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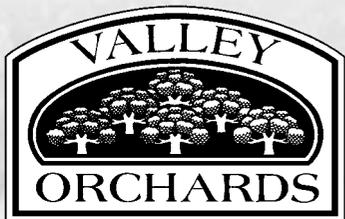
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ALEX'S comment the next day capped her woe. He was jubilant. "She's coming here this Friday night to listen to the broadcast with me."

"Making sure of at least one listener, are you? I hadn't realized things were getting that bad."

"You don't seem to grasp the idea." He smiled. "I'm going to use it to soften her up -- she can't fail to see how much Ellen resembles her. Can you keep a secret?"

"Of course."

"Well ... remember the scene I dictated to you yesterday -- the one where Jonathan asks Ellen to marry him?"

"I try hard to forget it."

He shook his head hopelessly. "You don't seem to appreciate anything involving the feeling of a man for a woman."

"I like cream with my coffee, but when someone puts so much in that it makes the coffee overflow and drool down the sides of the cup, I'm not pleased."

"Are you implying that the stuff is too sentimental?"

"It drips. But don't mind me. I just happen to prefer Jennifer to this Ellen excrescence. Go on."

His voice was uncomfortable. "You're not exactly

and handed it back to her. "Beautiful -- just beautiful. Retype that last page and send it out."

THE days dragged for Jeanie. Alex was in no mood to start on his next week's broadcast until he'd listened to this one with Eloise. When Jeanie reminded him that he'd only have a couple of days in which to meet the deadline, he observed that to go on now until after the broadcast would almost amount to being an insult to Eloise. Jeanie didn't follow his reasoning -- perhaps because insulting Eloise was high on her list of desirable things to do.

She was sitting in the palm room of the hotel that Friday evening, apprehensively awaiting the hour of eight when the broadcast was scheduled to begin. The small radio next to her chair was playing a soft musical program, but it did little to soothe her. Eloise was over at Alex's cabin, she knew, and that in itself was enough to start turbulent feelings tossing in Jeanie -- even without the imminent broadcast. She turned the radio down and tried to sink lower in her chair. Bob Carnes was approaching, and she was in no mood for his ebullience at the

prised. When you've taken another girl apart to see what makes her tick, her ticking that way doesn't come as too much of a shock. "Eloise," she observed, "is the sort of person who sticks pins into butterflies."

"Isn't she, though?" Bob agreed admiringly. "She certainly thinks of cute ways of letting a guy down. Come on along. Don't worry about your job. He'll probably leave this place after tonight, anyhow."

Jeanie stood up. Her gray eyes were reflective. "I don't mind being in on it. This is something I really ought to see."

THERE were six of them: the red-headed Rodney; two other of Eloise's more ardent swains; a brassy, auburn-haired girl named Grace; and Jeanie and Bob. They descended on Alex's cabin just a few minutes before eight. Rodney knocked loudly at the door.

Alex opened it. A puzzled frown spread over his face at the sight of the waiting group. "Hello. If you're collecting tables for bridge, I'm busy. Good-bye."

He started to close the door, but Rodney's inserted shoulder intervened. "Not so fast. We were invited."

*He started to close the door, but Rodney's inserted shoulder intervened.
"Not so fast. We were invited."*

a sympathetic listener. Anyhow, I've told Eloise that what Jonathan will say to Ellen is the way I feel about her. She doesn't know there's a proposal attached to it yet. When she hears that, I think she'll go for it. I can just picture her turning to me half-hesitantly with a question in her eyes. I'll just nod, and she'll come into my arms and"

"What have you been smoking? Opium?"

He frowned. "You lack soul completely. Did you type the manuscript yet?"

"Here it is."

He glanced over the closing pages. Then he smiled dreamily, changed a sentence,

moment. But it was no use to hide. He had seen her.

He approached, beaming. "Want to get in on the fun? Or would you be considered disloyal? After all, you're working for the guy."

"What fun?"

"The gang is all going over to Alex's cabin . . . just in time for his broadcast."

Jeanie's eyes flickered. "I don't get it."

Bob chuckled. "Eloise put us up to it. It seems that he's dedicating this program to her -- going to bare his soul, more or less. It should be a riot. I hope the poor guy isn't too embarrassed."

Jeanie wasn't too sur-

"By whom?"

Rodney nodded over his shoulder at the girl smoking a cigarette in the big chair in front of the fireplace. "Eloise -- to hear your radio program tonight. We understand it's going to be something special."

A tinge of color appeared at the edge of Alex's collar and started to surge upward into his face. He turned and looked blankly at Eloise. She nodded, smiling. "Of course I invited them, Alex. I told them all about it. Don't look so upset. You're not ashamed of the way you feel about me,

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