

## Proving a Point

Betty Winn Fuller

I DON'T know how the discussion got started. The four of us, Janice and Tom—Janice is my roommate—and Jim and I, were out at the wine cellar one Saturday night. We hadn't had anything special to do, so we'd just gone to a movie and then out there. We sat around for a couple of hours drinking a bottle of wine and eating liederkrantz cheese and crackers. When we started talking about the things that make a girl popular, either Janice or I, I don't remember which, advanced our favorite theory, and the boys thought it was the most ridiculous thing they'd ever heard. Naturally they would think it was ridiculous, we told them—they were men. You see, our theory of what makes a girl popular is this. All she needs is a big buildup. Give a girl the illusion of popularity and pretty soon it will be a fact, because men are really sheep about such things. When word gets around that all the men are anxious to date one particular girl, they break their necks to get on the bandwagon. You can see why Tom and Jim didn't go for our theory. They didn't believe it, and even if they had, they would have died rather than admit it.

When we got back to the sorority house that night, after a very heated discussion, I had a brainstorm. "Janice, why don't we prove our point to them? Remember that new girl we pledged last week, that transfer student from some small town. She's not known on campus yet."

Janice was incredulous. "You mean that little washedout blonde with the chubby face? Oh, come now, let's not go overboard."

"Wait a minute, she's not so bad. She's no beauty, of course, but she has possibilities. She is awfully quiet and shy, but I think we could do it, Janice. I really do. And what could better prove our point. If we put *her* over, the boys would have to admit we were right."

We finally decided to give it a try, and we could hardly wait for morning, so we could get Barbara alone and present the idea to her, in a tactful way, of course. Well, the poor kid was almost embarrassingly grateful. It seemed that, in a way, we were already her ideals. She had been looking through the sorority scrapbooks a couple of days before and had come across a lot of clippings about the two of us being elected queen of this and sweetheart of that. Then, too, the girls had been telling her a lot of tales about our phenomenal popularity, and how many hearts we'd broken when we'd both been

pinned about a month before. This had really made a big impression on her, so she was ready to listen to any advice we had to give her, having already catalogued us as the greatest experts she knew on the subject of attracting men.

We started on our little experiment that very afternoon. Janice was a whiz with the scissors, so she went to work on Barbara's hair. She gave her one of those cute gamin cuts that made her face look thinner. Then we got rid of the faded pink lipstick she was wearing and tried some of my more vivid shades. The next point was to check her entire wardrobe which, fortunately, was good if not startling. With the addition of a few bright scarves, a couple of wide belts, and some jewelry we were able to lend her, she was all set in the clothes department. She was still no raving beauty, but then neither was Cleopatra, I'm told.

The next day we really started on our campaign. Even though Janice and I were both out of circulation now, we hadn't been out long enough for the other boys to quit trying, in hopes that we might find that our pinnings were a big mistake. Then too, we were both wearing pins of different fraternities, which gave us twice the number of men to mingle with in a casual way. It took just a few remarks whispered confidentially in the right ears to get the ball rolling. To say that the word spread like wildfire was understating it. Not two days had passed before it was out of our hands. All we had to do was just sit back, relax, and watch the rumors grow. Then things started to happen. The men were begging us to introduce them to the new glamour girl, or better still, to get them a date. Most of them had never even seen her. We'd been keeping her under cover in order to heighten the effect, and here they were already begging for dates, which went a long way toward proving our point before we'd even started. Well, anyway, to each of the inquiries we gave the same non-committal answers. We'd see what we could do, but she was pretty well dated up for now.

After the week was out, we figured things were at a feverish enough peak to bring forth our prize. We came into the grill with her one day during lunch hour, and, honestly, I could hardly believe it myself. Within a half hour that girl was surrounded by a flock of the most eligible males on campus. She hardly said two words, just smiled and listened attentively, as we'd instructed her to do, but from the looks on their faces, you'd have thought she was handing out the wittiest repartee that had ever been heard on that campus. By the time the one o'clock bell rang, she was dated up for a month.

Of course the big test would come when we saw how she held up in performance. The stage had been set, but could she hold her audience? The next few weeks even I was amazed. It was like starting a tiny snowball down a big hill and then standing there wondering if that huge ball careening downward was the same one you'd held in your hands just a few minutes before. That girl positively blossomed under our very eyes. It didn't take her long to



achieve that poise and charm of manner that so many people mistakenly believe is the reason for a girl's popularity with men, but which I've always contended is the direct result of it. Anyway, Barbara had it, and Janice and I felt pretty smug about the whole thing. The only thing that irked us a little was Barbara herself. Within a matter of weeks, she seemed to have forgotten all that had transpired before and accepted her success as her just due. The only time we saw her now was between dates, and she never referred to what we had done for her. Sometimes I think she actually had come to believe those tales about what a terrific girl she was and how popular she had been at the small town she hailed from—tales that Janice and I had concocted out of thin air and had planted around where they would do the most good. Oh well, you can't blame the girl too much. After all, this was her first taste of male adoration, and even the most blasé of us are likely to let it go to our heads once in a while. Her attitude was a bit wearying, however, and we were glad the whole thing was out of our hands now.

We still hadn't let Tom and Jim in on our little experiment though. We wanted them to be thoroughly taken in before we came forth with the "I told you so." That this was a mistake I discovered the night I came in to find Janice weeping bitter tears into her pillow.

"You and your bright ideas!" she stormed at me. "Do you know what your precious little prodigy did to me tonight?"

Of course I couldn't imagine, but I soon found out, in a somewhat disconnected and highly hysterical manner. It seems that Barbara and her date had doubled with Janice and Tom that night. They had gone to a beer party, and after Tom had had a few too many beers, Janice had found him in the other room kissing Barbara. Well, it's kind of hard to comfort anyone who has just given back a fraternity pin and had it accepted almost with enthusiasm, but I did my best. I agreed with all of Janice's bitter talk about snakes in the grass. Her favorite expression was "and after all we've done for her."

Of course, it was a mean trick, and Barbara should have had better sense, but, personally I've always felt that if a girl doesn't know how to hold her man, then he should be open game for anyone who wants to try the field. And Janice never had been too smart in her handling of Tom. Naturally, I kept these observations to myself. They didn't seem very appropriate in her present state of mind.

In view of these latest developments, however, I thought it prudent to tell Jim of our little trick at the earliest possible moment. As it turned out though, I didn't have the opportunity. On our next date, Jim hemmed and hawed and [took me completely by surprise] with a lot of beating around the bush about his having three years of law school after he graduated in June, and how unfair it was to ask me to wait for him all that time. Of course I got the point immediately, and offered his pin back before he could get around to asking for it. Naturally, in such a moment I didn't even remember to tell him about Barbara. It didn't matter now. That is, I thought it didn't matter,

until I found out who his date was the next Saturday night. Sure, you've guessed it—Barbara. Honestly, it just seems like some people have no gratitude!

Well anyway, Janice and I are both back in circulation again, but our greatest competition comes from a certain little blonde freshman with a gamin haircut and a bright shade of lipstick. She's already been elected Freshman Queen and Sweetheart of Sigma Chi, and seems destined to surpass the records of both Janice and me combined. And here we are, the two of us, holding the secret of her success, and we can't tell a living soul. It would sound like sour grapes—and who would believe it anyway? Janice hardly speaks to me anymore without some sneering reference to *my* prodigee. You'd think she didn't have a thing to do with it to hear her talk.

And to top it all off, Barbara never has returned my red silk scarf, the one I loaned her to brighten up her black wool dress.

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## Requiem

Claire Libbert

HE SAT slumped against the pillows of his bed in the upstairs room, a mere shell of a man, regarding the wall with unseeing eyes. His face had the blank look of a house whose people have gone on vacation and left it alone and lifeless. The appearance of the shell was ordinary; a white fringe of hair hugged the skull, heavy brows crouched at the base of the high forehead. The mouth, surrounded by laughing lines, was now relaxed and expressionless. His body, once strong and virile, had become weak and useless with age. Beneath this passive surface lay the mind of Joseph Moon, turning over and over within itself the life of the past. He could remember clearly sights, smells, bits of conversation. In his thoughts his mother called him to taste the warm bread, fresh from the oven—his mother changed, and it was his young wife Celia who called him. The woman changed again, and it was his son's wife who called. So many memories filled his mind that the earlier happenings had a tendency to crowd the recent ones out of existence. Scenes of his boyhood confronted him with startling clarity; but he could not seem to grasp the events of yesterday.

Voices penetrated the silence from the floor below, rising and falling in a symphony of anger, baritone mingling with the falsetto piping of an off-key flute. No flicker of awareness crossed Joseph's face. His mind raced on, pursuing the past.

Down in the kitchen David's deep voice was husky with anger as he turned to face his wife. "Kate, at least have the decency to talk softly. Dad might hear you!"

"I don't care, David! I just don't care anymore! I can't stand