

Summer Sweethearts
By Mabel McElliott
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CHAPTER XI

held Katharine's hand near the hub of the electric fixture poised at an angle over the white table.

"There now, just let those dry. They look grand, don't they? Well, you take my advice, Miss Strykhurst, and don't let any boy get round you the way they do. But I can tell just by looking at you that you've got good sense. You couldn't be anybody's fool." Isabel abandoned herself to one luxurious sigh at the thought of her own folly where the absent Bill was concerned.

Katharine's heart contracted as though a hand had squeezed it. She had been a fool. Perhaps she ought to cry it before all the world; she was masquerading under false colors. Paying her bill, wandering out into the street again—a street dappled with late September sunshine and lined on either side with little cars—she felt a fury of rage and despair possess her. She was weak to run away from this trouble of hers. Isabel, silly and trivial as she was, would probably have met such a situation with more bravery.

Katharine hated herself, everything about her, with a sick and deadly hatred.

She had parked her own car half a block away, down by the little square of lawn and the iron benches that surrounded the monument to Innocent's soldier dead, when, with a flash of terror she saw Michael Heatherone.

He was on foot and bareheaded, as usual. He had a newspaper in his hand. Katharine was not more than 50 yards from him when she caught sight of him. There was no possible way of avoiding him and she would not, even if she could have. She marched on, blind with anger and pride.

The slate-gray eyes under the crest of red hair just grazed hers; looked aside, Michael, without a nod, without a glance of recognition, passed on.

The lofty room was almost empty except for a few groups of red-capped porters. Katharine, with her tall, white-haired father at her elbow, followed a man carrying their bags through the gleaming, long corridor. They were to meet Evelyn Vincent at the train gate.

The whole vast station had an unfamiliar air. When shall I see this place again? the girl thought dully. It seemed to her that she was saying farewell to home, to the city for good. Perhaps by some cunning she could manage to stay in New Mexico until the spring, when she was to come into her mother's money. Then she need never see Innocent again. Travel—strange places—would help her forget. She had urged Violet Mercer to come down to see her off. But with a queer little twisted smile her new friend had said she thought she'd better not.

"She doesn't like father, that's it," Katharine thought with a flash of insight. Well, neither Bertine nor her father had been especially nice to the Mercers, had ignored them, in fact. But Violet usually didn't notice such smallness in people. Violet, herself, the girl thought, was so generous and genuine a person that she ignored in others the qualities she deplored. Well, her father had come around amazingly in the matter of the trip. No matter how Bertine stormed and ranted, he had been gently persistent. He had said that perhaps Katharine was old enough to decide by now just who her friends ought to be. And this Miss Vincent seemed a pleasant woman, distinguished and charming.

"I've never understood Father in the least," Katharine thought with a pang of compunction. She had always seen him as it were, through a haze of Bertine's ways and prejudices. Maybe he was on her side really. They were making conversation now in the polite, labored way people employ just before a train departure.

"Sure you've got your money safe?" "Oh, yes. And my traveler's checks." The girl patted her big alligator-skin purse. She was in pale tan tweeds with a fur scarf slung over her slender shoulders. Her fair hair gleamed under the brim of her brown felt hat. Her brown gloves, her slim brown shoes, were perfection.

(To Be Continued)

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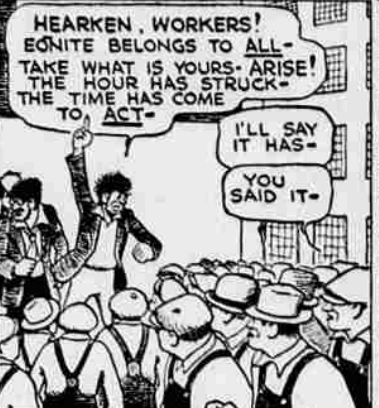
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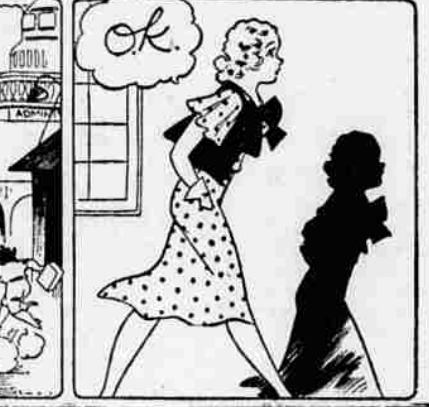
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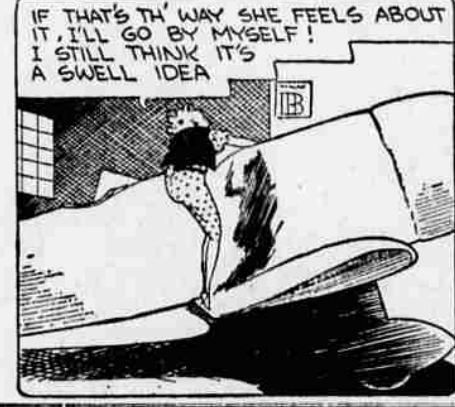
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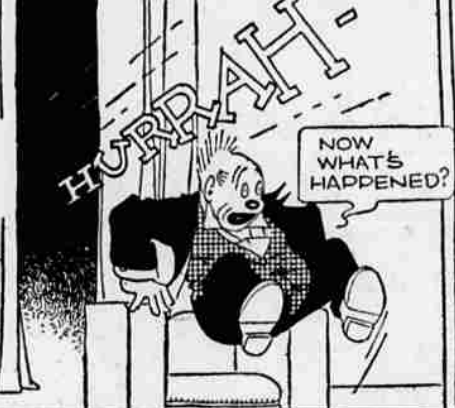
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