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COW BRAND BAKING SODA

Marrying Mark
By VIOLETTE KIMBALL DUNN

"Three cheers for Miss Lucy!" said Mark. Then what?"

Mrs. Summerville told Miss Tredway to leave the house at once.

"The hell!" cried Mark. "Did she happen to say why?"

"Yes, sir. She said she'd been to all the parents of Miss Valerie's friends and they had assured her they would not let their children associate with her unless Miss Lucy left."

"I see," said Mark. "I don't be-

lieve I want to hear any more. That's enough to go on with. After all, I might have known." He stood staring at the fire. Chiltern had seen tempers before, but never Mark's. He had gone quite white as he stood there, his hands clenched at his sides.

"Thank you, sir," said Chiltern at last. "May I go now, sir?"

"Yes. No, wait. Have you anything to suggest? I mean about finding Miss Tredway?"

"She went in the old van, the one they call The Ark. I should go after her, sir, if you'll allow me to suggest. The old bus couldn't be making any great speed."

"Where do you suppose she'd be heading?"

"Where did you meet Miss Lucy, sir, if I may ask?"

"Allington. It's a good thing one

of us has a head on him! Have Catlet run out the town car. That's about the fastest, except the old roadster. I want you to come along. We'll have to start at once."

"And Miss Valerie, sir?"

"I'll send her over to Miss Endicott's. I won't dare leave her here. She might be sent to Siberia by the time we get back. Will the place be safe without you?"

"Mrs. Banwood is very capable, sir. An irritating sort of person, but competent, if I may so say."

"Of course she knows nothing of all this?"

Chiltern's voice sounded reproachful. "Certainly not, sir."

"You might get Miss Endicott on the telephone for me. Then tell Mrs. Banwood we may be away for a few days. Give her whatever instructions you please. Then pack yourself a bag and meet me here in an hour."

"Very good, sir," said Chiltern. His face was unmoved, but his heart was lighter than it had been since Thanksgiving.

He got Shirley's number and left the room. Shirley was in luck. Would she put Valerie up for a night or two? Mark asked. Valerie would explain. Shirley knew by Mark's voice that something had happened. Loving Mark, being a tactful woman and knowing human nature she asked no questions, said she'd adore having Valerie.

He put down the telephone and went upstairs. He hardly knew what to tell Valerie and compromised by telling her nothing.

"Chiltern and I are taking a run up to Allington to see if Lucy's there," he told her. You may tell Shirley whatever you please. Nothing could drag it out of her, so there'll be no comeback.

Valerie listened, her eyes enormous in her small pale face. "Yes, Father."

He went directly to Dorothy's sitting room door and knocked. She opened it almost immediately. She had changed to a negligee of palest mauve. With her slightly disarranged hair she was as near loveliness as she would ever be. She had been expecting him and had dressed deliberately. But when she saw his face she realized the futility of clothes.

"Sit down, she said, but she would not meet his eyes. He didn't even answer, but looking at her. "We needn't bother with the amenities," he said. "I'm going away to try to undo some of the mischief you have done. I don't know how long it will take, but I want you out of my house by the time I get back. I should suggest leaving tomorrow morning. Catlet will attend to whatever is necessary for your journey."

"I never—" she began.

But he was already at the door. "There is nothing more to be said now or at any time," he repeated. "Please leave here at your earliest convenience."

She started to call after him that she would leave at once. That she had never been so insulted in her life. But she hesitated just long enough to remember the inconvenience of a hurried night departure. Besides, if he were really going away, she would have time to question Valerie. She could always frighten the truth out of the little girl.

She didn't know that Valerie was at that moment, bag in hand saying good-bye to Mark at the door of the big car, with Catlet standing guard.

Mark watched the tail lights disappear. Valerie was safe, and now he could think of Lucy. He ran up to his room and threw an indiscriminate collection of clothes into a bag. When he had finished he went out, deliberately locking first his own door and then Valerie's.

Mrs. Banwood had duplicate keys, and although he felt slightly ashamed, he put this down to pure habit. In his heart he knew he had no reason to trust Dorothy. He dropped the keys in his pocket and ran downstairs.

Chiltern presently emerged from the coat room with Mark's heaviest coat, a hat and a fur lined driving gloves. He held the coat for Mark and shrugged himself into his own.

"Everything all right?" Mark asked as they went out.

"Everything, sir. Mrs. Banwood understands what's expected of her. I ran the car out myself. I told them in the morning to make sure everything was all right."

"You certainly made a quick job of it," Mark told him.

"You didn't let any grass grow under your own feet, sir, if I may say so," said Chiltern.

XXX

Mark and Chiltern stepped out into the clear cloud of the night, and Chiltern closed the door behind them. He was, he felt, closing it on the pleasant humdrum of every day and stepping out to adventure. He couldn't remember being so excited since he sailed from England.

"Shall I drive, sir?" he asked as he opened the car door.

"Later, perhaps," Mark told him. "We may have to take turns. Climb in and take a nap if you can."

Mark swung through the gates and out to the road, heading for the state highway. There was practically no traffic and Mark gave the long car its head.

Chiltern watched the needle swing steadily up to 70, where it stayed, and they settled down to a steady rush through the night. It filled him with an odd exhilaration which was part of the unreality of the whole affair.

"What do you figure the Ark can do?" Mark asked.

"I couldn't say, sir. With the new engine she might make forty, shouldn't you say?"

"I never drove the old girl. I had the engine put in because Miss Lucy had a sort of affection for the thing. I'm sorry I did, now."

"But a train would have made even better time," suggested Chiltern.

"I guess so. I don't suppose you have any idea when she left?"

"No, sir," said Chiltern. "You see, Mr. Alexander, the old bus never entered my head. I thought Miss Tredway was taking the train, and kept waiting for her to call a taxi from the village. I kept watch near the front door, and all that time Catlet says she was having him run the Ark out. She must have driven it to a side door after he left, and gone out by the back drive and the service gates. It's easy enough to see it now. I only wish I'd thought of it then."

An hour later, when the floodlight of a late moon showed only the empty expanse of a deserted highway, Mark spoke again.

"Do you happen to remember the time Mrs. Summerville went to talk to Miss Lucy? I'm frightfully sorry—I didn't know you were asleep?"

There was a pause, out of which Chiltern spoke groggily. "I—I didn't know it myself, sir. Was there something you asked me? I beg pardon."

"I beg yours. I asked if you remember what time Mrs. Summerville went to Miss Lucy's room?"

"Yes, sir. It was about twelve."

"Then they didn't have lunch together?"

"Certainly not, sir. Mrs. Summerville had a tray sent to her room. By that time Miss Tredway must have gone."

"That would make it around half-past one when she left?"

"That's near as I can make out, sir."

"That would give her at least eight hours' start. We're probably running about twice as fast. I'm just trying to figure things out a bit."

"Could I do a bit of driving, sir?" Chiltern offered presently. "You must be wanting a nap."

"Not yet, thanks," replied Mark. "Are you fairly comfortable, Chiltern? Not cold?"

Chiltern smiled. "Not with this electric heater, sir. What won't they think of next? It was more than likely being warm and comfortable sent me off."

"I won't sleep again, sir," promised Chiltern. But in another ten minutes when Mark looked at him he was resting peacefully against the padded upholstery, a gentle whir coming from his slightly parted lips.

It was a few minutes before a when Mark caught sight of a

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