Summary

Rhett and Scarlett early in their honeymoon.

Notes

I wrote most of this far too late at night...all mistakes are mine (and let they be a caution against writing after midnight), but the characters, of course, are not.

"Turn around, Scarlett - slowly now. Let me see the dress."

Scarlett could hardly control the urge to spin in a whirl so she could hear the heavy skirt rustle around her legs, but she forced herself to turn slowly for Rhett's perusal. It was only the third day of their time in New Orleans, but she had already learned that Rhett would spoil her with anything she wanted - as long as he approved. He superseded her taste in jewelry, fripperies, but above all, dresses. And oh, she wanted this dress! It was blue like the bright sky above this bold and vibrant city, with lace trim all along the low neck and darling little short sleeves, and four bows down the front. The small bustle swayed enticingly as she turned demurely in a circle.

"Oh Rhett, do say you like this one! You haven't bought me anything new yet today," Scarlett said, though it was not yet noon, and turned her dimples on her new husband.

Rhett was sprawled in a chair, his large masculine presence out of place in the frilly dress shop. The shopkeepers tiptoed around him but his presence in this feminine world thrilled Scarlett. It felt naughty, trying on dresses for Rhett's favor. He was her husband, now, but matrimony had not erased the memory of the scoundrel she'd known for over half a decade. As she tried on dress after dress and let him look her over, her stomach turned somersaults under the tight bodices. His gaze
looked even more like he knew what she looked like without her shimmy, for now he truly did!

Scarlett blushed, and was unaware of how fetchingly that completed the picture with her pale skin and pink cheeks set off by the deep blue of the gown.

"Without my good taste to hold you back, my pet, you'd have bought every dress in New Orleans by now. Or at least all of the most wretchedly overdone gowns you could find. Now don't be mad Scarlett, or I won't buy you this one, either. Come here - let me see it up close." His black eyes danced as she approached. When she was within the reach of his long arms, he swept them around her waist and pulled her down to his lap.

"Rhett!" she protested, wriggling against his chest. "Let me go, Rhett, you're not being decent - the shopkeeper-

"The shopkeeper wants my money even more than you do, darling, and won't care at all if we're decent or not." He pressed his cheek against hers. "This one's awfully low cut, Scarlett, I don't know that I want to share this view with all of New Orleans."

"It's not low at all, Rhett, I'm sure the green one you bought yesterday is even more daring."

"Ah, but that's because I can't resist you in green. When you are wearing green I can refuse you nothing, and that includes buying you scandalous gowns. I can keep a level head when you are in blue. Do you really love this dress, Scarlett?"

"Oh, yes, I do, Rhett! I do," she ended softly, and kissed him lightly on the corner of his mouth. She rose quickly to sashay back to the mirror, and missed the searching light in his eyes as he watched her closely.

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She wore the pretty, deep blue dress to dinner that night. Rhett ordered champagne by the bottle and didn't scold her for drinking as many glasses as she wanted. The more she drank, the more brilliant and enchanting the night became, and she didn't want to stop drinking any more than she wanted the evening to end.

The alcohol made her cheeks pink again, the blue dress deepened the green of her eyes almost as much as the green Rhett loved to see her in. She was vibrant and gay, spirited in a way he hadn't seen her since before Atlanta fell. Instead of a young widow, she was now a young bride again - his bride.

As he swept her up into the carriage, his hands around her small waist, he flattered her outrageously. "Scarlett, you're bonnier in blue than any flag; and the two stars of your eyes outshine the stars above."

Scarlett hiccuped, and leaned against him on the carriage seat, and sang off-key "Hurrah for the Bonnie Blue Flag that bears a single star!" She sang the song all the way back to the hotel, startling late-night crowds. A few gentleman joined in, singing with her as the carriage passed them by.

At the hotel, Rhett pressed her back into the shadows of the arcade and kissed her quiet. She laughed and burst into song again as soon as he released her lips. Rhett laughed with her and swung her around in his arms.

"My dear, if I take you inside while you are caterwauling like this, I fear we'll be asked to sleep on the street tonight."
"Catawhat?" Scarlett asked breathlessly in the middle of a verse.

"Hush and let's go upstairs." His mustache tickled her neck and she giggled. With an arm around her waist, Rhett led her through the lobby and up the stairs, half supporting her as she wavered unsteadily in her new high-heeled slippers. She hummed under her breath the whole way up.

In their room, Rhett ambled around the perimeter, carelessly shedding clothing as he went until he was left only in his trousers. Scarlett stood at the mirror, waiting for his assistance. She turned this way and that, studying herself. She pressed her hands to her abdomen and caught her lip in her teeth. What was scandalous, she thought, was the way the new bustles pulled all the dress fabric back so that her front was tightly outlined for everyone to see.

Rhett slid behind her and covered her hands with his. He lowered his head and breathed deeply of the light cologne in her hair. Scarlett let her head drop back against his broad shoulder, and Rhett ducked his head lower to nuzzle at the corner of her jaw. His hands moved slowly over hers, caressing her stomach with her own hands.

Rhett lifted his head and his dark eyes met her light green ones in the mirror. As he watched, sliding their hands together slowly over her body, her eyes grew dark and hooded. His swarthy hands completely covered her small ones, and he pressed them lightly against her lower belly before disengaging and taking a step back from her.

With an ease of practice that still unnerved her, Rhett removed her bodice and skirt, unlaced her, and smoothly helped her out of her clothes until she stood only in her new, airy linen chemise. Without the heavy layers of fabric between them, she could feel his arousal against her back as he pressed close to her again. She shivered; married life with Rhett was so very different from her previous marriages. Charles and Frank had come to her in darkness, exercised their husbandly rights, and left her alone. Rhett didn't need darkness, and he toyed with and teased her in ways she'd never dreamt of. There was a whole world between kissing and bedding, and it was thrilling.

The champagne was still buzzing in her veins. She felt light and shaky and somehow magnified. Warmth pooled low in her belly, the strange, deep, tugging sensation only Rhett had ever touched.

Rhett. She studied his reflection in the mirror. His head was down, hiding his eyes, as he pressed hot kisses along her jaw, down her throat, along her shoulder. Who was her husband? Their marriage was still young, but it seemed impossible she would ever solve the mystery of what he thought and felt. She had known him for years before marrying him and his moods and whims still made no sense to her.

But it was hard to care about that when he wrapped his arms around her. His long fingers pressed into the softness of her belly, the tops of her thighs, her hips. She turned in his arms and offered her mouth up for his kiss, threaded her hands into his hair as his lips came down over hers. The kiss was hot but almost chaste, and with an intoxicated boldness she took the initiative and tentatively, touched her tongue to his mouth.

His loud groan surprised and thrilled her, and she slid her tongue between his parted lips. His hands cupped her rear and easily lifted her against his body. With his hands sliding under her thighs, it seemed natural to lift her legs and wrap them around his waist. She explored his mouth, emboldened by the champagne, and his tongue toyed against hers, teasing her, keeping her on the offensive.

Rhett walked them swiftly to the bed and lowered her to the mattress with a reverent care. Scarlett ached. She still didn't understand it, the way he made her feel, and whether she should feel these
things or not. As Rhett pushed the chemise up, and pressed kisses to every inch of skin revealed, she didn't care - she couldn't. She would think about it tomorrow, wonder what it all meant some other time.

His broad body radiated heat that relaxed her all over. She threw her arms out and stretched languidly, curling her toes, then running one foot lightly up his calf. The short, coarse hairs tickled the delicate sole of her foot. With her chemise gone, and the lights in the room still lit, she thought about being embarrassed but the champagne seemed to lift all embarrassment away. Rhett's mouth was wicked, but deliberate somehow as he kissed her shoulder, the tops of her breasts, the side of her stomach. He explored her like a landscape, but with a somehow tactical approach that seemed restrained. His eyes burned into hers. She thought, uncomfortably, that he looked like a wild dog on a leash, and hoped he never slipped the lead.

Then his hot breath washed over her there, and she tried to sit upright, protesting loudly if incoherently, "Rhett! My - what are you - Rhett!" But his hands were at her ribs, stopping her from raising more than her shoulders.

"Hush," he rumbled with his mouth against her, and she felt the movement of his lips and mustache down into her bones. This was not something she would have even known to dream of. This could not be right! She tossed her head against the pillows. Tomorrow - or some other time - she would decide if this was decent some other time - certainly not now. No, not now - and her thoughts splintered as she felt the broad swipe of his tongue.

She lost the coherency even of his name then, and moaned wordlessly. Her outstretched arms fistied in the sheets as Rhett's sinful mouth moved on her. His hands seemed to be everywhere, clasping her around the ribs, sliding down her hips, and her skin burned wherever he had touched her. One hand cupped her breast and thumbed her taut nipple, while the other hand continued its slow slide down her hip and lower, smoothing around her slightly angled knee, then sliding up the back of her leg.

Tension tugged at her belly. Every lick turned her inside out, and only his strong hands that were heavy on her skin held her together. Her thighs clenched, trapping his head, and suddenly her back was bowing uncontrollably and she twisted, almost sobbing as a bright wave swept her under.

Her mind, foggy with alcohol, cleared slowly after the onslaught of pleasure. Gradually, she became aware of Rhett's solid chest against her side, his hot cheek burning against her own.

"Rhett," she murmured again, and tried to hide her shame against his neck. But he wouldn't let her, and with a finger under her chin he lifted her face to his and kissed her. The kiss was soft at first, but as she started to stir against him again, he teased her with his tongue at the corners of her mouth, sliding it along her lips, until she opened for him. His hands swept her body as they kissed, and the new taste of him was more intoxicating than champagne - but thank god for the champagne that kept her from thinking too closely about that.

He pushed himself up and moved over her then, grasping her hips in one large palm and pulling her close. She did hide her face in his throat as he entered her slowly. Scarlett clung to his shoulders, buffeted by the tides of desire she didn't understand. She pulled away and studied her husband for a moment as he began to move within her. She didn't understand; these nights with him confused her and left her breathless; tossed her on a sea of feelings that were new and unexplainable, and the dark depths frightened her. Rhett seemed unaffected. He took from her, tenderly and mercilessly, yet he held a part of himself apart, she sensed. In an unguarded glance she might see the reflection of that dark sea that overwhelmed her, but in a blink he would change and she wondered if she imagined it.
She opened herself to Rhett, curling around him as he moved, her body responding with primitive reflexes. No, this was nothing like she had experienced of marriage before. Rhett thrust quickly, and she pressed her body to her husband, reveling in the power of him and willingly giving herself up to it. He lowered his head then, and gently kissed then bit the exceedingly sensitive spot where her neck met her shoulder, and she gasped and felt the warm oblivion of release sweep her again as Rhett groaned his own pleasure into the curve of her body.

In the morning, her head was splitting from the effects of the champagne, and her throat was hoarse. Rhett was gentle, caring for her solicitously, hand-feeding her from the breakfast tray. But his eyes had that eager, waiting look in them again, and it unsettled her. The headache made her irritable. She snapped at him, "Stop looking at me like that," and his laughter made her head split.

Maybe marriage with Rhett was just like any other marriage, after all. Men did what they pleased and women felt the pain. She didn't understand him any more than she'd understood Charlie or Frank. And she didn't care to.

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