

LOVE FOR TWO

RUTH DEWEY GROVES

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

CHAPTER XXVIII
A surge of hate spread itself over Lila's features, contorting them into a fleeting ugliness. She turned her head quickly away from Rod's stare.

But even in the moonlight her expression had been an unmistakable indication of displeasure. Rod could not see clearly enough to recognize it as anything more than that. But it was sufficient to trouble him.

Thinking it over that night, he concluded that Lila had no love for Cyrus. He had come to believe that she had. But even with the revealing moment on the piazza to enlighten him he had not the faintest idea why she had been so much annoyed at her husband's demonstration of affection.

Lila, boiling with resentment over his intrusion upon her tete-a-tete with Rod, could have expelled that Cyrus had spoiled the moment she had been waiting for—the moment when Rod needed sympathy, the moment he seemed bewildered and doubtful of Bertie Lou's love.

For, despite his loyalty, Lila knew that he must be pondering over Bertie Lou's behavior. She had pondered over it, too, until she received a clue. In a conversation with Rod, on the subject of the detective she had engaged, she asked him if he had told Bertie Lou anything that could give her a hint of their secret. Rod said, no, that he hadn't even told her that he was at Lila's the afternoon he had returned the empty jewel case.

Lila remembered having told Bertie Lou that he had just left her on that occasion. Casually she inquired of Rod how he had explained his lateness in arriving home and he said he believed he had lied about it.

"Well, the fat's in the fire with Bertie Lou," Lila told herself.

Abandoning all hope of deceiving Bertie Lou any longer, she

decided to make the most of her erstwhile friend's absence. When Bertie Lou returned—if she ever did—Lila knew that she would have little or no influence over her, no further opportunity to lead her into extravagance or things that Rod could criticize.

Perhaps Bertie Lou might induce Rod to give up his position with Cyrus. There Lila faced the possibility of losing him altogether unless she could complete her sorcery before his wife returned.

No need now to consider Bertie Lou's friendship. At last she could speak freely, could start to sow the seeds of discontent in Rod's mind.

She was furious with Cyrus for having interrupted her initial move and for having reminded Rod that she belonged to another man. But to Rod it seemed that he had gazed upon the secret travail of one who had made a ghastly mistake.

He pitied Lila. But he admired her tremendously for having kept her secret so well, for having lived so sportingly up to her bargain of exchanging her freedom for money. At least she had not whined. And if he had discovered what she had proudly hidden from the world it was purely by accident, he felt, and not by reason of any public display on Lila's part.

He thought of her unflinching manifestation of affection and consideration for Cyrus, a man whom he knew she did not love, and compared it with Bertie Lou's treatment of him, whom he had believed she loved.

He observed Cyrus closely for the rest of his stay at the Birchess. There was nothing in his manner to indicate that he suspected Lila's true feelings toward him.

Rod asked himself if it were not possible that he too might be taking his wife's love for granted.

Was there any such a thing as love? Was it love to keep a man calling his home every hour to inquire if there was a letter for him? And was it love that caused Bertie Lou to plunge him head over heels in debt—send him begging his father for a loan?

It looked very much like indifference and a shallow ambition, rather than love. Rod did not want to think so, but Lila had set herself to present Bertie Lou's character and conduct to him in this light. And so shy, so false in her method of putting her destructive efforts in the guise of friendly advice and sympathy was she that Rod found himself thinking Bertie Lou had revealed herself as selfish and unloving.

It did not come suddenly, his verdict of her; but as the weeks wore on and she made no mention of returning to New York, Rod was compelled to believe that she did not mind being apart from him.

Then there was her cold letter when he had to refuse the money she asked for. Bertie Lou had hated writing for it, but she needed funds—she had used practically all her immediate cash for her fare home.

She did not want to appeal to her father for a loan since that would cause him to wonder why Rod did not supply her with money.

Rod had replied with half the amount and the statement that he had no more to send. Bertie Lou was amazed. He must be spending money like water! Well, Lila's habits and tastes could account for that. For any man who aspired to an affair with her would soon find himself with a lean pocketbook, Bertie Lou believed.

Rod did not write for a week after receiving her sarcastic letter. During this period of waiting Bertie Lou had assured herself through a hideous night of alternating doubt and still faintly surviving faith that she did not care whether he ever wrote again or not.

For she had received a letter that fairly scorched her heart and seared her pride. It was a poisonous anonymity. But Bertie Lou thought she knew who had written it. The writing was very much like Molly's despite an apparent effort to disguise it.

It was brief. The writer merely suggested that Bertie Lou should return to Rod at once if she wished to get him out of the clutches of a certain bleached blond over whom he seemed to have lost his head.

As the writer had guessed, Bertie Lou was too proud to take any notice of the communication. She did not return to New York. Her letters to Rod grew even colder and further apart and

when he flatly demanded to know when she intended to return she replied that she thought she might spend the summer with her mother.

The letter had done its work. It kept Bertie Lou away from Rod, as it was designed to do. Not as long perhaps as Lila—for it was Lila who was the guilty person—she hoped that it would. She had painstakingly copied Molly's handwriting with just enough fidelity to the original to make anyone who knew it believe that the letter came from her.

Other factors affected Bertie Lou. Inquisitiveness chiefly. It drove her back to Rod. Inquisitiveness plus an aching yearning to see for herself if he really had succumbed to Lila's charms. Her friends in Wayville were beginning to comment upon her prolonged absence from her husband. They would soon be declaring that she had left him, Bertie Lou feared.

And she hadn't left him. There had been no final break, no incontrovertible proof that Rod was unfaithful. Neither had he suggested a permanent separation. She spoke tentatively to her mother about returning to him and was convinced at once that she had been a cause for worry.

"Yes, I really think you should," her mother said; "tho we shall miss you dreadfully."

Bertie Lou smiled over the relief in her mother's voice. "I'm afraid Rod will be thinking we've kept you too long," Mrs. Ward went on happily. "The dear boy has been so very patient. It must have been terribly lonesome for him without you."

Mother and daughter glanced at each other and then both looked quickly away. Each was wondering how near or how far from the truth those words had been.

The mother never had accepted Lila's friendship with Bertie Lou as genuine, a thing to be trusted, though she had kept her opinion from her daughter lest she worry her needlessly. She could be mistaken, perhaps, she told herself.

Bertie Lou would not let her mother know what she thought of Rod's loneliness, though she suspected that her mother had wondered at her willingness to remain away from him all these weeks and months.

She had surprised her mother's gaze bent upon her in grave meditation on many occasions lately. It was time to return to Rod and

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ALTURA, Calif., Aug. 6.—A test of the new city well drilled here recently to a depth of 1,250 feet showed that there was no diminishment of the supply after several hours pumping at the rate of 750 gallons per minute and City Engineer S. A. Mushen states that a never failing supply of water has been struck at this depth. Within the next two weeks a 1,000-gallon pump and a 300,000-gallon storage tank will be installed and with the addition of this new equipment the city will be supplied with water by operating the pumps on an 8-hour day basis. At the present time the pumps are kept working 19 hours daily.

With the close of the present month, it is expected that a total of 400 new water connections will have been made. This includes connections in business establishments and residences. The municipally-owned water system of this place, first put in operation in 1912, has proven a huge success to the town financially and when an additional \$50,000.00 bond issue was called for recently, there were few dissenting votes.

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TWO DROWNED NEAR PENDLETON

PENDLETON Ore., Aug. 6. (AP)—Eva Stange, 17, lost her life yesterday in an unsuccessful attempt to rescue Glen Robinson of Ione as the two were swimming in a slough on the Columbia river. Midway across the slough Robinson suffered an attack of cramps. The girl swam to his side. Both drowned.

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