

This Man, Joe Murray

BY WILLIAM CORCORAN

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CHAPTER XII

There was a sound of music and a smell of earthy spring... but the music was discordant and the spring was too long dead, and it was a stark, desolate visitation, and pale and fading for 100 years.

Helen no more! It was farewell. The past was dead; life went on. He was willing to face the decision. Life laid down a challenge and rendered him a job to do, and he could do, at least, his best. He would speak of love again. To the middle of existence there was a glimpse of still inadequate answer. He could do his best.

The marriage was a neat little umbrella in the two families and in the neighborhood. It was perhaps the easier launched for that very reason. One clean cut and the past was severed, and no one questioned or bid them pause.

Terry telephoned her folks that first day. On the second day she called on them. There was a long interview, the details of which were kept entirely to herself afterward, but she walked out of the house definitely and proudly and a bit shakily, resolutely piling a number of personal belongings into a taxi-cab, and asserting by her air and every gesture the independence she now possessed and her determination to keep it. Her father was never returned.

Joe called on his mother when he knew she would be alone. She received him calmly. To his surprise, she was fully aware. He demanded who had told her.

"The newspapers," she replied. "I've watched the lists of marriage licenses issued lately; your name was there this morning. When you didn't come home, there was only one thing likely. Besides, one look at your face now and I'd know all I needed. I know you too well, son."

He grunted and paused. When he did not continue he said, "Well?"

She smiled and came and put a hand on his shoulder. "Lots of luck, Joe... a power of luck! You didn't ask for my opinion, so I'll be sparing with it now. I hope you'll be happy, and if there's anything I can do for either of you, you need only tell me."

"Thanks," he said. "You can call on me."

"I'll do that first thing," she said.

you can have a little car and go to work in it and...

For an instant he was not listening; his mind automatically spanned a time of months, and there was a picture of another house suddenly vivid in mind's eye. Then he said, "A house, baby? We'll have one soon as the bank book buys one." He held her very tightly, very close, while she told him all about her house.

Terry knew what she wanted, clearly. Had she known a happy home, there would be less novelty in it, less fascination... less high, high adventure with this man who was her husband.

It was soon evident that a house would be no problem to her. She had rigid training as a housekeeper, a thorough if not benign training. The routine of cooking and cleaning, with Joe's help, was dispatched with efficient speed in so small a place.

It was a bare sort of place, so scantily furnished, but that was not a matter that either of them could mind. Such as it was, it was theirs. Terry had a few small pictures, a bit of brocade, a pair of silver candlesticks, a Wedgwood serving platter, a dozen or so books; Palgrave's "Golden Treasury." "When Knighthood Was in Flower," "To Have and to Hold," "The Care and Feeding of Children" (an edition twenty years old), "A Compendium of Social Usage," "The White House Cook Book," "Travel Diary in Providence," a strange miscellany.

"Where did you get these?" he asked.

"They belonged to my mother," she told him. "All those things belonged to her. They were put away. I guess she had lots of lovely things, but these are all I left. I've always kept track of them, and I'd never leave without them." She got a faded photograph from her handbag, a photograph in a silver frame of a blandly gay and demurely pretty young woman in a high-necked waist and halo of soft dark hair. It was an intelligent, sensitive face. "That was mother before she got married. She died when I was ten."

"Hm," said Joe. He looked at Terry. "She's nice. I'd like to have met her."

Terry kissed him gratefully and put the picture away without saying any more about her mother.

They slid gently and placidly into a way of living that was full of peace and quiet pleasure. They had found the world hard, each in a different way, and they withdrew from the world because of the peace there was. They helped one another, and enjoyed one another, and they did not miss the world. They quickly found the simple diversions of young married people the world over: the easy escape of a moving picture, the long slow interest in a trolley ride on a warm night, the desultory absorption of double solitaire, the satisfaction in long, detailed discussions about anything at all in the late darkness, side by side. There was no tension, no cross-purpose anywhere, no "nerves."

Joe had observed enough of marriage to know that this was unusual. He knew enough of women to credit Terry with uncanny judgment and skill in managing their moods and emotions. It was a management in which no thought or effort showed, as if it were instinct alone once again. She had a quaint and surprising perspective: meals, dishes, house, anything was forgotten if it were amusing for them to sit, she on his lap, talking and playing and laughing; and she was never cross if the neglect cost reluctant pains later. She amused him, tickled him, stirred him, kept him constantly aware of her, yet never as if with the least calculation or design.

She might come and sit beside him when in her judgment he was silent and absorbed long enough in the newspaper or a book. When her presence, quiet and almost bated of breath, finally penetrated his consciousness and he looked up, the big brown eyes would be waiting, provocative and full of secret mirth and very accusing.

"Terry's bored," pouting.

"Yeah?" vaguely.

"Terry wants to be amused."

"Huh! Did you darn all your old man's socks and beat the carpet and bake a week's bread?"

"Well, I darned the bread and baked the carpet and beat the socks, and I'm bored and I want to be amused."

"Pest! How long is it since you've been kissed?"

"Whole half an hour."

"I see," resignedly. "Well, come to headquarters."

And she always came flying, chucking, irresistible and well aware.

(To Be Continued)

FLAPPER FANNY

By Sylvia



"Your t's show a noble nature and a strong sense of duty. But your n's tell me women were crazy about you if you didn't pursue them."

SIDE GLANCES



"Let's not go. I've got the car so nice and shiny I'd like to keep it that way."

DRIVER HIRED
VIDA, June 11.—(Special)—The local school board, Mrs. Pete Finn, Barney Oldfield, Glenn Woods and Dayton Thomson, met this week to open the bids received for the positions of bus driver and janitor for the 1938-1939 school year. Low bids were submitted by Buel Beyerlin and Harley Hall. Mr. Beyerlin succeeds Ed Zimmerman, who has driven the bus for many years, and Mr. Hall will serve as janitor.

CRASH REPORTED
VIDA, June 11.—(Special)—Care driven by Dayton Thomson and Elvin Hixon of Wendling were involved in a collision, early this week in Springfield lane. Mr. Thomson's car was quite badly damaged but no one was injured. Wilson Donoho, who has been in the U. S. marine service for the past four years, recently received his discharge and has arrived home.

LITTLE ORPHAN ANNIE



Now Showing—"POPEYE'S TANGLED UP, TOO!" Tomorrow—"THE CAT STARTS FROM SCRATCH!"

Came the Dawn



By HAROLD GRAY



By E. C. SEGAR



SECRET AGENT X-9



The G-Man Works On the Sphinx



By ROBERT STORM



By MARTIN



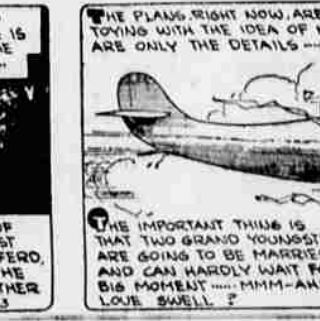
BOOTS AND HER BUDDIES



What It's All About



By CRANE



By V. T. HAMLIN



WASH TUBBS



What a Fix!



Shame On You, Foozy!



By WILLIAMS



ALLEY OOP



OUR BOARDING HOUSE



OUT OUR WAY



By WILLIAMS

