

## Short Stories



"... She is popular, what with her beauty and brains coupled together..."

"Who cares for that," he demanded.

"Who indeed!" (Me, me you fool, can't you see.) I was beside myself.

"Help me, Liza, you have to help." He was pleading.

"Is there a chance she'll care for me?"

Phooey! It was too much. I left.

I avoided him. I avoided everybody. For me, Good Friday had come, too soon. It was noticed at home. My sub-teen sister asked if I was in love. I had the symptoms you see, couldn't eat, couldn't sleep, wasn't merry. I'd have died at her tirade if mother hadn't stopped her. It was all true you know. Did I say died? I was dead.

I ran to find comfort in Fr. Delaney's book. "Love" he says, "is giving, the wanting to make a person happy." Neat, here I'm in love and have to make Romy happy by giving him to someone else. Thanks, Father, but . . . thanks.

"Liza, Liza," Romy was calling me. "wait. I tried to talk to you again but you disappeared. This

sions we were together and in parties we became a *barrio*. Our assignments and homework we did together. How I suffered thinking that all he did wasn't for me. He, he was always in the best of spirits, with help from me. He had my unrelenting faith that he was going to win.

I was wondering how much progress he'd made. I kept constantly asking him about it. He had to follow instructions to the letter if he wanted to succeed. He was using much of my time for instructions, and my nerves were frayed.

He was certainly inexperienced. He didn't know how to be popular with other people aside from his classmates and my friends. My friends in fact had become his friends. They kept talking about him. Teasing him in front of me saying he's good, bright and all the things I knew him to be and more. A day didn't pass when his name was not mentioned within my hearing. This had to happen when I meant to forget him after his "happiness".

"Romy," I demanded, after just

# FEELING Special

**I**T HAPPENED. I had been thinking, planning and imagining it ever since the first year and now it has happened. I'll never forget it. He told me he is in love. Perfect, except for one thing: He is in love with someone else.

"Tell me," I barely managed to speak, "all about it."

"She doesn't even know it." He was getting red around the ears. "Liza, tell me, would I have a chance? She is popular, what with her beauty and brains coupled together and dozens of guys trailing her. She . . ."

This was bad. "She can't be a scholar like you are," I coldly interrupted. Or is she? Heck — it's just the musings of a lovesick boy, I consoled myself.

"Books, twenty years, and that's all I have to show. No basketball, no baseball, no nothing. I lack experience. Girls, I didn't even notice them." He was beginning to raise his voice.

"You're the intellectual type." She can't be so good, I hoped wildly.

is important," he seriously explained. "I've got to pass in this and you have to help me. You won't know what it's like wanting to make somebody want you as I want her."

Well, Fr. Delaney, you are right, he might as well be happy if I can never, never, ever be.

"Yes, Romy, I will. With my little experience in teaching Ca-

denying to Mr. Ybañez, the school clerk, that he was my 'steady', "how is it coming along? Don't you know in this phase of your education you've cost me a lot of free book carriers."

"Liza," he was laughing, "don't worry, I'm beginning to see signs of hope. You are my best friend and if you should want anything, here I am ready, willing and able."

by NELLY McFARLAND

techism," I said, "we will win your fight."

Rule 1: Make her think you are interested in someone else.

Rule 2: Get into her gang. Get talked about in front of her.

Rule 3: Make her feel special.

Since then Romy, walked me home from classes and he even carried my books, just like an eager pupil wanting to learn more from an adored teacher. In excur-

"Thanks a lot," I countered dryly.

"About Rule two," he continued, "it's progressing along fine."

He had a knowing smile on his face.

For a dream man, he had a poor sense of humor.

The pinning ceremony of his fraternity was approaching. I didn't have an invitation, I was considered off-limits among his

## The American Nun (Continued from page 19)

Margaret listen to her smooth American English. His brother Esteban got well in time, and soon the two of them were often there at the chapel in conversation with Sister Margaret, which made her very happy.

The following year was a year of hunger for the town of San Quintin. Rain did not come for months, and the sun baked the earth with intense heat, till even the weeds were withering from thirst, the farms became barren and nearly lifeless. During that time, Don Sebastian was busy playing his usurious trade and expanding his property with greedy shrewdness. The people in the town made frantic appeals to their patron saint, San Isidro, for rain, making processions and rituals each day. But the heat of the sun did not abate, and in desperation and fatigue the men started to grind their bolos and knives quietly, sullenly, as warriors would in anticipation of war.

Sister Margaret was terribly alarmed. She knew how serious things would get if hunger didn't stop. She mailed a letter at once, addressed to the head of their religious order in the city, asking for relief goods in great amounts. She could not figure out how long hunger would stay, and she was quite surprised that the government in the town would not do anything to avert the danger from rebellion out of discontent and frustration among the masses. "Why has the government not taken any step yet?" she asked Miguel. The young man merely shrugged his shoulder, and spat on the ground contemptuously, muttering under his breath. "The government, damn the government!"

The relief goods came quickly. Sister Margaret requested Miguel to go to the town to tell the people that there was food in the chapel, and soon enough the town folks came rushing noisily. Some men volunteered to assist the American nun distribute the corn flakes, sardines, corned beef, powdered milk, coffee and sugar, which took them the whole morning, and nearly every one got a share. Sister Margaret, then, sent another requisition for clothes and some more food, and the goods that were delivered to her again lasted for a good six weeks. Then rain poured down from the sky one day, and the farmers

plowed merrily. The once starving town of San Quintin held a big fiesta in honor of the patron saint, and in gratitude to Sister Margaret. To her, the people in the town gave a nice banquet at which the key men in the government and important figures in the civic organizations were present. "Oh, I'm so happy, Miguel," Sister sighed to the young man after the affair was over.

Five years later, the American nun died. A bullet from a tommy gun bored through the left side of her body, and wounds were found on the palms of her hands. She dropped by the roadside in the pitch dark evening when the rebels swooped down upon the town of San Quintin; she had come out of the chapel, having got word that Miguel was in town, under the alias of "Commander Lucifer."

Miguel had disappeared from the place two years before that raid. He had got into trouble with Don Sebastian, and through political influence Don Sebastian had him jailed in the municipio. Miguel thought he was being cheated by the Don in his wages. Bitterly he vowed to his brother Esteban that he would get out of the prison and get even by all means. He did, and that evening he was back hunting for the head of Don Sebastian with a .45 caliber pistol, and with his raiding band he had the policemen slaughtered like pigs.

After she got shot, Sister Margaret, however, did not die instantly. Before she died, she felt two strong arms cradle her limp body, and she thought it was Miguel. "Is that you, Miguel?" she asked faintly and panting; She felt droplets touch her face. She knew that was Miguel holding her. "Where have you been, Miguel?" she said again, her voice thinning out, and slowly her head drooped against the arms. Half-consciously she murmured: "Ring the bell and tell the town that God is here," as if she had memorized that line when she was in the grades; then her hands slid to her side, and she was dead.

Nobody in the town of San Quintin could forget that once there was an American nun who came and lived there, as the brothers Esteban and Miguel could not even when their hair had turned grey. ‡

friends. Romy was without a girl yet.

He was walking me home from my evening class. I was in a nasty mood. I saw him for a while back there talking to the "Madame Curie" in class, and an intimate conversation it looked like, too. My work all wasted on the four-eyed monster. Was she the girl?

"Liza, will you come to the dance with me? We'll go together with Tita and her escort."

My pulse quickened. "The special girl—". I had to be sure.

"You are the special girl and more if you will wear this brooch for me. It was grandma's brooch and she was our special girl."

My! I was the girl! ‡

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