

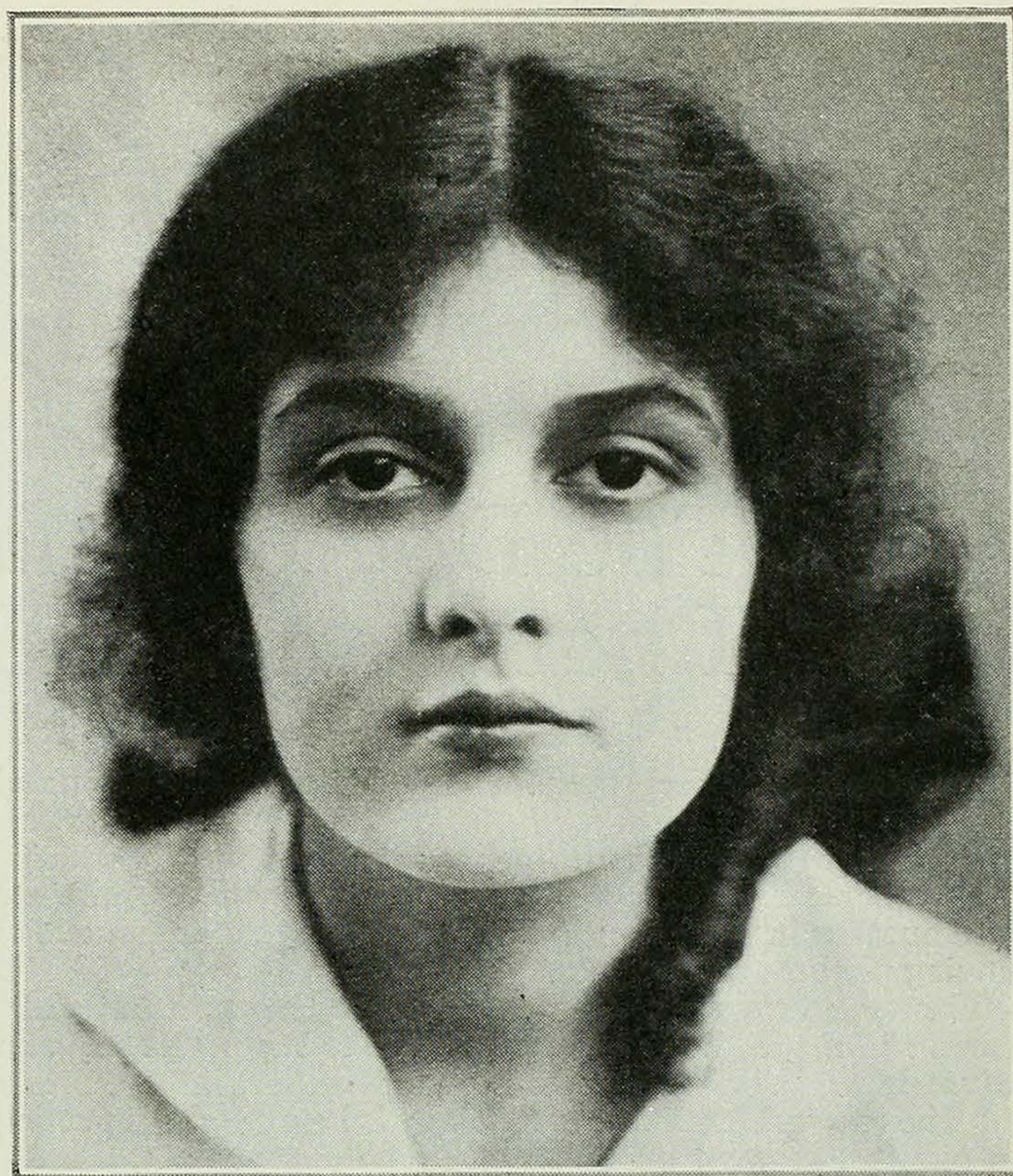


“**I**F you want to get a moral out of my life story,” says Evelyn Brent, “just say that suicide doesn’t pay. It’s foolish. Every time I tried it, the next day something splendid happened. You get just so low in life and then something good is sure to happen. Suicide doesn’t help any. If you succeed you pass out and never know the break that is just around the corner.”

Suicide Never Pays

Evelyn Brent, who tried it twice in despair at ill luck, says "DON'T!"

By Ruth Biery



Evelyn Brent, as she looked when she first broke into motion pictures at Fort Lee. Many heart-aches were ahead but now Miss Brent is happy. "It's taken me twenty-six years but I've gotten there. Anyone else can do the same thing without being half as foolish"

EVELYN BRENT has signed a contract with the Paramount-Famous-Lasky organization. It is not the usual Hollywood six months make-good-if-you-can proposition, but a straight one year dotted-line understanding, with options for the four years thereafter. And when we tell you that one thousand dollars of Evelyn's salary automatically goes into a trust fund each week, where she has no opportunity to spend it, you will realize that here is one of the few girls in this movie-mad city who is not worrying about the question "Are the Stars Doomed?" She is financially independent.

Probably there are some who will sigh with envy as they read this statement. As I sat with her in that luxurious own-your-own apartment, with its chic, novel appointments, I, myself, thought, "Well, here, at least, is one girl who has been thoroughly lucky. One girl who will not need sympathy or tears of understanding."

Ah, how premature, such a feeling.

I wonder if there are any folk in the Cinema City, who really do not need sympathy and understanding? Certainly not the dark-eyed, black bobbed Evelyn of this story.

She sat very still, a diminutive figure in dull gray, as she told us the facts of her life which have never before been told to any human being.

It was to be Evelyn's first day in school in Brooklyn, New York. She was fourteen years old, but felt many years older as she stooped to kiss her little grandmother and pale, worn-out mother good-bye in that nondescript apartment which they had taken upon their arrival from Florida a few months before.

"Remember, Evelyn," her mother's voice broke as she whispered, "we want our girl to have the same education and advantages, as though father had lived to protect her."

Evelyn nodded, and rushed down to the street before anything more could be added. As long as she was in sight of those second story windows, she hurried; but as soon as she had rounded the corner, her pace slackened. Her mind began to work over her family problems.

"There's no use of my going to school," she argued. "I'm going to have to work sooner or later. It might as well be sooner."

"Gee, life is funny." Her mind skipped back a few years. Daddy busy with his horses; mother happy with her house-keeping; she, herself, running about under the great palms of a Florida city. Always the same until that one day. Then—Why did such things have to happen? She could see mother, now, working happily in the kitchen. Father was in the stables. The door opened. A group of men entered—laid down the body of her [CONTINUED ON PAGE 120]



Now Evelyn Brent is happy with a new year's contract—with options for four more years. You will next see her opposite Adolphe Menjou in "A Date With a Duchess"

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over night. Well, this old writer girl put me in it. She had to fight for me; and prob'ly wouldn't have cut the buck, if it hadn't been that the director was pulling like hell to land his sweetie (another extra, like myself) for the feminine lead. My sweet mama played me against the director's patootie—and we both cut it! The director O. K.'d me—my little scenario scribbler O. K.'d Angel-Face. Presto! Stars over night, both of us. That's history."

D'Almonde suddenly appeared to lapse into a retrospective mood. He sat limply slumped—eyes staring straight ahead. "Get him out of it, boy!" I to myself.

"Smoke up," I said, stepping over to him and sticking the cigarette between his lips.

"Thanks," mumbled Vincent, rolling his eyes up at me as I gave him a light. "What was I telling you? Oh, yes, about that break of mine. Well, what I was getting at is this—I told you that I was just plain dumb.

"This little writer friend of mine was worried about me being an extra for a couple of years. She made me change my name from Tony Luchetti to what it is. We did everything we could to cover up my 'past,' and thought we had it pretty well done, when some louse from the publicity department of one of the studios sends me prints of about two dozen 'stills' with this pan of mine looming up more conspicuous than even the principals!

"D' y' get the slant? That boy wanted money for 'em—plenty jack! I was just boob enough to think that it would do me some good to shove this mush of mine up in front of the camera every time I got a chance. This egg threatened to spill the beans if I didn't come across, and buy the negatives."

"Did you?" I asked.

"No, I didn't; but it cost my scenario mama one thousand round berries for 'em! There was a lot of publicity out about me being a new 'find' from Buenos Aires. What the hell else was there to do?"

"There you are, Big Boy," concluded Vincent. "Does that prove what I said about being dumb? I'll say, plenty!"

"You didn't need to prove it to me," I rejoined, "and as an actor, I think you are a perfect imitation of a large slice of cheese."

"Yeah?—is that so?" came back D'Almonde, with wrinkled nose and lowered lids. "Well, I'll tellya, Slim. I've read some of your stuff, and as a writer, I think you are an A-1 stewart of tripe! So I guess we're fifty-fifty on that admiration stuff."

Time was shoving on towards noon. "One thing more," I requested. "You dearly love your wife, and your home life is very, very happy, is it not?"

VINCENT sat bolt upright, and gazed at me with the reproachful eyes of a chastised dog.

"Now, wait a minute, fella," he said. "I've been on the up-and-up with you, ain't I? I've given you cold turkey on a lotta things, ain't I? Well then, be regular and lay off that stuff."

"You know the whole world understands that I am the shining example of an ideally married star. My contract states that any time I go haywire, or the wife goes haywire, I'm out of a job.

"So show some appreciation for what I been telling you, and lay off that stuff."

"But *someone* loves your wife!" I ventured.

"Well then, why not let—"

"And you love *someone*—?"

"Say! just one more question like that, and a sock in the nose for you, ink slinger! I'll . . ."

Of a sudden D'Almonde's ferocious aspect deserted him; and he slumped back into that odd brooding mood—eyes fixed, body limp.

Scribbling "Thanks for the Interview" upon a slip of paper, I inserted it between the fingers of his inert hand, in substitution for the cigarette that was burning there, and, pocketing my notes, stole quietly away from the Garden of Truth.

Suicide Never Pays

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 33]

father. Not a word was spoken. Just her mother's cry—then her mother's prostrate body on top of her father's.

Those long months of mother's illness. Of course, she was better now. She knew Evelyn and her grandmother. She knew what she was doing. The New York doctors had helped, but even they said there would come another time, when mother would be unable to remember.

"THERE'S no use. They won't tell me. But I know there's darned little money. And neither of them can work. It's up to me. Besides, I want to be an actress!"

So, instead of going to school, as mother and grandmother had intended, the fourteen-year-old youngster hurried to the offices of the various casting directors in New York City. And because she was plucky and shrewd and pretty and would work for five dollars a day at anything offered, she became one of the steady extras at the World Film company at Fort Lee, across the Hudson from the big city.

"But there's always a day of reckoning," the twenty-six year Evelyn told me as she recounted the studio wanderings of the fourteen-year-old youngster. "They decided to give me a contract at twenty-five dollars a week. But instead of telling me about it, they wrote me a letter. Mother opened it. She went down to the school and found I had never been present. When I came home, they asked me, and, not knowing, I lied like a trooper."

Evelyn hesitated to tell about the scene which followed. It wasn't a pretty picture. Mother and grandmother hurt and discouraged because their little girl should scorn an educa-

tion; Evelyn proud and disdainful, displaying the money she had been saving. Finally, they all went to the studio where she had been working. And that visit won her her first life battle. She became, permanently, a motion picture actress.

It was fortunate, indeed. For only a few weeks later, the little mother's mind forgot again; and the grandmother, heartbroken and ill, passed to a land where there are no troubles.

"I had exactly forty dollars left after grandmother was buried," she told me. "And mother—well, mother loved violets. I used to bring her some every time I could afford it. One day I came in to find she had gotten hold of a violet colored silk cord. She was tying it around her neck. I had to take her up to a farm house in Connecticut, where there was a doctor who could look after her every minute."

A FEW months later, the little mother went to join the grandmother and the husband, where Evelyn knew she would be more happy.

There came a slump in the motion picture profession. The girl with whom she shared a seven-dollar a week room became discouraged and married a man who had a steady position.

"I did play one lead at this time. With Lionel Barrymore in 'Millionaire's Double.' It was absolutely the happiest day of my life—and my last job for many months," she added.

"I took a test for Selznick for a dramatic part. But they said I hadn't enough experience and hired Martha Mansfield. That seemed my last chance. There seemed nothing whatever left for me."

Evelyn hesitated a moment at this point of her story.

"Pneumonia and pleurisy followed. I didn't have any money at all. A friend of grandmother's had taken me to her house. But I didn't like that. I was used to earning my own living. All that I asked of life was to be a dramatic actress—and that seemed forbidden.

"The doctors had given me morphine. I took the whole bottle. A stomach pump was all I got for my trouble!"

ALL she got—at the moment. But a month later, the woman with whom she was living sailed for France and took Evelyn with her.

"That was the most carefree time of my life! We lived in the French quarters and saw only French people.

"Oh, the French people, the real middle-class French people, know how to be always happy."

Came time to return to the home-country. Two weeks in England was scheduled. And there, fate began playing with the life of Evelyn.

She was dining in the Piccadilly hotel one afternoon when she met the famous Maurice, the dancer. Now, of course, men are always attracted by Evelyn. Maurice was no exception. When he found she was an actress, he exclaimed, "I know an American producer who's tied himself into knots hunting for an American girl for his play. I'm going to tell him about you."

Although Evelyn insisted to both Maurice and the producer that she knew nothing of stage-craft, she was given the part—and stole the show in the bargain.

The leading man was working in a motion picture, between performances. Evelyn went with him and in a few days was making three hundred fifty dollars a week between the two occupations.

"My, but I thought I was wealthy!" she laughed a little. "I made fourteen pictures in England, saved up quite a lot of money and thought my life was straight sailing—but, I fell in love!"

Another almost imperceptible pause in her recitation.

"He was a married man. It was hopeless from the very beginning. He had a wife and children. Although he had not been living with them for some time, what could I offer in comparison? I wouldn't give up my career for any man living. Oh, it was just no use.



* Among some of the young moderns, the anklet takes the place of the engagement ring. Sue Carol wears a platinum anklet, but she denies that it means she is going to marry Nick Stuart



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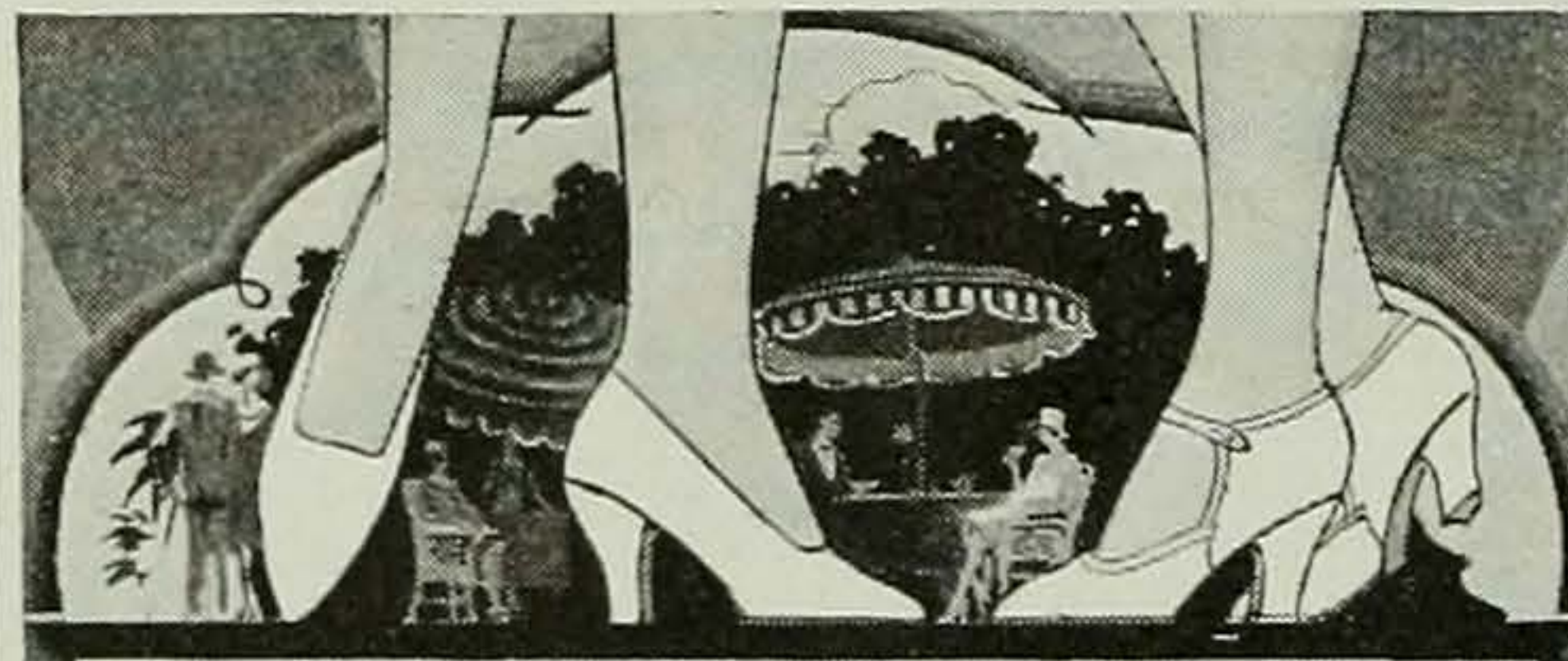
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But it was the first time I had been in love. I told him he must go. He went to America to get away from me.

"Funny, how one heartache leads to another, isn't it? He had no more than gone, when there came a slump in the English productions. They couldn't compete with the Americans. I couldn't find a thing to do. Finally, there came a chance on the stage. It was my last hope.

"On the fourth day—I caught cold. All I can remember is getting home. They found me on the floor of the bathroom, six hours later, unconscious."

Pneumonia, pleurisy and, this time, rheumatism with it. Easter Sunday was to be Evelyn's last day, according to the physicians. But again she defied the fates. Four weeks in the country with a trained nurse, and she returned to London without a penny left of her savings.

AND the day she returned, a cablegram informed her that the man she had loved had died in New York City.

She was thin, ill, haggard. The legitimate stage did not want her. The motion pictures were still closed.

What was there left for her?

"I took iodine this time. I didn't know that a person cannot swallow enough iodine to kill them. Another illness was all I had this time for my trouble!

"America! I wanted to get back to my own country. But boats cost money. I didn't know which way to turn.

"And the very next day after I decided I must get home, some way, an agent called up and asked if I'd like to play a part in a picture that the Cunard line was going to make on a ship going to America. *Would I like?* They gave me fifty pounds and my passage to New York City. And you know the rest of my story."

Yes, we know the rest. Douglas Fairbanks had seen one of her English pictures in his projection room in Hollywood and determined he would like her for his leading lady. When he found she was in New York City, doing extra work again, he signed her on a contract and brought her to California. Then, for a whole year, she didn't play in a picture! Perhaps this was the most heart-breaking point of Evelyn's entire life story. In the meantime she had met and married B. F. Fineman, an executive at Paramount-Famous-Lasky; but her heart yearned to continue her attempts to become a real dramatic actress. Finally, her husband secured her release from her contract and Evelyn began Hollywood freelancing.

"And to show how experiences dove-tail together," Evelyn concluded. "Von Sternberg had been an assistant something-or-other in England. I didn't remember him, but fortunately, he remembered me. He insisted on having me for the lead in 'Underworld' with George Bancroft, which, after twelve years, was my first real break in pictures."

NO, Evelyn is no longer Mrs. Fineman. But she and Mr. Fineman are seen lunching together at least once a week in the Cinema City. "He is still my best friend. We just get along better as friends than we do as husband and wife," was her candid explanation.

"If you want to get a moral out of my story," she added, as she uncurled herself from the cushioned chair, in which she had been half-hiding, while she was talking, "just say that suicide doesn't pay. It's foolish. Every time I tried it, the next day something splendid happened. You get just so low in life, and then something good is sure to happen. Suicide doesn't help any. If you succeed, you pass out and never know the break that is just around the corner; if you don't, you're downright sick and feel like a dumb-bell for causing so much trouble. It's taken me twenty-six years, but I've gotten there and I'm happy. Anyone else can do the same thing without being half as foolish."