

# Married Flirts

by MABEL McELLIOTT  
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**CHAPTER XXXIX**

When Tom Weaver swung down the ramp to the Tarztown train the sight of a familiar figure lagged behind a bit. Instead of quickening his step, he asked himself, "What's Vera doing here? He shouldn't be here. He's not the average male's share of consolation but he was not idiot enough to suppose, he told himself, that this actually happened this way. Wherever it happened to these days, there was also. Always pretty, tastefully dressed. Sweetly scented. She couldn't possibly make up. Tom couldn't help but be glad to see her. He had to tell her that it hadn't been for his part that Vera Gray had married Derek. He liked her in a comradely way. He knew lots of men who considered her devilish attractive. Unpleasantly she was. But he didn't like talking to her just now. Not what, again, was she doing on this particular train?

In spite of his laggard steps he could not help catching up with Vera. She turned to enter the car at the foot of the ramp and she saw him. She waved. Tom gallantly hastened and dropped in a seat beside her.

Vera made him forget his own problems momentarily. She was, she said, going to Irvington to see some old friends. That is, she was going on an impulse—not on invitation. She hadn't telephoned to see if they were in. But she was going to take a chance on it. She got up to leave. She said, dropping her hat, "New York was a lonely place."

"I suppose you'll be in Tarztown all the week small hours," Vera said. Tom consulted his time table and said he certainly would do so. He expected to get the 8:30 back to town. He'd told her he would be home shortly after 9. Then he remembered, rather sadly, that Gypsy would not be there. And he was curious in her intimate feminine fashion.

"I don't find the Wilsons at home. I'll wander around and have dinner by myself and get that train." She sounded awfully down, poor little Tom felt terribly sorry for her. Then she got off she waved at him and he was glad he had been decent to her. It wasn't much fun, being a girl alone in New York.

In Lila's exotic dining room a dark-haired young woman in a modish apron sat down looked down the long table nervously at a handsome, rather disheveled young man who had just entered. Instinctively she gripped her hands together. Derek's eyes were wild and his tweed jacket was full of lint.

Lila rose to the occasion superbly. "Daria, a chair for Mr. Bliss. Derek, go sweet, how good of you to drop in. Why didn't you let me know you were here? I thought you were in Buff. Someone told me..." Derek dropped into the chair someone pushed forward, never taking his eyes from her face. If Lila was dis-

turbed by his arrival she concealed it well. Only Gypsy noticed that the white blossom, dipping into the deep V of her black lace décolletage, rose and fell on a quicker breath. Her coloring was not heightened one iota. "I just got back this afternoon," Derek said thickly, carefully. "I only just heard about..."

Marko scraped his chair on the polished floor, interrupting. "You look splendid, my dear fellow, splendid..."

Derek fixed him with a glittering eye. "Thanks, awfully," he said carefully. "Thank a lot. Mighty good of you to say that."

Marko was standing now, his face ruddy in the dim light. "Come along, my boy," he boomed. "Come along. We'll have a talk in the library."

Derek shook off his big hand. His fair, handsome face was distorted. "I'm staying here," he said coldly. "I'm telling our friends all about it. They know I'm a modern man. They know these things are done. What are you afraid of?"

"Hunt," Gypsy half whispered. "This is really dreadful. Can't you do something?"

On an impulse Gypsy went to him. "Derek, come along. Let's go out on the terrace and cool off," she said softly. He gave her a curious penetrating glance.

"Oh, it's you, is it? I didn't know you ran with this crowd. Where's that nice fellow, your husband?" Gypsy's color faded. "He's not here, Derek. He's working..."

"Ah, working!" Derek's expression became cunning. "That's good. That's the right idea. We're all modern people..."

But he got to his feet and Lila three Gypsy one amused, desperate, grateful glance.

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