

Cupid and Chow Chow

Louisa May Alcott

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Ama began it by calling her rosy, dimpled, year-old baby Cupid, and as he grew up the name became more and more appropriate, for the pretty boy loved everyone, everyone loved him, and he made those about him feel fond of one another, like a regular little god of love. Especially beautiful and attractive did he look as he pranced on the doorsteps one afternoon while waiting the arrival of a little cousin. Our Cupid's costume was modernized out of regard to the prejudices of society, and instead of wings, bandage, bow and arrow, he was gorgeous to behold in small buckled shoes, purple silk hose, black velvet knickerbockers, and jacket with a lace collar, which, with his yellow hair cut straight across the forehead, and falling in long, curling love-locks behind, made him look like an old picture of a young cavalier.

It was impossible for the little sprig to help being a trifle vain when everyone praised his comeliness, and every mirror showed him a rosy face, with big blue eyes, smiling lips, white teeth, a cunning nose, and a dimple in the chin, not to mention the golden mane that hung about his neck.

Yes, Cupid was vain; and as he waited, he pranced, arranged the dear buckled shoes in the first position, practised his best bow, felt of his dimple, and smiled affably as he pictured to himself the pleasure and surprise of the little cousin when he embraced her in the ardent yet gentle way which made his greetings particularly agreeable to those who liked such tender demonstrations.

Cupid had made up his mind to love Chow-chow very much, both because she was his cousin, and because she must be interesting if all papa's stories of her were true. Her very name was pleasing to him, for it suggested Indian sweetmeats, though papa said it was given to her because she was such a mixture of sweet and sour that one never knew whether he would get his tongue bitten out by a hot bit of ginger, or find a candied plum melting in his mouth when he tried that little jar of Chow-chow.

"I know I shall like her, and of course she will like me lots 'cause everybody does," thought Cupid, settling his love-locks and surveying his purple legs like a contented young peacock.

Just then a carriage drove up the avenue, stopped at the foot of the steps, and out skipped a tall, brown man, a small, pale lady, and a child, who whisked away to the pond so rapidly that no one could see what she was like. A great kissing and hand-shaking went on between the papas and the mammas, and Cupid came in for a large share, but did not enjoy it as much as usual, for the little girl had fled and he must get at her. So the instant Aunt Susan let him go he ran after the truant, quite panting with eagerness and all aglow with amiable intentions, for he was a hospitable little soul, and he loved to do the honors of his pleasant home like a gentleman.

A little figure, dressed in a brown linen frock, with dusty boots below it, and above it a head of wild black hair, tied up with a large scarlet bow, stood by the pond throwing atones at the swans, who ruffled their feathers in stately anger at such treatment. Suddenly a pair of velvet arms embraced her, and half turning she looked up into a rosy, smiling face, with two red lips suggestively puckered for a hearty kiss.

Chow-chow's black eyes sparkled, and her little brown face flushed red as her ribbon as she tried to push the boy away with a shrill scream.

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"Don't be frightened. I'm Cupid. I must kiss you. I truly must. I always do when people come, and I like you very much."

With this soothing remark, the velvet arm pressed her firmly, and the lips gave her several soft kisses, which owing to her struggles, lit upon her nose, chin, top-knot, and ear; for, having begun, Cupid did not know when to leave off.

But Chow-chow's wrath was great, her vengeance swift, and getting one hand free she flung the gravel it held full in the flushed and smiling face of this bold boy who had dared kiss her without leave. Poor Cupid fell back blinded and heartbroken at such a return for his warm welcome, and while he stood trying to clear his smarting eyes, a fierce little voice said close-by,—

"Does it hurt?"

"Oh! Dreadfully!"

"I'm glad of it."

"Then you don't love me?"

"I hate you!"

"I don't see why."

"I don't like to be hugged and kissed. I don't let anybody but papa and mamma do it, ever—so, now!"

"But I'm your cousin, and you must love me. Won't you please?" besought Cupid, with one eye open and a great tear on his nose.

"I'll see about it. I don't like crying boys," returned the heard-hearted damsel.

"Well, you made me; but I forgive you," and Cupid magnanimously put out his hand for a friendly shake. But Chow-chow was off like a startled deer, and vanished into the house, singing at the top of her voice a nursery rhyme to this effect,—

"And she bids you to come in,
With a dimple in her chin,
Billy boy, Billy boy"

When Cupid, with red eyes and a sad countenance, made his appearance, he found Chow-chow on her father's knee eating cake, while the elders talked. She had told the story, and now from the safe stronghold of papa's arms condescended to smile upon the conquered youth.

Cupid went to mamma, and in one long whisper told his woes; then sat upon the cushion at her feet, and soon forgot them all in the mingled joys of eating macaroons and giving Chow-chow smile for smile across the hearth-rug.

"I predict we shall be much amused and edified by the progress of the friendship just begun," said Cupid's papa, a quiet man, who loved children and observed them with affectionate interest.

"And I predict a hard time of it for your young man, if he attempts to tame my strong-minded little woman here."

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Her mother's ideas are peculiar, and she wants to bring Chow–chow up according to the new lights, with contempt for dress and all frivolous pursuits; to make her hardy, independent, and quite above caring for such trifles as love, domestic life, or the feminine accomplishments we used to find so charming."

As Chow–chow's papa spoke, he looked from the child in her ugly gray frock, thick boots, and mop of hair tied up in a style neither pretty nor becoming, to his wife in her plain dress with her knob of hair, decided mouth, sarcastic nose, and restless eyes that seemed always on the watch to find some new wrong and protest against it.

"Now, George, how can you misrepresent my views and principles so? But it's no use trying to convince or out–talk you. We never get a chance, and our only hope is to bring up our girls so that they may not be put down as we are," returned Mrs. Susan, with a decided air.

"Show us how you are going to defend your sex and conquer ours, Chow–chow; give us your views generally. Now, then, who is in favor of the Elective Franchise?" said Uncle George, with a twinkle of the eye.

Up went Aunt Susan's hand, and to the great amusement of all up went Chow–chow's also and, scrambling to her feet on papa's knee, she burst into a harangue which convulsed her hearers, for in it the child's voice made queer work with the long words, and the red bow wagged belligerently as she laid down the law with energy, and defined her views, closing with a stamp of her foot—"This is our platform: Free speech, free love, free–soil, free every thing; anti Woman's Puckerage for ever!"

Even Aunt Susan had to laugh at that burst, for it was delivered with such vigor that the speaker would have fallen on her nose if she had not been sustained by a strong arm.

Cupid laughed because the rest did, and then turned his big eyes full of wonder on his mother, asking what it all meant.

"Only fun, my dear."

"Now, Ellen, that's very wrong. Why don't you explain this great subject to him, and prepare him to take a nobler part in the coming struggle than those who have come before him have done?" said Mrs. Susan, with a stern look at her husband, who was petting the little daughter, who evidently loved him best.

"I don't care to disturb his happy childhood with quarrels beyond his comprehension. I shall teach him to be as good and just a man as his father, and feel quite sure that no woman will suffer wrong at his hands," returned Mrs. Ellen, smiling at Cupid's papa, who nodded back as if they quite understood one another.

"We never did agree and we never shall so I will say no more; but we shall see what a good effect my girl's strength of character will have upon your boy, who has been petted and spoiled by too much tenderness."

So Aunt Susan settled the matter; and as the days went on, the elder people fell into the way of observing how the little pair got on together and were much amused by the vicissitudes of that nursery romance.

In the beginning Chow–chow rode over Cupid rough–shod quite trampled upon him in fact; and he bore it, because he wanted her to like him, and had been taught that the utmost courtesy was due a guest. But when he got no reward for his long–suffering patience he was sometimes tempted to rebel, and probably would have done so if he had not had mamma to comfort and sustain him. Chow–chow was very quick at spying out the weaknesses of her friends and alarmingly frank in proclaiming her discoveries; so poor Cupid's little faults were seen and proclaimed very soon and life made a burden to him, until he found out the best way of silencing his tormentor was by mending the faults.

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"My papa says you are a dandy-prat, and you are," said Chow-chow, one day when the desire to improve her race was very strong upon her.

"What is a dandy prat?" asked Cupid, looking troubled at the new accusation.

"I asked him, and he said a vain fellow; and you are vain,—so now!"

"Am I?" and Cupid stopped to think it over.

"Yes; you're horrid vain of your hair, and your velvet clothes, and the dimple in your chin. I know it 'cause you always look in the glass when you're dressed up, and keep feeling of that ugly hole in your chin, and I see you brush your hair ever so much." Poor Cupid colored up with shame, and turned his back to the mirror, as the sharp-tongued young monitor went on:—"My mamma said if you were her boy she'd cut off your curls, put you in a plain suit, and stick some court-plaster over that place till you forgot all about it."

Chow-chow expected an explosion of grief or anger after that last slap; but to her amazement the boy walked out of the room without a word. Going up to his mother as she sat busy with a letter, he asked in a very earnest voice,—

"Mamma, am I vain?"

"I'm afraid you are a little, my dear," answered mamma, deep in her letter.

With a sad but resolute face, Cupid went back to Chow-chow, bearing a pair of shears in one hand and a bit of court-plaster in the other.

"You may cut my hair off, if you want to. I ain't going to be a dandy-prat anymore," he said, offering the fatal shears with the calmness of a hero.

Chow-chow was much surprised, but charmed with the idea of shearing this meek sheep, so she snipped and slashed until the golden locks lay shining on the floor, and Cupid's head looked as if rats had been gnawing on his hair.

"Do you like me better now?" he asked, looking in her eyes as his only mirror, and seeing there the most approving glance they had ever vouchsafed him.

"Yes, I do; girl-boys are hateful."

He might have retorted, "So are boy-girls," but he was a gentleman, so he only smiled and held up his chin for her to cover the offending dimple, which she did with half a square of black plaster.

"I shall never wear my velvet clothes any more unless mamma makes me, and I don't think she will when I tell her about it, 'cause she likes to have me cure my faults," said Cupid when the sacrifice was complete, and even stern Chow-chow was touched by the sweetness with which he bore the rebuke, the courage with which he began the atonement for his little folly. When he appeared at dinner, great was the out-cry; and when the story was told, great was the effect produced. Aunt Susan said with satisfaction,—

"You see what an excellent effect my girl's Spartan training has on her, and how fine her influence is on your effeminate boy."

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Uncle George laughed heartily, but whispered something to Chow–chow that made her look ashamed and cast repentant glances at her victim. Cupid's papa shook hands with the boy and said, smiling, "I am rather proud of my 'dandy–prat,' after all."

But mamma grieved for the lost glory of her little Absalom, and found it hard to pardon naughty Chow–chow, until Cupid looked up at her with a grave, clear look which even the big patch could not spoil, and said manfully,—

"You know, I was vain, mamma, but I won't be any more, and you'll be glad, because you love me better than my hair, don't you?"

Then she hugged the cropped head close, and kissed the hidden dimple without a word of reproach; but she laid the yellow locks away as if she did love them after all, and often followed the little lad in the rough gray suit, as if his sacrifice had only made him more beautiful in her eyes.

Chow–chow was quite affable for some days after this prank, and treated her slave with more gentleness, evidently feeling that, though belonging to an inferior race, he deserved a trifle of regard for his obedience to her teachings. But her love of power grew by what it fed on and soon brought fresh woe to faithful Cupid, who adored her, though she frowned upon his little passion and gave him no hope.

"You are a 'fraid–cat," asserted her majesty, one afternoon as they played in the stable, and Cupid declined to be kicked by the horse Chow–chow was teasing.

"No, I ain't; but I don't like to be hurt, and it's wrong to fret Charley, and I won't poke him with my hoe."

"Well, it isn't wrong to turn this thing, but you don't dare to put your finger on that wheel and let me pinch it a little bit," added Chow–chow, pointing to some sort of hay–cutting machine that stood nearby.

"What for?" asked Cupid, who did object to being hurt in any way.

"To show you ain't a 'fraid cat. I know you are. I'm not, see there," and Chow–chow gave her own finger a very gentle squeeze.

"I can bear it harder than that," and devoted Cupid laid his plump finger between two wheels, bent on proving his courage at all costs.

Chow–chow gave a brisk turn to the handle, slipped in doing so, and brought the whole weight of the cruel cogs on the tender little finger, crushing the top quite flat. Blood flowed, Chow–chow stopped aghast; and Cupid, with one cry of pain, caught and reversed the handle, drew out the poor finger, walked unsteadily in to mamma, saying, with dizzy eyes and white lips, "She didn't mean to do it," and then fainted quite away in a little heap at her feet.

The doctor came flying, shook his head over the wound, and drew out a case of dreadful instruments that made even strong–minded Aunt Susan turn away her head, and bound up the little hand that might never be whole and strong again. Chow–chow stood by quite white and still until it was all over and Cupid asleep in his mother's arms; then she dived under the sofa and sobbed there, refusing to be comforted until her father came home. What that misguided man said to her no one ever knew, but when Cupid was propped up on the couch at tea–time, Chow–chow begged piteously to be allowed to feed him.

The be wounded hero, with his arm in a sling, permitted her to minister to him; and she did it so gently, so patiently, that her father said low to Mrs. Ellen,—

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"I have hopes of her yet, for all the woman is not taken out of her, in spite of the new lights."

When they parted for the evening, Cupid, who had often sued for a good-night kiss and sued in vain, was charmed to see the red top-knot bending over him, and to hear Chow-chow whisper, with a penitent kiss, "I truly didn't mean to, Coopy."

The well arm held her fast as the martyr whispered back, "Just say I ain't a 'fraid-cat, and I don't mind smashing my finger." Chow-chow said it that night and thought it next day and for many following days, for each morning, when the doctor came to dress the "smashed" finger, she insisted on being by as a sort of penance. She forced herself to watch the bright instruments without shivering, she ran for warm water, she begged to spread the salve on the bandage, to hold the smelling-bottle, and to pick all the lint that was used.

And while she performed these small labors of love, she learned a little lesson that did her more good than many of mamma's lectures. For Cupid showed her the difference between the rash daring that runs foolish risks, and the steady courage that bears pain without complaint. Every day the same scene took place; Chow-chow would watch for and announce the doctor; would bustle out the salve-box, bandage, and basin, set the chair, and call Cupid from his book with a new gentleness in her voice.

The boy would answer at once, take his place, and submit the poor swollen hand to the ten minutes torture of little probes and scissors, caustic and bathing, without a word, a tear, or a sound of suffering. He only turned his head away, grew white about the lips, damp on the forehead, and when it was all over would lean against his mother for a minute, faint and still. Then Chow-chow would press her hands together with a sigh of mingled pity, admiration, and remorse, and when the boy looked up to say stoutly, "It didn't hurt very much," she would put his sling on for him, and run before to settle the pillows, carry him the little glass of wine and water he was to take, and hover round him until he was quite himself again, when she would subside close by, and pick lint or hem sails while he read aloud to her from one of his dear books.

"It is a good lesson in surgery and nursing for her. I intend to have her study medicine if she shows any fondness for it," said Aunt Susan.

"It is a good lesson in true courage, and I am glad to have her learn it early," added uncle George, who now called Cupid "trump" instead of a "dandy-prat."

"It is a good lesson in loving and serving others for love's sake, as all women must learn to do soon or late," said gentle Mrs. Ellen.

"It is teaching them both how to bear and forbear, to teach and help, and comfort one another, and take the pains and pleasures of life as they should do together," concluded Cupid's papa, watching the little couple with the wise kind eyes that saw a pretty story in their daily lives.

Slowly the finger healed, and to every one's surprise was not much disfigured which Cupid insisted was entirely owing to Chow-chow's superior skill in spreading salve and picking lint. Before this time, however, Chow-chow, touched by his brave patience, his generous refusal to blame her for the mishap, and his faithful affection, had in a tender moment confessed to her little lover that she did "like him a great deal," and consented to go and live in the old swan-house on the island in the pond as soon as he was well enough.

But no sooner had she enraptured him by these promises than she dashed his joy by adding certain worldly conditions which she had heard discussed by her mamma and her friends.

"But we can't be married until we have a lot of money. Nobody does, and we must have ever so much to buy things with."

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"Yes, but papa said he'd give us some little furniture to put in our house, and mamma will let us have as much cake and milk-tea as we want, and I shall be very fond of you, and what's the use of money?" asked the enamoured Cupid, who believed in love in a cottage, or swan-house rather.

"I shan't marry a poor boy, so now!" was the mercenary Chow-chow's decision.

"Well, I'll see how much I've got; but I should think you would like me just as well without," and Cupid went away to inspect his property with as much anxiety as any man preparing for matrimony.

But Cupid's finances were in a bad state, for he spent his pocket-money as fast as he got it, and had lavished gifts upon his sweetheart with princely prodigality. So he punched a hole in his savings-bank and counted his small hoard, much afflicted to find it only amounted to seventy-eight cents, and a button put in for fun. Bent on winning his mistress no sacrifice seemed too great, so he sold his livestock, consisting of one lame hen, a rabbit, and a choice collection of caterpillars. But though he drove sharp bargains, these sales only brought him in a dollar or two. Then he went about among his friends, and begged and borrowed small sums, telling no one his secret lest they should laugh at him, but pleading for a temporary accommodation so earnestly and prettily that no one could refuse.

When he had strained every nerve and tried every wile, he counted up his gains and found that he had four dollars and a half. That seemed a fortune to the innocent; and, getting it all in bright pennies, he placed it in a new red purse, and with pardonable pride laid his offering at Chow-chow's feet.

But alas for love's labor lost! The cruel fair crushed all his hopes by saying coldly,—

"That isn't half enough. We ought to have ten dollars, and I won't like you until you get it."

"O Chow-chow! I tried so hard; do play it's enough," pleaded poor Cupid.

"No, I shan't. I don't care much for the old swan-house now, and you ain't half so pretty as you used to be."

"You made me cut my hair off, and now you don't love me 'cause I'm ugly," cried the afflicted little swain, indignant at such injustice.

But Chow-chow was in a naughty mood, so she swung on the gate, and would not relent in spite of prayers and blandishments.

"I'll get some more money somehow, if you will wait. Will you, please?"

"I'll see 'bout it."

And with that awful uncertainty weighing upon his soul, poor Cupid went away to wrestle with circumstances. Feeling that matters had now reached a serious point, he confided his anxieties to mamma; and she, finding that it was impossible to laugh or reason him out of his untimely passion, comforted him by promising to buy at high prices all the nose-gays he could gather out of his own little garden.

"But it will take a long time to make ten dollars that way. Don't you think Chow-chow might come now, when it is all warm and pleasant, and not stop until summer is gone, and no birds and flowers and nice things to play with? It's so hard to wait," sighed Cupid, holding his cropped head in his hands, and looking the image of childish despair.

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"So it is, and I think Chow–chow is a little goose not to go at once and enjoy young love's dream without wasting precious time trying to make money. Tell her papa said so, and he ought to know," added Uncle George, under his breath, for he had tried it, and found that it did not work well.

Cupid did tell her, but little madam had got the whim into her perverse head and the more she was urged to give in, the more decided she grew. So Cupid accepted his fate like a man, and delved away in his garden, watering his pinks, weeding his mignonette, and begging his roses to bloom as fast and fair as they could, so that he might be happy before the summer was gone. Rather a pathetic little lover, mamma thought, as she watched him tugging away with the lame hand, or saw him come beaming in with his posies to receive the precious money that was to buy a return for his loyal love.

Tender–hearted, Mrs. Ellen tried to soften Chow–chow and teach her sundry feminine arts against the time she went to housekeeping on the island, for Mrs. Susan was so busy hearing lectures, reading reports, and attending to the education of other people's children that her own ran wild. In her good moods, Chow–chow took kindly to the new lessons, and began to hem a table–cloth for the domestic board at which she was to preside; also swept and dusted now and then, and once cooked a remarkable mess, which she called "Coopy's favorite pudding," and intended to surprise him with it soon after the wedding. But these virtuous efforts soon flagged, the table–cloth was not finished, the duster was converted into a fly–killer, and her dolls lay unheeded in corners after a few attempts at dressing and nursing had ended in ennui.

How long matters would have gone on in this unsatisfactory way no one knows; but a rainy day came, and the experiences it gave the little pair brought things to a crisis.

The morning was devoted to pasting pictures and playing horse all over the house, with frequent pauses for refreshment and an occasional squabble. After dinner, as the mammas sat sewing and the papas talking or reading in one room, the children played in the other, quite unconscious that they were affording both amusement and instruction to their elders.

"Let's play house," suggested Cupid, who was of a domestic turn, and thought a little rehearsal would not be amiss. "Well, I will," consented Chow–chow, who was rather subdued by the violent exercises of the morning.

So a palatial mansion was made of chairs, the dolls' furniture arranged, the stores laid in, and housekeeping begun.

"Now, you must go off to your business while I tend to my work," said Chow–chow, after they had breakfasted off a seed–cake and sugar and water tea in the bosom of their family.

Cupid obediently put on papa's hat, took a large book under his arm, and went away to look at pictures behind curtains, while Mrs. C bestirred herself at home in a most energetic manner, spanking her nine dolls until their cries rent the air, rattling her dishes with perilous activity, and going to market with the coal–hod for her purchases.

Mr. Cupid returned to dinner rather early, and was scolded for so doing, but pacified his spouse by praising her dessert,—a sandwich of sliced apple, bread, and salt, which he ate like a martyr.

A ride on the rocking–horse with his entire family about him filled the soul of Mr. Cupid with joy, though the trip was rendered a little fatiguing by his having to dismount frequently to pick up the various darlings as they fell out of his pockets or their mother's arms as she sat behind him on a _____.

"Isn't this beautiful?" he asked, as they swung to and fro,—Mrs. Cupid leaning her head on his shoulder, and dear little Claribel Maud peeping out of his breast–pocket, while little Walter Hornblower and Rosie Ruth, the twins,

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sat up between the horse's ears, their china faces beaming in a way to fill a father's heart with pride.

"It will be much nicer if the horse runs away and we all go smash. I'll pull out his tail, then he'll rear, and we must tumble off," proposed the restless Mrs. C., whose dramatic soul delighted in tragic adventures.

So the little papa's happy moment was speedily banished as he dutifully precipitated himself and blooming family upon the floor, to be gathered up and doctored with chalk and ink, and plasters of paper stuck all over their faces.

When this excitement subsided, it was evening, and Mrs. Cupid bundled her children off to bed, saying,—

"Now, you must go to your club, and I am going to my lecture."

"But I thought you'd sew now and let me read to you, and have our little candles burn, and be all cosey, like papa and mamma," answered Cupid, who already felt the discomfort of a strong-minded wife.

"My papa and mamma don't do so. He always goes to the club, and smokes and reads papers and plays chess, and mamma goes to Woman's Puckerage meetings,—so I must."

"Let me go, too; I never saw a Puckerage lecture, and I'd like to," said Cupid, who felt that a walk arm-in-arm with his idol would make any sort of meeting endurable.

"No, you can't! Papa never goes; he says they are all gabble and nonsense, and mamma says his club is all smoke and slang, and the never go together."

Chow-chow locked the door, and the little pair went their separate ways, while the older pair in the other room laughed at the joke, yet felt that Cupid's plan was the best, and wondered how Ellen and her husband managed to get on so well.

Chow-chow's lecture did not seem to be very interesting, for she was soon at home again. But Mr. Cupid, after smoking a lamp-lighter with his feet up, fell to reading a story that interested him, and forgot to go home until he finished it. Then, to his great surprise, he was told that it was morning, that he had been out all night, and couldn't have any breakfast. This ruffled him, and he told madam she was a bad wife, and he wouldn't love her if she did not instantly give him his share of the little pie presented by cook, as a bribe to keep them out of the kitchen.

Mrs. C. sternly refused, and locked up the pie, declaring that she hated housekeeping and wouldn't live with him anymore, which threat she made good by quitting the house, vowing not to speak to him again that day, but to play alone, free and happy.

The deserted husband sat down among his infants with despair in his soul, while the spirited wife, in an immense bonnet, pranced about the room, waving the key of the pie-closet and rejoicing in her freedom. Yes, it was truly pathetic to see poor Mr. Cupid's efforts at housekeeping and baby-tending; for, feeling that they had a double claim upon him now, he tried to do his duty by his children. But he soon gave it up, piled them all into one bed, and covered them with a black cloth, saying mournfully, "I'll play they all died of mumps, then I can sell the house and go away. I can't bear to stay here when she is gone."

The house was sold, the dead infants buried under the sofa, and then the forsaken man was a homeless wanderer. He tried in many ways to amuse himself. He travelled to China on the tailless horse, went to California in a balloon, and sailed around the world on a raft made of two chairs and the hearth-brush. But these wanderings always ended near the ruins of his home, and he always sat down for a moment to watch the erratic movements of his wife.

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That sprightly lady fared better than he, for her inventive fancy kept her supplied with interesting plays, though a secret sense of remorse for her naughtiness weighed upon her spirits at times. She had a concert, and sang surprising medleys, with drum accompaniments. She rode five horses in a circus, and jumped over chairs and foot-stools in the most approved manner. She had a fair, a fire, and a shipwreck; hunted lions, fished for crocodiles, and played be a monkey in a style that would have charmed Darwin.

But somehow none of these festive games had their usual relish. There was no ardent admirer to applaud her music, no two-legged horse to help her circus with wild prancings and life-like neighs, no devoted friend and defender to save her from the perils of flood and fire, no comrade to hunt with her, no fellow-monkey to skip from perch to perch with social jabberings, as they cracked their cocoa-nuts among imaginary palms. All was dull and tiresome.

A strong sense of loneliness fell upon her, and for the first time she appreciated her faithful little friend. Then the pie weighed upon her conscience; there it was, wasting its sweetness in the closet, and no one ate it. She had not the face to devour it alone; she could not make up her mind to give it to Cupid; and after her fierce renunciation of him, how could she ask him to forgive her? Gradually her spirits declined, and about the time that the other wanderer got back from his last trip she sat down to consider her position.

Hearing no noise in the other room, Uncle George peeped in and saw the divided pair sitting in opposite corners, looking askance at each other, evidently feeling that a wide gulf lay between them, and longing to cross it, yet not quite knowing how. A solemn and yet a comical sight, so Uncle George beckoned the others to come and look.

"My boy will give in first. See how beseechingly he looks at the little witch!" whispered Mrs. Ellen, laughing softly.

"No, he won't; she hurt his feelings very much by leaving him, and he won't relent until she goes back; then he'll forgive and forget like a man," said Cupid's papa.

"I hope my girl will remain true to her principles," began Aunt Susan.

"She'll be a miserable baby if she does," muttered Uncle George.

"I was going to say that, finding she has done wrong, I hope she will have the courage to say so, hard as it is, and so expiate her fault and try to do better," added Aunt Susan, fast and low, with a soft look in her eyes, as she watched the little girl sitting alone, while so much honest affection was waiting for her close by, if pride would let her take it.

Somehow Uncle George's arm went round her waist when she said that, and he gave a quick nod, as if something pleased him very much.

"Shall I speak, and help the dears bridge over their little trouble?" asked Mrs. Ellen, pretending not to see the older children making up their differences behind her.

"No; let them work it out for themselves. I'm curious to see how they will manage," said papa, hoping that his boy's first little love would prosper in spite of thorns among the roses.

So they waited, and presently the affair was settled in a way no one expected. As if she could not bear the silence any longer, Chow-chow suddenly bustled up, saying to herself,—

"I haven't played a lecture. I always like that, and here's a nice place."

Cupid and Chow Chow

Pulling out the drawers of a secretary like steps, she slowly mounted to the wide ledge atop, and began the droll preachment her father had taught her in ridicule of mamma's hobby.

"Do stop her, George; it's so absurd," whispered Mrs. Susan.

"Glad you think so, my dear," laughed Uncle George.

"There is some sense in it, and I have no doubt the real and true will come to pass when we women learn how far to go, and how to fit ourselves for the new duties by doing the old ones well," said Mrs. Ellen, who found good in all things, and kept herself so womanly sweet and strong that no one could deny her any right she chose to claim.

"She is like so many of those who mount your hobby, Susan, and ride away into confusions of all sorts, leaving empty homes behind them. The happy, womanly women will have the most influence after all, and do the most to help the bitter, sour, discontented ones. They need help, God knows, and I shall be glad to lend a hand toward giving them their rights in all things."

As papa spoke, Chow-chow, who had caught sight of the peeping faces, and was excited thereby, burst into a tremendous harangue, waving her hands, stamping her feet, and dancing about on her perch as if her wrongs had upset her wits. All of a sudden the whole secretary lurched forward, out fell the drawers, open flew the doors, down went Chow-chow with a screech, and the marble slab came sliding after, as if to silence the irrepressible little orator forever. How he did it no one knew, but before the top fell Cupid was under it, received it on his shoulders, and held it up with all his might, while Chow-chow scrambled out from the ruins with no hurt but a bump on the forehead. Papa had his boy out in a twinkling, and both mammas fell upon their rescued darlings with equal alarm and tenderness; for Mrs. Susan got her little girl in her arms before Mr. George could reach her, and Chow-chow clung there, sobbing away her fright and pain as if the maternal purring was a new and pleasant solace.

"I'll never play that nasty old puckerage anymore," she declared, feeling of the purple lump on her brow.

"Nor I either, in that way," whispered her mamma, with a look that made Chow-chow ask curiously,–

"Why, did you hurt yourself too?"

"I am afraid I did."

"Be sure that your platform is all right before you try again, Poppet, else it will let you down when you least expect it, and damage your best friends as well as yourself," said Mr. George, setting up the fallen rostrum.

"I'm not going to have any platform; I'm going to be good and play with Coopy, if he'll let me," added the penitent Chow-chow, glancing with shy, wet eyes at Cupid, who stood near with a torn jacket and a bruise on the already wounded hand.

His only answer was to draw her out of her mother's arms, embrace her warmly, and seat her beside him on the little bench he loved to share with her. This ready and eloquent forgiveness touched Chow-chow's heart, and the lofty top-knot went down upon Cupid's shoulder as if the little fortress lowered its colors in token of entire surrender. Cupid's only sign of triumph was a gently pat on the wild, black head, and a nod towards the spectators as he said, smiling all over his chubby face,–

"Every thing is nice and happy now, and we don't mind the bumps."

Cupid and Chow Chow

"Let us sheer off, we are only in the way," said Mr. George, and the elders retired, but found it impossible to resist occasional peeps at the little pair, as the reconciliation went on.

"O Coopy! I was so bad, I don't think you can love me anymore," began the repentant one with a sob.

"Oh yes I can; and just as soon as I get money enough, we'll go and live in the swan-house, won't we?" returned the faithful lover, making the most of this melting mood.

"I'll go right away tomorrow, I don't care about the money. I like the nice bright pennies, and we don't need much, and I've got my new saucepan to begin with," cried Chow-chow in a burst of generosity, for, like a true woman, though she demanded impossibilities at first, yet when her heart was won she asked nothing but love, and was content with a saucepan.

"O Goody! and I've got my drum," returned the enraptured Cupid, as ready as the immortal Tradles to go to housekeeping with a toasting fork and a bird-cage, or some such useful trifles.

"But I was bad about the pie," cried Chow-chow as her sins kept rising before her; and, burning to make atonement for this one, she ran to the closet, tore out the pie, and, thrusting it into Cupid's hands, said in a tone of heroic resolution, "There, you eat it all, and I won't taste a bit."

"No, you eat it all, I'd like to see you. I don't care for it, truly, 'cause I love you more than million pies," protested Cupid, offering back the treasure in a somewhat ruinous state after its various vicissitudes.

"Then give me a tiny bit, and you have the rest," said Chow-chow, bent on self-chastisement.

"The fairest way is to cut it 'zactly in halves, and each have a piece. Mamma says that's the right thing to do always." And Cupid, producing a jack-knife, proceeded to settle the matter with masculine justice.

So side by side they devoured the little bone of contention, chattering amicably about their plans; and as the last crumb vanished, Cupid said persuasively, as if the league was not quite perfect without that childish ceremony,—

"Now let's kiss and be friends, and never quarrel any more."

As the rosy mouths met in a kiss of peace, the sound was echoed from the other room, for Mr. George's eyes made the same proposal, and his wife answered it as tenderly as Chow-chow did Cupid. Not a word was said, for grown people do not "'fess" and forgive with the sweet frankness of children; but both felt that the future would be happier than the past, thanks to the lesson they had learned from the little romance of Cupid and Chow-chow.