

Lovable

CHAPTER XXXV

Mrs. Kendall had said to Millicent: "This family has had entirely too much publicity and publicity must be done."

She was telling everyone sweetly, Peter's wife has gone to visit her mother. She was feeling so let down after the accident and thought it would be a nice time to go."

Sarah received the same news. She had called Ann's apartment several times and the phone was not answered. Then she had called Peter's office. The girl who answered stated that Mrs. Peter Kendall was away. No, she didn't know when she would return to the city.

Something was wrong, Sarah decided. Ann had not mentioned going away. When she was with her a few days before, even though she had looked a little pale from the accident, she had seemed radiant and happy. Something not connected with her illness was behind this—Valeria. Tony, or the Kendalls.

Sarah decided to write to Ann's aunt in Greenfield, thinking grimly, "If there's any dirt work I'll get to the bottom of it if I can."

Mrs. Kendall had called Valeria as soon as she heard the news of Ann's going. "Can you come over, dear? I'm something exciting to tell you. Something I think you will be glad to hear."

"Mrs. Kendall wants me to come over," Valeria told her aunt.

"What in the world does she want?" "It's only a guess. But I think she's going to tell me Peter has broken with his wife. You were the one who was so sure I had lost him forever, weren't you?"

Mrs. Walwright studied her niece's face—insolent, not in the least beautiful without clever makeup.

"Your work, I suspect," she said. "You didn't think I would let her keep him?"

"How do you know he'll come back?"

"How do I know anything? How do I know that he will be terribly let down and sore and unhappy and humiliated? You don't doubt that I'll make the most of my opportunity, do you?"

"No, I'm sure you will."

Mrs. Walwright was suddenly serious for the girl who had been unable to match her niece's cleverness and unscrupulous methods.

When she left the house Valeria was wearing a demure frock and hat with a half veil that shaded her eyes. Her face had been made up to a becoming pallor and her lips were only slightly touched up.

"I'll probably have lunch with Mrs. Kendall," she said, "and then perhaps we'll drive by later this afternoon and pick up Peter for dinner. He will be feeling pretty badly."

Her aunt was moved to admiration of such ability. Valeria was a perfect actress. All traces of ugliness were gone. Her voice was low and sweet again. Her eyes smiled wistfully.

But the program did not work out as Valeria had planned. At Peter's office they learned he had not been in all day.

Peter was with Millicent. "I may be wrong," she told him, "but it wouldn't surprise me if Valeria had a hand in this."

He shook his head. "No, she was very friendly."

He couldn't betray Ann, telling Millicent about Tony. And Millicent did not tell him about the friendliness through which the Valeria of the world to their deadliest work.

"Well, anyway, I suspect she's pretty well satisfied."

Peter suspected Valeria would be pleased, too. He determined to keep out of her way. But in the days that passed there apparently was no way of managing it. Valeria was always appearing on his path.

"I'm glad I ran into you. I'm simply ravenous for a bite and something cool to drink. Could you spare a half hour?"

If he was busy, it was "You couldn't be that busy! Besides you have to eat sometime."

Or she would offer to drive him wherever he was going. "I've nothing but time on my hands," she would say. That was all Peter had, too. Time for brooding and work.

On one of these occasions, Sarah saw the two having lunch together. She could not see Peter's strained and weary face, for his back was toward her. She only saw Valeria's smiling eyes and guessed how triumphant she was feeling.

Sarah's scorn of Peter was complete. It was outrageous for him to be having lunch with Valeria. She couldn't have found a logical reason for her feelings. They were all mixed up. She was sure, somehow, that Valeria had driven Ann away from Peter.

Sarah passed the table, nodded briefly to Peter and ignored Valeria. "You're looking fearfully thin, Peter," Valeria was saying. "It's really wrong to let yourself go like this, shutting yourself away from all your friends."

"Don't worry about me, Val. I'll be all right."

"I am worried. How could I help it when I see—see," she hesitated and went on, "someone I care for suffering?"

Peter looked up at Valeria then. Her voice sounded as though she were going to cry. There were tears in her eyes.

He said uncomfortably, "It's foolish of you to worry about me."

Valeria followed up her advantage. "When I think of Ann hurting you like this—"

"Leave her name out," Peter said harshly. The stark misery in his eyes enraged Valeria. She hated Ann, who had put it there.

Peter had gone calmly about putting Valeria out of his mind when he had broken with her. But when Ann left, he had turned into a recluse. Everybody was talking about it. All Valeria's friends were smiling and saying, "Peter's positively sunk over his wife leaving him. Did you ever see anyone so completely gone? Valeria, isn't there something you could do?"

She had used all her resources during the month, only to meet Peter's blank indifference.

"It's awful to be shut out like this," she said now. "I've been so lonely. I haven't been anywhere. I couldn't, worrying about you."

Paul Johnson looked up as Peter entered the office. "Peter, a call came for you. Someone wants you to come to this address on Bond street. Where in the devil is Bond street? Ever hear of it?"

(To Be Continued)

A spark plug tester may be made out of an ordinary lead pencil by sharpening both ends and drilling a small hole through it at its middle. The projecting lead at one end is held against the terminal on top of the spark plug, while the other end is grounded against the motor head. If a spark jumps across the gap, the plug is functioning.

Snakes have no ears, but their tongues are equipped with auditory organs that enable them to amplify the slightest sound. They also use their tongues as "feelers" in the dark.

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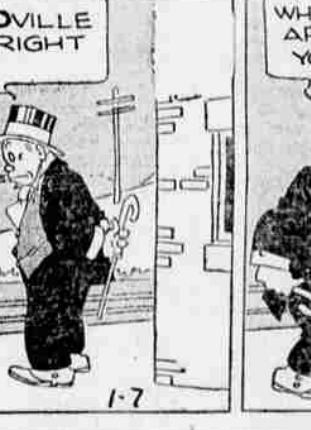
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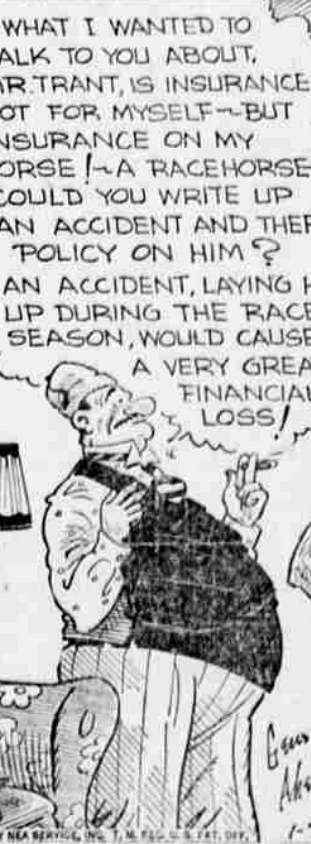
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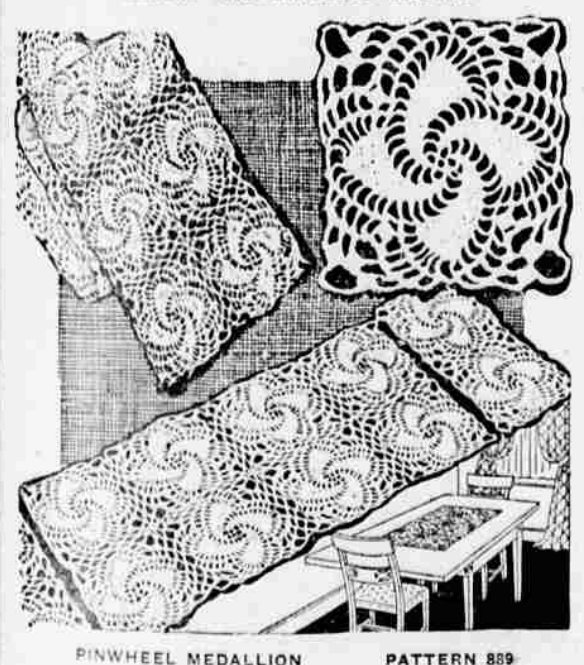
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