

SANDRA THE JEALOUS By Jane Phelps

SYNOPSIS

Everett Graham, a New York broker, and a widower of 41 meets and marries Sandra Courtney, a girl living in a town where he had a branch office. Sandra was 18 with all a girl's desires and dreams.

Sandra's father was pleased that she was to make so good a match, but her mother felt anxious, worried for fear the disparity in ages would not work for Sandra's happiness.

Sandra's friends played her unmercifully calling Graham "Grandpa" and telling her she would have to play nurse to him when he was all doubled up with age and rheumatism. Rose Grandon, Sandra's most intimate friend was particularly disgusted because Sandra thought of marrying a man as old as her father.

But he was rich, generous, and his very dignity that frightened Rose, added to his attractiveness in Sandra's eyes.

Sandra's brothers also made her courtship a rather trying one until Graham won them over by gifts. One of them, Toodles, said, when Sandra told of her marriage: "So you are going to play second fiddle," expressing what her young friends all felt, and what she herself hated to think of.

She says in telling her story: "I have a notion that a young unmarried girl is a good deal like a book with its leaves still uncut. A man takes her with a thrill of possession; but just what is in her he does not know. It may be she will be interesting, and—able to hold his interest once it is aroused, or it may be that each page as it is perused grows harder to read, his thoughts wander, and will not concentrate because of lack of action, or because of a superiority in the story which bores him.

Women, very young women especially are so anxious to be everything all at once that they leave no page unturned, nothing fresh and new to stir a man's jaded appetite.

Sandra goes to her new home with all the enthusiasms of girlhood, only to almost immediately become jealous of the wife who was number one, while she was number two. Graham's friends never tired of telling her how lovely his first wife was, and she also had to constantly gaze upon her picture hung in a prominent place in the home. He bought her sapphires, and sapphire colored gowns which she adored until she was told he did the same for his first wife, whom everyone said she resembled.

Graham, a cold undemonstrative man was unfitted to marry the girl who longed constantly for the expression of love. We would have said she was dignified, he hated tears, and Sandra was inclined to weep when unhappy. Irma Barton, an old friend of Graham's is introduced, Sandra has many sad hours over what she thinks is a love affair between Irma and Graham.

Also Sandra meets Halliday, a friend of Graham's, a man about town. Through this acquaintance she also finds herself in unpleasant situations.

Instead of the home she has pictured, all rose and bright colors she has the old home and the furnishings used by the first wife. While everything was good, solid and substantial, it was not dainty, not "girly."

Graham affects clubs, etc. While he is out Sandra finds pictures, letters, etc., from Leola, his first wife. All these to her mean that he still loves the other woman more than he does her, and she agonizes accordingly. For she has learned to love him in spite of his careless treatment of her.

As time rolls on her troubles become more poignantly real. She suffers, and endures until she is driven almost to desperation because of his lack of understanding her nature; his absorption in self, and his own affairs. In the end however Sandra finds that even being with number two has its compensations, that she possesses a love that is deeper, stronger than that he had given the first wife of whom she is no longer jealous.



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wasn't even noticed. I was only eighteen when Everett Graham asked me to marry him. Eighteen—with all that, in a small town girl, implies of ignorance, of innocence, and of lack of adaptability.

Everett was just forty-one. He had been a widower two years. That age and youth—even age as typified by forty-one—were intolerant of each other I had no slightest idea. It was one of the many things I was to learn by experience. Surely, because he was friendly with Lulu Carroll's father. It was Lulu's party.

I recall perfectly how I was dressed that afternoon. A simple tennis costume of white skirt and shirt waist, white sport shoes, and a soft white felt hat. Everything girlishly simple and inexpensive. Surely I wanted to attract a man so exquisite in his taste, so critical of feminine attire as was Everett Graham, a New York broker. Yet his eyes scarcely left my face after Mrs. Carroll introduced us.

He had a branch office in Lakeville—the town where I lived—and he remained nearly a week. In that time he constantly seemed to seek me; and as constantly found me willing to spend my time with him. He was nearly as old as father, and such a thing as marriage did not enter my mind. I was simply flattered that he singled me out for his attentions because he was handsome, had exquisite manners, and so much money.

He sent me flowers and books. When he found that I was an omnivorous reader, he ordered me several of the latest books from a larger town near by. Then he never appeared where I was without a box of bonbons, telling me laughingly: "All young girls like candy." Or declaring "You are so sweet I have no fear of making you sweeter; that is impossible."

Is it any wonder that I was attracted to him? I never had been accustomed to such attentions. The blundering village boys were bashful, and even when they tried to be forward they were sure to be clumsy. While Everett was so graceful in all that he did.

I felt lonely when he left, but he continued to send me books, and candy occasionally. Often accompanied by a short note. Just a few words that anyone might read, but enough to keep up my interest in him.

Everett was a widower. So any girl or woman who married him would naturally get a warmed over affection which I then thought must be terribly unsatisfying.

In a few weeks Everett came to Lakeville again. He only remained a few days, but again he sought me, and again I was flattered that he should single me, a young girl, out for his attentions.

Long afterwards I learned that father had been rather pleased that Everett seemed to like me, and that in a mild way he had encouraged him. Not that he ever said anything much to him; but he let him see that he was welcome when he came to the house. Know nothing of it, but father had some sort of heart trouble. He also had made some unfortunate investments, so that he would not have very much to leave if it were divided between mother, the two boys, and me. He was anxious about me because I was a girl. I suppose he figured the boys could shift for themselves better than I could.

My mother was a quiet little home body who rather disliked the idea of a widower calling, and giving me things. But I laughed away her fears when she talked of Everett, and declared nothing would make me a man's second wife. I wonder why we so often do the things we declare we will not.

SANDRA IS CHIDED BY HER FRIENDS CHAPTER II. Even as I declared that nothing would make me marry Everett, I felt I was not quite truthful. I might—some time, after I was older,—if he asked me.

ham. Why when he is a real old man all twisted up with rheumatism, a girl your age would be real young. The idea of marrying a man to play nurse to him never appealed to me. Really I never had thought seriously of marrying Everett until Rose put the idea into my head. Afterward I unconsciously looked at him every time I met him in the light of a husband; not my husband necessarily, but some girl's.

Everett Graham was tall, dark and very handsome, in an aristocratic way. He was an accomplished man of the world. That he was also blase I had no way of knowing, or that he had been called fickle. He dressed in perfect taste, and was well-groomed. Rose said he looked always as if he just that minute left his valet's hands.

I remember that I was a little cross at Rose when she teased me when Everett visited Lakeville the second time. I thought him very wise, very generous, very kind. And much more charming in his manners than the boys with whom I had romped and danced for years.

When he left the second time I somewhat felt like crying—but I forced back the tears. I look horribly unattractive when I cry. My face swells up, and my lids get so red. I choked a little when I said good bye however, and he must have noticed it, because he squeezed my hand, and his voice was almost like a kiss, it was so tender. That was the way I thought of it after he had gone.

He bought me a big box of candy and some magazines as a parting gift, then after he had gone the next town florist delivered me a wonderful box of roses. He had mother and father good bye nicely too, and said he should be in town again. That his business there would require his attention.

I was awfully lonely after he left. And for a day or two I "mooned" about looking as if "I had lost my last friend"; so Rose said. But Rose never had been admired by a man like Everett, so I forgave her. I had been chums all our lives so she felt privileged to say what she liked to me. I wouldn't have stood it from anyone else.

Mother was glad when Everett went away, and said so. But father rebuked her, and remarked: "But he is a good substantial man." "He is much older than Sandra. I am afraid she will become interested in him. And such marriages never turn out happily. I want my girl to be happy, dear. As you and I have been."

They didn't know I was where I could hear them talking. It once more made me think of Everett in the light of a husband. I wouldn't it be nice to be married to a man who was rich and generous, and so good-looking? He would be so kind to his wife she couldn't help but be happy. Of course she wouldn't be crazy in love with him like the young people were in books I had read, or like Rose seemed to think was necessary. But one would be terribly proud of him, and love him enough.

Everett was dignified. More so than dad who was always joking and teasing either me or the boys. But even his dignity added to his attractions in my eyes. Then I set him apart, my mind different. "Give me one of the boys every time," Rose declared when we talked of him. "Honest Sandra I don't believe he'd let his wife peep if he didn't feel in the mood. I am sure she wouldn't be allowed to say her soul was her own."

"You are jealous, that's the reason you say such things," I replied in my most superior manner. MAYTIME—AND THE WHOLE WORLD THROBBLING WITH LIFE CHAPTER III. It was in May that I first met Everett Graham. For several days it had been unusually warm. The leaves on the trees and shrubs had stolen silently from their winter hiding places, and were bursting brightly green on their stalks and branches. It seemed to me that the whole world was throbbing with life, was more keenly alive than ever it had been before.

I was just a girl that wonderful Maytime, with just a girl's visions, her ideas, and her dreams. The books I had read were mostly light novels, and romances which exaggerated those ideas without doing me any particular good or harm. Yet in a way I realized that they helped me to overcome the difference in our ages. Many of the heroines of the novels I had read had married men much older than they, and had been happy ever after—according to the narrator.

I had always liked my name: Sandra. Rose said it sounded as if I was a writer and had taken it as my nom de plume. Rose often said such queer things, although she was a perfect duffer. But after she said that I liked my name better than ever—Sandra Courtney. When I said it aloud, I was pleased with the sound and glad I hadn't been named Mary.

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or Margaret or Nellie. I liked my own name so much better. I have told how Everett looked, and I expect people who read my story would like to know something of how I looked also. I was tall—taller than most of my friends. I was thin, almost scrawny. Everett called it "willows" which sounded much nicer. My hair was very dark, abundant, deep red-gold in some lights. I often used to wish that whatever pigment had been used—they say that's what causes different colors in hair—had not been used quite so lavishly. People could see my hair before they saw me. So Rose said. I had the brownish eyes, and the light skin that usually goes with such hair. And I also had freckles. I had tried to get rid of them in every possible way since I was ten, but although I had taken off the skin many times, the freckles persisted. They were lighter in color now, and smaller. Mother said that when I was older they would probably disappear altogether. But they were a great trial to me. My two brothers made fun of me for trying to get rid of them so that finally I stopped. But I commenced again that spring I met Everett—but with no success.

Sometimes I used to think that having brothers was not an unloved joy. I was sure of it the day they told Everett that I was putting on stuff to get rid of the freckles because he came to see me. "Sandra is putting stuff on her face because of you," Toodles, his right name was Harry, confided to Everett. "She's done it before and it didn't work worth a cent, but she thinks you'll think she's prettier without freckles. Girls is silly anyway. Freckles don't hurt."

Buster, my other brother, his right name was Charles, wasn't quite so bad, yet he also often said frightfully embarrassing things. Rose Grandon hadn't any brothers, and once I was so exasperated that I was herung used to urge mother to punish them, but she said all boys who had young lady sisters were just like Toodles and Buster. I didn't wonder sometimes when they had been worse than usual that boys were said to be made of "scissors and snails and muppy dog tails" or something equally ridiculous.

Of course they weren't like that all the time. When they were good I was really fond of them. Toodles was fourteen, and Buster was twelve. I guess those are rather bad ages for boys. "Neither hay or grass" father had said once when I begged him to make me a pony. Everett seemed to like them, and was quite nice to them so they didn't play any more tricks, or tell tales about me while he stayed. When he got back to New York he sent Toodles a fishing rod and tackle, and Buster a big push wagon for which he had expressed a wish—expressed it in a way that made things very comfortable for me because if the boys commenced to act badly I threatened to tell Mr. Graham.

EVERETT SURPRISES SANDRA WITH A LETTER CHAPTER IV. The world seemed very uninteresting after Everett left. I felt almost as if I were all alone, although all the town boys and girls were around as usual. But somehow Everett had a way of making you know he was there. I don't know how else to express it. Rose and some of the other girls made no secret of their joy that he had gone. "So 'grampa' has finally taken himself out of the way, has he?" Rose asked. "Now perhaps we can have some fun."

I never said much when they teased me, and called Everett "Grandpa," but it made me uncomfortable. When Everett's first letter came, about three days after he left, I was so pleased that I didn't mind their teasing me one single bit. He had said nothing about writing to me, so I was awfully surprised. It was just a short letter, such one as any friend might have written me. There wasn't a word about caring for me in it. But just at the last he said:

"I have missed my little friend more than I ever thought it possible to miss anyone." It was silly, but I kissed the paper right on these lines. Then I carried it in my bosom as my dress for days—just like the girls in the novels did. But finally I put it away in the bureau drawer under my shirtwaists. The boys never disturbed them, and the letter was getting worn out.

It took me one whole afternoon to answer that letter. I must have wasted money a box of paper before it suited me. Then it didn't—not perfectly. I wrote about everyday things, the people he knew, etc., just as he did, until—came to the very end of my letter. Then I told him that I had missed him too, more than I ever heard myself anyone before. I wasn't very original, but I had spoiled so many sheets of paper I didn't dare use any more. As it was I had to burn up all the spoiled sheets and the envelopes to match for fear the boys would find them. It would have been terrible if they had. I never should have heard the last of it.

It is strange how things long past come back to us. I recall distinctly that whenever Everett came to call in that first short week I knew him, that I was always a bit frightened to go down to meet him,—he always asked for me—for fear I did not look nice enough. Even then I had heard him express an opinion upon the way some of the girls in our town were dressed at the tennis party, and it made me uncomfortable. I wore simple wash dresses at home but they were always freshly laundered, and until he commenced coming to the house, I never had thought of wearing anything different. Even now I know there could not have been anything very wrong about my gingham for morning and dainty muslins for afternoon. Anyway Everett said I looked lovely in them; and that mother was sensible to keep me looking so young.

I don't know that I was very different from other girls of my age, at least as I had been, and if I confess that I felt in some way different, set apart from the rest of the town girls, after I received Everett's

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letter I think most people will understand. I attached a sentimental value to the few lines he had written, that I never should have dreamed of putting upon the notes I had received occasionally from the town boys. This charming man from a great city where there were so many lovely girls had singled me, Sandra Courtney, out for his special attentions. It was a long time before he answered my letter. Nearly six weeks. But as he sent me some books and candy in the interim I did not feel that he had forgotten me, although I looked anxiously each day for a reply; and once or twice I locked myself in my room and shed a few tears when father said there was "no mail."

Then came the morning when I received Everett's second letter. I had walked down with father, and went with him to the Post Office. I read it as I walked slowly home under the blossoming trees, the scent of the early flowers in the air. He sent of apologized for not replying sooner, asked me to forgive him, and said he would be more prompt in the future if I would. He also said he would be in Lakeville again before fall, and signed himself: "Your fond friend, Everett Graham."

EVERETT PROPOSES CHAPTER V. I was delighted at the way Everett had ended his second letter. "Your fond friend," what could be nicer? It was different, too. Most letters I ever had either received or seen had been closed with "Yours sincerely," or "Very truly" or some such stereotyped phrase. I showed the few words at the close to Rose Grandon because she was my chum. I was sorry that I did. She said she thought it silly for a man as old as Everett to write to me at all. I was angry with her for the first time since we were tiny girls. I wouldn't speak to her for two days.

I wonder if any who read my story will be interested in all these little insignificant things I am telling so that what comes after may be plain to them? I envy the real story writer who understands the technique of telling a story so that it will interest the public; yet perhaps a true story like mine may help some other girl to avoid my mistakes, and so be saved the sorrow that came to me because of them.

I always felt cross when Rose called Everett "old." Really after a little I had not thought of him as old at all. Just as fine, and so wonderfully wise. That feeling I now know was caused more by his charm of manner when he exerted himself to please than by anything he said. Of course I couldn't act with him as I did with the town boys. I shouldn't have dared. No girl of eighteen would have taken any liberties with a man as dignified as was Everett Graham. Yet after all, his dignity was a source of pride to me. Now for another few weeks we corresponded regularly. Then the last of August he came to Lakeville again. This time for a two-weeks visit.

When he came to the house he did not spend as much time talking to father as he did on his former visits. But asked for me immediately. Now for another few weeks we corresponded regularly. Then the last of August he came to Lakeville again. This time for a two-weeks visit.

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