

## IT IS DARK IN THE BUSH

(Continued from previous page)

AS George Murray went off to his work he reflected that Mrs. Marsden really liked the college girl. One wouldn't have thought her old Marsy's sort, either—too much on the highbrow side. But there was an unusual warmth when she spoke to Judith, and he had often caught her eyes following the girl about with a strange, contented glance. What a blessing she had taken to her—for John was the apple of her eye and it would have been a horrid complication if she had not liked his wife. On the whole, things were turning out very well.

Judith was busy at her handwork, surrounded by a sea of scraps of every shape and colour, when the two boys came in presently, followed by Ann. They flung themselves wearily into chairs.

"Now I see why man wasn't meant to go on all fours," said John.

"It's just that we've lost the knack," retorted his companion. "Look how good Nebuchadnezzar was at it."

"What on earth do you mean?" asked Ann.

"Just that we've crawled miles through that bush, looking for clues."

"But the police have been right over it, haven't they?"

"As far as anyone can go over ground like that. Anyway, had a little luck yesterday and that spurred us on—but no results to-day."

Ann was quite pale. "What did you find yesterday?"

"David spied it—nothing very much, but a foot mark that the police had missed. A very faint one on the track that leads through the bush."

"Which track?"

"The one over the hill that leads to the back of Langley's farm."

"You mean, the one from here?"

"Yes—from other places as well, if the people cut through here."

"But—but then that means that someone else was there. It's not—it's not my father's footmark, is it?"

"No. The only walking shoes he had with him had rubber soles and heels. Anyway, it was smaller than his—and the mark of an ordinary boot or shoe. It was pretty blurred."

Mrs. Marsden had come in and was listening closely. "Surely you showed it to Mr. Missen?" Missen was the capable young private detective engaged by the defending lawyers in the hope that he might pick up something overlooked by the police.

"Rather. It was he who said definitely that it wasn't Mr. Graham's. He's photographed it, of course, and showed it to the police and covered it all up, and so on."

"But that's splendid. If only you could find something more, something that would prove definitely that another man was there."

"That's what we're trying for. It's pretty maddening—so much ground to cover, and all that undergrowth. Anything might lie hidden there for weeks. And then all that rain complicates it more."

\* \* \*

IT sounded hopeless. Ann's face drooped and tears came into her eyes. David spoke quickly, "Ann, come out for a

ride. A change of posture's as good as a rest."

They went out and Mrs. Marsden said, "Well, if you won't think me selfish, I'll accept your offer, Miss Anson, and have my usual rest."

Looking up, Judith intercepted a quiet glance that passed from her to John. What was its significance? She bent her head more closely over her work.

"How your hair shines," said John suddenly. He learnt forward and touched the black coil lightly. The next moment he had caught her busy hand and said in a voice quite different from any she had heard him use, "Put that sewing away and listen to me."

"I can sew and listen."

For answer he hurled the mass of scraps unceremoniously on to the floor and told her all his love. If the language was deplorably slangy, it seemed to content Judith.

### CHAPTER XI.

IT was much later when Judith said remorsefully, "Oh, that quilt! And I promised to finish it. I must do it to-night."

"No such thing. You're coming out with me. There's a young moon."

"There's also the quilt—and an orphan clamouring for it somewhere. Anyway, I promised Mrs. Marsden."

"Oh, blow Mrs. Marsden. She won't mind."

"She will. I'm afraid she may mind me altogether."

"Why on earth?"

"Because she loves you a great deal—and I've taken you away."

"What rot! Marsy's not the possessive sort. She'll welcome you with open arms. Why not? She's never sentimental about anything—if I married a whole harem, it wouldn't make her turn out an inferior dinner."

"She'll hide it, of course. But you're the joint in her armour."

"What utter rot, my beloved idiot. Why, she's as old as the hills. You're not imagining she's jealous?"

"Oh, not in that silly, vulgar way, of course. But there are many kinds of love and many kinds of jealousy."

"Carry on, sweetheart. I love to hear you holding forth and laying down the law. That's one of the nicest things about you, Judith, you're a perfect infant about anything outside college books, but you think you're a female Solomon."

Judith laughed and blushed. John was horribly right. She was far too inclined to dogmatise about people and emotions, and, after all, she hadn't had much experience—yet. This was the first lesson that love was teaching Judith, and it was more valuable than her years of study and her B.A. degree.

"Still," she persisted, "she has every right to mind. She brought you up. You told me yourself that she was the only mother you had ever known."

"Rather. She's always been a brick to me and I'm awfully fond of her. Why, I can't imagine life without Marsy. She came here soon after my father brought me to live with my uncle. I was only a kid of five, you know."

"Did your father stay with you?"

"No. He had his job, you see—captain of a merchant vessel. Not that I minded his going. I was scared to death of him."

"Did you see much of him?"

"I had one voyage with him—and I never wanted another."

"Was he very strict?"

"Rather. Hard as nails. I always think he must have made my mother pretty wretched. Not that she lived very long after her marriage. I was only about two years old when she died."

(To be continued next week)



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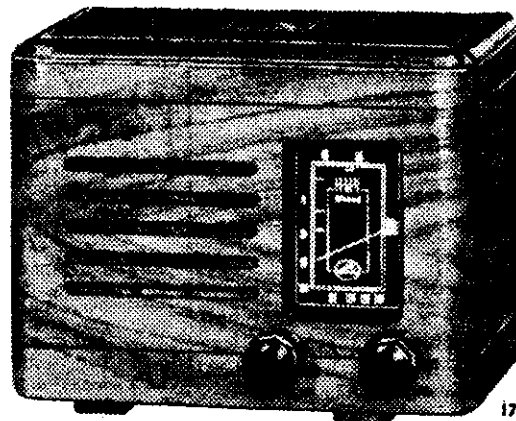
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