



Her Own Rival

By BEATRICE ASHTON VANDEGRIFT

THE world is getting harder for women. Equal rights, bobbed hair, and the corner delicatessen notwithstanding, they ain't no edging away from the fact that life nowadays for us females ain't as simple as it was in the good old cave age.

I'd rather face a brontosaurus than my boss, earn my new fur coat with clubbery in place of drudgery, and even be towed to my cliffside home by my long and flowing hair instead of waiting till my mate could *get* the home and I could afford to *wave* my hair.

Waiting! That's what puts the crimp in love nowadays.

Five thousand years ago a good-looking, unshaved cave sheik would stroll out for a morning walk attired with leopard skin and hickory club. He'd spot a neighboring nancy daintily basting a bear steak over her father's fire. Twenty minutes later she'd be doing the same thing over his and mildly wondering if snake oil's a good cure for a sudden bump on the brain basket.

Fast work, huh? But focus the situation now.

A good looking, well shaved sheik strolls out for a morning walk attired in Palm Beach and cane. He spots a neighboring nancy daintily basting her lips away from her father's ire. Twenty minutes later he's wondering who she is. Married, single, divorced? How he can meet her and speak to her. Twenty hours later he's figuring how he can take her to dinner, a show and home in a meter machine without embezzling the company's funds. Twenty days later he's debating whether he ought to ask her to wait a year.

And they call this the age of speed!

I'd been waiting for my Tommy a year and they was still another to go. And somehow things seemed to be marking time. The old thrill had flewed—the thrill of kissing him, shy, on my own initiative—the thrill of flashing my sparkler in the subway, bringing light to them that rode in darkness, and hoping that everybody in our

car would realize I was an engaged woman—the thrill of calling each other dear in front of friends—the thrill of our first meal cooked in the borrowed kitchen of my married chum that made it seem almost like our own home—all had wore away.

We loved each other—leastways I loved him.

A woman always loves a man who knows she uses rouge, who's lamped her with locks unkindled, who's seen her on a camping party when the only thing that's been marceled is the breakfast bacon. She couldn't let him see her that way unless she did love him. Put that in your brier root and inhale it, boys!

And I'd seen him, too—unshaven, unshorn and snoring. And I loved the prickly blue of his bearded cheek and the tousled mass of his rumpled locks. And my heart would leap as I bent over him, snoozing on the grass at my feet, to catch the rumble of his tired breathing. I loved him more at those times than when the barber's lilac still clung.

I guess the more a woman knows about a man the more she likes him, and the less a man knows about a woman the more he likes her.

And I've learned another thing, too.

Man may have discarded fur for serge and the cudgel for the razor, but the old instinct of the chase remains. Fifty centuries ago it was saber teeth and dinosaurs. Now it's golf balls and other women.

In the good old times man's hunting instincts were pretty well gratified after sixteen waking hours spent in plowing through the pleiocene swamps after itchyderms, flivversaurus and whiffendoofles, and he was perfectly satisfied to hike homeward to his hearth fire and the one woman he had selected, without roaming around the neighborhood after taps to see if they was any other nice little cuties that wasn't so knock-kneed or who had more and better teeth.

Yep, the instinct of the chase remains today. In the best and dearest men it remains—men like my Tommy.

I didn't realize it till one evening down to a dance at the Asbury Arcade where half a dozen of us weary New Yorkers had fled

to escape the bright lights and meet brighter ones. Seems they was always a *crowd* of us going around nowadays.

Instead of sweetly suggesting, "Honey dear, let's get away from all these people and sit in the park," Tom would say, "Hey, Sadie, how about a foursome down to Luna to-night? Get Annabelle and her fellow—or Rose—or maybe that new girl down to your office would like to go."

And when we did go out with the crowd, instead of parking in some secluded corner all by ourselves Tom would sit right down in the midst of the assembly, brush off the chair next to him with his best tan moochoir and invite some baby doll to "come on over and sit with us."

But I guess I don't believe in signs until they're underlined, demonstrated and pointed out. It didn't come on me till that night at Asbury that the man I was going to marry wasn't much different from the rest.

We'd been dancing every dance like we always did. Folks who knew us got so they never thought to cut in. We seemed as complete in ourselves as Tweedledum and Tweedledee.

I was happy.

Across the shining floor, through the long open doors laid the balcony and the sea, tossing in the dark like a feverish kid in its sleep. And it seemed that Tom was restless with it.

We danced on, doing the same old steps we knew so well, not talking much because we'd said everything there was to say. I laid my head closer on that manly bosom with the nice lavender stripes and thought how deep and strong it was, and comforting—forever and ever.

So I sighed a little, I was so content.

"Tired, dear?" asked Tom, as he'd asked it a million times.

I raised my head and smiled—up into that sweet face with the brown eyes and the lips that could be so spunky.

"Nope," I answered bright. "Got too much powder on my nose?"

"A little. In the corner by your eye. Want my hanky?"

He dusted my nose off, careless but efficient, then parked my head on his chest

again and looked over it and beyond. He was so tall!

"Say, Sadie," he commenced abruptly after a silence, "who's the new jane?"

"Where?"

"Over there, dancing with Tex. The girl with the yellow dress and the cute blond curls."

"That's Daisy Bennett—why?"

"Oh, nothing. Pretty, ain't she?"

"Yeh," I answered with hurt enthusiasm, the way all us girls does when the man we loves coos compliments about another member of our sex. "Oh, yeh, she's awful cute. Got one of them skins you'd love to touch—*up*," I added with malice.

"Kind of like to meet her," he muttered, averting his eyes and making his voice matter-of-fact as all men do when they're interested in something they oughtn't to be interested in. "Let's steer over their way and swap hops, huh?"

"Great!" I agreed, smiling the way you do in a dentist's chair when the dentist remarks what a nice set of molars you got. "I'd love to dance with Tex—for a change."

But oh, to think that after three hundred or so consecutive dances without interruption, my Tom was beginning to get tired of me! The men sure is a fickle lot.

Yet I approached my rival gay and giving Tom my compact to tote in his breast pocket over his heart where that silly little bottle blonde was going to park her haystack, I swung into Tex's polite embrace and let myself get lost in the mad revel without even a backward glance.

After the music stopped we moseyed back prompt to the meeting place under the date palm and stood, waiting. Tom wasn't there, and Tex seemed as anxious as a bridegroom at the church door.

"Daisy's always tooting off with some guy like this—and staying," he informed me, with an eye on the long door that led to the moon-mantled balcony. "She sure is hard to look after. Some sheik's always getting her in a dark corner and trying to make her forget me. Sometimes I don't think I'll stand for it." He scowled. "Oh here they come!"

I turned and saw and seethed.

From the balcony—with moonlight framing that gold hair and the ocean breeze billowing her short, sweeping skirts—come the Disturbing Element, hanging onto Tom's arm with both hers and looking up into his eyes with a mysterious smile.

Tom blushed as he handed her over to Tex.

"Oh, you big boy!" she flung back as she breezed away. "Don't you tell!"

Tom gave me a reassuring hug and we fell into our same old comfortable lockstep.

"Yeh," I muttered savage. "Daisies don't tell, all right—and she sure is a daisy."

My *fiancé* didn't say nothing. His eyes were dreamy and his lips curled a little at some remembrance that must have tickled him.

I couldn't bear no more.

"Got to fix my stocking," I whispered, choky. "Meet me outside the dressing room."

There was nobody there as I bust through the door and flopped on the little seat by the mirror. And my elbows made vicious tracks in the powder that caked the bureau—marble-topped it was, like them yellow-haired flappers that, in a minute, steal the love of a year.

But there must be a reason. There's a reason for everything, even parsley and mosquitoes, if we only prove it.

So I looked at myself in the glass, stern—at the old familiar brown bob, parted in the middle where Tom would always smooth it down so tender on both sides of my old familiar face. Not that I was a homely hepzibah. I was almost as good-looking as that blonde, with the aid of a little powder, rouge and the lipstick, them three things that has done more than all else to make women equal.

But the trouble was Tom *knew*. He'd never seen that blond baby going through the process of evolution. He'd only viewed the finished product. And that made her interesting.

Interesting! That was it.

I had ceased being such to my Tom. Distance lends enchantment. Familiarity breeds contempt—all them old wheezes dinned in my head till I would of went

balmy if I hadn't kept on looking at myself steady in the glass.

What did he say to that girl on the balcony? What did they talk about? What did they *do*? Say, let me tell you this—it ain't the *One Woman* who really knows about her man. It's the *Other Woman*!

The fact bust on me like a cloudburst and with it a bright idea flashed forth like lightning.

All right, then, I'd *be* the other woman! I'd be distant, fascinating, new. I'd be a vamp—the kind that lingers in the lilac dusk when the moon is low or who languishes on her *chaise longue* and lets her anguished lover kiss the hem of her pale pink negligee.

Yep, that's the kind I'd be, for that's the kind men want. They don't want a woman to share their burdens or bring slippers for their tired feet or hold the mirror while they shave. They want a baby doll to share their fun and call them Romeo and hold their hand while they rave. And I'd be that kind.

It took me a week to figure how, but when I got through I'd doped out a plot that would of been good for a year's run on Broadway.

I was going to accompany Tom on his vacation, unbeknownst to him—to be near him, to play the part of the “new girl next door.”

It was easy. Tom had told me to address all postcards to Tent No. 88, City Island, beginning August 16. Three days later I was the proud possessor of Tent No. 90 on the same island for one week, beginning August 16.

And I was alone. Mysterious females always are. When two go together they're merely “girls,” but when there's only one she's “that woman.” So I went alone, though my best chum, Ida Mae Gumpel, took Tent No. 92. A woman can be just as mysterious under secret chaperonage.

We arrived at City Island on the evening of the sixteenth, when all the water round about was laying in a quiet calm with tall boats on the bay lifting their sharp masts to prick blood from the sunset sky. On the shore stretched rows and rows of tents, lined up like soldiers on summer parade.

Gosh, it was so pretty it almost cured the awful ache that clutched round my heart with fingers that wouldn't let go.

But I wasn't there to fall into fits over nature's wonders. I had a grim masquerade to perform—the masquerade of being the *Other Woman*. For, if I gotta have a rival, I want to be it.

Tom's tent was quiet. He must be out fishing or something. Tom always was good on throwing out a line. So Ida Mae helped me unpack and arrange my new personality.

The first step consisted in donning a blond wig with long and beauteous curls. Ida's director gave it to her when she was playing an extra once out to Fort Lee.

Over my old familiar brown hob it went, and though it felt like a brush heap I grinned brave and bore up. Then out of my week-end bag I extracted a filmy thing of pink what had been stored away deep in my cedar chest awaiting the day.

I felt mean wearing it. 'Twas like looting a church to loot that little old hope chest of mine with all the dreams it held. But then, I figured it was the only way I could make them selfsame dreams come true.

“Gosh all golf balls!” commented my girl friend, surveying me with admiration. “Gee, you look great! But say,” she added, doubt tingeing her voice, “anybody'd know it was you. All Tom's gotta do is lamp them brown eyes and the merry old smile and he's got your number, honey. How are you gonna work it?”

“*Lamp* me is right,” I declared, mysterious. “That's all he's gonna do is *lamp* me. Where's the kerosene burner I brung? Light it, will you? That's right. Now, Ida, you toddle outside, look in and see the movies.”

I took my pink chiffon train in hand and commenced to perform a series of fascinating maneuvers in front of the lamp.

“Oh-h!” trickled Ida Mae's wondering tones from without.

“Would you know it was me?” I called, palpitant.

“Never!” she whispered. “Gee, Sadie, you look great! Just like a Tony Sarg soubrette or whichever.”

"Take another squint," I ordered, soft, twining my arms above my head and draping myself on the army cot. "Behold, Oh Well's Outline of Mystery. Some shadow picture, huh? Ida, would I in any way appeal to the lure-loving instincts of the average man?"

"You tell 'em, dearie," cooed Ida, loyal as any woman friend can be. "Now that the stage is set O. K. Sadie, can I toddle to the home tent and snooze? It's been a great but galling day."

"One more deed of charity, old faithful," I begged. "Trot out your uke banjo, tickle a few tunes when my hero comes, and then, to the echoes of soft music, you may slip away and leave me do the rest."

"All right," sighed Ida, weary but willing. "Say, here comes somebody now!"

"It's him!" I whispered. "Squelch the spot-light and shush."

Two pairs of masculine feet trod up the sandy walk and scraped across the plank floor of the tent next door.

"Hang 'em outside," come my *fiancé's* firm tones, and my heart warmed but froze. "They'll smell like the devil in here."

Point of information number one. So that's the way my soft-spoken little sugar baby talks when he's out in the wilds with his men friends! Gee, but I was learning lots. He swore!

"We'll have 'em for breakfast," stated another voice that I didn't recognize. So Tom had strange men friends, too!

"O. K.," agreed my hero. "Got a match, Hal?"

"Yeh."

Come the soft slur of sulphur on shoe soles and a long inhaling, mingled with a sigh of content.

"Let's sit out front," suggested Hal, after a pause.

"Too damn many mosquitoes."

"Well, I'd rather get a few bites than suffer in this blamed hot hole," argued Tom's boy friend.

They left the tent, and there was the shuffle of settling cushions.

"Now!" I whispered to Ida, who squatted with ukelele poised.

She picked a few chords for an opener, and I commenced singing in the new voice

I'd been practicing for a week. I was surprised at myself. It didn't seem me at all. It was soft and sweet and intriguing, and after a while it come to me as natural as chirping to a cricket.

"All alone, I'm so all alone," I began, gaining assurance in the dark. "There is no one else but you."

In between notes I could almost feel keen interest in the silence that hung over the tent next door.

"Wondering where you are—and how you are—and if you are all alone, too," I concluded with honeyed significance.

Ida strummed to a stop.

There come a portentous clearing of throats. H-m! H-m!

I went through the piece again, softer this time, and on the last two bars I was accompanied by base voices from out of the evening.

Say, I'd got him going already—the darn little flirt! Only one day on his vacation and accompanying the girl next door! Only twenty-four hours had my farewell kiss been drying on them fickle lips, and he was already pursing them to tunes from the Woman Across the Way. And the fact that that woman was me didn't help any. I was getting jealous of myself.

I couldn't act no more—not that day anyhow. Maybe to-morrow, but no more then. Something went dry in my throat and I felt tired.

"Go home, Ida," I whispered. "Thanks, deary, and sleep tight."

There was no shadow show that evening. I sat a long time in the dark, thinking, and the more I thought the bigger got the lump in my throat till my breath come deep and painful.

Yep, I sat there, a lonely woman of mystery, watching the moon peep impertinent through the tent flap and listening to the soothing lap of the waves on the shore.

Across the white city of tents come the passionate bass of a male quartet, taking up the burden of the evening's musical entertainment where my little girl friend had left off.

"Slumber-r-r on, my lit-tle Gyp Me Sweetheart," they sang with throbbing abandon, and the words clutched my heart.

Then come the final noises of bedtime—the slop of water thrown out back—the creak of a cot being put up—a high and tedious tirade from the married couple across the way who was arguing as to who really upset the canoe that afternoon, and was it on purpose.

All the great colony of vacationists around me subsided into a soothing, sonorous snore.

Tom and his inspiring friend Hal was still sitting out, and the moon had climbed high above the rippling bay before they spoke again.

“Time to flatten the ferns, Tom,” said Hal with a yawn that padded on the night air like a cat’s tread. “I’m going on in, anyhow. Coming?”

“Naw, I’ll stay out a minute. Gotta write a letter, and it’s light enough. Moon’s bright as blazes.”

“Letter? Who to?” asked Hal, indifferent.

“Oh, nobody—just my girl,” answered Tom, hesitant.

“Hah, got a skirt!” exclaimed the man friend with interest.

Tom didn’t say nothing, but I could almost feel him blush through the darkness. I leaned forward and tuned my ears intent to the low sound of their voices. Say, but this was good!

“What’s she like?” went on Hal.

“All right.”

“Pretty?”

“Sure!” snorted Tom, aroused. “What do you think?”

“Trust you to pick ’em right,” complimented Hal with admiration.

“Sure I pick ’em right,” boasted my *fiancé*, “every old time.”

My heart pounded in my chest like a high-powered engine raring to go. Then it sputtered and died. And right then and there I picked up Point of Information Number Two—next to the Other Woman, the one who gets the best inside dope on your sweetheart is the Man Friend.

And it hurt me.

I didn’t feel like the Woman Next Door—fascinating, free, powerful. I only felt like little Sadie Huggins, back home in her Tenth Avenue flat, loving her Tom and

wondering where he was and how he was, and if he was all alone, too.

Hal’s laugh cut in on my thoughts like a razor blade on a tender cheek.

“What are you laughing at anyhow?” asked Tom, a little mad. “Sadie’s the greatest girl in the world, and when we get married—”

“Oh,” intoned Hal, “so you’re gonna marry her?”

“Yes,” answered Tom, short.

My heart come to life again. I wanted to run out and throw my arms around his dear old neck and print a million loving kisses on the lips that had spilled them sweet words. My Tom—my own true Tom. I could of kicked myself four ways for having doubted him thus.

“Got a pen?” called Tom, as Hal went inside and commenced arranging blankets or such from the soft sound they made.

“Naw—left all that truck at the office. This is a vacation, stupe.”

“Never mind,” murmured my dear boy. “I’ll use a lead pencil. Sadie will understand.”

“Give her my love!” sang out Hal with a snicker.

“Aw, go to the devil,” growled Tom, and there was a silence, a beautiful, busy silence in which the man of my heart penned me a loving missile. What could of been sweeter?

“Say,” broke out Tom after awhile, a little indistinct as he give the envelope a long, soft lick, “who’s the dame next door?”

“Don’t know,” answered Hal, careless, “but she sure does maul a wicked uke.”

“Her voice is queer, kind of. Reminds me of somebody I know, and yet it don’t. Wonder if she’s good-looking.”

“Who knows?” whistled Hal, blithe. “The morrow may tell. Getting up at six?”

“Yeh. Set the clock. And say, where do you mail letters?”

“Down that wide street and turn left. What’d you tell sweetie, huh? ‘Sad and blue, lonely, too? Ain’t nothing doing here without you.’ Oh, boy!”

“Shut up!” snapped Tom, savage.

There was a final silence. So I went to my weary couch, not knowing whether to laugh or cry.

Oh, men, men! If woman is the eternal sphinx, look to man and you'll know the reason.

II.

FIVE days sped and Saturday come, the night when we was all to bust camp and get ready to go back to the old grind, as the scissor man terms his business.

And in them five days things had progressed like a bridge party.

Every evening we held a concert between the two tents, unseen but not unsung. And Tom would call out merry things back and forth such as:

"Hey, Ukelele Kid, Ha-wai-i?" or "Aw, come on out and gab awhile. Don't be so bashful, mystery girl. You're among friends." Or, "Say, who are you anyhow? The Queen of She-Bear or maybe So-lonely herself? You got me wondering, little one. I bet you're some baby. Listen, what color are your eyes? Broadway blue? And your hair—say, you're the only girl I know with corkscrews à la Pickford. How do I know? From your shadow on the tent. Sure, you never knew it, but I watched you every night, combing out them fairy locks of yours. And it's got me, little one."

Such was the words of sweetness that fell on my aching heart. But I bore up brave and played the game. When love is wounded it's better to kill it outright—like a horse with a broken leg. And though you hate to see it die, that which had been so beautiful and faithful and true, still, all you can do is shut your eyes and pull the trigger.

And that's what I decided to do on the last night of camp—pull the trigger on the love that had been ours.

The boys hadn't come back yet from their final boat trip on the bay as me and Ida ate the last supper in silence.

In the west, behind us, the sun dipped down in a blaze of color—reds and orange and a saffron yellow and the pale mistiness of smoky purple, so that even the eastern sky got jealous and tried to imitate it while the moon hung hesitant, wan and pale,

waiting for the dynasty of day to end and the reign of night begin.

And all this beauty—calm, cool, indifferent to the turmoil of this little earth—only stung me more. Sunset is made for lovers. Moons are made for love. It should of been raining and thundering and lightning to match the emotions of my anguished heart.

But to all outward appearances I was as serene as an actress on her four hundredth appearance. I was becoming accustomed to my rôle. It was the only thing in all this troubled world that seemed the least bit real. I even hummed a little as I turned to let Ida drape my blue chiffon frock—the sweet dress of dreams that I was going to wear for tea on the boardwalk at Atlantic City the second day of our honeymoon. And now I was wearing it to a funeral—the funeral of our love.

"Gosh, but you're wonderful, Sadie!" breathed Ida, between a row of pins in her front teeth. "He'll fall for you to-night, sure."

"Yeh," I commented, indifferent. "Well, let him pick a soft place, then, 'cause he's gonna lay a long, long time."

"Atta girl, Cleo," approved my bosom friend. "Treat 'em crool."

The moon was high and bright as my erstwhile *fiancé* and his man friend tramped up the walk to home, still munching the remains of a torrid terrier and roll what they had picked up down to the hot dog man's on the beach.

"Skip, Ida!" I whispered, hasty. "And leave me to my Mark."

I stood awhile at the tent flap, a solitary, statuesque figure in trailing, ethereal blue, waiting for my victim to prepare for the sacrifice.

I heard the splash, splash of water in a tin basin, the gurgle of words mumbled through a towel, the scrape of the razor on a well-known cheek, a whistling—the satisfied whistling of a man that's bent on lady killing.

Then come the aroma of barber's lilac, the kind that Tom always used. And it wafted to my widened nostrils and made my head a little dizzy and my heart ache. It was so much like Tom.

"Somebody loves me. I wonder who? I wonder who it can be?" he whistled with great significance. I smiled sardonic to myself.

Who? Who, indeed?

"Hey!" he called so suddenly it scared me. "Hey, woman next door—the moon's out!"

"So am I," I laughed, short but not unpleasant.

"Tell that to the submarines," he hooted. "You're in, but you oughtta be out—out under the bright silvery moon, talking to me."

"Sounds alluring," I remarked, coy.

"Are you coming?"

"Maybe."

"Well, you'd better. I want to see you. Camping right next door to a girl like you and going home without seeing her is like being in Rome and missing the Coliseum. Aw, come on out!"

"All right," I submitted. "Wait till I wind a scarf around my lily neck. The breeze is cool."

"No more than you, Lady of the Iceberg," he said, reproachful. "Oh, there you are!"

He stood like a statue, watching me trip toward him through the sand, my long skirts billowing out behind me the way that blonde's did as she and him emerged from the Asbury balcony. Back of me the moon was making a wonderful crown of gold around my borrowed locks as it does to the movie heroine's—or so I fondly imagined.

"Gosh!" exclaimed Tom, too petrified to say anything more.

I glided toward him, my face lost in the deep violet of evening.

"Gosh!" breathed Tom again, like a drowning man coming up for the second time. "Gosh, but you're beautiful, no kidding!"

I smiled serene and came to his side.

"You're like a queen," he floundered. "Like a—a angel."

I put out my white hand and touched his shoulder, intriguing.

"And a cunning little devil, too," he added, sly.

I bent my head nearer to his cheek and let my stolen goldilocks graze his new shave.

The evening swam in on us, close and sweet. On the shore the waves of the bay beat insistent. A breeze fanned our faces and bore a fragrant smell like cinnamon from some far bush inland.

I raised my head, framed against the moon. Tom's arms went around me. Let him crush me. Maybe he could crush out the terrible hurt that still lingered in my cold heart. But I was serene—serene, smiling and seductive. The Other Woman!

I felt it coming. He bent down and I didn't turn away. His breath was warm and close. He was nearer. All right, pull the trigger on our love! It would be all over in a minute.

But he let me go, brutally sudden, and turned away, sobbinglike.

"Aw, gosh," he muttered, "aw, gosh—I can't do it. You see, I—I got a girl back home!"

My heart leaped with joy. Warm, new fires were kindled in it to glow forever and ever.

He couldn't do it! He had a "girl back home." The other woman—the *other woman*! How sweet was that thought in my bosom. The other woman—back home.

He was starting to go when I stopped him.

"Tom!" I whispered, tense.

He turned.

"Sadie! Why, Sadie!"

He didn't ask me why, or how come or anything stupid. He only came back and wrapped me close and pushed back the hateful golden hair off my brow so that he could smooth down the dear old familiar brown bob. And he kissed me with all the love in the world.

Then after awhile he whispered so low he had to say it a second time: "Oh, Sadie. Oh, Sadie, dear—let's go and get married right now. Look, dear—we got all day Sunday for a honeymoon!"

And it was a beautiful day.

THE END



Thirteen Days

By **EARL WAYLAND BOWMAN**

ONCE and for all I'm goin' to write the true story of my life and how I come to be in the Kokkopola County jail out here in Arizona for cow stealin'. It's about the worst jail I was ever in, and God knows that's sayin' a lot! But it doesn't matter now. Nothin' matters since my terrible experience in the Kokkopola County jail. The only advantage of being in the Kokkopola County jail seems like is the chance it has give me to write the true story of my life, and when I get to studyin' about it I can't think of any book I ever read that's half as interesting as the story of my life is.

My name is Jefferson Suggens, my pa's name was Ezra Suggens, my ma's name was Eliza Suggens, I was born in Hickory County, Missouri, twenty-seven years and a half ago, and I've been called Jeff for short ever since I can remember, and I've wondered lots of times why somebody hasn't already wrote the story of my life. But

for some reason or other they haven't, so I'm goin' to write it myself.

I've been in the Kokkopola County jail for cow stealin' for thirteen days now, and I can say from the bottom of my heart that every second has seemed like a hour, every hour a week and every week a thousand years. So, as far as my personal feelings are concerned I've already been in the Kokkopola County jail one million one hundred and twenty-three thousand two hundred hours, three hundred and twelve weeks and a thousand and a little over eight hundred years.

Just imagine crowdin' all that time into thirteen days!

But anybody that's ever been in the Kokkopola County jail will know what I mean. Outsiders can't understand it. They have no idea how slow time can go when a man's in the Kokkopola County jail for cow stealin'. And God knows I never stole a cow in my life.