Death grips all Manhattan, only a colored man and white woman survive the:

Comet's Tail

A SHORT STORY

By DR. W. E. B. DuBOIS

This Leads You Into The Story

Jim, the bank porter, sent far below into the cellar to find missing bank records, returns to the top floor of the bank to find that New York has been swept by the deadly gases of the Comet's tail. In the bank, in the street, everywhere throughout the city, the comet has left a trail of death. Jim takes the body of a dead man from a Ford found standing on the street and makes a tour of the city.

He finds dead bodies in every conceivable position, and comes to the conclusion that his visit below the ground into the deepest bank vault has made him the only survivor of New York's greatest tragedy. He is nearly insane with loneliness, when he hears a human voice and hears a white woman call him from a nearby building.

PART II.

"What has happened?" she cried. "Tell me! Nothing stirs. All is silence! I see the dead strewn before my window as winnowed by the breath of God—and see—"

She dragged him through great, silken hangings to where, beneath the sheen of mahogany and silver, a little French maid lay stretched in quiet, everlasting sleep, and near her a butler lay prone in his livery.

The tears streamed down the woman's cheeks and she clung to his arm until the perfume of her breath swept his face and he felt the tremors racing through her body.

'I Saw The Dead'

"I had been shut up in my dark room developing pictures of the comet which I took last night; when I came out—I saw the dead.

"What has happened?" she cried again.

He answered slowly:

"Something — comet or devil — swept across the earth this morning and—many are dead!"

"Many? Very Many?"

"I have searched and I have seen no other living soul but you."

She gasped and they stared at each other.

"My—father!" she whispered.

"Where is he?"

"He started for the office."

"Where is it?"

"In the Metropolitan Tower."

"Leave a note for him here and come."

Then he stopped.

"No," he said firmly—"first, we must go—to Harlem."

"Harlem!" she cried. Then she understood. She tapped her foot at first impatiently. She looked back and shuddered. Then she came resolutely down the steps.

"There's a swifter car in the garage in the court," she said.

"I don't know how to drive it," he said.

"I do," she answered.

On Two Wheels

In 10 minutes they were flying to Harlem on the wind. The car rose and raced like an airplane. They took the turn at 125th st. on two wheels and slipped with a shriek into 135th.

He was gone but a moment. Then he returned, and his face was gray. She did not look, but said:

"You have lost—somebody?"

"I have lost — everybody," he said, simply—"unless—"

He ran back and was gone several minutes—hours they seemed to her.

"Everybody," he said, and he walked slowly back with something film-like in his hand which he stuffed into his pocket.

"I'm afraid I was selfish," he said. But already the car was moving toward the park among the dark and lined dead of Harlem—the brown, still faces, the knotted hands, the homely garments, and the silence—the wild and haunting silence.

Out of the park, and down Fifth Avenue they whirled. In and out among the dead they slipped and quivered, needing no sound of bell or horn, until the great square Metropolitan Tower hove in sight.

Gently, he laid the dead elevator boy aside; the car shot upward. The door of the office stood open. On the threshold lay the stenographer, and, starting at her, we met the dead clerk. The inner office was empty, but a note lay on the desk, folded and addressed but unsent:

Dear Daughter:

I've gone for a hundred mile spin in Fred's new car. Shall not be back before dinner. I'll bring Fred with me.

— J. B. H.

"Come," she cried nervously. "We must search the city." Up and down, over and across, back again—on went this ghostly search. Everywhere was silence and death—death and silence!

They hunted from Madison Square to Spuyten Duyvil; they rushed across the Williamsburg Bridge; they swept over Brooklyn; from the Battery and Morningside Heights they scanned the river. Silence, silence, everywhere, and no human sign. Haggard and bedraggled they puffed a third time slowly down Broadway, under the broiling sun, and at last stopped.

He sniffed the air. An odor—a smell—and with the shifting breeze a sickening stench filled their nostrils. The girl settled back helplessly in her seat.

It Seemed Hopeless

"What can we do?" she cried.

It was his turn now to take the lead, and he did it quickly.

"The long distance telephone—the telegraph and the cable—night rockets and then flight!"

She looked at him now with strength and confidence. He did not look like men, as she had always pictured men; but he acted like one and she was content.

In 15 minutes they were at the central telephone exchange. As they came to the door he stepped quickly before her and pressed her gently back as he closed it. She heard him moving to and fro, and knew his burdens—the poor, little burdens he bore.

When she entered, he was alone in the room, the grim switchboard flashed its metallic face in cryptic, sphinx-like immobility. She looked at the mouthpiece. She had never looked at one so closely before.

It was wide and black, pimpled with usage; inert; dead; almost sarcastic in its unfeeling curves.

It looked—she beat back the thought—but it looked—it persisted in looking like—she turned her head and found herself alone. One moment she was terrified; then she thanked him silently for his delicacy and turned resolutely, with a quick intaking of breath.

"Hello!" she called in low tones. She was calling to the world.

The World Must Answer

The world must answer. Would the world answer? Was the world—

Silence!

She had spoken too low.

"Hello!" she cried, full-voiced.

She listened. Silence! Her heart beat quickly. She cried in clear, distinct tones: "Hello—hello—hello!"

What was that whirring? Surely—no — was it the click of a receiver?

She bent close, she moved the pegs in the holes, and called and called, until her voice rose almost to a shriek, and her heart hammered. It was as if she had heard the last flicker of creation, and the evil was silence.

Her voice dropped to a sob. She sat stupidly staring into the black and sarcastic mouthpiece, and the thought came again. Hope lay dead within her. Yes, the cable and the rockets remained; but the world—she could not frame the thought or say the word.

It was too mighty—too terrible! She turned toward the door with a new fear in her heart. For the first time she seemed to realize that she was alone in the world with a stranger, with something more than a stranger—with a man alien in blood and culture—unknown, perhaps unknowable. It was awful! She must escape—she must fly; he must not see her again. Who knew what awful thoughts—

She gathered her silken skirts deftly about her young, smooth limbs—listened, and glided into a side-hall. A moment she shrank back: the hall lay filled with dead women; then she leaped to the door and tore at it, with bleeding fingers, until it swung wide. She looked out. He was standing at the top of the alley—silhouetted, tall and black, motionless. Was he looking at her or away? She did not know—she did not care. She simply leaped and ran—ran until she found herself alone amid the dead and the tall ramparts of towering buildings.

Hushed Voices, Moving Things

She stopped. She was alone. Alone! Alone on the streets—alone in the city—perhaps alone in the world!

There crept in upon her the sense of deception—of creeping hands behind her back—of silent, moving things she could not see—of voices hushed in fearsome conspiracy. She looked behind and sideways, startled at strange sounds until every nerve within her stood sharp and quivering, stretched to scream at the barest touch.

She whirled and flew back, whimpering like a child, until she found that narrow alley again and the dark, silent figure silhouetted at the top. She stopped and rested; then she walked silently toward him, looked at him timidly; but he said nothing as he handed her into the car. Her voice caught as she whispered:

"Not—that."

And he answered slowly: "No—not that!"

They climbed into the car. She bent forward on the wheel and sobbed, with great, dry quivering sobs, as they flew toward the cable office on the east side, leaving the world of wealth and prosperity for the world of poverty and work. In the world behind them were death and silence, grave and grim, aloest cynical, but always decent; here it was hideous.

It clothed itself in every ghastly form of terror, struggle, hate and suffering. It lay wrecked in crime and squalor, greed and lust. Only in its dread and awful silence was it like to death everywhere.

The Horror Of Death

Yet as the two, flying and alone, looked upon the horror of the world, slowly, gradually, the sense of all-enveloping death deserted them. They seemed to move in a world silent and asleep—not dead. They moved in quiet reverence, lest somehow they wake these sleeping forms who had, at last, found peace.

They moved in some solemn, world-wide Friedhof, above which some mighty arm had waved its magic wand. All nature slept until—until, and quick with the same startling thought, they looked into each other's eyes — he ashen, and she, crimson, with unspoken thought. To both, the vision of a mighty beauty—of vast, unspoken things, swelled in their souls; but they put it away.

Great, dark coils of wire came up from the earth and down from the sun and entered this low lair of witchery. The gathered lightnings of the world centered here, binding with beams of light the ends of the earth. The doors gaped on the gloom within. He paused on the threshold.

(Continued Next Week

"She was all alone. There had to be someone else still alive."

I REMEMBER THE

One-Sided Grid Game

When Howard beat Morgan, 52-6

In Nov. 1922, Morgan Colleges football team was handed a solid defeat which had grid fans talking for a long time. Over 1,000 fans saw Howard University deliver this drubbing to the Morgan Bears on the Howard campus in Washington.

Howard made its first touchdown in one minute. It added three more in the first quarter, and then sent the second team against the Morganites. These "scrubs" even made a touchdown in the second quarter.

Morgan had blood in its eyes when the second half started, and not only outplayed the Howard "scrubs" but uncorked a triple pass, Cromwell to Pritchett to Sorrell to Hill, that ended in a 50-yard run and a touchdown.

Immediately, Howard's Coach Morrison, sent back his first team into the game, and they rolled up three more touchdowns before the game ended.

The silver lining in Morgan's cloud was that they scored on Howard campus, on a Howard team. Besides, Cromwell outkicked the best White and Blue punters.

Weird Plays Featured

All kinds of weird plays featured the game.

In the first quarter, Morgan caught the kick-off on her 15 yard line, and lined up to return the punt. The pass from center was so high over Cromwell's head that it hit the goal posts and bounded back into the field, where a Howard back recovered.

Head linesman Bennie Washington said at the time it was the freakiest play he had ever seen and that had Morgan recovered, he would have been at a loss as to how to rule.

The second weird play was the kick-off in the second half that went over the Morgan goal line. Pritchett looked at it complacently without moving while Howard men chased the pigskin and captured it for a touchdown.

Howard had not developed a drop-kicker. Carter failed miserably at two attempts at goal. Contee did better. Thereafter for the first time in history, Howard scored its extra point by forward pass or a run around the end.

Field Poorly Policed

The Howard team occupied a bench on the west side of the field. Only players, newspaper men, and the university band were allowed on this side of the field, and no one was allowed within fifteen feet of the Howard bench.

Morgan players were given the East side of the field directly in front of the Howard rooters, who shortly after the game started, broke down wires and swarmed upon the playing field. The Morgan team was completely swallowed up and Coach Camper had all kinds of difficulty in locating his players when necessary.

An AFRO representative called this poor sportsmanship to the attention of Secretary Scott and President Durkee, and the latter protested. Referee Henderson warned the spectators that unless they withdrew from the playing field the Howard team would be penalized. Part of the rooters moved, but the rest remained and the game went on.

The line-up of this memorable game follows:

Some members of the 1925 Morgan College football squad shown here played in the game with Howard in 1922. At the time this photo was made, the late Dr. Charles Drew, famed blood plasma expert, was coach (top row, third from left) Talmadge "Marse" Hill, now line coach at Morgan played end (second row, first from left) Mack Payne, Baltimore school teacher and coach (bottom row, second from left) Daniel "Pinky" Clark was quarterback, (thirh row, fourth from left) and P. V. Sheffey, (second row, sixth from left) were also on the teaf. How many others do you recognize?

Howard	Positions	Morgan College
Williams	L.E.	Hill
Bagly	L.T.	Reed
Nunn	L.G.	Fisher
Holton	C	Cromwell
Smith	R.G.	Harvey
Crawford	R.T.	Brown
J. Long	R.E.	McIntyre
Carter	Q	Fletcher
Melton	L.H.	Pritchett
Contee	R.H.	Suggs
Doneghy	F.B.	Hine

Score by Periods:				
Howard	26	7	19	0
Morgan	0	0	6	0

Referee: M. Henderson, Dunbar. Umpire Mr. Douglass, Dunbar. Headlinesman, Mr. Washington, Armstrong.

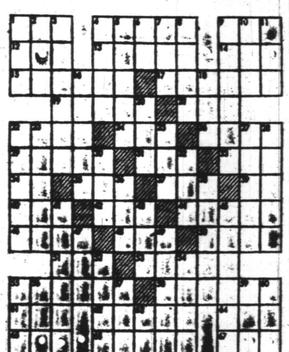
Crossword Puzzle

HORIZONTAL

1 A newt
4 Brushed away
9 Knock lightly
12 Correlative of neither
13 One who devours
14 Kind of fish
15 Senseless talk
17 Ages
19 Temporary dwellings
21 To immerse
23 Ethical moral
24 Place for wild animals
26 Persian elf
29 Principal division
31 To place
33 Boy's nickname
34 Small fish
36 Turf
37 Spanish for "river"
38 Pronoun
40 Worm
42 Negative
44 To move stealthily
46 Afternoon meal
48 Small chunk
50 Animal
51 Play on words
53 Is afraid
55 To echo
56 Chief god
61 Affirmative vote
63 Communion table
64 Ale
65 To spread
66 Ever, poetic
67 Land measure

VERTICAL

1 Finish
2 In favor of
3 Marine deity
4 Observed
5 A dance
6 French for "and"
7 To fondle
8 Walked on
9 Tribe
10 Pues
11 Through
16 Planet
18 Tabernacle
22 A bribe
25 Poem
28 To annoy
32 Pronoun
35 Less well cooked
36 Desirable
38 Descendant
39 Nervous disease
40 Canine
41 Entrance
43 Weakened
45 Jutting rock
47 Less difficult
49 To petition
50 Two-footed animal
52 Back of neck
54 Prepares
57 Rodent
58 Organ of hand
59 Sailor
60 Since
62 Barrow
63 Toward



ANSWERS

STARS YOU

DAILY FORECASTS

What to do and avoid each day in the coming week:—

Monday — Excellent for taking the initiative in all conferences over finance. Take an unexpected line and you will get away with it. There may be hidden opposition, which will come to light in a chance conversation with another. Lucky numbers, 9, 18, 27; color, red.

Tuesday — Unfavorable for asserting independence. A more co-operative attitude will bring a plan to a successful conclusion. Danger is having too many irons in the fire, with neglect to some. Lucky numbers, 6, 15, 24; color, white.

Wednesday — Good for new business moves. Those at the top will be easier to approach and more co-operative. A joint effort with one of the opposite sex will lead to a brilliant success in a social entertainment event. Lucky numbers, 3, 12, 21, 30; color, purple.

Thursday — Organization and planning will take up much of today. Good time for a deal in property. Don't reject constructive criticism; it will help to avoid errors in a plan. Lucky numbers, 7, 16, 25; color, green.

Friday — You will feel impatient at to-day's restraints, and judgment may be clouded. Therefore avoid hasty decisions and actions which may involve you in loss. The evening will bring greater freedom and the chance of an important contact. Lucky numbers, 1, 10, 19, 28; color, gold.

Saturday — It will be to your advantage to settle a money matter in the morning. Other bright ideas will occur to you, but put them in cold storage for the future. Personal evening engagements are likely to concern a philanthropic interest. Lucky numbers, 2, 14, 23; color, brown.

Sunday — Much quiet pleasure today in a social engagement of a sober, conservative kind. Later, however, a livelier and chattier event will please your family more. But there will be letters to attend to first. Lucky numbers, 8, 17, 26; color, gray.

YOUR OWN HOROSCOPE

Look under your birth-sign below for your forecast for the week ahead:—

ARIES (March 1 — April 20). —You will be piling on the effort to good effect for a few days. Look out for an unexpected hitch towards the end. A machine may break down or carelessness spoil your plans.

TAURUS (April 21 — May 21). —It will be a case of all hands on deck now. Your family will join in to help you through a tedious task which brings pleasure to all when accomplished.

GEMINI (May 22 — June 21). — Money matters will still be fluctuating, and you will have some worry over a partner's extravagance. Your suspicion of another will be cleared up and the relation turned to friendship.

CANCER (June 22 — July 23).—A feeling of uncertainty will tend to hold you back until mid-week, when you will make a good new move. Some influential help will be forthcoming.

LEO (July 24 — Aug. 23). —A right decision early in the week will greatly improve your worldly position. There will be strong opposition, but your steady work will receive due recognition.

VIRGO (Aug. 24 — Sept. 23). —Controversy in which you become involved will cause a little anxiety unless you act discreetly. A friend abroad will put you on to a good investment or speculation.

LIBRA (Sept. 24 — Oct. 23). —You should enjoy some pleasant trips just now and make new acquaintances. Worldly affairs will be stable, with the chance of solid progress.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24 — Nov. 22). —Energetic personal effort will enhance your reputation with a person of influence, who may offer you a fine new contract or agreement.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 23 — Dec. 23). —Your prompt acceptance of responsibility thrown on you by another's illness will bring financial gain. If your conscience is uneasy about this, remember that your personal effort saved a difficult situation.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 23 — Jan. 20).—Spurred on by the encouragement of a woman friend or partner, you will show more initiative, and make money in a way you hadn't thought of yourself.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 21 — Feb. 19). —If you find yourself in trouble through an impetuous expression of opinion, take a firm line and all will be well. Domestic affairs will be comfortable.

PISCES (Feb. 20. — March 20).—Having overcome some disagreement with your associates, a co-operative scheme will now bring a gain all round. Parents will help you in a temporary lack of capital, or a woman friend will come to the rescue.

THIS WEEK'S BIRTHDAYS

Here's the forecast for your birthday, engagement or wedding anniversary.

Sunday — Enthusiasm and energy will bring you a highly prosperous 12 months. You will now be able to make some exciting changes in the home.

Adrienne Arden's 12 months' forecast for your birthday, engagement or wedding anniversary:—

Monday — A temptation to make a rash venture will be put aside on the advice of a woman friend or partner and your desire for action diverted into a more profitable channel.

Tuesday — Some opposition will be encountered towards a new plan, but the chances are you will get off the mark too quickly for it to be effective. Social life will take you a little above your normal sphere, and a pleasant surprise will affect your personal life.

Wednesday — You can look forward to a satisfactory stabilization of your worldly position, with brighter prospects looming ahead. It will now be possible to turn an artistic or intellectual interest to practical account.

Thursday — For the greater part of the year it will be hard going with hindrances and disappointments to test your patience. A momentous campaign leads to a final show-down with your major opponent.

Friday — You will get off to good start, but will find this hard to keep up. Much time will be spent in correspondence and journeys over a matter you thought was settled.

Saturday — Worldly prospects will be only moderate owing to the awkward attitude of your superiors. Your attention will be directed mainly towards home affairs, in which there will be a steady growth of mutual trust and better understanding.

When their lips parted, she whispered, "I am free, darling—free from the past."

FOR LACK OF WARMTH

Could he resist an appealing girl when his wife shut the door to love?

By EDWARD WORTHY

John Wallace lounged lazily on he glider. It was a warm day, out here on his porch it was comfortable. It was vacation time for him, but that brought no animation.

Chances were that this vacation would be spent like the last two. He would probably go to Buffalo to see his mother, and Valorie, his wife, would go south to Waycross, Georgia. What enjoyment she got out of going to that outlandish place was beyond him.

But then, her attitude toward him, during their two years of married life was beyond him. He had been fascinated by her reticence, he had thought that once they were married he would be able to break through, but instead she had grown more apathetic. Without putting it into words, she seemed to be at war with him.

Once she had told him of the brutality of her father towards her mother and the six children, and of his infidelity. It seemed to have embittered her. But then there—

"Hi, Mr. Lazy Bones," a young girl called, leaning on his neat white fence.

It was June Travers, the girl next door. She had on shorts exposing her pleasingly plump thighs.

"Hi," he returned, "and I am not so lazy."

"Okay, have it your way," she smiled exposing even teeth and lips that had no need for lip stick.

"My boy friend had to work this afternoon," she went on, "how about being a good scout and ask your wife if you can play a game of tennis with me at the Wade Park court."

"No need to ask," John said, "I am elected."

"Fine," she said. "I'll pick you up about five o'clock."

John watched the bounce and quiver of June's 17-year-old figure move off toward the house next door. She had been chummy with him for the past six months, and for some reason he felt flattered with a longing he always tried to dispel.

After all, he wasn't old — just twenty-seven. Valorie was twenty-four. If only Valorie had the emotional attributes of a woman, life would be so different for him. He sighed and went into the house.

She Looked Lovelier

John found Valorie in the kitchen putting the final touches on a chocolate cake. She looked up as he came in, and he was struck anew at her loveliness. A wisp of black hair caressed her forehead. A small nose above generously proportioned lips that looked so kissable, yet, yielded so indifferently to his.

"June wants me to play a game of tennis with her this afternoon," he told her.

Valorie shrugged.

"You don't mind?" he pressed.

"Why should I?" she retorted. "But you have been unusually friendly toward that girl and the neighbors are beginning to gossip about you playing tennis and golf with her so much."

"Oh hang the neighbors!" he said angrily.

If only she had shown some anger or jealousy. If only he could break down the wall she had erected between them.

"You are certainly making a fool of yourself," she told him pointedly.

"But you don't care," he said defiantly.

"Why should I?" she asked heatedly, "you know what you want."

He went to her and took her shoulders in his hands and shook her.

Like An Iceberg

"You stand here like an iceberg," he said angrily. "You don't care whether I've kissed that girl or made love to her when we are together or not."

There was a startled hurt look on her face. Then she lashed out at him. Her hand struck his face again and again. And then the tears came — tears that John had never known her to shed. And then, she fell on his shoulder. "John — John—Oh John," she sobbed piteously.

She offered him her lips. He kissed her passionately, and she returned his kiss with a passion that had been pent up for years. When their lips

"Sometimes," she went on, "a person gets all mixed up in her mind. I suppose I was punishing you for what my father did to us.

"I was jealous, all right, but the coldness inside wouldn't let me show it. I have June to thank for bringing me to my senses."

John drew her close, as he thought of a life time of warmth with Valorie.

"I am not playing tennis this afternoon," he said.

THE END.

BRAIN TWISTERS

By DON DOUGLAS

Strike a Pose

Here are some real "posers" for you! The answer in each case contains POSE either at its beginning or at its end. For instance: To take issue with—and the answer, of course, is OPPOSE. Try it.

1. To decay.
2. One who attitudinizes.
3. Fatty.
4. Form collectively.
5. Greek god of the sea.
6. To offer.
7. State of rest.
8. To infer hypothetically.

Anagrams

Subtract and add the given letters, rearrange the result, and come out with new words. For instance: CHARM minus C plus E, and the result is HAREM.

1. NEUTRAL minus U plus N.
2. ADDRESS minus R plus N.
3. HANGERS minus H plus T.
4. MANAGER minus A plus T.
5. PAPERS minus P plus S.
6. RESTRAIN minus I plus A.

Prize Winner

Maybe you won't win any trophy on this twister, but at least you'll be satisfied to know that you're up on the cups, trophies and awards given out in such abundance in the sporting world. Can you identify the sport in which each of these famous awards is given?

1. Horseshoe of roses.
2. Bendix Trophy.
3. Little Brown Jug.
4. Vanderbilt Cup.
5. Davis Cup.
6. Wightman Cup.
7. Pennant.
8. Stanley Cup.

ANSWERS

STRIKE A POSE: 1. Decompose. 2. Posedon. 3. Propose. 4. Compose. 5. Poseidon. 6. Propose. 7. Repose. 8. Suppose.

ANAGRAMS: 1. Lantern. 2. Sadness. 3. Strange. 4. Garment. 5. Spears. 6. Nettles.

PRIZE WINNER: 1. Horseshoe. 2. Airplane racing. 3. Football. 4. Auto road racing. 5. Tennis. 6. Tennis. 7. Baseball. 8. Hockey.

Arithmetic

ADD

271 and 628
903 and 005

SUBTRACT

790 from 963

MULTIPLY

156 by 321

DIVIDE:

07 into 95

ROUGH EDGES

Her husband didn't meet her standards, but Dr. Archer did. Something, someone had to give . . .

A SHORT STORY

By JAMES H. HILL

They were dancing among other glittering people in the Christophe Ballroom of the Hotel Haiti.

A draped, blue bunting sign, bearing two-foot letters in gold and tinsel proclaimed: "The Pedagogues — 1953."

The sign stood before the swirled archway leading to the ballroom, supported by two gilded uprights.

Actually, the sign said more than just pedagogues; it said that everyone present had acquired at least an M.A.; it said that these people represented the finest aggregation of colored intellect assembled under one roof; it said that the colored American had come a long, long way from Jamestown in 1619.

Dr. Timothy Archer, ethnology professor at Colson College, should have been happy, dancing with Dr. Lenore Rice, who taught German at the same school; but as he guided her through the intimate movements of a rhumba, aware of her perfume, her soft, warm femaleness, the mute plea in her soft-lidded eyes; there arose in him the same primal urge that had driven Pithecanthropus Erectus out of the cave in the Ice Age and sent him panting after a female.

He Had Scruples

This, however, wasn't the Ice Age; and he couldn't slam Lenore over the head, drag her to his cave, and "know" her in the Biblical sense.

They were educated and civilized, and what's more they—themselves—represented the elite of civilization.

The cave man wasn't blog-tied with scruples and ethics, Dr. Archer was.

When the rhumba had ended, Dr. Archer withdrew his companion to the Dessalines Terrace outside the ballroom, paused with her under a cluster of palm fronds, his arm protectingly about her waist. He leaned close to her, his thinly-mustached lips brushing her temple.

In a whisper he asked: "When are you going to tell him?"

Lenore stiffened for a moment, her bronze face taut, her lips compressed. At length she shook her head, her massive earrings making faintly musical sounds. "I — I don't know, Tim . . . I don't know how — to tell him."

Very gently, Dr. Archer turned her around to face him, his hands firm on her shoulders.

"I understand, darling; but you must, eventually. After all, he's so — so very wrong for you!"

Lenore averted her eyes to the scarlet cummerbund about his waist, fingered his lapel.

"But it'll be such a blow to him, Tim! And he's so sweet — and patient . . ."

"But you're only sorry for him. You don't love him. You think he'd like you if he knew you married him out of pity?"

Lenore sighed and shook her head. "I suppose not, Tim." Impulsively, she buried her face in her hands.

"Oh, Tim, I feel like such a big fraud. Maybe — perhaps if you hadn't come along . . ."

The music drifted out to them, weaved through the gently-undulating palms. A waltz. Just a Kiss in the Dark.

He gathered her to him, oblivious to the furtive stares of other merry-makers, and kissed her forehead, led her back into the ballroom. "Poor Mel," she said. "Poor Mel!"

"You're Wonderful"

In keeping with the mood of the waltz, the already-dim lights were lowered even more. Tim and Lenore were dancing very close. "You're very wonderful, my darling," he murmured in her ear. "And what a wonderful life we could have together — you and I — an Odyssey that would put all other loves to shame."

"Please, Tim — let's just dance . . ."

He held her tighter, moved her beyond the mauve glow of the orchestra dais. "Oh, don't think I'm apathetic about Melvin, darling. He's a nice-enough fellow — salt of the earth in his boorish way — ideal, perhaps, as a frontiersman, hewing trees, blazing trails, fighting off savages; but on what common ground—"

"Please, Tim . . . Please don't say things like that!"

He pressed her even closer as they whirled, feeling the soft contour of her body press into his own. "But you can't leave me dangling, Lenore. You do love me, don't you?"

She was tremulous in his embrace now. The cocktails and the music. Just a Kiss in the Dark. "Oh, Tim, I don't know . . . I don't know . . ."

And there she was — Lenore Beverly Rice, Ph.D. in romance languages — a mature, brilliant woman, reacting to masculine proximity like the most naive country lass at a county square-dance.

In one black moment of self-reproach, she cursed the long, tedious hours of study which had given her an intellect capable of dealing with almost every situation except the inexorable fires which flamed in her at times like this, and sought to make her nothing more than a wanton.

Her eyes went up to the dark ceiling and made mute query. Was there a wisdom strong enough to counteract these basic instincts? Could one achieve a state of mind so abstract and selfless that mental functions and drives could really be controlled by the will?

If such there was, Lenore needed it now, while the band played the dreamy waltz, and Tim pressed her close to him, whispering endearments in her ear.

She thought of Mel Rice, the big, good-natured cement-finisher and brick-layer she'd married. He was a hustler and he made good money — more money than Tim Archer made teaching the science of human races. A good head, too, but Mel would rather work with his hands; and he was an artist with a trowel and mortar.

At one time, shortly after Lenore had received her doctorate, she'd encouraged Mel to take courses in engineering — courses which would lead to degrees. It was, after all, the normal urge a woman has, to see her mate go to the top in whatever field he chooses.

But Mel would have none of it, and continued to leave a trail of split infinitives and dangling participles. "A waste of time, honey. I wanta work at it — not teach it."

And he had. Their home was small, but well-appointed, Mel doing the work himself. He'd built a patio and garage whose front door opened with a selenium cell.

He leaned close to her, his lips brushing her tmeple. "What are you going to tell him?" he asked.

Denied Him Children

Up to the time Timothy Archer joined the faculty at Colson, Lenore was fairly contented, despite Mel's rough edges; but one thing she had denied him — children. Mel wanted them fervently — two at least — but Lenore had stood her ground.

This had been a sore point of difference for the better part of a year between them; and the reason it didn't continue longer was that the Collinses moved into the house next door; and the Collinses had a six-year-old boy named Paul. Paul's dad, Paul Sr., was a supply sergeant on duty in Korea; and Mel and the kid had just naturally taken to each other.

It was better for all parties concerned. Bea Collins didn't have to worry aout a baby-sister the infrequent times she went out with a couple of other war wives; little Paul never lacked an appreciative audience; little Paul seemed to fill whatever need Mel had for juvenile companionship; and Lenore could breathe easier.

In less than a year little Paul had learned a lot of skills with his hands; and he and Mel spent countless hours in the collinses' cellar, fashioning model planes and boats.

Naturally, Mel's name got into the Collinses' mail, and Mel and Paul Sr., had exchanged photos. There was a winter shot of Paul Sr., at a Pyong-Yang Dump; and Bea Collins had sent the sergeant a shot of Mel and Paul Jr., working on a model flat-top.

Yes, everything would have worked out perfectly, if Tim Archer hadn't happened along . . . .

Lenore was in a deeply reflective mood as she nestled in the pre-warmed confines of Tim Archer's convertible. Mel had been a prince to take Tim the way he did. It wasn't the first time that Tim had called at the Rice home to take Lenore to a function; and in his crude way, he had been philosophical about it. "Sure, you take her, Tim. I'd be like a salmon on the desert in a wingding like that. "Sides, I wanta teach a young neighbor of mine to taper a mast for a brigantine."

It was late. Twenty after two. Tim switched on the car radio and got an all-night disc-jockey. The jock was playing some oldies, and the lump that came through the chrome grill was Why Deutsche do Right? Lenore cast a quick, side-long glance at Tim and switched to another station. Some little combo was playing some gut-bucket straight out of Basin Street. She switched the set off.

"What's the matter, Lenore?"

After a moment she said. "I don't know, Tim. Recriminations, I guess." Then she looked up at him and smiled. "But I've made up my mind, Tim." She moved closer to him.

"I'll Tell Him . . ."

Tim was silent, his eyes straight ahead, looking down the tunnel of road his headlights made. His hands were firm on the wheel; but the inside of his gloves was moist.

"I'm going to tell Mel — about us, Tim . . ."

He let out a relieved sigh. His heart stopped its wild beating. Completely ignoring traffic regulations, he encircled her with his right arm. "Oh, Lenore"—darling . . . When? Tell me when?"

She was comfortable there in the bend of his arm, and besides, traffic was negligible this time of morning. "In the morning, Tim. First thing after breakfast. Mel is — is broad — and he's fair. He'd want me to be happy . . ."

Tim goosed the powerful V8 engine. "Do you think he suspects anything?"

She shook her head and even that moment felt good to Tim. "Not Mel. He has a simple, child-like faith in the goodness of mankind despite his rough edges. He'll be hurt, I know; but better one of us than the three of us."

Tim grinned. "I'm so happy I could barrel-roll this car!"

When they got to the Rice cottage on Davis rd., Dr. Timothy Archer took Dr. Lenore Rice into his arms and kissed her hard and long. She got out of the car on rubbery legs, disdaining his assistance with the key. "I'll be waiting by the phone for your call, darling — even if I have to wait all day."

"I'll call you, Tim," she said. "I'll call you as soon as it's done."

She breathed in deeply and regained some of her poise as Tim U-turned and departed. The night-light was on in the hallway. Each left it for the other when either of them was out. Everything was the same with Mel. Nothing was changed. But tomorrow—

Something Missing

Her steps were soundless on the carpeted stairs. She'd had a good time, but there was something missing. She was edgy and unfulfilled. If only she were going upstairs to Tim Archer now . . . Lord, what wrecks we make of our lives . . .

She saw the envelope propped against the base of the lamp on the night-table even before she noticed that Mel's bed was empty. Then the envelope and the empty bed made her forget the giddy happiness of the last few hours. She frowned at the envelope, cold sober now, recognizing her name scrawled in Mel's careless handwriting.

The usual "dear" was missing from the salutation, and very suddenly Lenore's legs could hold her up no longer. She flopped down on her bed, reading the note.

"Lenore, honey, I don't know how I could bring myself to tell you this. That's why I'm doing it this way. I guess I just ain't man enough to up and tell you that I don't feel nothing for you no more, but I tried awful hard, believe me.

"I thought once you kinda take a shine to that Eth-

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