

THE ROSE-GARDEN HUSBAND

By MARGARET WIDDEMER

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It was just then that Mrs. De Guenther's crisply spoken advice came. Phyllis was one of those people whose first unconscious instinct is to obey an unspoken order. She bent blindly to Allan's lips, and kissed him with a child's obedience, then straightened up, aghast. He would think her very bold!

But he did not, for some reason. It may have seemed only comforting and natural to him, that swift childish kiss, and Phyllis's honey-colored, violet-scented hair brushing his face. Men take a great deal without question as their rightful due.

The others closed around him then, welcoming him, laughing at the surprise and the way he had taken it, telling him all about it as if everything were as usual and pleasant as possible, and the present state of things had always been a pleasant commonplace. And Wallis began to serve the picnic supper.

CHAPTER XI.

There were trays and little tables, and the food itself would have betrayed a southern dandy in the kitchen if nothing else had. It was the first meal Allan had eaten with any one for years, and he found it so interesting as to be almost exciting. Wallis took the plates invisibly away when they were done, and they continued to stay in their half-circle about the fire and talk it all over. Phyllis, tired to death still, had slid to her favorite floor-seat, curled on cushions and leaning against the couch-side. Allan could have touched her hair with his hand. She thought of this, curled there, but she was too tired to move. It was exciting to be near him, somehow, tired as she was.

Most of the short evening was spent celebrating the fact that Allan had thrown something at Wallis, who was recalled to tell the story three times in detail. Then there was the house to discuss, its good and bad points, its nearness and farnesses.

"Let me tell you, Allan," said Mrs. De Guenther warmly at this point, from her seat at the foot of the couch, "this wife of yours is a wonder. Not many girls could have had a house in this condition two weeks after it was bought."

Allan looked down at the heap of shining hair below him, all he could see of Phyllis.

"Yes," he said considerably. "She certainly is."

At a certain slowness in his tone, Phyllis sprang up. "You must be tired to death!" she said. "It must be nearly 10. Do you feel worn out?"

Before he could say anything, Mrs. De Guenther had also risen, and was sweeping away her husband.

"Of course he is," she said decisively. "What have we all been thinking of? And we must go to bed, too, Albert, if you insist on talking that early train in the morning, and I insist on going with you. Good-night, children."

Wallis had appeared by this time, and was wheeling Allan from the room before he had a chance to say much of anything but good-night. The De Guenthers talked a little longer to Phyllis, and were gone also. Phyllis flung herself full-length on the rug and pillows before the fire, too tired to move further.

Well, she had everything that she had wished for on that wet February day in the library. Money, leisure to be pretty, a husband whom she "didn't have to associate with much," rest, if she ever gave herself leave to take it, and the rose-garden. She had her wishes, as unceasingly fulfilled as if she had been ordering her fate from a department store, and had money to pay for it. . . . And back there in the city it was somebody's late night, and that somebody—it would be Anna Black's turn, wouldn't it?—was struggling with John Zanowick and Sadie Rabinowitzes by the lamp, just as she had. And yet—and yet they had really cared for her, those dirty, dear little foreigners of her. But she'd had to work for their liking. . . . Perhaps—perhaps she could make Allan Harrington like her as much as the children did. He had been so kind to-night about the move and all, and so much brighter, her handsome Allan in his gray, every-day-looking man-clothes! If she could stay brave enough and kind enough and bright enough. . . . her eyelids drooped. . . . Wallis was standing respectfully over her.

"Mrs. Harrington," he was saying, with a really masterly ignoring of her attitude on the rug, "Mr. Harrington says you haven't bid him good-night yet."

An amazing message! Had she been in the habit of it, that he demanded it like a small boy? But she sprang up and followed Wallis into Allan's room. He was lying back in his white silk sleeping things among the white bed-drapes, looking as he always had before. Only, he seemed too alive and awake still for his old role of Crusader-on-a-tomb.

"Phyllis," he began eagerly, as she sat down beside him, "what made you so frightened when I first came? Wallis hadn't worried you, had he?"

"Oh, no; it wasn't that at all," said Phyllis. "And thank you for being so generous about it all."

"I wasn't generous," said her husband. "I behaved like everything to old Wallis about it—Well, what was it, then?"

"I—I—only—you looked so different in clothes," pleaded Phyllis, "like any man my age or older—as if you might get up and go to business, or play tennis, or anything, and—I was afraid of you! That's all, truly!"

She was sitting on the bed's edge, her eyes down, her hands quivering in her lap, the picture of a school-girl who isn't quite sure whether she's been good or not.

"Why, that sounds truthful!" said Allan, and laughed. It was the first time she had heard him, and she gave a start. Such a clear, cheerful, young laugh! Maybe he would laugh more by and by, if she worked hard to make him.

"Good-night, Allan," she said.

"Aren't you going to kiss me good-night?" demanded this new Allan, precisely as if she had been doing it ever since she met him. Evidently that kiss three hours ago had created a precedent. Phyllis colored to her ears. She seemed to herself to be always coloring now. But she mustn't cross Allan, tired as he must be.

"Good-night, Allan," she said again sedately, and kissed his cheek as she had done a month ago—years ago!—when they had been married. Then she fled.

"Wallis," said his master dreamily when his man appeared again, "I want some more real clothes. Tired of sleeping-suits. Get me some, please. Good-night."

As for Phyllis, in her little green-and-white room above him, she was crying comfortably into her pillow. She had not the faintest idea why, except that she liked doing it. She felt, through her sleepiness, a faint, hungry, pleasant want of something, though she hadn't an idea what it could be. She had everything, except that it wasn't time for the roses to be out yet. Probably that was the trouble. . . . Roses. . . . She, too, went to sleep.

"How did Mr. Allan pass the night?" Phyllis asked Wallis anxiously, standing outside his door next morning. She had been up since 7, speeding the parting guests and interviewing the cook and chambermaid. Mrs. Clancy's choice had been cheerful to a degree, and black, all of it; a fat Virginia cook, a slim young Tuskegee chambermaid of a pale saddle-color and a shiny brown outdoor man who came from nowhere

in particular but was very useful now he was here. Phyllis had seen them all this morning and found them everything servants should be. Now she was looking after Allan as her duty was.

Wallis beamed from against the door-post, his tray in his hands.

"Mrs. Harrington, it's one of the best sleeps Mr. Allan's had! Four hours straight, and then sleeping still, if broken, till 6! And still taking interest in things. Oh, ma'am, you should have heard him yesterday on the train, as furious as furious! It was beautiful!"

"Then his spine wasn't jarred," said Phyllis thoughtfully. "Wallis, I believe there was more nervous shock and nervous depression than ever the doctors realized. And I believe all he needs us to be kept happy, to be much, much better. Wouldn't it be wonderful if he got so he could move freely from the waist up? I believe that may happen if we can keep him cheered and interested."

Wallis looked down at his tray. "Yes, ma'am," he said. "Not to speak ill of the dead, Mrs. Harrington, the late Mrs. Harrington was always saying 'My poor stricken boy,' and things like that—'Do not jar him with ill-timed light or merriment,' and reminding him how bad he was. And she certainly didn't jar him with any merriment, ma'am."

"What were the doctors thinking about?" demanded Phyllis indignantly.

"Well, ma'am, they did all sorts of things to poor Mr. Allan for the first year or so. And then, as nothing helped, and they couldn't find out what was wrong to have paralyzed him so, he begged to have them stopped hurting him. So we haven't had one for the past five years."

"I think a masseur and a wheelchair are the next things to get," said Phyllis decisively. "And remember, Wallis, there's something the matter with Mr. Allan's shutters. They won't always close the sunshine out as they should."

Wallis almost winked, if an elderly, mutton-chopped servitor can be imagined as winking.

"No, ma'am," he promised. "Something wrong with 'em. 'I'll remember, ma'am."

Phyllis went singing on down the sunny old house, swinging her colored muslin skirts and prancing a little with sheer joy of being 25, and prettily dressed, with a dear house all her own, and—yes—a dear Allan a little her own, too! Doing well for a man what another woman has done badly has a perennial joy for a certain type of woman, and this was what Phyllis was in the very midst of. She pranced a little more, and came almost straight up against a long old mirror with gilt corners, which had come with the house and was staying with it. Phyllis stopped and looked critically at herself.

"I haven't taken time yet to be pretty," she reminded the girl in the glass, and began then and there to take account of stock, by way of beginning. Why—a good deal had done itself! Her hair had been washed and sunned and sunned and washed about every 10 minutes since she had been away from the library. It was springy and three shades more golden. She had not been rushing out in all weathers unveiled, nor washing hastily with hard water and cheap library soap eight or 10 times a day, because private houses are comparatively clean places. So her complexion had been getting back, unnoticed, a good deal of its original country rose-and-cream, with a little gold glow underneath. And the tired heaviness was gone from her eyelids, because she had scarcely used her eyes since she had married Allan—there had been too much else to do! The little frown lines between the brows had gone, too, with the need of reading-glasses and work under electricity. She was more rounded, and her look was less intent. The strained library teacher look was gone. The luminous long blue eyes in the glass looked back at her girlishly. "Would you think we were 25 even?" they said. Phyllis smiled irrepressibly at the mirrored girl.

"Yas'm" said the rich and comfortable voice of Lily-Anna, the cook.

from the dining-room door; "you sho'ly is pretty. Yas'm—a lady wants to stay pretty when she's married. Yo' don' look much mo'n a bride, ma'am, an' dat's a fac'. Does you want yo' dinnehs brought into de sittin'-room regular till de gem-man gits well?"

"Yes—no—yes—for the present, any way," said Phyllis, with a mixture of confusion and dignity. Fortunately the doorbell chose this time to ring.

A business-like young messenger with a rocking crate wanted to speak to the madam. The last item on Phyllis's shopping list had come.

"The wolfhound's doing fine, ma'am," the messenger answered in response to her questions. "Like a different dog already. All he needed was exercise and a little society. Yes'm, this pup's broken—in a manner, that is. Your man picked you out the best-tempered little feller in the litter. Here, Foxy—careful, lady! Hold on to his leash!"

There was the passage of the check, a few directions about dog-biscuits, and then the messenger from the kennels drove back to the station, the crate, which had been emptied of a wriggling six-months black bull-dog on the seat beside him.

CHAPTER XII.

Allan, lying at the window of the sunny bed-room, and wondering if they had been having springs like this all the time he had lived in the city, heard a scuffle outside the door. His wife's voice inquired breathlessly of Wallis, "Can Mr. Allan—see me?"

Oh, gracious—don't, Foxy, you little black gargyle! Open the door, or—shut it—quick, Wallis!"

But the door, owing to circumstances over which nobody but the black dog had any control, flew violently open here, and Allan had a flying vision of his wife, flushed, laughing, and badly mused, being railroaded across the room by a prancingly exuberant French bull at the end of a leash.

"He's—he's a cheerful dog," panted Phyllis, trying to bring Foxy to anchor near Allan, "and I don't think he knows how to keep still long enough to pose across your feet—he wouldn't become them anyhow—he's a real man-dog, Allan, not an interior decoration. . . . Oh, Wallis, he has Mr. Allan's super! Foxy, you little fraud! Did he want a drink, angel-puppy?"

"Did you get him for me, Phyllis?" asked Allan when the tumult and the shouting had died, and the carolling Foxy had buried his hideous little black pansy-face in a costly Belleek dish of water.

"Yes," gasped Phyllis from her favorite seat, the floor; "but you needn't keep him unless you want to. I can keep him where you'll never see him—can't I, honey-dog-gums? Only I thought he'd be company for you, and don't you think he seems—cheerful?"

Allan threw his picturesque head back on the cushions, and laughed and laughed.

"Cheerful!" he said, "Most assuredly! Why—thank you, ever so much, Phyllis. You're an awfully thoughtful girl. I always did like bulls—had one in college, a Nelson. Come here, you little rascal!"

He whistled, and the puppy lifted its muzzle from the water, made a dripping dash to the couch, and scrambled up over Allan as if they had owned each other since birth. Never was a dog less weighed down by the glories of ancestry.

Allan pulled the flopping bat-ears with his most useful hand, and asked with interest, "Why on earth did they call a French bull Foxy?"

"Yes, sir," said Wallis. "I understand, sir, that he was the most active and playful of the litter, and chewed up all his brothers' ears, sir. And the kennel people thought it was so clever that they called him Foxy."

"The best-tempered dog in the litter!" cried Phyllis, bursting into helpless laughter from the floor.

(To be continued next week.)

Sir Auckland Campbell Geddes is opposed to the adoption of the metric system by England as he says it would cause much confusion in the textile industry, which composes 30 per cent of their export industry.

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and MANALIN Cured Me

Mrs. E. M. Harris, R. R. No. 3, Ashland, Wis., sends a message of cheer to the sick:

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ANNUAL TIME OF TROUBLE AS IT APPEARED TO HIM

Housecleaning Date May Change, but Its Consequences Can by No Means Be Avoided.

Hubby Had No Difficulty at All in Classifying His Wife as Species of Tree.

Housecleaning is one of the spring festivals that has no fixed date, being movable on the domestic calendar. It is observed in many places following the close of the Lenten season, when the first crocus has bloomed its welcome to the returning birds, when the grass shows green, the sun mounts higher each day and the buds are puffed up with ambition to clothe tree and shrub in summer garb. . . . It's close at hand, may be celebrated now as each domestic circle elects, and may be expected to show many of the characteristics of the olden days. Men should not grumble when the festival is in progress. They get the earliest part. They may have difficulty in locating what they want, but they are in it only part of the time; the home folks are there all the time. It is one time of the year when the men folks ought to smile.—Ohio State Journal.

Prosperous Martinique.
The number of manufacturing industries in Martinique has been increasing, although most of the plants are small. The factories in operation are 15 sugar factories, 114 rum distilleries, eight lime kilns, one factory for canning pineapples, one factory where chocolate powder and coco butter are made, one factory for elementary pastes, two ice factories, two forges and foundries, one copper shop, one tile, terra cotta and brick factory 11 gaseous water factories and four printing houses.

Billions of Tons of New Fuel.
For the production of cheap electric power, briquettes and certain by-products the government of Victoria is planning to develop immense deposits of brown coal, estimated to exceed 20,000,000,000 tons.

Taken in the Other Sense.
Miss Mugg—I think you are just beautiful, my dear.
Miss Bute (modestly)—That's where we differ.—Boston Transcript.

Most people want justice for the purpose of passing it on to those who need it.

Embryo Politician.
"Mother," said little Ray in an aggrieved tone, "you have no constitutional right to send me to bed without my supper."
"What do you mean, Raymond?"
"You are exercising rule without the consent of the governed."—Boston Transcript.

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