

So we rented a garage, and were in business.

By this time, I was tired of Laura, and had found a new girl friend. Verna was seventeen, small, dark-haired, and goodlooking. She seemed sweet, and naive. I'd always been partial to guileless girls, as I said. But I was particularly careful to avoid sharp operators since my experience with the pincurled number who swindled me out of \$36 in Akron on my first day out of Chillicothe. I wanted to go to bed with Verna, but I just couldn't talk her into it. I had to pull the marriage routine again. It was beginning to be a drag.

Sitting at a drive-in restaurant one evening, I asked, "Verna, would you marry me?"

"Marry you! Oh, Jim! I would marry you. But I can't. Verna, would you marry me?"

"Marry you! Oh, Jim! I would marry you, But I can't. I'm only seventeen and I still live at home. I don't know how Mom and Dad would go for it. They haven't even met you."

"We don't have to tell your parents, or stick around here and get married. We can travel around the country. If I get short of money, I can always call my dad and have him send me some."

"Okay, Jim darling, I'll do it."

See what I mean. It must have been the 50th time I'd made the same proposition. Nobody had turned me down yet.

While I was setting up the spray-painting business, I'd become friends with a police officer in town. He'd come to our garage to have his car painted, and we'd gone out drinking together occasionally. We found that we shared two common interests—love of excitement and love of

Drive-in

women. I rode around with him in the squad car at night, and I soon discovered he'd do anything he could to make a

Police Friends

When we got home, I said to Verna, "Start packing everything. That detective is sure as hell going to check out the car's license number, and he's also going to check me out. You can bet your ass on that. As soon as I get that \$2000 from Jeanette, we are going to clear out fast. Just

make sure you're ready; Jeanette might have the money for me tonight."

Then I trotted back to Jeanette's house.

"Jeanette, you know a little bit about me. I told you I'm not just running around the country, living it up. But when this detective starts checking on me and the car, the word will be out that (Verna is here). Her husband's been looking for her ever since I took her away. He'll put out any kind of warrant he can put out, just to keep her here until he can pick her up. (Then her life won't be worth two cents.) I know this is going to happen. I have to get her out of town, fast. But I want to ask you something. Will you marry me? And will you leave with me? Will you do that?"

"Oh, Jim, I don't know. I want to leave with you, but I just don't know."

"Look, Jeanette, I love you. I want you more than any-

thing in the world, and that's God's truth. ~~Think about it~~
~~overnight. I'll be back tomorrow, and you can let me know~~
~~then.~~

I hoped desperately Jeanette would accept my offer of marriage. She had kindled emotions in me I didn't even know existed. She made me feel like a man in the true sense of the word. I loved her and I needed her.

~~When I got back, Verna had everything packed. Be-~~
~~cause of her condition, I controlled my urge to hurt her~~
~~physically. I contented myself with brusquely yelling at her~~
for causing me so much trouble; that was the extent of it.

The next morning at five, the phone rang. It was Jeanette.

~~"I want to go with you. I know you want to leave fast~~
~~so Verna won't be in danger, but I want to be married first.~~

I've got a plan. Some friends of mine live out in the country on a farm. We could get our blood tests, and ~~you and Verna could~~ sort of hide out at the farm while we wait out the three days. As soon as we get our test results, and our marriage license, we can be married and take off. I've already called my friends and explained the situation to them. They said it's perfectly all right. Will you go along with my program?"

"Okay, Jeanette, I'll do it."

"Good. Come to the house and I'll take you out there right now and introduce you to my friends. Then as soon as the doctor's office opens, we can have the blood tests taken."

~~I went back to the house and said to Verna:~~

"Look, she's getting the money but it's going to take a couple of days. Now, here's what the set-up is. She wants me to marry her. Naturally, you know I'm not going to do that. She's suggested that we go to her friends' house, and

that she suggested that we go to her mother's house, and stay there for the three days it'll take to get the money. In the meantime, we'll stay on this farm together, just you and me. I won't be running around town. When she gives me the money, we'll take off. OK?"

"I won't mind," answered Verna, "~~as long as I know I'm going to be with you.~~"

~~We picked up Jeanette;~~ she took us to the farm and introduced us to our hosts, and I drove her back home. The next morning, her brother brought her to the farm, and we went to the doctor's office to have our blood tests taken. After dropping her off at home, I returned to the farm where Verna and I remained for three days. ~~Verna, of course, was blissfully oblivious to everything that was going on, and~~ happy to have me around for a change. On the third day,

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Jeanette and her brother picked me up at the farm. We stopped for the results of our blood tests, got a marriage license, and were married by a judge.

"I love you so much, Jim!"

~~"I love you, too, Jeanette. Let's get the hell out of this town. Fast!"~~

~~"Oh, I've got everything already packed. Let's pick up my stuff, get your sister, and head out. Where are we going?"~~

"Denver."

"Oh, good. I've never been to Denver. I'll like that. They have a lot of mountains up around there, haven't they?"

Denver 1c