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by David Grinnell

GANYMEDE HOUSE

IT'S WONDERFUL WHAT
YOU CAN FIND AROUND
TOWN, IF YOU LOOK



NEW YORK is just like a regular perpetual World's Fair, isn't it? Just full of all sorts of interesting doings, free exhibits, odd characters. I suppose I'm not the first one to go on like this about New York; I guess out-of-towners must be pretty fed up with this stuff, but I don't care. I'm a native New Yorker—well, Brooklyn, anyway—and I say that it's a continual carnival.

For instance, it's full of what a fair grounds would call "foreign pavilions." That's a fancy term which means a sort of store-mu-

GANYMEDE HOUSE

seum where they display stuff made in different countries. New York is full of them. For instance, in Rockefeller Center, Radio City, that is, there's several. There's Sweden House, for one, where they have a very interesting display full of glass and silverware and such. It don't cost nothing to go in. It's a store, sure, run by the Swedes, I suppose, but it don't cost nothing to look, you see. At that, I bought a glass letter-opener for seventy-five cents as a sort of souvenir, last time I was there.

Then there's a French House and an Italian House and a lot of others, up and down the streets near Radio City, and they're all very swell-looking places and make you feel rich just to look at them. There's even a very swank-looking Finland House, with its windows full of whatever they make in those Eskimo-type countries. In fact, there's an America House, too, though that never quite made sense to me. What's the point, here in America? But what I'm getting at is that I like to look into those places, and the clerks always act like they were glad to show everything and don't care if they never sell anything.

Well, what I'm getting at—. Oh, I don't know how to explain it. Maybe I'd better just tell you the story.

One day I had to call on a

customer whose office was in the Fifties, and I was walking down one of the side streets looking at the swank stores, with a half hour on my hands before my appointment. Then I saw a new one. A tasteful glass and chrome front, a lot of the bleached, polished wood fixtures like they all go in for, and so on, but it was a place I'd never spotted before. The sign on the window says "Ganymede House." Ah, I thought, another county heard from.

A glance at my watch showed me that I still had time, so I looked into the window. It had the usual sort of stuff these Houses all go in for: some funny-shaped vases, some silverware, some cloth with native designs woven or stamped into it, some trick silvery gadgets I couldn't figure the use of. Those last things had a card alongside them, reading, "Just arrived from Ganymede City, a new shipment of warpers." That interested me. I don't have any need for a warper, whatever that is, but I opened the door and went in.

It was a brand-new store, I knew at once, from the smell of the fresh paint and the bright new floor waxing. It was a fairly big store as these places usually go, even had a little balcony. There was a lot of free floor space and only a few low glass display cases scattered around casual-

like, and shelf-racks along the wall. Everything had neat little cards saying what the objects were and the price, if they happened to think of it. All these Houses are laid out like little museums. That's what I like about them.

A clerk came up to me. He seemed a very pleasant sort of chap, very ruddy in complexion, with a nice smile. Before he can ask me if he can help me, I said, "Just lookin'," like I always did, and he nodded understandingly.

"We've just opened for business today. If you see anything that interests you, please ask me," he said, and added, "I don't suppose you are too familiar with Ganymede crafts . . ."

I nodded again, looking down at a case full of the usual stuff. It was jewelry, pins and metal clasps for women, looking something like the stuff you see in Greenwich Village. Odd designs. I said to the clerk, to be polite, "Ganymede wouldn't be near Finland, would it?"

"Well," he hesitated and said, "you could say that it was as close to Finland as it is to America."

I was looking at some trays and didn't answer him. After all, geography isn't my strong point, New York being the whole world to me. The tray I was looking at was rather interesting. It was one of a series of such wooden trays,

all of which had designs or pictures painted on them. Maybe not painted, they looked almost like photographs sort of worked right into the wood. I examined this tray real close.

The design on it was real spectacular. Showed a guy in funny armor mounted on some sort of winged dragon, chasing some screwy-looking creatures all full of knobs and legs. The clerk looked over my shoulder and said, "That's a rather good reproduction of Droomil's rout of the goombals. A very good buy."

It was good, too. A little too fairy-tale sort-of for my own house, but I thought I'd keep it in mind. "What's the price?" I asked, to be polite.

"It's only thirty-seven dollars," the clerk said, which I thought was more than I could afford to pay for a wooden tray, even if it did have a picture on it that you could look at for hours and see more and more details. I nodded and walked away slowly, looking at other things.

My time was running short, when I saw a rack with some table stuff on it. Maybe I could get some little thing as a sort of souvenir, I thought. So I looked at some spoons and some cups and saucers, and finally I found a little salt shaker that I thought the wife would like. My wife has a lot of salt and pepper shakers.

She kinda collects them. She's got a pair like a frog and mushroom, and one like a rooster and hen, and so on. So this little salt cellar I thought she'd like.

The clerk picked it up and looked at the price. "It's a dollar and ninety-eight cents," he said, "but it's really worth the money."

That's kind of high for a thing like that, but I really liked the gadget, so I dug out two dollars. "Wouldn't there be a sales tax?" I asked.

The clerk frowned. "We've just opened today and we haven't got our license to collect the sales tax yet. So I suppose you are the gainer. We won't charge you the tax."

Well, it's good to feel you're getting away with something. I gave him the two bucks. He dug into a drawer and got out two cents. For a minute he looked at the coins in a puzzled way. "Now, why would they want to make it such an odd price?" he mumbled to himself. He shrugged his shoulders, gave me the pennies, wrapped up the little salt shaker in brown paper, and thanked me.

I left the place and went about my business.

Well, to tell you the truth, I'm sorry I didn't make a note of the

address. I can't seem to find the street that Ganymede House is on, though I think I've been on it several times since. I keep telling myself that I'll look it up in the phone book, but you know when you get to the office you have other things on your mind and never get around to thinking about something like that until it's too late.

It's a pity, too, because I want to buy a dozen more of those salt cellars to give my friends for Christmas. They're really cute. Take this one, which my wife and I use every day. It's like a little, round, coppery barrel, and it's so convenient. It always hangs in the middle of the table just about two inches above the table cloth. And when you want it you only have to start to reach for it. It just moves right over to your plate, tips itself over neatly in mid-air, spills just the right amount of salt, and floats back over the cloth to the middle of the table. And when you take the table cloth off, the thing floats up to the ceiling and stays there next to the light fixture until the table is set again.

If I can find Ganymede House again, I know my friends will really appreciate salt cellars like that. * * *