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THE LOVE PENDULUM

BY MARION RUBINCAM THE NEW HOME Chapter 25

As I remember, that trip to the city was not a very pleasant one. We had to take the local, "Number 12," as they called it familiarly in the village, to a station some ten miles off, where the fast trains came through.

Except for the run in my car to Buffalo, I had not been out of Wellsville for any distance since I came there. Win and some of my new friends in the town had driven with me all over the surrounding hills, but this was the first real trip away from the quiet little place. I almost cried as our train wandered along by the side of the tiny river and through the gap of the hills.

And then we were on the express, and Win was ordering an elaborate luncheon for me in the diner. And then we were pulling into the city, and my ears were drummed upon by the roaring, beating, raging noise of the metropolis when it is hurrying home from work. It was hot, too, and the odor from the ferry slips nauseated me.

But Winthrop was crazy over all of it. He had rarely been to the city, and was most astonishingly ignorant of everything about it.

"My aunt's chauffeur met us at the ferry," he said, taking our baggage checks. "I'll get your things. My congratulations, miss—I mean, madame. And to you, sir."

Win smiled at the man, ascertain whether it was good form to shake hands or not. But I solved his problem by putting out my hand to Blake who congratulated me, and Win, who picked things up with extraordinary rapidity, followed my example.

"We're to stay at Aunt Harriet's," I told him. "She's away, everyone in this season, but she's kept the house open for us."

We drove to her huge white marble mansion, just off Fifth Avenue. Win was very much impressed by it, particularly by the Italian entrance Aunt Harriet had built on—a covered drive of glass and wrought iron. The house was sunk back in the centre front, each wing touching the street. But the car turned into a tiny drive to the main door, through gates or doors of heavy glass and iron grill work. On the side towards the street as well as on the steps, huge palms and ferns were banked. These showed through the glass and the water gave a tropical touch that was most delightful.

"Great, isn't it? Can we have something like this?" Win asked, pleased as a boy by everything he saw.

"When we have enough money," I answered practically. "This Italian entrance cost my aunt \$15,000."

"If you would like to go anywhere tonight, the car is ready," Blake suggested.

"Fine! Connie, let's go to a theatre," I nodded my head, and after dinner we went to the theatre. It was all new to Winthrop and he was as enthusiastic as a child—so much so that I could not help but catch some of his spirit. We went to a show which he liked immensely. I had seen so many like it that I was not interested specially, but I liked seeing him so pleased.

"Now, let's go somewhere and dance," he suggested.

And we went, for the sake of coolness, to a roof garden. We danced there until after one in the morning. And suddenly I found myself very tired. I could not tell why. It did not occur to me that I was used to going to bed at nine.

"Do we have to go home now?" Win asked in a disappointed way as the orchestra began putting green covers on the instruments and the people began to leave.

"Oh, there are other places, not so nice. I know several indoors—awfully hot," I answered.

"Do let's go to one. Come on, Connie, don't look so sleepy!" I'm tired," I answered, very nearly cross.

He sat at the table looking at me, all the fun and sparkle going out of his face.

"I'm a brute," he said. "I didn't mean to tire you."

Immediately I felt like a brute myself. After all, this was his first glimpse of the city, he was intoxicated. No wonder he did not want to leave it all so soon!

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"I'm not very tired," I began. "Tomorrow night we'll do this again."

A voice behind me said suddenly, "Why, Constance Bennett! I thought you were—"

I turned. It was a girl I knew slightly, one I did not care for much. She belonged to a family of social climbers whom my aunt snubbed every time she could.

"We came back today. This is my husband, Mr. Taylor," I answered.

She and her escort were both delighted—too delighted, to meet him, and too delighted to see me back after my illness.

"Are you going on to Lewis? You can dance all night there. Do come!" they urged. Win looked eager to go.

"Are you too tired?" he asked pleadingly. I shook my head and we started off. I was too tired and I hated these other people, and that little pain between my shoulders was coming back again. But there was nothing to do but go.

"Not a bit of it," he said. "We've still the \$10,000 a year allowance that mother sends, and I can persuade her to raise it if I want. She's so mad at your aunt for looking down on Wellsville that she'll send me all the money I can use."

"But then—why bother about a position that paid so badly?"

"Oh, because we'll need more than my allowance and I have to work anyway. I'll look around for something else tomorrow."

"When did you find this out?" I asked.

"This morning."

"Did you start looking around then?"

"What on earth are you driving at?" Win cried in sudden annoyance. "No, I didn't. I met that chap—Charles Young, the one we met at the roof garden the first night we came. We had lunch together and he ran me out to Long Island for a spin along the speedway. He can go in that car of his. We'll have to get one some day."

I decided not to answer. I disliked Young very much, his name had been mentioned with others in some very strange dealings in the financial district and gossip of it had reached me the winter before. Besides, he had queer black eyes and a sleek little moustache and his manners were smooth to the point of insouciance.

"I like him," Win went on. "I asked him up for dinner some night. He said he could come on Friday."

"This is Tuesday. Very well," I turned away and walked over to the tiny alcove in the room.

"You're not seem very cheerful about it," Win remarked, walking up and down the room. "Don't act like mother. She used to roar awfully when I brought anyone home for dinner. I suppose she wanted to fuss and bake cakes and do things like that."

"I'm not cheerful, it's because I don't like Mr. Young, not because I don't like guests," I answered.

"Why not? Isn't he all right? I think he's fine."

"He's well, he just doesn't go with very nice people. I can't explain," I said desperately. "I can't tell you why he isn't nice. Wait until you meet the people that are—I sound like a snob. But wait, and then you'll see!"

"All right," Win answered cheerfully, and settled down into a corner of the couch to smoke a cigar.

THE NEW LIFE BEGINS

Chapter 27

"What does it mean?" I asked, still puzzled.

"It means I've lost my job," Win said crossly.

"I know, you said that. But does it mean—that we'll be quite poor?"

I believe I asked that rather hopefully. Nothing would have pleased me better than to have lost all our money, for then I could take charge of everything, then I could really use my newly acquired domestic skill.

But Win laughed.

"Not a bit of it," he said. "We've still the \$10,000 a year allowance that mother sends, and I can persuade her to raise it if I want. She's so mad at your aunt for looking down on Wellsville that she'll send me all the money I can use."

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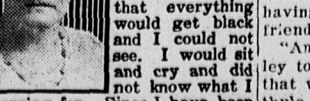
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ette. "Let's go out and meet these very nice people then. How about this evening? Let's go to a show and then dance."

"Yes, why not?"

"But—it's our first evening here. We've just moved in. Don't you want to—to well, to stay home?"

"Why?" Win looked his intense surprise. "There are lots of other evenings."

Once again that great wave of disappointment went over me. I turned my head away, it seemed so childish to show it.

There was silence for awhile. I wished that Ellen would announce dinner, but it was the first evening and I could not blame the new cook for being late.

I did so want to stay home! There were so many things to ask Win about, where he wanted things placed, how he liked his room—and I thought it would be charming to build a little fire in the new fireplace and simply sit there together. It was our fireplace, our home. Why didn't he have the same ideas about it I had?

"What's the matter?" Win asked. But his tones had more exasperation than sympathy.

"Nothing," I answered. "I'm a little tired, perhaps."

"I'm sorry," he tossed his cigarette into the fireplace and came over to me. In a moment he had picked me up and pulled me down on the couch beside him. "I'm so sorry I didn't know you were tired. What have you been doing?"

"Oh, nothing. Hanging curtains and moving furniture around. Ellen and I put up the beds. And I gave you my little boudoir for a smoking room."

"Did you have a lot of romantic ideas about staying here in our own little home tonight?"

I nodded. His sympathy was bringing the tears his annoyance had not, and could not start.

"All right, we'll stay. I suppose I was cross because I was upset about losing that place. I wanted to get out and forget it."

"I think it would rest me to see a show and to dance," I answered. His evident pleasure at this settled it. I knew then that whenever Win was tired or cross or upset, the thing to do was to take him where there was diversion.

I was tired and my back was aching again. But we went to a musical show and we went to a big hotel ballroom, and danced until early in the morning. And so we passed that first evening—and so we passed a great many other evenings.

THE PARTY Chapter 28

All through the last days of September and the first of October we kept late hours. My aunt was in and out of our home occasionally, but most of the time she was away.

My old friends began coming back to town, and of course, they came to see us.

"We were so excited hearing about the elopement," one said—a girl in my class at school, a slim little brunette who affected a slight lisp. She pronounced it "the exhalted."

"Fancy Constance eloping," another caller smiled, a tall, fair haired girl, who had been told she looked like the Goddess of Liberty and who affected over after a certain lofty manner.

"And we're the anxious to meet your husband," Shirley went on. Shirley Benick was one of last season's "buds," and her one ambition was to marry the richest man in her set.

"He'll be here soon," I told them. "But I wasn't sure. Win was still too engrossed with the city to make any serious efforts at finding a position. He spent his days in my car running about the streets and around the resorts near the city, and when I did not want to go, he went alone. I decided it was a fact, and he would get over, and said nothing in protest. I did want him to look at things more seriously, and I was disappointed in this sudden frivolity."

Win came at tea time, as the girls were ready to leave. I was very proud of him when he came in, his hair rumpled where he had pulled off his cap, his eyes and skin glowing from the coldness of the outdoor air. Win was not handsome, but he gave that impression.

The girls liked him, that was evident. I had been so anxious for that! For since Winthrop and I were to settle in the city, it was necessary that my old crowd like him. I preferred the simpler life of his own town—but he did not, and his word was my wish in those days.

"Fancy Connie just going off to a little place in the country and having such a romance," my tall friend said, smiling at Win. Shirley took it up. "I like her hair cut that way. I think I'll do mine that thyle. Connie, what did you do all summer besides getting married?"

"I learned to cook!" I answered. And then they both laughed. But Win frowned and looked annoyed at this domestic remark of mine.

"I suppose you'll both be at the Risdon's reception?" Nedda asked. "It's such a joke, Mrs. Risdon is opening the season this year, she's gotten ahead of the Martins. They say Mrs. Martin is furious. However, Mrs. Martin has a new count visiting her next month."

"Yes, we're going," I answered absently. I remembered suddenly I had not written Win's mother for weeks.

"I'm having the loveliest gown—"

Nedda went on to describe it, and ended with its price. Win was more interested than I was.

"Have you a new dress for this affair?" he asked when the girls had gone.

I shook my head.

"We've spent more than we ought buying furniture, and we simply can't spend more this month," I answered. "I've been keeping books. Win, I have all our expenses and our income listed, so we will always know how we stand."

"Oh, hang that!" Win exclaimed. "Please buy a new dress for it. You're so much prettier than either of those girls and I want you to be the prettiest person there."

I wanted to do anything that pleased him. I knew the sort of dress I would have to get, and I got it—going to my aunt's pet dressmaker. Win had to buy a complete evening outfit too. His old one was not good enough for the places we were going to.

I figured up the bills when they came in.

"More than a thousand dollars, Winthrop," I said. "We can't go on this way."

"Oh, yes, we can. I only have to get one outfit like this—it will last years," Win said easily.

The money was spent, so I decided it was best to say nothing more. I dressed carefully for the reception, knowing Win wanted me to look my best. I had been home for several days, so I was fresh and rested. And I looked very well in the soft, frilly dress of blue silk.

It was the shade of my eyes and it made my skin look even whiter than normally. And my hair was so long by this time that I could make a pretense of doing it up by using a jeweled comb in it.

In a way, this was Win's formal introduction to my friends. I was glad he looked well and proud of him, as we entered the big ballroom at the Risdon's.

All my old friends were there, all delighted to see me. And there were many new ones. My aunt was standing there, in a shimmering gray gown that clung about her. She smiled at us and we went over towards her. She was talking to a strange woman—a woman who turned and looked at us quite frankly as we approached.

I wondered who this stranger might be, who was invited to the very select Risdon reception.

THE STRANGE LADY Chapter 29

I have always thought that this new woman had a strange effect on me from the moment I saw her. For when my aunt introduced us, I did not hear her name. And that was very unusual with me, for Aunt Harriet had been very particular about that sort of thing when I was a child. It was no use asking Win—Win never heard the name of a person he was presented to.

But Aunt Harriet was calling her Gwen, so I knew her first name was Gwendolyn. I never liked the name, it seemed rather a silly word, but that was my prejudice.

I looked at this stranger. She was tall and thin, so thin as to almost awkward. She had a quantity of reddish hair, quite red in fact, which was cut short and brushed about her head. It was very wavy and it stood out in apparent confusion around her face—a confusion that was carefully studied out by her hair dresser, however, a rumply effect that was very artistic.

There were present that evening some of the best dressed women in the city, but she stood out among them for the beauty and smartness of her gown. It was an odd affair of a material I had never seen. It seemed to be all in one piece and draped about her in soft folds, but it followed the very latest silhouette. It was soft and shimmering, a greenish silver, and from her arms, fastened at intervals with emerald bracelets, a long shimmering fringe hung, a fringe that seemed to be alive as it quivered and waved and shone with every slight motion.

She was so magnificent and so daring and so different, that for a moment I took in the general effect before I looked at her. Then I noticed that her eyes were small and almost green, and they squinted, but not lovingly, that her hands were almost too large. I could give no guess as to her age—she might be a raw-boned girl of 16 in a strange costume, she might be some wonderful woman of 40 who did not look her age.

"The eloping couple?" she greeted us, extending a ringless hand to each of us. "Your aunt has been telling me about it. She was so disappointed not to be able to bring you out as a debut last year. But I've been consoling her by telling her that now you're really established you'll have much more fun. It's so awkward, really, being a little debut."

"How do you know, Gwen, you never were one," my aunt remarked.

The woman laughed. Her laugh, like herself, was different. It was a rich, sweet laugh though, much more pleasing than the shallow, forced sounds that most of my friends made when mirthful.

"No, I never was. One danger I escaped."

She turned to me—

"I did exactly what you did, my dear. I eloped. Only I ran away from boarding school. Such an excitement as there was! But I did not want to be brought out, because I was so big and awkward. I was ashamed of my self. I knew I would be humiliated by all the sweet pink and white creatures that knew how to manage a fan and make eyes at the men."

"You made eyes successfully, I should say." My aunt seemed strangely indulgent to this woman I had never seen.

"At first! Yes, Ted was an ideal husband in the beginning. I never have been sorry I eloped with him. It was a splendid experience."

Win had been looking at her in

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swung from her shoulders. "She does look like a goddess with that classic column as a back ground," Win said as we walked towards her.

"She knows it, that's why she stands there," I answered. "Have you met the newcomer, Nedda asked as we came up to her. "Yes, who is she?" Win wanted to know.

"That's what we are all asking. She must be someone great to here. Mrs. Risdon is obviously lining her guest of honor." "All turned to look over the big roof towards the group of the woman was the centre. The man was beginning softly, some couplet from the various groups and began by the mantle. A train of blue satin

(Continued on Page 11)

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