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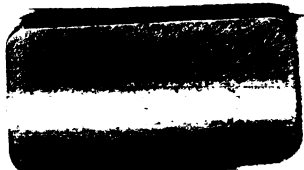
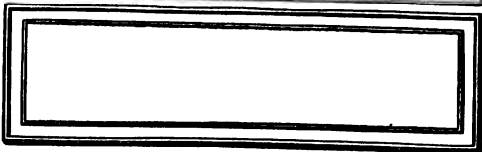


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Bride Roses

A S C E N E

By W. D. Howells

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SCENE

A Lady, entering the florist's with her muff to her face, and fluttering gayly up to the counter, where the florist stands folding a mass of loose flowers in a roll of cotton batting: "Good-morning, Mr. Eichenlaub! Ah, put plenty of cotton round the poor things, if you don't want them frozen stiff! You have no idea what a day it is, here in your little tropic." She takes away her muff as she speaks, but gives each of her cheeks a final pressure with it, and holds it up with one hand inside as she sinks upon the stool before the counter.

The Florist: "Dropic? With ice-

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pergs on the wintows?" He nods his head toward the frosty panes, and wraps a sheet of tissue-paper around the cotton and the flowers.

The Lady: "But you are not near the windows. Back here it is midsummer!"

The Florist: "Yes, we got a rhevricherator to keep the rhoces from sunstroke." He crimps the paper at the top, and twists it at the bottom of the bundle in his hand. "Hier!" he calls to a young man warming his hands at the stove. "Chon, but on your hat, and dtake this to — Holt on! I forgot to but in the cart." He undoes the paper, and puts in a card lying on the counter before him; the lady watches him vaguely. "There!" He restores the

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wrapping and hands the package to the young man, who goes out with it. "Well, matam?"

The Lady, laying her muff with her hand in it on the counter, and leaning forward over it: "Well, Mr. Eichenlaub. I am going to be very difficult."

The Florist: "That is what I lige. Then I don't feel so rhesponsible."

The Lady: "But to-day, I *wish* you to feel responsible. I want you to take the whole responsibility. Do you know why I always come to you, instead of those places on Fifth Avenue?"

The Florist: "Well, it is a good teal cheaper, for one thing" —

The Lady: "Not at all! That is n't the reason, at all. Some of your things are dearer. It's because you take so

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much more interest, and you talk over what I want, and you don't urge me, when I have n't made up my mind. You let me consult you, and you are not cross when I don't take your advice."

The Florist: "You are very goodt, matam."

The Lady: "Not at all. I am simply just. And now I want you to provide the flowers for my first Saturday: Saturday of this week, in fact, and I want to talk the order all over with you. Are you very busy?"

The Florist: "No; I am qvite at your service. We haf just had to egsegute a larche gommission very soddenly, and we are still in a little dtisorter yet; but" —

The Lady: "Yes, I see." She glances

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at the rear of the shop, where the floor is littered with the leaves and petals of flowers, and sprays of fern and evergreen. A woman, followed by a belated smell of breakfast, which gradually mingles with the odor of the plants, comes out of a door there, and begins to gather the larger fragments into her apron. The lady turns again, and looks at the jars and vases of cut flowers in the window, and on the counter. "What I can't understand is how you know just the quantity of flowers to buy every day. You must often lose a good deal."

The Florist: "It comes out about right, nearly always. When I get left, sometimes, I can generally work them off on funerals. Now, that big order that I just fill, that was a funeral. It

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usedt up all the flowers I hat ofer from yesterday.”

The Lady: “Don’t speak of it! And the flowers, are they just the same for funerals?”

The Florist: “Yes, rhoces nearly always. Whidte ones.”

The Lady: “Well, it is too dreadful. I am not going to have roses, whatever I have.” After a thoughtful pause, and a more careful look around the shop: “Mr. Eichenlaub, why would n’t orchids do?”

The Florist: “Well, they would be bretty dtear. You could n’t make any show at all for less than fifteen tol-lars.”

The Lady, with a slight sigh: “No, orchids would n’t do. They are fantastic

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things, anyway, and they are not very effective, as you say. Pinks, anemones, marguerites, narcissus — there does n't seem to be any great variety, does there ?”

The Florist, patiently : “ There will be more, later on.”

The Lady : “ Yes, there will be more sun, later on. But now, Mr. Eichenlaub, what do you think of plants in pots, set around ?”

The Florist : “ Balmss ?”

The Lady, vaguely : “ Yes, palms.”

The Florist : “ Balmss would to. But there would not be very much golor.”

The Lady : “ That is true ; there would be no color at all, and my rooms certainly need all the color I can get

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into them. Yes, I shall have to have roses, after all. But not white ones!"

The Florist: "Chacks?"

The Lady: "No; Jacks are too old-fashioned. But haven't you got any other very dark rose? I should like something almost black, I believe."

The Florist, setting a vase of roses on the counter before her: "There is the Matame Hoste."

The Lady, bending over the roses, and touching one of them with the tip of her gloved finger: "Why, they *are* black, almost! They are nearly as black as black pansies. They are really wonderful!" She stoops over and inhales their fragrance. "Delicious! They are beautiful, but" — abruptly — "they are hideous. Their color makes me creep.

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It is so unnatural for a rose. A rose — a rose ought to be — rose-colored! Have you no rose-colored roses? What are those light pink ones there in the window?”

The Florist, going to the window and getting two vases of cut roses, with long stems, both pink, but one kind a little larger than the other: “That is the Matame Watterville, and this is the Matame Cousine. They are sister rhoces; both the same, but the Matame Watterville is a little bigger, and it is a little dtearer.”

The Lady: “They are both exquisite, and they are such a tender almond-bloom pink! I think the Madame Cousine is quite as nice; but of course the larger ones are more effective.” She

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examines them, turning her head from side to side, and then withdrawing a step, with a decisive sigh. "No; they are too pale. Have you nothing of a brighter pink? What is that over there?" She points to a vase of roses quite at the front of the window, and the florist climbs over the mass of plants and gets it for her.

The Florist : "That is the Midio."

The Lady : "The what?"

The Florist : "The Midio."

The Lady : "You will think I am very stupid this morning. Won't you please write it down for me?" The florist writes on a sheet of wrapping-paper, and she leans over and reads: "Oh! *Meteor!* Well, it is very striking—a little *too* striking. I don't like

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such a vivid pink, and I don't like the name. Horrid to give such a name to a flower." She puts both hands into her muff, and drifts a little way off, as if to get him in a better perspective. "Can't you suggest something, Mr. Eichenlaub?"

The Florist: "Some kind off yellow rhoce? Dtea-rhocoes?"

The Lady, shaking her head: "Tea-roses are ghastly. I hate yellow roses. I would rather have black, and black is simply impossible. I shall have to tell you just what I want to do. I don't want to work up to my rooms with the flowers; I want to work up to the young lady who is going to pour tea for me. I don't care if there is n't a flower anywhere but on the table before her. I

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want a color scheme that shall not have a false note in it, from her face to the tiniest bud. I want them to all *come together*. Do you understand?"

The Florist, doubtfully: "Yes."
After a moment: "What kindt looking yo'ng laty iss she?"

The Lady: "The most ethereal creature in the world."

The Florist: "Yes; but what sdyle — fair or tark?"

The Lady: "Oh, fair! Very, very fair, and very, very fragile-looking; a sort of moonlight blonde, with those remote, starry-looking eyes, don't you know, and that pale saffron hair; not the least ashen; and just the faintest, faintest tinge of color in her face. I suppose you have nothing like the old-

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fashioned blush-rose? That would be the very thing."

The Florist, shaking his head: "Oh, no; there noding like that in a chreen-house rhoce."

The Lady: "Well, that is exactly what I want. It ought to be something very tall and ethereal; something very, very pale, and yet with a sort of suf-fusion of color." She walks up and down the shop, looking at all the plants and flowers.

The Florist, waiting patiently: "Somet'ing beside rhoce, then?"

The Lady, coming back to him: "No; it must be roses, after all. I see that nothing else will do. What do you call those?" She nods at a vase of roses on a shelf behind him.

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The Florist, turning and taking them down for her: "Ah, those whidte ones! That is the Pridte. You sait you woult n't haf whidte ones."

The Lady: "I may have to come to them. Why do they call it the Pride?"

The Florist: "I did n't say Bridte; I said Pridte."

The Lady: "Oh, Bride! And do they use Bride roses for" —

The Florist: "Yes; and for wed-dtings, too; for everything." The lady leans back a little and surveys the flowers critically. A young man enters, and approaches the florist, but waits with respectful impatience for the lady to transact her affairs. The florist turns to him inquiringly, and upon this hint he speaks.

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The Young Man : “I want you to send a few roses — white ones, or nearly white” — He looks at the lady. “Perhaps” —

The Lady : “Oh, not at all! I had n’t decided to take them.”

The Florist : “I got plenty this kindt; all you want. I can always get them.”

The Young Man, dreamily regarding the roses : “They look rather chilly.” He goes to the stove, and drawing off his gloves, warms his hands, and then comes back. “What do you call this rose?”

The Florist : “The Pridte.”

The Young Man, uncertainly : “Oh!” The lady moves a little way up the counter toward the window, but keeps looking at the young man from time to

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time. She cannot help hearing all that he says. "Have n't you any white rose with a little color in it? Just the faintest tinge, the merest touch."

The Florist: "No, no; they are whidte, or they are yellow; dtea-rhocés; Marshal Niel" —

The Young Man: "Ah, I don't want anything of that kind. What is the palest pink rose you have?"

The Florist, indicating the different kinds in the vases, where the lady has been looking at them: "Well, there is nothing lighder than the Matame Cousine, or the Matame Watterville, here; they are sister rhocés" —

The Young Man: "Yes, yes; very beautiful; but too dark." He stops before the Madame Hoste: "What a

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strange flower! It is almost *black!*
What is it for? Funerals?"

The Florist: "No; a good many people like them. We don't sell them much for funerals; they are too gloomy. They use white ones for that: Marshal Niel, dea-rhoces, this Pride here, and other white ones."

The Young Man, with an accent of repulsion: "Oh!" He goes toward the window, and looks at a mass of Easter lilies in a vase there. He speaks as if thinking aloud: "If they had a little color— But they would be dreadful with color! Why, you ought to have *something!*" He continues musingly, as he returns to the florist: "Have n't you got something very delicate, and slender, about the color of pale apple

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blossoms? If you had them light enough, some kind of azaleas" —

The Lady, involuntarily: "Ah!"

The Florist, after a moment, in which he and the young man both glance at the lady, and she makes a sound in her throat to show that she is not thinking of them, and had not spoken in reference to what they were saying: "The only azaleas I haf are these pink ones, and those whidte ones."

The Young Man: "And they are too pink and too white. Isn't there anything tall, and very delicate? Something, well — something like the old-fashioned blush-rose? But with very long stems!"

The Florist: "No, there is noding lige that which gomes in a crheehouse

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rhoce. We got a whidte rhoce here” — he goes to his refrigerator, and brings back a long box of roses — “that I did n’t think of before.” He gives the lady an apologetic glance. “You see there is chost the least sdain of rhet on the etch of the leafs.”

The Young Man, examining the petals of the roses: “Ah, that is very curious. It is a caprice, though.”

The Florist: “Yes, it is a kind of sbordt. That rhoce should be perfectly whidte.”

The Young Man: “On the whole, I don’t think it will do. I will take some of those pure white ones. Bride, did you call them?”

The Florist: “Yes, Pridte. How many?”

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The Young Man: "Oh, a dozen — two dozen; I don't know! I want very long, slender stems, and the flowers with loose open petals; none of those stout, tough-looking little buds. Here! This, and this, and all these; no, I don't want any of those at all." He selects the different stems of roses, and while the florist gets a box, and prepares it with a lining of cotton and tissue-paper, he leans over and writes on a card. He pauses and puts up his pencil; then he takes it out again and covers the card with writing. He gives it to the florist. "I wish that to go into the box where it will be found the first thing." He turns away, and encounters the lady's eyes as she chances to look toward him. "I beg your pardon! But" —

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The Lady, smiling, and extending her hand: "I felt almost *sure* it was you! But I could n't believe my senses. All the other authorities report you in Rome."

The Young Man: "I returned rather suddenly. I just got in this morning. Our steamer was due yesterday, but there was so much ice in the harbor that we did n't work up till a few hours ago."

The Lady: "You will take all your friends by surprise."

The Young Man: "I'm a good deal taken by surprise myself. Two weeks ago I did n't dream of being here. But I made up my mind to come, and — I came."

The Lady, laughing: "Evidently!

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Well, now you must come to my Saturdays; you are just in time for the first one. Some one you know is going to pour tea for me. That ought to be some consolation to you for not having stayed away long enough to escape my hospitalities."

The Young Man, blushing and smiling: "Oh, it's a very charming welcome home. I shall be sure to come. She is — everybody is — well, I hope?"

The Lady: "Yes, or everybody *was* on Monday when I saw them. Everybody is looking very beautiful this winter, lovelier than ever, if possible. But so spiritual! *Too* spiritual! But that spirit of hers will carry her — I mean everybody, of course! — through every-

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thing. I feel almost wicked to have asked her to pour tea for me, when I think of how much else she is doing! Do you know, I was just ordering the flowers for my Saturday, and I had decided to take her for my key-note in the decorations. But that made it so difficult! There does n't seem anything delicate and pure and sweet enough for her. There ought to be some flower created just to express her! But as yet there is n't."

The Young Man: "No, no; there is n't. But now I must run away. I have n't been to my hotel yet; I was just driving up from the ship, and I saw the flowers in the window, and — stopped. Good-by!"

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The Lady : “ Good-by ! What devotion to somebody — everybody ! Don’t forget my Saturday ! ”

The Young Man : “ No, no ; I won’t. Good-by ! ” He hurries out of the door, and his carriage is heard driving away.

The Florist : “ I wondter if he but the attress on the cart ? No ; there is noding ! ” He turns the card helplessly over. “ What am I coing to do about these flowers ? ”

The Lady : “ Why, did n’t he say where to send them ? ”

The Florist : “ No, he rhon away and dtid n’t leaf the attress. ”

The Lady : “ That was *my* fault ! I confused him, poor fellow, by talking to him. What are you going to do ? ”

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The Florist : “That is what I lige to know! Do you know what hotel he stobs at?”

The Lady : “No; he did n’t say. I have no idea where he is going. But wait a moment! I think I know where he meant to send the flowers.”

The Florist : “Oh, well; that is all I want to know.”

The Lady : “Yes, but I am not certain.” After a moment’s thought. “I know he wants them to go at once; a great deal may depend upon it — everything.” Suddenly : “Could you let me see that card?”

The Florist, throwing it on the counter before her : “Why, soddonly; if he is a frhiendt of yours” —

The Lady, shrinking back : “Ah, it

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is n't so simple! That makes it all the worse. It would be a kind of sacrilege! I have no right — or, wait! I will just glance at the first word. It may be a clew. And I want you to bear me witness, Mr. Eichenlaub, that I did n't read a word more." She catches up a piece of paper, and covers all the card except the first two words. "Yes! It is she! Oh, how perfectly delightful! It's charming, charming! It's one of the prettiest things that ever happened! And I shall be the means — no, not the means, quite, but the accident — of bringing them together! Put the card into the box, Mr. Eichenlaub, and don't let me see it an instant longer, or I shall read every word of it, in spite of myself!" She gives him the card, and

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turns, swiftly, and makes some paces toward the door.

The Florist, calling after her: "But the address, matam. You forgot."

The Lady, returning: "Oh, yes! Give me your pencil." She writes on a piece of the white wrapping-paper. "There! That is it." She stands irresolute, with the pencil at her lip. "There was something else that I seem to have forgotten."

The Florist: "Your flowers?"

The Lady: "Oh, yes, my flowers. I nearly went away without deciding. Let me see. Where are those white roses with the pink tinge on the edge of the petals?" The florist pushes the box towards her, and she looks down at the roses. "No, they won't do. They

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look somehow — cruel! I don't wonder he would n't have them. They are totally out of character. I will take those white Bride roses, too. It seems a fatality, but there really is n't anything else, and I can laugh with her about them, if it all turns out well." She talks to herself rather than the florist, who stands patient behind the counter, and repeats, dreamily, "Laugh with her!"

The Florist : "How many shall I sendt you, matam?"

The Lady : "Oh, loads. As many as you think I ought to have. I shall not have any other flowers, and I mean to toss them on the table in loose heaps. Perhaps I shall have some smilax to go with them."

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The Florist: "Yes; or cypress wine."

The Lady: "No; that is too crapy and creepy. Smilax, or nothing; and yet I don't like that hard, shiny, varnishy look of smilax either. You wouldn't possibly have anything like that wild vine, it's scarcely more than a golden thread, that trails over the wayside bushes in New England? Dodder, they call it."

The Florist: "I nefer heardt off it."

The Lady: "No, but that would have been just the thing. It suggests the color of her hair; it would go with her. Well, I will have the smilax too, though I don't like it. I don't see why all the flowers should take to being so inexpressive. Send all the smilax you

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The Florist : “ It iss gold-looqing.”

The Second Lady : “ What do they use this rose for? For — for ” —

The Florist : “ For everything ! Weddtings, theatre barties, afternoon dteas, dtinners, funerals ” —

The Second Lady : “ Ah, that is shocking ! I can't have it, then. I want to send some flowers to a friend who has lost her only child — a young girl — and I wish it to be something expressive — characteristic — something that won't wound them with other associations. Have you nothing — nothing of that kind ? I want something that shall be significant ; something that shall be like a young girl, and yet — Haven't you some very tall, slender, delicate flowers ? Not this deathly

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white, but with a little color in it? Is n't there some kind of lily?"

The Florist: "Easder lilies? Lily-off-the-valley? Chonquils? Azaleas? Hyacinths? Marcuerites?"

The Second Lady: "No, no; they won't do, any of them! Have n't you any other kind of roses, that won't be so terribly—terribly"— She looks round over the shelves and the windows banked with flowers.

The Florist: "Yes, we haf dtearhoces, all kindts; Marshal Niel; Matame Watterville and Matame Cousine—these pink ones; they are sister rhoces; Matame Hoste, this plack one; the Midio, here; Chacks"—

The Second Lady: "No, no! They won't any of them do. There ought to

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be a flower invented that would say something — pity, sympathy — that would n't hurt more than it helped. Is n't there anything? Some flowering vine?"

The Florist : " Here is the chasmin. That is a very peautiful wine, with that sdtar-shaped flower ; and the berfume"—

The Second Lady, looking at a length of the jasmine vine which he trails on the counter before her : " Yes, that is very beautiful ; and it is girlish, and like — But no, it would n't do ! That perfume is heartbreaking ! Don't send that !"

The Florist, patiently : " Cypress wine? Smilax?"

The Second Lady, shaking her head vaguely : " Some other flowering vine."

The Florist : " Well, we have cot

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noding in, at present. I coult get you some of that other chasmin — kindt of push, that gifs its berfume after dtark” —

The Second Lady: “At night? Yes, I know. That might do. But those pale green flowers, that are not like flowers — no, they would n’t do! I shall have to come back to your Pride roses! Why do they call it Pride?”

The Florist: “It is Pridte, not Bridte, matam.”

The Second Lady, with mystification: “Oh! Well, let me have a great many of them. Have you plenty?”

The Florist: “As many as you lige.”

The Second Lady: “Well, I don’t want any of these hard little buds. I want very long stems, and slender, with

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the flowers fully open, and fragile-looking — something like *her*.” The first lady starts. “Yes: like this — and this — and this. Be sure you get them all like these. And send them — I will give you the address.” She writes on a piece of the paper before her. “There, that is it. Here is my card. I want it to go with them.” She turns from the florist with a sigh, and presses her handkerchief to her eyes.

The Florist: “You want them to go rhighdt away?” He takes up the card, and looks at it absently, and then puts it down, and examines the roses one after another. “I don’t know whether I cot enough of these oben ones on handt, already” —

The Second Lady: “Oh, you must n’t

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send them to-day! I forgot. It is n't to be till to-morrow. You must send them in the morning. But I am going out of town to-day, and so I came in to order them now. Be very careful not to send them to-day!"

The Florist: "All rhighdt. I loog outt."

The Second Lady: "I am so glad you happened to ask me. It has all been so dreadfully sudden, and I am quite bewildered. Let me think if there is anything more!" As she stands with her finger to her lip, the first lady makes a movement as if about to speak, but does not say anything. "No, there is nothing more, I believe."

The Florist, to the First Lady: "Was there somet'ing?"

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The First Lady : “ No. There is no hurry.”

The Second Lady, turning towards her : “ Oh, I beg your pardon ! I have been keeping you ” —

The First Lady : “ Not at all. I merely returned to — But it is n't of the least consequence. Don't let me hurry you ! ”

The Second Lady : “ Oh, I have quite finished, I believe. But I can hardly realize anything, and I was afraid of going away and forgetting something, for I am on my way to the station. My husband is very ill, and I am going South with him ; and this has been so sudden, so terribly unexpected. The only daughter of a friend ” —

The First Lady : “ The only ” —

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The Second Lady: "Yes, it is too much! But perhaps you have come — I ought to have thought of it; you may have come on the same kind of sad errand yourself; you will know how to excuse" —

The First Lady, with a certain resentment: "Not at all! I was just ordering some flowers for a reception."

The Second Lady: "Oh! Then I beg your pardon! But there seems nothing else in the world but — death. I am very sorry. I beg your pardon!" She hastens out of the shop, and the first lady remains, looking a moment at the door after she has vanished. Then she goes slowly to the counter.

The Lady, severely: "Mr. Eichenlaub, I have changed my mind about

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the roses and the smilax. I will not have either. I want you to send me all of that jasmine vine that you can get. I will have my whole decorations of that. I wonder I did n't think of that before. Mr. Eichenlaub!" She hesitates. "Who was that lady?"

The Florist, looking about among the loose papers before him: "Why, I don't know. I got her cart here, somewhere."

The Lady, very nervously: "Never mind about the card! I don't wish to know who she was. I have no right to ask. No! I won't look at it." She refuses the card, which he has found, and which he offers to her. "I don't care for her name, but — Where was she sending the flowers?"

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The Florist, tossing about the sheets of paper on the counter: "She dtdid n't say, but she wrhote it down here, somewhere" —

The Lady, shrinking back: "No, no! I don't want to see it! But what right had she to ask me such a thing as that? It was very bad taste; very obtuse, — whoever she was. Have you — ah — found it?"

The Florist, offering her a paper across the counter: "Yes; here it iss."

The Lady, catching it from him, and then, after a glance at it, starting back with a shriek: "Ah-h-h! How terrible! But it can't be! Oh, I don't know what to think — It is the most dreadful thing that ever — It's im-

Bride Roses

possible!" She glances at the paper again, and breaks into a hysterical laugh: "Ah, ha, ha, ha, ha! Why, this is the address that I wrote out for that young gentleman's flowers! You have made a terrible mistake, Mr. Eichenlaub — you have almost killed me. I thought — I thought that woman was sending her funeral flowers to — to" — She holds her hand over her heart, and sinks into the chair beside the counter, where she lets fall the paper. "You have almost killed me."

The Florist: "I am very sorry. I didn't suppose — But the order address must be here. I will find it" — He begins tossing the papers about again.

The Lady, springing to her feet:

Bride Roses

“No, no! I would n't look at it now for the world! I have had *one* escape. Send me all jasmine, remember.”

The Florist: “Yes, all chasmin.”
The lady goes slowly and absently toward the door, where she stops, and then she turns and goes back slowly, and as if forcing herself.

The Lady: “Mr. Eichenlaub.”

The Florist: “Yes, matam.”

The Lady: “Have you — plenty — of those white — Bride roses?”

The Florist: “I get all you want of them.”

The Lady: “Open, fragile-looking ones, with long, slender stems?”

The Florist: “I get you any kindt you lige!”

The Lady: “Send me Bride roses,

Bride Roses

then. I don't care! I will not be frightened out of them! It is too foolish."

The Florist: "All rightht. How many you think you want?"

The Lady: "Send all you like! Masses of them! Heaps!"

The Florist: "All rightht. And the chasmin?"

The Lady: "No; I don't want it now."

The Florist: "You want the smilax with them, then, I subbose?"

The Lady: "No, I don't want any smilax with them, either. Nothing but those white Bride roses!" She turns and goes to the door; she calls back, "Nothing but the roses, remember!"

The Florist: "All rightht. I don't

Bride Roses

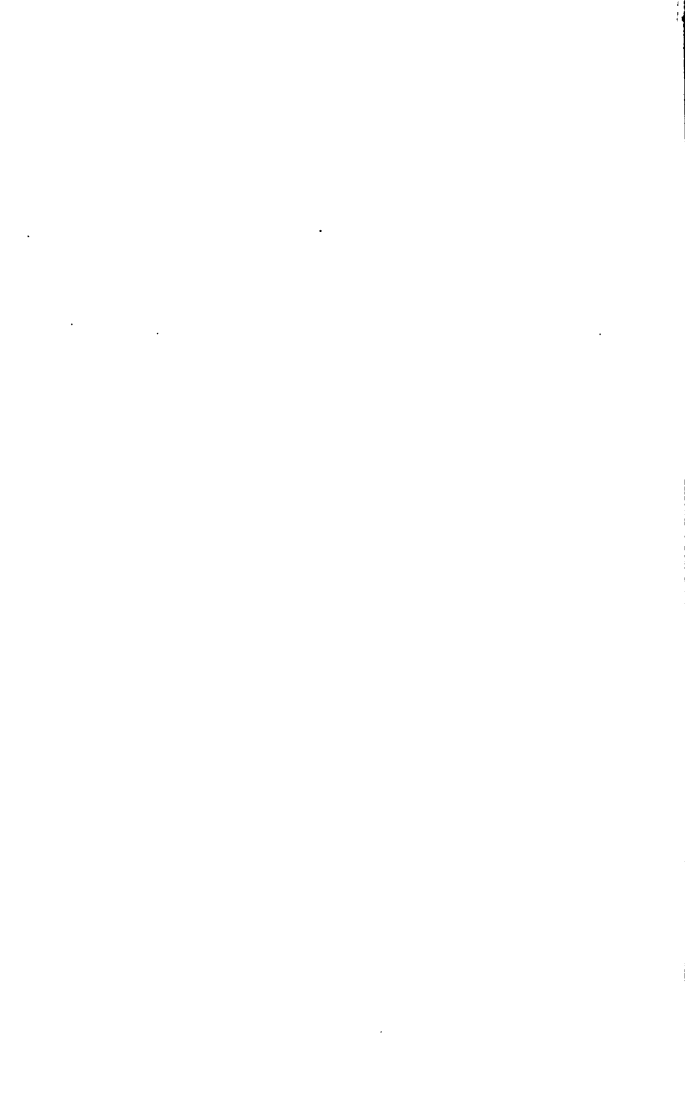
forget. No chasmin; no smilax; no kindt of wine. Only Pridte rhoces.”

The Lady : “ Only roses.”

The Florist, alone, thoughtfully turning over the papers on his counter: “That is sdrainche that I mage that mistake about the attress! I can’t find the oder one anwhere; and if I lost it, what am I coing to do with the rhoces the other lady ortert?” He steps back and looks at his feet, and then stoops and picks up a paper, which he examines. “Ach! here it iss! Zlipped down behindt. Now I don’t want to get it mixed with that oder any more.” He puts it down at the left, and takes up the address for the young man’s roses on the right; he stares at the two addresses in a stupefaction.

Bride Roses

“That is very sdrainche too. Well!”
He drops the papers with a shrug, and
goes on arranging the flowers.



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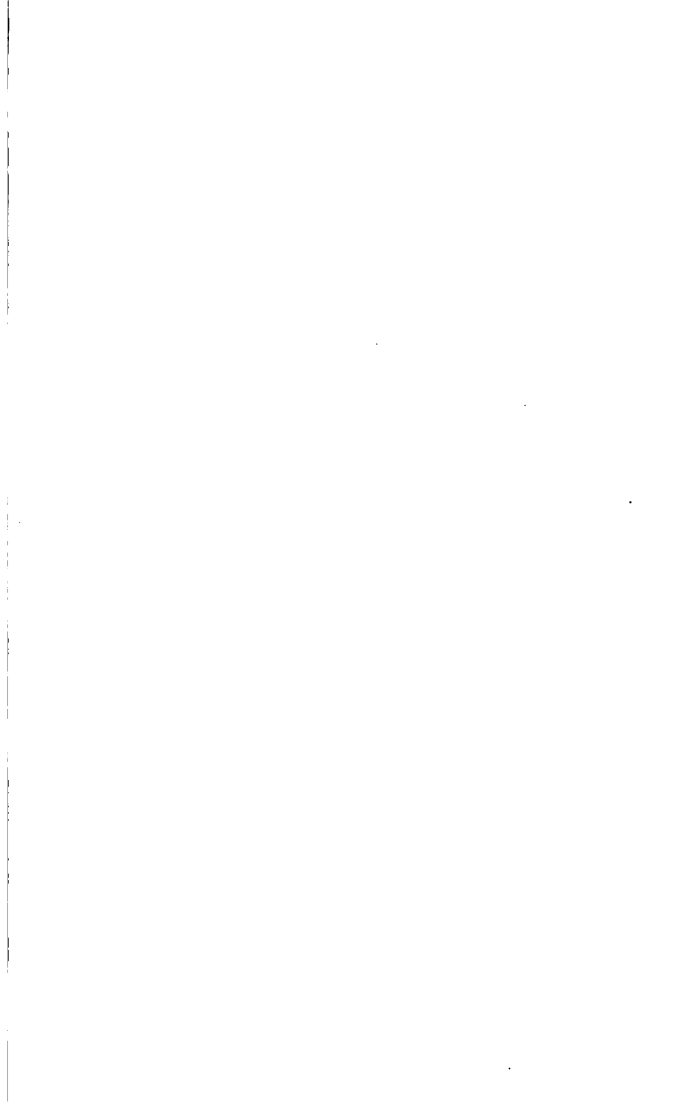


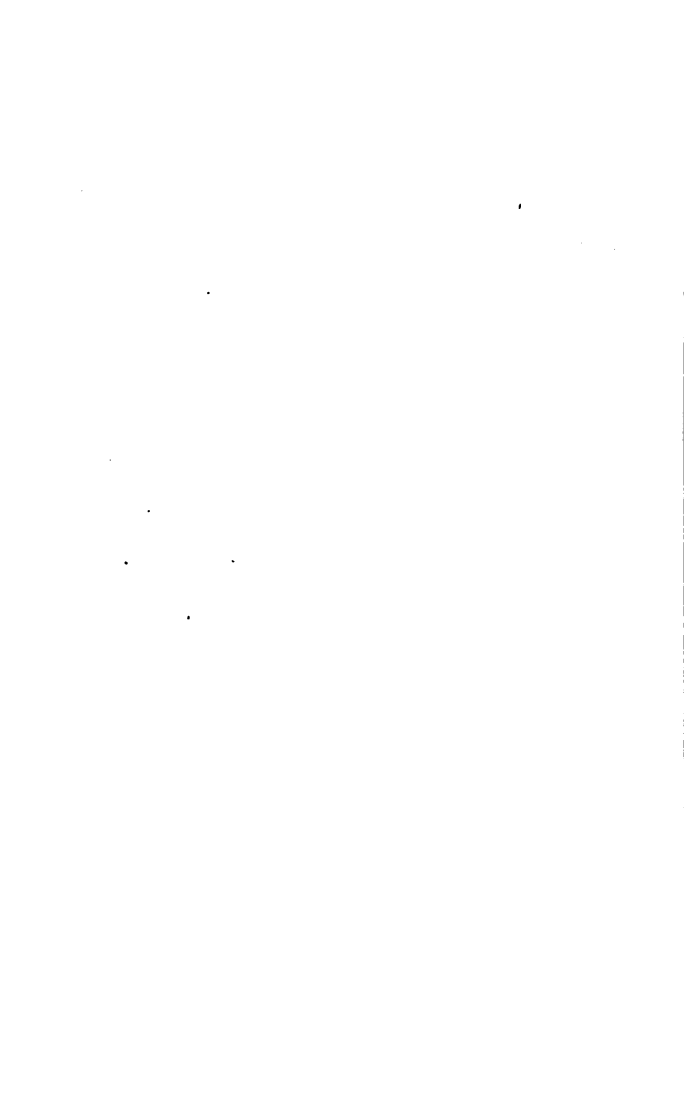
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