

VACATION DIARY

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CHAPTER XI

... my lawyer had told me everything... helped to get him a way to keep him out of jail... to think that my brother's son should stoop so low."

"Oh, Miss Pegler," I whispered, "what else could I say?"

Wiping away her tears, Miss Pegler said, "You may as well know the truth... perhaps I should have told you before... but I'm fond of my nephew and I felt if you were married and he got a fresh start, things might have worked out all right."

"The trouble started when he was at college. He got in with a fast set... started gambling... my lawyer arranged the allowance from his father's estate and of course I gave him gifts from time to time... however, he was always in debt... then he met some crooks... counterfeiter... paid thirty dollars for a hundred dollars' worth of bogus money."

"Things went from bad to worse till he could not afford to buy any more of the counterfeit money, so the man made a deal with him and he was supposed to pay a certain percentage on every hundred dollars' worth of counterfeit money he disposed of... unfortunately he kept on gambling and got behind in his payments... that was really why he left New York so glibly (though I had no suspicion of it at the time). I'm keeping nothing back from you."

"I think you're very brave, Miss Pegler," I said.

"Don't say that, my dear. But I must tell you the rest of this terrible story. Digger, the man for whom Dick was working, had to take to cover and shortly after we arrived Dick ran across him here. After that he hounded him all the time... if only Dick had told me everything, I would have helped him. However, a friend of his called him a young designer-Roger, I believe he called him though I never knew his last name—warned him that Digger's friend, Roger, had planned to have him kidnapped as he was in desperate straits for money... oh, there are so many angles to the whole thing, that I could talk to you for long enough. I don't know if I can ever forgive myself for urging you to marry him... all I can do for you now, my dear, is to settle an income on you... and, though he is my nephew, and no doubt you loved him, there is only one thing to do—forget him."

"Oh, Miss Pegler, you mustn't think of giving me any money. You're not to blame... all I hope is that Dick may yet make you proud of him."

Walking home my spirits felt lighter than they had for many a day. In spite of my grief for the old lady and her troubles, my heart was singing... what she'd said about Roger and Roger assured me Roger did not consider Dick his friend, otherwise he would have aided and abetted him to kidnap Dick.

There were no trips to the village tonight... after the special dinner parties no one felt like dancing, so when I went upstairs I stopped for a minute in Tess' room, sampled some of the candy Jimmy had sent her... noticed some newspapers at the foot of her bed.

(To Be Continued)

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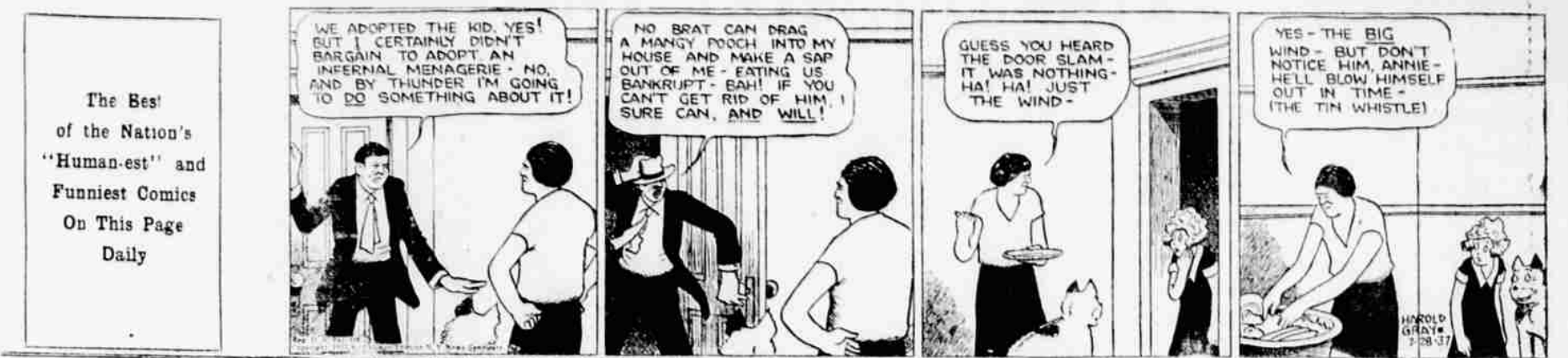
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