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MISCELLANEOUS

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THE Miwaleta Campfire Girls will hold a cooked food sale at McKean, Darby and Baldwin's Saturday, March 2nd.

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WANTED—Men to take contract slashing brush. Inquire at South End Service Station.

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$3000 LOAN wanted. Security 200 acres land on Pacific highway, 2 dwellings, 6 cabins, service station. Carries $3200 insurance. See G. W. Young & Son, 116 Oak street, Roseburg, Oregon.

LOST

LOST—In Roseburg Feb. 22 man's light driving glove for right hand. Finder please return to this office.

NOW WE'LL SLEEP

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Orchid

THIS HAS HAPPENED

Ashtoreth and Hollis Hart are newlyweds, honeymooning in Paris. Ashtoreth is rarely beautiful, and Hollis is extraordinarily rich. He calls her "Orchid" because she reminds him of that lovely flower.

But happiness seems, somehow, to have eluded them. Before their marriage Ashtoreth had been a stenographer in Hart's employ. She is years younger than he, and he idolizes her youth and beauty.

In Paris she meets an old sweetheart, Monty English, who has gone to France to sell radios for his firm. Monty is young and Monty is handsome. But he is distressingly poor, and Ashtoreth couldn't see him at all.

He treats her rather coldly, but it is apparent that he is still in love with her. Hollis devotes himself to tennis and the collection of antiquities. Both pursuits bore Ashtoreth to tears. When he is not at the courts, or browsing about in old shops, he makes tender love to his little bride. And that also bores her. Annoys might be a better word. She has discovered that he has two front teeth that come out on little swivels, and that spoils the end of romance.

She invites Monty to have dinner with them and contrives to see him on several occasions, though Monty tries to discourage it.

On their last day in Paris she has luncheon with Monty at Jack's. He tells her frankly that he doesn't want to see her again.

NOW GO ON WITH THE STORY

CHAPTER XLVI

Hollis must have concluded his packing some time that afternoon, because when Ashtoreth returned at four o'clock from luncheon their suite was deserted.

She looked on her dressing table for the customary note. If Hollis as much as wandered down to the bar he was sure to leave a message. Weighted with a crystal bottle, or an onyx jar. Or stuck, maybe, in the corner of her mirror . . . "Beloved, I adore you. Seeking liquid refreshment. Return in 10 minutes. Will miss you fearfully. Your adoring husband." . . . Silly little notes, full of crazy protestations. She would find them on her pillow mornings, if he went out before she awoke. . . . "Angel, you look like a madonna with your eyelashes kissing your cheeks. I go to choose flowers for your breakfast tray."

She had given Mogg the afternoon. Probably Hollis had entrusted a message to her, and the stupid creature had forgotten to leave word. She lifted things on her dressing table, poking about. She looked under her pillow, and on Hollis' chiffonier. . . . Maybe he was cross because she lunched with Monty. But he told her to. He had been perfectly pleasant about it. Well, if he was angry, he could stay angry. The idea!

She opened her bag. Petit point, with an old gold clasp, set with emeralds. It was stuffed with francs.

She would walk along rue Sainte Honore, out to the Faubourg, and look in the windows of all those adorable little shops. They were sure to be full of entrancing things. She'd get a quilted bed jacket for Maizie. And some of that gleaming Russian jewelry for Sadie. Sadie would adore those ankle bangles, and the long, drippy earrings. If she didn't have enough money, she could have them sent collect to the hotel. Hollis wouldn't mind. But it would serve him right, if he did. Her last afternoon in Paris! And he'd gone off, without a word.

* * *

When she returned, Mogg was back. And Hollis had telephoned, leaving word that he had been delayed.

It was seven o'clock. "I'll wait half an hour," she decided, "and if he isn't in then, I'll have dinner by myself."

She would go to Maxim's, because she enjoyed watching French girls. They fascinated her. Hollis didn't like to take her there, because he said she stared outrageously.

At half past seven, Ashtoreth put on dark clothes, and a small felt hat. She had heard that women were not admitted alone. But that of course was nonsense. American girls go everywhere. With well bred nonchalance, they crash the gilded gates of the best and the worst places in Paris.

"I'll stroll right in," she decided. "They won't dare say anything."

So she took a taxi, and was deposited at Maxim's, along with a few American tourists, and two dubiously attractive ladies, who arrived simultaneously. She followed on the heels of the tourists, leaving the cocottes (for such they were) standing on the sidewalk, waiting an auspicious moment to ask some man to take them in.

She sat at a small table near the door, where she could best see the action. It wasn't as exciting as she expected. The ladies of the boulevards, sitting in groups, ordered drinks, and chatted together, quite like women anywhere. The American tourists looked at them shyly, and made comments behind their backs.

There was not a woman there who looked "fast," in the American sense. Ashtoreth wondered if any of them were war widows, and if they had children.

* * *

She ordered a filet of sole with wine sauce and was waiting for it when she was conscious of someone standing at her elbow.

"Ashtoreth! What, in the name of all that's holy, are you doing here?"

It was Monty.

"Oh, hello, Monty." She was elaborately casual. "Sit down, won't you? I'm all alone."

"So I noticed. What's the big idea?"

"My husband had an engagement," she lied glibly. "And he just parked me here for a while. He's coming back later. We'll have dinner together. Hollis can't be here for an hour."

He drew out a chair, and let her order for him, supplementing her suggestions with a bottle of champagne.

"You shouldn't ever eat sole without champagne. Ash. I'm ashamed of you!"

They toasted each other gaily. "Here's to the maiden of bashful fifteen;
Here's to the widow of fifty;
Here's to the flaunting, extravagant queen, . .
And here's to the housewife that's thrifty!
Let the toast pass:
Drink to the lass.

"I'll warrant she'll prove an excuse for the glass. . . . You're the flaunting extravagant queen, Ash."

"That's all right," she retorted. "I'm married to the king."

Monty grew serious.

"He is a prince, you know, Ash. I don't believe you half appreciate him."

"Oh, yes, I do," she protested. "There's just one little thing, Monty. Two little things, I should say." She leaned toward him, and the sparkling champagne made her eyes dance. She laughed softly, irresistibly. "False teeth!" she giggled. Two of them. On swivels. He takes them out nights."

Monty regarded her severely.

"I wouldn't tell anyone but you," she assured him.

"Well, that's nice of you, I'm sure. Listen to my words of wisdom, young woman. If your husband had a toupee and a wooden leg and a glass eye, he'd still be aces with me. And you'd be a darn lucky girl, at that."

"Well, it's not very romantic," she demurred, thinking of the teeth. She believed that was why Hollis was always up first in the morning. Probably he kept them in a glass in the bathroom.

At 10 o'clock she pretended to look about for Hollis, and watched the door, as though expecting him.

"What are you doing tonight, Monty?"

"Going to bed," he told her. "Went out on a bender last night, and I'm not feeling so hot."

"Then suppose you take me home," she proposed. "We can leave a message here for Holly. I'm tired myself."

* * *

She was beginning to be a little nervous. Hollis had surely returned, and was probably frightened to death. Well, it would serve him right. Just the same, she had better be going. He was crazy about her, really. It would not do to frighten him too much.

But Hollis was not there when they arrived.

"Come up," she invited Monty. "It's perfectly respectable. We have a drawing room."

He declined shortly. "No thanks. I'll be toddling along. See you in Boston some time."

"Oh, please come, Monty. . . . Listen, I'll tell you something. It wasn't true that I was expecting Holly at Maxim's. I don't know where he is. I went there alone, because he didn't come home to dinner. He went out this afternoon, while I was lunching with you. He didn't leave any message or anything. And I haven't seen him since."

Monty whistled. "Was he sore because you met me?"

"Oh, no. No, that wasn't it. We haven't quarreled. In fact, I think he probably left a note for me when he went out, but Mogg was cleaning, and she's the most thorough thing you ever saw. Sweeps everything up, just like a whirlwind. Holly's poor note must have gone the way of all tissue. I've no doubt he's tried to reach me a dozen times by telephone, but you know yourself how these French people are about getting messages. I assure you, Monty, there's nothing wrong. Only I'm just a little nervous. And I would appreciate it if you'd stay with me."

Monty considered his hat (it was one of these light gray ones—almost white) and flecked an imaginary speck from its spotless rim. He was plainly embarrassed.

"Gosh, Ash! I'd rather not go up to your rooms. Don't you see how it is? Let's sit down here in the lobby."

Ashtoreth's color rose hotly.

"You're the most provincial creature," she told him angrily. "No, I shan't sit in any old lobby. Go ahead, if you want. Go home, and say your prayers, and ask God to keep you a good, circumspect little boy. Go on."

She flounced off. Then turned on her heel with another little admonition.

"Go to the devil!" she commanded tersely.

He stood there until she had stepped into the lift, and was whisked away. The lift, he noticed, was like a golden cage. And the thought flashed through his mind that Ashtoreth was a captive girl in a golden cage. Monty was not imaginative, nor particularly sentimental. He shrugged, and pulling his smart hat over his eyes, stopped a taxi and returned to his pension.

* * *

Some time after midnight, he was startled by a patter of small stones on his window. He woke instantly. With a sort of clairvoyant sense, he knew that Ashtoreth was in the garden, throwing pebbles to rouse him. So sure was his conviction that he did not pause to look, but slipped into his dressing gown and hurried downstairs.

As he stepped through the wicket into the garden, she came toward him. She was wearing a long dark wrap, and pumps with rhinestone heels.

She looked frightened and distressed and came to him with outstretched hands.

"You'll catch cold," he told her coaxily, quite as though he were used to visits from beautiful girls who came at midnight, to throw pebbles at his window. "Go upstairs, and I will call Madame."

"It's about Holly!" she cried. "He hasn't come home yet."

Monty took her arm sternly. "Go in the house."

"Don't be cross!" she begged, and caught his wrist with her hand. "I woke up and when Holly wasn't there I was so frightened. I didn't wait to dress. I didn't think, Monty. I only threw on a wrap, and came straight to you."

He led her down the little flagged walk and into the house.

"Wait in my room," he commanded. "I'll be there, as soon as I can rouse Madame."

* * *

She stumbled up the dark stairs. There was a feeble moon, shining whitely, and the room was full of shadows. Dark, hateful shadows. And a great ugly wardrobe. She bumped her knee on the thing, and tripped, falling against the bed. It was soft and warm, and smelled faintly of tobacco. She sat on the edge and waited. Her heart was pounding wildly.

In a moment Monty came carrying a candle, which he shaded with his hand.

How handsome he looks, thought Ashtoreth. But she was trembling too violently to say anything. There were voices on the street, and the sound of a car with engine running madly. Then a horrid clattering shook the little house.

"That's the sort of knocker we have!" whispered Monty. "Maybe it will wake Madame. I couldn't."

It must have been an iron knocker, at the very least. It shook the bricks, and beams of wood. And flakes of mortar came tumbling down from the walls.

"It would rouse the dead," shuddered Ashtoreth.

Then they heard Madame, breathing loudly, in the next room. They heard her plant heavy feet on the floor, and they heard the bed creak. She struck a match and lighted her candle. And, complaining, descended the stairs.

Monty went to the door and, opening it, listened to the conversation in the hall below. After a moment, he turned quietly to Ashtoreth.

"It's your husband," he said. "And Madame is sending him up."

(To Be Continued)

* * *

What does Hollis say? And Ashtoreth? Tragedy seems in store for Hollis' "Orchid."

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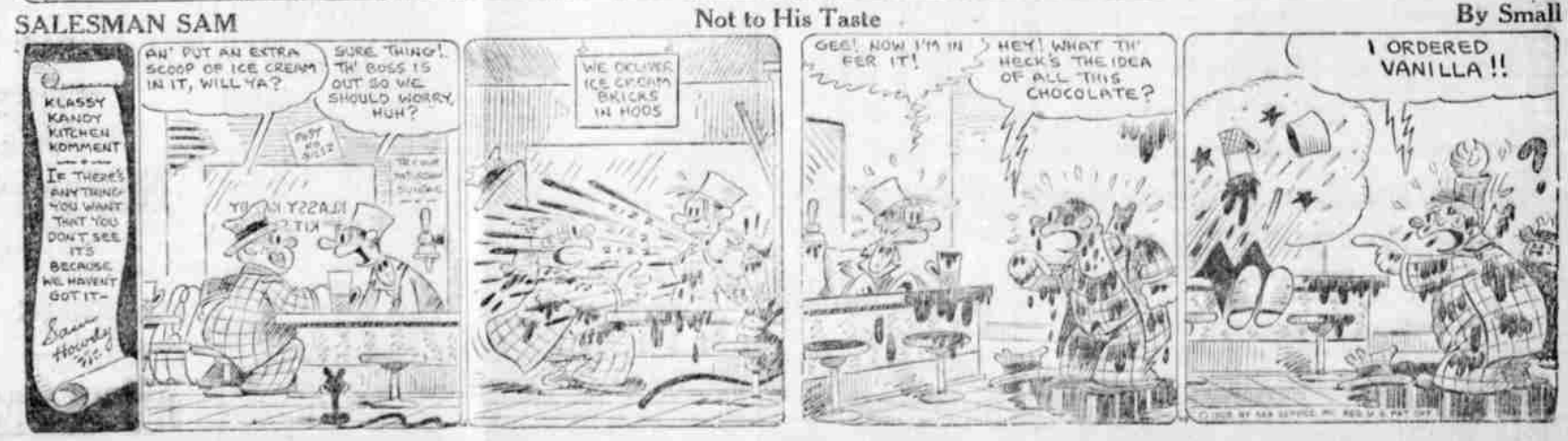
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