

"THE LOVE PENDULUM"

A GROWING FEAR Chapter 31

And so it happened that the evening I wanted so at home, was a miserable failure. I kept up my spirits through dinner, though I was much too tired to want to eat.

Of course I realized that I was very silly. I did not want to stay in my room because I was too tired to go out. And I was not jealous. How could I be when he was out with his own aunt? I was too sure of his love to have any foolish ideas because he had expressed so much admiration for Mrs. Van Brugh.

I cried simply because I was nervous and tired. Yet the vision of that strange, attractive face with the greenish eyes and the red hair, was always before my eyes.

When Ellen came in the room I saw whether I wanted anything. I turned my face into the pillow and pretended to be asleep so she could not know I had been crying. There was too much gossip circulating among the "smart" servants from the agencies.

I was lying there feeling very much rested when Win came home. He was very enthusiastic. "You should have made an effort to go with me," he began. "She would have liked me better than you."

"That was charming of her," I murmured, not at all interested. "But Win did not notice my lack of enthusiasm."

"You'll have to go soon," he went on. "She's quite amazing. I never heard a woman talk like her. She knows all about everything."

"That was a large statement, that," I remarked. "Don't be sarcastic. It isn't coming to you," Win retorted. "Mrs. Van Brugh says sarcasm and blunders never go together."

"Does she?" "Constance! What's wrong with you? You ought to like her, she likes you. Don't be petty. She isn't; it shows her generosity of mind that she admired you so. One beautiful woman rarely compliments another."

I began to answer, then stopped. "What was the use of her? Win was in another enthusiasm. Some weeks ago the enthusiasm was the city, now it was this woman. I couldn't tell him that it was the most obvious thing in the world for her to tell him I was pretty. He was my husband, we were recently married, it was simply the thing to say and she had said it."

Win's enthusiasm continued. He was asked by Mrs. Van Brugh to tea the next day. He said he had to come, tried to say he was tired, because for some reason he did not want to go. But Win was so insistent, and I went with him. It seemed to me that from that time on, half our lives was Gwendolyn Van Brugh. She had taken a very fine house, which much impressed my unsophisticated husband, and she had too many servants standing about and her other guests, in a most extraordinary tea room. Her red hair was bound up in a turban of twisted silver and green. She wore an oddly shaped silver coat to her knees and under that full Turkish bloomers of vivid green satin. It was daring, but it was very becoming, and it suited her eccentric type.

salaaam for this special gown." "But I don't know how to salaaam!" Win cried in mock dismay. There was a laugh at this and one of the men offered to show him. "I've reserved this place by me for Mrs. Taylor," our hostess said, taking my hand and pulling me down by her. "You know everyone here, don't you, Mrs.—my dear, please do let me call you by your first name. I asked your husband what it was. Constance is such a charming name, and it suits you so well."

She turned to the others. "Doesn't it? With those serious blue eyes she couldn't have any other name. I want you to meet an artist friend of mine who is coming in later. He'll like you so much. You're a perfect Gainsborough type. Or a Fragonard. You should have your portrait done in that manner. Winthrop, my dear, will you?"

"I did not hear what her request was. After one evening's acquaintance she had arrived at this familiar and casually affectionate footing! A little fear began to develop, a fear that later was to develop in several curious ways."

GWENDOLYN Chapter 32

The only thing to do was to call her Gwendolyn, or better yet, by her pet name Gwen. I did not like to either. I'm afraid I never liked her at all. Yet in justice to her, there were many likeable qualities. Whatever reason I had later for my dislike, I had none at that time. I had no reason at all that day, or for sometime afterwards.

Just beside her while she poured tea from a great brass samovar which stood on a low table by her, and I watched her closely and critically. Perhaps a dozen persons came and went while we sat there. When we rose to leave she detained us and kept us until all the others had gone.

Meantime the artist she mentioned had arrived, a well-known painter from Paris, who had met my father over there. He was tall and middle-aged and distinguished. He kissed the hands of the women who were present in a courtly manner that was very becoming to him, and I saw Win's eyes on him. Win was taking notes from him too, for Win learned fast.

There was a stock broker present, a physician, a civil engineer, a boy from college, and some others. Gwen seemed able to talk to all on his or her special subject. It was baseball with the college boys.

"I tried to get up a 'nine' in the little village near Laurier—my summer home, you know. It's a medieval French village near the Loire, my chateau on a wee hill at its very edge. Those little boys—they were amusing!" She flashed a smile at him, all the time pointing her finger and making the tea things. "They can't, you know, they simply can't. Born and bred to work, it will take generations before they can learn to play. I was umpire. One lad made a home-run once." She went on, rattling out baseball slang as easily as he did and keeping him laughing with her descriptions.

"Another cup, my dear. Of course! You like three lumps, don't you? I always remember. The boy had gone, the artist was standing by her, his cup in his hand. He, too, was given that strange fascinating smile of hers. "Yes, this is the charming child I spoke of. Don't you think she should be done a bit after the French manner?" Her left hand rested a moment on mine. "Those eyes and that rump of gold hair! Do you remember the group of cherubs at the National Gallery in London? And the day we were there? Ah, mon ami, that was a perfect day!"

"And by the way," she had forgotten me in another interest, "you haven't been in town long enough to see the Avenue Gallery Exhibition, have you? Only some work by a young student, an American who has been studying in Paris. But such effects! A landscape Cezanne himself might have done—you must see it."

She took in the whole room now. Win was watching her, the time pouring. "Such a manner for a beginner! Such lines, such bold, sweeping effects! Sometimes he leaves whole patches of canvas bare. Sometimes he pours his pigment on, just squeezing it from the tube. But the effect of depth he achieves! The ease and boldness of all old painters, the emotionalism of maturity—he's barely 21!"

The painter left, joining another group. Gwendolyn smiled at the stock broker, who came over and sat on a chair near her tea table. "I have a hunch about Cardinal Copper," she announced. "Another hunch! My dear Gwen, your hunches are extraordinary. The man had a clear, booming voice. The room listened when he talked. "But I've been right—how many times?" "Eight out of ten, I should say," the man answered. "What is it to be, up or down?" "Down ten points this week. I want to sell 5000 short as soon as it moves. Will you let me know instantly the minute something happens? You remember I went short on steel a week before the last smash? I said this Canadian strike situation would have an effect."

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She went over and played a little on the piano to illustrate something she said. She does that wonderfully too. "Everyone is taught music enough to play a little," I answered, growing cross at this continual praise. "But you should have heard her—and the way she talked about it. She composes too. That's something not many people can do."

Again I kept silent. I intended to watch the copper stock she was talking of, and to see the picture she was endorsing over. At least I could judge then whether her judgment was as good as everyone seemed to believe. Then I did a foolish thing. "Win," I said suddenly, "I believe you are falling in love with her!" Instantly I was sorry. But it was said.

DIVIRGING PATHS Chapter 33

I had read some art critic's comments on the paintings Gwen was so enthusiastic about and they were very lukewarm in their praise. The day after the tea, I went to see the pictures myself. They were fairly nice, but I had seen some real Cezanne's in Paris that one time my father had taken me over, and I remembered enough of those to see that these pictures were done in imitation of that artist but that somehow they lacked the one essential, indefinable thing that distinguishes a good picture from a poor one. I was not a critic, and I was a very young woman, but I had a fair education and a serious mind. I had read a lot and I simply knew that my judgment here was as good as Mrs. Van Brugh's.

And her stock, that was to go down, went up. I wondered where she had sold short. I secretly hoped she had and lost a great deal of money. A few days later, I mentioned the fact casually to Win that the copper had gone up. "Yes, but Gwendolyn decided not to go into it after all, so she did not lose," he said. "How did he know? Had he seen her? I had not, and he hadn't mentioned her. That was one incident. There were many others. Gwendolyn came down for tea at our little apartment one afternoon. Win had phoned he would not be home until that day, but he came in at 4.30, a few moments after she did. There was nothing strange about that, only taken in connection with other things, it had a significance to me.

Other things happened. Their talk, one evening when we all met at my aunt's, seemed to touch on things that only they knew. It was not about any subject mentioned while we were all together. Then one day I was at Aunt Harriet's for luncheon. "You're beginning to look badly. You're terribly thin," she observed. "I have a cold," I defended myself. "Rubbish! You've no more cold than I have. Perhaps it's the way you do your hair. Let it fly, don't try to hold it in tightly with combs."

After luncheon she had her maid arrange my hair in a way that suited her better, with fluffy masses around my face. She shook her head at the result. "No, you do look badly. Now, what's the trouble, Constance? Has Winthrop been worrying you?" "No," I answered, promptly and perhaps defiantly. "That means he has!" I said nothing for Aunt Harriet was a bad person to argue with. "Do you need money?" she asked.

"Don't you remember the long, quiet evenings last summer?" I asked Win one night. I was sitting by the living room fire, pulling on my gloves while we waited for some friends to call for us. We were going driving to a dinner and dance in Westchester of those delightful evenings of the coolness, the patches of black shadows and the silvery moon light, the sense of perfect peace and relaxation. "Do I remember? Weren't they awful?" Win answered. "We were dead then!" I dead then! I was nearly dead now. "I can't go tonight," I said suddenly. I meant it. I was so tired and nervous I felt I could not move. "Connie!" It was a mixture of sympathy and sudden annoyance. "Connie, why do you exhaust yourself during the day? Why don't you rest then? I think you might, dear, if you loved me. You know how I love to take you and show you off."

His arms were around me as he spoke. I leaned my cheek against his shoulder. "Please let's stay in tonight. They won't mind if I don't go." "All right," he answered and kissed me. But the joy of life had gone from his voice. Poor Win, he so enjoyed this constant excitement. And it tired me so and bored me. So I changed my mind and insisted that he go. "Which makes an extra man. I'll

told me she saw them having lunch together downtown the other day, somewhere near Win's office. But I told her to say nothing. I suppose the chauffeur went right over and told you all about it."

This left me in a hopeless puzzle. Win had not mentioned having lunch with Gwendolyn. It was nothing if he had, only it looked deliberate that he hadn't mentioned it to me. I could not say Shirley had told me, for she hadn't, and I did not want to lie and say I knew about it. "Well, you needn't worry about Gwen," my aunt went on. "Every man becomes fascinated by her, but none of them take her seriously. And then, she wouldn't look at your little country Winthrop anyway."

Strangely enough, this made me angrier than her implication that Win might care for Gwendolyn Van Brugh. "She looks at him quite a lot," I answered. "Why shouldn't she? He is much less than any of the other men on meets at her place." Aunt Harriet began to laugh. "All right, you silly child, have it your way. You're still in love with him. And you are so naturally stubborn you'll never admit you made a poor choice."

"Aunt Harriet!" I began to get up with great dignity, ready to leave. "Don't be a fool, Constance," she said. "Let Win alone, he'll run after her for a few months and forget her. And don't get on your dignity with me because I criticize Winthrop."

I went home thinking about it. That evening at dinner—one of our rare dinners alone—I asked, "Why didn't you happen to say you had had lunch with Gwendolyn?" Winthrop looked up quickly. "We had lunch with her three times. If I didn't mention it, it was only because you were so cross every time I talked of her. It was not because I intended to deceive you. She transferred her account to my firm, because it meant a big thing for me. So I've handled her affairs and sometimes we've talked them over at lunch. You're not jealous, are you?" "Certainly not," I answered coldly.

NEW FEARS Chapter 34

The little details that were growing so important, seemed to pile up into one great heap before me—a mass of facts, suspicions, fears, jealousies, anxieties, that appalled me. "Win and I were always on the go. One night I went to Nedda's, another a dinner with Shirley, then Mrs. Van Brugh. Then we had to have them at our place. We danced, we played cards until all hours and for sums I knew we could not afford—for Win was not a good player—and on the occasional evenings when there was nothing scheduled, Win took me to a theatre or some of the hotels to dance.

We rarely got in before 2 o'clock. Win seemed to thrive on it—the more he ran about, the more fastidiously he was with the froth and frivolity of the city. "I'm too tired to go," I would protest sometimes. "Then rest during the day! You silly women, you race about all day and at night you are played out. You've nothing to do. And Connie, do get a new dress, I've seen that pink one till I'm tired of it."

"I hate all this silly killing of time," I protested occasionally. "Oh, come on, Connie, dear, he would argue with me. 'You talk like Mother. She hated to go out too.' So I went. I always went. And I could not rest very much during the day. It seemed to me that in our particular set the women spent their days doing the planning and the work for the amusements they took their husbands to in the evenings."

And it was so useless, so futile! Why did we dance evening after evening? Where was the fun in playing cards afternoon and night? The money flowed through our fingers. It went to hotel waiters, hat boys, for theatre tickets, opera tickets, charity benefits, it went to caterers and decorators. I had to have flimsy dresses, and they crushed and looked old in no time. Our checking account ran, and I began changing things at the stores. Of course I had credit everywhere. That came of being one of THE Bennetts—the only advantage and that a doubtful one, I ever derived from my name. "Don't you remember the long, quiet evenings last summer?" I asked Win one night. I was sitting by the living room fire, pulling on my gloves while we waited for some friends to call for us. We were going driving to a dinner and dance in Westchester of those delightful evenings of the coolness, the patches of black shadows and the silvery moon light, the sense of perfect peace and relaxation. "Do I remember? Weren't they awful?" Win answered. "We were dead then!" I dead then! I was nearly dead now. "I can't go tonight," I said suddenly. I meant it. I was so tired and nervous I felt I could not move. "Connie!" It was a mixture of sympathy and sudden annoyance. "Connie, why do you exhaust yourself during the day? Why don't you rest then? I think you might, dear, if you loved me. You know how I love to take you and show you off."

have to find someone to make an even number," she said. "Call Nedda, perhaps she can—it's short notice." He went to the phone. But he called another number, and I heard him ask Gwendolyn. She had an engagement and he asked her to break it. Presently she said she would, for he said he would call for her at once. "I asked—" he came back, a little embarrassed to tell me. "I know," I answered, keeping my voice casual. "Run along now and have a nice time."

I felt relieved and almost happy as I took off my dance dress and slipped into an old housegown. How far apart we were drifting, I thought. I did not even care that Win was going away without me. I knew his growing liking for this other woman, but somehow it did not worry me so much. At least it was a suspicion confirmed. That was better than this terrible state of doubt. Ellen came in at nine. "May I go off, madam?" she asked. "My sister's phoned she's sick, and sent for me. She goes to see a baby, you see, and—"

"Your sister is the laundress, isn't she?" "Yes madam. She'll be too ill to do up this week." "I think I'll go with you, Ellen. Perhaps I can do something for her."

So while my husband was dancing, I trudged through East Side streets with my maid, to look after my Irish washwoman. And curious things were to come from that visit too.

THE NEW PLAN Chapter 35

I have since thought that I enjoyed that evening I spent with Ellen at her sister's more than any of the evenings since I had come to the city. The sister, who was also our laundress, lived in a couple of rooms, five flights up, in an East Side flat house of the cheapest sort. Her husband was a sailor. She supported her three children by washing. She had a certain amount of intelligence and a certain sense of humor that did not desert her, even though she was sick in bed. "She expects the baby in two weeks," Ellen told me. As we walked along the streets we ceased to be mistress and maid and became simply two women, united in one effort to help another woman in distress.

Ellen's sister was a long gaunt figure lying in the bed. Her gray hair—gray though she was scarcely 30—was combed back and ended in a stringy pigtail that lay on the pillow by her. She had deep-set wrinkles, and a mouth that closed in a grim line, or softened into a humorous smile. "I don't want charity," she said rudely as we came in. "I don't want to give charity," I answered suddenly uncomfortable because of my big squirrel coat. "I've been rather ill too, and I thought some of the nice things they made for me to eat, might tempt you too."

Her face softened a little. "The children mean well, but they don't mean on cooking," she answered. And we began with that, while Ellen heated some delicacies we had brought from my place. "I'm not in want," the woman said. "I go to the hospital in a week and I'm taken care of there. The children are safe in the day, and Ellen can sleep here nights when she's through with your work. But the baby has no clothes. I never had time."

"Oh, I can make some, I should love to," I begged. "It's sewing!" she looked doubtfully at my hands. "I can sew," I answered. "If I don't get them done in time, I'll buy them, but it would be nice to make them myself."

Somehow that evening I got back to earth again. I felt as though my feet were touching solid ground. I had been living up in the air, in a world of froth and frivolity, where the non-essentials of life were the only things considered worth while. After we were home again, I put on a negligee and sat down by the fire to think out this new problem. One thing was evident. Winthrop and I had radically different tastes. He was naturally frightfully extravagant—possibly the result of a life in which he had not been allowed to handle money. He had no sense of the value of money at all. I was naturally economical. That is, I knew what I should have for the money spent and though I was compelled to spend much more for things than we could afford, or much more than they were intrinsically worth, at the same time I did not actually throw money away as he did.

I loved the quiet, simple, plain life. That was perhaps because I had been given only the elaborate fussy, over-heated sort of existence. Win, as a reaction against the very placid life of his home, was infatuated with this mad, hurried rush of the city. Perhaps this was a temporary feeling. Perhaps he would soon tire of this empty rushing about, as I had tired of it some time before. Perhaps he would see that there

Advertisement for Dunlop tires. It features two Dunlop tires with the text "THESE ARE THE ONLY TOOLS YOU NEED" and "THESE ARE THE ONLY TIRES YOU NEED". The year "1894" is also visible.

was nothing to this—that evening after evening of dancing, flirting, theatres, cards, of sitting about tables eating and drinking, while watching a lot of very common girls dance awkwardly and sing through their noses, was only a waste of the precious gift of life. Perhaps! "I don't like him," Win confided after dinner. "But it's charming of her to have him around."

There were a dozen of us, a few rather influential men and women who were patrons and stockholders in some of the big musical societies. The musician was evidently there to be introduced. After dinner he played, very efficiently, very brilliantly from the technical viewpoint, but utterly without feeling. "Such emotionalism, such tonal qualities," a friend of the musician's said to Gwen. "Such emotionalism, such tonal qualities," I heard her repeat to the wealthy patrons of music, who nodded, perhaps politely, perhaps because they were impressed. The women smoked, of course. Most of them did among the people we knew now. The cigarettes in a great antique silver box, were always being passed.

"My sweet little blue and pink cherub does not smoke," Gwen said, putting an affectionate hand on my arm. "So nice to see one woman who doesn't, these days, isn't it?" "You're mistaken, I always smoke," I answered. I had to give it up by the doctors' orders when I was ill. The musician handed me a cigarette and held the match while I lit it. As a matter of fact, I had only smoked once before. Every girl does once in her life. That time I was 15 and in boarding school. I did not like the cigarette, but I had been among people who smoked so frequently that I was not awkward handling it. And I managed to take very few puffs and let it lie between my fingers burning itself out. My hostess looked somewhat surprised. Win looked quite amazed. He had never seen me so reckless before. I felt his eyes coming back to me again and again. But I pretended I did not notice. "May I sit here by you? You are so soft and so—refreshing after some of the women one meets in these big cities," the musician said. "You are like apple blossoms after one has been smelling peonies or living among orchids."

"After that I could not let you go!" I smiled up at him and pulled aside my dress so he could sit on the couch with me. I kept him there all evening. I did not like him, but I was playing a game. He was part of the cigarette was part of it. I looked about the room. I needed more material for my age. I saw a strange little man sitting on a low stool watching me. I had forgotten his name. I wished suddenly he would come and talk to me and I wished I was not smoking that odious cigarette. But the game had to be played. I was playing for life and love and happiness.

I HAVE A SHOCK Chapter 37 The little man has an enormous head, sizes too large for his thin, almost emaciated body. And the size of the head was increased by the bushy red hair that covered it—hair brushed sleekly into place, but that, by its very thickness, seemed to stand out all over the head. He sat on a low stool, his rather long arms clasped around his knees. He was watching me, he had been watching for some time. I wanted him to come over and talk to me, but he never moved. Sometimes he turned to chat with an elderly man beside him. The musician, a Mr. Nardonski, continued to be devoted to me. "You are musical, of course?" he asked. "Why the 'of course'?" I countered. (Continued on Page 11)

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