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"America I think you play too much. When a girl, like me, is sorry for you, you kiss for amusement."

He was conscience stricken.

"Not for amusement, Yolande. But you're kind and gentle. I'm desperate. I came here tonight expecting. . . You know what?"

Again she nodded.

"Young men in my country are very passionate. If a thing like this were to happen to them, they would go on the loose—sit in wine taverns and get drunk. I do not want you to do that. If by sacrificing myself and permitting you to kiss me—"

Mrs. Steele's voice was heard calling. They sprang apart. Yolande ran out to intercept her. Mrs. Steele wanted to know why that boy had not gone.

"He's just going, Madame."

Yolande hurried him into his coat and muffler. He urged her to meet him.

"Not behind Miss Betty's back."

Then could he write her? She denied permission.

"But see here, Yolande," he protested, "you're the only human being I have left to cling to. Isn't there some way of communicating?"

She thought of Jacques Mahu, who had been her father's orderly and was now running the Café d'Avignon in the West Fifties.

"I can't ever see you. But if you have a message, M. Mahu will pass it on."

In the darkness of the outer hall Henry reminded her, "And that other promise?"

She had intended to act with the utmost propriety. As his face neared hers, her hands went to his shoulders. Their lips touched. She forgot everything, save how cruelly he had been treated.

Next day and the next she tried to stay away from the Café d'Avignon, but late one afternoon she visited it. Long before it came in sight she was picturing its striped awnings and boxed shrubs—a speck of Provence transplanted in America. M. Mahu, neat waisted and tall, with the poise of a matador, was standing menu in hand to welcome his clients.

"When the daughter of my captain remembers me, this is an honor, Mademoiselle."

"Has a handsome young man, a little like you, left a message for me?" she inquired breathlessly.

"Mademoiselle, I distrust handsome young men—especially when they resemble me." He paused for only a moment. "If this handsome young man is playing hanky-pank, I cut his throat."

"Don't do that," she laughed. "You'd be electrocuted."

Then she explained the situation.

"So I can't see him. I can't write to him. But he does need a good influence."

A Sweepstake Ticket Merely for Luck

Reluctantly Jacques handed her an envelope, addressed in Henry's familiar handwriting. Enclosed was nothing but a sweepstake ticket. She was mystified.

"But why a sweepstake ticket?"

"For luck," Jacques said. "Give her this for luck. She brought me luck. And I won't try to see her again till Betty's married. That is what he told me."

During the two months that had elapsed she had received no other communication. Apparently Henry had taken her at her word. Or perhaps, light and gay of temperament, he had thrown off his grief and no longer needed her. Anyhow, tomorrow was to be the wedding.

What troubled Yolande was the transformation in Miss Betty. On this final evening of her girlhood some one had thrown a party. Out she had romped into the night with Stanley Morton, as tho no one before him existed.

All day the house had been in a turmoil. Belated gifts arriving. Arrangements with the florists and with Jacques Mahu, who, introduced by Yolande, was providing the orchestra and doing the catering. Towards midnight Mrs. Steele called a halt.

"You must be tired." Then, with unwonted tenderness: "Some day other people will be doing this for you. Come to my room. There's something we ought to talk about."

As she prepared for bed, Mrs. Steele conducted a monologue.

"It's about Stanley. He objects to having you in his household. He's said nothing of this to Miss Betty—so you mustn't. He intends to tell her on the honeymoon. The reason he objects to you is that you two have had secrets. In the event of those misunderstandings which are sure to arise, you'd side with her and form a majority."

Mrs. Steele eased herself into bed. Yolande was about to retire when Mrs. Steele recalled her.

"Keeping up a front to get Miss

Betty married has ruined me. After tomorrow I must retrench. I'm selling the house. Going traveling." She examined her highly polished nails. "The question is what am I to do with you. But we don't need to decide that tonight. Think things over. And not a word to Miss Betty."

In her little white bedroom, which adjoined Miss Betty's, Yolande undressed slowly. Her world had toppled. It was too light now to light a candle. Churches would be shut. In Avignon when life became more than one could handle, one lit a candle and implored the help of heaven.

The nursery jingle throbbed in her mind:

"How far is it to Babylon?"

"Three score miles and ten."

"Can I get there by candlelight?"

"Ah, yes—and back again."

There was no church and no saint handy, but it couldn't do any harm to light a candle in her bedroom. Setting one before her mirror, she struck a match. As the wick flickered into flame, the ringing of the doorbell startled the silence.

Yolande scrambled into her dressing gown. None of the servants would stir at this late hour. Being an employé who was supposed to be a friend, it was up to her.

Glancing thru the panes of the door, she saw that the disturber was a telegraph boy. More congratulations! She held out her hand for the telegrams. There was only one. It was for her. It read: Your ticket drawn Candlelight, the favorite. Race will be run tomorrow. Stop. If he wins, you gain a pile. Stop. Here's hoping.

It was signed, Henry.

Back in her bedroom she found the candle burning steadily. Switching off the electricity, she snuggled between the sheets. At first her only thought was that Henry had remembered her. The dear idiot to wire her! Then it dawned on her that his news might be true. Then the extraordinary coincidence that the horse was called Candlelight. "Can I get there by candlelight?"

She'd been lighting a candle when the bell had rung. Candles were the landmarks of prayers—symbols of faith. A dark road lit with candles, leading to heart's desire—that was life. You lit a candle before some long dead saint who had once been as human as yourself. The saint pleaded your cause. Of course it was childish to suppose that God cared who won a sweepstake. But believing that God cared was faith. "Dear God, the number of my ticket is—," she murmured.

But she'd forgotten the number. To rise to search for it that she might mention it to God, seemed too mercenary.

She dozed and was aroused by Miss Betty.

"You awake, Yolande? Oh, you superstitious darling—burning a candle for my happiness!"

She started to talk about Stanley Morton.

"He's more wonderful than I believed possible."

Between praises of her fiancé she hummed snatches from a song. Yolande sat up.

"Where did you hear that?"

"It's the latest. Every one's dancing to it."

"But who wrote it?"

"Who knows who writes anything?"

"Then what's it called?"

"Oh, it's one of those blah ditties, all minors and discords, called, 'Never Consider Me at All.'"

Yolande sank back smiling. Get there by candlelight! . . . Why not?

"I'm going to sleep in the twin bed beside you," Betty was saying.

"We've been very nearly sisters."

Lights were snapped out. The candle guttered.

Yolande was falling to sleep when she heard Henry's name mentioned. "He won't be there. I didn't have the heart to ask him. Besides, his father's gone bankrupt. If Stan hadn't proposed first, wouldn't I be in a jam? My guardian angel must have been watching." Her words trailed off, "I guess love's a case of the survival of the fittest."

Miss Betty had shifted back to her own room by the time Yolande awakened. She indicated the silver framed regiment of her rejections.

"Stan might get mad. Toss them out when I'm gone."

And so this was the morning of mornings! Somehow holy and exciting. Like receiving absolution. All your sins pardoned. Starting afresh. You were never going to repeat your old follies. And the strange part was that every one connected with a wedding seemed to share the cleansing process. The ushers who had wooed Betty looked starchy and passionless as cherubim. The bridesmaids who had accused her of poaching were meek and consecrated as doves. Thru this atmosphere, brightly Chris-

tian, moved Miss Betty, mystically veiled and dedicated.

Mr. Henry wasn't at the church—he, who save for a caprice of fate might have been joining vows at the altar. Poor Mr. Henry! During the most impressive portions of the service Yolande's heart was bleeding for him. During the less impressive her mind was cheering for a horse named Candlelight. Then from being subdued and heavenly, the organ blared like a circus band wagon, proclaiming that these two who had been born separate had now been made one.

Yolande reached home to find the reception in full swing. The bridal party lined up. The house overflowing like a subway at the rush hour. Jacques Mahu, very efficient and impersonal, had taken charge of everything. There remained no duty for Yolande. Feeling dispossessed, she wandered thru the hubbub.

Herded into a corner, palms partly hiding them, she noticed the musicians. They were attired like gypsies and made a splash among the black-coated gentry.

The Surprise of the Wedding Reception

Dancing and the throb of music. Suddenly there was a pause. Something unusual must be happening. There was a surge toward the doors which led to the dance room. Yolande was carried forward. The orchestra leader in his broken English was making a speech.

"We has a leetle surprise. Zee Monsieur who play zee piano is not of my orchestre. 'E join me only for today. 'E does not know what I ask 'im. Per'aps 'e say no—per'aps yes. Eet ees a great honor to 'ave 'im wiz us. 'E ees a composer who write under zee name of Adrian Graham. I will ask 'im to play for you 'is song tres populaire, 'Never Consider Me at All.'"

The pianist struck a chord. He began to sing. Tho his back was towards her and he was partly hidden by palms, Yolande recognized the voice as Mr. Henry's.

"Never consider me at all. I only loved you. I'm Dan Cupid in disguise. Not wise. A fool, pulling rabbits from a hat." Finishing with, "But they're only dream rabbits. So never consider me at all."

He played it over and over. At first sadly. The next time thoughtfully. At last with a mounting ripple of merriment till there was nothing left but exulting laughter. Nodding to the orchestra to join, he burst into a syncopated medley, which continually resolved into "Here Comes the Bride."

Yolande escaped during the burst of applause.

"Rather darling of him!" Miss Betty chuckled as Yolande helped her to change into her going away costume. "Sort of a last tribute."

Under a shower of rice the tall, blond bridegroom and the lovely bride sped away.

Yolande having run out to the pavement, was staring after them when she felt her arm clutched.

"I came at the earliest moment. Kept my promise not to see you till Betty was married."

"But, Mr. Henry," she gasped, "you weren't invited."

"Very generous of me to attend, don't you think? And I will say it's been one of the nicest weddings. From me that's praise, since I was the sacrificial goat. Stan Morton would never have been hooked unless I'd made competition for him."

Yolande was certain by now that Mr. Henry had been drinking.

"Don't go back into the house," she implored.

"I won't," he agreed, "if you'll fetch your outdoor togs and join me in my car. I've something to tell you."

She guessed at once that it must have to do with Candlelight.

A few minutes later she found his car and seated herself beside him.

"It wasn't fair, Mr. Henry," she reproached him. "Miss Betty didn't ask you."

"Fair, my sweet! Get this. My motive was to see you."

Too much champagne, quite obviously! He trod on the gas, outstripping every vehicle. It was anything to tone him down and divert him.

"Did Candlelight win?" she asked.

"Not that I've heard."

"But you sent me a wire."

"So I did. You receive some thousands of dollars when your ticket draws a horse."

It was clear that in his state of mind thousands of dollars meant no more than thousands of buttons. Probably he'd started on this toot when he wrote the telegram and it hadn't contained a word of accuracy. His next words, leaping from finance to sentiment, seemed to bear out her theory.

"I've never forgotten the way you kissed me."

"I was sorry for you."

"No girl ever kissed the way you kissed, simply because she was sorry."

Such a remark put a damper on conversation. She wondered whether he was taking her. Turning sharply into the West Fifties, he drew up before the Café d'Avignon. She was among friends. She breathed a sigh of relief. A waiter, whom she knew as Alphonse, took charge of them. He seated them facing each other, in the discreet privacy provided by boxed shrubs.

"The table Monsieur reserved."

When Henry ordered cocktails, Yolande attempted to restrain him.

"I wouldn't, Mr. Henry."

"This will be my first. Why not?"

"You're excited."

"You bet I'm excited. Please drop the mister. I've lived two months for this moment."

"Your song's a success," she introduced a safe topic.

"You've said it. But we're wasting time. Did any one ever tell you you were beautiful?"

"No one ever did," she humored him.

"Or that you're merciful? You collected the broken bits of me—"

Alphonse, bringing the cocktails, interrupted this burst of eloquence.

"To what shall we drink?" Henry raised his glass.

"To Candlelight."

She knew that she disappointed him.

"To us," he corrected.

Suddenly his face had become sensitive and tremulous. She forgot his big act in crashing the wedding, all of which had been so unlike him. He was the crazy harmless small boy, wide open to be hurt, whom in secret she loved. Something was badly the matter with him—and it wasn't champagne. Her guess was that he had sought her to talk about his lost love.

"Did you ever have a dream?" he questioned.

"My dream was that you would marry Miss Betty."

"What difference would that have made?"

"The three of us would have lived together. But Mr. Morton doesn't

want me. And Mrs. Steele is going traveling. If you'd married Miss Betty, I would have been able to take care of you."

Alphonse, with professional zeal, spanked the first course on the table. They were tongue tied till he vanished. Then Henry said, "You're in the same spot that I was that night—dismissed. I'm glad it makes things equal. It gives me a chance to do for you what you did for me."

During the rest of the meal he harped on what she'd done for him. Wildly exaggerated talk. She pooh-poohed his flatteries. All she'd done was to dust him off when he'd collided with the inevitable.

He shook his head.

"But a man oughtn't to collide. He ought to have more sense. Before you, Yolande, I long to pose as brainy and two fisted. How can I, when you've read my letters to Betty? Anything I say, you know I've already written to a Jane who gyped me. What sincerity can you attach to my words? I am at a terrible disadvantage. A man can't alter his technique. There's only one way of saying, 'I love you.'"

"Yes, but words sound so new when they're spoken to a new person."

Suddenly she saw something queer and emotional happening to him. Her heart began to quicken with a suspense that was akin to joy.

Luckily Jacques Mahu entered. He feigned surprise at finding them together. Invited to join them, he ordered wine and began to boost her values.

"You should have known the father of Mademoiselle. There was a brave man. One demands no better family."

A Conspiracy Between Henry and Jacques

Yolande was not deceived. A conspiracy existed between Jacques and Henry. How could Henry have attended the wedding, save by the connivance of Jacques? The table at the Café d'Avignon had been reserved. The dinner had been ordered ahead. It had been much too excellent for anything but a special dinner.

"I never doubted that Mademoiselle was of good family."

He asked for the bill. Rising, Jacques Mahu inquired whether everything had been satisfactory.

"There is nothing to pay," he said.

"To your future happiness, Monsieur and Mademoiselle."

Having drained his glass, he left them embarrassed.

"Shall we go?" Yolande suggested.

Neither of them stirred. Henry's hand crept across the table and touched hers.

"What small hands!" He bent back the fingers.

"I'd never noticed." Then, gathering her courage. "Henry, you've been so sweet and strange. But you seem afraid. Why all the scheming?"

"I had to see you alone." A newsboy in the street, peering thru the hedge of shrubs, addressed her.

"Grand National results, lady."

Diving into her purse, she produced a nickel.

"Did Candlelight win?" Henry asked.

She passed the paper to him.

"Free For All won. Candlelight didn't even finish. But you were saying—"

"That I had to see you alone—not in a crowded restaurant."

They passed into the dim street. He was guiding her to his car, when she hung back.

"Leave it parked. Let's walk."

He took a firmer grip on her arm, she choosing the direction. It was his turn to wonder whither they were going.

"You're upset because Candlelight didn't win."

"I haven't given it a second thought."

"Then what are you thinking?"

"You're romantic."

She denied that.

"I'm French and practical. My nation sells dreams. You Americans manufacture realities and give your dreams away for nothing."

"Then let's be practical," he said.

"Could you marry me?"

"I could."

"Could you kiss me, knowing what you do, without being sorry for me?"

"I could."

"Why not now?"

"Because I'm looking for something."

"Being practical," he twitted her.

Having traversed many blocks, she found it. A white cross on a church, sandwiched between black lofts.

On the altar of a saint she lit a candle.

"What for?" he whispered.

"For thankfulness." She raised eager lips to his. "Sometimes we pray for unworthy things and God gives us more than we asked."



Something unusual must be happening. The orchestra leader in his broken English was making a speech.