

LOVE 'n' WAFFLES

By Marian Phillips Johnson

IT HAD all been very exciting—getting married right in Uncle Hilary's teeth, you might say! Going with Peter to pick out that darling place in the suburbs that Uncle Hilary would surely give them for a wedding present! Taking an option on it—to make sure it wouldn't get away!

But, going with Peter to break the news to Uncle Hilary—that was an entirely different matter!

"It seems a rather foolhardy thing, in my opinion," Uncle Hilary said, fingering a paper in his hand. "I have told you, Peter, that I am not in any way assured that you will make a success in the real estate field. You're too easy-going." He glowered at Peter under his heavy brows.

"I'll make good!" promised Peter, cheerfully. "I'll have something to work for—now!"

"I'm not guaranteeing you a steady position just because you're my nephew—or because you have done this foolhardy thing!" snapped Uncle Hilary. "You'll have to make good—do you understand? You'll have to begin by selling Coles!"

"Yes, sir," said Peter, a little faintly. Angela felt a queer trembling somewhere within. She knew how tough that Coles proposition really was!

"And as for you, young lady," said Uncle Hilary, transferring his hostile gaze to her, "don't you think you've taken a rather serious step? Giving up a good position—with a future, mind you—for a dhaban in a two-room flat—if you can afford even that!"

"N-no," breathed Angela, thanking her stars he hadn't said "weren't!"

"Well, you've done it!" Uncle Hilary snapped. "Work it out!"

"O. K.," said Peter quietly. "Come on, Angel!"

"HE'LL think it over," grinned Peter, outside. "He'll kick in with that house, yet!"

"What shall we do?" asked Angela.

"Buy furniture," said Peter. She began to vision unpainted furniture and cans of bright lacquer and new paint brushes and gay, inexpensive chintzes and well-planned low-cost meals. She'd help Peter make things go!

And then, one morning, a square pasteboard box arrived. Angela opened it with shaking, eager fingers to discover—a waffle iron! A wedding present—from Uncle Hilary!

ONE morning, clad in a very becoming little house frock, Angela was measuring coffee into the new drip coffee pot and humming a gay little song.

Peter, with his shirt in one hand, came grinning into the kitchen and kissed her smartly on the back of the neck.

"Take that, woman," he admonished sternly, waving the shirt at her. "Can't you take your work seriously o' mornings?"

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"It's only my naturally sunny disposition, sir," apologized Angela meekly. "Leggo! You're breaking my ribs!"

She wriggled out of his embrace and made a lunge for the tea kettle.

Scanning the cheery small kitchen, Peter's glance fell on the shiny new waffle iron, and inspiration seized him.

"Let's have some waffles, honey," he said.

Angela stopped in her tracks and turned to look at the waffle iron on its painted yellow shelf.

"It's a little late for waffles, darling," she parried. "Let's have scrambled eggs on rounds of toast, with cute little curls of bacon!"

"Gosh!" mourned Peter, reluctantly. "I had my mouth all set for waffles and honey!"

"Some other time," said Angela crisply.

She scrambled eggs deftly and placed the finished product before Peter with a warm little flush of pride.

"Swell," said Peter, sampling them. "Pret' near as good as waffles!"

Angela felt the warm blood rising steadily in her cheeks. Just like a man, she thought. He would forget the insult of that iron if it occurred to him to might produce something good to eat!

"I thought I was fixing something especially nice," she said at last, in a cold little voice.

Peter lifted surprised eyes to her flushed young face.

"Gee, I didn't mean I didn't like it," he said. "It was a swell breakfast!"

With his arms around her, and his kiss on her lips, Angela felt the strange tenseness within her melting like a mist.

"Darling!" she murmured—and happiness settled softly down upon the Selway domain.

But on Sunday morning, out of a clear sky, Peter sprung the waffles on her again.

Angela's breath stopped right in the middle of a perfectly swell little trill.

"C'mon, honey," urged Peter. "I'll bet you sling a mean waffle!"

IT NEVER would have happened, if she told herself afterward, if Peter hadn't followed her around, talking all the time—taking her mind off what she was doing!

He put the iron on the table and turned it on.

"It's automatic!" he exclaimed. "It clicks!"

"If ought to growl," muttered Angela, thinking of Uncle Hilary. "Who's afraid of the big bad wolf?"

In spite of Peter's interruptions Angela managed to finish the batter. Peter lifted the lid invitingly.

"Sling 'er there, honey!" he urged.

Angela covered the surface of the iron carefully with the golden batter and closed the lid. Then she sank into her chair and joined Peter in fascinated contemplation of the tricky little machine before them. The cover began to rise slowly, and little spurts of fragrant steam escaped. Peter sniffed, joyfully. Then the batter began running in three long streams down the sides of the iron and cooking itself on.

"Too much," opined Peter, cheerfully.

"Yes, I can almost figure that out for myself," remarked Angela, sharply.

"Don't get huffy," said Peter.

"Who's huffy?" demanded Angela.

"You're huffy," remarked Peter.

"I am not!" defied Angela, hotly.

"It's burning," suggested Peter, sniffing.

"It hasn't clicked," defended Angela.

It clicked.

"There!" exclaimed Peter.

Angela grabbed for the handle and executed a valiant tug. But the iron didn't seem inclined to open.

"It's stuck!" cried Angela, wrestling gallantly.

Peter watched the proceedings, and grinned.

"What's in them thar waffles, Mrs. Selway?" he inquired innocently. "DeGrage's glue, perhaps?"

Angela lost both her dignity and her temper.

"I hate you!" she cried, eyes blazing. "Ouch!" she added painfully, burning her finger.

"I was only kidding!" cried Peter. "Angel, are you hurt?"

Here, let me!" He kissed the injured finger, then proceeded to pry open the iron and scrape out the waffle that clung to every little square as though it had become part of the iron itself.

Angela, waving the injured hand gently back and forth, picked up the little green book with the other, and began to read.

"Heavens!" she exclaimed. "I should have oiled the thing first!"

"Atta-girl," grinned Peter. "Read the directions after you try 'em! That's system for you!"

"I never used a new iron before," defended Angela, truthfully. "It was your fault, anyway," she flamed, "for talking to me all the while!"

"Excuses," said Peter, grandly, enjoying himself. "How far do you think excuses would get you in the business world, Angela?"

"They seem to work pretty well," said Angela sweetly. "They have with you—haven't they?" She felt better. A little better, anyway.

"I suppose you meant that for a dirty dig about Coles," said Peter, jabbing furiously at the iron.

"Well, you started it," accused Angela, feeling something stinging in her eyes.

"Well, don't start crying about it," said Peter. "I don't know why it is," he went on reasoning, "that a woman can work in an office and be cool and efficient and sensible. But get her into a home and she goes to pieces over every little thing!"

"It's because housekeeping is hard, and dirty, and tiresome!" cried Angela hotly. "And I wouldn't have to be doing it—if your darling old Uncle Hilary didn't have to run our whole lives for us!"

"Oh," said Peter, "so that's the way you feel about it!"

"Well, I didn't hire out as a cook when I married you—did I?" demanded Angela, and went into her bedroom and slammed the door. Her finger hurt. She stuck it in her mouth and it hurt still more. Tears rolled down her cheeks.

Peter came in and tried to take her in his arms. Angela shrugged angrily away. Peter captured and held her, and kissed her and told her that he loved her—and what did any old waffles matter, anyway? It all took quite a long time—but peace was finally restored.

The scar of it remained between them, like a nasty deep little wound, refusing to heal.

It always seemed worse at breakfast. Angela couldn't eat a single breakfast without thinking about those terrible waffles, seeing again the great bowl of creamy batter she had thrown away, and the horrid burned iron; hearing again Peter's clever remarks; feeling him being critical of her.

Peter wasn't the same, either. He was silent and jumpy, and a little strained look appeared around his eyes. It gave Angela a horrid feeling that he was dissatisfied with her; it angered her to feel that he was measuring her efficiency as a wife—by a waffle!

AND then one day Angela suddenly couldn't bear it another minute!

"I—I guess it's been a mistake about us, Pete," she said, in a strange little voice.

Peter didn't look at her.

"I—I guess so," he said.

"So—I guess I'd better go," suggested Angela, her throat aching terribly. "I—I can't stand it, Pete!"

Peter pushed back his chair and stood up.

"All right—if that's the way you feel about it," he said stiffly—and went out, without even kissing her good-bye.

Angela sat at the table and wept. She could see herself getting old and faded and having only a memory of four wonderful weeks as the one beautiful thing in her life! It was horrible! After a while, she packed.

She would, she decided, take the 8:15 that night. That would give her the opportunity to tell Peter good-bye.

Six-thirty found her white and jumpy, pacing up and down, waiting for Pete. Maybe he wouldn't come!

All at once she heard him at the door. But there were voices! And then Peter came in, cheerful and gay—with Uncle Hilary!

Peter kissed Angela lightly.

"Uncle Hilary decided to come home with me, Angel," he said.



If It Had Been Another Woman, Angela Might Have Stood Her Ground. But It Wasn't. It Was a Shiny, New — Waffle Iron!

"Heavens," she exclaimed. "I should have oiled the thing first!"
"Atta-girl," grinned Pete. "Read the directions after you try 'em."

"How p-perfectly darling," said Angela, hollowly, taking Uncle Hilary's hat and stick.

In a few moments she slipped away to the small bedroom and stood regarding her packed bags. Suddenly Peter stood beside her.

"Don't go, Angel," he begged, reaching an arm toward her.

Angela eluded the arm. "I was taking the 8:15," she informed him, coldly.

"Listen, honey, you can't!" said Peter. "Uncle Hilary—"

"All right!" flamed Angela. "I'll wait! I—I suppose I have my pride, too, Peter Selway," she murmured tensely, so that Uncle Hilary shouldn't hear. "He was so sure we'd make a mess of things! Well, he shan't have the satisfaction of being here to umpire the separation! I—I'll stay—for tonight! And I'll feed him within an inch of his domineering, selfish, over-fed life! And I hope he gets the most life! And I dig on record!"

"Angel!" cried Pete.

With a strange, wild joy surging in her heart, and Peter tagging at her heels, Angela returned to the living room and dear Uncle Hilary.

"Cozy little place you have here," smiled Uncle Hilary, approvingly. "How do you like housekeeping, Angela?"

"Fine," lied Angela.

"Cookin'—and all that—fun, eh?" asked Uncle Hilary.

Angela couldn't bear it. But, somehow, she managed to nod, brightly.

"Well," remarked Uncle Hilary, "you're making a real business man of Peter, my dear!"

Angela managed a smile.

"Yes," said Uncle Hilary. "What do you think your old man did today, Angela?"

"I—I wouldn't know," said Angela.

"He sold Coles!" beamed Uncle Hilary.

"No!" gasped Angela. "Oh Peter!"

"He certainly did surprise me!" said Uncle Hilary. "Guess mar-

Angela ladled the creamy mixture from the tall earthen pitcher. Uncle Hilary sniffed.

"A bachelor misses a lot in this life," he murmured a little wistfully. "You know—cozy little meals cooked right at the table—like this! Funny," he added, "but I've always been specially fond of waffles! Probably selfish of me, but I was sort of hoping I could sneak in for a few once in a while, when I gave you this!" He waved a hand in the direction of the iron.

"Plenty!" muttered Peter.

"By the way," said Uncle Hilary, pleasantly, "how about that waffle-jigger, Angela? Couldn't you ask an old man a waffle, could you?"

Peter jumped, turned pale, and looked at Angela.

"We—we'll see," she said, and rose to her feet. "Excuse me, will you?" With her chin lifted high she started toward the gay little kitchen.

"Excuse me," said Peter, and followed Angela.

"LISTEN, honey," he said, anxiously, "you could give him some of those rounds of toast with scrambled eggs and cute little curls of bacon—"

"I could," said Angela, eyes bright. "Oh, Peter, how did you ever sell Coles?"

"I had to," said Peter, simply. "I was losing you, Angel!"

"But how—" repeated Angela, feeling something sharp in her eyes.

"It was today or never—with me," said Peter. "I guess I just got it over to him that I meant business!"

He was holding her close! he was kissing her like he used to kiss her a week ago!

"Listen, Pete," gasped Angela at last, "go talk to Uncle Hilary while I dig up something."

"Give 'em fried eggs," murmured Peter, his lips on her hair.

"I'll feed him," said Angela.

She set up a small table in the living room—there wasn't any dining room—and placed the shiny bright waffle iron on the tea wagon at her right.

Peter glanced at the waffle iron as though he expected it to reach out and bite him. Then he looked uneasily at Angela. He felt sorry for Angela. He looked about the table. Butter, Honey, Sugar and cream. Coffee. Nothing more. Nothing to eat in case those waffles didn't turn out.

you! I—I just wanted—to make sure!" His blue eyes misted dreamily. "Nice kids," he was thinking. "I'll have to do something for them—"

But Angela was looking at Peter—darling, beloved Peter—whom she wouldn't have to leave—now! Because she wasn't a failure any longer! Because she had—made good!

"Do have a waffle, honey," she said, demurely, passing him the plate.

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