

KITTY FREW

By JANE ABBOTT

SYNOPSIS: While Marge Crossby tries to interest Garfield Frew through their work as amateur theatricals, Gar's wife, Kitty, contentedly stays at home and manages their small household. Kitty keeps a budget—and Gar grows estranged. She begins to worry about their expenses.

Chapter 27

THREE PINK ROSEBUDS
TOLD DI we could get along without her. She had something else on this afternoon," Marge had explained casually.

She had produced a long list of names. "Your mother was it out, Gar. I ran into her at the Century Club yesterday and she asked me if she could help us. Wasn't that dear of her when she's so busy? She said a lot of nice things about what we're doing. She's going to give a theater party the first night. That'll make splendid publicity. Oh, speaking of publicity—I'm going to ask the Times to send that Dorcas Taber over to get a feature story of the whole thing. I'll run well—all about the theater and who's really back of it and who's in the first cast and Somerset and everything."

"Good idea!" Gar had responded promptly. But he had been thinking how stunning Marge looked in the thing she was wearing, whatever it was. She looked like the favorite in a harem; he had played with that fancy while Marge was talking.

He had been lounging comfortably against the rose damask cushions of the divan, his feet stretched out toward the fire.

"I've got to do something about Somerset, Gar," she had said slowly. "He's—well, he's taking too much for granted. But I can't offend him, just now. I wish you'd sort of stick around. If you'd go to the rehearsals—"

"The big bonder! Why didn't you say something about it before? You bet I'll stick 'round. He has his nerve!"

Marge had sighed faintly. Her hand had reached out and tucked itself under Gar's arm. He was always completely at home in Marge's sitting room, pleasantly conscious of its luxury, of its seclusion, of the privilege that was his in so enjoying it.

She had told him of the progress the Players were making. The costumes had been ordered from New York. He must see what Gordon Wing was doing with the back drop for the first act—it was perfect. Her low voice had run on and on from one thing to another, while Gar had listened and watched the little play of muscles under the tne skin of her throat.

"Gar, I had a wonderful talk with your mother, about you. Of course she'd say things to me that she wouldn't say to anyone else because she knows what friends you and I have been. She was so sweet I just opened my heart to her. I told her—well, I'm not going to tell you what I told her. You would have guessed it a long time ago except that you're so blind—"

"You're going to tell me, Marge!" Gar had asserted masterfully.

"Shoot!"

She had shaken her head; she had leaned a little closer to his shoulder, her face bent away from him. When she answered there had been a suggestion of tears in her faltering voice.

"But there isn't any, now. You're married, Kitty. And you've spoiled me for anyone else. It's always been like that—that's the way I felt last winter when I came out. I didn't give a hang about any of the parties when you weren't going to be there. Oh—" She stirred restlessly. "I hate everything now! I'm sick of the crowd, of all this fuss over the theater. I'm going away from Winton this spring and I'm never coming back. I think I'll live in Paris all the rest of my life. Will you miss me, Gar?"

Gar had been touched by her confession, flattered. "I'll go after you and bring you back," he had answered quickly, vehemently. He had put his arm about her shoulder and kissed her. "Gosh, Marge, I'd miss you a lot! You can't go away!"

"Would you?" she had whispered against his arm.

He had straightened, smiling down at her.

"To prove that I think of you I sent you some flowers to-day—"

"Oh! Heby told me there were flowers—I haven't opened the box; I thought they were from Somerset. How dear of you, Gar!"

"I didn't put in a card. I wanted to see if you remembered our old romance. The three pink rosebuds—"

"Gar! How cute—that you remember. 'I-love-you.' It wasn't nonsense—last winter, Gar! Then

she had drawn quickly away from him, pulled a cord that released a bright circle of light from a lamp at the end of the divan. She had flung back her shoulders, dramatically. "We're crazy, Gar, talking like this—"

A clock somewhere had chimed seven.

"Good gracious, I didn't dream it was so late!" Gar had sprung to his feet. "I've got to beat it. You can depend on me, Marge—about Somerset. And forget that going away stuff."

"Thanks, Gar." Her voice had been sweet, a little plaintive. Driving home Gar had frowned heavily, thinking of Somerset's presuming on any intimacy with Marge. He'd show him where he got off! It did not occur to him that Marge could have done that herself, weeks ago. He was all chivalry, all affection for Marge. What if she did go away to live in Paris!

But he had forgotten that alarm when he reached home. Kitty and her eager hungry embrace had met him at the door.

"You're going to wear your corset, aren't you?"

"Of course. It's in the ice-box. It's lovely, Gar."

"Well, so are you."

"Do I look all right?"

"Beautiful. You're getting class, Kit. What are you doing? What beauty parlor are you going to? First thing I know I'll see your picture on some ad for cold cream or powder."

Kitty laughed lightheartedly. Gar's easy praise was intoxicating to her; she needed no new dress, she needed no artificial color on cheeks or lips. She brought the corset to him to pin on to her shoulder.

"The devil!" Gar cried, laughing suddenly. "That isn't what I ordered for you—those three pink rosebuds. I told that fellow I wanted orchids."

"But I love these, Gar. And orchids are so frightfully expensive."

Gar laughed again. "Not when I'm sending them to you."

They met the others at the Rainbow Gardens. They went there frequently; the head waiter always greeted them with particular concern that they should have the table they wanted. Often Kitty, following Gar into the crowd, thought of Josie, looked for her among the dancers and at the tables. She told Tubby much about Josie, and Tubby had laughed with her, but not at Josie, and she had liked him better for that.

There were to be ten of them to-night, at a long table. Diana came with Buck Sewall, Red came alone, Tubby with Isabel Peters, others joined them. Tubby took the chair next to Kitty and began whispering in her ear.

"Say, you look out of sight to-night."

"Tubby, this old dress. You see me in it every time I go anywhere!"

"I thought it was a new one, honest."

"You're silly."

But she warmed to his nonsense. Tubby amused her with his devotion, his clumsy humor. She felt at ease with him. With the others, at times like this, it was like playing a part in a play, the role of which she knew well, now.

Gar was at the other end of the table. He had kept the chair next to him empty. He was watching the door. Presently he sprang to his feet. "Here's Marge."

Marge approached the table with Paul Somerset. The others hailed her coming a little hoisterously.

It was Gar, not Somerset, who took Marge's evening coat from her shoulders. "Sit here," he commanded, indicating the unoccupied chair next to him. It left one for Somerset across the table. "I'm on the job," he added; a low tone.

Marge lifted a deeply reproachful look to him as she slipped into the seat he had saved for her. Her fingers went significantly to the orchids against her shoulder. Her eyes traveled swiftly down the table and met Kitty's wide startled glance fixed on her. She laughed softly, her lips scarcely parting over the sound.

At their end of the table Tubby was deep in a story which he was pouring into Kitty's ear. All at once he became aware that she was not listening. He thought she spoke. "What'd you say, Kitty?"

She turned back to him, her eyes blue-black, a heightened color on her cheeks. "Did I say anything? If I did—it was only that it was just silly, thinking it for a moment—"

"But what I'm telling you is gospel truth, Kit! It happened—to a fellow I know."

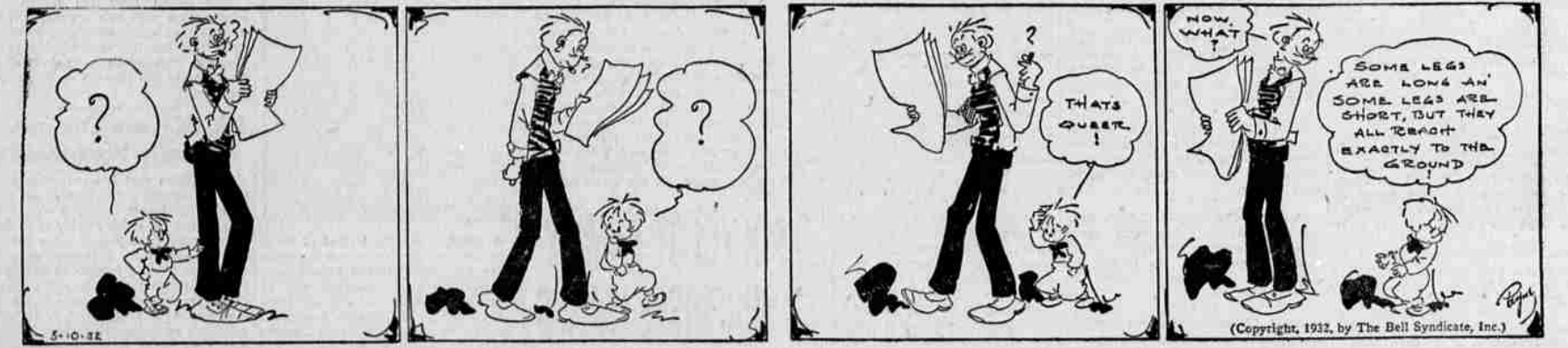
(Copyright, Jane Abbott)
Christmas eve brings Kitty a letter from Marge.

TAILSPIN TOMMY—Skeeter's Ears Aren't Seasick Anyway!



S'MATTER POP—A Puzzling Problem

By C. M. PAYNE



BOUND TO WIN—The Departure

By EDWIN ALGER



THE NEBBS—Mother O' Mine

By SOL HESS



MUTT AND JEFF—It Looks Like Mutt Wins The Celluloid Coffee Pot

By BUD FISHER



209 DOUKHOBORS NABBED IN NUDE

NELSON, B. C., May 10. — (P) — Provincial police arrested 209 Doukhobors, members of a Russian religious sect, when they staged a nude parade at Thrums, near here, Sunday. The group, composed of 90 men, 52 women and 67 children, were brought to the jail here in automobile trucks. Unlike the demonstration a week ago when 118 nudists were arrested after a sharp battle with police, the Doukhobors submitted peacefully to day. Those arrested last week were sentenced to three years in the penitentiary. Those captured today face similar fates.

38 BURIED UNDER FRENCH LANDSLIDE

LYONS, France, May 10. — (P) — Thirty-eight persons were believed buried today under landslides which swallowed up two apartment houses in the outskirts of Lyons. Twelve injured were removed before rescuers were ordered away by Edouard Herriot, the mayor and former premier, who himself escaped death from another slide only by leaping to safety. The rescue parties returned to the ruins, however, after cries were heard in the wreckage. At midnight they discovered a woman, pinned by a beam. She said she was not hurt.

BRINGING UP FATHER

By George McManus

