



WHAT HAS HAPPENED

When John Hunter Yates retires from the presidency of his huge industries to spend the rest of his years doing the things he has always wanted to do, he is but forty-nine years of age, comparatively a young man. He wishes to include his society dowager wife, Elinor, in his planned adventures, but she cannot account for his strange emotions. Believing him to be in a form of second childhood, she refuses his pleas, thinking his adventuresome mood will wear off. Not wishing to relinquish his final grasp on youth, he takes with him to Europe Blossom Bailey, beautiful young actress, willing to take advantage of Yates' millions, whom he met at one of his wife's social functions. He does everything possible for her while in Europe and she is extremely grateful to him for his generosity. While there, they meet Anthony Zukowski, former piano teacher of the music-loving Yates. Zukowski has written a symphony, which Blossom urges Yates to sponsor. Yates does, and Zukowski is an immediate success. Blossom falls in love with Zukowski, but because of Yates' kindness, she remains loyal to him. She makes Yates take her back with him to New York. He does, but Zukowski follows. Yates asks Blossom to marry him and tells his wife he wishes a divorce. She tells him she believes Blossom has another lover. Yates, insanely jealous, has a detective trace her and finds that Blossom has been visiting Zukowski at his apartment. He goes there. Zukowski and Blossom had planned to leave New York for Europe the following week, but Blossom demurs, saying she wishes to be loyal to Yates.

NOW GO ON WITH THE STORY

Zukowski stared at Blossom coldly. "You're white and free and over twenty-one."

Blossom turned to face him. "Don't hate me, darling. Don't you see I can't leave him? I mustn't. I've hurt him enough as it is. He was an important man when I met him. And what is he now? A futile old man who sits at home waiting for me. I've treated him terribly. I've got to make it up to him somehow. He's been so awfully good and generous, and I'm all he's got. How can I walk out on him now?"

Zukowski spoke savagely. "I'm sorry for Yates. Yes. Sure he was a great man in his own world—but he's just an old fool in the new world he stepped into—a ridiculous—"

Blossom put her hand over Zukowski's mouth. "Stop trying to be a villain, Tony. There are no villains—only people—human beings—all trying to learn how to play a Sonata . . . and most of them failing." She paused. "You have to be a little sorry for people."

She turned and walked out quickly. The door shut quietly behind her. Zukowski stared a moment, then grabbing his hat he rushed out after her. The door banged loudly.

The large room was empty. Not empty of furniture, but of the vital life that had deserted it so quickly, so hotly. The large piano in the corner seemed the only semi-mortal thing in the room. The pale, white keys retaining something of the life that was born in the tapering fingers of Zukowski. The man's soul never fully departed from the instrument. The fireplace, with its glowing logs, made eerie, ghostly shadows on the keys. Zukowski might have been there . . .

The knob of the bedroom door turned slowly. The door opened quietly, as though in mute sympathy for the anguish of the humans who entered the room, John Hunter Yates, pale, aged, walked slowly to the small table upon which rested the unfinished food.

He stood for a moment, his gaze slowly sweeping the room. His eyes rested for a long moment on the photograph of Blossom on the piano.

He reached into his pocket and drew out a gun. He fondled it for a moment, then dropped it into a nearby wastepaper basket. With one last look around the room, he walked quietly out. The door closed behind him quietly . . . quietly . . . once again the room was alone . . . alone with its sympathy for mortals.

The butler admitted Yates into the foyer of Blossom's apartment. Yates waited until the butler had departed with his coat and hat, then turned to look into the large mirror on the wall.

The reflection was haggard, worn. He stared a moment, then suddenly threw back his shoulders. His mood fell from him in an almost physical change. He twisted his sad lips into a smile, adjusted his necktie, patted his hair. John Hunter Yates was once again a man. His step was springy, youthful, as he walked into the living room where Blossom waited.

She looked up with a warm smile as he came in. Her mood, forced and fictitious, was gay.

"Oh, there you are! I've been waiting here for hours. The dress rehearsal was simply marvelous . . . you should have been there. Everybody thinks we've got a hit. What have you been doing this time of the morning?"

Yates smiled wanely. "Wondering . . ."

Blossom looked at him quickly, aware of the subtle change that had infested the man.

Yates endeavored to make his tone commonplace, light—but was not quite able to do it. His effort to be casual was pathetic.

" . . . and doing a lot of thinking—about us. I've been intending to tell you for weeks, but I kept putting it off. It's rather an awkward matter, naturally—but . . . well, it's about time the party was over. It was rather nice while it lasted . . . Of course, you'll remember . . . neither one of us ever said anything about a permanent arrangement, did we?"

Blossom stared, her eyes widening with incredulity.

Yates continued. "You have this house and your play, and I'll make you a satisfactory financial arrangement, of course . . ."

Blossom's tone was heavy. "What's happened?"

Yates avoided Blossom's eyes. "No complaints from me, mind you. You've been very sweet and amusing—a nice vacation . . . rather better than such little things usually turn out. But, after all, one has to get back to work sometime . . ."

Yates' face twitched with the emotion that was searing his heart, his soul. The pain had a destroying quality that undermined this determination. The muscles of his jaw

tightened. His voice broke as he tried to speak.

"I—don't think I can say—any—more, just now . . . I . . ."

He started away, but Blossom ran after him.

"Wait!" Her voice was low. Tears started in her eyes. "You—you've done many beautiful things for me—but—but this is the most beautiful."

Yates tried to smile. "In every relationship there's much that's beautiful and much that's ugly. The best you can do, I suppose, is to remember the beauty and do the best you can to forget the ugliness."

Vivid flashes of Paris, of Zukowski, of the symphony, sidewalk cafes, Zukowski in his seedy clothes, Zukowski, grand and magnificent, leading the huge orchestra, bowing to the plaudits of an admiring world . . . rain . . . fog . . . London holding Yates' hand . . . playing duets with Yates . . . pictures flashed through Blossom's mind. She stared into Yates' eyes.

"I—I'll never forget the day you brought me the camellias in Paris."

Hell reached up and touched Yates' heart. He blinked . . . his eyes were moist. "I'll never forget the night I first saw you in the garden . . . your face . . . white and misty in the moonlight . . . I remember how I took you in my arms . . . like this . . ." His arms encircled Blossom tenderly . . . "And kissed you . . ." His lips found hers passionately, a passion that was to be only a remembrance, a long-forgotten camellia. His lips drew away slowly. " . . . like this. It was like kissing a ghost then . . . and now . . ." His arms drew away from her

body, but his eyes held hers steadfastly, with yearning that only she and Yates understood.

His voice was soft. "Goodbye." And Yates was gone. The door closed quietly . . . in sympathy . . .

The key turned in the lock, and John Hunter Yates was in his office, stretched out before him eerily. Once again his face was haggard, worn. John Hunter Yates had become an elderly, beaten man. Youth . . . but a myth. The Yates organizations . . . something practical . . . something for Yates to love . . . a patch on the wound Youth had demanded for its services . . .

Yates walked down the aisle past the desks, crossed to a door and let himself in. Through Miss Gower's office to his own private office. He switched on a light, mechanically lifted a paperweight from the desk and picked up a sheet of paper. He stared at it. It was a memorandum.

"To: Mr. Yates. From Miss Gower. Tomorrow you will be fifty years old."

Yates stared a moment, then rose and walked to the huge map on the wall depicting the growth of the Yates companies. He walked back to the desk. His gaze found the framed photograph of his wife. A pleading, wistful expression came to his eyes.

Suddenly, he reached for the phone and started to dial. Midway in his dialing he stopped—he couldn't remember what number he was calling. He hurriedly thumbed the telephone book and stopped at "Yates, John Hunter."

He started to dial the number . . .

THE END

Final Tax Payment delinquent August 6th and Sale of Delinquent Tax Property 2nd Monday in September (10th).

W. B. MUNDY
Treasurer, Clark County

Run July 20, 27 and Aug. 3