

15 Words 15c Farmer Classified Ads Phone 1208

1917?

By EDWIN BALMER

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(Continued.)

A girl in white was standing restlessly within the front door. She was a brown-haired young girl, gray-eyed, with a smooth, clear skin which was flushed now in her eagerness, and she stamped her little foot impatiently as



"I'd never have asked you to marry me in such a world."

her brother lingered on the path. Agnes succeeded in making no other demonstration, however, until Martin had gained the road; then she threw open the screen door and ran down the porch steps. Jim caught and kissed her and half carried her up the steps again. They paused in the hall to look at each other under the light. Jim's inspection appeared far more than merely satisfactory, but he failed to pass muster under Agnes' eyes.

"Why, what's bothering you, dear?" she demanded solicitously. "Nothing," Jim threw his hat on a chair, and, hand in hand with Agnes, he sought their place on the lounge near the big, shaded lamp. Agnes' parents had gone out, and she and Jim had the room to themselves. "I'm rather extremely in need of some sane, rational, nonmilitary companionship for a while. What do you suppose I've been doing? I just came from the factory, where I've been to see if spies weren't making bombs. Yes!" He told her, in humorous detail, the discussions and his errand of the evening. "You can see from that the effect of having a lieutenant about most of the time, and Nellie's as bad."

"I can see," Agnes agreed. "I wasn't going to say anything about your sister, Jim, till you'd mentioned it, but"

"Oh, on, dearie." "I had her to lunch today, and I got her ideas." "About war?" "I wasn't going to bring up the subject, but I'd been reading that dandy new disarmament article about our setting the example to the other nations. 'The Mission of America,' by Professor Doyen. The magazine was open at it, and Nellie saw I'd been reading it. I give you my word that when I told her—as I had to—that I thought it was the finest and most practical thing I'd ever read she became positively violent."

"I know," Jim nodded. "And there are so many things which you and I can't understand—not being in the navy."

"That was exactly the tone. I could hardly keep from laughing at her one minute and the next telling her what an infant she was. I didn't realize what the navy was doing to her before. Now I know. Instead of growing in thought or experience since she's left Elgin she's been actually going back. She's a year older than I, and she used to be older really, but her mental age now is about the same as Mart's. He was home for lunch and agreed perfectly with every ridiculous thing she said."

"The just-asked me what Lieutenant Wendell thought as though no one else knew anything."

"Being eighteen, he's just at the army and navy stage. I suppose you were once, too, Jim, but—thanks to—Agnes kissed him quickly—"you went into business and I outgrew it. Why, Jim, I wouldn't dare marry if I believed that the world had to be controlled by force and fear."

"Yes; when?"

Two hours later Jim drove again toward town in the bright moonlight. He smiled at the recollection of his errand to the factory early in the evening. Agnes had made him forget—or remember only with amusement—the wild alarms which had disturbed him. Agnes and he were going to be married in three months; they had decided on the day. He was happy and he whistled as he drove along. The windows of the factory laboratory were dark now and the place seemed deserted; but, as he was opposite the end of an alley, some one leaped out at him and called his name.

Wendell, having showed himself, retreated abruptly into the darkness of the alley and, as Bob beckoned, Jim backed his car into the alley. "Lights out," Wendell ordered. Jim switched them off.

"What's up?" "You were just coming down to find out?" Bob challenged. "No, I was here at 8 o'clock." "What did you find?" "Just Ingouf and Enloe, working at their valve."

"Working on their valve? That was all you saw?" "What else was there to see?" "Those men"—Bob motioned toward the darkened laboratory as if they were still there—"tell me, how much do you know about them?"

Jim had not realized until he tried to answer how little he knew about them or about others in his father's employ. They had come to Elgin recently to take machinists' positions. They were good machinists.

"Your car's good for seventy or eighty miles of the road?" Wendell demanded. "Eighty-five on a straightaway. One like it has been driven over 100 miles an hour on track."

"And you dare drive it like the devil, if we need to?" "Dare?" Jim rejoined. "What for?" "For your friends in there. I was going to jump them as they came out. They're motorcycles here. But if we can let them come out as if they weren't watched and show us where they're going and we could then get them we'd find out more. But, aside from the pace, it's going to be dangerous."

"Dangerous?" Jim ejaculated, with scorn. "Quiet!" Wendell warned. "They're coming!" Jim gazed with him about the corner of the building. A door at the far end of the factory opened, and two men stepped out into the shadow. They looked about, and apparently saw nothing to disturb them. They took motorcycles which were leaning against the building, brought them to the street and started away.

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CHAPTER IV. Evidence of Nation Wide Plot. They separated and crept up, crouching and listening every few yards and then advancing again. Tall, rank grass, which would conceal a man lying down, was between the road and a potato field twenty feet to the left.

Jim gazed as he crouched again in this grass. His hands were wet with blood. Wendell walked past, shoving his revolver into his pocket, and stood staring down. Jim joined him. Ingouf's body lay in the grass, so mangled that Jim, forcing himself to bend closer, scarcely could be certain that this was the form of the man he had seen at the factory a few hours earlier. If any of the revolver bullets had hit him their marks had been obliterated by the work of the bomb, which, either exploding as he threw it or having fallen from his grasp and bursting at his feet, instantly had slain him. The explosion had been of terrible force. The ground was hollowed at Ingouf's feet, the grass was strewn and scattered, and the body was torn and half denuded. As Jim staggered back from it, sickened, Wendell knelt beside it.

"We must search him," Bob said quietly. Jim recoiled and walked off to the motorcycle. The engine was still running as it lay in the road. Jim stopped it and looked over the machine. It carried nothing but the ordinary equipment and the usual tools in the case. The two bombs evidently had been carried by Ingouf himself, and he seemed to have had only the two. At least Bob found none in his search, and he discovered on the body only keys and pocket knife, a few coins and other ordinary trifles. In a pocket of the coat—it was a shredded strip of wool, all blood-soaked—was a letter addressed in typewriting to Ingouf at his home.

Half the envelope and contents only remained. The envelope bore in the corner the return address of "S. D. Mariatt, Insurance, Chicago." Within was half the sheet of a typewritten letter of the ordinary sort of life insurance solicitation—at least the typewritten lines presented only the usual appeal to the addressee to insure—but between those lines appeared, handwritten in the delicate, small characters of a woman's script, only the first half of each line remained, and in the moonlight the writing was not legible. Wendell struck a match and held it over the paper: Immediately upon receiving this you and proceeded before morning to the west— etely demolish and burn and thereupon you both in readiness for further service when you will offer yourselves as volunteers— and go to the front with the company for the pur—

(To Be Continued.) He brought the car up as short as he could; he leaped down to the ground after Bob, who was running back beside the road, reloading the revolver as he ran. The motorcycle which had been ahead stopped far down the road; the rider, Enloe, jumped off and stood staring back. Jim watched him, and when he made no move Jim grabbed a steel bar from his tool box and followed Wendell. He caught up with Bob, who had stopped and crouched fifty yards short of the spot where they

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