**Girl**

By O. Henry

IN GILT letters on the ground glass of the door of room No. 962 were the words: "Robbins & Hartley, Brokers." The clerks had gone. It was past five, and with the solid tramp of a drove of prize Percherons[[1]](#footnote-1), scrubwomen[[2]](#footnote-2) were invading the cloud-capped twenty-story office building. A puff of red-hot air flavoured with lemon peelings, soft-coal smoke and train oil came in through the half-open windows.

Robbins, fifty, something of an overweight beau, and addicted to first nights[[3]](#footnote-3) and hotel palm-rooms, pretended to be envious of his partner's commuter's joys.

"Going to be something doing in the humidity line tonight," he said. "You out-of-town chaps will be the people, with your katydids[[4]](#footnote-4) and moonlight and long drinks[[5]](#footnote-5) and things out on the front porch."

Hartley, twenty-nine, serious, thin, good-looking, ner- vous, sighed and frowned a little.

"Yes," said he, "we always have cool nights in Floral- hurst, especially in the winter."

A man with an air of mystery came in the door and went up to Hartley.

"I've found where she lives," he announced in the portentous half-whisper that makes the detective at work a marked being to his fellow men.

Hartley scowled him into a state of dramatic silence and quietude. But by that time Robbins had got his cane and set his tie pin to his liking, and with a debonair[[6]](#footnote-6) nod went out to his metropolitan amusements.

"Here is the address," said the detective in a natural tone, being deprived of an audience to foil.

Hartley took the leaf torn out of the sleuth's dingy memorandum book. On it were pencilled the words "Vivienne Arlington, No. 341 East --th Street, care of Mrs. McComus."

"Moved there a week ago," said the detective. "Now, if you want any shadowing done, Mr. Hartley, I can do you as fine a job in that line as anybody in the city. It will be only $7 a day and expenses. Can send in a daily typewritten report, covering -- "

"You needn't go on," interrupted the broker. "It isn't a case of that kind. I merely wanted the address. How much shall I pay you?"

"One day's work," said the sleuth. "A tenner[[7]](#footnote-7) will cover it."

Hartley paid the man and dismissed him. Then he left the office and boarded a Broadway car. At the first large crosstown artery of travel he took an eastbound car that deposited him in a decaying avenue, whose ancient structures once sheltered the pride and glory of the town.

Walking a few squares, he came to the building that he sought. It was a new flathouse, bearing carved upon its cheap stone portal its sonorous[[8]](#footnote-8) name, "The Vallambrosa." Fire-escapes zigzagged down its front -- these laden with household goods, drying clothes, and squalling children evicted by the midsummer heat. Here and there a pale rubber plant peeped from the miscellaneous mass, as if wondering to what kingdom it belonged -- vegetable, animal or artificial.

Hartley pressed the "McComus" button. The door latch clicked spasmodically[[9]](#footnote-9) -- now hospitably, now doubt-fully, as though in anxiety whether it might be admitting friends or duns[[10]](#footnote-10). Hartley entered and began to climb the stairs after the manner of those who seek their friends in city flat-houses -- which is the manner of a boy who climbs an apple-tree, stopping when he comes upon what he wants.

On the fourth floor he saw Vivienne standing in an open door. She invited him inside, with a nod and a bright, genuine smile. She placed a chair for him near a window, and poised herself gracefully upon the edge of one of those Jekyll-and-Hyde[[11]](#footnote-11) pieces of furniture that are masked and mysteriously hooded, unguessable bulks by day and inquisitorial racks of torture by night.

Hartley cast a quick, critical, appreciative glance at her before speaking, and told himself that his taste in choosing had been flawless.

Vivienne was about twenty-one. She was of the purest Saxon type. Her hair was a ruddy golden, each filament of the neatly gathered mass shining with its own lustre and delicate graduation of colour. In perfect harmony were her ivory-clear complexion and deep sea-blue eyes that looked upon the world with the ingenuous calmness of a mermaid or the pixie[[12]](#footnote-12) of an undiscovered mountain stream. Her frame was strong and yet possessed the grace of absolute naturalness. And yet with all her Northern clearness and frankness of line and colouring, there seemed to be something of the tropics[[13]](#footnote-13) in her -- something of languor[[14]](#footnote-14) in the droop of her pose, of love of ease in her ingenious complacency of satisfaction and comfort in the mere act of breathing -- something that seemed to claim for her a right as a perfect work of nature to exist and be admired equally with a rare flower or some beautiful, milk-white dove among its sober-hued[[15]](#footnote-15) companions.

She was dressed in a white waist and dark skirt - that discreet masquerade of goose-girl[[16]](#footnote-16) and duchess.

"Vivienne," said Hartley, looking at her pleadingly, "you did not answer my last letter. It was only by nearly a week's search that I found where you had moved to. Why have you kept me in suspense when you knew how anxiously I was waiting to see you and hear from you?"

The girl looked out the window dreamily.

"Mr. Hartley," she said hesitatingly, "I hardly know what to say to you. I realize all the advantages of your offer, and sometimes I feel sure that I could be contented with you. But, again, I am doubtful. I was born a city girl, and I am afraid to bind myself to a quiet suburban life."

"My dear girl," said Hartley, ardently, "have I not told you that you shall have everything that your heart can desire that is in my power to give you? You shall come to the city for the theatres, for shopping and to visit your friends as often as you care to. You can trust me, can you not?"

"To the fullest," she said, turning her frank eyes upon him with a smile. "I know you are the kindest of men, and that the girl you get will be a lucky one. I learned all about you when I was at the Montgomerys'."

"Ah!" exclaimed Hartley, with a tender, reminiscent light in his eye; "I remember well the evening I first saw you at the Montgomerys'. Mrs. Montgomery was sounding your praises to me[[17]](#footnote-17) all the evening. And she hardly did you justice. I shall never forget that supper. Come, Vivienne, promise me. I want you. You'll never regret coming with me. No one else will ever give you as pleasant a home."

The girl sighed and looked down at her folded hands.

A sudden jealous suspicion seized Hartley.

"Tell me, Vivienne," he asked, regarding her keenly, "is there another -- is there some one else ?"

A rosy flush crept slowly over her fair cheeks and neck.

"You shouldn't ask that, Mr. Hartley," she said, in some confusion. "But I will tell you. There is one other -- but he has no right -- I have promised him nothing."

"His name?" demanded Hartley, sternly.

"Townsend."

"Rafford Townsend!" exclaimed Hartley, with a grim tightening of his jaw. "How did that man come to know you? After all I've done for him -- "

"His auto has just stopped below," said Vivienne, bending over the window-sill. "He's coming for his answer. Oh I don't know what to do!"

The bell in the flat kitchen whirred. Vivienne hurried to press the latch button.

"Stay here," said Hartley. "I will meet him in the hall."

Townsend, looking like a Spanish grandee in his light tweeds, Panama hat and curling black mustache, came up the stairs three at a time. He stopped at sight of Hartley and looked foolish.

"Go back," said Hartley, firmly, pointing downstairs with his forefinger.

"Hullo!" said Townsend, feigning surprise[[18]](#footnote-18). "What's up? What are you doing here, old man?"

"Go back," repeated Hartley, inflexibly. "The Law of the Jungle[[19]](#footnote-19). Do you want the Pack to tear you in pieces? The kill is mine."

"I came here to see a plumber about the bathroom connections," said Townsend, bravely.

"All right," said Hartley. "You shall have that lying plaster to stick upon your traitorous soul. But, go back." Townsend went downstairs, leaving a bitter word to be wafted up the draught of the staircase. Hartley went back to his wooing.

"Vivienne," said he, masterfully. "I have got to have you. I will take no more refusals or dilly-dallying[[20]](#footnote-20)."

"When do you want me?" she asked.

"Now. As soon as you can get ready."

She stood calmly before him and looked him in the eye.

"Do you think for one moment," she said, "that I would enter your home while Héloise is there?"

Hartley cringed as if from an unexpected blow. He folded his arms and paced the carpet once or twice.

"She shall go," he declared grimly. Drops stood upon his brow. "Why should I let that woman make my life miserable? Never have I seen one day of freedom from trouble since I have known her. You are right, Vivienne. Héloise must be sent away before I can take you home. But she shall go. I have decided. I will turn her from my doors."

"When will you do this?" asked the girl.

Hartley clinched his teeth[[21]](#footnote-21) and bent his brows together.

"To-night," he said, resolutely. "I will send her away to-night."

"Then," said Vivienne, "my answer is 'yes.' Come for me when you will."

She looked into his eyes with a sweet, sincere light in her own. Hartley could scarcely believe that her surrender was true, it was so swift and complete.

"Promise me," he said feelingly, "on your word and honour."

"On my word and honour," repeated Vivienne, softly.

At the door he turned and gazed at her happily, but yet as one who scarcely trusts the foundations of his joy.

"To-morrow," he said, with a forefinger of reminder uplifted.

"To-morrow," she repeated with a smile of truth and candour.

In an hour and forty minutes Hartley stepped off the train at Floralhurst. A brisk walk of ten minutes brought him to the gate of a handsome two-story cottage set upon a wide and well-tended lawn. Halfway to the house he was met by a woman with jet-black[[22]](#footnote-22) braided hair and flowing white summer gown, who half strangled him without apparent cause.

When they stepped into the hall she said:

"Mamma's here. The auto is coming for her in half an hour. She came to dinner, but there's no dinner."

"I've something to tell you," said Hartley. "I thought to break it to you gently, but since your mother is here we may as well out with it."

He stooped and whispered something at her ear.

His wife screamed. Her mother came running into the hall. The dark-haired woman screamed again- the joyful scream of a well-beloved and petted woman.

"Oh, mamma!" she cried ecstatically, "what do you think? Vivienne is coming to cook for us! She is the one that stayed with the Montgomerys a whole year. And now, Billy, dear," she concluded, "you must go right down into the kitchen and discharge Héloise. She has been drunk again the whole day long."

赏析：

故事的一开始哈特利先生正与同事聊天，这时进来一位私家侦探打断了他们的对话，并告知哈特利先生他寻找的那位姑娘的住址。于是在打发掉侦探后，哈特利先生就启程拜访那位名为薇薇安的姑娘。在她的住所里，哈特利先生大献殷勤，姑娘却难掩勉强之色，在哈特利的追问下，薇薇安终于承认还另有人选，正巧那人也来到她家中，但却被哈特利先生逼走，而薇薇安最终也答应了哈特利的请求。正当读者沉浸在对这一对年轻人未来婚姻生活的憧憬之时，故事的最后却出现了哈特利的妻子，通过她，读者才知道哈特利并非向薇薇安求爱，而是找她到家里当厨娘。

这部作品沿袭了欧·亨利短篇小说的一贯风格，也即“欧·亨利式结尾”，作品情节快速发展，而结尾突然出现一个意料不到的结局，让读者在惊愕之余，不能不承认故事合情合理，进而赞叹作者构思的巧妙。故事开端，作者先是通过哈特利先生与同事的对话给出了关于哈特利先生是居住在城郊的信息，提供基本的故事背景。接着是私家侦探的出现，为后文做铺垫，通过侦探这样独特的身份标志引起悬念，以此开始引导读者的思维。作者以哈特利的视角来描述故事的主人翁——姑娘薇薇安，其观察细致入微，且处处带有引导性，仿佛是哈特利在欣赏自己的看中的恋人，尤其还加上哈特利的一些简单带过的心理描写和薇薇安为难神色的精细捕捉，无不影响读者的思考，以为哈特利是在像薇薇安求婚，直到文章的最后一段才得以真相大白。更为精彩的是，作者不光是结尾独具匠心，令人瞠目，在故事当中也着力制造跌宕效果，如哈特利先生看到薇薇安面有难色便追问是否另有人选，此时作者抓住了薇薇安的神情变化，答案一目了然，而正在读者感叹“果真如此”时，作者就让这“竞争者”真的出现了！而后又有了“情敌”较量的精彩情节，更加令人对“恋情”的存在深信不疑。再之后，薇薇安突然又提到另一个女人埃洛伊兹是否会离开，再次引起读者兴趣，误以为哈特利实际已有家室，人物的关系更加的复杂化，而后真正的妻子出现时却又刻意将其身份，令读者疑窦丛生。这两段情节是文中的小高潮，与结尾的高潮并置，正是“一波稍平一波又起”。一如以往，作者的文字十分生动活泼，细节描写准确到位，且善于制造气氛。而本文与其他许多“欧·亨利式结尾”小说的不同在于作者在刻意误导读者。以往欧·亨利总会让读者顺着剧情发展，制造悬念但不会让其产生明显预期，而这里他却有意去引导读者按照预定好的错误方向去思考，然后在结尾颠覆这种预设，达到戏剧又幽默的艺术效果。而生活也就是这样，往往是情理之中，却又在意料之外。

1. Percherons: 柏雪龙马，一种产自法国的灰色或黑色的马，以前用来拉火炮和四轮大马车。 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. scrubwomen: 女清洁工。 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. first nights:（戏剧或歌剧等的）首场演出 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. katydids: 树螽，与蚱蜢、蟋蟀同属叶蝉科的一种绿色昆虫，雄螽的前翅上有一种独特器官，摩擦时产生一种尖锐声音。 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. long drinks: 大杯的低酒精含量饮料。 [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. debonair:（通常指男人）愉快而自信的。 [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. tenner: 十英镑（的纸币）。 [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. sonorous:（指语言﹑ 文字等）感人的, 堂皇的。 [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. spasmodically: 一阵阵地；时断时续地 [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. duns: 讨债人 [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Jekyll-and-Hyde: 有善恶双重人格的人。这里指Vivienne家中被包起来的家具，在Hartley看来像是伪装，到了晚上会变成一件刑具。这里表达出一种不信任。 [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. pixie=pixy: 神话中的小精灵，尤指那种很淘气的。 [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. tropics: 这里指她性格中的两面性 [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. languor: 恬静；平静。 [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. sober-hued: 略带冷静的 [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. goose-girl: 指很愚笨的女孩。 [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. sounding your praises to me: 对你大加赞扬 [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. feigning surprise: 佯装惊讶。这里应该只是从哈特利的角度认为汤森德在假装。 [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. The Law of the Jungle: 丛林法则; 弱肉强食。 [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. dilly-dallying: 浪费时间，尤指犹豫不定；闲混或踌躇。 [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. clinched his teeth: 咬紧牙关。 [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. jet-black: 深黑色的。 [↑](#footnote-ref-22)