

## THE DAILY NOVELLETTE

## Twin Cottages and Parakeets

The two cottages were exactly alike. Each had a front porch with a vine-covered trellis, and each had a bay window on the side, one facing east, the other west. They stood side by side. The neighbors called them the Twin Cottages. They were connected by a narrow passage extending from the west side of one to the east side of the other.

But the tenants of these cottages were not neighborly. Mrs. Goodwin, of the east bay window, and Mr. Goodwin, of the west bay window, never spoke to each other. The brothers had built these houses, had begun their married life together, but their wives had quarreled, years ago, so now Mr. Avery Goodwin and Mr. George Goodwin lived each alone, across the old green lane.

As fate would have it, Miss Nathalie Goodwin came to spend a summer vacation with her uncle.

"Isn't it funny, Uncle Avery?" she asked. "Mrs. Goodwin's nephew is spending his vacation with her."

"It doesn't touch my sense of humor," Uncle Avery said coldly.

"We met on the sidewalk in front," Nathalie went on. "and we really had

nothing to speak, though, of course, we're not cousins."

"Certainly not," with emphasis.

"His name is Donald Prior, and he's a footwalker for Stebbins and Porter, but he wants to be an artist. He has a vacation here now, in full season, and he's painting for all his worth."

"Humph! I should think he gave you his whole history!"

"Perhaps I was to blame," Nathalie confessed with a slight blush. "I was so interested that I asked him one or two questions."

"Well, you have a complete righting-up right. You won't need to ask any more."

Nathalie was a little afraid of her stern uncle. She decided to avoid meeting Donald and give her attention to making the west cottage more habitable.

"Uncle," she asked one morning, "who owns that connecting passage?"

"It belongs to both of us."

"What is there in it?"

"Rats and spiders, probably."

"Does Mrs. Goodwin go in?"

"I don't know where she goes. Probably not."

"If there are spiders," Nathalie pursued, twisting a duster, "I ought to go in."

Her uncle laughed. "Aren't you satisfied with making the cottage 'neat and homelike' without attacking the passage?"

Nathalie did not reply. Curiosity was prompting this daughter of Eve. An hour later she slipped the rusty bolt and, dustpan in hand, ente of the passage, shuddering a little in anticipation of the spiders.

"My word," she cried. "Donald Prior has painted this for a studio."

Several mounted canvases were hatted against the walls, and one picture, not quite finished, stood upon an easel. The pink color in Nathalie's cheeks deepened as she studied the picture, her fingers escaping from a blue dust cap that accentuated the deeper blue of her eyes.

"What's she breathing?" she asked.

A brief slip, the east door opened, and the doorway framed the stately figure and tanned face of Donald Prior.

"Hello!" he exclaimed.

Nathalie blushed and held out the trembling dustpan. "I came here to look for spiders," she faltered.

"They don't apologize. We have equal rights, I suppose," glancing around with an infusion of point tubes and brushes. "My aunt doesn't like a bit of dust."

"Doesn't she? I wish my uncle didn't!"

He laughed. "So I paint here."

"But you have painted me."

"I beg your pardon for attacking that," he blushed. "I am sorry. I had everything I needed except a model."

"I guess you have succeeded, only you have battered me."

"Blattered you," he could do that.

I'd give up floorwalking altogether and stick to painting."

"But there is one thing I don't understand—how did you get a chance to paint me at all? I never saw you at the window, never dreamed of your uncle's at breakfast. I'd appear to him with hot pancakes in a covered dish. He wouldn't hear me?"

Donald laughed. "Do you notice the mirror on the opposite wall? If a young lady happened to be sitting under the tree on her side of the lawn, she might cast a reflection that a painter could see perfectly while keeping out of range of the window."

"Well, it seem too much like a fairy story if I write that Mr. Goodwin's Easter Bonnet!"

"Oh!" said Nathalie wistfully. "I'll tell you what I'll do. Do you think I'm a real venture? And when your uncle's at breakfast I'll appear to him with hot pancakes in a covered dish, so that the young man has given up floorwalking and is giving his whole attention to art, and that Nathalie has a permanent position as model for the artist?"

Donald studied the mirror and the kit bag and the back yard reflected in it for a moment.

"How odd!" Then she turned for a critical inspection of the portrait on the easel.

"The wrist is good," she decided. "But I never wear that kind of shoes, and the skirt is too long. I don't look much like a fashion plate," with a little smile.

"Heaven forbid!" ejaculated the artist fervently.

"I wish I had worn my mouse gown instead of that old white thing," she went on. "That has a bolero effect and hand-embroidered panels on the skirt."

"Don't you think you may be getting a little thin and wearing the mouse gown?" he said, like all things to get her off the subject. "If you would turn your garden chair a little, I would let the full face instead of the profile."

"Oh, no. My uncle wouldn't approve. It would be quite wrong now I know. I would be quite wrong now I know. In the interest of art," he urged. "I'm tremendously anxious to get that bolero effect."

"You're just making fun. I don't believe you know a bolero from a shoulder cape."

"I am ignorant," he acknowledged. "I want so much to learn."

Nathalie put on her little air or dignified look. "I must go back to my uncle. Isn't he well?"

"No, I feel anxious about him."

"Really? What seems to be the matter?"

"General trouble. He has no appetite. His health course in domestic sciences, but with the things I make—knock-knocks. He is painting some old-fashioned cooking panses and things."

"Is that so?" Now, my aunt can cook for the immortal gods."

Nathalie glistened at the little, strong girl, and did not comfort him.

"She does on the old-fashioned cookery. I think we'll be having pancakes for breakfast."

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