

# The Bridal Suite

Richard Connell

In a taxi that bowled up Fifth Avenue one spring morning sat a young man dressed as a bridegroom. Glossy, new top hat, braided cutaway, striped trousers, nuptial neck-tie, white gardenia in buttonhole—he had all the earmarks of a young man bound straight for the altar. Everything about him suggested orange blossoms—everything except his face. Bridegrooms the world over wear a slightly dizzy look and radiate a nervous happiness. Not he. If a passer-by had peered into the taxi as it weaved along, that passer-by would have been justified in assuming that the young man had only a second before eaten an especially large, excessively tart and particularly indigestible dill pickle.

His best friends might not have recognized James Clement Day. He did not look in the least like himself. It was not at all in character for him to contort his normally pleasant features into a scowl that made him look like a professional cream sourer in a cheese factory on his way to work. That cheerless glower was hardly the expression one expects to find on the face of a nice young man on the way to enjoy what is commonly considered one of life's happiest experiences. Jimmy Day frowned at his wrist-watch. In some twenty-five minutes it would be all over and he would be leading out of the Gothic door of St. Gerald's a Mrs. James Clement Day.

Jimmy winced. Already he felt his back being slapped, his hand wrung by congratulatory and envious friends. He could see the imposing Franklyn H. G. Chandler unbending a moment, and forgetting that he had more ancestors and skyscrapers than a centipede has ankles, and saying, "Jimmy, my boy, be good to my little girl." Then off and away in a twelve-thousand-dollar limousine (the gift of the bride's father), with rice down his neck. At this point Jimmy groaned so loudly that the taxi driver bent a suspicious cauliflower ear over his engine, thinking something was wrong with the gear shift.

Now, any man in his senses would have said that Jimmy Day was a chump to be in such a funk on his wedding day. Many a man in his place would have been dancing on the roof of the taxi, waving a joyful top hat and proclaiming himself the luckiest of mortals. For there was waiting for Jimmy at St. Gerald's, on the arm of her father, Miss Eva Chandler.

The society press stated that Miss Eva Chandler was the handsomest débutante of her year and printed pictures which conclusively proved it. Through Jimmy's mind, as the taxi bore him altarward, hurried phrases from the papers—"Queenly Daughter of Multi-millionaire—Culmination of Childhood Romance—One of the Most Important Society Events of the Year—Links Two Old and Rich Families—Bride Ardent Sportswoman and Amateur Actress of Ability—Popular Clubman and Successful Young Lawyer—Duplex Apartmenton Park Avenue—"

And the pictures! They passed in front of Jimmy's eyes in a jumble. Eva as Juno in a finishing school pageant. Eva astride her favorite Irish hunter. Eva as chairman of the drama committee of the Junior League, towering above the other débutantes. Eva at Newport. Eva at Palm Beach, with bathing suit and striped sunshade. Eva at Cannes, watching a duke play tennis. Eva at Southampton, with dogs. Eva, without dogs. Eva, serene, beautiful, days.

Jimmy Day slumped in the corner of the cab and gripped his meticulously shaved chin. He was doing a curious thing. He was doing something no young man is supposed to do on his wedding day. He was thinking.

He tried hard to shake off the state of mind that had settled on him like a dank indigo cloud that morning, at the very second he was pinning his gardenia on his lapel. Until the florist had brought the flower, Jimmy hadn't really realized that this actually was his wedding day. For weeks he'd been busy getting his work in shape so that he could go away for six weeks with Eva. His mind had been slightly numb as he hurried about, helping Eva with her shopping, getting passports, arranging for their trip to Italy, buying his own wedding outfit, doing all the orthodox, expected things. There had been a deal of feverish activity in his life and little chance for quiet reflection. Now, on the way to the church, he was doing some intense thinking.

Jimmy tried to pull himself together. Eva was all right. Having said this to himself, he kicked his shins. All right? A fine thing for a bridegroom to say of his bride! Why, she was wonderful. Magnificent. Lovely to look at. Charming. Amiable. Fond of her own way, but who isn't? Highly conventional, of course, like all the Chandlers. Again Jimmy groaned. So was he. If it weren't for the conventions, would he be there? The simple truth, Jimmy said, trying to face it with calmness and philosophy, was that he was not in love with Eva Chandler. Furthermore, he was pretty sure that she was not in love with him.

She liked him. He liked her. That was natural. They'd known each other since she was a leggy little girl and he a freckled little boy. Houses side by side in East Sixty-fifth Street. Houses near by in Southampton. Same parties. Same friends. His father had been her father's partner. Their romance (Jimmy made a face) had been predestined. Before Eva had been uncradled and Jimmy breeched the older members of both families had accepted the idea that Eva and Jimmy were to be married some day, and Eva and Jimmy had let this notion become a part of them.

They had drifted into the twenties in a semi-engaged condition, taking an ultimate marriage for granted, but never really facing what it meant. If they'd only been able to hate each other, Jimmy thought. But they never got round to it, and now the day had come and a marriage had been arranged and there were presents, and ushers and bridesmaids in pink, lavender and orchid taffeta and photographers from the rotogravures and a churchful of the right people, and Eva and Jimmy were in for it. The taxi mumbled along toward St. Gerald's.

Jimmy Day drew in his breath and let it out in one tremendous sigh. That ass, Clive Sargent! That blind, unenterprising, noble ass! Why had he run off to the jungles of Cambodia, ostensibly to dig up buried cities, but really, and quite obviously, because he was in love with Eva and was afraid she was not in love with him? Why hadn't Clive had the gumption to ask her? She'd given him every chance, the nit-wit. Probably Clive thought it wasn't sporting to come between two people engaged since their early perambulator days. Hange these gentlemanly Yale fullbacks who do the wrong thing because they think it is the right thing to do! Hang this chivalry business! Hang conventionality! Hang everything, but particularly made-to-order marriages! So thought James Clement Day, in his bridegroom regalia, as with every click of the meter he drew nearer to St. Gerald's.

Of course Eva was really in love with Clive Sargent. Only two days before, at tea, while Eva was absent-mindedly manipulating the sugar tongs, Jimmy had asked her some unimportant question. Eva had answered, "Yes, Clive dear," and had blushed and had put four lumps of sugar in his tea although she knew perfectly well Jimmy never took sugar. Jimmy remembered too how Eva had acted when Clive, without a word to anyone, had packed up and lit out to the Orient. For days she wasn't herself. It was all too clear. Also it was too late to do anything about it. Grimly Jimmy reflected that on his wedding day there was one other man as unhappy as he, and that was poor Clive Sargent. Jimmy pictured him at the moment when the bishop would be pronouncing the fatal words. Clive would doubtless be draping his six feet two inches of despair against some ruined temple and brooding blueely. Clive would be attempting to console himself by the thought that, after all, Eva Chandler wasn't the only attractive girl in the world.

Sophistry! She was the only girl for Clive, Furthermore, he was just the man for her fond of sports, big, goodnatured, good chin, good income, good egg, and tall enough to dance with her without looking absurd as Jimmy suspected that he, with his five feet seven inches, did. If Clive had only had an ounce more of self-confidence! But he hadn't. "We ought to act on our impulses," muttered Jimmy Day, and regretted that he hadn't acted on the one he had love with Eva and was afraid she was had a month before, which was to cable not in love with him? Why hadn't to Clive Sargent: Clive had the gumption to ask her? "Come home at once. Don't give up She'd given him every chance, the nitthe ship. While there's life and so wit. Probably Clive thought it wasn't forth. Faint heart and so forth. A sporting to come between two people Friend."

"Another time," Jimmy promised himself, "I'll know a wise impulse when it hits me, and I'll act on it."

Another time! There wouldn't be any other time now. Jimmy tried to face the thing like a Day and a gentleman. He'd go through with it, of course. At least, if he wasn't in love with Eva, he wasn't in love with anybody else. Didn't those marriages of convenience one read

about in French novels often turn out happily? Jimmy tried desperately to catch the coat tails of optimism, but he couldn't hold on. Meantime, St. Gerald's was two blocks away.

Jimmy did his best to muster a smile. "Must look happy, anyway," he said fiercely. "Must. They'll expect it of me." He twisted his features into a smile that served only to make him look as if he had been sipping vinegar. Down the street he could see the lofty spires of St. Gerald's. Eva was there by now. How was she feeling? She was smiling, of course. Society expects every Chandler to do his or her duty, and a Chandler always does what is expected of him or her. But her heart was not smiling. Jimmy knew. It was some nine thousand miles away in Cambodia. Brave, foolish Eva!

The thought spurred Jimmy to a sudden violent activity. He banged violently on the glass of the taxi. It halted, with a squealing of the brakes.

"Wait," ordered Jimmy. From his pocket he took a card, scribbled words on it:

"Going away. Terribly sorry, but I'm the wrong man. Right man on his way. —Jimmy."

"Here! Tell the man at the church door to give this to Mr. Chandler," he directed. He was charged with desperate animation now. He thrust the card and a ten-dollar bill into the taxi driver's gnarled hand. He slipped out of the cab. He ran down the street, away from the church. In college Jimmy had been a sprinter, but on no cinder path did he ever move so fast as that spring day when he ran down Fifth Avenue, away from his wedding. He was panting as he flung himself into a taxi headed downtown.

"Blue Moon Line Pier, North River," he gasped out to the driver. "Step on it."

That taxi driver was a hardy fellow, with, evidently, no fear where he was going to spend eternity. His taxi whisked between and around trucks and trolley cars, fluttered around corners like an intoxicated June bug, snorted through side streets and skidded up to the pier just as the sailors were beginning to play with the fat hawsers which tethered the S. S. Gigantica, newest and most vast of all liners, to her dock.

An official of the line, impressed by Jimmy's silk hat and earnestness, took him to the purser. That dignitary shook his head, politely regretful. "Not a chance, I'm afraid," he said. "Ship's full, absolutely. Every cabin taken. Very heavy traffic this time of the year, you know."

"Second class, then," said Jimmy. "Full."

"Third class."

“Fuller.”

“Need a steward or a sailor?”

The purser smiled.

“No. But the Luxora is sailing tomorrow. Very fast. We’ll beat her to Plymouth by only ten hours.”

“Must go to-day,” declared Jimmy. “Important business.”

The purser surveyed the top hat, the cutaway and the determined face.

“Well,” said the purser, “it just happens that there is one place left aboard, but I doubt if it would interest you.”

“I’ll sleep in a lifeboat, if necessary,” said Jimmy.

“The place I mean is more comfortable than that,” said the purser. “Also, considerably more expensive. It’s the bridal suite.”

“I’ll take it.”

“It costs thirty-eight hundred,” “I’ll take it,” said Jimmy, and repeated, “The bridal suite!”

The purser wondered how a man so young and so healthy could laugh so ironically.

The bridal suite on the S. S. Gigantica was somewhat larger than the average New York apartment and considerably more luxurious. It had its own drawing-room, dining-room, bedroom, two baths and even a bit of glass-enclosed deck.

“Not so bad,” remarked Jimmy. “Plenty of privacy. No need to go out on deck and maybe be asked embarrassing questions. Wonder if Eva fainted. It would be the proper thing to do. In her heart, though, she’s blessing me this minute.”

He sat down at a desk and wrote out a cablegram to Clive Sargent in Cambodia that he had thought of sending a month before. Then he rang for the steward.

“Please send this cablegram.”

“Yes, sir.”

“Is there a store aboard where they sell post cards, souvenir paper weights and possibly underwear?”

A superior smile appeared on the cockney face of the steward.

“There’s a souvenir shop, sir, and a branch of a New York department store and a French perfume shop and an English haberdashery and a pet store and a book store and a drug store and a—”

“Admirable little boat,” said Jimmy. “Suppose you look me over and then go out and get me a flock of shirts, ties, caps, suits, toothbrushes and what not.”

“Yes, sir.”

“And, steward, please have all the meals served in here.”

“Yes, sir. Shall I reserve deck chairs for you?”

“No. I don’t expect to go out on deck much.”

The steward looked knowing.

“I understand, sir. You wish to be left alone.”

“Right.”

The steward hesitated at the door. “Can I get anything for the lady, sir?”

“What lady?”

“Your wife, sir,” said the steward.

“I have no wife,” responded Jimmy. The steward twiddled the door knob. “Sorry, sir.”

“No one is with me.”

“Oh!” said the steward and vanished. Jimmy, with a gesture of finality, plucked the gardenia from his buttonhole, tossed it away, and sank into an easy-chair. The boat trembled as the giant engines started to throb. The monster’s heart was beginning to beat. Then the S. S. Gigantica pointed her white nose toward England and followed her nose.

When the steward brought Jimmy an armful of formal clothes later the wedding uniform he

had been wearing, Jimmy retired to the spacious bedroom to change. He had put on a soft blue shirt and was knotting his tie, when he heard a sound. It came from his drawing-room. Someone must be there, moving about, stealthily. Jimmy listened. It couldn't be the steward. He had just gone off to the other end of the great ship to get cigarettes for Jimmy. Cautiously Jimmy opened the door. Someone was there.

The stranger was a young man, slight, rather good-looking. His black hair was shellacked into place, in accordance with the prevailing mode, and he wore one of those liberally cut suits with the fashionable two-step trousers, so called because they are so voluminous that the wearer must take two steps before the trousers move at all.

“Well?” demanded Jimmy.

The young man swung round and made a startled noise.

“Who are you?” questioned Jimmy.

The young man was suffering from a severe cold. His voice was husky.

“Who are you?” he croaked.

“My name,” said Jimmy, “is”—he checked himself—“a matter of no importance. The point is: what are you doing in my suite?”

“Your suite?” The young man stared at Jimmy.

“Yes. My suite.”

“This is the bridal suite, isn't it?” said the young man, and there was a touch of belligerence in his hoarse voice.

“Yes.”

“Then I belong here. I engaged it.”

“The devil you did,” said Jimmy pleasantly enough. “I engaged it myself from the purser not an hour ago.”

The young man could not have looked more dismayed if Jimmy had tried suddenly to heave him through the porthole.

“Really?” he faltered. “But that can't be. I engaged the bridal suite by telephone at the

uptown office of the line just before the ship sailed.”

“Sorry,” said Jimmy. “Looks as if I’d beaten you to it. Here I am, at any rate, and here I think I’ll stay.”

“In my suite?” Jimmy was firm.

“You can’t.”

“I’d like to know why not.”

The hoarse young man looked more dismayed than ever.

“You just can’t,” he repeated. Jimmy considered.

“Do you mean you are on your honeymoon?” he asked.

Stiffly: “No.”

“Well, then, is your wife with you?”

“No.”

“Then you want the suite only for yourself?”

“Yes.”

“I’d like to be obliging,” said Jimmy, “but in the circumstance I can’t be. You’ll have to make some other arrangement.”

“But,” protested the hoarse young man, “there isn’t any other cabin left on the ship.”

Jimmy shrugged his shoulders.

“Besides,” said the hoarse young man, “I have as much right to the suite as you have. Maybe more.”

“The purser will have to decide that.”

“Then bring him here!”

“It seems to me,” said Jimmy, “that since I am in possession here, and you want to oust me,

it's up to you to get the ouster."

The hoarse young man sat down limply.

"I can't go," he said, and added, "I'm not feeling well."

A silence, during which the hoarse young man puffed nervously on a cigarette, was broken by a rap on the door of the suite. It was the purser himself, harassed and conciliatory. He was very sorry indeed. There had been a mistake, one of those unavoidable, last-minute rush mistakes. That gentleman (a bow toward Jimmy) had taken the suite at the purser's office, apparently at the identical moment when that other gentleman (a bow toward the hoarse young man) had engaged it by phone at the line's office.

Frankly, the purser admitted, he did not know what to do. He was worse off, he declared, than King Solomon in the case of the disputed infant.

Jimmy eyed the hoarse young man tentatively. He looked like a decent, well-bred chap, and, after all, it would be dull having no one to talk to for six days, and Jimmy was by nature sociable.

"I'm willing to share the suite with you," said Jimmy. "I think we should be able to stand each other for six days. Besides, there isn't anything else we can do unless we draw lots to see which of us swims back to New York."

The hoarse young man miserably twisted his steamer cap.

"I can't swim," he said dolefully.

The purser rose.

"It's settled, then," he said, beaming with relief. "Thank you, gentlemen, thank you." And he was gone.

Jimmy began affably to make the best of the situation. "I'm sure we'll both respect each other's rights. By the way, my name is Day."

The young man cleared his throat.

"Mine's Kimball," he said. His voice sounded as if he'd been eating briars.

"I was wondering," said Jimmy, who had been studying his companion's face, "if perhaps you are one of the Bob Kimballs. There was a Roger Kimball at Harvard with me."

“I’m from Chicago,” said the hoarse young man shortly.

“Really? I’ve a lot of friends in Chicago. I go there often. Where do you live there?”

“Back Bay,” said the hoarse young man.

“Back Bay? In Chicago?” said Jimmy. “I thought I knew the town well, but I don’t know that section.”

“New part of town,” said the hoarse young man. “Just named.”

“Oh,” said Jimmy.

“I hope you’ll excuse me,” said the hoarse young man. “It hurts my throat to talk.”

He took a book from a thickish pigskin bag and took himself into a corner of the sun parlor.

As Jimmy hung up his cutaway in the closet he was humming to himself, under his breath, and this was a sign that he was puzzled. For stamped on one end of the pigskin bag were the initials R. K. and beneath them the words Boston, Mass.

When he had offered to share the suite with the hoarse young man, Jimmy had acted on an impulse because he had decided that hitherto he had not been impulsive enough. He had occasion to wonder if his impulse was a wise one. Certainly the hoarse young man could not be described as a jolly roommate. He gave hoarse, monosyllabic answers to Jimmy’s attempts to start a conversation. His manner was morose and worried. When dinner time came Jimmy sought to thaw him.

“Now for dinner,” said Jimmy. “You’ll take your meals in our private dining-room, I suppose?”

“No,” said the hoarse young man, not looking up from the book.

“I see. You prefer to eat in the ship’s dining saloon.”

“No.”

“But you must eat somewhere.”

“No.”

Jimmy gave it up, and enjoyed his dinner alone.

After dinner Jimmy burrowed into a mystery story which the steward had brought from the ship's library. As he devoured a series of pleasing murders he had a distinct impression that the hoarse young man, though apparently engrossed in his own book, was covertly watching him, was stealing sidelong glances at him.

"Perhaps," thought Jimmy, "he thinks I'm an embezzler. Wonder what he is?"

Toward midnight Jimmy went to bed.

"I think I'll turn in now," he announced. On this decision the hoarse young man made no comment.

"You can have your choice of beds," said Jimmy. "Do you want the one next to the wall?"

"Doesn't matter," said the hoarse young man.

"Then we'll let the gods of chance decide," said Jimmy, flipping a coin. "Heads you take the bed near the wall, tails I do. Heads it is. Well, good night. Don't worry about disturbing me when you come in. I can sleep through a barrage."

"Good night," croaked the young man into his book.

Jimmy did not go to sleep at once. He was kept awake partly by the motion of the ship, although he didn't mind that much as he was a good sailor, and partly by his speculations about Kimball.

"Odd bird," decided Jimmy, and was almost asleep when he heard the outside door of the suite open and close again. Jimmy shrugged his shoulders. After all, it was none of his business if young Mr. Kimball went on a nocturnal prow. It was broad daylight when a sound made Jimmy's eyes fly open. Someone was entering the suite. Jimmy looked at his watch. Seven-twenty. Then at the other bed. It had not been slept in.

When Jimmy emerged, dressed, the hoarse young man was there in his chair in the corner of the sun parlor.

He answered Jimmy's "Good morning" with a nod.

"Having breakfast with me?" queried Jimmy.

“No. Thanks.”

As Jimmy spooned into his morning melon he decided that the young man did not intend to be rude. The trouble with him was, Jimmy concluded, that he was in a state of nerves. Guilty conscience, maybe? Jimmy reflected that his own conscience wasn't troubling him in the least. As he couldn't stand the silence of the suite, Jimmy boldly ventured out on deck. What if someone did recognize him?

Nobody did. Jimmy had lunch in the ship's grill, tramped a brisk four miles around the ship, and returned to the suite late in the afternoon. The hoarse young man was still in his chair, dozing.

As Jimmy opened the door the hoarse young man sprang up, stared wildly at Jimmy, then looked relieved, and sat down again.

“Wonder if it's stolen bonds?” mused Jimmy. “He looks like the type of young man one sees starting at the bottom in Wall Street, fresh from Princeton. Doesn't look as if he'd pinch bonds, though. Well, he wants to be let alone; that's clear.”

So Jimmy tried to act as if the young man didn't exist, and stayed out of the cabin as much as possible. But he could not keep from wondering about the hoarse young man, for never before had Jimmy encountered a seeming normal human being who never ate and who never went to bed.

In two days the S. S. Gigantica would poke her way into Plymouth harbor. Jimmy came into the suite at dinner time, in high spirits. Nobody on board had recognized him as the fugitive bridegroom, a description he knew the more lurid of the papers would surely apply to him. In his hand was a fresh copy of the Ocean Liar, the daily newspaper printed on the ship.

“Like to see it?” he said, offering it to the hoarse young man.

A raspy “Thanks.”

Livid the hoarse young man glanced over the four-page paper. Then Jimmy heard him gasp, saw his hands, his whole body stiffen, and heard a sound that was half sob come from him.

“Anything wrong?” asked Jimmy.

“No.”

“You're a poor actor, young Mr. Kimball,” said Jimmy, but not aloud.

After he had retired, Jimmy heard the hoarse young man steal out on his nightly errand. Every night he had done it. Jimmy liked that, to return late in the morning. Jimmy was puzzling over the singular conduct of the hoarse young man, when he became aware that there was a curious silence. The great engines of the liner had ceased to throb. As it didn't much matter to Jimmy whether he reached England on time, or if for weeks late, he closed his eyes and was soon dreaming.

Something had happened to the hoarse young man. Jimmy noticed it at once when he emerged from the bedroom to have his breakfast. His companion was huddled in a corner of the sun parlor, his face positively haggard. He lit cigarette after cigarette, puffed jerkily for a second, threw the cigarette away. His hands, Jimmy noted, were trembling. He replied to Jimmy's morning greeting with a hasty bob of his head. As Jimmy drank his coffee he was aware that the eyes of the hoarse young man were on him.

Unexpectedly young Kimball addressed him.

"We stopped last night," he said.

"Yes. What was the matter?"

"Engine trouble," the steward said."

Then, "Do you think it will delay us much?"

"Can't say. It may. We don't seem to be making the speed we were yesterday."

Concern showed on Kimball's face.

"Oh, do you think so?" he said.

Jimmy glanced at the waves.

"Looks that way to me," was his verdict.

The hoarse young man paced up and down. Then he faced Jimmy again.

"Do you think," he asked, "that a boat which sailed the day after we did could overtake us?"

"Possibly. The Luxora might. She's very fast."

Jimmy saw Kimball's jaw tighten as if he were keeping back an exclamation. Then Kimball went back to his corner, picked up his book, but his head over its pages, Jimmy had a notion that the hoarse young man was not enjoying the book much, because he was holding it upside down.

It was an excellent lunch, and Jimmy was enjoying it. Kimball still stared at his book. Jimmy was playing with a peach Melba when he heard a short, stifled cry. He looked. Kimball had sprung to his feet and was looking out across the sea with wild eyes.

There, on the horizon, was a streak of white, and above it floated "black smoke."

The hoarse young man could hardly say the words.

"Do you know what ship that is?"

"The Luxora," Jimmy told him. "She will beat us to port by several hours, I heard on deck."

"Oh, dear, oh, dear!" cried the young man.

"Come, come," said Jimmy, affected by the other's patently genuine distress, "buck up. Whatever it is, don't let it worry you. Nothing is ever as bad as you think it's going to be. The only thing to do is face it like a man."

"I can't," Kimball's voice was a wail. "I'm not a man."

Jimmy's mouth and eyes opened wide.

"What!" he articulated.

"I—I—I—" Kimball's voice was choked, but it was no longer husky; it was soprano. "I'm a girl, that's what I am, and I wish I weren't or that I were dead."

"My dear young lady," was all Jimmy could say. "What the devil—"

"I'll throw myself overboard," she sobbed, and started up.

"You'll do no such thing," said Jimmy quietly, and with firm hands on her shoulders made her sit down again.

“You’ll sit right there and tell me what this is all about.”

His voice and manner seemed to steady her. She controlled her sobs. “I’ve been awful,” she said, pretending like this—sneaking out at night to sleep on piles of rope, living on fruit out of the baskets people left in their steamer chairs.”

“But why did you do it?”

“I was afraid I’d give myself away if I ate with anyone.”

“I mean,” said Jimmy, “why should you want to be a man?”

“You don’t understand. You think I’ve done a crazy, unforgivable thing.”

“To know all is to forgive all,” Jimmy quoted. “What did you do? Don’t tell me unless you want to.”

“I might as well now,” she said. She had stopped crying. “I ran away from my husband, that’s what I did.”

“It’s been done,” said Jimmy. “You can always run back home.”

“I won’t,” she cried. “I won’t.”

“You don’t love him?”

“No. I won’t marry him. That’s a novel idea.”

“He isn’t my husband,” she said, “yet. He was almost my husband. I was on my way to the church, all dressed up in a veil, and everything—”

“And I ran away. Wasn’t that a terrible thing to do?”

“Sometimes,” said Jimmy, “it’s justifiable.”

“They tried to make me marry him,” she said.

“Who?”

“Oh, family! Well?”

“I know you’ll think I’m a little fool. But what could I do? I was afraid of him. I hated him.

Sometimes Thorndike looked like a wolf.”

“Thorndike!” exclaimed Jimmy. “Don’t tell me you mean Thorndike Holt!”

“Why, yes. How did you know?”

“From your description.”

“You know him, then?”

“Yes. Very slightly.”

“Do you like him?”

“Very, very slightly.”

For the first time she smiled.

“Now you know why I ran away,” she said.

“I think I do,” said Jimmy. “And I hardly blame you.”

“But I wanted to tell the very day we were to be married. You see, I told you a lie. I am one of the Boston Kimballs. Robert’s cousin. Faith, I’m twenty. I guess I never have had much sense. Probably that’s why I became engaged to Thorndike. Thorndike was considered a great catch. He’s appallingly rich, you know.”

She thought it romantic to be engaged to a man. I blamed myself to the fact that engagements usually end in marriage. Then, ten days ago, they told me that Thorndike was going to Europe on business for a year and wanted to be married right away. I hoped for a miracle. It didn’t happen; and I found myself on the way to church. Somehow I managed to slip away, steal my brother Rob’s clothes and passport, and—well, here I am.”

“Here we are,” said Jimmy. “I’m afraid it hasn’t helped much, telling you this. Probably a man feels differently about such things.”

“Wrong, Miss Kimball,” said Jimmy solemnly, “do you realize that you are addressing a Fugitive Bridegroom?” Then he told her all about Eva and Clive and himself, and somehow they began to laugh. Faith Kimball stopped suddenly.

“It’s all very well for you to laugh, Mr. Day,” she said. “Eva will not be waiting for you, with your father, at Plymouth.”

"So you mean Thorndike Holt and your father are aboard the Luxora?"

"Yes. Oh, I might have known they'd follow me."

"But he can't force you to marry him."

"You don't know Thorndike. Just to make sure, he's brought Father with him. They'll talk the conventions and scandal and position in society to me till I have to give in. I know."

"He must love you."

"No. But he's proud. He's a collector, you see."

"So I've heard," said Jimmy dryly.

"Oh, what am I going to do?" Faith Kimball was on the brink of tears again.

Jimmy walked the drawing-room with concentrating brows.

"Look here," he began. "I'm a lawyer. My duty is to get people out of difficulties. Let me think about this."

She watched him as he thought. He stopped in his march.

"I see only one solution," he announced. "I don't know much about the laws of England, but I'm reasonably sure they frown on bigamy."

"How does that help me?"

"Well," explained Jimmy, "Thorndike Holt would hardly expect to marry you in Plymouth if, when he arrived there, you had a husband already."

"One is available."

"Who?"

"Me."

She looked at him a long time.

"That's very kind of you," she said, "but—"

Jimmy spoke earnestly.

“I’m not being kind. I’m not doing it because I want to save you, or any noble rot like that. I’m following an impulse, and something tells me it’s a wise one.”

“But you don’t know me.”

“Yes, I do. I know you well enough to fall in love with you. That doesn’t take seconds, even. I know you are beautiful, even in that outfit. You are game and have sense. You’ve proved that. What more do I need to know?”

“And I hardly know you.” Faith Kimball was smiling.

“Granted,” she said, “you’re not exactly a stranger. I’ve often heard Roger speak of you. He likes you.”

“Do you?”

She smiled.

“I have the highest respect for Roger’s opinion,” she said. “Also”—she hesitated—“I’ve seen how you reacted to a very trying situation.”

“I think,” said Jimmy, “that inasmuch as we know each other that little, really ought to know each other more, and it’s high time we started to get acquainted.”

At six that afternoon a somewhat embarrassed young man was ushered into the cabin of Captain Marlow of the S. S. Gigantic.

“I understand,” said Captain Marlow. “A captain may perform marriages.”

The sea-bronzed face beneath the gold-braided cap grinned widely.

“Yes. That’s so.”

“You could do it without telling anyone?”

“Yes.”

“In that case,” said Jimmy, “would you mind stepping down to the bridal suite right away?”

The owly-visaged dining-room steward who served a dinner for two in the bridal suite that evening said gravely that he was very sorry to have to inform the passengers that because of engine trouble the liner might be all of three days late in reaching port.

To this day the steward cannot understand why a piece of bad news should cause two gentlemen to burst into gales of hilarious laughter. His theory is that they had been drinking.

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