

A Tea Room Tempest

A Case of Too Many Mirrors

By CLARISSA MACKIE

Coming out of the bright sunshine of a winter's day, Gerald blinked nearly sightly as he entered the softly lighted tea room.

"In the left hand alcove, under the palms," Cornelia had said, and he had hastened to this his first appointment with her since their betrothal with blundering speed.

There was the rosy alcove with its background of palms, but no Cornelia. He sat down with his back to the bustling room full of beautifully gowned women and quietly attentive men and watched the reflection of the animated scene in the strip of paneled mirror on the wall opposite.

"I will go into the library," he said to the servant who admitted him, and presently he stood in the quiet, dignified room among the books that Judge Lloyd loved.

For a moment he stood inside the door, peering into the dim corners, hoping that Cornelia had kept her tryst with him.

A mist of white floated out of a big chair and stood before him—a very beautiful Cornelia, but a very different one from the girl he had parted with the night before. This was a Cornelia of indignant eyes and haughty head and sorrowful lips. As her lips parted to speak the door opened quickly behind them, and Judge Lloyd entered.

The judge held out a welcoming hand to Gerald and took his daughter's hand in his own. He stood there for a moment holding them thus, looking from the young man's anxious face to the mutinous, downcast countenance of his lovely daughter.

"Gerald," he said at last, "when I returned this morning my wife told me that my daughter had engaged herself to you. Do you know what I said to her? He regretted Gerald with kindly eyes.

"The young man shook his head. You could truthfully have said I was unworthy of so great a treasure." He said earnestly.

Cornelia's chin went up the least bit higher, and he could barely see the soft curve of her rose tinted cheek.

Judge Lloyd laughed softly. "I told my wife I would rather give Cornelia to you than to any other man I know," he said emphatically. "If you only live up to the high opinion I have of you, Gerald, you will be a mighty happy man, for no woman could help loving you. There; I will leave you both for a moment before dinner is announced. You will be frightened at the array of relatives we have mustered to meet you, my dear boy."

Once more he wrung Gerald's hand, kissed his daughter tenderly and left the room.

When the door had closed behind him Cornelia slowly turned her head and regarded her lover with open contempt in her violet eyes.

"Well?" she asked cuttingly.

"Well?" retorted Gerald stiffly. "I came because I thought you might offer me an explanation of your conduct this afternoon."

"My conduct?" repeated Cornelia in amazement. "What have I done that requires an explanation?"

"Nothing, except to humiliate me by breaking your appointment with me today and taking me with a brainless idiot like Monty Woodhull!" Blazed Gerald, losing his self control.

"Monty Woodhull!" repeated Cornelia, with tears of indignation in her eyes. "I haven't seen him today. I waited and waited for you at the tea room, and at last I took tea alone. But I saw you!"

"Cornelia!" expostulated her lover, agitated at her manifest falsehood. "I saw your face reflected in the mirror opposite my seat, and I saw Monty Woodhull's back or that of some other fellow sitting with you, and—"

"Impossible!" retorted Cornelia. "Your own sister sat at the next table and saw me waiting alone, while you sat in the opposite alcove with the loveliest girl wearing the dearest hat I ever saw!"

Gerald stared open mouthed. Then enlightenment came into his eyes. "Was it a funny white thing?" he demanded suddenly.

"You know it was!" sobbed Cornelia.

He laughed contentedly. "You're right about one thing, and so am I. The girl you saw reflected was the loveliest girl in the world—your very own self, Cornelia. As for me, the brainless fool I saw reflected was myself, and that's the truth. I ate all alone too, Darling, didn't you understand?"

Cornelia decided that Gerald's arms would afford a comfortable refuge while he explained the double misunderstanding and the puzzle of the mirrors placed opposite and counter reflections from other mirrors set in square posts about the room and how they had both been misled.

"But I don't understand, dearest," he said in conclusion. "You told me to meet you in the left hand alcove, and I was there, while you—"

"I meant the left hand going out of the room," explained Cornelia. "You will never want such a stupid, suspicious wife, Gerry, and—"

"I'm not going to have one," protested Gerald, and then he added softly, "Now, I have a magic ring here and—"

But the rest of it was for Cornelia's stink set alone.

A Chase For a Wife

She Led the Chaser a Pretty Dance

By F. A. MITCHELL

There was a ring at the telephone bell at the University club, and a waiting answered the summons.

"Is Mr. Kennard in the city?"

"I'll see, sir. Hold the wire."

A messenger was sent scurrying through the apartments and found Kennard engaged in a game of pool on one of the private rooms.

"You're wanted at the telephone, sir," Kennard went to the telephone booth and asked who had called him.

"I am Mr. Gaffney of Gaffney, Calderwood & Funk, attorneys. We have a telegram from correspondents in San Francisco announcing the death of Norman L. Kennard."

"My uncle!"

"He has bequeathed his fortune to you, but there is a condition involving a limit of time which induced our correspondent to use the telegraph instead of the mail. I would recommend you to call at our office at once since what we have to communicate is not exactly the thing to be transmitted over a telephone."

"Call a cab," said Mr. Kennard, and in ten minutes he was in Mr. Gaffney's private office, where the telegram that announced his uncle's death was shown him. It contained a brief clause of the will that, since the testator wished that his fortune should be kept together and desired his stepdaughter, Agatha Burch, to share in it, the inheritance was conditional on Kennard marrying Miss Burch. The limit of time was short, being but six weeks, and Miss Burch, who was a great traveler, was abroad.

Mr. Kennard "got busy" at once. A steamer would sail in six hours, and he spent most of this time telegraphing to learn the whereabouts of Miss Burch. Unfortunately no one knew just where to locate her. Her permanent address was Paris, from whence her mail was forwarded to her. Kennard determined to make straight for that city, where he would learn the last order given for the forwarding of mail.

During the voyage his mind was continually on the matter before him. He had never seen Miss Burch, but had heard that she had been something of a belle in San Francisco society, was pretty and of an independent and a fearless disposition. She had been abroad several times and each time had penetrated farther into barbarous countries. Indeed, it was surmised that her stepfather, who was opposed to her ramblings, had retained friends to beset her on any part of her future-outright since it would leave her free to continue them rather than setting down in a permanent home. She had been his sole reliance in a domestic way, and he had been bitterly opposed to this trip she had taken. She was very fond of her stepfather, but so great was her passion for visiting out of the way lands that she had promised him if he would consent to this one trip she would never go again. When she left he was perfectly well, but soon after his departure she, with no one to guide, had disappeared except a hired nurse. The police would be the result of this hazardous situation.

When Kennard reached Paris he took himself to the branch office of a banking house in the Place Vendôme, where he learned that the last piece designated for forwarding Miss Burch's mail was Vienna. At the time was had just been declared between the Balkan states and the Turks.

"For heaven's sake!" exclaimed Kennard. "I hope her mania for seeking things won't lead her to visit the theater of war. If I have to hunt for her there it will be like looking for a needle in a haystack."

Taking the first train for Vienna he had the bad luck to meet with an accident and was delayed twelve hours. On reaching Vienna he learned that Miss Burch had left four hours before his arrival. Orders had been left at the office of her hotel to forward mail to Belgrade, the capital of Serbia. There was no train for that point till evening, and he was obliged to tarry about Vienna nearly all day. When the hour for departure came he was told that owing to the unsettled conditions and the mobilization of troops there was no prospect of getting through on scheduled time. This added to his discomfort, and each day, each hour, the fear grew upon him that he might not catch the lady in time.

Kennard was delayed two days in Budapest owing to the railway equipment being used in the movement of troops and did not reach Belgrade until the end of the third day after leaving Vienna. On reaching his destination he drove hurriedly to the address Miss Burch had left at her hotel and learned that she had taken a train for Bukharest, in Roumania.

"Great Scott!" ejaculated the pursuing man. "She's getting nearer and nearer to the fighting. Suppose she should be killed! I wonder if the will makes any provision in case of her death before I can marry her."

Before leaving America he had asked the attorney to write out such information as he might need, and now taking out the paper containing it he found the words, "A marriage as early as possible is desirable, for in case of the death of either party interested the

estate shall go to the surviving party."

"That's another danger," growled Kennard. "The unfortunate girl is going right down among a barbarous people who are killing one another right and left. She's sure to fall by the hand of some bloodthirsty Turk. However, Roumania doesn't seem to be mixed up in the state of present, and if she will only stay there it will be all right. But there's getting there."

Then he began to think of the matter of a courtship. A girl who would be so reckless as to go down into a region where a bloody war was going on might be only enough to refuse a fortune that was attached to a man she didn't happen to fancy. And even if she snatched him would she accept that sentimental nonsense called a courtship?

When Kennard reached Bukharest he learned that a young woman answering Miss Burch's description had gone to Sofia, in Bulgaria, but as to Miss Burch as a certainty he had lost the trail. Since he could not find her in Bukharest there seemed nothing for him to do but to go to Sofia.

On reaching the capital of Bulgaria he found everything in turmoil. Troops were being dispatched to the front, and everybody was busy forwarding supplies and munitions of war. Kennard went the rounds of the hotels and on the register of one found the name of Agatha Burch, U. S. A.

"I wish to see that lady at once," said the pursuing lover to the proprietor, pointing to the name on the book.

"That young lady! She's gone."

"Gone! Gone where?"

"Let me see what address she left for her letters. Ah, here it is! Forward letters with the army mail. Now I remember—that's the American girl who organized a corps of nurses."

"She's a fool!" cried Kennard, beside himself with irritation.

"A fool! I beg your pardon, sir. The young lady made herself very much admired and beloved here. It was a noble act for her to—"

"Noble nonsense! She's demoralized a corps by mingling with new and exciting scenes. There's a large fortune waiting for her in America, and if she gets killed she will lose it."

"Of course she can have no use for a fortune if she is dead. But what is that to you?"

"Why, you muttonhead! I'll lose a fortune, too, and a wife!"

"It seems to me that it is you who are demoralized."

"Well, there was nothing left for Kennard but to follow the army that had gone in the direction of Adrianople. As for the ordinary means of transportation, that was not to be thought of. So he bought a horse and mounted, pursued his way.

There was terrible fighting between the allies and the Turks, and Kennard made no headway whatever in seeing Agatha Burch, though he used every means that presented itself for reaching her. At one time he drove an army supply wagon; at another he passed himself off for a newspaper correspondent. Lastly he took a gun and marched with an infantry regiment. But here he got more than he had bargained for. The Turks got within range of his rifle, and he was obliged to fight.

"What folly!" he exclaimed. "This girl by her idiosyncy has not only endangered her life, but mine, and she's a million dollars waiting for me at some wild place to see the world in a national manner."

Suddenly Kennard was turned clear around by the force of a bullet, and he lay prostrate under her. He was pierced by the bullet.

"Way in! I'm here!" he groaned, "I'll use it to visit the south pole."

The last man who stopped over Kennard ground a hobnail boot in his face. This made him a sight to behold. He lost consciousness, and the next thing he knew a woman with a red cross on her arm was pouring some liquor down his throat. Kennard had seen a number of Red Cross nurses during his marches, and every time he saw one he made inquiries for the nurse he wanted. He asked this one if she knew an American Red Cross nurse named Burch, and she said Miss Burch was the head of her corps of nurses. She was on the field directing the succor of the wounded. Kennard begged his informant to call her chief. She did so, but it was more than an hour before Miss Burch came.

"Are you the American who desires to see me?" she asked of the much mutilated, dirty and bloody Kennard.

"Yes."

"Well, what can I do for you?"

"Marry me!"

The look of repulsion at his appearance was discouraging.

"Are you Agatha Burch?"

"Yes."

"Well, your stepfather is dead and left his fortune to me, his nephew, with the provision that I marry you within six weeks after the probate of the will."

"My goodness gracious! Suppose I refuse?"

"You get nothing; neither do I."

"How much time is left?"

"I think about a week."

"That's lucky. If I had to say 'Yes' right now I'd decline. Perhaps in a week I can get you to look like a human being. We'll see."

Within the seven days Miss Burch could see in the wounded Kennard the semblance of a good looking man, and she accepted the conditions of the will.

"That uncle of mine and your stepfather was no fool," remarked the groom after the ceremony had been performed. "I'll see that you settle down."

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