

SCIENCE FICTION STORIES

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Edited by Robert W. Lowndes

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Doc Holliday had taken a dry-dive, leaving no explanation behind except a small book . . .

Husbands, care and feeding of

by MACK REYNOLDS



CORPORAL James Denny, Suicide Detail, entered without knocking. In his beefy right hand, he carried a canvas bag—the contents of which he up-ended on the lieutenant's desk.

He said, "Here's a hot one for you, Lootenant."

The lieutenant said, "Oh?" less than enthusiastically.

"Yeah, it's this here Doc Holliday they had about in the papers last week."

"Never heard of him." The lieutenant poked with a lackadaisical forefinger the little pile of men's pocket-effects the other had dumped on his desk. On an average he would go through such intimate relics of a life departed four or fives times a day. It wasn't inspiring work, par-

ticularly for a man optimistic enough—in a pessimistic world—to look forward to a kinder future.

"Sure you did, Lootenant," Denny was saying, "it was all in the papers. They had a lot of these bigwigs there, all these here scientists, like."

The lieutenant sighed and said, "I still haven't heard about him. What happened?"

"He jumped out a winder."

"He what?"

"He jumped out a winder," Denny repeated. "He took the long dive."

"You mean he jumped out of a window last week and you're just bringing in the report now?"

"Naw, Lootenant, you don't get it," Denny complained. "He jumped out the winder *today*, a coupla hours ago. It was last week he had all these here newspaper guys on his neck. He makes this big announcement, see? All about his big discovery. And the science editors they come down, and all these here perfessers and all, they come down, and he makes this here demonstration, see? Well, all he gets the first time is maybe a pint of water and the next time—"

"Look," the lieutenant said wearily—he had enough in the way of domestic troubles without getting into these hassels with his men. "Look, let's start somewhere else; at the beginning, preferably. Now, then, what was he demonstrating?"

"This here time-machine," Denny said reasonably. "But, holy cow, all he gets back is water a coupla times and maybe a stone or so. They give him the ha-ha, see?"

"No," said the lieutenant. "I don't, but the hell with it. Where's the note?"

Corporal Denny said plaintively, "What note?"

"The suicide-note. They always leave a note, or perhaps a few letters, telling the world what's wrong with it."

"There wasn't none this time, Lootenant. He just jumped out the winder without no note, no letters, no nothing. Holy cow, maybe he was in a real big hurry."

"Don't say *holy cow*; you sound like an overgrown kid. This was everything in his pockets?"

Corporal Denny looked aggrieved, but he said, "Yeah. That there little book was in his hand."

"All right. Go give your report to Baker. I'll check it later."

"Sure, Lootenant." Corporal Denny saluted—less than snappily—

and left. To Sergeant Baker, in the outer office, he said, "Holy cow, what's biting Steve May? The Lootenant been having another one of them fights with his old lady?"

Sergeant Baker said, "What'd'ya mean, *another* one? I didn't know they'd ever got finished with the first one."

It wasn't a particularly brilliant sally, but a superior is a superior, and rank has its privileges. Corporal James Denny laughed inordinately.

SO THERE wasn't any suicide-note, eh? Lieutenant Steven May picked up the deceased's wallet and went through it. Eighty-four dollars and the usual conglomeration of cards, licenses, photographs; the odds and ends that a man accumulates as the years go by. The lieutenant finished with the wallet and took up the check-book. He whistled softly at the total. Why should anybody with that kind of a balance want to take off? Evidently, the suicide had made his mark in his time, whether or not his latest device was a pickle.

There was a key-ring with seven keys; a dollar and sixteen cents in change, a white handkerchief; a pocket-comb; two street-car checks; a small pocket-knife, a book of matches; four cigarettes in a de-lapidated pack; a stub of pencil; an envelope containing a bill from some chemical supply house; a wrist-watch—now broken.

Nothing to indicate reason for self destruction.

The lieutenant yawned and picked up the pamphlet the scientist had held in his hand at the time of the fatal leap. He wondered if he should phone Martha and apologize—but that could wait. He still thought she'd started it that morning.

The paper was of a variety the lieutenant had never seen before, heavy, soft texture, a new type ripple finish; evidently some new departure in the paper manufacturing trade.

He began reading idly, skipping the heads and getting to the body type.

First you must realize that much of what you have heard and even read about husbands is erroneous. They are neither the stupid brutes described by some, nor the gentle, easily-trained and handsome fellows gushed over by others. Largely, husbands are what you, yourself, make them.

There is no basis for the charge that they are unpleasantly odorous. If you keep your husband neat and clean, giving him a bath at least once a week, there will be no cause for complaint on this score.

Nor are husbands necessarily quarrelsome. True, if you have sev-

eral about the house and give them nothing with which to entertain themselves, growling, scratching, fisticuffs and biting will sometimes ensue. This, of course, does not apply to persons having but one husband in their home.

Licutenant Steven May grunted and turned the pamphlet over to look again at the cover. "The Care And Feeding Of Husbands, by Patricia Glorm, XVIII."

He grumbled deprecatingly and turned back to the interior and to a new page.

Many make the mistake of feeding their new husband nothing but the scraps from the table. While some manage in this manner for indefinite periods, we cannot recommend the practice. For one thing, the poor fellow may well receive short shift on days in which your own appetite is more than usual. Then, too, at one meal he may receive a toothsome meaty bone and at the next become sorely disappointed at lesser fare. On such occasions his howls and whines may prove both distressing and aggravating, and it is hard to remember that the fault is yours rather than his.

No, long years of experience have well proven that the husband who is fed a special husband-ration and but once a day, is in the long run happier and consequently gives more pleasure to his owner.

We strongly recommend Glorms Meal (or pellets) for all husbands. Glorms supplies the following guaranteed analysis:

Protein, not less than twenty-five percent; fat, not less than six percent; fiber, not more than five percent; ash, not more than ten percent.

LIEUTENANT May shifted himself uncomfortably in his swivel-chair and turned to the title leaf of the little pamphlet. It didn't tell him any more about the contents than the cover. The publishing-house was unknown to him and where the date of publication should have been was the figure 1988, which, of course, didn't make sense.

"I don't get it," he said aloud.

He flicked through the pages again and came up with the chapter title, "First Day In the New Home."

Always remember that when your new husband comes from the rearing-pens to his new home the poor tike is undergoing what to him is a terrifying strain. For the first time in his life he is leaving his brothers, his playmates, and his kindly trainers behind and has been brought to an environment that, to say the least, is strange to

him. Understandable, indeed, is the fact that he may take days before he is used to you and to his new home. Most likely he will spend his first hours cowering under the bed or behind some other shelter.

Be gentle with the poor anxious fellow. Speak pleasantly and show him you are his friend. Such initial kindness will pay large dividends in love and affection in the future. Above all, be sure at this time not to scold or beat the bewildered tike. He is afraid and lonesome, but still doing what he can to please.

All husbands, today, come from the rearing-pens fully housebroken. However, it is easily understood that under the stress of his strange surroundings he might make a mistake once or twice. If he continues to offend in this manner, after a few days punish him lightly. A rolled up newspaper can be satisfactorily used as an instrument of chastisement. The size of the paper and the noise it makes as you gently strike him, impresses and frightens the new husband more efficiently than if you were to deal him heavy—and heartless—blows.

As soon as possible, after the arrival of your new husband from the pens, you should introduce him to his little nook or corner where he is to stay and which he can call his own. Many choose to provide him with a rug or an old blanket upon which to lie; however, if your apartment is properly-heated this is not necessary. He will soon learn that this is his sanctum and will retreat to it when scolded or frightened.

Lieutenant May grunted and turned two or three pages, skimming, reading a paragraph here, a sentence there.

Above all, remember that when you are in another person's house you must not pat or play with her husband, unless she gives you permission. Perhaps she is training him for some special purpose and wants to raise him as a "one-woman-husband."

"Huh!" the lieutenant snorted.

Every husband should have a toy with which to play: a ball, some blocks, some innocent little trinket with which to while away the hours.

If you have a yard, or other suitable area for his exercise, provide him with a box on which to climb and jump. This will afford him considerable amusement and give him a keen appetite for his food.

Steven May finally stopped and tossed the pamphlet to his desk when he came to the chapter, "Worming Your Husband." He asked himself disgustedly, "This is humor? Who in hell publishes things like that?" For some reason he felt uncomfortable.

Suddenly, something that Denny had said half-returned to him. He reached out and picked up the phone. "Let me have the squad-room, Baker," he asked.

A voice answered presently, "Suicide Detail, squad-room."

"This is Lieutenant May. Is Jimmy Denny there?"

"This is Denny, Lootenant."

"Listen, Denny. This Doctor Holliday—what was it he was working on?"

"A time-machine, Lootenant."

"What do you mean by a *time-machine*? What's a time-machine?"

"Holy cow, Lootenant, I don't know. How'd I know? All I know is he had all these guys—this was in the papers last week, see? Well, he had all these guys there to see this here experiment and he turns the thing on and he's got this little box like, see? Well, he turns the thing on and opens the box and there suppose to be something in it from the future, see? Well, he gets maybe a pint of water the first time and all these guys laugh, see? Then he works the thing over and over again, and every time he gets something like water—or maybe a rock, or a piece a wood, or something like that, see? He gets real mad at them and starts yelling like crazy when they laugh. He says all this stuff is coming from the future and if they'll hang around long enough while he keeps trying, sooner or later he'll get something to prove it. But they all give him the ha ha and leave, see?"

The lieutenant said softly, "I think I'm beginning to." He hung up and his hand went out, hesitatingly, almost reluctantly, for the pamphlet again. He turned to the title-page; the copyright-date was 1988.

CORPORAL James Denny came into the office at a pace inconsistent with his bulk. His eyes were wild and his hands flailed excitedly. "Holy cow," he yelped, "holy cow, you know what happened?"

Sergeant Baker looked up at him. "Simmer down, Denny," he said. "It ain't—"

"Listen," Denny yelped, "it's the Lootenant. You know what he just went and done? Holy cow!"

