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# ONE MAN'S WIFE

by Barbara Webb

**THE RETURN**

Richard Ross came onto the forward deck of the liner that was taking him home from South America after an absence of six years. Home, New York. Old Friends—and Anne Lovelace. True, no one knew he was coming. Anne might be married. His old friends gone, or absorbed in new interests. But there has been no wedding or engagement announcement from Anne Lovelace in the accumulation of mail he had found in Buenos Aires. So his thoughts were full of hope now as he faced expectantly in the direction where the skyline of New York would soon be visible.

Six years before, fired with a passion for far lands, Richard Ross had organized an expedition into the interior of South America. He had financed it himself. He was rich in his own right, with neither father nor mother to bid him stay at home. His relatives were scattered, and there was none to grieve over his determination, save Anne Lovelace, and she was then at an age when she mourned the loss of a good tennis partner more than anything else. Richard remembered his last sight of her, dancing

He landed, called himself a fool for not having cabled some old friend to meet him, and went to a hotel, where he sat a long minute before reaching for the telephone book. He decided to try to get hold of his old friend, Bob West, and finally reached him at the club where Bob had lived since leaving college.

A sleepy and irritable voice responded. "What the devil do you want?" it growled.

"This is Dick Ross, home from South America and needing a friend," Richard answered.

There was a pause at the other end of the wire, then, "Dick Ross, don't know any—Dick Ross! Well Dick Ross. Sure I remember Dick Ross. Thought you were dead old man. Hadn't heard from you in years. Fact is right now I'm half dead after a party I went to all last night. How are you anyway?"

Richard laughed. "You don't sound very jubilant," he said. "Shall I call around or do you want to come down here?"

"Say, I'll tell you what. Let's meet somewhere the last of the afternoon

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As Anne stared Dick rose, made her rather an unsteady little bow—and was gone.

ing about the courts at her parents' country home, hair flying, eyes sparkling, her whole figure lithe and youthful, full of grace and the joy of living.

"Such a good, sweet kid," he thought now, standing on the deck, aloof from his fellow passengers. Of course, since then she had made her debut. Grown up. Become a woman. But Richard dared to hope she had not forgotten him, would be glad to see him.

He was half ashamed of the thrill that ran over him when the towers and spires of New York finally came in view.

"Been alone too long," he muttered at his half-ashamed attempt to swallow a lump in his throat when the Goddess of Liberty swam into sight.

for dinner. I've got to sleep another couple of hours and then I've got some things to do—but I'll see you at dinner-time sure. Where are you staying?"

Richard told him.

"Right. I'll be there quarter to 6. So long, old man; mighty glad to have you back!"

And with this Richard had to be content, though he felt vaguely chilled by the conversation. He spent the day getting his specimens landed and into storage and awandering around New York.

Of the city he decided it had grown far too big and too fast. Of the women he decided they were a new species to him. And by night he was so homesick for the sight of a familiar face that he took up his stand in the lobby at 5.30 to be sure of seeing his old friend the moment he stepped in the door.

Bob was late, but his greeting and his handclasp were warm and full of fervor.

"Let's get out of this to some place where we can talk," he said. "Come on, I'll take you to a place where we can get a real charcoal broiled steak and see most of New York at the same time—the crowd that counts anyway."

Richard followed him to a taxi and presently they were seated at a quiet table in a huge restaurant with a dancing floor in the center. Several parties had already begun and there was discreet doctored of ginger ale on all sides for the preliminary highball.

**MARRIAGE?**

There was an awkward pause after the waiter had taken their order. Richard told himself he could not expect to renew ties dead six years in a moment. Bob played with his water glass, and then leaning forward and making an obvious effort, he said,

"It can't be as bad as that," Richard said earnestly. "You're an awful cynic, it seems to me."

"Times have changed, brother," Bob answered. "And people have changed with them. But I wish you luck. What're you going to do now?"

"Well, first of all, I'm going to play for a while, then I'm going to take a house and begin arranging and classifying all the stuff I brought back, that'll take a year or so. After that—well, it depends—"

"Member Anne Lovelace?" Bob asked, looking toward a neighboring table where a very noisy party was in progress.

Richard's heart thumped, and he tried to keep the eagerness out of his voice as he answered, "Fine kid. Sure I remember her—mean to look her up—is she married?"

**ANNE**

Bob shook his head. "Not our Anne—too busy being the life of the party—but if you want to look her up, just glance over to the table—the big one near the dancing floor. That's Anne, sitting at the end."

Richard looked. He saw a girl, tall, slender, dressed in a sheath of black that showed each curve of her figure. Her hair was cropped close to her head. She wore long green earrings, and bright spots of rouge stood out on either side of her cupid's bow mouth. She was chain smoking in a long jade holder, lighting one cigarette from another. As though drawn by Richard's gaze, she turned her face toward him, and then recognized his companion.

She half rose in her chair and called, "Hi, there, Bob West—come on over. Bring along the handsome stranger. We can do with a couple more men tonight."

She saw Bob ask "Shall we go?" saw the "handsome stranger" half shrug, and then watched the two

men speak a word to their waiter and thread their way to her side.

Richard was in a daze. He heard the party's noisy greeting to Bob, felt Anne grab his hand say, "Never mind your name, I like your face."

"Don't you remember me—Anne?" he asked gravely.

She gave him a long look—half inquiring, half seductive. "Sorry," she drawled at last.

"He used to beat you at tennis, Anne—your subconscious refuses to recognize him for that," Bob broke in. "It's good old Dick Ross, back from the wilds of South America, rich, famous, lonesome ripe for the picking."

Anne sprang to her feet. She caught both of Richard's hands. "You bet I remember him. Good old Dick Ross. Here sit here, beside me—wait, we'll get another chair—"

And in a moment Richard was seated at her side, trying to take in her chatter, confused by the noise, mumbling the names of the people who were presented to him.

"AN ARTY CROWD"

"An arty crowd I like playing around with," Anne whispered to him. "Mother hates it—but we're all mixed up these days—as you've probably found out. Why didn't you write to me? You promised you would. Naughty boy. Come out to the country place tomorrow we'll get back to old times."

Her words tumbled over each other in their haste. Her speech was a trifle blurred and Bob put out his hand and took away her glass.

"Not too much tonight, Anne, old dear," he chided. "Richard ain't used to all this speed are you, old son?"

"All right. I'll take the pledge—for half an hour," Anne said good naturedly.

A rather surly youth across the table pulled out his watch. "Three drinks for Anne—half an hour from now," he said. "She'll need to catch up with the gang."

There was a general laugh. Some one said to Richard, "Bet you'll see more queer snakes here in New York than in all the jungles of the world—the whole round world."

This sally went round the table. Men and girls—laughed boisterously. Richard felt himself withdrawing from it all, trying to see it clearly, wondering what had happened to these people, some of them well bred, some of them not, all of them bent on achieving hilarity with shrill laughs and loud talk.

Anne made a direct play for him, appropriated him as her special

escort, told him he was in for a real time of it, and after the dinner dragged him with her party to the theatre. He submitted rather than consented. His head ached. He had lost his bearings and he halted the ending of the show with real relief.

But for the crowd the evening had just begun. They agreed after much wrangling on a night club. Richard pleaded weariness and tried to leave them. But Anne clung to him, Bob urged him, and presently he was in a garishly decorated room, the inevitable dancing space in the middle and another round of drinks on the table.

He refused to dance, and Anne after putting a moment grabbed the sulky youth by the hand and led him out to the floor. In a second they were all out there—leaving Bob and Richard alone at the table.

Bob leaned forward and grinned at his old friend. "What do you think of it now, old man? Some fun, eh? Oh, you'll get used to it."

Richard was watching the dancing. He said slowly: "I don't get it, Bob. I've seen all kinds of dancing—native dancing—all that—down there those things are seasonal—done to keep the tribe going and so on—but this—I think it's beastly."

"Don't take it so hard, you'll get used to it—like it, more than that, have to have it. Its the cackal living—this kind of life."

Richard shook his head. "I'm not going to take it at all—any way," he said. "I'm off tomorrow. Going abroad—maybe somewhere over there I can find some kind of quiet peaceful living."

"You mean a quiet peaceful woman?" Bob flung back. "You don't want a wife, you want a housekeeper—somebody who'll mend your socks and cook your meals—"

"Maybe I do—but it's no use looking for her in New York. I'm going abroad I tell you," the unwanted drinking had excited him. "France—Normandy—over there I'll find a quiet little pleasant girl—"

"Yes—," Bob drawled—and when you do?"

"I'll marry her," Richard shouted the words. A dance had ended. Anne was headed for the table. She heard Richard's queer words and stopped to stare at him.

As she stared he rose, made her rather an unsteady little bow—and was gone.

**ANNE LOVELACE**, out four years, unmarried, is not one to let chances slip through her fingers. She pursues **RICHARD**. The chase leads her to Paris where she finds—but take the trip with her and see what had happened to **RICHARD** in his attempt to escape from modern New York.

## SWORN IN AS MEMBER

WASHINGTON, D. C. May 28—John H. Bartlett, former governor of New Hampshire and former first assistant postmaster-general, was sworn in this morning as a member of the International Joint Commission by Justice Harlan F. Stone of the Supreme Court. While both Canadian and American sections of the commission elect their own chairman, it is understood Bartlett will be chairman of the American group of three.

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**M. J. SMITH,**  
Secretary.  
Trustees Estate of Owen Connolly.  
Kinkora, P. E. I.  
May 27, 1929.  
5025-5-28-30-June-1-3-5-7.