

While The Kettle Boils

Dear Friends,

Many of you, I know, have competed in flower shows. For those who have not—or may be toying with the idea—here is my own experience in a recent Rose Show. Be warned!

In the past I have had a few small successes in Decorative Sections. Consequently, when the recent show was first listed, my friends assured me that I simply must compete! Various helpful souls contributed to the idea—one with a basket—another with a carte blanche of her garden. She had some lovely roses in bloom, and already, tempted beyond my strength, I was decorating baskets and vases in my imagination.

Two days before the show, the Spirits of the Elements had a private pow-wow. They decided that this spell of sunshine might be in danger of going to our heads—and that a good douse of wind and rain would temper our pride.

The afternoon before the show, I went out to my friend's garden to collect my promised roses. They were there all right—but in a nice carpet of petals strewn about the grass.

My friend, who is a practical soul, refused to admit defeat.

"You've simply got to enter; Tomorrow morning early we'll run across to Mrs. S.—she may have a few roses left—and Mrs. B. next door would be only too willing to oblige.

So I lay awake all night, listening to the wind and imagining rose petals blown before it. By morning the sky had settled down to a nice, steady downpour.

Fortified by a cup of tea, I ran across to Mrs. S., who told me to help myself to her garden—or what was left of it.

I saw a few roses miraculously clinging to a stem—and started towards them. The mushy earth closed over my feet to my ankles.

Mrs. S. called from the doorway, "Don't get your feet wet!"

I replied, with a determined smile, that everything was perfect. A vicious-looking thorn tore across my hand as I reached for a whole pink bud. I got it—and a scratch with it.

Mrs. B.'s garden yielded me a few more roses—and several further layers of mud, but I was past caring now. I was left with one determined idea—I was going to get to that show!

In the big hall I found a scene of bustling activity. Women darted in all directions, carrying bunches or vases of blooms. There were collisions and mishaps, but everyone appeared good-natured. After some manoeuvring I found a vacant allotment, and settled down to my decorating. Nearby a woman was grumbling because her pink roses were discoloured at the edges. Mine were chewed. But I was gaining heart. My vase of roses looked very nice, and the bowl didn't look half bad with the drooping ones turned to the back. Then I started in on my basket—and forgot time and place. Flowers can always do that to me. A voice at my elbow informed me that all the other competitors had left the hall and the judging was about to begin. I gave a last frantic touch and preen and rushed the basket over to the stand.

When I returned a few hours later, the hall had on its party manners and all signs of flurry had disappeared. Admiring groups drifted about or clustered round the various stands. Over someone's shoulder I saw a First, a Second, and a Third Prize Card poised beside my entries.

So, that's that! I thought. I wonder what date is the next flower show? Some people like punishment.

Yours cordially,


Cynthia

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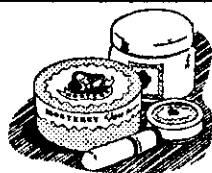
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