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AN ANGEL ELEPHANT

By GRETCHEN GRAYDON

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"I wonder if you dream how adorable you are in that blue gown," Hetherington said, trying to possess himself of Philomena's hand.

She drew it away, pursed her lips daintily, and flung back at him, "Oh! It's the gown, is it? Thank you for telling me. I shall be sure to wear it the next time the MacCarty comes to see us."

"Confound the MacCarty!" Hetherington ejaculated. "I'd like to break his head for him, the presumptuous oaf. What business has he even to admire you?"

"Mayn't a cat look at a king?" Philomena interrupted demurely, her eyes dancing in the screen of their long lashes.

She had the charm of infinite variety. Some days she was positively ugly, others ravishingly beautiful. This was one of the beautiful days. She knew it, and acted upon the knowledge. She owed Hetherington for several things, chiefly Miss Mannering. He should be paid in full. He had never proposed to her outright, but all along assumed gaily that she would marry him, speaking openly, in a light comedy manner that might mean everything or nothing. She had not resented the light comedy manner, being by no means sure of her own mind.

Still it had been distinctly aggravating to have him run off after the Mannering girl the same as the other men. For two whole days he had kept in the new beauty's train; worse still, he had come back to Philomena not merely repentant, but with the air of one who feels that he has discharged the duty of a proper man.

"A cat may look at a king; the proverb is silent as to queens," Hetherington retorted. "Moreover, you can scarcely stretch it to fit an elephant, which is the MacCarty's animal prototype."

"Now I know how I came to promise him two dances—I adore elephants—always did," Philomena murmured, reflectively, as if aside.

Hetherington caught both her hands and drew her to her feet. "Do you mean to keep the promise?" he asked, his face darkening. She smiled up at him audaciously as she answered:

"Who knows? He may prefer to sit them out. But if he should, you needn't mind, we will take care to keep out of earshot of you and Miss Mannering."

"Oh I see," Hetherington laughed, not quite easily, but with a magical lightening of countenance. "I must say that will be handsome of you," he went on; then, his hands slipping up to her shoulders, "Sweetheart, let's run away from everything—the grand ball, the elephant, the Mannering—run away and get married. Listen! It will be so easy; only a spin across country to that dear little stone church we saw last week—we'll take along witnesses—and telegraph for our traps to follow us. If 'twere done, when 'twere done then 'twere well 'twere done quickly. Think how much we shall escape, all the fuss and frills and upsets of a big wedding. And this is the only way to escape them. I know your aunt has her heart set on St. Thomas', with twelve bridesmaids, and all the rest of it. Say yes, there's a darling. I will live just to keep you from being sorry for it, even one time."

"It sounds enticing," Philomena said, then with a reflective sigh: "But it can't be done. You see if I ran off with you, the Mannering would inevitably get the MacCarty and his millions. That's what she is here for, and that's what I'm bound not to let her do."

"Have your joke," Hetherington grumbled, trying to draw her to his breast.

She put him away with gentle dignity, saying: "But it is not a joke. That's why I am so provoked with you; you let yourself be one of her bait gudgeons. Oh, she's a shrewd piece—she knows a man like the MacCarty means to pick a wife as he has picked a racing stable, from among those other men want very much."

"How do you know?" Hetherington demanded.

Philomena opened her eyes very wide. "Why, he told me so," she said. "You know we are great friends and talk of many things. And he is really vastly entertaining—such a big bulk of raw human nature, with streaks of wit and other streaks of understanding through its honest ignorance."

"H-m! You are somewhat a belle. How many times has he proposed to you?" Hetherington asked.

"Only once, the first day," Philomena said, smiling wickily. "I asked time for consideration, but he wouldn't give it. He wanted a straight yes or no, but consoled me by telling me that if after awhile he was not engaged he would give me another chance. So I must be sure and make up my mind. I

know he is not engaged, not unless Miss Mannering has landed him since morning."

"Is your mind made up?" Hetherington asked teasingly.

Philomena shook her head, but said brightly: "Not yet. Still, there's no telling what may happen between dances."

"Then you refuse—my plan and everything?" Hetherington said, paling visibly.

Philomena shot a glance at him and shivered faintly, but said, with an accent of gentle surprise, "Why, I did that some time ago."

"You will fight the Mannering woman for the MacCarty. You would not even raise a finger for me," Hetherington began bitterly.

Philomena laughed a soft, malicious laugh. "One saves a novice from drowning. A swimmer who knows the waters is apt to regard help as an impertinence," she said.

Hetherington set his teeth. "Goodby," he said, hardly above his breath, holding out his hand. Philomena looked at him doubtfully and asked, "Where are you going?"

"I don't know—to the devil most likely," he answered recklessly.

"Beg pardon, telegram for you, sir," a footman said, coming to the pair with a yellow envelope on his tray.

Hetherington tore it open, glanced at its contents, then stood twisting it between his fingers and smiling an odd, dazed smile. After a long breath he took Philomena in his arms and kissed her, saying in her ear:

"Luck has stood your friend. I'm a beggar, or shall be in two hours more. That was a call for margins I can no more put up than I can fly. I've been speculating wildly. I wanted you so badly I thought I must offer you millions no less than myself. Until today they seemed in my grasp. That was why I dared. But I'm losing everything at once."

"Not quite," she said, clinging to him, her eyes shining up at him through a mist of tears. "You may have me, if you lose everything else. I'm not afraid of poverty if I may have love."

"Seems like it's time I took a hand in this game," a throaty voice said behind them, and there stood the MacCarty, very red, and all over perspiration. He had been ambushed all the while in the summer house outside which the lovers stood. "You folks think list'nin' ain't the right thing," he went on. "No more it ain't, but I waked from a nap as you were in the midst o' talkin', and it didn't take ten words to show me the lay o' the land. I like the lay of it. The little lady thar," nodding toward Philomena, "has got me doped out fine and pat, but she didn't make sport of the old galoot. She said it in sport, but she has looked out fer me. And more'n that, she's made me understand that was at least one woman money couldn't buy. You ain't half good enough fer her," this to Hetherington with a chuckle. "But since it appears she likes the looks o' ye, be hanged if you're a-goin' to take her and try love in a cottage. At least, not unless the cottage's got all the fixin's. No need to tell me how you stand. I ain't quite out o' the market if I am up here in the mountains, courtin' and rusticatin'. If you need margins, I know the reason why. Go right straight to the telephone. I'll be along o' ye; together we'll get the straight o' things down to a dot over my private wire. I'm goin' to see you through if it takes one million of even two. But when you are through you git married and keep out of sech messes."

"I will," Hetherington said, holding out his hand.

Before the MacCarty could take it, Philomena flung herself between them, threw her arms about his thick neck and kissed him on both cheeks. "You're an angel elephant," she murmured. "I shall love you always, no matter what he says," with a nod toward Hetherington.

"He says, 'Amendment accepted,'" Hetherington said, wringing the MacCarty's hand.

That gentleman laughed apologetically, but returned the grip heartily, and said as he puffed away with Hetherington at his elbow:

"It takes just an angel elephant to skeer the bulls and bears good and hard."

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Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound Makes Sick Women Well.

am writing you."—Myrtle Mills, Oquawka, Ill.

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