

Maules, the little Vicomte de Vombelles and the lively Marquise de Mustrolles. The latter ran to embrace the princess.

"Ah, my dear," said she, "you did not expect to find such a large court. Nobody wanted to go without having seen you."

The princess would not allow them to depart immediately, and, with her bewitching grace began to chat, saying all the time the prettiest things.

I was very little acquainted with this brilliant company, and the lovers of the princess especially cast upon me stealthy looks, full of defiance and jealousy. But I paid no attention to them nor to the conversation, interesting as it was, because a small personage to whom I had not yet been presented, was all the time causing me the most cruel alarm. This was Monsieur Bonbon, the princess' little dog, a griffin of pedigree, a rare and marvelous beast as large as my two fists though he cost the price of an ox. It is inconceivable to what extent these little animals, feared in opulence, can become foppish and ridiculously vain. There is something of the vulgar upstart in their small heads. When I first entered he sprang from the armchair where he was coddling himself in soft drowsiness and came straight to me, eyeing me from head to foot, showing by most expressive grimaces the disdain and astonishment inspired by a visitor so ill-dressed. "Why do they admit people of that sort?" he seemed to say. Then, running around me, he gave a long growl, which doubtless contained all the abusive language that a dog could utter to a man. My boots, above all, appeared to him monstrous. He touched them with the tip of his paw, smelled of them with a disgusted air, and carried his insolence so far as to pretend to sneeze. At last he turned his back on me and walked off, stopping now and then to look sideways at me. It was plain that he would have me thrown out at the door if he had been able. Hoping that Monsieur Bonbon would cease his impertinence I took a seat. He was placed on the knees of his mistress, and indifferent to the caresses of the pretty hand that patted him, he gave me ugly glances that did not alarm me. Alas, he had other malice in store for me. Presently he raised his head, his nostrils dilated right and left, he gave a series of little sniffs as if he inhaled an unaccustomed odor.

"What is the matter with him now?" I asked myself uneasily. Then a subtle emanation surrounded me. Gradually the scent became stronger and more noticeable. Suddenly I comprehended the frightful truth. The friend potatoes I had in the pocket of my coat were tainting the drawing room. No words could express the anguish into which this discovery plunged me. I might hope that the delicate people around me would not suspect the truth, but Monsieur Bonbon was not to be deceived. Whether he was allured by the odor and merely yielded to his greediness, or in his ill-nature took a spiteful pleasure in denouncing me, the detestable dog leaped to the floor and bounded toward me. Then, standing on his hind legs, he sniffed at me from every side until he had discovered the pocket of provisions, upon which he made a desperate attack.

I tried to seize him; he escaped me. I tried to push him away with my foot. I pulled my chair back; lost pains. The foolish little beast was determined to see what I had in my pocket, and nothing could make him abandon that idea. It was necessary to take a heroic stand. I rose, and, bringing under me the dangerous skirt containing the rest of my dinner, I sat down on it both to shelter it from the enterprising Monsieur Bonbon and stifle the betraying perfume.

Then my ferocious persecutor jumped on a neighboring chair and yelped with fury. After that he began to scratch my thigh with his forepaws as if he intended to disrobe me.

"How I would like to poison you," I said mentally, looking at the accursed brute with a sinister eye. General attention was attracted to me. I was in a mortal fright.

"What can all little Bonbon?" the princess had already been asking. She came to my side to take him.

"Now she will smell the friend potatoes," I thought, becoming scarlet.

For a moment I had an idea of making a wild flight. But already everybody was rising.

"Wait a moment," the princess begged her friends. "I want you to hear my Russian romance." And coming to me with the music in her hand she said with her irresistible grace: "I pray, sir, sing a verse; you will give me the greatest pleasure."

She herself placed the music on the rack and I sat down at the piano. It was a melancholy popular song that I had learned during my stay in Russia, and, desirous of pleasing, I sang it with all my sensibility.

There was a general fluttering murmur; my slight voice had moved all hearts. I was triumphant—when I felt myself disturbed by a tugging and pulling at my coat. Aware the Monsieur Bonbon was renewing his hostilities, I turned quickly, but it was already too late.

The infernal animal had had time to rummage in my pocket and had dragged out the horn-of-plenty! Now he held it in his tiny jaws, and, shaking it violently, scattered the fried potatoes on all sides on the carpet.

Overwhelmed with confusion, I remained dumfounded—a veil before my eyes, a ringing in my ears. I had a vague sense that there were exclamations of surprise and ill-suppressed laughs. Then there was a general retreat. Alone with the princess, I rose and made some unsteady steps toward the door. She stopped me.

"You will dine with me?" she asked in a voice sweetly earnest.

This last blow finished me. Could she not understand that at such a moment an invitation to dine resembled a charity? I wanted to speak, but I was suffocating.

As she drew nearer, I turned my head away to conceal from her the tears in my eyes, and I rushed away, overcome with shame and grief.

I lived in a pretty little room in the top story of a high house. That is where I went to abandon myself to despair. I flung myself on my bed, crushed under the breaking up of my dreams. The dreadful idea that I had been ridiculous before the woman I loved was continually crossing my mind. Now the princess knew both my misery and my love. That kiss I had stolen from her upon the stairs she might otherwise have been able to pardon, but how allow such audacity on the part of a man who carried his dinner in his coat pocket? For half an hour I sought vainly for a little relief to my chagrin, and with sorrowful soul I was looking upon the future as a black immensity without stars, when there came a gentle knocking at my door.

I started. Then sending the visitor to the infernal regions I went to open the door, resolved quickly to get rid of the importunate person.

But as soon as I saw the newcomer I drew back in amazement.

"You!" I cried.

"Yes."

"You, princess; you here?"

She appeared much moved, and her voice trembled.

"Yes," she said with a divine smile. "You would not dine with me, I have come to dine with you."

"To dine!"

With this exclamation I looked about me vaguely imagining that since the princess was in my quarters it would be no more marvelous to

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