

# Married Flirts

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### CHAPTER I-A

THERE was a striped red and white canopy outside St. Bartholomew's. The red carpet at the edge of the sidewalk was already dusty from the scuffling of many feet. Indoors an organ pealed sonorously.

Shining car after shining car slid up and deposited its well-dressed and scented wedding guests. Ladies in beige, in blue, in black, with expensive furs slung over their modish shoulders, although the day was warm. Gentlemen in the uniform of the day, the tapper, the striped trousers, the perfectly cut tail coat, the shining shoes.

At long last, the awaited thrill came. The bride, all brides should be lovely, and Lila Hotelling lived up to the tradition. Gardenia fair her skin, buttercup-yellow her shining hair, a feather or two of which escaped from the rare point lace which framed her face. Her frock, of medieval cut, was of some soft, dull stuff. She wore a string of pearls and you knew they were real. She carried calls lilies.

Lovely, lovely bride!  
How the music pealed as she came, with cool dignity, into the vestry! The tall man with her—her uncle, it was whispered, a diplomat at Paris, who had crossed the sea to "give her away" in the quaint old style—mattered at her calm. The bridesmaids ahead—six of them—in graded nasturtium tints, were more nervous than she. One of them, a willow reedhead, trembled all over with every step she took. It must be her first wedding, thought Lila's uncle, gravely.

Necks were craned, there was a polite rustle all over the church. Scents of lilies, of noisette roses, of La Vieille Folle, delicate and insubstantial; sound of music, of traffic outside in Park Avenue, of New York Central trains rumbling somewhere in the howls of the earth.

Derek Bliss, rather like a faun in morning clothes, a well-tailored faun with stormy dark brows and eyes flashing amber lightning, stood waiting for his bride, Derek, who was everything that was eminently correct, from his cockle to his clubs, but who hadn't as much money as the Hotelling clan thought Lila might expect. Not that Lila's people were rich—far from it—but they had a tradition of money in their house. All the Hotelling women had expensive tastes and indulged them. Lila's father had died three years ago, exhausted from the strain.

Gypsy had been sorry she couldn't go to Lila's wedding. They had met, down on the Cape, every summer, in childhood. Gypsy's mother, grandmother and Lila's had been friends. To the rambling old houses on the bleached shore they had gone, summer after summer. Of course, their lives, back home, had run along entirely different lines. Gypsy's lawyer father made just enough money to feed, clothe and house his brood.

NOTHING was left over for expensive private schools, in Gypsy's childhood, while Lila had, of course, experienced what is known as "the best" in that quarter. Lila had even had a year in Paris, when she was nineteen, while Gypsy's first college year had been cut short by Mother's operation.

It was during Gypsy's year at the settlement house (she had managed a course in kindergarten in the year following her mother's convalescence) that the two girls had renewed their acquaintance. Lila, beautiful in furs, had rushed into the shabby brick establishment one November afternoon.

"My dear, I couldn't get away earlier. Am I late?" The other Junior Leaguers gabbled frantically. Lila had looked up to see the young secretary, neat and plain in her dark blue frock, staring at her.

"My dear, isn't it... it's never Gypsy! They had seen each other rather often, as often as Lila's heavy calendar of engagements would permit, that winter. And now Lila was being married on the same day as Gypsy.

Lila wasn't thinking of Gypsy at the moment, however. She was occupied with her self, her train, her bouquet. Derek looked rather sweet, didn't he? He was rather a lad—bit of a lamb, that boy. Yes, it was a pity he hadn't more money, but she, Lila, would soon see to it that he got more of it. That was a wife's job.

"... I, Lila, take thee, Derek..."

It was funny, but weddings were all exactly alike. She'd been a bridesmaid twice in last season. You got bored with the ritual. Isn't it a pity there wasn't more klieg to it? How solemn the clergyman sounded!

The organist crashed into the recessional now. She faced about triumphantly. She knew she looked her best. That photographer had kept her standing for ages, though, the idiot. She was just a wee bit tired. She could do with a cocktail this moment.

DOWN the aisle they went. Lila kept her eyes open. She didn't believe in this beaming-bride stuff. Demureness was more her style, anyhow.

No lingering outside here, as at Gypsy's simple wedding. Lila and Derek ran the gantlet of old ladies and disappeared in the maw of a shining long-limbed car. The reception was to be at Sherry's. Lobster thermidor. Curved glasses brimming with golden bubbles. High, nervous laughter. An orchestra thrumming above it all.

"Come along, sweets, let's get out of this!" That was Derek, brownish, looking at his watch. "We're riding a bit close to the wind." Lila's laughter rose high-

er and higher. They must come—they must all come to see them off! She vanished, reappearing in a dark blue costume which effectively showed off her slender, rounded figure. She had a knot of green orchids for her silver fox. Her makeup was a triumph. She looked flawlessly young, sophisticated, amused.

The suite was packed to the brim with roses, with telegrams, exotic fruit in tall baskets. Derek gloomed around, hands in pockets, waiting for the signal which would call the merry-makers ashore.

"Why not come along? Why not all of you...?" Lila was forgetting the occasion for her honeymoon. She wanted to make it a wholesale cruise.

At last they drifted away and the two were left to hang over the ship's edge alone.

"Happy, dearest!" Her voice was decidedly pettish. Nerves crept into it, now the excitement had died down and the audience had disappeared.

"I'm a wreck. Honestly. What a day!"

Her face was a white blur in the early dusk. He caught at her hand.

The engines, far below, churned into life; the whistle brayed. Silently the boat moved away from the pier. Life was beginning for Lila and Derek.

THE ferry carrying Gypsy and Tom, in the shining little car, slipped through the warm September night.

"Look, Tom!" Their car had been the first one on the boat, so they had a splendid view of the harbor. "Look, that must be—yes, it is the Empiric. Lila's boat!" The majestic ship, a fairy cargo of twinkling lights, moved on its way. The ferry rocked a little in the wash. Tom said, lightly: "You ought to be going to London and Paris, too, instead of to a little shack on Long Island."

"Why, you great big silly!" She widened her eyes at him. "As if I didn't love Wading Hollow! As if I'd give up our two weeks there for London or Paris."

The young husband grinned at her. He was very likable when that smile crinkled up his sun-browned face with its crown of fair, curling hair.

"So you're satisfied, woman, are you?"

"You're darn shouting I am." It was just as well Mrs. Morell wasn't around, to hear her daughter's choice of words.

The ferry bumped into the slip and Tom drove expertly off into the downtown streets of the city. They would cross another bridge, and find one of the main arteries which led down Long Island, and they would stop when they were tired, some hours later, at a pleasant little inn they knew, half way down, for dinner. They planned to reach the beach house before midnight. There everything had been put in readiness for them by Tom's elder sister, Rosina, who had a summer place several miles away. The Wading Hollow place, cabin and some acre or so of ground, was young Mr. Weaver's sole heritage. He had come into the property some years before on the death of a maiden aunt. Gypsy had spent several weeks there, the season before, under Rosina's chaperonage, and had fallen in love with the place.

"Rose said she'd put up new curtains," Tom said, cheerfully. "You won't know the shack, it's so dressed up for you."

"If you're changed, one stick or stone of it," Gypsy warned him impressively. "I'll never speak to you again. It was perfect as it was."

Tom drove, one-handed fashion. His free arm held his small wife in his curve. They left houses behind, left the twinkling lights of villages, after their simple meal; they smelled the sweet scent of pine and salt water, of hay drying in the fields.

"Mmmmm... That was Gypsy. 'Don't you love it!'"

"We're almost there."

They turned into the dirt road and bumped over it gallantly. The moon made a track on the waters just ahead.

"Home, Mrs. Weaver, ma'am."

The little house waited for them, dark and silent and welcoming.

Tom carried her over the threshold.

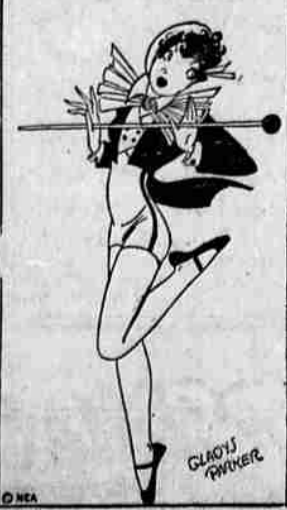
(To Be Continued)

The Gaelic language is used as an everyday tongue by more than 15,000 persons living on Cape Breton Island, Nova Scotia.

Belgium is the most densely populated country in Europe, having 686 inhabitants to the square mile.

### Flapper Fanny Says

Girls who balance their figures often tax their energies.



### OUT OUR WAY

### OUR BOARDING HOUSE

By Ahern



### SALESMAN SAM

By Small



### BOOTS AND HER BUDDIES

By Martin



### WASH TUBBS

By Crane



### FRECKLES AND HIS FRIENDS

By Blosser

