

## WHITE JADE

BY ELLEN EVELYN MACKIE

VIRGINIA DUNFIELD rose abruptly from the bridge table. She had paled under her suntan. There was a slight tightening at the corners of her lips.

"These card sharks! She was cleaned out. Dick had warned her. She must get away from the game somehow. Glancing at her wrist watch, she stifled a yawn.

"Sit down, Mrs. Dunfield, you're not going yet! We're playing another rubber—" Herbert Wilshire's voice held a note of impatience.

Virginia looked a trifle coldly into the evasive eyes of the man who had helped to trim her at a game that was all too one-sided. "Oh, I could play all night too, if the cards were . . ." she hesitated, sensing the indignation that flashed from the eyes of her hostess. "Really, I must go. It's nearly two o'clock. If you can tell me how I'm to be on the links tomorrow morning at ten . . ."

"Go along, Virginia," cut in Lady Maude's cool, smooth voice. She was aware of the other woman's plight. You can't draw blood from a stone. Lady Maude couldn't waste time on an opponent who was already cleaned out. "I'd forgotten about your golf game tomorrow. Here's Beryl . . . she'll take your place. Good-night, Virginia. Sweet dreams . . ."

MRS. DUNFIELD responded tonelessly. She slipped from the room with a sense of having been whipped. As she ascended the stairs, the voices of the others floated up to her—murmured arguments, polite disputings. Thank heaven she had pulled out.

Entering her room she turned the key softly. She crossed to the mirror, gazing at her reflection for a full second. "Fool!" she scoffed, "You're not one of them. Can't travel with these people. Too sharp for you."

Why had she accepted the invitation? She had known what it would cost. Being a guest at Lady Maude Clydebrook's country house was an expensive luxury. The tips alone would buy you a week at any good hotel. But the bridge debts.

How was she going to pay? Wearily Virginia switched off the lights. She drew aside the curtain, watching the moon flash a magic sword of silver across the polished floor. What a night! Curling herself among the cushions on the low window-seat, she gazed at the silent shadowed world without. It soothed her to whisper her fears to the night breeze, which carried them swiftly over the lake and away. And Virginia had some thinking to do.

IT WAS the same the other time she spent a week at Lady Maude's. But Dick had known then. She'd come to *Clyde Manor* with his full consent. They'd scarcely been married a year, and Dick had been rather proud that his young bride was invited into this fashionable set. But the one week had been enough. Dick paid up readily enough . . . though with a wry smile. He'd had a quiet talk with her afterwards, explaining how it was she couldn't keep up that pace.

"Lady Maude's friends have got the coin—" he had said in his tolerant way, "or else they

know how to shuffle the cards . . . to win by hook or by crook," laughing whimsically at his own humor, "and it's well enough for Beryl Dean . . . a girl who drips money like a wet umbrella. She's rich pickings for a brilliant shark like Lady Maude. Doesn't mind being trimmed at cards. Beryl's lavish tips pay for more than the cocktails. She's glad to get playing with that crowd."

Thinking it over, Virginia remembered with a start, that she hadn't seen Beryl at the card tables for several nights. This evening, the girl had descended upon them from somewhere, when Lady Maude pounced on her to take her, Virginia's place. Where had she been these other evenings? Not at bridge. Beryl had something more interesting on deck. An affair, no doubt. But with whom? Possibly that money-grabbing Lionel Glidden. Mrs. Dunfield gave a slight shiver. She hated that man. Always spying.

Her thoughts drifted back to her own affairs, her present predicament. Lady Maude held I.O.U.'s from Virginia amounting to nearly four hundred dollars. How was she to cover them? Fool . . . to have taken advantage of Dick's absence from town . . . getting into this entanglement. And the gowns she'd bought for this house party . . . the expensive French lingerie. One had to have things in keeping . . . and she was sharing Annette, Lady Maude's personal maid. Annette could be supercilious.

MRS. DUNFIELD unfastened her window and swung it wide. With a half-sigh she ran the full length of the house. She paced to and fro restlessly . . . drinking in long draughts of the stimulating night air. Now she stopped to gaze at the reflected moon shimmering in the silver-tipped mountain beyond. Then, with a quick turn of her head she coned the long row of windows, which like her own, opened out on to the balcony. All were unlit, save one, which cast a rosy glow from a lamp at the bedside table.

Beryl Deane's room! Mrs. Dunfield stole over, and peered through the open window. The bed-room was empty. In the dim light she could discern an evening gown tossed carelessly on the floor where pink satin shoes had been left on green ostrich feather fan with some other trinkets, envious eyes took in the costly toilet accessories—antique gold . . . too ornate for her taste but fabulously rich with its settings of precious stones.

Virginia was amused at the disorder. Beryl, it seemed, scorned the services of a personal maid. Said she liked her privacy. Gossip had it that her affairs mightn't bear too close scrutiny. Virginia's eyes were attracted by some things on the dresser. Gems! Gems that glittered and gleamed under the rosy light . . . precious stones that lured and beckoned.

An irresistible impulse seized Mrs. Dunfield. The room was so accessible. Just a step over the sill . . . Beryl would be playing bridge . . .

After an evening of desperate bridge, Virginia Dunfield attempted to recover by playing with fire . . . and ends in a lofty note, with the halo of real heroism

A second's hesitation . . . a swift around, and Mrs. Dunfield climbed on low window-seat to Beryl Deane's room, paused a second . . . listening . . . they crossed to the dresser.

Fear froze on the woman's face, as she the gleaming disarray on the toilet. Jewels . . . glistening, scintillating. Rings, earrings, ropes of gems . . . all in a fascinating, tempting heap. The girl have been in a frenzied haste to have left thus, strewn so ruthlessly about.

MRS. DUNFIELD had heard of a easy-going attitude toward her value. Yet the girl's very recklessness seemed to its own safeguard. It was said to be unwise way her missing articles turned up.

Dazzled, Virginia reached forth an unsteady hand to examine an antique piece. Her hand trembled slightly as they passed lovingly over priceless array. The irony of it! This girl with such jewels . . . when one, only would buy Virginia's freedom from debt. white jade bracelet, for instance. The girl picked it up, scrutinizing it closely. A Gem she recognized its period by the intricate carving, the moon-glow lustre. She slipped over a slim wrist, holding it off to admire exquisite beauty.

Suddenly her body went tense . . . she dilated! Footsteps! A soft tread on the balcony. Mrs. Dunfield's blood ran cold.

She switched off the light. Every pore of her body tingling in terror, she tiptoed to the window.

Through a tiny aperture in the curtain Virginia peered cautiously outside. No light. Growing bolder, she parted the drapery, putting her head through the open window. She looked apprehensively up and down the balcony. Not a soul.

A light leap; Mrs. Dunfield was over the sill. Then a strange hand seemed to clutch her heart. The bracelet! She'd forgotten to return it. There it gleamed on her arm in the still white light . . . like a moonbeam on her wrist. She wrenched it from her hand, slipping it inside the front of her gown.

FOOTSTEPS! Again that soft tread, this time behind. She wheeled around. The man of Southern droll reassured her. Preston Blythe, "Virginia!" His soft voice was like balm to her frightened senses. "What luck! Julietts to meet on a moonlit balcony."

He stood straight and tall, looking down at her. His voice held a wistful note. [See also page . . .]

## MAKING THEIR DEBUT

At right: Miss Frances Wisner, debutante daughter of Mrs. Charles F. Wisner, of Russell Hill Park, Toronto, for whom her mother is entertaining a tea on November 22. Miss Wisner has returned from Boston where she spent a year at school after graduation from Bishop Strachan.



Dorothy Wilding

Miss Veronicas of Bedford Road, tea on October 22. Miss Veronicas is abroad when