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**THE DREAMER
BY MARTHA
OSTENSO**

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“Seventeen down,” he said with authority, and loudly enough for the young man across the aisle to hear, “that’s anoa”

The Dreamer

By Martha Ostenso

Published in *Collier's Weekly Magazine*, March 19, 1938.

**Concerning the gentle Mr.
Bangle, whose eyes were
dim but who could understand
what they saw**

The bus careened southward through the autumn morning fog in which, like top-heavy ghosts, floated the houses of New Jersey villages. Before nine it would have crossed the ferry, disgorged its passengers, and crept into its mid-town terminal.

Mr. Sheridan Bangle, glancing up from his crossword puzzle, congratulated himself again upon the fact that years ago he had chosen a boarding-house near Tenafly, instead of one closer to New York.

This bus ride meant a great deal to Mr. Bangle. During it he was something more than the stooped and aging bookkeeper in the establishment of Solomon and Kriss, Greeting Cards de Luxe; something more than the refined and timid old gentleman with the vague cobweb of gray-brown hair who so eagerly passed the salt at Mrs. Oswald's boarding-house. During it he was at moments almost what he had wanted to be in his youth, because in the sanctuary of the bus and in the pleasant landscape outside there was no reminder of what he really was.

The young man who sat opposite Mr. Bangle was wondering if the girl with the brown eyes and the nonsensical little hat would get on at the corner where he had a two-weeks-old reason for expecting her. Not, he thought bitterly, that he had any right to think of her at all. Or to think of anything except the driving necessity of finding a job, of escaping from that mausoleum that was Uncle Benjamin's house—and from the debt to Uncle Benjamin, which was being rubbed in like the proverbial salt in a wound, day and night.

He was tall and blond and strong-looking, and upon his face was the refusal to be afraid. He put firmly out of his mind the thought of the brown-eyed girl, opened his newspaper and scanned the "Help Wanted" columns,

checking an item or two. Uncle Benjamin had spent so much—more every time he mentioned it—to put him through Uncle Benjamin’s own little denominational college, and to give him a business course afterward. Yes, Uncle Benjamin had done his Christian duty by his orphaned nephew. Now, at the rate of a quarter of his salary each week—a young man needed the bracing sense of his obligations!—the nephew would commence paying his debt to Uncle Benjamin. Unemployment—tush, tush! No such thing for a young man who was equipped and willing! That a week, two weeks, could have passed without any return of the bread cast upon the waters was an affront to Uncle Benjamin’s intelligence. The young man turned in wrathful humiliation to the crossword puzzle page.

And now the dark-eyed girl with the quiet way of dress and manner, and with the smooth, sweet rose of a mouth, entered and sat down beside Mr. Bangle. The young man, the young girl, and Mr. Bangle, through the early morning fog toward New York, were cozily abreast of each other. The girl opened her copy of the same newspaper, glanced at the headlines, then turned to the crossword puzzle on page twenty, pencil in hand. For a minute or two she was unable to bring her wits to bear upon the puzzle. She found herself thinking how thrilling it would be if the bus should meet with an accident in this fog and the sternly aloof but by no means oblivious young man across the aisle should be forced to take her in his arms. It was ridiculous! What she should really be thinking about was how she should approach the advertising agencies in a new way, so that some of them would notice her at last and offer escape from the deadly monotony of the tearoom where as “hostess” she earned eighteen dollars a week.



“Oh,” she said. “That’s all there is to it, then? There is no—no dream?”

Mr. Bangle liked to speculate about people in the bus. It was, in a way, his social life, and one that never disappointed him, since his usually kindly appraisal of his fellow passengers was never put to the test of a more intimate acquaintance. For some reason, it occurred to Mr. Bangle now that the girl and the young man had been acutely aware of each other this week, with no hope of the awareness becoming anything more.

The thought troubled him. He had observed the young man's anxious search of the employment columns. Mr. Bangle's glance out of the dewed window at a resplendent copper beech looming through the mist from some rich man's terrace did not reassure him. Still, he could not help this sudden feeling that he was an instrument of fate. These two should meet, *must* meet—through him, Sheridan Bangle, who owed his Christian name to his father's esteem for a great soldier. An electric sensation of omnipotence swept Mr. Bangle as he glanced from the girl's prettily bent profile to the young man's rather stern one.

He saw that the girl was having difficulty with a word in the puzzle, a word with which he himself had been acquainted for years. *Anoa*—the wild ox of the Celebes! Had not the name, the phrase, so fascinated him that he had gone to the library on one of his Saturday afternoons off and found out not only about the wild ox, but about the darkly sung, moon-far and enchanted Celebes? Macassar—the River Sadang! More than that, because of that name, did not a certain dream burn undaunted still in his breast?

Audaciously, Mr. Bangle thrust his folded paper toward the girl and pointed with his pencil.

"Seventeen down," he said with authority, and loudly enough for the young man across the aisle to hear, "that's *anoa*—*anoa*—" His voice dropped to a hush, a glow of awe and wonder in it. "—the wild ox of the Celebes!"

The girl looked at him with startled, widened eyes. The young man leaned over as though involuntarily and looked at him too. Mr. Bangle beamed affably, conspiratorially, from one to the other. Then they both smiled, or rather the girl smiled and the young man's features underwent, as if in spite of him, a change for the better at least.

"Thank you very much," said the girl, and filled in the spaces.

"Don't mind if I use it, do you?" asked the young man. And he looked, again as if in spite of himself, straight into her eyes. He pointed his pencil, and stretched his long legs into the aisle. "*Anoa*—" He spoke the word slowly, savoring its recondite, gloomy jungle charm, much to Mr. Bangle's delight. "That—that's a swell word, Mr.—"

"Bangle," said Mr. Bangle promptly. "Sheridan Bangle, of Solomon and Kriss." He rummaged convincingly in his vest pockets for a nonexistent card, then gave a rueful shake of his head. "I seem to have—"

The young man, meanwhile, had been more successful. He extended his card, smiling firmly at the girl and saying, "Pardon me, please," as he reached in front of her. "Edward Fleet, Mr. Bangle, of Fleet, Fleeter, Fleetest!"

The girl, leaning back out of the way, blushed, laughed with an absurd dimple twinkling deeply into her cheek, permitted her dark eyes to dwell briefly on Edward Fleet's hostile, warm ones, then looked demurely down.

"Fleet," said Mr. Bangle thoughtfully, craftily. "Fleet—and Bangle! Fancy that—two such singular names in one small public vehicle like this!" He bent upon the girl an earnest scrutiny. "You, for example, will probably disappoint us by having some such prosaic moniker as 'Smith!'" He felt delightfully wicked.

"Not quite!" she said with spirit. "My name is Linda Summers."

"Linda Summers. Well, well. Very euphonious, indeed! Miss Summers—may I present Mr. Fleet!"

Guilelessly his worn blue eyes embraced them as with sober formality they acknowledged the introduction. Then, glancing in haste at the thick gold watch he slipped from its frayed chamois pocket, he resumed his crossword puzzle.

"My day never starts right if I don't get this finished first," he explained.

Mr. Bangle tried honestly not to listen to the stiffly impersonal conversation between Linda Summers and Edward Fleet. But it did leave him a bit disappointed. He had hoped for something more from these two. He had done his part, anyhow. He was relieved when the bus had crossed the ferry and started down through the phantom towers of the fog-hung city to the terminal. Yet here dreariness and fear scuttled through the early-morning streets, caught up with Mr. Sheridan Bangle again. He sat up briskly. He must not admit such presences while he said goodby to these young people before he set out on foot to his office in the East Thirties.

He smiled benevolently at them, raised his derby hat upon which was a rubbed patina of time, and said, "I shall look forward to meeting you both again. In the meanwhile"—he chuckled—"if you will forgive the pun—*anoa-oe!*"

Linda Summers laughed, not very steadily, and Edward Fleet saluted him gravely. Mr. Bangle was not aware that their eyes followed his shabby, stooping figure as it disappeared through the drizzle toward its unexalted destination.

Edward Fleet, jaws set, eyes level and darkened, stood beside Linda Summers and looked at the crowd hurrying through the rain. The girl was slender in her not-warm-enough navy flannel suit and she was not short, but Edward, towering over her, was obliged to hunch down when he spoke to her.

"You're going to get wet."

Linda's lashes caught the rain in an upward glance. "I'm used to it."

After a sharp encounter of their eyes, he looked away, staring straight before him. "Where do you go from here? If it isn't too far, I've got fifty cents for a taxi."

He had to admit that it was lovely, the way her cheeks reddened angrily up into the wet. "Fifty cents for a taxi!" she blazed. "And have you walking all day, from the Bronx to the Battery, looking for a job! I'd sized you up long before Mr. Bangle took it upon himself to introduce us."

"You're right—I *am* looking for a job. And I knew you had me sized up, too. But if you think I'm grateful to the old codger for introducing us, you're wrong. I didn't want to meet you."

Her smile was maddening. "No? And why not?"

"I can't afford to know you. Why should I—"

"We're wasting time, standing here," she interrupted. "Besides, I'm late."

He took her arm and helped her across a puddle beside the curb. "Well—where do I walk with you, then, while we both take a soaking?"

They dodged assorted traffic and she told him of the quaint restaurant off Park Avenue where she was a notch above the waitresses. She would live in New York, she said, except that it was cheaper to live at home, even counting the bus fare. Besides, her mother and father would worry. Her father had been well enough off until two years ago, when something had gone wrong with the factory. She'd had two years at Barnard, anyhow, but now she was twenty and she felt that, well—she hoped to get into advertising eventually. She had been plaguing the agencies, especially that one designed only for women—*Cherchez la Femme*. It would be wonderful to get a job there.

She had tried half a dozen times to see Deborah Inglis, who was in charge of the agency, but had never got farther than the outer office. Meanwhile, she saw to it that Mrs. Horace Pumperdink's grilled sardines on toast were exactly to her liking, and that the dressing with Mrs. Eugene Kimmerling's salad was just right. And at the end of the week she received eighteen dollars.

Linda did not seem to talk fast, but she said much. And in a voice that was brave, sweet music. Edward rubbed a quarter and a dime together in his port-side pocket, looked resignedly down at the vanishing crease in his trouser leg, and decided what he should not tell Linda. He would not tell her, for example, that he had sneaked down into the laundry and washed and ironed his shirts when Uncle Benjamin's housekeeper was in bed with a bad cold. He would not tell her that every Monday morning Uncle Benjamin, at breakfast, extended to his nephew a sealed envelope with his name on it, which contained a ten-dollar bill; and that a similar envelope was handed to Mrs. Drury, the housekeeper, when she poured the coffee. The contents of the envelopes were

to do for a week.

But he did tell her that he had to have work of some kind at once. He had studied journalism, but since even good reporters were thick as bristles on a hog's back, he had taken a short business course this past summer in order to make shift while he waited for the sort of opening he wanted.

She said brief, consoling and encouraging things. Edward felt better, and then worse. They had come to the place off Park Avenue where Linda worked.

"Look!" he said recklessly. "I want to see you again—before tomorrow morning, I mean. You're not always on the bus when I go home. Can't we—darn it, I can't even take you to a movie. But can't we—"

Her hand in his was sure and warm and soft. "I'm off at four this afternoon."

"How about the Spanish Museum? It doesn't cost anything." He grinned crossly, endearingly. "I'll be here at four—if that's all right with you."

"I'll watch for you," she said simply.

Her parting smile remained with Edward all through that day, which would have been except for Linda Summers so exasperatingly like all the other days of the past weeks. And for Linda the day had a vast and shining difference—despite the rain, despite the triple-chinned and pearl-festooned women who came and ate squab at red-lacquered tables.

Mr. Bangle was perplexed. Nearly two weeks had gone since he had made bold to introduce Edward Fleet to Linda Summers, and each morning he had greeted them with a sort of proprietary affection. Over his crossword puzzle he had studied them covertly. He was convinced that all was not as well as might be. He thought, too, that he had divined the reason. Linda was working. Edward was still idle. Not that that would make any difference to the girl, if Mr. Bangle could trust his own instincts. But the young man was proud, proud to the point of anguish. Why, he had literally snarled yesterday morning in response to the girl's greeting. Well, Mr. Bangle could understand that. He had been proud himself, once. Now, as he glanced at them sitting together and saying nothing, he was sore at heart and furious at a life that would not let the young be young.

The morning was brilliant. Mr. Bangle leaned across the aisle, shading his spectacled eyes against the glare of first frost. His voice was almost furtive, as if there were guilt in it.

"You haven't landed anything permanent yet, have you, Mr. Fleet?" he ventured.

Edward's look was almost belligerent. "Nothing permanent. I had a few days as bookkeeper in a sash and door factory but that's about all."

Mr. Bangle lowered his head a little and blinked over his glasses. "I—I'm

having a little trouble with my eyes. Nothing serious, you know—just a matter of getting new glasses.” He chuckled deprecatingly. “I’m afraid Mr. Coombes—he’s my superior, you know—I’m afraid he’s beginning to notice things. Minor errors that escape me—”

“I’m sorry, Mr. Bangle.” The injustice of everything made Edward scowl angrily out of the window.

Mr. Bangle’s cheeks sprang into a nervous red where the tiny old veins were. “Mr. Coombes is a splendid fellow. Very clever. And very efficient. I’d rather not have him tell Solomon and Kriss about my eyes. You understand, of course? Not that—”

“I understand, Mr. Bangle.”

“It has occurred to me that—perhaps—forgive me if I presume too much—but it has occurred to me that I might enlist your help—two or three evenings a week, perhaps, if—”

He drew a deep, tremulous breath.

“I’ll come any time,” Edward put in quickly. “I could come tonight.”

“Really? I had scarcely hoped—of course, I shouldn’t ask you to give your services for nothing, you understand,” Mr. Bangle said with dignity. “It means a great deal to me. Would you—would two dollars an evening be enough?”

“Certainly. What time, Mr. Bangle?”

“Let us say a quarter of six. I’ll be quite alone then. You know the place—Solomon and Kriss, on East—”

“I’ll find it,” Edward assured him.

Nevertheless, for a whole day Mr. Bangle lived with the fear that something would happen to bring his plans to naught. Life, as he knew, could be so irritatingly uncertain.

But it all turned out even more pleasantly than he had hoped. Edward appeared promptly at the appointed time, went briskly over the books, and found only two errors. At seven o’clock, Linda brought a hot supper for three into the cubicle of Solomon and Kriss’ which was Mr. Bangle’s office. And they sat about and ate and drank and made exceedingly merry.

Mr. Bangle could not remember having enjoyed himself so heartily in years. It was like being young again. It was like—he couldn’t tell what it was like.

“Why—this is quite the most—it’s like being somewhere—” He got from his chair with surprising agility. “Let me show you something.”

He brought from a drawer a tattered, pencil-marked map of the South Seas and spread it on the desk. Then he opened an unpretentious steamship folder and placed it beside the map.

“Here she is!” he said triumphantly, and pointed with a thin, ink-stained

finger to a curiously shaped island east of Borneo and south of the Philippines. “Do you remember? That’s the—the Celebes!”

Linda and Edward leaned above the desk. “Of course!” Linda said. “That’s where the wild ox lives—the—”

“Anoa!” Mr. Bangle reminded her. “Now—this is the route as I have marked it out—the route of the freighter Pompeii, from New York to Java. You see?” His pencil followed the line that had already nearly bitten through the paper from many previous tracings. “New York—Haiti—Panama—Gilbert Islands—Mindanao—Macassar Strait—and there you are—the Celebes!” He halted, half choking with emotion, his eyes glistening as he looked up. He smiled. “And up there—in those mysterious jungle mountains—the small wild ox, Anoa!”

Edward and Linda glanced at him, and then at each other. A mist had appeared behind Mr. Bangle’s glasses, and when he spoke again there was an unaccountable tenderness in his voice. “Do you know? I’m going there some day. But—I say—why shouldn’t we all go? There’s an idea. I hadn’t really thought of it until this very minute. The three of us—together!”

“Wouldn’t it be fun!” Linda exclaimed on a breath.

Without thinking, she slipped her hand into Edward’s, and while he held it tight and stared at the map, his eyes full of the bright darkness of Mr. Bangle’s vision, he said flatly, “It’s like wishing for the moon.”

“Not at all!” Mr. Bangle was as spirited as though he had his passage ticket in his pocket. “Two hundred and fifteen dollars, round trip, on the Pompeii. She has accommodations for six passengers—just six. And maybe there wouldn’t be anyone else. Just the three of us. I’ve been aboard her—three times—down in Red Hook. She’s as snug a little ship as you’d ever hope to see. I think I can figure—about the year after next—”

He smiled modestly and left his sentence hanging in mid-air. Then he folded his map and schedule, and with an affectionate pat tucked them back into the drawer and stepped to the window. When he raised the blind, the sleet was threading sharply against the pane. A day could change so, from the sparkle of morning. Mr. Bangle adjusted the blind so that it was exactly a third of the way from the top. He peered at the window frame and asked Edward if he could see a faint pencil mark—just *there*.

“Mr. Coombes is annoyed,” he explained apologetically, “if he comes in in the morning and finds the shade is not at this precise—ah—elevation.” He laughed indulgently. “It’s just a little—shall we call it a fetish?—of his.”

And Linda, because she was afraid of what her eyes might betray, turned quickly away and hastily put on her coat.

Linda and Edward did not take the bus home with Mr. Bangle that night. For Mr. Bangle had paid Edward his two dollars, and Edward had insisted they should go to a movie. Mr. Bangle reminded them of his failing eyes, and sent them off together and alone. And as he took his seat in the bus, he felt very pleased with himself, indeed. He had managed things very satisfactorily, he thought.

After the movie, Edward took Linda to an Automat for toast and coffee. And after that they walked west, through a lighted net of sleet and snow on Forty-second Street, to the docks. There they turned south until open before them was the river with its furred white moving lights in the blackness, its nostalgic smell of wood and oil and tar and salt and rope, its dark, undecided shapes of wharf and hull, its loaded silence, and its hoarse or plangent sounds.

They had haunted the river fronts before, during the past two weeks, and the parks and museums as well, simply because they had gained free admission to each other's company by doing so. Edward had put a bold face on his desperation at not finding work, or had not spoken of it at all. But he had deceived Linda not in the least. He had done everything so thoroughly, with a kind of ebullient, impatient cheer—everything except take her in his arms and tell her that he loved her.

But now, as they walked suddenly into the shadow of a warehouse flush with the river, while a cold wind laced their faces, Edward drew Linda into his arms and kissed her.

And then they quarreled.

They quarreled because Edward suddenly forced himself free of Linda, who didn't want to be free of him.

"There's no sense to this!" he said violently.

Linda said calmly, though her heart was wild, "Why?"

"Why? Because I love you and I want to marry you and I can't marry you for five years—if then."

Again Linda asked, "Why?"

Edward was incensed. "What'll I have to keep a wife on, especially after I've paid Uncle Benjamin every week? Even if I get a steady job tomorrow, there wouldn't be enough to—"

"I'm getting eighteen," said Linda obstinately. "You were getting twenty-five on that job you—"

"I haven't got that job now," he reminded her bleakly.

"But you'll get another right away. If we can make about forty-five together—that's a hundred and eighty a month. I know where we can get a one-room apartment with kitchenette—gas plate in the bathroom, that is—for thirty a month. We should be able to save a couple of dollars or so every week, toward—"

“Toward what?” Edward clenched his hands in his coat pockets. Toward Mr. Bangle’s dream, he thought savagely—toward Mindanao—the soft, hot, shadowy danger of lovely archipelagos—of the Celebes of poetry and crossword puzzles! Or was Linda thinking of furniture—or a baby, perhaps?

“Toward what?” she echoed scornfully. “Toward anything you like. Toward what we want most. Haven’t we been talking to Mr. Bangle, and—”

The smell of the outgoing river tide under the whispering sleet was almost more than Edward could bear as he thought of Mr. Bangle. But he remembered Uncle Benjamin.

“Listen,” he said sternly, “it’s all right to talk with Mr. Bangle about the South Seas and all that. But it doesn’t work out that way. Getting married now would mean you’d have to do without things—you’d come in tired from work—you’d cook and wash and iron and—I’m not going to put you through that, Linda!”

“Oh.” There was a brief silence. “That’s all there is to it, then? There is no—no dream—no *anoa*?”

“Why talk about the impossible?” Edward set his mouth down in harsh finality. “What’s the use! Even if—”

And because they stood long under the shadow of the warehouse by the river, it was very late when they learned that the bus Mr. Bangle had taken at eight-fifteen had been wrecked somewhere beyond Fort Lee, and that Mr. Sheridan Bangle had been fatally injured.

What could be seen of Mr. Bangle as he lay in the white bed was bright and smiling, although his eyes without their glasses were too raptly brilliant, as if they were looking at something a little too far away, too magical to be quite grasped. A nurse stood by, looking severely down at her watch.

Linda and Edward sat close beside the bed in order to hear Mr. Bangle’s labored words. Linda winked fast, smiled and patted the ominous mound of white, while Edward kept his reassuring grin for Mr. Bangle and tried to be facetious about Mr. Bangle’s appearance.

“Don’t worry, Mr. Bangle. Why, you’ll be on deck again before you know it!”

Mr. Bangle’s strange, engrossed smile lighted his face. “On deck—yes!” He chuckled, and Edward went brick red at his own stupid blunder. “On deck!” Mr. Bangle repeated. “And that reminds me—it would be well to remember—that if two—if two want a thing—it always comes easier than if—if just one wants it.”

He gave Edward the card upon which he had written briefly when they had first come in. “Just take this to Mr. Solomon—in the morning.”

“And I’ll explain to Mr. Solomon that you’d like me to substitute for you

for a few days—till you're around again," Edward said awkwardly.

The slow smile crept again into Mr. Bangle's eyes. "And don't forget, my boy—about that window shade, will you? Mr. Coombes—you understand how it is?"

Edward nodded. "I understand," he said quietly.

Linda shut her eyes quickly and leaned her face down against Mr. Bangle's shoulder. The nurse rustled meaningfully.

Edward stood up. "We'll be in to see you again tomorrow, Mr. Bangle—about six."

They paused for a moment at the door and waved to the old man. He lifted one hand slowly in a farewell gesture and smiled.

"Remember—two can do it—very easily. I mean—the *anoa!*" Mr. Bangle said.

Miss Deborah Inglis was a businesswoman with no nonsense about her. Only twice before had she sat down to a red-lacquered table in this fancy tearoom, and then only because she was hungry and the establishment was close to her office. But on both occasions Linda Summers had been keenly conscious of her presence. Had she not tried four times to gain an audience with the manager of that exclusive agency, *Cherchez la Femme*?

"For the love of heaven!" Miss Inglis bawled, above the rattle of a hundred voices, mostly female, at the cocktail hour. "Is there a ham sandwich in this place, or is it all gin and caviar? I've sat here for fifteen minutes, but I might as well be the Invisible Man!"

Linda stood before her. "I'm very sorry. There's a club group—we're more than usually busy. What would you like—"

"Like! Good grief! I ought to demand cutlet of porcupine! Are you supposed to be in charge of this harem? Are you being *paid* for being in charge of it?" She glared far and wide, but Linda felt that she was glaring mostly at her.

Tears smarted in Linda's eyes, and perhaps because of them she drew herself erect. "Miss Inglis," she said, "have you ever heard of the wild ox of the Celebes?"

Deborah Inglis brought her outraged, roving eyes back to the girl's face. Her spine jerked; she stared.

"What was that you said?"

Linda colored hotly, but repeated her question, standing very straight. Deborah Inglis began to laugh. Then she frowned.

"What are you doing here?" she demanded, scrutinizing Linda. "Didn't I see you in our outer office one day last week?"

"Probably. I was trying to get in to see you about work."

“Yes. We didn’t have anything just then. Come in tomorrow morning and ask for me. But for the love of pity, right now get me a ham sandwich and a glass of milk. I didn’t have time to have lunch today.”

Edward Fleet put away his ledgers, his bills of sale in their files, covered his typewriter, and went to the one window in his small office. The window faced south. He looked at Mr. Bangle’s mark on the frame. Then, on the late gray afternoon, he let the blind run up as far as it would go, smiling a twisted, grim smile of tribute to Mr. Bangle as he did so.

Mr. Lancelot Coombes entered. His eyes were nail-colored. “One moment, Mr.—ah—Mr. Fleet. I prefer to have these two adjoining offices—this one and mine—present a certain uniformity. In small matters as well as large. Will you please lower that shade a third of the way from the top?”

Edward stood back and calmly regarded Mr. Coombes. “Have you ever heard of an animal called the *anoa*?” he asked.

Mr. Coombes batted his light lids. A pink, angry rash appeared on his thin nose. “You are being trivial, are you? On your first day. I am sure I do not know, and do not wish to know anything about the animal you mention. But I feel certain that Mr. Solomon would be interested to hear—”

It happened that Mr. Solomon was just then passing along the corridor. It might have surprised Mr. Coombes to know that Mr. Solomon was feeling heavy-hearted. Mr. Bangle, who had been with the firm for so many years, had also been just Mr. Solomon’s age. Deep down, Mr. Solomon was sentimental.

“What iss it? What iss it?” asked squat and irritable Mr. Solomon, stepping into the little office. “Do I hear a quarrel already?”

“My assistant,” said Mr. Coombes, loftily amused, “has just asked me about an animal, a strange animal.”

“Enimel? Enimel?” Mr. Solomon looked at Edward, irked. “What kind of an animal?”

“It’s the wild ox of the Celebes, Mr. Solomon,” Edward informed him. “Mr. Bangle was planning to go to the Celebes—to hunt this small wild ox. It’s very rare—almost extinct, in fact. I was just about to tell Mr. Coombes what a pity it was that Mr. Bangle did not live to go on his one big adventure.”

Dew appeared in Mr. Solomon’s eyes. He shook his head. Then he seemed suddenly indignant. “What you call it, this ox?” he demanded.

“The *anoa*.”

“A-noa, hey? Write it down, and give it to me. My son-in-law, he goes to Canada every year to hunt. Next year he goes to Africa. You come to my house—for dinner, yes—and meet my son-in-law. Fine fellow. Diamonds in Amsterdam. Rich? Unnh! It gives me a sickness!”

Edward and Linda were riding home together in the bus—home, that is, as far as Linda’s place, for they were to have dinner there. They had been talking quietly, sitting very close, their hands clasped. Nobody in the bus looked at them, because everybody was tired from the day in New York and eager to be home.

“He had died just before I phoned the hospital,” Linda murmured. “And when Miss Inglis was so—awful—I just had to let go somehow. It’s funny—but I felt it was the last thing I could do for him—defy somebody, as he should have done but never dared to do!”

“I guess it was something like that that struck me, too—about that window shade. I’d have done it sooner or later, anyhow, I suppose. That Coombes is just dandy!” Edward smiled soberly and searched Linda’s eyes. He put his arm around the back of the seat and drew her toward him, briefly, vehemently. “Do you really mean it, Linda?” he whispered, his voice tense and anxious as it had been a while ago, in the little restaurant where they had met for tea. “You’ll take a chance—with me? And you won’t get tired waiting for all the things somebody else could give you?”

Linda brushed his coat sleeve with her lips. “Didn’t I say I would? And didn’t he think we would? Even if we never go there, Edward—it’ll be fun dreaming about it, with you. And I’ll never give up believing—even if it takes years and years!”

“Go on believing, darling,” Edward said. “I’m commencing to believe, myself.”

TRANSCRIBER NOTES

Mis-spelled words and printer errors have been fixed.

Illustrations by Earl Cordrey (1902-1977) have been omitted as they are not yet in the public domain.

[The end of *The Dreamer* by Martha Ostenso]