

# Dahling

By John R. Thomson

## I

"I never saw it to fail. Every time we go out, you see Addison Carter and have to run over and lick his hand. I just can't understand why you tag after him like Mary's lamb. Listen, Harry, if he were going to throw any business your way, he would have wound up for the pitch by now. Without too much reflective thought, I can rather easily recall that the only gift he has bestowed upon you was the flu at the lake in 1945.

"Delving deeper into my store of unpleasant memories, it was by Addison's averseness to normal health on that occasion that I was forced to spend a horribly delightful week with that Juno he calls his wife. Believe me, Harry, that's one woman I could learn to dislike without too much tutoring. She's always crawling around the club like she's forgotten where she buried her bone. Last week, I felt my hopes for a happy life on earth were realized when she backed into the pool while snapping a picture of that radio-active infant of hers. I'll never forget the look she had on one of her faces.

"Speaking of their child, I respectfully submit that that boy offers indisputable evidence that evolution has witnessed a serious setback. Honestly, Harry, you'd think that in the course of human events someone would detect his delinquent potential and cut his hair. At least we haven't developed a passion for untidiness in Doug like the Carters have in that pitiful wretch, Charles. I guess it's not the boy's fault. No wonder the Carters have an unripened Dillinger in their own home, the way they coddle him. Just think, every time that child frowns, toy stock goes up four.

"If Mabelle Carter would spend more time at home with her boy, she wouldn't have time to plan major offensives against every man she sees. You'd think Addison would see how she throws herself, that is to be taken literally, at any man of the attractive variety. Madge Hollet and I nearly injured our vital organs laughing at the lecture the other night. Mabelle Carter did every thing but con-tortions trying to attract that poor speaker's attention. He was nice looking but was old enough to be Mabelle's brother. Well, when the question period arrived, I thought a crawling beast had bitten Mabelle, the way she shot up her hand. Dr. Gantz ignored her at first but finally called on her when he realized that her arm was rapidly developing a cramp.

"Dr. Gantz, in view of your lecture, do you agree, then, that the intent is as bad as the crime?" she screamed. At that, Madge nudged me where it hurt and whispered, 'If it were, Mabelle would be raking in a fortune delivering travelogues on hell.' Doesn't that sound like Madge Hollet, Harry? She's one gal who plays it smart and keeps her tongue as sharp as her nails. It's rather unfortunate and untimely, though, that she utilizes both every time she has two Stingers. I adore Madge just the same. She's the only girl I can rely on to keep her mouth shut.

"Really, Harry, it's beyond me why you trail after Addison like Mary's lamb. Pure logic would clue you—Oh ratz, exit pleasant evening; he's taking his hand off of her long enough to wave for us to come over. Smile for me, dear. I'm too frustrated trying to conceal my enthusiasm. Wait till I finish this drink. It most certainly will be my last one for the evening if he pays the check."

## II

"Oh for heaven's sake, Addison, take your hand out of the stratosphere. They've seen you, and you know they'll ignite the carpet getting over here just to get a free drink. For the short life of me, dear, I can't see why you paw over Harry Matheson every time he comes within range. What the devil can he do for you but clear a path? Do you realize they've never asked us over to their house? Oh well, I've never had cancer either. Wouldn't you know Christine would finish her forty cent drink before setting out to bore us for the rest of the evening.

"Where do you suppose Harry ever met Christine, dear? I bet a cut glass wash rag he came across her in a bruised apple. Madge Hollet says that the only thing Christine has to offer Harry is complete and final mental relaxation. That sure sounds like Madge doesn't it, Addison? She's a doll. You know, she's the only girl in our crowd that I can really trust.

"In what river do you suppose the Mathesons deposited their abnormal offspring this evening? We've seen nature's wonders, Addison, but I'd gladly forfeit a nominal fee to see that child in action in his natural habitat. I can't see why the Mathesons don't make a fortune by renting that boy out as source material for research papers on birth control. How long do you think it will take him to develop into an individual as homely as his father? He surely has all the raw materials. We might not have the Matheson's money, dear, but we have a lot to be thankful for in having Charles. At least Charles hasn't an inherent aversion for soap and water.

Really, someone ought to put that child out of my misery. Just the other day Madge said — Oh oh, you'd better be quiet, Addison. They've spotted your flare and are coming over the top with all their thirst. Honestly, Addison, I simply can't understand why you fall over Harry Matheson every time . . . ."

"Christine, dahhhllinnng! Where did you find that handsome man? Here, sit next to me—have I got a piece of dirt for you! I happened to catch a glance of Madge Hollet downtown this morning, and whom do you think she was with dahling? . . . ."

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## Reunion

by George Fullen

Martin stood on the sidewalk outside Grand Central Station and embraced the overpowering size, the magnificence of New York City once again. It had been several years since he had stood, for the first time, on that same Forty-third Street pavement and felt the same awe before the spectacular accomplishments of modern civilization. Despite his great hurry, the man had had to pause, as before, to absorb the miracle of America as represented by its greatest city. But this time he was not so much impressed and did not stand so long. He picked up his bag, again, and got into the nearest taxi.

"The Peter Stuyvesant," he told the driver.

He could not escape the sentimental memories recalled by the New York scene. There, close to Grand Central, was the Child's restaurant where, so often, he had eaten dinner just after arriving in New York on a week-end pass. And then the cab was in Times Square which Martin remembered as being crowded for a New Year's Eve celebration every Saturday night during the war. Too late, he looked to see if the Stage Door Canteen were still functioning. Broadway was familiar names of theaters and bars flashing past. Once on Central Park West, he turned to see the line of plushy hotels along the South Drive which had always been one of his favorite views in New York. Then he settled back and counted the streets as the cab crossed them.

He was tense with the kind of controlled excitement that he had not known for several years. To see the Ziffers again—Martha and Ivan! Here! In the United States! In New York City! They had been so certain that all hopes of their ever meeting again were foolish when they had parted in Casablanca.