

# THE MAY DAY MYSTERY

by OCTAVUS ROY COHEN

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## CHAPTER I

MAY day is of outstanding importance in the scholastic year of a southern college. It marks definitely the end of a long grind; it comes quickly and unobtrusively, and students who on April thirtieth—have looked upon the semester as never-ending are suddenly awakened to realization that in a very short time there will be an exodus and the great buildings will become mere hollow shells.

And this May day was perfect. A brilliant sun smiled down from an unclouded sky; spring flowers peeped out from the bushes; groups of students loitered under the trees chatting idly or not talking at all. It was a day for dreaming, for idly wandering thoughts.

Twelve hundred students of both sexes succumbed to the spell. Worries were dispelled. Spring had come late to this little college campus of Maryland university in mid-Alabama; but had it come, in the glory of its coming, for all its tardiness.

Over on the hill a great quadrangle, a mile beyond the Bowl stood the women's dormitory, and immediately before it was a line of blue brick and white stone. A girl stepped from the doorway into the sunlight and paused by the lilac bush. Then, with the assured deliberation of a senior, she proceeded to violate a college rule.

Annette Peyton picked a spray of lilac, plucked the flower which looked most like an eye which might behold her. Then she gazed across a tiny, verdant valley toward the knoll upon which were situated the academic buildings of the university.

Tony Peyton was a pretty girl. She was more than a pretty girl. There was strength of character in her kind face with its tiny, upturned mouth and great, lustrous black eyes. She gave an impression of generous vitality. She touched the spirit of lilac to her mouth and smiled. She smiled into the spring, and the campus smiled back at her.

She stared at across the tops of the pine trees toward the knoll on which the academic buildings reared their imposing forms. All of a pattern: red brick and white stone; nine of them standing like identical sentinels about the natural stadium which had been converted into the Bowl. Maryland wasn't a big college; that was a roll of honor. There were records, too, or graduates who had risen to positions of importance in the field of science and art.

And perhaps the students attacked just a few bits too much importance to the eminence recently achieved by the Maryland football and track teams. Just a little too much importance. . . . but this morning Tony Peyton could not understand that, because as she looked down into the almost empty Bowl she saw in her mind's eye a picture which had impressed itself indelibly upon her eighteen months before when Maryland's greatest gridiron team, under the leadership of Larry Welch, had smashed and battered its way to a legitimate claim to the mythical national championship. That had been a day; twenty thousand fans on wild in the Bowl; a riot of color and a welter of sound.

Tony gazed at her wrist watch and sighed. With a conscious effort she rid herself of the spell. With a quick, eager stride she started down the hill into the valley which must be crossed before one could mount the other hill—the hill upon which the college buildings stood.

She moved through the tiny valley, head thrown back, sprig of lilac held in her right hand, lips moving slightly as she hummed a popular melody. The magic of the day was upon her and she approached the Hill with a feeling of reluctance that the spell must be broken.

And then—quite suddenly—she stopped. Just before her was a huge oak tree. Tony knew that particular tree; it stood sentinel before a forest knoll affectionately known by all students at Maryland as the Bower; a tiny, secluded spot sheltered by giant trees, carpeted with violets and embowered in huckleberries.

Voices came to her from that knoll; voices of a man and a girl. Tony's teeth pressed tight together and as startled, worried expression leaped into her eyes. She was afraid—but she wasn't sure.

A man in yonder—with a girl. Nothing in that helped her to the end of the day. It would have been a matter for more wonder had the Bower been unoccupied. But she

fancied that she knew the voices. . . . the girl's sweetly shrill answers. Then there was silence.

There was of no mind to interrupt a campus romance. Unless . . . She remained motionless for several minutes; her face a study in worried concentration. Why didn't they speak again? She wished to be sure. She thought . . .

And then her doubt vanished. From behind the shelter of trees and vines came a man's voice; rich and soft and freighted with caresses. "Little sweetheart," he said, "you're the most bewitching thing I've ever seen."

Tony's lips pressed to a firm, angry line. It was Pat Thayer all right; Pat making love, in his suave, polished, deferentially superior way—to someone.

Then the childish voice of Thayer's companion; a voice which trembled with eagerness of a first girl's passion—

"Oh, Pat," said the girl, "you're so wonderful!"

Tony's face grew stern. She hated no longer. She circled the great oak tree and shoved aside the curtain of huckleberry vines.

The man met her eyes. But he continued to hold the girl tightly in his arms. He smiled sardonically at the intruder over the dusky golden hair of his companion.

"And who," he inquired with mocking politeness—"Who invited you, Tony?"

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best for you to keep away from Pat Thayer."

"Why? What's so terribly wrong with him? Or maybe you think I've never been kissed before. Is that it?"

"No. If it was anyone else. . . ."

"But it isn't, Tony. It's Pat. And I'm asking you why he's so dangerous."

"I'm trying to be nice, and it isn't very easy. The only thing I'll say is this: If you can't tell me what you're hunting at, then I'll stick with Pat as long as he wants."

Tony's eyes flickered to Thayer's sardonic face.

"Why don't you do the decent thing, Pat? Why don't you do it off?"

"Why should he?" inquired Iry. Then she turned toward the man.

"Tell me, Pat—what is there between you two?"

"Ask Tony," she repeated. "She'll tell you what she wishes you to know."

"Then good-bye. There's just room in the Bower for two."

"Get this, Iry," Tony spoke rather more sharply than she intended. "I don't give a hang what Pat Thayer does. Right now I'm thinking of you."

"I feel—sincerely . . ."

"I fancy," interrupted the man, "that she's really thinking about your brother—Larry."

Tony did not evade the challenge.

"Perhaps that's true, Pat."

"You see, Iry," she said, "he fits into that potential corner of your family. It's up to her to protect innocent you from childishness."

Iry smiled with genuine amusement. "Can you beat it?" she said. "Can you even beat it?"

Tony—Tony could not really think of any rejoinder, so she said:

"Yes. From Pat Thayer."

"You know what, Tony? You give me a pain in the neck. What's all this?"

"Pat can explain," said Tony.

"I didn't ask him. I asked you."

"I'll rather not say anything."

Iry started to her feet. "You've got to say something. I have a right to know."

"What right?"

An incoherent sort of stammer settled about Iry's girl's shoulders. "Pat and I are engaged," she announced.

A light of genuine fear danced in Tony's deep, black eyes. Her lips were without a smile; her expression stern and menacing. She spoke directly to Thayer, ignoring the girl.

"Have you really gone that far, Pat?"

"You heard what Iry said."

"In asking you."

"Yes, it's true."

Tony walked very close to him. "You've got to cut it."

"Who says so?"

"I do."

"And what right have you to give orders?"

"I have plenty of right. You know I have. Pat Thayer. You've got to quit this thing and quit it quick. It was bad enough when I thought you were carrying on with a kid. But to let her think she's engaged to you. . . ."

"Tony!" broke in Iry, and there was real distress in her voice. "I wish you'd let me—"

"Oh! I could tell you plenty. This man is no good. Iry. He's making a fool of you."

Thayer's hand closed over Tony's arm.

"Lay off," he growled, "stepped about all I'm going to stand."

"DeMolay," he said, "my man was ugly and threatening, but Tony faced him defiantly, her cheeks blazing. "You've got me started. Pat—and I warn you I'll carry through if you don't call things off right here."

"You haven't the nerve."

"No! Try me and see."

initative youths and girls who were attracted by the friendship of this man of the world.

Tony knew him. She knew him from age, and to seventeen the first amorous palpitations of the heart are to be taken very seriously and not to be lightly trifled with.

As Iry herself would have expressed it, Pat Thayer had her running around in circles. She bitterly resented Tony and didn't care how quickly Tony knew it.

"I still don't see where this is any of your business."

"It isn't—sincerely . . ."

"Then good-bye. There's just room in the Bower for two."

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"You haven't the nerve."

## SHIRE'S CHECK D'MOLAYS, 34-18

Lodge Team's Hold On First Place At Stake In Tonight's Games

Still smarting from the lash of a 34 to 18 defeat at the hands of the lowly Birmingham Fruit

quintet last week, the DeMolays will be fighting to keep their hold on first place in the Birmingham Athletic Club basketball league to

night when they clash with the Williams' Boot Shop five, always a dangerous foe.

The Hillbillies, now all alive in second place by virtue of the fact that Williams' defeated Birmingham last week, will meet

Shire's tonight. Should the Hillbillies win and the DeMolays lose, the Hillbillies will find themselves at the top of the heap.

The Lions Club will tangle with Mulholland's in the third contest on tonight's program. Birmingham Fruit draws a bye.

The DeMolays' defeat last week was as decisive as it was unexpected. Birmingham Fruit got off to an 18 to 12 lead in the first half, and never was in danger of falling behind. Har Ladd, Birmingham Fruit guard, was almost untoppable on the attack. He sank four field goals and a free throw in the first half, and added five more points in the last two stanzas.

Williams' defeated Mulholland's by holding the latter to a single field goal and one free throw in the last half. Mulholland's had a 9 to 5 advantage at the end of the first two periods, but allowed it to slip gradually away as the game wore on. Kitchen, Williams' right guard, scored four field goals.

The Lions Club never had a chance against Shire's, with Kenney McBride and Danny Jewell, Shire's forwards, both sinking field goals from all angles of the floor, the game was almost a foregone conclusion in the first half when Shire's rang up 21 points while holding the Lions to 6.

The box scores follow:

Birmingham Fruit 18  
Shire's 21  
Lions Club 6  
Caldwell 12  
Ladd 12  
Bel 12

DeMolay 34  
Sutton 18  
Sutton 18  
Sutton 18

Williams 21  
Kitchen 4  
Kitchen 4  
Kitchen 4

Mulholland's 9  
Mulholland's 9  
Mulholland's 9

Lions Club 18  
Lions Club 18  
Lions Club 18

Shire's 21  
Shire's 21  
Shire's 21

Williams 21  
Williams 21  
Williams 21

Mulholland's 9  
Mulholland's 9  
Mulholland's 9

Lions Club 18  
Lions Club 18  
Lions Club 18

Shire's 21  
Shire's 21  
Shire's 21

Williams 21  
Williams 21  
Williams 21

Mulholland's 9  
Mulholland's 9  
Mulholland's 9

Lions Club 18  
Lions Club 18  
Lions Club 18

Shire's 21  
Shire's 21  
Shire's 21

Williams 21  
Williams 21  
Williams 21

Mulholland's 9  
Mulholland's 9  
Mulholland's 9

Lions Club 18  
Lions Club 18  
Lions Club 18

Shire's 21  
Shire's 21  
Shire's 21

Williams 21  
Williams 21  
Williams 21

Mulholland's 9  
Mulholland's 9  
Mulholland's 9

Lions Club 18  
Lions Club 18  
Lions Club 18

Shire's 21  
Shire's 21  
Shire's 21

Williams 21  
Williams 21  
Williams 21

Mulholland's 9  
Mulholland's 9  
Mulholland's 9

Lions Club 18  
Lions Club 18  
Lions Club 18

Shire's 21  
Shire's 21  
Shire's 21

Williams 21  
Williams 21  
Williams 21

Mulholland's 9  
Mulholland's 9  
Mulholland's 9

Lions Club 18  
Lions Club 18  
Lions Club 18

Shire's 21  
Shire's 21  
Shire's 21

Williams 21  
Williams 21  
Williams 21

Mulholland's 9  
Mulholland's 9  
Mulholland's 9

Lions Club 18  
Lions Club 18  
Lions Club 18

Shire's 21  
Shire's 21  
Shire's 21

Williams 21  
Williams 21  
Williams 21

## Teams' Standings In B. A. C. League

Team	W	L	Pct.
DeMolay	5	2	.714
Hillbillies	4	2	.667
Mulholland's	4	3	.571
Shire's Market	4	3	.571
Williams' Boot Shop	4	3	.571
Birmingham Fruit	2	5	.286
Lions Club	1	6	.143

Last Week's Results

Shire's Market, 38, Lions Club 27.

Williams' Boot Shop 20, Mulholland's 12.

Birmingham Fruit, 34, DeMolay 18.

DeMolay vs. Williams' Boot Shop.

Hillbillies vs. Shire's Market.

Lions Club