# THE SPIDER AND THE LIE

*There's Many a Slip Twixt Ammonia and The Cup*

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Illustrated by BERT SALG

AN EXPRESSION of unalloyed bliss decorated the ebony features of Semore Mashby at sight of the crowd which eddied impatiently about the entrance to the rambling frame structure across the road. To his ears came the soothing symphony of silver and the eyes of the emaciated little negro glistened as he grew more certainly certain that this latest—and riskiest—of his business ventures was receiving the accolade of success.

His eyes were focused upon the ornate sign which hung above the portals of the ex-warehouse:

NAGARA FALLS SKATING RINK
"Good Skates for Good Scouts"
Come & Enjoy the Poettry of Motion
Constant Music
Admission Fifty Cents Whether You
Is or Aint Got Skates
PROF ZERO HARRIS
World Champeen Colored Skater
Will Give Moderate Lessons at
Moderate Prieces.

From within came the mournful wail of a once-proud orchestrion, now sadly in need of the ministration of some kindly mechanic. This was accompanied by the rhythmic srssssh-shrrsh of wooden-rollered skates upon the well chalked floor.

The floor was a whirling mass of color. Birmingham's very bestest colored society was represented by an overwhelming majority, giving mute testimony to the fact that the recrudescence of the skating craze had swept the city by storm.

Semore's gaze feasted upon the revelers and he felt his money pocket growing heavier in anticipation.

Now the orchestrion wheezed away to a sickening pause, then burst forth afresh in a roar of jazz. As as an afresh in a roar of jazz. At as an the floor and a lithe and graceful figure zipped to the center and contorted itself into a series of amazing figures.

At the crest of the wave of popularity which had greeted the return of roller-skating rode Professor Zero Harris, until recently a stranger in the city.

Zero Harris could skate. He whirled and pirouted upon one wheel; he spun and glided and zipped about the smooth floor like a blackbird on wheels.

Zero's personality had put across the Niagara Falls venture just as his unflagging optimism, combined with that personality, had persuaded the canny Semore Mashby into making the necessary original investment.

Zero Harris, it appeared, had labored for many years in and around skating rinks at the time when the roller sport was at its zenith. He came to Birmingham with the idea of securing a position in his profession of barbering but an acquaintanship with Semore Mashby, reputed to be the wealthiest man of color in Birmingham, and his old love for the rink sport, prompted him to undertake the task of interesting the Mashby capital in the venture.

It required all of Zero's spellbinding art, and a readiness to risk a large percentage of his own modest capital, to bring Semore in. They divided the expense of equipment, which, under the terms of copartnership, was owned in common. The building had been secured by Semore—a rambling structure in the recesses of which Mr. Mashby had conducted a desultory warehouse business for a number of years.

But now as Semore surveyed the scene of jollity he found in his heart a sentiment whichc was not entirely happiness. Each skater represented 50 cents to the Mashby eye and Semore felt within himself keen regret that only a moiety of that sum was finding its way into his own pocket. It annoyed him that Professor Harris was sharing the financial success of the enterprise.

Too, there was a more personal angle to Semore's reluctance to share his profits with Zero Harris. And that angle was even at the moment gliding out onto the floor, hands outstretched toward Zero.

Miss Ammonia Mims had for some time been the apple of Mr. Mashby's matrimonial eye. He was pleased by her reputation for frugality and domestic alertness. Nor was her beauty entirely wasted upon Semore. He had proceeded methodically about his courtship, quite convinced that any moment he cared to lay his fortune at her feet she would plunge willingly into the matrimonial sea. And so she most probably would have done had not Professor Zero Harris appeared.

Ammonia ranked as the best skater among the colored feminine citizenry and that distinction marked the bond of friendship between herself and Zero.

The orchestrion stumbled to a halt. Zero and his lady friend glided the length of the floor and paused before the thin figure of the co-owner of the Niagara Falls. They were palpitant with the joy and excitement of the moment.

"Evenin', partner."

" 'Lo, Zero." Then, with his most radiant smile, "An' how you is, Miss Ammonia?"

She dimpled bewitchingly. "Tol'able, thank you."

From the other side of the floor came a terrific crash and a shrill, plaintive feminine voice—"Mistuh Harris—O-o-oh! Professor Harris!"

Zero was off like a streak, but when the fair Ammonia would have pursued him Semore detained her.

"Jes' a minute, Ammonia. I craves to make talk with you."

"Yassuh, Brother Mashby. Shoot."

"It's about that Zero feller. Ammonia: how come you to be so intrusted in him?"

A blush of pale lavender suffused her cheeks. "Aw! you g'wan, Mistuh Mashby. I ain't instrusted in Zero Harris."

Her coy manner gave the lie to her words and Semore was not pleased. "You suttinly ac's like he was the fondest man you is of."

"Ain't he yo' partner in the Niag'ra Falls an' ain't you-all two makin' a heap of money?"

Semore squirmed. This was rubbing it in with a vengeance. So Zero's stock soared high with the young lady by reason of their copartnership!

"He ain't no kind of a man fo' you to make ma'iage with, Ammonia. He ain't nothin' on'y a shif'less, nonethinkin' skater which if I hadn't been good enough to staht him off in this rink business, he woul'n't hahdly have a job."

As he discerned the flying figure of Zero Harris once again in search of Ammonia, he turned away with a last bitter fling of advice—"You is traipsin' 'round with Zero 'cause you think he has got something'. Ise tellin' you now he ain't got nothin' an' he's li'ble to lose that."

Zero claimed her, and, with arms linked, they sped away into the mass of skaters.

The Niagara Falls skating rink was a welter of merriment and prosperity. Above the rhythmic whir of skate-wheels and the valiant cacophony of the orchestrion, Semore Mashby could hear the clink of money as it tinkled into the box-office cash drawer, the register at the soft-drink concession, the hot-dog stand in the far corner. And each event above actual expenses Semore was dividing with the debonair young professor who repaid him by dazzling the young lady whom Semore had marked out as his own.

The feet of Miss Ammonia Mims divorced themselves from the ground.

True, each had furnished an equal share of the money which provided the equipment and Zero was working without salary—having merely a modest drawing account to tide him over until the day—three months from the opening of the rink—when they should make their first financial accounting and division of profits; but Semore felt that without his support the enterprise would have died a-bornin'.

Finally an idea came to him and he merged into the night that he might walk a long distance and reflect upon this plan to restore what he conceived to be the equities of the situation.

Meanwhile Zero Harris injected the full radiance of his ingratiating personality in the effort to bewitch the marvelous Ammonia Mims. Ammonia liked the young gentleman and made no bones about it. Only the annoyance of her recent scene with Semore Mashby disturbed the serenity of their contentment.

"Don't you worry 'bout what Semore Mashby says," insisted Zero.

"Aw! Zero. . . . But Semore is a pow'ful man in Bummin'ham."

"Shuh! He ain't got a thing but money."

"Money counts."

"Ise gittin' money, too. Sweetness. Lookit all these folks in heah at four bits each. Two bits out of each admission goes to me after espenses is taken out. Also I an' Semore gits a split fum the hot-dog an' sof'-drink concessions. Ise gwine make a heap of money in this rink. Sugar-foot; an' when I does so I is gwine ast a suttin' young lady will she leave off her job of stenographing fo' Lawyer Evans Chew an' take a position lookin' after my house."

"You hush!"

The following morning Mr. Mashby presented himself at the office of Lawyer Evans Chew.

The suite of offices occupied by the erudite colored attorney were attractive in the extreme. A ground-glass door opened from the hallway into a large and airy anteroom in one corner of which was a near-mahogany typewriter desk where sat the trim figure of Miss Ammonia Mims.

"Mawnin', Ammonia."

"Mawnin', Mistuh Mashby."

"Has Lawyer Chew come in yet?"

"He'll be heah mos' any minute. Won't you be—

The door was flung open and Lawyer Evans Chew breezed into the room. The attorney was in fine fettle.

"What I can do you for this mawnin', Mistuh Mashby?"

Once closeted with the lawyer in the latter's mahogany-furnished office, Semore outlined a certain financial deal which aimed at the financial destruction of Professor Zero Harris.

"In the fust place, Lawyer Chew, you know that I an' Zero is in partnership with that skatin' rink."

"I is aware of that salient fac', Brother Mashby."

"We have been runnin' six weeks an' we ain't due to settle up until the end of th'ee months. That means six weeks mo' befo' we has an accounting. In other words, except that he has a drawin' account, Brother Harris don't know where he is at, n'r neither he won't know until us settles. Now I aims that when he fins' out where he is at, he won't be there."

Chew rubbed the palms of his hands together unctiously. "Preceed, Brother Mashby; preceed. It begins to sound like you exhibited yo' perceptions when you sillected me as yo' attorney."

"It's thisaway," explained the little man. "The buildin' that the Niag'ra Falls rink is in was one which I has used as a warehouse fo' about th'ee years. The business never amounted to much an' not on'y I paid $20 a month fo' same, but I ain't never had no lease, jest rentin' fum month to month. Now what I craves is this; that you should get me a five-yeah lease at $20 a month or even $25 does the owner think maybe the propitty is wuth a littel more'n what he has been gettin' fo' same. Does you understand?"

"I has a vast comprehension."

"Also, Lawyer Chew, I craves that Brother Harris don't know nothin' about my takin' out this lease."

"You aims fo' him to think you had it all the time?"

"Exac'ly."

There was considerably more conversation before the smaller man departed. He made his way to his own musty, dingy sanctum where he gave 110 per cent of his attention to the task of evading the usury laws of Alamaba.

Meanwhile, having set in motion the machinery which he hoped would eventually macerate Mr. Zero Harris, he forgot the affair in the twin interests of his courtship of Ammonia and his pursuit of addition lucre to add to his healthy bank accounts. And so immersed was he in both that until the storm burst he was unaware of the fact that fate had stepped in and dealt him a royal flush from a cold deck.

Fate's emissary in this particular case was no less a personage than Miss Mallissie Cheese, one of the most bewitching of Darktown's belles.

Mallissie was there on all counts. She was built on generous lines which, however, remained in control; and she was inclined to be a vamp. The covetous eye of Miss Cheese had fallen upon the trim figure of Prof. Zero Harris and she found herself much pleased. Quite deliberately, therefore, Mallissie set about the task of appropriating Zero to her own uses. She started by paying him a bonus price for private lessons—given publicly. And Zero, being a good business man, fell into the trap. He regretted the fact that it took much of his rink time from the fair Ammonia but he was sure Ammonia would understand—so sure that he didn't even bother to explain. And even if he had explained, it is more than probable that Ammonia would not have cared to understand since she not only was vastly fond and jealous of Zero, but she despised Mallissie.

"Ev'ything you gits, you gits, an' ev'ything I gits you gits."

Night after night when the merry-makers jammed the well chalked floor of the Niagara Falls skating rink, Zero went dutifully about his task of teaching Mallissie to skate whilst Ammonia pretended to be indifferent to the attentions which she fancied he was lavishing upon the other woman.

And although she maintained a courageous front, she shed many sad, salt tears in the seclusion of her golden-oak-furnished boudoir.

In blissful ignorance, Zero skated to his fall and that fall occurred one night when a more important engagement caused Mallissie Cheese to remain away from the rink. The place was crowded with eager humanity and Ammonia was pointedly accepting the attentions of the young cavaliers who flocked about her.

Zero admired her from a distance for a few minutes, and then, when the music had stopped momentarily and the crowd about her thinned somewhat, he glided across the floor and bowed smilingly.

"How 'bout skatin' the next waltz with me, Ammonia?"

Events of the past fortnight had cut Miss Mims to the quick. Her head tipped to one side and she arched her penciled eyebrows disdainfully.

"Says which?"

"How 'bout givin' me a skate?"

"How come you to espec' me to do such, Prof. Harris?"

Zero grinned: She would have her little joke. "You is the humorestest gal, Ammonia. C'mon; le's us skate."

"No."

"No?"

"Tha's what I said. Is you blind that you cain't heah me?"

Obviously, Zero was. "Leave off yo' jokin', Ammonia—"

"I ain't jokin'."

"You ac's like such."

"Ac's like ain't is like."

"But Ammonia—"

"Don't you go buttin' me. An' I wan you to understan' right now that I ain't no kind of a gal which you can skate with when they ain't nobody else which you craves to skate with more. Tha's all, Mistuh Harris. That's ev'y last word I has got to say about it or you, an' the sooner you fin's yo'se'f another lady pahtner, the better off I is gwine be."

News of the quarrel spread swiftly about the hall and more than one feminine eye lighted eagerly at the prospect that, now Zero was an unwilling free agent, there might be some chance to ensnare his approval. More than one of these scheming young ladies took occasion to pour kerosene upon the fires of Ammonia's righteous indignation.

Through the kindly offices of the gossipy Sis Callie Flukers, Semore Mashby was made aware of the status, and a chortle of unadulterated delight came from between the Mashby lips.

But Semore was not entirely deluded. He knew that Ammonia was infatuated with Zero and that the lover's quarrel was a thing of troublous impermanence. On the other hand, if he could effect the departure of Mr. Harris from Birmingham, there was a strong likelihood that Ammonia might eventually come to his arms.

With Semore deluging Ammonia with attention and Zero constantly in the society of the Junoesque Miss Cheese, the cosmic scheme of the principals was at sixes and sevens. And it was during that period that Lawyer Evans Chew summoned Ammonia and dictated to her the terms of the lease which he had secured from the owner of the warehouse in which the Niagara Falls Skating rink was located.

The lease was five years at a monthly rental of $25, and it was executed in favor of Semore Mashby. Ammonia looked up from her notebook—

"To Semore Mashby?" she inquired, "or to Mistum Mashby an' Mistuh Harris?"

"Semore." Chew shook his head. "I got a hunch he is fixin' to do Zero dirt."

"How come?"

"Them two fellers ain't gwine have a settlement fo' another th'ee weeks yet an' Zero mos' likely ain't thought nothin' 'bout the rent. Now heah goes Semore leasin' the buildin' himself whichc he has rented fum month to month befo' an' the chances is he's gwine stick the partnership heavy fo' rentin' fum himself."

Semore's procedure was now very clear to Ammonia, and her first sentiment was one of unholy joy that some one was about to bring suffering to the man who apparently had abandoned her that he might pursue the flagrant Mallissie. But gradually that feeling subsided in bitterness against Semore Mashby and a wish that she and Zero were friends again that she might pass on to him the proof of his partner's perfidy. At length she tossed her head. That was out of the question....and she had the satisfaction of knowing that whatever Zero's true feelings might be regarding her, he would suffer by reason of their quarrel.

An era of magnificent prosperity had descended upon the Niagara Falls Skating rink. Flushed with success, Zero's inventive brain was working overtime and he commenced promoting a succession of special affairs whichc taxed the capacity of the rink to its uttermost.

Then Mashby conceived the idea of a skating race for ladies.

He knew that Ammonia was easily the best of Birmingham's feminine skaters; she was not only master of the more elementary fancy figures but she could make genuine speed about the smooth, well-chalked floor. By promoting a race for the fair sex, then, Semore realized that he was affording her the opportunity for a triumph such as she had never before experienced. The night of the race would be a red letter one for her, and he planned the regal presentation of a silver cup to her immediately at the triumphant conclusion of the contest.

He suggested the plan to Zero and that gentleman sparkled with enthusiasm. Fine! That's a swell idea, Semore."

"Who you reckon is gwine win same?"

"Ammonia."

Semore simulated surprise. "You reckon she's gwine win?"

"Semore—they ain't no woman in Bummin'ham can skate as fast frontways as she can backwards. They ain't no mo' chance of beatin' that gal in a skatin' race in Bummin'ham than they is of makin' a cullud man sadder'n what I is right now." He laid a gentle hand on Semore's shoulder. "What you reckon is eatin' that gal?"

"Well, she was tellin' me t'other day that she was sick an' tired of you. Said you wasn't no good, or somethin'. Anyway, she wasn't complimentin' you none."

Zero writhed. Then, alone, he gave thought to the words of Mr. Mashby and a bit of light penetrated.

Semore had been unnecessarily frank in passing along the good word and there had been an evil glint in the Mashby eye. Too, Zero hadn't been unmindful of the avid attention which Semore had been paying Ammonia. It was possible . . . but Zero shook his head determinedly. He wouldn't believe that. Still, here was Semore promoting a skating race for no reason in the world save to give Ammonia a chance to shine before the public, and Zero knew the young lady well enough to realize that she would be duly grateful to the creator of this opportunity.

The Niagara Falls attained the end of the third month of its existence and that night after the rink closed Zero Harris and Semore Mashby retired to the latter's office for their first settlement. Zero was eager and alert, but there was about Mr. Mashby a peculiar diffidence, which, however, escaped the eye of his partner.

"It's thisaway," he explained to Zero. "U's has been runnin' fo' three months. Su'tractin' our runnin' expenses durin' that time we shows a net earnin' on the runnin' of the rink of five hund'ed an' ten dollars. Is that satisfactory?"

Zero's eyes glistened. "Sho'ly am, Brother Mashby."

"Yo' half of that," pursued Semore, "would be two hund'ed an' fifty-five dollars, but you has drawed out one hund'ed an' sixty."

"Tha's right. Tha's right, Brother Mashby—I ain't 'sputin' you on that." Zero did a little quick figuring. "So you jes' gives me the ninety-five dollars which is due me, an'—"

Mr. Mashby arched eyebrows inquisitively. "Says which?"

"Says you gives me my balance of ninety-five dollars."

"You ain't got no sech of a balance."

"How come not?"

Semore strove to conceal his nervousness. "Fac' of the matter, Mistuh Harris, you not only ain't got no $95 comin' to you, but you owes me $105 cash money!"

Zero gasped. "Wha's that you is sayin' with you' mouf?"

"I says you owes me $105."

"You is crazy as you looks."

"Huh! You don't know what you is talkin' about"

"An' you ain't talkin' about nathin', Semore—an' you is likely to forget that. What you ain't got in yo' haid is no brains—speechifyin' 'bout me owin' you money. How come you to spill so much foolishment fum between yo' lips?"

Mr. Mashby replied with excessive dignity. "You fo'gits the rent."

"The which?"

"The rent."

"Which rent?"

"The rent which Masby & Harris, proprietors of the Niag'ra Falls Skatin' Rink, is payin' to Semore Mosby fo' said rink."

Zero shook his head slowly. "How much that is, Semore?"

"Sixteen hund'ed dollars a year. Tha's four hund'ed dollars a quarter; two hund'ed I pays an' two hund'ed you pays. You has ninety-five dollars comin' to you and you owes me two hund'ed fo' rent. So you ain't got nothin' comin' to you an' besides that you owes me one hund'ed an' five dollars."

Mr. Harris rose and crossed the room. The thing was not entirely clear to him but he had a hunch that he was being stung. He spoke without turning. "Ev'ything you gits, you gits," he summarized. "An' ev'ything I gits you gits."

"Looks that way," agreed Semore genially. "Fact of the matter is, seems like to me you has made a bad business deal. Looks like the best thing you can do is to get out an' find you a regular job to earn that hund'ed an' five dollars you owes me. Cause the longer you remains where you is at the worser you gits into debt."

Zero's slender fingers were trembling. His next remark was made in a low puzzled voice as though intended for his own enlightenment—"I wuks hahd fo' three months an' gits nothin' an' then at the end of that time I still has that much, less a hund'ed dollars." An idea smote him and he whirled. "How come this rent business ain't never been mentioned befo'?"

"Never was due until now," returned Semore logically.

"Hmm! It seems wrong."

"Seems ain't is. Now I tell you what I is willin' to do, Zero. I'se willin' you should assign to me all yo' right, title an' interest in the Niag'ra Falls fo' one hund'ed an' five dollars, same bein' how much you owes me. I goes ahaid an' operates same entirely at my own espense an' releases you fum all obligation. Don't that sound fair?"

"Mm-hmm! It soun's so awful fair that somethin' tells me it ain't."

"The longer you keeps on wukkin' fo' the Niag'ra Falls the less you has got."

Zero's eyes narrowed. "Cain't quit now," he said positively.

"How come not?"

"Pussonal reasons."

Semore understood.

Until late that night Zero walked the streets alone, giving melancholy thought to his sudden break in luck.

At 2 o'clock in the morning he was making his way mournfully down Avenue F when the door of Lawyer Evans Chew's house opened and Florian Slappey, the Beau Brummel of Darktown, emerged. He tossed a bit of airy persiflage over his shoulder at the dejected co-members of the Full House Poker club who stood upon the Chew verands—then, seeing his lonesome friend, linked arms and strolled down the street with him.

"You look like you happened to an accident, Zero."

Welcoming the opportunity, Zero passionately poured his troubles into the receptive ear of his friend.

Florian loosed a flood of indignation which was surcharged with invective against the perfidious Mr. Mashby. "An'," he concluded, "by doin' such he aims to take yo' business away fum you, run you out of Bummin'ham an' ma'y yo' gal."

"No?"

"Yeh. An' you is enough of a suckerfish to fall fo' it."

"You mean Semore is studyin' 'bout mayin Ammonia?"

"Suttinly."

"An he figgers that does I git out of town he can do same?"

"You is tootin' now, son."

Zero smashed his right fist into the palm of his left hand. "Dawg-gone his hide; I'se gwine teach him. I'se gwine git revenge fo' all this dirty work."

"Wh-wh-what you aims to do to him, Zero?"

"I'se gwine keep on wukkin' at the rink!"

And he did, but no longer did he work in the dark.

The day of the race found Zero busy with decorations. The silver trophy had been purchased and engraved and was on display in the center of the rink. At noon Zero telephoned Ammonia.

"Miss Mims?"

"Uh-huh."

"This is Zero."

"Who Zero is?"

"I'se he."

"I ain't the kind of a gal to make talk with strange gemmen." The receiver clicked on the hook and Zero turned miserably away.

He understood now why Semore had conceived the idea for the race. It afforded Ammonia public opportunity for triumph and it was a cinch that Miss Mims would be grateful to the man who made that triumph possible.

By 7 o'clock that evening the rink had been prepared. Ropes had been stretched around the floor of the rink to mark the inner boundaries of the racing track. These ropes were attached to stakes which had been stuck in the floor with the help of slender and sharp nails. Within the enclosure and at each of the four points of the compass had been placed small tables. On each of these tables was a large can of powdered chalk. Each can had a perforated top and each was to be presided over by a man whose duty it was to keep fresh chalk sprinkled on the track during the course of the race that the skates might not slip on the sharp turns. Semore Mashby himself had insisted upon presiding over the chalk box at the curve nearest the finish line.

Ammonia's advent was the signal for tumultuous applause. She was clad in a new sport suit of white trimmed lavishly with cerise. On her ample feet were new laced boots and she wore about her ebony throat a lamb's wool scarf such as she had seen in moving pictures of colder countries.

Zero Harris, whose role was that of master of ceremonies, eyed her longingly and only the fear of public rebuff deterred him from again seeking a reconciliation.

As a matter of fact, Ammonia had long since wearied of the warfare. But lest he might presume that her pride was not so strong as his, she maintained an attitude of severe aloofness which dissuaded him from attempting eleventh-hour amends.

Mr. Mashby made his way through the excited throng toward Zero's private office. A bit of disconcerting dialogue came to his ears.

"This race sho'ly gwine be a fine thing fo' Zero Harris," commented the first voice.

"How come?"

"He's pow'ful fond of Ammonia Mims, ain't he?"

"You said it."

"An' Ammonia is gwine win, ain't she?"

"Uh-huh. Barrin' accidents."

"An' she's gwine be terrible grateful to the man which taught her to skate."

"Shush—but I heard tell it was Semore which fust thunk of havin' the race."

"That don't make no diff'ence. Does a gal git popular on account she does somethin' she is gwine be grateful to the man which taught her how to do same."

This, indeed, was a new angle to the situation. It had not occurred to him that Ammonia's gratitude would be directed other than in his direction. Contemplation of that possibility was vastly disturbing. "Dawg-gone!" he soliloquized, "if tha's the way she looks at it, I mos' hope she loses."

He returned to the enclosure and beckoned to Ammonia.

"I has arranged things so that you is closest to the ropes when the race stahts, Ammonia. You jes' keep on the inside an all them other gals will have to swing wide on the turns so you won't have to travel near so fast as they does."

He laid a tentative finger on her arm—"An' don't you go forgittin', Miss Mims, that I thank up this race—also boughten the solid silver cup which you wins."

She flashed him a radiant smile. "I ain't forgittin'," Mistuh Mashby. I never forgits nothin', 'no time." And in her mind was remembrance of the deal by which Semore had euchered Zero Harris out of many dollars.

A whistle shrilled, the orchestra droned off into silence, the crowd stilled. With some difficulty Zero lined up the racers, putting Ammonia nearest the ropes.

"On yo' mark! Get set!" And the tiny revolver cracked and they were off.

Ella Dungee and Ammonia Mims flashed ahead of the crowd. But although Ella was speedy, Ammonia's easy stride was sufficiently strong to enable her to hold the inside and she rounded the first curve inches ahead of Ella and comfortably in the lead of the others.

Before the completion of the first lap the racers had divided into two distinct groups: the leaders consiting of Ammonia, Ella Dungee, Mrs. Evans Chew and Mrs. Maudine Pigford.

They completed the second lap, and the third. Maudine Pigford was tiring and Mallissie Cheese was pulling away from the tailenders and bidding for a position among the leaders. They reached the north curve, swung by Semore Mashby and set off on the fifth lap. At a signal from Semore, each of the officials seized his can of powdered chalk and sprinkled it on that section of the track immediately before him.

Ammonia lengthened her stroke. She held close into the ropes as she neared Semore, crossing right leg over left with each powerful thrust. The gap between her and Mrs. Chew, her nearest rival, widened. She smiled warmly at the wizened Mr. Mashby and then—

Something happened. The feet of Ammonia Mims divorced themselves from the ground. A portion of Miss Mims not generally employed in Skating placed itself where the feet had been.

There was a roar of surprise sprinkled with laughter. Ammonia clambered to her feet and set out in pursuit of Ella Dungee and Mrs. Chew, both of whom had passed her. She could hear occasional bits of merriment but she was undaunted. Employing all of her latent speed, she had passed both the leaders before again reaching the turn where Semore Mashby stood industriously sprinkling chalk on the floor.

Ammonia was angry. Laugh at her, would they? She determined to make a runaway race of it right there. Her feet fairly twinkled as she rounded the curve and shot by Semore's post.

And then it happened again. Only this time it occurred twice as forcibly. The crowd shrieked with laughter. The other skaters, swinging wide to avoid the prostrate figure, shot by. She noticed the other women on the far turn, all swinging wide. She alone had the knack of holding the inside without slackening speed.

And, just when she would have retired from competition, Semore bent over her eagerly—

"You go on an' win," he commanded. Meekly she turned to obey, but as she swung out in pursuit of the others, his voice came to her ears in well-meant advice.

"Keep yo' feet, Ammonia. You ain't never gwine win this race sittin' down!"

Murder flamed in her heart then, with Semore as the murderee. She knew that she would get even with him. She'd humble herself and make friends with Zero Harris and she'd tell him about the trickery of Semore in connection with the lease on the rink—she'd make it plain to Zero that when Semore took the lease in his own name it was the same as though he had done so in the name of partnership and that the benefits of the law rental were his as well as Semore's. She'd tell him all that—because she despised Semore as the author of her miseries.

She was stroking mechanically now, head swimming, body aching froom too violent contact with the floor. Her triumph had fizzled. She was tasting gall and wormwood. Perhaps even Zero would have none of her now. The thought hurt . . .

Her speed was not yet gone. She knew that she couldn't win, but at least she could come in ahead of Mallissie Cheese. She negotiated the lower turn in safety, sped down the other side and swung once again toward Semore. And once again in that fatal spot her feet parted company with the ground. Even the shriek of delirious laughter from the crowd failed to drown the crash.

Professor Zero Harris lifted the battered form of Ammonia Mims in his sinewy arms.

"C'mon, honey . . "

It was the first kind word which had come to her. She flung her arms about the neck of the man who held her. "Oh! Zero . . . "

Semore insinuated himself before them. "Ammonia——"

"Git away fum heah!" she sizzled. Then she faced Zero. "Ise got somethin' to tell you, Zero; somethin' about that Mashby man which you is gwine be happy to heah——"

They retired to the side lines and watched Mrs. Evans Chew win from Ella Dungee. Ammonia turned wearily to Zero. "Take me away fum heah, honey. I never want to see a skate no mo'."

"Jes' a minute." He took her by the hand and towed her across the floor. They were alone on the track near the spot where Ammonia's three catastrophies had occured. Zero directed her attention to a glistening section of the floor immediately in front of Semore's post. "See that?"

"Uh-huh."

"Feel it."

She applied a finger to the smooth surface. "It's slick," she said.

"Sho'ly it is, Ammonia. Now look heah." He picked up the can of powdered chalk which Semore had used and sprinkled a bit on the floor. "Rub that," he commanded.

She did so, and immediately the floor became slippery where the rubbing occured.

"What is it, Zero?"

"It's thisaway," he explained. "Semore Mashby knowed that I an' you was sutin' to make up sooner or later did you keep on comin' to this rink an' he figgered that if'n he could git you so disgusted with skatin' that you woul'n't never be frien's again an' he could make ma'iage with you. So—" He drew a deep breath. "All what that man done was to empty the powdered chalk out of that can and put powdered wax in it instead. He knowed you was the on'y lady which could skate good enough to take them turns close—and so— ev'y time you made this curve yo' skates hit that powdered wax an' you hit the floor."

She was all for committing manslaughter right then and there. And while Zero personally removed her well-waxed skates she told him of Semore's perfidiousness.

"Oh! sugar-foot," he murmured gratefully, "you has sho'ly tol' me somethin' now. I'se gwine make that cullud buzzard wiggle . . . You sho'ly was sweet to tell it to me, Ammonia."

"I'se gwine tell you ev'ything I knows, Zero. An' is you gwine tell me ev'ything, too?"

"I suttinly is," he swore. "Fum now on."

To himself he added: "But they ain't no sense bein' fool enough to tell her it was I which put powdered wax in the can Semore used."

(Copyright, 1925.)

How the Parisienne Attains the Smart Silhouette

One French woman lost 50 pounds in two months. Explains the secret of getting thin without drugs, diets, creams, exercises or appliances.

A French woman now in America reports that a new treatment for obesity has been found by a well-known French scientist; it is a simple, harmless combination of ingredients put up in a small tablet called "SAN-GRI-NA," which helps nature in throwing off unnecessary fat-forming elements, thus making it impossible for fat to form and accumulate on the body. Already surprising reports from all parts have been received. Cases of reducing vary from 10 to 50 pounds, in a remarkably short time, with complete restoration of health and marvelous change in general appearance. While "SAN-GRI-NA" is mostly recommended for reducing, it is also an invaluable help to get rid of all-worn-out, tired feeling—does away with puffing, and in many cases entirely relieved high blood pressure. GUARANTEED ABSOLUTELY HARMLESS. Recommended by specialists, physicians and nurses as a safe, positive and simple way to take off from 5 to 6 pounds a week. Can be had from leading drug or department stores.

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