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That Blonde Person



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Helen F. Bagg

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That Blonde Person

A Farce in One Act

BY

HELEN F. BAGG

Author of "THE FASCINATING FANNY BROWN,"
"WHISKERS," "WHY NOT JIM?" etc.



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That Blonde Person.

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No 1

That Blonde Person

CHARACTERS

ELEANOR ELLIS *a young married woman.*
ETHEL PERCY *her sister.*
MRS. HUBBARD PARKER }
MRS. CHAUNCEY PHELPS } . . . *friends of Eleanor's.*
MRS. HUDGENS *a laundress.*
JANE *a housemaid.*

TIME OF PLAYING.—Thirty minutes.

STORY OF THE PLAY

Eleanor Ellis, a young married woman, thinks her washer-woman, Mrs. Hudgens, should leave her husband, who has the habit of getting arrested. "Show him that you despise him." She won't help to get Patsy out of jail unless Mrs. Hudgens consents to a separation. Mrs. Hudgens refuses. "This world's a lonesome place for widders." Mrs. Phelps and Mrs. Parker tell Eleanor that her husband has been lunching with a "blonde person." She laughs them away with the declaration that it must have been her husband's Cousin Marian. But when they are gone Eleanor begins to pack up her things. "I'm going to leave him to-night!" Everything she packs awakens memories. Eleanor weakens. "Maybe I ought to stay and reform him." Her husband calls her on the 'phone. It was Cousin Marian after all. "She'll be here in ten minutes." Eleanor radiant: "John, I want you to get Patsy Hudgens out of jail. It's an awful thing to love a husband."

COSTUMES, ETC.

ELEANOR. About twenty-five ; wears a pretty afternoon house gown.

ETHEL. About eighteen ; wears appropriate afternoon costume.

MRS. PARKER and MRS. PHELPS. Young society matrons ; wear afternoon calling costumes, with hats, gloves, parasols, shopping bags, etc.

MRS. HUDGENS. Irish, about forty ; wears calico or gingham dress, with pocket in skirt or in underskirt, apron, and very small and battered straw hat.

JANE. A young Irish housemaid ; wears appropriate maid's costume of black, with white cap and small apron.

PROPERTIES

Basket, supposed to contain clean clothes, money, telephone, bell, glass of water, couch cover (a Mexican blanket, if possible), vases, sofa pillows, small bookcase and books, cigar box or jar, clock, door curtains, candlesticks, picture, two rugs.

That Blonde Person

SCENE.—*A pretty drawing-room. Doors at C. and L. Small desk with telephone up L. Down R., couch with pretty cover and plenty of pillows. Down L., table with books and bric-à-brac. Up R., mantel with clock and candlesticks. Chairs, pictures, various pretty ornaments, etc., in appropriate places.*

(As the curtain rises, JANE, a good-looking housemaid, neatly attired in cap and apron, is arranging flowers. The sound of some one laboriously practicing the piano can be heard from off stage. The performer gets to one place in the composition each time, then breaks down and goes back and begins over again with a most monotonous effect. A bell rings, and JANE goes off at C., returning quickly with MRS. HUDGENS, the washerwoman, carrying a large basket of laundry, neatly covered with a newspaper. MRS. H. is a weather-beaten little woman, dingily dressed, who does not venture to sit down, but deposits her basket on the floor and stands by it.)

JANE. I'll tell Mrs. Ellis that you're here. I suppose you'd like your money?

MRS. H. I would that. What with Hudgens in jail an' th' children needin' shoes fer school, a bit of money's a convenient thing to have.

JANE. In jail? Do you mean to say Patsy's in trouble again?

MRS. H. (*vindictively*). It's thim villains of polices! You'd never see their like fer spyin' on a man when he gits his pay an' is feelin' a bit happy. An' they call it a free country.

JANE. True for you. Didn't I keep company with one of 'em for a year, an' him lettin' on to have money in th' bank, and a wish to get married, an' all the time engaged to a girl in Cork, an' she comin' out to marry him.

MRS. H. The spalpeen! But it serves you right mixin' wid such low company—and you wid a fine place like this. Is that th' mistress playin' th' pianny?

JANE. No, it's her sister, Miss Percy. (*Goes to L., just as ELEANOR ELLIS enters L.*) It's Mrs. Hudgens with th' clothes, ma'am.

ELEANOR. Very well, Jane. Take them up-stairs, please. (*Exit JANE, C., with basket. ELEANOR goes to desk and sits.*) I think I have the right change here, Mrs. Hudgens.

(*Rummages in desk, L.*)

MRS. H. Yes'm.

ELEANOR. Dear me, where did I put that money? Oh, here it is.

(*MRS. H. approaches and takes the money.*)

MRS. H. (*putting money in pocket of skirt*). Thank you, ma'am.

ELEANOR. The children all well?

MRS. H. Yes'm. Sammy wasn't quite himself for a day or two, ma'am, but he's mendin'.

ELEANOR. What was the matter?

MRS. H. Well, we were afther thinkin' it might be th' tack he swallowed last Monday.

ELEANOR (*in horror*). Tack! Good gracious!

MRS. H. Yes'm. They will pick up them things, bein' on th' floor so much—but land, it only hardens 'em.

ELEANOR (*with a shudder*). How awful! Is—is your husband keeping—is he all right now?

MRS. H. Oh, yes'm. He's in jail, ma'am. They're that particular there, a man don't have no chance to take anything; thim police has the eyes of a weasel, ma'am.

ELEANOR. Mrs. Hudgens, do you mean to tell me that that man has been on another spree?

MRS. H. Yes'm.

ELEANOR. And that you mean to take him back again when he gets out of jail?

MRS. H. (*in surprise*). Sure, what else wid I be doin' with him, ma'am?

ELEANOR. Why, leave him, of course. Get a separation. Free yourself and children from his disgusting companionship.

MRS. H. Yes'm, but only think of how lonesome we'd be

without him, ma'am. Sure, there ain't nobody like Patsy fer company whin he's all right. That's the trouble. He's that popular that min is always treatin' him fer this an' fer that, an' instead of comin' home quiet an' sleepin' it off like a gentleman should, what does he do but stride down th' street to that Callahan's beat, him that niver could abide Hudgens because he's a foine big good-lookin' chap, an' Callahan fit to stop th' watch in yer pocket if he was to look at it sudden, an' of course he gets run in an' loses his job.

ELEANOR. That's all very well, but you have no right to allow him to treat you like this. You should have some spirit. Show him that you despise him.

MRS. H. Yes'm.

ELEANOR. How long is he in for this time?

MRS. H. (*tearfully*). Thirty days, and a foine pleasant job inspectin' garbage promised him an' goin' to be gave to Jim Casey if he don't git bail by to-morrow.

ELEANOR. Now, Mrs. Hudgens, you know I told you the last time Mr. Ellis bailed your husband out that I would never consent to its being done again unless you promised to leave him?

MRS. H. Yes'm.

ELEANOR. Well, I meant what I said. If you really want your husband to get that job, I'll ask Mr. Ellis to bail him out to-morrow, but you must promise me to apply for a separation.

MRS. H. Sure, whut good wid I be gettin' from th' job if I'm after lavin' him?

ELEANOR. He can be compelled to pay you a certain part of his earnings for the support of the children. I don't know very much about those things myself, but Mr. Ellis is a lawyer, and I'll find out all about it from him.

MRS. H. Thank you, ma'am, but I'll not be troublin' ye. Let Jim Casey take th' garbage, an' I'll kape my man. It's less trouble than gettin' rid of him, an' this world's a lonesome place for widders! Good-bye, ma'am.

ELEANOR. If you change your mind, Mrs. Hudgens, you may let me know. Think it over.

MRS. H. Thank you, ma'am. I know you mane well. Some day whin Mr. Ellis is caught by them police an' run in jest fer havin' too good a time, you'll understand. Good-bye, ma'am.

(*Exit, c.*)

(ELEANOR *shakes her head and turns to her desk again.*)

ELEANOR. I wonder what makes women of that class so incorrigibly obstinate?

(*Enter* ETHEL PERCY, *a girl of eighteen, L.*)

ETHEL. I thought I heard voices in here.

ELEANOR. You did. I've been lecturing Mrs. Hudgens. That miserable husband of hers is in jail again.

ETHEL (*pushing on the arm of a big chair*). I don't see that that's any reason for lecturing her.

ELEANOR. Now, of course, she wants John to bail him out. I told her I wouldn't let him do it unless she'd promise to leave the man.

ETHEL. Well, I should think that was simple enough.

ELEANOR. She's as obstinate as a mule. She doesn't seem to have any proper pride. None of those people do.

ETHEL. You mean she doesn't want to leave him?

ELEANOR. That seems to be the idea.

ETHEL. Humph! I'd like to see myself living with a man who got himself put in the Bridewell. What's the matter with her?

ELEANOR. She says it's lonesome without him!

ETHEL. Lonesome! Suffering cats!

ELEANOR. How a woman can have so little respect for herself I can't see. Why, if John Ellis were to do anything like that I'd leave him if it was my last official act!

ETHEL. I should hope so! Any sensible woman would. Fancy John in jail! (*She giggles in enjoyment of the thought.*)

ELEANOR. I can't fancy John doing anything that isn't quite all right. (*Rises.*) Well, I must go up and count the laundry and see if they've kept any of it out for family use during the week. It's quite a habit of theirs.

(*Exit, L.*)

(*ETHEL goes up to door C. The bell rings. She looks off.*)

ETHEL. Gracious! Mrs. Hubbard Parker and Mrs. Chauncey Phelps! I'd better hike up-stairs and make myself presentable.

(*Exit, L.*)

(*Enter* JANE, C., *ushering in* MRS. HUBBARD PARKER *and* MRS. CHAUNCEY PHELPS, *two young matrons, very elaborately gowned.*)

JANE. Will you be seated, please, while I tell the ladies?

(*They sit.*)

MRS. PARKER. It's Mrs. Ellis whom we particularly wish to see.

JANE. Yes'm.

(*Exit, c.*)

MRS. PHELPS (*sitting in chair, down L.*). I'm beginning to feel horribly nervous. It's a very disagreeable thing to have to do.

MRS. PARKER (*sitting on couch, R.*). Nonsense! We've come to do Eleanor Ellis a good turn. I never consider it disagreeable to do my duty.

MRS. PHELPS. At any rate, it's very embarrassing.

MRS. PARKER. Not at all. Why should we be embarrassed? We haven't done anything.

MRS. PHELPS. No, of course not, but one always feels a little timid about approaching subjects of this sort.

MRS. PARKER. I don't.

MRS. PHELPS. I only hope we shall manage it tactfully. Chauncey says you must have tact when you interfere in other people's affairs if you don't want to get hurt.

MRS. PARKER. That's just like a man! Always avoiding responsibilities!

MRS. PHELPS. After all, if anybody had seen my husband taking another woman to Hartley's for luncheon, I should want her to come and tell me. I'm sure I would.

MRS. PARKER. Of course you would. Any woman of spirit would. She'll thank us for it.

MRS. PHELPS. Well, I'm sure I hope she will. She'll either thank us or put us out.

MRS. PARKER. Let her try to put me out!

MRS. PHELPS. What are you going to say?

MRS. PARKER. Well, I shan't waste any time on preliminaries. I shall go at once to the point.

MRS. PHELPS. Yes, that's the best way. Spare her feelings as much as we can. Oh, the miserable wretch! When I think of how comfortable and happy they looked, sitting there eating strawberries at a dollar a box.

MRS. PARKER. Never mind the strawberries. I shall say at once without any preparation, "My dear Eleanor,

while Mrs. Phelps and I were lunching at Hartley's to-day, we saw your husband sitting at the next table with a blonde person. We thought it our duty to come at once and tell you."

MRS. PHELPS. And that's where we get the grand bounce.

MRS. PARKER. Nonsense. We —

(Enter ELEANOR, L.)

ELEANOR. I'm so glad to see you both! It's so lovely of you to come together.

(She sits up c. There is a moment's pause.)

MRS. PHELPS (with a meaning glance at MRS. PARKER). We've been lunching together at Hartley's, so we thought —

MRS. PARKER (hurriedly). We thought we'd run out and chat with you for a little while.

ELEANOR. Lunching at Hartley's? Oh, I do so love to go there. They have the best things to eat.

MRS. PHELPS. Yes. They had strawberries to-day. Imagine it, and they're a dollar a box.

MRS. PARKER (nervously). It's very unhealthy to eat them so early in the season. I never do.

ELEANOR. John is so fond of strawberries. I always try to get them the moment they're in the market.

MRS. PHELPS. I'm afraid you spoil that husband of yours, my dear. Do you know —

MRS. PARKER (hurriedly). Haven't you had this room done over lately? It's very effective.

ELEANOR. Oh, do you like it? I was afraid it was too light.

MRS. PHELPS (with another glance at MRS. PARKER). Oh, no, not a bit. It suits you so well, too. Now if you were a blonde —

MRS. PARKER. But she isn't a blonde, so what's the use talking about it? How is your sister, Mrs. Ellis?

ELEANOR. Very well, thanks. I'm afraid Jane didn't tell her you were here. (Rises.) I'll call her.

MRS. PARKER. No—no—don't. (ELEANOR pauses, a little surprised, and MRS. PARKER finishes.) Don't disturb her on our account.

ELEANOR. Oh, she'll be so anxious to see you; she wouldn't like it at all if I didn't call her. (*Crosses to L., opens door and calls.*) Ethel!

MRS. PHELPS (*reproachfully, to MRS. PARKER*). You said you'd do it right away and have it over with! I'm as nervous as a witch.

MRS. PARKER (*indignantly*). You don't expect me to blurt it out like a fool, do you? You have to lead up to these things with tact.

MRS. PHELPS. Well, it looks to me as though you were leading away from it with tact.

ELEANOR (*at door*). Come down, dear. We have callers.

(*Comes back to her seat. MRS. PARKER clears her throat nervously.*)

MRS. PARKER. My dear, we didn't come here to-day just to call; we had an errand.

ELEANOR. Indeed?

MRS. PARKER. A very painful one!

ELEANOR. Why, what —

MRS. PHELPS (*desperately*). We want you to take the candy table at the bazaar. Oh, I know you said you wouldn't, but we've asked every one we know, and not a soul will do it, and we thought maybe, while your sister was with you — (*Enter ETHEL, L. MRS. PHELPS jumps up and greets her excitedly.*) My dear Miss Percy, so very glad to see you!

ETHEL. How lovely of you both to call! How are you, Mrs. Parker?

MRS. PARKER (*glaring at MRS. PHELPS*). Very well, thank you.

ETHEL (*sitting up L. C.*). And how is dear Mr. Parker? Somebody told me he hadn't been well.

MRS. PARKER. He hasn't.

ETHEL. I hope it's not serious?

MRS. PARKER. It's the things he eats down town at those horrid restaurants that upset him. I've made him come home to lunch lately, and he's much better.

ELEANOR. I suppose restaurants are rather unsettling as a steady thing.

MRS. PARKER (*with meaning*). Unsettling! That's a

very mild name for it. I want to tell you, Mrs. Ellis, indeed, I feel it my duty to tell you —

(MRS. PHELPS *is taken with a violent fit of coughing, which quite drowns this speech.* ELEANOR *runs to her.*)

ELEANOR. Dear me, poor thing, what can I do for you? Ethel, run for some water!

(*Exit* ETHEL, *at L.* ELEANOR *pats the sufferer on the back.*)

MRS. PHELPS. N-nothing! I—I —

(*She goes off into another fit.* ETHEL *comes back with a glass of water.* MRS. PHELPS *drinks.*)

MRS. PARKER (*sternly*). Now, Mildred Phelps, if you're quite through with that cough, I shall tell Mrs. Ellis exactly why we are here this afternoon.

ELEANOR. Why, the candy table —

(*She goes back to chair, up C.* MRS. PHELPS *groans.*)

MRS. PARKER. No, it's not the candy table. I wish it were. We came here this afternoon to open your eyes to the atrocious behavior of Mr. Ellis.

ELEANOR (*in amazement*). 'To do what?

ETHEL. Now, what in the name of mischief has John done?

MRS. PHELPS (*feebly*). Hadn't she better leave the room?

ELEANOR. I see no necessity. I'm not aware of anything that my husband has done that she mightn't hear. Please go on.

MRS. PARKER. Now, my dear, you mustn't take it like that. We're only trying to do our duty by you as your friends.

MRS. PHELPS (*almost in tears*). I'm sure if you were to see my husband lunching at Hartley's with a blonde person and eating strawberries at a dollar a box, I'd want you to come straight and tell me!

ELEANOR (*faintly*). A blonde person! Hartley's! What do you mean?

ETHEL. Well, I never!

MRS. PARKER. Mildred and I were lunching there and your husband came in with this—this—individual—and we thought it our duty to come to you at once and tell you so that you could take the proper steps at once.

ELEANOR. And what do you consider the proper steps?

MRS. PARKER (*sternly*). Divorce!

MRS. PHELPS. Or separation with separate maintenance.

MRS. PARKER. Humbug! Divorce is the only remedy in such a case. A woman owes it to her self-respect.

ELEANOR (*as though struck by an idea*). Wait a minute. What sort of a looking woman was she?

MRS. PARKER. Gray tailor-made suit with a big bunch of violets —

MRS. PHELPS. And a big black hat with a willow plume. Must have cost seventy-five dollars at the very least.

ELEANOR. And you say she was a blonde?

MRS. PARKER. Blonde or peroxide. Impossible to say which at that distance.

ELEANOR (*bursting into laughter*). Oh, dear! oh, dear! And to think how you scared me!

BOTH. What do you mean?

ETHEL. Eleanor!

ELEANOR (*wiping her eyes*). Why, it's John's Cousin Marian, of course! How stupid of me to have forgotten!

BOTH. Cousin Marian!

ELEANOR. Yes; Mrs. Hardin Abbott, of New York. She's going to California this week and she didn't know just what day she would pass through, so she said she would look John up and have luncheon with him, and not try to plan to stop over. She's very fond of John.

MRS. PARKER. She seemed to be.

ELEANOR. Yes, they're like brother and sister. Ridiculous of me not to have thought of her at first.

MRS. PHELPS (*rising*). Well, I—I'm delighted to know that there's nothing wrong. I felt dreadfully about it.

ELEANOR (*rising*). Yes, I know how sympathetic you are!

MRS. PARKER (*rising*). I hope you realize that we were doing it from the best motives?

ELEANOR. Could any one doubt your motives, my dear?

ETHEL (*rising*). So good of you to come so promptly. Why, you didn't waste a moment. You took a taxi, didn't you?

MRS. PHELPS. It's such a long walk from the cars. Good-bye, dear; so glad we were mistaken.

ELEANOR. Don't mention it. John and I will have a good laugh over it to-night.

MRS. PARKER (*angrily*). If you're ready, Mildred, I don't see any reason for standing around any longer.

MRS. PHELPS. Oh, quite! Good-bye, dear. Good-bye, Miss Percy.

ELEANOR. } Good-bye. So glad to have seen you.
ETHEL. }

(*Exeunt* MRS. PARKER and MRS. PHELPS, C.)

(ETHEL *goes to door c., looking off*. ELEANOR *drops into a chair and covers her face with her hands*.)

ETHEL (*turning*). Cats! (*Sees* ELEANOR.) Why, Eleanor, what is the matter?

ELEANOR (*sobbing*). Cousin Marian!

ETHEL. Cousin Marian?

ELEANOR. Yes. There isn't any Cousin Marian!

ETHEL. Look here, Eleanor; are you crazy? What do you mean by saying that there's no Cousin Marian?

ELEANOR. I mean that she isn't here—she's in New York—I just made up all that business about her going to California to shut those women's mouths.

ETHEL. Oh!

ELEANOR (*savagely*). Now, what I want to know is, who is the blonde person with violets that my husband takes to lunch at Hartley's?

ETHEL. Oh, Eleanor!

ELEANOR. And to think that it was only half an hour ago that I said I couldn't imagine John's doing anything that wasn't just right, and even then those miserable women were on their way here to tell me this!

ETHEL. The monster! I hope those strawberries poison him!

ELEANOR. Married just one year, and here he is taking strangers out to lunch! But I'll show him!

ETHEL. What are you going to do?

ELEANOR (*rising*). Do? I'm going to leave him. Now—to-night—as soon as I can get my things on. I'm going home with you.

ETHEL. Good for you!

ELEANOR. I shall leave a note for him telling him that he shall be free to marry this—this violet blonde person as soon as possible. Then I shall take every article that I possess and leave the house.

ETHEL. But you won't have time. It's four o'clock.

ELEANOR. You'll have to help me. We'll begin with this room.

ETHEL. You're not going to take the furniture?

ELEANOR. I'm going to take all my wedding presents. Every one of them that belongs to me. Do you suppose I'm going to let that woman have all my beautiful things?

ETHEL. I should say not! Come on, let's get 'em ready now.

ELEANOR (*tearing the covering from the couch and throwing it on the floor*). To begin with, my Mexican serape that Uncle Bob sent me. That'll do to tie them up in and carry them up-stairs. Don't take any of his things! Just the ones that my own friends sent me. Those vases of Cousin Jack's—wrap 'em up!

ETHEL (*taking the vases off the table and rolling them in sofa pillows*). I never would have believed it of John. Never!

ELEANOR (*picking up an armful of books that stand in a small book-rack at back of table L., and dumping them into the pile*). Grandfather's set of Thackeray. Poor grandfather, how badly he'll feel. He—he's so fond of John. (*She takes her handkerchief out and wipes her eyes.*) We—we were reading them aloud. We had almost finished "Pendennis." I—I'll never finish it now! (*Crosses to R.*)

ETHEL. You'll never finish packing if you're going to cry over every wedding present. Whose is this?

(*Holds up a cigar box or tobacco jar.*)

ELEANOR (*sobbing*). Don't touch that. It's his! How can you be so hard-hearted, Ethel?

ETHEL. I'm not hard-hearted. I don't want you to get sorry for John and forget what you owe to yourself.

ELEANOR. Sorry for him! I should think not. (*Takes down the clock.*) Here's sister Janet's clock.

(*Brings clock to ETHEL.*)

ETHEL. It won't go in the trunk.

ELEANOR. Then I'll carry it under my arm. I won't leave it for her.

ETHEL (*packing the clock with some more cushions*). This house is going to look as though a cyclone had struck it.

ELEANOR. That's how I want it to look. I want him to realize what he's done.

(*She goes up c., mounts on a chair and begins to take down the curtains at door c.*)

ETHEL. What in the world —

ELEANOR. Mother gave me these curtains. She wouldn't want another woman to use them, I know. (*Buries her face in their folds.*) We hung them together, John and I, last Christmas.

ETHEL. Humph!

ELEANOR. I wonder if she'll be good to him? John has to be so careful what he eats. I—I couldn't bear it if that woman ruins his digestive system. I'll never forgive her!

ETHEL. She'll probably see that he eats at Hartley's; that seems to agree with him pretty well.

ELEANOR (*tearing down the curtains, coming down c. and tossing them to ETHEL*). I wonder how long it takes to get a divorce?

ETHEL. It oughn't to take long in a flagrant case like this. How about the things on this table?

ELEANOR (*going r.*). They're all mine. (*ETHEL sweeps them all into a pile. ELEANOR takes two big candlesticks off the mantel; hands them to ETHEL.*) Cousin Henry's candlesticks. He told me that John was a man in fifty.

ETHEL (*grimly*). I hope so, the way he's been behaving!

ELEANOR (*mounting a chair to take down a picture, up r.*). I'm—I'm not sure that I believe in divorce. It doesn't seem exactly Christian. Suppose John should get reckless, and do something awfully wicked?

ETHEL (*taking down picture, l.*). Well, hasn't he done something awfully wicked now? How bad do you want him to get?

ELEANOR. He—he might take to drink, like Mrs. Hudgens' husband. Maybe—maybe I ought to stay with him and reform him.

ETHEL. Eleanor Ellis, I'm surprised at you! Where's your pride?

ELEANOR. I—I don't know. (*Comes down with picture.*) Wrap that up very carefully. John gave it to me. He said it looked like me.

ETHEL (*taking it*). Humph!

ELEANOR. Of course, I don't want to stay with him; I only want to do my duty, and it's an awful thing for people who have lived together a whole year to separate!

(*She stoops and picks up a small rug.*)

ETHEL. I'll bet it was that blonde stenographer of his; she has a dreadfully deceitful face.

ELEANOR (*grabbing another rug and rolling them up vindictively*). If it is I'll never speak to him again! I'll —

ETHEL. Oh, yes, you would. If he were to come in this minute you'd be as meek as Moses. I only wish I could get a chance to talk to him! I'd tell him what I think of him. I'd — (*The 'phone rings. ETHEL goes to it, up L.* ELEANOR *continues to add items to the pile on the floor.*) Hello! Oh! (*Very meekly.*) Hello, John! Yes, she—she's here. Did you—did you want to speak to her?

(*She puts down the receiver and, avoiding ELEANOR'S glance, goes back to the pile on the floor, down C.* ELEANOR *runs to 'phone and catches up receiver.*)

ELEANOR. Hello! Yes, this is Eleanor. No, there's nothing the matter: I've only got a cold. (*Dabs her nose with handkerchief.*) What! Cousin Marian Abbott in town! On her way to California!

ETHEL. Suffering Satan!

ELEANOR. Yes, yes, of course, you're to send her up at once. Oh, John, I—I hope you took her to lunch somewhere? Hartley's? Yes, of course that was right. What? You want me to get a gray suit like hers? You absurd boy—oh, yes, of course I will if you like it. She'll be up in ten minutes! All right! (*ETHEL collapses on the floor, R.*) John—oh, John, there's something I want you to do for me before you come home. Mrs. Hudgens' Patsy is in jail again, and I want you to get him out right away,

do you hear? He can get a lovely garbage job if he gets out by to-morrow. What? Oh, of course, he's no good, but she—she likes him, and why shouldn't she have him if she wants him? It's an awful thing to love a husband. What! Why, any old husband. Good-bye—don't forget. (*She hangs up receiver and surveys the wreck.*) Cousin Marian Abbott will be here in ten minutes, and she's the most particular housekeeper in the world. What are we going to do?

ETHEL. Hustle!

(*She starts wildly to hang a picture, L.*)

ELEANOR. Jane!

(*She takes the curtains and runs to the door with them.*)

(*Enter JANE, C., who stares in amazement at the scene.*)

JANE. Fer th' love of mercy!

ETHEL. Jane, there's not a minute to lose; there's company coming in ten minutes, and this room must be put to rights. Hurry!

JANE (*picking up the candlesticks, and carrying them to mantle, R.*). Yes'm. What——

ETHEL (*scrambling down from the chair, grabbing a rug, and spreading it out*). Mrs. Ellis had a—— Well, a sort of fit, and this is the result.

JANE (*standing R.*). A fit!

ELEANOR (*up C., adjusting the curtains and turning with a radiant face*). You needn't be afraid, Jane—it's the sort of a fit that never happens twice! The only thing that can bring it on is the combination of a blonde person, and violets, and strawberries.

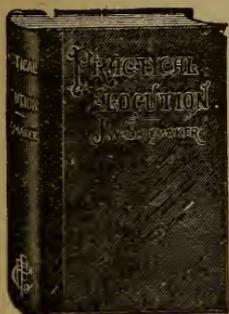
ETHEL. And cats!

(*ELEANOR and ETHEL laugh.*)



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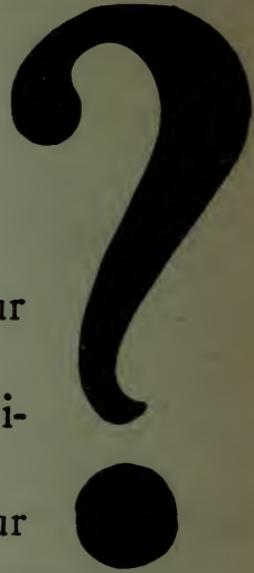
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