FICTION FROM THE AFRO ARCHIVES

'Twas Love At First Sight

What happens when a cultured school teacher marries a rough, uncouth boor, merely as a matter of convenience. Can she remain faithful when true love comes her way?

Life is queer! One goes along in an ordinary sort of way and then all of a sudden something very unusual happens that may alter one's whole existence. Life is, after all, just a series of incidents like a row of wooden soldiers; one only slightly agitated moves all of the rest.

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WHAT YOU do today or tomorrow may decide when, where and with whom you will end your days. To fight against it is almost futile, since this merely starts another chain of incidents that may have a worse result.

Take me, for example. Five years ago I was appointed teacher of English in the high school in our little North Carolina town. I had been planning to go to Chicago and take up social work but the appointment kept me at home.

Emerson is a staid, religious highly moral, uninteresting and boresome place where the only recreation is church socials, bridge games and the radio. I had grown to detest it but I had to stay because my widowed mother needed me and the money I was making, to keep up the old home.

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THINGS happened pretty rapidly after that appointment. As one of the attractive and best-dressed girls in town, I became the cause of a bitter rivalry among the unmarried men of the town. They were largely an ordinary crew and I couldn't be bothered with them.

It's an awful thing to be tied down for life with a dull man!

Unfortunately, that's how I ended eventually, and on the advice of my mother.

Jim Brown was the most eligible of the flock of suitors. He had money, a thriving general store, a large number of rented houses and the esteem of the community.

But he was stodgy, fifteen years older than I and rough and uneducated. If it had not been for my mother's sickly condition and the pitifully small amount of money we had in the bank, I would never have married Jim.

To make a long story short, my school appointment at home kept me there, made me lonesome and easy prey for Jim. If I had gone to Chicago it would have been different.

Anyway, he proved to be a coarse, ill-mannered brute, extremely jealous and yet incapable of arousing my love. Instead, I came gradually and reluctanly to loath him.

I hated to have him put his hands on me, and yet I had to submit to his unwelcome caresses. I couldn't quit. There was little Jim to think of, and besides, Emerson was the only place I knew.

So I stuck it out, teaching at school, preparing meals, going to church, being a dutiful wife and . . . and detesting my husband.

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WELL, THE situation remained the same until this past summer. The principal of my school had hinted that it would be a good idea for me to go to summer school as I was the only one of the faculty that had not attended.

He did not know that I would have gone every summer had it not been for my husband's jealousy, and suspicion. He would not give his consent until the principal urged him to do so. I selected Columbia University. I had always wanted to see New York City and enjoy some of the pleasures of Harlem.

It was a tug of war to get away but I finally made it. What a thrill to get on a train going away from Emerson, my husband and the hypocritical gossips and bores of my home town! Three months' vacation in the great metropolis of the New World!

How thrilled I was at the prospect! All night I stayed awake thinking about it, Greensboro, Danville, Lynchburg passed, then Washington, a change of trains and finally the huge Pennsylvania Station at 33rd Street, New York.

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I KNEW practically no one in New York and at first it was pretty lonesome. Then one Friday night a reception was given for summer school students at the 135th Street Branch Library where several writers and poets were scheduled to speak.

I went joyously, eagerly, and there I met the first man who ever really attracted me: Ramon de Bendo.

He was so different from any man I had ever met that the comparison was startling.

Tall, erect, slender, athletic, very dark with well-moulded features, long, slender, delicate hands: long curving eye lashes, gracefully curved eyebrows and flashing white, even teeth; he was the very perfection of manhood.

We danced all evening together after introducing ourselves in that charmingly informal manner of New Yorkers. We ate ice cream and drank lemonade while we told about ourselves.

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HE WAS the only son of a wealthy Brazilian exporter in Rio de Janeiro, finishing his senior year at Fordham University. He spoke of himself modestly and paid me the most gallant compliments on my beauty and culture in delightful English just slightly mellowed by his native Latin tongue.

It was a matter of love at first sight with me. Ramon was the first man I had ever met whom I deemed my equal. I could not help but compare him with my coarse, uncouth, brutal husband, Jim Brown; and smile wryly at the tricks Fate plays on us.

Where Jim was indifferent and inattentive, Ramon catered to my every wish, and yet he was always the cultured gentleman, never the slave. Where Jim spoke to me in the language of the store and livery stable, Ramon addressed me as a courtier speaking to a noble lady.

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THAT FIRST night as we came away from the library, he breathed an "I love you," in my ear. How it thrilled me! How it aroused dreams of a fairy castle atop a green-clad knoll under the deep blue skies of the tropics! I felt at last that I had met my affinity. I was in a Seventh Heaven of delight. I let Ramon kiss me at my apartment door.

I knew it was wrong; knew it was a violation of my marriage vows; knew I was deceiving my husband; knew that all Emerson would condemn my conduct if it knew, but it didn't know and couldn't know, and even if it did I didn't care!

So long had I suppressed my youthful longings and cravings for true romance while tied down to a brute fifteen years my senior, that I could do so no longer. They had to have some outlet, and . . . well, I promised myself to be discreet.

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"DOROTHY!" he breathed, one evening as we were rowing on the pond in Central Park under a full moon, "are you going to kill me?"

"Why, what do you mean, Ramon?" I gasped in surprise looking up into his dark eyes.

"Well," he explained, "I love you more than anything else in the world. We were made for each other, Dorothy, and you know it. Without you I cannot live, will not live. You hear, I will not live. It would not be worthwhile.

"You know this; you can see it in my eyes, my manner, my every gesture. And yet, despite the fact that you love me, too, you are going back to your husband when summer school is over; going back to boredom, tawdriness, stodginess, hyprocrisy, and hatred, to say nothing of everlasting, unfounded suspicion.

"You hate to go and yet you are going because you feel it is your duty to do so. I understand duty, Dorothy, but I also understand love. We are made for each other, we both have education and a love of knowledge; we are both young and full of the joy and bounce of living.

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"I HAVE money and position in my home country where there is no race prejudice such as you have here. You know I want you to go with me and you really want to go with me, and yet you won't go. You are going to ruin my life for the sake of duty. You are going to kill me!"

"Oh, Ramon!" I cried in anguish, "don't say that, please. I admit I care for you but you'll admit it would be monstrous to desert my husband, my mother and my little boy. I cannot do that. I must do my duty even though I hate the ground Jim Brown walks on."

My heart was touched. Here

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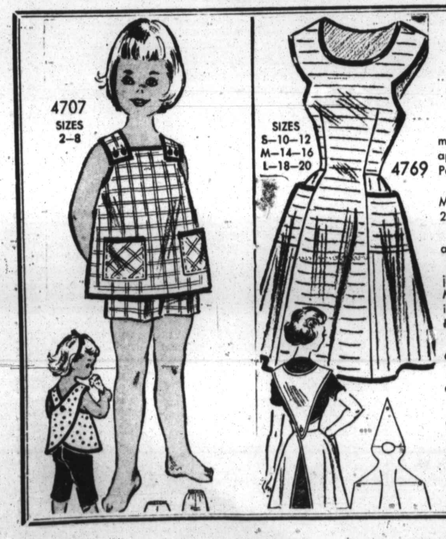
"I believe I really love you, my darling.

AFRO PATTERNS



Plenty of protective cover for kitchen chores makes this a favorite apron. For bathing baby, sew apron in splash-proof terry cloth. A sew-easy Printed Pattern — see the diagram.

Printed Pattern 4769: Misses' Sizes Small (10, 12); Medium (14, 16); Large (18, 20). Medium size takes 2⅛ yards 35-inch.

Printed directions on each pattern part. Easier, accurate.

Quick, whip up these sun 'n' fun separates in a jiffy — daughter will live in, play in, love them. Make several versions of smock, shorts, pedal pushers in no-iron cotton, denim, seersucker with our easy Printed Pattern.

Printed Pattern 4707: Child's Sizes 2, 4, 6, 8. Size 6 smock and shorts take 1½ yards 35-inch.

Printed directions on each pattern part. Easier, accurate.

Send Thirty-five cents in coins for this pattern—add 5 cents for each pattern for 1st-class mailing. Send to ANNE ADAMS, care of AFRO-AMERICAN No. 219, Pattern Dept., 243 West 17th St., New York 11, N.Y. Print plainly NAME, ADDRESS with ZONE, SIZE and STYLE NUMBER.

IN CASE OF AN ENEMY ATTACK

He'll Sound The Alarm

One phone call by Air Force Major Lew Smith can put the entire North American continent on the alert. He and his crew hold the destiny of the country in their grasp.

Maj. Lewis C. Smith, 15-year veteran of the United States Air Force, today holds down one of the most sensitive jobs on the North American continent.

If air defense conditions warrant, Major Lew Smith, a native of Chicago, Ill., former World War II fighter pilot, and German prisoner of war, can place the entire United States on what is known as "Warning Yellow."

This is an air defense condition indicating an attack by hostile aircraft is probable.

By the flick of a switch he could cause a situation which could affect every man, woman and child on the North American continent.

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FOR EIGHT hours each working day he studies a huge 20 by 30 piece of plexiglass on which is imposed a huge map of the North American continent, plus long stretches of the cold dismal Arctic Regions.

He is the Operations Duty Officer at the North American Air Defense Command Combat Operations Center in Colorado Springs, Colo.

This is the command post for the battle of North America, if and when it should ever happen. Here, the patterns of attacking bombers would first form on the map watched intently by Major Smith and his tactical crew of USAF airmen.

In the windowless three-story reinforced concrete block building is located the nerve center of the entire pattern of defense woven by defense officials during the past few years.

Here the directions of a saturation bombing attack on North America would form.

In the soft light of the COC the NORAD staff would determine whether and when atomic destruction had started on its one way trip to the Americas.

From here, the go-ahead for the all powerful USAF Strategic Air Command would be transmitted.

As Major Smith gazes into the plexiglass montage he only too well realizes his tremendous responsibility.

He describes it well when he says, "When I realize what I can accomplish by making one phone call in the line of duty I get the same feeling I had just prior to the starting whistle on the football field."

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HIS LOOKS and manner do not indicate the huge load carried on his shoulders. He is a family man with an 11-year-old daughter.

He is a rated senior pilot and wears the Distinguished Flying Cross, Air Medal and a Purple Heart.

He received his bachelor of science degree at the University of Maryland in 1952, after having attended the University of California, Los Angeles, during the early 1940's.

He served as the USAF Professor of Air Science and Tactics at Howard University, Washington, D.C., from 1947 to 1952.

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SMITH, A former P-51 Mustang fighter-pilot during World War I with over 100 missions to his credit, was shot down over Iterbo, Italy, approximately 100 miles north of Rome.

He was imprisoned in Germany until war's end.

Today as Operations Duty Officer in the COC, he and his crew evaluate the many thousands of fight plans and reports logged by the North American Air Defense surveillance system.

Now, a jet fighter pilot, he maintains his flight proficiency during his off-duty hours.

These airmen take the reports funneling into the Command Post indicating unknown aircraft flights originating from the four corners of the continent.

Standing behind the surveillance board is a battery of WAF's and airmen which plot on the map, location, course, altitude and other information on every unidentified aircraft detected by radar stations and the Ground Observer Corps on the North American Continent.

To the right of the surveillance board which Major Smith can take in at a glance is the "tote board" which repeats the information plotted on the plexiglass surface and in addition records the tactical action taken in the case of the unidentified "bogey."

At a glance, Smith can readily tell the radar station picking up the "bogey," the track number assigned the aircraft, its speed, altitude, time and the number and type of aircraft scrambled (sent into the air) to intercept and identify it.

ON THE basis of information being received throughout the day and night (the COC is a 24-hour, 365 day-per-year operation) the tracks of unidentified aircraft are plotted on the board by the WAF's and airmen who work behind the board on three different levels above the main floor, writing backwards in order not to obscure the tracks they plot from the personnel analyzing the information shown.

All told these men can be said to have the destiny of a continent within their grasp. And they wear the mantle of responsibility with honor and devotion as they go about their daily task of protecting the Continent against a surprise enemy air attack.

Staff Sergeant Earl Wayne Agee, from Brunswick, Mo., mans the switchboard at NORAD, where he keeps in touch with defense installations all over the Continent.

Tech. Sergeant Carroll Shepard, of Summerville, S.C. works with RCAF Squadron Leader Walker, in Combat Operations Center.

MEN AT WORK—Air Force Major Lewis C. Smith concentrates on a huge plexiglass map which tells him the location and route of every airplane flying across the North American continent. One of his crewmen sits beside him, ready to relay instructions.

Love at first sight

(Continued from Page 4)

was a man practically "made-to-order" for me, a man who loved me deeply and had it within his power to lift me from hell to heaven, and yet I was being forced to make a choice against my desires.

We returned to the city in silence.

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I COULD not sleep when I went to bed that night. The situation into which I had gotten myself worried me tremendously. The result would apparently be immediate tragedy for life-long suffering.

As the sun rose over Long Island Sound and flooded my boudoir, I decided to pack my things, quit summer school and go back to Emerson at once. It was the only way, I thought, out of my delemma.

As I went about getting my things together, I felt perfectly wretched. My husband had not written me a line during the six weeks I had been away and mama had only written twice. Worried about the baby, Ramon and the future, I was nearly crazy.

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EARLY THE next morning I arrived home. I had forgotten to telegraph and there was no one at the little station to meet me, but Sam Thorpe, the jitney driver.

Nothing had changed in the brief time I had been gone. There were the same landmarks, the same trees and shrubbery, the same streets. It seemed so strange in view of what I had gone through. My heart sank hopelessly as I thought of Ramon five hundred miles awy in the Big City.

I unlocked the front door and Sam brought in my suitcases. "Come right up stairs with them Sam," I directed, "and put them in my room."

I followed him and he stepped aside while I opened the bedroom door for him. We both jumped back in surprise at the sight that met our astonished gaze. There before the mirror arranging her hair stood Flora Bandson, the most notorious flirt in Emerson!

"What are you doing here?" I shouted, advancing into the room.

"I-I-I'm cooking for Mr. Brown," she lied, frightened. "He hired me, Mrs. Brown, honest he did."

"You like!" I hissed, hurt, disillusioned, disgusted by the sordidness of it all. It was like Jim to take advantage of my absence in this way.

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JUST THEN my husband ran upstairs in his shirt sleeves and stopped as if shot at the sight of me. For once he forgot to curse, losing all control of his foul tongue.

Finally, after what seemed an eternity, he found his voice and insisted that Flora was only there as his cook while I was away; but he couldn't satisfactorily explain why he had let her occupy my room instead of the top floor bedroom.

I saw Attorney Smith an hour later and he assured me that with Sam Thrope as witness, getting a divorce would be easy. It was.

Thanksgiving Day, free at last, Ramon and I went to the Municipal Building in New York and were pronounced man and wife. We were both supremely happy.

That was a year ago and we're still happy. Mother and little Jim are here with me in Rio. In the evenings as I look over the beautiful bay, I think of life—the queer things it does and the beautiful love that summer school brought me.

Jest For Laffs

The ability to speak in many languages is valuable, but the ability to keep your mouth shut in one is priceless.

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Things generally balance out. Other people's troubles are never as bad as our own, but their children are always a whole lot worse.

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Old age has some benefits. For instance you can whistle as you wash your teeth.

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Too many square meals make people too round.

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There's nothing like a good, old - fashioned home - cooked meal — not in most homes at least.

You don't have to stay awake nights to succeed. Just stay awake days.

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Question of the day is: Will a guided missile do more harm than a misguided miss'il?