

choice

the answer to "the lady or the tiger"

by richard lower

He stood alone in the great arena, tall and slender. Thoughts coursed through his head like little shocks of electricity. Then he walked forward and without hesitation opened the door on the left. Silence, then a mighty roar burst from the assembled crowd. The youth stood dazed. He could not believe that the princess would play such a trick on him. Anger flared within him. So she had meant for him to die. His gesture, which was to be magnificent, now dropped, sadly unappreciated.

He led forth from the cage which he had just opened a beautiful maiden. He had been spared a horrible death at the teeth of the tiger.

The former lover of the princess was married according to the customs of the country. He took his pretty bride to his home where life began for them.

"John, dear," Penelope said to her husband one day, "why don't we ever go out of an evening? We always sit at home while you read the newspaper and smoke your old pipe. You do think more of them than you do of me."

And so they began to go out evenings.

One day John came home from work and found his wife crying.

"Oh John, I'm the only woman in the whole neighborhood who has to do her own washing. My beautiful hands are ruined."

So they had a wash woman.

"John, dear, I need some new clothes. I have nothing to wear to my bridge club." And so Penelope had some new clothes.

"John dear, why don't you get

yourself a suit of clothes like Mr. Smith? I think he looks so nice.

"John, you know Mr. Fairchild doesn't smoke his pipe in the house?"

So John went out of evenings to smoke his pipe.

"John, why don't you stay at home in the evenings? No other husband leaves his wife alone as much as you do."

One night John didn't go home at all. The next day he still didn't show up. His wife became worried. She called the police. They asked her to come down and identify a man there at the station.

In a padded cell was a man sitting on the floor tearing his hair. His only words were: "The right door, the right door."

tea

by

martha rose scott

"I shall move this green figure back on the table," said Mrs. Raymond, "so that it will not be harmed in the crowd. Perhaps this end table will be in the way. There—I shall push it close back against the little settee. How the old brass tray on the mantle shines in the sunlight that streaks across it and plays upon the slender green bottle beside it! Everything is in readiness—my house and I stand wanting to receive the first guests. The brass knocker falls against the door. I must open my house to them.

They will lift their long skirts and drift up the steps in whispering groups. They will exclaim over my gay silk quilts and ask me to tell them how old my writing desk is. Yes, I shall let them in. One after the other the ladies enter. I hear them laughing softly as they go upstairs. Their yellow and blue gowns ascend and descend the steps. They are assembling in the drawing room. Madame Cheritz begins to sing and play for us; Elizabeth Boswell is to read.

"Oh! There is the quick jangle of crystal—my French chandelier! I go at once—Broken?—No, no, Mrs. Conway, it is quite all right.—Yes it can be fixed. She must not know that I care. I shall tell her how I once carelessly brushed off four pendants (but not how I cried). There is music again—tea-time atmosphere—soft carpets, slender-legged chairs, ladies murmuring about my new painting—a fine purchase—appraised at ever so much more than we paid for it, including the cost of cleaning and retouching the canvas—the gilt frame, heavy and scrolled—such a prize!

"Oh! There—Madame Cheritz is trembling on the final crescendo. How deep and ringing is the tone of the piano! I must find a rich Paisley to throw over it. Now—now the ladies are sweeping into the dining room. Mrs. Jay will pour from my old silver teapot. You will have sugar, Mrs. Laird? Yes, Mrs. King, the candlesticks are very old, Sheffield pattern, you know. Yes, they are exquisite. Everything is in harmony, the blue and buff walls, yellow candles and yellow flowers. The ladies swish their silk skirts around the polished table and chat softly over their thin tea cups. More cakes, Nettie, please. Tea, Mrs. Lough?

"Now they are swaying up the long stairway. Mrs. King looks back over her shoulder at the great grandfather clock that stands in the hall. It is my oldest piece.

"Yes, I am so glad, Mrs. Chenoweth,

that you enjoyed it. Yes, Mrs. Ray, thank you so much. —One by one the guests trail down the carpeted steps—The ladies have gone now. The last white glove has been drawn through my finger tips, and the sound of the heavy door closing is resounding through the quieted room. Once more my house and I are alone, and I am folded in the gray curtains of its peace—Let me replace this spray of jasmine in the low rookwood bowl."

manthy

by

mary elizabeth search

Into the stairway which led down from the side-walk to a dirty-gray frame structure turned two women detectives. "I'd like to see Manthy Cooper's room," requested Mrs. Shaeffer, the eldest woman, as a large burly negro man clouded the doorway. They stepped into a black dingy room cluttered with used furniture and followed the negro as he cleared a path. He led them up a few steps, and into a large bare room whose walls had been covered with newspapers. Several corners had come loose, and the draft caused these to flap and rustle. An old straw mattress thrown in one corner was the room's only furnishing. "But I wanted to see Manthy's room."

"This is Manthy's room."

"What does she do with the things she steals?" inquired the detective.

"Trades 'em at Oathie's for liquor."

As the two women stepped upon the sidewalk, a large, flabby fat, negro woman dressed in a blue calico dress with an old black cloth cape thrown over her shoulders stopped and waited for them. She turned as they approached her, and walked down the street between them.