

ALICE JOYCE



In a Drama of Everyday Life HER SUPREME SACRIFICE

By E. M. WICKES

WHEN Gordon Eames eloped with Ora Winton, the pretty stenographer, and married her, despite his wealthy father's objections, he made his wife too happy to peer into the future with its cares. Gordon was sanguine regarding his parent's final blessing, but when a year had passed and no word had come from his father, he began to lose hope. Ora noted the gradual change in Gordon, which kept her in a fretful suspense. A year after their wedding the baby, Donnie, came; and while he brought joy to her heart, she realized that he would make their struggle a trifle more difficult. However, she felt he was worth the extra care and trouble.

Gordon had been fortunate in securing a position as secretary to Cranford Hale, but the salary did not suffice for everything, and as soon as Ora experienced the pinch of limited funds, she offered to do copying at home. Gordon protested for a time, but she finally won him over.

"It will only be for a short time, dear," she said with her arms around Gordon's neck, "and besides, it will be an excellent way of disposing of my spare time."

For six months she typed, attended to her household duties, and was always ready to meet him with a loving kiss and a tempting meal when he returned from business. She sang at her work, hoping that for Gordon's sake a change for the better would come. For herself she cared little, as her husband's love and Donnie were sufficient to make her happy.

Gordon had fallen into a brooding habit, giving her the impression that he was silently soliloquizing over his father's continued silence, and possibly regretting his marriage. With an aching heart she watched him week after week, and when she was unable to stand it longer, she went to him one evening, put her arm around his neck, and said:

"Gordon, dear, something must be worrying you, for the old smile that used to fill my heart with sunshine and gladness has turned to a dark frown. Won't you tell me and let me share your troubles?"

Gordon raised his eyes and smiled weakly.

"It's just business worries, Ora. They come and go, and it would be foolish for you to bother your pretty head about them."

Ora sighed and remained silent, feeling that he desired to keep his trouble to himself. Perhaps later he would take her into his confidence.

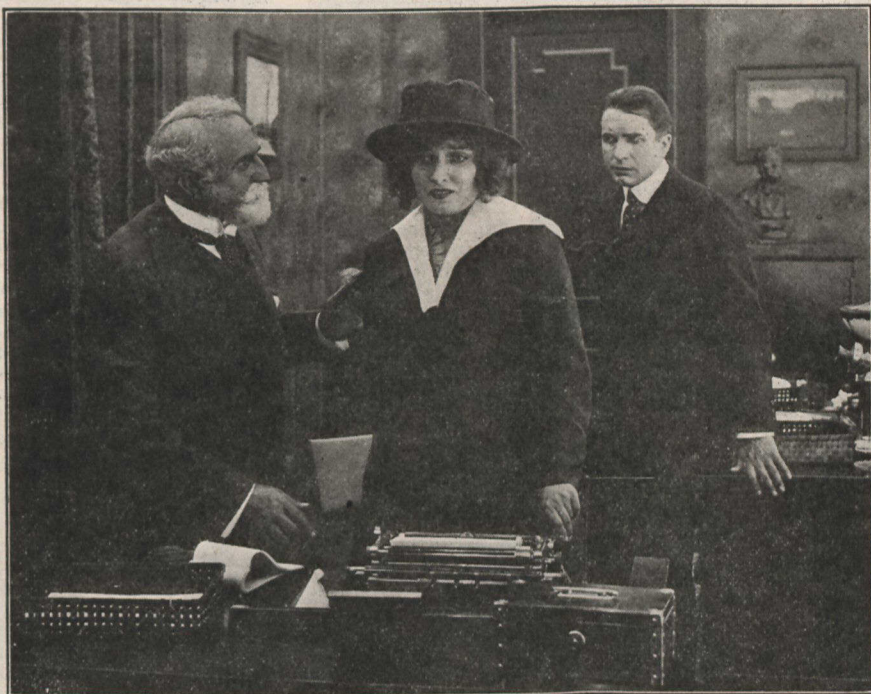
The following morning a letter fell from the pocket of a coat of his she was about to hang up. Picking up the letter she looked at the imprint on the envelope,

which was that of his father's attorney. Her first impulse was to return it, but surmising that the contents were in some way associated with her husband's depression, she felt that as his wife she was entitled to read the letter. Her worst fears were confirmed, for the letter stated that Gordon's father had been taken ill, and that if the son desired to return alone he would be welcomed back.

Weak and trembling, Ora dropped to the couch and wept. Gordon would be loyal to her, she was positive, but she wondered if she were doing right in keeping him from his father and the luxury to which he had been accustomed. The struggle for an existence had probably robbed his romance and marriage of their glamour and caused him at times to regret his apparent folly. It did not seem possible that her love and little Donnie could make up for his loss, and her only course would be to free him and give him an opportunity to go



Once upon a time a rose that Gordon had placed in her hair gave her far greater joy than the flowers before her, that seemed devoid of all perfume.



Gordon stood like a man turned to stone, but Hale was too much concerned with his new acquisition to note any difference in Gordon. In fact, Hale paid so much marked attention to Ora that he was oblivious of Gordon's existence.



"My darling boy," she murmured, the tears streaming down her cheeks.

back home. To go on living with him day after day would be more than she could bear. Her beautiful dream had been shattered by stern reality and she must not try to delude herself any longer. She brooded and philosophized until her thoughts turned into a chaotic jumble. Then she put on her hat and went outdoors, hoping the sunshine and fresh air would calm her troubled spirits.

Ten minutes later, while crossing a wooden bridge that spanned a lake in a park, she stopped to gaze into the clear, crystal water. It looked so inviting with its power to end all her worry, that for a moment she remained there dreaming. Suddenly she felt something slide from her neck and the next instant she saw her necklace and locket strike the water and shoot to the bottom. The water was not deep, but they were beyond the reach of her arm.

"Oh, how will I ever get it!" she exclaimed.

Before she had time to formulate a plan, an elderly gentleman was standing at her side.

"Can I be of any service?" he asked, raising his straw hat.

Ora glanced up. He had such a kind, fatherly face that she felt immediately drawn to him.

"My necklace just dropped into the lake," she said.

"That's unfortunate, but it won't trouble you long," he smiled, as he bent over to fish out the necklace with his cane.

"Thank you, ever so much," she said, taking from him the necklace and locket which he had dried with care.

"I am glad to have been of some service," the old gentleman remarked, offering his card. "Should you ever need a friend don't hesitate to call on me."

She thanked him and waited on the bridge until he had gained the street. As she faced about to return, the card slipped from her fingers and fluttered to the lake, and she had not even read the name on the card. She regretted her loss, but knew it was out of the question to notify the old gentleman of the incident.

"Old Hale met some young beauty in the park to-day," Gordon remarked that evening as she sat doing some typing. "Seems he fished out a necklace from the lake for her. And he's been talking about her beauty all afternoon."

"And do you know who the beauty was?" she asked, thinking to coax him into a cheerful mood.

"No," he answered indifferently.

"She was your own little Ora."

"You?" he queried with puckered brows. "Why he believes you're unmarried and vows to wed you!"

"But how can he when I'm married to the only man I'll ever love?"

"I don't know. But somehow people with money can do a great many things. My dad and his money have been able to make my life miserable."

Ora stifled a sigh. Considering it unwise to dwell on the subject, she turned to her work, and Gordon resumed his self-communing.

Through the entire night she lay awake trying to map out a definite course for the future, and when morning came she had her mind made up to go away, secure a divorce and enable him to go back to his father. To leave Donnie behind would be another blow, but she had no alternative. In the end Donnie would be better off.

On the following morning as soon as Gordon had left for the office, she packed a bag and then wrote a note telling Gordon of her decision to obtain a divorce. Having finished with this, she went to Donnie's room, caressed him several times and finally started on her mission.

Two days later, while seated in an unpretentious boarding house she came to realize that a divorce would cost money, and as she had very little money at the time, she knew that an immediate divorce was out of the question. She would have to secure a position and save all she possibly could. While looking over the "want" column of a morning paper she saw an advertisement that called for an intelligent stenographer, and she immediately set out to apply. On reaching the place she found it to be a photographer's studio.

"You would make a better model than a stenographer," her prospective employer remarked, scrutinizing her from head to foot. "That is, I mean, you would make more money, and the work would be much easier."

"But I never posed as a model," Ora sighed, feeling a golden opportunity was slipping away.

"There's nothing difficult about posing," the photographer replied. "The figure is the essential thing, and you're just the kind of a model I need. I can easily find a stenographer. I have just received a large order and would like you for a model."

"And how much would the model's position pay?" Ora inquired, hope growing strong within her.

The man toyed with his Van Dyke for a moment, while he thought the matter over.

"I have an idea," he smiled, "that you could act as model and stenographer. I'll pay you six dollars a day. What do you say?"

When Ora recovered her breath she gladly accepted the offer and immediately began. Her employer arranged to have her attend to the stenographic work in the mornings and pose in the afternoons. When he learned from her that she was alone in the city, he took quite an interest in her, and even insisted that she occasionally dine with him and his family. Ora felt deeply grateful to him for his kindness, and never had an occasion to resent a look, word or act of his. To her he was like a father and brother combined.

For five months she worked early and late, preferring to remain after hours, rather than to go home and brood. She derived a great deal of pleasure from her employer's appreciation of her work; but that was all. Work itself meant nothing—it was merely a means to an end—all for a set purpose, a sacrifice.

At the end of five months, deciding that she had enough money to obtain a divorce she notified Mr. Allen, her employer, that she would have to leave. He pleaded with

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