

-484-

She was at the door.

"Look up Dr. Monarch," he almost shouted, "and tell him in my name." He trembled with the words and with their urgency. He hoped she ^{had} heard him right. "Dr. Monarch," he repeated. And she was gone.

CHAPTER VI

Over at The Campus

Over at the campus they were having their third respite of the year, and those fortunate enough to get through with their finals early could take a modest vacation until the new semester rolled around. It could be as long as ^{the even} ~~three~~ ^{longer} ~~five~~ days, and if one was willing to chop a few days off the ~~half year~~. A silent understanding, a compact, between student and faculty to blink at such shortcomings. No roll call for at least four or five days. Let the tired mind and the heavy eyelids thaw out another few days.

A few lucky ones, ⁿ indeed, ^{had} left the day before. Their exams ^{came} together and early. Others left with Cynthia, still others will leave the next ^{day} and others not at all.

A small exodus. Everyone visiting his or her shrine, fulfilling a nostalgic urge, a certain tug of the heart, or maybe a definite aim. Or maybe a simple desire of getting away from the old tortured haunts to better and fresher scenes, old scenes that have recouped a new freshness and charm, much younger than the newest experience^s at college. What an interminable age one semester ^{to} to a freshman, even, a sophomore!

What's the good old town doing? And what is he or she doing? Your mind is unclouded and free, and can think of other things than courses and exams.

So what's the old town doing! The old man with the shuffle, the old lady with the sweet home-cooking, the cozy corner, the familiar smell of the warmth of the house. The smell of the house. The room or rooms. And finally even a brother or a sister. Above all She, He! Maybe a den, where a lifetime of trophies and memories have been stored away. The old desk that had witnessed the many scenes of preparation for high-school courses, now in retrospect a minor scuffle, a mere skirmish compared to the slaughter just gone through. You are hungry for the old home scenes!

George had one more exam, and so had Jenkins. Foster's last one was in the same course with Cynthia - Trigonometry. He was a slower thinker than Cynthia, and when she had handed in her paper he was still pondering the last problem. He saw her leave for the cooling breezes, but he stuck tenaciously to the question which by now was half answered. He could leave now and pass the course, but... And she was gone while he was hesitating. He dipped into his calculations, and ten minutes later he was a free man.

Should he hunt up Cynthia and arrange for some sort of a celebration tonight - the completion of their first semester? He was calling the Women's Dormitory, but decided against it. He wanted to think a while about it. Where and how to celebrate. Cynthia had not been so easy to please these days, and he had to think of something special. And then again she might be resting just now. He'd present himself in person in the evening and surprise her.

At seven she wasn't there. No one had seen her since morning.

At eight she hadn't returned. Nor at nine, and ten. Walking the streets for the three hours, Foster had called on the phone, made appearances, ^{but} with the same results. "No, she hadn't been seen since she left in the morning. No, she left no word. No, she hadn't called." At ten-thirty he went to see George.

"Have you seen anything of Cynthia, George?" he asked before he was half way in the room.

George was with Jenkins going over history for tomorrow's exam, their last one.

"No, Foster," George said, taking off his green eye-shade. "Come to think of it, haven't seen ^{her} in two or three days. But you know, exams and all."

"She had her last one this morning, and hasn't been seen since," Fear and consternation ~~was~~ in his voice.

"Still don't see any need for alarm." George tried to sound calm and reassuring. "You see, Foster, she is a grown young lady. She may have gone just for the day..."

"With whom? I have inquired all around, friends or otherwise."

George was worried, but he wouldn't let on before Foster. He knew Cynthia wouldn't just get up and disappear without a word to anybody. He also knew that she was troubled. He was worried. But there was nothing he or Foster could do about it. Not tonight anyway.

"All right, so you inquired," he said bravely, "there may be one you left out. Nothing to do until morning. My last exam. I should be through by ten-thirty. If by then, or before, you haven't heard, you come to the door and ^{beckon} ~~motion~~ to me. I shall be through in no time, no matter ~~the~~ the questions and how much I have covered by then. It'll be no more than ten minutes. Now go to your room and have some sleep. Nothing to it!"

"You're sure now, George?" It was just pantomime with Foster. He had to say something before going, although he knew it was a silly question. He was alone in the dark, and wanted someone with him.

"Sure I am sure."

"Will you ^{speak to me} ~~say~~ before you turn in?"

"It might be late."

"I won't sleep anyway."

"All right." Turning to Jenkins, after Foster left, as if needing some one to lean on himself: "What do you make of it?"

"Make of what?"

"Listen, you Shakespearean hound, you heard."

"So I did."

"It isn't like Cynthia to vanish like that?"

"You want me say yes or no?"

"Don't be so stupid.... I am sorry. Getting jumpy too."

"Don't mind me. I understand. Want to quit now?"

"No, we'll be through in no time." He paused. "You'll come with me when I go to Foster?"

"Yes, George, I will."

CHAPTER VII

The Absolute Pact

She was her complete compact self when she left Dr. Capen's office. That complex instrument, the brain, had played its trick well. It gave her that bravado, that stiffened attitude in her mental and physical make-up she had been seeking. It gave her the courage to go on, to live. A bold front. A soberness of countenance and mind that might have even given her a measure of happiness. Extracted from life by main force of her will. She had labored hard, and she was tired. But one finds surcease, even peace in fatigue. It's just that the mind can work so much, go that far and no more. And that's a blessing. The mind goes into hibernation. No torture of body. The body hibernates with the brain.

How much Dr. Capen believed in her sudden change of attitude, how