

## Chapter IV

IN the morning she was awakened by the ringing of the telephone. The instrument was an extravagance, for, save for Anthony's, she received few calls and made practically none. But the woman from whom she had taken the apartment had persuaded her into keeping it. Still, as she had never indicted the change in ownership, its value was small. She lay there for a moment blinking drowsily in the thin but intensely gold sunshine of December thinking that her ears were deceiving her.

Finally she reached out a rosy arm, curled it about the edge of the door jamb and, reaching the little table that stood in the other room just on the other side of the door, set the instrument up in her bed. The apartment was so small that almost everything was within arm's reach.

"Hello," she murmured sleepily.

"Oh, I thought you must be there; I said to myself: 'She couldn't have left home this early'. What time do you go to that famous drawing class of yours anyway?"

"I beg your pardon! Who is this speaking, please?"

"Why, Roger, of course,—Roger Fielding. Don't say you've forgotten me already. This is Angèle, isn't it?"

"Yes this is Angèle Mory speaking, Mr. Fielding."

"Did I offend your Highness, Miss Mory? Will you have lunch with me to-day and let me tell you how sorry I am?"

But she was lunching with Anthony. "I have an engagement."

"Of course you have. Well, will you have tea, dinner, supper to-day,—breakfast and all the other meals to-morrow and so on for a week? You might just as well say 'yes' because I'll pester you till you do."

"I'm engaged for tea, too, but I'm not really as popular as I sound. That's my last engagement for this week; I'll be glad to have dinner with you."

"Right-oh! Now don't go back and finish up that beauty sleep, for if you're any more charming than you were last night I won't answer for myself. I'll be there at eight."

Inexperienced as she was, she was still able to recognize his method as a bit florid; she preferred, on the whole, Anthony's

manner at lunch when he leaned forward and touching her hand very lightly said: "Isn't it great for us to be here! I'm so content, Angèle. Promise me you'll have lunch with me every day this week. I've had a streak of luck with my drawings."

She promised him, a little thrilled herself with his evident sincerity and with the niceness of the smile which so transfigured his dark, thin face, robbing it of its tenseness and strain.

Still something, some vanity, some vague premonition of adventure, led her to linger over her dressing for the dinner with Roger. There was never very much colour in her cheeks, but her skin was warm and white; there was vitality beneath her pallor; her hair was warm, too, long and thick and yet so fine that it gave her little head the effect of being surrounded by a nimbus of light; rather wayward, glancing, shifting light for there were little tendrils and wisps and curls in front and about the temples which no amount of coaxing could subdue. She touched up her mouth a little, not so much to redden it as to give a hint of the mondaine to her appearance. Her dress was flame-colour—Paulette had induced her to buy it,—of a plain, rather heavy beautiful glowing silk. The neck was high in back and girlishly modest in front. She had a string of good artificial pearls and two heavy silver bracelets. Thus she gave the effect of a flame herself; intense and opaque at the heart where her dress gleamed and shone, transparent and fragile where her white warm neck and face rose into the tenuous shadow of her hair. Her appearance excited herself.

Roger found her delightful. As to women he considered himself a connoisseur. This girl pleased him in many respects. She was young; she was, when lighted from within by some indescribable mechanism, even beautiful; she had charm and, what was for him even more important, she was puzzling. In repose, he noticed, studying her closely, her quiet look took on the resemblance of an arrested movement, a composure on tip-toe so to speak, as though she had been stopped in the swift transition from one mood to another. And back of that momentary cessation of action one could see a mind darting, quick, restless, indefatigable, observing, tabulating, perhaps even mocking. She had for him the quality of the foreigner, but she gave this quality an objectivity as though he were the stranger and she the well-known established personage taking

note of his peculiarities and apparently boundlessly diverted by them.

But of all this Angela was absolutely unaware. No wonder she was puzzling to Roger, for, in addition to the excitement which she—a young woman in the high tide of her youth, her health, and her beauty—would be feeling at receiving in the proper setting the devotion and attention which all women crave, she was swimming in the flood of excitement created by her unique position. Stolen waters are the sweetest. And Angela never forgot that they were stolen. She thought: “Here I am having everything that a girl ought to have just because I had sense enough to suit my actions to my appearance.” The realization, the secret fun bubbling back in some hidden recess of her heart, brought colour to her cheeks, a certain temerity to her manner. Roger pondered on this quality. If she were reckless!

The dinner was perfect; it was served with elegance and beauty. Indeed she was surprised at the surroundings, the grandeur even of the hotel to which he had brought her. She had no idea of his means, but had supposed that his circumstances were about those of her other new friends; probably he was better off than Anthony, whose poverty she instinctively sensed, and she judged that his income, whatever it might be, was not so perilous as Paulette’s. But she would have put him on the same footing as the Starrs. This sort of expenditure, however, meant money, “unless he really does like me and is splurging this time just for me”. The idea appealed to her vanity and gave her a sense of power; she looked at Roger with a warm smile. At once his intent, considering gaze filmed; he was already leaning toward her but he bent even farther across the perfect little table and asked in a low, eager tone: “Shall we stay here and dance or go to your house and talk and smoke a bit?”

“Oh we’ll stay and dance; it would be so late by the time we get home that we’d only have a few minutes.”

Presently the golden evening was over and they were in the vestibule at Jayne Street. Roger said very loudly: “Where’s that push button?” Then lower: “Well, your young lovers aren’t here to-night either. I’m beginning to think you made that story up, Angèle.”

She assured him, laughing, that she had told the truth. "You come here some time and you'll see them for yourself." But she wished she could think of something more ordinary to say. His hands held hers very tightly; they were very strong and for the first time she noticed that the veins stood up on them like cords. She tried to pull her own away and he released them and, taking her key, turned the lock in the inner door, then stood looking down at her.

"Well I'm glad they're not here to-night to take their revenge." And as he handed her back the key he kissed her on the lips. His knowledge of women based on many, many such experiences, told him that her swift retreat was absolutely unfeigned.

As on a former occasion she stood, after she had gained her room, considering herself in the glass. She had been kissed only once before, by Matthew Henson, and that kiss had been neither as casual nor as disturbing as this. She was thrilled, excited, and vaguely displeased. "He is fresh, I'll say that for him." And subsiding into the easy chair she thought for a long time of Anthony Cross and his deep respectful ardour.

In the morning there were flowers.

From the class-room she went with Paulette to deliver the latter's sketches. "Have tea to-day with me; we'll blow ourselves at the Ritz. This is the only time in the month that I have any money, so we'll make the best of it."

Angela looked about the warm, luxurious room at the serene, luxurious women, the super-groomed, super-deferential, tremendously confident men. She sighed. "I love all this, love it."

Paulette, busy blowing smoke-rings, nodded. "I blew sixteen that time. Watch me do it again. There's nothing really to this kind of life, you know."

"Oh don't blow smoke-rings! It's the only thing in the world that can spoil your looks. What do you mean there's nothing to it?"

"Well for a day-in-and-day-out existence, it just doesn't do. It's too boring. It's fun for you and me to drift in here twice a year when we've just had a nice, fat cheque which we've got to spend. But there's nothing to it for every day; it's too much