

John D. Voelker,  
1033 Ontario St,  
Oak Park, Illinois.

FAITHFULLY YOURS

*by*  
John Donaldson.

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For it was a hot July day and Mr. Tanbark was hurrying to catch a train to the furniture convention in Grand Rapids. His ~~doctor~~ <sup>physician</sup> had warned him against such combinations of <sup>heat and hurry.</sup> ~~circumstance.~~

"There," he finally wheezed, mopping his brow with a <sup>lavender</sup> limp handkerchief, "that's done." The telephone rang. Mr. Tanbark's niece would have words with him. <sup>words were had.</sup> There were sounds of mingled disappointment and hay-fever in the voice of Mr. Tanbark. "Well, <sup>- Kerchoo! -</sup> if you must, you must, I guess. <sup>^</sup> But I did want you to meet this boy Jerry - a fine, practical boy. -- Kerchoo!! -- Goodbye."

Mr. Tanbark turned a dull eye on Mary. "What do you think of that, Miss Kerr? Here I go and arrange for my niece to entertain the son of one of our best customers - and me having to leave town. Then she calls at the last minute and says she must go to one of these horseshoe - I mean, polo games." Mr. Tanbark's humor was entirely guileless. He continued reflectively, "Yes, old Jerry is our biggest customer." The magnitude of his niece's social crime did not submerge the economic appeal. Mary Kerr nodded sympathetically at the pathetic plight of her employer being torn between these conflicting forces. Mr. Tanbark surveyed Mary with the admiring abstraction that he bestowed on a Tanbark dining room suite. <sup>the kind with the slender, aristocratic legs.</sup>



"I have it," he suddenly exclaimed. "You be my niece for the afternoon. He's only staying 'till tonight. You entertain this young Jerry. Tell him anything. He's leaving for South America next week so it wont matter. Show him the factory. He loves furniture. <sup>He's</sup> just a chip off the old - - off the old - -" Mr. Tanbark <sup>ran</sup> foundered helplessly. "Bedstead," volunteered the not so guileless Mary, coming to the aid of the party. <sup>Par</sup> "Anyway," concluded the still doubtful Mr. Tanbark, "we can't disappoint a customer. <sup>Trade</sup> *with Tanbark is our trademark.*" Mr. Tanbark was always on firmer ground when quoting the company's latest slogan.

"I'm afraid that I could'nt do that, Mr. Tanbark," said the troubled Mary. "It - why, it would'nt be right."

"There, there, I guess you're right," continued the mendacious Mr. Tanbark. However, the Tanbark fortune was not built by indecision. He hastily scribbled a note and put it in an envelope. "Anyway, see that the young man gets this note." Mr. Tanbark started for the door, Grand Rapids bent. "And be sure to take good care of the goldfish during my absence, Miss Kerr." He cast ~~what he conceived to be~~ a tender glance at the cauldron of fish that graced his desk. Local tradition had it that besides his furniture <sup>his fish goldfish</sup> they were his only love. "Goodbye," said Mr. Tanbark rather sadly, and he was gone. Mary pondered whether this farewell salute was for her or the fish.

She <sup>carefully</sup> ~~tenderly~~ changed the goldfish water according to the approved Tanbark ritual. She was a trifle flushed when the office boy announced, "Mr. Jerry Harrington." That young man stood in doorway and surveyed her with frank admiration. The office boy melted away to the baseball world.

"Would you think it impertinent," the young man said, "if I told you that the lights on your hair are like the glint of those goldfish. Only much more human," he concluded with a laugh.



Mary was blushing now. "What a cheeky young man," she thought. "And so nice looking, too." She mentally sighed. "But that's always the way." As he advanced she pertly handed him the note left by Mr. Tanbark. "I believe this is for you," she said with much dignity. The nice looking young man read the note aloud, which annoyed Mary. She did not wish to hear her employers personal correspondence. "What is he reading?", thought Mary fearfully.

'Dear boy Jerry,  
I had to leave unexpectedly today for Grand Rapids. My niece here, who will entertain you this afternoon, will explain all. Just tell her where you wish to go. Regards to you and your father.  
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Young Mr. Harrington turned to Mary with a quizzical smile. "I am disappointed not to see Mr. Tanbark. But I was afraid I would arrive too late." Mary was aghast at her employer's betrayal. The young man went on. "Thoughtless of your uncle not to tell me your name. Mine is Jerry Harrington. May I ask yours?"

"Why, my name is Mary Kerr," replied Mary truthfully and a trifle defiantly.

Jerry laughed. "Well, Miss Kerr, I am sorry the mayor is'nt here himself to give me the keys to the city, but I can't say that his envoy disappoints me." He was regarding her with patent approval. Mary attempted to look stern, but laughed in spite of herself. Mr. Harrington was an opportunist. "First, I command you, in the name of Uncle Josiah, to accompany me to lunch," he ordered with mock severity. <sup>Par.</sup> Mary remembered that she was really hungry. "I'll call mother first and tell her not to expect me," she said.



During lunch Mary discovered that young Mr. Harrington really was'nt so fresh after all. He was just clever. "Well," she said in a most humble manner as they moved out upon Tanbarkton's main thoroughfare, "where wouldst his highness be guided now? To the furniture factory?" <sup>Par</sup> Jerry laughed. "Yes, I'm vitally interested in furniture." Then suddenly, "Have you a hope chest in your home?" <sup>Par</sup> Mary blushed for the second time that day. "Why, Mr. Harrington - - I - -" Jerry went on relentlessly. "That's fine, but call me Jerry, please, or I'll have to report you to your uncle." Mary wondered what one could do with a boy like that.

After debating the relative merits of a tour through the Tanbark factory as against a drive to the polo game, Jerry compromised by commanding Mary to direct his little roadster out to the forest preserve. "You see," grinned Jerry, "I'm learning the furniture business from the ground up, so I would like to see some of the raw material."

The roadster developed distressing internal shudders as they neared a shaded pond in the depths of the woods. After several guttural groans it stopped with an asthmatic jolt. Jerry was singularly undisturbed by these antics. He left Mary and soon returned dripping like the bunch of water lilies which he triumphantly held aloft. "They match your hair and eyes," he beamed, presenting them to her. They looked for wild flowers and peered into bird's nests. They forgot about Josiah Tanbark, furniture and time.

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Their eyes met. Jerry regained consciousness in time to adroitly avoid garnering a radiator full of chipped beef. An outraged cow stood stupidly by, <sup>foggily</sup> contemplating the devious ways of mortal man.

Jerry drove Mary to the modest little bungalow where she lived with her mother. "Wont you have time to come in and meet mother?" Mary smiled rather wanly. Her mother was a sweet, gentle woman. "Just another Mary grown older," thought Jerry. He easily succumbed to her invitation to stay for dinner.

<sup>After dinner</sup>  
Mary and Jerry sat on the porch. The last radiance of the sunset was barely visible through the vines. Jerry began impulsively, "Mary, I have decided to stay in Tanbarkton over the weekend. I was really going to leave town tonight, but --" Jerry seemed to have some trouble with his articulation. " -- but I like the town. And," he continued with inspiration, "I have'nt begun to learn what I should about furniture. Can I see you tonight?"

"Why - why yes, Mr. - Jerry. Of course." Mary was thrilled. He was staying over for her! And it was the first time she had called him Jerry. What a pretty name. She had never thought of that before. She almost giggled as she remembered they once had a dog named Jerry. "But he was a good dog," she loyally recalled.

Jerry left for his hotel. Upon his return, in a remarkably short time, he launched his course of furniture at once. "Mary, I never thought that Josiah Tanbark could have such a beautiful niece." Mary smiled Evelike as she thought of the pudgy Julia Tanbark. Her smile was followed by a frown. Should'nt she tell Jerry that she was not Mr. Tanbark's niece? It was more loyalty to Mr. Tanbark than a desire to deceive Jerry that kept her silent.

They wandered happily through Tanbarkton's Saturday night throngs, all unseeing. They found a movie and sat through two exposures of its gripping plot. <sup>But</sup> At might well have been shown upside down and dialoged in Burmese. They laughed as they tried



The next day many of Tanbarkton's faithful were curious to know who the handsome young man was that attended church with Mary Kerr and her mother. It was a beautiful, warm day and after dinner Mary's mother packed both them and a basket of food off on a picnic. They tramped into the farthest reaches of the forest preserve. That day many of Tanbarkton's cows were completely benumbed. Jerry, gathering her into his arms. The

The night was warm as they again sat on the vine-covered porch. The wayward chirp of a cricket seemed to answer the slow creaking of the porch swing. A crescent moon cast a pale light on the leafy vines. Jerry and Mary had been very still. Jerry took Mary's hand. "Mary," he began, "there is something that I must tell you." Mary's heart pounded. She must not let him go on without telling him that she was not Mr. Tanbark's niece. "But Jerry, there is something I must tell you." Her heart was leaden now. Why had she carried this deceit so far? She went doggedly on. "I am not Mr. Tanbark's niece. I am merely his secretary. His real niece was unable to meet you. Mr. Tanbark played this joke on both of us, through his note, so that you and your father would'nt be hurt at <sup>your</sup> not meeting her." Jerry was silent. "You're not angry with me are you Jerry? I - I did it for your father." Mary's voice was slightly tremulous.

"But Mary dear," Jerry softly said, "I was just going to tell you about myself. My father would'nt be hurt. Poor old dad was a farmer back in Iowa before he died. That was before I finished school. I came to see Mr. Tanbark yesterday to try to sell him some tapestry chair covers. That's my job. I knew there was some mistake when I read the note. I've never seen the gentleman in my life. But when I saw you -" Jerry gulped and continued, " - well, I just fell for you I guess. Mary dear, I love you."

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"The Prince of Wales will take care of that," said the besottedly happy Jerry, gathering her into his arms. The furniture market was fast emerging from a slump.

Just then a small boy came up <sup>on his next trip</sup> ~~by~~ the porch with a belated telegram for Mary. The youngster was full of confused apologies about having gone swimming and forgetting to deliver the message. He dazedly departed as Jerry thrust a coin into his hand and hustled him off of the porch.

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