

PRO

by Lydia Torrance

"But Olaf Norgaard!" I shouted. "When we were married just yesterday you mean to say you expect me to pretend we're *not* married just because of your old mother?"

"Now Lyddie, watch how you talk! When she's used to you maybe she won't mind my marrying you too much. But if we're going to go out to the farm we'll have to pretend you're Morris' girl and want to get farm experience."

I couldn't believe my ears. My honeymoon was to be as a hired girl, and after I'd just given up being a waitress!

"Who do you love, me or her?" I said.

"Now Lyddie - a man can't answer that. A mother's a mother. You're - different," he added after a funny pause.

Well, not to dwell on unpleasant memories, I agreed. I didn't want to go back to the restaurant after getting hitched, and have those truck drivers making lewd remarks. I figured it wouldn't take that long for Mrs. Norgaard to get used to me, and then I'd say I'd gotten tired of Morris and Olaf and me could get married. Get married! I started to get mad all over, just thinking about how life sometimes turns out. It never rains but it pours.

We finally got to the farm, and I had to sit in the truck while he went in and explained. I saw the upstairs curtains move as we drove in, and she must have had a lot of questions, because I sat in that cold pick-up truck cab for an hour, and then he brought me in and showed me right to my room, it was his dead sister's room and full of dolls and barettes like she's gone away to play at a friend's house and might be back any time. He whispered that he'd call me for supper and closed the door. So I sat there for two hours thinking "Oh Lyddie, Lyddie, what have you gotten yourself in for this time?"

I finally was called downstairs for supper and there was Mrs. Norgaard sitting at the head of the table, and she smiled and said, "Good evening child, you must be starved. Dumplings?" As soon as she'd served up our suppers she started in on me. Where had I met Morris? Oh, at Adelaides? And how long had I worked there? We see, and when did I meet him? Yes, yes, and how long ago had I left Stasis? Well, she could only hope that the girl who wanted to marry *her* son had as much spunk and determination in pursuing him, because Olaf hadn't met any girls so far, not so's you could call of the marrying kind leastwise. After a while she sweetly asked me if I'd mind helping with the supper dishes, since I couldn't start getting to know the work areas too soon seeing as how I seemed to be there for

the winter.

I went to bed that night pretty mad, and I stayed mad for six years. It wasn't the work, I didn't mind the work, it was that she always talked about what qualities she expected in Olaf's girl, as opposed to the qualities I and my kind had. "I expect when Olaf marries she'll want to add on a few rooms ... But then Olaf's wife will have her own dishware and ours will seem kind of shabby." That kind of talk seemed to go on day and night.

Another thing was that she didn't seem to think much of Morris and was trying to find out what I saw in him, when I didn't see *anything* in him except a creepy, overweight, dirty-minded boy who always put his cigarette butts in his coffee cup at the restaurant. And when Olaf told him about what was happening he couldn't wait to come courting.

So after I'd been there two weeks, one Sunday afternoon Morris turns up with a straw hat in hand (in February, if you please). "I see your beau is here," Mrs. Norgaard says. "Olaf can finish with these chores, you go on in to the parlour," she says as nice as you ever heard. And I go in and sit on the horsehair sofa wishing I could play the pianola so I could keep busy that way.

"Hello Lydia," Morris said. "Hello," I said and looked out the window. He came over and stood beside me and didn't say anything, but he was breathing sort of heavy and funny. But then he usually had a cold, or asthma or something. All of a sudden I felt his grimy hand on my shoulder. I shuddered and his hand fell off.

"Gee Lydia," he said. "Olaf told me what you're doing here. It's awfully nice of you but I didn't even know you felt that way about me."

"Now Morris you just stop that!" I shouted and I stomped my foot. "You know I'm married to Olaf and I love him, we love each other, and we're playing like this because of his mother, she has to be broken in like to the idea."

"But he said I could court you."

"All he meant," I tried to explain patiently, "was that you can come out here and talk to me so she won't think he and I are sweet on each other yet."

"Well, I can take you for rides too," he said. I thought about his trying to stop the truck and swarm all over me.

"No. And besides, I'm throwing you over pretty soon. And then Olaf will start falling in love with me."

"You got it all figured out haven't you?" he said, and he sounded mad, but Olaf came in then, and what he said I'll have to tell you next week.



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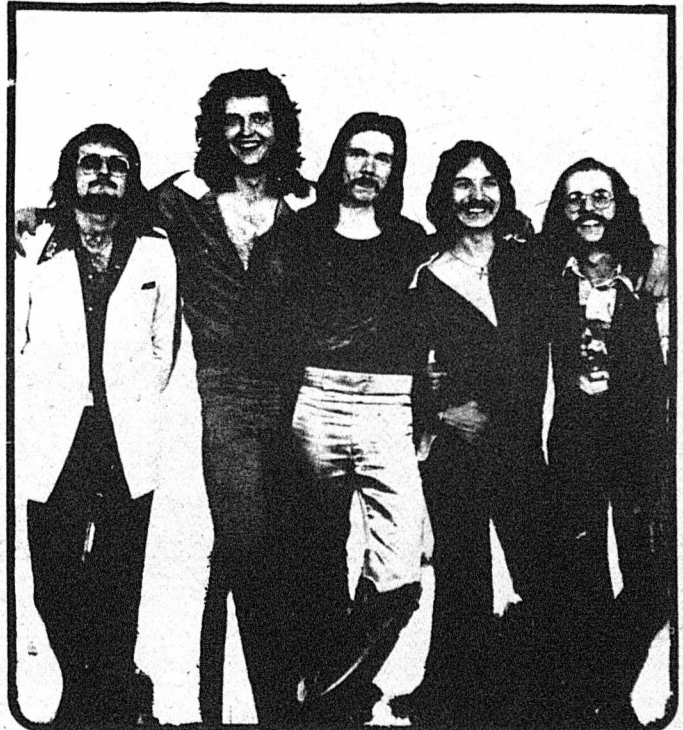
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