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REVENGE IS SWEET

By ELMER WINSTON
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She was an incorrigible flirt. At last, having declined a number of suitors, she became engaged to a multimillionaire, and her mother determined that she should not have a chance to throw over the opportunity. The girl was sent into the country on a plea of ill health in the dead of winter to remain there till a week before the wedding day.

An aunt agreed to take her to her summer residence, open it and live there with her during the season of her captivity. There were plenty of young men about in summer, but now there was not one within fifty miles except a few countrymen. The January winds were blowing cold and she sat all day reading novels or doing fancy work, occasionally turning to look through the window at the bleak view.

There was a little lake a few hundred yards distant, just outside the walls of her prison grounds. One cold night it was frozen over, and the next morning the sun shone bright and the air was still and full of ozone.

A man was skating on the lake. She arose, dressed herself in a becoming skating costume, took up a pair of skates and went to the lake. Putting on her skates, she went on the ice, at first timidly; then, gathering confidence, she sailed off, graceful as a swan.

The man, evidently a farm hand, cut figure eights, did the Dutch roll and all manner of stunts. The girl swayed her skirts gracefully to one side, then to the other, as she skated. It was a case of country boy showing off before city girl and city girl before country boy. Then she purposely fell on the ice and lay there till he came and picked her up.

"Are you hurt, miss?"
Where had she heard a voice like that? She looked up into the young man's face, and behind a stubble beard of five or six days' growth she saw something that reminded her of some one she had seen before.

"Not much," she said.
He was turning away when she struggled or pretended to struggle with a lame ankle. "I fear I must ask you to help me off the ice," she said.

She rested heavily on his strong arm as she shambled to the shore, and when she got there he took from about his neck an enormous woolen comforter and, folding it, put it on the ground for her to sit on. Then he asked what else he could do for her. Her ankle continued to pain her—so she said—and she would neither try to get home nor try to skate. The consequence was that he stood on the verge of the ice cutting stunts and talking to her. After a while she took off her skates and limped home—that is, she limped till he was hidden by the trees in the grounds of her prison, then she walked as well as ever.

It was the beginning of the ice season, and for several weeks there was good skating. There is nothing attractive to a city girl in a raw countryman, though this one was raw only in appearance, and, having an original mind and a pleasant way with him, he gradually threw a singular spell over her. Perhaps it was because he was the only man about. The lake was crescent shaped, the far horn of the crescent being hidden by a hill. Fearing her aunt would interfere, she met the countryman at the farther horn. The first thing she knew she was experiencing a singular sensation she had never felt before.

Then came sleighing, and the countryman met her by appointment where no one in the prison would see with a sleigh and a pair of horses—he said he had obtained leave to exercise them for their good—and the two rode side by side to the jingle of bells. So the winter passed, and one day she awoke to the fact that the sleighbells would soon be replaced by wedding bells and she would be given over to a man she didn't want.

By and by she got to talking spoony with the countryman and told him her story. He heaved a sigh which sounded like a blacksmith's bellows. That made her feel more spoony still. They were sleighing at the time, and somehow her hand collided with one of his under the robes. Touch—a good conductor of love—broke her up. He begged her to run away with him and get married. She hesitated, then said she didn't see exactly how she could. He urged her, and she told him if he would be at the usual rendezvous the next day with the sleigh she would meet him and come to a decision. He persuaded her to leave her decision in a note placed in their "postoffice" in a thicket.

She cried all that night. All the butterfly had gone out of her under a case of real love. In the morning she yielded to temptation. She resolved to elope with the countryman. She wrote him to that effect, conveying the note to their exchange letter box herself. In the evening just before dark she went to the rendezvous. The sleigh was not there. She waited awhile, then went home.

A THREAT TO ABDUCT

By M. QUAD
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Abraham Scott, who was, of course, called Abe by all who called him anything, had reached the age of twenty-five before he fell in love. He had been a farmer's hired man for years and years, and it had come to that point where he was spoken of as an old bachelor and a man whom Cupid could never lead astray.

There is a psychological moment in the life of every human being, and Abe Scott's moment came one day when he was mowing hay by the roadside. An agent for a patent corn sheller got down from his wagon to take a seat on the fence and have a talk with the sweating mower.

"See here, man," he said, "you are making a slave of yourself, and it isn't right. Why, you ought to have a farm of your own and be working for yourself."

"How am I going to get a farm?" asked Abe as he thought of the hundred dollars saved up in his trunk.
"Marry one, and a mighty fine looking widow with it!"

"Shoo! Who'd have me?"
"Who'd have you? Let's see about that. About twenty-four or twenty-five years old. Strong and rugged. Not handsome, but manly. Good disposition. Would treasure a good wife. Would make a farm blossom in every fence corner. Would be elected county supervisor within two years. Why, man, there are dozens of widows with farms who are waiting for you."

"I never heard of it," said Abe as a thrill came to his heart.
"Well, you hear of it now. I've got a widow in mind at this very moment. She's just bought the Smith farm, two miles down the road."

That was a long afternoon for Abe. He had thoughts—many thoughts. He had so many thoughts and he took so much time to wrestle with them that the farmer for whom he worked said to him when supper time came:
"Abe, you must have eaten too much pork and beans today, and it tired you out to lug them around."

That evening the hired man did something that astonished the farmer family beyond measure. He dressed up in his best and set off down the road and did not return until midnight. At the breakfast table next morning they tried to pick it out of him, but he was blushing silent. He wouldn't have told for three months' wages, and yet he had only gone on a scout. He had walked past the widow's farm and felt guilty as he did so. On the next evening he did the same thing, but felt bolder. On the third evening he got up the courage to call and ask for a drink of water. The widow fetched the dipper with her own hands and passed a few remarks, and Abe went home feeling what love was. He realized that he was struck on the widow, and yet he felt that she was so far above him that he would never dare approach the subject of matrimony. He said this to the corn sheller agent when he came along, and the man replied:
"I didn't figure that you would do any courting in the ordinary way, but that romance would help you out."

"I guess I'll give it up," said Abe in despair.
"And I guess you won't! I've set out to do a good thing for you, and I'm going to put it through. Now, then, get down here in this fence corner in the shade and let me talk to you like a Dutch uncle."

That talk lasted an hour. Fortunately for Abe, the farmer was away from home that day; otherwise he would have been down to see if his hired man was asleep. Abe's behavior the rest of the day set the good wife to wondering if he was losing his mind. He was very silent, but she saw on his face a look she had never noticed there before—a look of grim determination. She wondered if he was going to do or die. He didn't leave the house that evening, but the next morning he announced that he was going to the village, two miles beyond the widow's farm. No explanations whatever. He just put on his Sunday best and started off. He was going to call on the widow, not only in broad daylight, but in the forenoon. His knees were weak and his heart thumping, but he forced himself forward. At the gate he gave a gasp, but his legs took him to the side porch, where the woman sat peeling potatoes for the 12 o'clock meal. She recognized him as the man she had served with water, but had not spoken yet when Abe stood before her with uncovered head and said:
"Widow Rodney, I'm Abe Scott, hired man for Farmer Taylor. I'm worth \$100 and a hustler to work. I'm in love with you and want you for a wife. I can play on the fiddle, play checkers, and I don't snore. If you don't say yes I'll abduct you and imprison you in a cave until I break your haughty spirit. Answer me yes or no and at once, for I am a man not to be trifled with!"

The widow heard him through and then laughed so heartily that some of the potatoes rolled out of the pan. Abe stood for a moment with a very red face and then turned and walked for the gate. He had almost reached it when the woman called:
"Hold on, there! Come back and let's talk it over!"

Six months later they were married, and for the next ten years the corn sheller man could not think of the incident without exclaiming to himself:
"Gosh all hemlock, but what a fool I was!"

The Locket

By HENRY D. STANLEY
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A young man and a girl of twenty were dancing together in a ballroom. A basket of peculiar material and workmanship flew about from her bosom as she whirled. On the third finger of her left hand was a ring with an inexpensive stone. When the music ceased she took the man's arm, and they strolled away into a side room, where there was no one except themselves. Seating herself on a sofa, she said:
"That's our last dance."

"You don't care to wait?"
"While waiting my chances in the matrimonial market would be passing away. In ten years I shall be thirty and my opportunities for marriage reduced at least 75 per cent. at thirty-five say 90 per cent. and at forty I won't have one chance in a hundred that I have now."

"You will always have me whatever be your age."

"I wouldn't trust to your constancy. We girls as we grow older become either fat or skinny. And I know you too well to believe that you will ever love either kind."

"I swear!"
"Don't swear. Go out, as you propose to, to the mining districts and when you return, if unmarried and I am unmarried and you want me, you will doubtless get me. But you won't want me."

She took off the ring on her finger, unclasped the locket from about her neck and handed them to him.
"Keep them," he said, "not as typical of an engagement, but as trinkets."

"Since you wish it I will."
"Goodby. I leave by an early train. I must go. I have things to do yet before going to bed."

"Goodby and good luck be with you."
Twenty years passed. The man during all that time had all he could do to keep his head above water; then he struck a bonanza. Returning to his former home for the purpose of organizing a mining company, he reached it in the winter season, when the gayety was at its height. On his way from dining with a friend he passed the building where two decades before he had parted with his love. Seeing the place lighted up and hearing the strains of music, he entered. Couples were dancing, and there was the lady from whom he had parted whirling, while on her bosom was the never resting locket.

How she had managed to preserve her youthful looks and her beauty he was at a loss to know. She must be unmarried, for no woman who had the care of a family could look so young. As she danced by him, the locket flirting as of yore, their eyes met, but he saw at once that he was not remembered.

"Who is that lady?" he asked of one who stood near.
"Miss Clarkson."

"I thought so," he said, then to himself: "I must have changed much more than she."
He concluded not to make himself known then and there, but announce his return by note the next day and ask permission to call. This he did and received a very gracious note in reply, stating that Miss Clarkson would be happy to receive him. The same evening he went to her residence. She was living in the same house, and on being ushered into the drawing room there sat a woman so fat that her first effort to rise was a failure, and instead of making a second she held out her hand to him.

"Pardon me," she said. "It's very hard for me to rise. I told you when you went away that we women must expect to grow fat or skinny, and you see that I belong to the first class."

He controlled himself sufficiently to conceal the shock, but as to acting like a returning lover he found it impossible. As soon as he became composed he said:
"The first thing I wish to know upon my return is have you still the ring and the locket I gave you."

"The ring is now locked in my bureau drawer upstairs. The locket I lent to my niece, Jigla Clarkson, to wear at a ball which she was to attend last evening."

He was satisfied with the explanation and knew why he had been led into an error.
The lady made it very easy for him. She had not expected that they would begin where they had left off twenty years before. Indeed, it was evident from the expression on her former lover's face that he had no mind to keep his pledge that, though she were fat and forty, he was still hers. She asked him what he had been doing all those long years, and he told her that he had been struggling with adversity. He failed to acquaint her with the fact that he had come home to form a company that would give him an enormous income. Instead, he left her to suppose that he was still struggling. Before leaving he tried to stammer something like his words when they were half their present age, but failed.

"Don't," she said, interrupting him. "What I told you has come to pass. Go marry some woman between twenty and thirty years of age and be happy."

He said "Never!" very faintly, but the next day hunted among his old friends till he found one who would introduce him to the younger Miss Clarkson. Again the locket flapped, but this time while he danced with the niece, whom he finally married.

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