BLACK IS WHITE

By GEORGE BARR McCUTCHEON

ILLUSTRATIONS By RAY WALTERS

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SYNOPSIS.

In the New York home of James Brood Dawes and Riggs, his two old pensioners and comrades, await the coming of Brood's son Frederic to learn the contents of a wireless from Brood, but Frederic, after reading, throws it into the fire and leaves the room without a word. Frederic tells Lydia Desmond, his fiancee, that the message announces his father's marriage and orders the house prepared for an immediate homecoming. Mrs. Desmond, the housekeeper and Lydia's mother, tries to cool Frederic's temper at the imperious changes. Brood and his bride arrive. She wins Frederic's liking at first meeting. Brood shows dislike and veiled hostility to his son. Lydia and Mrs. Brood meet in the lady-room, where Lydia works as Brood's secretary.

CHAPTER IV—Continued.

Lydia flinched, she knew not why. There was a sting to the words, despite the languidness with which they were uttered.

Risking more than she suspected, she said: "He never considers the cost of a thing, Mrs. Brood, if its beauty appeals to him." Mrs. Brood gave her a quizzical, half-puzzled look. "You have only to look about you for the proof. This one room represents a fortune." The last was spoken hastily.

"How old are you, Miss Desmond?" The question came abruptly.

"I am nineteen."

"You were surprised to find me so young. Will it add to your surprise if I tell you that I am ten years older than you?"

"It doesn't seem credible."

"Are you wondering why I tell you my age?"

"Yes," said Lydia, bluntly.

"In order that you may realize that I am ten years wiser than you, and that you may not again make the mistake of underestimating my intelligence."

The color faded from Lydia's face. She grew cold from head to foot. Involuntarily she moved back a pace. The next instant, to her unbounded surprise, Mrs. Brood's hands were outstretched in a gesture of appeal, and a quick, wistful smile took the place of the imperious stare.

"There! I am a nasty, horrid thing. Forgive me. Come! Don't be stubborn. Shake hands with me and say that you're sorry I said what I did." It was a quaint way of putting it, and her voice was so genuinely appealing that Lydia, after a moment's hesitation, extended her hands. Mrs. Brood grasped them in hers and gripped them tightly. "I think I should like to know that you are my friend, Lydia. Has it occurred to you that I am utterly without friends in this great city of yours? I have my husband, that is all."

The girl could no more withstand the electric charm of the woman than she could have fought off the sunshine. She was bewildered, and completely fascinated.

"It's—it's very good of you," she murmured, her own eyes softening as they looked into the deep, velvety ones that would not be denied. Even as she wondered whether she could ever really like this magnetic creature, she felt herself surrendering to the spell of her. "But perhaps you will not like me when you know me better."

"Perhaps," said Mrs. Brood, calmly, almost indifferently, and dismissed the subject. "What an amazing room! One can almost feel the presence of the genii that created it. It is the wish of the man with the enchanted lamp. As a rule, oriental rooms are abominations, but this—ah, this is not an oriental room after all. It is a part of the East itself—of the real East. I have sat in emperors' houses out there, my dear, and I have slept in the palaces of kings. I have seen just such things as these, and I know that they could not have been transported to this room except by magic. My husband is a magician."

"They came from the palaces of kings, Mrs. Brood," said Lydia enthusiastically. "Kings in the days when kings were real. This rug—"

"I know," interrupted the other. "My husband told me the story. It must have cost him a fortune."

"It was worth a fortune," said Lydia. A calculating squint had come into Mrs. Brood's eyes while she was speaking. To Lydia it appeared as if she were trying to fix upon the value of the wonderful carpet.

"A collector has offered him—how much? A hundred thousand dollars, is not that it? Ah, how rich he must be!"

"The collector you refer to—"

"I was referring to my husband," said Mrs. Brood, unabashed. "He is very rich, isn't he?"

Lydia managed to conceal her annoyance. "I think not, as American fortunes are rated."

"It doesn't matter," said the other, carelessly. "I have my own fortune. And it is not my face," she added, with a quick smile. "Now let us look further. I must see all these wonderful things. We will not be missed, and it is still half an hour till tea-time. My husband is now telling his son all there is to be told about me—who and what I am, and how he came to marry me. Not, mind you, how I came to marry him, but—the other way round, it's the way with men past middle age."

Lydia hesitated before speaking. "Mr. Brood does not confide in Frederic. I am afraid they have but little in common. Oh, I shouldn't have said that!"

Mrs. Brood regarded her with narrowing eyes. "He doesn't confide in Frederic?" she repeated, in the form of a question. Her voice seemed lower than before.

"I'm sorry I spoke as I did, Mrs. Brood," said the girl, annoyed at herself.

"Is there a reason why he should dislike his son?" asked the other, regarding her fixedly.

"Of course not," cried poor Lydia.

There was a moment of silence. "Some day, Lydia, you will tell me about Mr. Brood's other wife."

"She died many years ago," said the girl, evasively.

"I know! I know Mrs. Brood. "Still I should like to hear more of the woman he could not forget in all those years—until he met me."

She grew silent and preoccupied, a slight frown marking her forehead as she resumed her examination of the room and its contents.

Great lanterns hung suspended beside the shrine, but were now unlighted. On the table at which Brood professed to work stood a huge lamp with a lacelike screen of gold. When lighted a soft, mellow glow oozed through the shade to create a circle of golden brilliance over a radius that extended but little beyond the edge of the table, yet reached to the benign countenance of Buddha close by.

Over all this fairylike splendor reigned the serene, melting influence of the god to whom James Brood was wont to confess himself! The spell of the golden image dominated everything.

In the midst of the magnificence moved the two women, one absurdly out of touch with her surroundings, yet a thing of beauty; the other blending intimately with the warm tones that enveloped her. She was lithe, sinuous with the grace of the most seductive of dancers. Her dark eyes reflected the mysteries of the Orient; her pale, smooth skin shone with the clearness of alabaster; the crimson in her lips was like the fresh stain

"I Must See These Wonderful Things."

of blood; the very fragrance of her person seemed to steal out of the unknown. She was a part of the marvelous setting, a gem among gems.

She had attired herself in a dull Indian red afternoon gown of chiffon. The very fabric seemed to cling to her supple body with the sensuous joy of contact. Even Lydia, who watched her with appraising eyes, experienced a swift unaccountable desire to hold this intoxicating creature close to her own body.

There were two windows in the room, broad openings that ran from near the floor almost to the edge of the canopy. They were so heavily curtained that the light of day failed to penetrate to the interior of the apartment. Mrs. Brood approached one of these windows. Drawing the curtain apart, she let in an ugly gray light, from the outside world.

She looked down into a sort of courtyard and garden that might have been transplanted from some distant Araby. Uttering an exclamation of wonder, she turned to Lydia.

"Is this New York or am I bewitched?"

"Mr. Brood transformed the old carriage yard into a—I think Mr. Dawes calls it a Persian garden. It is rather bleak in wintertime, Mrs. Brood, but in the summer it is really enchanting. See, across the court on the second floor where the windows are lighted, those are your rooms. It is an enormous house, you'll find. Do you see the little balcony outside your windows, and the vines creeping up to it? You can't imagine how sweet it is of a summer night with the moon and stars—"

"But how desolate it looks today, with the dead vines and the colorless stones! Ugh!"

She dropped the curtains. The soft warm glow of the room came back and she sighed with relief. "I hate things that are dead," she said.

At the sound of a soft tread and the gentle rustle of draperies, they turned. Hanbi, the Hindu, was crossing the room toward the small door which gave entrance to his closet. He paused for an instant before the image of Buddha, but did not drop to his knees as all devout Buddhists do. Mrs. Brood's hand fell lightly upon Lydia's arm. The man turned toward them a second or two later. His dark, hand-some face was hard set and emotionless as he bowed low to the new mistress of the house. The fingers closed tightly on Lydia's arm. Then he smiled upon the girl, a glad smile of devotion. His swarthy face was transfigured. A moment later he unlocked his door and passed into the other room. The key turned in the lock with a slight rasp.

"I do not like that man," said Mrs. Brood. Her voice was low and her eyes were fixed steadily on the closed door.

CHAPTER V.

Husband and Wife.

The ensuing fortnight brought the expected changes in the household. James Brood, to the surprise of not only himself but others, lapsed into a curious state of adolescence. His infatuation was complete. The once dominant influence of the man seemed to slink away from him as the passing days brought up the new problems of life. Where he had lived to command he now was content to serve. His friends, his son, his servants viewed the transformation with wonder, not to say apprehension.

It would not be true to say that the remarkable personality of the man had suffered. He was still the man of steel, but retempered. The rigid broad-sword was made over into the fine flexible blade of Toledo. He could be bent but not broken.

It pleased him to submit to Yvonne's commands. Not that they were arduous or peremptory; on the contrary, they were suggestions in which his own comfort and pleasure appeared to be the inspiration. She was too wise to demand, too clever to resort to cajolery. She was a Latin. Diplomacy was hers as a birthright. Complaints, appeals, sulks would have gained nothing from James Brood. Nor would it have occurred to her to employ these methods. From the day she entered the house she was its mistress.

There were no false notions of sentiment to restrain or restrict her in the rearrangement of her household. She went about the matter calmly, sensibly, firmly; even the most prejudiced could not but feel the justice of her decisions. The serene way in which she both achieved and accepted conquest proved one thing above all others: She was born to rule.

To begin with, she miraculously transferred the sleeping quarters of Messrs. Dawes and Riggs from the second floor front to the third floor back without arousing the slightest hint of antagonism on the part of the crusty old gentlemen, who had occupied one of the choice rooms in the house with unInterrupted security for a matter of nine or ten years. Mrs. Brood explained the situation to them so graciously, so convincingly, that they even thanked the servants for moving their heterogeneous belongings to the small, remote room on the third floor, and applauded her plan to make a large sitting-room of the chamber they were deserting. It did not occur to them for at least three days that they had been imposed upon, cheated, maltreated, insulted, and then it was too late. The decorators were in the big room on the second floor.

They had been betrayed by the wife of their bosom friend. Is it small cause for wonder, then, that the poor gentlemen was manfully turned back to the third floor and gloriously, garrulously drunk in the middle of the afternoon, and also in the middle of the library, where tea was to have been served to a few friends asked in to meet the bride?

The next morning a fresh edict was issued. It came from James Brood and it was accompanied by a spineless husband put forth the order that they were to have nothing more to drink while they remained in his house. This command was modified to a slight extent later on. Brood felt sorry for the victims. He loved them and he knew that their pride had been injured a great deal more than their appetite.

In its modified form, the edict allowed them a small drink in the morning and another at bedtime, but Jones, the butler, held the key to the situation and—the sideboard. And after that they looked upon Mrs. Brood as the common enemy of all three.

The case of Mrs. John Desmond was disposed of in a summary but tactful manner.

"If Mrs. Desmond is willing to remain, James, as housekeeper instead of friend, all well and good," said Mrs. Brood, discussing the matter in the seclusion of her boudoir. "I doubt, however, whether she can descend to that. You have spoiled her, my dear."

He flushed. "I trust you do not mean to imply that—"

"I should like to have Mrs. Desmond as my friend, not as my housekeeper," said his wife simply.

"By love, or that's just what I should like," he cried.

"There is but one way, you know."

"She must be one or the other, eh?"

"Precisely," she said with firmness. "In my country, James, the wives of best friends haven't the same moral standing that they appear to have in yours. Oh, don't scowl so! Shall I tell you that I do not mean to reflect on Mrs. Desmond's virtue—or discretion? Far from it. If she is to be my friend, she cannot be your housekeeper. That's the point. Has she any means of her own? Can she—"

"She has a small income, and an annuity which I took out for her soon after her poor husband's death. We were the closest of friends—"

"I understand, James. You are very generous and very loyal. I quite understand. Losing her position here, then, will not be a hardship?"

"No," said he soberly.

"I am quite competent, James," she said brightly. "You will not miss her, I am sure."

"Are you laughing at me, darling?"

She gave him one of her searching, unfathomable glances, and then smiled with roguish mirth.

"Isn't it your mission in life to amuse and entertain me?"

"I love you, Yvonne—Good God, how I love you!" he cried abruptly. His eyes burnt with sudden flame of passion as he bent over her. His face quivered; his whole being tingled with the fierce spasm of an uncontrollable desire to crush the warm, adorable body to his breast in the supreme ecstasy of possession.

She surrendered herself to his passionate embrace. A little later, she withdrew herself from his arms, her lips still quivering with the fierceness of his kisses. Her eyes, dark with wonder and perplexity, regarded his transfigured face for a long, tense moment.

"Is this love, James?" she whispered. "Is this the real, true love?"

"What else, in heaven's name, can it be?" he cried. He was sitting upon

"You Will Not Miss Her, I am Sure."

the arm of her chair, looking down at the singularly pallid face.

"But should love have the power to frighten one?"

"Frighten, my darling?"

"Oh, it is not you who are frightened," she cried. "You are the man. But I—ah, I am only the woman."

He stared. "What an odd way to put it, dear." Then he drew back, struck by the curious gleam of mockery in her eyes.

"Was it like this twenty-five years ago?" she asked.

He managed to smile. "Are you jealous?"

"Tell me about her."

His face hardened. "Some other time, not now."

"You have never told me her name—"

He faced her, his eyes as cold as steel. "I may as well tell you now, Yvonne, that her name is never mentioned in this house."

She seemed to shrink down farther in the chair.

"Why?" she asked, an insistent note in her voice.

"It isn't necessary to explain." He walked away from her to the window, and stood looking out over the bleak little courtyard. Neither spoke for many minutes, and yet he knew that her questioning gaze was upon him and that when he turned to her again she would ask still another question. He tried to think of something to say that would turn her away from this hated subject.

Then it came to him. It was time for you to dress, dearest! The Gunnings live pretty far up north and the going will be bad with Fifth avenue piled up with snow—"

"Doesn't Frederic ever mention his mother's name?" came the question that he feared before it was uttered.

"I am not sure that he knows her name," said he levelly. The knuckles of his hands, clenched tightly behind his back, were white. "He has never heard me utter it."

She looked at him darkly. There was something in her eyes that caused him to shift his own steady gaze uncomfortably. He could not have explained what it was, but it gave him a curiously uneasy feeling, as of impending peril. It was not unlike the queer, inexplicable though definite sensing of danger that more than once he had experienced in the silent, tranquil depths of great forests.

"I wonder what could have happened to make you so bitter toward her," she went on, studying him through half closed eyes. "Was she unfaithful to you? Was—"

"Good God, Yvonne!" he cried, an angry light jumping into his eyes—the eyes that so recently had been ablaze with love.

"We must never speak of—of that again," he said, a queer note of hoarseness in his voice. "Never, do you understand?" He was very much shaken.

"Forgive me," she pleaded, stretching out her hand to him. "I am foolish, but I did not dream that I was being cruel or unkind. Perhaps, dear, it is because I am—jealous."

"There is no one—nothing to be jealous of," he said, passing a hand over his moist brow. Then he drew nearer and took her hand in his. He leaned again on the arm of her chair. She leaned back and sighed contentedly, the smile on her red lips growing sweeter with each breath that she took. He felt the blood warming once more in his veins.

For a long time they sat thus, looking into each other's eyes without speaking. He was trying to fathom the mystery that lurked at the bottom of those smiling wells; she, on the other hand, deluded herself with the idea that she was reading his innermost thoughts.

"I have been considering the advisability of sending Frederic abroad for a year or two," said he at last.

She started. She had been far from right in her reading. "Now? This winter?"

"Yes. He has never been abroad."

"Indeed? And he is half European, too. It seems—forgive me, James. Really, you know, I cannot always keep my thoughts from slipping out. You shouldn't expect it, dear."

"I suppose it is only natural that you should inquire," he said resignedly.

"Of my servants," she added pointedly.

He flushed slightly. "I dare say I deserve the rebuke. It will not be necessary to pursue that line of inquiry, however. I shall tell you the story myself some day, Yvonne. Will you not bear with me?"

She met the earnest appeal in his eyes with a slight frown of annoyance. "Who is to tell me the wife's side of the story?"

The question was like a blow to him. He stared at her as if he had not heard aright. Before he could speak, she went on coolly:

"I dare say there are two sides to it, James. It's usually the case."

He winced. "There is but one side to this one," he said, a harsh note in his voice.

"That is why I began my inquiries with Mrs. Desmond," she said enigmatically. "But I sha'n't pursue them any farther. You love me; that is all I care to know—or that I require."

"I do love you," he said, almost imploringly.

She stroked his gaunt cheek. "Then we may let the other woman—go hang, eh?"

He felt the cold sweat start on his brow. Her callous remark slashed his finer sensibilities like the thrust of a dagger. He tried to laugh, but only succeeded in producing a painful grimace.

"And now," she went on, as if the matter were fully disposed of, "we will discuss something tangible, eh? Frederic."

"Yes," said he, rather dazedly. "Frederic."

"I am very, very fond of your son, James," she said. "How proud you must be to have such a son."

He eyed her narrowly. How much of the horrid story did she know? How much of it had John Desmond told to his wife?

"I am surprised at your liking him, Yvonne. He is what I'd call a difficult young man."

"I haven't found him difficult."

"Morbid and unresponsive."

"Not by nature, however. There is a joyousness, a light-heartedness in his character that has never got beyond the surface until now, James."

"Until now?"

"Yes. And you talk of sending him away. Why?"

"He has wanted to go abroad for years. This is a convenient time for him to go."

"But I am quite sure he will not care to go at present—not for awhile, at least."

"And why not, may I ask?"

"Because he is in love."

"In love!" he exclaimed, his jaw setting hard.

"He is in love with Lydia."

"I'll put a stop to that!"

"And why, may I ask?" she mimicked.

"Because—why—" he burst out, but instantly collected himself. "He is not in a position to marry, that's all."

"Financially?"

He swallowed hard. "Yes."

"Poor!" she exclaimed, dismissing the obstacle with a wave of her slim hand. "A cigarette, please. There is another reason why he shouldn't go—an excellent one."

"The reason you've already given is sufficient to convince me that he ought to go at once. What is the other one, pray?"

She lighted the cigarette from the match he held. "What would you say if I were to tell you that I object to his going away—at present?"

"I should ask the very obvious question."

"Because I like him, I want him to like me, and I shall be very lonely without him," she answered calmly.

"You?" he cried. "Why, you've never known anything but—"

"One can be lonely even in the heart of a throng," she said cryptically. "No, James, I will not have him sent away."

He was silent for a moment. "We will leave it to Frederic," he said.

Her face brightened. "That is all I ask. He will stay."

There was another pause. "You two have become very good friends, Yvonne."

"He is devoted to me."

She blew cigarette smoke in the face

He Was Silent for a Moment.

and laughed. There was a knock at the door.

"Come in," she called.

Frederic entered.

CHAPTER VI.

The Spreading Glow.

Yvonne Lestrange, in a way, had been born to purple and fine linen. She had never known deprivation of any description. Neither money, position nor love had been denied her during the few years in which her charm and beauty had flashed across the great European capitals, penetrating even to the recesses of royal courts. It is doubtful if James Brood knew very much concerning her family when he proposed marriage to her, but it is certain that he did not care. He first saw her at the home of a British nobleman, but did not meet her. Something in the vivid, brilliant face of the woman made a deep and lasting impression on him. There was an instant when their eyes met through an opening in the throng which separated them. He was not only conscious of the fact that he was staring at her, but that she was looking at him in a curiously penetrating way. There was a mocking smile on her lips at the time. He saw it fade away, even as the crowd came between. He knew that the smile had not been intended for him, but for some of the eager cavaliers who surrounded her, and yet there was something singularly direct in the look she gave him.

That single glance in the duke's house proved to be a fateful one for both. They were married inside of a month. The virile, confident American had conquered where countless supplicants of a more or less noble character had gone down to defeat.

He asked but one question of her, she asked none of him. The fact that she was the intimate friend and associate of the woman in whose home he met her, was sufficient proof of her standing in society, although that would have counted for little so far as Brood was concerned.

She was the daughter of a baron; she had spent much of her life in Paris, coming from St. Petersburg when a young girl; and she was an orphan with an independent fortune of her own. Such common details as these came to Brood in the natural way and were not derived from any effort on his part to secure information concerning Mademoiselle Lestrange. Like the burnt child, he asked a question which harked back to an unforgotten pain.

"Have you ever loved a man deeply, devotedly, Yvonne—so deeply that there is pain in the thought of him?"

She replied without hesitation. "There is no such man, James. You may be sure of that."

"I am confident that I can hold your love against the future, but no man is vital enough to compete with the past. I've doesn't really do, you know. If a man cannot hold a woman's love against all newcomers, he deserves to lose it. It doesn't follow, however, that he can protect himself against the man who appears out of the past and claims his own."

"You speak as though the past had played you an evil trick," she said.

He did not mince words. "Years ago a man came out of the past and took from me the woman I loved and cherished."

"Your—your wife?" she asked in a voice suddenly lowered.

"Yes," he said quietly.

She was silent for a long time. "I wonder at your courage in taking the risk again," she said.

"I think I wonder at it myself," said he. "No, I am not afraid." he went on, as if convincing himself that there was no risk. "I shall make you love me to the end, Yvonne. I am not afraid. But why do you not ask me for all the wretched story?"

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

HOW RANGE FINDER WORKS

Operation of Instrument That Makes Possible Deadly Gunnery of the Present Day.

One of the most important instruments used on a warship is the range finder. Without this instrument it is practically impossible to aim the guns accurately without incurring a serious delay in getting the range by trial shots. Range finders all work on almost the same principle, images of the ship or other object sighted on being received through the two object glasses, one located near each end and on the side of the tube, being reflected and refracted by a system of mirrors and prisms, so that both are brought to the eye of the observer, who looks through the eyepiece, located at the middle of the tube and on the opposite side from the object glasses. The right-hand glass transmits only the upper half of the object sighted on and the left-hand glass the lower half. When sighting a ship, for example, the riggings and funnels will appear to be offset horizontally from the lower part of the ship so long as the instrument is not set for the correct range. The images then are brought together by a thumb screw that moves one of the prisms, and this sets a scale that shows the distance in yards to the ship.

Eugene Field Loved Children.

It was children whom Field loved best, and he would take all sorts of trouble to make a child happy. His room was crowded with toys, queer dolls, funny little mechanical toys that ran about, or boxed, or nodded strange heads, or performed tricks. His study door was never shut to a child, and he had many child friends his family knew nothing of. His brother tells how, a few hours after his death, a little crippled boy came to the door and asked if he might go up and see Mr. Field. He was taken into the room where the gentle, much-loved figure lay, and left there. In a little while he came limping downstairs, the tears streaming down his cheeks, and went silently away, known to nobody there. —From "Eugene Field, Lover of Childhood," by Hildegrade Hawthorne, in the St. Nicholas Magazine.

Sanitary Sandwiches Latest.

Enter the sanitary sandwich. Many of the New York cafes have adopted a machine for their free lunch counters, that delivers a sandwich without a hand touching it, or the necessity of tipping the carver. This intelligent mechanism consists of a number of vacuum tubes of glass, each containing ham, corned beef and cheese. Push the lever and a slice of bread drops out on the platform. If you want a ham sandwich, press the lever and a knife cuts off a slice of ham an eighth of an inch in thickness and drops it on the bread. Another push of the bread lever and your sandwich is complete. The new machine can make a sandwich every second and give it away, which should just about keep up with the capacity of some of the hungry ones

The Progress of Civilization.

Tom Hoskins—Pa, I suppose you are going to take your children to see the Aryans.

Pa—No, I'm afraid I'll have to go alone. Their time is so taken up with tango teas, hesitation hops and four-o'clock dances that they really haven't an evening to spare.

The Pessimist.

Dayton—A bachelor is a man who has been crossed in love.

Parker—Yes, and a married man has been double-crossed.—Life.

AFTER SUFFERING TWO LONG YEARS

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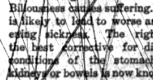

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