The Kitten In The Wolf’s Den

TOM WAGLE

You are beautiful aren’t you Jean? And you know it. You are dressing for tonight with precision unusual even for you. When you finish you will be lovely, won’t you Jean. Your clothes and make up will create the effect you are now building for. But there is one thing that bothers you through all your sureness. Where are your prospects Jean?

Oh, you have had your chances, but you are at least wondering. Maybe you are too particular Jean. Or maybe your idea of the perfect mate is somewhat exaggerated. Sure, maybe you should be particular—you have money, you are a college graduate, you travel, you can boast of being intelligent and beautiful—why you can even cook, can’t you Jean. Why not wait for the right man? Is that why you are looking forward to the party with all your controlled eagerness?

You know Steve Crandall will be at the party—the fabulous Steve—you have heard your friends mention him often. You are to be his date tonight. He is coming down from the city and as luck had it you were home on one of those rare occasions and was asked to fill in. He might be the man you want Jean. He might be different from all your others. You want a man that will slap you down and keep you down. You want a man you can’t dominate, don’t you Jean. Somehow you despise the weaklings who make love to you up to a certain point and then let you laugh in their faces. You want a man who will completely overpower your will. It sounds strange, but that is you, isn’t it Jean. It isn’t that you don’t know what sex is, you thoroughly enjoy it, but only that on the rare occasions you permit yourself the luxury, you are always the hunter—never the hunted. And from what you have heard about Steve Crandall...

You are late Steve. Surely when you invite yourself in on old friends you can be prompt; but that is part of your reckless charm, isn’t it Steve. You are the guest of honor—the moment they received your wire they arranged the party just for you. Old times you know Steve. They will have a girl for you, people always do. Why is it your friends throw attractive girls your way? You will settle down when you meet the right girl; but you wonder if you will ever meet her, don’t you Steve. Steve did you ever stop to think? It might be that you expect something you will never find. You have been looking quite a while you know. You want a girl who won’t play until she has a wedding ring on her finger—your wedding ring Steve. Look at you Steve—you are too attractive, too smooth. Do you really expect a woman to resist a man like you? You make a sport of love and you know it only too well. Do you make a pass only to test a girl? Is it for that hungery conceit of yours, or do you think that if you can’t seduce a girl no one can or has?

You drive on through the perfect summer night Steve. Your expensive convertible gives a burst of reckless speed—the speedometer says eighty—bounces up to ninety-three. But you have everything under your finger tip control, don’t you.

Better slow down now. Their house is just around the next curve. They always call on you when in the city—now you are here. You look forward with a strange enthusiasm to the evening ahead. This girl might be the one . . . .

Well she is worth the drive isn’t she Steve. Her name is Jean something-or-
Steve Crandall will be quite a catch. And you can catch him. Besides this might be love—wouldn’t that be something.

Steve wants to take a drive, does he Jean. Well, that suits you doesn’t it. Your starry eyes will blend in perfectly with the starry night. Maybe you had better stay here. No, that wouldn’t be you. Besides it seems fate meant for you and Steve to ride through the night.

You drive and drive, not saying a word, but that’s all right, you both understand the silence. You both feel the mounting excitement when you finally stop on the hill overlooking the lake. Neither of you ever saw the moon like this before, did you. Its shimmering image in a path of roses across the shining surface, isn’t it.

Have you forgotten Steve? Have you forgotten the thoughts you had only a while ago? Or is it reflex action when you take her hand that particular way? Think Steve. This girl might mean something to you. How can you make love to her from sheer habit?

And Jean, remember dancing on the veranda? Your games are starting again Jean.

This is Steve, Jean. Steve this is Jean. You both had vague thoughts of destiny just a few minutes ago. How can you cheapen it with your stale patterns? But she comes to your arms Steve—your expert arms.

Your lips insist, Steve, and hers are willing. This is something new even for you, isn’t it Jean. Put out that fire Jean. You have so many times. One more kiss—you want just one more kiss, don’t you Jean. Then you will put exciting Mr. Crandall in his place—the same easy way you put all lustful men in their place, eh Jean.

This witch tantalizes you, doesn’t she Steve. She’s bothered too Steve. She’s trying to push you away. Look in her eyes.
No, she doesn't want you away. Her arms might feebly push, but they cling more. Her voice might plead one thing, but you hear another. You have heard many voices like that, haven't you Steve.

Steve Crandall has lived up to all your ideals, hasn't he Jean. You suspected that he might be the one when you met him only a few hours ago—now you are certain. He is stronger than you isn't he Jean. This is the man you want to marry. Judged by your own pattern, Jean, this is the man you want. You have never met a man you couldn't have; but this is the first man you have ever wanted, isn't that right Jean. There is a new look on your face—the look of one who has waited and searched and, at last, found. You feel like a kitten, don't you Jean. Steve Crandall has tied a pink ribbon around your neck. You close your eyes Jean. Are you reliving your delicious defeat or are you planning a future for you and Steve?

And Steve—are you disappointed? You have just accomplished what many have tried—you should be proud or don't you feel like gloating at your latest conquest? Are you shocked Steve? Does it suddenly seem you have destroyed your own ideal? She begged you, she pleaded for the first time in her life; but you wouldn't know about that, would you. Well, Steve, you can always tell yourself that she come close to being your kind of woman. It was easy though, wasn't it.

Make a mental note Steve. Get her phone number and name—put a circle around it in your little black book.

VOYAGE

When the last sure sight of land is gone,
The ship rides in the ever changing point
Of an inverted blue crepe coolie's hat.
Where sky and water meet,
The horizon ring rocks the strong to sleep
And lures the weak to the rail.
The vessel is an isolated bobbing world
Peopled only by gamblers and philosophers.
The gamblers hope to discover
For whom the dice roll,
And the philosopher knows
They roll for him as well as you.
And win or lose,
We lose the day and gain the year,
Though nothing seems too dear a price to pay
To gain the year and yet to save the day.

GEORGE FULLEN

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