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PERFECTION IN SEAFOODS



The Queen's Holiday

BY Elizabeth Corbett

"My maid is here, to spy if not to guard," said Elsa. "Anna, Anna! Why, where is she?"

"She went out," Ted informed her. "Anyhow she doesn't understand English, does she? She wouldn't be a very efficient spy."

"Perhaps they are planning to change Mr. Layton's prison," suggested Carl from over near a window.

"What makes you think that?" demanded Elsa.

He pointed out of the window,

and she went to see. The drawbridge was down, and at the farther end of it waited the Magdeburg car, empty and unguarded.

Elsa beckoned to Ted. "If the three of us were in that car — this minute!"

"With gasoline—and luck—we might still get away," Ted finished for her.

Carl tried the door, opened it a crack, and looked into the corridor. Then he closed it softly, and came to report in an excited whisper. "The sentries have been withdrawn. If now, before others come to take their places—"

"They have a funny way of changing guards in Castle Warbeck," said Ted musingly.

Carl tipped to the window, and reported on that reconnaissance.

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too. "The sentries outside the castle—I can no longer see any from this window."

"That's just too good to be true!"

"But, Mr. Layton, if a revolt has broken out among the guards—"

"If one has, they were pretty quiet about it. However, I suppose I'll have to make a pass at the thing. You haven't a weapon of any sort handy, have you, Elsa?"

"You can use the legs of a chair as a club!" suggested Carl.

"That chair there," Elsa pointed eagerly. "The legs are already almost off."

With Carl's help Ted wrenched a leg from the chair she indicated. Balancing it in his right hand, he put his left arm around Elsa. "Just one kiss for luck, Elsa. After that, put your hands over your ears."

"But I am coming with you," said Elsa firmly.

"You're doing nothing of the kind, sweetheart. Here, Carl, hold your queen for a few minutes!" Ted passed Elsa over to Carl as unconcernedly as if she had been a bag of sugar.

She had just freed herself from him when she heard three or four shots outside the castle. She rushed along the corridor and down the stairs. At the foot of the stairs she collided with Ted, who was

returning as fast as his legs would carry him.

"Get back up there!" he panted. Arm in arm, they raced upstairs to the dining room. Ted slammed the door and set his back against it. "That is just what I expected," he announced. "They were making it just too easy for me to escape. Naturally I was suspicious."

"They wished you to run away?" asked Carl.

"Of course they did. I'm an embarrassing prisoner; but for all Colonel Tilius' jib about the way the United States fails to protect its citizens, he didn't want to execute me. So he thought of a brilliant way out: The Japanese method of 'escape' for prisoners."

"You did not run across an open space, Mr. Layton?" Carl asked.

"I certainly did not. I kept close to the wall of the courtyard until I reached the passage which leads to the drawbridge. At the outer end of the passage I took three or four hasty steps forward; but by the time they shot, I had come back much faster than I went out."

"Her Highness should escape with you," Carl had a bright idea. "That can still be done! You must change clothes with me, Mr. Layton. Then I will run out and let them mistake me for you. In the confusion after I am shot, you and Her Highness can get away in that car which still stands there in readiness."

"I'm afraid we haven't much time to think of plans," said Elsa anxiously. "The guards will surely return soon."

"They're undoubtedly on the way now," Ted put his ear to the crack of the door, and nodded briefly. "Yes, they're coming."

CHAPTER XXVI

Elsa heard the tramp of feet in the corridor. In desperation Carl rushed to the window. "Highness!" he cried in an excited tone. "That train—the train by which Colonel Tilius came here last night—is farther along the track now. I can see smoke from the engine, too, though the engine is still hidden from me by trees."

"Hiv! They're getting steam up are they?" said Ted.

"Yes, and they must have switched too. The train is now headed back toward Grandheim."

"If that engine has steam up," said Elsa, "surely it means that Colonel Tilius is returning to Grandheim. And as for us—"

The door opened, and two sentries appeared at attention. Between them strutted Colonel Tilius, followed at respectful distance by the maid, Anna. Tilius was wearing a long military overcoat and carried his cap in his hand; he sped a military carriage, but his imitation was not very successful.

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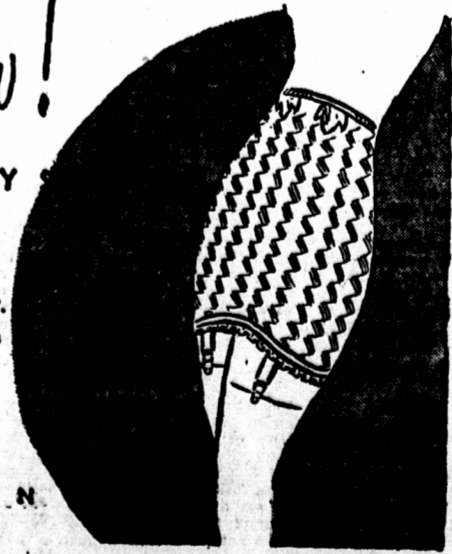
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resses are twice as good as one. Or better, aren't they?"

"Mr. Layton will not go with you," said Tilius dryly. "Mr. Layton makes himself a nuisance."

But Ted shook his head at her. "Go along and do as you are told, Elsa. There are other persons concerned besides you and me. Don't you hear that?"

The noise he alluded to had begun a moment earlier but Elsa had been too agitated to notice it. Now she listened to the distant booming and her face paled. "Is that—can't—non?" she whispered.

"It is. Big guns in the distance. This country is at war, Elsa. You have your part to play, and it won't be an easy one."

The maid brought Elsa's hat and coat. Ted helped her put them on. "Now your handbag and gloves. That's right. You're all set!" With a hand under her chin, he raised her face toward his and took a long look into her eyes.

"We have no time for sentimental farewells!" growled Tilius.

Ted slipped an arm around Elsa's waist. "Then since time presses, may I walk to the gate with Mrs. Layton, and wave good-by from there?"

(To Be Continued)

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