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One of the Old Girls.

Continued from page 51.

somebody that just naturally felt they had to come tiptoeing into my room every three or four minutes to see if I was sleeping, or had enough covers on, or wanted a drink, or something. I got to thinking what it would have been like if I had a husband and a home. You'll think I'm duffy, maybe."

Gabie took Ellie's limp white hand in his, and stroked it gently. Ellie's face was turned away from him, toward the noisy street.

"I used to imagine how he'd come home at six, stamping his feet, maybe, and making a lot of noise the way men do. And then he'd remember, and come creaking up the steps, and he'd stick his head in at the door in the funny, awkward, pathetic way men have in a sick room. And he'd say, 'How's the old girl to-night? I'd better not come near you now, puss, because I'd bring the cold with me. Been lonesome for your old man?'"

"And I'd say, 'Oh, I don't care how cold you are, dear. The nurse is downstairs, getting my supper ready.'"

"And then he'd come tiptoeing over to my bed, and stoop down, and kiss me, and his face would be all cold, and rough, and his moustache would be wet, and he'd smell outdoorsy and smoky, the way husbands do when they come in. And I'd reach up and pat his cheek and say, 'You need a shave, old man.'"

"I know it," he'd say, rubbing his cheek up against mine.

"Hurry up and wash, now. Supper'll be ready."

"Where are the kids?" he'd ask. "The house is as quiet as the grave. Hurry up and get well, kid. It's darn lonesome without you at the table, and the children's manners are getting something awful, and I never can find my shirts. Lordy, I guess we won't celebrate when you get up! Can't you eat a little something nourishing for supper—beefsteak, or a good plate of soup, or something?"

"Men are like that, you know. So I'd say then: 'Run along, you old goose! You'll be suggesting saurkraut and wieners next. Don't you let Millie have any marmalade to-night. She's got a spoiled stomach.'"

"And then he'd pound off down the hall to wash up, and I'd shut my eyes, and smile to myself, and everything would be all right, because he was home."

There was a long silence. Ellie's eyes were closed. But two great tears stole out from beneath each lid and coursed their slow way down her thin cheeks. She did not raise her hand to wipe them away.

Gabie's other hand reached over and met the one that already clasped Ellie's. "Ellie," he said, in a voice that was as hoarse as it was gentle.

"H'm?" said Ellie.

"Will you marry me?"

"I shouldn't wonder," replied Ellie, opening her eyes. "No, don't kiss me. You might catch something. But say, reach up and smooth my hair away from my forehead, will you, and call me a couple of fool names. I don't care how clumsy you are about it. I could stand an awful fuss being made over me, without being spoiled any."

Three weeks later Ellie was back at the store. Her skirt didn't fit in the back, and the little hollow places in her cheeks did not take the customary dash of rouge as well as when they had been plumper. She held a little impromptu reception that extended down as far as the lingerie and up as far as the rugs. The old sparkle came back to Ellie's eye. The old assurance and vigor seemed to return. By the time that Miss Weinstein, of the French lingerie, arrived, breathless, to greet her Ellie was herself again.

"Well, if you're not a sight for sore eyes, dearie," exclaimed Miss Weinstein. "My goodness, how grand and thin you are! I'd be willing to take a course in typhoid myself, if I thought I could lose twenty-five pounds."

"I haven't a rag that fits me," Ellie announced proudly.

Miss Weinstein lowered her voice discreetly. "Dearie, can you come down to my department for a minute? We're going to have a sale on imported lawn-gerie blouses, slightly soiled, from nine to eleven to-morrow. There's one you positively must see. Hand embroidered, Irish motifs, and eyeleted from soup to nuts, and only eight-fifty."

"I've got a fine chance of buying hand-made waists, no matter how slightly soiled," Ellie made answer, "with a doctor and nurse's bill as long as your arm."

"Oh, run along!" scoffed Miss Weinstein. "A person would think you had a husband to get a grouch every time you get reckless to the extent of a new waist. You're your own boss. And you know your credit's good. Honestly, it would be a shame to let this chance slip. You're not getting tight in your old age, are you?"

"N-no," faltered Ellie, "but—"

"Then come on," urged Miss Weinstein energetically. "And be thankful you haven't got a man to raise the dickens when the bill comes in."

"Do you mean that?" asked Ellie slowly, fixing Miss Weinstein with a thoughtful eye.

"Surest thing you know. Say, girlie, let's go over to Klein's for lunch this noon. They have pot roast with potato

plankuchen on Tuesdays, and we can split an order between us."

"Hold that waist till to-morrow, will you?" said Ellie. "I've made an arrangement with a friend that might make new clothes impossible just now. But I'm going to wire my party that the arrangement is all off. I've changed my mind. I ought to get an answer to-morrow. Did you say it was a thirty-six?"

The Chinese Home.

It is difficult for the Occidental mind to picture the wall-within-wall life of a Chinese home (writes Harriet Monroe, in the March Century). Down a narrow lane one passes between two walls behind which may be hovels or palaces, there is no telling which, since the one-story roofs beyond are invisible.

One pulls a string at a gateway, the address of some family of high degree. A servant appears, leads through another gateway, a flowery courtyard, a little room or two, and finally into a reception-room, with its carved wood wainscoting and furniture, its porcelains and jades and brasses, its blue and green-and-gold ceiling, and its window pattern of paper panes.

Here the hostess appears, offers her Occidental guest tea or champagne, or both, with cakes and candied fruit or lotus-buds. Then she may lead one through other courtyards, all with the usual one-story rooms around them, and into her secluded garden of rocks and pools, of pretty paths and bridges, of clustering trees and flowers.

In such a palace as this each courtyard, with its surrounding rooms, may be the special home of one of the sons and his wife and children; but somewhere in the maze of walls, under one of the low, tiled roofs, is the common dining-room, with the kitchen beyond. Here the men of the family eat together twice a day, and afterward the women and children.

And somewhere also there is a central family hall, with the ancestral tablets, which must have their tribute of incense at proper seasons.

These are held in such reverence that no foot may pass above them, and therefore two-story dwellings are unknown in regions uncontaminated by foreign influence.

SAME OLD STORY.

She: "How ever did they ever come to marry?"

He: "Oh, it's the same old story. Started out to be good friends, you know, and later on changed their minds."



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