

Romance With



Actually, when Heather Angel was married in Yuma, she had on a borrowed frock. But she wears this gorgeous creation in "Romance in the Rain"

Many times she seemed way out of reach, but persistent Rafe Forbes at last touched heaven

By Jerry Lane

RECIPE for romance: A tennis court inspirationally located between a rose-covered tea house and a dahlia garden.

A balmy afternoon.

One very handsome, very blond young man.

One slip of a girl with hair like buffed ebony, an adorably piquant face—and the meanest serve in Hollywood.

* * * * *

"I didn't know an Angel could play a game like you do!" Ralph Forbes lunged for a well placed low one, returned it, missed her answering shot.

"Forty, love," sang out someone from the sidelines.

"Love?" echoed Mr. Forbes, reaching for a high ball.

"Love!" chanted Cupid, swinging on the net.

* * * * *

They'd met a bare half hour before. H. M. Howard, writer extraordinary and "Tottie" to his friends, had done the trick. And Heather Angel had smiled, a very secret little smile, as Rafe lingered over her hand. She couldn't very well explain what she was thinking. But in her mind's eye she was back in India, escaping from the broiling sun into a small, rattan-roofed theater, seeing a picture years old—"Beau Geste."

"That young one, that Forbes, he seems so familiar," she remarked to her friend, a member of the same repertory company in which Heather was touring the Orient. "Do you suppose I could have met him anywhere in London? He's obviously from England, too."

And then in Colombo, another cinema with Forbes a Scotch nobleman this time. In Sarat, he was a dashing army officer up there on the screen. In Calcutta they saw him as a spy. In Hong-Kong he was Betty Compson's lover.

"Is there any other actor in America?" Heather demanded. "Every time we go to a motion picture, there he is! . . . And I still can't place where I met him."

BUT they'd never met. Not until that afternoon on Howard's tennis court. A haunting memory of something never lived, half remembered scenes from an unknown past. Where do they come from?

This, however, was real enough! Rafe Forbes was asking for her telephone number in the customary fashion of young men the world over. There was but one slight hitch. He wrote it down wrong! The very next morning he dialed the number. A cool, impersonal voice slid over the wires to him, "Sloot and Sloot, plumbers. No sir, there's no angel here. This is a plumbing shop."

An Angel

It all happened so suddenly, when they were married, that Rafe didn't have time to make an official proposal!



"Hang!" said Mr. Forbes. No use trying to wheedle it out of the operator. The private numbers of picture people are guarded more zealously than the crown jewels. He tried Howard. Mr. Howard, his secretary informed Rafe, had been called out of town unexpectedly. Not fifteen minutes later, Howard's secretary was informing a Miss Angel that yes, she thought she could get Mr. Forbes' telephone number. Just a minute please. It's . . . here it is, Oxford 3216.

But—here it wasn't! Heather had no way of knowing that the secretary had inadvertently read "6" instead of "7." She was sure of just one thing. Never would she ring Ralph Forbes again. Not as long as she lived. That furious woman who had answered the call. Brrr! It left her petrified. He wouldn't be invited to this cocktail party—nor to any other she gave!

And that's the way matters stood for four months.

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Romance With an Angel

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Mary Forbes, coming to dine with her son one night, had big news. "I saw a charming girl today at the Gleasons. Really charming. I think you two should meet. Her name is Heather Angel . . ."

"I *have* met her, mother! Oh lord," groaned Rafe, "why didn't I break that date at the dentist's and go to the Gleasons?" Mrs. Forbes, fishing thoughtfully for a cherry in her fruit compote, smiled slowly.

It was a certain violently black, star-emptied midnight when he did run into her. They were coming in opposite directions through the entrance of a popular night club. She paused. He turned. Neither liked the other's companion. The air vibrated, changed to a chilly blue.

"Why on earth did she pick *him* to go out with?" thought Rafe.

"He's here with *that* woman," thought Heather.

This was the end between them. The definite finale. They'd forget—

But it was queer how, for people no longer interested in each other, sleep eluded both of them that night. How Forbes stormed and raged and ranted to his genial man Friday the next morning.

"Imagine letting that blankety-blank tag around after her! There ought to be a law against such men! She ought to know better. She—"

IT took the British navy to bring them together. At least a part of it.

When His Majesty's ship, Norfolk, steamed into San Pedro harbor, flags flying, a slim, shining greyhound of the deep, you could hardly suspect it of doubling for Cupid.

"Boom!" went the great guns in salute.

"Boom!" went that mischievous little fellow's bow and arrow.

Rafe saw her as she stepped on deck. Lanterns were strung along the gleaming length of the decks. There was the exciting medley of gold-braided uniforms, beautifully gowned women, the gaiety a warship takes on when it's turned into a flower-trimmed ballroom. "I'll Close My Eyes To Everything Else If You'll Open Your Heart To Me," played the band. The Admiral, Sir Reginald Plunkett-Ernele-Erle-Drax, was bowing over Heather's hand. Who was that with her? Ah—relief—her mother!

Luck was with him tonight. He'd brought his sister, Brenda.

You don't have to worry about a sister, not when she's already surrounded by a half dozen young blades.

By a little expert maneuvering, Rafe managed to get Heather alone for a moment. "Have you seen the shore lights from that nice spot up forward?"

"Yes," acknowledged the littlest Angel, "about eight officers have shown it to me already!" And suddenly they were laughing, looking deep into each other's eyes, drifting . . .

He finessed a dance with her, although by that time Heather was having serious Admiral trouble. She'd forgotten which dances she had promised him. It was a waltz, dreamy, lilting. . . . She was so exquisite and dainty and young. Breath-takingly young. "I'm having a buffet supper for the officers at my

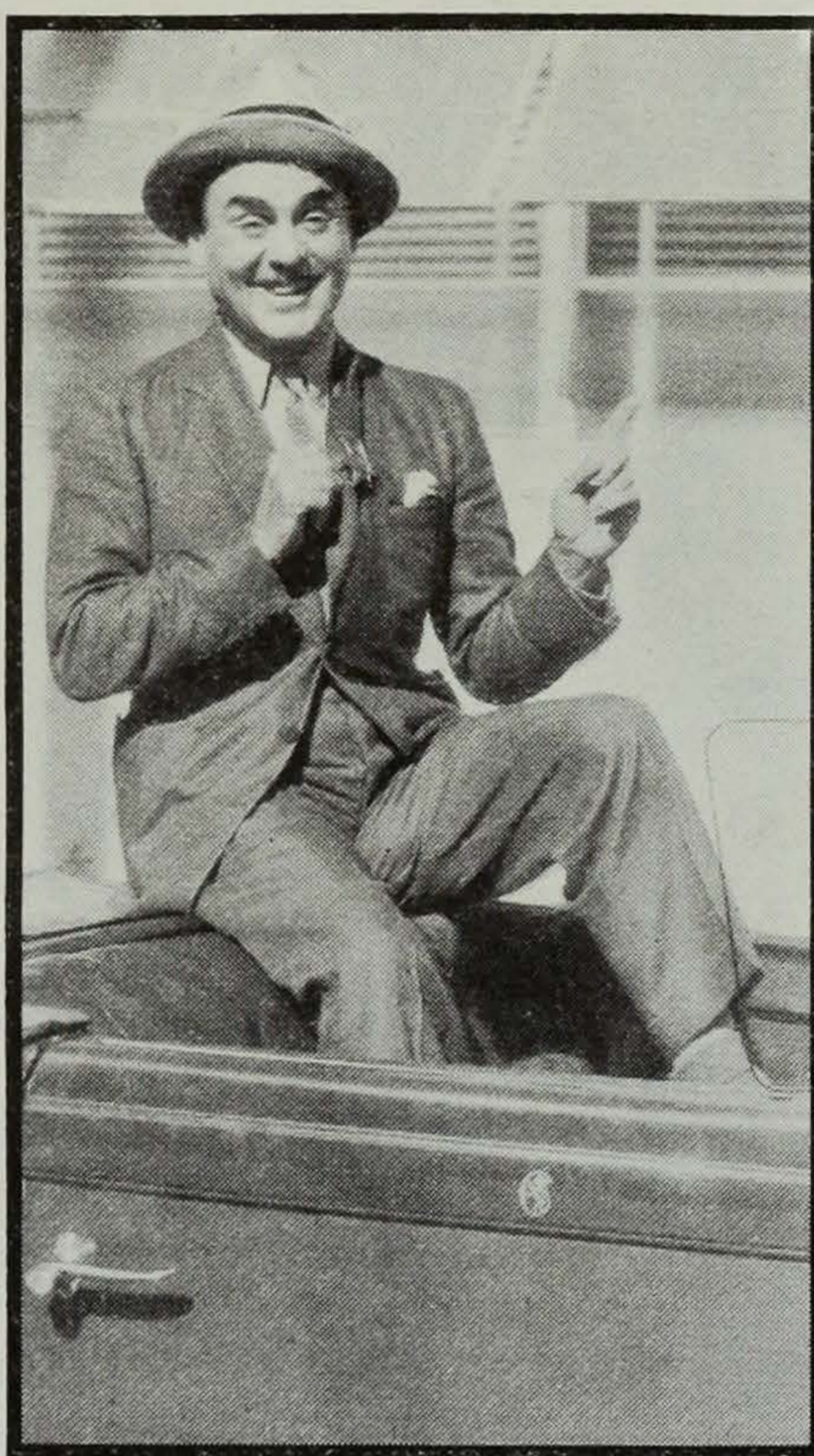
house tomorrow night. Can you come?" His arm tightened about her.

"Yes, I'd love to," murmured Heather against his coat lapel.

"You're so blessedly sweet. You're—"

"I believe," said the Admiral pleasantly, "this is my dance!"

RAFE'S house is an English Norman affair swooping up a hillside in the gentlest fashion possible. A rather glorified bachelor's quarters, surrounded by sweeping lawns and trees that were young when the Spanish conquistadors arrived. A gray parrot, the gift of a sea-wandering friend, holds forth at the



Leo Carrillo, the likeable "bad man" of many pictures, proudly displays his honorary sheriff's badge, so we suppose the country's safe now

entrance. "Hello, darling!" he chirped as Heather entered.

"He's speaking for me!" said Rafe, coming to greet her.

It was good fun, that party. Sea stories were spun until you could fairly feel the spin-drift off the bow and the roll of the deck. Rafe made an exceptionally fine host—considering the fact that he kept his weather-eye constantly fixed on an Angel. And like all good angels, she led the singing. In the garden, that was, along about the pre-daybreak hours. No one thought of departing.

There were rollicking navy songs to be sung, three verses to a song, and the purple hills echoed with them. Laughter, clever toasts, a lusty chorus.

It was two o'clock the following afternoon that Rafe awakened. His man was peering around the door in a slightly perturbed state. "What shall I do, sir? There are two ladies

sitting out on the lawn." Forbes made a Nurmi-like leap for the window. There, calm and quite unconcernedly chatting, were Heather and her chum, Pat Paterson. "We're driving down to the beach," they told him when he put in a hurried appearance. "We thought Mr. Forbes might be lonesome for a breath of salt breeze."

Why, come to think of it, Mr. Forbes was!

Now Hollywood was still ruminating over the sudden Pat Paterson-Charles Boyer nuptials. And Pat was in that state of enthusiasm peculiar to brides, where she wanted to see the whole world happily married. Here was a chance to help the good cause along! Not that it needed helping.

In ecstatic mood, Heather reached for a flower on a nearby bush as they slowed up for a stop sign. It was a nice little flower—only it happened to have a hornet on it. He thoroughly resented being a captive in a slim white hand. It didn't take him long to make the fact known in drastic fashion. Heather screamed. She backed against Rafe's shoulder like a bruised child.

And Rafe—what does any young man do in a case like that? Anyone knows that the general first aid treatment includes considerable hand-holding.

"Oh," breathed Pat looking on, "it's just like something you read in a book!"

And, in truth, the next six weeks would have written a highly romantic chapter in any novel.

THE blessed part of it was—there were no rumors. For once, Hollywood failed to do its usual blaring about a budding love affair. Because Hollywood didn't know. No one suspected. Not even the columnists. It wasn't that Rafe and Heather were trying particularly to keep it a secret. It was just that columnists don't "cover" the Riviera polo field on off days.

"Great shot!" Rafe pulled up to watch. Heather was such an ethereal little thing to be racing so madly down the field, swinging a mallet. A celestial cherub in white whipcord breeches and a silk shirt, riding her mount like a gaucho. He didn't know then that she'd ridden a pony in Oxford almost before she could walk. That in India she'd been in the habit of getting up at five in the morning to exercise a friend's racing horses. But she was a wonder on the polo field.

She was a wonder anywhere. In the evening across candle-lit tables . . . on long rides through orange groves on up to the mountains. They appeared together only twice in public. And then the name-linkers of Filmtown were not around!

It was at her farewell supper for Boyer that Rafe told her:

"Heather, sweet, I'm leaving tomorrow for a fishing trip up in the Sierras. I—I think it's best."

He wanted to figure out this thing that had happened to him, to get a perspective. It's one thing to drift into a romance—and another to be caught in the glorious whirlpool of it that makes your senses reel, your heart pound.

TEN days later he was back. He knew exactly what he wanted of life. He wanted an angel with unfathomable dark eyes and an

adorable shyness and an eager wistful little face. But the Angel was difficult. You can't know an overwhelming love for the first time and be sure what you're about. She was cold and formal one minute, and appealingly warm and dear the next. It put a man on edge.

"I think," he said mournfully one morning, "it's going to take me two more months of steady concentration before I win her over."

That was the morning of August twenty-eighth. There was nothing about it to hint of what was to come.

Pat was giving a cocktail party for Chevalier that afternoon and Mlle. Angel was as remotely impersonal as a marble statue. Most people thought they hadn't met. He was to take her to dinner afterwards and Rafe scowled in bewilderment as he dressed for it. What made her act like that? The telephone jingled. It was Heather.

"I'm so tired tonight, Rafe. Would you mind dining here at Pat's with the two of us?" Was there a tremble in her voice? If he could have known!

Because the Angel had made up her mind! While *she* was dressing. A shaft of late sunlight had fallen across his picture. She stood there looking at it, wondering, and suddenly something went "click" in her heart.

"Heather has just told me something to ask you, Rafe, and I think she'd better ask you herself," Pat leaned across the table in a blaze of excitement. What was up? The girls had been acting queerly ever since he entered the room.

Heather pressed her hands together until the little knuckles showed white.

"How long," she asked, "does it take to get to Yuma?"

Simple words—and then the full meaning of them struck Rafe spellbound. He pushed back his soup . . . went, in a trance, to the other side of the table . . . Carolina, Pat's French cook, dropped a whole tray of plates and no one heard.

These Forbeses are a swift acting lot. Rafe called five airports in so many minutes. Not one plane available. He routed his secretary, Jane Grey, out of bed. She in turn routed Henry, the chauffeur.

"I thought so," said Henry sleepily. "I knew we'd be traveling to Yuma one of these days!"

It occurred to the pair that there were people who might rate being notified. His mother—her mother. "Will you come right up to Pat's apartment in the Sunset Towers," was their cryptic message. "We have something important to tell you!"

There was the little matter, too, of an engagement ring. Rafe searched through his pockets in a frenzy. He had to use something! He did—the slender chain of his watch! He wrapped it around Heather's finger and no ten-carat diamond ever was put on with more tenderness and feeling. There was a catch in her throat as his arms went around her. A love summed up, a question asked, an answer given in that one little phrase—"How long does it take to get to Yuma?"

Usually it takes something like six hours driving from Hollywood. It took them ten. There were delays at the start, of course. Heather had to find a frock of Pat's she could wear. People came. Rafe caught sight of the diamond and sapphire ring on his mother's finger. It had been his grandmother's. His mother was taking it off, giving it to him.

"This is better than the chain!" she smiled. "Funny, I haven't worn it for years. I don't know what possessed me to slip it on tonight."

Jane Grey contributed the wedding ring—one she had worn on her little finger. Everybody emptied their purses, for there's no place you can cash a check at midnight.

Finally they were off, at two-thirty in the morning. Dinnerless, sleepless and blissfully in love.

It was just past Indio that they threw a main bearing. Fortunately, in front of a garage. Hitch-hiking to your wedding . . . hailing busses at daybreak.

But all the busses were going in the wrong direction.

"I've got a 1922 car here," confided the garageman, "but it goes." It did. Just. It was held together by the grace of heaven and little else. There was no back seat.

Only a choice collection of antique farm implements. And in it Heather and Rafe rode to their marriage.

Only four minutes it took, with Judge Freeman reading the simple service. A hot, white sun streamed in.

A bluebottle fly swung in lazy circles. Funny, how Paradise can shift down into a dry little courtroom.

On the way home by train Rafe murmured, "Darling, do you know we have to begin all over again? I'll begin with a star sapphire engagement ring and then we'll get a link of Janey's ring put into a wedding ring of your own."

"It would be nice, dear," said the Angel, "if you'd begin with a proposal! You know you never have—officially—asked me to marry you."

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