

ICE WATER PL—!

By FANNIE HURST

Mr. Vetsburg invites Mrs. Kaufman, his landlady, and her daughter, Ruby, to guests at his sister's hotel.

CHAPTER IV WHY, Mama—why, Mama, what is Meyer Vetsburg to me? Why, he—his got gray hair, Ma? he's getting bald. Why, he do a n' know I'm on earth. He—

"You mean he's got gray hair, Ma? he's getting bald. Why, he do a n' know I'm on earth. He—"

"Ma, not—not him!" "Why, he's got an accent, Ma, just like old man Katz and—"

"Why, you think, Ruby, I been making out of myself a servant like you?"

"Don't think, Ruby, when the day comes what I can give up this white-elephant house that it won't be a happy one for me."

"Mama, Mama, and you pretending all these years you didn't mind!"

"I don't, baby. Not one minute while I got a future to look forward to with you."

"DANDERINE GROWS HAIR" Besides doubling the beauty of your hair at once, you will shortly find it new, soft and downy at last, but really new hair growing over the scalp.

with a man like Meyer Vetsburg, don't don't it come to me, too, baby?"

"That's what my little girl can do for mama better as stenography. Set herself down well. That's why, since we got on the subject, baby, I—I hold off signing up the new lease, with every day Shullif fussing so. Maybe, baby, I—well, just maybe—oh, baby?"

For answer a torrent of tears so sudden that they came in an avalanche burst from Miss Kaufman, and she crumpled forward, face in hands and red rushing up the back of her neck and over her ears.

"Mustn't! Mustn't!" Her voice had slipped up now and away from her. "Why, Ruby, it's natural at first maybe a girl should be so scared. May-be I shouldn't have talked so soon ex-cept how it's getting every day plainer, these trips to Atlantic City and—"

"Mama, Mama, you're killing me." She fell back against her parent's shoulder, her face frankly distorted. A second starting there into space, Mrs. Kaufman sat with her arm still entwining the slender but lax form.

"Ruby, is—is it something you ain't telling Mama?" "Oh, Mommy, Mommy!" "Is there?" "I—I don't know."

"Ruby, should you be afraid to talk to Mama, who don't want nothing but her child's happiness?" "You know, Mommy. You know!" "Know what, baby?" "None."

"Is there somebody else you got on your mind, baby?" "You know, Mommy." "Tell mama, baby. It ain't a—a crime if you got maybe somebody else on your mind."

"I can't say, it, Mommy. It—it wouldn't be nice—be nice."

"So help me, I don't." "Mommy, don't make me say it. Maybe if—when his uncle Meyer takes him in the business, we—"

"Baby, not Leo?" "Oh, Mommy, Mommy!" And she buried her hot, revealing face into the fresh net V.

"Why—why, baby, a—a boy like that!" "Twenty-three, Mammas, ain't a boy!"

But, Ruby, just a clerk in his father's hotel, and two older brothers already in it. A—a boy that ain't got a start yet."

"That's just it, Ma. We—we're waiting! Waiting before we talk even—maybe his Uncle Meyer is going to take him in the business, but it ain't sure yet."

"He's ten times too good; that—that's all you know about it. Mommy, please! I—I just can't help it, dearie. It's just like when I—I saw him—a—clock began to tick inside of me. I—"

"O my God!" said Mrs. Kaufman, drawing her hand across her brow. "His Uncle Meyer, Ma, 's been hinting all along he—he's going to give Leo his start and take him in the business. That's why we—we're waiting without saying much, till it looks more like—like we can all be together. Ma."

"All my dreams! My dreams I could give up the house! My baby with a well-to-do husband maybe on Riverside drive. A servant for herself, so I could pass, maybe, Mrs. Suss and Mrs. Katz by on the street. Ruby, you—you wouldn't, Ruby. After how I've built for you?"

"Oh, Mama, Mama, Mama!" "If you ain't got ambitions for yourself, Ruby, think once of me and this long dream I been dreaming for—us."

"Ruby, Ruby, and I always thought when you was so glad for Atlantic City, it was for Vetsburg; to show him how much you liked his folks. How could I know it was—"

"Mommy, please Mommy! I didn't mean it. I didn't mean it, Mommy darling." "I can't go on all the years, Ruby. I'm tired. Tired, girl."

"Of course you can't, darling. We—I don't want you to. Sh-h-h-h!" "It's only you and my hopes in you that kept me going all these years. The hope that, with some day a good man to provide for you, I could find a rest, maybe."

"Yes, yes." "Every time what I think of that long envelope laying there on that desk with its lease waiting to be signed to-morrow, I—I could squeeze my eyes shut so tight and wish I didn't never have to open them again on this—this house and this drudgery. If you marry for me, I'm caught. Caught in this house like a rat in a trap."

"No, no, Mommy, Leo, he—his uncle!" "Don't make me sign that new lease, Ruby. Shullif bounds me every day now. Any day I expect he says is my last. Don't make me saddle another five years with the house. He's only a boy, baby, and years it will take, and—I'm tired, baby. Tired! Tired! She lay back with her face suddenly held in rigid lines and her neck ribbed with cords."

At sight of her so prostrate there, "No, no, Mommy, No, no." Suddenly Mrs. Kaufman threw up her hands, clasping them tight against her eyes, pressing them in frenzy. "Oh, my God!" she cried. "All for nothing!" and fell to moaning through her laced fingers. "All for nothing! Years. Years. Years."

Ruby Kaufman grasped the cold face in her ardent young hands, pressing her lips to the streaming eyes. "Mommy, I didn't mean it. I didn't mean it. I didn't mean it, Mommy!"

"You didn't mean it, Ruby, did you?" "Tell mama you didn't." "I didn't, Ma. Cross my heart. It's only I—I kinda had him in my head. That's all, dearie. That's all!"

"He can't provide, baby!" "Sh-h-h-h, Ma! Try to get calm, and maybe then—then things can come like you want 'em. Sh-h-h-h, dearie! I didn't mean it. Course Leo's only a kid. I— We— Mommy dear, don't. You're killing me. I didn't mean it. I didn't."

"Sure, baby? Sure?" "Sure." "Mama's girl," sobbed Mrs. Kaufman, scooping the small form to her bosom and relaxing. "Mama's own girl that mind."

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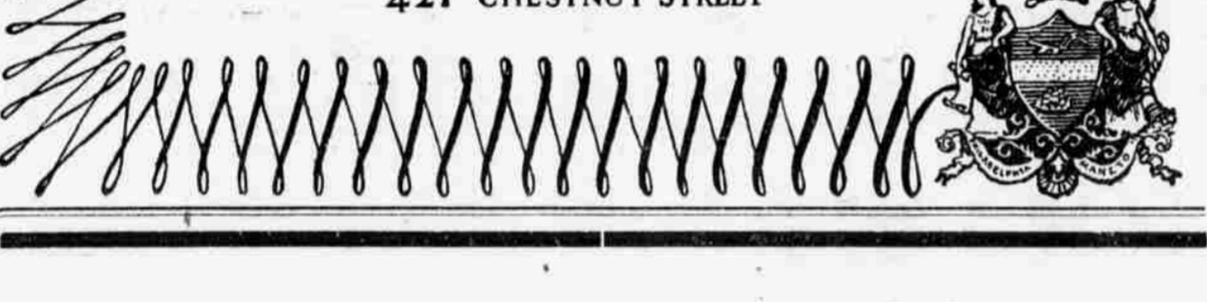
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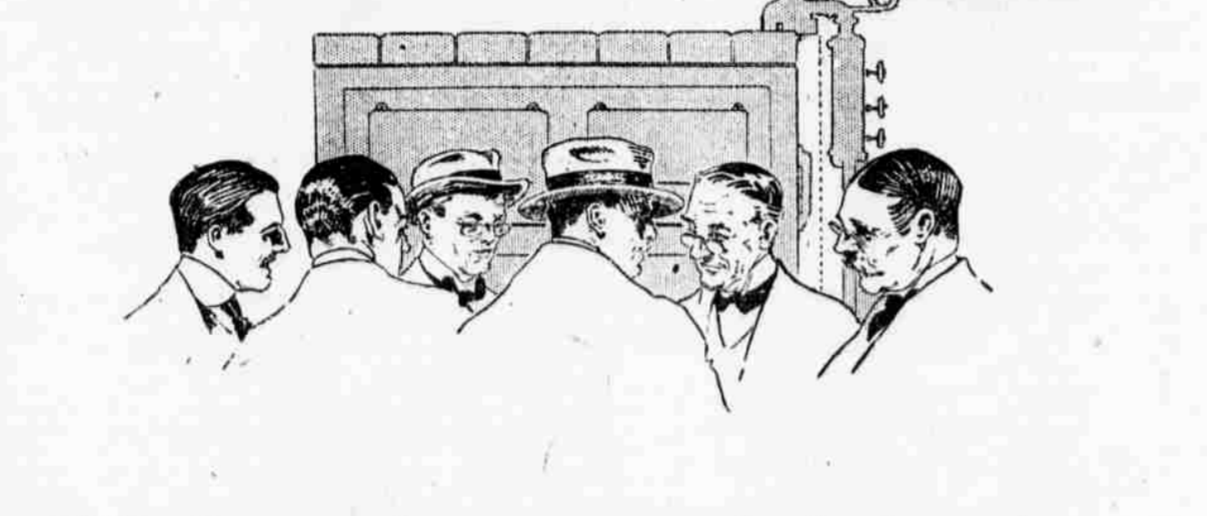
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