

# Two's Company

By MARGARET CLON HERZOG

## The Characters

Nina, Junior League and ex-debutante, impulsively married David to escape her love for her stepfather.

Richard, the charming, well-talored stepfather, on a 5-month trip with his wife, after senselessly talking love to Nina.

Honey, Nina's gay, youthful mother who is wild about Richard, is traveling on doctor's orders.

David, a bright young auto salesman, seduces Nina and strives to make her happy on his small salary.

## Chapter 35

### Gracie Proves A Bar!

BEFORE Nina, in all her preparations, had been the vision of Gracie's delicious meal... served so easily.

Her own salads and sandwiches had seemed, as she prepared them, perfect examples of the culinary art. But now, as she came out with the dishes, her confidence vanished. People had to get up and move back their chairs, as she crossed over to the buffet...

There were not enough little tables to put things on. David had to eat off the mantel. Jack Knight looked uncomfortable with two plates on his knees, and his glass on the floor beside him.

Nina had planned on some hot soup to start off the cold meal; but in her embarrassment over the general disturbance she forgot it until they were well into the lobster salad. Gracie went out with her, into the messy kitchen, and helped her carry in the cups...

The mangled salad and half-eaten sandwiches looked particularly unappetizing, when they returned to them. Nina could think of less and less to say.

Her color grew more like the belly of a perch, by the minute. The meal, that had taken so many hours to prepare, was over in what seemed like a few minutes.

Although the living-room looked like a hotel pantry after a convention banquet, she began to worry that they had not had enough to eat.

David was having such a good time with Gracie, that she began to hate him. Every word of praise about her food sounded, to her distraught ears, like a grown-up's kindly efforts to humor a child.

There was no screen to put up to hide the unsightly mess, as there had been at Gracie's apartment; and everybody pitched in and helped to clear up the place.

David had remonstrated at first, and insisted on doing the work himself—trying to please Nina; but his progress was so slow, that Gracie just got up quietly, and proceeded to help him. Hatful girl. In a moment, it was general.

They all bumped into each other, going in and out of the kitchen, and Gracie got spilled on.

When Nina came back from putting French chalk on her guest's dress, Gracie had the whole place cleared away. The bridge tables down. The cloth folded.

"Great work, Gracie," David was congratulating her, and Nina retired to the bathroom for a quiet cry.

The next thing was that they ran out of ice. David had to go to the corner to get some. Gracie—to keep him company—went too.

Then cigarettes. Nina had forgotten to get an extra carton. Jack Knight went this time.

And, then, after they had put up the bridge tables again, they discovered that there weren't enough poker chips in the one box Nina had bought at the cigar store.

Gracie suggested using matches. "Excuse me just a second, will you, while I go and look for some..."

More getting up, and moving of chairs. David was so polite, so eager to be a help that he was constantly saying "Let me, sweetheart," and "I'll go, baby,"... thereby calling attention to her labors. He never let her squeeze by him, but jumped up to let her pass, and then Jack and Bill would have to jump up too... offer their assistance...

Just To Wring Her Neck  
It seemed to poor Nina, who had tried so hard to make her party a success, that the entire evening was spent moving furniture, milling about... going for soup, or ice, or cigarettes that had been forgotten... And Gracie, all the time, helping her out, smoothing over her mistakes... And not only that, very definitely playing up to David. Damn her, so cool and healthy looking. So efficient.

Damn her... she could have tossed off this silly party on crutches, with one arm in a sling, and they all knew it. Nina had a fierce desire to pick her up in her little \$12.75 model, and plunk her down at the Central Park Casino with a sophisticated crowd, and confront her with a menu in French... Though that was silly, too; Gracie would have got away

with it somehow. No, Nina guessed she just wanted to wring her soft, little brown neck.

Jack was to have a birthday the following week.

"I'll give you a party you won't soon forget," promised Francine. Nina thought he was not likely to forget this one. He had got up and moved his chair at least 50 times already.

"No," said Gracie, "I have an idea."

"Oh, I'm catnip to the ladies, all right," said Jack, smoothing back the absurd peninsula of hair on his forehead.

And then Gracie went into a long, whispered conference with David, about the proposed festivities.

That the long consultation was merely for the fun of putting her head up close to David's, was obvious, when she announced that they were going to Coney Island.

That was all that came of it. Coney Island. She could have suggested it right out.

But no. That, or any other meager excuse, was enough for Gracie to drag David off on one side and monopolize him. David winked at Nina, once or twice, over the girl's dark eyes, but that didn't help it any. Nina wasn't annoyed with him, she was annoyed with Gracie.

About 1:30, Miss Nolan said to David: "You better make your bride let me help her with the dishes, big boy. The poor kid'll be up half the night!"

Gracie, the little helper. The ministering angel.

"Why don't you, sweetheart? Gracie's a whizz."

"I thought you told me, once, to treat them with a beautiful disregard," remarked Nina.

But Gracie said, "Oh, what the hell!" in the most comradely way imaginable... and insisted on doing just one more thing to show what a grand wife she would have made for David.

"Come on, let's leave those two alone together," David pointed at Bill and Francine, on the day-bed. "They're practically beyond control now!"

So he and Jack sipped their drinks in the kitchen, while Gracie went marly and efficiently to work at the sink. Not a spot on her dress. Not a hair out of place.

Nina, white and weary, wiped away, in stony silence.

When they had gone, Nina said just one thing to David.

"I just ask you, darling, not to say that I managed beautifully. I didn't, and I know it. Now will you please take Button out, and just—not say anything?"

So he didn't; but he kissed her with a slightly bewildered look on his face.

When he came back, she was sound asleep on the very edge of the bed. Her stockings were still on, and one fat tear was glistening on her white, white cheek.

At A Standstill:  
THE last two weeks of August were the first two seem like a strawberry festival. The heat was blistering.

Cordelia wrote about night life in Stockholm, and yachting on the cool waters at Oslo.

Aunt Carrie wrote once, on paper that was crinkly from a refreshing bar harbor fog.

Honey and Richard sent pictures of themselves, by the rocky marine pool, at Antibes.

Carl Semple was to meet Cordelia in Paris, and journey down to the Riviera for a reunion with the Challengers. Tony Leeds would be there...

Nina sat in her apartment that was cool only because it looked cool, and read the letters, and wondered what streak of insanity had lurked in her family, that she should have deliberately got herself into this predicament.

She weighed 105 pounds. She was listless from morning to night. David saved what he could out of his lunch money (He was always saying: "Oh, a malted was all I wanted,") and brought her back little delicacies—fresh figs—or flowers—some frozen dessert from a really good place, like Sherry's...

But that... that. It made her feel that she wasn't being a good sport, that she needed codling... She did need it, of course, but she didn't want to appear to be asking for it.

She couldn't seem to get up the energy to love David, as she had hoped she was going to, for being so heavenly sweet to her; or to hate him, for chaining her to this dreadful, dull poverty.

She couldn't seem to miss Honey, or recapture any of her old longing for Richard... or get over him either, for that matter. She was at a standstill.

Her biggest sensations came from little things: A cold glass of beer... Taking her shoes off, after tramping home from the grocery with packages in her arms... The terrific flood of relief, when David said: "Let's eat out, tonight, sweetheart, you look tired."

She thought: "This isn't—living. But she went on.

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The money situation looks large for the Dats, tomorrow.

# SMATTER PO!

By C. M. PAYNE



# TAILSPIN TOMMY—The Tension Mounts!

A RADIO NEWS FLASH IN THE PASSENGER COMPARTMENT OF FLIGHT TEN, PILOTED BY TOMMY AND SKEETER, VOICING THE CONCERN OF 3-POINT OFFICIALS OVER INABILITY OF ITS DENVER TERMINAL TO CONTACT FLIGHT TEN BY RADIO HAS AROUSED THE APPREHENSION OF THE PASSENGERS, AND ESPECIALLY, MR. BLURTZ.



# BEN WEBSTER'S CAREER—

WITH TRADD JORDAN, RIGHTFUL OWNER OF THE NUGGET LINE, LEADING THE PARTY THE RETURN WAS MADE TO HARDPAN GULCH AND THERE, BECAUSE OF THE WEIGHT OF EVIDENCE AGAINST STRALE, THE AUTHORITIES WERE COMPELLED TO ARREST HIM.



# THE NEIGHBORHOOD LEAGUE

By GLUYAS WILLIAMS



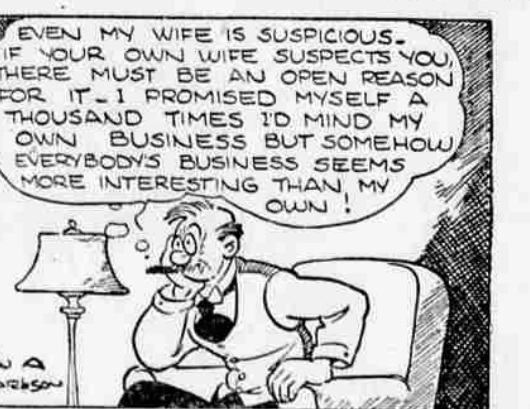
# TAILSPIN TOMMY—The Tension Mounts!

By HAL FORREST



# THE NEBBES—Rudy's In a Spot

DO YOU KNOW THAT THE WHOLE TOWN IS TALKING ABOUT YOU HOLDING UP THIS FELLOW ARDLEY AND GETTING EMMA'S BONDS BACK?



# BOY WANDERERS HELD INCURABLE

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Seventy percent of the roving youths now receiving aid at this county's transient camps are "incurable wanderers," says a report by M. E. Lewis, camp director.

# CUT AND SHOOT IS QUIET TOWN

CUT AND SHOOT, Tex. (AP)—Cut and Shoot is a peaceful village despite its name.

# 14 YEARS A FOOD EXPERT... BUT MRS. ROBSON COULDN'T TELL FLAVOR OF ALLSWEET FROM THAT OF EXPENSIVE SPREADS!

IT HAPPENED THIS WAY... THINK OF THE MONEY WE'LL SAVE!

IT WAS JUST A WEEK AGO... I'D LIKE TO VERY MUCH.

NO... I CAN'T DETECT ANY FLAVOR DIFFERENCE IN THE SAMPLES, I WOULD HAVE JUDGED ALL TO BE EXPENSIVE SPREADS.

IMAGINE! A THRIFTY MARGARINE THAT ACTUALLY TASTES AS FINE AS SPREADS WHICH OFTEN COST NEARLY TWICE AS MUCH!

IT'S WONDERFUL, MRS. ROBSON!

TELL US ABOUT YOUR ALLSWEET TEST, MRS. ROBSON!

Mrs. Barbara Reid Robson (center) holds three university degrees... is a noted lecturer on home economics... and is at present engaged in food product development work on the West Coast.

Many experienced food testers agree with Mrs. Robson... say Allsweet has flavor as fine as high-priced spreads! Yet wonderful new Allsweet sells at thrifty margarine prices! Allsweet is truly marvelous as a spread for bread, toast, muffins, biscuits, hot cakes, waffles. And it's just as delicious on hot vegetables, or when used in cooking and baking. Allsweet owes its wonderful goodness to the fine all-American vegetable oils and fresh, pasteurized skimmed milk with which it is made. Allsweet is absolutely wholesome, too. Good Housekeeping Bureau has tested and approved it. The Council on Foods of the American Medical Association has accepted it. Try a pound today! At your food dealer's.