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LOVE FOR TWO

RUTH DEWEY GROVES

THIS HAS HAPPENED

Bertie Lou Ward married Rod Bryer, who had previously been engaged to Lila Marsh. The only shadow on the bride's happiness is Lila's habit of telling friends that she was Rod's first love.

A position in New York is offered Rod by Tom Fraser and he accepts. Anxious to make a good impression, they live beyond their income and Bertie Lou finds it hard to resist when Molly Fraser urges her to buy more than she can afford. She and Rod have their first quarrel over money, and to make matters worse Lila arrives to visit Molly and make life miserable for Bertie Lou. But they introduce her to a rich Mr. Loree and she surprises them by marrying him.

Lila asks Bertie Lou to forgive the past and be friends. But trying to keep up socially with wealthy friends plunges them in debt. Rod becomes depressed and Lila seizes her chance to persuade him to accept a higher salary from Loree.

Shortly after, Lila asks Rod to put some of her jewels in the office vault during her husband's absence. When he returns the case the jewels are gone. He wants to notify the police but she demurs, pointing out that the suspicion against him might spoil his career.

She begs him to keep the matter a secret—even from Bertie Lou—and he promises on condition that she will let him pay their value as he can save. Going home, he lies to Bertie Lou about his two engagements with Lila and when she discovers his falsehood all the old doubt about holding his love from Lila returned.

NOW GO ON WITH THE STORY.

Lila's half-sister, Lillian, over Bertie Lou's failure to meet her returned in full flower when Rod voiced his unrequited love.

She had forgotten, in her anticipation of this half-hour alone with him, that she too had been concerned for Bertie Lou's safety earlier in the afternoon.

But now that Rod was showing a foolish desire to run off pell-mell just because he had missed a telephone call from his wife, Lila shrugged. It would do no good to keep him now.

As they were leaving the building it occurred to Lila that Rod would wonder when he learned that Bertie Lou had failed to keep an appointment with her, why she hadn't mentioned it. No use allowing her anger to lead her into a misunderstanding with him.

"I thought you might know why she didn't meet me for the matter," she remarked, a touch of seriousness in her voice. From the corner of her eye she could see Rod's face take on an expression

of alarm.

"Do you suppose anything has happened to her?" he exclaimed fearfully.

"No, of course not," Lila replied. "She probably had to go some place in a hurry and couldn't wait to phone me."

"She called the office before," Rod explained. "Just after I'd left, our operator told me. She could have called you then."

"Oh, well, maybe she forgot all about the show, though I talked with her this morning," Lila said, at last settling genuinely interested.

They had reached the street now. "I'll drive you home," she offered, but Rod said he could make better time in the subway. Lila took him by the arm and propelled him into her limousine.

"Don't be silly," she remarked lightly. "If Bertie Lou called the office as you say, then nothing has happened to her."

"That she may have started for the theatre afterward," Rod pointed out. "She isn't home."

"Then she must have been called some place in a hurry, just as I said," Lila insisted. "You'd know by this time if she met with an accident on the street."

Lila's remark carried enough logic to convince Rod. He abandoned the plan of taking the subway. But he could not relieve his mind entirely of worry. Bertie Lou rarely called the office. Only upon most pressing matters did she ever disturb him in his work. And where could she have been called to with such urgent haste?

He put the question to Lila. "I don't know," she confessed. "Unless it was a message from Wayville."

"But Bertie Lou wouldn't leave for Wayville without telling me," Rod declared.

"Well, we'll soon find out why she's had us both on our ears," Lila remarked, again feeling irritated. Rod's undiminished concern for Bertie Lou displeased her. It spoke too plainly of what his wife meant to him.

She felt somewhat relieved when they arrived at Rod's apartment. Perhaps, after all, Bertie Lou would be without a good excuse for breaking their theatre engagement without notice. That would give her a chance to impress Rod with her magnanimity, providing, of course, that she was able to control her temper.

And suppose Bertie Lou were not at home! Well, Lila wouldn't grieve over that. . . . Rod might be in need of sympathy.

Bertie Lou was gone!

Rod went hurriedly through the rooms, growing more alarmed as each passing moment disclosed no trace of his wife. When he re-

turned to the living room where Lila waited he was visibly shaken. "Have you looked for a note?" she asked. Rod glanced around the room.

"In the bedroom; probably on the pillow," Lila went on. "It's usually done that way," she knuckled, to make light of her remark. It was just one of her little jokes that Rod missed the point.

... the idea that Bertie Lou had left him did not occur to him in any form, comic or otherwise. Yet it was reasonable to expect that she had left some word for him. So he began to search for it.

It didn't take long to find it. It was in the bedroom, but not pinned to the pillow as Lila had facetiously suggested. Rod located it on Bertie Lou's desk, and almost immediately he was startled by a knock. He assumed Bertie Lou had received from Wayville. Rod read her note first. She reformed him to the message and said she had taken the first train she could get. Rod was stunned. Bertie Lou had gone away without telling him!

He read the telegram after a bit. Bertie Lou's mother was ill.

Rod went out to Lila and showed her the message. "I really thought it might be something like that," she said. "Well, there isn't anything for you to do but come along with me and spend the evening."

"Thank you," Rod mumbled, "but I'd rather not leave the apartment. Bertie Lou will wire me."

"You can leave word to have the message sent to our address," Lila urged. Rod was in no mood to acquiesce. So Lila was forced to end her coaxing and leave him.

She did not realize that he was merely making a gesture of faith in Bertie Lou—faith that he would hear from her. The brevity and coolness of her note had shocked him. It was as though a separation from him meant no more to her than going out to tea without him.

Before she went away Lila made Rod promise to let her know if he had word about his mother-in-law. She assumed Bertie Lou had said she would send him a wire. She also interviewed the maid in the kitchen. Yes, Mrs. Bryer had left rather hurriedly after receiving the telegram and had instructed her to serve dinner and breakfast and then consult Mr. Bryer for further orders.

"Didn't she say how long she would be away?" Lila asked.

"No, ma'am," but she said several weeks.

Lila pursed her lips. "I suppose she will want some of her things sent to her."

"She took two suitcases and a steamer trunk."

"Well, if she sends for anything you'd better let me know and I'll look after it," Lila told the girl.

She went back and made a last unavailing effort to persuade Rod to go home with her.

"Of course Bertie Lou will be back in a few days," she said with a desire to encourage him with a false hope that would provide room for disappointment when Bertie Lou's continued absence

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put an end to it. Disappointment might easily give way to resentment, she reasoned, and resentment could be followed by bitterness, perhaps a quarrel.

She was rather anxious to know just how serious was the illness of Bertie Lou's mother. If it was nothing that anybody should worry about she might be able to throw Rod a hint that Bertie Lou had certainly acted with utter disregard for his feelings in departing so hastily. She might at least, Lila decided she could say to him, have left word with the switchboard operator at the office that she was leaving.

Lila did not hear from Rod that night. She telephoned to him the next afternoon. No, he had not heard anything new. Lila detected a suggestion of tension in his voice.

"We're a couple of deserted halfshells," she laughed. "I expected Cy home today but he wired he won't be here. I wish you'd come up to dinner, Rod."

Again Rod declined to dine with her. But Lila was not to be denied. When he reached home he found her comfortably settled in an easy chair, waiting to dine with him.

"I don't see any reason why we should be lonesome alone," she explained. "We needn't make a party of it."

Before the dinner was over Rod was glad of her company. Her chatter helped to take his mind off his increasing anxiety over Bertie Lou's strange behavior. It had

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bothered him in his work.

He couldn't quite understand it. Surely if she hadn't had time before her departure to pen more than a brief note, at least she had plenty of time on the train. He ought to have had a letter this morning. None arrived. He had gone to the office, disturbed and perplexed.

Once, when his mind fell away from some remark Lila made, he told himself that Bertie Lou might have been too worried about her mother, too upset, to write. "I'll wire," he decided. "and find out how her mother is."

After dinner Lila insisted that he walk home with her. It was a glorious spring night, with a supple sky and a soft breeze that felt like rain to faces not so long since accustomed to icy blasts.

"If it stays warm we're going up to Connecticut for the weekend," Lila said. "Cy will be in tomorrow. Suppose you come along with us, Rod. It will do you good to get out of the city. In fact, I think I'd like to go even if it does turn cold. What do you say? Will you come?"

"Why, I don't know," Rod hesitated. "I want to be where Bertie Lou can reach me by wire."

Lila laughed. "Connecticut isn't in Africa, you know. Wire her you're going up with us for a few days. She knows the address. There's a telephone office along here somewhere, I think. Do it now, then you won't change your mind."

Rod weighed the prospect of a good tramp in the country against a lonely week-end in the city and decided in favor of the tramp.

Bertie Lou herself answered the door and received his message. Her mother was sleeping,

but two neighbors were, in the parlor looking over a seed catalogue. So Bertie Lou took the telegram up to her old room where she could read it undisturbed.

Her fingers trembled as she tore open the envelope. She derided herself for her eagerness. She didn't want to love a lying cheat so much that a few words from him could set her heart fluttering and make her breath come short. But it was her way of loving Rod, no matter how much she was trying to hate him.

She had not admitted it to herself, but she had been hoping and waiting for this message with more longing than she'd ever experienced in her life. Perhaps Rod could explain. He might even say he was coming on the next train. Her eyes lighted eagerly as she unfolded the sheet of paper.

(To Be Continued)

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\$100 standing reward will be paid for anyone caught stealing or killing sheep or goats on property of Al Crasson, Sunshine Ranch, 1 mile Kollhagen, J. H. Short, J. M. Weatherford, Frank Barker and Son, T. A. Troxol, or Jones Estate. E. J. ROHR, Treas.

HORSE KILLS BOY

(Associated Press Leased Wire)

HARRISBURG, Ore., Aug. 6.—Taking a ride on a horse which his father had bought for him, Thomas Brown, 13, was killed Saturday night when the horse reared and fell on him.

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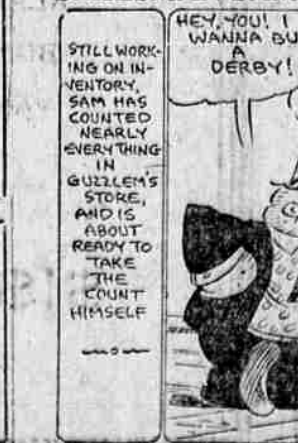
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