

# PRAY YOU, LOVE, REMEMBER

By Eleanor Talbot Kinkead

Author "The Invisible Bond," Etc.



Two people were seated upon the steps of the little portico.

THERE was a wonder in the fall of the June sunlight on field and stream, and there was something so idyllic in the scene that one began to think of "reapers reaping early in among the bearded barley," and of the road that led to "many towered Camelot."

Miss Forsythe had been thinking of it, but all at once she caught in her breath and stared. Her companion, a slim youth in white duck, followed the direction of her gaze, and his lips puckered in a slow, boyish whistle.

They were passing down a narrow path toward the wood, and they had just come upon a rambling old farm house only a few yards away half hidden by vines and fruit trees.

Two people were seated upon the steps of the little portico. The young woman in the pink cotton gown leaning her head against the slender Doric post was strangely, hauntingly beautiful, and Annette Forsythe was made aware of this in one of those comprehensive glances that are distinctly feminine in their quick grasp of detail. But it was upon the dark young man at the girl's side, in the outline of whose figure there was something surprisingly familiar, that her gaze rested in a sort of passionate insistence.

He was sitting with his back toward the two approaching, his strong young shoulders bending slightly as he leaned toward the girl with the unmistakable aspect of a lover. His face was lowered, and there was an instant's uncertainty. But presently he threw back his head and laughed.

ANNETTE'S face paled. "Why, it's Bob," she whispered, and there was a peculiar note in her voice. The youth in white duck chuckled gleefully.

"It assuredly is Rob," he said with mock resignation. "We fellows have just caught on to his little game. Thought he was off in the woods sketching, or something like that, and all the while we've been wearing ourselves to tatters getting up dances and excursions and boat rides and such antics, he has been over here flirting with the prettiest girl you ever saw—except when you happen to look in the glass," he added gallantly.

"You see, she's not just the typical country girl by a long shot. Came from somewhere down in the Bluegrass country, and it seems the family has seen better days. Ferris saw her for the first time early one morning several weeks ago when two of us were out on the river with him in his boat. She was down by the bridge. She hadn't on a hat, and the wind had blown her hair loose, and when the sunlight shone on it it changed from brown to gold.

Rob gave a start that almost capsized the boat, and I saw his hands on the oars tremble. He did not speak a word, but he sat with his lips parted, and kept his eyes on her until we had passed, like a man dazed. Somehow no one cared to jest about it."

Miss Forsythe bent down and gathered a daisy that grew near the path. She was pretty in a diminutive, girlish fashion, but her face had suddenly hardened.

"What nonsense you are talking, you absurd boy," she said coldly, as she pulled the flower apart. "Think of Rob with his brilliant talent and his great ambition being taken in by a nobody like that whom he would no doubt tire of in a week! When he marries, he should marry a woman of position and fortune. But of course this is only a passing fancy. Only, it's horrid—that sort of trifling, I mean, and one hates to hear of it, especially with regard to a man one has always respected."

IN the meantime the two under discussion had reached a point in their acquaintance that, unsuspected of one of them, was to mark a climax. It was the day of his departure from the little Kentucky summer resort, where, with a party of friends, the young artist, Robert Ferris, had been spending the month of June. In less than a week from that day he expected to be sitting on the deck of the ocean

steamer that was to bear him for a three year stay in those realms of art toward which hitherto his soul had worshipped in unavailing hope.

Presently the conversation lagged. With the responsiveness that belongs only to the finer order of womankind the girl had been quickly sensitive to his mood. But as she watched him, from time to time a little roguish smile played about her lips and a lovely light stole into her eyes.

He had been sitting for some time in deep thought, his elbow resting on his knee, his chin in his hand. His face, lean, clear-cut, powerful in its strength of purpose, expressed a conflict of emotions. All at once he raised his eyes, drew a deep breath and rose. He had grown very pale.

"It has all been so beautiful," he said, "more beautiful than anything I have ever imagined could come to me. It is very hard to say good bye."

THE girl turned wonderingly—as if she had not fully grasped the import of his words. She looked quickly away. For a moment she sat mute and motionless.

His gaze wandered away to the glistening wheat fields and to the sun-kissed stream in the distance, and then, drawn by an irresistible magnet, traveled slowly back to her, and clung to her with unspeakable yearning and pity. She was so soft and white and beautiful—too lovely a thing to suffer. In spite of all her pride and reserve and maiden dignity, he knew that with his departure there would fade for her the splendour of the grass, the glory of the flower.

But the slim figure straightened itself bravely. She rose and stood looking him in the face with eyes that did not once falter.

"When?" she asked.

He took out his watch.

"Today—in less than an hour," he said unsteadily. "I didn't want to speak of it until the very last moment—I wanted to have one more perfect day."

All at once he set his teeth hard. He had resisted every impulse to tell her that he loved her, yet the strain in that instant was terrible. If only he could snatch her into his arms and bear her away with him into that unknown future that awaited him! But art is a jealous mistress. Unhindered and untrammelled he felt he must be in the years of toil that were before him.

The artist and the man fought the battle step by step—and the artist conquered.

He put forth his hand.

"Three years is a long time—but they will end—some day." He gave another sweeping glance around. Then he took both of her hands in his. "Some day I shall come again into these lovely green woods—some day, I shall remember them always."

She did not answer, and he asked in an embarrassed fashion:

"When I come, will I find you here?"

A strange little laugh broke from her, and she quickly withdrew her hands.

"If I am living," she said, "I shall be here."

She was still smiling as he went down the orchard path, her gaze fixed on his stalwart form until he disappeared from her view. Then a low moan broke from her and she sank to her knees.

"O God, make him, make him remember!" she prayed in stifled sobs.

ONE day four years later Annette Forsythe arrived with her mother in Paris. Her first act on the establishment of themselves in the sumptuous apartments that had been secured for them was to dispatch a note to her cousin, Robert Ferris, now an artist of such distinction that she had already heard much of him through Parisians she had met on her travels. She asked him to call at five.

It was a daring impulse that had prompted her thus deliberately to seek the man who had driven all others from her thoughts. She proposed to stake everything on the throw of a single die.

She was a woman of steady nerve, but as the hands of the little jeweled watch she wore approached the appointed hour she rose and began restlessly to trail her gown of rose colored silk and mull up and down the room.

She paused before a mirror and critically surveyed the dainty form it reflected. The face that looked back at her was pretty, though hard, and it was still youthful. A little smile of triumph flickered across her features, and she turned to meet a tall figure standing within a few feet of her, whose gray eyes were fixed upon her in an expression amused, yet partly cynical.

"Time writes no wrinkles, Annette," he said, cheerfully, as he came forward.

She broke into the low silvery laughter he well remembered and held out both her hands. "How nice of you!" she exclaimed. "But first let me make my bow to genius. Isn't it glorious to be a grand success? But, oh, how you must have worked!"

She was studying him curiously. She found him strangely, almost shockingly altered, and she tried in vain to find in him something of his old-time, cheerful self. He took her scrutiny in good part.

"Behold my gray hairs," he answered with a laugh. "Every one tells me I have grown older," he added indifferently. "It matters little about the outward changes in the case of most of us, provided we keep a strong hold on our illusions."

Annette's face grew cold. "Our illusions are usually our follies," she said. There was a certain



"Oh! Bob, are you ill? What is it?"