

"Business Kisses"

By BEATRICE BURTON

Author of "Gloria, The Flapper Wife"

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Rose sank back into a corner of the wide seat, with her eyes wide and tears coming fast. She wanted a look at it.

"You know I'm wild about you, Mary Rose, don't you?" Tom said huskily. "When are you going to marry me?—You know you have no more chance of getting away from me than—than Custer's Last Stand! Don't you?"

CHAPTER V

Mary Rose had no answer to give him, he sat perfectly still in her corner of the car. And Tom said nothing more, but looked grimly ahead of him until the wheels crunched on the gravel driveway of the Pepper Pot restaurant.

Then as he opened the door and she stepped out, he took hold of both of her slim wrists and drew her slowly toward him. Mary Rose could feel that he trembled—could feel his breath on her cool cheek.

"Look here, why do you act this way?" he asked. "Why do you freeze up when I kiss you? You say you like me, and then you won't let me touch you."

With sudden passion he drew her closer. But before he could touch her lips Mary Rose pulled herself away from him.

"Don't, Tom, everybody'll see you," she said sharply, and started for the long, low white building whose windows glamed like squares of gold against the darkness. He followed her.

"There's nobody around to see us," he said sullenly. "And if you gave a snap of your fingers about me, you wouldn't care if there was! Look out!"

A huge D-xter automobile, with flazing headlights, rushed past them, its wheel grazing Mary Rose's skirts. Tom looked after it wrathfully as it swerved into the farthest corner of the yard and came to a dead stop.

"The fool! He almost hit you," he exclaimed, holding Mary Rose close. "Why doesn't he watch where he's going?"

But Mary Rose wasn't listening. Her eyes were on the car. She knew that great blue car with its nickel trimmings! It was a special Dexter Eight and it belonged to Hilary H. Dexter himself.

"I must be sure to tell Flossie that she's not the only girl who runs around with Hilary Dexter!" she thought. "I wonder who's with him tonight in that car of his?"

It was not until she and Tom were sitting across from each other at a little corner table that another thought struck her. Suppose it were Flossie who was with Dexter, now, tonight?

"Excuse me a minute, Tom," she said, jumping up. "I want to go into the dressing room to powder my nose."

Tom rose, too. "And I was just thinking that you were the only girl I know who doesn't make up her face every fifteen minutes," he said regretfully.

Mary Rose flashed a smile at him and was gone.

The dressing room was at the end of a long, narrow hall that ran from one end of the farmhouse to the other. As Mary Rose walked toward it she saw that there were little private dining rooms on either side. The door of one of them stood open and as she passed it Mary Rose caught a glimpse of a man and a girl within.

"Now, why do they eat in there when they could be out in the big room where the crowd and the music are?" she wondered. "I don't see what fun there is in coming to a place like this and then having supper in a poky little room."

Mary Rose groaned. She might have known that Flossie wasn't going to the library. Not Flossie, who never read anything but motion picture magazines and style books. She's never go to the library in a lifetime!

"She may have met Sam Jessup, somewhere, too," her mother went on. "I heard her phoning some one this afternoon, and she may have been planning to meet him—but I wish she'd come home. It makes me so nervous, not knowing where she is at 9 o'clock at night."

Mary Rose looked at her cheap little wrist watch. It was 9 o'clock; she hadn't realized how the hours had flown since she and Tom had driven into the courtyard of the Pepper Pot.

"Tom, I think I ought to go home," she said when she joined him in the outer hall, where he stood leaning against the wall smoking a cigaret.

He looked down at her. "Why?" he asked shortly.

"Well, my mother says that Flossie left the house three or four hours ago—and she hasn't come back," Mary Rose explained as they walked back to their table.

"Was she alone?"

"No, she was with Alice James. They told mother they were going to the library for a book." She began to laugh suddenly. "Imagine Flossie or Alice James reading! I bet neither one of them had ever opened a book since they left high school!"

"They're a pair of wild kids—" Tom looked at her gravely. "But they're probably safe and sound sitting in a movie somewhere. Still, if you think you ought to go home and look them up—"

Mary Rose shook her head. "No, we'll have our dessert and coffee first," she said. She didn't want to leave Tom's party. "Then we'll go."

"I want to ask you something, and I want a straightaway answer," he said quietly. "Why don't you ever let me hold your hands? I really want to know."

"Because I don't like any hands," she answered promptly and with decision.

"Not anyone?"

Mary Rose's voice quivered. But she told the truth.

"Not anyone—who's ever tried to hold them?" she said, looking away.

"Mary Rose, you're in love with some one. I've known it, somehow, all along," he answered, after a long silence. "Who is it?"

(To Be Continued)

SALESMAN \$AM—By SWAN



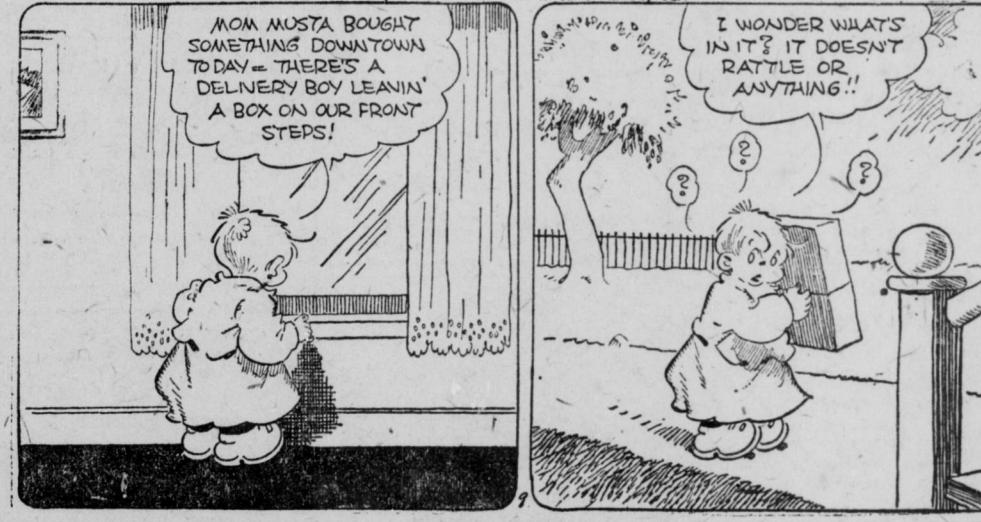
OUR BOARDING HOUSE—By AHERN



BOOTS AND HER BUDDIES—By MARTIN



FRECKLES AND HIS FRIENDS—By BLOSSER



SANDY by ELENORE MEHERIN, Author of "CHICKIE"

CHAPTER CXVIII

He stood at the kitchen door, his back to Judith.

Judith noticed the slump of his shoulders; the lighted cigarette that he flicked but didn't smoke.

She noticed the white hydrangeas that in one moonlight had bloomed with such mysterious, arresting beauty—bloomed behind two figures clasped joyously in each other's arms.

The hydrangeas looked dusty in the sunlight—dusty against the blue walls of the kitchen porch. Judith now thought resentfully.

Douglas turned, shoved a hand wearily over his hair. "They're taking a devil of a time."

"Yes; they are."

They avoided miserably each other's eyes.

Tuesday morning—morning of freedom—sunny March morning, Douglas came over to the table, stared at the newspapers spread out as Judith's sister had left them.

Splashed all over the front page were pictures of himself and Sandy. Vivid dramatic accounts of the sensational widow of the Worth under-case. An artist's sketch of Sandy as she stood with the sunlight falling on her white, haunting face; as she stood in that moment just before she faded; just as she called out:

"Douglas—oh, you hear—Douglas, I didn't do it—I couldn't."

"I can't think of anything nicer than to have supper with you every night, all the rest of my life," he went on, showing his white teeth in a grin. But his eyes were serious.

The girl only looked at him. She tried to laugh, but she couldn't. She knew that Tom was going to ask her to marry him again, and that she ought to say, "Yes." But could she?

"There's a white house out near my father's farm—a little white

durable ... how incredible all this—

Distracted scenes trooped through his mind—cell—Conners spattering tobacco juice on the floor—the tanks where a fellow sentenced to be hanged had walked—food eaten with his fingers. Then an office—man lying dead—someone creeping along the floor—creeping and moaning—

These scenes trooped through his mind in a shuddering disorder—nightmare scenes.

He followed Judith to the kitchen.

"She's better today, Judge."

"I thought so, Douglas. She seemed better today."

Then he sat down and leaned his chin on his fists. And again all those distorted images went through his mind. Another one followed these—the image of Emma. Emma had a way now of following him about—a way of coming up abruptly and searching his face. Of saying to him: "My boy—oh, my lad—don't be crushed—you must be yourself again."

He laughed at Emma. He was not himself—but he would be—he would be, of course—let her give him a little time—just a little time—

"Jude—how in the name of God did all this come to you and me? How did all this come to her?"

"Oh, not that bad, Jude?"

"I've feared it all along . . . the tank lit up some old tuberculosis . . . and that trip—and the frightful strain."

"But she was so gay this morning . . . on him . . . He shoved the newspapers. Lord—how violently un-

"I know—she will."

Then Douglas came with pitiful little boy trustfulness to Judith. "What did he tell you, Jude? We can save her? She's much brighter. She's better."

And it was like this for a week—Judith came so often and found him sitting at Sandy's bed—sitting there, holding her hand—or sometimes kissing her hand—pitiful and love in his eyes—love and pity in his voice—

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"Jude—how in the name of God did all this come to you and me? How did all this come to her?"

"I wonder about it, Douglas."

"Sandy wonders about it, too, Jude."

"Oh, if we could just get her over this—Jude, you and I could take her away."

Judith went up to him and pulled a chair to his side. "Yes—if we could do this, Douglas—

"It's coming to her. All her life

She thought: "I'm glad to be here—glad to be weak . . . Then he loves me more . . . He wants to care for me . . . Just a little while . . . Soon I'll have to give him up . . . I'll do this—I've learned—"

She thought all this to herself, planning for the day when she would be well and breezy and strong again.

Yet glad that day was still distant still far off.

She said eagerly: "Douglas, you looked at me as though you were older—why, as though you pitied me. And Douglas, in your heart you must surely think that it is I who have—who have put a terrible load on you. You blame me—no, don't stop me—but when you are alone, when you close the door of your room and shut me away and do not have my hand in yours, then you think, 'Why did she come into my life—why did I ever know her? Ah, you think this?'

He had his head lowered, the face hidden from her. Now he leaned down. "No, Sandy, I don't think this. I wonder why—why it came to you—to you and to me—yes. Yet we'll forget—we'll soon forget it all."

"Oh, say that!" She reached her hands to his face—she clung to him with her eyes. "Say that, Douglas, dear."

His eyes filled—pitiful and love, love and pity. He put his arms about her, wishing so to spare her. "I say, Sandy."

"I love you, Douglas—I worsen you." She gave a quick, gasp breath. "Oh, raise me up—quick!"

To Be Continued