

LOVE FOR TWO

RUTH DEWEY GROVES

CHAPTER XXX

Bertie Lou experienced a gratifying sense of action in speeding along the highway with Marco in his open roadster. The rush of a cool wind in her face, the soft whirr of the motor—these were in perfect movement, activity—even danger she courted.

Marco took a curve on two wheels and Bertie Lou was thrown over against him before he got the car on all four wheels again.

But she did not protest. Rather, she stole a glance at her, thinking she might be too frightened to speak. There was no hint of fear on her countenance.

"You're a nifty girl," he complimented her. "I hate squealers."

"Go as fast as you like," Bertie Lou told him.

But Marco was through. He didn't dare get another ticket. Neither did he want an accident. His father's ultimatum, delivered in dead earnest just before he sailed for Europe a few weeks since, had left Marco duly impressed.

They arrived safely at Sherard's. And Marco was hungry so they took a secluded table and dined without dancing. While they awaited the hors d'oeuvre he offered Bertie Lou another cocktail. She did not refuse so Marco poured the drinking water back into the jar and added the cocktails to the ice that was left in the glasses.

Bertie Lou was not accustomed to drinking. The gin she had taken at the apartment was the first she had tasted since her sudden departure for Wayville. And it was after nine o'clock now—nothing to eat since a bit of salad at lunch. Still she did not feel that drink—the fresh air had overcome its effect.

The orchestra was playing a sentimental waltz. It was too sad to be endured. Bertie Lou wanted to be gay. She drank the second cocktail in Marco's manner—all at once.

"Let's dance," she pleaded, but Marco said no. Said he wouldn't until he'd had something to eat. The food was served but Bertie Lou was now no longer in the mood for leaving the table. There was a curious numbness in her finger tips and she felt as if her clothing was all that held her up.

"You'd better eat something," Marco advised, watching her as she pushed the third plate away.

He didn't want her to feel her drinks too much. A girl who had to be dragged around the dance floor was a flat tire as far as he was concerned. He liked 'em peppy. They could get "half-ill" if they wanted to, but he objected to having them pass out entirely.

Bertie Lou wouldn't eat so he didn't order anything to drink. After dinner they drove again for an hour and then returned to the dance. When Marco wanted a drink he went out to the bar and got it. Until Bertie Lou reprimanded him. It was one o'clock. The place would close at two. Marco ordered highballs, but Bertie Lou surprised him. She drank only half of hers.

Nothing could make her gay. She knew that. No use making herself sick with stuff she didn't want. She'd broken that silly promise to Rod. That was all she wanted to do. Now she would see if he cared—should he find it out.

Marco came upstairs with her and unlocked her door. She let him come in to say good night to her.

Bertie Lou snapped on a switch and the hall was filled with faint light from a golden Chinese lamp. She put out her hand to Marco.

He ignored it and kissed her on the mouth.

Bertie Lou was too surprised to speak. Earlier in the evening he had tried to kiss her and she'd told him not to make a mistake about that. . . . If he wanted kisses he could take somebody else out. He had been so ready to take her at her word that she hadn't expected him to try again.

"Good night, Mrs. Bryer," he said coolly, and Bertie Lou was rather startled by the swiftness of his departure. She tried the door behind him just to see that the lock had caught, then turned toward her bedroom just as a light was snapped on in the living room.

Rod was standing beside the davenport tying the sash of his dressing gown. Bertie Lou saw that he had made a bed for himself there—a bed that was in full view of the front door. He must have seen Marco kiss her!

"Yes, I saw it," he said; "if you're wondering about that." Bertie Lou smiled. "No attempt to hide it," she replied serenely. "What's the sentence going to be?"

"Do you want a divorce?" Rod asked bluntly.

Bertie Lou took it well. Inwardly she quivered from the blow but Rod saw only a nonchalant exterior.

"How about you?" she countered. For a moment they faced each other quietly and steadily. It was agony for Bertie Lou, and Rod was not happy either.

He was doomed, he felt, to misery, even as Bertie Lou herself felt that misery would be her fate. He did not want a divorce. What good would it do him? He did not know that Lila loved him, but even if he had known he would not have wanted to put himself in a position to tempt her to leave Cyrus.

A divorce would mean a lot of trouble; his parents would grieve over it, and he and Bertie Lou would have to endure Wayville's gossip for nothing—for nothing, that is, unless a divorce would add to someone's happiness. Perhaps it would be Bertie Lou's.

"I'd rather give you a divorce than witness another scene like that," he told her quietly. "You ought to be free for that sort of thing."

Bertie Lou felt a surge of relief come over her. That sounded as if he really cared! "That was only a little war tax," she laughed. "But of course if you object . . ."

"I expected you to give any man a chance to laugh at me," Rod interrupted.

"Then you don't object to anything short of a little good night kiss?" Bertie Lou came back, covering her seriousness with an arch smile.

"You may do as you please as long as you don't forget that you're married," Rod replied coldly.

Bertie Lou looked at him with eyes ablaze for a full moment. Then: "May I hope that you will not forget it either?" she cried, coming closer to him.

"Bertie Lou!" he exclaimed sharply, "you've been drinking."

Bertie Lou challenged him with lifted chin and defiant expression.

"What if I have?" she stormed. "You've just given me permission to do as I please. But that's a good joke coming from you!" she stopped and laughed in his face. Rod winced under her sneering tone. She had left him for months, with only brief, cold notes exchanged between them, yet he felt not entirely innocent of blame. He could not help caring for Lila but he regretted it. If Bertie Lou had known about it she could not have said more cutting things, he thought.

"You may make terms, too," he said quietly. "If you think we can live together, I don't want a divorce. I'd rather not have one if there's a chance we can make a go of it, each in our own way." The last words came with significant meaning.

Bertie Lou went just a little white, she feared. "I'll be easier on you," she said steadily, "because I know how hard it is to remember you're married." She meant him to believe that marriage was as much a handicap to her as to him. He believed it. "Any time it's impossible to remember it let me know first," he returned. "I promise the same to you."

Bertie Lou whirled toward the door. In the hall she halted, to ask him why he didn't use the guest room.

"If you'll put some sheets on the bed I will," Rod answered calmly.

Bertie Lou went on. In a few minutes she called to him that the room was ready. Rod entered as she left.

"Thank you," he said. Bertie Lou did not answer.

"Good night," he added. Very faint and indistinct came her reply as she hurried down the hall. He heard her door close quietly. But there was no sound to tell him what the closed door meant to her.

So this was marriage!

No matter how many dreams you brought to it, marriage became, finally, a thing of the earth. Bertie Lou, in a heap on the bed, laughed through bitter tears.

Funny things—people. All about them were the wrecks of marriages, yet the poor dumb creatures went on marrying in the belief that they could escape the common curse.

Bertie Lou recalled the high hopes that had filled her heart on the night before her wedding. They were nothing now but

bleaching bones on the highway to heartbreak. Once clothed in the exquisite promises of love they seemed to Bertie Lou like naked skeletons as she reviewed them after a year of marriage.

Rod had forgotten all about it—but the next day was their first wedding anniversary. When it dawned Bertie Lou was sunken-eyed and shaky, but game to make the best of things.

"Life's a rotten affair," she soliloquized and got up to pull down the shade on the hot summer light. "But it's just the same for all of us; no use to whine. Maybe someday . . . if we take our love together to some sky! . . . some sky that isn't filled with skyscrapers . . . now stop crying, silly . . . wedding days don't go on forever. Who'd want them to? Couldn't eat honey and sip nectar all the time. But that doesn't mean there aren't other pleasant things in the world once we know the whole thing's a dump heap anyhow."

Having come to her decision not to leave Rod until he wanted to be free, Bertie Lou fell into a light sleep. At 8 o'clock Rod knocked on her door and she sat up in bed with a nervous start. "Come in," she called, doing her best not to let her voice betray her hope that he had remembered their anniversary. (To Be Continued)

THREE DROWNED

NANAIMO, B. C., Aug. 8. (A P)—A woman and two children were drowned in a boating accident at Boat harbor, eight miles southeast of Nanaimo last night according to meager advices reaching here. A Mrs. Mines of Island Park, Burnaby, an 8-year-old boy named Cummings, and another boy whose name was not given, were the victims. A three-year-old child, who was at first thought drowned, escaped.

Mr. Edge has been named ambassador to France. He'll have to be pretty sharp to put anything over on these foreign diplomats.

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INSPECTOR HERE TO INVESTIGATE

United States Postal Inspector George G. Rolfe was in this city Wednesday investigating the robbery of the Mt. Hebron, Calif., postoffice and the store there. The robbery occurred on the evening of July 26. Carlton Zitter, who gave officers here the name of Dick Payne and who stated his home was in Cleveland, Ohio, assertedly confessed the robbery.

He stated that he entered the store of Lloyd Stevenson and being unable to find money, entered the postoffice department in the store. There he hid the inspector he opened seven or eight letters but found no money. A federal warrant has been issued and a United States marshal is expected from San Francisco within the next few days.

Rolfe yesterday praised the work of Klamath county officers in apprehending the youth, stating that "northern California and southern Oregon officers surely have been of great help to us."

Ambassador Dawes persists in refusing to wear those knee breeches. In a verbal way, however, he would be a perfect success on any golf course.

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NOTED AUTHOR FOUND DEAD IN HER ROOM

Disappointed When Publication of Books Fell Off.

CHICAGO, Aug. 8. (AP)—Mary MacLane, a successful author 15 years ago, died last night in a lonely room on the fringe of Chicago's black-and-tan belt. The author of "I, Mary MacLane," "Men Who Have Made Love to Me," and other romantic writings, Miss MacLane had virtually disappeared. It was some time after her death before it was realized she was the Mary MacLane whose romantic adventures as well as her books had stirred the imaginations of the

reading public of a few years ago. No one was at her bedside as she died. Her body was found by the proprietor of the small hotel where she had lived for the last four years. Her death, a doctor's certificate said, was due to natural causes. Miss MacLane's retirement about six years ago was believed to have been caused by disappointment. It came after the sale of her books had fallen off and financial reverses set in. Ill health added to her troubles.

She graduated from a Butte, Mont., high school.

STRAUB RESIGNS

EUGENE, Aug. 8. (AP)—Dr. John Straub, dean emeritus and professor of Greek at the University of Oregon, will conclude his active teaching work in October, 1930, rounding out 52 years of service to the institution and 53 years of teaching. Announcement of his resignation was received by the University yesterday. He will continue to make his home in Eugene.



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