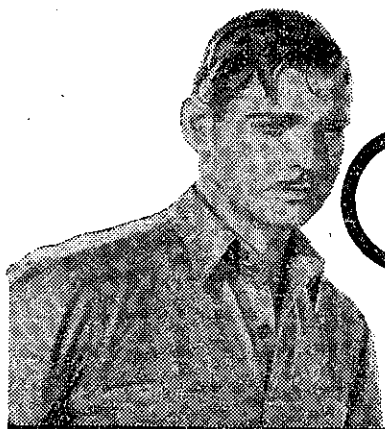




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FROM THE

METRO-GOLDWYN

MAYER PICTURE

by BEATRICE FABER



CHAPTER ONE.

Daughter of the Rich.

*Ah Love! could you and I with
Him conspire
To grasp this sorry Scheme of
Things Entire,
Would not we shatter it to bits
—and then
Re-mold it nearer to the Heart's
Desire!*

—Omar Khayyam.

Dazzling sunlight spread its widening rays over Hudson River. The water sparkled to the warm caress with a shimmering of jewel-like ripples that mirrored the brilliant blue of the sky.

Its calm placidity was suddenly disturbed however, as a speedboat, splitting the wide ribbon of river shot down from under the George Washington bridge and headed south like a bat out of hell.

At the wheel, riveting the eye, was a creature—not just a girl, but a glorious goddess—a cocktail of Youth and Beauty. Her reddish-brown hair whipped back in the wind. Eyes as blue as sapphires glowed with excitement as the boat sped along. The T-shirt and white slacks she wore revealed, rather than concealed the classical perfection of broad slim shoulders, swelling breast and long, slender legs.

Nearing 125th Street, the girl with a strong lift of her arms, cut the wheel and swerved across the bow of an oncoming ferry with a great arc, then continued the mad course onward. Laughing at the near-encounter, she turned to look back at the grizzled old Scot boatman sitting in the stern.

"I'll get one at Forty-second Street," she shouted over her shoulder, gleefully. "They're much bigger." On the boat went, weaving its wild-bullet course down through the 42nd Street area, in and around the harbour shipping, until, rounding the island's tip, it slowed up, and, at a much reduced speed was seen to head for one of the dock-sheds bearing the huge sign—Field Line, Inter-Americas Navigation Company. There, with almost a swagger, it proceeded to dock next a huge yacht.

The girl jumped gracefully out of the boat. "Thank you, Mag." She turned to the old Scot. "If we go again we'll play leap-frog with the 'Leviathan'."

His answer was a chuckle of delight as he touched his forelock. An elderly maid, holding a polo coat and silk

muffler, fluttered over to her. "I thought you'd drowned —" she began querulously.

"Amy — you're an old sissy." A few moments later she was at the private elevator of the Field building. Arriving at the 20th floor she could see, through the opaque glass of the outer door, the large office staff at work. An elderly efficient-looking secretary looked up at her in slow surprise. "Why—hello, Diane."

Diane offered her hand with a pleasant, engaging grin. "I haven't seen you for ages, Miss Robbins."

"N-no."

"Is he busy?" Diane nodded toward the door.

"I think it's all right to go in," Miss Robbins said a little hesitantly.

Diane smiled, then turned to the door marked Private — Richard Field. The familiar elegance of the room greeted her. It was always a source

of quiet pleasure to renew acquaintance with the pictures on the wall, most of them of Field Line vessels—to run her hand caressingly over the small ship model on the English antique cabinet.

Richard Field was talking into an ediphone, his back slightly to Diane as she approached his desk. Though nearing forty-eight—his hair almost entirely gray—he yet had the lean, well-knit body of a younger man. His face was finely cut and, powerful and decisive as he was by repute, his mouth betrayed his innate sensitiveness.

"—Yes," he was saying, "We've decided to start the Carribean on coastal out of Savannah. That will put the Southern Cross on the Rio-Buenos Aires run till next December. Then she'll join with the Amer-central for the West Indies cruise."

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He gathered her into his arms with a great hug saying, "And I keep asking myself how can an old man like —"