



DEVIL-MAY-CARE

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Second Instalment

Synopsis

What Happened Before

At a party in Palm Beach given by Mr. Cooper Clary, Lesson, an attorney, meets Lucy Harkness, known as Devil-May-Care because of her adventurous, eventful life. In a game in which partners for the evening are chosen, Lucy is won by Tim Stevens, who has a great reputation as a successful heart-breaker. Lesson is a bit jealous. Tim Stevens tells Lucy they are going aboard his boat, the *Minerva*, and she accedes in order not to be "a quitter." Asked if she is sorry that he won her company, Lucy says she is not and that evidently Fate has arranged it. Tim then persuades her to stop looking regretfully after Lesson.

Now Go On With the Story

"Regretfully? I've never regretted anything, Tim. I do . . . whatever I do . . . because . . . it was ordained. Am I able to deflect the course of the universe? Then how can I deflect myself? I'm a projectile, Tim, aimed by some force at some remote target."

"Remote? Maybe not. Perhaps I'm the target, Lucy," he suggested.

She pursed her mouth.

"I hardly think so, Tim."

"Why not?" he demanded.

"I'm too good for you," she told him.

"Are you, by any chance, joking?" he inquired.

"Certainly not."

"Then you're just being rude?"

"Truthful is a prettier word."

"Too good for me, eh?" he mused.

"Well, good is a strange word. It's capable of a lot of translations. Too good for me? How about Lesson? Not too good for him?"

"Why harp on him? I'd never met him until to-night," she said.

The *Minerva* was one of the finest boats of its kind in Southern waters, and often though she'd seen the craft, Lucy Harkness gave a little nod of approbation to-night. The polished woodwork reflected the stars; the chairs cushioned wicker, gleamed spotlessly white; the fittings of the small boats shone; the canopy aft looked, in this silver light, as though made of colored damask. And upon the table laid for two the *Minerva's* steward had expended not merely time but taste.

"I always like you better when I come aboard the *Minerva*, Tim," she said.

"So?" His voice was sullen.

"I think the *Minerva*, so clean and sweet, is your soul—when you were a tiny baby."

"How long have you been teaching Sunday-school?" he demanded.

She laughed.

"Fair enough! It isn't fair to reproach you about the present condition of your soul, is it, Tim? Not while my own is in the condition it is. Well, I won't lecture you or abuse you any more to-night."

"You'll be nice?" he asked, again eager.

"As nice as possible. You won the race, didn't you?"

"And you didn't really mind my fouling? You wanted me to win?" he demanded.

"I'm twenty-three, Tim. Old enough to realize that what we want we may not have; what we get has been determined aeons ago. You've got me, for supper here. I've got you. Well, let's make the best of it."

"It could be a lovely best," he insinuated.

She shrugged.

"Maybe. I don't know. Fate hasn't taken me that far into her confidence."

"Could I show you?" he inquired.

"You mean . . . make love to me?"

She shook her head. "Fate has read me no riddles, Tim, but that . . . I don't need her assistance. Love can only be made when two engage in the pretty pastime. And I . . . shall never engage in that little game with you."

"Sure?"

She stared at him, taking no warning from his eagerness.

"Pos-o-lute, old thing." She straightened up in her chair. "Come on; let's drop nonsense. I said I'd be as nice as possible. But 'possible' ends at talk of flirtation and long before flirtation begins. Here, what's this?"

She leaped to her feet. The *Minerva's* lines had been cast off, and the propeller had begun to move. She ran to the low rail and stood poised upon it for a moment. But the stone pier was already twenty feet away.

"Well, for the love of Mike!" ejaculated Stevens. "Any one would think you thought I was about to kidnap you. Any objection to a spin down the lake, to give us an appetite for supper?"

"Well, if we can leave Casa Clary at all, without offending our hostess, I don't suppose it much matters where we go."

"It looked as though you were afraid of me," stated Stevens.

"Desire must have had something to do with what it looked like, then," she retorted. "You like women to be afraid of you, don't you, Tim?"

"I don't get you," he told her.

"The very devil of it is . . . you do get me . . . always. Isn't that true? I see through you so completely that . . . instead of being feared . . . you're a little bit afraid of me: eh, Tim?"

"Little Miss Hate-Herself—that's you, isn't it?" he jeered.

"You can't accuse me of vanity because I state that I can see through you, Tim. Most women can, and do. They don't tell you so, because you have money."

"I won't agree with you," he said.

"But if you can see through me, then you must know how much I . . . love

you."

"That's what offends me," she replied.

"Offends? Is love offensive?"

"Your kind. From a man like you . . . of course it's offensive."

"Oh, by God! that's carrying it a bit too far! Just a bit too raw, Lucy!" he cried.

"I don't mind it up to a certain point, but when you indicate that I'm unclean, filthy—"

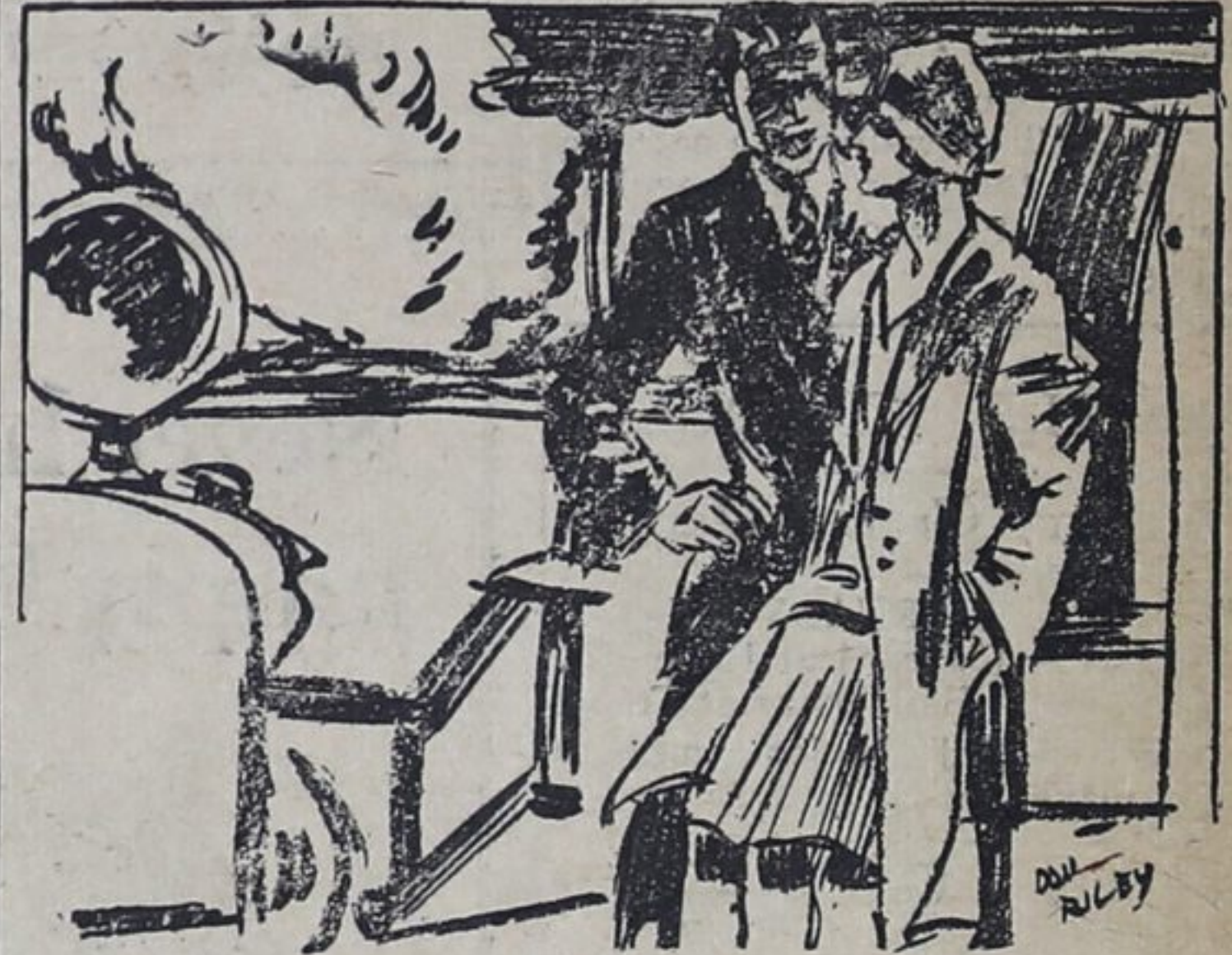
"You are—"

"Then why, in God's name, come out here with me to-night?" he cried.

"Because when I enter a game I play it. Pity you can't say as much, Tim."

and make it stick there," he cried.

"Where you're concerned I just teetotally don't give a damn! I always thought that men who went blah over one particular woman were weak-kneed soft-heads. But I've changed my mind. You . . . you . . . oh, I can't make it clear, but you . . . obscure the sun for me, Lucy. There's a cloud always before me, and if I turn my head to look the other way, the cloud is still there. It's you, you all the time, everywhere. If some one speaks to me it's your voice I hear. A girl dances in the theater and it's Lucy Harkness that I'm watching. The sun sets over Lake Worth and



"I think the *Minerva*, so clean and sweet, is your soul—when you were a tiny baby."

"How do you know I can't? How do you know . . . when I play a game, I don't . . . play it . . . all the way?" he demanded.

She laughed contemptuously.

"With women, you mean? But of course you mean that. It's the only game you know. But . . . you've never played it with my kind of woman, because my kind don't play with you."

"You're one that's going to," he said flatly.

"Think so?" She shook her head again. "This is Mrs. Clary's game we're playing. The other game . . . I didn't enter."

"You didn't know you'd entered it," he contradicted, "but you have. You're here, aboard the *Minerva*. You'll leave the *Minerva* when I'm damned good and ready to let you leave; not before. Now, do you play my game?"

Her eyes were dreamy; her sweet mouth drooped pensively.

"If Fate intended, yes. But Fate has been so very kind to me, thus far, that I cannot believe it intends me any such trick as playing such a game with you. Tim, I've come out with you. Let's go back."

"Not," he told her, "until you've learned a little more of fate."

"Abduction went out with hoop-skirts," she said.

"It's come in again," he remarked grimly.

She remembered Modane, the *Minerva's* skipper. A rat-faced man, of inexact ancestry, a touch of the Levantine in his hooked nose. The men were ordinary sailors, and the domestic staff, so to speak, were Japs. No help from the latter would be forthcoming; it was not for them to interfere in the actions of the barbarians who employed them. The white sailors were crude, stupid men; and Modane was his master's man.

Wariness owned her; this situation, absurdly impossible though it might seem later when she narrated it, was definitely dangerous now. The extent of its danger depended entirely on the degree of madness which possessed Stevens.

"And it all leads to . . . what?" she asked.

"You'd keep your word. It leads to your promise to marry me. When I have that, I'll put you ashore."

"And as the months, or years, pass blithely by?" she asked.

"I won't wait that long," he said.

"Maybe, after a while, you'll ask me to marry you."

"Isn't this a trifle too melodramatic, Tim? The ruined maiden pleads with her despoiler—"

"The trouble with you, Lucy," he interrupted, "is that, with all your experience, you don't know men. Or you'd know that I mean what I say."

"But why want a girl who has only contempt for you?" she asked.

"Don't ask me! Why does the tide come in? You believe in Fate; you've said so often enough, anyway. Well, you're my Fate, Lucy. God! I haven't mentioned love to you, but if I had words to tell you . . . The very sight of you drives me crazy: the tones of your voice, the way you sometimes blink your eyes, as though you were a million miles away—Lucy, I've run around after you like a pet pup, for a year, and now—"

"Now the mongrel bites, eh?" she interjected.

"He's only barking now," he told her, "but he will bite."

She shook her head.

"No, I don't think so. He'll be afraid of the whip."

"Get this into your pretty head,

it's Lucy Harkness's face I see.

"A magazine, a newspaper supplement prints pictures of women and they're all photographs of you. Your name is in the headlines; it's on the signs along the road. I tell you, Lucy, this is real, this is honest-to-God. I've never told you, never asked you to marry me, but . . . you've known."

"Yes, I've known, of course," she admitted.

He snatched at her admission.

"And you came here to-night—Lucy, why did you come? Was it because—"

"It was because, solely, you won the race. No other reason. I've never shirked an issue, never avoided a problem. Fate meant me to come here to-night. But I've told you this a dozen times."

"And don't you think that Fate also means us to care for each other?"

"I've answered that before, Tim, but I'll answer it again. I'd rather be dead than let your hands rest upon me; I'd rather be dead and condemned to eternal hell than let you kiss me. Now, is the answer clear?"

Later, sheer, s k panic overwhelmed her. She was trapped, caught, at what mercy this beast, this madman, chose to extend to her.

And even as she recognized this fact a knock sounded upon the door.

Stevens's voice came through the panels. It held a quality of excitement that she had never noted in his tones before. It was almost as though he had been drinking heavily and was fighting hard not to show the effect of the liquor. Yet there had not been time, since she left him, for him to become intoxicated.

"Lucy, I want to talk to you," he said.

The maddest panic swept over her, obliterating sanity. The door was flimsy, would give way, despite the bolt, at the least onslaught. Tim Stevens had dared plan an abduction and carry it through. He might not go to further lengths, but how could she tell? If she opened the door . . . if she failed to open the door and he crashed through it . . .

She would rather die than plead with Tim Stevens. She had never begged of any one in all her life; she would not begin now. Yet she could not fight; a screaming, scratching woman lost all dignity, confessed her weakness by her very defense.

Panic passed; although her act was mad to the point of suicide, her actions were cool, deliberate. This was Devil-May-Care, who made her decisions on instant impulse, but who carried them through as calmly as though they had been thought over for months.

She opened the port-hole—really a window—of her cabin, and dived cleanly into the Gulf Stream.

She was conscious of no shock as she went below the gleaming waters. It was one of those nights when semi-tropical Florida is really tropical, and the difference between the temperature of air and water was very slight. She didn't bother to swim beneath the surface for any appreciable distance.

Continued Next Week

Catalogue Competition

The thing for the merchants of this community to do in their own interests is to advertise faithfully, and to make their printed announcements interesting and helpful to those whose trade and favor are desired.

Mail Order Houses and the large departmental stores of neighboring cities with their striking advertisements and catalogues are the serious competition of local merchants.

The poorest way to offset this competition is for our local merchants to remain silent. For them not to "speak up" is to give the Mail Order Houses a better chance to get business from this community.

A Word to the Public

When you send your money to a city store you enrich the great stores and impoverish this community. Strengthen—not weaken—the merchants of this community. It will be returned to you in the form of better service and better values.

Watch for remaining Instalments of this story which will run in this paper for three months