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8-18dttstrmf4w

(Continued From Page One)

"Very well. Thank you, thank you." Yes, it was Howard. She could scarcely speak.

"The house—that is—the furnace is—that is to say—oh!" She shivered and started determinedly all over again. "Hello. Is that Van Norton & Hemphill's?"

"Yes, this is the same place," in an amused tone. "Is there anything I can do for you, madam?"

"The house is freezing. The new furnace is not working right at all. Please send a man the first thing in the morning to fix it. I—we—I am so cold now I can hardly talk."

Hearing a subdued laugh, she snapped up the receiver. The idea! Then it occurred to her that he likely would not dream it was she. There were so many Browns in town; besides, she thought bitterly, he had evidently forgotten all about the address she had sent him.

The small lace handkerchief refused to absorb any more moisture, and a great stamping in the vestibule announced the arrival of her uncle. Nina flew to the key solitude of her room and after doctoring her tear stained features with cold water and talcum managed to get into some evening clothes plus a warm opera cloak in time for dinner.

That night she slept very little. One minute she blamed herself for being so precipitate; the next she reproached him for his seeming indifference. She had been so sure he would hurry to her the minute he got her letter, but his boat had been in three days and still no sign from him.

At last she fell asleep. It seemed to her that she had been dozing just a minute when she was awakened by a violent hammering in her room. She sat up in bed and shivered. The window pane above the shutters was still black. She reached out and switched on the electric light. It was not 6 o'clock.

Again that awful hammering, then a raucous scraping in the direction of the register. She made a face and covered her ears. Then all was quiet for awhile, and Nina snuggled under the covers. All at once a metallic voice came up through the tube from the cellar.

"Now, you see, O'Brien, it will all have to come out. The underfeed is not right." Nina sat bolt upright again, her eyes staring wildly in the darkness. It was Howard's voice. Then followed a few orders about valves, drafts and gauges, which she did not understand in the least, but it was a voice she could listen to forever. She forgot about the cold.

"Now, O'Brien, you go and get the tools and bring Mason along with you. I am going to stay here a minute and look things over. It has to be done right this time. This is a nice condition to find things in the very day I get home. First thing I heard when I

got to the office. How many more jobs like this are there?"

Nina did not listen to the explanation that followed. Her heart was in her throat, and she scarcely breathed. His words rang in her ears. Howard just home yesterday! What could it mean? Oh, it was only too plain what it meant. He had come on a later boat, and she had wronged him. She had allowed her petty spite to drive away the person she loved best in the world.

There was no more talking now, only an occasional scraping as though some one was sliding the dampers. Howard was evidently there alone.

Suddenly a flush dyed her cheeks. Her eyes grew very bright, and a little smile hovered around her lips. Her heart was beating fast now, but her lips tightened. She sprang out of bed and threw on a dressing gown. She ran quickly to the wall and stooped, with her lips close to the wrought iron cover.

"Hello!" she called.

"Hello!"

"Is that the man from Van Norton & Hemphill's?"

"Yes, madam."

"Are you fixing the furnace?"

"Yes; it is in pretty bad shape."

"Is there any heat in it at all?"

"No; I am standing inside."

"Can any one hear us?"

"I have closed all the dampers but this one."

"Are you cold?"

"Very. This cellar is like Greenland."

"Why don't you go to the kitchen and get warm?"

"I am happier here."

"That is a very odd place to be happy, inside a furnace, 6 o'clock in the morning, dark, thermometer down to zero. You must feel quite hilarious."

"I am more hilarious and less cold than I was at 6 last night."

"Why last night, may I ask?"

"The cause of the fall in temperature was a letter which registered about 50 degrees below zero F."

"Did—did you think so?"

"Didn't you mean it so?"

"Are you quite sure you know who I am?"

"Are you sure you know who I am?"

"Oh, Howard, can you ever forgive me? I am so miserable. I heard your voice, and I couldn't let you go without at least saying 'goodby.' Did you know I was here?"

"Yes, Nina; the addresses were the same. How soon can you be down here and get this ring of yours?"

"Darling, do you forgive me and do you really love me still?"

"Love you, darling? I counted the minutes all the way home. I had just reached the office when you called me up."

"Then you knew it was I?"

"No, dear, but I do now. I was so happy to hear a voice like yours that I fairly laughed out loud. Darling, do hurry down. If I can't see your dear

face in two minutes I'll climb up this pipe."

"What did you think of my terrible note, Howard, tell me?"

"What! The sassy little letter you wrote yesterday? Didn't pay any attention to it, saucy! Are you coming down or are you not? I am going to turn on all the dampers, and every one can hear what you say. Now, will you come?"

"Just one little word more, Howard. What did you come out here so early for?"

"To see you, of course, silly. What else?"

"And all that noise!"

"Did it on purpose to wake you up. You didn't think I was going to wait any longer, did you?" shamelessly.

"Howard, I cried all night."

"You deserved to," severely.

"And, Howard!"

A warning rattle of the dampers interrupted her. She laughed happily.

"All right, dear, in two minutes."

And something that sounded suspiciously like a kiss wended its lonely way through the crooked tin pipe.

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