

# Simple Aveu

A STORY

*By Nancy Hale*

**L**ISTEN, sweet," the girl said. She held the Tom Collins glass in both hands and turned it round and round between her palms. "You mustn't think I'm being awful."

"I don't think you're being awful," the man said.

"No, but I don't want you to think I'm just being promiscuous or anything. You know I'm not promiscuous, don't you?"

"Sure. I know you're not promiscuous."

"I mean, we agreed from way back that we'd tell each other if anything happened to change the way we felt."

"Sure, I know. I'm not kicking, am I?"

"No, I know you're not. But I just want you to know that I'm not just falling for this man."

"Well, what do you call it?"

She put her glass down and leaned across the table earnestly.

"Darling, don't be like that. I mean I don't want you to think I just went out and fell for him. I didn't want to fall for him."

"Sure, I know. He swept you off your feet."

"Darling, please don't talk like that. I wouldn't have fallen for him if I could have helped it."

"All right. Let's talk about something else."

"I just don't want this to end with you hating me."

"I don't hate you. Now let's talk about something else."

"All right, darling. What do you want to talk about?"

The man leaned back and put his feet up in the chair on the other side of the table.

"Hell," he said. "There's lots of things to talk about. Mussolini. Unemployment. The Spanish situation. All you have to do is read the papers."

"I wish you didn't hate me so."

"I told you I didn't hate you, for God's sake. I think you're fine. I'm just talking about something else. Can't I talk about something else?"

"Listen, why can't we go on being perfectly good friends?"

"Sure, why not? The three of us—you and me and your lovely friend. We'll all go on some swell parties together."

"I don't see why you have to hate him. He thinks you're fine."

"Tell him I'm so glad. Go out and buy him a bunch of geraniums with my compliments. Geraniums—that's for a pain in the neck."

"Oh, dear," the girl said. "I don't see why it has to end like this. I thought I was doing the right thing to tell you about it. Wouldn't you rather I told you about it and was perfectly square about it all than to just let it go on and on?"

"Sure I'm glad."

"I mean I could have just gone on letting you think I still loved you until things petered out by themselves."

"Nice picture, petering out."

"Well, just kind of rearranged themselves naturally."

"Yeah, I see."

"Oh, darling, please don't be so mad at me. I'm trying to do the best I can."

"What do you keep saying I'm mad at you for? I'm not mad at you."

"If you used to love me the way you said you did, I don't see how you could hate me so now."

"Oh, for God's sake. Let's have another drink."

"Do you think you'd better? You've had four."

The man held out his glass to the waiter. "Another Tom Collins."

"Please don't get drunk."

The man leaned toward her with elaborate attentiveness.

"Why not?"

"You know I hate to see you get drunk."

"You won't see me get drunk. You've never seen me drunk."

"All right."

"When have you ever seen me drunk?" he persisted.

"Darling, do we have to go all through this again?"

"Hell, no. We haven't got to go through anything again. Think of that. You'll never have to tell me I'm drunk again. Think of that. From now on you can tell your swell friend he's drunk instead."

"You know, I don't believe you ever did love me."

"All right. You believe that."

"Did you?"

"No. I never loved you. I just told you so. I just went around all the time with you because there aren't any girls in New York. How's that?"

"Darling, please, please, please don't be horrid. I only meant I didn't see how you could hate me so if you'd ever loved me."

"Listen, get this. I don't hate you."

"And please don't think I've treated you badly, will you?"

"No." He finished his drink and leaned back in his chair and began to sing under his breath.

"You want me to go, don't you?" she asked him.

"No. Why? Stick around. Have another drink."

"I don't want another drink."

"Well, let's talk then."

"All right."

"You begin. I suggested a lot of fine things to talk about and you didn't want to talk about them. Tell me about your lovely friend."

"You know him?"

"Sure, but I haven't got the woman's angle on him." He began singing again.

"I wish you wouldn't get drunk."

He stopped singing.

"What's the matter? Don't you like this tune? It's a swell tune. Try it on your Victrola some day when you get time." He began again.

"I guess I'd better go now."

"Just as you say."

The girl got up uncertainly.

"Aren't you coming out to the door with me?"

"Sure."

He followed her into the hall.

"Well, good-by," she said.

"Good-by." They shook hands.

"Come and see me sometimes, won't you?" she said.

"Sure."

She went out through the grilled door and the waiter who had opened it shut it after her. The man went back into the bar and put his foot on the rail.

"Tom Collins," he told the bartender.

He discovered his reflection in the big glass opposite. By stepping back a little he could get his face in focus. It was a curious feeling to come suddenly across that familiar face. He held his chin up and adjusted his necktie in the mirror.

The bartender put the drink in front of him. He took a sip off the top. Then he felt in his pocket and found a dollar bill and put it on the bar. He ran his hand along the round wooden moulding on the edge of the bar. It was cool and smooth.

"Nice bar," he said, stroking it. Then he went on drinking his drink.

## ADVICE TO A GIRL

*By Sara Teasdale*

No one worth possessing  
Can be quite possessed,  
Lay that on your heart,  
My young angry dear,  
This truth, this hard and precious stone,  
Lay it on your hot cheek,  
Let it hide your tear.  
Hold it like a crystal  
When you are alone  
And gaze in the depths of the icy stone;  
Long, look long and you will be blessed,  
No one worth possessing can be quite possessed.