

continued from previous page

"You mean you're going canoeing with this animated muscle after I chased all the way down here after you?"

The red-haired young man rose and came over to him. "That's what the lady said, spindle-shanks. So trot along like a good boy before I have to take steps."

Alexander Wade surveyed the other with ill-concealed loathing. "I wasn't talking to you, Atlas. And if you must take steps, I'd suggest you take them away from here."

The red-headed young man smiled. He put out a large hand suddenly. Alexander Wade, standing on the edge of the float directly in its path, teetered, toppled, and fell into the lake with a loud splash. He came up, sputtering furiously, but Eloise and Rodney were already getting into the canoe. Eloise was laughing. "Don't be offended, Alex. It's all in fun. I'll see you tonight."

He pulled himself out of the water and sat on the edge of the float, dripping tiny rivulets into the lake and scowling after the retreating canoe. Jeanie came up, found a dry spot and sat beside him. "You're in love with her, aren't you?" she said.

He shrugged. "Would I be likely to be in love with someone who spoils my sleep and appetite and puts me in danger of losing my job? The answer is yes."

Jeanie's eyes clouded. "Well, I don't like her. I don't like the way she treats you. I think she's mean."

"Eloise? She's wonderful. You just misunderstand her. After all, you can hardly blame her for preferring some of these Adonises around her to a broken-down radio-writer. Wouldn't you?"

"No!" His eyelids flickered. "Eh?"

"I think you're sweet."

"Me? Sweet?" He stared at her. Then he shook his head slowly. "The female of the species sure gets some queer notions."

Jeanie looked at him darkly. "You know, I don't think you're really in love with her at all. You're just lazy."

"What has that got to do with it?"

"She's only another pretext for you to use to excuse yourself from working."

"What a weird idea!"

"Well, look at you now -- sitting there dangling your feet in the water with the garter snake still waiting to get into the salad."

"You don't expect me to go to work today, do you?"

"Why not?"

"I'm all wet."

"There are towels."

"But my nerves are all shot."

"Pooh," Jeanie said.

He observed her gravely. "Pooh, eh?" He pulled at his ear. Then he got to his feet.

"'Pooh' just about covers it, doesn't it?"

THEY got the garter snake into the salad and Jennifer in tears and Jona-

the program a shot in the arm, but which also should do him a lot of good with a certain young lady.

TAKING dictation on the script really became almost intolerable for Jeanie when Alex's plan to glamorize the program became evident. Ellen was taking the position of being Jonathan's girl away from Jennifer, and next Friday night's program, which was set against a country club dance background, was to be the time for the transformation to take place. At one point in Alex's dictation, things became so sticky that Jeanie was forced to put her pencil down. "No," she said.

He looked puzzled. "No what?"

"He can't tell her that her hair is like ripe grain shimmering in the summer sun."

"Why not?"

Jeanie came up, found a dry spot and sat beside him. "You're in love with her, aren't you?" she said.

than in trouble -- and then got them all out of their difficulties again for that broadcast. Jeanie transcribed her notes and sent off the finished script approvingly.

But she didn't go too strongly for getting Jonathan involved with an iridescent blonde female, named Ellen, for the next script. She didn't like the idea of Jonathan twotiming the faithful Jennifer at all, and told Alex so in no uncertain terms -- letting fall a few choice remarks about blondes with names starting with "E" in general, as well as the one in the broadcast in particular. Jeanie didn't like Eloise -- didn't like the other girl's propensity for gathering a group of admiring males around her wherever she went -- thought she was basically selfish. It was bad enough to have Alex mooning around over her without having Jonathan go all gooey over her prototype in the broadcast. But Alex only smiled secretly when Jeanie protested. He had a plan, he told her, which not only would give

"Apart from being pure corn, people don't talk that way."

"They do when they're in love. You just don't understand, Jeanie. You're sort of, well -- unawakened."

The temptation to lift pad and pencil and bring them down sharply on the top of his head was almost irresistible. Jeanie, biting her lip, stood up, went over and put on some coffee. Her voice was bitter. "You know you're ruining the program, don't you?"

"I'm putting it on its feet. After all, it wouldn't be very realistic to have Jonathan prefer Jennifer to a girl like Ellen, would it? When Ellen tells him he either gives up Jennifer or else -- well," he smiled, "Not much choice for Jonathan, is there?"

"You irritate me." Jeanie rose and gathered her pencil and notes.

"Where are you going?"

"There's a dance tonight, remember?"

"It doesn't start until nine. It's only four."

"You, being a mere man,



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wouldn't understand." She left abruptly.

He couldn't possibly realize why Jeanie needed quite so much time to prepare for that dance. No one could unless they knew how Jeanie felt inside -- and no one knew that except Jeanie. He was taking Eloise, and Jeanie was going with Bob Carnes, the tennis pro, but Jeanie wasn't launching that new

to get any notions out of his head, but she felt pretty good about it.

It took some maneuvering of the unsuspecting Bob, but she finally managed to run into Alex on the terrace. He was one of a group of four men clustered around Eloise, who was in silver and green and looked at her scintillating best. Nevertheless, four pairs of eyes widened slightly as Jeanie approached. She nodded at Alex. "Hello."

Alex blinked. Then he frowned. "Who are you kidding? You don't look like that."

There was a tiny, delicious, shivery feeling between Jeanie's shoulder blades. She smiled at Eloise. "Alex is so used to me in pedal-pushers or slacks. I hope I'm not too much of a disappointment to him this way."

"I don't think you need to worry." Eloise's voice was flat. "Not that you were." She took Alex's arm. "This was our dance, Alex."

He was gone with her -- gone, if Jeanie judged Eloise correctly, for the rest of the evening. Jeanie clenched her fists, helplessly. The exposure had been too quick to have taken.

Jeanie was right. She only saw him a few times again, and then only at a distance and always in the clutches of the blonde girl, who seemed to be after exclusive title to every man she met. The evening, the gray dress, the music and the moonlight and stars, all added up to a complete vacuum for Jeanie.

continued on next page

SHE piled her hair high on the top of her head, attached jeweled earrings to her neat little ears, added a touch of mascara to her long lashes to give a hint of mystery to the large gray eyes, and slipped into the wide-skirted, breathlessly-chosen creation.

Bob whistled when he saw her. It was the correct remark to make, possibly even exceeding good form in its loud spontaneity. "Lady," he murmured, "remind you and me to get romantic later in the evening, please."

Jeanie shrugged loftily