

Married Flirts

By MABEL McLELLITT
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BEGIN HERE TODAY
 GYPSY MORELL and TOM WEAVER are married the same day as the LITTLE FAIRIES and the LITTLE FAIRIES. She expects to live in luxury, while Gypsy is to be a school teacher in a settlement school.

After returning from her honeymoon in Europe, she invites the Weavers to dinner. Among the guests is a wealthy MARRIAGE BROKER, who once asked Gypsy to marry him. He showers her with attention which she accepts because she is jealous of Tom's interest in HILDA BLANCHARD. After the party Tom and Gypsy quarrel, but peace is later restored.

Shopping for Christmas, Gypsy meets Broughton who offers her a job cataloging his library. Gypsy hesitates, then she decides to take the job, planning to use the money thus earned to buy Tom's Christmas gifts. Broughton gives her an advance payment of \$50.

NOW GO ON WITH THE STORY
 CHAPTER XIII

TOM stared at the box he held in his hand. "But darling, it's magnificent! How did you ever...?" Then he remembered. He was not just any husband, worrying about bills. He was Gypsy's Tom and this was Christmas Day, when anything might happen. Just the same, the platinum watch rather worried him. Gypsy must have gone deeply into debt to buy it. What an adorable thing she was!

Gypsy's heart was going very fast. She stared at him with round eyes. "You mustn't ask questions, dearest, on Christmas Day." He kissed her, penitent and abashed, his heart fairly swelling with love for her.

Gypsy opened all her packages. Little squeals of delight greeted the scent, the gloves, the flowers. She put the book under her pillow and the candy on the coffee table. She said, and truly, that she loved it all... she loved everything, and he was a smart boy to remember her likes to well.

Then they had breakfast. Gypsy's woolly rose dressing gown was belted about her slim figure. Her curls were tossed and her eyes bright. Their first Christmas together was being a great success. She had even set up a tiny tree in the corner of the living room (Derek had been right!). Later they would go to mid-day dinner at her mother's house. Tom had brought the car into the city the previous week-end, so that their bundles might be transported in comfort.

They drove off, just after noon, in the little car, the rumble seat crammed with gayly wrapped bundles. Gypsy snuggled close to Tom's side. What fun Christmas was! It had a special, a different flavor from any other day in the year.

There was turkey. There was cranberry sauce. There was plum pudding. The old house wore wreaths in all its windows. The hall smelted of fir boughs and fruit cake and candle-wax. Mrs. Morell had her hair waved; there was a flash in her thin cheeks.

"Dear children! No, you're not late—Clara is just hasting the bird. Daddy's down at the furnace. He'll be waiting in a minute. Tom run up and lay your things off in my room, Gypsy. Cousin Lou is in yours and I don't believe she's dressed yet."

COUSIN LOU was a spare, smiling, middle-aged woman from Ansbury Park, always included in the Christmas group. Mr. Morell looked around the table with a swelling sense of life's goodness. A man had his shares of burdens and worries—often he didn't know how he was going to make both ends meet—and then Christmas came along, and he was thankful just to have his dear ones gathered around him. There was Gypsy and that nice boy she'd married. Gypsy was all right. He didn't have to worry about her. A couple of years back, he hadn't quite known... Gypsy had been going places with that oldish, rich man. He and Mother hadn't liked the idea. But then the thing had straightened itself out. All his worry had been for nothing. Gypsy had fallen in love. Now she was starting life as he and Mother had. There wasn't much money, of course, but the boy was young and clean and ambitious. Gypsy was taken care of...

No one would have known, watching his lined and prosaic countenance, as he sliced meat and spooned dressing, that such thoughts were his. "Some of the white meat, Bertram? I guess he thinks the second joint is choicer."

The old white china, with its gilt bands, the deep blue glasses, the rose wreathed plates for the pudding—all, all were in their accustomed places. This was Christmas, with all the good old things that had ever been. Morells had eaten from this china 100 years ago, thought the father gravely, and would 100 years from now, please God!

Clara rolled in with fresh plates, rolled out again with laden ones. She was brave in a stiff new uniform today. Her crinkly hair had been "straightened" for the occasion.

GYPSY was cracking walnuts for Cousin Lou. Across the table, the girl twin squeaked joyously at some joke of Tom's. Gypsy's new scent was much admired and everyone exclaimed over his or her gifts. They all felt expansive and happy. Afterward this sense of well-being would deepen into drowsiness. The younger ones would go off to coast, the elder ones would steal a nap, perhaps. But at the moment all was coziness and laughter.

Gypsy collapsed into her favorite deep chair by the fireplace, afterward.

"I didn't know I was so tired until this instant," she confessed luxuriously. "We were up until all hours. I hadn't wrapped any of my packages... and I had to trim the tree..."

Tom said he proposed a walk in half an hour or so. Did anyone want to come along? Gypsy stifled a yawn. She knew, she said, that

a walk would do her worlds of good, but she wasn't going to have one. She was going to curl up on the sunroom couch and snatch 40 winks.

So the party separated, as family parties have a way of doing. The wind outside blew colder, the early dusk fell and the lamps were lighted. In the kitchen regions Clytie clattered cheerfully away with the last pans. She would don her new purple silk presently and go off to the African church in the village. The bill that Mr. Morell had given her crackled enticingly in her purse. Clytie was thankful. She experienced the Christmas spirit.

The house quieted down. Mr. Morell dozed by the fire in the living room, his wife and Cousin Lou played checkers at a table nearby and in the sunroom Gypsy, curled up under an old Paisley shawl, tried in vain to sleep. At first she had been desperately drowsy but, once she had stretched out, she had come stark awake and her conscience had begun to prick her anew.

What a fool she'd been (she thought) to let Marko talk her into this! It would only mean keeping a secret from Tom and he'd never in the world understand it.

Well! she would work out the \$50 with Marko—she would give him the very best she knew how to give in the way of labor—and then she'd see him again. Marko's way of living was too insidiously easy for a young working wife. He made things so soft, so luxurious.

At long last she fell asleep to dream troubled and uncertain dreams in which Marko Broughton, wearing a long beard and flourishing a big stick, threatened her with dire happenings.

She woke, trembling all over with nervousness. Tom was standing over her, big and young and vital. "What's the matter, darling? Think you see a ghost?"

"Oh, I had such a dreadful dream!"

He put his arms around her. "Laybones, that's what comes of eating too much dinner and going to sleep. I've walked miles. I feel great."

SHE sat up, shaking the sleep out of her eyes. "Where is everybody?"

"They're congregated in the kitchen, popping corn," Tom told her. "It's eight o'clock. Your father's talking about wanting supper."

"Supper!" Gypsy cried, appalled. "We only left the table a moment ago."

"You've lost count," Tom fibed. He pulled her to her feet.

Arm in arm, they joined the group in the kitchen. Beatrice had her red silk frock covered by a tentlike apron. She was slicing bread. Mr. Morell withdrew his head from the icebox door.

"We're scrambling for supper," he told his eldest daughter. "Come and help."

Gypsy said she couldn't eat a bite. She felt like a Strasbourg goose already. But when at last the impromptu feast was spread, she found herself nibbling at bits of things. A wing of the ravaged bird, a buttered roll.

"Oh, this hot tea is heaven, Mums! I always forget how much I love tea."

Cousin Lou beamed. "Try some of this fruit cake, Gypsy. It's Grand Aunt Mildred's recipe."

Gypsy laughed helplessly. This was Christmas, after all. She would go back to bread and milk on the morrow to make up her dietary sins.

At 10 o'clock she and Tom pulled themselves and their various belongings together.

"Night, Mums. Such a good day, darling. 'Night, Daddy. Remember you're all coming to my place next week."

"Sunday, yes," Mrs. Morell said comfortably. "I declare, I think it's too much for you, Gypsy. Better let it go."

"Nonsense. I'll expect you." There were kisses all around and then the door closed and she and Tom were in the little car together.

"Brr!" Gypsy held her fur collar high. The wind was bitter now, sweeping across the flats.

Tom tucked the robe in around her. If only he'd been able to buy her that fur coat! Maybe next year...

Gypsy pushed the thought of Saturday far back in her mind. She'd have to make some excuse to Tom for not meeting him that afternoon. What should she say? She hated lies, but this was one which had to be told.

(To Be Continued)

Flapper Fanny Says



Girls good at a number of things are the ones who count.

OUT OUR WAY



OUR BOARDING HOUSE



SALESMAN SAM



BOOTS AND HER BUDDIES



WASH TUBBS



FRECKLES AND HIS FRIENDS



THE NEWFANGLES—MOM'N POP



By Small

By Martin

By Crane

By Blosser

By Cowan