

Without Formal Introduction.

If Harding had not had a twin brother he would have been completely taken by surprise when the girl spoke to him in the train, for he was sure he had never met her before; she was not the kind of girl to be forgotten. But his striking resemblance to his brother explained her mistake.

This girl was the only person in the carriage when Harding entered it.

She was of medium height, fair, with light hair. She had barely glanced at him as he entered the train; she was buried in a new magazine. While he was watching her profile the girl turned suddenly, caught his eye, and then impulsively turned toward him, holding out her hand.

"How do you do?" she said cordially. "I'm delighted to meet a friend! I've been travelling for hours, and I'm bored to death."

Harding greeted his twin brother's friend with cordiality equal to her own.

"Wonder where Ted met her?" he thought. "I wonder if it was at Buxton or at the seashore? Oh, perhaps he's waltzed with her. I wonder who on earth she is?"

"You might at least say you are glad to see me," continued the girl.

Harding lied cheerfully.

"I was thinking of you just before the train came in," he said, "and wondering when we should have such pure unalloyed jollity again as that day we spent together."

"Indeed, yes," she said.

"And do you remember," the girl went on, "that lovely evening on the lake?"

"Don't I!" said Harding.

He was about to add a reminiscent remark of safe and general character about the dip of the oars when the girl added:

"How clear and frosty the air was, and how our skates skimmed over the ice!"

Harding almost gasped at his narrow escape. He decided to let the girl do her own talking.

"And do you remember that evening on the veranda?"—the girl lowered her voice suggestively—"when it was too dark to see my eyes, and you declared they were blue, although I almost persuaded you they were hazel!"

"How could I forget it?" said Harding, with a bold plunge. "But you didn't 'almost persuade' me. I know your eyes too well."

And he gazed into them.

"If that is the case," said the girl, and her voice frosted over suddenly, "how did it happen that you didn't recognize me when you got into the train? You looked straight at me."

"My unfortunate eyes!" stammered Harding, clutching desperately at the first excuse that came. "I'm so profoundly near-sighted, you know. On my honour!"

"Your explanation, though far from original, does you credit," said the fair-haired girl, stiffly; "but I can suggest a better one. I'll make you a present of it. You never saw me before. You do not even know my name. You saw that I had mistaken you for some one I know, and you were not honorable enough to undeceive me. I saw you were uncertain about the lake, and I tested you on the veranda. The veranda and the hazel eyes were pure fiction on my part—and on yours."

She rose with dignity and moved to the far end of the carriage.

"Oh, Miss——!" Harding paused, foiled by the awkwardness of not knowing her name.

The girl's face relaxed a little. She struggled with a smile. The smile won the day, and then Harding went over and took the seat beside her.

"I beg your pardon," he said humbly, "and if you won't hear my explanation, send me away. Evidently you took me for your friend, Mr. Harding. Well, I'm not Harding. At least, I'm not your Harding."

"I'm very sure you're not," said the girl hastily.

"I mean I'm not the Harding you thought. I'm not myself, you see; I'm not my brother."

"Then who are you when you're not your brother?" said the girl.

"I'm Will Harding," he explained, "and the man you met before was my twin brother, Ted. He's the image of me, and people can't tell us apart—or together, for that matter. This sort of thing is always happening. We're both so used to it that we never correct the impression—just live up to the role."

"You didn't deceive," said the girl. "I knew when you began to talk that I'd never met you before."

Her eye were brimming over with fun. "If I haven't said enough," added Harding, "I hereby offer my most humble apologies."

"They are accepted," said the girl, gravely. "But you don't deserve it."

"I know," said Harding, humbly. "Perhaps this will be a lesson to me. You see, I never got into trouble before. We always prime each other on important things—if I propose to a girl, for example, or borrow money from a friend."

"Will you get that umbrella for me, please?" asked the girl hurriedly. This is my station."

"Already!" exclaimed Harding, in dismay.

"And you haven't even told me your name!" The girl colored until even her pretty ears grew pink under the fluffy hair. "You might ask—Ted," she said, with a backward glance from the door.

When Harding went back to the seat the girl vacated he found her handkerchief on the floor. In one corner was embroidered the monogram, "E. L. D."

"Ted," he said, casually, a day or two later, "do you know any girl whose initials are E. L. D.?"

"Elsie Davis?" queried Ted.

"Never!" said Will. "Red hair."

"Ellen Duncan?"

"Black eyes and hair" said Will. "This one is blond. Not too blond, you know; not bleached, but lots of light hair with glints in it, and blue eyes with stunning lashes, and good carriage."

"Pretty bad case, isn't it?" said Ted, sympathetically.

"None of your business," said his brother discourteously, and they parted.

The world is so small that it is not surprising that Harding eventually met the fair-haired girl. It happened at a dance given at a large country house, and the girl proved to be one of the house party. She was standing at the end of a long hall when he first saw her, and at the sight of her the words he was saying died on his lips, and he interrupted himself to ask: "Who is that girl in blue—the light-haired one with the long lashes?"

"Eleanor Davenport," said the matron at his side. "Don't you know her?"

"Will you present me?" he eagerly demanded. But just then someone else claimed the matron's attention, the crowd shifted and when the space was clear again Miss Davenport had vanished.

"I want to speak to you a moment, Mr. Harding," said Miss Davenport, a few minutes later. Harding turned quickly at the sound of her voice. "I have a confession to make, and if I wait for a formal introduction I may not have a chance."

They were standing near a screen of palms, and Miss Davenport stepped behind it and motioned him to follow.

"I don't suppose you will ever understand," she said, the color mounting to her way hair, "but I must tell you how it happened, and it is not because I'm afraid to meet your brother—it is because I'm ashamed of myself. Will you believe that?"

"Certainly," said Harding. "I'll believe it if you say so, of course, though I'm not a clairvoyant."

"Don't tease me, please," she said. "It is awful to tell—but—I never met your brother."

"Oh, don't take it so much to heart," said Harding. "Think if you had never met me, now."

"It's too serious for joking," protested Miss Davenport. "You see it happened like this: I had been travelling for hours, and there wasn't a thing to do. I tried to read, and reading made my head ache, and I was bored to death, and then you got on the train. What did you say?"

"Nothing," said Harding. "Please go on."

"Well, when I saw you, I thought what a pity it was that I should be bored and you should be bored, when we might—we might——"

"Might what?" said Harding.

"Oh, you won't help me out one bit!" she sighed. "Why, if we weren't so conventional, if we were only children—don't you see?—we should just have spoken naturally, and both have been amused, and forgotten to be bored."

"I see," said Harding.

"And then I thought, suppose I should speak to you just as if I really were making a mistake, and thought I knew you. And so I did. And you were so funny——" her blue eyes shot light. "You were so anxious to act your part, and you acted it so very badly. And when you confessed and apologized! But I can't tell you how despicable I felt, after leading you into it, and I registered a solemn vow after I left you that if I ever met you again I would confess. I am really sorry. Will you believe me?"

"I don't know," said Harding solemnly; "you have deceived me once, you see."

"But I never did it before," she pleaded.

"And I was so bored."

"You have destroyed an illusion," said Harding, sadly. "You have destroyed my faith in man—I should say, in woman. Besides, what will your chaperon say?"

"I shall never tell her."

"I should think not! What will she say when I tell her?"

"You wouldn't. You couldn't."

"I shall, unless you bribe me."

"I'm completely at your mercy," she said.

"What are your terms?"

"Your card, with as many dances as I choose."

"I surrender."

"The first—and——"

"The first is promised."


"Not with my permission. However, I'd waive the first, and take the second, and the fourth."

"Hello, Ted!" said a voice that fell familiarly on Miss Eleanor's ears. "Nothing of the monopolist about you, is there? If Miss Davenport is willing, introduce me, please."

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We've already met informally, but I'd like to have it on the proper footing, so I may put in my humble and respectful petition for a dance."

Eleanor Davenport looked up. The man to whom she had made her confession and the newcomer were as much alike as two golf balls. She turned from one to the other.

"Do you mean to say," she cried to the latest arrival, "that you are the one I met on the train?"

"I have that honor."

"Then you——" Eleanor turned to Ted in wrath. "Do you call yourself a man of honor? Give me the dance card. You shall do penance."

"Don't take away those dances," begged the culprit. "Anything else! Not that!"

"You shall have just as many as your brother chooses to assign to you," said Eleanor, relentlessly.

"I'll give you one, dear Ted," said Will, cheerfully. "Thank you very much, Miss Davenport. I am honestly appreciative."

Later in the evening, when they were sitting out the last waltz, Eleanor said:

"Don't you think, Will, we ought to hunt up your brother? Of course, it was terribly mean of him, but still——"

"I'm in no hurry," said Harding. Ted will keep. I'm very happy here."

"But I thought," said Eleanor, the lashes dropping over her blue eyes, "I thought you said you always told each other when you had—proposed to a girl."

"That," said Harding, taking her hands in both of his, "is only when we are refused."

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