



"SISTERS UNDER THE SKIN"
Elissa Landi
 FRANK MORGAN — JOSEPH SCHILDKRAUT
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What Has Happened

John Hunter Yates resigns as president of his huge corporations to enjoy the remaining years of his life. He is 49. When his wife will not join him in his planned adventures, he takes Blossom Bailey, beautiful young actress to Europe with him. While there, they meet Anthony Zukowski, youthful musician composer and former piano teacher of the music-loving Yates. Zukowski falls in love with Blossom. Blossom reciprocates the love in her heart, but will not return it because of the kindness of Yates. She will do nothing to hurt him. Because of Zukowski's presence, she asks Yates to take her back to New York, after Yates has sponsored Zukowski's symphony and made him a success.

NOW GO ON WITH THE STORY

New York, Blossom Bailey to appear in a new show as the star. John Hunter Yates, the unpublished sponsor. Anthony Zukowski—to appear in a series of concerts. New York.

Yates sat at one end of the long table. At the other end his wife, Elinor, picked at her grapefruit. She looked up at Yates.

"John, how long is it since you and I have breakfasted together? Cream"

"No, thanks." Yates paused, then, "You've been perfectly marvelous all through this, Elinor."

"If I have, it's only to make up for being perfectly stupid for twenty years."

"We've always been honest with each other. I'm coming right to the point. I think it would be better for everybody concerned if you got a divorce."

Elinor spoke quietly. "For everybody but you and me. Do you want to marry her?"

"I've asked her. Is there any reason why I shouldn't?"

"About thirty, John. But even if you could bridge the gap of years, it still wouldn't be any good. You're asking her to marry you because you think that'll hold her. It didn't hold us, did it? And however much I've failed as a wife, John, at least I've never loved anyone else. A failure — yes. But a faithful failure."

"You're not given to making unpleasant insinuations, Elinor. If you knew her—"

"I do know her. I made it my business. And I like her. She's loyal and tremendously grateful. So you'll get loyalty and gratitude, even if you don't marry her. But you won't get love, John. Because there's somebody else."

"I don't believe it."
 "Oh, yes you do. That's why you want to marry her. Build a wall. The sad part of it is you can't eliminate your rival. He'll grow more menacing with the years."

"If there is anybody else," said Yates, "who is it? What's his name?"
 "Youth. His other name doesn't matter."

Yates stood up. His voice was harsh. "I'm not going to let you poison my mind against her with any stray piece of gossip you have. It's a pity we can't meet the issue in friendship and frankness. I'm terribly sorry. I never thought we'd

face each other as enemies — but since you won't give me a divorce I shall be forced to get one."

Elinor stood also. "I'll contest it with all my strength. But whether I win or lose, I'm your wife. No court decision can ever change it. I'll always be your wife. And this is your home. John — to come back to—her voice faltered—"when you have no other place to turn to—" She turned away suddenly to hide the tears that blinded her eyes.

Yates walked quickly to her. He placed his hand on her shoulder in a mute, clumsy gesture of comfort. She took his hand for a fleeting instant, then with a muffled "Good-bye," she was gone. Yates stared after her, his face a mask of stark misery. He picked up his cane and hat from a nearby chair and walked slowly from the house—the house that had been his.

Broadway electric lights told a tragic story. On a theatre marquee glistened this tale: OPENS TOMORROW. BLOSSOM BAILEY IN A NEW PLAY—"BOY AND GIRL." The New York Symphony Hall's marquee read: ZUKOWSKI—FAREWELL APPEARANCE.

Yates sat in the spacious living room of the apartment he had provided for Blossom. He started as the doorbell rang. The butler admitted a thick-set, squat individual. "Mr. Conroy," announced the butler.

Yates rose as the man entered. He stared expectantly, almost fearfully, at the newcomer, who seemed loathe to talk.

"Well" said Conroy, "I guess you won't need me after tonight, Mr. Yates."

"Why not?"
 "It's all over but the flashlights"
 "Please be more specific," urged Yates.

"You hired me to get the goods, if any—and there's plenty."
 Yates spoke slowly. "What did you find?"

"Only what everybody on Broadway knows." He shook his head sympathetically. "If ever a man was two-timed, you're the guy. I'll say this for the gal—she kept putting that piano player off as long as she could. But the last week or so she's been going up to see him regularly at his flat—a studio apartment in Greenwich Village. Here's the address. It's on the top floor. Zukowski called her up at her dress rehearsal tonight and I happened to be in the next dressing room to hers when she got the call. It looks like they're planning to beat it on the next boat."

"How could that be," said Yates heavily, "when her play opens tomorrow?"

"What's a little thing like a play? She's seeing him up at his place after her rehearsal tonight."

Yates was dazed. "You're sure of all your facts?"

"Or money refunded. Well . . . after all, what d'you expect in a case like this? Two and two makes four. Anything else I can do, Mr. Yates?"

"No. Not a thing." His volcrose. "And I don't believe a thing of it! It couldn't happen. Not with her, it couldn't."

"Maybe it couldn't, but it did,"

said Conroy quietly.

Yates shouted, "You're a liar! And probably a blackmailer! I don't believe a word of your report."

"Then why did you hire me?"

"I don't know. I can't understand how I came to do such a low, rotten thing. I must have been drunk or out of my mind. You can send your bill to the office. Go on—get out!"

Conroy shrugged. "Okay. Here's the key to his flat. You paid for it—you might want it for a souvenir."

He threw the key on a chair and walked out quickly. Yates looked dumbly at the address clutched tightly in his hand. His gaze went slowly to the key on the chair . . .

Yates' car rolled up in front of Zukowski's dwelling. "You needn't wait," he informed the chauffeur. "I'll drive home myself."

"Yes, sir."

Yates walked quickly into the building. Some time later another car drew up in front of the house. Blossom and Zukowski stepped out. In a few moments they were in Tony's studio apartment.

Fifteen minutes later they were seated at a small table in the large living room. A midnight snack. The clock read 12.30.

"Travel light and you travel light-hearted," said Zukowski. "As little baggage as possible, and no timetables. When you're hungry, write a song."

He stared at Blossom—she hadn't heard a word.

"Blossom!"

Blossom snapped out of her reverie with a jerk.

"You haven't heard a word I said." Blossom played with a fork. I've been thinking. I've made up my mind about something, Tony . . ."

Zukowski looked at her inquiringly.

"I can't leave on the boat with you next week."

"Now, sweetheart — I know how you feel about your play—"

Blossom shook her head. "It isn't the play." She leaned forward. A pleading note crept into her voice. "Listen, darling! You're the most convincing talker in the world. Or maybe you're convincing to me because I love you so. To me you can make winter seem summer, and black, white. So please please . . . don't ask me to be logical; I only want to be honest."

Zukowski paused before speaking, then: "So do I. That's why I want you to come with me . . . unless you really love Yates. Do you?"

Blossom looked into his eyes. The sincerity of her love was written in her gaze. "I love you, Tony. I did from the start. That's why I was afraid of you. And I'll love you always. I'll dream of you . . . and see your face in crowds . . . and when I play in the theatre you'll always be in the audience, no matter where you are. Whenever I hear lovely music, I'll think of you . . ." She paused. "But I'm staying with Yates."

Blossom rose. She picked up her hat slowly, unwillingly.

(To be Continued)

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