

The Glad Surrender

By HAZEL DEYO BATCHELOR
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Laurel Stone's marriage to Granville Burton came as a surprise to every one. Laurel had fallen deeply in love with him, but to Burton the woman was a lovely article to place in his home. His reasons for marriage were not sentimental ones. A year after their marriage a son is born, and this event changes Laurel's attitude toward her husband. She becomes impersonal, and it arouses interest in him. This interest suddenly flames into emotion, a thing Burton had always thought he could do without.

CHAPTER XXXIII

HUMAN nature is a strange thing. Granville Burton was a man too sure of himself ever to doubt his supremacy concerning his own possessions. He had delighted in seeing Laurel admired by other men. He remembered once shortly after they had been married his pride as she had stood surrounded by men. She was a woman made to be admired and loved, but she belonged to him and he would as soon have thought of any one trying seriously to interest Laurel.

But since last night when he had held her in his arms and she had been utterly unresponsive, something in him had changed. The old assurance was not so strong. If he had seen Laurel at lunch with one of his own friends he would have thought nothing of it, but this man out of the world in which Laurel had played a big part before he had come into her life, this big, silent man, who was a big man in his way, was it possible that he could give Laurel something that she did not get in her own life?

Before Laurel had seen Granville he had seen the party come into the dining room and had observed the gay camaraderie, and the light badinage that had been tossed back and forth. Laurel giggled like a gay little girl and she was exquisite in her cool soft white, the loveliest thing in the room, but as soon as she had seen him something went out of her smile, a certain reserve came back to her face; she was subtly changed.

Laurel bowed to Potter and Dargett, men who had visited at the Burton house many times, men who turned over daily big financial deals, who were

powers in Wall street, and then she turned back to her own table. Tom Benton noticed that she was distracted, and knew that it was Granville's presence that had made her so. She toyed idly with a bit of bread, and drew a breath when the three men finally rose from the table. They stopped at Laurel's table for a moment and there were brief introductions and some desultory remarks. Laurel was conscious that Granville stood near her chair. She could have put out her hand and touched him, and she felt his eyes upon her as he looked down, but there were only the most impersonal things touched upon in the conversation.

It was the first time that Ted Banning and Benton had met Laurel's husband. After they were alone again and Laurel was dipping into her iced bouillon, Ted said eagerly: "He's a wonder, Laurel, I'm not surprised that he can manage things as he does."

Winona sniffed. "He's only a man, Teddy, and Laurel's husband." Tom Benton was silent. He had liked Granville Burton. The two men looked each other in the eye and the response had been immediate. Tom Benton always admired big men, men who had illusions but said little about them. He had the newspaper instinct and he was a splendid newspaper man, a dogged type, a man who dreamed dreams, who had illusions but said little about them. Benton was all fire, all brilliance, a flash of white teeth one moment as his face broke up into a smile, and his gray eyes like cold steel the next. He was alert, almost wiry. Benton was heavier, his entire make-up was slower but much gentler. His brown eyes were honest and fine. He was a man's man. In a minute he had understood Laurel's surrender to this man, her sudden marriage, everything, and he laughed at himself for ever having hoped that he might some day have Laurel for his own.

Granville's appearance had somehow thrown a damper on the luncheon party, try as they would to act as if nothing had happened. The gay spirit of camaraderie was gone, and Laurel felt herself somewhat left out in the cold. The other three drifted into newspaper jargon and shop talk, and Laurel sat back in her chair, exquisite, far removed from the shabby girl who had interviewed famous men for the Chronicle at one time in her life.

They finished and left, and Laurel, pleading a headache, was on her way to Long Island at 3 o'clock. She was not happy any longer, even with her friends. She had felt like an outsider today with the old crowd, and although she had made a certain place for herself among the people who made up the Long Island crowd, they were not real friends. There was no one woman in whom she could confide, not one.

Tomorrow—Several people have strange thoughts.

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