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for a confessed crime, she saw him disintegrating. She thought about this wrapped up milk of magnesia and tablets and boxes of face powder and sales on the cash register or dusted. He was beginning to drink and—because the world had treated coldly—he might conceivably begin—and then what would become of

did no thought of breaking off this affair, even as she saw her young life away in tributaries of waste and. It was the farthest thing from her though her people harped on nothing but she, of all the world, had remained and her only thought was to help about a week before Christmas she had found her chance.

Effingham Printing Company, down street from the store, staggering under expected volume of Christmas business required a messenger and general man. Here, at last, thought Marjorie a job for Fletcher with a good return. Something solid.

usually drifted by the store to pick her up when she got off from work at seven. She could scarcely wait until time around to this hour. Her face was set with her surprise when she met and almost immediately she burst out: "Fletcher, I've found you a job—"

was in a sullen mood—his horse had lost part of the money—and he turned cold to her. "Since when did I need a

to look for a job for me?" he inquired belligerently.

flinched almost as if he had struck her, but for a moment she pushed on: "At the Effingham Printing Company."

know about a job—down—that nice place."

ing what?" he asked.

well—it's kind of a general-helper job. You might have to do some deliver-

to a salesman," Fletcher blazed. "Not a messenger boy."

Fletcher," she said, and her voice took on a harshness of despair, "you're out of luck. You can't pick and choose. There are a hundred men who would jump at that job. I have a chance to pull yourself out of this

"I'm in a hole," he said. "So I'm a beggar and you're ashamed to be seen with me after this you don't have to."

stopped under a street light. Her face was almost as pale as the snowflake melted against her cheek, but her big eyes turned. Her small body stiffened under the camel's-hair coat, and into her mild came the stubbornness of desperation.

"Right," she said. "I don't have to." It seemed to weaken, but then he kicked a soft snow on the curb. "It's up to you," he said.

"You don't take that job," she said. "I want to see you again."

"I'm not taking orders from anybody," she said. "This is a free country."

walked off and she stood immobilized under the street light until a woman touched her arm and asked her if she were in trouble. "Yes," Marjorie said. "Yes, I am."

had been moving in a kind of daze lately. She was grateful for the interlude of Christmas week. While she had been in contacts and cigarette cases the cosmetic sets in the Owl Drugstore, thoughts ran around in crazy circles, wondering where he was, how he slept, what he had for eating. She had been so occupied with him for four years that she did not know what else to think about.

ough everybody who knew her, and her

own instincts, told her she was well rid of him, something in her flesh denied it. She wanted him back.

Apparently he did not want her back. Every night when she left the store she looked furtively around, hoping to see his lank figure slouching in the shadows. But it was not there. She came to the conclusion that he had never loved her. This was almost more disturbing than his absence. If he had loved her, he would have straightened himself out long before. But even that did not ease her longing. Because she was foolish and a woman, she would have been happy only to love him.

TIME ticked on its inexorable round and it got to be Christmas Eve.

Young Mr. Carlton, who had lost approximately eight pounds in the past seven days, threw himself with a fine frenzy into the dubious merriment of the office party. He began to drink when the office closed at one P.M., and by six-thirty the secretaries and file clerks and assistants and the mail girls and the office boys had all gone home and Mr. Carlton found himself alone and faintly maudlin. He had a good deal of Christmas spirit without being able to take his mind off Miss Laura Drew, whom he imagined at that moment, dressed in white tulle and her pearls, in the arms of Marc Gilbert. (As a matter of fact, Miss Drew was locked in her bathroom, sobbing because she felt convinced that Christmas was not going to bring her what she most desired.) After he had raged futilely at this mental picture for a while, he got up and into his overcoat, from whose pocket his white scarf depended rakishly, and putting on his hat only slightly awry, he weaved toward the elevator and went down and out of the building into the cold crisp air of the waning day. The snow made a hard crust under his feet and he moved carefully, carrying himself as if he might break.

He walked a long way. The mist of alcohol lifted faintly and he saw that he was in a

strange part of town. He stood at a corner, wondering which direction to take and thinking of Laura, grateful that his mind for once did not conjure up the picture of Marc Gilbert beside her. He remembered that it was Christmas Eve.

He thought, *I ought to send her a present—just some little thing. A token of good will.*

He played with the idea for a few moments, muttering, "A token of good will," and adding sentimentally, "The last present." He rather liked it.

He looked around for a florist shop, but the only one in sight was shut tight, and so were all the other stores. Now he had decided to make the offering, he could not bear to be thwarted, at least in the state he found himself in, so he trudged on, striking up a side street, and eventually he came to the lighted doorway of the Owl Drugstore.

There was a girl behind the perfume counter and he sidled over and spoke to her. "I would like to buy a present," he said carefully. "A Christmas present for a lady. A token of good will."

"A nice bottle of perfume?" Marjorie asked mechanically. She was tired and blue.

"Yep," he said. "A flowery fragrance. Very apt," he said, his lawyer's rhetoric soaring in inebriation. "Very apt for the last present." He looked at Marjorie sadly.

"What kind of perfume does she use?" "Oh, it's beautiful. It's the most beautiful smell in the world."

Marjorie studied the customer. He was a creature from another world—a world that rarely found itself in the Owl Drugstore. He was handsome and not quite himself. He needed help.

She smiled naturally for the first time in days. "What kind of lady is she?"

DIVORCE

Most divorces occur during the first five years of marriage, two thirds during the first ten years. The number of divorces decreases to less than half the average among couples with an income of less than £150 a year (about \$600) in England. In America, divorce runs highest during years of prosperity, and lowest in periods of depression. The first divorce to be granted to a woman in India took place in 1934.

H. G. BOGGS, Marriage, Fables, Facts and Figures.

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