

PRO

by Lydia Torrance

I'm plenty old — 115 next month — but I'll be a lot older before I ever forget that ride with Portleigh. How could I have guessed then what a swine he was? "Lyddie, honey, let's team up."

"You mean ..."

"No. I mean let's team up. We can get married too, if you want, but I'm talking about a partnership. Think I really sell books? Hah! Think I could pay for this car selling books? I'll level with ya, kid. The books are just a front."

"You mean ..."

"No. I'm not some sorta criminal. I got my degree right here. Lookit."

"Martial arts? You mean..."

"No. Jesus kid, maybe you do need a correspondence course or something. It says 'Marital Arts.'"

"You mean..."

"Not exactly. I'm not so much of a marriage counsellor as a marriage *supplementer*. I get talking books with some of these bored, stupid housewives — which believe it or not a lot of 'em haven't even heard of Lew Wallace — and these housewives are mainly sick of listening to the wireless and eating sweetmeats and getting more and more frustrated. That's where I come in."

"You mean..."

A gigolo! Here I was, in the middle of the prairies, just my one cardboard suitcase, with a strange man — and he turns out to be a gigolo!

I thought, okay, buster, first town we come to, I don't care if it's just a sort of wide space in the road, *I'm getting out!*

"Hey Lyddie, why're ya all purple in the face an' scrunched up against the door with your arms folded like that?"

Why indeed!

I was mad. And I stayed mad for six weeks.

"Hey Lyddie, how come ya haven't said nothin' for six weeks?"

"First town we get to that looks halfway decent, I'm getting out!" I hadn't got out before only because some of the towns we stopped at were just God-awful and the rest were worse than that. Besides, it turned out to be true that Portleigh was a Master of Marital Arts. Had a pink belt. I couldn't say no to him, but it's to my everlasting credit that I never said yes, either. I didn't say anything. But when I finally shouted at him I could see he was hurt.

All that morning, in Dryhump, Man., I'd been waiting in the car for Portleigh, first in front of one house, then in front of

another. I got so sick of leafing through magazines, that if I didn't see another *Godey's Lady's book* again as long as I lived it would've been fine with me. I looked up from a feed catalogue to see Portleigh finally emerge. The painted-faced, brazen-haired hussy was leaning against the screen door, *obscenely*, and twiddling her fingers good-bye at Portleigh; Portleigh, book-suitcase in his left hand, waved to her with his right, full of dollar bills. And then he blew her a kiss. He never did that. I saw red.

He climbed in, and I started screaming.

"Hey Lyddie, what the hell!" And, like I said, he was hurt. He looked tired, too — it was our twelfth house that morning — and right away I started feeling sorry for shouting at him. God knows he was an improvement on Olaf, no matter how he got his living. And he was handsome. And he was a Master of Marital Arts.

"Lyddie, I do believe you're a tetch jealous."

It was true.

"That's a lie! Jealous? Of what? You? The first decent-size metropolis we come to, I'm not kidding, out I get! I'm not fooling, Portleigh. Enough is too much. Virtue is its only reward. Think I like sheltering in the car, day after day, leafing through magazines for the umpteenth time, when some of 'em I've thumbed so much the pages don't have any print on 'em anymore, and all that time you're in some slut's house having fun —"

"Fun?"

"Fun, you heard me, buster — having fun, and leaving me to read seed catalogues that some of 'em I've already memorized, and all the time I'm thinking, Lyddie, what in God's name are you doing here —"

"Fun?"

"— when you could be down in that nice, cool root cellar with Olaf and Mrs. Norgaard. I've had it, Portleigh."

"Fun? Listen —"

"And you said we'd get hitched. Hah! Sure, a poor country girl, inexperienced, why not just hand her a line, promise her anything. Sure. You don't need me, Portleigh. You don't need me at all. What do you need me for, anyway?"

"Listen ... well, Lyddie, I've been meaning to mention that ..."

"Do you mean ...?"

But then he showed me their pictures.

And the beat goes on

SAN FRANCISCO (ZNS-P) - Political detention, oppression, torture and murder are continuing in Chile on an unprecedented scale, according to

found:army

SAN FRANCISCO (ZNS-P) - An army of Persian soldiers who got sidetracked while invading Egypt 2,500 years ago has been found.

Archeologists digging in deserts 300 miles west of Cairo report they have uncovered the skeletons of a complete army, including swords and spears. According to the scientists, the troops were probably buried alive in a violent desert sandstorm. Until the discovery, the fate of the missing army, led by King Ambyses the Second, was a mystery.

Cheer up

The Edmonton Eskimo-HQT Cheerleaders will hold training schools at M.E. LaZerte High School, 6802 - 144 Avenue, Tuesday, March 15 at 6:30 p.m. and Thursday, March 17 at 8 p.m., and at St. Mary High School 65-99 Street on Monday, March 21 at 7:30 p.m. and Tuesday, March 22 at 7:30 p.m.

a report by a United Nations study group.

In its third report in two years, the special working group of the UN human rights commission states that the Chilean secret police keep citizens in a continual state of terror and anxiety and that the number of

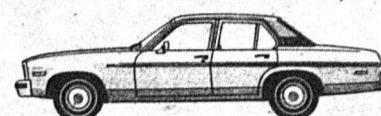
secret arrests are rising.

More than 50 per cent of all prisoners detained by Chilean police in the second half of 1976 disappeared, the report says. The study links these cases to the discovery in recent months of numerous bodies, mutilated beyond recognition.

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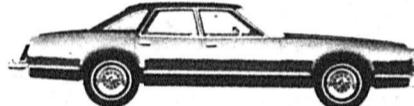
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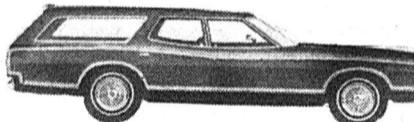


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