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THE Phantom Lover.

(By the Author of "A Bachelor Husband.")

CHAPTER XX.

He heard the sigh of relief she gave.

"I'm glad," she said. "Somehow, lately, I have thought that you did know. Mr. Mellows . . . last night . . . I thought I saw him in the theatre last night. I know now that I was mistaken." She paused a moment and looked past him to the window and the cold grey street outside. "I shouldn't have seen him," she said again, as if to convince herself rather than him. "Because he is in Paris—I found out this morning that he is still in Paris."

"Yes," said Micky. His voice sounded choked. "And so—so you want to go out there to L. M. is that it?"

Her face brightened.

"Yes, I should have told June, only she isn't very sympathetic. You see—she smiled faintly—she hates my 'phantom lover' as she calls him, and so—so I know she would only do her best to keep me from going to him; but you—"

"I am afraid," said Micky quietly. "That I shall try and do the same thing."

"He turned and looked at her squarely."

"You've never been in Paris," he said "and probably you can't speak a word of French. You've probably never travelled any distance alone. Miss Shepstone, it's impossible for you to go. I am only advising you for your own good. Why not write to—to your fiance and ask him to make arrangements for you?"

"He broke off helplessly. The poor little letter in which she had already done so lay in his pocket at that moment. It turned him aside to think of the tissue of lies and deceit his own actions were forcing upon him."

"I—I have asked him," she said almost in a whisper, "but he said he couldn't have me—then! But that's quite a long time ago," she added hopefully. "And I thought if he saw me—if I got there and surprised him—"

Micky turned away. He could imagine so well what would happen if indeed she found Ashton. He walked over to the window and stood looking into the street with unseeing eyes.

"Have a little patience," he said presently. "Take my advice and stay here. If he—if he can, he will send for you. I am sure." She looked up quickly, a spark of anger in her eyes.

"You sound as if you think that will never be," she said sharply.

Micky met her gaze unflinchingly. "I don't think anything of the sort."

I know—I know if I were in his place, whoever he is—I should be counting the moments till I could . . . could have you with me." He smothered the momentary seriousness of his words with a little laugh. "And now, after that pretty compliment, aren't you going to reward me by taking my most excellent advice?"

The ghost of a smile crossed her face.

"I wanted you to say something so different," she told him wistfully.

"I know—but I'm not going to. Any one would advise you as I have. It isn't . . . it isn't that I'm prejudiced, or anything like that. I would give a great deal to see you happy. I hope you believe me."

She sat twisting her hands together nervously. After a moment she looked up at him.

"Thank you," she said.

She rose and began to pull on her gloves.

"I hope you don't think it's very dreadful of me to have come," she said deprecatingly. "But . . . but this morning, somehow, I felt I must have someone to talk to—some one to advise me . . ."

"I am honoured that you came," said Micky gravely. Her eyes fell before his.

"And—and you won't tell June?" she appealed.

He smiled rather sadly.

"I am not likely ever to tell any one," he said.

"No, I know. Mr. Mellows—she held out her hand to him suddenly, her fair face flushing—"I should like to take back something I said to you one day. Perhaps you don't remember, but I do, and lately—especially since last night, when you were so kind—I've felt that I wasn't just to you; and so . . . if you will forgive me, I should like to be friends with you after all."

She was crimson by the time she had finished, but Micky took her hand without answering, held it for a moment, then let it go.

"I suppose I mustn't offer you anything?" he said with forced lightness. "No coffee—or tea? It's cold out this morning. If you would care for anything, my man would bring it at once."

She laughed and shook her head.

"I don't want anything, thank you," she turned round at Micky's luxuriously furnished room. "Isn't it beautiful?" she asked him.

He smiled. "Do you like it? I am glad."

"I think it's lovely." She looked up at him. "I seem to have been climbing a ladder lately," she said. "Since I left that awful place in the Brixton Road—where I am now in heaps better than that was, but this—"

Micky was silent. It trembled on his lips to say that everything he had in the world was hers if only she would take it, but he knew the utter futility of it. Money and possessions

counted very little with her. She would not have minded the house in the Brixton Road at all with the man she loved.

He went downstairs with her.

"So we're really friends now?" he said when he bade her good-bye. "And you'll promise to let me advise you again when you're not quite sure what you ought to do?" There was a note of anxiety in his voice.

She flushed nervously.

"It's kind of you to be interested. It seemed strange to her that after all that had happened they should have so easily got back to their old footing of friendliness. But Micky was not at all happy. When she had gone he stood for a long time at the window staring moodily out.

When Driver brought lunch, he found Micky poring over a Bradshaw; he spoke to the man with elaborate carelessness.

"You'll have to take another trip to Paris—to-morrow will do."

"Yes, sir," Driver smoothed a crease in the cloth. "To post another letter, sir?" he asked expressively.

Micky looked up sharply, but Driver met his eyes innocently.

Micky coloured.

"No; it isn't a letter this time," he said. "It's to buy a fur coat."

CHAPTER XXI.

"The phantom lover," said June Mason lugubriously, "is certainly turning up trumps."

It was a week later, and she was giving Micky tea.

Either was out. She knew now that it was to see Esther he came. She was quite reconciled to the fact, and had got over her first pang of jealousy, but Esther's indifference to him enraged her.

"Can't the girl see what she's throwing away?" she asked herself furiously. "What on earth is she made of that she can't see what's waiting for her to take? If Micky had adored me as he adores her . . . well—my name wouldn't have been June Mason to-day."

But she kept such thoughts to herself and treated Micky very much the same as usual, though unconsciously there was a slight restraint in her manner, especially when Esther was present.

"I'm beginning to think that I've misjudged our Raymond," she went on laughingly. "Perhaps some one has converted him. Anyway, he's treating Esther handsomely. First the money, and now the fur coat. . . . Suddenly she looked up with sudden interest.

"Oh, it's come, then, has it?" he said eagerly.

"Come! It's been here two days. How did you know?" she asked with sudden suspicion.

"I heard you talking about it. Wasn't it you? No? Then it must have been Miss Shepstone."

"I dare say," said June easily. "I never saw any one so delighted with a thing as she was with that coat. And it is a beauty, Micky. I only hope it's paid for," she added practically.

"Why shouldn't it be paid for?" Micky said.

She made a little grimace.

"Because Raymond Ashton never paid for things if he could help it; and you know he didn't," she told him.

"However, as he seems to be a reformed character, we'll give him the benefit of the doubt." Suddenly she began to laugh. "And that isn't all," she said again. "This morning a caller arrived for that blessed cat—"

She indicated Charlie sleeping peacefully on the rug. "A silver collar, too my boy, with Esther's name on it . . ."

Micky stooped to examine the collar; his face was red when, after a moment, he looked up again.

"Esther declares she never told him we'd got a cat," June told him doubtfully. "But, of course, she must have done, or else the man's got second sight."

Micky was drinking his tea; he choked suddenly.

A feeling of panic closed upon him. Never told him she'd got a cat? Of course she hadn't. What a fool he had been to make such a blunder—what an utter blockhead.

"I expect she did tell him," he managed to say.

"Yes, that's what I think," June lit a cigarette and passed the lighted match over to Micky.

"Anyway, Esther goes about the place stung all day," she added dryly. "There's no doubt at all that she's up in the seventh heaven of happiness. Reams of letters the man writes her. Perhaps, as the novels tell us, love is a wonderful thing—"

She looked at Micky with a comical expression in her queer eyes. "I should say it must be it's reformed that man," she added cynically.

Micky said nothing. He had been very uncomfortable about things during the last few days. As far as he could find out, Ashton had not yet been married. Supposing it had all been bluff when he said he was going to be married—supposing he turned up again in London?

Micky stayed as long as he could in case Esther came in; it was only when he began to feel sure that June knew why he was dragging his visit to such a length that he said he ought to be going.

"There's no hurry," she said kindly. "Why not wait till Esther comes in?"

Micky shook his head; he said he couldn't spare the time, but in his heart he knew quite well that he intended to wait.

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"I suppose she—or she never talks any more about taking a job now, eh?" he asked after a moment.

"No, I don't think so; that man's word is law to her, you know. I believe if he said 'Come out here and marry me at once' she'd fly off by the next train. As a matter of fact, I'm expecting something of the sort almost daily."

"I don't think she'll do that," Micky said. He stood back to the fire, with his hands in his pockets, staring up to the ceiling.

"No!" June watched him quizzically. "Do you know, Micky," she said at last, "that I consider you've altered a lot lately?"

He swung round at once, and scrutinized himself in the glass over the mantelshelf.

"For the worse, or the better?" he asked anxiously. "I know I never was exactly an Adonis."

She laughed merrily.

"I don't mean your face, stupid, but yourself. You're quieter, you don't go about so much; in fact"—she challenged him deliberately—"I believe you're in love."

"So I am," said Micky stolidly.

She pretended not to take him seriously.

"It's no joking matter—I mean what I say."

"So do I," said Micky. He laughed. He came over to where she was sitting, and stood behind her chair so that she could not see his face. "I've tried to make up my mind to tell you lots of times," he said. . . . He stopped and moved away restlessly.

June sat very still; presently—"It's Esther," she said quietly.

"Yes."

"Poor old Micky! I'm sorry for me; I walked into it with my eyes wide open. I knew she was engaged—I knew it all the time."

"And Esther . . . does she know? Have you told her?"

"Yes. . . . She took it as an insult. Perhaps it was; I don't know. You see, I knew she was engaged to that other fellow."

"An outsider! who isn't worth a thought," June cried indignantly. "Micky, however could she have refused you?"

He laughed. He looked down at her with a comical expression in his eyes.

"She's not the first woman who's done that," he reminded her.

She sat up with sudden haste.

"That wasn't anything, but this—"

"This," said Micky, "isn't anything either, except on my side. You always told me that some day I shouldn't be able to have what I wanted. You were right."

"I should like to slap her!" said June viciously.

He laughed outright.

"If you did I should slap you, my dear." He went back to his chair by the fire. "It's only between ourselves, June," he said.

"Of course . . . and Micky—do you think she will marry Ashton?"

Micky did not answer for a moment.

"No," he said at last. "I don't think so."

June stared at him.

"Then—then do you mean—?" But he would not tell her anything.

"You've heard quite enough for one day," he said teasingly.

"Don't worry your head about me! I don't know why I told you—somehow I thought you'd guessed."

(To be continued.)

Reduced Salmon Pack for 1921.
 Early estimates of the salmon pack of British Columbia for 1921 indicate that the output will be of comparatively small proportions, the ratio running from 40 down to 20 per cent. of normal. Consul General F. M. Ryder, of Vancouver, intimates that some canneries are prepared to put up about 35 per cent. of their normal pack, while others are figuring only on 15 per cent. No "chums" will be canned in British Columbia during 1921, as there are said to be three-quarters of a million cases still in stock without a market. According to Mr. Ryder, canners contend that with Japan putting 500,000 cases of redfish on the British market, Alaska canneries carrying over about 400,000 cases over the end of the year, for the first time in four or five years, and with the pack from the Columbia River and Puget Sound there would be a gigantic total pack all rushing to the British market. Of the 615,388 hundredweight of canned salmon exported from Canada during 1920, the United Kingdom took 310,451 hundredweight—Financial Post.

Household Notes.
 Stale bread is best for filling a bowl. Start corn beef to boil in cold water. Keep root vegetables in a dry place.
 A northern exposure is best for a kitchen.
 Dry fine blankets on curtain stretchers.
 Bait the mousetrap with sunflower seed.
 Puff paste must be made rapidly in a cool room.
 Keep ferns away from gas and out of draughts.
 Keep soiled linen from bathroom in a closed hamper.
 Remove the burned surface of bread with a grater.
 Carrots candied with brown sugar are delicious and nourishing.

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 Pattern 3521 was used to make this style. It is cut in 4 Sizes: 4, 6, 8 and 10 years. A 6 year size will require 2 1/2 yards of 44 inch material.
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 A pattern of this illustration mailed to any address on receipt of 15 cents in silver or stamps.

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 Pattern 3519 was used to make this model. It is cut in 3 Sizes: 6 months, 1 year and 2 years. A 1 year size will require 2 1/2 yards of 27 inch material.
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