

COPYRIGHT / USAGE

Material on this site may be quoted or reproduced for **personal and educational purposes** without prior permission, provided appropriate credit is given. Any commercial use of this material is prohibited without prior permission from The Special Collections Department - Langsdale Library, University of Baltimore. Commercial requests for use of the transcript or related documentation must be submitted in writing to the address below.

When crediting the use of portions from this site or materials within that are copyrighted by us please use the citation: *Used with permission of the University of Baltimore.*

If you have any requests or questions regarding the use of the transcript or supporting documents, please contact us:

Langsdale Library
Special Collections Department
1420 Maryland Avenue
Baltimore, MD 21201-5779
<http://archives.ubalt.edu>

FANNY WILLIAMS (to be played later by Claudette Colbert) is a dreamy little girl of a poor family. She is devoted to her drunken father, an ex-sailor, now a carpenter, who tells her stories of adventure in far lands and also of knights who are noble, strong and brave. She ~~identifies~~^{fixes} in her mind a knight who will come riding some day, and who will probably be like her father.

The story opens with a prologue which shows that her mother is a depressed, hard-working woman who tries to make both ends meet and bring up her family despite the charming inefficiency of her husband. In this prologue Fanny insists that she wants to grow up some day and marry her father, who tells her these beautiful stories about knights. There is a good deal of sarcasm on her mother's part and some tears on Fanny's. ^{Then} ~~when~~ the news comes that her father has been killed by a street car during one of his drunken debauches.

As Fanny grows older she remains the dreamy, idealistic, aloof child, still devoted to the image of her father, looking for a knight to come riding. When she is so careless as to tell some of her friends of her ideals, they make fun of her. From that time on she keeps her dreams to herself and is known as "peculiar".

When she is in high school she is seized with a passionate hero-worship for Len Marshal, the great high school half-back who has made a great reputation and who is surrounded by admiring girls. This is the first boy who has seemed to measure up to her standard of a noble knight. When he turns out to be a grandstand player, a liar and a hypocrite, she is so embittered that she decides to have nothing more to do with boys.

She quits school and goes to a business college and learns to be a stenographer. She remains aloof from everyone except a hard-boiled, red-headed girl named Katherine Taylor, who becomes her intimate friend. After several jobs which she does not like, she finally obtains a pleasant, permanent post with Katie's firm - J. G. Magnus & Co. So for a while she works along pleasantly, and acquired a mild boy friend named Ralph Harley - an earnest and pleasant boy who works hard and possesses all the virtues of a nice fellow - but his trouble is that he is not romantic, that he has no real dash, and that he does not at all measure up to Fanny's ideal of what a knight should be. Early in their acquaintance he proposes to Fanny, who rejects him sweetly but without any doubt of her feelings. He takes it badly at first, but so much is he in love with Fanny that he tells her he can and will be her friend, hoping that some day she may change her mind. So life moves along without excitement until America enters the war.

Fanny, regarding all members of the service as heroes and knights in the making, plunges into canteen work in all her spare moments. She neglects Ralph, who nevertheless understands her point of view. And one night, while she is doing her duty in the canteen, her hero, in the flesh, enters. Marine Sergeant, shining in dress uniform, mahogany skinned, he walks straight into the deepest recesses of her heart. (I believe Frederic March is supposed to play RALPH, and William Boyd, the stage actor, is the SERGEANT.) With supreme confidence, with the romantic flavor of an old hand with the ladies, SERGEANT GEORGE CAREY simply takes her right over as a possession. She worships him. To her he has all the qualities of the perfect knight.

There are numerous scenes of the development of her complete obsession - walking across the Brooklyn Bridge, watching the lights of New York at the end of Montague Street, on the Palisades, etc. He is humorous, sure of himself and romantic. He has known many women who have loved him.

His relation toward Fanny is different from anything that has ever happened in his life before. For the first time he has found a good girl who is capable of the supreme passion which only a good girl can give. It rather frightens him, used as he is to easy conquests of easy women.

Fanny's brother, Fred, does not like George, because he is a wizened little chiseler. Fanny's mother recognizes in George the same kind of man that her husband was - an adventurous, wandering man who never should be married or settled down.

Biding her time, Ma waits until she sees that the affair is becoming serious, then she gets George alone and, worming out of him the fact that he really intends to marry Fanny almost immediately, she puts various fears into his mind by showing him that he should not be married at all, and persuades him to postpone the marriage until after the war is over.

George, who has been working in a Marine recruiting station, knows that he is about to be sent over-seas. He could still marry Fanny but now his resolution has been dampened by Ma.

Fanny is greatly upset that her mother has even talked to George - although she does not know what her mother has said - and in a big scene of love and passion, tells George that she is afraid that something may happen to prevent

their marriage, and if she thought anything would prevent it, she would go to a hotel with him - would do anything so they would at least have each other. In the book, George, because he is a rake, wants to keep this one affair pure and decent. He puts Fanny off with a false promise that they will be married very soon and lulls her fears. My suggestion is that, to make it stronger, she should go right ahead nevertheless and overcome his scruples, really seducing him for that one time, because he must go over-seas the next day. It would be when he confesses that he must go over-seas that she forces him to take her.

At any rate, he goes away, they are still unmarried, and he is her hero now, being a knight in the great war.

Fanny has a shrine in the corner of the parlor, containing a victrola given her as a good-bye present. There is a certain record which George has told her will always stand for him when he is away, so that when she plays it she must believe that he is right there with her. No one is allowed to touch this sacred phonograph or the records.

As months go on, George's letters become fewer and finally cease. Then comes the news that he has been reported missing - and finally that he was killed. This smashes Fanny's life completely.

After the war is over and Fred returns from the Quartermaster's Department, having married a silly little girl named Zelda, Fanny is still mourning her lost knight. She will not go anywhere or see anyone, she wears black, she mopes around the house worshiping at her shrine, playing the record over and over to herself. On top of the victrola there is George's picture and an American flag.

Ma is thoroughly alarmed for the health and sanity of Fanny. Surely after George has been gone for a year Fanny ought to begin to recover. But she sinks more and more into melancholia. Fred is thoroughly annoyed at Fanny and wants to get her out of the house, both because he does not like her, and because she takes up room which he himself and Zelda would like to have. Further Zelda is going to have a baby, and that will further complicate matters.

(In the book there is an episode of a married man, older and romantic, who offers Fanny a trip to Cuba, permanent ease, clothes, entertainment and luxury as his permanent mistress. He is married, but he has one of those "understandings" with his wife. Fanny, in desperation, almost succeeds in going through with such an arrangement, but his likeness to her father, which has first attracted her, finally succeeds in breaking the arrangement up. I think this entire episode should be omitted.)

Ralph has returned from the Army, and is doing very well in a music store. He is more than ever devoted to Fanny. He is all that Ma could hope for as a son-in-law - an ideal husband, quiet, decent, industrious and devoted. Ma, seeing in him the solution to her problem for Fanny, keeps urging him on her daughter. Fred, seeing in Ralph also a means to get Fanny out of the house, boosts his candidacy. All of this has no effect on Fanny, who admits she likes Ralph, but he is not the type.

On the day that Ralph gets a raise to \$75.00 a week, urged on by Ma, he comes to Fanny and in a very pathetic scene begs her to marry him, whether she loves him or not. When Fanny once more definitely, even if gently refuses, he bitterly tells her that he must get out of her life, then,

as he cannot stand it, loving her as he does without any hope.

This occurs in the afternoon before a horrible party which her brother, Fred, is giving for his fellow ex-soldiers from the Quartermaster Department. He has invited Ralph. Fanny has refused to come, as it makes her much more anguished to be reminded of uniforms and the war. When Ma and Fred find out that Ralph refuses to come because Fanny has turned him down finally, they tell Ralph to come over anyway, that they will have a surprise for him. The raucous and stupid party commences. Fanny tries to escape from it but Fred waylays her. He shows her a letter. This letter was received by Ma a year before. It is from George and says that Ma was right, he is not the sort of person who should marry, he loves Fanny but cannot marry her, he has thought of a way to disappear and Ma must break the news to Fanny as best she can. Ma has saved the letter all the time and even now would not use it, but Fred is determined that Fanny must be snapped out of what he terms an idiotic melancholia.

Fanny takes the letter into her own room; the party gets louder and Ralph sits wondering what it is all about. Fred goes so far as to play the sacred record. Fanny, white with rage and pain, comes back into the room, holding the letter. She goes to Ma and says "Everything in the world I ever loved you always ruined", - slaps Fred a terrific blow in the face - goes to the victrola, takes off the sacred record and smashes it - then goes to Ralph and says, "I'll marry you, but God help both of us if George ^{although I} - hate him ~~and~~ do - ever returns. I don't know what might happen."

Years pass. Fanny becomes a nice, bourgeoisie housewife, belonging to a bridge club and living in a nice little flat.

Ralph prospers and his business becomes so good that he wants to branch out and enlarge. He finally gets the opportunity to buy a very much larger store in Newark, for an absurdly small sum of money. He is a nice, calm, hard-working, middle-class man, dominated by Fanny, who always reminds him from time to time of the fascinating George. Otherwise their life moves smoothly.

No sooner is the bargain completed and irrevocable, and Ralph has moved into his new store in Newark, than the reason for its being such a bargain appears. Trouble begins to happen. A special gang of racketeers preys on people opening businesses in that district. Almost immediately a henchman of the gang calls on Ralph in the store and gives him an involved hint that new music stores are not wanted there; that the reason the late owner was willing to sell so cheaply was because mysterious things happened to him, such as bombings and severe accidents, and a repetition of these occurrences is likely to take place any moment. However, if Ralph will pay somebody a certain sum of money every week, he will find the accidents will not happen.

Ralph is so stubborn that he does not believe the threats, and besides he is not willing to pay any such sum because it would be ruinous to the business from a financial standpoint. He orders the henchman out. The henchman starts back to headquarters, announces mysteriously that the big boss himself will ~~have~~ be told about it.

The big boss himself comes to the store the next day to put the works on Ralph. ^{- He is gone.} The minute he enters he is astonished to learn the identity of his victim. He therefore does not do anything at all about the racketeering for the moment. He makes friendly advances to Ralph, and asks about Fanny and how things are going. Ralph is guarded in his reception of George, but

willing to be at least halfway cordial. George looks just as romantic as ever, except that now there is something a little too slick about him. He wears patent-leather shoes and a somewhat over-emphasized suit. He wins Ralph confidence by telling him that he is a special operative, working in plain clothes, and that he has got wind of this gang of racketeers - that he doesn't dare to do anything on account of the power of the gang and especially of the big boss - and that he wants to get more evidence and bide his time. Therefore, he wants to work with Ralph on getting the goods on the racketeers.

He asks Ralph to bring Fanny to a restaurant where they can talk and where he expects to have some information, and says that he is so well known around the restaurant that it is perfectly safe to talk there.

The next night Ralph does bring Fanny there. George hasn't much information but just enough to keep the illusion going. He now concentrates on Fanny. Fanny is more beautiful than ever, she has turned out to be all that he has ever thought. (George has warned them that he is living under an assumed name on account of having deserted from the Marines, and they must be careful not to give him away, as he has to operate as a special service man under this new alias.)

Fanny bawls him out and lets loose all the reproaches that she has been saving up for years, but when he dances with her and she feels his arms around her, all the old magic of his personal appeal begins to work on her. She fights against it, but in spite of herself she realizes that it is there, although she hates herself for responding to it. George flatters her and uses the old blarney on her, becoming a heavy little by little. At the end of the evening he wants to make a date with her so he can see her when her husband is not there.

She indignantly refuses - but he laughs and says "Oh, that's all right."

A day or so later he comes to Ralph's store and tells Ralph that the whole thing looks pretty dangerous to him - that unless Ralph is prepared for a knock out and drag out fight, he had better give in and pay the weekly protection money. He leaves Ralph pretty well scared, and his attitude is one of ill-concealed contempt for Ralph, whom he considers a weakling and a human rabbit.

Upon the heels of this, the next day after you have shown that Ralph is not only immensely troubled over this and somewhat frightened, but also that he is a little scared and suspicious of Fanny's attitude toward the long lost suitor, George, having found his way to their flat, comes in and gives Fanny considerable of a sales talk about himself. In other words, he creeps up on her up to a certain point. Fanny resists his fatal attraction as much as she can, but when George points out that Ralph is pretty weak-kneed and soft, her defense of Ralph is not very convincing.

When Ralph comes home he is intensely worried. Fanny gets it out of him that the racketeers' henchman has been around again and he is on the point of giving in to their demands, although it will be ruinous. This arouses Fanny's contempt, bearing out as it does the estimate of Ralph that George had urged upon her. She calls Ralph a coward and says something about George as being the type of man Ralph ought to have been, that he would not be afraid of anything like that. In other words, she stings and wounds Ralph deeply. He simply closes up and is hurt.

He now suspects, from a hint, that Fanny has seen George again, and accuses her of it. She flares up and says if she has, what is a soft guy like Ralph going to do about it.

The next evening or afternoon, George again comes to the flat. This time he wastes no moves. He goes right into an attempted seduction of Fanny. He tells her that she has always loved him, that he is the kind for her, he says that he has power, that he can give her romance and that he is a real guy, is he not? She resists, but he grabs her and kisses her, and she becomes as weak as water in the throes of this attraction. And then Ralph enters.

George now goes right into his big act. He says he loves Fanny and he knows Fanny has always loved him. He is the kind of man she ought to have, Ralph is a weakling and should give her up. Ralph begins to be aroused, but his answers are ineffectual. He then becomes rather pitifully defiant. Now his home and everything he loves is at stake. And he has come to suspect that George is also not what he seems, but the menace to his business.

I do not know exactly how the rest of this works out. He might go into a violent scene of physical action, so that there is a fight and he beats George at his own game. But I do not know whether that would be believable. It might come to gun-play, with the gun in the hands of George; while Ralph, to George's utter astonishment, gets the gun away from him, and in self-defense shoots George - with the result that he is exonerated and even made a hero because George is now revealed to the police and the authorities to be a murderer as well as a racketeer, or Ralph might out-wit him, and show him up for a skunk, and do it all by psychology and without physical action.

At any rate, Ralph turns out to be the hero, -- the real knight that Fanny was always looking for and never

^{Her Knight}
< Weaver, John V.A. > Plan for making
a play or a screenplay of his novel
Her Knight Comes Riding (N.Y.: Knopf,
1928). 11 pp., folio, typescript, with
a few words pencilled in Weaver's
hand