

Estevan waltzed Eleanor to fame in those few moments. You should have heard the stunned, charmed silence as he bent low over her in the final pose of the waltz

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## Broadway Success Story

By Alec Rackowe

ILLUSTRATED BY WALTER KLETT

**Another socialite name goes up in lights. Eleanor Vail, a girl who had to win the man she wanted to find the man she loved**

**M**OST of the time, if one of our ten night places isn't doing so well, the boss drops into my office in the Garden Building that houses the Parnasse and the Dell on the floor below, and we discuss it calmly. Whether we should close the joint and reopen under a different name or carry on and see if business picks up. Just so long as it isn't the Parnasse the boss and I come to a friendly and immediate agreement. But the Parnasse is something else again.

The Parnasse is the first club the Nelson chain opened. In more than twenty years it hasn't changed its color scheme of black and white. It is the class place of the chain and it means more to both of us than all other nine together.

This last time the boss sent for me I knew it was about the Parnasse. I see the records every afternoon and the graph on Parnasse business had been falling down and down. But what to do had me even lower.

Mr. Nelson was chewing his cigar. I didn't give him a chance to blast. I said, "I know what's on your mind.

It's been on mine a long time, too." The boss glared at me from under his shaggy brows. "That's a big help. Why don't you do something?"

I glared in my turn. "Just like that, I suppose."

He threw the cigar into the basket. "You're the Dean of Broadway," he said nastily; "Tip Noakes, the magician. Well, you better pull something out of the hat—quick. The Parnasse is in the red and we're not in business for sentiment."

I snapped back at him, "Maybe you'd like to turn it over to someone else? Maybe I'm too old for this business. Just say so if that's how you feel. I'll step out."

"No you won't," the boss said, reaching for a fresh cigar. "It's your room. If you can't make a go of it we shut it up. You want that?"

I shook my head. "You know I don't."

"Well, do something. Get it some publicity. Get the people coming back. It's a swell room. I'd hate . . ." He stopped and growled and then waved me away.

Publicity. Sure. But a room like the Parnasse needs more than publicity. Everyone who matters on Broadway and Park Avenue and Sutton Place knows the Parnasse. I'd got practically on my knees to Folsom and Selling, those rival columnists, and they'd put in the plug often enough, but it hadn't helped. Seeing the name Parnasse in a Broadway column was like seeing the name of Broadway itself. It was so familiar it didn't register. I needed more than publicity.

I stood at the window of my office looking down into the color and bustle of my street. But my mind was a desert, so after a while I went downstairs. Nograles was brooding at the entrance to the Parnasse and I continued to the next floor where the Dell is. They have separate entrances and elevators but the stairs pass them both at the back. I knew the Dell would be full. It always is. A rowdy place with checkered table cloths, a colored floor show with lots of zing and a mammy who makes fine waffles to go with Southern fried chicken. A money-maker but not a class spot, even though it gets a play from swell people as well. Not—as you can gather—the Parnasse.

I went through the kitchen and opened the swinging doors, stepping to one side out of the waiters' way. There was a team of dancers doing a Cuban rumba in silk costumes. Aboriginal stuff with lots of rhythm, and the crowded tables were watching. And so was one of the bus boys.

He was standing near me, looking on when he ought to have been sticking

to his chores. Most bus boys are meager lads who reflect the beating they take from harassed waiters, but this one was tall and straight, dark-haired and nice-faced. He was watching the dance with a concentration that surprised me.

But a bus boy not working is anathema in café business. I went over to the door where Arnold was chewing the fat with one of his captains. "What's the idea?" I demanded as the captain faded. "Don't your busses have to work around here?"

ARNOLD looked past me and his moon face twisted into a grin. "Oh, Estevan. He is different, Mr. Noakes. He is a student of the dance. A very nice young man. Nograles asked me to use him a while. He has been making the rounds. Watching all the dance teams in town." "As a bus boy?"

Arnold shrugged. "Even young men interested in the dance must live. And what is wrong with being a bus boy? I started as one in Berne—"

I left him. I never knew a headwaiter who didn't start his career in Switzerland and work his way up with Cesar

Ritz. All good headwaiters start in Helvetia and end up in Hollywood.

I wasn't in any mood for Arnold's biography. I had half a mind to send up to Nograles and have him can this non-bussing bus boy. I went to the bar instead and had a drink. I said hello to a few people and watched the crowd dance to the hot music of the colored band.

It was the usual mixed lot. Broadway, out-of-town buyers with dress models from the Thirties and a smattering of the younger Park Avenue crowd. And among the latter a blond and curvesome youngster named Eleanor Vail.

She was dancing with some youngster I didn't know. She stood out from the rest, not more than twenty, with that faintly bored, faintly sophisticated air a lot of these silver-spoon kids seem to acquire before they're out of their teens. As if everything is an old story.

But the unusual thing was that Howard Rogerson wasn't there. He and Eleanor had been an item for the past couple of months. It didn't mean anything. I knew Rogerson's type. The modern version of the playboy of the

twenties. Millions; hail-fellow manner and a finger in a lot of Broadway ventures. But we'd thought maybe there was something between Rogerson and Eleanor because she was Society, and hitherto Rogerson had given the faces and names of Broadway a play. He was past thirty and it was time he married. When he started squiring this pretty postdebutante the odds shortened against Rogerson and single-blessedness. But here she was and Rogerson nowhere in sight.

I left the bar and went toward the kitchen doors. Just as I got there I noticed my cigar was out. I fumbled for a match but before I could do more than scowl because I hadn't any a voice said, "Let me, Mr. Noakes," and a match flared gently. I got a light and I saw it was this Estevan.

His voice had an English touch to it. I looked at him and I liked what I saw. I said, "Thanks. I hear you're a student of the dance. Done any yourself?"

"Yes, sir," he said with that nice deference I'm old enough to like in kids in their early twenties. "In Madrid and Buenos Aires. . . ." Then he said, "Excuse me, Mr. Noakes," and moved away to help one of the waiters.

I WENT on up to my office. I sat down at my desk. Something was stirring in me. I was chewing a fresh cigar when there was a knock on the door. I said, "Come in," and the door opened to show me Eleanor Vail.

She was wearing a satin frock that bared her smooth shoulders and showed every line of her lithe body. She had a cap of pale, close-lying hair curling in a long bob; large gray eyes under thick lashes; and a red mouth. She said: "Mr. Noakes, could I sign a check?"

"Sure," I told her. "You could have asked Arnold. They'll send you a bill at the end of the month."

She smiled at me—a quick, little smile. "That's why I didn't ask Arnold. It's my party and I won't be able to pay. Thirty dollars is pretty much half of what I have to spend in a month."

It didn't matter much. There's always a lot of checks picked up by the house in our game and Eleanor rated—at least once. "Okay," I said, "don't worry about it."

I could see the relief in her gray eyes and something else, too. She said, "You're nice, Mr. Noakes. I wish I were."

"What's wrong with you?" I asked.

She looked at me frankly. "I try to be honest and I'm not. I knew I shouldn't have asked them to come. I thought Howard would show up and he'd pay for . . ." She gestured.

"What's the matter?" I asked. "You two ft?"

I could see the kid wanted to talk and I leaned back and drew on my cigar. Maybe I'd have an item to pass on to Folsom or Selling.

She moved around the room, looking at the signed photos of all the greats of a quarter century that line the walls. When she got around to me again she said, "Wishful thinking. That's my failing. Wishing I had clothes and money and glamor. But glamor, Mr. Noakes. That's what Howard goes for."

"And you go for him?"

"I go for him." Her eyes were wide and unblinking. "Maybe it's his millions or his manner, but I go for him, very largely. When he started taking me around I had ideas. Now . . ." She shrugged. "A girl who has to beg for"

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I sent them to start on their long job. The dancing was up to Estevan

**E**LKHART, INDIANA, is the home of two good headache remedies. Both of them fizz and both are guaranteed to relieve acidity, drowsiness and that sinking feeling. The only difference between them is that one comes in bottles, and the other comes in spangles. The one in spangles is Kitty Clark, of Ringling Brothers' circus. Never heard of her? Probably not. Kitty is just one of the "kids."

The kids are thirty-four girls who do the group acts. They ride over the jumps together, swing on the high ladders together and fill in wherever else a cute young face and a trim little figure will brighten up the ring. All their work takes years of training. Much of it takes strength and courage. They risk injury—even death—several times a day, seven days a week. They're as important to the show as the ringmaster or the star acrobat or the big top itself. And yet the announcer doesn't introduce them. The spotlight operators rest when their acts are running. Their pictures aren't on the posters. Their names aren't even in the program. It's time the kids got a salute. So here it is:

Kitty Clark might be any one of the thirty-four. She happens to be the youngest and one of the most versatile. Like most of the other kids, she's in the ladder act, the manège (riding trained horses), and the jumps, and she could double with the elephants and trapeze at a pinch. She also has a specialty: drum-majoring. And that's where you see her first and best.

When the "spec"—the opening parade—marches around the hippodrome track, look up front for a silver pin wheel, something like the propeller of a Stratoliner under full throttle. That will be Kitty's baton. Then look at Kitty herself. And sigh for at least three woe-begone girls somewhere, because when prettiness was passed around, Kitty got their share too. Her eyes are blue, her brown hair is curly, she's barely out of her teens, she could match measurements with Venus, and—to get back, with a wrench, to the main topic—she's the best drum major in show business.

Pat Valdo says so. He's the boss of Ringling's performers, the kids' house-mother, father-confessor and faculty adviser, and for forty years he's watched drum majors come and go. Kitty tops them all, he says, in looks, tricks and showmanship.

### Twirling's a Science

Technically, though, she isn't a drum major at all. She's a twirler. A drum major leads the music. A twirler simply follows it. Don't let that "simply" mislead you.

Admirers have sent her more than a hundred batons, but her favorite is one her father made. It's a bit under a yard and a bit over a pound, and batteries in the chrome-steel shaft light up bulbs in the head and tip.

Almost inattentively, much as Jascha Heifetz would play *Shave and a Haircut, Two Bits*, or as Mae West would kiss a baby girl, Kitty ripples through the five basic movements: the Hand Pass—twirling from hand to hand; the Finger Roll—twirling from thumb to little finger and back; the Twice-Over Throw—up in the air, two complete spins and catch again; the butterfly—from side to side, and hand to hand; and the Under-Leg Pass, which describes itself.

This is only kindergarten stuff, of course. You can pick it up in three or four years' practice. When you've got an M. A. in twirling, as Kitty has, you can work out on Figure Eights, the Catch-Behind-Back, Thumb Rolls and Ten-Over Throws. Kitty can spin her baton forty feet in the air and catch it again.

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# Sawdust Doll

By J. Bryan III

Meet Kitty Clark, one of the unsung heroines of the Big Top, a member of that unobtrusive group known as "The Kids." They supply the sparkle and glamor that make circuses successful

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