falls of lace, and with her dark hair dressed in curls. The harp was, of course, the object of her pictured devotion—the harp was the star figure in each of these por-

traits! Persis Carmody had, by her own report, proudly refused to play publicly even in church. . . . And her own mother, Gretchen of the original flaxen hair, done in the cream-white satin with point lace and pearl beads which was her wedding-dress in 1900. Her mother was long dead now, but the face in the portrait had great spirit, and the story was that she had taken less kindly to the harp, upon her marriage to young Philip Carmody, than his mother might have wished. Did her initials, "G.C.," stabbed into the gilt of the harp, express something of the young wife's rebellion against the tyranny of her mother-in-law? . . . Or were they all sweetly, gently compliant to the tradition? In all that galaxy of harp devotees, hadn't she any support at all? Was the rebel spirit really something new—something wholly modern?

But now the door grated open. Peter! He said abruptly: "Why did you do that? Out there?"

"Wh-what—? Why, Peter Harned, d'you mean you didn't want me—?"

"You only did it before a crowd! You wouldn't have done it if there hadn't been a crowd! That's all our engagement means to you—just a spectacle—"

"I can't help it," said Angela, "because I grew up being engaged to you. Any time you want to call it off—" She struck three chords, and sang in tones of mild resignation:

"'Child of sin and sorrow, filled with dismay,
Wait not for to-morrow, yield thee to-day—'"

"Yes, but listen, Angie! It's not right—when I care, and you don't—to make me a public—"

"If you don't want to be in the public eye, then you'd better pass me up. I can't bear to be inconspicuous! 'Heaven bids thee come while yet there's ro-om. . . .'"

She was now lightly jazzing the plaintive hymn . . . humming. . . .

He caught her two wrists: "Will you stop it! She'll hear you—your grandmother—"

Angela snatched herself free of him. "Suppose she does! The harp's reserved for sacred music—and I'm reserved for you—you alone! Don't you ever get sick of backing up gram's prejudices? Don't you ever get clean fed-up with

being a good boy? Don't you, Peter Harned?"

"But Angie, sweetheart, I was only trying—"

"Trying to forestall the explosion between gram and me that's bound to come off. Peace committee of one—huh! It's your old rôle. You'd better cut out that fire-extinguishing stunt, Peter Harned; one of these days you'll sneak up on the tail of a lighted fuse once too often; when the smoke clears—"

"Angie, honey, I didn't mean—!"

"Refreshments first," came the seep of a voice through the half-open door; "then the concert by the little Carmody girl. It's still only ten o'cl—"

"Can you simply bear it?" whispered Angela. "The same old ditties that *they* were warbling twenty—forty—sixty years ago. Shades of the old sweet melodies—can't you *hear* them echoing here? Don't you s'pose that she—my great-grandmother Parkman up there—might have sneaked in *Champagne Charley*, or some of those old rough ones—at least when she was alone? And what do you s'pose would happen if I ripped into something new—really new, to-night? No—I've too much life to *endure*—"

Peter came close to her, as though irresistibly drawn. He made a stumbling effort of words: "I—I understand! You're like the steam in a plugged exhaust pipe, and you've got to find an outlet or blow up the works. I—if you can only put up with me—like me a little—I'd never block the way. There'd be a free exit to—to any damn place you wanted to go—"

"You mean *you're* my stepping-stone to freedom?"

"Well. . . ." He was such a big, honest, simple creature; and his feeling for her was so whole-souled, so bone serious. And when a man is forever spreading before you, like a door-mat, his heart's devotion . . . fairly begging you to tread upon him. . . .

"D'you think that you are my only access to the great wide world?"

"Oh, Lord, Angie," he groaned, "I didn't mean—"

"Huh! Just to show you that you're dead wrong—!" Angela met, with bright regard, the sudden tortured burning out

of his blue eyes; she dropped her lashes, and measured to the full the effect of her next words upon him. She delivered them with the thrust of a lady employing a hat-pin—sticking Peter, Peter being stuck: that was the world history of their entire relationship from childhood. "It's all off, then. From now on, I'll roll my own, thank you."

His boy's coloring left him. "You mean—our engagement—?"

"Yes, I do."

But he had reached her, his arms were about her, closing as though to crush out of her the wilfulness. "You can't! Angie! You won't—I can't bear——"

Angela, within his fierce hold, was queerly passive. "It's no use. . . . Please, Peter, they'll see!"

"But you—kissed me then—just a few minutes back——"

"It's not then—it's now! I tell you it's off. Sh! what are they saying?"

"—The Black Horse Tavern, my dear, but not till midnight——"

"Peter, which is the Black Horse Tavern?"

"The Ridge Road. But seriously, dear——"

"Listen, Peter, have you got your car here?" She had wriggled entirely away from him.

"At the front of the house—why?" he asked, stopped by the sudden sharp purpose in her voice.

"There's a last thing," said Angela, "which I think you can do for me. Wait—wait right here!" . . . She was almost instantly back, with the ermine evening wrap, which had been her grandmother's Christmas gift to her, trailing the floor. She was incandescent with excitement. "Coast's clear—they've adjourned to the mess-hall. Now's our chance."

"But where—? You don't mean—the Black Horse Tavern!"

"Right."

"But you're not planning for *me* to take *you*——?"

"Right, again."

"But Angela, I can't! I can't do such a thing! Any other evening, on the q. t.——"

"Any time but the time I want! That's a sample of your freedom! Peter, was

there ever any use to argue with me? And I've made up my mind! If I thought forever, I couldn't think of a better way to start this New Year than to get in on gram's special pet raid. The granddaughter of the president of the Ladies' Betterment League—could anything be more conspicuous than that? You can't stop me! You can dash in and squeal on me to gram—but by that time I'll be gone—and afterward I'll not speak to you till death seals my lips—on my oath, I won't! I'm going if I go alone. . . . Well, *do* I go alone? And say, Big Boy, pass me the lute!"

"The—the harp? But my God, Angie, you can't——"

"Do you move me, or do I move myself? It's pretty tall for me."

"But wh—what's the idea? My God, Angie, I can't—you can't— Why, it'd be as much as my life's worth for me to take that harp out of your grandmother's house!"

Angela looked from Peter to the harp. Seven little devils of cool calculation were dancing in her brown eyes. She came back to the spectacle of Peter's soul-agony. "Will you shake a leg!"

Twenty minutes later the hilarious, smoky atmosphere of the Black Horse Tavern's main dining-room was invaded by a princess in an ermine wrap, and a boy in a coon-skin coat who lugged a great baize-covered object. It was between dances. A burly man at a near-by table glanced up, paused in the act of pouring out another from a hip flask, and addressed his Titian-haired companion: "Say, ain't that that little Carmody devil—and her boy-friend—and—what th' hell——?"

Angela stepped past him, past other glances of inquiry, amazed recognition, vivid questioning. . . . She moved direct to the little hovering, pouter-pigeon figure of a man, who was clearly the proprietor. "Table, madam?"

"Is that all of the orchestra?" she asked, with a nod toward the five males who occupied the platform.

"Fagan's Jazz Band, from Syracuse," he assured her.

"You need a harp. Will you boost me up?"

The little Frenchman stared. He was new to these parts; he had never heard of Angela, or the Carmody tradition.

But here Peter caught up with her. "Angela!" he cried. "Don't you let her—*you!* If you do you'll regr—"

"Oh, shut up! Don't pay any attention to him. A hand, boys!" she urged, shedding her cloak, and laughing up at the five men on the platform. "A hand for the stringed baby! . . . Now, let's go! What is it—*The Sheik*? I'm on!"

The rest of that short evening was run through like a musical smear, like the rip of a jazz record speeded too fast. There on the platform, the centre of a web of paper streamers, the object of fuddled compliments, the chief cause of ever louder and ever noisier blasts upon tin horns, Angela let herself go. She played, with fingers and toes—with all of her body, she jazzed upon the Carmody heirloom. The harp is a slow, rather inflexible instrument, and the skill which she demonstrated that evening must have represented hours and hours of stolen practice behind closed doors in the old front parlor. But now, at last, her execution was public. Openly she desecrated the Carmody harp, and the desecration was joy to her. For *she* was master now. She controlled and insulted the thing which had tyrannized over her . . . used it as a mere implement to release all the twanging and rippling madness of life which had been confined in her.

Peter, at the table below her, drank and frowned—and Angela broke into high song. . . . Everybody took up the chorus. Glides and slides of feet and saxaphones. . . . Voices shouting, arms sawing, bodies swaying—all the mechanism of joy going at once! Angela was the centre of it, on familiar terms with orchestra and dancers. The blacker Peter scowled at her, the higher flamed her zest. He cut in upon her a dozen times, tried to tear her away. Because it made Peter more unhappy, Angela smiled openly upon the drummer, who had a misshapen cranium and a weak chin. Peter's face suffered, his eyes were wild. Several things he *could* do besides glower, she reflected: he could tip off the raid to the proprietor; he could 'phone her grandmother. The latter was the thing which

Peter probably did, in that short interval when he was absent from the room. But at that point, some one passed Angela a cocktail which tasted like varnish, and she stopped reflecting. . . .

Midnight! The lights were off, horns were blaring, and Angela was somehow being swung from shoulder to shoulder. Hot breaths . . . trespassing hands . . . a kiss from which she struggled free. Now a grasp she knew . . . a clean, hard grip upon her shoulder. . . . Peter, shaking her! "For the love of God, Angie—!"

But lights flashed on, and Angela dodged from him, laughing. She was back at the harp again, her spread hand plucking up the rhythm. The long, loose, downward smear of the music, like the slipping of a drunken man . . . the halt, and the sudden upward recovery, like a hiccup . . . now the pat, pat, with head and shoulders going—Angela and the drummer executing a pantomime duet of fox-trotting partners separated.

So absorbed she was, that she missed the entrance at the far end of the room. She glanced up, saw the commotion, and welcomed it as the raid.

But this was not the raid. It was Angela's grandmother, supported by ladies of the League, who stood and gathered in the whole scene! Angela stopped dead in the middle of a crescendo. . . . The orchestra caught her shock, and stopped subsequently. In the complete hush that ensued, Mrs. Carmody advanced, her cane tapping ominously. She was a stern figure in her hereditary sealskin cape, with a black Chantilly scarf tied over her head. Those who had been unable to sit but a moment before, now managed an upright position; expectancy seemed to stiffen their spines.

Peter sprang to her side, but she motioned him back. "Well?" she said, in her tremendous bass voice, with her black eyes upon Angela.

Angela was suddenly conscious of the fact that her dress was torn half off her shoulder, and that the wreath of artificial flowers was over one eye.

"A private room," Peter entreated; "this way, Mrs. Carmody, please!"

"I have nothing to say to my granddaughter," boomed that lady, "which I

cannot say in public. If Peter Harned will have you, you will marry him at once. Otherwise, you are disinherited. Well?"

Angela stared back at her grandmother . . . turned to seek out Peter. . . . His blue eyes burned into hers with a sudden intense hope, a breathless pleading. . . . Angela's knees seemed to melt away. . . . But a little smile touched the muscles of her cheek; she said, still watching Peter like an experiment— "I'll clear out, gram!"

Mrs. Carmody turned.

"Angie!" burst from Peter. "Oh, Mrs. Carmody, wait!"

"Don't talk to me—talk to her. Just one thing more, Angela! On one condition only, will I ever see you again. If the time comes when you do make up your mind to take Peter Harned, I'll . . . talk to you. That is, if Peter is still fool enough to have you."

"The harp, gram! Is that disinherited, too?"

"It's yours," said old Mrs. Carmody grimly.

In the buzz that followed their departure, and in the two-minute interval when Peter was in pursuit of them, probably in an attempt at arbitration, Angela grabbed the proprietor: "I want you to get me and my harp to the station—at once, by a back way! Wait—Oh, damn, I've no money. But the raid—I can tip you to the raid—"

Flash a close-up of the little Carmody girl alone on the platform, under winter stars; she wears a priceless coat, but she is bareheaded, and her sole possessions in this world are two dollars in the pocket of the brocaded coat-lining—as yet undiscovered—and the baize-covered harp which stands taller than she does. That figure in the background is the drummer, who is acting-first-cavalier to the harp. The tension which Angela is registering is the outward expression of an inward prayer that the east-bound 12:45 will reach this platform ahead of Peter Harned. But when the train does come thundering in, she lingers strangely . . . delaying until the last member of Fagan's Jazz Band is aboard, and the train is actually moving. . . .

Angela, in a quandary, was driven to accept the drummer's offer of a fare to

Syracuse. Whereupon, the fellow's attentions to her became so fervid that she was terrified, and appealed to another. She chose a middle-aged gentleman as her protector. This fatherly man understood perfectly—too perfectly? . . . He settled the drummer, and paid her fare on to New York. . . . He hoped, significantly, that Angela would allow him to help her. . . .

Angela escaped. She bribed the porter, with the cameo ring on her little finger, to smuggle her harp off at the next station. That was Rochester. A good manœuvre to elude Peter, she assured herself! In Rochester, she played for three nights in a German restaurant, where she made a modest hit and made, also, her own fare to New York. That was the beginning of Angela's career.

New Year's Eve of 1926—just five years later to the day. The scene was the Pullman car of an east-bound train, which was temporarily stalled in the blizzard somewhere west of Rochester. The passengers included "The Queen of Jazz" and the members of her nine-piece ladies' band, which was returning from a vaudeville tour of the West, and was due in Rochester for an engagement that evening.

Angela herself lay back in the plush seat with her eyes closed. In the five years she had changed. Her flaxen hair was off; one—and only one—of the tiny waxen ears swung a tremendously long silver filigree earring. Except when she was rock-still, the earring jazzed. At this moment she was motionless; Angela had learned to conserve her energy. Her face was unlined and as fine-featured as ever, but it had thinned and sharpened a little, and—yes—hardened, as though it had learned resistance. Only the dark eyes, when she opened them, were the same—the same young vitality, the same dancing glints of gold. Her dress was nun's gray, with a touch of devil's red, and the very extreme little gray kid slippers she wore had heels and triangular toe inserts of red.

About her was the stir of the eight bored and grumbling members of her company: Fritzie Ryan, trombone; Tot Taylor, piano; Bubbles Gordon, sax and clarinet; and Lola La Mont, also sax and

clarinet, playing a listless and argumentative game of poker. . . . Irene and Gwen, banjo and drums respectively, quarrelling over the merits of marcel and water wave. . . . Dolores, trumpet, blowing upon a fresh coating of rosy-pink liquid nail-polish. . . . Babe, violin and *comédienne*, suffering the attentions of a travelling salesman.

The conductor passed through, and they hailed him, one and all, for the tenth time. "When do we move?" . . . "Here for the night?" . . . "My Gawd, we got a show waiting for us." . . . "You hear him, Angie, he says he don't know!" . . . "No diner, and I've had nothing but a gin rickey since breakfast." . . . The conductor was patient, but noncommittal. He mentioned, for the tenth time, that smoking was not allowed in the car. He moved on.

Angela looked out upon the gray, snow-blurred landscape. Did some glimmering of its familiarity reach her? Holly . . . and memories of the five years between. . . . She had played in cabarets and picture palaces, where orchestra leaders and managers had pursued her. She had made eight round trips on a third-rate ocean-liner, where the French captain had paid her marked attention. She had been discovered by a modernist poet. She had had a sensational success on the Loew Circuit. In all that time, she had heard nothing from Holly—or from Peter! At first she had sent him occasional small notes—without any address, and just often enough to keep him stirred. The flippant substance of these notes had been enough to drive a good man in love with her crazy—from that very first one, which had hinted at a continued close friendship with the drummer! Yes, Angela had gone that far out of her way to torture Peter. . . .

But now the reflection of a lantern in the darkening pane through which she stared caught Angela's attention. It was carried by a man moving in the dim gray world beyond. This lantern was fate's first signal to Angela.

Now voices in the passageway . . . the man with the lantern and the conductor entering their car. The fellow's rough overcoat and his cap with the earmufflers were plastered with snow; his

hawk's face, a wet, stinging red from the storm, was strangely familiar to Angela.

"S there a Mr. Zeppo aboard?" called the conductor. No answer from the passengers. "This is the last car," he shrugged. "Guess your man's not here."

"Heck," said the storm-battered individual, "now what'll I tell them ladies? A two-mile drive from the village, diggin' through most of the way——"

"Zeppo," murmured Angela. "Is it Zeppo, the violinist, you're looking for?"

His gaze jumped to her. "The same, ma'am! Do you know——?"

"Know of him. What is it—a special programme?"

"Special—you've said it! This here bird's due to play in the Holly Grand Opera House at eight-thirty sharp tonight. The house is pretty nigh sold out, and it's important—a benefit affair. I swore to Miss Trask of the Ladies' Betterment League that I'd tunnel over here and fetch him back, if it was my last——"

Ladies' Betterment League! "Holly—are we close to Holly?"

"Two miles, ma'am." But of course—this was Sam Jones of the coal and feed store! Angela's dark eyes opened wide . . . and wider upon him. Suddenly they showed dancing points of gold; the muscles of her cheek nagged to smile. His hawk eyes were blank of any slightest recognition of her. This was rich—Oh, rich! "Wait!" said Angela.

She rose, slid into a moleskin jaquette and a little scarlet felt hat. "Wha's the idea?" gasped Lola.

"Girls, gather up your compacts—and collect the pipes and cymbals!" ordered Angela. "Better button yourselves against the weather. We've got one carload of instruments, sir. . . . Isn't there a farmhouse or two along the way where we could collect a couple of flivvers to rattle the human baggage into town? There's nine of us girls."

"But——"

"Listen," said Angela, "we nine will take the place of Mr. Zeppo. A whole brass band instead of one dinky violinist."

"But I dunno what Miss Trask——"

"The price," said Angela, "will be the same. Man, it's a bargain I'm offering you!"



Drawn by Harold Stein.

"The harp, Gram! Is that disinherited, too?"—Page 611.

"Seems like Holly *would* get its money's worth. . . ."

"It will," Angela stated.

"But Angie, what about our *Palace* date—?"

"*The Palace*," she said, "will have to worry along without us this one night. The train would never make Rochester in time, anyhow. Buck up, girls! There's a rare evening—and a hot dinner!—just ahead of you. Well?"

Piled three-deep in an open flivver, they scored Angela all the way into town. "This joint, Holly, is it mentioned on the road maps?" . . . "Not that unit of bedtime lights off there?—Aw, Angie, quit your funnin'!" . . . "But honest, kid, what's the idea—that's all I'm asking." . . . "Steady, bo, on them wash-outs! The springs on this bus don't seem to cope them, and I got me one bad rib—Oh, my Gawd, I'm a broken blossom!" . . . "Rib?—My knees are both frost-bit, and I got no more basis for a complexion left—"

Angela leaned forward and instructed the farmer boy to drop them at the Mapletree Hotel. "You been in this burg before? Say, I got you, I'll bet this place Holly's your home-town! And I'll bet—gosh, girls, I'll bet Angie's got a rube sweetie here she's aiming to make sit up and take notice. I always did suspicion her of an anchor somewhere in her past, 'count of her pulling so straight. Golly, I begin to get the spirit of this detour! But say, I'll bet nothing as fast as us has ever previously hit this village."

Angela giggled. "Girls, I'm counting on you for speed!"

"Speed, girls, you hear her? Angie, kid, we're your women!"

And indeed, the performance which "The Queen of Jazz and Her Band" (it was so that Angela had instructed them to introduce her, keeping well out of sight herself) put on in unsuspecting little Holly that night was the fastest of fast-stepping metropolitan shows. Through a hole in the curtain, she watched them gathering—took a keen zest in recalling each half-forgotten face. . . . Miss Julia Bly, the pet aversion of her childhood . . . Miss Sarah Trask . . . Peter! Could it be Peter "filled out," that great figure of a man? And

the girl in white lace with him—the large, placid beauty? Surely that was Daisy Medford, no other! Was it possible that Peter—Angela's Peter—had married *her*? . . . And gram—gram herself, in all her panoply of sealskin, black brocade, and family diamonds! . . . Bowing right and left, and receiving on all sides respectful homage. . . . Seated upright now, in the place of honor—front row middle, directly under Angela.

Mrs. Alvah Hutchins, rather doubtfully announcing the change: "The Queen of Jazz and Her Band, who have very kindly offered to substitute for Mr. Zeppo, the violinist. . . ."

The curtain rolled up, and for the only silent moment of the entire evening, Angela was discovered seated at her harp, and surrounded by her bevy of girls, trombone, saxaphones, trumpet upraised, each instrument ready for instant attack. In that first second, there was, on the collective face of Holly, no recognition for Angela. Girl at harp . . . *harp* . . . what did that suggest?

But Angela gave one jerk of her shorn head, and the assault was on. "*The Lunatic's Dream*," with every known variation. . . . Angela herself, occupied as she was, knew just when the suspicion of her identity penetrated; she got it in the tightening of her grandmother's face, in the sudden flare-up of Peter Harned's color, in the general whisper increasing to a loud buzz. . . .

"*Hot Lips!*" cried Angela, exchanging harp for flute, and they were off afresh, drowning comment in blatant and contagious sound. Angela, a little figure in animate dress of gold metallic cloth, was, in the course of the next half-hour, everything at once. She was thunder, lightning, and a cuckoo call. She doubled, trebled, and quadrupled on harp, flute, cymbals, and oboe. She was the saucy female in the comedy argument between the masculine bass sax and the feminine clarinet. She was the singing soloist in "Will You Love Me When My Flivver's on the Bum?" and the dancing soloist in "Some Little Somebody to Love." But why multiply the instances of Angela's outrageous versatility?

With a man's derby over one eye, and with her gilt-slipped feet doing a hot



Drawn by Harvé Stein.

"Listen," said Angela, "we nine will take the place of Mr. Zeppo."—Page 612.

step on just one spot of the platform, Angela carolled:

"When in the Charleston dance I want to bump
a knee
I want to bump a knee
With her—,"

It was at this point that Mrs. Carmody rose up, and, supported by Miss Trask, made her way from the Opera House. Her exit was definite and dramatic. And yet—was the tap-tapping of her stick a trifle less sure than formerly—was her stern rigidity failing ever so little? Nonsense! It was good—good to crash through the ice of gram's disapproval! But suppose the whole house should walk out on her—? Angela flung herself harder into the fun-making.

The house did not empty, but gradually filled until every square foot of standing room was occupied. The rumor of the little Carmody girl's spectacular return must have spread over the town. And gradually Angela breathed life into the cold marble of their shock and disapproval. It was a final feat of real genius—the way Angela, a single hot coal in a bed of gray ashes, fanned up, at last, a *bona fide* fire. And now she was getting over to them something of her own strong feeling of the sincerity, the underlying sadness of jazz. The modernist poet who had discovered her had published statements to the effect that Angela was an artist with a mission in life. Holly, however remotely, was experiencing vibrations of the same thought.

The last half was a rollick, with the audience shouting for favorites and whistling in. Angela closed, finally, after six encores and seven bows. She avoided a personal ovation only by sliding out through a rear door.

Twenty minutes later, in the privacy of Angela's hotel bedroom, the entire company was enjoying Swiss ryes and near-beer, when the clerk telephoned up: "Gentleman to see you, Miss Carmody."

Peter! What could he want of her? Angela ran down to the deserted lounge; Peter was dead white; Angela herself was rather pale. "Oh, hello!"

"Hello, Angela. I . . . ladies of the League have sent me."

"Umph," said Angela.

"I . . . it's an awful mess."

"Good to see you," said Angela brightly. "By the way, Peter, are you married to that—to Daisy Medford?"

"No."

"Hm—engaged to her?"

"Not yet," said Peter succinctly; "but I hope to be."

"Hm. Well, what's an awful mess? I'd say I saved the night for the Ladies' League. They had a full house, didn't they?"

"It's not that; the receipts were good. They raised their thousand—something over. But it was a conditional proposition, see—Mrs. Carmody would give five thousand, if they made their goal. But now she goes back on her word. She says it was a cooked-up job. You've got to come with me, Angie, and convince your grandmother that the League had nothing to do with bringing you here."

"Hm. What's the fund for? More clean-up?"

"No, it's for a free children's ward in the town hospital."

"Oh! In that case——"

Peter and Miss Trask were the witnesses of the combat between Angela and old Mrs. Carmody. Her grandmother, unrelaxed upon the Duncan Phyfe sofa, with pillows at her head and smelling salts at her nose, refused to have any negotiations with reason. The Ladies' League had imported Angela and her atrocious band as a direct insult to her, Persis Carmody. The Ladies' League could then rustle for the additional five thousand. All Angela's explanations, all her pleas for little sick children, were to no avail. And yet, under the steel of her grandmother's ultimatum, Angela caught a tiny quivering of the moustached lip. The poor old dear was solitary . . . and weaker than she had been.

"Isn't there," hinted the girl softly, "any appeal I can make to you? Can't we come to—to any terms, gram?"

The old lady blinked back at Angela's meaning. "There's Peter. I said then—I say it now—if you'd marry——"

"Oh, Angela," entreated Miss Trask, "if you just could bring yourself to do it for Holly! For the fund!"

Angela lifted to Peter both consideration and interrogation.

But Peter moved backward from her. "No," he groaned, "I don't *want*—"

Having played the situation, Angela now gripped it firmly. She turned to Miss Trask: "The five thousand is yours. I'll write you my own check for it. Tell that to the ladies. And gram, I'll drive no bargains with you, understand? If I marry Peter, it's because I choose to marry him—it's conditional upon nothing. As a matter of fact, if you hadn't pulled so hard for Peter—put him so terribly under the disadvantage of your choice—As a matter of fact," she trailed off, "even now—if Peter himself weren't so—so averse—"

Two minutes later, Angela was in Peter's arms in the hallway. . . . "But that damned drummer scoundrel—all those others—"

"I may never have the impulse again, but suddenly I want to be nice to you. The drummer—all the others—were nothing in my life. Just fiction! That's gospel, Peter. But that person in the lace window-curtain with you to-night—that Daisy Medford—do you tumble for her?"

"I—we've been peaceful together," sighed Peter.

Suddenly Angela twisted from him, and clicked off the telephone-receiver. She called the hotel and got Lola La Mont. "Lola," she said, "you'll have to go on without me. What? . . . Yes, that's it. What? . . . Yes, thorns and orange blossoms. . . . Thanks, dear! And Lola, will you ship me the harp? It's a parlor piece—retires with me—uh huh."

The Credo at Work

BY WILLIAM U. GAVER



NOT long ago public sentiment was aroused in our community. "Aroused for righteousness," the local clergy said. A prominent citizen had been unfaithful

to his marriage vows, and his shame had been flaunted in the open court. A wave of moral indignation swept over us. Here was a man whose example would corrupt our youth. There was talk of our emulating the fate of the Roman Empire. Before the indignation subsided, the offense had assumed the colossal and complex proportions of an attempt to destroy the moral fibre of society, to undermine American institutions, and to demolish the sanctity of the home; and the man himself had taken on the aspect of an arch-fiend.

Strangely enough, nobody had ever thought to become indignant about this fellow's illicit dalliance before the news of it appeared in the papers. His affair had

been an open secret for months before it got into the head-lines, and had been regarded by the community with marked composure. The man remained a respected citizen—the subject of some gossip, certainly—but at most he was the victim of nothing more damaging than knowing winks. Immediately that the news of his transgression became openly public information, however, he became a virtual outcast.

Having known all about the matter for a long time, people were suddenly shocked, scandalized, and angered to read about it in the papers. It now took on an entirely new meaning. As an open scandal, it became a matter of public concern; and so it had to be regarded in terms of its general significance. One no longer passed judgment merely on the behavior of Miss A. and Mr. B. One now passed judgment on moral principles. Was this not a case of defying God's law, of striking at the roots of our moral fibre, of flouting the sanctity of the home? Was one to think the same of such a sin as one had pre-