

Anne

By Dick Campbell

I LEAPED over the three front steps and jabbed nervously at the doorbell, hoping that Anne would be ready this time. She sometimes seemed to delight in the conspicuous late entrances that we made at most of the parties we attended. I planted my thumb on the button and held it there. Anne's voice rang with excitement through the upstairs window. "Come in, Ran, and make yourself at home. I'll be down in two jiffs. The evening *Trib* is on the radio. Oh, I'm so excited I hardly know which way to turn!"

I heard her from the inside now. The living room, small and modestly furnished, gave one a sense of home and rest. "Oh, Ranny," Anne called from the head of the stairs, "Ranny, don't you think it is wonderful that we were invited to Mrs. Van Ouster's party for her niece? I am just dying to get inside that house. It looks just like a palace, up on that great big hill. You have to climb a lot of stairs before you even get to the front porch, only I guess you call theirs a veranda. Mother said it is so luxurious inside—big oozy chairs with velvet on them, a winding stairway, and a grand piano, and carpets all over the floor. I wonder what Mrs. Van's niece is really like. I was talking to Sybil today, and she said that she and Joe weren't invited and that the niece was just a snobby little snip. My, won't the rest of the gang be burned up when they read the write-up the *Bugle* is sure to have. O-oh, Ranny, aren't you thrilled?—Ranny?— - - -Aren't you thrilled? - - -"

"WHAT?—Oh, yes,—yes, it will be fun." I tried to figure things out. I often wondered why I liked Anne. Sometimes she was almost as disgusting as my baby sister. She kept me waiting almost every time. Why did she always have to be late? We were late to Jordan's party just because she wasn't ready. She said she had worked hard that day, and when I asked her what she had done, she started to cry and said, "You

think I don't know how to do a thing, don't you?" We had just made up when Jack had his dance. We were the last ones to arrive, and Anne insisted that we be the last ones to leave after the refreshments. She had acted so silly with Jack's cousin during the evening. Then she threw him a kiss when I finally did get her started out the door. She never did that to me.

She always handed me her books on the way to and from school. She even had me tie her shoestring on Main Street once, and then laughed at me, accusing me of turning red. She danced very gracefully, though, and could say just the right word no matter what happened, but either Virginia or Peggy could do that too. Would she always be that puzzling? Would she be that way even next year when she was eighteen?

"**R**RANNY, I'm just about ready now." Folding the newspaper that I had leafed through, but hadn't read a word of, I stood up and looked toward the stairs. She was already descending.

Her brown hair lay in crisp waves which became curls at the ends. Her dark eyes flashed in young excitement. The long peach-colored dress and high-heeled pumps made her look grown-up—that look which all young girls strive for. In her hand she carried the golden compact I had so proudly given her on her last birthday. She said nothing; I too was silent. We only smiled. After I helped her with her wrap we started down the front walk to another party, late—as usual. But I did not care, for she had slipped her little hand through my arm.

