

# LOVE FOR TWO

## RUTH DEWEY GROVES

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

CHAPTER XLVIII

Rod stepped into the tiny hall and then halted abruptly. For a few seconds he fancied he had entered the wrong house. That was absurd. This was Baker's place, all right. But what was going on? Who could be here? "Why, Baker, of course," he told himself, though still puzzled. He'd never thought about the possibility of the man having a wife. This looked like a woman's work. But it was funny they hadn't waited until he was out of the house. Perhaps they wanted him to leave at once.

He was still in the hall when suddenly he was rooted to the spot by a greeting called out to him from the kitchen. Was this an hallucination?

"Rod, is that you?" the voice sounded, a bit shaky. "Come out and help me with the steak, will you?"

Rod moved on into the living room, feeling just as he should have felt—completely bewildered. This couldn't be! Now he knew he was the victim of his own mind. His brooding over the past had brought him to the verge of insanity.

That table. He stood staring at it, without answering the voice from the kitchen. Oh, he was still too sane for that! Of course there were no places laid for two, no gorgeous red roses, and a lace cloth.

Then he sniffed. "Oh, Lord," he groaned, "do I only imagine that heavenly smell?"

"Well, aren't you coming?" The voice from the kitchen was growing impatient—just like a wife's. For answer he moved over and touched the roses. Their feel was unmistakable. Did people imagine they felt things, too—things that weren't there? Rod had a touch of panic.

"If you did you never could have believed what you told Lila!"

"Lila!" Rod repeated dully.

"Yes," Bertie Lou faced him with her head high and her cheeks aflame. "Lila told me what you saw at Marco Palmer's house. I went to her when I learned that she had been out here. Oh, Rod," she hurried on in a rush, "how could you believe such a thing?"

Rod stared at her a moment in dumb questioning. Then: "My God, what a blind fool I've been," he exclaimed bitterly. "Bertie Lou, you will never forgive me, will you?"

Bertie Lou sank into a chair and buried her face on her arms. Rod came over and knelt beside her. "Listen to me, please," he begged. Bertie Lou did not raise her head. Neither did she draw away from the hand he put tentatively on her arm.

"I must have been mad," he went on, "but I have some excuse, Bertie Lou. I had been disillusioned, and I was sure you didn't love me. You went away in such an unaccountable fashion; you hardly wrote—just short, cool notes. . . ."

"I knew about you and Lila," Bertie Lou interrupted in muffled tones. "I found out before I went away."

"There wasn't anything to find out then," Rod said with painful honesty.

Now Bertie Lou raised her head. "You told me a lie," she charged him reproachfully. "I told you you had worked at the office, or something. And you had been to Lila's apartment!"

"Yes," Rod admitted. "I had, but I couldn't tell you why, Bertie Lou. I didn't want to worry you."

"And you were there when I called your office just after I got that telegram from home," Bertie Lou added. "I knew then that you were in love with Lila."

"No, don't say that!" Rod pleaded. "I won't lie to you again, ever, even for your own sake. Please believe me. I didn't care much for Lila then—except that I believed her a wonderful friend. Later I thought I did. But it has been you, Bertie Lou, first, last and always since I first loved you. And there was nothing with Lila that I can't tell you about."

"And you had a date the first night you were home," he reminded her.

"It surprised Marco more than it did you," Bertie Lou answered, smiling. "I never would have gone out with him if you hadn't told me you were having dinner with the Lorees."

And so they went on, bringing up their grievances, laying them, clearing away their misunderstandings and coming nearer to each other than they ever had been before.

Suddenly Rod remembered that Bertie Lou's presence in the Baker cottage was unexplained. "Tell me how you happen to be here," he urged her.

"It's where I should be," she boasted proudly. "Right in our own home!"

She enjoyed Rod's evident perplexity, but she did not keep him long in suspense. "I had this house built with the money you sent me," she told him. "Lila did us one good turn, even if she didn't mean to. She forced us to save some money."

"But \$2,000 wouldn't build this house," Rod protested.

Bertie Lou put her hands on his shoulders and looked into his eyes. "Don't say it that way," she cautioned him. "It sounds as if you didn't believe me. And we must never doubt each other again. Or lie. One little lie led to all the trouble we had."

"But it began before that—the night of our wedding. I asked myself if you loved me. I should have believed that you wouldn't have married me if you didn't. And I should have kept on believing it."

Rod took her hands off his shoulders and pressed them to his lips. "A man never had a sweeter bride," he told her, "but a man's a man, Bertie Lou. And that means that sometimes he's a fool. Only a wise woman can help him then. You were too proud and too good."

Bertie Lou smiled at him.

"Well, try it again," she warned him, "and I'll fight for you like a fishwife."

"I think I'll stick to the hearthside," Rod replied. "But I still would like to know how you financed this house. And that doesn't mean that I think you stole the money or anything like that, but just as a matter of curiosity. . . ."

"I bought it on terms, of course, silly. And 'tis half yours. You were the first person to answer my ad."

"With chicken feed in my pocket! But I've got a position. I take possession of a cage on Monday. It's special work and there will be a lot of overtime, but it's with a big organization and now that I've something to work for besides bread and butter. . . ."

"Thank goodness I've found a paying tenant for this house at last," Bertie Lou applauded. "You don't know how I've worried about the future payments."

Rod laughed. "You can sell the flowers and vegetables I've grown. A lot of your five dollars a week went for seed."

"Then you must have been living on crackers and cheese," Bertie Lou declared, jumping up. "And I've the loveliest dinner for you! But you will have to help me with the steak."

"I can cook it to the queen's taste," Rod assured her. Suddenly Bertie Lou paused over lifting the steak to the broiler.

"You said that the first time we cooked a meal in our own home," she reminded him.

"This is a new start, too," Rod replied solemnly. "And this time we will make a go of it, won't we, Bertie Lou?"

"Let's go right out after dinner and send telegrams to our parents," Bertie Lou suggested; "and I've got to telephone poor little Beattie Rogers. She will sit up for me I'm afraid. She never trusted you very much and I think she guessed that I was head over heels in love with my caretaker. And she may do over that I've brought a week-end bag. I expected you to leave tonight," she added naively.

"Tell her that you've given me the job for life," Rod said. "I'm never going to stop taking care of you again."

"For five dollars a week?"

"For love of the only girl in the world!"

THE END

FIRST WRIST WATCH  
The first wrist watch, a bracelet to which a watch was attached, was presented by the Earl of Leicester to Queen Elizabeth in 1572.

ELECTRICAL TERMS  
Among the electrical terms named for those who introduced them are volt, ampere, ohm and watt.

### ANSWER TO LETTER GOLF

Here is the answer to the Letter Golf puzzle on page 4:  
KING, KINE, LINE, LONE, CONE, COLE.

In 1847 ballstones that measured 14 inches in circumference are said to have fallen in New South Wales. Others weighing four and one-half pounds were reported after a storm at Casoria, Spain, in June, 1829.

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He drove out to the kitchen like a veritable madman. He would find out if he could see the owner of that voice! If he could . . . then there was no doubt about it. . . . he was ready for the straightjacket.

He saw her, standing before the kitchen table, fusing with a thick steam, and not trusting herself to look up at him. He lifted his arm and drew his coat-sleeve across his eyes. Bertie Lou waited for him to say something. She heard only a half-suppressed sound of helpless misery that brought her head up with a jerk.

"Why, what's the matter with you?" she cried and rushed over as though she feared he was going to fall and she could save him. Her touch on his arm had a strange effect. What happened then was far from Bertie Lou's plans.

Rod simply took her and held her. Held her as a drowning man would hold to life. Bertie Lou could scarcely breathe. And she couldn't think at all. A humorous phrase came to her mind—"this is so sudden." It made her laugh. And the laugh, though it was barely audible for lack of strength behind it, was a sound of pure happiness. No, she was not thinking.

But she had to breathe, and when she finally struggled out of Rod's embrace she remembered in a rush all that she had forgotten in this last moment.

Bertie Lou allowed him to take her hands. "Will you let me tell you why I lied to you?" he asked she struggled for faith in which to break the silence in him. She nodded.

Then Rod told her about the necklace and the bracelets. "She did that to cause trouble between us!" Bertie Lou cried at one point in the story. "Oh, Rod, if only you had told me why you had to save your money!"

"I couldn't when you came back from Wayville," he answered. "You had changed so. I mean I thought you had. I'm ashamed of it, Bertie Lou, but I didn't believe you would want to pay Lila the insurance money."

"I know. She had made you think I was a selfish little beast," Bertie Lou said.

Rod took her hands off his shoulders and pressed them to his lips. "A man never had a sweeter bride," he told her, "but a man's a man, Bertie Lou. And that means that sometimes he's a fool. Only a wise woman can help him then. You were too proud and too good."

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By George Clark



"I ain't saying prohibition's here to stay, but the saloon will never come back."

### Freckles and His Friends



ALL RIGHT, BOYS—WE'RE READY TO GO!!

ALL ABOARD!!

WELL—WE'RE OFF! HANG ON NOW!

G'BYE FRECKLES—G'BYE TLAGALONGS!!

### Some Vacation



GEE—I HATE TO LEAVE LINDY AN' MY DOG—YOU'LL TAKE GOOD CARE OF 'EM, WON'T YOU, DAN?

DEED I WILL, TAG!

YOU'VE HAD A GREAT VACATION THIS YEAR, HAIN'T YOU FRECKLES?

### By Blosser



IT SURE WAS SOME VACATION, UNCLE HARRY!!

### Mom'n Pop



WE MUST BE ON THE WRONG ROAD. THEY TOLD US IT WAS ONLY TEN MILES TO THE NEXT TOWN AND WE'VE ALREADY GONE FIFTEEN

THIS LOOKS LIKE A SIGN AHEAD. SLOW UP A LITTLE, CHICK

GIVE ME THE FLASHLIGHT AND I'LL SEE WHAT IT SAYS

### Pop's All Wet



WHERE ARE WE?

I CAN'T MAKE IT OUT. I'LL HAVE TO SHIN UP THE POLE

WHAT DOES IT SAY, POP?

WET PANN!

### By Gowan



WHAT DOES IT SAY, POP?

WET PANN!