Her Return

It Was Long Delayed

By CLARISSA MACKIE

For three long years Genet Saville had nursed a bitter resentment against her husband. During this time there was ever before her the mental picture of their quarrel and the parting. The recollection of his white, contemptuous face always stung her to fresh hatred of him. She could hear his low spoken acrid reply to her upbraiding. The few words that had sent her fleeing from the room and later from his house with all the quick passion of her southern nature stirred to its depths.

She had sought solitude in an obscure Swiss hamlet. She, who was without kinfolk, had cut herself loose from the only tie that bound her to her world. She had not seen a familiar face nor heard the sound of a well known voice in all those thirty-six months. She had not read a newspaper nor heard any tidings of the old life. Her private fortune, in negotiable securities, afforded her every material comfort. She had music and books, her favorite dog and bitter thoughts.

Three years, thirty-six months, a thousand days, and more, ages ago, since their parting in the library. Never had she once longed for the sound of Norman's voice, for the sight of his face, for reconciliation. She hated him for his outburst that night, hated him for his cool contempt of her "heroics," as he called it. Always she would remember him as she had last seen him, cold and stern and bitter, with no love for her. She fed her soul on these unwholesome reflections.

Then one lovely morning Genet climbed up the verdant upland pastures reclaimed from the rough mountain sides. She paused in the shadow of a dark clothed pine tree, inhaling the pure air and glorying in the panorama of mountain and valley, pine forest and distant glacier, when close beside her there sprang into view a tableau—a young dairy farmer and his sweetheart.

Genet had often watched the peasants, her fair face amusedly contemptuous of their crude lovemaking. This man might have been Norman's twin brother—handsome, clean cut, gray eyed, brown skinned. The girl was fresh and sweet and fair. She was in his arms, and his firmly molded chin was pressed against the parting of her golden hair.

Genet watched them, a strange new feeling leaping to her head, to her heart—a white flame of jealousy that seared her wounds. The bitterness, the anger against her husband. Her pulses throbbed, and the blood flew to her cheeks. She watched the man's face wistfully, hungrily, as one who looks on a beloved forgotten picture and revels in the wonderment of rediscovery.

The face of the man was curiously like that of Norman—the finely shaped head with its glossy brushed chestnut hair, the straight nose, the resolute mouth now softened into tenderness. The steadfast gray eyes, deep set and black lashed, were fixed on the girl's face, shyly lifted to his, and exquisite in its virginal purity of expression.

So Norman must have looked at her when he had told Genet of his love.

Genet drew back among the pine boughs and leaned her face against the rough bark of the tree. She was trembling with long controlled emotion, deliciously thrilled at the wild promptings of her wayward heart. Impetuously she had withdrawn from her husband, too hurt to render him justice. As passionately would she return to him and heap the smothered riches of her love and a lifelong devotion at his feet to repay for his suffering, his regret, his loneliness, for he would have suffered keenly, he who worshiped the ground she trod. All the world should know that she who had left him in anger without due reason acknowledged her mistake and had returned to him.

After awhile she descended to the village, singing all the way to the tiny chalet where she lived. The simple peasants among whom she had spent her exile looked after her and wondered and smilingly agreed with one another that the sad faced lady had found happiness after all.

All the nightmare of Genet's nurtured resentment which had rubbed off of three years of life was banished by her preparations for immediate departure. Now that she saw herself in the wrong she chafed to be humiliated before her husband in expiation of her sin.

Arrived in New York and settled in a hotel under an assumed name, she called a cab and motored slowly past the town house. As she expected, it was closed and shuttered. She looked up at the familiar windows with dim eyes and registered a vow to live more earnestly, more worthily, if she was permitted to go back.

The next day the train carried her down to Fairfields, where she entered the ancient surrey which served all transportation purposes for the casual traveler.

Leaving the sleepy village, the surrey rolled jauntily along the sandy, wooded roads under tall growing white pines and chestnuts.

Genet sat with clinched hands and tense lips watching the mind drift in golden streams, ever the trees, ever the curious, the fascinating woodland scents, gravely responsive to the pulses in the thrush's tender song. The driver bumped drowsily on the front seat and slapped at the flies on the broad backed horse. It was a ride to be remembered for its sharpness.

At the stone pillared entrance to Fairfields Genet dismissed the carriage and entered the winding avenue that led to the house, a half mile distant, on the very edge of the bluffs overhanging the sound.

The house must be open, for there were recent tracks of broad tires in the drive. The gate lodge was tenanted, for curious heads jerked behind the curtains. She wondered if Mrs. Lee and her lame husband still lived at the lodge. She longed to stop and talk to them and thus bring herself immediately into the swing of the old life.

Her slender, girlish figure was clad in pale blue linen coat and gown, with a veil the same tint shrouding her white hat. She stepped across the turf with eager feet, her charming face now rose red with anticipation, now lily pale with sudden dread.

The low, rambling house lay quiet in the hot sunshine. The broad verandas, awninged and vinecad, seemed to be deserted. Her glance wandered to the launch. The party had boarded her and were lounging in wicker chairs about the deck. Norman was at the wheel. She saw his backward glance at the house. The whistle tooted impatiently, and they were away, cutting the water into a thousand twinkling lights and a shower of falling spray.

When they had rounded the point she hurried across the drive and entered the veranda. There was a litter of smoking things on convenient tabourets, heaps of sporting papers and gayly covered magazines. A siphon, a decanter and a tray of empty glasses were on a round table and bespoke recent refreshment. It was very like old times when she had gone away for a few weeks and left Norman to hold bachelor revels with old cronies. She smiled at the disorder. It was all so natural that the past three years were blotted out as if they had never been. She was merely returning home from a day's shopping in the hot town.

Thus she deluded herself.

The wide, cool hall was quite deserted. The polished floor gave back blurred reflections of the heavy furniture. The huge fireplace was crowded with fresh branches of fragrant bayberry. The library door was closed, but other open doorways offered cool vistas of drawing rooms, billiard and dining rooms. The stairs wound in a broad spiral to the second floor.

Genet paused, her eyes lingering on each well known object. There was no change in the arrangement of furniture. Even the hatrack bore its customary heterogeneous array of coats and caps, riding crops, golf sticks and tennis rackets. With a quick nervous gesture she threw back her veil and turned to the library. Before she sought her own apartments she would peep in here. And now the creeping fear at her heart found shape and suggestion.

If her portrait, the one Giddy had painted, still hung over the fireplace in the library, then all would be well: Norman would be forgiving, would relent. His mother's picture had graced that space until Norman married, and then it had given place to Genet's. And now that she had forfeited her right would it be there? If not she would steal away from the house and never return. The answer to her questioning heart lay behind the closed door.

Suddenly she turned the knob and slipped inside, closing the door softly behind her. Then she leaned panting with emotion against its mahogany surface.

The long room lay in shadow save for the many windows at the farther end. Here a high backed winged chair was placed.

She fell to trembling as she heard the flicker of a turning page behind the winged chair. In the silence it seemed as if her heart throbs would betray her presence. In her joyful imaginings of her return to her husband there were no such fearful terror and apprehension as came upon her now. Her gloved hands wrung together in a supreme effort for control. Suddenly a little sigh of relief escaped her. Perhaps no one was in the room after all!

Then, as if her sigh had been heard, a voice came from the chair, a voice of quiet inquiry, Norman's voice.

"Who is there?"

Genet's lips were dumb.

"Who is there?" he repeated. And after another silence the winged chair creaked with his uprising. Genet's glance flashed to the fireplace for courage and reassurance, and then a great joy came into her dark eyes.

Her portrait was there in its place and beneath it a vase of fresh violets.

Norman came down the room, his eyes half blinded by the sudden change from the sunlit window to the gloom of the room. Genet saw that the smooth chestnut of his hair was flecked with silver; that his face was worn and his eyes were weary. Then the supreme moment came when he saw her and recognized her. Puzzlement gave way to surprise and something else. What was it?

He stopped abruptly, one hand resting on the table, his deep gray eyes fixed upon her face, white as snow against the dark paneling.

"I am sorry. I have come home. I love you, Norman," she whispered. Then she hung her head, not daring to look into his beloved face.

"Afraid? Afraid of me? Why, I have been waiting for you all these years!"

Safe in her husband's arms once more, Genet Saville knew that her grateful punishment would be in the knowledge that sad and broken, she drew to him.

Two Make a Quarrel

It Just Escaped a Serious Ending

By DOROTHEA HALE

Two of the boys from the Lone Bull ranch were herding a bunch of cattle among the Bow hills, which were not really hills at all, but bits of the gentle lifted taos little mounds of herbage. Gabriel and Theron Crane had not spoken for three weeks. The reason for their sudden change from warm friendliness to bitter enmity was a mystery to their comrades and a matter for regret for the entire outfit.

Now they rode a few hundred yards apart, silent, taciturn and moody. It was not for them with hatred in their hearts to rejoice in the sweetness of the spring morning or to feel the pulse of the new season beating strong within them.

A very little matter precipitated the smoldering passions that lay beneath the calm exterior of their sun browned faces. Gabriel in passing his comrade, who was smoking one of his everlasting cigarettes, felt the stinging burn of a flying ash against his cheek. Involuntarily his hand sought his hip pocket, but Crane had already drawn and was looking coolly at him from behind his heavy weapon.

"W-e-l-l," drawled Crane after a little startled pause, "did you reckon you could do for me this way?"

"You know better than that. You needn't chuck your sparks in my face," retorted Gabriel furiously.

Crane smiled with a puzzled look behind his honest eyes. "What's eating you, Gabe?" he demanded after a little pause.

"What's eating you, you mean. You been looking for trouble this here three weeks. I heard all about what you said down to the canyon." Gabriel still sat half turned on his saddle, one hand on his hip.

"Looking for trouble!" repeated Crane incredulously. "Why, I been trying to keep outer trouble with you. I reckoned you'd lay for me some"—

"Lay for you!" roared Gabriel. "I ain't that kind. When I have a bone to pick I ain't a-going around throwing cigarette ashes in anybody's face. If you got anything against me I'll meet you down to Satan's gulch and we'll fight it out."

"There won't but one go home again," said Crane angrily.

"Sure."

"When will you be there?"

"Tomorrow morning at half past 4."

Without another word they separated.

There was a certain air of grim determination in Gabriel's manner that night which caused Harry Barry and Tim Lewis to exchange uneasy glances and later to meet at the gate of the corral. Harry Barry was the first to break the silence.

"Gabriel's cleaning his gun," he remarked with assumed lightness.

"So's Crane," said Tim significantly.

"What do you think they're going to do?" asked Harry uneasily.

Tim Lewis shook his head dubiously. "No telling."

"Mary guess. They've never been the same like brothers as they always was since they came home from that damnation hee ever to the Forks church."

"Donation bee, you mean. You're meaning the party they give the new minister, where everybody took victuals and then stayed to eat up what they brought."

Harry Barry nodded his handsome head. "I guess I was some mixed up with the quilting bee I heard they was giving to the widder who keeps house for the minister. Whatever made them two geezers get mad at each other? They didn't have anything to drink except milk. They paid some notice to the Widder Padrone."

Tim Lewis shook his head dubiously. "And they was always the best of friends," mourned Harry Barry. "Perhaps a woman came between 'em," he added hopefully as one who had discovered an elusive clew.

"Don't blame everything on the women," chided Tim. "There isn't any use us guessing. We better do what we can to help keep 'em from manufacturing sleves."

"You mean to draw the charges from them guns," observed Harry Barry. "But somehow I don't know as I like the job of taking Gabriel's gun away from him while he's sleeping innocent like. Why, he'd go into the sleve business right away with me for a sample. Guess again."

"My best guess is that I'll get up bright and early and trail 'em till I'm satisfied they're not out for blood," said Tim.

Long before Harry Barry had thrust his head from beneath his blanket Gabriel and Crane had arisen as by mutual accord and, dressing quietly had gone down to the corral and caught up their horses.

Out in the pale dawn of a new day rode the two men who had been close friends for years. They both knew that one would never come back and the other would be a fugitive from justice. Which one would be the fugitive and which the other thing?

Perhaps they were asking themselves these questions as they rode swiftly and silently across the dewy grass. Lanky and brown, with strongly marked features, any magic lantern would have revealed the same stern determination.

All the preliminaries had been arranged the night before, and the two men knew their duty and their opponent knew theirs, which rendered explanations unnecessary. Each man was driven past the point of speech.

The three grey peaks that were dead ahead of them marked the spot at which they would turn their backs on the rising sun, the signal for the duel. The yellow rays touched them, and the yellow glitter of the sun crowned them with the promise of the new day. Gabriel drew rein. The dull gray line which marked the mouth of the gulch loomed up suddenly which finally became large enough for them to ride through, but the gulch remained desolate silent.

At the further end there was a long stretch of sand. Here they could wreak vengeance for their real or fancied wrongs, and the one would get his or their eyes to dazzle their aims and balk them of their revenge.

Slowly they dismounted, making much delay over the careful shaking of their horses at a respectful distance, tossing over the adjustment of saddles and blankets and delaying in every way the crucial moment. At last, when there was no excuse for further delay, Gabriel walked slowly to the farthest point and leaned against a rock.

"I'm ready," he said curtly.

"Same here," returned his opponent briskly.

"There won't but one go back," said Gabriel slowly. "I expect there might be a mountain to send."

An unconscionably petite interval. At last Crane spoke. "I ain't heard what it was you was sore about," he said grimly. "I don't mind shooting a man when I think he deserves it. But, cuss, found you, Gabe, I don't know what the matter with you."

"You do!" returned Gabriel deliberately.

"That's enough," remarked Crane. "Count ten."

He drew his revolver and leveled the long blue barrel at his erstwhile friend. Gabriel did likewise and slowly counted ten.

There was a stunning roar of powder, with a simultaneous report from the two weapons. When the smoke had cleared away the two revolvers were lying on the sand and the antagonists were each nursing a right arm.

Crane darted forward, snatched up one of the weapons with his left hand and held it close to Gabriel's head.

"If you don't tell me what's eating you," he snarled angrily, "I'll blow some daylight into you."

The other glared back at him fiercely. "You mean to say you don't know what's the matter?" he demanded.

"Why would I be asking you, then?"

Gabriel was silent for several seconds; then he blurted out: "It's what you told Mrs. Padrone. She told me what you said the night of the dance to the minister's house."

"What did I say?" Crane's face was scarlet.

"You said you was sure I was single and didn't ought to be paying attention to respectable widows. That's what she said you said. And it's a blasted lie, as you know I never was married to nobody." Gabriel's head clasped his wounded arm.

"Of course you ain't married," breathed Crane heavily as he dropped his left hand to his side. "Have I ever said you is, Gabe?"

"No, I suppose not, but—"

"Do you believe me when I say that's never told that to the Widder Padrone?"

"Yes."

"Then what's your grouch about?"

Gabriel looked helplessly about him. He saw the disapproving faces of the ponies, steaming forth from the cool night, heard the birds the blackbird and saw the azure sky of the new day. His eyes dropped to Crane's fixed, pale and drawn with pain, and his own scowling countenance broke into a crumpled smile of anger and pity.

"Dash it all! Did I wing you, you old cherub? Here!" Tenderly he assisted Crane to a reclining position, cut his sleeve and bandaged the wound his bullet had made. Then he applied his flask to Crane's compressed lips and watched with concern his comrade's efforts to swallow. Forgetful of the bullet that was in his own right arm, he worked over the other until at last Crane sat up, a thin saturnine smile curving his mouth.

"I'm all right now, Gabe. Get down here and let me fix you up. I reckon I'm jest as good a shot as you are!"

An hour afterward the two rode slowly toward the Lone Bull. Each right arm was bandaged stiffly, and each revolver was thrust in a left hand pocket.

"As for that Widder Padrone," began Gabriel, when Crane cut in roughly.

"Dash the widders for a meddlesome crew!"

Out of the distance two horsemen rode to meet them. One was Harry Barry, and the other was Tim Lewis. At sight of the two older men riding together in apparent friendliness the youngsters threw up their hats and whooped joyfully.

"What's worrying you two fellers?" asked Gabriel, with his old time geniality.

"Heard the news?" asked Harry Barry, with a desire to avoid personalities.

"What news?"

"The Baptist minister has married his housekeeper, Mrs. Padrone. What do you think of that, eh?"

Crane returned his calm thoughtfully. "I think I'll call on the minister and remind him of his liberty—of—ahem!—duties," he said.

Then he and Gabriel exchanged a glance of mutual forgiveness.

A Russian Episode

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By [illegible]

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[illegible] there was a [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]