

Illustration by
LEON BENIGNI



Benigni
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Fantastic shapes, nightmare heads, swept by to the tom-tom beat of the music. Nanette had a wild desire to escape

FIREFLIES AND THE YELLOW MOON

by JAMES FRANCIS DWYER

It was the smallest bird Nanette had ever seen upon a dish. A *bonne bouche* pathetic to contemplate. It had been grilled to a beautiful cinnamon tint, pinned together with a little silver skewer, laid upon a square of toast, sprinkled with cognac and set on fire. With the spectral flames of the burning brandy darting over bird and toast, the fat waiter tramped pompously across the sitting room of the Trask suite and laid the morsel before Nanette.

The blue eyes of the girl examined the tidbit. The waiter hovered near her chair.

"What is it?" asked the girl.

"*Un petit oiseau, mademoiselle,*" answered the waiter. "A leetle bird called *grive*, miss."

Nanette Trask regarded her offering. A vague feeling of uneasiness had clutched her. Something about the serving of the diminutive bird upset her. What painful care had been exercised to pluck the trifle, grill it, bed it on toast and serve it with blue flames darting over the little skewered body!

"It is a dish for the gourmets," began the waiter.

"I—I don't think I like it," interrupted Nanette. "No, nothing more, thank you. I am finished."

She slipped from the table, crossed the room and disappeared through a door leading to the bedroom of her mother.

The fat waiter, much surprised, carried the small bird away.

Nanette's mother, Mrs. Mannington Trask, was in bed, propped up by many pillows. Straddling her couch, was a huge invalid's tray. A glance at it told Nanette that her mother had led her by a full course. The fragments of a bird, obviously a near relative to the little *grive* that Nanette had refused, had just been pushed aside by the elder woman.

"Why, my dear child!" cried Mrs. Trask. "You surely have not finished your lunch?"

"Yes, mother," answered the girl. "I have finished."

Nanette Trask walked to the window and looked out. Directly below was the Promenade des Anglais, a curving bow that ran from Pont Magnan to the Quai des États-Unis. Upon it moved droves of *hivernants*; time-killers who found their task a tiresome one.

She listened to her mother crunching a small bone. Mrs. Trask had evidently retrieved a morsel from the thrust-aside plate. Nanette wondered if the fat waiter would bring her *grive* to Mrs. Trask. She hoped he would not. She was a little sad about the bird. She felt that it had some strange connection with herself. That was ridiculous of course.

To take her mind from unpleasant thoughts she hummed a little verse that she had used many times as a poetic broom to sweep morbid imaginings from her mind:

"In the harbor, in the island, in the Spanish Seas,
Are the tiny white houses and the oranges trees,
And day-long, night-long, the cool and pleasant
breeze

Of the steady Trade Winds blowing."

"Please don't, child!" cried Mrs. Trask. "You know very well that I am always depressed by Masfield. Didn't you eat your lunch?"

"I ate the *hors d'œuvres*."

"Not the little bird?"

"No, mother."

"Why, dearest?"

"It—it seemed— Oh, I don't know! It—it seemed too much like me."

"IKE you?" The voice of Mrs. Trask leaped upon the assertion. "You silly girl! What do you mean?"

Nanette turned from the window. "I—I don't know," she said helplessly. "It seemed so small and pitiful. With all—all the fuss about serving it up. Sort of trousseau of chopped chives, silver skewer, flaming cognac, and that

The love story of an American girl abroad, facing an unhappy marriage while the Riviera held gay carnival

great ogre of a waiter. It—it was like me! There!"

The "ogre" tapped discreetly at the door and thrust himself into the room with a new dish for Mrs. Trask. He looked rather apprehensively at Nanette. Mrs. Trask was a little afraid that "dear François" had heard the name applied to him by her daughter. She thought that Nanette at times was a little unbalanced. She, Mrs. Trask, would be very pleased when the wedding ceremony was over.

Nanette had turned again to the window. While the fat François whispered about the *côtelettes de veau à la provençale* the girl chanted softly:

"And o' nights there's fireflies and the yellow moon,
And in the ghostly palm trees the sleepy tune
Of the quiet voice calling me, the long low croon
Of the steady Trade Winds blowing."

Oh, fine was that little broom of poesy! It chased away black thoughts and brought little pictures. More than pictures. Much more than pictures. At times the things mentioned in the poem—the things for which Nanette longed—appeared before her. Now, as she stared across the purplish-blue plain of water that ran away to Africa, she saw them. On little legs they came towards the Promenade. The tiny white houses; the orange trees, the yellow moon, and the ghostly palms! They ran inshore and beckoned to her. (Turn to page 60)