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## Hometown Girl

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## Hometown Girl . . .

. . . Jeremiah Halbert

It was one of those typical cocktail parties. Crowded into a room reserved by the Amec Engineering Company for such events were all the promising young executives of the firm; two top executives, two Army officers, a Navy Commander, a host of models and the guest of honor, Sen. John Falstaff, chairman of the Armed Forces Thermal Control Commission. The room was filled with the constant buzz of a crowd climaxed every now and then by the roaring laughter of Peter Selas, sales manager of Amec. In one corner of the room Matt Casey was trying to talk to Captain Louis Cann of the Army Engineering Corps. Matt, at 29, was typical of many of the young executives of the firm. He was a graduate engineer, had a wife, Betty, and two children, Tim and Terry, the latter being only two weeks old. Matt was doing very well for himself, his last year's salary was in five figures and this year he estimated it to be at least two thousand dollars above last year's earnings. At the present time he was trying to interest the captain in his pet topic, Thermostatic conductive regulators.

"Lou, the installation of our Thermostatic unit in the Anover Street Armory will cost a little more as an initial expense but in the long run it will save you money."

"Matt, those units cost \$240 apiece and that Armory will need at least 40 of them. We just can't afford it with our present budget."

"To be exact it will take 43 regulators. However, our product is 74% efficient and will last for ten years. Your present condensers cost \$40 apiece, less installation, have to be replaced every two years, and are only 62% efficient."

Lou Cann was tiring of the arguments and wanted to break away, at last he spotted his commanding officer, Col. Phil Jones, and saw his chance, "Your product has not been thoroughly tested. The Army cannot take the chance."

"We have used it in our plant for the last six months . . ."

"I know, but it is too short a period to make any valued judgments. Look, why don't you draw up some reports on the details of your unit. Perhaps then I will see it your way. Right now I have to go see the Colonel."

"I'll have them at your office in the morning," Matt yelled as the Captain turned his back and started weaving his way toward the Colonel's group.

With the captain gone Matt started to look for the Commander. He finally spotted him in the middle of the room and started to work his way toward him. Half way across the room a model stepped in front of him, looked at him thoughtfully and exclaimed:

"Matt, Matt Casey, why you have gotten so fat I hardly recognized you!"

"Alice, Alice Feathers, from Floral Park. You are the one that has changed greatly. What are you doing here in New York?"

"I'm working as a model to get enough money to see my way through the Academy of Theatrical Arts. It sure is good to see someone from home."

"The feeling is mutual. Look, we can't talk here. It's too noisy and besides I'm not supposed to talk to anyone but our guests. Why don't you have dinner with me tonight? I told Betty I would be eating out and I would like to hear the hometown gossip."

"If you are sure your wife won't mind, I'm not the one to turn down a free meal."

"Good. I have to leave at four or so, so why don't you meet me by the Fifty-second Street entrance at ten to six."

"It's a date. See you there."

The rest of the cocktail party rambled on, each person in the place knew they had a job to do and did it. At a quarter to six Alice left the few remaining people and went down stairs to meet Matt. Matt was waiting there and escorted her out on the street. Once out there Matt confronted her. "If you don't mind let's eat in one of those places that cater to tourists. New York is just like a small town in a lot of respects. If I'm seen with you it will be all over the office tomorrow that I have the best looking mistress in New York"

"I understand . . . And they talk about Floral Park." Alice chuckled.

Halfway down the street they came to a small restaurant and entered. They were lucky; a table in the far corner was empty. When the waiter came over they both ordered two Roast Beef au Jus dinners and a Manhattan before the meal. Throughout the meal the talk was about Floral Park, who got engaged, who got married, Did they have to get married? What ever became of old Dr. Peters? Alice answered the banter as well as she could and then asked Matt how he was doing. Matt then started talking about his family. Like most young married men, when talking about their families, he lost all sense of time, when he did look at his watch it was seven-thirty.

"Look at the time. Betty will start to worry. I have an idea, why don't you come home and spend the night with us. Betty will be pleased to meet the girl that used to tell my mother on me when I skipped Sunday school."

"Really, Matt, I shouldn't. After all she has been out of the hospital only a couple of days and she won't feel like entertaining."

"Bosh! She will be glad to see you. Besides I won't take no for an answer." Matt then called the waiter over and paid the check, helped Alice on with her coat and while she was putting on her gloves picked up her modeling case. "Uugh, what have you got in here, a pipe."

"No, a hammer. I use it to keep the wolves away." countered Alice. They left the restaurant and headed down the street. "I parked my car up here when I came back . . . pretty convenient, isn't it?"

"I think you had this planned all the time." Mused Alice.

"No, not exactly. But it is working out."

They reached the car and Matt put the modeling case in the back seat. He then stepped aside and let Alice get in, made sure her dress was clear and closed the door. He walked around to the other

side and got behind the wheel. Starting the car he headed it toward the East side Parkway, from there he drove through the Brooklyn-Battery Tunnel and finally on the Belt Parkway headed toward his Long Island home. Half way home he turned to Alice. "Would you mind driving for a while? Those cocktail parties in the afternoon give me a headache."

"Not at all. Pull over."

Matt pulled the car over and got out to walk around to the other side. Alice slid behind the wheel and got comfortable. Matt got in the car on the other side and said. "Straight ahead and then turn off at exit 29."

"O.K. There is some aspirin in my purse, why don't you take a couple?"

"Thanks, that's what I need. By the time we get home I'll be fit as a fiddle again."

Alice maneuvered her way back on the highway as Matt searched for the aspirins. He finally found them, extracted two from the box and swallowed them. "Brrr . . . they sure taste bitter without water." Ten minutes later Matt slumped down in a sound sleep. Alice glanced over and smiled. She continued along the road, came to exit 29 and turned off. Once off the highway she turned left and took that road for about a half mile. Then she turned left on a dirt road and went up the road about two hundred feet before she stopped the car. Reaching back she brought her modeling case forward and opened it up. She took out a pair of men's shoes, size ten, and a hammer. Removing her heels, she put them in the case and set it on the floor. Working with care, she put on the men's shoes and stepped out of the car into the soft mud alongside the road. Taking the hammer, she grasped the handle with both hands and hit Matt on the head with all her force. Meticulously she then removed his wallet, took the money out of it and dropped the billfold on the ground. Then she removed his watch and ring (she would drop these in the sewer later). Pulling Matt's body down on the seat she then hit him on the face fourteen times. Still showing little concern she threw the hammer into a nearby field, picked up her modeling case and took off down the road. A hundred feet up the road she reached a concrete section. There she removed the men's shoes and put on her heels again. Walking at an easy pace she came to a split level home about one hundred yards up the road. She walked up the walk and knocked at the door. A young woman of about 24 came to the door. "You're a widow now, Mrs. Casey. Where is the rest of my ten thousand dollars?"

Betty Casey nodded and turned back into the house. Two minutes later she came back and handed Alice an envelope. Alice took the envelope, peeked inside, and then started down the steps to the car she left in the yard that morning.