

**THIS HAS HAPPENED**  
 Helen Page feels unhappy when classmates accuse her of being in love with her handsome graduate, Leonard Brent. But he represents all that she knows of home and family and she shares his indignation.  
 Brent changes all his plans for his future after a chance meeting with a divine being, Charles Neelin, who tells a strange story which Brent is able to corroborate to some extent by a visit to the underworld.  
 On graduating Helen reminds her guardian of his promise to reveal her parentage and is amazed when he informs her that she is a millionaire's daughter. Cyril E. Cunningham, an old friend of her father's, tells her that he promised her parents to take her to him when she is 18. They go to Yonkers and Brent introduces her to Cunningham as his granddaughter. He offers as proof the locket containing a picture of Evangeline Cunningham which he had taken from the girl's mother.  
 Helen remains at Bramblewood while the lawyer investigates the story. Cunningham presents her with a car which she drives everywhere. One day she accidentally strikes a girl, Eva Ennis, who has to be taken to the hospital. Eva's brother, Robert, upbraids Helen for her selfish recklessness and then, finding her unstrung condition, offers to take her home. Cunningham invites her to spend the evening. The young couple go for a canoe ride.

# The Innocent Cheat

Construction seemed not to show any signs of being a thing. They were home from home and didn't care as they would soon be home again and would be happy. The picture of an accident that never can be repeated. Old friends and relatives their dreams. Youth dreams they were content with a chance to see each other.

Presently Helen said they should go back and she would be like to have her face in the shining world of hair and Helen would think that well, for once Leonard Brent did not get her good night thought.

All in the morning he came to Bramblewood and his lovely forehead personality caught at her wavy hair and fastened it securely upon himself again.

Helen told him about the accident to Eva Ennis and asked him to drive to the hospital with her. Brent was quite willing to go. He did not care to remain long at Bramblewood, either to ensure in conversation with Mr. Cunningham or to be entertained by Helen. He feared both.

Mr. Cunningham's questions were dangerous—she Helen's company as well. He must avoid the appearance of having anything but a personal interest in her and this he could not do without harm to his plans if he spent much time with her. For certainly an admission on his part would engender a similar attitude on hers in time, he reasoned.

They were admitted to Eva's room without delay. Helen went swiftly to the bed and took the hand that Eva clunged in a touching friendliness.

"How are you?" she inquired anxiously.

Eva smiled at her.

"Very little pain this morning, thank you," she replied.

"I telephoned late last night and they told me you were sleeping," Helen said.

"Yes. After Bob left. He came in late. Eva's eyes were shining with excitement as she looked at Helen. Bob had told her that he'd been at Bramblewood—she had not wrong he had been in his first judgment of Helen. Eva was delighted, because nothing could make her believe that Helen was entirely to blame for the accident.

She attempted to express this opinion to Helen. You know I should have looked before I stepped into the road," she said, "and I do want to thank you for all this." She waved a hand to indicate that she meant the private room and the private nurses.

"It's nothing, my dear," Helen



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"I was speeding. I had no idea that Brent had been attracted by her appearance. Her mother had brought some of Eva's own garments to the hospital that morning and had spent an hour in doing the things for her daughter that no one else can think of. The soft, curly brown hair was brushed until it gleamed and the shell pink jacket Eva wore was not finer and softer in its alien texture than the round young throat that rose from it.

The blue eyes were shadowed with the marks of pain but their brightness had not faded and there was even a faint tinge of pink underneath the delicate skin of the cheeks.

She looked very sweet and delicate, very appealing and feminine. Rather a novelty to Brent, meeting a girl like her. It struck his fancy to give it attention.

Eva tore her eyes away from him. "The doctor says I may go home in a few days," she said to Helen.

"I'll come for you," Helen promised.

A few minutes later she left with Brent. "What do you think of her?" she asked when they were out of Eva's hearing.

"Sweet," Brent answered indifferently.

A cloud passed over Helen's face at his answer. Of course she wouldn't have expected him to admire Eva. She knew too well the type of woman to whom he bowed in admiration.

Brent wanted to know what was back of the accident and Helen told him frankly that she had been bored to desperation by the life at Bramblewood.

Brent understood what she left unsaid—that she had been longing for him. Secretly he glowed with satisfaction. But when he spoke his voice was tinged with sadness.

"I'm sorry you haven't been happy," he said, "because I believe your grandfather is getting to love you."

Again a shadow passed over Helen's features. "I'm afraid he is," she agreed. "And I'm very fond of him too—in spite of—everything."

Brent sighed. "Well, my dear, you must not harbor resentment. He is not the same man who was unkind to your mother. She would forgive him if she were here and I'm sure she would ask you to do the same."

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"He's Eva's brother," she said quickly.

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"Yes."

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**Ruth Dewey Groves**  
 AUTHOR OF  
 "RICH GIRL-POOR GIRL", ETC.

"Helen," he said suddenly, "wouldn't you like to come in and go to the theater with me?"

**CHAPTER XIX**

"I'd love to," Helen exclaimed happily. "It's been terribly dull out here."

"I know," Brent agreed, "but I've hesitated to ask you before in fear that I might antagonize your grandfather and do you some harm."

"I don't think he would mind letting me go," Helen said. "He's really very kind. Shall I drive in with you?"

Brent made a quick excuse. "I have an engagement tonight," he said. "Will you come tomorrow?"

Helen's disappointment was instant, also her understanding of it. One of Leonard's many charming women friends, of course. She felt herself grow a little cold over the thought that again there was someone before her.

But she would not give in to the impulse to refuse his invitation altogether, seeing clearly that it would be childish to do so.

"Tomorrow, then," she said listlessly. Brent overlooked her tone, refusing to make an issue of it.

They talked of plays on the drive back to Bramblewood and Helen began to take an interest in selecting the one they would see together.

The next day she went to see Eva just before starting for New York, and Bob's name was not mentioned. Eva would not thrust it forward and Helen seemed to have forgotten him. Her anticipation of an evening with Leonard, at dinner and at the theater, had obscured all else.

Brent met her at the Grand Central station and took her to his hotel, where he had engaged a room for her in which to change into her evening clothes. When she was dressed and went down to meet him she was a vision of loveliness.

Brent was proud of her, proud of the attention she attracted, but his heart beat no faster at the touch of her soft hands, the sight of her eager, animated countenance.

There was nothing in their souls to meet—no common transport for them. And it did not suit Brent to allow Helen's beauty to move him. His came with her was far too serious for what he called "trivial nonsense."

But Helen's anticipation of a wonderful time had affected her emotions to the point of obliterating doubt and uncertainty. Brent was the Brent of her school days to her. Let him be cold. She was used to that. She loved him just the same.

The kiss that he bestowed upon her fingers tingled there only slightly less than would her lips had he chosen to kiss her at the cause.

She was enjoying herself with the delicious misery of a young girl who feels herself hopelessly in love with an older man. Leonard might tell her that he loved her, but she knew that he did not live for her alone.

She forgot that only yesterday she had not wanted him to manifest love through jealousy—forgot that she had been loath to talk about Bob Ennis. She was enthralled with the time, the place and the man.

For Brent, in spite of his calculating attitude toward her, could not did let himself go in an effort to entertain her. He told her amusing anecdotes of smart people, saw that she dined as an epicure would, accorded her every attention she could have desired.

She saw beautiful women about them and yet not once did she observe Brent's eyes straying away from her to them. When the music was particularly moving he said things to show that the thoughts it stirred in his mind were associated with her.

Helen fell under the spell of the hour's witchery without resistance. Soft lights, music, beauty, perfume, perfection. Her senses were stimulated by them until she was carried away, lifted to a plane of ecstatic delight.

From dinner they went on to the play—a romantic love story with the modern twist—an unhappy ending. It chilled Helen but her spirits revived again when Brent took her to one of the more restrained clubs and they danced for an hour.

Then they got her suitcase from the hotel and Brent drove her home.

And for the first time he kissed her on the lips. It was in the dim light of the great hall at Bramblewood. Helen trembled in his arms like a wild animal that finds itself in strange surroundings.

"I love you," Brent whispered into her ear. "I love you."

Helen drooped against him. She did not say to him, "I love you."

The words did not come to her. And she was without regret that they did not, for the omission was unnoted on her part.

Brent was not so oblivious. He glimpsed defeat. Helen felt his arms tighten about her then slacken. He had warned himself against destroying her romantic illusions. He knew that she did not love him, knew that he fascinated her, and he knew what to do.

Gently he held her away from him. "You must forgive me," he said with infinite pathos in his voice. "I had no right to do that."

His hands slipped from hers, pressed them let them go. It was a gesture of renunciation, meant to awaken pity.

When he was gone Helen felt very tender toward him. She stood at her window and watched the road down which he had driven and hoped with a wildness that even she smiled over that he would come back.

The next day she was exceedingly sweet and soft with her grandfather and the old man made up his mind to a course of action that had suggested itself several days before.

He sent for Mr. Greaves and asked for a report on the progress of the investigation of Helen's parentage.

There was nothing new.

"It seems improbable, does it not, that if Helen is not my granddaughter, that I shall not locate the legitimate heiress?" Mr. Cunningham queried. Before he could be answered he added sharply: "Within my lifetime, I mean. That cannot be long, you know, Greaves."

Mr. Greaves nodded. He understood what was going on in his client's mind. He had seen it coming.

"I've grown to love Helen—whoever she is—and I'm ready to accept her as my granddaughter," Mr. Cunningham went on. "I shall leave her my fortune on condition that she is not proved to be an impostor. In that event it will be held for my legitimate heirs. You may destroy my former will, Greaves, and make another."

Helen was with Eva, having a confidential chat with her, when the will that made her the heiress to a fortune of millions was drawn up, witnessed and signed.

Eva was talking about her ambition. She dreamed of being a world-famous violinist.

"Bob is going to be a lawyer," she interjected suddenly. "He's a dear, works day and night. You know, he's paying for my lessons. I hate to have him sacrifice himself as he does, but I'll pay it all back some day."

She sighed gently. "It's awfully hard to get anywhere in music."

"I intend to make it easier for you," Helen said.

Eva looked at her with widening eyes. "You will make me very unhappy if you refuse," Helen told her. "I dislike owing any kind of debt, so please don't argue with me. My conscience will be much easier if I know you are glad to meet."

She laughed and added: "Even as we did."

And by the time Eva was able to go home Helen felt sure that she was glad they had met. And she herself was glad too. For she had never known a girl as gullestly dear as Eva. Her soul seemed to be untouched by anything but beauty.

They grew, during the remainder of Eva's convalescence, to be real friends. Helen came often to the

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