

In foolish fancy, the
young heart flounders. In wisdom,
it flourishes free.



ake care of *my little girl*


• Liz Ericson was sure of it—never before had she seen such bustling activity or heard such a din of chatter as that surrounding her now. Lovely of face and figure, attractively dressed, she clearly stood out among the group of young girls thronging the small lobby of the college-town hotel. Yet, in her heart, she was awed and a little frightened. And it didn't seem to make any difference that no one else realized it. *She* knew her well-developed poise was shaken—that the excitement of this first day as a freshman at Midwestern University had brought a strange flush of shyness to her cheeks.

Making her way to the room clerk's desk with her best friend, Janet Shaw, she wondered if college meant as much to the other girls as it did to her. Certainly, they were all just as excited. The hum of their high-pitched voices, as they talked anxiously of studies and football, work and play, was proof enough of that.

But for Liz, Midwestern U. meant something else, too. Tri-U—Upsilon Upsilon Sorority. Her mother had pledged Tri-U when she was here at college, and had talked about it unceasingly ever since Liz could remember. Naturally, she too would become a member. It was, if not a family tradition, at least an assumption.

The desk clerk answered her question about the room reserved for Elizabeth Ericson and Janet Shaw pleasantly. Room 302, he said; however, it was a single room instead of a double. He hoped they wouldn't mind the crowded conditions:

When the two flustered girls finally reached the small, chintz-bedecked room, they found it crowded, indeed. Still another freshman was to share the cramped quarters. An outspoken, athletic girl, her name was Adelaide Simpson. From Tucson, she told Liz and Janet



Tri-U. Sisters
in the spirit of its
traditions and
the biased views
of snobbery.

Take care of my little girl



Casey Krause was Tri-U's rebel and, Liz soon learned, chic Dallas Pruitt's pet peeve. They seemed to argue endlessly.



Liz was still beaming when she and Ruth reached the Jug Room, to discover Joe and Adelaide there, too.



That Chad Carnes drank too much only seemed to enhance his prestige on Fraternity-Sorority row.



Chad introduced her to Professor Benson. "Miss Ericson wanted to meet you. She's going to France this summer."



Liz finally consented to go to the party with Joe. Casey and Adelaide greeted her warmly—and it was a wonderful evening!

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Liz Ericson.....**Jeanne Crain**
 Joe Blake.....**Dale Robertson**
 Adelaide Simpson.....**Mitzi Gaynor**
 Dallas Pruitt.....**Jean Peters**
 Chad Carnes.....**Jeffrey Hunter**
 Marge Colby.....**Betty Lynn**
 Merry Coombs.....**Helen Westcott**
 Ruth Gates.....**Lenka Peterson**
 Casey Krause.....**Carol Brannon**
 Mother Clark.....**Natalie Sehafer**
 Janet Shaw.....**Beverly Dennis**
 Professor Benson.....**Grandon Rhodes**

succinctly. But coming "East" to Midwestern U. was no thrill for her. She was there, she continued laughingly, only because her mother got tired of her smelling like a horse!

"Are you going to live in the dorm—or pledge a sorority?" Liz asked her curiously.

"Don't know. Don't care, either way," Adelaide said, pulling things from her valise. "Long as it doesn't interfere with my riding or tennis." The phone rang, and Adelaide shoved her full weight against the door. "No! No!" she cried. "We've

grown very fond of each other, but nobody else gets in here!"

But it wasn't the harried room clerk on the phone. It was Marge Colby, Rushing Chairman at Tri-U, calling to say hello and ask if Liz's room was comfy. "We're dying to meet you," Marge said, matter-of-factly. "Of course, it's against the rules to issue any invitation before tomorrow, but we're expecting you for the opening tea. Are you free? . . . Swell. Until tomorrow."

At the mention of Tri-U, Liz became nervous again. Suddenly, she was *lost* in a nightmarish thought—suppose, after all the years of anticipation, she didn't make it? Suppose Tri-U didn't pledge her? Of course, as Janet pointed out, they practically *had* to. Liz was a "legacy," the daughter of a sorority sister. Still, her trunk hadn't arrived, and she was going to be a fine sight going through Rush Week in the suit she'd arrived in—with Tri-U's holding the reputation of best-dressed house on campus!

• Meanwhile, the girls at the Tri-U house, just as anxious to make a good impression on the *right* girls, had their Rushing preparations in full swing. After singing rehearsal was over, Marge Colby told them critically, "The humming was a little matter-of-fact. Humming should have feeling. It impresses the rushees." But her next words made the group beam happily. "I'd just like to say that you've been real swell, fellas. I've had marvelous cooperation from everyone, and the plans for the parties sound simply grand!"

The front door slammed, and a casually-dressed girl, her silver bracelets jangling, rushed into the room. Merry Coombs, the house president, regarded her with distaste. "Casey, you know very well that no member, especially a senior, is excused from these Rushing meetings."

Casey Krause bowed. "Ten thousand pardons, Grand Eminent Sister," she drawled. "It slipped my insignificant mind."

"We can do without your sarcasm, Casey. You're fined fifty cents."

"Wouldn't it be wonderful," one of the girls suggested, "if Casey stayed in her room all during Rushing Week?"

The rebel shrugged unconcernedly. "I'll do better than that. I'll wear a beard and dark glasses!"

But attention was diverted to the doorway, as Mother Clark, the housemother, graciously entered the room. The girls rose respectfully, and Merry helped her into a chair.

"Well, well, well," Mother Clark murmured, pleased. "We're going to have a wonderful tea. But I feel for you girls. Over six hundred freshmen this year!"

Of course, they didn't have to entertain them all, Marge Colby pointed out. "There are quite a few Catholic and Jewish girls among that six hundred."

Naturally, they were allowed to take "Catholics, Mother Clark reminded them equably. But it always brought up the problem of fish on Friday—and little things like that.

"What's our official attitude on atheists?" Casey demanded sarcastically.

Merry forced a good-natured smile. "The same as toward intellectuals," she answered smoothly. "Don't even bother to give them tea!" When the girls' laughter had died down, she added, "And, as usual, one of Casey's remarks officially ends a meeting. Good night"

• After Registration had been completed, the next day, Rush Week became hectic with activity. At the Tri-U tea, Liz, under the protective wing of Dallas Pruitt, a calculatedly chic senior, was presented to Mother Clark.

"Elizabeth Ericson?" the housemother echoed, "Olive Ericson's Elizabeth?" She and Liz's mother had been sorority room-mates, and Mother Clark told her she'd just had a long letter from her mother. "Well, well, well. She's very proud of you, dear." (Continued on page 60)

Take Care of My Little Girl

(Continued from page 31)

Liz accepted the compliment modestly. "Mother talks about you all the time," she said, poised. "Cookie, Cookie, Cookie, is all we hear around the house. Father says it's like being married to two women."

It was Mother Clark's turn to look modest. "Well, well, well," she murmured.

Dallas Pruitt beamed her approval. Liz Ericson would obviously be a decided asset to Tri-U. She had looks, personality, and poise. Suppose she was wearing a suit? It was a beauty—and she had said something about a missing trunk, hadn't she? Not to mention that the handbag she was carrying just shrieked New York—*expensive!*

But not all of the rushees were faring as well as Liz. Huddled in a corner, trying unsuccessfully to keep up her end of a sinking conversation with her Tri-U hostess, painfully shy Ruth Gates was growing more panicky by the second. Finally, when she rose to acknowledge an introduction to Merry Coombs, the teacup so precariously balanced in her lap slid with a clatter to the floor. One of those horribly awkward silences ensued, before the hum of conversation nervously resumed. Ruth, flustered and miserable, tried to dry the spot with her hanky.

"Please don't," Merry insisted, embarrassed for her. "The maid will clean it up."

At the realization that she had committed still another social blunder, Ruth mumbled an incoherent apology and fled to the powder room. The sorority sisters exchanged meaningful glances.

Adelaide finished her cake and abruptly turned to Marge Colby. "Thanks a lot, had a lovely time. Got to bang some tennis balls around."

"I do hope you—" Marge began. But Adelaide was halfway across the floor. Marge's eyebrows went up.

Janet, her gaze following Ruth's vanishing figure with sympathy, muttered, "Excuse me," and followed the disturbed girl into the powder room.

When Dallas Pruitt pointedly asked Liz if Janet was a friend of Ruth's, Liz's voice mirrored her alarm. "Oh, no!" she assured her. "Janet's my best friend. A wonderful girl!"

At the first opportunity, Liz escaped to the powder room to warn Janet of the impression her gesture had made. Coolly, she acknowledged Janet's introduction to a teary-eyed Ruth. "Janet dear," she said in a strange voice. "There are some people who want to meet you." When they were outside, she explained, "People were thinking you were a friend of Ruth's!"

"What if I were?" Janet asked, puzzled.

Liz shrugged uneasily. "Nothing—it's just that first impressions are so important!"

• On the way out the door, bound for the Kappa Kappa Delta dinner with Adelaide and Janet, a few nights later, Liz heard the phone ring and raced back to answer it, expecting notice of her trunk's arrival. Her caller turned out to be not the express company, but Joe Blake—a nice-looking, ex-G.I. senior who'd helped her with her schedule on Registration Day.

No, there was nothing wrong with her schedule, Joe told her. But, after the usual uninspired dinner she'd be having, how about meeting him for a coke?

"Okay," Liz agreed. "If you don't mind my wearing the same old suit I wore the other day. My trunk's lost."

"I'll be wearing the same old suit you saw me in," Joe told her, laughing. "And I never had a trunk."

Later, as they strolled along the college

walks, Liz discovered that Joe was not a fraternity man. "Don't you approve of fraternities?" she asked.

He explained that, to a twenty-eight-year-old who had spent six years in the Army, the whole thing was a little silly—a whole lot silly. "But don't let me influence you. You're just the right age for all that nonsense."

"You haven't got a chance," Liz told him, then laughed, telling him about her father consoling her tearful mother at the station. "Look at it this way, dear," he said. "You're not losing a daughter, you're gaining a sorority sister!"

Joe seemed amused. The next night, however, meeting her after the Tri-U dinner—for which Liz had charged a formal in a downtown store—he asked her to elaborate on her theme that there were "a lot of good things about sororities." Liz, it appeared, was awed by the elaborate ritual of the Tri-U sisterhood, the choral singing, the luxury of the Tri-U house, the tradition and sentiment behind it all.

"Now, take Adelaide," Joe said argumentatively. "There's a girl with the right attitude. She's taking all this 'hanky-panky' in stride. She isn't walking around starry-eyed."

"But," Liz objected, "even with the 'hanky-panky,' a sorority is such a big part of college life. Why should I miss it?"

"When I was a kid, I was jealous of the boy next door because he had the measles—and I didn't," Joe said. "I didn't see why I had to miss it." There was a connection, he insisted. "But I don't think I'm bright enough to explain it to you."

"If a sorority wants you—especially a good one—it gives you a wonderful feeling of 'belonging,'" Liz countered. "Isn't it natural to want to 'belong'? What about all the lodges, clubs, associations, brotherhoods—" "What about them?" Joe asked.

Liz didn't think she was bright enough to explain it to him. All of which seemed to make another date practically a necessity.

• In the meantime, at the Tri-U house, heated debate raged on the question of which girls were going to be offered the privilege of joining their select circle.

A girl named Peggy Crane was black-balled because she used a henna rinse on her hair. Adelaide Swanson nearly met the same fate. But Mother Clark reported that her mother was worth a million dollars, and the Tri-U's quickly decided that Adelaide would have much to offer. Ruth Gate's name came up, to a chorus of groans. Again, Mother Clark interceded. Ruth was, after all, a "legacy"—and Tri-U had a tradition about "legacies."

"Casey was a legacy," Dallas pointed out. "We took her, and look what happened to us."

Casey was unperturbed. "Why this sorority has gotten rich on my fifty-cent fines."

But Mother Clark was insistent. The pledging period was just a trial period, and she felt they owed it to Ruth at least to pledge her, try her. It would please her so much.

Officially, then, there were no blackballs. But Dallas, gloweringly, made one thing plain: Unless Ruth changed—and she didn't believe in miracles—Dallas was not going to allow her to be initiated.

There was one "legacy," of course, about whom there was complete agreement. That lovely Liz Ericson. Her creamy looks, engaging personality—that chic formal she'd worn tonight. By all means, Liz!

But that friend of hers—Janet Shaw!

Janet was definitely a so-so character. And what, after all, did they know of her family and background? They'd already passed thirteen rushees. Their limit was fifteen. From here on in, they'd have to be *mighty* careful . . .

It was obvious from the ecstatic smile on Liz's face as she entered their hotel room, the next morning, that she'd received the prized bid from Tri-U—not to mention six other sororities.

Adelaide was busily packing her valise. "It's the dangdest thing," she commented, honestly puzzled, when Liz asked how she'd made out. "You never saw so many cards! What makes *me* so popular?" But she wasn't pledging any of 'em—not even Tri-U. "Too much social stuff, phony smiles—and that singing!" She put her hands to her ears, then continued cheerfully, "Nope, I'm going to Huyler Hall. I can step right out of my window onto six tennis courts." When, incredulous, Liz pointed out the beautiful friendships she was giving up, Adelaide asked, "What's wrong with the girls in the dorm? They second-class citizens or something?"

Liz had no chance to answer; at that moment, Janet walked in the door, ashen pale. "No, not Tri-U," she answered tonelessly Liz's unspoken question. She'd had bids from two other sororities which she obviously considered second-rate—and she wasn't holding Liz to any childish agreement they'd made about sticking together.

"I meant every word of it," Liz said, trying desperately to sound sincere. But Janet was close to the breaking point. With a heartbroken cry, she turned and fled from the room.

The phone rang—Liz's trunk had arrived. For a tortured moment, she could not tell the express company where to send it. She turned to Adelaide for help, but her roommate wisely left her to make her own decision. "I guess—" the words came haltingly—"you'd better send it over to the Tri-U house, please."

When she'd hung up, Liz found it difficult to look Adelaide squarely in the eyes. But she didn't have to. Adelaide had suddenly become very busy with her packing . . .

Liz was still in a blissful daze from the thrilling Tri-U pledge ceremony when she floated into the college coffee shop, the Jug Room, with Ruth Gates. It wasn't until she saw Joe Blake, sitting with Adelaide in a booth, that she came down to earth. "What are you two looking so glum about?" she asked. "And where's Janet?"

"We've just come from seeing her off," Adelaide said, woefully. "She's gone home."

"There are always plenty of casualties, Pledge Night," Joe added.

Stunned, Liz wheeled and rushed from the shop, mumbling broken phrases. Joe sighed and exchanged a look with Adelaide, then got to his feet and followed.

When he caught up with her, Liz was crying hysterically. It was all her fault, she insisted. Janet's life was ruined, and she was responsible!

Joe gripped her by the shoulders and sat her down on the curb. "Now, look here," he said firmly. "Janet was just an idiot to let a bunch of silly girls drive her home. In six months, she'll come back here or go some place else, and she'll be a much more sensible and happier girl. So I want an end to all these lamentations."

Gradually, the sobs subsided and Liz found herself strangely consoled by the fact that Joe didn't think she was so awful—just not very bright, that was all. Smiling through her remaining sniffles, she decided it was a big help to have a man to turn to. Together, they walked back to the Jug Room.

• The annual dinner given for Tri-U and their pledges by Lambda Psi Xi, top fraternity on campus, was, socially speaking, a tremendously important occasion. And, not

too surprisingly, Liz was the pledge belle of the ball.

Marge's smile of approval, when she noticed Liz dancing with the handsome, casually self-confident senior, Chad Carnes, was proof that already their pretty pledge was heaping credit on Tri-U. That Chad's breath was often distinctly alcoholic, that he was rumored to have a romantic alliance with a married townswoman, only enhanced his prestige on Fraternity-Sorority Row. Liz had made a valuable conquest; she might easily turn out to be the brightest feather in Tri-U's fashionable cap!

Humanly enough, Liz was somewhat dazzled by her quick success. Chad was fun, exciting to be with. But Joe— She always felt so warm and comfortable with Joe, even though Marge had warned her against too frequent dates with a non-fraternity man—one who didn't even own a tuxedo . . .

Thrilling as sorority life was, when semester exams came around Liz found she could get much more studying done in Adelaide's room at Huyler Hall than in the sorority house. "There," she explained to Adelaide, "everybody's always telling everybody else to keep quiet. That makes for quite a hubbub."

At this point, the phone outside the room rang noisily. It was Chad, calling from the Jug Room, though Liz knew he should have been at a French exam. "Liz!" he said urgently. "I've got to see you! Come right down."

When she met him, a few minutes later, he confided, "I took one look at the questions and knew I was a dead pigeon. So I handed in a practically empty blue book and came down here. Then I got the idea. Didn't you tell me once you were a prize student in French?"

Liz nodded doubtfully, and Chad pulled out a list of the exam questions. He'd bought an extra blue book, and he wanted Liz to fill in the answers. "Right after the exam," he continued, "the prof'll take the blue books to his office. If I can get my old blue book out of the pile, and slip this one in—' His eyes glowed with excitement.

Liz, however, was looking plainly frightened. Chad grinned. "What's the matter?" he taunted. "Scruples? Look, everybody cheats. You know that—except maybe a few spooks."

"I guess it's just a case of half-scared, half-Indiana conscience," Liz told him, still troubled.

Chad became earnest. The point was, if he flunked this exam, he wouldn't graduate, and his father was the kind of man who'd sneer and say he'd always known his son didn't have the stuff. It tore at Liz's soft heart to hear the kind of family life Chad had—his father had already been married three times, and Chad never saw his mother. Suddenly, she understood a curiously unstable part of Chad which had been puzzling her. On impulse, she told him she'd help him.

The exam itself proved easy for her, and they arrived at Professor Benson's office

just after he did. Chad introduced Liz. "Miss Ericson wanted to meet you, sir," he said easily. "She's going to France this summer and would like to see the *real* France. I told her you could be a big help."

"I've heard so much about Brittany," Liz took over nervously, "but I haven't the faintest idea where it is."

"A delightful place," the professor said warmly. He walked with Liz over to a big map on the far wall. "There it is—on the coast, facing England."

As he rambled on, Chad, perspiring, found his unfinished blue book in the stack on the desk, and hastily made the substitution.

Outside, he pressed Liz's hand in nervous exhilaration. "I'm going to see to it that everyone on the campus knows what you've done for me!" he told her.

• Apparently he did. The next day, the girls at Tri-U knew all about it. In fact, one of the big shots in Chad's fraternity had mentioned Liz as now being a cinch for queen of the Freshman Frolic, Dallas reported happily.

Most of the sisters were thrilled—they hadn't had the honor of having a queen for eight years.

Liz, however, was still puzzled. As she confessed to Joe, out walking the next day, "What bowls me over is Marge and Dallas acting as if I swam the channel or something. Do you get that?"

"Sure, I get it," Joe told her quietly. "With some people, cheating is a major sport, and you've just won your letter. Personally, I'm a pre-med, and I'd only be cheating myself."

"You think I'm pretty much of a heel, don't you?" Liz said, nettled.

"I don't think you're a heel," Joe said quietly, "but I don't think you're Eleanor Roosevelt, either."

Exasperated as much at her feeling of guilt as at Joe's apparent censure, Liz said angrily, "To think of the way I've been defending you! They've been hounding me for months, and I've been standing up for you. I'm beginning to think that Marge and all the others are right—you're just a smug, stuffy—" She groped for a squelching statement. "Why, you haven't even got a tuxedo!"

Later, still besieged by doubts, Liz was ashamed of her outburst. The next night, though, assisted by a particularly romantic moon and a suave approach that had her in his arms and being soundly kissed before she quite knew what was happening, Chad resolved the conflict. She would have his fraternity pin as soon as he could remember who had it at the moment. "It

means," he added, "that someday, if you pass your math and don't put on weight, I may ask you to be my first wife."

It also meant that Liz's stock soared even higher with the girls at Tri-U. Marge Dallas, Merry, and the others—except Casey—were almost indecently proud of her.

But, when Hell Week rolled around, Liz found herself just as humbled as the other pledges. It was particularly humiliating to be caught by Joe parading in front of the house wearing an 1890 bathing suit and parasol. And it was both backbreaking and terribly discouraging to make chalk outlines of her footsteps all the way around the block—then to see a quick shower wash them all out, so that she had to do it all over again.

Actually, though, she was more worried about Ruth Gates than herself. On the second day, on the way out to the cemetery to copy names, dates, and epitaphs off a hundred tombstones, Ruth looked unnaturally bright-eyed, feverishly excited. But Liz couldn't persuade her to go to bed. To become a Tri-U, Ruth would obviously make any sacrifice.

The third night, after the pledges had been given their assignments for the evening, Marge stopped Ruth on her way out to get the names of all the people who lived on 4th to 11th Streets, and told her Merry wanted to talk to her.

Merry seemed to have something on her mind. She began by asking Ruth, "Have you been happy here? . . . I mean *really* happy with us? It's so important that your sorority sisters are the kind of girls you'd want for friends the rest of your life."

"I know," Ruth said earnestly. "Of course, you can't be crazy about *all* the girls, and all the girls can't be crazy about you—but I'm so happy here. I've never been so happy in my life! Honestly, I've been in a daze since I've been pledged. I want to be a Tri-U more than anything else in the world!"

Merry sighed deeply. "Ruthie," she said reluctantly, "I'm afraid I have some bad news for you." She didn't tell Ruth that Dallas had led a movement to blackball her, insisting in a saintly manner that it would be kinder not to let such a hopeless case go all through Hell Week. Instead, Merry gave an excuse that the Dean of Women had heard that Ruth had run up a large bill at a local department store. "Well, I'm afraid, Ruthie," she concluded, "that we have to ask for your pin."

As Ruth stared at her with feverish, uncomprehending eyes, Merry put an arm around the girl's shoulders. "We don't want you to feel a stranger," she said, imperceptibly walking Ruth toward the door.

"We'd like you to come to dinner once in a while. We'd love so to see you."

Ruth didn't hear. She was holding up an assignment paper, mumbling, "Got to go to Fourth Street—get names—" Merry's words to the effect that it wasn't necessary now, that she should get some sleep, fell on deaf ears. Like a sleep-walker, Ruth stumbled from the room.

Briefly troubled, Merry looked after her. Then she heaved a sigh of relief.

• At that moment, Liz, too, was sighing with relief—for an entirely different reason. Forlornly examining a signpost, on the outskirts of town, which said five miles to Cloverdale, she happened to see Joe walking down the street. Joe, to whom she hadn't talked since accepting Chad's pin. Abruptly, she realized it was strangely good to see him again.

Joe seemed to feel the same way. "I missed you a lot," he told her. "That's an admission I generally don't make to a girl who's thrown me over." He indicated Chad's pin. "A little belated, but my insincerest congratulations."

"My insincerest thanks," Liz said, a little lamely, and quickly changed the subject. She was supposed to go to Cloverdale, she explained, have a postcard signed by the head nurse at the hospital, and mail the card from Cloverdale so the girls could see the postmark. The busses, however, had stopped running—which let her in for a long hike.

Joe had a better idea. He was on his way to a party. Why didn't Liz come with him? After the party, they could go to the bus station and give the card, signed by Joe, to the nightwatchman, who in turn would give it to the first bus driver to go to Cloverdale in the morning. If the driver would mail it there, everything would be set.

"Oh, no, Joe," Liz protested. "I really can't."

But she did. And there at the party were Adelaide and, of all people, Casey Krause! Somewhat apprehensively, she asked, "You won't give me away, will you, Casey?"

Casey regarded her with surprise. "Give you away? I'm proud of you, my girl." She turned to the roomful of people. "Everybody—this is Liz Ericson. In three days, she becomes a sorority sister of mine, so everybody please be kind to her and avoid the subject."

The room was small and intimate; full of the "warmth of people and food smells and smoke. After greeting Adelaide—whom she hadn't seen much of lately, either—with affection, Liz mixed with the group, aware that she was enjoying herself immeasurably. At one point, she told Casey how much she liked Jack Gruber, the host.

Casey nodded grimly. "He used to date me sophomore year. 'They' told me not to let him sit on the front porch. He embarrassed the pledges. An I.Q. of 185—and he embarrassed the pledges!" She laughed harshly. "Here it is two years later, and I'm getting angry all over again. Why don't they get some honest ways of judging people? If they *have* to judge people. They pretend to be democratic—and just look at their by-laws!"

Liz laughed. "You sound exactly like those Communist pamphlets that have been flooding the campus," she teased.

But Casey was serious. "Well, if the Commies are against sororities, that's certainly one thing that would make me in favor of them. But look at the people who *are* against them. Woodrow Wilson, for example—a pretty good citizen, wouldn't you say? He fought fraternities at Princeton tooth and nail. He happened to think that organized snobbery is downright un-American. And in my small way, I agree with him."

"I've often wondered why you stuck it out all these years," Liz said curiously.

Casey snorted, bitter at her own weakness. "I'm a gal that always takes the path of least resistance. The food was good; besides, the sisters wanted me out so badly, I wouldn't give them the satisfaction of quitting."

A girl named Sid Goldman, sitting nearby, turned to ask what they were being so serious about, and Liz looked at her reflectively. "Sid, how come you never joined a sorority?"

"I'm Jewish," Sid replied.

"But there are Jewish sororities," Liz persisted.

"They didn't ask me." Sid laughed without much humor. "Don't you know? Jewish sororities are just as snobbish as any other kind. And anybody who says they aren't is just plain anti-Semitic."

The others laughed, but Liz was suddenly thoughtful.

Her abstraction, however, was interrupted by the entrance of a coldly determined Chad. One of his fraternity pledges had seen Liz going to the party. He'd come to take her back to the sorority, to try to smooth over this indiscretion with Merry.

The room was quiet, all eyes on the two. Liz, resenting his high-handed attitude, stood her ground.

Chad glared. "If you haven't got the guts to go through Hell Week just because it's tough," he sneered. "If you haven't got the integrity—"

Liz's eyebrows lifted. "What are you talking about—*integrity*? Maybe I'm no one to talk after helping you cheat, but you're just the fellow to preach integrity!"

Joe intervened. "You've got to try to understand his sense of values. It may be a little peculiar, but—"

Chad turned on Joe threateningly. "Listen, you. Don't think you scare me because I'm surrounded by you and your—" he paused, and looked contemptuously around the room—"friends."

This was more than Liz could take. "You shut up, Chad!" she exploded. "Shut up! Shut up! You're nothing but a silly, empty, overblown kid. I don't know how I was ever taken in by—I'm ashamed that I—"

In the excitement that followed, Chad took a swing at Joe—and wound up on the floor. When he stalked out a moment later, it was as though a gust of stale air had blown out of Liz's life.

• That night, Liz returned to the sorority house a very thoughtful girl. But, once inside, her own problems were forgotten, for there was news—frightening news. Ruth Gates had disappeared. As she revealed the story of the depledging, Merry was frantic. Ruth had looked so strange when she left.

It was Liz and Joe who finally found her. On a hunch, they went to the streets Ruth had originally been assigned to canvass, and discovered her huddled on a front stoop, feverish and ill.

Both Merry and Marge came to the hospital to join Joe and Liz in the long, anxious wait for word from the doctor about Ruth's condition. While they waited in the reception room, with Joe walking up and down the corridor outside, Liz quietly but determinedly began to ask questions.

"Merry," she began, "will you tell me why Ruthie was depledged?"

Sensing Liz's dangerous mood, Merry shifted uneasily. "Well, you know the feeling about Ruthie. Personally, I think she's the sweetest—"

"Was it Dallas?" Liz asked.

"Yes, but—" Merry explained about the department store bill.

"You know," Liz said casually, "I'll be in the same fix soon. I've been running up bills. Dallas said, if I wanted to be Frosh Queen, I had to be the best-dressed." She paused, her face a mask. "Does that depledge me, too?"

"Now, look, Liz," Marge said. "There's

a big difference between you and Ruth. We can overlook some things in your case. What's gotten into you? You sick or something?"

"No," Liz's voice was steady. "I'm just afraid I can't live up to Tri-U ideals."

"You can't be serious!" Merry protested. "You're not thinking of turning in your pin, are you?"

At Liz's nod, Marge stared in shocked amazement. "We'll be the laughing-stock of the campus. A Tri-U pledge hasn't handed in her pin since 1939! And she was kind of funny to begin with."

"Maybe she wasn't," Liz said slowly. "Maybe she was a nice girl with the wrong kind of figure for clothes."

As the doctor came out of Ruth's room, they turned quickly. "Pneumonia," he said. "Worse than I thought, but she'll pull through all right."

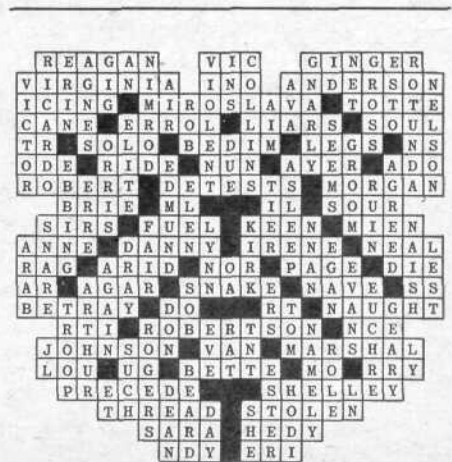
Marge and Merry heaved a deep sigh of relief, and Merry eyed Liz with sudden excitement. Now that there was no longer any reason to concern themselves over Ruth—they would, of course, send her flowers in the morning—she had an idea. "Say, suppose we took Ruth back in?" she asked eagerly. "How would that be?" Marge made a face, and Merry told her, "Let her wear the pin—who cares?" She turned back to Liz. "Nobody will even have to know we depledged her. How about that, Liz?"

Liz was taken by surprise, but not for long. Outside, she could see Joe waiting tensely, the knowledge that an important decision was being made plain upon his face. "No," she said at last, a little sadly. "It won't work. It won't work for Ruthie, and it won't work for me. I won't deny that there are things to be said for sororities. I've had fun. But it isn't enough to make up for the things it's done to me. It made me so anxious to be a Tri-U that I let Janet Shaw leave school. I found myself preferring people like Dallas to Adelaide, or Chad to Joe."

As she went on, there was faint revulsion on her face. "I thought it was smart to cheat—I even thought it was important to be Frosh Queen. One thing you were right about. Ruthie—she doesn't belong here, where she'll be merely tolerated, where she can wear the pin and 'who cares.' She belongs to Huyler Hall, where they won't care what she wears, or how she looks, or what she says. Ruthie doesn't need to be tolerated—she needs to be *wanted*."

The two girls looked at her uncomprehendingly. But it made no difference. Liz turned toward the hall, sure in the knowledge that she had discovered those of life's values which really mattered. And that, with Joe's help, she would never lose sight of them.

THE END



Solution to Puzzle on Page 24