

GLASS MONTAGUE

OBJECT:
MATRIMONY

Montague Glass

Object: matrimony

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REAL ESTATE!" Philip Margolius cried bitterly; "that's a business for a business man! If a feller's in the clothing business and it comes bad times, Mr. Feldman, he can sell it his goods at cost and live anyhow; but if a feller's in the real-estate business, Mr. Feldman, and it comes bad times, he can't not only sell his houses, but he couldn't give 'em away yet, and when the second mortgage forecloses he gets deficiency judgments against him."

"Why don't you do this?" Mr. Feldman suggested. "Why don't you go to the second mortgagee and tell him you'll convey the houses to him in satisfaction of the mortgage? Those houses will never bring even the amount of the first mortgage in these times, and surely he would rather have the houses than a deficiency judgment against you."

"That's what I told him a hundred times. Believe me, Mr. Feldman, I used hours and hours of the best salesmanship on that feller," Margolius answered, "and all he says is that he wouldn't have to pay no interest, insurance and taxes on a deficiency judgment, while a house what stands vacant you got to all the time be paying out money."

"But as soon as they put the subway through," Mr. Feldman continued, "that property around Two Hundred and Sixty-fourth Street and Heidenfeld Avenue will go up tremendously."

"Sure I know," Margolius agreed; "but when a feller's got four double flat-houses and every flat yet vacant, futures don't cut no ice. Them tenants couldn't ride on futures, Mr. Feldman; and so, with the nearest trolley car ten blocks away, I am up against a dead proposition."

"Wouldn't he give you a year's extension?" Mr. Feldman asked.

"He wouldn't give me positively nothing," Margolius replied hopelessly. "That feller's a regular Skylark. He wants his pound of meat every time, Mr. Feldman. So I guess you got to think up some scheme for me that I should beat him out. Them mortgages falls due in ten days, Mr. Feldman, and we got to act quick."

Mr. Feldman frowned judicially. In New York, if an attorney for a realty owner knows his business and neglects his professional ethics he can so obstruct an action to foreclose a mortgage as to make Jarndyce vs. Jarndyce look like a summary proceeding. But Henry D. Feldman was a conscientious practitioner, and never did anything that might bring him before the grievance committee of the Bar Association. Moreover, he was a power in the Democratic organization and right in line for a Supreme Court judgeship, and so it behooved him to be careful if not ethical.

"Why don't you go and see Goldblatt again, and then if you can't move him I'll see what I can do for you?" Feldman suggested.

"But, Mr. Feldman," Margolius protested, "I told it you it ain't no use. Goldblatt hates me worser as poison."

Feldman leaned back in his low chair with one arm thrown over the back, after the fashion of Judge Blatchford's portrait in the United States District Courtroom.

"See here, Margolius: what's the real trouble between you and Goldblatt?" he said. "If you're going to get my advice in this matter you will have to tell me the whole truth. *Falsus in uno, falsus in omnibus*, you know."

"You make a big mistake, Mr. Feldman," Margolius replied. "It ain't nothing like that, and whoever told it you is got another think coming. The trouble was about his daughter Fannie. You could bring a horse a pail of water, Mr. Feldman, but no one could make the horse drink it if he don't want to, and that's the way it was with me. Friedman, the Schatchen, took me up to see Goldblatt's daughter Fannie, and I assure you I ain't exaggeration a bit when I tell you she's got a moustache what wouldn't go bad with a dago barber yet."

"Why, I thought Goldblatt's daughter was a pretty good looker," Feldman exclaimed.

"That's Birdie Goldblatt," Margolius replied, blushing. "But Fannie – that's a different proposition, Mr. Feldman. Well, Goldblatt gives me all kinds of inducements; but I ain't that kind, Mr. Feldman. If I would marry I would marry for love, and it wouldn't make no difference to me if the girl would have it, say, for example, only two thousand dollars. I would marry her anyway."

"Very commendable," Mr. Feldman murmured.

"But Fannie Goldblatt – that is somebody a young feller wouldn't consider, not if her hair hung with diamonds, Mr. Feldman," Margolius continued. "Although I got to admit I did go up to Goldblatt's house a great many times, because, supposing she does got a moustache, she could cook *gefüllte Fische* and *Fleischkugeln* better as Delmonico's already. And then Miss Birdie Goldblatt – "

He faltered and blushed again, while Feldman nodded sympathetically.

"Anyhow, what's the use talking?" Margolius concluded. "The old man gets sore on me, and when Marks Henochstein offers him the second mortgages on them Heidenfeld Avenue houses it was yet boom-time in the Bronx, and it looked good to Goldblatt; so he made Henochstein give him a big allowance, and he bought 'em. And now when he's got me where he wants me I can kiss myself good-bye with them houses."

He rose to his feet and put on his gloves, for Philip was what is popularly known as a swell dresser. Indeed, there was no smarter-appearing salesman in the entire cloak and suit trade, nor was there a salesman more ingratiating in manner and hence more successful with lady buyers.

"If the worser comes to the worst," he said, "I will go through bankruptcy. I ain't got nothing but them houses, anyway." He fingered the two-and-a-half-carat solitaire in his scarf to find out if it were still there. "And they couldn't get my salary in advance, so that's what I'll do."

He shook hands with Mr. Feldman.

"You could send me a bill for your advice, Mr. Feldman," he said.

"That's all right," Feldman replied as he ushered his client out of the office. "I'll add it to my fee in the bankruptcy matter."

II

About Miss Birdie Goldblatt's appearance there was something of Maxine Elliott with just a dash of Anna Held, and she wore her clothes so well that she could make a blended-Kamchatka near-mink scarf look like Imperial Russian sable. Thus, when Philip Margolius encountered her on the corner of Fifth Avenue and Twenty-first Street his heart fairly jumped in admiration. Nevertheless, he raised his hat with all his accustomed grace, and Miss Goldblatt bowed and smiled in return.

"How d'ye do, Miss Goldblatt," he said. "Ain't it a fine weather?"

"Sure it's fine weather," Miss Goldblatt agreed. "Is that all you stopped me for to tell me it was fine weather?"

"No," Philip said lamely.

"Well, then, I guess I'll be moving on," Miss Goldblatt announced; "because I got a date with Fannie up on Twenty-third Street."

"One minute," Philip cried. "It was about your sister what I wanted to speak to you about."

"What have you got to do with my sister Fannie?" Miss Goldblatt demanded, glaring indignantly at Margolius.

"Why," Philip replied on the spur of the moment, "I got a friend what wants to be introduced to her, a – now – feller in the – now – cloak business."

Miss Goldblatt regarded Philip for one suspicious moment.

"What's his name?" she asked abruptly.

A gentle perspiration broke out on Philip's forehead. He searched his mind for the name of some matrimonially eligible man of his acquaintance, but none suggested itself. Hence, he sparred for time.

"Never mind his name," he said jocularly. "When the time comes I'll tell you his name. He's got it a good business, too, I bet yer."

Miss Goldblatt grew somewhat mollified.

"Why don't you bring him down to the house some night?" she suggested, whereat Philip could not forbear an ironical laugh.

"I suppose your father would be delighted to see me, I suppose. Ain't it?" he said.

"What's he got to do with it?" Miss Goldblatt asked. "Do you think because he's called in them second mortgages that me and Fannie would stand for his being fresh to you if you was to come round to the house?"

"No, I don't," Philip replied; "but just the same, anyhow, he feels sore at me."

"He's got a right to feel sore at you," Miss Goldblatt interrupted. "You come a dozen times to see my sister, and then –"

"That's where you are mistaken," Philip cried; "I come once, the first time, to see your sister, and the other times I come to see *you*."

"Ain't you got a nerve?" Miss Goldblatt exclaimed.

"Why do I got a nerve?" Philip asked. "Miss Goldblatt – Birdie, what's the matter with me, anyway? I'm young yet – I ain't only thirty-two – and I got a good name in the cloak and suit business as a salesman. Ask anybody. I can make it my five thousand a year easy. And supposing I am a foreigner? There's lots of up-to-date American young fellers what couldn't keep you in hairpins, Birdie."

He paused and looked pleadingly at Birdie, who tossed her head in reply.

"Them houses up in the Bronx," he said, "that's a misfortune what could happen anybody. If I got to let 'em go I'll do it. But pshaw! I could make it up what I lost in them houses with my commissions for one good season already."

"Well, my sister Fannie –" Birdie commenced.

"Never mind your sister Fannie," Philip said. "I will look out for her. If you and me can fix it up, Birdie, I give you my word and honour as a gentleman I will fix it up for Fannie a respectable feller with a good business."

He paused for an expression of opinion from Birdie, but none was forthcoming.

"What are you doing to-night?" he asked.

"Fannie and me was – " she began.

"Not Fannie —*you*," he broke in. "Because I was going to suggest if you ain't doing nothing might we would go to theaytre?"

"Well, sure," Birdie continued. "Fannie and me could go and we wouldn't say nothing to the old man about it."

"Looky here," Philip pleaded, "must Fannie go?"

"Sure she must go," Birdie answered. "Otherwise, if she don't go I won't go."

Philip pondered for a moment.

"Well – " he commenced.

"And why wouldn't it be a good scheme," Birdie went on, "if you was to ring in this other young feller?"

"What young feller?" Philip innocently asked her.

"What young feller!" Birdie exclaimed. "Why, ain't you just told me – "

"Oh, that's right!" Philip cried. "That's a good idee. I'll see if I can fix it."

He stopped short and looked at his watch. "I'll meet you both in front of the Casino at eight o'clock," he declared.

It was five o'clock and he only had a trifle over three hours to discover a man – young if possible, but, in any event, prosperous, who would be willing to conduct to the theatre a lady of uncertain age with a dark moustache – object: matrimony.

"You must excuse me," he said fervently as he shook Birdie's hand in farewell. "I got a lot of work to do this afternoon."

III

On his way to the office of Schindler & Baum, his employers, he was a prey to misgivings of the gloomiest kind.

"I got such a chance of getting a feller for that Fannie like I would never try at all," he murmured to himself; but, as he turned the corner of Nineteenth Street, Fortune, which occasionally favours the brave, brought him into violent contact with a short, stout person proceeding in the opposite direction.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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