

## The Wedding Ring

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the order, and he would send for it this very day.

He was in the house before starting for town, but the old lady sat asleep in her chair, and he did not disturb her by speaking, but gently he drew the band ring off the finger to have the size and stole away.

Outside of Black's he let the man go on with one load, and left his own standing while he went in.

Lucy happened to be alone, and was sewing. She got up, blushing a bit, when Aaron entered, for he was not in the habit of dropping in.

"Lucy," he began, "would you mind getting the catalogue. I want you to help me, please, in picking out a wedding ring, and make out the order for me. My hands aren't strictly clean."

"A wedding ring," she gasped, turning pale.

"Sure, a good one, 22 karat, and tell them to rush the order."

Lucy turned the leaves nervously.

"Have you the size?" she asked in an ill-controlled voice.

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"Yes, here it is," producing the childish band ring. "You can measure from this."

Lucy picked it up gingerly and looked at it with a rather bitter smile.

"Aaron," she said, shaken out of her reserve and the tears standing in her eyes, "are you going to bring in some bit of a child wife who will be only a charge to your poor old mother, after all she's been to you. I thought better of you than that. It's all a mistake. Don't do anything in haste, it will be an injustice to both of them."

She faced him, after this outburst, and the tears ran down her cheeks.

"A wife!" he gasped.

"Certainly, a wife. Doesn't a wedding ring imply a wife? Are you crazy, Aaron Preston?"

Aaron considered a moment, and then began to laugh uproariously.

"You heartless wretch," said Lucy, stamping her foot, then dropped herself into a chair, dropped her head on the table, and began to cry.

Aaron became quiet, and touched her arm gently.

"You consider mother, don't you Lucy?" No reply.

"I've often wondered if you could ever possibly have any kind feelings for me at all, Lucy, the ugly old bachelor."

"Who said you were old and ugly?" "I did; now look up and I'll tell you all about the wedding ring."

Which he did, and presently she was crying and laughing, both at the pathos and humor of the whole situation.

He also told her about the contemplated break-up of the home, which caused them to both look very solemn.

"Lucy," he went on, "I was very happy when you were there at threshold time. Mother was happy too, and you were the spirit of it all. Tell me, did you mind being there very much?"

"I was happy, too," she confessed.

"But not enough to stay for always, even after poor mother is gone, as she must go one day!" he hazarded sadly.

Lucy knew that Aaron was not the conceited type that could be played with, so answered truthfully, "Yes, for always, just with you."

"Then," he said, boyishly, "we'll send for two wedding rings, and an engagement ring too. Come, right now. Oh Lucy, how happy we'll be."

"Yes," said the girl, her cheeks flushed and her eyes bright, "and I'll go with you on the way from town to tell her. We'll take care of her. And she shan't leave her prairie home."

"God forever bless you," said Aaron, as he kissed her. "Now, about these rings," said Lucy practically, her pen poised, and the two beads were bent over the catalogue.

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