

Spike Heels

By ALICE DUANE

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I'll never forget my disappointment the first time I saw Kitty Barlow's brother Brand.

"He's swell," Kitty would say. "The swellest brother in the world." I remember hearing "swell" used that way for the first time by Kitty about her brother. Before we were using "swell," when we still thought it was old-fashioned slang for "fashionable," Kitty used to say her brother was wonderful or great. But one day she burst into my room with a box of candy. It was rainy, a chilly winter afternoon, too bad for any outdoor exercise, and you know how gloomy a girl's school gets under conditions like that. So Kitty's box of candy was, naturally, a godsend.

"He's the swell-elegantest brother in the world," she said. And of course I agreed. I was thrilled with the easy way she rolled this new bit of slang off her tongue, and I was hungry for some candy. Anyway, I'd come to think a lot of Brand just because he was so nice to Kitty.

It was funny, of course, when I really seemed to know him so well, but I never met Brand till I'd been out of school two years and was twenty. They lived in California, and Brand went to school and college there, and he was on a business trip in South America when we were graduated from Murchison's. So Kitty's father came on alone for it. Her mother had died by that time. Then Kitty went to college near home, and I went abroad to study art for two years. Even then Brand and I sent messages to each other through Kitty's letters—we felt like old friends, because Kitty was always swapping messages for us and quoting us to each other.

When I came back I went straight to visit Kitty. I'd promised to spend Christmas holidays with them.

Then I saw Brand, for the first time. Standing on the station platform beside Kitty. And didn't they look good! Until suddenly, as they were running forward to meet me, I realized that Brand was short. Kitty is shorter than I, and he didn't seem much taller than she.

I can't tell you how my heart sank. No real reason, then, of course, for it to behave like that. For I really didn't care how tall or how short Brand was—then.

Well, we had a gay ten days. That first evening we talked over plans for the whole visit. Kitty had a lovely step-mother who seemed to want to do everything to make Kitty and Brand happy.

"Are you all set for the fancy dress dance on New Year's eve?" asked Kitty. And of course I was.

"I'm going as a Spanish dancer—I have a costume I got in Spain," I said. "Old lace mantilla, full skirt, painted fan and the duckiest spike-heel red slippers you ever saw."

"Well," said Brand—and already I was conscious of his eyes on me most of the time. "Well," he said, "we'll look good together, won't we? I'm going to be Friar Tuck—brown robe, rope girdle, and all. I'm going to wear sandals."

Three days before the party I got away by myself and went shopping. Before I went I took one last look at my spike-heeled red slippers, my lovely tortoise shell comb, my beautiful painted fan. You see, I had decided to wear another costume. The Spanish one wouldn't do without those spike-heel shoes and they'd just make me too tall for Brand in his monk's sandals. So I decided to be a nun, with nice flat-heeled slippers under my long skirts. I managed to get the costume, and sneak it in, and when I tried it on, by myself that evening, I decided I really looked very sweet and demure in it. And a lot shorter.

The party came at last and, without saying anything to Kitty or Brand about my change of plans, I dressed in my dove-gray costume, with my white veil and wimple, and my little white mask, and went downstairs. There, in the hall, looking up and waiting for me, was Brand. He didn't have his mask on—but I would have known him anyway. He wasn't Friar Tuck. Instead he was in Spanish costume, dressed as a torador, with those high-heeled boots that stage toradors wear. He looked beautiful, waiting so eagerly. He knew me, even in my strange costume and white mask, that made me look so little.

He looked at me, as I stood a little shyly beside him—not just across at me, as he would normally, not up to me, as he would have if he'd worn the sandals and I'd worn those spike-heeled slippers. But just down at me. And then I lost any bit of regret I might have had for my gorgeous Spanish costume.

"Well?" said Brand quizzically. "Yes," I answered, shakily. "I guess we both had the same thought." I stuck out one flat-heeled, round-toed, soft black kid shoe.

"Kay," said Brand huskily, "you're a sweet kid. Come on away from this rabble where I can tell you so."

As we started down the hall, toward the library door under the stairs, he slipped in his high heels on the waxed parquet. I steadied him till he got his footing again. My flat, stout little slippers clung sturdily to the slippery floor. Hidden now by the stairs from the assembling guests, Brand put his arm around me, looked down at me, and laughed.



BEAVER SHIPS RETURN: Canada and the United Kingdom were linked again by the famous Beaver line when the Canadian Pacific's new cargo liner Beaverdell docked at Saint John, N.B. in March at the end of her maiden voyage from Liverpool. The turbo-electric fast freighter in making her initial crossing of the North Atlantic in less than seven and one half days demonstrated the service which will enable her and three sister ships to replace the original five vessels of the Beaver class which were lost during the war. A fine example of the latest developments in marine design and engineering, the Beaverdell features widespread use of electrical installations. Her propelling unit is turbo-electric, in which steam generated electric power at high voltage drives the motor which is the propeller shaft. Electric winches also are used to speed the transfer of cargoes between

ship and shore. Almost one quarter of the huge cargo carrying space on the Beaverdell is refrigerated for safe transport of perishables. Electric fans ventilate all the holds, while "tell-tales" and long distance recording thermometers enable the ship's officers to keep a close check on the cargoes, at all times. Other peacetime uses of "war-baby" developments in use on the ship include radar, gyro-compass, and the latest radio-telegraph communication sets. The new 10,000-ton vessel was given a rousing welcome upon her arrival at the busy port where she discharged 6,000 tons of cargo, some of it rubber from Singapore, and loaded Canadian farm produce—including meat, eggs and flour—for the United Kingdom. At right, Mayor J. D. McKenna of Saint John congratulates Captain B. B. Grant on the return of the Beaver line to the North Atlantic fast freight service.

FIREMEN BANQUET RETURNED

The Fire Brigade tendered a banquet and social evening to thirteen members who served with Canada's armed forces, on March 22, in the Oddfellows Hall. Verdun Rebekah Lodge catered for a delicious chicken dinner.

E. V. MacCormack was toastmaster and chairman. He proposed a toast to the fire brigade which was answered by Chief Donald Letimer. A toast to the ladies was proposed by Harry Savings and responded to by Mrs. Albert Carter. Short speeches were also made by Mayor Harold Oleave and Cr. Joseph Gibbons.

Wives of the members and Council members and their wives were also guests for the night. After the banquet dancing was enjoyed.

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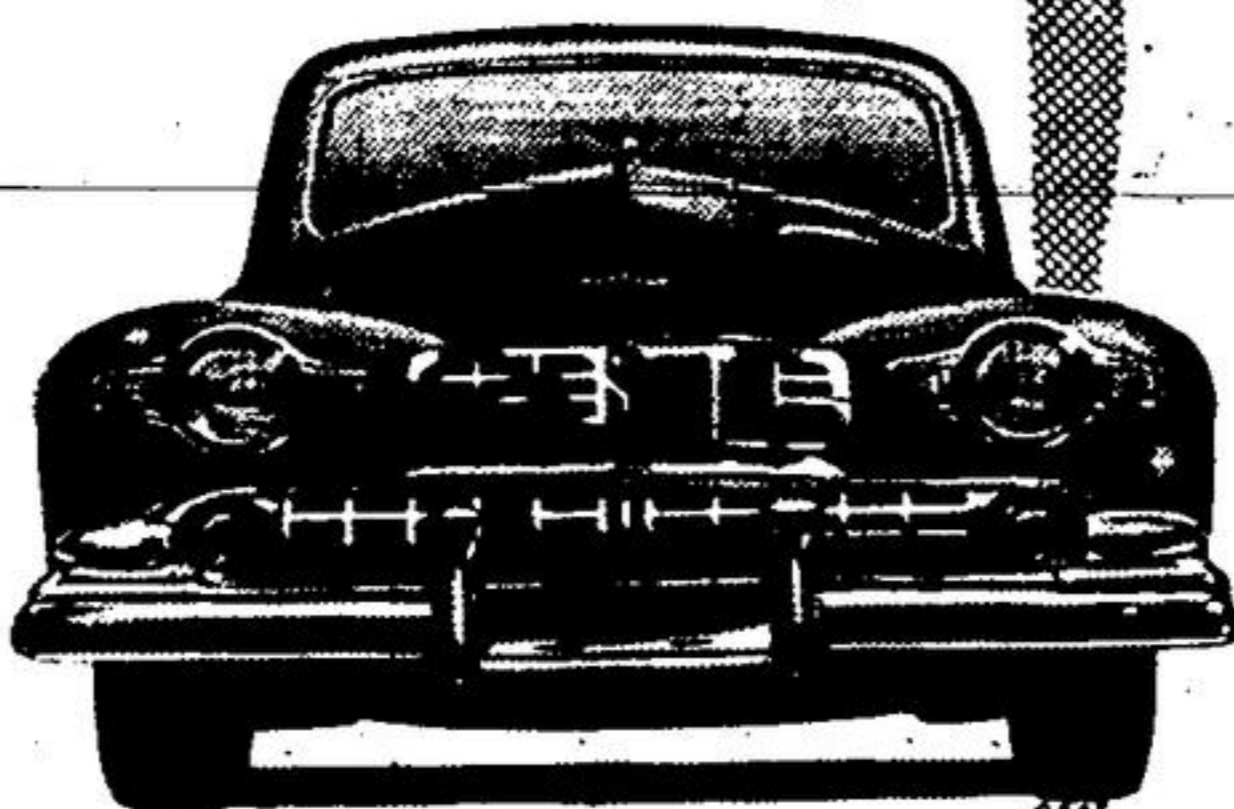
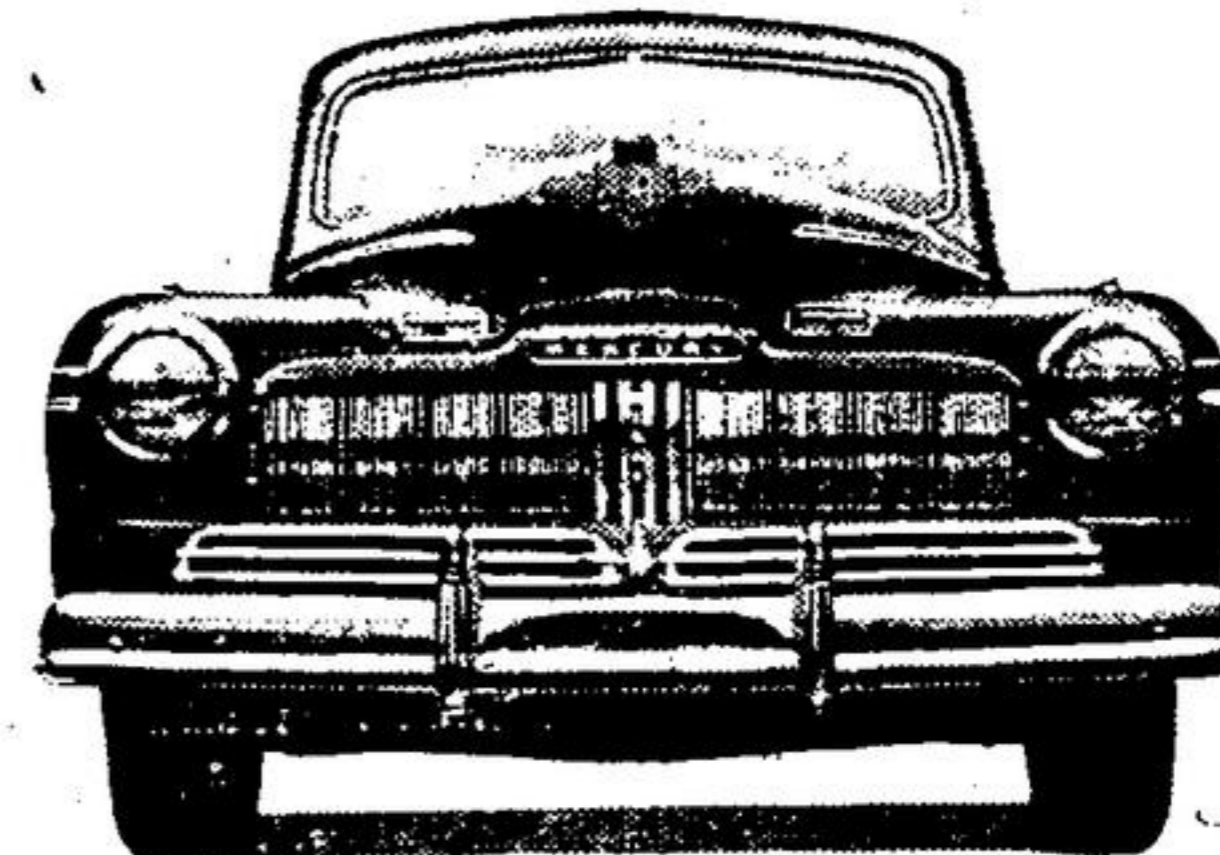
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