

SOPHIE KERR'S GREAT NOVEL

"STAY OUT OF MY LIFE!"

By Sophie Kerr

CHAPTER XXVI

JANE tapped the letter she had just received. There was only one important deal on hand and that could not be closed for another three weeks. It would be a good time to make the trip to Marburg.

While she was thinking it over Mrs. Andrews, her secretary, came in—a pleasant, competent widow who had married herself to Jane by her personal detail, her imaginative vanity and her super-respectability. Mrs. Andrews brought instant comfort to clients who hesitated before Jane's youth and good looks.

"Mr. Sears is on the phone," reported Mrs. Andrews. "He's a little tight, and of course he's begging you to hurry."

"I'll talk to him," said Jane, taking the phone. "Yes, Mr. Sears, this is Jane. I'm so glad you called up. I've been after the title guaranty up. I've been pushing the search and we may be able to close a week ahead of time. That's fine, isn't it? But you'd better keep the reservations you have. There might be some hitch, though I don't anticipate anything. These forms have to be gone through. If we neglect them we might find ourselves tied up in the courts."

"Don't worry, you'll get plenty of the war before it's over. That's right, you keep in touch with me. No, I'm certain it hasn't leaked out. I'll take a pretty smart newspaper man to get hold of this transaction until you say the word. Now listen: I may have to go out of town for a few days but Mrs. Andrews will be right on the job and will telephone me instantly if I'm needed. The money'll be ready and waiting for you the moment we close. And anyway, you're all right, Mr. Sears. You've signed the contract of sale and you've accepted a payment, so you're bound. You can't be forced out of it. Your house is sold, no matter what your sister or your lawyer or anybody else tries to do."

She hung up the telephone with a sigh. "I've told him all that a dozen times. I don't see how he can start all over again. 'Disgusting person! Just because he's Roland Carlin and his grandpa and his grandpa had a lot of money he thinks he can run the world in circles. I don't know whether he's worse drunk or sober. Wait, Mrs. Andrews. My aunt is sick and I ought to go to Marburg to see her. My feeling is that I'd better get it over and be back here in plenty of time before the Sears closing date comes along. I might even leave tonight.'"

"I'll see what accommodations I can get for you and if they're all right. Then I'll write your aunt and ask your maid for your packing directions."

Time had marched on with Miss Rosa. She clutched at Jane and wept freely. Her once solid and rosy face was flabby and waxen. Her carefully touched-up hair showed an inch of white against the scalp. But after her first tears she rallied. "I'm not really sick," she protested. "I had the flu and it left me low, that's all. And I've been so worried with that Jimmy Traylor, the young whipper-snapper. I'm so thankful you're here, Jane. You look fine. That's a pretty dress! You make me feel such a sight."

Jane's presence was a tonic. Almost at once Miss Rosa declared that she was going to get up and get her clothes on and go downstairs for lunch. After that they'd summon young Traylor and Jane should deal with him. In the meantime Jane might look at the suggestions young Traylor had made about Miss Rosa's affairs, to know what he'd been up to.

Jane found that she could not concentrate on young Traylor's letters. She thought, go for a walk and blow away the fatigue of the train and the stale air of the house. She put on her hat and the fur coat and went out, walking up toward the college, feeling strange and alien in the unaltered scene. The gray stones of the buildings faded with the gray sky. Students turned back and forth along the paths with the effect they had always had of bug, aimless insects. Even the curricula at the windows of the president's house were the same dingy gold rope and Amy had thought so ugly. Now the name of Amy had intruded. It was impossible to walk this way, to see these things without the sense of Amy's lost companionship. And really, surely, Jane determined to go and see Amy, to see the child. "I want

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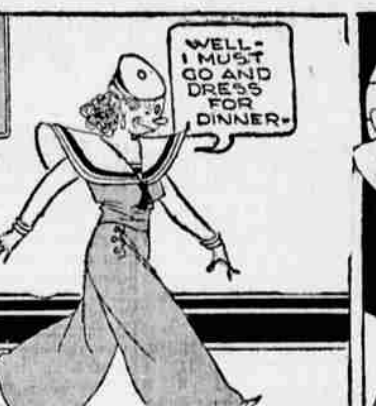
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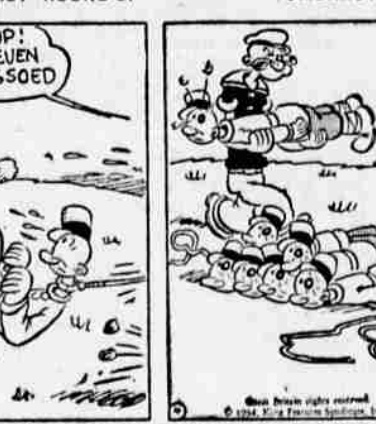
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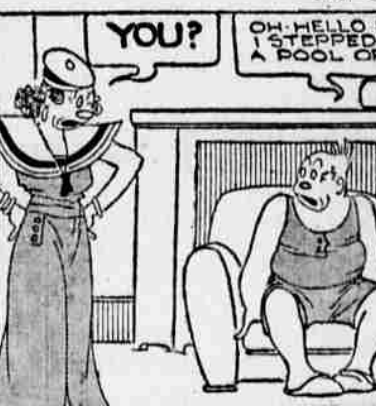
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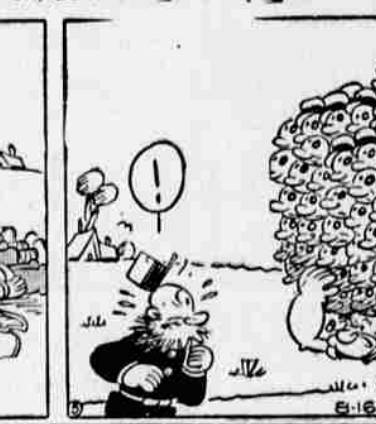
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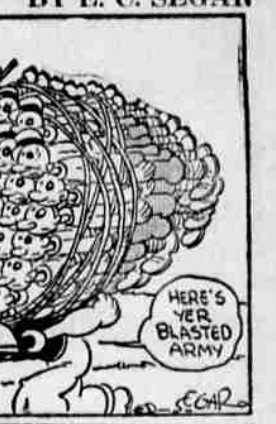
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