

• SERIAL STORY

LUCKY PENNY

BY GLORIA KAYE

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THE STORY: Wealthy Penny Kirk has returned from Paris to Kirktown to learn something about the great steel mills...

CHAPTER VII

SUNLIGHT had a way of softening Penny's resolutions. She had determined to be angry, and to raise the roof when she visited the Kirk offices...

"What's the smart approach?" she asked herself, sitting up to greet the day. "I know. They'll naturally think I'm dumb. I'll just play dumb."

She picked a well-tailored suit from her wardrobe. To it, she added her furs. Standing before the mirror, she practiced a few suitable facial expressions...

Somehow, she felt overdressed. What a vast world of difference separated Penelope Kirk and Penny Kellogg, she reflected.

The elevator lifted her swiftly to the 14th floor. A pleasant receptionist smiled a cheery "Good morning. May I help you?"

From her repertoire, Penny selected a bored look. She managed to tilt her nose a couple of notches. "Tell Mr. Stimson that Penelope Kirk is here to see him. And please hurry," she said.

The surprised receptionist jumped to her feet. "Yes, Miss Kirk. Won't you please be seated?" She flew to Mr. Stimson's office with the startling news.

PENNY examined the elaborate and expensively decorated reception room. Its rich carpeting and marble-floored easy chairs were luxurious.

Mr. Stimson, perfectly groomed as befitted the supervisor of an industry so vast as the Kirk steel enterprises, hurried down the corridor to greet Penny.

"My, my, Miss Kirk," he panted, out of breath as a result of his unusual exertion. "This is a most pleasant surprise. I had no idea you were anywhere near here. I thought you were in New York."

"New York," Penny said, "is such a bore." "Yes. Yes. It is, isn't it?" he said. "Won't you come into my office?" Deferentially, he led the way.

"You might give me a cigaret, old dear," Stimson was obviously flattered by her intimate salutation. He felt more at ease. He smiled as he offered her his cigaret case.

"Well, now that I am here, I suppose I should make the best of it." Then, reflectively, she said, "There is something you can do for me, if you will."

"Just ask, Miss Kirk," he said, eagerly. "I'll be glad to do anything I can."

"My grandfather certainly had some unusual ideas about building a house. I want to make some changes. Could you recommend the best architect in town?"

"Why, yes, Miss Kirk," said Stimson. "I'd recommend Johnathan and Jones. They're the architects who designed my home. Shall I call them?"

"No, thanks. I'll drop in and see them. Just something to do, you know." She rose from the chair that enveloped her. "Thank you so much. I really must be going. By the way, Mr. Stimson, please don't mention my visit to the newspapers or to anyone else. I'm here for a rest. I'll call you again."

HE bowed low, regretted her refusal to have dinner with him, and promised to care for her every whim. She knew he would breathe a sigh of relief the moment the elevator door separated them.

Penny had learned what she wanted to know about the executives of the Kirk mills. Even this short visit revealed how little they knew or cared about Kirktown.

She found the offices of Johnathan and Jones, architects. The reception room was small and practical. The girl at the switchboard doubled as a typist. Her greeting was business-like, brief.

Penny liked Charlie Jones the minute she saw him. He was in his shirt-sleeves, studying two sets of drawings offered to him by two young men.

"Sit down. I'll be with you in a minute," he told Penny, without interrupting his study. He suggested a change, asked a question, and sent his assistants back to their desks.

"Now," he said, smiling pleasantly, "what can I do for you?" "I'd like to order a model village," Penny said.

Charlie Jones was struck dumb. "What... what was that you said?"

Penny laughed. "I just said I'd like to order a model village." Then she continued, eagerly. She introduced herself, assured him he wasn't dreaming, and outlined briefly her plan. From her purse she extracted a clipping.

"Here's a story," she said, "about the model defense village of 300 homes built by an airplane plant to house its workers. The village was built so swiftly that it was finished before people in the vicinity knew what was happening. I want 500 houses, built the same way, on the plateau above the present site of Kirktown."

WHEN he had sufficiently recovered his senses, he caught and enlarged upon Penny's enthusiasm. This, Charlie Jones assured her, had always been his greatest ambition in life. To plan,

to build, to work out the details of just such a project, was the Jones idea of heaven.

They talked about comfortable, low-cost houses. They talked about pleasant, shady streets. They located stores in a convenient shopping center. They found room for a swimming pool and playgrounds. They were playing an exciting game.

"Only one thing I must insist upon," said Penny. "I want absolute secrecy. Nobody is to know just what we're doing until it's all done. I want a good job. I want it fast. I want no publicity."

Charlie Jones assured her he'd respect her wishes. His eyes were dancing for joy as he shook her hand. She hadn't been out of his office a minute before all his young assistants poured from their cubbyholes to crowd into his tiny work-room. She knew she had come to the right place and to the right man.

A taxi took her to the bus stop. The slow-moving Kirktown "express" dropped her in front of the Courier office just as the whistle blew for the 4 o'clock train. She slipped happily down the steps.

"Hello Jim," she greeted cheerfully, sailing her straw hat accurately toward a nail on the wall. "How'd tricks?"

"Hya, Penny," Jim smiled. Jim watched her admiringly as Penny swung easily into the routine of her work. He wanted to tell her how much he had missed her, even for a few hours—how much he needed her. Instead—

"By the way, Penny, I almost forgot," he said. "You start on your story assignment at the Kirk mills tomorrow. Everything's arranged, provided you promise to be good."

"I'll be good," she answered. "Good and scared. Heaven help the poor working girl alone in a steel mill with 3000 men."

(To Be Continued)

HOLD EVERYTHING!



"Jones, I'm afraid you're forgetting what you're supposed to stuff around here!"

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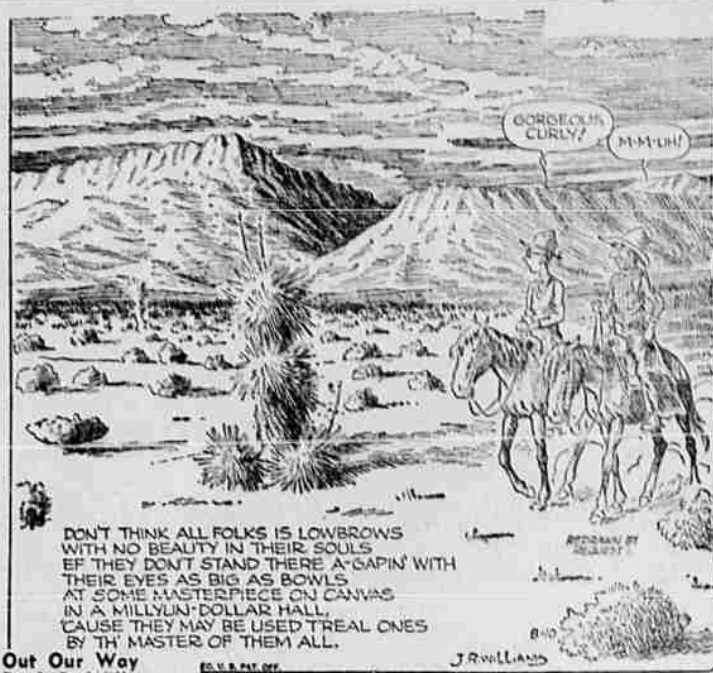
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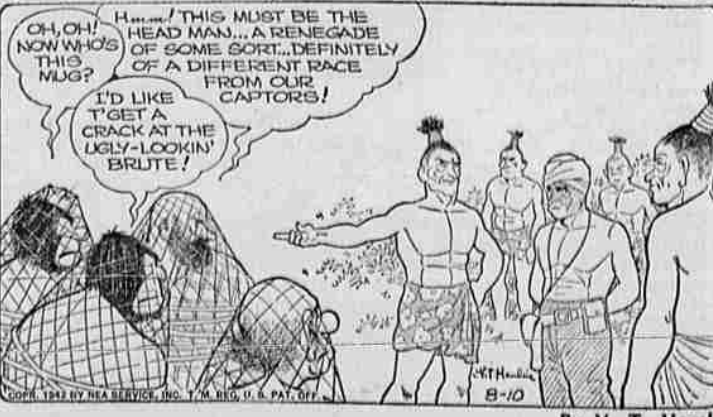
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