

KITTY FREW

by JANE ABBOTT

SYNOPSIS: Kitty Frew opens a shop with her sister-in-law, Carol, to help forget the sudden death of her husband, Gar. She has taken for granted the friendship of Gar's half-brother, David, though she has known he loves her. Now he is a successful writer and she misses his companionship.

Chapter 41 ON THE HILLTOP

FROM outside of the office came the sound of Josie's high bristling voice talking to a customer, from a back room the hum of a sewing machine where alterations were being made.

Kitty wrote letters. She visited the fitting room. She met some customers who called for her. One was Diana Close. Diana did not buy anything.

"I had a letter from Marge yesterday. She's coming home before Christmas."

"That's nice," Kitty could say it quite calmly, because she felt no smallest interest in Marge's coming or staying away.

"Mrs. Frew! Some one to see you." It was Josie again, in the office door.

Kitty went out to the waiting room. She gave a little glad cry. David stood there.

"Oh, I wanted you to come to-day!"

"Did you think I'd forget what day it is?"

"But you're so busy—"

"Not too busy for that. What say to celebrating?"

"But I can't—"

"Of course you can, Mrs. Frew," put in Josie from the office door. "Mrs. Somerset will be down after lunch and if we get in a jam Miss Foster can come out."

"Of course you can," echoed David, laughing. "We'll drive out to the little house if you'll use your car."

"Oh, David, I'd love that!"

"I've telephoned Mrs. Dundy to have some lunch ready for us. Put on your bonnet, quick."

"But how did you know I'd go?"

"I intended to kidnap you if you balked at all. This is my day as much as yours."

The new David, assertive, charming, spirited. He wore a new suit, a new hat.

"It seems to me you are looking particularly well, to-day, Mr. Frew!"

They drove swiftly out of the city, out into a russet-brown and gold country. The wind in her face brought the old high color to Kitty's cheeks; her eyes had darkened in the old way of delight.

"It's been five weeks since I've seen you!"

"Don't I know that?"

He told her of changes he'd been making in the new book, of the people he'd met, David, going ahead, she thought. Well, she was, too. And she told him of the precious balance that marked the success of the shop.

"It's a go, David."

"Of course, I knew it would be."

"I'm most pleased on account of Carol. Sometimes I can't believe she's the same girl. And Paul's getting—well, he's nice, David. I like him now."

She told the latest of Dorcas, laughing. Dorcas had gone to live with her Aunt Lydia. Aunt Lydia had had a slight stroke which made an invalid of her. And she needed Dorcas. But Dorcas had simply transplanted her flag of independence. She'd taken Old Timer with her and Emil and Max and Mark and the others ran in and out of Aunt Lydia's house, as much at home there as they'd felt on Ketchum Street. Mrs. Gentle was running a boarding house at 22.

She told him of his father. "He's very well and I think he's happier, David. We have good times together."

"I love you, Kitty."

She drew her hand away, trembling. She put it to her face. "I'm afraid, David." Her voice faltered. He saw a deep flush spread from her cheek to her throat. He waited, patiently, his eyes caressing her.

"I've missed you awfully—this year. It—your not being here—made a—difference with everything. I guess—I do—need you, David! I guess I've always needed you. What you gave me—"

He drew her gently to him until her shoulder rested in the hollow of his arm. He said no word, content to feel her relax against him, content to see the happiness slowly suffusing her face.

She broke the silence first. "But, David, you ought to go to write that."

"I'll write Norwood to-night—that I'm staying. I'd rather work here Kitty—with you."

the feeling of distance between them—they both changed, she said to herself.

Jan, at David's heels, was coaxing for a walk. When they had finished their luncheon they climbed the hill. And reaching its top, they sat down under the old trees.

"I used to sneak away from the others and come here every day. I called it my own. Wasn't that presumptuous in me, when it's really yours?"

"It's a big hilltop," David answered easily.

David had no need, now for its seclusion, Kitty thought.

"Do you remember that first day we came here, David? How long ago it seems now. That girl that I was then is—almost—a stranger to me now."

She looked soberly out across the valley, not seeing it but seeing that Kitty Frew of those days when she had had to lean on David. What a foolish, bewildered, uncertain, blind girl she'd been! But, even thinking that, she felt a wistful tugging at her heart; there was something homesome in going ahead—without David!

"You're happy, now?" David asked brusquely.

"Yes, I guess I am." Then she straightened, laughed. "How absurd to put it so doubtfully! Of course I am! Ought I not to be with the Treasure Island Shop so safely established? I like the work. I like seeing Carol so sure of herself. I like the way your father depends on me. I like Pound. You can't know how nice it is to have Pound waiting for me when I go home, to have him fuss over me. And David, he's so proud of you, as proud as if he might take Little Lady to his room. I gave him my autographed copy to keep. David, can you know how proud we all are of you?"

He sat clasping his knees, his chin bent to his hands.

"I mean—" his tone was gruff, "are you contented to go on like this—the rest of your life? Is it going to give you—everything you want?"

She answered quickly. "Oh, yes, of course." And then as though another voice had asked the question, she repeated: "Of course I am!"

She could not see his face. It was turned from her. But she saw him give a little expressive lift of his shoulders.

"I had to know that. I'm going away, Kitty, abroad. Norwood wants me to write a biography. It will necessitate digging up some old scandals from their respectable graves. Norwood says I have the touch he wants. I can't tell you much more about it now."

"How perfectly wonderful! David Frew, with such an assignment! Do you remember when Dorcas used to send you home like a bad boy who had not done his lessons?" But there was a sharp pain under the lightness of her voice. "David, when are you going?"

He turned to her. He did not touch her but his eyes betrayed his longing. "Oh, right away, I guess. I told Norwood that I could go now, unless—"

"Unless—Kitty, I came back hoping that you'd tell me that you needed me. But you don't need me now. You're walking very well on your own two feet, I see. I ought to be glad. But you're so young—if you were thirty or more I could reconcile myself to seeing you contented with business. But you—"

"I'm not!" She cried it involuntarily and the words released all the longing in her heart. "It isn't all I want! But, David, what else can there be for me?" She said it in the old troubled way of appeal to him. With the old gesture she put her hand on his arm.

He bent swiftly and kissed her hand.

"I love you, Kitty."

She drew her hand away, trembling. She put it to her face. "I'm afraid, David." Her voice faltered. He saw a deep flush spread from her cheek to her throat. He waited, patiently, his eyes caressing her.

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THE END

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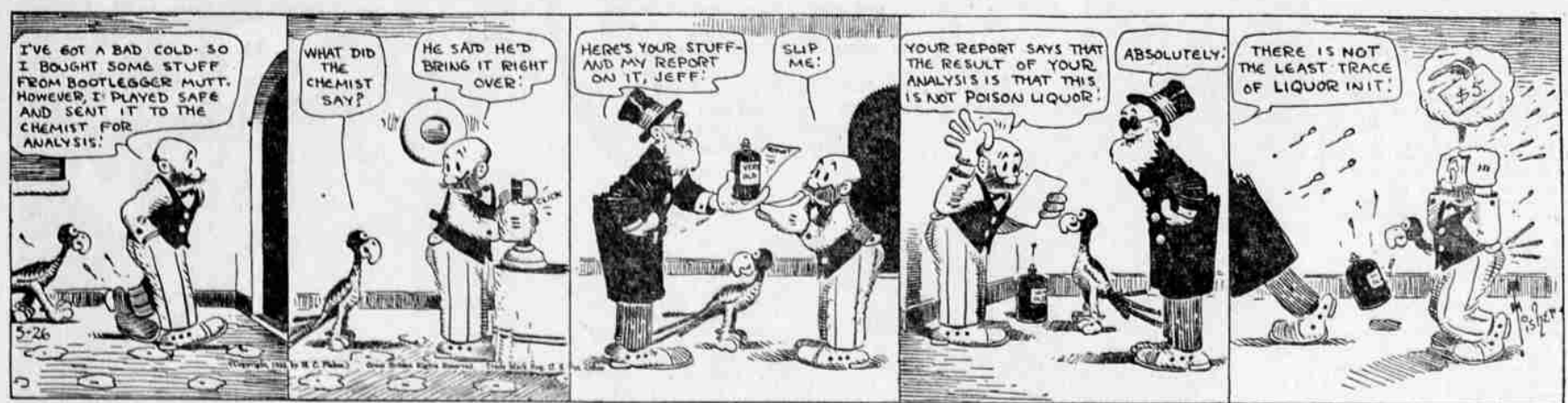
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TRUCK OPERATORS FINED FOR LOADS

M. C. Smallwood was fined \$10 in Judge Glenn O. Taylor's court yesterday for operating an overloaded truck. He was arrested by State Policeman B. M. Baucum. Kenneth Phelps received the same fine on the same charge, following arrest by Officer O. O. Nichols.

C. A. Thomas and B. F. Stevenson, who also appeared on the same charge, entered a plea of guilty. Their cases were continued.

Mrs. C. H. Eisman forfeited \$10 for failing to stop at a through street.

All our leather goods, special for graduation gifts, 25 to 50% off. Office Stationery & Supply Co.

CANDIDATES' BALL AT ROGUE ELK SATURDAY

Plans are being completed for another candidates' ball this Saturday evening at Rogue Elk, to which the defeated candidates, as well as the nominees, are being invited, according to announcement made by W. E. "Shorty" Morris, defeated candidate for county commissioner.

An elaborate program is being prepared for the evening and the "bunch" which attended so many meetings and dances together previous to the election is expected to get together.

Portraits of distinction. The Peasleys, opp. Holly theater.

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