Between Two Lovers.

By Tom Masson, in the Cosmopolitan.

'I want you to see my boat.'

Bob Burrill had just pounded up in his French machine, having come over seventy miles since seven o'clock to tell Dorothy Knight about his latest acquisition. He was like a child with a new toy.

But enthusiasm is always contagious. And as she looked at this handsome young fellow whose money was just beginning to interest him, she caught some of his spirit.

'I should love to see it,' she said.

'Then it's all arranged. You and your father can join me tomorrow at Shell Harbor, just down the coast.'

Dorothy smiled. Bob's new yacht was a thing worth seeing. It had reversible engines and twin screws, and boasted of two smoke-stacks. It was presided over by a captain, three officers, a chief engineer, a crew of eight men, and other supernumeraries. And moreover, it had been described and illustrated in all the papers, thus giving it a certain amount of necessary social distinction.

Dorothy had never been on a yacht before. Her father's law practice, while ample enough to provide for comfort, had not included this luxury. Besides, Dorothy's father was a plain man, and it is doubtful if, under any circumstances, he would have coveted such mechanical distinctions. Dorothy from a merely physical standpoint was not a plain girl, but mentally she had inherited her father's characteristics. The glare of money did not spoil her vision. Bob's father, who was an old friend of Judge Knight's, had died a year before, leaving Bob sole legatee. And Dorothy was interested in his yacht, more because of its owner than because of its intrinsic worth.

'I should be very glad to go,' she said, if father can give up the time. But——'

'Oh, I know what you are going to say,' broke in Bob. 'No, there's no one else coming—that is, only one-—'

He looked at her half quizically.

'I thought you might like to have the parson,' he said. And he's coming.'

Dorothy blushed.'

'That was good of you,' she replied. 'I'm sure he needs the change. But how did you persuade him to tear himself away from his duties?'

Bob's gaze was still fastened upon her.

'That was easy; I told him I expected you to be there also.'

There was a silence. Dorothy's eyes wandered out through the open window across the street and her mind went out beyond to that other young man so widely different from this one who stood before her. He had come to the church a year before, and his earnestness, his eloquence, his unflagging sense of duty, had gained him universal respect. Latterly he had been in the habit of dropping in occasionally, and he and Dorothy had had long talks together—talks in which she had come to regard him perhaps in an unusual way. The hopelessness of his work, amid so much that was indifferent and sordid and iconoclastic, did not appeal to her so much as his hopefulness in discussing it. No complaint had she ever heard him utter. His struggle did not seem to oppress him. His strong, helpful temperament had come to be almost a necessity to her, and only now, as this idle young man who looked at her so intently uttered his explanation, was there revealed to her an aspect of her relationship with Roland Burton that had never occurred to her before.

She started. Was it right of Bob to make such an insinuation? But, after all, was there truth in it? Had she been unconsciously leading this young clergyman on without knowing it?

'What do you mean?' she said.

In answer, Bob came over and stood close beside her, looking down gravely into her eyes. His handsome and immaculate figure towered above her.

'Dorothy,' he replied, 'I've kept track of Roland Burton ever since we were in school together, and in spite of the fact that he is pious, he is at heart not a half-bad fellow. Now, I've knocked around some in the few years I've been off the nest, and I know what the signs of adoration are. Roland is dead in love with you, he may not know it, but he is.

'Nonsense! You don't understand him. His thoughts don't run in those channels.'

Bob was steeped in the slang of the day.

'Don't you fool yourself!' he broke out. 'Love's the same thing and we're all built pretty much alike.'

He reached forward and took her hand.

'Dorothy,' he said, gravely, 'I love you myself, I wish I could tell you how much I love you, but I can't do it. I wouldn't insult you by telling you what I could do for you if you would marry me, because, knowing you as I do, I somehow know that wouldn't make any difference to you. Money doesen't seem to affect you the way it does some girls. Why, I have had a lot of them fairly throw themselves at me, but I know it isn't for myself. The fact is, Dorothy, I seem to need you. I don't see how I can get along without you. There is something within me constantly striving to get to the surface, but it doesn't have much chance with this life I am leading. And yet I cannot help my life. I guess it would have been better for me if I had to earn my own living.'

There was something pathetic in his insistence. In the presence of this strong, reliant, womanly girl he seemed to be pleading for his own weakness.

'I never seemed to realize what I ought to be, he said, 'until I met you.'

Dorothy did not immediately reply. Unconscious of the fact that her hand was in his, she stood silently, thinking of that other man, with his delicate frame, his ethereal yet virile face with its sense of immense reserve power. Was it true, as Bob said, that he too loved her? It could not be. And yet, with many misgivings, there came to her swiftly the recollection of many of their confidences, trivial at the time, and yet which now seemed to her to loom important. And then she turned to Bob suddenly, withdrawing her hand as she did so.

'Why did you ask Roland Burton on your yacht, if you thought he was in love with me?'

'I don't know. It was a foolish thing to do, I suppose. It wasn't exactly because I wanted to, I assure you, but I couldn't help it. The other day when we met he looked at me with those calm eyes of his, and I just blurted out the invitation, I had an idea that you might want him to come and I couldn't resist him. But today I made up my mind that I couldn't wait. And so, Dorothy, I came seventy miles in three hours to get your answer. Will you take me? You must take me. I simply can't get along without you.'

A figure was coming across the street to the house—a tall, slight, ministerial-looking figure. Both of them looked out and recognized it simultaneously. Dorothy's lip quivered.

'Bob,' she said, 'don't ask me to give you my answer now, I don't know myself. Leave me to think.'

Bob took her hand and kissed it.

'It's tough on me to wait,' he said, simply. 'I never had to wait for anything before, but I guess I'll have to this time. Can you let me know on the yacht.'

'Perhaps—on the yacht.'

Bob met Roland on the steps.

'How are you, Burton, old chap?' he said.

'Hello, old man,' said Roland, his face lighting up. 'I've just missed you.'

'Yes—your pleasure is in store, I'm off to Shell Harbor. See you to-morrow, sure. Train leaves at noon.'

'I'll be there, God willing. Au revoir.'

'Ta ta.'

There was the loud champ-champ of an automobile—a whirring sound that echoed along the street—and Bob was gone.

There are moments in our existence when love is in the air—as if cupid were devoting his entire attention to us, determined, while the mood is on him, to do the work of a lifetime in as short a period as possible. Such a period had evidently come to Dorothy Knight. Fresh from Bob's declaration, and rendered self-conscious by what he had said of one who he seemed to know was his rival, she turned to her new companion with an evident sense of embarrassment.

His quiet, almost austere manner, however, reassured her.

'I hear,' he said, 'that we have both been invited to a real yacht. Bob is good to his old friends.'

'Yes,' said Dorothy. 'Are you going?'

'If you are.'

'I hope to persuade papa.'

She leaned forward suddenly.

'What do you think of Bob?' she said, earnestly.

'I like him.'

'But he's so different from you.'

'That is doubtless why I like him. Each one of us seeks a contrast in others.'

'Do you think he is honest?'

'It's hardly neccssary for him to be anything else.'

'Do you admire his character?'

The clergyman straightened up. His face clouded.

'Now—Miss Dorothy,' he said, 'I'm not going to say anything against Bob. Bob's a good fellow. He's naturally that, no matter what his circumstances. There's a good deal in him that's undeveloped and I fear always will be. Sometimes, as I have put my hand on his shoulder, I seemed to feel within him a struggling soul, longing to be free from the fetters of wealth and easy going companions. There's a real man concealed about Bob somewhere, and loving the chap as I do, I have longed many a time to help bring that man out. I—'

He stopped.

'I am afraid I've said too much,' he added. 'It isn't quite fair for me even to give you an impression about him. I suspect that Bob loves you.'

Dorothy looked him fairly in the eye.

'Why isn't it fair?' she asked. 'Suppose Bob loves me, what then? Would you want me to make a mistake? That is, only supposing, of course, that he does love me. Isn't it right that you should advise me in a matter of this sort, which may be of the utmost importance to me? Isn't it your duty?'

He rose slowly, his great eyes fastened upon her face. He folded his arms calmly. She could not but feel as he looked down upon her that here was a man who had conquered himself. And the lines on his still young and handsome face seemed to indicate what a long struggle it had been.

'No,' he replied. 'This is not a case for me to decide. You have no right to ask me and I have no right to answer. Ethics or morals don't weigh here. It is man and man. For I also love you.'

So Bob was right. His keen spirit had read his brother's secret, even before Dorothy herself had known it. These two men were pitted against each other. The one, light, pleasure-seeking, the best of good fellows, and yet containing about him somewhere all the elements of true manhood. The other, earnest, self-denying, with a high purpose beyond him, with his life mapped out before him with bounds of steel, and who had already gone through that supreme struggle in the mastery of self and emerged from it victor—whose whole life was dedicated to the best that was in him.

'You love me!'

'Yes. I do not know why I should tell you this, and yet I feel that you ought to know. I want you to be my wife. And yet I have so little of this world's good to offer you that—'

She stopped him with a gesture.

'Don't say that, please,' she cried. 'That doesn't matter.'

'Perhaps I am wrong in daring even to speak of this. And yet my conscience is clear. I feel that it is within my power to make you a happier and nobler woman than you might be with Bob, you understand, because there's no telling what Bob may do if the right girl gets him. But it is merely that I am not ashamed of my work—I glory in it, and if I ask you to share it with me, it is because I believe that your opportunity to be happy in the best sense will be as great with me by your side as with any other man.'

He came over to where she stood.

'Dorothy,' he said, 'will you be my wife?'

She did not reply. There was a long pause. Then, as if he divined and suspected the force of the problem he had asked her to solve, he turned toward the door.

'I understand, 'that you cannot give me your answer now. But perhaps, when we meet again—'

She turned her face to his. He held out his hand.

'Yes—' she said— 'on the yacht.'

'Very well—on the yacht. Until then; and God bless you.'

She heard him go out—she saw his tall figure retrace its steps across the street, and then she went slowly up to her father. At the head of the stairs she saw the face of her dead mother, calm and sweet in its stately repose, look out at her from its faded frame. What would she have given if she could have gone to this mother now!

Her father was in his study, looking over a brief that he was preparing for next week's session. His grizzly face beamed benignantly at her as she entered.

'Well, my dear,' he said, 'you have had callers.'

She dropped down on the stool at his side, a long-familiar attitude with her from a girl, whenever she was in trouble. The old man caressed her soft hair.

'Well, my dear, what is it?'

'Father two men have just proposed to me.'

The old man started back. His eyebrows contracted. A look of pain came over his face. The inevitable then, had happened. He had felt for a long time that such a thing must be. And now that it had come, he stood up under the sudden blow with all the inherent stoicism of a nature in which courage and resignation had long held equal sway.

'Two men!' he exclaimed, with an apparent attempt at playfulness. 'Only two. And it isn't nightfall yet.'

Then he held her face up to his.

'Tell me all about it,' he said.

'There isn't much to tell, papa. It's Bob Burrill and Roland Burton and I cannot make up my mind.'

Her father leaned back in his chair, absorbed in thought. At last he spoke.

'Dorothy,' he said, 'it seems strange to me that you should have attracted to you two such opposing elements in these young men. Bob Burrill is the representative of the very spirit of commercialism. His father started out a poor boy, and by using other men to his own advantage, by that almost brutal cruelty that goes on its way regardless of the rights of others, he piled up a fortune. And yet Bob's father was not a bad sort. Perhaps he couldn't help himself. Perhaps he was only an instrument. At any rate, he was smart and keen and shrewd, and now Bob is reaping the benefit. If you marry him, my dear, there'll be no wolf to bother you.'

'You know that doesn't matter, father with me.'

'Of course not. We've been over that ground before. There's something else in the world besides money. On the other hand, look at Roland Burton—Bob's antithesis. His one thought is to build up his church, enlarge his mission work, and in a word to combat, with all the health and strength in him, about everything that Bob stands for.'

'Well, father, what shall I do?'

'My dear, it isn't a question of principles. It's a question of men. I wish I could help you, but I cannot. I am afraid now, as I look back on the education I have given you, that after all, perhaps I have done too much. I have striven to show you that love, while I still believe it to be the only enduring force in the world, is practical in its application. You and I, my dear, since your mother left us, have been inclined perhaps to philosophize together too much. If you hadn't had your old father to lecture to you, no doubt that now you would have treated this matter from your heart alone, instead of from your mind and heart together. But after all, my dear, your own heart must decide. Which of these young men do you love? That is the only thing for you to consider.'

She patted her father on the cheek. Between these two cronies there had always been the most perfect companionship.

'Daddy,' she said, in that one word slipping back unconsciously into her childhood, 'you are splendid. I don't believe I could ever leave you, anyway. And it is so good, so unselfish of you, now when you see me in trouble, to forget all about yourself. I know that I shall never find any one like you, anyway, and even if I did marry, you know that I never really could leave you.'

'Tut! tut! You are a woman, aren't you?—even though I often forget it—and you must obey your instincts. I shall manage somehow. But, little girl, you must decide for yourself—as your own heart says. Haven't you any preference?'

Her head dropped.

'Yes,' she said. 'But still—I hesitate.'

'Never mind. Whatever it is, you will be right—perhaps not right from another's standpoint, but right from your own—and that is all you need care about. Have you put them off?'

'Yes. Bob has a new yacht.'

'I read about it.'

'And he wants us to meet him at Shell-Harbor to-morrow to see it. Roland is also to be there. I have told them both they must wait until then—that is, if you can arrange to go.'

Her father's eyes twinkled. Years of law practice had taught him to conceal his real feelings.

'I suppose,' he said, that I shall have to make myself as scarce as possible. But I promise to be the best of chaperons. And now, little girl, if I am to take a day off, I must finish up this work. Besides, I want to think a little. So run along.'

Dorothy Knight stood looking over the rail of Bob Burrill's new yacht, the "Sea Swallow," at anchor in Shell Harbor. The tide, unusually swift at this time of year, was slipping melodiously past the shining steel sides of the vessel whose stern was swung out toward the entrance to the harbor, with its white line of forbidding-looking breakers that marked the tortuous way of the narrow channel. In the distance, like a tiny speck, was the yacht's naptha-launch making its way shoreward with the captain, who had gone in for the evening papers from the metropolis.

The captain was a scotchman, one whom Bob was justly proud of, as he had an international reputation, and Bob has secured him only by a tempting offer. That morning the captain as an unusual favor, had asked Bob if he might bring his little four-year-old son out to spend the evening, as he had never been on such a big ship before; and Bob had gracefully acquiesced. The little shaver, in charge of the steward, was playing on the forward deck, when Dorothy, turning her face to the bow, spied him.

Bob was smoking under the after awning. Roland and Dorothy's father were below, playing dominoes.

'Whose little boy?,' asked Dorothy.

'Captain's,' said Bob. 'Only here for the evening. Nice little chap.'

Dorothy stepped forward.

'Come, little boy,' she cried. 'I want to speak to you.'

But the boy was shy. He ran forward, with Dorothy after him.

'It is no use,' she said, laughingly, returning in a moment. 'He's afraid of me. I shall have to tempt him. Go downstairs, Bob and get some candy.'

Bob stepped to the passageway to the saloon, with a deferential 'Aye, aye.'

Dorothy turned once more to locate her guest. A moment before, the steward had gone below to give some directions for dinner. Where was the boy?

Suddenly her heart stood still with terror. The urchin, in his sudden fright at the advances of such a grand lady, had climbed up over the rail forward of the bridge. How he got there, no one ever knew. At this moment, one of the crew, idling near the bow, saw him. With a sudden cry the man started precipitately forward. The child, already frightened, lost his balance. There was a splash. Dorothy saw a little struggling body, a mass of tiny curls, for an instant in the swift-running water alongside.

'Bob!' she cried. 'Bob! Bob! Quick!'

Bob came bounding up the passageway. She pointed frantically to the water.

'The child!' she cried. 'Look!'

And then, without even knowing what she was doing, she went to the rail and with all the might of her strength tried to tear away the life-preserver that was hanging there. As if the life-preserver could in itself have done the child any good!

Bob's eye took in the catastrophe in a flash.

He paused. It was only an instant. The fact is, Bob was not a good swimmer. This came over him as he gazed into the eyes of the woman he loved. A sense of his own inadequacy filled him. And then—he had gone to to the rail, and was overboard.

There are moments when words seem much too slow to creep into our intelligence. We divine by mere feeling. And it all came to Dorothy as she stood there in this terrible moment just after she had seen him slip over the side. Bob could not swim well. And she had made him do it. She had demanded this of him. Like a horrible picture suddenly revealed to us all at once, she saw the whole tragedy as in a panorama.

But as she stood there, her physical self paralyzed with fear, all her mental self focused on this frame work of despair, something was happening. A tall, clerical spare figure of iron and wonderful resilience had emerged silently, swiftly from below. A man whose whole life had been passed in mental and moral discipline, surveyed the scene; a man whose nervous energy, stored up by years of denial, of contemplation, who in his boyhood days had dived by the hour for pennies off his native bridge, was there to act.

Roland Burton grasped the life-preserver from her hands. He did not even look at her. He was too busy. With a single effort he tore it away. There was a cleancut splash, a dozen long, swift strokes, and then a sudden dive where the child a moment before, had sunk, apparently for the last time.

'It was as clane and nice a piece o'-work as ever I seen,' said the chief engineer, who told the story afterward to the captain. 'He makes a swift doive, brings your little kid to the surface, and then, would you belave it, tosses the loife-preserver he has in tow to the owner, as calm like as if it was a Sunday-school picnic. And by this toime the boat was off the davits and we picked 'em all up, aloive and well, as you are aware. An' they do tell me the chap was wan o' thim sky-pilots. I never knew it was in 'em afore.'

It was a week later. Judge Knight sat in his study, siill working on his brief. The hearing had been postponed until the next calendar.

The door opened and Dorothy came in. Once again she sat down by his side. Once again she put her hand against his heart, and again he stroked her hair with the old familiar gesture.

'Well, dear,' he said. 'What is it this time?'

'Daddy, you are so non-committal about some things. You kissed me and said it was all right, but you didn't show the least surprise. Weren't you surprised?'

'My dear, I am too old a bird now ever to allow a woman to surprise me.'

'But if I had decided differently, would you have been satisfied then?'

'Perfectly so. As I told you before, you had to decide the matter for yourself. And I felt that you were your own best judge. But—'

'There! I knew there was something on your mind. What is it?'

'The old man put down his papers.

'This' he said. 'As I have just said, while I am never surprised at what any woman does, I never expect my dear, to be too old to learn from woman. And as a matter for my own information—merely to satisfy my childish curiosity—I should like to know just why you selected Bob.'

His daughter smiled with the wisdom of all of Eve's accumulated inheritance.

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'Well, let me see,' said auntie. 'Can you tell me of any one in the Bible whose name begins with A?'

'Yes; Adam.'

'I'll tell you a B,' said auntie: 'Benjamin. Now a C.'

'Cain.'

'Right,' said Aunt Sarah.

'Let me tell D,' said Joe, hearing our talk: 'Daniel.'

And so we went through all the letters of the alphabet, and before we thought of it we we were called for supper, the house was lighted, and we had a fine time. Try it.

"Such reasoning," said General F. D. Grant, in a military argument, 'reminds me of the reasoning of old Corporal Sandburst. Corporal Sandburst was one day drilling a batch of raw recruits.

"'Why is it,' he said to a bright looking chap, 'that the blade of your saber is curved instead of straight?'

"'The blade is curved,' the recruit answered, 'in order to give more force to the blow.'

"'Nonsense,' said the corporal. 'The blade is curved so as to fit the scabbard. If it was straight, how would you get it into the curved scabbard, you idiot?'"—Detroit Free Press.

'Brethren,' said a man in the meeting, 'so many sinners are dying every day I have come to the conclusion that hell is full.' He sat down, when an old deacon in the amen corner raised the hymn: 'Ther'es a place reserved for you, brother, a place reserved for you.'

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We are showing the most complete and up-to-date line of Furniture and Carpets ever displayed in Wesminster, and at prices so low as to be surprising, for the quality of goods. We invite all to visit our store before buying, and prices and goods will do the rest.

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We can save you money on FLY NETS as we bought before the advance in price.

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NEW SHOPS, new tools and better facilities for quick and good work. Special attention given to repairing in all its branches.

We have a new Rubber Tire Machine, and can put on rubber tires at a very short notice at our factory. We put on the celebrated Kelly, Goodyear and Diamond, all high grade tires. All orders promptly filled and work of every kind warranted.

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WHISKEY AT $2.00 PER GALLON.

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Plate work and repairing will be given prompt attention. Gas administered.

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Sunday School Teacher—You know something about Bunyan, of course? Tommy Tucker—All I know is that paw suffers just awful with his.

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