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Golden Gloves

By LOIS C. WHITE
McClure Newspaper Syndicate.
WNU Features.

JESSALYN LANE picked her way through the churning crowd from the cashier's desk back to the glove counter and handed a customer her purchase. As she did so, a shaft of light set prismatic colors dancing in the diamond on her left hand. The thought that Ted Dawes' parents would arrive today was uppermost in her mind.

Co-worker Jane was fluffing hair that was already fuzzy. "Scared?" she asked.

Jessalyn answered truthfully, "Yes!" Jane smiled to a prospective customer. Jessalyn thought, if only I had Jane's glib tongue and fearless way of going after what she wants! She wasn't afraid of Ted's father, but the vision she had conjured up of his mother affected her as puckery persimmons do one's mouth.

Tragedy had taken Jessalyn's last living relative a little while before. There were somber depths in her dreamy gray eyes. Hastily, now, she began checking new merchandise. Jane sidled over, Jessalyn's nimble fingers suddenly halted. She slowly drew forth a pair of gorgeous gold-covered gauntlets. Her eyes shone. Gloves were her weakness. Buying a new pair lifted her spirits the way new bonnets usually boost feminine morale. "I must have them to wear tonight," she said.

With a grin and an I-give-up gesture, Jane pushed Jessalyn's sales book forward. Jessalyn frowned. "You know it's against regulations for me to write up my own purchase. I'll tuck them away and let you have the sale later." The color would match the flowers on her hat and complement her costume. She hoped the fichu accentuating the smartness of her best blouse would have its crispness at six o'clock. Ted would take her straight to his parents' hotel. His mother would surely notice minute details. The thought of this first meeting was frightening enough, but having to face it whipped down by eight hours behind a counter was like being dragged from sick bay to muster.

Late shoppers wove in and out. Jessalyn smiled, noticing a little lady making the most of her advantageous position on the stairs to look over the heads of the crowd. A blue feather curled forward on her hat. It bobbed and bowed as she stepped daintily around a haggler in the center aisle. She disappeared, but the blue feather marked her progress as she steered a polite course to "ready to wear."

Later, Jessalyn looked up and the blue feather was nodding at her across the counter. The wearer's eyes were blue too. She smiled. Her well-modulated voice was tinged with excitement and Jessalyn had an intuitive feeling the little lady was worried. She was positive of it when the customer said, "I want something to go with a dress I just bought." She confided that the occasion was very special and lifted the lid of the box she carried so Jessalyn could look at her purchase. Jessalyn smothered a gasp. The printed flowers were identical in color with the ones on Jessalyn's hat. "I've just got to make a good impression." The appeal went straight to Jessalyn's heart. They had something in common. Both faced a crisis!

Jessalyn had the gloves that would lend glamour to that modest frock and bolster the little lady's strength to meet her particular ordeal, whatever it was. She didn't know what prompted her to make the sacrifice. Maybe it was the tender smile, or the trusting gaze, or the scent of lilac, bringing a cascade of childhood memories. Jessalyn brought out the golden gloves. The little lady was obviously very pleased. Then her gaze fell on the pendant at Jessalyn's throat. "What a lovely lock-et!"

Jessalyn fondled the cherished heirloom. "It was my mother's." The little lady took her packages and turned away. But Jessalyn heard her murmur, "I've always wanted a daughter."

The hectic moment before the mirror in the crowded cloak room was over. Jessalyn felt her hat was at the wrong angle and she discovered a hole in her old brown gloves. She felt a tiny pang, remembering the beautiful new ones she had sold that afternoon. But she was glad that she had let them go.

Ted was waiting. He guided her through traffic. Jessalyn thrilled at his touch and tender glances. But when her feet sank into the thick red carpet of the hotel dining room, she trembled. It was easy to recognize Ted's father, and to like him instantly. He was like Ted. Fearfully she turned. Her trembling smile did not die. The men were puzzled, but they beamed. Their ladyloves laughed. For Jessalyn it was like getting up in the morning expecting a dull, damp fog and finding warm yellow sunlight streaming in the windows. It was reunion with someone already dear and familiar. For on Ted's mother's hat curled a bright blue feather and on the table lay the golden gloves!

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*An excerpt from—CONSERVATION AND CANADA'S GAME FISH, by G. C. Toner, M.A., one in a series of pamphlets published by The Carling Conservation Club.

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