

LOVE FOR TWO

RUTH DEWEY GROVES

AUTHOR OF "WHEN A GIRL LOVES" © 1928 By NEA Service Inc.

CHAPTER XXIV

Lila saw her advantage and pressed it. Rod was weighing the cost of giving publicity to the theft, of seeking the aid of the police and the insurance company.

The case was absolutely black against him. No one, only himself, he admitted, had touched the jewels after Lila had given them to him for safekeeping. And the lock of the case had been difficult to open when he returned it to her. . . . looked as if it had been tampered with.

Whether or not he thought of this Lila could not know, but she did see that he was seriously facing the evidence as it stood against him.

Suppose he could never escape the odium of suspicion that must fall upon him—what then? Though innocent, he would have to struggle along under a cloud for the rest of his days.

What would become of his future? Who would employ him? Small jobs, perhaps. Maybe he'd have to return to Wayville. The story of the missing jewels following him there ultimately. Even preceding him, possibly, if Cyrus believed him guilty and preferred a charge of grand larceny against him—or would it be burglary?

Rod's brain was working swiftly now that he clearly saw a string of consequences in his outlook. It occurred to him that the police might find sufficient evidence to hold him for trial.

He knew very little about police procedure, but when a person had been entrusted with a case containing valuable jewels and returned it empty he felt sure it must be a crime. Above all, an investigation of his own affairs would reveal that he was in debt—that he associated with people of means far beyond his own.

It was not a pleasant prospect to face. It could easily mean ruin, complete and final. He thought of Bertie Lou and his face grew haggard in an instant. Lila's pleading took root then. She saw the expression of defeat envelop his features and then disappear as a spark of hope quickened his tongue to an eager question.

"Tell me," he said, "how much your jewels were insured for. If I could pay it. . . ."

Lila laughed. "Don't be foolish, Rod." The laugh died away as she saw a look of stubbornness settle around his lips. "How could you pay it?" she asked as though it might be possible after all.

"You know Cy is paying me \$150 a week," Rod replied. "No matter how much of that it took to cover the insurance, I could afford it. I don't see how I'm going to prove my innocence. If Cy throws me out on my ear I'd have a hard time getting another job. I hate to give the thief a chance to get away but I guess a good detective could do as much as the police."

"But Rod, you need all the money you earn."

"I'll manage," Rod said grimly. "I won't let you take the full loss, Lila. It's fine of you to want to."

He looked at her with a depth of gratitude that curdled warmly around Lila's conscience-proof heart.

"If I'd lost your necklace and bracelets I'd feel I ought to pay you what they cost, though I don't know how I'd do it," he added honestly. "But they were stolen, and unless you receive them you will get only as much as the insurance you carried on them. Whatever that is I'll pay it if it takes the rest of my life time to do it."

Lila sighed. "I'm sorry you won't let me do a little thing



"I hope so," he said feelingly. "I'd like Bertie Lou to know what you've done for me."

like that for a friend," she said softly. "But if you won't. . . . the necklace cost six thousand, but I felt so safe over it I insured it for only three. The bracelets were insured for two thousand each. I don't know what they cost. Let's see that makes \$7,000. Oh, Rod, it would break you to pay that!"

"It certainly would if I had to pay it all at once," Rod admitted. "But I propose to do it piecemeal, Lila, if you don't mind."

"Of course not, silly. I don't want you to do it at all. What's \$7,000 to me? I think it will be fun to fool everyone with my fakes. It takes money to throw a bluff about pearls, doesn't it? If I'd worn them in Wayville they'd have been tagged."

Rod refused to joke. "Are you satisfied?" he asked. "You'd have a better chance of getting your stolen things back if we called in the police, you know." He was not absolutely sure of that but he felt he ought to give her every opportunity to change her mind if she wanted to.

Lila was firm. "I'll get that detective I spoke of. You'd better see him here, though, and not at the office. I wish you'd forget about the whole thing if he falls to turn up the thief."

"No, if I can't pay you the amount of the insurance I'll communicate with the police," Rod averred stoutly. "You'll lose enough anyhow. It must have been my fault somewhere along the line. I ought to pay for it."

"All right. My land, what a long time it takes Wilkins!" Lila said in a voice that left no doubt that she wished to change the subject. "Chuck it, Rod, no use to worry."

Her voice sank to extreme tenderness as she gave his shoulder a little pat.

The maid returned with a tray and two crystal glasses. Lila put one to Rod's lips. "Drink that and then run along home and forget what happened," she coaxed. "And whatever you do don't tell Bertie Lou about it."

"I'll have to, Lila. She'd wonder what I was doing with the money."

Lila sipped at her glass in silence. Finally: "I wouldn't worry Bertie Lou if I were you, Rod," she said quietly. "It isn't fair to me to treat me like a Shylock either. And why should you deprive her of money she needs when all that you could give me won't make the slightest bit of difference to my happiness."

"I'd be miserable," she went on hurriedly as she started to speak. "If I knew that Bertie Lou was suffering on my account. Why, Rod, don't you realize that I'm trying to be a good friend, that I want to make up for all the mischief I tried so hard to cause in Wayville?"

Rod reached out and took the soft white hand that rested on the edge of the desk. "You're the best friend in the world," he told her warmly.

"Then you won't tell Bertie Lou?" she besought him.

"I don't feel justified in keeping such a thing from her, Lila," "Oh dear," Lila lamented, "one of these earnest people who are just as eager to share a sorrow as a joy. I'd go batty if Cy brought all his troubles home to me. But, of course, if your mode, or your code, or whatever excuse you have, compels you to spoil Bertie Lou's happiness when you could just as well keep your

trouble to yourself, why, go ahead and do it."

"Then what would I tell her about the money?"

Lila thought a moment. "Tell her you're buying an interest in the company. Then if ever you have to explain that, say you drew the money out and plunged on Wall Street."

"One shock and it's over. This way, she'd be upset about it indefinitely, and worried, too, for fear you might be under suspicion. Besides, I won't consent to having you beggar yourself to pay me in a hurry."

She glanced at a tiny clock on the desk. "I really must put you out now," she added apologetically. "I've got to get off to Connie Winstead's dinner."

She went to the head of the stairs to say good night to him. "I'll call you up tomorrow or the next day about seeing the

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detective," she said in a low voice.

Lila hadn't yet become accustomed to having servants all over the place. She simply could not—as some of her friends did—speak and act with utter disregard of hired retainers.

"And don't wear a long face," she added. "Who can tell what's just around the corner? We may get the jewels back, after all."

She put out a hand and Rod clasped it with a warm pressure. "I hope so," he said feelingly. "I'd like Bertie Lou to know what you've done for me."

Lila laughed. "You're forgetting how much a woman enjoys a secret. One that she really wants to keep, I mean. And Bertie Lou and I know each other too well now to need any proof of our friendship. Remember your promise not to tell her anything about this."

Rod said he wouldn't forget. Lila stood at the head of the stairs until the front door closed behind him. Then she danced gaily back into her boudoir.

Rod, on the other hand, was depressed as he started for home, planning his first falsehood to Bertie Lou.

(To Be Continued)

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NEWS NOTES OF SHASTA VIEW

(Special To The Herald)

(Dilla Bailey, Correspondent)

SHASTA VIEW, Aug. 1—

George Kirkpatrick, son of Mr. and Mrs. O. M. Kirkpatrick is suffering from a broken arm sustained when he fell from a horse. At last reports the child was doing nicely.

Mrs. A. E. McCoy has returned from her visit at Ash Valley and will entertain the Helping Hand ladies at her home Wednesday, July 31st.

Mrs. Mabel Sullivan entertained at dinner Sunday, Mr. and Mrs. G. W. Myers, Mr. and Mrs. J. L. Bailey, Nels Fogle and family, Mr. Cummins, Estene McManus, Dorothy McManus and Mrs. Teresa McComb.

G. W. Myers and wife were business visitors at Lake City, Cal., last week. Mr. Myers buying hogs and Mrs. Myers getting fruit.

Dorothy and Estene McManus of Klamath Falls who spent two

weeks with their uncle and aunt, Mr. and Mrs. J. L. Bailey returned to their home Friday.

C. B. Brown was a business visitor at the county seat Saturday.

Mr. and Mrs. W. A. Layman were called to Dorris one day recently on account of the serious illness of their sister in law, widow of the late Claude Kirkpatrick.

Gordon Turner of Medford visited his uncle and aunt, Mr. and Mrs. J. L. Bailey, Friday. Gordon lived in this place when a small boy and friends of the family will be pleased to know of his winning the world's championship for endurance swimming in the boys 19 year old class. The time was 24 hours and 20 minutes.

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SHOCKING TO PESTS

LONDON, Aug. 1.—A new electrically charged plow is claimed to be death to pests and a boon to crops. Experiments show that as the two blades of the plow pass through the soil, an electrical field is created, which kills insects and weeds and puts nitrogen into the soil.

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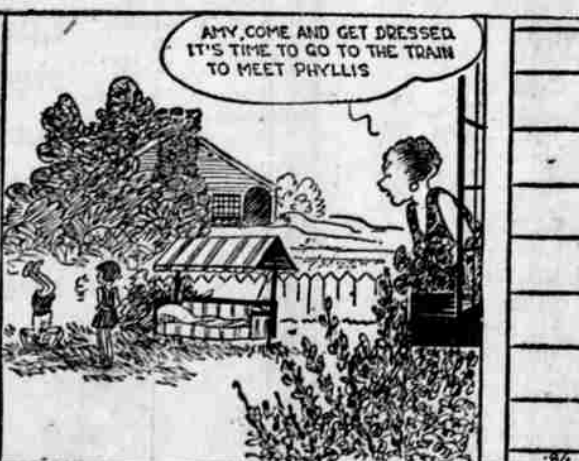
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