

Daisy

Arnold H. Balk

Daisy was a very earnest worker. To Mrs. Dreger, who was out of the house most of the day, all that mattered was that Daisy seemed to get on with the baby, and so all was well with the world.

Daisy was nineteen years old and had never done this sort of work before. She said she wanted to do it because she was interested in nursing and had served as an aide during the war in one of the local hospitals. She was not an attractive girl. That is, she wasn't the type to draw whistles from drug store casanovas. She was of average height and bony frame. She had an olive complexion and green eyes overshadowed by unusually thick brows. Her hair was dark brown and slightly kinky in texture. However, she had a beau; and a very jealous one too. Whenever the boy friend, whose name was Albert, came to help Daisy with the evening dishes, both Mr. and Mrs. Dreger were forced to hear his declarations of undying loyalty to her over and over until taking in a movie was suggested by Mr. Dreger to his spouse, who was always in complete agreement.

It wasn't surprising to see that Daisy was loved. One may observe this phenomenon on the street any day of the week and wonder at how such pairs as these find attraction in one another. Daisy had no visible attraction. She had a husky voice which many regard as a sexy type, but this was marred by her unashamed abuse of the English language. Her speech was that of the typical New York shop

girl or stenographer. Albert, whose frame was in extreme contrast to Daisy's from pushing crates about in a warehouse during the day, was just a few tones huskier in voice but, phonetically speaking, her equal in every way.

The weeks went by and all went as well as could be expected. Daisy fed the baby on time, cleaned the house, and cooked supper for the Dreger, when they dined in.

Then the Christmas season arrived, and Peter, their eldest son, came home. He was introduced to Daisy and advised how to handle her, especially in regard to Albert. Mr. Dreger knew his son very well. Peter had better taste than to pursue Daisy, Mr. Dreger was sure, but Daisy's reaction to Peter was another thing. When she was first introduced to him, her green eyes fairly bulged and she seemed unusually grammatical in her speech. Albert would no doubt check up now and then, in the afternoons, and so the only thing to do was keep Peter out of the house during those hours.

Peter was obstinate at first. He explained that he had a lot of homework to do and he needed the afternoons to do it in. His nights would be devoted to nothing but social activities. He suggested throwing out Daisy and thereby ridding the house of Albert. He went on to say that if he couldn't enjoy his home, a small one at that, then he might as well go back to school. He didn't come home to hang around the corner drug store every afternoon for four or five hours. The only solution he could find to the problem was to find someone older, preferably in the neighborhood of seventy, of extraordinary ugliness and completely devoid of sexual attraction to muscle-bound crate-pushers. He was highly insulted that anyone would think his taste so poor that he would woo Daisy of the green eyes and practically same colored skin.

Daisy, on the other hand, felt quite differently about Peter. He was becoming more and more attractive to her every day. The girl's mind, inspired by movie magazines and novels in which the heroine rises from despondency to fame and fortune, finally saw the possibility of the realization of her dreams.

Mr. and Mrs. Dreger, unable to dissuade their son from remaining in Albert's sight, saw their fears begin to materialize in Daisy's more than necessary attentions to Peter, who, however, went about his occupation in open rebuff to her. She would often bring the baby into the living room where Peter was studying. Another habit of Daisy's was trying to engage Peter in conversation while he studied. The subjects she chose for discussion ran from lurid medical cases she had witnessed to boys she had dated, the last of which Peter had trouble in distinguishing from the first. She was always sure to let him

know that she was very particular about what company she kept and assured him that there was nothing permanent in her relationship with Albert.

Peter soon saw the wisdom of her father's words and moved his studies downtown to the public library. He did not do this through fear of Albert, but through a craving for peace. He could not bear Daisy's interminable patter any longer.

It was at this time that Albert began visiting Daisy in the afternoon. He had been suspicious ever since he heard of Peter's arrival. Now, in the second week of Peter's stay, Albert decided to check up. He knew about those rich men's sons and how they take advantage of any pretty girl hired as a maid in their homes. He wasn't going to let his fair Daisy be victimized by this college playboy. What Albert found on three consecutive occasions was a despondent and irritable Daisy who would give no reason for her condition.

Saturday night, the eve of Peter's departure, came, and the Dreger family were dining at home. Everyone was filled with anticipation of something pleasant to come. Peter was leaving the next day, and soon everything would return to normal. No one was more anxious for the morning to come than Peter. He was very warm to Daisy now. He thanked her for each helping she offered him and in general gave off a very amiable air.

Daisy went back into the kitchen and did not return until it was time for dessert. She then came in with the pudding and put a dish of it before Mrs. Dreger and then one in front of Mr. Dreger.

When she came to Peter she hesitated for a minute. Then, holding firmly onto the bowl, she dashed the contents into his face. Mrs. Dreger screamed. Peter arose instantly from the table, and face bespattered with brownish ooze, reached for Daisy. She evaded his grasp and proceeded to scratch and slap blindly. Mr. Dreger, who had slipped up from behind, finally pinned her against the wall and held her until she became calm. He then released her, and, without saying a word, she walked out into the kitchen, put on her coat, and left the house.

"Here, let me wipe the pudding off your face," said Mrs. Dreger, distractedly, as she picked up a napkin from the table.

"That's all right, Mother, I'll go into the bathroom and wash it off."

All the tension of the preceding two weeks had finally come to a head, exploded, and evaporated. They now sat in the living room and all was silent.

Then the baby began to cry.