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The Torture Of Love

By C. C. L.

On this ideal day in June the perfume of roses filled the air; the birds were fluttering about among the trees, each twittering to its mate; even the bees humming in the air seemed happy.

A handsome woman dressed in a white linen suit and large black hat, came quickly down a side street in the beautiful city of Los Angeles.

She walked quickly along for a few blocks and more than one passerby looked after the fine figure and the happy, contented look in the dreamy gray eyes that were fringed with long curling lashes, the rose pink that glowed in her cheeks. Altogether she made a charming vision of wonderful womanhood.

When she reached a certain corner she stopped to wait for a car, as she stood at the curb dreaming of the man she loved, all unconscious of a tall well built man standing in the shadow of the hotel building.

As she approached the street corner his face had turned deathly white; his strong frame shook with emotion. He had stood looking at her for fully ten minutes when suddenly she turned and her gaze wandered in his direction. In a second the beautiful face had grown as white as the dress she wore.

For a few moments she hesitated. "Shall I walk on," Mrs. Andrews thought, "or shall I remain where I am standing?"

While she stood trying to decide what to do. The man came up to her saying "How do you do?" She turned and calmly faced Jack Hamilton, the man she was engaged to marry just three years ago.

Romance was at its crescendo when he told her that he loved her. They were at a dance in a charming cottage by the lake, the dreamy waltz that had just ended was still ringing in their ears.

As Jack, his handsome face flushed and eager, came to Mary Bland and threw her light wrap around her.

Together they entered the arbor, covered with honeysuckle vines. The moonlit lake lay before them. It was truly a lovely spot for a proposal.

"I love you, Mary" Jack said, and pulled her to him with that savagery in man that even the gentlest of women admire.

He did not wait for her to answer, but covered her face with passionate kisses again and again. He kissed her until her brain seemed dizzy.

No doubt the way she clung to him betrayed her. She had been longing for him to speak.

Mary had that intrinsically sacrificial maternal tenderness that all good women possess.

Well, they had been engaged almost a year. Jack called often; they went every place together, but he had never mentioned their wedding day.

In the beginning of the second year he broke an engagement with her without excuse or word of any kind. Mary's first feeling was of impatience. Then as the days passed a feeling of honor overtook her.

She waited for mail, day after day. When the telephone rang, she would start and tremble. She had to endure sleepless nights and days of anxiety.

Then after several weeks had passed, Jack returned and Mary forgave him. For another year they were happy.

The wedding was set for the following November. Suddenly Jack wanted the date changed to the next June.

"Although I love you dearly, Mary," he said, "we are both young. What's the use to hurry? I don't care to burden myself with a family. I don't see anything romantic in a baby."

The girl's heart almost stopped beating, as she listened, she realized then that he lacked the instinct of fatherhood, while she loved children.

There followed a bitter quarrel in which Mary broke the engagement.

How she suffered in the weeks that followed. She was ambitious and liked to work and that helped her live through the loneliness of her life. The fading of each new day was like living a thousand years. Fighting the loneliness of the mind the craving of the body.

Mary began to grow pale and thin. Then all of a sudden Jack began to besiege her with letters and telephone calls, begging, pleading that would have touched even a heart of stone. You can imagine how Mary's heart thrilled, that seemed bleeding for him. She listened to his promises and once again they were happy.

For the wedding was but two weeks off; the presents were all in; the beautiful trousseau ready, and the club to which they belonged was giving a dance in their honor.

It was a fine looking couple that entered the ball-room. Jack, tall and handsome in evening dress. Mary, looking lovely in white lace, her pretty face flushed in the excitement.

She was soon surrounded by admirers as she was a social favorite, and she did not miss Jack for quite a while. When the dance was almost over, Jack's younger brother, Hugh, came up to Mary with a look of anxiety on his fair young face, as he said:

"Mary, Jack has been called away on business. I will take you home. Don't worry, it will be all right."

"Something is kept from me" she cried. "What is wrong with Jack, that I can't be told? Is it financial trouble?" she asked, when she and Hugh had entered her home. He folded his arms, and for a moment his face twitched; then he said patiently.

"Haven't you any idea?" "Not the least in the world," she moaned "What is it? Please tell me, Hugh."

Hugh left her and went to the telephone.

Mary listened saguely while she heard him call the physician who attended both of their families. Hugh asked the doctor to come at once to Mary's home.

While they both waited, Hugh gave brief unsatisfactory replies to all Mary's questions, but before the doctor was half way up the steps, Hugh hurried to meet him. The two held a brief conversation, then entered the room together "My child," the doctor said kindly, patting Mary on the arm, "you should have been told of this, Jack is suffering from fits of dementia. He is trying so hard to overcome it, and has not had a spell for months. I had hoped in time he would be cured, but now it is impossible."

The words were so terrifying to Mary that she stood screaming. Hugh tried to hold her in his arms and console her, as shriek after shriek rang through the house her family were all aroused.

Her father came rushing down stairs to find his daughter unconscious in Hugh's arms.

The engagement was broken again. Mary's family, while feeling it was the only sane thing to do, suffered as all conventional people do, at the shock and smear of publicity.

Mary then was sent on a long visit to the South.

While there no one mentioned Jack's name. He had passed entirely out of his life.

As the months passed by in beautiful Old New Orleans, Mary became more cheerful. The many places of interest to visit with new friends and her days began to pass by in peace. One day a friend invited her to go to visit a battleship, and Mary, who had always lived in the middle West, had never seen one, therefore, she was very much delighted.

It was a beautiful sight that met their gaze when they reached the pier of the Mississippi river.

Out in the water a short distance lay two large battle ships, the "Arizona" and the "Hancock" were at

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anchor, their tall tapering spars and flying flags reflected in the water.

Two small boats were disembarking visitors at the gang way ladders.

Mary and her friend stood on the deck of one of the large ships, and the friend, who was a young married woman, approached a young officer and asked:

"Will you please send some one to show us over the ship?"

Lieutenant Andrews hesitated a moment, while his eyes rested on Mary's face, then he replied with a smile.

"I will go myself" So the trio started on the wonderful trip which all three enjoyed.

Lieutenant Andrews had not been with Mary Bland an hour when he decided that she was the only girl in all the world, for him, and he had known many beautiful women.

And Mary was as much interested in him. She wondered if he was married; who his friends were; a thousand different thoughts of him crossed her mind as explained the different things of interest aboard the ship.

When the tour was finished, the trio sat at one of the officer's table to talk then he told them the history of his life, and at his words, "No, I am not married" It seemed to Mary that her heart beat lighter.

The afternoon passed all too quickly for each and they were all surprised when one of the marines passed calling, "Five o'clock visitors all ashore" Mary and the Lieutenant exchanged cards, and Mary thought as she let her hand rest in his, that he was the most wonderful man in all the world.

When Mary reached her Aunt's home, she was all excited over the advents of the afternoon.

When the good old auntie saw how interested her niece was in the young officer, she at once sent him an invitation to take dinner with them.

The days that followed after that were one round of pleasure, with a walk in Audibon park, sails on the river, dances and dinner parties; and when the ship left "New Or-

leans," Lieutenant Andrews felt as though he had all the world behind. For his world was filled up with Mary, to whom he had plighted his truth.

Jack, however, was still vividly in Mary's life although she loved Lieutenant Andrews with devotion and knew that she would find a lasting happiness in his love.

Sometimes a strange and horrible palsy would steal over her. The past was a bitter remorse intoned in black despair.

Over and over again, she tried to write the full story to her lover but always the same effect. She would tear the letter in shreds and moan, "God, I cannot ruin both of our lives. If he knew all, he would spurn me, and I, Heaven help, cannot live without his love."

In September Mary returned to her home. Her parents were delighted with the change in her, and many happy hours were spent telling her dear ones of Lieutenant Andrews.

Then at Christmas the Lieutenant came to visit Mary at her home. It was arranged then that Mary, accompanied by her brother, would go to Los Angeles the following spring.

Well, they were quietly married. They had a beautiful home of the bungalow type, with a great wide veranda that ran around the house; some parts shaded by creeping vines. The driveway was shaded by large palm trees, and winding walks led to a beautiful flower garden at the back of the house. Lieutenant Andrews often entertained his fellow officers and their families.

(continued on page 8)

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