

## Chapter 14: Hell's Belles

**H**IS Majesty was very angry. "I've warned you women time and time again," he shouted, "that if you allowed your unorthodox and immoral discussions to become public I would padlock your club! Do you think I enjoy having Hell made ridiculous, and my administration a joke?"

"I fail to understand you," Eve observed stiffly.

"You do, do you? Then read *that!*" He thrust a newspaper under her nose.

"TREMENDOUS SENSATION!" she read. "Secrets of Notorious Club to be Bared! Anonymous Author Promises Full Details of Revolutionary Discussions! Better Element of Hades Aroused! Strong for Law Enforcement! Prominent Citizens Urging His Majesty to Take Action and Have Radical Organization Suppressed!"

## *Ladies in Hades*

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“Well!” Eve exclaimed.

“Well!” Satan’s voice shook with anger. “I’ve a great mind to boil the whole lot of you in vitriol for the next ten thousand years, just to teach you a lesson! As for the traitor amongst you—the unspeakable creature who has agreed to make this information public—she shall be expelled from the Infernal Regions and thrust into Outer Darkness for the rest of her eternal existence! Which one of you was it? Confess!”

The ladies of the club all shook their heads in trembling denial.

“It wasn’t any of us!” Eve cried. “Our minutes must have been stolen!”

As she spoke, a shrinking figure detached itself from the shadows in one corner of the roof and approached His Majesty. It was a woman.

“If I tell you who the guilty person is,” she asked, not without a certain amount of confidence, “will you really do as you said?”

“Yes!” Satan thundered. “As sure as my name is Lucifer, out she goes! Hell has no punishment bad enough for such a wretch. Who was it? Speak!”

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"Me," Eve's French maid whispered, firmly if somewhat ungrammatically. "Marie Moreau. I stole the minutes. And if you don't let me go and join my lover I'll see that they are given to the newspapers just as I said I would, no matter what you do to me."

Satan drew back his hand as though to strike. Then he remembered that the girl before him was, from a bodily standpoint, already quite dead, and that even he had no power to destroy her soul. In an instant he had recovered his equanimity.

"I suppose you mean that crazy aviator who broke out of Heaven last month," he exclaimed, "and has been flying over Hell ever since trying to land against my orders!"

"But yes," murmured Marie. "Lieutenant Smith, of the great city of Hoboken, whom I met in Paris. We love each other. It is on his account that I am here. Every night he flies over and drops me a message. But he cannot keep it up. Already his wings are badly singed and I am terribly afraid, if he isn't more careful, he will go into a tail-spin and crash right into the Bottomless Pit!" She began to weep.

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Satan raised his arm above his head. A vast cone of light blazed up into space. From his finger tips radio signals crackled. Soon an object like a tiny moth appeared from the gloom and began to descend in dizzy spirals. A moment later the figure of a male angel, his pinfeathers ruffled, his halo awry, his face covered with soot, swept down to a perfect landing upon Cleopatra's roof.

"I'm John Smith!" he announced quietly.

"Bobo, my darling!" Marie cried.

"Marie!" exclaimed the fallen and rather dilapidated looking spirit.

Frantically the two embraced, while the ladies of the club smiled.

"Be off with you," said Satan in a gruff voice, "before I change my mind. And a good riddance, too. Don't ever try to come back, either, if you know what is good for you!"

Mr. Smith, with Marie tightly clasped in one arm, made an excellent take-off. As he rose he waved good-by with his free hand.

"Lucky couple," sighed Sappho. "At least they are together."

"And like most people in love," remarked



*"Bobo, my darling!" cried Marie.*

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Cleopatra, "condemned to flutter frantically between Heaven and Hell for the rest of their existence."

"Where are you going?" Eve cried, feeling suddenly romantic. "They say there's a place at the Edge of Time where dreams come true——"

Mr. Smith glanced down over his shoulder and grinned.

"Nothing like that," he replied. "We're going back to Earth. I've arranged for a permanent position with the Society for Psychological Research. Spooking, you know."

"And I," added Marie, pressing an asbestos-covered package to her breast, "am taking the club's minutes with me and shall see that they are published. Good-by."

As they disappeared in the darkness Satan's expression became resigned.

"Any publicity is good publicity," he muttered. "A little snappy advertising like that won't do Hell a bit of harm." He turned to Eve and her friends. "Your club's disbanded! But it may console you to know that I intend shortly to make a big superfilm for propaganda pur-

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poses, and if you girls behave yourselves I may use you in it——”

“I want the lead!” exclaimed the members of the club in chorus, rushing toward him. “What’s the picture to be called?”

“Hell’s Belles!” cried Satan, making a sudden leap for the door. “And I don’t mind saying if it weren’t for you women even Hades would be a fairly decent sort of a place to live in!”

THE END