

Beware Of Bachelors

SYNOPSIS

Dr. Davis and his wife, May, have been quarreling. Davis is jealous of Beranger-de Brie, a perfume manufacturer, and May is jealous of Myra Pfeffer, an artist. They have just made up when Davis receives a supposedly professional call and finds himself delegated to take Myra home from a party because she pretends illness. On opening her apartment door he thoughtlessly pockets the key. May, becoming suspicious, follows him. Angry, she gets Beranger and they go to a cabaret. Davis finally locates May and once more they are reconciled. They start for home only to find Myra in the doctor's car, demanding her key. May threatens divorce.

CHAPTER XIII—Continued

The streets were dark and silent, save for an occasional truck rumbly on its way downtown. The road was clear before her. There were no traffic lights to hinder her. She raced past the Ritze and on towards home. She'd show Ed Davis that he couldn't make a fool of her. Having that woman waiting there in the car was going just one step too far. She'd see her lawyer the first thing in the morning.

She drew up at last in front of the apartment house where she and



She held the picture.

Ed had established their home. It was a little depressing to think that this would be the last time she would ever stop in front of it. And their married life had been so short. But she wouldn't stand for any such treatment from any man, she told herself firmly. She jumped out of the car. The sound of a voice caught her ear. She turned to face Beranger.

"Why, Mr. de Brie!" she exclaimed. "How on earth did you ever get there?"

"I was hiding from the doctor," Beranger explained. "I must have gone to sleep, because the first thing I knew you were in the car and I couldn't get out again."

"I'm leaving my husband," May informed her admirer quickly. "I'm getting my things now."

"Oh, my dear!" Beranger exclaimed. "I'm so happy. You never did belong to such an uncouth creature—you, so lovely—so charming—so—so—understanding!"

May smiled. "Well, I've got to get some overnight things—and quickly. If you want to wait I'll run you downtown as far as the Ritze. I'm going to stay there. But I've got to rush. Wait here for me. I'll be right down."

"All right," Beranger called after her departing figure and settled himself in the car.

May hurried through the long marble corridor and roused the sleepy-eyed elevator boy. Once on her own floor she sought the apartment, unlocked the door and went on into the bedroom. She snatched an overnight bag from a shelf in the closet and began packing her things. She rummaged through the chiffonier and found a pajama suit and a dressing gown. She ran into the bathroom and seized her toilet articles, throwing them into the bag. She went back into the bedroom and looked about to see if anything had escaped her that she might need.

Her eyes lighted on a picture of her husband propped up on the dressing table. She looked at it and then went over and picked it up. She started to put it in the bag. There wasn't any reason why she shouldn't have a picture of Ed, even though she was going to divorce him. But what did she want a picture of him for when she never wanted to see him again. She set the picture back in place. She turned again and looked at it. She picked it up again. Should she take it—shouldn't she? Suddenly she threw the photograph into the bag. She was wasting time and she didn't want to meet Ed here. She picked up the bag and hurried out into the hall, slamming the door behind her.

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CHAPTER XIII—Continued

"You get out of here quick, and if ever I catch you meddling in my affairs again there's going to be trouble." He watched the effect of his words on Myra.

The girl stared at him in amazement. "Well, I must say, Dr. Davis," she began coquily.

"I don't care what you must say," Davis retorted. "You get out and mighty quick!"

"Well, you're certainly no gentleman," Myra jumped out of the car and stamped her foot.

"Will you kindly get out of my sight before I forget what little

manners I have left?" Davis threatened.

"I certainly shall," Myra turned on her heel and went flying up the street.

"Well, that's that," Davis snorted. He got into his car and went rolling slowly over the asphalt pavements.

Would May really carry out her threats, he wondered. Had she actually meant that she would try to get a divorce? The whole thing was absurd. He'd have to talk her out of it in some way. Did she really mean to go to the Ritze or was that just a gesture—a gesture to make him angry? Surely May couldn't have meant it. She'd probably be home, waiting for him. Oh, there'd be another quarrel, no doubt, but he'd try to make it up in some way.

The thought of May at home sent him bowling along through the empty streets. At the corner of the apartment house he turned off and ran the car around into the garage. So certain he was that everything would be all right that he did not ask the garage man whether his wife had brought her car in or not. He jumped out and hurried to the house as quickly as possible.

In the elevator he hurried to the boy. "Has Mrs. Davis come in?" he questioned.

"Yes, sir," the boy informed him. "She come in, but she's gone out again."

"Gone out again!" Davis stopped suddenly. No use letting the boy know anything about this. "Oh, yes, I phoned her—have to be out on a case tonight myself."

"Yes, sir," the boy stopped the car and let the doctor out at his floor.

Davis hurried down the hallway and into his apartment. He went on into the bedroom. He could see the signs of May's hurried departure. Doors open, the light still on, some clothes thrown across a chair-back, her toilet articles missing from the dresser. He groaned.

Finally he went into the living room, switched on the main light there and looked about. He paused, scratching his head meditatively. What to do now. May had evidently carried out her threat. He frowned. Then he went over and poured out a large drink of Scotch from the decanter on the console table.

He lit a cigarette and perched himself on the arm of the lounge, thinking. Suddenly he jumped up, crunched on the cigarette, re-filled his flask, returned to the bedroom and began throwing his pajamas

and toilet articles into a small satchel.

He hurried out to the elevator, rang, and waited impatiently for the lift to ascend.

"If Mrs. Davis telephones," he informed the boy on duty, "tell her that I'll be back tomorrow—that I'll try to get in touch with her during the day."

"Yes, sir," the boy returned. Davis went out into the street, rounded the corner, and hailed a passing cab.

CHAPTER XIV

"The Ritze Hotel," Davis directed the taxi driver curtly and stepped into the machine.

Once more the doctor was headed for downtown, but this time not in the mood in which he had started before. He was heartsick, furious, sorry for himself, all at once. May hadn't been very fair, treating him the way she had. She might at least have believed him. He was telling the truth all the time. It was a sad, sad world. He took out his refilled flask and tried the effects of another drink of whisky.

Didn't do any good, liquor didn't, he muttered to himself. Only sometimes it made you forget your troubles. And he had plenty to forget. May could have listened to him, anyhow. She didn't need to tear off that way without allowing him one word. It wasn't at all kind of her. But nobody ever was kind. Here he had tried to do everything; he could—tried to make up—spoke first—swallowed his pride—everything. Everybody was against him. He took another swallow of Scotch and put the flask back into his pocket.

And he had thought Joe Babbitt was a friend of his. Joe had got him into all this trouble, and now Joe wouldn't help him out of it. Ed May was going to divorce him. No one cared anything about him. If he died right now there wouldn't be anybody who'd feel sorry about it. May wouldn't even know. And if she did know, she probably wouldn't care. It was a sad, sad world.

"Do you want out here?" the voice of the taxi driver broke into Davis's meditations.

Davis looked out and saw the Ritze in front of him. "Oh, yes—sure." He opened the door and lurched just a trifle unsteadily into the street. The porter picked up his bag. "How much?" he demanded, trying to read the meter.

"Sixty cents," the driver responded.

Davis handed the man a dollar bill. "S all right." He waved away the change and followed the porter.

"Do you want a room, sir?" the man was asking him.

"Yes," Davis answered moodily. "Wanna room—don't care what."

The porter grinned and led the way to the desk. Davis scribbled his name on the register without more ado, and addressed the clerk.

"Wanna room with bath—beautiful room—best room in th' house," he told the clerk.

"Sorry, sir," the clerk informed him. "We've got a convention here, and we're all full up. I'll see what I can do, though."

He consulted the room files. "No, there isn't a room with bath left in the house. I can give you a room, however—a nice, outside room, if that'll do."

"Sure, I don't care—any room," Davis nodded.

"Front!" the clerk tapped the bell on his desk and the bellhop came running. "Show the gentleman to Number 814," he directed.

"Yes, sir. Right this way, sir," the bellhop started across to the elevators, followed by Ed, trying to maintain his dignity and walk a straight line.

Up they went, and then down the long corridor where May had preceded them only a short time before. The boy unlocked the door of Number 814 and went into the room, followed by Ed. He switched on the light, threw up the window, drew the blinds and laid the key on the dresser.

"Anything else, sir?" he asked.

"Nope, that's all—oh, yes, bring me some Rockite Water an' some cracked ice," he ordered.

"Yes, sir, thank you, sir," the boy hurried out, closing the door.

Davis looked around the room, examining it. He took his flask out of his pocket and set it on the bedside table. Then he opened his bag and began to unpack his belongings.

In the room, separated from Davis by the white tiled bathroom, stood May, her negligee thrown about her shoulders, taking her belongings out of her overnight bag. Among them was the picture of Davis. She held it up, looked at it, and then two tears came into her eyes. It was terrible—terrible to think that she was going to divorce him—never to see him again. She set the photograph carefully on the dresser, regarded it tenderly. Ed—her Ed—and to think it had come to this.

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CHAPTER XIV—Continued

It was so lonely there in the hotel room all by herself. Terribly lonely. But she'd have to get used to being lonely—that is if she really divorced Ed. She sighed and turned to her unpacking. She removed her toilet articles and took them into the bathroom, depositing them on the glass shelf above the gleaming white hand basin, and returned to the bedroom, closing the door.

In his room Davis was laying out his belongings and stood contemplating them with a gravity that seemed illly suited to their portent. He wandered uncomfort-



The maid turned down the spread.

ably about the room and then began removing his coat and vest. He caught sight of his shaving articles and then remembered that there was no bath to his room and he'd have to go out in the morning to get a shave. It seemed like adding insult to injury.

Then his eyes lighted on a door from beneath which came a slender streak of light. Perhaps that was a bath. He went over and knelt down, applying his eye to the keyhole. It was a bath, but how to get into it? The key to the room door—that might help. He searched and found it where the bellhop had deposited it. He tried it in the lock. It fitted. He turned it. The key worked. The door swung open. Now he had a bath.

He returned and picked up his shaving articles and carried them into the bathroom. He stared, frowning, at the other articles laid but there. A perfume bottle met his gaze. He picked it up and smelt it. The odor brought back some remembrance that was far from pleasant. He pulled out the stopper and calmly poured the liquid down the sink. The other articles he carefully seized and flung them out of the window and then, equally carefully, deposited his things and returned to his room, closing the door.

A knock at his bedroom door. Davis called out, "Come in."

A chambermaid entered, a bundle of towels in her arm. "Is there anything you'd like, sir?" She raised a pair of deep blue eyes and smiled faintly. "I brought some fresh towels." She arranged her burden over a chair back.

Davis looked at this new arrival with appreciative eyes. Fluffy yellow hair peeped from beneath the crisp, white cap. A Cupid's bow mouth with a little dimple at either corner held an alluring charm.

"You're—you're very kind," Davis smiled in answer. And at that moment she did indeed seem very kind—kinder than anyone had been for a long time. She was interested in his welfare, his comfort. No one else was.

"Oh, thank you, sir," she smiled and was gone.

Davis started after her, but as the door closed in his face he turned back and began pacing up and down moodily. He was lonesome—terribly lonesome. It was awful to be alone in a hotel room. And nobody cared whether he was alone or not. Another knock in-

terrupted his soliloquy. He turned eager eyes towards the door. The bellhop entered with the soda and ice.

"All right, put it over there," Davis indicated the bedside table. He tipped the departing boy and then mixed himself a highball. May, seated in front of her writing desk, was chewing the end of a pen. Should she or shouldn't she write to Ed? Perhaps she had been too hasty after all. Perhaps she had misjudged her husband.

It seemed such a pity to condemn him without a hearing—such a pity to give marriage so short a trial. Perhaps Ed was already sorry for everything that had happened. He might be as anxious to see her as she was to see him. Anyhow, it wouldn't hurt just to write him a little note. It was only being fair, telling him that she would give him a chance to explain. And she must be fair.

"Ed, dear," she began, and then fell to chewing the pen again. She wanted the note to sound dignified and yet friendly—after all, even though they were going to get a divorce there was no reason why they couldn't arrange it amicably. "I feel that perhaps I have been a little hasty," she wrote. "If you care to talk matters over I shall be glad to see you here at the hotel, May." She read the epistle. That sounded all right. Didn't make it seem as though she were anxious, and yet she was willing to do the right thing. She folded up the letter and put it in an envelope.

Well, she might just as well go to bed. It was a relief to have that off her mind. She picked up a jar of cold cream and impulsively gave a kiss towards Ed's picture, and then furious with herself hurried into the bathroom. Before her lay an array of shaving articles. She caught her negligee about her and looked fearfully at the door which she supposed was locked, but which she was now afraid to try lest it open. It was quite evident that there was a party next door using her bathroom. For a moment she was frightened, ready to call the room clerk, and then when she saw that all her things had disappeared she became angry. With a sweep of her hand she pushed the things off onto the floor.

She ran over to the writing desk and scribbled a note, returned to the bathroom and thrust it beneath the door, banging against the padding as she did so. Then she retreated to the safety of her room and banged the door.

May's knock brought Davis to attention. He glanced at the door, then went over and opened it, and it was then that he discovered the note. He closed the door quickly and opened the paper.

"Whoever you are, will you please stay out of my bathroom," he read. He began to chuckle. Then he crumpled up the paper and tossed it aside, and went back to his whisky-soda still smiling.

Davis was beginning to feel not only the effects of the liquor, but he was beginning to yawn deeply. He tugged at his necktie, loosened it, and began to remove both tie and collar when another knock came at his door.

"More visitors around this place," he mumbled. "All right, come in."

The pretty chambermaid entered the room. "Are you sure that you're quite comfortable?" she questioned sweetly. "There's nothing you'd like?"

Davis, puzzled by the girl's unusual interest in him, and yet pleased, smiled at her.

"Why—er—no, thank you," he answered.

"You'll be wanting to go to bed," she told him, and began turning down the spread and arranging the pillows.

"Thank you," was she being friendly, or just attending to her duties, Davis speculated. Anyhow, she took an interest in him, and the thought was comforting. He was feeling very low, indeed.

"There," she patted the pillows briskly and turned to go. "If there's anything you need, just ring." With one of her long, lingering smiles, she vanished.

In her room May was combing her hair and preparing for bed. At last she pulled up the blinds and then thoughtfully took Ed's picture from the dresser and placed it on the bedside table. She got into bed, sent a kiss towards the photograph, and switched out the light. She felt more at ease, now that she thought she would see Ed first thing in the morning. She would send the letter by messenger to his office, and she felt sure that he would come hurrying to the hotel.

For a long time she could not sleep. She tossed, trying now this side, now that. The noises of the street all seemed wafted to her room. She could hear the tread of feet through the corridors as late-comers returned to their rooms. Once she got up and tried the door to make sure it was locked, completely forgetting the bathroom door. Then she fell into a light doze.

INSTALLMENT TWENTY-FOUR