



WHEN DOLLY CAME BACK

This is a dreadfully wicked story—at least it seems so at first, but it turns out so nicely that it is not so wicked after all.

By LOUISE MORRIS

DOLLY had just wakened to the fact that she had been in Heaven about a year, and she thought that she really would like a change, not perhaps to a warmer climate down south of the celestial regions, but she wanted something different, for so much grand opera singing was beginning to get on her nerves. So she went to St. Peter and asked for leave of absence for a short time. Dolly had a yearning to get a look at earth once more, and see how her poor Jack was getting on without her. St. Peter did not seem very well pleased, although he consented to give her a night off for a whirl about town, but on one condition only, that no matter what she saw or heard she must not make herself visible to the eye of mortal, because if she spoke, away she would be whisked off heavenwards and her little earthly spree would be cut short. St. Peter did not like his spirits getting away from him too often, he liked them bottled up for his own special benefit after they had been some little time in wood!

Well, Dolly thought this one night stand would have to do, so she fixed her halo on straight, pulled her robe together in a more up-to-date style, brushed her wings off and started to fly down on her evening's adventure. Calmly, serenely, she floated out on the blue ether. On her way down she passed a couple of fellow fliers, bird-men that is to say, and she laughed in her angel sleeves at their clumsy flying contrivances. "Oh, if they could only see me with my billowy wings," she thought.

On, on, down, down, to the city of big buildings, lies and graft—flew Dolly, over the great White Way that was just beginning to be lighted up for its evening crowd; and about half past six on a lovely autumn evening Dolly found herself perched over the roof of her former home.

Now, how to get in? She flew to the door of the apartment house; it was open and some one was going in through the door of her own flat. So she flitted in on her patent noiseless flyers, right into her own dear little sitting room, and sat as well as her wings would allow in her own old chair. Well, it did seem nice and cosy to be home again, so peaceful and quiet, everything just the same. Ah, dear old Jack would have nothing altered, thought Dolly tenderly.

Presently she heard steps coming along the passage, and in came Jane, dear Jane, her old factotum. Dolly controlled herself with an effort from making any sign.

Jane drew the shades, lighted the lamp and made the room even more inviting than before. Then she spoke to herself, "Ah, but it's lonesome here since the missus left. How me and the boss need her!" "Darling Jane," thought Dolly. "How lovely to hear your own obituary."

Then Jane went out and Dolly listened as anxiously in the spirit as she had ever listened in the flesh for the sound of the latch key at 7 o'clock. At last it came, and oh! but it was a struggle to see that face and not tell him she was here, right here, at home—he looked so sad and lonesome. Throwing himself into a chair he sighed. "Ah!" he cried, "How I wish my dear old girl were here. It's horrible coming home night after night and no one to meet you. It seems ages since she left."

"Oh, my poor, poor lonesome Jack," wailed Dolly.

Then Jane announced dinner.

"All right, Jane, serve it at once." Dolly followed him into the dining room. Things did not look quite the same here, there had been a few changes. Such a dainty dinner. Dolly knew if she were alive she would be quite hungry, it looked and smelled so good.

"Ah, Jane," Jack said, when he had finished and was sipping his coffee, "I enjoyed my dinner and you are a pretty good cook,"—loud smiles on Jane's part—"but it's a mighty wretched thing for a man to be left without his wife. I know she is happy, so I should not complain, but I do wish I were with her."

Imagine if you can Dolly's feelings. If she spoke, biff, bang, biff! away she would go and perhaps never see her Jack again.

"Oh, my poor darling, if my heart were not dead, how it would ache for you! if I only could comfort you! I almost wish you would marry again—some nice, quiet, plain little woman who would mother you and be good to you."

Dolly ran over in her mind a list of girls whom she would like to have comfort Jack and she chose Kate Hudson. No matter if she were a little older than Jack and a bit thin and had greyish hair; Jack would be doing a good action, too. Poor spinster Kate, who earned her own living, what a godsend it would be for her to have a home like this. In a spiritual sense, so to speak, Dolly felt so charitable; a nice, warm, near-earthly glow came over her as she thought how Kate would enjoy all the good things that once were hers, and now were going to waste on a melancholy man and an unappreciative maid.

loves me!" then silence, and Dolly gazes lovingly on her own dear boy as the smoke from his pipe curls upward.

All at once the bell rings three times. Jack sprang up, joy written all over his face, rushed to the door, opened it, and with a glad shout, gathered into his arms the bell ringer; then he almost carried her into the room where Dolly sat frozen in speechless amazement.

"Oh, Mabel, I've been so wretched, so lonesome. How glad I am you're back. Life has been like a desert these last three weeks. Here Jane, Jane, come quickly! The Missus is home! And now tell me what possessed you to give me such a delicious surprise?"

Dolly's wide open blue eyes gazed at Mabel; she could not understand. Mabel? Who was Mabel? Outwardly Dolly saw a very pretty dark eyed, dark haired little woman in a smart tailored suit and bewitching hat and veil. And how she and Jack were talking and laughing and kissing! And Jack looked exceedingly bright and happy.

"And now, my darling," Jack was saying, "Jane will bring you something to eat and we'll have a real cosy time."

"The reason I came home unexpectedly," said Mabel, "was that Mother was better, so I made up my mind I wanted to get back to my poor old lonesome hubby." More kisses on Jack's part!

Then Dolly knew! Knew that all Jack's sadness was not for her. The brute! The unfeeling brute had married again!

"Was it for this," moaned Dolly, "that I left my happy home up above. She's not pretty. I hate her! And she's got my diamond star on! How dare she? And Jack, how could he forget me so soon," and Dolly cried and cried, and wished she hadn't died; and a pretty little domestic tableau went on without her.

Mabel had taken off her coat and hat and looked prettier than ever and Jack was hovering over her making her taste a little of everything on Jane's tempting tray, and when she could eat no more, Jane cleared away all the things, and Jack, with his Mabel in his arms, compared notes on their three weeks away from each other. As for Dolly, she was suffering the misery of the damned. It's a fearful thing for a woman to be silent when her dead heart is breaking and her defunct head is bursting, and she must listen to loving words and see tender caresses!

"I shall tell St. Peter when I get back I have been in Hades to-night," Dolly cried to herself. Then she huddled down in her seat again to listen to some more torture, and such a stupid lot of foolishness! Quite forgotten was her former altruistic wish that Jack would marry again. Of course if it had been some elderly, bony, plain spinster, she would have been quite glad that he had a housekeeper again, with just perhaps a few little caresses on the side. But this! this!! This unseemly love making was too much, and she was only getting well chilled in her cold storage box of a year's occupancy!! "What's that he's saying?" Could she believe her ears!

"My first wife? Oh, my dear little girl, I never loved her, a tall blonde with pale blue eyes, a cold kind of creature, not like you my little dark-eyed gypsy."

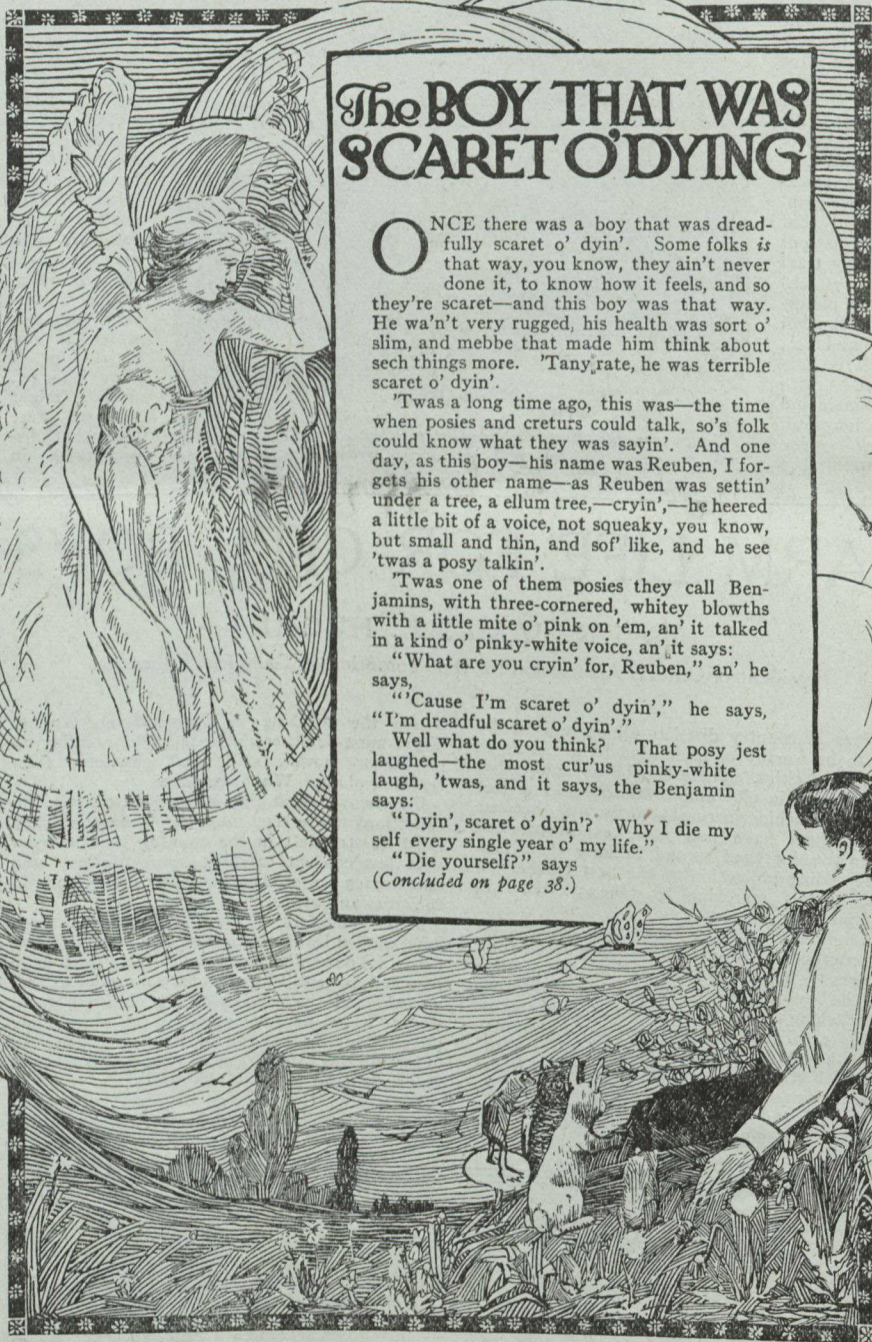
"Oh, I've always been so jealous of her, I thought you really loved her Mabel from the depths of Jack's still!" murmured Dolly.

"Never! Never!! NEVER!!!" cried Jack.

Ah, too much, too much was this for Dolly's storm wracked brain. St. Peter, Heaven, her promise, all, all were forgotten, at this terrible shock of Jack's duplicity. With a fearful shriek, she cried, "Oh! Jack, Jack, for heaven's sake don't say that." And then—then—she woke! Awoke to find the tears streaming down her face, and Jack, her own dear Jack, shaking her.

"Wake up, Dolly, wake up, you're dreaming, child." "Wake up?" she cried. "Was it all a dreadful dream? Is there no Mabel? Am I here? Right here, at home?"

"Say, old girl, you've had a bad dream. You shrieked enough to wake the seven sleepers. Tell me about it in the morning. I hate to say it served you right, but I told you not to finish all that Welsh rarebit at Martin's last night."



The contributor of this delightful little allegory states that she found the manuscript amongst the papers of a deceased friend. It was wrapped in a piece of paper and addressed by her, yet she was not aware of its existence until after she had been through her friend's desk and found it there. We are pleased to publish it posthumously as the work of a writer, who, had she lived, would have undoubtedly contributed much worthy material to Canadian literature.

Dolly looked at Jack's sad face and the place where her heart should be felt like an aching void. Presently he rose from the table and went back to the living room again. Dolly did wish he would stay in one place, her wings bothered her going about so. However at last he settled down in his cosy arm chair, paper in hand and pipe in mouth, and Dolly settled herself as well as her wings would permit in a chair in the corner to watch her darling and to wish she could comfort him. Jane came in a few minutes later.

"Mr. Winthrop, you forgot this letter."

"Ah, thanks Jane, it's the last letter from my girl and do you know, I would not be surprised if we should see her sooner than we expect."

"Well, I hope so, Sir," said Jane and departed to regions culinary.

Dolly felt a trifle puzzled at Jack's last remark. Had he become a convert to spiritualism? "And, oh, how sad," she sighed, "my last letter! Let me see, that must have been the summer I was away for a week. Oh, how he