

secretary's face, nor did he wait for him to leave. He was back at the telephone, calling his mother.

When her voice, old but not feeble, still harsh and arrogant and indestructible, came over the wire, he said slowly, "Mother, there's been trouble downtown."

"How does it concern you?"

"Something's wrong at the Bacon School."

Already he was regretting the impulse that urged him to call her. He might have waited until he collected the facts.

But she'd sensed the danger. Her keen, ruthless instinct leaped beyond the paucity of his description. Her voice warned him she was taking over the reins, as she always had, in any emergency. "Frederick, you are to keep quiet. You are not to talk with anyone, until I've decided what to do. Now, come home *immediately!*"

"It's impossible for me to leave now—unfinished work."

THAT didn't fool her. But he didn't mean to go home directly—to stand like an abashed kid before her punitive figure. After she hung up he rose and stretched his body. Perhaps he had taken too much of a chance, but Howard Polans swore it was safe.

"What's the use of knowing the right people," he grumbled, "if they don't help you out in a pinch?" Why fork over so much dough at election time? Why suffer years of friendship with a milksop like Harlan Pryde or a stuffed shirt like Judge Leland Tennant?

When he thought of Judge Tennant's perpetually itching palm the blood roared to his head. Judge Tennant knew how to receive, all right! As executor of his brother's will he had invested the considerable estate left to his reckless young nephew, Johnny Tennant, in Frederick Ford stock. Naturally, he hadn't done it for nothing. He'd demanded a generous bonus from Frederick. And Frederick had given it. In cash.

"I'd better give Harlan a ring," Frederick decided. Somehow, he always found himself calling on Harlan first, because Harlan was always so generous with aid and advice. From the time of the first job he'd had away from Pryde's Hunt—it was putting up a three-room cottage for a Negro family—Harlan had always been there, beside him, lending him money for lumber and cement, encouraging him, getting him another house, a bigger house, to build. At first Frederick couldn't understand it—Harlan Pryde's kindness, his generosity. After all, he and his mother were only servants at the Hunt. But his mother explained it to him once. She said that Harlan was the kind of fellow who was ashamed of being rich and socially prominent; that he wanted to share with fellows who didn't have as much.

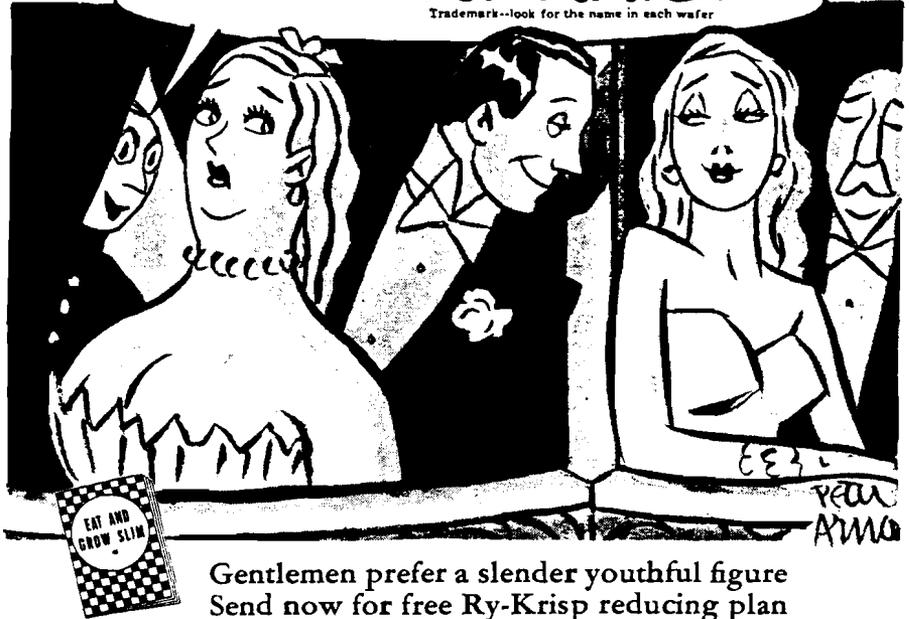
He picked up his hat and his overcoat and walked out of the office. "I'm not waiting for Bellinger," he told the reception clerk. "Have him call me later, at the house."

He sneaked out of the side entrance and down in the service elevator.

If you did not know of Harlan Pryde's standing, his reputation as a brilliant lawyer, you might have mistaken him for a professor at some small backwater college. His height was proportionately too tall for the thin shoulders, the narrow, scholarly face. His eyes were deep-set and deep-searching. His hands were like a musician's should be and never are: long-fingered and sensitive, with fine, flexible wrists. Even a term as mayor of Monro, on a liberal ticket, had not crushed

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