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# The CONFESSIONS of a Taxi-Dancer

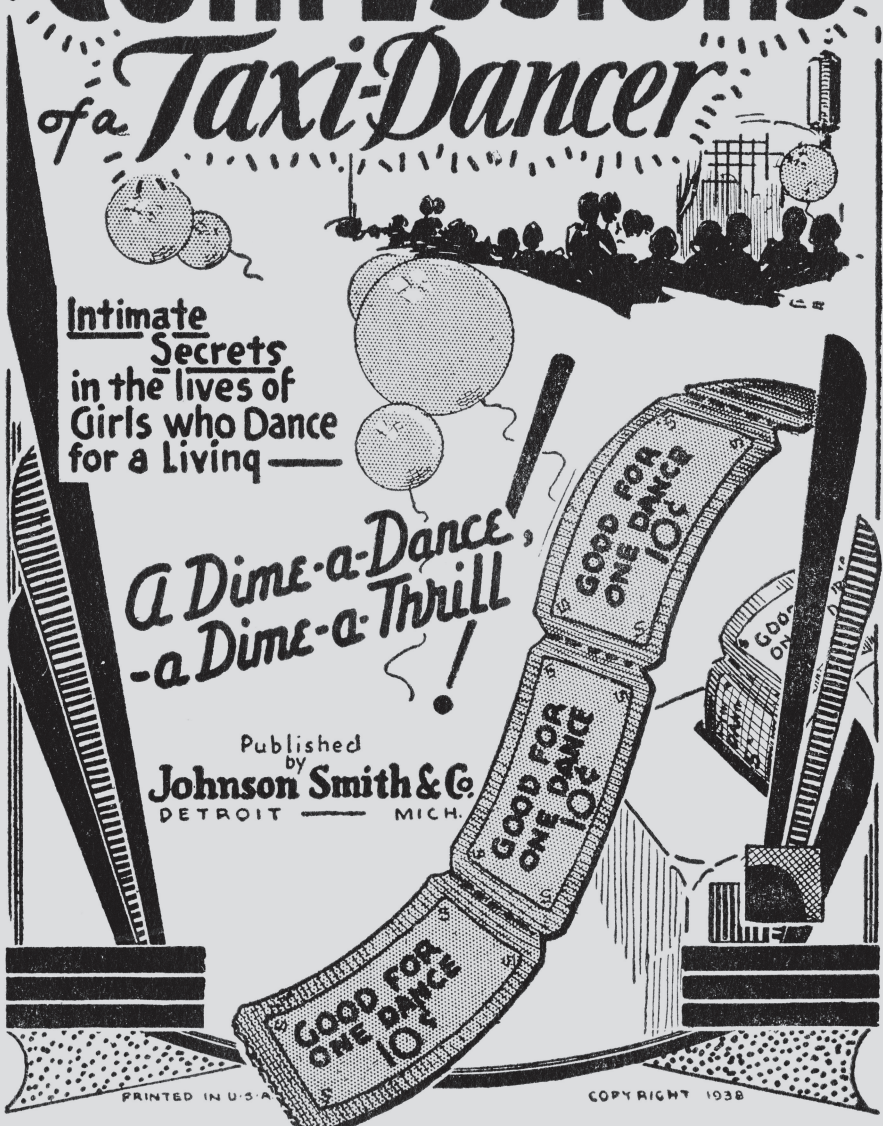
Intimate  
Secrets  
in the lives of  
Girls who Dance  
for a Living

*A Dime-a-Dance,  
-a Dime-a-Thrill!*

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# The Confessions Of A Taxi Dancer

## Introduction

Scarlet, glittering neon signs cover the front of the building. A raucous loudspeaker grates out the basic melodies of the newest song hits.

Pictures of pretty girls adorn the windows and entrance. Pictures are carefully selected—there are blondes, brunettes and redheads.

In beaming, gigantic letters the sign across the top of the building reads:

**Ten Cents A Dance**  
**Partners Furnished**  
**100 Beautiful Girls 100**

For this is the home of the taxi dance. A dime a dance—a dime a thrill.

Groups of men and youths stop to study the pictures. They laugh and comment. Idiosyncracies and peculiarities of the girls are proclaimed frankly and loudly. The comment is hardly respectful.

Music from the scratchy loud-speaker beats into their ears. They laugh again and start for the doorway.

At the top of the stairs is the ticket girl. Admission is 50 cents, but merely a formality, for the patrons are given dance tickets in return. Most patrons take only five—things might not be interesting.

Newcomers elbow and push their way through the throng crowded around the dance floor. All eyes are in one direction.

Standing at the edge of the floor are the unengaged girls. Blondes, brunettes and redheads again. Their attire is gorgeous. Gowns touch the floor. Arms and shoulders are bare. As much of their bosom is exposed as the management allows. Hair is in the newest mode. Perhaps a gardenia or rose nestles amid the swirls and ringlets. Satin slippers peek from under the gowns as they beat the rhythm of the music.

Their luckier sisters are dancing. Most numbers are foxtrots. The management maintains that there is something sensuous about the rhumba and the waltz that arouses the emotions of the patrons too easily. A foxtrot requires energy for fast foot movement—less time to develop objectionable ideas.

The floor is well lighted. For the few waltzes lights are darkened and "spots" sweep the floor. Sometimes amber, sometimes blue. The girls without "slips" guide their partners to the walls when the spotlights gleam. Tight fitting evening gowns reveal folds and fasteners of under garments and the girls wear as little as possible "underneath."

On a balcony sits the "checker." Each night he selects different girls and tabs the number of times they are on the dance floor. At the end of the dancing his count and the number of tickets they turn in must be approximately the same. For the management takes no chances that she might have "boy friends" in the crowd whom she might "treat" to free dances.

A second ticket seller is in a tiny alcove just off the dance floor. She takes in the most money. Usually the men select a partner while they have only the five original tickets. If they find the partner charming and intriguing they "go" for a lot more. The girls know that the second purchase will depend on the impression created. Usually the tickets purchased on the floor are in "long strings." The girls cheerfully wait while the tickets are purchased—they'll get paid for the dance they miss.

And if a "big" purchase is made the girl decides to go to work. She flatters her partner, acts her friendliest, laughs when he laughs. She may let her cheek rest against his, crooning the words of the song in his ears. For that long string of tickets in his pocket represents wages to her—and she's determined to get them all, if possible.

Her partner may suggest a drink. If he's really fascinated he'll offer to pay for the dances she misses. A refreshment counter is away from the dance floor. Only soft drinks. No liquor allowed on the premises—unless some of the boys "sneak" in a bottle.

Unless her time is being "paid for" the taxi-dancer will drink fast. She's anxious to be out on the floor again. Very seldom does she take time out to eat with a patron.

Above it all is the incessant music. On busy evenings the orchestra grinds out about 40 dances an hour. Just slightly more than half a minute for each number. But when business is slow the customers are given a "break" and the orchestra slows down a bit. The routine is the same night after night. The numbers are shifted but slightly. The orchestra, like everybody else in the place, is trying to please the customer.

On "slow" nights there are frequent "free" dances. These are on the house. The girls are permitted to ask the patrons to dance. The catch is that the patrons asked seldom quit after the free dance. They keep on dancing a few more times at least, which is profit for both the girls and the management. There are no free dances when the floor is crowded.

The pause between the dances is hardly more than a few seconds—it may be lengthened a bit when things are particularly dull. The taxi-dancer must learn not to give her partner the idea she has ceased dancing when the pause in the music comes. She stays in his arms, probably still swaying from the final steps of the dance just ended.

The patron must "break" to indicate that he knows the dance is over and desires to stop. If he continues to dance he will hardly pause between numbers.

Dividing his time between the two ticket sellers is the manager, whose job it is to prevent disturbances and adjust complaints of both the girls and the patrons. The girls, as a rule, do not hesitate to complain when a patron becomes too offensive, either in action or by words. The manager's size usually is considerable and on occasion forcibly ejects patrons who have been drinking too much.

Most of the girls smoke—too much in many cases. Their formals give them no opportunity to have their own smokes, but they show no hesitation in asking a patron for a cigarette. The patron usually feels flattered, joins the girl in a smoke, probably buys a soft drink and ends up by starting a long series of dances. If he doesn't think of the formal gown angle he'll buy her a package of cigarettes, which she puts in the locker room.

Most of the girls have a number of formal gowns. But each girl has her "lucky" outfit—the dress in which she seems to make the most money. The girls are alert to every psychological angle—they hate to part with a dress that has served them well. Neither will they experiment with a new coiffure until the old one seems to have outlived its ability in attracting the boys. Each girl has her "lucky" shoes.

Hosiery is not worn. The dancing slippers are soft enough to permit stockingless feet. Hosiery costs money and the girls would wear out three to four pairs of stockings a week. So they went on a hose-less standard a long time ago.

**The Author  
Who Must Remain  
Anonymous**

## Chapter One

### I Am A Taxi Dancer

I am one of the girls described in the previous chapter. I hold no illusions—I am sophistication personified. I know all the answers and most of the questions, too.

Almost nightly I am forced to fence with the expectations of the men who patronize the taxi dances. It would surprise a lot of people if they knew what some men expected for a dime!

I became a taxi dancer because I liked to dance and because the girls earned wages much larger than they could get anywhere else. Out of each ten cents we get a nickel—and there are a lot of nickels in a full night of dancing.

I wasn't so "wise" when I started. I was just a green kid expecting to make a lot of money and have a lot of fun dancing besides. If it hadn't been for some of the older girls in the business I would have made a fool out of myself the first night I danced.

To be a taxi dancer you've got to learn technique at refusing "dates" with the man who has just spent \$3 worth of tickets on you; technique at breaking a "hold" that's becoming too familiar, but without offending the customer, and technique along a lot of other lines too.

You've got to learn how to keep your face turned while dancing with some of the boys, for they'll steal a kiss every time they get the chance. And who wants to kiss every dancing partner?

Those are some of the things I was warned about when I first took my place in the lineup. How badly I needed advice I realized just about the first dance. For some of the boys have a way of "spotting" a girl who

is new and for a while she makes a lot of money. They suspect she's green, and won't hesitate to learn how far she'll "go." After the first few weeks she becomes just one of the girls and her dances and earnings get down to the average.

Oh, I can recall quite clearly the first time I heard "Hold me tighter, honey," whispered into my ear. It confused me a little then, but now it's a different story. I know what to do—and it's all based on calculations. I'll explain later.

The management is quite explicit in the instructions given to the girls. Any advances, improper language or suggestions, or improper dancing are to be reported at once. But if a girl can develop the technique of handling most of the offenders without causing hard feelings it's much better and you don't get the reputation of being a "sorehead."

It's a great game. You never know what you're going to meet or face in the next dance. Most of the boys like to dance and don't go in for any of the rough stuff. They get a "kick" out of dancing with taxi dancers because our arms and shoulders are bare. But there are many exceptions to the rule.

And the exceptions provide the fireworks. Many's the time I said that taxi dancers should have a special guardian angel because even our super-developed technique at keeping certain types at arm's length often is taxed to the utmost.

I'm speaking of the type who tries to get his arm around you so tightly that you have trouble squirming free. Let him get started with his arms tightly around you and he'll ask you to croon the words of the "torch



A taxi dancer knows how to effect moods. She must know when to be scornful, petulant, anxious or "sweetly innocent."

song" that the orchestra offers. A lot of girls have been fooled by this type, especially if he's handsome, for they didn't suspect that the singing was merely a "gag" to keep the girl's mind diverted. While she sings sad and plaintive words he keeps getting closer and closer. His arm encircles more and more of her shoulder and

waist. Too late she realizes that the rules of dancing are about to be broken and unless she has sufficient backbone to "get tough" and order him to "break" she's going to have a hectic time of it. And always in the back of her mind is the realization that if she turns him in she's going to lose a customer. Those tickets buy break-

fast, and shoes, and gowns. No customers and there won't be any of those things.

Then there is the specialty type. He works on the theory that the girls "fall" for the "sympathy racket." He starts by commenting on the hard life the taxi dancers lead, how they are misunderstood by the world, and that they deserve something better out of life. Most taxi-dancers could tell him that story by heart—with the ending as well. But they listen because they're getting two nickels a minute.

After whispering about the unfair deal the girls have been dealt, he offers to be the benefactor who'll provide some of the better things of life. "Ever been to Chicago?" he may ask. No? Well, there is a city for you, he goes on. Plenty of gayety, life, excitement. Why not run down there some weekend with him in his car. Sure, he'll be glad to pay the girl what she'd lose by not working.

Some of the girls have fallen for this "line." When they got back their best friends learned that they got

about half way where it was suggested they stay over for a night in some small town hotel—or even in one of those pint-sized cabins for two along the way. If the girl was smart enough to take some money with her she returned by train or bus. Otherwise she was up against a real problem. And chances are that if she was the kind who'd stay over, she'd find that her escort had changed his mind the next morning about Chicago, or wherever it was they planned on going, and brought her home, much sadder but also much wiser.

All the rest of the tricksters and shysters eventually seem to find their way to the taxi dance also. The "representative" of the movie company looking for new talent appears regularly. He invites the girls to his studios for photographing. He lasts in a city only as long as he can evade the police. For his "racket" is to get the girls to pose while undressed. The pictures, he explains, are then sent to Hollywood. But they really go to some unscrupulous printer who has engravings made and sells the pictures on "postcards," etc.

*Yesterday This Day's Madness did prepare;  
Tomorrow's Silence, Triumph, or Despair;  
Drink! for you know not whence you came,  
nor why:  
Drink! for you know not why you go, nor where.*

## Chapter Two

### The Taxi Dancer's Creed

Yes, we have a creed. It's the same creed the men have. They've put us into a classification. They're out to get as much as they can. Well, so are we. There's little mercy on their side, and we've come to the same conclusion.

Pure love, as represented by cupid and his little bow, seldom finds its way into the taxi dance hall. Maybe the little fellow is afraid he's going to be kidnaped.

Lots of the girls marry men they met there. But seldom does it work out. A month or two and they're back—telling the girls they are divorced. Men seem to have a habit of not being able to forget where they met the girls and when things are a little difficult, never fail to remind them where they came from.

Yet, the search for real love is sometimes pitiful. Some of the girls just go on wishing and hoping, but I've gotten over that stage. The world has branded us with a name and brands have a habit of staying once they're put on. Who wants a taxi dancer as a guest in a drawing room?

A real taxi dancer, one who's had a few years' experience, knows that the odds are against her ever being married happily if she stays in the town where she makes her living. The customers at taxi dance halls aren't just exactly the elite of society. And to marry some of those fellows is being a lot worse off than before. Anyway, most of the fellows who get marrying ideas figure on having their wives keep on dancing, and a girl who falls for that shows that taxi dancing wasn't much of an education after all.

Yes, we older girls have a creed. Get as much as you can and as easy as you can.

We're sophisticated enough to believe that it doesn't make much difference any more if your dancing partner's hands slip a little and he holds you where it isn't supposed to be quite proper. The first few times you feel as though a needle stung you—but when you smilingly say "That's going to cost you two extra tickets" and he just smiles in agreement, well, you just change your view on things.

Of course, you like to have the fellow act as though he were partly a gentleman and that you're still a lady—not accustomed to letting everyone do it. That's part of the technique. For if a partner believes he has made a sudden conquest—and that you're letting him do things because you're attracted—a long string of tickets is almost certain to be the result. Besides, you have to draw the line because you must have enough intuition that he'll not try to go further on the dance floor. Some of the boys have a terrible time trying to control themselves.

But when you meet some of these "two ticket" boys, they always insist on a date when the dance is over. It's pretty difficult at times thinking of six or seven plausible excuses during the course of a single evening, but the girls usually get by with it. The boys who spend a lot of money on a girl don't like to be offended by being refused.

Of course the management promises the authorities that the girls will not be permitted to make "dates" while dancing. The girls promise they won't either, under penalty of losing their jobs.



Sometimes you've got to break away from a "fresh guy."

I've wondered many times whether the management was dumb enough to believe that our expensive fur coats and sweeping evening wraps are paid for out of our earnings at the "joint," as the girls familiarly term the dance hall.

Sure we make dates with the boys—the right boys, I mean. Only they are usually not boys any more in the term of years. We've found out a

long time ago that it hardly pays to make dates with the younger ones because nine times out of ten they're only spending their weekly allowance at the dance hall and once the price of a goodly amount of tickets has cut into the total, there isn't much left except for a bite to eat and a ride home.

It's the middle-aged bachelors, widowers and just plain "cheaters" who

comprise the best field of cultivation for the girls who go in for "dating." We know how to find in what category they fall. Just go out with one of these middle-aged thrill seekers and watch when he pays a bill. He invariably has a bill fold that's full of passes, cards, etc. If he's a bachelor or a widower he won't draw it back when you casually remark, "What an unusual wallet." In fact,

he may hand it to you, closed of course. But the "cheater" is scared almost to death that you might read his name on a card, license or pass. Afterwards he wonders how the girl found out he is married. Just another bit of technique you learn after a few months at the "joint."

I've taken a few of these "boys" for a "ride" myself. But let that wait until later.

*Ah, make the most of what we yet may spend  
Before we too into the Dust descend;  
Dust into Dust, and under Dust to lie  
Sans Wine, sans Song, sans Singer, and -- sans End!*

## Chapter Three

### The High Cost Of Appearance

I mentioned the fact the girls had expensive fur coats and evening wraps. Perhaps the reader would like to know more about the earnings and expenses of the average taxi dancer before I tell more about our private lives.

Well, the average girl has three or four formal gowns. If the average woman bought them they'd represent quite an investment. But a taxi dancer is always in the market for a stunning gown and as a result we get a special price from the dealers. The average price of a gown is around \$20—payable in small weekly installments. The dealer knows that the taxi dancer's account is as good as gold because she's working all the time and if she doesn't pay he can appeal to the management.

As soon as one gown is paid for the dealer is wise enough to show the girl another "creation" and invariably she buys it. The payments, she figures, are really part of the investment required to keep her earnings up—for a lot depends on the gown.

Shoes do not comprise the item of expense it is generally believed. A pair of dancing slippers lasts almost a month, if worn steadily, night after night. No special prices on slippers, but the girls know how to shop and the cost seldom is more than a few dollars a pair.

High in the list of expenses is the care of the hair. The taxi dancer at heart is a bitter enemy of the hair-dressers who constantly create new styles in hair dress. But there is nothing she can do about it except keep in step with the styles. It's always warm in the dance hall and

perspiration isn't conducive to keeping curls and ringlets in place.

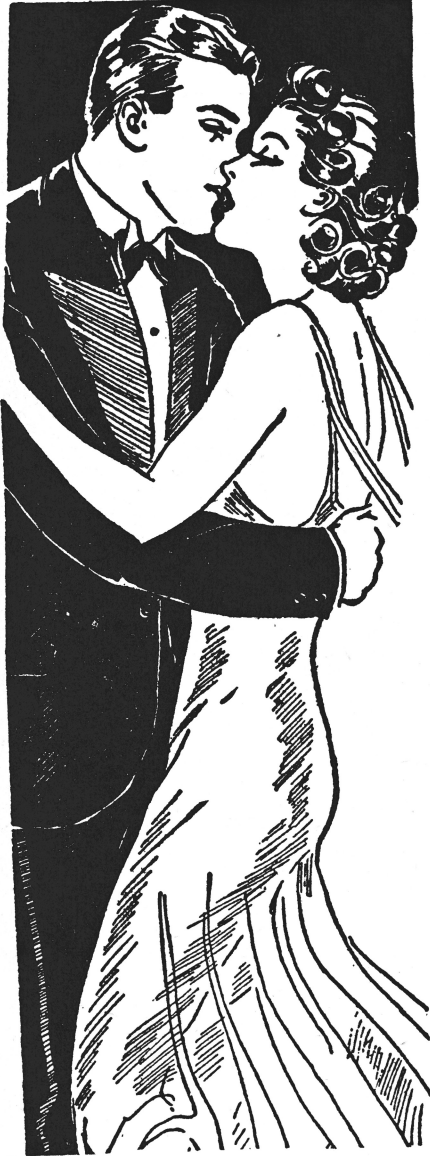
Sometimes we wonder whether hair dressing isn't more important in getting "business" than flashy gowns. For it seems that the girls who have the "craziest" hair styles seem to attract the most customers. But it's a case of going constantly to the beauty parlors and in natural sequence, a never-ending expense.

Most of the girls get their hair dress ideas from the movie magazines. The coiffures of the stars are studied and then copied. If a movie becomes sensationally popular the heroine's coiffure immediately is copied in every taxi dance hall.

It is unusual for a pretty girl to make less than \$25 a week in a taxi dance hall. Most of the more popular girls average around \$35. This may sound like excellent earnings, but the cost of "upkeep" must be taken into consideration.

It is not unusual for a girl with a "run of luck," as we call it, to have her earnings go into the \$40-a-week class at certain intervals. More than one girl has earned over \$50 a week on occasions.

Conventions usually stimulate earnings. Many of the delegates and attendants are from the smaller cities where there have been rumors and stories about taxi dances and the boys want to learn what it's all about. A convention man, with a nice bankroll, usually makes a good customer. Of course, nearly all have the idea of taking the girls out after the evening of dancing is over for the "splurge" that is supposed to accompany all those conventions where wives are not desirable. To make an impression



Some men try to "hold you tight."

on the "big town" girls the "small town" delegate often goes the limit. He has heard that the big city girls are gold diggers and often comes prepared for the worst. You can rest assured that most of the girls do little to discourage his belief—but in a manner that again displays real technique.

You've got to have a special "line" for these "small town" boys. It starts something like this (after he has told you he's only visiting the big city): "Gosh, it must be beautiful living in the country, with the trees, and the grass and the flowers. Here in the big city you get so little of that," and with it you smile sort of whimsically. Once his sympathy is aroused he's usually good for a lot of dances—and maybe a good time afterwards.

The average man is prone to be sympathetic toward a girl—especially one whom he believes is making her living the hard way.

Invariably the "small town" customer is good for a sizeable tip, either in cash or in tickets. The acceptance of cash tips is frowned on, naturally, by the management, but few of the girls won't take them if offered.

Yes, sir, the "small town" convention delegate can be made to feel right important if he believes that he went down to the big city and made a "hit" with one of the girls who figure so strongly in the conversation at the Main street pool room and beer garden. His chest and his head swell with self-importance, even though he'll never be able to tell the boys back home about his amorous triumph for fear that it might get back to his wife.

On the other hand, some conventions are notorious for the fun makers they bring to town, but also have a reputation for small spending budgets. The girls in the taxi dances have most of the conventions rated.

These occasional boosts in weekly earnings bring up the average. Most taxi dancers are "tightwads" themselves, putting away every possible dollar for the inevitable "rainy day." For they know that no business is affected as quickly by economic conditions. During the depression of the '30's the taxi dancers made a meager living in most cities.

## Chapter Four

### Regulations For Taxi Dance Halls

Undoubtedly such statements cause the question: "Why are such places permitted to operate?"

There's nothing wrong at all, fundamentally, with the taxi dance halls. Like most everything else, if there is any contamination it comes from the people who abuse its purpose.

In every large city there are thousands of lonesome men, with whom the problem of finding something interesting to do is a serious problem. Again, there are thousands of men who would like to dance a little better, but have little opportunity to learn from ballroom partners.

For the lonesome man the taxi dance hall can provide an interesting evening. He talks and dances with the girls and they do their best to entertain him. It's part of their job while dancing.

No dancing teacher is more conscientious than a taxi dancer if a man tells her he wants to learn a certain step. He'll have to pay considerable for learning it, but the girl will do her best to teach him. Hardly a night passes but that a girl doesn't teach a man a step—at 10 cents a selection.

Somehow the term taxi dancer became associated in the minds of many people with things that are considered as not quite so nice. Maybe that started the men whose interest was not in dancing to come up to the taxi dances. And their presence alone is enough to make nearly everybody suspicious about the place.

Naturally, the police and other civic authorities endeavor to regulate taxi dance halls. The policewomen are quite zealous in their watch over the girls.

For example, as soon as a girl is engaged by the management the policewomen are informed and they check with the girl.

Here's what I encountered when I started in the business. The policewomen talked to me, alone, the first evening I appeared on the dance floor. They wanted my real name, my home address and a mighty good reason why I left the small town where I was born. They don't take generalities either, for girls must produce letters from home to prove their statements.

If there is the slightest suspicion that a girl ran away from home against the wishes of her parents, the parents are notified—and told where she is working.

I've been told that virtually every girl tries to fool the policewomen with a fictitious name—but few get away with it. And now—with social security numbers on file everywhere it's just about a hopeless task.

The policewomen aren't bashful what they talk over with the new girls. They tell the girls what they can expect and warn them that the slightest complaints regarding their conduct or their action will result in trouble. The girls are warned against associating with older men and a few plain facts are usually thrown in. If a girl heeds the advice of the policewomen she'll save herself a lot of trouble later on.

The policewomen likewise tell the girls what type of gown they can wear. Of course, they can't regulate fashion too far, but they will call in a girl who is attired in a gown that it cut entirely too low and if she

hasn't another one, she's through working for the evening.

And there's undergarment inspection night. None of the girls know just when it will be but at certain intervals the policewomen appear in the hall and taking the girls in small groups into the dressing rooms order them to prove they are properly clothed "underneath."

We fooled the policewomen for a long time by having the cashiers keep a few extra pieces of necessary lingerie under the counter. When the policewomen were seen entering the hall the girls who required the undergarments merely walked over to the cashier, took what they needed and in the smoking room slipped them on!

Nobody around the dance hall would admit it, but many is the time when the girls wish a nice scandal story involving some girl (from another hall of course) would appear in the newspapers. For business booms then!

Morbidly interested men by the hundred flock to the taxi dances about that time to view at first hand the "type" of girl who'd be mixed up in a startling scandal or something equally interesting. For a real business stimulant there's nothing like having a wife assert that she found her husband being passionately embraced by a taxi dancer! Right after that becomes public there are plenty of men who start envying the accused party and come to see just what taxi dancers look like—and probably try to coax them into embraces, too.

But as for seeing a lot of sensuous exhibitions on the dance floor the spectators are almost doomed to disappointment. Of course, there are always a few girls who are willing to go just a little beyond the limit, but in the main no public ballroom is regulated as strictly as the average taxi dance hall. The owners take no chances of losing their profitable business. That's why they don't hesitate to fire a girl if she loses her sense of judgement and almost openly caters to the type of men who take full advantage of the girl's willingness.

An example of the kind of newspaper story which causes business to "boom" at taxi dances is the follow-



Most girls smoke -- often too much.

ing, taken from a Chicago publication:

Does biting a partner's ear or blowing down his neck constitute indecent dancing? Judge Michael Feinberg was asked about it after these and other goings-on were described by the police opposing a suit for an injunction to restrain the city from revoking the license of the \_\_\_\_\_ Dancing Academy.

Sixty instructresses of one kind of dancing or another were interested listeners. On the out-

come of the suit depends their jobs. They got \$10 a week and 5 cents commission on every dance ticket they collect—at 10 cents a dance.

Giggling at her friends in the courtroom, Miss Nancy Kelly, 28 years old, a witness for the operators of the dancing "school," said she had twenty-four dances with Policeman Francis O'Conner. She thought he was a theater usher.

O'Conner testified previously that several of the girls kissed him on the neck while they danced.

"Did you kiss the officer's neck, bite his ear, or blow hot breath down his neck?" asked Attorney Theodore Levin.

"No, I certainly did not," replied Miss Kelly, a slender blonde.

Another blonde, Miss Violet Guerro, 29 years old, also denied kissing, biting, or blowing. She told about dancing with Police-

man Thomas Sampson.

A broad southern accent was displayed by another instructor, Mrs. Wilda Sherrod, 32 years old. She said the "teachers" were told by the management to be perfect ladies. To an appreciative audience she described the low cut red satin gown she wore when the police were there. Policeman O'Conner she referred to as "the young man."

"I danced with him as he would have liked his sister to dance," she said.

In reply to another question, she said, "Honey, I don't know the taste of whisky or even of beer."

An investigator, Walter Cromwell, 33 years old, said a man on the street handed him cards inviting him to the premises on the second floor and promising him "beautiful girls."

He danced with eight girls, four of whom danced indecently, he testified.

*What! out of senseless Nothing to provoke  
A conscious Something to resent the yoke  
Of unpermitted Pleasure, under pain  
Of Everlasting Penalties, if broke!*

## Chapter Five

### A Typical Evening On The Floor

Let me take the reader out on the floor during a typical evening of dancing.

First of all, I'll stand in line with the rest of the girls when the dancing starts. I'll look through the crowd and try to get the eye of a youth who is well dressed and who appears to have "polish." Those are the ones who usually feel sorry for the girls and give them a nice tip as well as a string of dances.

Yes, there is one who has noticed my "casual" glances. He's walking over now. "Shall we dance?" he asks, smilingly. "Certainly," I reply and offer my arms.

We drift into the crowd. I'm sparing for an opening to determine just what type he is. The orchestra swings into a ballad full of sentiment. I sense his reaction, as he seems to dream.

I let my cheek rest against his shoulder. He doesn't object, but appears enthralled by the music and the dancing. The ballad is familiar to me. I sing a few of the words—the most sentimental ones. I always pick out the words with the personal element—"you" and "I." They make the entire picture seem more intimate. He smiles as I sing, but says nothing. Experience tells me that he's lonesome; that he's going to be easy to flatter and probably keep for a lot of dances.

"Your dancing is excellent," I tell him as the orchestra makes the momentary pause between numbers. "You're kidding," he replies. I assure him I'm not, in my most convincing tone. Again he takes me in his arms. "Your dancing is wonderful," he begins. And so the conversation is started.

I ask whether he has been up to the dance before. He undoubtedly hasn't been there previously because he wasn't sure about a girl. I pause in the conversation to sing a few more verses from a particularly haunting number. The words seem to sink into his mind. He makes some comment. I nestle my head closer to his shoulder—and his cheek.

So dance after dance goes by. He's having the time of his life. By this time he is almost certain that most of the stories he has heard about taxi dancers aren't true. He asks whether I'd like a drink. We sit quietly while we sip our sodas. Then we dance some more. Finally he asks the number of tickets he owes me. Quite a few, but he gives them gladly. He's had a glorious evening and assures me that he'll be back soon.

So I stand in line again. The "cream" of the crop is no longer waiting. Now there are mostly older men—and not a few of them are undoubtedly grand-daddies.

One of the old "daddies" has noticed me and I see his eyes drop from my hair to my toes. That's warning enough for me. His eyes sparkle as though suddenly rejuvenated as he comes closer.

Not a word does he utter when he takes me in his arms and starts "pump-handling" his way out on the floor. One of the other girls winks as we pass. She must have danced with him earlier in the evening for the wink was a signal of warning to me. I nod my head in reply.

Right through the crowd we go. Not a word is spoken. Strictly business. The music pauses. I hope the dancing with him is over. No. Cau-

tiously he tears off a ticket from the string in his coat pocket and he hands it over. The music is playing again so we start once more. Gradually he guides me to the darkest corner in the place. I can't help but smile. And when I look at his weazened face and sunken cheeks I almost laugh out loud. But I let him think he's putting over a fast one by getting me into that corner. Ah, finally he's made it. Again and again he pays me that one ticket. And as each successive dance begins he holds me a little tighter. Finally it's too tight. I resist firmly. "Now, girlie," he begins, "let's be friends." I reply that we are friends, but none of that "close dancing" for us. He seems disappointed—again. For I was not the first girl who has "called" him on those ideas. So we walk slowly from the floor and my courteous "thank you" is not answered.

"Daddy" goes back into the crowd to wait until another girl strikes his fancy. I go back in the "line."

Sleek-haired and olive-skinned, my next customer grasps me firmly by the arm and determinedly makes his way into the crowd. His white teeth gleam a glistening contrast to his dark hair.

This, I say to myself, means more trouble. For he is a "type" and utterly detested by most of the girls.

His feet and legs seem as lithe as rubber. I have trouble following him and he is greatly pleased. "Too good for you, huh?" he asks. Too good for me is right, I answer, and he laughs harshly.

"Wanna learn?" he asks. I suggest that we dance more slowly so that we can enjoy it. "O.K. Babe," and he slackens the tempo of his movements. His entire attitude is one of possession; he exudes conceit and egotism.

"I'll take you home tonight," he suggests—he and his V8. Of course, he expects me to agree. I assure him that I have made earlier arrangements. "Break d' date," he almost commands. I smile, for it's going to be fun drawing this petty trickster on.

So we start to argue. Fiercely he commands me again to break the earlier date. His swarthy face turns greenish as the anger brings the blood



Flowing gowns and fancy coiffures attract most men.

to his head. My laugh aggravates him, but I know his vanity will not let him walk away—because then he'd consider me the victor.

We argue as we dance. Finally he realizes that he is getting nowhere and that it's costing money on top of it all. Brusquely he asks "the damages." Grudgingly he gives me the tickets. Mumbling under his breath he walks away, and I follow, tearing the tickets apart for they're easier to carry that way.

The line again. Reuben has come to town, Reuben of the farm and he is standing there looking at me. At least those are my thoughts. The back of his neck is fire-red from the sun; his clothes hang loosely and haven't felt a pressing iron in months. His shoes are light brown—funny, I think, how those rubes always go in for brown shoes.

He's looking right at me and I know what's passing through his mind. He's trying to persuade himself over the mental hill of indetermination and ask me to dance. I feel like taking his arm and leading him out on the floor—as I would some child.

His face gets redder when his eyes meet mine. That's the trick that always works. For in the unbelievably short time that it takes for a thought to pass through the mind he has realized that to hesitate now would make him ridiculous and he walks forward. I act nonchalant.

As soon as we start his big foot comes down on mine, but I say "excuse me." Letting him think it was my fault puts him more at ease and we jerk our way along. Yes, he's from the farm alright, because he tells me all about it. These farm boys constitute a real problem for the taxi dance girls.

If they can be made to feel at ease, they are the most ideal of all customers. But most of them are so shy and embarrassed that nothing seems to work. Get them into the mood and make them forget their awkwardness and they'll spend a lot of money on tickets—and provide the opportunity of having some good fun when the dance is over. For their idea is a good time in a sensible, clean way.

Their dancing is old-fashioned, probably learned at the town or vil-

lage dance hall. But their lack of skill is off-set by that definite air of unsophistication which they seem to exude. Their appearance at the taxi dance hall is to them the realization of "devilment" they have heard exists in the big city. The girls, with their startling gowns and more or less general air of sophistication are really something to talk about when they get back home.

But we go on dancing. Bumped freely here and there we manage to get around. Usually the dance steps are nothing more than diversified versions of the waltz step, for the fast, tricky numbers seldom get much attention at those school socials and village festivals.

The farm youths could easily be taken for "suckers" for their senses are dazzled in the company of the taxi dance girls. But the girls know that they are in town for only a day or so and that their capital is limited. So we work with the boys to show them a good time while we can.

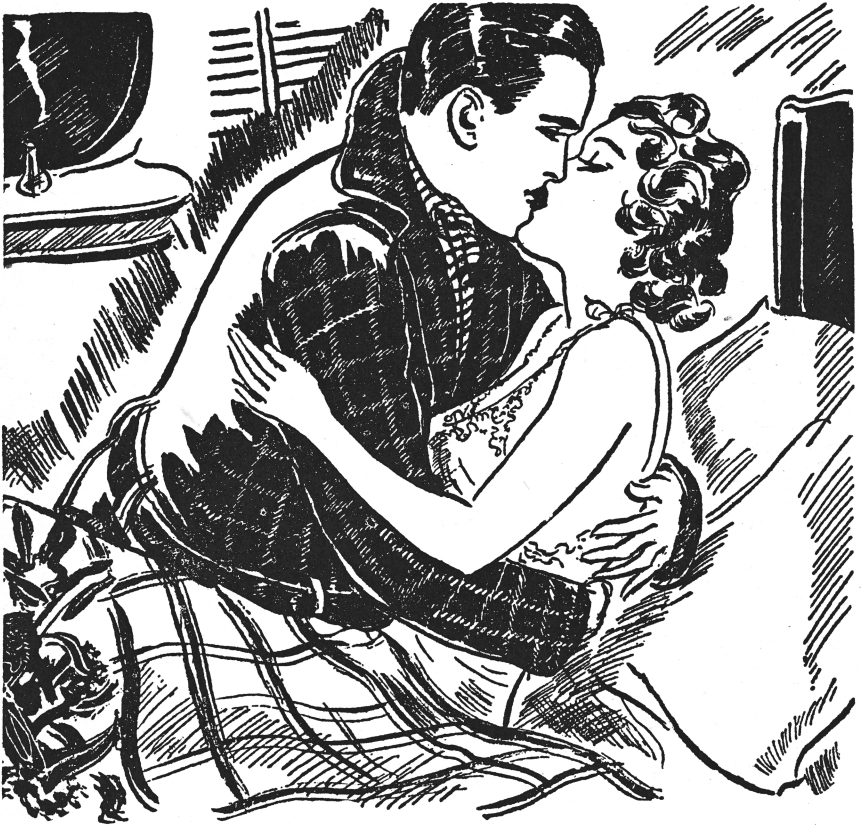
If they do get enough nerve to ask for a date and the girl decides to spend a quiet evening, she'll find that she's led, usually, to a car that's more or less dilapidated. Just looking at these cars makes you visualize the loads of eggs, produce and grain that it has hauled around over the bumpy side roads.

Where to go is the girl's problem. A "ritzy" place still open when the dance ends is out of the question, for her escort is hardly attired in the correct fashion. So it's usually an average type cafe.

But let's get back to the dance. Our boy friend, let's say has danced up his allotment of tickets and, still blushing, walks back into the crowd to watch from afar the rest of the girls.

My next partner will be a typical "wise guy." Handsome, broad-shouldered and with an air of confidence that bodes no good for the girl he selects, he takes my hand without a word of greeting and almost arrogantly makes a path.

For a space of time that seems interminable he doesn't say a word. His eyes are busy carefully inspecting the rest of the girls. His actions indicate that he is fully satisfied with himself.



We all dream of love, but dreams of love seldom seem to come true with the taxi dancers.

Finally he remembers that he is still dancing with me. "Oh, yes," he says with a studied smile, "are you still here?" I reply that I am—but wish to myself that I wasn't.

"What's on tonight, babe?" he asks. Plenty, I reply. He doesn't like that and for a second acts as though he were going to punish me by walking away.

"I'm holding a table at the So and So Club after the dance," he goes on,

as if to give me another chance. "Want to come along?" I decline again. Now he's exasperated and wondering how he can get rid of me without causing any hard feelings. For he's determined to have a girl tonight but isn't very particular who it is. So he dances a few more numbers to make believe that he's no "piker." Finally he gives the excuse that it's getting warm and we walk from the floor. He gives me the tickets grudgingly.

By this time it's getting rather late. After midnight. It's time for the drunks to start coming in. Of course, the management promises the police that no drunks will be allowed, and those who actually stagger are stopped from entering. But it's not the drunks who stagger that cause all the trouble. Rather it's the fellow who has had only a few drinks and whose passions are aroused by the liquor who causes the trouble for the girls.

Here's one of them now. His eyes seem to bore right through your dress. His actions are almost normal, but his features and expression broadcast the fact that he has been drinking.

He picks on me, despite the fact that there are half a dozen other girls in the line also. I wish I could turn away, because anything is liable to happen when you start dancing with one of these fellows.

His first act is to bump hard into another couple. The other fellow did not like it and lets us know with a dour look. My escort is ready to fight, but other dancers pass between and that trouble is averted.

So he turns his attentions to me. Familiarly he fondles my arms, my shoulders. You can feel the passion in his touch—almost in his very presence.

He pulls me tightly against him. Gently I remonstrate and he just laughs. Without uttering the words I know that he thinks "What are you girls up here for anyhow?" He wants to be kissed. I say it's against the rules. He gives his opinion on the rules and insists. I hold my lips toward his. Quickly he tries to meet them with his. But at the last instant I pull my face back and he laughs. He thinks I'm teasing him. So he tries to hold me closely again and kisses the hair above my ear.

By now he knows I'm wary and won't try anything abrupt. He'll attempt to be subtle. So he starts a conversation that might be casual. I'm just as pleasant as can be—for I want no trouble with this type. He's the kind who would wait outside and start an argument.

He tells me he's been to taxi dances before, and he falls back on the "old one" about the music being wonderful—and his favorite number. He

suggests that I sing. So I croon the words in his ear. A little more time, he thinks, and I'll have forgotten that he tried to kiss me. Thus the dances go by.

But his renewed efforts at trying to hold me tightly against him and to press his lips against mine continue to be unsuccessful. He becomes angry. He feels he has been cheated. His resentment becomes bitter, for there is still enough influence from the liquor to make him argumentative. He asks how many tickets he owes me. I tell him—the exact number. He acts surprised. "Tryin' to give me the run-around, eh?" he asks. And adds, "Well you won't get that many. Thought I was drunk and didn't know how to count." He gives me a figure which he says is the number of tickets he owes. Usually it's about half as many.

But I've had his type before. So as we walk from the floor I signal the floor manager, who starts walking toward us. My companion doesn't know him. But as we meet I simply say that I danced a certain number of dances and that I don't seem to be able to collect.

The floor manager merely invites the patron to pay "what this girl says she has coming." This makes the patron still more angry. He claims he was "gypped" and that he danced only half as many numbers as I claimed. "Pay her," the floor manager directs. The fact that there might be trouble is sensed around the hall—but by the employes only. A few more walk up to where we are standing. The patron sees what's happening. He gives the assistant manager enough money to buy the tickets I say I have coming and the patron leaves, mumbling his opinion of a "joint" that "runs just to clip a lot of dumbbells like me."

Perhaps it's after 1 a.m. by now. The drunks are out in full force. But another half hour and still another crowd will start coming. They are the "cheapskates" who wait until 1:30, buy a half dollar's worth of tickets and then expect to find a girl who's still waiting to be asked on a date for the rest of the night.

Usually this last-minute crowd is made up of youngsters about 21 and they always come in groups of three

or four. The younger girls often "fall" for this type, but the older ones shun them like the plague. These youngsters can have very annoying ways, but to the older girls their chief drawback is the "kiddishness" and lack of sophistication. They go into a cafe and love to attract attention—something which the taxi dancer isn't crazy about because she meets too many people in the course of an evening. The youngsters love to tell "tall stories" about almost everything, all with the hope of impressing the girls. None of them for me.

But suppose I do make a date with a clean-cut appearing fellow of around 25. First of all I tell him where to meet me—around the corner and a short distance down the street. This not only because the management doesn't like it, but because there might be other customers outside who'd like to have me go with them, and I don't like to offend any one.

Usually I'm hungry and if he suggests that I select a place to go it will be to a good-class cafe for something to eat. Seldom does the "date" turn out to be anything but that—especially the first time you're out together.

The principal topic of conversation always centers around the dance hall. The boys like to learn some of the "trade secrets" and just what the girls are compelled to "put up" with.

I always send them away fully satisfied. My style here is to hold up your companion of the evening in the light of a gentleman while most of the others fall into a classification far beneath that in which you consider him. Little tales that fall into the classification of being "shady" are what they really want to hear and when they are successful in getting a girl to tell some of these things they get a real kick out of the evening.

After eating, he drives you home and it's always after 4 because the time passes quickly when you talk. Maybe he'd like to park for a while, but he's getting tired himself so you do not have to argue long to convince him that it's time to go home. Usually he asks for a kiss before leaving. Sure, he'll get it because a kiss is a good investment for future business.

Left out of this recounting of an evening until last has been the fellow who always knows a new "story." And some of them are filthy. Most of the girls hate to deal with a customer of this type, but when business is dull you have to stand for a lot of things.

Yes, many of the girls know a lot of stories too. But when a girl becomes known for telling stories to most everyone she soon finds that the worst types which come to the dance hall are going to be her customers.

*O Thou who didst with pitfall and with gin  
Beset the Road I was to wander in,  
Thou wilt not with Predestined Evil round  
Enmesh and then impute my Fall to Sin!*

## Chapter Six

### The Men In A Taxi Dancer's Life

Admittedly there have been "men in my life."

Some of them I was genuinely attracted to; most of them I knew would be merely temporary "attachments."

Some of them have been married—most of them, for that matter, "cheaters" of one sort or another. There is a genuine "kick" in "taking" one of those "cheaters" while he thinks he's putting over a fast one.

Often I've watched from across the table when one of these middle-aged "cheaters" examined every curve of my youthful body with his eyes. Often I couldn't keep from thinking that somewhere his middle-aged wife, who gave him the best years of her life, wondered what he was doing. Yet, if appearances are that he's prosperous, then the sky is the limit.

Taxi dancers, I should have mentioned sooner, usually have one evening a week free. Mondays, as a rule.

Returning to the "cheaters," some of them are so afraid they are going to be "burned" through their little "playing around" that they'll even stand in front of the license plates of the car when they meet you. But their efforts to show you a good time must not be depreciated. Invariably, they go the limit. The finest dinner, the finest liquor is in order. They expect a "big evening" and are willing to pay for it.

How much it's going to amount to is entirely up to the girl. She can let him believe that she's willing to be a companion from "then on" and have a place to go every night off, or she can make it a one night affair and then forget about it.

Let me, for example, tell you about Joe, who thought I was his "girl friend" for a good many weeks. I met Joe in the customary way—at the dance hall. He seemed to like me and danced almost every number the first time he was there. He was cautious in his approaches and felt his way. Finally he got to the point where he asked whether I went out and when I agreed he frankly was delighted.

The first two or three times he was the perfect gentleman, just glad to have company. He bought me good meals, the best of drinks, gardenias, cigarettes, anything I wanted. We watched floor shows in the finest "spots" and never was there any hint of anything but platonic association.

But soon after he started "turning on the heat." He liked to have his arm around my shoulders when we watched a show. With every funny incident he drew me close to his bosom when he laughed. He may have thought he was being casual, but I could have written him a letter on what was coming next.

The first goodnight kiss—how carefully his lips touched mine. Only his lips touched me, his arms were still on good behavior. But with that first kiss the flame of desire was kindled. The signs were easy to read. It was time for a little technique.

After that, when he dropped in at the dance hall for a few dances, his lips constantly were pressed against my hair. I'd pull my head away, but smiled when I did it. He held me closer and didn't talk so much. And he protested when he saw me smiling at other dancers. All these were the positive signs that seem to follow in natural sequence with most men.

The comforts of a hotel suite--  
until the inevitable trouble with  
the "boy friend."



My next move was to determine just what I would like to have. For it was about time that he tried to show me that I would be better off if I stayed his "girl" and paid no attention to anyone else. But Joe was the only one who took a different course.

The next time we dined together he bluntly told me he didn't like the place where I lived. I told him I had little choice and could afford nothing better. "I'll get you a room," he answered. "And it will be a lot better than the one you have now. How would you like to live at the Blank Hotel?" Sure, I would like to live there, but it took money.

"I'll pay a month in advance and you move up there," Joe directed. So I moved—part of my belongings, for I knew that I'd soon be back where I started from. It was going to be a problem keeping Joe away from that room, but I rather enjoyed looking for the trouble. I always felt fully capable of taking care of myself. But I was going to eat free for a while and that would let me add considerably to the savings account.

Joe was very nice about the whole thing. He sent flowers to the room the first few days and didn't make much effort to stay around. But the inevitable was bound to happen and after a week or so he dropped in one afternoon and I soon noticed that he had been drinking. That's always the danger signal. For a lot of men start to think when they've been drinking and invariably they end up by feeling sorry for themselves; feel that they have been cheated.

His "modus operandi" was changed. No longer was there gentleness in his approach. His language changed also. There wasn't any "sweetheart" stuff in his attitude or language now. It was a case of "C'mere, baby." A half drunken man is a difficult thing to reason with, and the best way to handle him is to humor his vanity. So I let him embrace me and kiss me. Rough, brutal passion was written all over his face. I'll always remember how his eyes gleamed. But he forgot that he was dealing with a taxi dancer. Failing to find resistance, as he expected, he wasn't quite so sure of himself. And when I started telling him how hungry I was for a good meal with him at a place where I knew he liked the food, he was tempted. A little more urging with the suggestion that we'd come back to the room afterwards and he assented.

But I went straight to work after dinner—and back to my old room when the dance was over.

Yet, the woman's a fool who'd leave a man under those circum-

stances. When he sobers up he'll be sorry and decide to play a different game in the future. So the thing to do now is to keep away from private places with him, but take his company in public. He'll do almost anything to get the girl back into the same spot where he committed the faux pas. In fact, soon he'll think about the money he spent and conclude that a little more added to the original investment won't be thrown away. They might say this is pretty raw and just plain "gold digging," but the critics will find very few lilies on the men who are the so-called victims of "gold diggers."

In fact, Joe had the nerve to tell me that I was a gold digger when I wouldn't give back a couple of coats that he bought for me!

There are many taxi dancers who ignored their better judgement and experience by letting themselves believe that some of the boys they met while at work meant to "do right" by them. But they always learned in the end that when playing such a precarious game they must adhere to the fast and hard rule of "give as little as possible and take all you can."

A game that's played beyond the law of society cannot have any respectability. Friendship that's formed under such conditions does not have a lasting foundation.

The girl who believes there is milk and honey in the shadows of association with a man who's attracted only by her figure and the fact that she's a taxi dancer always ends up as the loser.

But to get back to the subject of my boy friends. Joe hasn't been the only one. But as far as names are concerned they may have all been Joes. For I never believed for an instant that the names they gave me were correct. Only the dumbest taxi dancer would believe that. Well, none of them ever got my real name either

—for even if we must give it to the management the boys we meet on the floor get a different one.

There was Jimmy—funny little Jimmy with the classy cars. His father was a "big shot" who gave Jimmy everything he wanted. So Jimmy tired of the debutantes in his social class and started looking for excitement in the taxi dance halls. Jimmy was a good kid, as long as it lasted. But Jimmy got tired of the fast life and went back to the social strata in which he belonged.

And Johnny. He was a serious sort of soul who went for that Bohemian stuff. Talked a lot about class restriction and just didn't believe in most of the laws—especially the one that says a man and woman ought to be married before they start living together. He couldn't understand why I was willing to listen to most of his chatter, but drew the line on the non-marriage angle. He was sure he'd make a Bohemian out of me.

Yes, there have been quite a few of them. I'd like to forget about most of them—I wish some of them had never lived. Yet, there are pleasant recollections; evenings when I kidded myself that love would be grand if it were real, nights when romance would have been present if the shadow of the dance hall wasn't with me, and even days and weeks here and there—some of them were mighty nice.

But you can't compromise with your soul. Down deep within you all the time is the realization that it isn't right, isn't normal. Often you wonder whether you still have a chance to get away from it all. It's such an empty existence—full of good times, if you want them, but entirely void of anything substantial; a night of fun, a short acquaintance and maybe even a little hope. There it always ends. You have to start all over again—on the same thing.

## Chapter Seven

### The Tragic Story Of Mona

There's the story of Mona, for instance. Mona, my room-mate. Mona of the big, black eyes and the black hair, daughter of a coal miner who thinks his child is a great success as an office worker in the big city.

When Mona first came to the big city those black eyes shone like pools of liquid fire. The beat and surge of the big city was like a fairyland to her. She dreamed of a good job in one of the factory offices around the city, but soon learned that employment managers were not favorable to girls who came from the country with no big city business training.

Somebody told Mona about the taxi dances and with her good looks she didn't have to ask twice there. For the management of a taxi dance—except in a few isolated instances—loses nothing by hiring good looking girls. The girls are paid only if they dance and when they dance they bring money to the dance hall. So why should the management turn away a pretty girl?

Of course, with Mona it was to be only a temporary job. But it's been three years now and that office job hasn't materialized yet.

The fire isn't in Mona's eyes any more. Instead there's a sort of cold gleam which sometimes makes your heart feel sick. Mona has learned the way of the big city and she's learned a lot about big city men, too. She hasn't that lithe, springy walk which once characterized her movements. Rather, she's grown to walk slowly, smoothly—somebody who had an education once called it *svelte*.

For Mona's been around. She's been to the places where she saw what she once termed "grand ladies." She saw



Mona

them with their silver fox capes and scarfs. She saw their formal gowns that seemed to have a different appearance than those which the girls wear at the dance hall.

Mona has a silver fox cape too now. She has several dinner gowns in her closet, but she never wears them to the dance. In fact, she hardly ever wears the silver fox furs.

Mona went to the dances in the coal mining districts where she was born. but the boys were big and rough and hardly knew a thing about fancy dancing. The music was by

some of the boys or men around town—not by an orchestra in evening clothes. She was too moon-struck to pay much attention to the tips some of the older girls offered when she started on the dance floor.

I don't remember the first night she worked, but she must have looked wonderful in the borrowed formal she wore. She told me all about it so many times I can hardly forget. On every side there were beautiful girls dressed just like she was. And the boys. She couldn't have looked very closely because she thought they all were nice.

Well, Mona got to going out with some of the customers. The smoothest, silkiest and most treacherous of the men were among them. But Mona wasn't dumb and got through those first encounters without any serious damage resulting.

She was disappointed with those first "dates" and they made her dreams grow wistful. She was waiting for her Prince Charming from then on.

He came soon enough—at least so Mona thought at the time. Only he didn't ride up on a prancing white charger. He had a cream-color roadster.

Mona tumbled—hard. She wasn't rooming with me then, but somebody should have told her that the boys who postpone the "fresh stuff" always make up for it in the end.

For awhile she went for those "lovely rides" around the country. There were no advances, just a kiss now and then. Her Prince Charming was everything she had hoped for. Then she started dreaming of marriage. He talked as she did. Her world was beginning to be complete. Then came the dark part of the story. She believed in him; had faith in him. She gave herself to him. But he kept evading positive dates on marriage. At first his excuses sounded plausible. Then doubt came. She was eating her heart out. But she didn't have sense enough as yet to tell her troubles to any of the other girls.

So time went on. The days became more and more miserable. She still gladly accepted the only crumbs he offered—company.

Her looks started to show it. The rest of the girls started to surmise.

Then she told me. It was hard to tell her the truth—that she had been taken for a ride. She was too miserable to offer any fight. The truth just seemed to envelope her. She didn't see him any more.

But Mona suddenly stopped being a girl. She was a woman. A woman who was looking for revenge. Any man was her prey. The determination that had been bred into her veins by generations of coal-mining forebears gave her a will that she hadn't used until then. When she made up her mind it stayed that way.

She was careful about her "dates." The younger customers wondered why she never went out with them. Always Mona seemed to be more interested in the older ones. I knew. Mona was going to exact financial tribute for the way she had been treated. She had decided that romance was a myth and that if she was to be made the object of the hunt it would be an expensive experience for those who tried it.

Mona kept it up a long time. She seemed vivacious, enthusiastic and eager to be good company. The men she went with all fell for her. Mona seemed to have acquired the knack of picking only those who really were infatuated. Their gifts were not only amazing, but often spectacular. But the hunt was in vain for Mona remained an elusive quarry so far as an actual catch was concerned. As the various individuals tired of the chase and probably turned to other fields Mona simply paused to add up the results before she started "playing" the next one.

Mona hasn't said so, but I know that she's saving her money and pretty things for the day when she goes back to the little coal mining community. She's going to have some money in the bank and a lot of nice clothes. Maybe she'll never be able to wear them when she gets back and maybe she will. In any event she'll have them.

And after awhile she's going to marry. Perhaps the chap will be a coal miner, maybe something better. Mona isn't going to be fussy. Because by the time she's ready to go back she'll have her fill of most of the men who go to taxi dances. She's going to find a companion who probably

never heard of a taxi dance and when she goes to the village dance hall all those fancy steps will just be forgotten as she dances the old fashioned waltz.

I may have been around, as they say on the Big Street, but it makes me shudder to think of the attitude which a girl like Mona assumes after an experience like that. Of course, there are a lot of girls who were disappointed in love and never even heard of a taxi dance hall, but not every girl is subjected to the temptation, and more than that, the flattery. Flattery is a poison that sometimes seeps into a woman's mind and blinds her to a realization that she's still living in a world that's very realistic.

I've called this the story of Mona. It could have been the story of Rose, Sadie, Eleanor—a whole lot of others. All of them went through the same ordeal and came out a lot worse—and tougher.

Yes, we're sophisticated to the limit—but right down inside us is the constant yearning for that something which every other woman prays for. We'd give anything to have someone come along and really forget that we were taxi dancers and merely women. To none like ourselves is the truth of the old belief that men want wives whom they feel are not world-wise more apparent. But for the time they want to "chase" why pick on taxi dancers who have a hard enough job trying to get along?

*Come, fill it, and have one with rhymes  
Fill up the lonely glass and drain it  
In Memory of dear old times.*

*Happy are we met  
Happy have we been  
Happy may we part  
And happy meet again.*

## Chapter Eight

### We Like The Term Of Entertainer

We like to classify ourselves as part of that great army of troupers known as the entertainment world.

Flattered and pursued, admired and petted, the inclination to regard ourselves as possessed of talent and personality takes root easily.

Fired by this thought, many of the girls who danced at the price of a "dime per" get jobs in other fields. Sometimes the jobs are better, but often they are worse. Knowing the taxi dancer's love for good earnings, every businessman who can use a pretty girl to stimulate business seems to come to the taxi dance hall for talent.

The beer garden operator who needs a pretty waitress, an attractive check room girl or a girl who has a fair voice invariably offers a job to the taxi dancer. Every job of this type runs pretty close to the limitations of the game known as rackets, but if she is willing to co-operate she can make a lot of money.

During the period when money was extremely scarce during the past depressions and many of the halls cut the price of a dance to five cents, the girls found they could make more money taking some of the "promotion" jobs until times improved.

For example, one of the girls left the taxi dance hall to become a combination entertainer and check girl at a tavern. Of course, the atmosphere was not of the best and the customers not of the city's elite, but when she added up her tips and her salary at the end of the week she was far better off financially than the girls working at the taxi dance hall. And she did get a chance to sit down a great deal of the evening.

But the constant drinking and tobacco-filled atmosphere, together with the long hours soon leave their mark on the girls and the smart ones either come back to the taxi dance or get into something entirely different.

Not a few of the girls have managed to "catch on" as models. Some of them are "practice models" for artists and act as "stand ins" for the professional models. There is not as much money in this type of work as there is in working at some exclusive store. If the taxi dancer has a good figure, good looks and knows something about posture and carriage, she can make a lot of money working a few afternoons during the week.

There's still another place which gets a fair number of girls from the ranks of the taxi dancer and that's the burlesque theater chorus. The burlesque theater manager can't afford to spend a lot of money training girls, so he looks for those who know how to dance. And the taxi dancer, with a sense of rhythm that has been drummed into her ears nightly makes an apt pupil. But burlesque choruses aren't favored so greatly by the girls unless the pay is exceptionally high because the shows don't last long. Of course, the beauty of being a taxi dancer is that you can always come back if there is nothing against your record.

But while the standing of the chorus girl and girls in other types of the entertainment business has been raised considerably in recent years, the newspapers have never screamed the news that some wealthy playboy eloped with a taxi dancer.

There is something about the fact that you dance with everybody which seems to create that atmosphere of suspicion and dislike toward the taxi dancer. Yes, it's a hard thing to live down, if you really want to or have to.

A chorus girl may be accused of having a lot of boy friends, but when her admirers see her she's on the stage in an atmosphere of glamour. When an admirer comes to see a taxi dancer she may be in the arms of almost anybody—and apparently liking it, too. That may be the difference; I'm not positive.

In some cities, like New York, the regulation imposed by the police on both the dance halls and the girls undoubtedly have much to do with the opinion held by the public.

Some of the New York police regulations are: There must be no hidden rooms in the dance hall; all entrances and exits must be open during operating hours. The record of every employe must be filed with the police; there shall be no mixing with the patrons by the girls while they are not on the dance floor; the girls must not drink liquor; no liquor can be displayed at a table where one of the girls is seated; there must be plenty of light in every section of the hall; closing hour is 4 a.m. (this is much later than permitted in many other cities); known rowdies and rough-necks must not be allowed to regard the hall as a meeting place or even be permitted on the premises.

The police regulations even go so far in New York as to limit the number of places which can operate. And if a taxi dance hall "folds up" there is no inclination to issue a license for a successor.

I worked in New York when there were 14 dance halls in the city where taxi dancing was permitted. In addition there were the so-called ballrooms which likewise had "hostesses," but which operated on an entirely different principal. The ballrooms did not adhere to the 30-second dances, but were operated principally for the benefit of couples. The "hostesses" in many instances brought a lot of curious couples to the places. These ballrooms are known as Class A halls.



Romance -- how we love to dream about it.

At these Class A places the department of everybody must be just so—or out you go. The police regulations provide that here an unescorted male patron wishing to dance with one of the "hostesses" must first be introduced by the head hostess. The girls must be paid a minimum of \$25 weekly in Class A places. Dances end at 1:30 a.m. here. Another police provision provides that if you want to "sit out" dances with hostesses the fee shall be \$3.00 an hour.

But the taxi dancers are getting a lot of competition from the beer gardens, etc. In many beer gardens the proprietors will take a chance on letting their pretty singing waitresses mix with the customers and even dance with them. In other words the patron can drink a few beers and dance with one of the waitresses until either he or she gets tired—and a lot cheaper than if he were at a taxi dance hall.

Naturally, all these things cut into the number of patrons which the taxi dance hall can expect.

Our consolation is that this type of place has but little attraction for the tourist and the convention delegate. The allure which expression and opinion has created about the taxi dance always will remain one of the best magnets for attraction.

Tourists, strange as it may seem, often are among the regular summer customers. The male members of a touring party, coming from a city or state where taxi dances are unknown, like to learn what they are like as part of their sightseeing expedition and get a kick out of dancing away the best part of an evening.

But I do not agree with those who assert the days of the taxi dance are numbered. I believe, as I said before, that there is a justifiable place for them in a large community where there is a large transient population. Properly understood the taxi dance can have a definite purpose in the

entertainment life of a modern metropolis. The occasional instances where the taxi dances are publicly abused or attacked can easily be likened to those criticisms made about some places selling liquor.

I believe it is far better to have youths without feminine friends dance in a taxi dance hall than with some waitress in the smoke-filled back room of a tavern or saloon. Most broad-minded people know that the average man likes to dance and there are many men who cannot find girls to take to a ballroom where couples only are permitted. And many youths have told me they would sooner go to a taxi dance where they will not be "refused" by a snobbish girl who dances only with the best of them. That complaint is very common among our patrons who often express genuine disgust with the manner in which some girls act in a ballroom.

*Here's to the merry old world  
And to the days -- be they bright or blue --  
Here's to the Fates, let them bring what they may --  
But the best of them -- that's to you!*

## Chapter Nine

### Conclusion

I cannot help elaborating a little on the final paragraph in the previous chapter. Many of the girls who look with disdain on taxi dances and also the boys who attend them don't know the number of customers they send us.

Oh, I've been to the so-called public dances and watched how some of the girls act. The dance halls usually have a good quota of boys who come without girls hoping that they can get dances with some of the girls who came unescorted.

And I've stood there and watched some of the boys be hurt by many of the girls. Why, I've seen scores of boys turned down by girls who could not make their soup or salt in a taxi dance hall!

The egotism which holds some of the girls in the public ballrooms is almost fantastic. Of course, it's their privilege to choose with whom they care to dance. But they needn't be as "snooty" as they often are when they turn down a request. When a boy walks up to some of these girls and politely asks whether she would care to dance they look him over from head to foot and if the angle of his necktie doesn't just suit them they utter a disgusting "No, thanks" which makes the boy wish he had never heard of a dance hall.

Yes, some of the girls actually get away with "murder." It makes me "burn" when I consider how anxious and glad the girls in the taxi dances are to have some one ask them to dance—for a price, of course.

I don't blame some of the youths who assert they'd never go to a public ballroom without a girl friend. Their feelings are hurt so badly that

they often become actually bitter against the girls.

It might do some of those "snooty" girls a lot of good just to stand in the line at a taxi dance for one night and see just how far their popularity goes when it has to be sold at 10 cents a dance!

I'll say this too about the public ballrooms: A lot of them are not operated 50 per cent as strictly as the average taxi dance hall.

Why, I'll never forget the time I spent a brief vacation in a small mid-western city where dances were held every Saturday night at the club-rooms of a fraternal organization. The conditions were bad enough to make anyone associated with the dance hall business gasp. The practice of bringing a bottle seemed to be quite general. The big majority of the dancers were quite sober, but the policeman in attendance had his hands full weeding out the boys who were under the influence of liquor too greatly to dance properly. And they gave "pass out" checks which permitted those youths who didn't have a bottle to go out and buy a few drinks.

I often wonder whether a lot of the criticism aimed at the taxi dance halls isn't just something that glances off after being aimed at some of the public dance halls first. For I could give almost a blanket guarantee that conditions in the taxi dance halls are a lot better, from the drinking and social evil standpoint, than in a lot of dance halls which are attended by the children of some of those who are our greatest critics.

The reader may never realize how often and cruelly circumstances can inflict injury. That little spark which

we came to know as conscience in church and classroom is a mighty difficult thing to extinguish or control.

Let's take this example: I accept an invitation "to dinner" from one of the boys, who seems to be a friendly, clean-cut sort. Reluctantly I agree to go to one of the better places in town. I know that he sees glamour in me and that he'd love to be seen in public with a girl wearing a low-cut formal gown, extremely modern coiffure and just the right accessories.

But I know I'm not going to enjoy the meal as much as he will. Because there's going to be a third guest at the table. An unseen guest, but whose presence I am going to feel constantly. The unseen, unbidden guest will be Conscience.

For I'm going to be afraid all evening that somebody else with whom I've "dated" will walk in and see me. I'll feel that they'll think I've "worked" somebody else for an expensive meal. They won't give me the benefit of the doubt that I urged strongly against going to this expensive place.

If I go for a ride in a car I hope that the invitation comes from a youth who has a three-year-old auto. Because if he's got a classy, modern car anyone who sees and knows me will think I'm taking him for a buggy ride. Won't people ever understand that taxi dancers are human—and even if they have sophisticated ideas they might want to forget about all that for a little while at least?

Perhaps it sounds a little strange for a taxi dancer to be passing out advice, but here goes anyway. The next time you see those big flaming letters in the sign denoting a taxi dance hall just give a moment's thought to the girls who work there—and why. Don't put the blame right on the girls for anything that might happen—or something you might read about. Just remember—the girls are trying to make a living.

And if you're one of the boys who attends taxi dances give us a break. Don't come up there with the idea that you're going to see a lot of things and do a lot of things which aren't in the rules of good conduct at dance halls.



Come up to dance -- and that's all.

But if you're among those who have other ideas, just bear in mind that you're not a "big shot" of a new pattern. The girls at the taxi dance have handled your type before—no matter what type it is. And if you have ideas of getting tough—well, that won't do you much good either because we've handled some tougher cases.

I'll make this suggestion: If you are a customer or a potential customer, first give us the chance to prove ourselves. Act the part of a gentleman and if one of the girls doesn't act the part of a lady then form your conclusions. But I'll gamble on this: If you act like a gentleman the girls will act like ladies—because they've been trained to act all the parts. All you want to do is dance with them. If you have ideas of romance with them, why just bear in mind that

if it's not on the level they'll know it almost before you talk about it.

But what of my destiny? My future? Your guess is as good as mine.

I have prayed many times that fate will save me from a fate that will keep me dancing until the wrinkles become apparent and I am no longer attractive to the customers.

Frankly, I have often told myself that my best chances for a better future rests with those of the customers who are broadminded enough to know that a girl working there does not have to be "bad" in the sense that the world generally construes the term.

I hoped for a long time to have one of those men become genuinely interested in me, so that I could give him the chance to learn of my dreams and wishes. Sometimes it is difficult to restrain myself from pouring out the story of my hopes and desires when I dance with a patron who easily expresses the suggestion that he is "different." But I can never do it because I fear it would spoil everything.

How I would love to tell such a man that I could love him forever if he would only give me the chance to show him that the world's impression of taxi dance girls may not be one hundred per cent right.

Love? Of course, I could love almost any man like that. I'm not foolish enough to say that there isn't anything like love in the sense that it is something that not every two people could feel toward each other. But I'm practical enough to say that a whole lot of love could grow out of the realization that there will be security and rest and peace out of a marriage with a man whom I didn't know very long. Maybe that's what this "love at first sight" consists of.

The sorrow of heart which a lot of dances with a man of that type brings is difficult to put into words. Just what I'm missing comes to me so poignantly that it is almost maddening. I may know he's a gentleman, but he's a long way removed from the possibility that he would be attracted from the serious standpoint toward a taxi dancer. How I'd love to tell him my story—the story of my hopes and prayers and ideals. But there is no use in kidding yourself.

I've learned that things seldom happen just that way.

You've got to go out and build a campaign to get a man like that. You've got to have yourself in the right position, as the first thing. This may sound a little strange, but it's a part of the belief which many taxi dancers hold. They know they've got to overcome the fact that many believe a taxi dancer isn't all she could be.

Just bear in mind always—we are sophisticated to the limit. We know all the questions and most of the answers.

But we're perfectly willing to forget that we know them if you are. If you aren't—just have your questions ready.

Don't try to kid us—we've been kidded by the best of them.

Remember, we like to call ourselves part of that section known to society as the entertainment world. We'll always try to show you a good time. And we like to have a good time in the manner of your sisters, not in the fashion that is considered as ultra-modern.

There are a lot of us who obtained fairly good educations before circumstances decreed we would have to make our living this way because no other jobs were available. It hurts when a fairly well educated girl must subdue her comments because she knows the man who is paying for dancing with her is a lot dumber than she is. Yet, she can't tell him so because we've learned that if there is anything most men dislike it's a woman who knows as much or more than they do.

While I'm passing out advice, I could add also that we could give a lot of it to the wives of some of the married men who look to the taxi dance hall for a thrill. Oh, it's fine to turn into a loving, homey woman after the preacher has said the necessary words. But a man is a strange kind of an animal. He isn't always satisfied with realizing that he has captured the object of the hunt. He wants excitement to continue. He doesn't believe that marriage is going to end all the fun in life. That's why I'd like to tell a lot of wives that they shouldn't hang up their dancing slippers when they start keeping

house. All her attention needn't be devoted to copying the recipes which her husband's mother used in an effort to appease his hunger.

For the man still loves a good time, whether he's married or not. Not every married man who comes to the taxi dance wants to take out the girls. Many of them want to have a little fun talking with other women—and no harm meant. His wife undoubtedly is jealous and the only way he ever manages to get to talk to another woman—and dance with her—is to sneak down to the taxi dance for an occasional evening.

If some of these wives knew what their husband did they'd undoubtedly go into a faint and upon recovering start packing for a trip back to mother. Some of them are so narrow minded they didn't deserve a good man in the first place. Many homes have been broken up because the wife thought that cooking, washing and ironing constituted all there was so far as marital activity on her part was concerned. Her husband thought he was still young enough to enjoy a pleasant evening doing as they did before the ceremony and that's where the trouble started.

Maybe our sympathies are directed too much toward the man. Perhaps it is because that's the half of the argument with which we come in contact.

But the ears of a lot of wives must burn at some of the tales of sorrow and woe which are passed on to us by some of the husbands. Every once in awhile I come across a stranger who is frank enough to admit that he is married and has "sneaked out" for a good time.

But if I keep on talking about married men the reader will get the impression that the majority of customers are dissatisfied spouses. That, of course, is not true. They constitute but a small percentage, the rest being the single men.

Bachelors? Who ever started the story that most of them disliked women and for that reason didn't get married doesn't know his stuff as far as I am concerned. As far as I'm concerned the bachelor who is nearing 40 and who is just starting to wonder whether he didn't miss a lot after all is another of the "boys" whom I don't want for customers. Nine times out of 10 they've got the idea that every woman is on their trail and while they like to have the girls around them, fear constantly they might fall victim to feminine advances. And I'll say this too: most of the youngish bachelors are the worst tightwads of all. What they've saved in their years of single "blessedness" is going to stay with them and while they like to have a good time aren't willing to pay for it. No, none of those bachelors for me. They're too cautious.

But the time arrives when I will have to conclude this narration. I hope that I've given the reader a chance to glimpse inside of the taxi dance halls and also glimpse into the mind of at least one of the girls who earns her living there.

I know that not every girl thinks the way I do, but I'm quite sure that the reader now has a fairly comprehensive idea of just the way the average girl feels.

So with that thought in mind the author leaves it to the judgement of the reader if any further conclusions are to be reached.

## THE END



