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A Sweetheart at Thirty
 THE STORY OF A WOMAN'S TRANSFORMATION
 By Marion Rubincam
 ROMANCE
 Chapter 14

So Mark and I sweethearts of 14 years ago, stood and stared at each other. I saw his too red face, the rolls of fat around his jaw, his slack mouth, his small greenish eyes. I saw the fat waistline, the flat chest, the stubby feet.
 And he saw—an old woman. The once golden brown hair was colorless, the fresh skin sallow with the sallowness that years and neglect and general lack of interest can produce, he saw wrinkles around his eyes and mouth sagged cheeks, the look that never expects anything new nor anything more from life. He saw me dressed in a plain brown muslin dress, cut in the queer basque affected by old ladies, with a hat that would have made a caricature of any woman. Fourteen years ago a girl—to-day, how terribly old a woman! And only 35!
 "Let's have some lemonade," he suggested.

I agreed. I did not particularly want the lemonade, which was sure to be sour. But it was something to do.
 We walked over to the bowl and worked our way near enough to be handed a glass each. Mark swallowed three in succession then ate four pieces of layer cake. Then apparently feeling much better he turned from the chattering crowd.
 "You don't eat much," he commented as I put my plate with a half finished piece of cake on it back upon the table.
 "You always did eat like a bird. I remember it now." He seemed pleased at recalling this fact.
 "Look here, Enid. I've gone and forgotten most of the folks here. You stick around near me and tell me who they are. 'Twouldn't do to seem to forget people so."

That kept me near him for an hour or more. All Henly Falls was at the function and many relatives from the country near by, so there was a large crowd. The room was intensely hot, and the Japanese paper lantern swinging from the lines of electric lights only seemed to make the heat worse. The noise of talk and laughter was much too big for the comparatively small hall.
 In crowds, I have noticed since that the larger the place the more musical does the buzz of human conversation become. A thousand people and you produce a sound like the droning of a big, fat bee. But a hundred or so are not pretty to listen to. Presently my head began to ache.
 Finally Esther and Vi came up and I was introduced.
 "Well I wouldn't have known you," Mark said to her as he had said to me before. "When I left here you were a baby, and now look! A regular young lady, grown up. I'll bet you have a lot of beaux."

"A lot of notions," Esther grumbled, but good naturedly.
 Vi turned pink, and looked anything but pleased at the awkward compliment. I knew how annoyed she really was—any girl would be if she is in love with one man so much that she cannot see any other. And Vi was in love, as I alone knew.
 "Time flies," Mark observed as though he had originated that remark. "I guess we're getting on, Enid aren't we?"
 So there it was again; I had it from my sister in law, in her outspoken comments on my looks and age. I had it from my brother more or less indirectly. I had it from Laura, spitefully. And now my old sweetheart was commiserating me on my age.
 Finally the party broke up and started home. The family were ready to walk; the school was not so far away from our house. Laura and Charlie had started off ahead of us and Esther was saying a last goodbye and assembling our guests when Mark came up.
 "Room for one in my flivver," he said, and took my arm to help me in.
 He drove along the village street slowly.
 "Used to go buggy riding in the old days," he said. "Got a car now—things are better these days. Got a nice house too, better'n the one I used to have here. Got a good business too."

I wondered why he should tell me this. But I made some answer to show I was interested.
 "Yep used to ride in a buggy got a car now," he repeated. "Want to come for a ride with me day after tomorrow."
 "Why, yes—unless Esther needs me to help," I answered.
 "All settled then you'll go. His tones were crisp and curt. Like those of a new and over-industrious grocery clerk. Mark had been a grocery clerk, so I heard. We arrived at the house. Mark stopped his car, and sat still at the wheel. I got out unassisted.
 "See you day after tomorrow," he said and drove off.
 So after 14 years a man had asked me to drive with him! And it was the same man, the one who had been so devoted, so awkward and yet so affectionate in those distant days! I should have been flattered, thrilled. I should have felt like a young girl again. But I wasn't a bit interested.
 Romance! It was necessary to youth alone. Did it stop with the thirties—or in the twenties? Is everything sweet and sentimental over with the first wrinkle?
 He had been a handsome young fellow so I thought. I had been a pretty girl, so he thought. He was fat and bald and 40, and complacent. I was shrivelled and wrinkled and 35, and hopeless. Was there an element of romance here?
 I thought not—and somewhat depressed I turned from the gate and walked up to the porch.

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ESTHER'S ADVICE
 Chapter 16

The day after Commencement, true to his word, Mark Upjohn came around in his little snub-nosed car, and took me out for a drive. I always enjoyed auto riding, and I had done a little of it, though most of the farmers about our way possessed expensive machines.
 But this was not a pleasant ride. Mark drove slowly and cautiously, a moderately good horse would have covered the ground faster. "The horse's been a lot of changes since I was here last," he remarked. "I've had a new one, and then as we went along he pointed out things that were different, the new barns, the many factories, the villages that had expanded into miniature towns. He had a remarkable memory for small things.
 He stopped in front of a leather factory, one of the many shoe factories that had come up in our part of the state.
 "You wait here," he told me, and went into the office. And wait I did for an hour at least, staring ahead at the most uninteresting group of cottages. He came out at last and without a word of apology for his delay, he started the car along the road home.
 I never asked me where I wanted to go, or what I wanted to see!
 "I thought you'd like to come with me," he remarked on the way back. "And I had to drive over to see Cuthbert about some shoes he's wholesaling. I'm thinking of taking up shoes as a side line." He added, seeing an explanation was necessary. "Got a big grocery business, you know. I thought I'd add on shoes and yard goods and such. New factories and new people coming means more trade."
 "You sound very prosperous, I observed, thinking that Esther would be interested in any gossip I might bring her.
 "Oh, yes, I'm a good business man, a good business man," he said with a broad smile of satisfaction. His profile looked curiously inadequate for the size of his face as I glanced at him. This is so often the case with fat men—neck cheeks and body outgrow the original pattern, so to speak and the general effect is the profile of a child of four on the frame of a man of 40.
 "I've made quite a lot of money quite a lot," he went on. "Guess I can practically retire soon. I'm thinking of taking Billy with me. Seems as though my business ought to go to some member of my family, and he's my own sister's son."
 "Oh, yes, yes, they do appreciate it," his tone was oily, it was so complacent. "I'll make a man of him. I'll work him hard make him learn the whole thing; in a few

VI'S AFFAIR
 Chapter 15

Was it any wonder I felt depressed. After all, what did life hold, directly, for me? I was old, they told me so. I was worse than that—I was an old maid. All men had passed me by, none had wanted me. Yet deep in my soul was something. I could not tell what, that wanted love that demanded protection and tenderness.
 I know now that as long as a woman honestly wants love, she will not close. To love, one must give as well as take. Some women may marry again and again, and not know love; and some may live and die, "old maids"—and be ideal mothers to other women's children.
 Vaguely I began to know all I had missed. Definitely, I felt its absence, and that it would never come to me.
 What was this thing—Romance? It was its name perhaps. The spirit of it was all around me—in the warm and fragrant air blowing in from the fields, in the faint moonlight and starlight, in the soft murmur of the summer night.
 On the porch Laura and Charlie sat among the shadows. They were so close I knew they must be holding hands, or perhaps his arm was around her waist. Plainly, I was not wanted here. So, with a word that the rest were walking over, I went into the house.
 That was romance—to Laura at least. To sit in the best parlor out of the porch with one of the boys to hold hands to be kissed occasionally! Laura was in love with Charlie—I suspected she was in love with anyone who would pay much attention to her in other words she was in love with love. And Charlie was devoted.
 Was that romance? Was that what I wanted, a shadow, that somehow it seemed silly to me and without glamor. To have my hand held—"You're an old woman," I told myself suddenly ashamed of my thoughts. Remember what Esther said—there's no fool like an old fool!"
 I went up to my room to take off my new dress. Some odds and ends of work remained to be done and I took my old housedress from its nail on the closet door. As I started down stairs I passed Vi's room, and looked in. She was sitting on her bed poring over the pages of a letter.
 She looked up hiding her letter then she smiled and called me in.
 "Is a letter from Bud, she said closing her door. "Told him to write care of Margaret, and the letter came today. She slipped it to me before the exercises began. "But you shouldn't do that! I protested. That's deceiving your mother."
 "Mother wouldn't understand Vi answered. She doesn't like Bud because he says things about Henly Falls and went to the city to get work. She doesn't like the Pearsons anyway. Honestly there's nothing in the letter she shouldn't see, only she's so unsympathetic. You're much more my mother than she is."
 I felt a little warm glow tingling all over me.
 "I'd let him write to me here if she wouldn't scold me about my notions" or if Laura wouldn't look sulky," she went on. "Besides, it

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years I'll turn over the actual work of it to him and just keep a majority interest in the place—sort of retired partner."
 Billy to do the work Mark to take the profits! But I was wise enough not to say this.
 "Got a nice house over there too," Mark went on. "House, garden, garage," he pronounced the "garage" got my car, and a good housekeeper. My wife would have an easy time of it."
 "Your wife! But I thought—"
 It slipped out. I had not meant to say that.
 "Sure I am a widower," he answered my half spoken question. "But there's no reason why I should stay one, is there? I got a lot to offer a wife, nice house, nice car, nice garden, nice lawn, nice everything. I'm engaged the drive," I said politely, as I got out—unassisted, by the way—at our gate.
 "Well, yes, I thought you might be said graciously. "I had to drive there, and I thought since you don't get out much any more, you might enjoy going."
 And with this gallant speech he drove off. But he did turn around to shout back that he was coming again.
 Amused and angry—mostly angry—I went up to the porch. Esther was in the kitchen ready to dish up the supper. She turned to me her small eyes eager for news. I remember so well how she looked—it was hot and she had not worn corsets that day. Her figure was a bundle of flabby looking flesh held in the centre by a loose strait belt of her working dress. Beads of perspiration stood out on her forehead, her skin was hot and shiny. Where she had a corn, she had cut a slit in her old shoes.
 "Well, tell me did he say anything?" she demanded.
 "Knowing Esther I recounted every word he said, as far as I could remember. Esther listened eagerly, occasionally stirring the vegetables on the stove. "Well it would be a joke if he took you after all, she said. "I thought you were a hopeless old maid by this time. But he might—men do queer things, you never can tell about them." She poured off the water from the potatoes into a pan—it was always saved for soup; we never wasted anything.
 "You lost him before when you might have had him," she said. "Now you take my advice and get him this time. I don't know but what it would be a better thing anyway—his made his pile now and you'd have it easy. His first wife had to work. You've had it comfortable here with us, now you can have it comfortable with him."
 And this was Esther's way of taking Romance!

GROPING
 Chapter 17

The June day ran along and July came. Esther and I worked like slaves. We always did at this season. In the morning it was the house work; the canning took our afternoons; these late afternoons, and while the light lingered after supper, we worked in the garden. What time was left, was taken up by the immense amount of darning and mending.
 It was the usual routine—Mondays we washed (and we had several farm hands) and wash had several farm hands became so revoltingly dirty it always astonished me that we ever got them clean again. Tuesdays we ironed, and Wednesdays we cleaned. We were near enough to the road to get its yellow dust over everything. Saturdays we cooked and baked, and every day we cooked a heavy breakfast, a heavy midday dinner, and a heavy supper for the five of us, and our help. And we did the milking—in fact, we had to drive the cows to pasture and home again daily. Jim and James and the hired men were too busy in the fields.
 "And the heat dragged the strength out of us more than the work."
 "Laura's willing, but you can't blame her for wanting to do some work of her own," Esther said excusing her favourite daughters occasional lapses. "I guess Charlie will speak pretty soon, and they ought to be married this winter."
 She rang out the wet cloth and permitted herself a moment of leisure while she thought this over. Then she picked up the kettle of boiling water and poured it into the milk can she was washing bending over while the steam hit her nose and face, making it hotter and redder than ever. "Of course she wants a nice lot of linens and things. She's going to embroider some pillow cases next week, and she's doing' hem-stitching on sheets this week. I'll buy her some scarfs to do too—girls like fancy things like that and I must say I think they're pretty. I never did get time to make myself many linens."
 Laura had not taken much interest in embroidery before. It was only since Charlie had been paying marked attention to her that she began learning new stitches and fancy sewing. Since that time nearly a year ago, she had been at it constantly, and already had a fair lot of dollies and napkins

and tablecloths. That was like Laura.
 Love effects women in curious ways. It starts some dreaming rose-colored dreams, others to learning embroidery stitches! Violet's soul soared to the highest star. Laura tied hers to the kitchen stove. Vi idealized the man she loved. Laura wanted to feed him.
 We rinsed the cans and turned them to dry, and started for the house.
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 "Give them to Laura," I said very positively. "It's not likely Mark will do anything but continue to come around every week."
 "Well if he does, say anything you can make some more. There's 13 towels, and a crocheted bedspread."
 So she had been up in my old trunk, counting over the few things I had gathered together in the days when I too, was making a "hope chest" I could picture her delving among the poor remnants of my one romance her small eyes eager while she searched for treasures to bestow upon her daughter. To be sure, I had forgotten the things yet there was a sentiment about them. They were laid away in lavender, as my poor romance had been. For a while I hated Esther.
 I was glad when the work was done and I could be for a time alone in my room in the cool dark. I sat by the window, a wrapper over my nightgown, and thought about myself.
 What could I do? If I wanted to make myself better, now was the time. Esther under ordinary circumstances would say "there's no fool like an old fool" if I made the least attempt to cast off my age. But now that Mark was in town, and coming to the house, she had an idea I still might marry him—or rather that he might be persuaded to marry me. Also whatever I did to recover my youth, would be at least tolerated.
 What did these women do, who kept their youth and their charm? I thought over the ones I knew—but at 35, my friends were all married and had families. One already had a daughter 15, and she herself looked older than I. One had had six babies and was old to have another—she was older than I. One had married and been forced to leave her husband—she too looked old, but she went through worse than I ever had.
 Another—once a lovely young girl with gold curls that used to blow about her face—had married young had borne and lost four children and at 29 had suddenly run away with a man. We never mentioned her name, of course.
 I remembered this girl particularly well. She never ceased to grieve for her skin; she was always putting something on it—of course, I might try this. There were cold creams at the drug store and powders in little ray colored boxes. Would that help? Suppose I curled my hair? Laura had a curling iron somewhere. I had heard that olive oil was good for the complexion.
 I slipped into the kitchen in the dark, and found the bottle of oil there, kept for salad dressing, and some white corn starch from the kitchen cupboard. I ran up the back stairs with my heart in my mouth, and locked my door. Then lighting the lamp, and bending close to the mirror, I rubbed the oil over my face and hands, and wiped it off, and used the powder I looked at myself then.
 I looked like a circus clown!

THE GIRL REBELS
 Chapter 18

It was curious that, the day after my own clumsy experiment with cosmetics—called by some the forlorn hope of the aging—I should find Violet practicing the same thing. I noticed that her door was closed; I knocked and she asked me my name before she admitted me.
 "But why do you do it?" I asked her. "And where do you get the cold cream?"
 Violet laughed a little, her cheeks pink because she was discovered.
 "Oh one of the girls in my class. She uses it all the time and gave me some."
 "But you're so pretty and so young. You don't need these little things. You're too young for them—just as I'm too old."
 "Now Aunt Enid!" Violet protested. "You're too old! You only think you are because mother keeps saying so, and because Laura's a cat. As for powder and cold cream, all the girls use them. But mother would positively howl if she knew I did, and she wouldn't give me the money anyway. Now, is there any harm in a woman making herself as beautiful as possible?"
 She turned on me dramatically as she said. At least it would have been dramatic if she had not had a large blob of cold cream on the very end of her nose. As it was, her speech was funny, and I laughed the first carefree laugh I think I had laughed for years. Violet turning to her mirror began to laugh too. Then wiping the stuff from her skin—which always looked so freshly pink and white—she began to comb her hair, and put on a fresh frock, talking all the time.
 "The trouble is we're bossed," she said. "We're bossed. Mother keeps telling you you are old and homely—and you are when you do your hair the way she does and wear dresses cut in a fair lot of dollies and napkins

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 What could I do? If I wanted to make myself better, now was the time. Esther under ordinary circumstances would say "there's no fool like an old fool" if I made the least attempt to cast off my age. But now that Mark was in town, and coming to the house, she had an idea I still might marry him—or rather that he might be persuaded to marry me. Also whatever I did to recover my youth, would be at least tolerated.
 What did these women do, who kept their youth and their charm? I thought over the ones I knew—but at 35, my friends were all married and had families. One already had a daughter 15, and she herself looked older than I. One had had six babies and was old to have another—she was older than I. One had married and been forced to leave her husband—she too looked old, but she went through worse than I ever had.
 Another—once a lovely young girl with gold curls that used to blow about her face—had married young had borne and lost four children and at 29 had suddenly run away with a man. We never mentioned her name, of course.
 I remembered this girl particularly well. She never ceased to grieve for her skin; she was always putting something on it—of course, I might try this. There were cold creams at the drug store and powders in little ray colored boxes. Would that help? Suppose I curled my hair? Laura had a curling iron somewhere. I had heard that olive oil was good for the complexion.
 I slipped into the kitchen in the dark, and found the bottle of oil there, kept for salad dressing, and some white corn starch from the kitchen cupboard. I ran up the back stairs with my heart in my mouth, and locked my door. Then lighting the lamp, and bending close to the mirror, I rubbed the oil over my face and hands, and wiped it off, and used the powder I looked at myself then.
 I looked like a circus clown!

THE GIRL REBELS
 Chapter 18

It was curious that, the day after my own clumsy experiment with cosmetics—called by some the forlorn hope of the aging—I should find Violet practicing the same thing. I noticed that her door was closed; I knocked and she asked me my name before she admitted me.
 "But why do you do it?" I asked her. "And where do you get the cold cream?"
 Violet laughed a little, her cheeks pink because she was discovered.
 "Oh one of the girls in my class. She uses it all the time and gave me some."
 "But you're so pretty and so young. You don't need these little things. You're too young for them—just as I'm too old."
 "Now Aunt Enid!" Violet protested. "You're too old! You only think you are because mother keeps saying so, and because Laura's a cat. As for powder and cold cream, all the girls use them. But mother would positively howl if she knew I did, and she wouldn't give me the money anyway. Now, is there any harm in a woman making herself as beautiful as possible?"
 She turned on me dramatically as she said. At least it would have been dramatic if she had not had a large blob of cold cream on the very end of her nose. As it was, her speech was funny, and I laughed the first carefree laugh I think I had laughed for years. Violet turning to her mirror began to laugh too. Then wiping the stuff from her skin—which always looked so freshly pink and white—she began to comb her hair, and put on a fresh frock, talking all the time.
 "The trouble is we're bossed," she said. "We're bossed. Mother keeps telling you you are old and homely—and you are when you do your hair the way she does and wear dresses cut in a fair lot of dollies and napkins

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years I'll turn over the actual work of it to him and just keep a majority interest in the place—sort of retired partner."
 Billy to do the work Mark to take the profits! But I was wise enough not to say this.
 "Got a nice house over there too," Mark went on. "House, garden, garage," he pronounced the "garage" got my car, and a good housekeeper. My wife would have an easy time of it."
 "Your wife! But I thought—"
 It slipped out. I had not meant to say that.
 "Sure I am a widower," he answered my half spoken question. "But there's no reason why I should stay one, is there? I got a lot to offer a wife, nice house, nice car, nice garden, nice lawn, nice everything. I'm engaged the drive," I said politely, as I got out—unassisted, by the way—at our gate.
 "Well, yes, I thought you might be said graciously. "I had to drive there, and I thought since you don't get out much any more, you might enjoy going."
 And with this gallant speech he drove off. But he did turn around to shout back that he was coming again.
 Amused and angry—mostly angry—I went up to the porch. Esther was in the kitchen ready to dish up the supper. She turned to me her small eyes eager for news. I remember so well how she looked—it was hot and she had not worn corsets that day. Her figure was a bundle of flabby looking flesh held in the centre by a loose strait belt of her working dress. Beads of perspiration stood out on her forehead, her skin was hot and shiny. Where she had a corn, she had cut a slit in her old shoes.
 "Well, tell me did he say anything?" she demanded.
 "Knowing Esther I recounted every word he said, as far as I could remember. Esther listened eagerly, occasionally stirring the vegetables on the stove. "Well it would be a joke if he took you after all, she said. "I thought you were a hopeless old maid by this time. But he might—men do queer things, you never can tell about them." She poured off the water from the potatoes into a pan—it was always saved for soup; we never wasted anything.
 "You lost him before when you might have had him," she said. "Now you take my advice and get him this time. I don't know but what it would be a better thing anyway—his made his pile now and you'd have it easy. His first wife had to work. You've had it comfortable here with us, now you can have it comfortable with him."
 And this was Esther's way of taking Romance!

GROPING
 Chapter 17

The June day ran along and July came. Esther and I worked like slaves. We always did at this season. In the morning it was the house work; the canning took our afternoons; these late afternoons, and while the light lingered after supper, we worked in the garden. What time was left, was taken up by the immense amount of darning and mending.
 It was the usual routine—Mondays we washed (and we had several farm hands) and wash had several farm hands became so revoltingly dirty it always astonished me that we ever got them clean again. Tuesdays we ironed, and Wednesdays we cleaned. We were near enough to the road to get its yellow dust over everything. Saturdays we cooked and baked, and every day we cooked a heavy breakfast, a heavy midday dinner, and a heavy supper for the five of us, and our help. And we did the milking—in fact, we had to drive the cows to pasture and home again daily. Jim and James and the hired men were too busy in the fields.
 "And the heat dragged the strength out of us more than the work."
 "Laura's willing, but you can't blame her for wanting to do some work of her own," Esther said excusing her favourite daughters occasional lapses. "I guess Charlie will speak pretty soon, and they ought to be married this winter."
 She rang out the wet cloth and permitted herself a moment of leisure while she thought this over. Then she picked up the kettle of boiling water and poured it into the milk can she was washing bending over while the steam hit her nose and face, making it hotter and redder than ever. "Of course she wants a nice lot of linens and things. She's going to embroider some pillow cases next week, and she's doing' hem-stitching on sheets this week. I'll buy her some scarfs to do too—girls like fancy things like that and I must say I think they're pretty. I never did get time to make myself many linens."
 Laura had not taken much interest in embroidery before. It was only since Charlie had been paying marked attention to her that she began learning new stitches and fancy sewing. Since that time nearly a year ago, she had been at it constantly, and already had a fair lot of dollies and napkins

and tablecloths. That was like Laura.
 Love effects women in curious ways. It starts some dreaming rose-colored dreams, others to learning embroidery stitches! Violet's soul soared to the highest star. Laura tied hers to the kitchen stove. Vi idealized the man she loved. Laura wanted to feed him.
 We rinsed the cans and turned them to dry, and started for the house.
 "You got a lot of things in the green canvas trunk in the attic," Esther said suddenly. "I was going to have you give 'em to Laura when she married, seein' as you wouldn't be likely to want them. But now with Mark coming around every week you might want 'em yet."
 "Give them to Laura," I said very positively. "It's not likely Mark will do anything but continue to come around every week."
 "Well if