

# A BACHELOR HUSBAND

By RUBY M. AYRES  
Author of "Richard Chatterton," Etc.  
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"NOBODY will hear us here," she said. "I think—" But Mrs. Heriot insisted, and Marie led the way into the library, which had been turned into a sort of smoking room for Chris since their marriage.

Mrs. Heriot shut the door carefully, then, turning, she asked with dramatic intensity: "Mrs. Lawless, who is this Miss Webber?"

Marie stared at her.

"Dorothy Webber? She is my friend; we were at school together."

"My poor child! If you think she is your friend you are being dreadfully deceived—dreadfully."

"I don't know what you mean."

Mrs. Heriot dabbed her eyes to wipe away imaginary tears.

"I hate to see people deceived," she said. "I hate people who make scandal and mischief. I am only telling you for your own sake and because you and I have always been friends; but rest easy—down on the golf links—"

Marie broke in with pale lips: "Mrs. Heriot, I would much rather you said no more. It is of no interest to me—I beg of you, please..."

But Mrs. Heriot was enjoying herself too much to stop. She had always disliked Marie, and she hated Dorothy because she had appeared to be on more friendly terms with Chris than she herself. She went on, refusing to be silenced.

"You ought to turn her out of the house! She is a false friend! Why, I saw her—and my sister saw her—with your husband's arms round her! Crying in his arms! I hate having to tell you, but I thought, and my sister thought, that it was only right that you should know. She broke off, looking at Marie's stony face with faintly malicious eyes. "Men are so weak, poor dears; how can one blame them?" she went on. "It's the women, with their subtle cleverness. She did not add that she had tried all her own wiles on Chris with humiliating failure."

"I am so sorry for you," she pursued softly, "but you should really insist that she leave the house."

Marie walked past her and opened the door.

"Please go," she said.

"That Mrs. Lawless—"

"Please go," Marie said again.

"Oh, well, of course, if you wish it!" Mrs. Heriot passed her jauntily and went out into the hall, just as Chris opened the front door and came in.

Mrs. Heriot smiled and held out her hand.

"It was so afraid I should have to run away without seeing you," she said. "We have had such a delightful afternoon. Where have you been, you bad man?"

Chris made some vague answer. His eyes had gone past her to where his wife stood at the study door. She was very pale, but quite self-possessed, and she even smiled faintly as she met his eyes.

"Mrs. Heriot is just going," she said clearly. "Perhaps you will see her out, Chris."

She went back to the library, and stood staring before her with blank eyes. She had always hated Mrs. Heriot, and distrusted her, but something told her that this time, at all events, the widow had spoken the truth. The facts seemed to fit so completely into the chain of last night's events—Dorothy's tears, Chris's occupation, and her own instinctive feeling that all was not right.

She heard Chris close the front door and come into the room behind her, and she forced herself to turn.

"Dorothy and Aunt Madge are in the drawing-room," she said stiffly. He barred the way when she would have passed him.

"Well, there is no hurry to join them, is there? How did you get on at the bazaar this afternoon?"

"We only started a little while. We had our fortunes told."

"Silly child! What did they tell you?"

"Oh... lots of things! Nothing that I believe, though."

She stood apathetically with her arm round her. She longed to tear herself from him, but she was afraid that once she gave way to the storm of passionate anger that was rending her she would never be able to control herself.

"I was sorry afterward that I did not come with you," Chris said. "Frankly, I wouldn't come out. He's packing—his off the day after tomorrow."

"The day after tomorrow?"

"Yes—something has happened to make him change his mind. I suppose, he's going, anyway."

Marie's heart felt like a stone, though every nerve in her body was throbbing and burning at feverish point. Feathers was going! After tomorrow she would not be able to get to him, no matter how passionately she longed to do so.

This man whose arms were about her cared nothing for her. He had lied to her, and pretended and deceived her. She felt that she hated him.

"What's the matter, Marie Celeste?" Chris asked, abruptly. "Aren't you well? You look soiling."

"Do I? It's nothing; I'm quite well." She moved past him, and he made an effort to stop her, but she knew that his eyes were following her as she went upstairs.

What did she mean to do? She did not know. Possible and impossible she thought she would tell Chris that she had found out about Dorothy—not that she would not tell him, would she dare? She did not know.

Her whole being was in the throes of some new, strange passion.

Perhaps even up in Scotland he had made love to Dorothy, and that was why he had stayed so long. Perhaps London, and that was why she was coming home! Marie bit her lips, but she would not even ask her to the house! Marie bit her lips, but she would not even ask her to the house! Marie bit her lips, but she would not even ask her to the house!

"Marie, I've got to go home." She gave her the message to read without another word.

Marie took it mechanically, but the words danced meaninglessly before her eyes.

"Ronnie died this morning. Come at once."

Ronnie was Dorothy's brother, she knew. She looked at the girl's white face and quivering lips, but she felt no pity for her.

"I'm sorry—so sorry," she said, but the words were meaningless.

She went with Dorothy to her room for the car and told Miss Chester.

"Some one must go with her; she ought not to travel alone," the old lady said, in distress. "Surely Chris will go with her."

Marie's face burned. Oh, yes, there was no doubt Chris would go—would he dare to go. She heard Miss Chester

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make the suggestion to him, and held her breath while she waited for him to answer.

If he agreed she would know that he was guilty. If he refused there would be just a hope that Mrs. Heriot had lied.

But Chris turned to her.

"Would you like me to go, Marie?" She hated him, because he left it for her to settle. She could not trust herself to look at him.

"Aunt Madge thinks some one should go, and I can't," she said. He agreed hastily.

"Of course, you can't; I will go, if you wish it. I shall be able to get back till tomorrow," he said. "It will be too late to catch a train back tonight."

Marie did not answer, and he went away. She gave him no chance to say good-bye to her. He kissed her cheek hurriedly before he followed Dorothy to the waiting car, and he looked back anxiously as he closed the door.

"I'll be back as soon as possible tomorrow," he said.

Marie went back to Miss Chester without answering.

"That poor child," the old lady said sadly. "What a trouble for her! Did you know the brother, Marie?"

"I saw him once. He was a nice boy," Marie said apathetically. She could remember Ronnie Webber well. He had had a snub, freckled nose and twinkling eyes.

It seemed impossible that he could be dead. She wished she could feel more sorry.

The evening seemed interminable.

"Sit down and read a book, child," Miss Chester said once. "Don't wander about the house like that! I know you must be upset, but it's no use taking trouble for much to heart."

Marie looked at her, hardly listening.

"I think I'll ring Mr. Dakers up," she said.

Miss Chester's eyes grew anxious.

"I should not, my dear," she said. "Chris told me that he was very busy packing. He is going away the day after tomorrow."

"I know; but I should like to see him before he goes."

She rang Feathers up, but he was out and not expected in till late. Fate seemed against her at every turn.

"I must see him again; I must!" she told herself feverishly as she went to bed. She sat at the open window for a long time looking into the darkness. Another forty hours, and he would be miles away. She thought of all the pictures she had seen of Florence and Venice, and wondered what it would be like to visit them with the man one loved.

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## THE GUMPS—The Gibraltar of Finance

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I COULDN'T HELP BUY CONNECT IT WITH YOUR LIFE—YOU REMIND ME OF SOME HUGE ROCK IN THE SEAOE INDUSTRY AND COMMERCE—TOWERING ABOVE ALL ELSE—THE GIBRALTAR OF FINANCE ON WHICH THE WAVES OF COMPETITION AND AMBITION WINDSWEEP AND MAD STRIKE—ONLY TO BE BEATEN BACK INTO BUBBLES AND FOAM

AND THEN I WONDER IF YOU ARE SINCERE—DO YOU REMEMBER THE NIGHT AT THE BLACK CAT—AT BILL DEWEY'S PARTY? WHEN YOU DREW MY PICTURE ON MY FAN? AND INSCRIBED IT—MY HEAVEN EYES? NO MATTER WHAT THE FUTURE MAY BRING FORTH THAT NIGHT WILL ALWAYS BE ONE OF THE TENDEREST MEMORIES OF MY LIFE

AND DO YOU REMEMBER? I'LL BET YOU DON'T—WHEN YOU SCOLDED ME FOR DANCING WITH CHARLEY THOMPSON? YOU KNOW I MADE BELIEVE I WAS HURT—BUT I REALLY LIKED THE THOUGHT THAT YOU JUST MIGHT BE JEALOUS—YOU GREAT BIG WONDERFUL MAN OF DESTINY—AND I AM WONDERING—IF WAY DOWN DEEP IN YOUR HEART YOU ARE SINCERE OR WHETHER IT IS JUST A PASSING FANCY—ANY HOW—I AM GOING TO SIGN MYSELF—YOUR HEAVEN EYES

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GOOD

BOSS, LOOK HOW NICE MAGGIE WAXED THE FLOORS!

## By Sidney Smith

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