

A Bridal Commission

By JOHN KENAN

I was sittin' with Amelia before the fireplace, with the logs givin' out a cheerful heat. Amelia didn't seem happy, though, and I asked her why she looked so melancholy-like.

"I'll tell you, Mr. Grimshaw," she said. "Did you ever hear the song, 'No One to Love, None to Caress?' Well, that's the way I feel. Father ever since mother's death has been restless and cross, and now he's goin' to give me a stepmother. I haven't any brothers or sisters to love, and I'm goin' to have a stepmother to hate."

"Why, Amelia," says I, "the thing for you to do is to get married."

"How can I do that with nobody to marry me?" she asked, awful sad.

"How you talk!" says I. "You know mighty well there's lots of fellers that would be glad to git you."

"I'd like to know where they are. If you know any sich I wish you'd send em around."

"Sartain. I'll git you a husband in no time. Air you particular about his bein' good lookin' or havin' a farm of his own or anything like that?"

"No, I ain't particular, leastways I won't be if you can fix me out before paw brings that red headed widder into the house, 'cause I know I've got to git out when she comes in."

"How much time is there?"

"Well, I heard paw say the other day that he calc'lated to be married before the end o' next month."

"Supposin' I send you a feller that suits you and you suit him, what is there in it for me?"

"I don't see what I can do for you, Mr. Grimshaw, seein' that I haven't got a cent in the world, and there isn't any favor I know of that I can do you. But I suppose"—looking down at the floor—"havin' made the match, you'd be entitled to kiss the bride."

This bothered me a lot. I was to fix up a match by which another feller was to git all the kisses he wanted for a lifetime, and I was to git one kiss on the weddin' day.

"It seems to me, Amelia," I says, "that's like sellin' a man a house woth a lot o' money for a commission. He gits a whole house, and the broker gits a few dollars."

"You forgot," said Amelia, "that the broker don't want all the houses he sells. What would he do with 'em? Besides, when a man buys a house it argys that he's able to own a house and wants a house, and wants that particular house. I don't see that the broker earns anything more than his commission. Do you?"

"I don't see as he does," says I, scratchin' my head. And I didn't. Howsomever, I couldn't git it out o' my noddle that I was goin' to git the little end o' the bargain. But I felt sorry for Amelia, powerful sorry, for I'd had a stepmother myself.

"Is it customary," says I, "to pay a commission before the transaction's completed?"

"Not at all," said Amelia. "That wouldn't do."

"Why not?"

"Well, the broker, havin' got his pay, wouldn't take any pains in the matter."

"If he didn't do his work he might return what he'd received."

"In that case he'd git double pay for nothin'—that is, if his commission was a kiss."

"Isn't there somepin among business men like payin' part down, the rest when the deal has gone through?"

"That's got nothin' to do with bro-

kers; it's when you buy a piece of property yourself."

"Well," I says, givin' it up, "I reckon I'll have to wait for my pay till I've done the job."

I got up and was goin' out when Amelia said:

"How soon are you goin' to send a feller?"

"I dunno. Somehow I don't like the transaction. Seems to me he'll git the lion's share."

"Well, Mr. Grimshaw, since you look at it that way I don't know but I ought to make it more to your interest to do the job. I might double the commission, one-half payable in advance."

"Now you're shoutin'," I said, and instead of goin' away I sat down ag'in and tuk the first half o' my commission. It tasted so good that I began right off to hanker for the other half of my pay.

"Amelia," I says, "you couldn't pay it all in advance, could you?"

"Sartain not. What would there be to hold you to your work?"

I thort awhile, and then I said:

"Supposin' I make the deal for my self."

"What do you mean by that?"

"I mean supposin' I jist take the other feller by the nape o' the neck and put him out. Then, instead o' actin' as his broker, I acquire the property in my own name."

"Land sakes, Mr. Grimshaw!"

That was all the talkin' we done, I was hungry for another kiss, and I tuk her in my arms and had a dozen without stoppin'.

"Good gracious, Mr. Grimshaw, what you doin'?" she says.

"I'm makin' a fast payment to bind the bargain."

Amelia and I was married before her father brought the stepmother to his house, and Amelia found a home with me. One of her old flames on our weddin' day claimed a right to kiss the bride.

"What did you do to earn it?" says I to him.

Amelia bust out hartin'.

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