MORE THAN SHE BARGAINED FOR

VIVIAN TURNER made a delightful rustling sound as she ploughed noisily through the fallen leaves that covered the forest path.

"Now, isn't this the crackiest place for a vacation a girl ever had!" she said to herself. "And the girls in the office think I'm crazy to spend my precious days of freedom this way. Bless their hearts, let them think. Now, this path leads somewhere, so we'll find out where it leads."

She turned a bend in the path and there in a small opening in the forest saw a little log house. Blue smoke rose from the chimney, a speckled hen was scratching around in the leaves and sitting on the tiny porch was a man. An open book lay on his knees. His head was bent over the page.

"Adventure!" said a voice inside her as she continued up the path that led to his very feet.

When she had covered the short distance and stood before him she was puzzled and offended because he did not even raise his head.

"Well, either you must be stone deaf or an awful concentrator," she said.

At the sound of her voice he started and looked up.

"I'm a concentrator," he said, "but I really thought you were Jane. She was here a minute ago."

"H-m-m, married," Vivian noted dismally. "This is where Viv'll have to do a fadeout scene. No home breaking for me. But he is nice. I like his blue eyes. He's awfully stiff, though. He might ask me to sit down. I wouldn't bite him or his Jane either."

The man said nothing—just looked at her in a polite, disinterested way. Vivian laughed a little nervously.

"I was just walking through the forest and landed—here," she said at last. "I hope you and Mrs. Jane won't mind."

"Oh, no, sure not. Make yourself at home. I don't mind at all and Jane has nothing to say about it. There she comes now."

The fat speckled hen approached with leisurely dignity from around the side of the house and Vivian's heart gave a little flop of relief.

"You must get lonesome, don't you? I wouldn't, but most folks would. You're big and youngish. . . . It seems strange," she ended with winning frankness.

"Yes, but it's safe here and I have my books and the birds and animals in the forest and Jane. The forest folk never betray or deceive. Besides, I do research work in ornithology and this is a good place for me to be," he ended, lamely. "I'm Will Delaney of the state university."

"Woman hater. He means that for me," she registered quickly. Then she felt an overwhelming sympathy for him. He probably wanted friends and was lonesome, but was afraid somebody'd hurt him again.

"I'm so sorry," she said quietly. "I'm afraid somebody has caused you to lose your faith in people."

The man turned a tragic face to her then and in an outburst told her his whole story.

"I haven't been able to bear the sight of a girl since," he told her desperately, "and yet I want to—to—I'm not the hermit kind of a fellow. If she only hadn't lied to me on top of it. If she had only come straight to me and not let me get it from others."

"I know how you feel," said Vivian from her seat on the step beside him. "But why let one worthless girl ruin your whole life? Come on—let's go exploring together."

She jumped up and with a childish gesture caught hold of the cuff of his coat and tugged at it until he rose.

Together they rambled through the woods until noontime.

"We'll explore the caves after lunch," she told him. "I have to go to my farmhouse and get something to eat now."

It was on the fourth day that Vivian took stock of the situation.

"Lordy, Lordy," she said to the cracked mirror in her bedroom at Mrs. Benton's. "I just wanted a little flirtation and now I'm all tangled up in a love affair. That's more than I bargained for. Never mind, he'll never know I'm in love with him if it kills me. I've got some pride. Guess I'll have to quit seeing him every day this way. It'll make it worse when I have to leave."

But, of course, she did not. Instead, she thought up a hundred different excuses for daily trips to the little house in the woods.

On the eve of her departure for the city Vivian felt her hand tremble as she put it in his for a last goodby. Suddenly he pulled her to him almost roughly.

"Vivian, I can't let you go," he said huskily. "I swear I can't. You've changed everything for me, but if you ever lie to me or go back on me I'll kill myself."

"Then you mean I'll have to marry you to save your life?"

"That's what I've been trying to get through your head for the last two weeks," he said, impatiently.

"Now he's lying," she said to herself. "All the time he's been trying not to want to marry me." But her answer in no way resembled her inner thoughts.

"Well, I guess I'll have to annex you and Jane," she laughed, as her arms crept up around his neck.

And Catch Them

"Very few women," says a contemporary, "have any interest in fishing." We dunno. Lots of the dears angle for compliments.—Farm and Fireside.

Just Think of It

You often say, no doubt, that certain persons make you tired. Maybe you haven't any room to talk.—Atchison Globe.

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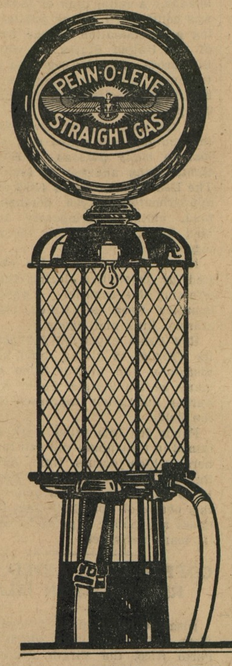

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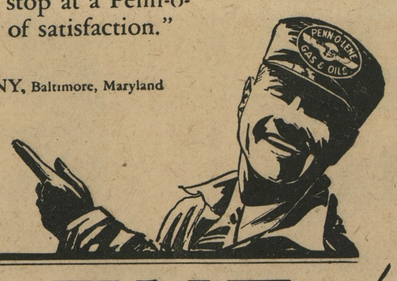

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