

PRO

by Lydia Torrance

Lucreesh has been wondering just why I split up with my first husband Olaf, before I went to Hecuba Normal. Well I sure don't have anything to be ashamed of, so I told her I'd put it right in my column.

The fact is after high school I wasn't sure what I wanted to become. I those days everybody didn't just trundle off to college automatically like they do now. There were lots of things you could do besides play fish and neck, without going to college, and I thought of being a dancer but I wasn't sure how to go about it so I became a waitress instead, at the Adelaide Cafe and Do-nut Shoppe in Loner, about fifty miles from Hecuba.

Adelaide's was what they call a local institution because Adelaide was a real good cook and sort of hearty and salty and all the truck drivers and pig farmers liked her. Sometimes the language wasn't really fit for a young impressionable girl, but it was meant in fun and Adelaide never let any one get too out of line. "Pick it up, girls," she'd say if we weren't moving fast enough for her. "Yeah, and put it down here," some fellow would say sure as shooting and then everyone would laugh.

Well that's where I met Olaf one day. He came in with three others and I just felt drawn to him. I started seeing him, he'd take me on rides in his pick-up on Sunday afternoons, wouldn't say much but I knew what he was thinking — I thought I did. So we'd ride along and study the dead cornfields and I'd say "Isn't that a cute house?" and "You'd think they'd paint that barn," and he'd just grunt. He wanted to do other things too. I may as well say it, but I was firm about that. Adelaide always said to us "Remember, if they want milk they got to buy the cow, don't go giving them free drinks," and I finally figures she was talking about marriage! So I let Olaf know a girl like I had to be careful and wasn't messing around.

One day he proposed. Well I'd been thinking about it but I was still surprised. Adelaide said "Met his mother yet? I thought she was his best girl." Now it was funny, but his mother was always feeling poorly or visiting cousins everything said I'd like to meet her, why didn't we go out to the farm? So I says "What will your mama think if we marry, Ollie?" and he says "Oh she'll be glad for the company, it gets lonesome out there." But he started biting his lip like he tended to — I should of known there was a problem.

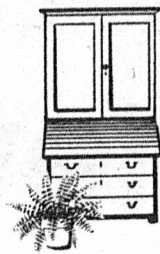
Now I'd been at Adelaide's for about six months and I sure liked living in

Loner, it wasn't a city like Edmonton, but it was bigger than my hometown Stasis and they had stores and a movie palace and sidewalks. And did I want to become a farmer's wife already, cooking and fetching eggs and worrying about the weather instead of just noticing it? But I was getting tired of all the smart talk between the men and the other girls. Whether they were ordering bacon and eggs or a grilled cheese hold the mayo it always sounded like they were talking about something else, and I'd turn red and couldn't think of any snappy answers. "Bring me some more coffee Lyddy," they's say, "and make it hot and black, like my women." Well I wasn't going to miss all that hooting. So I decided to go ahead.

It wasn't a big wedding but it was in a church, not a justice of the peace's office, and Adelaide and the other girls came, and some of Olaf's friends, including Morris, this fat, greasy guy who always wanted to talk dirty and squinted and clenched his fingers and tried to hug you. Olaf's mother had a particularly bad cold that week and couldn't go out of the house but she sent her best.

Well we spent that first night at the Loner Continental Hotel, and what with Ollie's friends trying to climb in the transom, and throwing things at the window plus what was going on inside, it was a different night than I'd ever spent. But I got through it.

And then that next morning we were ready to go downstairs when Ollie says "Oh, there's something I should tell you." "Yes?" I says shyly. "It's about Mama," he says. "Yes?" I says, thinking it's about her health and why she's always ailing. "She don't know about you yet," he says. So then it all came out. See, his mother and he were very close, his sister died when he was young, and his daddy when he was fourteen, and so she's real jealous-like. And all this visiting cousins and being sick, that's fabrications of Olaf's because he thought she'd be upset about his having a girl-friend, and he always meant to tell her and then he never did. So now he has this idea. "We could pretend that you're Morris' girl, who wants to get to know farm life before she marries. So you could help Mama for a while and when she gets used to you we'll say you don't like Morris anymore and we're in love or something, and then we'll get married."



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