

# Up to the Hilt

by ANNE ROWE

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### SCENARIOS

Jane Applebee, literary agent, regrets having invited her sister, Neal Ferrant, the glamorous actress, to share her New York apartment. Neal always took what she wanted, and in this instance it was Jane's estate plan, Deane Kennard, rising young author. During a visit to Elmpoint, the country estate of her other sister, Bita Pearce, Jane was intrigued by Mrs. Brenda Knight, an attractive stranger who had lost her way and spent the night there. Elmpoint had been purchased completely furnished and Bita, soon in need of a nursery, had recently given Neal the lush fittings from one of its bondoors. During the night Jane found Brenda Knight wandering about in the unfurnished room. On Wednesday Jane gave a reception for her most important author and house guest, Margot Case-Ingalls, recently arrived from Hollywood. Among the guests were Dr. Hunt Berwick, amateur criminologist and war buddy of Bita's husband, Dick; Brenda Knight, and Mr. Polly Woodford, famous contractor who lived across the hall. Neal arrived with a stream of admirers, including Deane Kennard and Tonia Valente, wealthy South American. Margot was infuriated when the guests deserted her to pay homage to Neal, and deliberately embarrassed Deane and Hunt, each of whom had met her on a previous occasion, by declaring she had never seen them before. Later that evening she asked Jane if she might have the apartment to herself on Friday afternoon. Jane suspected a man in the picture when Margot confided she was greatly worried about something on Thursday before Neal left for her downtown opening, accompanied by Deane and Tonia; she gave Jane one of the huge pillows from her room because its rose color clashed with her hair. The apartment was empty when Jane arrived home late Friday afternoon, but in the suitcases used by Margot and her unknown guest, Jane found the remnants of Deane's mailed cigarettes. Fearing Hunt Berwick, who had come to take Margot and Jane to dinner, would see them, Jane threw the tell-tale bits down the incinerator. Jane and Hunt, puzzled by Margot's continued absence, go out to dinner. Jane is telling the story.

### CHAPTER TEN

BEFORE WE rang Polly Woodford's bell that evening, at nine-thirty sharp, I went into my apartment to see if Margot had returned in the meantime. But apparently she had not. At least there was no sign of her in her room or elsewhere. And so I shrugged off the puzzle and went back to the foyer, where Hunt Berwick was waiting for me. He was standing at one of the consoles there, fingering a large gray envelope, and asked the moment he saw me, "Was this here when we left? It's addressed to Mrs. Ingalls and delivered by hand. No stamp." "I don't know," I told him. "All I can say is, I hadn't noticed it and it's one more mystery." This mystery was soon to be cleared, however. "What a pity, what a pity! When I'd arranged for my star mannequin to model only gowns created for her!" Polly twittered regretfully when I told him of Margot's disappearance. "How could she do that to me! After I put a note into your foyer telling her about it!" "You put the note in my foyer?" "A note in a gray envelope?" Hunt and I shared our simultaneous reply. Polly exhaled his head and twittered—apologetically, this time. His twitters were graded all through the scale to express various emotions. "Mais oui, I always use gray stationery. And I hope you will forgive my entering your home without permission, Mademoiselle Applebee. But—when I found the door open—" "You found my front door open?" I asked incredulously. "A little bit," Polly showed a distance of half an inch between two fingers. "The departing visitor evidently hadn't quite closed it." "What departing visitor?" Hunt asked abruptly. Polly shrugged. "A gentleman. To say more would be indiscreet, no?" "Not when the—er—gentleman was leaving Miss Applebee's apartment," Hunt pointed out dryly. "Polly's antics registered embarrassment. 'That is true, in a way. But, after all, who I thought it was beside the point. All I saw clearly was a man in a light gray hat sinking out of sight in the elevator, when I came out to deliver the note. I concluded he came from Miss Applebee's apartment because there was no other place to come from and—' He stopped, cocked his head and blinked, a bit maliciously. I thought, 'He was about your height, Dr. Berwick. And I notice your hat is light gray also. So—it actually could have been you.' "It could, but it wasn't," Hunt told him briefly. "Of course not. I just meant to illustrate my predicament," Polly agreed. And then went on: "When I found the door ajar I naturally imagined he had left it open and went in. But I rang the bell first. Word of honor, I did." I couldn't understand it. If he had rung the bell, Margot would have heard and answered it. And then a simple explanation occurred to me and I cut into the little couturier's effusions excitedly: "Of course, that's it! I bet Margot Ingalls was in the elevator, too, and you didn't see her, Mr. Woodford?" Polly stopped talking, looked reflective, and then agreed, "C'est oui, Clever of you to think of it, Mademoiselle. Without a doubt she was in the elevator, hidden behind her escort." And then he dropped the subject and ushered us into his apartment. It was, without exception, the most beautiful I'd ever been in, and so original, only the imagination of a near-genius could have dreamed it up. The whole rear of the house had been thrown into one enormous room which could be subdivided into three by means of decorative sliding walls—with such unsightly necessities as the kitchen and bathroom tucked away to both sides of the foyer. The sliding walls looked like rich draperies when closed, hanging in majestic golden folds ornamented with a brilliant design of fantastic flowers and birds, and closed or half open, were a marvelous background for the equally rich and exotic furniture Polly had gathered in his home, each piece as much of a special creation as his beloved gowns. Tonight the wall that ordinarily shut off his sleeping quarters served as a back-drop for his fashion show. And the apogee of it was one gorgeously gowned mannequin.

after the other emerging from between the shimmering folds, to the accompaniment of hidden music and a running patter of commentary from Polly—really deserved a larger audience than just Hunt and me. And a more appreciative one. I can't, of course, definitely judge Hunt's reaction to the beauties of fashion he appeared. But I know that I, who should have been in raptures over Polly's superb gowns, somehow was not. The problem of Margot's strange absence, and my discovery that Deane, presumably in Boston with Neal, had been the mystery man of the afternoon, made me unable to concentrate on anything else, and I was honestly glad when the last "creation" had vanished from view and we were sitting at a perfectly appointed supper table in the dining room end of the apartment. Here again Polly had given his originality full play. A Chinese houseman served us caviar, large, gray pearls of it heaped high in a magnificent silver bowl, accompanied by a wonderful old Chateau d'Yquem. "From the Maison Gourmet," our host explained. "Not like the pre-war unsalted by any means, but the best there is now. They have some method of unsalting it." I am as a rule not overfond of Caviar. But I can truthfully say I enjoyed Polly's. And I enjoyed even more his delight in it. The contents of the silver bowl dwindled, vanished, were replenished and dwindled again, as Polly kept eating as if to establish a record. Which, however, didn't prevent him from chattering like a magpie and plying Hunt and me with a stream of indiscreet questions. "They ranged from my business to my father's immense success in London. From Hunt's war record to his plans for the future, to the nature of his relationship toward me. The latter stressing the possibility of romantic developments so embarrassingly that, in sheer self-defense, I decided to divert the little couturier's curiosity by asking him a few questions in my turn. "I saw you talk with Mrs. Knight at my reception," I told him when he was temporarily silenced by a big bit of caviar. "Do you know her well?" He swallowed the bite with a gulp. "Mrs. Knight? Mais oui, Mrs. Knight," he said in a way that made me think he hadn't quite caught the name at first. "But certainly I know her well. She has been my customer for years." "Then it's no wonder she's so marvelously well dressed," I taunted him. "By the way, I only met her recently. Is she a widow or a divorcee?" Polly put down the glass he was raising to his lips. "Mademoiselle Applebee! What a very indiscreet question!" he reproached me. "Do you not realize that a couturier is like a father confessor or a physician? I never disclose the private affairs of my clients." I threw a quick glance at Hunt, whose eyes had approved my inquiry about Brenda Knight before, and he came to my rescue promptly. "Of course you don't," he applauded. "It would be a grave breach of confidence."

by has only three legitimate charges: (1) Operating expenses, including taxes and interest on the debt; (2) Depreciation, which the commission recognizes only as a reimbursement for facilities actually withdrawn from service and only enough to make good any actual wastage of capital; and (3) Dividend, equivalent to an accepted allowable rate of interest on the "net property value" which words immediately bring up many conflicting views. Rate Comparisons The Federal Power Commission can show the public that rates for electricity can be very much less under public control. This, of course, is possible owing to the fact that the government can borrow money much more cheaply than a private utility; also to the fact that a publicly owned utility need pay no Federal income taxes. As these reasons to owe 30 per cent, it can be seen that they are a great factor. Of course, this merely means that the government must collect this money from other taxpayers if the utilities are exempt from taxation. But this point is not pedaled by those who advocate public ownership. The Federal Power Commission can show the people of a community that, by taking over the utilities, they can (1) get a reduction in rates through the saving of interest charges, and (2) get back, within twenty years, all that they pay for the property through the saving in Federal income taxes. As the public gradually realizes this fact, there will be more and more properties taken over by authorities. Furthermore, the above mentioned depreciation formula and the even more severe original cost formula may help the public in getting these properties at bargain prices. Socialism Increasing Just now we hear little about public ownership in this country, but it is spreading at a rapid rate throughout Europe and the British Empire. Sooner or later the shadow of socialism will fall on the United States. The New Deal is preparing the ground. When it hits us, the utilities will be one of the first groups to suffer. The bonds of public utility operating companies should be perfectly safe; but it may be wise for investors in utility stocks to cash in now before their properties are forcibly taken over by public authorities.

To Be Continued.

## Utilities Will Be Among First To Be Socialized

Tax Exemptions, Babson Says, Only Advantage Basis

By ROGER W. BABSON  
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New York, April 5.—I dislike to see any more electric utilities taken over by the public at the present time. The utilities did well during the war and are now entitled to show what they can do in times of peace. Therefore, I wish it strictly understood that this week's column

is not an appeal for public ownership. Yet, I do believe that investors in public utilities are entitled to know the truth.

Federal Power Commission Up to now, public utilities have been regulated only by municipal authorities and State commissions who have understood local needs and conditions. In most cases they have been fair to the public, to the employees, and to the shareholders. Recently, however, the Federal Power Commission has come into the picture in a most threatening manner. The original idea was for this commission to function only in connection with interstate problems; but current interpretations of the law enable it to interfere with most all electric utilities.

The Federal Power Commission is not content to render decisions based upon precedent. Shooting is not the only method of killing a man. A slow death may be brought about by starvation, by abuse, or even by fear. The utilities claim that the Federal Power Commission is using this latter method to bring about public ownership through unfair propaganda and an attempt to ruin the reputation of utility executives. Whether we like it or not, this program is destined to bring about government ownership of the utilities. This will probably be through large Federal Authorities, with the country divided into districts corresponding with the Federal Reserve Boards.

Depreciation Policies A Federal Power Commission's formula demands that all depreciation charges, in excess of the cost of replacements and statutory dividends, shall be deducted from the appraisal price when and if the property is taken over by the public. This means that the public is already engaged in buying these properties on the installment plan.

The commission claims that a utility

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