

SO BIG

(Continued, from page 6)

Chapter XIV

It was a scheme for interesting women in bond buying. It was a good scheme. She suggested it so that Dirk thought he had thought of it. Dirk was head boy of the bond department in the Great Lakes Trust company's magnificently housed building on Michigan Avenue, Detroit.

In other rooms gleamed pink in the late sunlight. Dirk said it was a terrible building, hardly proportioned, and that it looked like a vast vanilla sundae. His new private domain was more like a splendid bookless library than a business office. It was finished in rich dull walnut and there were great upholstered chairs, soft rugs, shaded lights. Spacious and roomy, it paid to have clients. There was a room for their convenience fitted with box armchairs and couches, lamps, writing desks, in mauve and rose. Paul had selected the furnishings for this room. Ten years earlier it would have been considered absurd in a business office. Now it was a routine part of the equipment.

Dirk's private office was almost as difficult of access as that of the company's executive. Cards in the massive office door, indicating a visit between the caller and Dirk DeJong, head of the department. You asked for him, uttering his name in the ear of the six-foot statuesque detective who, in the guise of usher, stood in the center of the marble rotunda eying each visitor with a coldly appraising gaze. This one padded softly ahead of you in rubber feet, only to greet you over to the ear of a glorified office boy who took your name. You were ushered in. You waited.

Presently there appeared a young woman with inquiring eyebrows. She conversed with you. She vanished. You waited. She reappeared. You were ushered into Dirk DeJong's large and luxuriously inner office. And there formally died.

Dirk was glad to see you; quietly, interestingly glad to see you. You stated your business and he listened attentively; as though it concerned him. The value of business done with women clients by the Great Lakes Trust company has enormous. Dirk was conservative, helpful—and he always got the business. He talked little. He was amazingly effective.

Ladies in the modish block of recent bereavement made quite a somber procession to his door. His suggestions (often originating with Paul) made the Great Lakes Trust company a direct advertising rich in results. Next little pamphlet written for women on the subject of saving investments. "You are not dealing with a soulless corporation," said these brochures. "May we serve you? You need more than friends. Before acting, you should have your judgment vindicated by an organization of investment specialists. You may have relatives and friends; some of whom would gladly advise you on the subject. But you may simply feel that the less you know about your financial affairs, the better. To handle trusts, and to care for the securities of widows and orphans, is our business."

It was startling to note how this sort of thing mounted into millions.

"Women are becoming more and more used to the handling of money," Paul said, shrewdly.

their patronage is going to be as valuable as that of men. The average woman doesn't know about bonds, but she does know about bond buying. They think they're

somewhat mysterious and risky. They will be educated up to it. Didn't you say something: Dick, about classes in finance for women?"

"Of course they'd come. Women will accept any invitation that's engraved on heavy cream paper."

The Great Lakes Trust had a branch in Cleveland now, and one in New York, on Fifth Avenue. They drove to interest women in bond buying and to let them know finance was to take almost national proportions. There was to be newspaper and magazine advertising.

The Talks for Women on the Subject of Finance were held every two weeks in the crystal room of the Blackstone and were a great success. Paul was right. Much of old Aug. Hempel's shrewdness and business foresight had descended to him. The same came down to the dot. Dick let her wait five minutes in the outer office, being still a little annoyed. At four-thirty-five there entered his private office a tall slender girl in a small little broadtail jacket fur-trimmed skirt, and a black hat. She was so daring and so slim that even the French had to be jealous of its French femininity. She carried no portfolio of drawings under her arms.

Through the man's mind dashed a series of unbusinesslike thoughts such as: "Gosh! . . . Eyes! . . . That's my way to see girls dress."

Tired looking . . . No, guess it's her eyes—sort of fatigued. Pretty. . . . Aloud he said, "This is very nice to see, Miss O'Mara."

Then he thought that sounded pompous and said, curiously, "Sit down."

Miss O'Mara sat down. Miss O'Mara was at him with her tired deep blue eyes. Miss O'Mara said nothing. She regarded him pleasantly, quietly, composure.

He waited for her to say something, but she did not, except to business offices; she had a cold, sharp, faint smile.

"She" Dirk had exclaimed, "is it a woman? I didn't know. That name might be anything."

"Oh yes, she's a woman. She's said to be very—very attractive."

Dirk sent for Dallas O'Mara. She replied, suggesting an appointment two weeks from that day. Dirk decided not to consult other commercial artists, looked at their work, heard their plans outlined, and was satisfied with none of them. The time was short. Ten days had passed. He had his secretary call Dallas O'Mara on the telephone. Could she come down to see him that day at eleven?

No: she worked until four daily at her studio.

Could she come to his office at four-thirty, then?

Yes, but wouldn't it be better if he could go to her studio where he could see something of the various types of drawings—oils, or black-and-white, or crayons. She was working mostly in crayons now.

All this relayed by his secretary at the telephone to Dirk at his desk. He jammed his cigarette end violently into a tray, blew a final infuriated writh of smoke, and picked up the telephone connection on his own desk. "One of those d—d temperamental neophytes trying to be grand," he muttered his hand over the mouthpiece. "Here, Miss

Rawlings—I'll talk to her. Switch her over."

"Hello, Miss—uh—O'Mara. This is Mr. DeJong talking. I can't speak that you come to my office in back to back (Not that this has—sue)."

Her voice, "Certainly, if you prefer, I thought the other would save us both some time. I'll be there at four-thirty." Her voice was leisurely, low, rounded. An admirable voice. Restful.

"Very well. Four-thirty," said Dirk crisply. Jerked the receiver onto the hook. That was the way to handle 'em. These females of forty with straggling hair and a bundle of drawings under her arm.

The female of forty with straggling hair and a bundle of drawings under her arm was announced at four-thirty to the dot. Dirk let her wait five minutes in the outer office, being still a little annoyed. At four-thirty-five there entered his private office a tall slender girl in a small little broadtail jacket fur-trimmed skirt, and a black hat. She was so daring and so slim that even the French had to be jealous of its French femininity. She carried no portfolio of drawings under her arms.

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O'Mara.

"Nonsense."

"He looked at her then.

Perhaps that had been humor. But he was not smiling. "You must believe in me."

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O'Mara.

"Miss O'Mara stood up. "That is my price."

"She was not at all embarrassed.

He realized that he had never seen such effortlessness composure. It was as though he was gambling with the odds of his flat-top desk piled high with paper, a blotter, "Goodby, Mr. DeJong." She held out a friendly hand. He took it. Her half was cold gold, not bright—and cold in a single great knot at the back of her hand, low. He took her hand. The tired eyes looked up at him.

"Well, if that's your price, Miss O'Mara. I wasn't prepared to pay any such—but of course I suppose you top-notchers do get crazy prices for your work."

"Not any crazier than the prices you top-notchers get."

"Still, fifteen hundred dollars is quite a lot of money."

"I think so, too. But then, I always think anything over nine dollars is quite a lot of money. You see, I used to get twenty-five cents apiece for sketching hats for Gage's."

She was undeniably attractive. "And now you've arrived. You're successful."

"Arrived! Heavens, no! I've started."

"Who gets more money than you do for a drawing?"

"Nobody, I suppose."

"Well, then?"

"Well, then. In another future I'll be telling you a story of my life."

She smiled again. Her wide smile still turned to her. She decided that while most women's mouths were mostly features this girl's was a decoratively.

She was gone. Miss Ethelinda Quinn et al., in the outer office, appraised the costume of Miss Dallas O'Mara from her made-to-order four-piece to her made-in-France military re-creation; of their own costumes. Dirk DeJong in the inner office realized that he had ordered a fifteen-hundred-dollar drawing, sight unseen, and that Paul was going to ask questions about it.

"Make a note, Miss Rawlings, to call Miss O'Mara's studio on Thursday."

(TO BE CONTINUED)

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Arrives Sandusky 11:30 p.m.

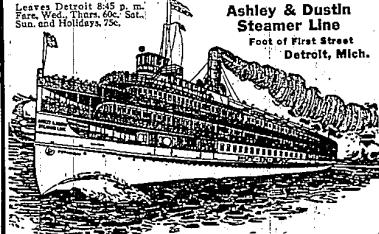
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