

# VERNA the IRRESISTIBLE

The Story of a Girl with a Strange, Brown, and Compelling Beauty

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**As an Artist's Model, Verna Receives Her First Recognition in New York; She is Intrigued by the Ultra-Modern Life of Greenwich Village**

## BEGIN READING HERE

### WHAT HAS GONE BEFORE—

Verna Nash, remarkably beautiful daughter of a shiftless family, refuses to remain in her lowly station and decides to amount to something in life. Against the advice of her mother, she spurns Dick Colvin, an uncouth laborer, and is rescued from his forced attentions one night by Donald Baxter, a slickster, from Kalesburg, a neighboring city. Irresistibly drawn to her, Donald lavishes attentions on her without avail. She finally consents to take a position as night club entertainer at his cabaret. Dick Colvin unsuccessfully attempts to prevent her. In Kalesburg, Donald takes Verna to Mrs. Quill's rooming house, where she is locked in a back room but after many adventures she escapes and meets Rev. Hugh Godfrey, a handsome young clergyman, who befriends her and falls immediately in love with her. As she does not want to spoil her chances for individual success, she refuses his proffer of marriage.

Finding as little opportunity in Kalesburg as there was in Norrisburg for a colored girl, and learning that Dick Colvin is coming to town, she leaves for Welch, W. Va., where, as waitress in a Negro restaurant, she is very popular and is pursued by Dr. Charlie Meyers, a dentist. In order to escape his ardent attentions, she goes to work for a mine superintendent some miles in the hills where, after six or seven months, she meets the superintendent's artist daughter, Margot Yancey, who raves over Verna's beauty and her wonderful soprano voice, and offers to help her if she ever comes to New York City. In this Verna sees a realization of her dreams, so when Dick Colvin intercepts her one night at an Elks' dance and there is a fight between him and Dr. Meyers, her escort, she becomes disgusted and leaves the coal fields for New York City.

### NOW GO ON WITH THE STORY

#### CHAPTER SEVEN

#### THE BEAUX ARTS BALL

Smartly dressed in a grass green ensemble and carrying a new yellow traveling bag, Verna looked more beautiful than ever as she descended from the taxicab in front of Margot Yancey's studio on West Ninth Street, New York City, on the edge of Greenwich Village. The chauffeur and two or three passersby stared in admiration as she tripped lightly up the steps of the impressive brown-stone fronted house and sounded the polished brass knocker.

Verna's mind was a whirl of new impressions, a jumble of skyscrapers, traffic, city noises, a newly experienced courtesy unknown to her in her Southern hometown, and the memory of her long journey from West Virginia. As she waited for the door to be answered, she wondered what her reception would be, whether she would live in this grand house or not, how soon before she would see Harlem, the Negro capital.

#### Verna, the Model

Miss Yancey answered the door herself, arrayed in artist's smock, her fingers stained with paints.

"Why, Verna!" she exclaimed, "come right in, child. I had no idea that you would be here so soon. Take your things right up stairs. You came at the right time; I've got a South Sea illustration and I'll use you for the model."

"Oh, Miss Yancey," the dark girl replied, "I don't know that I can be a model; I've never tried it."

"Nonsense! It really isn't anything. All you've got to do is to sit still in the position I put you. It'll be an excellent beginning for you, Verna. I think I can get you lots of work around here with my friends and you'll be paid seventy-five cents an hour."

Verna mumbled her thanks, and tears of gratitude stood in her eyes as she unpacked her things in the little charming bedroom to which Miss Yancey assigned her on the third floor. All of her dreams seemed to be coming true. She unconsciously pinched herself to see if she were really awake.

She found the job of posing to be very simple, but exacting. For long hours she sat on a pedestal or leaned on a support while Margot Yancey sketched and painted her in various costumes and poses, and often without any costume at all.

"Oh, really now," the statuesque Margot would drawl in her nearest approach to enthusiasm, "you are quite ideal, Verna."

Sometimes while they were at work, a friend or two would drop in for a chat. Invariably they raved when they saw Verna's exquisite figure. In a fortnight three or four artists were clamoring for her serv-

ices and in five or six weeks the whole village was raving over the new "find" of Margot Yancey.

to have an artist use her body for a picture, paint it yellow and change her features and hair to that of a Japanese maiden. The mystery of the canvas and paint held her as in a thrall.

#### She Becomes a Hit

And then there were the enthusiastic comments of the artists. They liked her for the perfect specimen of humanity that she was and she learned to appreciate her charms even more than ever before. These people, working with the most beautiful models, declared again and again that she possessed the most perfect feminine form they had ever seen, so she had to believe it.

She assumed a new, haughtier bearing and an aristocratic swing that enhanced her beauty a hundred times. She quickly learned the graceful, unhurried mannerisms of the salon, the secrets of perfect makeup, the art of color combinations, the easy but

legion. For once she felt delightfully, gloriously satisfied and at peace. She was surrounded by people of education, culture and refinement, she averaged thirty dollars a week, she had the leisure to cultivate her great natural charms and no men were pestering her to marry them. To be sure, the aristocrats, the wasters, the critics and the students who visited the studio of Margot eyed Verna admiringly, flattered her, occasionally danced with her and three or four times took her to lunch or dinner at the International Restaurant, Pirates' Den, or some other smart place where she was always the center of attention; but none of the men made any overtures. Because they were in awe of her or in fear of Margot Yancey, they avoided any of the proposals she had heard from the lips of Dick Colvin, Donald Baxter, Hugh Godfrey, and Dr. Charlie Meyers.

#### Verna Receives a Warning

"Don't be fooled by these men,"



"Margot Yancey painted her in various costumes and poses and often without any costume at all."

Verna was enjoying it tremendously. Sometimes she posed as a nymph, sometimes as a Chinese or Greek or African. It interested her

exacting etiquette of the studio. She became, in short, a septa edition of the graceful Margot Yancey, whose male admirers in the village were

Margot warned her when she spoke of it. "There are dozens of them crazy about you right now, dear, but they are a little in awe because you

are colored and they are white, and because you are under my wing. If you weren't living here, you'd see how quickly they would make advances. If it were not for the criticism of society, any of these men would be proud to marry you, but the difference in race prevents that.

"They would love to have an affair with you, but they are afraid to troach the subject because you live with me. They'll not hold off very long, though, so I warn you to be careful. To a girl as beautiful as you are, men will offer anything, and there are men rich enough to offer anything who often come to visit us." Margot smiled wisely and protectively, drew indulgently upon a long Russian cigarette and shifted her position on the chaise lounge.

Three months after Verna's advent to Greenwich Village, the annual Beaux Arts Ball was announced. The ball was always the occasion for the artists' models, scenic artists, interior decorators and other people of the Bohemian set to wear their most elaborate costumes amid the most gorgeous and exotic scenery.

"Verna," drawled Margot, "you must go by all means. You'll really be a sensation. We'll get you up as the Queen of Sheba. Fred Watkins will make the costume and Will Radoski will make the palanquin for you to be carried in. We'll get a quartet of big handsome black fellows from Harlem to bear it and dress them as Egyptian serving men. Oh, it'll just be grand."

"But," interrupted Verna, "won't there be some objection to er,—me at such a swell affair?"

"Nonsense!" said Margot. "No one will dare to object to my guest. Besides, Honey, this is Greenwich Village, New York City, and not the Solid South. Everybody will be delighted. There may be a few narrow-minded persons about but they don't count; besides, most of them drop their silly prejudices when they enter this life. They have to."

There was much hustle and bustle in the artists' colony getting ready for the annual affair scheduled to be the most elaborate in history. Verna was as excited as the rest. Two or three times she went over to Fred Watkins's studio to see the progress of her costume, or to Will Radoski's little basement shop to watch the building of the palatial silvered palanquin.

#### "The Ethiopian Love Song"

Margot had said that when the time came for stunts, Verna must sing a song; so Verna began to hunt for something appropriate. Nothing trite or commonplace would do, but she could find nothing else. Then, one day Margot swept into the studio with eyes a gleam.

"I've got just the thing," she cried excitedly. "It's Wendell Dalton's very latest piece, 'The Ethiopian Love Song.'"

"Who is Wendell Dalton?" asked Verna, wondering and curious, as Margot seated herself at the baby grand piano and began to run over the piece.

"Who is Wendell Dalton?" echoed Margot, facing her incredulously. "Why, don't you know? Say, Verna, he is the swellest, handsomest colored fellow I've ever seen; a college graduate, the very soul of culture; tall, aristocratic and one of our leading composers. I'll have him down to tea sometime so you can meet him."

Between Margot Yancey, Fred Watkins and Will Radoski, Verna certainly looked more like the Queen of Sheba than it had been possible for

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