

Majesty, F. Scott Fitzgerald

I

The extraordinary thing is not that people in a lifetime turn out worse or better than we had prophesied; particularly in America that is to be expected. The extraordinary thing is how people keep their levels, fulfill their promises, seem actually buoyed up by an inevitable destiny.

One of my conceits is that no one has ever disappointed me since I turned eighteen and could tell a real quality from a gift for sleight of hand, and even many of the merely showy people in my past seem to go on being blatantly and successfully showy to the end.

Emily Castleton was born in Harrisburg in a medium-sized house, moved to New York at sixteen to a big house, went to the Briarly School, moved to an enormous house, moved to a mansion at Tuxedo Park, moved abroad, where she did various fashionable things and was in all the papers. Back in her debutante year one of those French artists who are so dogmatic about American beauties, included her with eleven other public and semipublic celebrities as one of America's perfect types. At the time numerous men agreed with him.

She was just faintly tall, with fine, rather large features, eyes with such an expanse of blue in them that you were really aware of it whenever you looked at her, and a good deal of thick blond hair—arresting and bright. Her mother and father did not know very much about the new world they had commandeered so Emily had to learn everything for herself, and she became involved in various situations and some of the first bloom wore off. However, there was bloom to spare. There were engagements and semi-engagements, short passionate attractions, and then a big affair at twenty-two that embittered her and sent her wandering the continents looking for happiness. She became "artistic" as most wealthy unmarried girls do at that age, because artistic people seem to have some secret, some inner refuge, some escape. But most of her friends were married now, and her life was a great disappointment to her father; so, at twenty-four, with marriage in her head if not in her heart, Emily came home.

This was a low point in her career and Emily was aware of it. She had not done well. She was one of the most popular, most beautiful girls of her generation with charm, money and a sort of fame, but her generation was moving into new fields. At the first note of condescension from a former schoolmate, now a young "matron," she went to Newport and was won by William Brevoort Blair. Immediately she was again the incomparable Emily Castleton. The ghost of the French artist walked once more in the newspapers; the most-talked-of leisure-class event of October was her wedding day.

Splendor to mark society nuptials... Harold Castleton sets out a series of five-thousand-dollar pavilions arranged like the interconnecting tents of a circus, in which the reception, the wedding supper and the ball will be held... Nearly a thousand guests, many of them leaders in business, will mingle with those who dominate the social world... The wedding gifts are estimated to be worth a quarter of a million dollars...

An hour before the ceremony, which was to be solemnized at St. Bartholomew's, Emily sat before a dressing-table and gazed at her face in the glass. She was a little tired of her face at that moment and the

depressing thought suddenly assailed her that it would require more and more looking after in the next fifty years.

"I ought to be happy," she said aloud, "but every thought that comes into my head is sad."

Her cousin, Olive Mercy, sitting on the side of the bed, nodded. "All brides are sad."

"It's such a waste," Emily said.

Olive frowned impatiently.

"Waste of what? Women are incomplete unless they're married and have children."

For a moment Emily didn't answer. Then she said slowly, "Yes, but whose children?"

For the first time in her life, Olive, who worshipped Emily, almost hated her. Not a girl in the wedding party but would have been glad of Brevoort Blair—Olive among the others.

"You're lucky," she said. "You're so lucky you don't even know it. You ought to be paddled for talking like that."

"I shall learn to love him," announced Emily facetiously. "Love will come with marriage. Now, isn't that a hell of a prospect?"

"Why so deliberately unromantic?"

"On the contrary, I'm the most romantic person I've ever met in my life. Do you know what I think when he puts his arms around me? I think that if I look up I'll see Garland Kane's eyes."

"But why, then—"

"Getting into his plane the other day I could only remember Captain Marchbanks and the little two-seater we flew over the Channel in, just breaking our hearts for each other and never saying a word about it because of his wife. I don't regret those men; I just regret the part of me that went into caring. There's only the sweepings to hand to Brevoort in a pink wastebasket. There should have been something more; I thought even when I was most carried away that I was saving something for the one. But apparently I wasn't." She broke off and then added: "And yet I wonder."

The situation was no less provoking to Olive for being comprehensible and save for her position as a poor relation, she would have spoken her mind. Emily was well spoiled—eight years of men had assured her they were not good enough for her and she had accepted the tact as probably true.

"You're nervous." Olive tried to keep the annoyance out of her voice. "Why not lie down for an hour?"

"Yes," answered Emily absently.

Olive went out and downstairs. In the lower hall she ran into Brevoort Blair, attired in a nuptial cutaway even to the white carnation, and in a state of considerable agitation.

"Oh, excuse me," he blurted out. "I wanted to see Emily. It's about the rings—which ring, you know. I've got four rings and she never decided and I can't just hold them out in the church and have her take her pick."

"I happen to know she wants the plain platinum band. If you want to see her anyhow—"

"Oh, thanks very much. I don't want to disturb her."

They were standing close together, and even at this moment when he was gone, definitely preempted, Olive couldn't help thinking how alike she and Brevoort were. Hair, coloring, features—they might have been brother and sister—and they shared the same shy serious temperaments, the same simple straightforwardness. All this flashed through her mind in an instant, with the added thought that the blond, tempestuous Emily, with her vitality and amplitude of scale, was, after all, better for him in every way; and then, beyond this, a perfect wave of tenderness, of pure physical pity and yearning swept over her and it seemed that she must step forward only half a foot to find his arms wide to receive her.

She stepped backward instead, relinquishing him as though she still touched him with the tip of her fingers and then drew the tips away. Perhaps some vibration of her emotion fought its way into his consciousness, for he said suddenly:

"We're going to be good friends, aren't we? Please don't, think I'm taking Emily away. I know I can't own her—nobody could—and I don't want to."

Silently, as he talked, she said good-bye to him, the only man she had ever wanted in her life.

She loved the absorbed hesitancy with which he found his coat and hat and felt hopefully for the knob on the wrong side of the door.

When he had gone she went into the drawing-room, gorgeous and portentous; with its painted bacchanals and massive chandeliers and the eighteenth-century portraits that might have been Emily's ancestors, but weren't, and by that very fact belonged the more to her. There she rested, as always, in Emily's shadow.

Through the door that led out to the small, priceless patch of grass on Sixtieth Street now inclosed by the pavilions, came her uncle, Mr. Harold Castleton. He had been sampling his own champagne.

"Olive so sweet and fair." He cried emotionally, "Olive, baby, she's done it. She was all right inside, like I knew all the time. The good ones come through, don't they—the real thoroughbreds? I began to think that the Lord and me, between us, had given her too much, that she'd never be satisfied, but now she's come down to earth just like a"—he searched unsuccessfully for a metaphor—"like a thoroughbred, and she'll find it not such a bad place after all." He came closer. "You've been crying, little Olive."

"Not much."

"It doesn't matter," he said magnanimously. "If I wasn't so happy I'd cry too."

Later, as she embarked with two other bridesmaids for the church, the solemn throbbing of a big wedding seemed to begin with the vibration of the car. At the door the organ took it up, and later it would palpitate in the cellos and base viols of the dance, to fade off finally with the sound of the car that bore bride and groom away.

The crowd was thick around the church, and ten feet out of it the air was heavy with perfume and faint clean humanity and the fabric smell of new clean clothes. Beyond the massed hats in the van of the church the two families sat in front rows on either side. The Blairs—they were assured a family resemblance by their expression of faint condescension, shared by their in-laws as well as by true Blairs—were represented by the Gardiner Blairs, senior and junior; Lady Mary Bowes Howard, nee Blair; Mrs. Potter Blair; Mrs. Princess Potowki Parr Blair, nee Inchbit; Miss Gloria Blair, Master Gardiner Blair III, and the kindred branches, rich and poor, of Smythe, Bickle, Diffendorfer and Hamn. Across the aisle the Castletons made a less impressive showing—Mr. Harold Castleton, Mr. and Mrs. Theodore Castleton and children, Harold Castleton Junior, and, from Harrisburg, Mr. Carl Mercy, and two little old aunts named O'Keefe hidden off in a corner. Somewhat to their surprise the two aunts had been bundled off in a limousine and dressed from head to foot by a fashionable couturiere that morning.

In the vestry, where the bridesmaids fluttered about like birds in their big floppy hats, there was a last lip rouging and adjustment of pins before Emily should arrive. They represented several stages of Emily's life—a schoolmate at Briarly, a last unmarried friend of debutante year, a travelling companion of Europe, and the girl she had visited in Newport when she met Brevoort Blair. "They've got Wakeman," this last one said, standing by the door listening to the music. "He played for my sister, but shall never have Wakeman."

"Why not?"

"Why, he's playing the same thing over and over—'At Dawning.' He's played it half a dozen times."

At this moment another door opened and the solicitous head of a young man appeared around it. "Almost ready?" he demanded of the nearest bridesmaid. "Brevoort's having a quiet little fit. He just stands there wilting collar after collar—"

"Be calm," answered the young lady. "The bride is always a few minutes late."

"A few minutes!" protested the best man. "I don't call it a few minutes. They're beginning to rustle and wriggle like a circus crowd out there, and the organist has been playing the same tune for half an hour. I'm going to get him to fill in with a little jazz."

"What time is it?" Olive demanded.

"Quarter of five—ten minutes of five."

"Maybe there's been a traffic tie-up." Olive paused as Mr. Harold Castleton, followed by an anxious curate, shouldered his way in, demanding a phone.

And now there began a curious dribbling back from the front of the church, one by one, then two by two, until the vestry was crowded with relatives and confusion.

"What's happened?"

"What on earth's the matter?"

A chauffeur came in and reported excitedly. Harold Castleton swore and, his face blazing, fought his way roughly toward the door. There was an attempt to clear the vestry, and then, as if to balance the dribbling, a ripple of conversation commenced at the rear of the church and began to drift up toward the altar, growing louder and faster and more excited, mounting always, bringing people to their feet, rising to a sort of subdued roar. The announcement from the altar that the marriage had been postponed was scarcely heard, for by that time everyone knew that they were participating in a front-page scandal, that Brevoort Blair had been left waiting at the altar and Emily Castleton had run away.

II

There were a dozen reporters outside the Castleton house on Sixtieth Street when Olive arrived, but in her absorption she failed even to hear their questions; she wanted desperately to go and comfort a certain man whom she must not approach, and as a sort of substitute she sought her Uncle Harold. She entered through the interconnecting five-thousand-dollar pavilions, where caterers and servants still stood about in a respectful funereal half-light, waiting for something to happen, amid trays of caviar and turkey's breast and pyramided wedding cake. Upstairs, Olive found her uncle sitting on a stool before Emily's dressing-table. The articles of make-up spread before him, the repertoire of feminine preparation in evidence about, made his singularly inappropriate presence a symbol of the mad catastrophe.

"Oh, it's you." His voice was listless; he had aged in two hours. Olive put her arm about his bowed shoulder.

"I'm so terribly sorry, Uncle Harold."

Suddenly a stream of profanity broke from him, died away, and a single large tear welled slowly from one eye.

"I want to get my massage man," he said. "Tell McGregor to get him." He drew a long broken sigh, like a child's breath after crying, and Olive saw that his sleeves were covered with a dust of powder from the dressing-table, as if he had been leaning forward on it, weeping, in the reaction from his proud champagne.

"There was a telegram," he muttered.

"It's somewhere."

And he added slowly,

"From now on you're my daughter."

"Oh, no, you mustn't say that!"

Unrolling the telegram, she read:

I can't make the grade I would feel like a fool either way but this will be over sooner so damn sorry for you
EMILY

When Olive had summoned the masseur and posted a servant outside her uncle's door, she went to the library, where a confused secretary was trying to say nothing over an inquisitive and persistent telephone.

"I'm so upset, Miss Mercy," he cried in a despairing treble. "I do declare I'm so upset I have a frightful headache. I've thought for half an hour I heard dance music from down below."

Then it occurred to Olive that she, too, was becoming hysterical; in the breaks of the street traffic a melody was drifting up, distinct and clear:

"—Is she fair
Is she sweet
I don't care—cause
I can't compete—
Who's the—"

She ran quickly downstairs and through the drawing-room, the tune growing louder in her ears. At the entrance of the first pavilion she stopped in stupefaction.

To the music of a small but undoubtedly professional orchestra a dozen young couples were moving about the canvas floor. At the bar in the corner stood additional young men, and half a dozen of the caterer's assistants were busily shaking cocktails and opening champagne.

"Harold!" she called imperatively to one of the dancers. "Harold!"

A tall young man of eighteen handed his partner to another and came toward her.

"Hello, Olive, How did father take it?"

"Harold, what in the name of—"

"Emily's crazy," he said consolingly. "I always told you Emily was crazy. Crazy as a loon. Always Was."

"What's the idea of this?"

"This?" He looked around innocently. "Oh, these are just some fellows that came down from Cambridge with me."

"But—dancing!"

"Well, nobody's dead, are they? I thought we might as well use up some of this—"

"Tell them to go home," said Olive.

"Why? What on earth's the harm? These fellows came all the way down from Cambridge—"

"It simply isn't dignified."

"But they don't care, Olive. One fellow's sister did the same thing—only she did it the day after instead of the day before. Lots of people do it nowadays."

"Send the music home, Harold," said Olive firmly, "or I'll go to your father."

Obviously he felt that no family could be disgraced by an episode on such a magnificent scale, but he reluctantly yielded. The abysmally depressed butler saw to the removal of the champagne, and the young people, somewhat insulted, moved nonchalantly out into the more tolerant night. Alone with the shadow—Emily's shadow—that hung over the house, Olive sat down in the drawing-room to think. Simultaneously the butler appeared in the doorway.

"It's Mr. Blair, Miss Olive."

She jumped tensely to her feet.

"Who does he want to see?"

"He didn't say. He just walked in."

"Tell him I'm in here."

He entered with an air of abstraction rather than depression, nodded to Olive and sat down on a piano stool. She wanted to say, "Come here. Lay your head here, poor man. Never mind." But she wanted to cry, too, and so she said nothing.

"In three hours," he remarked quietly, "we'll be able to get the morning papers. There's a shop on Fifty-ninth Street."

"That's foolish—" she began.

"I am not a superficial man"—he interrupted her—"nevertheless, my chief feeling now is for the morning papers. Later there will be a politely silent gauntlet of relatives, friends and business acquaintances. About the actual affair I surprise myself by not caring at all."

"I shouldn't care about any of it."

"I'm rather grateful that she did it in time."

"Why don't you go away?" Olive leaned forward earnestly. "Go to Europe until it all blows over."

"Blows over." He laughed. "Things like this don't ever blow over. A little snicker is going to follow me around the rest of my life." He groaned. "Uncle Hamilton started right for Park Row to make the rounds of the newspaper offices. He's a Virginian and he was unwise enough to use the old-fashioned word 'horsewhip' to one editor. I can hardly wait to see that paper." He broke off. "How is Mr. Castleton?"

"He'll appreciate your coming to inquire."

"I didn't come about that." He hesitated. "I came to ask you a question. I want to know if you'll marry me in Greenwich tomorrow morning."

For a minute Olive fell precipitately through space; she made a strange little sound; her mouth dropped ajar.

"I know you like me," he went on quickly. "In fact, I once imagined you loved me a little bit, if you'll excuse the presumption. Anyhow, you're very like a girl that once did love me, so maybe you would—" His face was pink with embarrassment, but he struggled grimly on; "anyhow, I like you enormously and whatever feeling I may have had for Emily has, I might say, flown."

The clangor and alarm inside her was so loud that it seemed he must hear it.

"The favor you'll be doing me will be very great," he continued. "My heavens, I know it sounds a little crazy, but what could be crazier than the whole afternoon? You see, if you married me the papers would carry quite a different story; they'd think that Emily went off to get out of our way, and the joke would be on her after all."

Tears of indignation came to Olive's eyes.

"I suppose I ought to allow for your wounded egotism, but do you realize you're making me an insulting proposition?"

His face fell.

"I'm sorry," he said after a moment. "I guess I was an awful fool even to think of it, but a man hates to lose the whole dignity of his life for a girl's whim. I see it would be impossible. I'm sorry."

He got up and picked up his cane.

Now he was moving toward the door, and Olive's heart came into her throat and a great, irresistible wave of self-preservation swept over her—swept over all her scruples and her pride. His steps sounded in the hall.

"Brevoort!" she called. She jumped to her feet and ran to the door. He turned. "Brevoort, what was the name of that paper—the one your uncle went to?"

"Why?"

"Because it's not too late for them to change their story if I telephone now! I'll say we were married tonight!"

III

There is a society in Paris which is merely a heterogeneous prolongation of American society. People moving in are connected by a hundred threads to the motherland, and their entertainments, eccentricities and ups and downs are an open book to friends and relatives at Southampton, Lake Forest or Back Bay. So during her previous European sojourn Emily's whereabouts, as she followed the shifting Continental seasons, were publicly advertised; but from the day, one month after the unsolemnized wedding, when she sailed from New York, she dropped completely from sight. There was an occasional letter for her father, an occasional rumor that she was in Cairo, Constantinople or the less frequented Riviera—that was all.

Once, after a year, Mr. Castleton saw her in Paris, but, as he told Olive, the meeting only served to make him uncomfortable.

"There was something about her," he said vaguely, "as if—well, as if she had a lot of things in the back of her mind I couldn't reach. She was nice enough, but it was all automatic and formal.—She asked about you."

Despite her solid background of a three-month-old baby and a beautiful apartment on Park Avenue, Olive felt her heart falter uncertainly.

"What did she say?"

"She was delighted about you and Brevoort." And he added to himself, with a disappointment he could not conceal: "Even though you picked up the best match in New York when she threw it away."...

... It was more than a year after this that his secretary's voice on the telephone asked Olive if Mr. Castleton could see them that night. They found the old man walking his library in a state of agitation.

"Well, it's come," he declared—vehemently. "People won't stand still; nobody stands still. You go up or down in this world. Emily chose to go down. She seems to be somewhere near the bottom. Did you ever hear of a man described to me as a"—he referred to a letter in his hand—"dissipated ne'er-do-well named Petrocobesco? He calls himself Prince Gabriel Petrocobesco, apparently from—from nowhere. This letter is from Hallam, my European man, and it incloses a clipping from the Paris Matin. It seems that this gentleman was invited by the police to leave Paris, and among the small entourage who left with him was an American girl, Miss Castleton, 'rumored to be the daughter of a millionaire. ' The party was escorted to the station by gendarmes." He handed clipping and letter to Brevoort Blair with trembling fingers. "What do you make of it? Emily come to that!"

"It's not so good," said Brevoort, frowning.

"It's the end. I thought her drafts were big recently, but I never suspected that she was supporting—"

"It may be a mistake," Olive suggested. "Perhaps it's another Miss Castleton."

"It's Emily all right. Hallam looked up the matter. It's Emily, who was afraid ever to dive into the nice clean stream of life and ends up now by swimming around in the sewers."

Shocked, Olive had a sudden sharp taste of fate in its ultimate diversity. She with a mansion building in Westbury Hills, and Emily was mixed up with a deported adventurer in disgraceful scandal.

"I've got no right to ask you this," continued Mr. Castleton. "Certainly no right to ask Brevoort anything in connection with Emily. But I'm seventy-two and Fraser says if I put off the cure another fortnight he won't be responsible, and then Emily will be alone for good. I want you to set your trip abroad forward by two months and go over and bring her back."

"But do you think we'd have the necessary influence?" Brevoort asked. "I've no reason for thinking that she'd listen to me."

"Time's no one else. If you can't go I'll have to."

"Oh, no," said Brevoort quickly. "We'll do what we can, won't we, Olive?"

"Of course."

"Bring her back—it doesn't matter how—but bring her back. Go before a court if necessary and swear she's crazy."

"Very well. We'll do what we can."

Just ten days after this interview the Brevoort Blairs called on Mr. Castleton's agent in Paris to glean what details were available. They were plentiful but unsatisfactory. Hallam had seen Petrocobesco in various restaurants—a fat little fellow with an attractive leer and a quenchless thirst. He was of some obscure nationality and had been moved around Europe for several years, living heaven knew how—probably on Americans, though Hallam understood that of late even the most outlying circles of international society were closed to him. About Emily, Hallam knew very little. They had been reported last week in Berlin and yesterday in Budapest. It was probably that such an undesirable as Petrocobesco was required to register with the police everywhere, and this was the line he recommended the Blairs to follow.

Forty-eight hours later, accompanied by the American vice consul, they called upon the prefect of police in Budapest. The officer talked in rapid Hungarian to the vice consul, who presently announced the gist of his remarks—the Blairs were too late.

"Where have they gone?"

"He doesn't know. He received orders to move them on and they left last night."

Suddenly the prefect wrote something on a piece of paper and handed it, with a terse remark, to the vice consul.

"He says try there."

Brevoort looked at the paper.

"'Sturmdorp—where's that?"

Another rapid conversation in Hungarian.

"Five hours from here on a local train that leaves Tuesdays and Fridays. This is Saturday."

"We'll get a car at the hotel," said Brevoort.

They set out after dinner. It was a rough journey through the night across the still Hungarian plain. Olive awoke once from a worried doze to find Brevoort and the chauffeur changing a tire; then again as they stopped at a muddy little river, beyond which glowed the scattered lights of a town. Two soldiers in an unfamiliar uniform glanced into the car; they crossed a bridge and followed a narrow, warped main street to Sturmdorp's single inn; the roosters were already crowing as they tumbled down on the mean beds.

Olive awoke with a sudden sure feeling that they had caught up with Emily; and with it came that old sense of helplessness in the face of Emily's moods; for a moment the long past and Emily dominant in it, swept back over her, and it seemed almost a presumption to be here. But Brevoort's singleness of purpose reassured her and confidence had returned when they went downstairs, to find a landlord who spoke fluent American, acquired in Chicago before the war.

"You are not in Hungary now," he explained. "You have crossed the border into Czjeck-Hansa. But it is only a little country with two towns, this one and the capital. We don't ask the visa from Americans."

"That's probably why they came here," Olive thought.

"Perhaps you could give us some information about strangers?" asked Brevoort. "We're looking for an American-lady—" He described Emily, without mentioning her probable companion; as he proceeded a curious change came over the innkeeper's face.

"Let me see your passports," he said; then: "And why you want to see her?"

"This lady is her cousin."

The innkeeper hesitated momentarily.

"I think perhaps I be able to find her for you," he said.

He called the porter; there were rapid instructions in an unintelligible patois. Then:

"Follow this boy—he take you there."

They were conducted through filthy streets to a tumbledown house on the edge of town. A man with a hunting rifle, lounging outside, straightened up and spoke sharply to the porter, but after an exchange of phrases they passed, mounted the stairs and knocked at a door. When it opened a head peered around the corner; the porter spoke again and they went in.

They were in a large dirty room which might have belonged to a poor boarding house in any quarter of the Western world—faded walls, split upholstery, a shapeless bed and an air, despite its bareness, of being overcrowded by the ghostly furniture, indicated by dust rings and worn spots, of the last decade. In the middle of the room stood a small stout man with hammock eyes and a peering nose over a sweet, spoiled little mouth, who stared intently at them as they opened the door, and then with a single disgusted "Chut!" turned impatiently away. There were several other people in the room, but Brevoort and Olive saw only Emily, who reclined in a chaise longue with half-closed eyes.

At the sight of them the eyes opened in mild astonishment; she made a move as though to jump up, but instead held out her hand, smiled and spoke their names in a clear polite voice, less as a greeting than as a sort of explanation to the others of their presence here. At their names a grudging amenity replaced the sullenness on the little man's face.

The girls kissed.

"Tutu!" said Emily, as if calling him to attention—"Prince Petrocobesco, let me present my cousin Mrs. Blair, and Mr. Blair."

"Plaisir," said Petrocobesco. He and Emily exchanged a quick glance, whereupon he said, "Won't you sit down?" and immediately seated himself in the only available chair, as if they were playing Going to Jerusalem.

"Plaisir," he repeated. Olive sat down on the foot of Emily's chaise longue and Brevoort took a stool from against the wall, meanwhile noting the other occupants of the room. There was a very fierce young man in a cape who stood, with arms folded and teeth gleaming, by the door, and two ragged, bearded men, one holding a revolver, the other with his head sunk dejectedly on his chest, who sat side by side in the corner.

"You come here long?" the prince asked.

"Just arrived this morning."

For a moment Olive could not resist comparing the two, the tall fair-featured American and the unprepossessing South European, scarcely a likely candidate for Ellis Island. Then she looked at Emily—the same thick bright hair with sunshine in it, the eyes with the hint of vivid seas. Her face was faintly drawn, there were slight new lines around her mouth, but she was the Emily of old—dominant, shining, large of scale. It seemed shameful for all that beauty and personality to have arrived in a cheap boarding house at the world's end.

The man in the cape answered a knock at the door and handed a note to Petrocobesco, who read it, cried "Chut!" and passed it to Emily.

"You see there are no carriages," he said tragically in French. "The carriages were destroyed—all except one, which is in a museum. Anyhow, I prefer a horse."

"No," said Emily.

"Yes, yes, yes!" he cried. "Whose business is it how I go?"

"Don't let's have a scene, Tutu."

"Scene!" He fumed. "Scene!"

Emily turned to Olive: "You came by automobile?"

"Yes."

"A big de luxe car? With a back that opens?"

"Yes."

"There," said Emily to the prince. "We can have the arms painted on the side of that."

"Hold on," said Brevoort. "This car belongs to a hotel in Budapest."

Apparently Emily didn't hear.

"Janierka could do it," she continued thoughtfully.

At this point there was another interruption. The dejected man in the corner suddenly sprang to his feet and made as though to run to the door, whereupon the other man raised his revolver and brought the butt down on his head. The man faltered and would have collapsed had not his assailant hauled him back to the chair, where he sat comatose, a slow stream of blood trickling over his forehead.

"Dirty townsman! Filthy, dirty spy!" shouted Petrocobesco between clenched teeth.

"Now that's just the kind of remark you're not to make!" said Emily sharply.

"Then why we don't hear?" he cried. "Are we going to sit here in this pigsty forever?"

Disregarding him, Emily turned to Olive and began to question her conventionally about New York. Was prohibition any more successful? What were the new plays? Olive tried to answer and simultaneously to catch Brevoort's eye. The sooner their purpose was broached, the sooner they could get Emily away.

"Can we see you alone, Emily?" demanded Brevoort abruptly.

"Why, for the moment we haven't got another room."

Petrocobesco had engaged the man with the cape in agitated conversation, and taking advantage of this, Brevoort spoke hurriedly to Emily in a lowered voice:

"Emily, your father's getting old; he needs you at home. He wants you to give up this crazy life and come back to America. He sent us because he couldn't come himself and no one else knew you well enough—"

She laughed. "You mean, knew the enormities I was capable of."

"No," put in Olive quickly. "Cared for you as we do. I can't tell you how awful it is to see you wandering over the face of the earth."

"But we're not wandering now," explained Emily. "This is Tutu's native country."

"Where's your pride, Emily?" said Olive impatiently. "Do you know that affair in Paris was in the papers? What do you suppose people think back home?"

"That affair in Paris was an outrage." Emily's blue eyes flashed around her. "Someone will pay for that affair in Paris."

"It'll be the same everywhere. Just sinking lower and lower, dragged in the mire, and one day deserted—"

"Stop, please!" Emily's voice was cold as ice. "I don't think you quite understand—"

Emily broke off as Petrocobesco came back, threw himself into his chair and buried his face in his hands.

"I can't stand it," he whispered. "Would you mind taking my pulse? I think it's bad. Have you got the thermometer in your purse?"

She held his wrist in silence for a moment.

"It's all right, Tutu." Her voice was soft now, almost crooning. "Sit up. Be a man."

"All right."

He crossed his legs as if nothing had happened and turned abruptly, to Brevoort:

"How are financial conditions in New York?" he demanded.

But Brevoort was in no humor to prolong the absurd scene. The memory of a certain terrible hour three years before swept over him. He was no man to be made a fool of twice, and his jaw set as he rose to his feet.

"Emily, get your things together," he said tersely. "We're going home."

Emily did not move; an expression of astonishment, melting to amusement, spread over her face. Olive put her arm around her shoulder.

"Come, dear. Let's get out of this nightmare." Then:

"We're waiting," Brevoort said.

Petrocobesco spoke suddenly to the man in the cape, who approached and seized Brevoort's arm. Brevoort shook him off angrily, whereupon the man stepped back, his hand searching his belt.

"No!" cried Emily imperatively.

Once again there was an interruption. The door opened without a knock and two stout men in frock coats and silk hats rushed in and up to Petrocobesco. They grinned and patted him on the back chattering in a strange language, and presently he grinned and patted them on the back and they kissed all around; then, turning to Emily, Petrocobesco spoke to her in French.

"It's all right," he said excitedly. "They did not even argue the matter. I am to have the tide of king."

With a long sigh Emily sank back in her chair and her lips parted in a relaxed, tranquil smile.

"Very well, Tutu. We'll get married."

"Oh, heavens, how happy!" He clasped his hands and gazed up ecstatically at the faded ceiling. "How extremely happy!" He fell on his knees beside her and kissed her inside arm.

"What's all this about kings?" Brevoort demanded. "Is this—is he a king?"

"He's a king. Aren't you, Tutu?" Emily's hand gently stroked his oiled hair and Olive saw that her eyes were unusually bright.

"I am your husband," cried Tutu weepily. "The most happy man alive."

"His uncle was Prince of Czjeck-Hansa before the war," explained Emily, her voice singing her content. "Since then there's been a republic, but

the peasant party wanted a change and Tutu was next in line. Only I wouldn't marry him unless he insisted on being king instead of prince."

Brevoort passed his hand over his wet forehead.

"Do you mean that this is actually a fact?"

Emily nodded. "The assembly voted it this morning. And if you'll lend us this de luxe limousine of yours we'll make our official entrance into the capital this afternoon."

IV

Over two years later Mr. and Mrs. Brevoort Blair and their two children stood upon a balcony of the Carlton Hotel in London, a situation recommended by the management for watching royal processions pass. This one began with a fanfare of trumpets down by the Strand, and presently a scarlet line of horse guards came into sight.

"But, mummy," the little boy demanded, "is Aunt Emily Queen of England?"

"No, dear; she's queen of a little tiny country, but when she visits here she rides in the queen's carriage."

"Oh."

"Thanks to the magnesium deposits," said Brevoort dryly.

"Was she a princess before she got to be queen?" the little girl asked.

"No, dear; she was an American girl and then she got to be a queen."

"Why?"

"Because nothing else was good enough for her," said her father. "Just think, one time she could have married me. Which would you rather do, baby—marry me or be a queen?"

The little girl hesitated.

"Marry you," she said politely, but without conviction.

"That'll do, Brevoort," said her mother. "Here they come."

"I see them!" the little boy cried.

The cavalcade swept down the crowded street. There were more horse guards, a company of dragoons, outriders, then Olive found herself holding her breath and squeezing the balcony rail as, between a double line of beefeaters, a pair of great gilt-and-crimson coaches rolled past. In the first were the royal sovereigns, their uniforms gleaming with ribbons, crosses and stars, and in the second their two royal consorts, one old, the other young. There was about the scene the glamour shed always by the old empire of half the world, by her ships and ceremonies, her poms and symbols; and the crowd felt it, and a slow murmur rolled along before the carriage, rising to a strong steady cheer. The two ladies bowed to left and right, and though few knew who the second queen was, she was cheered too. In a moment the gorgeous panoply tad rolled below the balcony and on out at sight.

When Olive turned away from the window there were tears in her eyes.

"I wonder if she likes it, Brevoort. I wonder if she's really happy with that terrible little man."

"Well, she got what she wanted, didn't she? And that's something."

Olive drew a long breath.

"Oh, she's so wonderful," she cried—"so wonderful! She could always move me like that, even when I was angriest at her."

"It's all so silly," Brevoort said.

"I suppose so," answered Olive's lips. But her heart, winged with helpless adoration, was following her cousin through the palace gates half a mile away.

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