

A Christmas Honeymoon

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CHAPTER I.

What Betty Revere Wrote to Anny De Peyster.

CHRISTMAS eve in the morning, at Willard's hotel, Washington, D. C. My Dearest Girl—I am sitting up with ten pillows at my back. It's only 6 o'clock a. m., but I can't sleep after I wink, not that I have slept, for I haven't, not a moment, since I lay down at 2 a. m. four hours ago, back from the crush at the White House.

"Before I go on another line, Merry Christmas, dear, a thousand of them. I sent you a wee bit of a gift post last week, but I just had to light five candles on my dressing table (you know how I dislike gas) and give you the news. Oh, yes, there is news, Nan, glorious news too! Dad is to go positively to Limoges as consul general. Don't you put, for I, who have always longed to live in France, shall remain here in the States. Why? I hear you ask. Because I am engaged—yes!—to marry, whom do you think? Mr. Peter Van Zandt. Hasty, you say. Yes, I suppose so. We had never met until six weeks ago, when at the British embassy we did. It was a case of—no, no, not love, but liking at first sight, and the very next morning his card came up with some flowers, and the next, and the next, and all the mornings since, and he himself every day. He is stopping at this hotel, too, and last night at the White House, in a certain corner of the conservatory, Betty Revere capitulated, and I'm happier than I quite understand.

"As for Mr. Van Zandt, well, he says he is in heaven. It's to be a late autumn wedding. Peter says so, and maybe it'll have to be in France; I don't know yet. But what do you think? You remember the big brick double house on the corner of the square—the house with two front doors, one on Washington park, the other around the corner? The house we used to pass on our way to school at No. 1, with the silver plate on the door on the square, and 'Dr. Van Zandt' on it? Well, that is to be my home. Peter is that Dr. Van Zandt's son, and that queer old delicious double house was built that double way so that the doctor's patients should not disturb the doctor's family. They tell me it's exactly two separate establishments except for a single wide folding door on each floor.

"So I am not to live abroad, and we shall not be separated, and you will be my first bridesmaid, and I know Peter will like you and you Peter, and I do wish his name wasn't Peter! I can never call him that. He's not like a Peter; he's handsome and big and tall and strong and a bit stern and very tender and immensely courtly, and I think we'll never become too intimate; a too intimate man must be frightful to be married to. It's 7 o'clock now; my chocolate will be coming up soon. I've been engaged, let me see, seven hours exactly, because I know it was just midnight when Peter, in a very masterful way, I must say, took possession and slipped his great big ring on my finger until he can fetch me a prettier one, he said.

CHAPTER II.

Her Woman's Will; His Man's Way.

AS Betty had written to her closest friend, Anny De Peyster, Mr. Peter Van Zandt was inclined to be masterful at the same time he was exceedingly young, a combination which is not rare, it is true, but which, leavened as it was in his case with a fund of patience and a sense of humor, rendered Van Zandt, even at the early age of one-and-twenty, rather of a personage in his particular circle. He was, as Betty, beautiful, willful, perhaps spoiled Betty had written, a handsome man; tremendously well set up; one of the men who were always well groomed, well dressed; unobtrusive, but distinctly there; an obvious, unmistakable factor in whatever position or environment he found himself. It is not too much to say that he had thought, reasoned and reached about as many conclusions as one-and-twenty of the masculine gender can. He was something of a man already, just as Betty, laughing out her seventeen years and the fraction, was a good deal of a woman.

On the afternoon of the day Betty had written to Anny De Peyster, she went with Peter for the ride. Peter had, later, a stag dinner on at the club; some man who was going to be tied up the following week, but he managed to break away from this and got back to Willard's by 9:15. Word came down that Miss Revere was disposed; word went back, hastily



Mr. Van Zandt Was the Man With the Violin.

scribbled, that he "must see her; he couldn't get on at all unless he did; that it was four hours now since he had, etc." Word came back by pencil that "a headache was raging."

Peter went to his room and scribbled again. "Let me come, I can cure it." He waited a considerable time for the answer. While he waited he strove to melt time away by playing upon his violin.

Certainly Peter Van Zandt was the man with the violin.

Then, just as he was in the midst of a very especially fortissimo passage, Betty's reply reached. It ran this way: "I have got up and into a frock. My head is splitting. It is all the fault of some wretch who plays the violin in a room below us or above, or near by. At least he thinks he plays, but the noise is frightful. I wish I could murder him. You can come in three minutes. Daddy is writing letters in his room. I am in the parlor."

When Peter had read the note he smiled, laid the violin on the dressing table and in less than one minute was in the parlor with Betty.

"He has stopped!" she exclaimed with a delicious little pout, as she contrived not to have Mr. Van Zandt kiss her.

"Who has stopped, dear?"

"The violin man. Did you—didn't really stop him?" with very wide, almost frightened, eyes.

"Yes, I stopped him."

"Oh! How did you do it? Was he angry? Is he young or old? What did he say?"

"He wasn't angry. He is young. I didn't say anything."

"Peter?"

"I simply took the violin and laid it away from him."

"But—didn't he want to thrash you?"

"No."

"But it must have been an insult."

"Not exactly," Peter laughed. "How's the headache, little sweetheart?"

"It's better."

"Let me smooth it. There—so. Perhaps I inherit some of my father's curative power."

"Who is the violin man, Peter?" Betty always pronounced the name with hesitation and reserves of disapproving taste.

"Oh, he's not a bad chap."

"A friend of yours?"

"Not an enemy, I trust."

"You must know him quite well if he gives her time enough to change her mind. Her mind is her own, sir, and she takes surprising liberties with it."

"I wonder if I do?"

"Well, dear, an revoir. Write me about Ned Davies. Are you still as cruel to him as ever? And believe me to be with sweetest thoughts of you at Bloomingdale as ever. BETTY."

"P. S.—If my letter seems more fragmentary and disjointed than usual put it down to the fact that some misguided being in a room near our suit has a violin and plays on it or with it in the most excruciatingly horrible way whenever I am in. You know how I loathe violins save when played by competent artists, and this person is evidently amateur, au bout des ongles. A man, of course; he draws a strong bow. I despise men who are musical. I mean men who play on violins and pianos and flutes. BETTY."

not without its seductions and its implications of her own supremacy.

"I suppose so. Will I like him?" she asked, wide eyed and after a pause.

"I hope so."

"You will not be jealous of him, then?" with no attempt to conceal the suspicious note.

"No, I think not."

"Don't you know?"

"Not exactly. I might be jealous of even him."

Betty breathed more freely. "Do you like the violin yourself, Peter?"

"Rather a favorite instrument of mine."

"Yes, to be sure, when well played."

"Yes, Betty darling."

"Well?"

"Can't you let go the violin, dear, and just think of me?"

"No, Peter, I can't. And I hate to have your name 'Peter'. I do indeed! It doesn't match with you."

"What would match with me?" he looked deeply, indulgently, fondly into the lovely face.

Then Betty laughed and hid her eyes and murmured, "Just I."

And there was the laughter of love between them.

"And now you'll forget the violin man, won't you, sweetheart?" he asked. She shook her head doubtfully. "I'm not so sure. You see, you say I'm likely to meet him, being such a friend of yours, and then will he want to fetch his violin to—"

"Our house?" finished her lover. "Eh, is that what you want to know, dear?"

Betty nodded, looking at him squarely with her wonderfully blue eyes.

"Yes," Peter Van Zandt answered, "the violin man will want to fetch his violin to our house," his kiss was on her red lips, "and he will want to play for you."

"I couldn't stand it. I hate musical men—I mean men who play on musical instruments; they're always very effeminate," Betty rose.

"Are they?" Peter Van Zandt instinctively glanced at his own hand, which was as powerful as a stonecutter's sledge hammer for all its whiteness of flesh and pinkness of nail.

"Yes, I am sure of it. Peter, if you were a musician of any sort or kind I'd send you flying. I certainly would. It would spoil all the rest of you."

"Would it?" Peter had risen, too, of course, and had his arms around his little love. "Ah, no, my own, if you loved me and if I were musical you would still love. Is it not so?"

Betty withdrew; her black brows contracted, her starry eyes were dimmed almost as if with tears.

"No, it's not so, Peter, at all. I may be queer and silly, but, after all—then she laughed for all the world as April might laugh at January and clapped her hands, and then laid them softly upon Peter's shoulders and took a deep breath, adding, "You're not a musical man, and so why should we disturb ourselves about your friend of the violin?"

He prisoned her face between his palms. He prisoned her glance in his. "And would you really cast me off if, well, say, if I were the violin man?"

Betty, with bewitching smiles and gay little curves and flutes of mirth, nodded her imprisoned head and said, "Yes, I would."

Again he kissed her, halted, made to speak out, held his peace and laughed with those reservations of prophecy which even very young men allow themselves in connection with the girl they love.

CHAPTER III.

When the Birds Came Home.

BETTY REVERE and Peter Van Zandt were married at Grace church. It was admitted to have been the most beautiful wedding New York then had ever seen, with the most beautiful bride and the most gallant and proud bridegroom. Anny De Peyster was maid of honor. There were eleven bridesmaids and twenty-two ushers. The company overflowed to the sidewalk, and the music was from the organ and an orchestra. And such music! No wedding marches, no voices breathing o'er Eden—instead waltzes, the gayest of the gay, all the tunes that were liked best in those faroff days. "Il Bacio," "Una Palomita" and the rest. Betty was of a mind to go off, tripping to the measures her small feet loved the best, and it was noted that she fairly danced up the aisle, and certainly down it, although keeping well in step with Peter's stately tread.

Why did she have twenty-two ushers and only eleven maids? "Because," laughed the bride, "every girl should have two cavaliers so that not either one of them might be too happy, and so that she might choose and not be forced into boredom." Colonel Revere gave his daughter in marriage, sailing the next day for his post in France.

When the merriment was at its highest, when the music was the sweetest, Peter and his wife stole down the rear staircase of the old St. Nicholas hotel, where Betty and her father had been stopping; she, wrapped into an army cloak, and into a coach and off for Boston and Niagara before one grain of rice or a single slipper had been thrown at them.

By and by through a little hole in the walls of the garden of paradise these two slipped back into the double house on the corner of Washington square, Peter darting up the steps and unlocking the door himself, then down again to catch her up and carry her in his arms up and into her own house.

"Welcome home, sweet wife of my

soul!" And up he carried her to her own rooms on the second floor, with Shaddle busying himself with luggage in the vestibule, with Miss Bridget Supple gathering together satchels, shawl straps and valises, both exchanging glances, Shaddle's somewhat sheepish and suggestive, Miss Supple's arch, yet forbidding, as indeed had been the case between these two for lo, these past many years.

When the trunks were all taken up and the light luggage, too; when Supple had discovered that she was not wanted above and therefore had come down to assist Shaddle in looking over the table and seeing that everything was in exact form, Shaddle was found standing, thoughtfully leaning against the mantel corner twirling a ring around on his large thumb, Miss Bridget Supple had seen that ring before, several times. She came into the dining room, drew the folding doors closer between the drawing room, arranged the curtains, even advanced to the hearth and poked the logs a little, lifted the bellows and began to puff them.

"Bridget!" exclaimed Shaddle.

No attention was paid. Miss Supple continued to ply her bellows. "Biddy!" Miss Supple vouchsafed a glance. "Ah, Biddy, darlin', what's the use of waitin' any longer? Won't you make it Christmas eve?"

Miss Supple, from sheer force of long habit maybe, shook her head.

"Yes, you will!" Shaddle persisted. "Isn't the young master's example a good one? And if we keep on like this we'll soon be too old for it altogether."

"Never too old," exclaimed Miss Supple.

"Maybe not," with a doubtful emphasis. "But make it Christmas eve at St. Joseph's, won't you?"

Miss Supple had parried these suggestions for many revolving years. Rising from the hearth she replied, "Let's wait a bit, Shad."

"Wait a bit!" retorted the butler. "I've waited and waited and waited. Biddy, what are we waitin' for now?"

"To see how this"—the serving woman lifted her eyes to the room overhead—"turns out."

"Are you crazy? Turnus out!" With the two of them clean wild for one another, how could it turn out? And even if it didn't, what reason is that for you and me to be keepin' on havin' our banns read?" Shaddle rearranged his forks with an undue clatter.

"Wait a bit," reiterated Miss Supple, adjusting her cap at the mirror in the pier. "It's not us that should be after leavin' them two young things to themselves just at the start."

"Isn't it?" cried Shaddle irately.

"Of course we wouldn't be leavin' for good and all, but only for a fortnight's vacation like; it wouldn't be right, though. Mrs. Van Zandt 'll be needin' me, Shad, and the young master can't get on without you."

"Can't he! But I'm to get on without you, Biddy?"

"Whist! Ain't I here in the same house with you?" Mr. Shaddle seemed to find assuagement in the eyes of Miss Supple, who, however, promptly eliminated personal sentiment by asking, "How do you like the new mistress?"

"She's as fine as silk, Biddy."

"That she is, with eyes in her head like diamonds."

"He worships her."

"That he does."

"Ah, go on, now, Shad, them napkins is tumbling over and the smilax wreaths are fallin' from the chandelier."

Shaddle, dissuaded thus from mere romance, replaced the smilax, stood the plate warmer in front of the glowing fire and then vanished into his pantry.

That first dinner went off admirably; many another with friends and relatives at the board; Anny De Peyster



Little Surprises For Peter When He Came Home.

and Ned Davies, of course. Fast following days when Peter went down to his law office in Nassau street, when Betty, under Biddy's cheerful guidance, got inklings of the housekeeping she knew nothing at all of. Little surprises for Peter when he came home toward 5 o'clock, little bits of wifely comfortings as to warm slippers, house coats laid out and grousies at hand.

Sometimes the coupe and Poppet and Peacock prancing in their new harness down Broadway to Nassau to fetch Peter home; sometimes to carry him downtown in the morning. Evenings at the opera, the theater; quieter times at home in the library or, rather, in each library by turns, for there were two, of course.

It was an actual double house over which Mrs. Van Zandt was called upon to preside. On each floor merely the big archway connecting the two quite

separate establishments and no communication at all in the garrets.

Peter had, when refurbishing the double house completely for his bride, taken the keys of the archway doors—there were doors? to be sure; solid mahogany, inches thick, polished as glass, now flung wide with curtains looped aside to frame them—Peter then had taken the three keys, tied them on a peg and said, "We will never want them, but let them alone just for the sake of the governor who's gone on."

So it was, after all the old physician's painstaking years of sequestration of his profession from his family, now one big single house cramed over by the restless feet of Betty Van Zandt.

"This very day she had been herself dusting Peter's library; they called the library in the Washington square half Peter's, because there were none but law books there, and Betty, for mischief, had just put a couple of sentimental novels on the table and a copy of Harper's and of Godey's; then she had frisked out into the garden. Such a delicious garden as it was, with the high splined iron fence matted with arbor vines all the year round; with box bordered paths all gravelly beneath her slippers' feet; with a little fountain and deep shade of horse chestnut and fruit trees; an arbor thatched with grapevines, seats here and there, and flowers! All the sweet old fashioned kinds in their seasons, pansies and Sweet Alice, lady slippers, hollyhocks, lilies of the valley; marigolds, dahlias; bleeding hearts; iris-spur, bluebells, foxgloves; fuchsias, Mexican sage, snowballs; Hiacs; in small formal beds marked out by box way up to the stable and carriage house.

Betty had put on one of her prettiest frocks, a black silk skirt, and an over-gown that I think they called a Dolly Varden, a panned, ruffled, fished bit of daintiness with bunches of posies, pink and green and violet on a creamy gown. Betty's hair, in a wonderful waterfall, with a beaded net, conning somewhat its exuberant tendency to curl all over her pretty head, had then frisked out into her garden to gather a posy for the table.

They went to dine alone that evening, just Betty and Peter. They had been married exactly three months, and Peter had said in a lordly way that he hoped no one would drop in around 6:30, a man wanted his wife to himself sometimes, etc., at all of which Mistress Betty had laughed joyously. Had there been such a thing in those days as a telephone she would promptly have put it into commission and had guests to tease her husband with.

As it was, for she was a child full of whimsies, conceits, little rebellions, getting away from the routine of things, Betty, instead of being at the vestibule to greet Peter on the third monthly reminder of her wedding day, elected to sit demurely in the garden listening for the click of the night key "ll the latch.

CHAPTER IV.

When the Violin Man Came.

SHE heard it; also heard inquiring tones and Shaddle's subdued replies, quick plunging footsteps up the stairs, down again, out the back door, into the garden, up the broad, central path. Betty fled from her seat in the arbor and darted back into the house, ran up the stairs and stood dimpling, mirthful on the landing while Peter searched.

"Sure," observed Miss Supple to her innamorata, "they're like two children."

"Ah, yes, but they're grown up for all that!" was the butler's sage rejoinder.

Betty stood there full five minutes. She was sure she had heard Peter come into the house; sure she had heard his voice and Shaddle's.

To be sure she had, but not to discern the words.

Mr. Van Zandt had asked Shaddle where a certain thing was, a thing the serving man had noted that his master had not touched in months now. He had fetched it; Peter had taken it. Biddy had seen her young master unfastening the case, drawing forth the contents; then she had beckoned the butler away to his pantry, and there the two faithful souls stood together quite breathless and poignant, watching, waiting, for they didn't precisely know what.

Their mistress, too, stood uow on the threshold of her own room, the door ajar, her lips parted, her ear bent.

Where, then, was Peter?

If he could tarry she was assuredly in no haste. She withdrew, pushed the door closer, flung herself into a chair, dalled with a powder puff, a hand-glass, laughing at her own most radiant face.

As she laughed in sheer joy over the beauty of herself and of Peter's possession of that beauty and over the lesson she would teach Peter as to his patience, all, all to end in his kisses on her mouth, Betty heard a sound, a wail, a mellowed but piercing scrape. She put her hands up to her ears, then took them down.

It was a violin.

A violin played by an unadept hand. It must be Peter's friend, the violin man of Willard's, fetched home by Peter for dinner.

And Peter had said, "Let us be all alone this evening dear, little girl, please."

And Betty had said, "Yes."

It was certainly horrid of Peter to

fetch home a guest and, above all, that violin man on this particular evening, and beyond everything it certainly was ungenerous of Peter to announce the violin man or to let him announce himself in this remarkably informal fashion.

Doubtless the violin man was a genius. Geniuses were unpleasant folk. Peter would surely be coming up soon to tell her, or, at least, if the violin friend was so determinedly intimate, Shaddle would be sent with his card to his name.

Mrs. Van Zandt sat down again. But all the while the violin was wailing, calling, searching, with its strange, weird, pussy cat voice resounding up and down and all over the big double house; quite as if it were at its accustomed haunt, and Betty's roses grew a deeper red, her lips quivered, her eyes flashed with the nearby tears.

Did Peter, then, think that his wife would come down at the call of this violin man? Did Peter wish his wife to answer such a weird and jesting announcement?

He could not.

The violin man must be an unconquerable boor. She should sit still right there in her own room, until Peter came or sent.

Below in the butler's pantry Shaddle sat on the shelf dangling his heels, listening; Miss Supple at the crack in respectful attendance at call of either master or mistress; both speechless but quite uncomprehending.

No one summoned them.

Betty, above, heard the shriek, the long attenuated moan of the strings coming to her; there seemed a sort of witchery in the excruciating inarticulate of the quivering tones. She got up, came to the door, opened it. Certainly the violin man must be at the foot of the stairs, even up at the first landing; she drew back.

Then Peter spoke. "Betty!"

But this did not obtain reply. Mistress Betty was of no mind to be summoned thus informally while the violin man went patiently on with his bow.

"Darling!" came to Betty's astonished ears.

Then "Sweetheart!" reached her outraged hearing.

Then Peter laughed, his mirth seeming to chime in queerly with a wild



Not Relinquishing His Violin, He Put Out His Arms to Incline Her With It.

dissonant strain from the violin. It smote her brain and heart, and made them ache.

It even made the discreet butler and serving woman in the pantry glance at each other in a strange, bewildered fashion.

"Betty!" came up to her again.

She tiptoed out of her room, to the railing; she looked down the square well of the staircase, and saw her husband, standing alone in the hall, holding a violin under his chin, drawing the bow with that peculiar careening emphasis which is more especially the manifestation of the person who wants to play on the violin and can't.

Her big eyes dilated, her slim figure quivered, her lips and cheeks were as white as her teeth; with her two little hands she gripped the railing and looked over, down, at her husband below.

Van Zandt glanced up eager, expectant, waiting for her.

"Peter?" she ejaculated in a curious, hushed voice.

"Yes, love girl, it's I." He played on. "I see you." Then he looked up at her face again, seeing the bloom of it no longer there, but he played on, little straggling attempts, wheedling the strings into what he perhaps fancied was a melody.

"Come down," he said hoarsely.

Betty came down obediently, her hand upon the rail for steadying, perhaps.

Then, not relinquishing his violin, he put out his arms to incline her with it. Betty held aloof, unresponsive.

"Were you the violin man of Willard's yourself?" she asked in a thin, small voice, brittle as Dresden china, with a little break of heart in every syllable it uttered.

"Yes?" Peter laughed again, full of youth, manfully, possession and radiating his lack of knowledge of woman-kind as brilliantly as man ever did.

"You are jesting, Peter?" Her sweet eyes quickly sought the cruel, bitter, joy; in the shadows of the long hallway; her sweet breath fluttered with ecstasy at the thought that her husband was but masquerading, that the real violin man was of course in his