

# WOULD YOU?

By FANNIE HURST

Mrs. Yanci Rifkin is told by a doctor that she has only a year to live. She and her sister-in-law, Zetta Rifkin, keep the bitter secret to themselves. Yanci wants to borrow \$2000 in order to insure the success of her husband, a tailor, before her death. She goes to see Jerry Kessler.

## CHAPTER V

WHEN it opened again immediately after and Mrs. Yanci Rifkin entered, she was like a white hussar in a white military tunic to her chin and a small white toque with a black stick up, pressing the copper-colored curls down close about her face. They held the picture for the moment, gazing with rising expression one at the other.

"Gawd, a beauty," he said. "Little Yanci Joffie!" and brought his hands together in a loose clap.

"If it ain't the same old Jerry," she said slowly, breaking into a smile first, and if you ain't as hard to see as the president!"

"Gawd, girl, if I'd a' known it was you kept callin' today, I'd a' come tearing up here from the Forty-second Street Country Club, double quick. Little Yanci Joffie, b'gad, and

## "ICE WATER, PL—!"

At first glance you wonder what the title means. You have to read the story to find out. But that will be no hardship for

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The author, knows how to get your interest and then hold it for six days. You will be rewarded by a surprise if you start this story on Monday, January 5, and read it all the way through.

not a day older in how many years is it? Eighteen?"

"You, neither, Jerry."

She opened her collar and sat down on a leather divan, riding the springs with a sense of place.

"This is so—some place! Got to hand it to you, Jerry, so—some place!"

They were immediately in rapport.

"Some little red-headed queen, wad! Same little something about you, kiddo, that can get me going any time of day, and say, dude! Always could wear 'em and get away with 'em, couldn't you, even if you grabbed 'em from a misfit parlor?"

"Scem like yesterday, don't it, Jerry, that us girls was dressed up in our Easter Sunday hand-me-downs, cutting up and playing bean-bag out on the sand at Coney, and you came along in that little wire-wheeled runabout, got to hand it to you, Jerry, you never was a piker."

He sat down beside her, hands on his round, tight-spinned knees.

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"I-I guess, Jerry, you—you wonder why I'm looking you up, after all these years since—since I been settled down."

"They all come back to old Papsy," he said. "Nearly all."

Silence, and she sat regarding her bowed palms.

"Things ain't so smooth with me, Jerry."

"Could have told you they wouldn't be eighteen years ago when you thought your old Papsy didn't mean the best in the world by you. Did—"

"I married, Jerry, what you'd call a good old schnooke that—"

"Kid like you tying up with the first little kyke tailor that comes along!"

I've seen too many of these girls like you get what old fool call respectability, like some people get religion, and then go dragging it through life like a tin can tied to a dog. Never knew a girl was easier to get than you, Yanci, and I ain't kidding you."

"Things are all right with me, Jerry, but—"

He laid a finger alongside his nose, "ugh."

"He—he's all right, too, Jerry, but—"

He edged farther along the divan.

"I'm on," he said.

"You—you're a wise one, all right, Jerry."

"I'm the best little forger and forger in twenty states, too, if that's what a catin' you. Byones, is always byones, I say, every time."

She withdrew from his nearing breath.

"Jerry, I—I need a lend. Papsy ain't such an old fool he thinks it's his raving beauty has brought you back."

At that such a flush ran under her whiteness that she turned her face away to blink her eyes at the sting.

"I thought, Jerry, maybe you—you was the only old friend I got could—could advance me a lend of—of say, two thousand, and not feel it!"

"Gawd, Jerry, you're some little red-head, you! Nothing small about you! Two thousand, she says, just like that! But like you for your nerve, you little devil, you!"

She arched a shoulder at him, glancing over it.

"Two thousand, Jerry, would make a— a pack of Papsy. I got in my head a darn sight easier."

"What have you got in your head, kiddo?"

"Jerry, you make me laugh. If there's anybody in the world don't need a brick house to fall on him, it's you."

"Gawd," he said, "and to think you stuck it out eighteen years with him!"

"I want to just get 'em out of that hole down there, Jerry. If I could just make that move up-town, Jerry, like—all the other firms, and get my girl married off to a straight young man that's wanting her, and feel that Henry—after all he—he's a good old schnooke, Jerry—was fixed up there so the business could run along without it—it—it would make a whole lot of things I got in my head, Jerry, a darn sight easier."

She was constantly averting her head from his constantly nearing breath, sucking her lips inward and regarding the palms of her gloves. He slid a bit along the slippery leather.

"Why ain't you out and plain with your little Papsy? You want money for some kind of a break; is that it, kiddo?"

"—well, I—"

"Is it or ain't it that's what I want to know first of all?"

"—yes."

"That's more like it."

"Lemme have it on a year's note, Jerry, that'll be—"

"Come now, little one, can't you stick on the level with me? That ain't no way to get favors out of me, is it? Don't make things no easier for you, neither. I ain't sold wooten goods to your kind of little kyke firm for over thirty years not to know what you can do and you can't do. But that ain't what's bothering me, kiddo, and you know it ain't. It's just I want you to be on the level with your old uncle Papsy."

"I am, Jerry, I am. And I tell you we ain't no little firm any more; won't

"Nothing, Jerry, nothing. Only I—you can see for yourself, Jerry, that a year—"

"Say, how do I know in that year you mightn't be out for a airing one fine day and get run down by a automobile or—"

"So much the sorer for you, Jerry. I got a two-thousand-dollar insurance policy waiting for that little thing to happen. You—you know Henry well enough to know how he'd use that money, Jerry; you know the first thing he'd do with it would be to pay off that—"

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All of our smartest velvet hats are included in this sale. Both large and small shapes in all the wanted colors.

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be if we can once get up-town and—in one year we—"

"It can't be done, I tell you. I know too many little shyster firms have made the break for the avenue, and got away with it, too. Look at Bond and Rankin. But it took them five years and two extensions to meet their first note, and here you come, little one, with a twelvemonth proposition on that—"

"But, Jerry—"

"Can't be done, baby doll."

"But, Jerry, you understand me, you—"

"That's the talk."

"You know it can't be done, and I know it can't be done; but we're willing to talk business just the same. Am I right?"

"—yes."

"What'll you gimme if it can be done?"

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"Jerry, if you'll let me have it secret like, depositing it in the Third Avenue Bank with—with Selig, like it was a lend from the bank itself on a year's note with—without Henry—my husband—knowing different—you know Selig, and he'll fix it for us—if you'll do that Jerry, and—and it ain't paid back in Selig's hand one year from date, then—then—I'm game to fix it up with you any way you want, Jerry. I'll be ready then to let you make your own terms, Jerry."

"If I done the right thing, I'd say lay your head on your bed, little girl, you made it; now, wouldn't I?"

"I—what—what's the use cryin', Jerry, over spilt milk?"

He reached over to cover her recumbent hand, but she withdrew it unostensibly.

"Well, kiddo, suppose your uncle Papsy does fork over the two thou. Shall we celebrate by taking a little ride up the road in the slickest little eight-cylinder roadster you ever seen pound the dust? Got a night key, I mean morning?"

"No, no, Jerry. No, no, Jerry, you wouldn't push things now at the last minute and spoil 'em. I—I got my girl to think of yet, Jerry. Gimme this year, Jerry, these few last months to get straight. After eighteen years, Jerry, what's a year more or less? Lemme play safe, Jerry."

"Gee," he said, "but you're some little Stop, Look and Listen, and sat back, making a chirring noise through moist lips."

"Quit!" she cried. "I hate that noise you always make."

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