

HOME GROWN

By FANNIE HURST

Miss Birdie Fink, New York sales-woman, goes picknicking with Mr. Gilly, also of New York, clerk at the Michigan hotel where she is spending her vacation. She has arranged with Mr. Prokes, a hotel guest from Miami, Michigan, to be back by 10 o'clock, in order to go canoeing with him.

CHAPTER V
HE TOSSED the remnant of his sandwich into the lake and pinnetted to his feet as if the song of his soul was winged.



FANNIE HURST

"I'll tell you what I let's do, sis—it's a half hour row to Bay Shore. Let's go over to the movies—it's better than overworking this winter game."
"There comes the moon!"
"Yes, it's a habit over here—but come on, they got a imitation of a show over there and a place called Luna Park that would give Conny the hysterics if she saw it; but it's the liveliest spot around here. Come on, are you game?"

"The wing of their boaters had flown into the night; only the sullen embers remained, red eyes guarding the rem-

nant of their cannibalistic feast. They scurried down the beach and into their bobbing canoes, as they pushed away the red eyes blinked out suddenly as if a night bird had died on watch, and the gloom was immediately a shade bluer and the maculimous mist of night rose off the water.
"You're a nice boy, Gilly; but gee, you're a bum paddler. You jerk a boat around like a subway train coming to a quick stop. Say, look at that moon, will you, like a red Chinese lantern hung from a star."
"Yes."
"La-la, tra-la, tra-la in la-la-tya-la."
"Sing to me, birdie-birdie—I'm game on the poetry stuff if you are. That's one of the main excitements up here—singin' on the water."
Through the catanombic gloom they smiled at each other.
When they play that ragtime lullaby—
"No—lemme begin over again—"
Sweet and low, sweet and low,
Wind of the western sea—
Blow—blow—tra-la—la—

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MONDAY, JANUARY 26

little old dump anyway, Gilly! It looks like a good spot for your favorite funeral. I—I gotta—wannta be back by ten—I forgot something."
Mr. Gilly slowed his stroke; his mouth took on a slight oblique slant of discomposure.
"Don't let me keep you up, Miss Fink."
"Let's turn around, Gilly. I bet them movies over there would put a night owl to sleep. Gee, how dead it looks—let's turn back."
"Sure-thing."
He swung around so suddenly that she elbowed at the sides of the shell for balance.
"Gee—you got a temper like steel!"
Silence.
"Don't you get sore easy, though!"
"I ain't sore."
The vigorous dipping of the paddle and the swift cutting of water.
"Say, Gilly, ain't you afraid of breaking the speed laws?"
Silence.
A star streaked downward and died in its flight. Miss Fink lay flat back on the boat, her face foreshortened and upturned.
"Shootin' star's luck, ain't it, Gilly?"
"Dunno!"
She nestled deeper into her cushion, one arm flung high in a semicircle over her head and her lids so low over her eyes that she might have been a sleeping beauty.
Drip—Drip—p! They floated silently in a rustle of moving water.
A smile trembled across Miss Fink's lips and she opened them so that her voice came softly, softly:
Sweet and low, sweet and low,
Wind of the western sea—

Blow, blow, breezes blow,
Wind of the western sea—
The Beach Hotel gleamed yellow from every window as if it were posing for a picture postcard or where-to-spend-your-vacation pamphlet.
The dining room was cleared of its table-forming tables and its floor polished to a mirror.
Tropical palms, with skillfully dyed fronds and twisted half way up with braided cotton moss, huddled in a little jungle around the piano and violin accompaniment. Straight around the desert of room, chairs, backs to wall and legs crumpling, awaiting action as a stage library setting, discovered at the rise of curtain, awaits the entrance of the French maid in her four-dollar silk stockings to rick the furniture and the audience with a tiny feather duster and tinier French accent.
After a while the scratching of a

violin for its note and the one finger tum-m—tum-m on the piano; the light blather of voices rising to a swell. Unstylish women in shotted silk dresses with waist lines and decolleté which skirts and bodices cut high over bosoms that would have quivered under bareness. The invitational rhythm of waltz music and a pink-haired violinist swaying in the palm jungle. A couple glided out into the sahara of polished floor, another and yet another. Presently a bobbing throng, the women flushed with their primal love of the dance, the men in fast wilting collars and out of step. Mr. Prokes inserted a third handkerchief, bib fashion, inside his fainting collar and took Miss Fink in an antiquated embrace of the waltz. His hand, outstretched against her back, completely covered the area between the shoulder blades and lay heavily against his chin.
"Whew!"
"For the new grand master you ain't doing bad, Prokes—you've taken every man's wife of 'em around, ain't you?"
Mr. Prokes mopped at his face with a fourth handkerchief and writhed in his evening clothes as if he would fly their broadcloth.
"Yes, but it's almost over. The eleven o'clock song and the passing of the loving cup, and then I'm ready, sister, for what I been waitin' for all evening—guess."
"Can't!"
"The prettiest and sweetest little girl in the crowd and a little gray-colored name. I—I don't like it a bit, your da-cin around here with all these other fellows—you just wait till I'm off duty."
"What I think of these guys!"
"I ain't much on dancing myself, little sister, but I'm game—but watch me after the eleven o'clock song puts me off duty and I've started the lovin' cup around. You and me, sister, and the little gray shall. Ready now, one—two—three—ready—now—go!"
Miss Fink pinnetted skillfully around Mr. Prokes's heavy-footed ambler, a wood nymph matching her dainty place to her favorite Bruin of the forest.
"Good, Prokes—that was a swell

reverse. Say, there's a fortune for a dancing teacher out this way."
"One—two—three!"
"Ouch! Lemme try to guide. No, now start over again; just try to kinda keep your feet where mine ain't and you'll come out all right."
"One—two—"
"So—good—now you're all right. No, that was my fault. Reverse again—Ouch!"
"I—I give it up, sister."
"Where!"
"It just ain't right to ask a little fairy like you to steer me around. How'd you like to go out in a quiet corner of the veranda and cool off; it's ten minutes before the shoutin', and we can wait out where it's quiet."
"Yes, it is just in here, ain't it?"
Mr. Prokes breathed as if for a lung capacity test, inserted a fourth handkerchief into the limp rag of collar and held wide the screen door. A rush of air lifted his hair and dried the beads on his brow.
Light dresses and light voices drifted from black corners of the veranda and from the recesses of rocking chairs. A chain of Japanese lanterns

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stretched between two pillars, swung and flickered, and out above the cedars, standing darkly with their crowns against the sky, a lopsided moon with a swollen and inflamed face, invited them.
"Whew, this is more like it! Here's two chairs. There ain't no use talkin', I'm more at home on a lee field than a dance floor. I just ain't got the knack."
"Say, after that long-legged fellow from Wichita walked over my ankles and completely destroyed my instep, you seem like a toe dancer doing the Powder Puff."
"My, but you do look pretty to-night, Miss Fink."
"Aw!"
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"My, but you do look pretty to-night, Miss Fink."
"Aw!"

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ceded into the impressionistic mood of night, her pink chiffon scarf drooped from her shoulders like wings.
"Oh, dear!" she sighed twice, leaped backward and let her hands fall limp along the arms of her chair. Her slight trembled for a moment and died.
"What's the matter, little sister?"
"Nothing."
"Well, girly—is it all over but the shoutin', ain't it?"
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