



ANNE IVES: MASCOT

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SYNOPSIS.

Anne Ives, mascot by reputation, starts from Winnipeg for London to attend the coronation of King George. Her father was the count of Yves of France. Following a quarrel with the count, Anne's father went to America, where he married. At his death he left Anne a key to a strong box in the vaults of Magniff & Co., Paris bankers. The box was to contain bonds of the largest French banks and companies. On the steamer Anne meets the dissolute son of Banker Magniff, who, not knowing her identity, tells Anne of a proposed scheme to get hold of the Panama bonds and extort money from her father. The aviator, an aviation man in London, and volunteers to go as a passenger with a French-contestant who wins the prize, but disappears before Anne can learn his identity. Anne is about to give up her attempt to gain admission to the count, when the aviator and his grandfather appear. The young man invites Anne to accompany him, and while entering the abbey she loses her purse.

CHAPTER III—Continued.

While my mind hurriedly ran through all the possibilities of my situation, the elder gentleman bowed Estelle to the seat which the usher offered them and ceremoniously departed, to take up his station at the side of the French ambassador, among a little group of foreign dignitaries near the high altar. He brushed past me in his high buff boots—and, for the present, at least, my purse was lost to me. I prayed fervently that his duties did not call for his kneeling; I would not trust my property even among the peers and their ladies, should it roll out of his boot-tops!

Well, for the present there was nothing to be done. My escort sat between myself and Estelle, who peered ecstatically toward the altar. We two had not a good sight of the proceedings, but we did not care. We were engrossed with the novelty and piquancy of our situation—at least I know I was, even though my hatred for this man was becoming insupportable.

Whether or not I actually saw the crowning of King George I have not the smallest idea. I know the organ pealed and tenor voices sang anthems, and that from time to time we rose upon our feet and then sat down again. In that kaleidoscopic series of changeable coloring, those swaying, moving, loyal crowds, we were as solitary as travelers in a desert of prismatic sands.

"Will you not tell me your name, sun-goddess?" besought my companion. "I sought you everywhere that afternoon; I was disconsolate."

"You sought me?" I answered, sharply. "Why, you had not the common courtesy to wait until I had recovered from my fright."

"Fright?" he repeated. "It was the change of temperature that made mademoiselle faint, not fright."

This was ingenuous; in spite of my hate of him, I felt slightly mollified.

"Why didn't you wait?" I asked, and then hated myself for having asked it.

He hung his head, quite like a boy.

"I'll tell you, sun-goddess," he answered. "The fact is—my grandfather is one of the French military embassy, you know."

So that was his grandfather: I had thought the old gentleman his father. He looked hardly over sixty.

"My grandfather is eighty-four," he said, smiling, as though he read my thoughts. When you have favored me with your name I shall tell you our own; it is a name well-known in the annals of France. On account of some pride of his—you know he has old-fashioned ideas, sun-goddess—he desired that, if I insisted on flying, I should do so incognito. Besides, though I have no official rank here except that of army captain, I am really here on quite an important mission on behalf of the French foreign office. You will understand, therefore, how essential it was that, on the eve of the coronation, our name should not become the common property of the public. Accordingly, I hurried away to change my clothes after the flight, being sure that when I returned to the grounds, unrecognized, I should find you there and be privileged to offer you my most respectful thanks and homage. Imagine my chagrin, then, to discover that you and your companion had disappeared. I was disconsolate."

"You thought more of your machine than you did of me," I said, and next moment I could have bitten my tongue. I hastened to add that it made no difference to me.

It was bewildering, the medley of emotions that this young Frenchman inspired in me. Hate was predominant, but yet, perhaps because of my own French blood, I found his presence stimulating, inspiring. He was so different from Mr. Spratt!

"And now, you will favor me with your name, that I may present my grandfather, will you not, mademoiselle?" he asked.

"My name," I answered, "is Anne Ives. It is a short one, but it serves all useful purposes."

"And—pardon me if I am presumptuous, mademoiselle—but you are an American, making a journey to England unchaperoned, doubtless in accordance with the customs of your

charming countrywomen? My mother will be delighted with you. Permit me to offer you my card."

He handed me an oblong piece of pasteboard, slightly larger than the cards that our men use, engraved with a long name which I could not at first discern, owing to the dimness of the light.

"But you can't go to a pawnbroker for it," she inquired, staccato.

"To raise the fare," I answered. "My purse was stolen today, and so I want to pawn my watch."

"But you can't go to a pawnbroker," she cried, still more staccato and eyeing me as though I were some new species of animal. "Where are you going to stay?"

"Unless I pawn my watch, you may address my letters to the third bench inside the main entrance to the Bois de Boulogne," I answered, calmly.

"But I'll lend you the money, dear," said Estelle, her mind at once diverted to this new problem. "I've got ten pounds I have no use for." Already she was unlocking a drawer of the secretaire. She took out two five-pound notes and thrust them into my hands. "You must take them, Anne," she insisted. "We don't go back on one another in Cedar Plank. And it's only fair payment for getting me into the abbey and saving my reputation at home."

"You dear thing!" I said, pocketing the bills. "When I get my bonds from the Paris bank I shall return this promptly."

"Where are you going to stay?" cried my companion, branching out along another trail of speculation. "Do you know what a dreadful city Paris is? No single woman should go there, nor any married one, either, until she's thirty-five, at any rate."

"How old are you, Estelle?" I asked.

"Thirty-five," she said, innocently. I went into hysterics quite suddenly; I suppose it was the reaction from the strain of the morning.

"Now, dear, if you go to Paris, do go to the Pension Anglais," she insisted, when she had shaken and slapped me into sanity, and bathed my face with eau de cologne. "Promise me that and I know you'll be well looked after and come to no harm."

"I—I—I promise," I gasped weakly. "But one thing I won't do," I continued, pulling off her wedding ring. "I won't wear this."

And then I realized that, instead of laughing, I was crying. And for my life I couldn't tell why, unless it was with anger against the man who had humiliated me.

I had the greatest difficulty in persuading her to let me depart. Especially she insisted that the wearing of her wedding ring would be necessary to my safety in the French capital, of which not having yet been there, she entertained exaggerated and, I secretly believe, delightful fears. But somehow I eluded her well-meant intentions of detaining me, and eight o'clock found me at Charing Cross station, waiting for the Dover train.

I had ten minutes leeway, and strolled idly up and down the platform, watching with interest the various traveling types. There was a party of Frenchmen on their way home after the coronation who interested me in particular. The faces of more than one seemed half familiar to me, and especially I found myself regarding a tall Englishman, immaculately attired, who, evidently in the guise of interpreter, went busily from one to another, settling difficulties, labeling baggage, and generally smoothing away the little troubles of their journeying.

Turning suddenly as I was passing, he almost ran into me, stopped dead, and lifted his hat. Then I knew who he was, and who those others were. They were aviators and their friends, and he was the chief steward, with whom I had exchanged words at the aviation meeting the week before when I volunteered to ascend with the Chevalier d'Yves (then unknown to me) in his monoplane.

"My dear madame, why in the world don't your husband call for his prize?" he ejaculated, pulling out his pocket-book.

"Well, Anne," I said to myself, "you certainly have managed your affairs splendidly. Here you are in London, without a penny, and, worse still, without the key to the box in the Paris vaults which contains your fortune."

Angry tears came into my eyes. My scorn for the man who had disinherited my father, and for his grandson, the chevalier, had hitherto supported my spirits; but now, in this realization of my extremity, I felt crushed down by my misfortunes. Oh, why hadn't I taken the advice of my room-mate, Mary Jenner, and waited until we could all make up a party to go to England at the close of the school year!

One thing was clear: I must make my way to Paris at once, key or no key, satisfy the banker Magniff as to my identity, and recover my bonds. Doubtless, at a pinch, he would offer me a fair price for them—enough, at any rate, to make the \$500 that I had lost look small. And—this thought buoyed my spirits wonderfully—I should thereby thwart his scoundrelly son Leopold's scheme and prosecute his own revenge against my relatives.

I made my way back to the boarding house. Estelle had not yet returned.

When at last she arrived, several hours later, desperately tired but radiant, she clasped me in her arms in a delirium of gratitude.

"Anne, you have saved my reputation," she exclaimed. "If we had not gotten into the abbey, through the kindness of your mysterious aviator, I should never, never have gathered courage to face the folks at Cedar Plank, Ia. again. Oh, Anne, do you know that old man is a real count, and a general in the army? But why did you run away?"

"I had no wish to continue the acquaintance after I discovered who our friends were," I answered coldly. "The count, as you call him, and my father were not on speaking terms. He is my grandfather."

"Your—your grandfather?" Estelle stammered, looking at me with mingled awe and amazement.

"And he isn't my husband," I panted, terrified. "My name's Anne Ives, if

you want to know, and it's no business of mine who he is, because I never saw him before in my life."

But he absolutely declined to believe me.

"Oh, oh, madame," he said, smiling and shaking his finger at me. "It was a deucedly clever scheme to pretend to be strangers to one another. It made your flight look so much more spontaneous. Of course, I shall not press you—"

"Won't you please take back this money?" I pleaded. "Indeed, you are under a misapprehension."

"Will not madame keep it and hand it to monsieur, if she should happen to encounter him?" asked the secretary, blandly.

Evidently he refused to believe that I was not the wife of the chevalier—the very man whom I hated more bitterly than I had ever dreamed I could hate anyone. The very mention of the hateful word indicating the relationship in which he thought we stood filled me with loathing. I should have flung the money into his face, but suddenly bells rang, and there was a concerted rush for the train. The guard was already signaling to the engine-driver. I dashed into a compartment just in time; the wheels began to revolve, and I sank down into my seat, still clutching the envelope. I looked inside; there were five bank notes, of the value of one hundred pounds apiece. I thrust them into my handbag.

Estelle had packed my suitcase for me, and, when I opened it, a little later, what do you suppose I found on top of everything? Nothing else than that horrid little Mr. Spratt's book on the Code Napoleon, which he had so eloquently presented to me at the moment of my departure from Winnipeg. Poor little Mr. Spratt!

The sight of it recalled to my mind vividly Mary Jenner, my best friend, and the life which now seemed so infinitely far away. And it was only two weeks before that I had been teaching a class of overgrown boys and girls the principles of arithmetic!

If they knew of my subsequent adventures! I smiled, and then I felt the moisture in my eyes. I thrust the envelope containing the money into the cover of Mr. Spratt's book and gave myself up to somewhat painful meditation until I reached Dover.

The night passage was calm and I slept well until awakened at Calais, where we re-trained for Paris, reaching there at an unearthly hour in the morning. Through the kindness of an old gentleman aboard the train—you know those old gentlemen who are bubbling over with altruism toward the stranger—I eventually found myself knocking wearily at the doors of the Pension Anglais. I was assigned a room by the sleepy night clerk and tumbled into bed without even troubling to undress. When I awoke it was past twelve o'clock, and the noise and stir of the great city was in full swing beneath my windows.

I couldn't bring myself to the performance of my mission for a couple of days. I inspected the cathedral, the Louvre, the shops; I reveled in my surroundings. Indeed, the fascination of the French capital so overwhelmed me that I doubt whether I should ever have brought myself to carry out my purpose of visiting the banker but for a serious incident which suddenly recalled me to a sense of duty.

I was in the Louvre for the third or fourth time, reveling in the beauty of the sculpture there. I had paused before a statue of Praxiteles, an exquisite piece of work depicting the ideal of beauty, the Greek Hermes. I fell into a train of speculation. Were the modern Greeks, I thought, of the same physical type? I mused; had I ever seen a Greek? There must be Greeks in Winnipeg, but . . . And suddenly I felt a pair of eyes regarding me from across the gallery. I looked up with a start, to see a man in a slouch hat, attired like a guide, and yet evidently not one, since he lacked the official badge, regarding me with intense penetration.

It was the Greek Zeuxis, the hanger-on of villainous scoundrels Leopold Magniff!

But was it? Was not I, rather, the victim of an over-weighted imagination? As I stared at him in consternation he moved with stealthy, gliding steps into another chamber. When I had recovered my self-possession and followed him, he was nowhere to be seen.

The shock of this incident recalled me to the duty that lay before me. If indeed I were under espionage, it was my task to obtain my bonds with the least possible delay. I should never feel satisfied until I had disposed of them and taken the train and boat back to England. For the first time I regretted Estelle's absence. My loneliness was appalling; I felt as though some dark, ominous cloud of danger hung over me.

Early the next morning I sought admission to Leopold Magniff, senior, in his banking house upon the avenue.

I had anticipated some difficulty in seeing him, but for some reason or other I was admitted almost immediately.

"And now, if you would enlighten me as to the identity of your delightful husband—"

"My husband?" I answered, feeling the blood run into my face.

"I've carried it with me ever since, trusting to run across him. And do you know that to this day I haven't

satisfied your curiosity? Ah! that was a spectacular flight of yours. And clever—deucedly clever!"

"My husband?" I answered, feeling the blood run into my face in the most embarrassing manner.

"But didn't you know that he failed to claim the prize of five hundred pounds that he won by his remarkable flight?" he asked. With that he extracted an envelope from his pocket-book, which he handed to me with a formal bow. "With the compliments of the committee," he continued.

"And now, if you would enlighten me as to the identity of your delightful husband—"

"Five minutes later he put down his pen."

"Now, mademoiselle, I am at your service," he said.

And I told him my story, to which he listened with an impassive face.

I had not thought before of the improbabilities in it. Yet, even as the words left my mouth, I found myself stumbling for explanations and halting like some conspirator concocting a clumsy fabric of falsehoods. In

deed, when I desisted at last, confused and stammering, there was the ghost of a smile upon the old banker's face.

"I congratulate mademoiselle upon her perfect knowledge of French," he answered, and took up his pen again.

"Well, monsieur—" I stammered.

"Pardon me?" he responded, looking up as though I had just stated a new proposition to him.

"You will let me have my bonds?" I asked.

He smiled again; then frowned slightly.

"I am very busy, mademoiselle," he answered. "Why do you not see my friend, Baron Rothschild?"

I felt the color blazing upon my cheek.

"You don't believe me?" I cried, angrily.

"I am a thief, mademoiselle," he said.

"My dear mademoiselle!" he protested. "Do you mean seriously to press this ridiculous claim on me—me, Leopold Magniff, with fifty years' experience of men and women?"

"I certainly intend to obtain my property," I answered.

He pressed the tips of his fingers together and looked at me thoughtfully.

"If mademoiselle insists upon my investigating this claim, the consequence may be serious to her," he

continued.

"My dear mademoiselle!" he protested. "Do you mean seriously to press this ridiculous claim on me—me, Leopold Magniff, with fifty years' experience of men and women?"

"I certainly intend to obtain my property," I answered.

He outburst was so sincere, so genuine, that my anger evaporated; I could only feel conscious of a wave of sympathy for the old man, so miserable, in spite of all his wealth.

"Monsieur," I said, presently, "you doubtless are acquainted with the circumstances that drove my father into exile."

He nodded. "I have been your grandfather's banker for forty years," he answered. "It was unjust; the whim of an ancient aristocrat who placed his own pride before his son's happiness. He drove him from his house because they differed in politics. Cle! What a cause! What a cause for disinheriting one's own son! He could never have done so under the law, mademoiselle, but unfortunately some of the old estates are still controlled by the old feudal customs of the Bourbons—notably in your part of France."

"Then you will understand," I pursued, "that I do not harbor any goodwill against my grandfather or his grandson."

He looked up at me hopefully, as though he found cause for rejoicing that anyone should share his hatred.

"You would gladly see them dispossessed—disinherited, as they dispossessed your father?" he asked, eagerly.

I nodded. Something within me seemed to rise in protest on behalf of them: I saw the