

"Pay the man," she commanded.

"Give me time. I'm always paying," grouched Sinbad.

"But he's waiting."

Bootsy loved to see money going out.

"Let him wait. I often have to wait," continued the grouch. "I'll pay at the counter anyway. Keep the money longer, so to speak, you know."

"Bootsy laughed:

"Gosh you're stingy!" she complimented.

"Suffering cats, I've got to be!"

"One would think you were the only person to owe money," Bootsy complained. "Quit thinking about it. Let the other fellow worry."

Sinbad looked at his wife in a sort of mystified way that had lately developed, and then laughed at her stupidity or his own fear of consequences.

Sinbad had certainly made the supreme sacrifice when he took unto himself his wife Bootsy, for she was the exact opposite to him in every conceivable way. Bootsy was either densely ignorant or indifferent as to their welfare, or she refused to permit the present to be sacrificed no matter how rosy a future such a sacrifice might promise. With a strange defiance that was unfathomable to Sinbad, she continued to ride comfortable in the saddle even when she must have known the wobbly condition of the knees beneath.

Things went on in this uncertain manner until the maturity date of the second payment on the home arrived. There was no money, but the situation must be faced. Sinbad had managed by a strength that did not appear to be his own, to rule the domestic roost to the extent that they had boarded exclusively at a very moderate restaurant, even although the efforts created much discord, and on more than one occasion nearly severed diplomatic relations. The cost at the end of the month aggregated much the same as during the canned food regime.

It was during those spats that Sinbad discovered that it was all up to Sinbad. Bootsy was more or less docile when handled with gloves on, and the husband regretted that he hadn't got wise long since. He discovered that when he set his foot down in a real masculine way, Bootsy sat up and took notice. The advantage he had of being a man as opposed to a woman, surprised him a bit at first, but after a while he got used to it and began to apply the lever more and more. He might buck her off. It was the first time he ever thought of taking such a mean advantage in order to shake the girl from her high perch.

When the notice soliciting payment arrived, Sinbad didn't even have the interest.

"Well," said the mortgagee a few days later, "it's all up to you, you know."

They were simple words, but they conveyed a complex meaning. It was the icy voice of cold business, and Sinbad began to have visions of a beautiful home flying away on an ironclad mortgage and carrying away with it the initial payment of one thousand dollars hard earned cash.

An appeal was made again to the impossible and unsympathetic Bootsy. There was no other court to which the case could be carried for adjustment, and there wasn't much daylight shining from that one. Bootsy was the local Privy Council and her decision would necessarily be final.

"Quit worrying," was the legal advice. "They won't take our home."

"They won't, eh?"

"What! And make you lose all that first payment? Nothing doing!"

Certainly! All the more for them."

"Don't you ever think it," said the High Council.

"Bootsy, don't be foolish. They will in a second."

"Oh, the mean things!"

"Mean or no mean, it's business. I'd do the same thing myself," he warned.

"Oh forget it!"

"We can't forget it. It's there, and you can't shake it."

"I don't believe it." Bootsy persisted.

"Notwithstanding all your optimism, we are going to lose our home unless some unforeseen miracle saves us," Sinbad groaned.

"And notwithstanding all your pessimism, I don't believe it," said Bootsy.

"Something must be done—at once."

"Perhaps after all I'd better take in washing!"

"It may come to that."

"When it does I look out for number one," she threatened.

"So do I," warned Sinbad.

They looked at each other across the table of the restaurant like two dogs that might spring at each other's throats at any moment. But neither sprang. And Sinbad, remembering his hereditary masculine advantage over a woman, continued to stare until the magnetism of his eyes broke the Bootsy defence and she dropped hers.

"Is that right?" she said, humbly, nibbling at some crumbs.

"It certainly is. The time has arrived when we must get down to honest-to-goodness housekeeping and no nonsense, with honest-to-goodness economy—brass tacks, I mean."

She surveyed him for a moment as though looking for a loop hole; and then, finding none, she said:

"Well, if you say so, I guess it must be done."

"Bravo! It sure must. Come."

They went out into the city and bought the necessities for a beginning, all the purchases being charged against the guarantee of a future pay cheque.

The first morning of honest-to-goodness cooking resembled a novice navigating a ship in dangerous waters. The new plan promised to be as much of a success as all former ones.

"What'll we have for breakfast?" cried Bootsy, with surprising enthusiasm.

"Pancakes," suggested Sinbad.

"Oh yes, pancakes," enthused Bootsy. "Why didn't I think of that?"

She secured the necessary pots and pans and material and began to break eggs into a white enamel bowl until five or six had been added:

"Say, have mercy on the eggs," he protested.

"Who's doing this?" she objected. "You or I?"

"We are. And you don't need so many eggs."

"Well the book said so."

"Look it up again to make sure," advised Sinbad.

"Haven't time." And she threw in some sugar, salt, and a quart of milk.

Sinbad laughed.

"'Pon my word!" he exclaimed. "You're cooking enough for a railway camp."

"Mind your own business!"

Sinbad realized the tragedy of the thing; but then, he had a certain husbandly compassion for Bootsy, who no doubt was doing the best she could, or at least, as well as she knew how.

There was as much humor attached to the cooking process as to the mixing, for the stack assumed huge proportions, and still she cooked, and cooked, and cooked.

"They're good, aren't they?" Bootsy complimented herself when they began to eat.

"They certainly are," Sinbad agreed, "But what are we going to do with the balance?"

Bootsy looked at her husband blankly for a second, seeming to realize her error in the tone of his humor. She didn't know whether to laugh or cry. She did neither.

"I tell you," suggested Sinbad. "We'll have pancakes every morning for a month until they are done. What do you think?"

"What, eat stale food! Nothing doing!" she protested.