TRUE BY THE SUN

—BY—

LIDA LARRIMORE

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CHAPTER IX—Continued

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"Oh, no!" She was smiling again, joking him out of the doldrums. "My disposition is soured from shaking up lemon phosphates. Let's go for a ride or something? I have a date with Herb but I'll fix it. You fade away and I'll meet you. I'll tell him my grandmother is sinking again."

But Dolly was diverting only for a time. Sooner or later Jim's thoughts returned to Cecily. Dolly was a part of those circling thoughts only because she knew, or pretended to know, something about Clyde. Jim could not trick her into telling him. He doubted whether what she knew was important. He suspected that she used those vague hints to hold his interest.

She wanted to hold his interest. He was sure of that. He began to have an uneasy suspicion that Dolly was thinking of him too much, falling a little in love with him. Small things made him aware of her increasing interest, a sudden unnatural reticence, moments of silence, an expression, a question.

"How long will you be here, Jim?"

"I don't know."

"Leaving soon?" A sharply indrawn breath. Hands with nails painted raspberry red pleating her apron, twisting a button, drumming a silent tune on the fountain, a table, the door of the second-hand roadster.

"I don't know that either. Look here! Why, Dolly? Haven't I answered that question before?"

"Nothing." A toss of her golden head, blue eyes glinting and yet with shyness in their depths. "Nothing. I was just wondering when I'd have a free evening. Rudy Vallee wants a date."

Jim realized, then, that he had spent with Dolly a part of seven evenings in a row, a part of every evening since Jeremy Clyde had come to "Meadowbrook." The discovery surprised him. His visits to the drug-store, to the small frame house with the sagging porch, had been casual, never pre-arranged, just something that happened, a way of getting through the mild September evenings, brilliant with starlight, nostalgic with summer's lingering farewell. Obviously, seven evenings in a row meant something special to Dolly. Jim made another resolve.

"Wire Rudy," he said lightly, smilingly, "I'm signing off after tonight."

"Why?" A startled expression flared, for a moment, in her eyes.

"I've been drifting," he said. "Drinking too many orangeades. I've got to get to work."

"Home-work?"

"Reading," Jim explained. "There's so much that I don't know about horses. I have a room full of Breeders' Gazettes that I've got to absorb."

Perhaps his suspicions had been without foundation, Jim thought, with a feeling of relief. Dolly seemed gay enough. He liked her. She appealed to his sympathies. He inferred from bits of information she had given him, that she had a pretty thin time of it at home.

She criticized her father and her step-mother indulgently, as though they were children. She was loyal to her brothers and sisters, proud of them, not discriminating against the "steps."

"You think I can sing! You ought to hear Joey. He can warble rings around Morton Downey or Lanny Ross. Joey would be a big-timer if he could get a break. Joey Quinn. That would be a good radio name, wouldn't it? Sort of cute and Irish."

Dolly's family, in Dolly's anecdotes and observations, amused and interested Jim. Actually, they were a commonplace assortment. Dolly was the smart one. Dolly had personality and spunk and endearing charm. "The family" was a dragging anchor, a milestone around her neck.

She had talked to him, too, of Herbert, the sandy young man in the drug-store.

"Herb wants me to marry him," she had said, quite casually one evening as they sat in a lumpy couch hammock on the porch of the small frame house. "His uncle has a drug-store in a town with a funny name up near Scranton somewhere. Herb's going into business with him."

"Are you going to marry him, Dolly?"

"Sometime, maybe. I'm keeping Herb for a rainy day. He's smart and steady, but not much fun. He's swell to me, though, and I treat him like dirt."

"You ought to be ashamed of yourself."

"I am. Honestly, Jim. I guess I ought to. Only Scranton's so far away. I'd like to see the kids get a break. And—Oh, I don't know." Her voice was wistful. "I can think of things so much more fun than marrying Herb."

CHAPTER X

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Jim parked his car in the enclosure at the side of the Cherry Hollow theater. Cecily's fawn-colored roadster was already there. Jim wondered whether or not Cecily would be in the audience. Jeremy Clyde frequently used her car to drive to the theater. She was probably here this evening, though. Tonight the Cherry Hollow company was giving the last performance of the season.

The small, dimly-lighted theater was well filled when Jim found his seat in the row next to the last.

Cecily was there. She sat at the side, near the front, alone apparently, wearing some sort of soft brown dress with a scarf knotted under her chin. He had an excellent view of her profile against a background of rough, smoke-colored wall.

What was she thinking? She sat so quietly, looking down at something in her lap. Was she happy?

New arrivals blocked his view of her. Jim's glance settled upon the deep blue curtain with a roughly stenciled border design of acorns and leaves. He was curious to see Jeremy on the stage. He had a compelling desire to find out all that he could about him, to discover, if possible, whether or not there was anything under his surface charm and romantic good looks. That, he told himself, was the reason he had come to the theater tonight. Was it actually, though? Or had his presence there a morbid aspect—like the irresistible desire to prod a wound or bite on an aching tooth? . . .

Something brushed the back of his neck. Jim glanced up and around. Two girls were settling themselves in the seats directly behind him, a tall girl with an olive skin and dark braids bound around her head; a small fair girl with a piquant face and light brown hair cut in a deep bang level with her brows. It was a scarf in the tall girl's hand which had touched Jim.

The girls behind him, he presently inferred, were members of the company not playing this evening. They talked of a trip to the coast which the company was to make during the autumn and early winter. Jim listened, filling in the time before the performance commenced.

—"Has Jeremy condescended to sign up for the trip?"

It was the tall girl who asked the question.

"Jeremy! On the road!" The answering voice had a lyric quality, light, lilting, clear. "You insult him, darling. Our Jeremy has his eyes on bigger and better things. His girl's papa is going to back a play for him—at least that is what he modestly intimates."

"So!" A low throaty laugh. "Something romantic, I suppose. Costumes, perhaps. He will need to look very beautiful not to waste papa's money."

"It won't matter whether he can act or not. I think he can. At least he's terribly effective."

"Shh!"

A gong rang. The deep blue curtain slithered open disclosing the stage. The performance began.

Jeremy was effective. Jim realized that as he saw him make his first entrance, dressed in evening clothes, a silk hat held negligently in the crook of his arm. He felt the

"I'm Keeping Herb for a Rainy Day."

reaction of the audience — largely feminine—and knew that the girl behind him was right. It probably made no difference whether Jeremy could or could not act.

The play was a Broadway success of a few seasons past. Jeremy played the role of a young Italian opera singer who meets, in a speakeasy in New York, a little southern girl doing the town with her fiance a surly young prig from East Orange. The girl was small and dainty. By contrast Jeremy appeared tall and debonaire and romantically handsome. His voice was caressing, his accent authentic, his profile undeniably handsome.

But was it acting? Jim did not know. Cecily thought he had genius. But Cecily was in love with him. Jim's curiosity was being satisfied but, beyond that, the evening was being wasted. He made no startling discoveries. Clyde was effective in a role that might have been written especially for him.

The theater was stuffy. Jim's legs felt cramped. He left his seat as the lights came on for the intermission at the end of the first act. Cecily, too, had risen, was walking up the aisle. She saw him and waved. They met in the small crowded lobby.

"Hello!" she said.

"Hello! How about a breath of air?"

"That's what I'm looking for."

"I thought perhaps you were looking for me."

"No." She smiled. "You are a nice surprise."

They stood on the steps of the theater. Jim lit her cigarette, lit his own, flicked the match away.

"Are you interested in the drama, Miss Vaughn?"

She laughed. "We are being polite, aren't we? That's so stupid. Jim, do you want to see the rest of the play?"

"I can take it or leave it."

"Let's leave it, then. I've seen it four times this summer. It's one of the best things Jerry does." Her voice brightened. "Let's run over to Dutch's."

"How about Jeremy?"

"We'll be back here by the time the performance is over."

Jim took her arm. "All right," he said. "Let's go."

They walked to the fawn-colored roadster.

"Will you drive?" she asked.

"Want me to?"

"Please. I'm awfully tired." She settled into the seat with a little sigh of relief. "I've been driving all afternoon. We went up to New Hope and along the canal. I adore Jerry but I won't ride in a car he drives."

There were only a few scattered groups in Dutch's garden, two or three couples moving about the floor. A waiter led them to a secluded stall at some distance from the orchestra.

"Want to dance?" Jim asked when the waiter had taken their order.

She shook her head.

"I'm weary. I just want to sit. You're so restful, Jim."

"Thank you," he said.

"I mean it. I like to be with you." She pulled off her hat, rested her head against the trellis behind her. She looked weary, Jim thought, dispirited. There were faint shadows under her eyes.

"What is it Cecily?" Jim asked. "What is troubling you? Do you want to tell me?"

"Of course. That's why I kidnaped you. Will you listen, Jim?"

"My one accomplishment."

The waiter brought tall glasses. Cecily took a few sips and set her glass aside.

"It's Jerry," she said, after a moment.

"You astonish me," he said. "I thought it was the new issue of government bonds."

She smiled faintly. "Do you mind if I talk about Jerry?" she asked. "I mean—after the night we danced —Will it hurt you, Jim?"

"That isn't important."

"I think it is." She glanced up at him fleetingly, looked down at her fingers snapping the purple and scarlet pod.

Jim bent toward her across the table.

"Cecily," he asked gravely, "will you try not to think of what happened that night? You can't entirely, I suppose. Neither, of course, can I. But don't let it spoil our—well, friendship, for want of a more adequate word. Anything that I can say will make me sound self-sacrificing and noble. I don't feel especially noble. It's really selfishness, perhaps. I want you to talk to me."

The smile vanished. Her expression was weary again. "I've had an exhausting day. I've been trying to make Jerry see that he should go with the Cherry Hollow company on their tour this fall. You see I've talked to Father. He can't put money into a play for Jerry now. He explained it all to me. I had no idea how much he's lost during the depression. But I'm afraid Jerry won't understand. He'll think it's prejudice or something. And I'm afraid he has talked about Father backing a play for him."

Jim knew that her apprehension was correct. Jeremy had talked. The conversation he had overheard in the theater made him aware of that. He waited in silence for Cecily to continue.

"I don't like the idea of not seeing Jerry all fall and half the winter," she went on. "I'll miss him awfully. But I think it's a splendid opportunity. The company has a certain amount of prestige. Wesley North is an excellent director. The experience would be valuable."

"Jerry doesn't like road trips?" Jim asked.

For an instant her eyes flashed with indignation.

"What if he doesn't?" she said sharply. "I don't suppose you really liked picking beans and changing tires!"

Jim was surprised and touched. He felt and controlled a feeling of elation.

"But I haven't artistic temperament," he said lightly.

"Jerry has, of course." The indignation was gone. Her eyes held a brooding expression. "He's either flying among the stars or sunk in the depths of gloom. He acts, at times, like a spoiled little boy." A note of affectionate indulgence in her voice softened the criticism. "And I do nag him," she added.

"Nag!" Jim disposed of the ugly word. "You couldn't nag anybody."

"I do," she said thoughtfully. "I can't seem to help nagging even when I know it irritates him. I want him to do the fine things of which he is capable. I love him and believe in him. Jerry doesn't like spurs. He doesn't get on very well with Wesley North because Mr. North digs the spurs in, too. Jerry's been so accustomed to praise and flattery. I'm just finding that out. You see, I've never been with him so—" She broke off with a rueful smile and a quick glance at Jim. "That was Father's idea, of course. He thought if I knew Jerry better—"

"Your idea," Jim reminded her, feeling again, for a moment, that lifting elation.

"I know." She sighed. "I'm making mountains out of mole-hills tonight. I'm making you think that Jerry is petty and selfish and unreasonable. He is, at times. Who isn't? But he's splendid, too. I'm

"Come On, Jim, Let's Fly!"

tired and disappointed and a little exasperated. I was, I mean. I feel better now." She breathed deeply, smiled across the table at Jim. "Thank you," she said.

"I haven't done anything."

"You've let me talk. I can talk to you. Do you remember when we hated each other?"

"I can just barely remember." Jim smiled.

"You hated me longer than I hated you." Her eyes were soft and bright with amusing memories.

"You're a disconcerting young lady."

"You aren't sorry, are you?" The laughing lights died out of her eyes. "What happened the evening we danced hasn't made you regret being at 'Meadowbrook'? We're all so fond of you, Father, Susan, Tommy, I—"

"No, I'm not sorry," Jim said. "This summer has been a break for me." He paused, looked down at his glass. If he could talk to her indirectly, without hurting her or antagonizing her—He felt terribly inadequate. If he were wiser and more articulate—If he were not so deeply in love with her—

She looked at him with sympathy and interest. "How, especially, has it been a break for you?" she asked.

"I think living—everything—is a question of values," he said slowly. "There are times when we don't see clearly. It's like being in a place of shadows, a deep forest, a lamp-lit room. Distortions, falsities seem true because we have no measure of comparison. Then, after a time, we come out into the sunlight. Do you understand? I'm not good at symbolism, but the thought beneath it is true. I know it is true because it has happened to me."

"Before you came here?" she asked.

"Yes. There was something I thought I could do, something false and distorted. Then I came here. When one lives and works in the sun, shadows seem unsubstantial. I have, for a time at least, re-established my scale of values. That's why I'm not sorry."

"You've given me something to think about. I don't know. Sometimes—" Her eyes glanced thoughtfully across the garden. Jim, watching her, waiting for the conclusion of the sentence, saw her suddenly startled expression.

"There's the Nolan girl from the theater!" she said. "What time is it, Jim?"

Jim consulted his watch. "Ten minutes past eleven."

"Good heavens! Jerry is waiting for me!" She caught up her hat and her purse. "Come on, Jim, let's fly!"

Jim sent the fawn-colored roadster speeding along the return route to Cherry Hollow. He had felt, for a moment, very close to Cecily. Now he had lost her again. Beneath her comments and exclamations, he felt her anxiety. When he brought the car to a skidding stop in the theater drive, she was out before he could make a motion to assist her.

The headlights revealed a small group of people standing on the steps. Jeremy detached himself from the group, as Cecily walked quickly toward the steps, and came to meet her. Jim, following Cecily at a little distance, saw that Jeremy's expression was unpleasant.

"Well!" he said. "Thank you for coming back."

"Jerry, darling! I'm so sorry!" Cecily slipped her arm through his in a conciliating gesture.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

From Perfectly Cut Patterns

"I'M GLAD I'm not on the serving committee this week" muses Mrs. Smith of Walnut street, as she takes stock of herself in the mirror preparatory to leaving for the church supper. "I look entirely too swell for me—why, I'm almost excited! I always knew surplice waists were becoming, but how becoming I never knew till now. That little deceptiveness is just what I need, and these sleeves are the most comfortable things! If about half our circle wore dresses like this it would be better for all concerned; so many of us have outgrown the tailored streamlined styles. Now, Mrs. White for instance—"

Enter an Admirer.

"Why Mother, you look de-lovely in that shade of blue! And you look real stylish, too—you ought to be going to a Coronation."

"Oh, I'd much prefer the church supper, dear. I'll be a somebody there in my new dress but at a Coronation I would be little potatoes. By the way, what did they say about your new jumper at school?"

"Mother, I meant to tell you. Mary Jane and Betty are both going to coax their mothers to make one just like it. I said maybe you would loan them the pattern, would you?"

"Why of course. Did you tell them it took me only two afternoons to make yours including two blouses?"

Enter "The Duchess."

"Sis, you're pretty young to be talking about clothes so intelligently. When you get a figure that clothes really count on—ahem, like Yours Truly's for instance; then it might be different —oh Mother, how nice! I'm crazy about it. Gee, such smart lines! Remember, you promised to help me with a new party frock next week if I did well with this shirtwaister. I wish all dresses were as easy to sew and as swell to wear as it is."

"Perfectly cut patterns spell success for any frock, Kay; your party dress is as good as made right now. But I must be on my way or I'll be more than fashionably late for the affair. Bye, bye —be good girls and see that Daddy gets something to eat."

Pattern 1268 is for sizes 36 to 52. Size 38 requires 5¼ yards of 39 inch material.

Pattern 1996 is for sizes 6 to 14 years. Size 8 requires 1¾ yards of 39 inch material for the jumper and 1⅓ yards for the blouse. Armscye and neck edges of jumper require 2½ yards of 1½ inch bias facing.

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Smiles

Home Talent

Jones—Now, there's Shelley—don't you think he employs too many metaphors?

Binks—Yes, I think he ought to give American workmen a chance.—Hartford Courant.

A psychologist states that he remembers being spanked at the age of two, for upsetting a pot of glue. That's just the type of experience to stick in memory.

April Foolery

The office boy wandered in a bit late t'other day, to be met with this question from the office manager (a verra, verra tough guy): "Say when were you born?"

"April 2," replied the office boy.

"H'm," snapped the office manager, "late again!"