

Zelda Dameron

By
MEREDITH NICHOLSON

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CHAPTER XVII.—(Continued.)

He decided to go direct to Dameron and speak to him of the defect in the deed, more from curiosity as to what the old man would say than with any idea of helping the situation on his part, considering professionally or personally; but he justified himself in the score of the old relationship between Carr and Dameron. Carr was out of reach; Leighton did not even know his exact address at this time. And there was old Rodney Merriam, his best friend, and there was Zelda!

Dameron sat at his desk with a mass of papers before him as Leighton entered. The old man wore a serious air, to which the mass of papers contributed. A puzzled look crossed his face as he raised his eyes and regarded Leighton dreamily. Then suddenly, as though just recalling Leighton, he smiled and rose from his chair.

"My dear Mr. Leighton, this is a rare honor; I am delighted to see you, sir." He had never greeted Leighton so cordially before.

"Pardon me, Mr. Dameron, I have come on an important errand." "I can't imagine it," said the old man, graciously.

"But I do so on the score of your old friendship with Mr. Carr. He is absent or I should have referred the subject of my errand to him. You undoubtedly have your own counsel—in Mr. Carr's absence."

"Myself! I have enjoyed Mr. Carr's advice through so many years that I feel I have a fair knowledge of the law. We have both"—and he indicated Morris by a gesture—"we have both enjoyed the instruction of an excellent preceptor," and he bowed over his hands. "Well, sir!"

"I have just happened to learn of a deed given by you to the Patoka Land and Improvement Company for a block of lots lying south of town. Of course, it is a pure oversight, but you neglected to get an order of court, approving the sale. I thought I would mention it to you. It is a sale of some importance. And now I am sure you will pardon me."

Morris turned toward the door, but the old man rose and extended his hand.

"Ah," he began, with a droll air of coquetry, "we have had the same preceptor! You have a capital eye, Mr. Leighton. I quite admire it in you; and I thank you. I am aware of the provision you indicate. But I have provided for it. The judge is away from home just now and the gentlemen to whom I have sold were anxious to get title without delay. It doesn't look quite regular, I admit. My duties as trustee are nearly at an end. Only a few days more of responsibility. We will make a new deed if necessary—but the purchaser will be protected. We are all—ah, honorable men!"

"Very good, sir; I am sorry to have disturbed you"—and Leighton went out. Dameron's manner had been odd; the old man had frequently spoken to him at home, but usually with cold formality; but his greeting a moment before had been with exuberant cordiality. Morris had never quite made Dameron out, and he was not satisfied with an explanation that the poorest lawyer at the Mariona bar would reject instantly. And the old man had deliberately lied about the absence of the judge of the court, whom Morris had seen but a few hours before.

The bubble that Ezra Dameron had blown upon the air was near the end of its perilous voyage. His dream, of a dollar a bushel—a dream wrought of the flimsiest shadows—was dispelled. The danger of a great destruction of corn by mid-September had passed. A member of the Chicago firm of brokers through whom he had been trading, had called that day, having paid a visit to Mariona merely to see what manner of man it was who had cast money upon the waters so prodigally, maintaining a fantastic dream of values at the expense of a small fortune.

Leighton's call had made Dameron uneasy. He had squandered his own property months before; and now Zelda's estate was largely dissipated; and he faced the necessity of rendering an account of his stewardship within a few hours. Leighton undoubtedly knew something of the transactions by which the real estate held by Ezra Dameron, trustee, had been sold; and if Leighton knew, then Rodney Merriam, who was at home again, would undoubtedly know at once. He must save himself; a plan had formed in his mind by which he could hide his duplicity and put off for a year—perhaps forever—the fact that the greater part of Zelda's property was gone. But first he must get into his own hands the option he had given Balcomb for the sale of the creek strip. The sale had hung fire unexpectedly; but he rejoiced that this property had been saved until the last; he firmly believed that he should ultimately bring back to the empty treasury the money he had thrown away; but while he waited he must study more minutely the conditions that created prices. In a short while, all would be well again; but he must retain his hold upon what remained of Zelda's property. Carr would be necessary for his future operations. The creek strip must be saved and held for a greater price than the option carried. He sent at once for Balcomb, who came in looking a trifle annoyed.

"I wish you wouldn't sent for me at the busiest hour of my busiest day, Mr. Dameron. I suppose you want to know about the purchase of the creek strip. Well, we're not quite ready to close it to-day. That's a big scheme and all our money isn't paid in yet."

"Then the option—I must have back the option at once." And the old man spoke in a peremptory tone that was in marked contrast with the mildly insistent note he had of late been using.

"Not at all, sir. That is a thirty-day option and has ten days longer to run."

"To be sure; but the trust expires to-morrow; I had no right to bind the

estate beyond my trusteeship. To-morrow is my daughter's birthday. My administration of her affairs is ended. I must trouble you to give me the paper."

"Not much, I won't! We've been delayed for a few days; but you've got to carry out the deal. That was part of the consideration when we took your lots; and moreover you accepted money on the option. The trusteeship doesn't cut any ice. Of course, your daughter is morally, if not legally, bound by your acts. I can't stop any longer. Before the 10th of October we'll be ready to close, and meanwhile you'll please be good enough to remember that approval of the sale of those lots. Some of these people we're selling to may be silly enough to have the title looked into—and I don't want any nonsense about it. You remember I fixed all that with my company to please you—merely to get that option. My own hands are clean, you understand, if anything happens. Good day, Mr. Dameron."

"But wait—I can't do it! I must have that option," began Dameron, and there was a pitiful whine in his voice; but Balcomb went out and slammed the door.

J. Arthur Balcomb had enjoyed a successful year. Things were running smoothly with him; he had no doubt in the world that he could enforce his option on the creek strip of land whenever he wished. He knew Zelda Dameron, and he was quite convinced that she was not a girl to avoid obligations incurred by her father.

CHAPTER XVIII.
Morris expected Rodney Merriam to manifest wrath and indignation at the recital of Ezra Dameron's ill-doing, but the old gentleman in Seminary Square listened in silence, and at the end asked:

"Well, what are we going to do about it?"

"That's the rub—there's not much of anything that you can do. The trust is a wide-open thing. He isn't required to report to anybody and he gives no bond; but he must get the court's approval before he sells anything; and then he must reinvest the money in other realty. It is significant that he has been selling at desperate prices toward the end of his trusteeship. He must be hard up."

Merriam had never spoken of his brother-in-law to Leighton except in terms of respect, and he hesitated now.

"My sister's idea in making that will," he began, quietly, "was to deal quite regularly. I admit. My duties as trustee are nearly at an end. Only a few days more of responsibility. We will make a new deed if necessary—but the purchaser will be protected. We are all—ah, honorable men!"

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on, and tell her the whole matter. It is not a pleasant thing to do, but if we get her help—if that should seem the best way—"

They were deeply engrossed and did not hear the bell or the servant opening the front door.

"Uncle Rodney!"

Both men sprang to their feet. Zelda stood in the library door.

"Glad to see you, Zee," said her uncle, quietly.

She looked from one to the other and nodded to Morris.

"You don't look so awfully glad, I must say. If I've come in upon a conspiracy I'll take myself off. The gloom here is so thick you could grow mushrooms in it."

"I'm glad you happened in, Zee. There's something I wish to speak to you about. We may as well discuss it now; and if it's agreeable to you, I should like Mr. Leighton to stay. It's a legal matter that we may want him to advise us about."

"You have a serious air. I have you haven't been breaking any laws, you two. Certainly, Mr. Leighton may stay."

"Sit down, Morris," said Merriam, deliberately.

Zelda had taken a chair in the corner away from the smoldering fire, and Merriam found the chair that he liked least, with an unformed idea that such self-imposition fitted him better for an unpleasant task. He did not begin immediately, and while he collected his thoughts Zelda watched him with amusement.

"If you knew how funny you look, Uncle Rodney, I'm sure you'd laugh. And you seem a little ultra-serious, too, Mr. Leighton. Please, uncle, don't scold me!"

"Yes, yes, to be sure," said Merriam, absent-mindedly, and Leighton and Zelda exchanged a smile. "I want to speak to you about your property. There are some things connected with your affairs that you must know."

"But father attends to everything—you'll certainly waste your talents on me. Do let us talk of something cheerful."

"You know that your property, what your mother had and wished to give to you, was left in trust. Your father is the trustee."

"Yes, I know that."

"Your father's powers have been absolute. He is not required to give an accounting to any one—except, of course, to you, when he turns over the property on your birthday—that is, to-morrow."

"Yes, I believe to-morrow is the first of October. I understand perfectly that that mother wished me to know that she trusted father—as she expected me to trust him. That is all very simple."

"Everything was left to your father's discretion, but there were a few minor requirements. In case he should sell real estate, he was to get the approval of the court; and he was to buy other real estate with whatever he realized."

"That's probably important, but not amusing. I really dropped in to ask what you were going to give me for my birthday. I'm almost sorry I came."

"Your father has sold some of the real estate."

"Of course. You escape a lot of trouble by not having real estate, so father says—taxes and all that. But once more, pardon me!"

The color was dying out of her face and she twisted her fingers nervously. Her heart was beating fiercely. It had come at last—this hour in which she must face an attack upon her father. She had known that it would come, and she knew that she should meet it. It angered her that the terms her uncle used were unfamiliar. Law and business were unknown words to her. She again followed her uncle's recital closely; he was speaking with a sharp precision that he had never used before in talking to her.

"Your father has sold a great deal of your property," he repeated; "and it appears that through neglect—he has stated—or forgetfulness, the court's approval was not secured in at least one case. Of course, this can be corrected."

(To be continued.)

TOO CONSPICUOUS IN COLOR.
United States Will No Longer Have Gray Horses in Its Cavalry.

The gray charger, long an inspiration for the poets of chivalry, is now passe. So say the high officials of the war department who look after the purchase of horses for the United States cavalry.

He may be just as vigorous, intelligent and faithful as his brothers of another color, but he's too conspicuous, they tell us, too apt to get his \$200 hide filled with lead. So he has to go. Horsemen of the National stock yards can no longer sell grays to the government, which they maintain is bad business all around.

Uncle Sam formerly owned \$240,000 worth of horses of this color. One troop in every regiment was known as the "Gray Troop." But on investigation the department decided that so much money in living targets was a bad investment, for in these days of high-power rifles the gray troop would be a shining mark for the infantry of the enemy before the boys and blacks and browns and sorrels could get close enough to be distinguished from the scenery.

To Make Stockings Last.
In order to make her new stockings last beyond their time, one clever woman rubs paraffine on the heels and toes before putting the stockings on. They wear wonderfully under this treatment.

Curing a Cramp.
Is it in the leg? Does it come in the night? It may be easily relieved. Simply have a good strong cord. Then you are ready for the cramp. When it comes wind the cord around the place. Wind it rather tight, then give each end a sharp pull. That will relieve the cramp, which will not come on again the same night. For a permanent cure of these spasms one should go to a physician.—Philadelphia Record.

Restless Royalty.
"Before their marriage he said she should be treated like a queen."

"Well," answered Miss Cayenne, "he has kept his word after a fashion. His household is very like one of those little European monarchies."

When a girl marries in haste it's sometimes her last chance.

TWO DAINY COSTUMES

MUSLIN DRESS.—This dress is in printed muslin with pale blue ground; the simple little bodice has a square yoke trimmed with lace appliques and edged with Valenciennes lace.

The two flounces on skirt are trimmed with larger appliques. The fullness of skirt is drawn in above the flounces with a band of very wide ribbon arranged in a large bow at left side of front.

Hat of fancy straw trimmed with ribbon.



Dainty Dress—Cream delaine with a mauve ring embroidered on it is selected for our dainty design which, though drawn with a hat, would be so useful for semi-evening wear.

The skirt is trimmed with a deep lace band edged at the foot with mauve silk about 3½ inches deep, scalloped at the top, which also is edged with silk; the material is gathered here and at the waist.

The bodice has an effective lace trimming edged with silk; the opening at front is filled with delaine, and the sleeves are set to silk bands.

Hat of coarse cream straw, trimmed with mauve bows.

Materials required: 3 yards delaine 42 inches wide, 4 yards lace 20 inches wide, 2½ yards silk 22 inches wide.

BLACK SATIN ALL THE RAGE

Shade and Material Has Entirely Captured the Fancy of Devotees of Fashion.

Black satin has certainly captivated Fashion! First, with the tailored suit with long, graceful lines; then with the Faquin scarf and mantle, and now with the chic little chapeau, says the Philadelphia Press.

While this latest millinery creation is a forerunner of autumn modes, women like it so much that they have not delayed a minute to wear it.

When a woman called it "simply ideal" the other day she certainly hit the mark, as it is ideal for almost any occasion.

It is a creation between a mushroom with high dome crown and tiny brim—and a poke bonnet. Fashioned in a severe style, with soft folds of satin around the crown and small bow or rosettes at the side. And a dainty fringe of white or ecru valenciennes must edge the brim inside to give the necessary softness to the face. Truly a picturesque hat, yet practical, so much so that a woman can take one "as the only hat" for a week-end trip—quite appropriate to wear with a tailored suit, ideal combination with a lingerie dress, and will be charming for evening.

One of these hats recently seen in London was simply trimmed with two ostrich plumes—one at either side of the front and standing perfectly straight.

Parisiennes are very enthusiastic about black satin—and is it any wonder when such modes have been designed for their pleasure and to enhance their beauty?

Newest lace veil is a charming combination of black and white. This not only signifies the vogue of this delightful color combination, but provides a most charming veil for blonde or brunette. The net or mesh part is of white, while the chantly designs are black.

Natural color lace veils are new, too. These are for women who prefer things to match, and who wear natural color straw hats with pongee suits or frocks.

To Restore a Faded Color.
To restore the faded color of the child's fine blue silk stockings, dip them after washing into hot water in which is dissolved a little (not too much) common bluing and several small lumps of alum. Those which have faded to nearly white can be simply colored in this way to do service as long as they will wear.

Satin and Foulard.
The latest combination of material is figured foulard and plain satin in the predominating shade of the silk. The satin is used for the gown itself and the foulard in a deep hem effect or as underskirt, for a tunic. The foulard also forms the undersleeves and boleros of the new semi-empire costumes.

FOR THE HOME DRESSMAKER

Some Ideas That It Will Be Well to Keep Always in the Memory.

Dark red linen makes a girlish dress that can be worn with a coat or lingerie waist. The material launders nicely.

Some walking suits are trimmed with pompadour ribbon on the collar, narrow revers, cuffs and belt, the ribbon matching the stripe of the material.

When altering a blouse for any reason it is a great mistake to move the shoulder seam to the front. A far better plan is that of dropping it backward instead of forward.

Vanity bags for dancing parties are most attractively made of dainty ribbon, in the form of a tiny bag, which holds powder and puff ball, while the bottom on the outside has a mirror, held in place by a shirred piece of ribbon, after first being glued to the rib-covered cardboard, which forms the inside of the bag.

OF VIOLET BATISTE.



A summer gown of violet batiste of this sort might be fashioned from one of the many lovely robes now on sale at small cost. The embroidery is, of course, in same color, but the lace used is white. Finish the costume with a white Neapolitan hat, loaded with double violets.

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When You Take Cold

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