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HARRY F. JEFFERSON

"The Woman's Shop"

IN A CLASS BY HERSELF

By FANNIE HURST

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WHEN Genevieve Johnson was eighteen she was earning in her capacity as private secretary to the vice president of Lang's department store at least a third more than any youth of her acquaintance.

Genevieve had what in a man would be called "natural-born business ability." She liked the conflict, the clash of wills, the play of cupidity, astuteness and shrewdness, that took place in the busy mercantile world she day by day beheld milling about her.

When she went home evenings to the small immaculate bungalow she shared with her widowed mother, her talk was of the office; of the tactics of the business executives and her own reactions to their methods. She was alertly, deeply interested in her business career. That, of course, was the major reason why she was destined for outstanding success in a mercantile world that was chiefly peopled by men. That is why, by the time she was twenty-three, the name "Genevieve Johnson, General Manager," was painted in black letters upon the ground-glass door that led to her suite of private offices.

By this time Genevieve was earning at least four or five times as much as any man of her acquaintance. She was in a class by herself—a phrase which was destined eventually to grind itself relentlessly into the conscience of the young executive.

She was in a class by herself.

More and more, in her social life, awareness of this fact drove itself home to Genevieve. The boys with whom she had grown up, gone to school, and mingled socially, began to segregate themselves, as it were, into little groups of aloofness from Genevieve. They admired her, but she represented something inaccessible. What youth earning less than one-fourth the amount that this quiet, brown-haired, brown-eyed girl was commanding, could feel himself comfortable attempting to entertain her? There was nothing he could do that she could not more readily accomplish for herself. It was an insidious and a subtle and a gradual thing that began to take place in a little world that revolved around Genevieve Johnson.

Even with her girl friends, the isolation of her kind of superiority began to rest heavily upon Genevieve. It was not, of course, that they reacted the way the boys did. They regarded her with respect and a certain amount of awe. They were proud of her friendship, and even while they remained in the lesser capacities of stenographers and saleswomen, paid her the tribute of undisguised admiration.

But in the end, what happened to these girl friends was that they married off, one by one. The inevitable pairings of young people who had grown up together in a community began to take place. Tom married Jenny. Avril married George. The Kennedy twins married two local merchants. And Rita Irving, Genevieve's closest friend, made an interesting alliance with a young artist from Savannah, Ga.

One by one, slowly, subtly, inevitably. And with the passing of the years, there came to Genevieve the passing of certain illusions, hopes and dreams. The crash of the last of them came when Royal Morgan married a visiting girl from Chattanooga. It was not that Genevieve had admitted even to herself that much of her hope for happiness was bound up in the figure of this able and amiable young engineer. But deeply inside of her, when the blow of his marriage came, Genevieve realized that this time she had been cut to the soul.

It was a strange marriage. Certainly it would have seemed from the very outset, to those who knew Royal, that a girl like Genevieve would have been irrefutably better suited to him than the one of his choice.

Royal was the level-headed, up-and-coming type of American young man, inevitably headed for a substantial kind of success. The girl he married was the frilly, scatterpated southern belle type, that has been crowded to the wall by her more modern and efficient sister.

Genevieve represented pretty nearly all the things that Royal Morgan somehow would seem to have needed in a wife. And yet, as Genevieve admitted bitterly to herself, the greater her success in business, the more surely she and Royal grew apart. He had always shown a fine and robust enthusiasm of her achievement, but there came the time when Royal laughingly pointed out to her the fact that she was earning more money than he was.

That was the beginning. Royal began to fall off in his attentions. Royal began to be apologetic in offering her the brand of entertainment he was in in a position to buy. His modest gifts, such as books and flowers, ceased entirely. The self-consciousness of the difference in their financial position had set in.

Genevieve was once more paying the price of her efficiency.

And ironically enough, two weeks before Royal's marriage, Genevieve received not only an advance in salary and a generous bonus from her firm, but was promoted to a still more important executive position in the establishment known as Lang's department store.

Success magazines began to print full-page stories of the phenomenal rise of this young woman.

Local papers interviewed her and the Associated Press carried a reprint story of her in papers the country over.

The mother of Genevieve, who had been a widow for twenty-two years, and whose struggle had been a hard one, began to expand in her old age like one of those Japanese paper flowers which, dropped into water, unfold their leaves. Pride in her girl was the sustaining motive of these finishing years of her life. And yet deep in her tired, old heart, the mother of Genevieve saw, just as clearly as Genevieve herself, the kind of defeat that success was bringing to her daughter.

When Genevieve was twenty-six, she and her mother occupied a handsome apartment in a smart apartment hotel. Genevieve's clothes were either tailor-made or French imports. She drove her own roadster. She employed a practical nurse as a companion to her mother. She was regarded as the trim, efficient and outstanding business woman of her state.

There was even some talk of paying her the complimentary gesture of putting her up for mayor, which Genevieve declined.

She made a country-wide tour in behalf of her firm, observing the department store methods of the large stores in the large cities, and on her return wrote a brochure that was published by the thousands and distributed to the personnel of department stores the country over.

The year that Genevieve's mother died, she was earning twenty thousand dollars a year in her capacity as executive.

The blow of this death was something that smote her with an intensity that, even in her mother's declining years, she had never foreseen. It left her so incredibly alone. There had not been so much time before to realize the extent of her social isolation. Her days had been crowded with activities; her evenings so devoted to attendance upon this mother.

Suddenly now, devastatingly, Genevieve Johnson was face to face with her loneliness.

And in this case the slogan "misfortunes never come singly" began to prove itself.

In the year of her mother's death Genevieve, driving her smart roadster through the town's traffic, met with a serious accident. A truck, running wild, crashed into the flank of her car, hurling her some ten feet out of it.

For four months she lay in a cast. Four months racked with pain; and yet, in a way, as she came to look upon them, the four happiest months of her life.

Royal Morgan, whose wife, before his divorce, had gone off with a chauffeur, came to visit her daily. Something, and something plus, of their old relationship had revived itself. Also there was a new wisdom, a new authority, a new reserve to Royal. Life in the physically tormented months in that hospital was suddenly sweeter to Genevieve than she dared to admit.

But it was to cause puzzlement to her doctors, the failure of the healthy young body of this young woman to respond as they expected it to do.

The bones of Genevieve's body were knitting all right, but inertia lay upon her. She could not be coaxed into even attempting to walk. Her doctors regarded her in amazement and suggested more mental effort.

Royal Morgan came to share in their puzzlement. His entire life was bound up in the recovery of Genevieve Johnson. It frightened him to contemplate the continuation of her bedridden days on and on into no one knew what uncertainty.

One day, in spite of his resolution to conceal from her his terror and anxiety, he found himself sitting beside her bed begging her, with tears in his eyes, and tears in his voice, to concentrate upon defeating this strange inertia in her. He poured forth his passionate need for her recovery and companionship. He poured forth his love for her.

It was then that Genevieve, with her happiness over her like an aurora, confessed her plight. Genevieve was afraid to get well. Genevieve was afraid that the old efficiency, sweeping back over her, might sweep him away from her.

It was the most heartbreaking, heart-hurting thing that had ever happened to Royal Morgan. It made her so inexpressibly dear to him and so inexpressibly pathetic.

When Genevieve's convalescence began, so suddenly it happened, so quickly, so completely, that even her doctors were aghast at the miracle of the overnight change that had taken place in her.

Even her recovery was efficient, said her friends.

Royal Morgan knew better.

Carnegie Memory Honored

The annual ceremony of observing the death of Andrew Carnegie was held recently at his statue in Pittencrieff glen, Dunfermline, Scotland. A large crowd was present, and wreaths were laid by the Dunfermline Carnegie trustees and town council. Carnegie is remembered as "Dunfermline's benefactor," and one wreath bore the inscription: "He lives in the affections of the inhabitants of his native town."



LOOKED QUEER

The Bride (indignantly)—I never was so embarrassed in my life!

The Groom—Why, whassa matter, dearie?

The Bride—All through the wedding ceremony you had your eyes glued on the side door marked "Exit," and the best man actually started two or three times to grab you as if he thought you were going to make a dash for it.

Carry On

Pat, who was moving, had asked one or two of his friends to carry his chicken-house round for him.

They found this a very strenuous job, but struggled on. About halfway they set the coop down to have a rest when one of them suddenly exclaimed: "Why, where's Pat?"

"I'm all right," came a voice from inside the house, "I'm carrying the perches."—Exchange.

Godspeed!

"Let me take $10 will you? I left my wallet at home."

"Sorry, but I can't. I'll put you in the way of getting it, though."

"Thanks. How?"

"Here's a dime for carfare. Run home and get your wallet."

AN ACCIDENT



He—"Did that girl who was so determined to marry George get him?" She—"No, she did not." He—"Did he die of accident or disease?"

From a Rear Seat

Twinkle, twinkle, little star,
On the vaudeville stage afar!
I wonder how you'd look if I,
With glasses up, were sitting nigh?

Widow's Might

Two tramps stopped at the home of a lone widow, and one went in to beg. Very soon he came out with a black eye.

"Well, did you get anything, Jack?" asked the other.

"Yes," growled the poor sufferer, "I got the widow's might."

Appropriate

The theatrical manager was looking fed up when he met his rival in a restaurant.

"Hello, what's up?" asked the latter.

"Frightful mess in my house. Pipes burst all over the place."

"Dear, dear," said the other; "frost at home, too, eh?"—Stray Stories.

How She Knew

Young Wife (sobbing)—Jack doesn't love me any more; he said I was the prettiest woman in a hundred.

Mother—What's wrong with that?

Young Wife—Before we were married he said the prettiest in a thousand.

Could Weather It

Father—Well, my boy, any college debts?

Son—Nothing, father, but what with diligence, economy and stern self-denial you will be able to pay.

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