

# Married Flirts

MABEL McELLIOTT  
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GYPSY MOOREL was a woman who was married on the same day as LILA ROYALING and DENISE BLISS, but while Lila lives in luxury Gypsy has to struggle to keep expenses within Tom's income.

After Gypsy's son is born her days become a dreary round of caring for him and caring for her home. Tom is frequently away from home evenings and Gypsy suspects he is interested in VERA GRAY who works in the same office.

Lila confides to Gypsy that she intends to divorce Derek and marry MARK BROUGHTON, a rich and slick fellow.

Gypsy's father is seriously injured in a motor accident, but recovers.

Lila divorces Derek. She gives a dinner party which Gypsy and HUNT GIBSON are guests. Derek arrives, uninvited. He has been drinking and falls from the terrace to the street.

Meanwhile Tom has gone out of town on a business trip and Vera takes the same train.

NOW GO ON WITH THE STORY

What was she saying? He stiffened, tried to carry it off with a laugh.

"Your imagination is working overtime, my dear. I'm perfectly happy."

"Ah, but you've changed so. You're not the boy I used to know! You're so serious... you seem to have so much responsibility. It's not right."

Tom laughed openly at this. "You mean I've grown up? Well, I should hope I had. It was about time."

She shook her head. "No, that's not it. I—that girl isn't the one for you, dear. It was I—you and I were meant for each other."

"What appalling creature women were! Once they got a notion into their heads, there was no dislodging it."

"You and I go separate ways now, Vera. I don't like you soberly. We can be friends, of course."

She interrupted him. "Ah, but that's exactly it! We can't. We aren't any more. That's what hurts."

The whole thing was absurd and Tom was suddenly weary of it. He put out his hand.

"We'll talk about this some other time," he said. "It's all pretty foolish. You're tired and overstrained. I don't know how this all started. She sat up, eyes flashing, bosom heaving. "Well, I do, Tom Weaver. There's something too big here for us to ignore. It's sweeping both of us into—into—" she groped for a word.

Tom groaned inwardly. This was what his drifting had brought him to, his casual luncheons and conferences. He had found her attractive; he had enjoyed her companionship. Now what?

Gently he said, "I love Gypsy. There's no getting away from that."

"Yes, but..."

"There isn't any 'but' in my feeling for my wife. Tom told her, feeling like a prig and not enjoying it."

"Your wife doesn't understand you, darling, and you know it."

"Oh, rats! Tom grinned but she was not to be turned aside thus."

CHAPTER XI

VERA said, "I'm afraid it's sprained." She said, "It's terribly stupid of me. That tricky ankle..." She smiled wistfully and bravely at the young man beside her on the marble steps of the great station. The young man wore an anxious expression.

"The thing to do is to get you to a taxi as quickly as possible," he told her.

"I'm frightfully sorry," Vera said in a small voice. He was half carrying her up the stairs now. People turned to look at them, the limping tall girl and the handsome fair young man with the do-or-die expression.

"Nonsense." He tried to inject some heartiness into his voice. "You didn't do it on purpose."

"Tommy, you're a darling!" As he seated himself beside her in the taxi she turned to him impulsively. Almost before he knew what was happening a pair of warm lips were pressed to his.

"I—I shouldn't have done that!" She was covering in her corner now and she looked as though she were about to weep.

"It—it just happened." Her lip quivered.

Tom wore the slightly bewildered expression of a man who feels the situation is getting decidedly out of hand.

"I'm so—so awfully fond of you, Tom. You know that." The girl's voice went on confidentially, "I was just grateful to you, you see."

"Sure, of course, I understand." He mumbled the words.

"Then it's all right?"

"Perfectly all right." Did all men feel such fools when they got them selves into a hole, Tom wondered.

"Now you mustn't bother about poor little me," Vera murmured when the cab drew up, with a screech of brakes, at the brownstone house on a side street. She gave him a sidelong glance in which coquetry and exasperation were oddly mingled. "I've kept you too long already."

Tom made the expected gallant denial. As Vera got slowly out of the cab her mouth twisted in a grimace of pain. That settled it. She would have to be helped up the stairs—all the way to her apartment, in fact. Three flights up.

She had made the place charming and comfortable with deep chairs and soft cushions. There were one or two nice prints in black frames and there were rose colored curtains. Into one of the chintz-covered chairs the girl now lowered her fragrant person, smiling whimsically at the man beside her.

"Thanks awfully. I don't know why you're so good to me."

Tom towered over her. "Sure I can't get you anything before I go? Witch hazel from the drug store? Anything?"

"Never mind." Her tone dripped self pity. "You're anxious to be off. I'll manage. Only..."

"Only what?" Common courtesy alone demanded that he play up to her.

"If I could just have a teeny drink!" Her large eyes interrogated him swiftly. "Everything's in the icebox—all but the applejack which you'll see in a green bottle on the kitchen shelf."

He blundered into the small square of kitchen and presently the tinkle of ice could be heard. When he emerged there were two tall frosted glasses on a small tray.

"You do yourself pretty well here," he said, reluctantly admiring.

"Well, I have to," she sighed. "There's nobody to worry about poor little me. Never got you up here before, Tommy lamb. It took a sprained ankle to do it."

He glanced at her suspiciously but her expression was so guileless that he cursed himself for a churlish fool.

"Well, do sit down and have your drink, anyhow," she cooed. "Claret?" She pushed a shagreen box toward him and Tom stretched his long legs, relaxing in a deep chair. For the first time he realized how tired he was.

They talked. Although the incident in the taxi was not again referred to, it hung, palpable as air, between them. Tom had a startled memory of fresh, warm, eager lips on his own. The girl's curved smile, the intonations of her voice, indicated she had not forgotten. The air was electric.

At last he glanced at his watch. Good Lord, I had no idea. It's springing to his feet. It was 10 minutes to 12. Gypsy would have been home long since. She had planned to leave early. What was he thinking of?

"Don't go, Tommy," Vera said, putting a silken hand on his arm. "Don't! It's been so nice. I don't know when I shall get you to myself again."

"Sorry, but I'm afraid I must."

HER cheeks were flushed and her eyes bright. "You mustn't," she said stubbornly. "I've been wanting to talk to you for ages something important."

"Well, shoot."

"You're not happy, Tom, dear. I can see that. I—I'm devoted to you. I'd give the world to make you happy."

CHAPTER XII

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## OUT OUR WAY

By J. R. Williams



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By Ahern



## SALESMAN SAM

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## BOOTS AND HER BUDDIES

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## WASH TUBBS

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## FRECKLES AND HIS FRIENDS

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## Flapper Fanny Says

