

# "Business Kisses"

By BEATRICE BURTON

Author of "Gloria, The Flapper Wife"

The names in this story are purely fictitious and are not to be taken as referring to any particular person. Price 5¢

## CHAPTER LVIII

Flossie looked at her, listening intently.

"Yes, that's the Wheeler, all right," she said, drawing a long sobbing breath. "I suppose Sam thinks he's coming to take me home with him. But I just won't even see him, and you can tell him so. You can tell him I'm through with him forever and ever, amen."

But the surprise of her life was in store for her. Sam did not ask to see her, when he came. He did not want to see her. He distinctly said so.

"If your mother's here, I'd like to speak to her," he told Mary Rose, who let him in. His nice young face was very grim and he spoke with a certain dignity that had always been lacking in him before.

Before Mary Rose could call her mother, she heard her step on the stairs and she came into the room with her hair still in curl papers and her gray flannel kimono pinned around her.

"What have you to say for yourself, young man?" she asked, not even glancing at the chair that Sam held for her.

Sam gave a queer, sarcastic smile. "Well, I don't know whether I want to say it for myself, or not—but there are a couple of things I wanted to talk over with you."

He turned to Mary Rose. "May I speak to your mother, alone?" he asked, and with a nod, she turned and went out of the room.

But at the head of the stairs she stopped and stood still to listen. For to eavesdrop is a human failing and, now as she was, Mary Rose Middleton was very human. Most of us have listened to things not intended for our ears at some time or another in our faulty lives.

"You see this ring—and this—and this!" she heard him ask, and she knew that he was showing Mrs. Middleton the things that Hilary Dexter had given to Flossie. The sapphire and the vanity case of gold and jade, the cigarette holder that matched it and a string of tiny seed pearls that had been his last gift to her.

"Did you ever see these things before?" he asked, and Mrs. Middleton answered quietly that she never had.

"They belong to my wife. They were given to her by the man I work for," Sam went on, and Mary Rose heard a gasp of surprise close to her. Flossie had come on tiptoe out of the bedroom and was standing beside her.

"How did he know where I got them? I didn't tell him," she whispered.

Sam's next words answered her question. "You know I'm Dexter's secretary and I pay all his bills for him," he was saying. "And months ago I made out the checks to pay for these things. I remember them distinctly—I thought they were for his wife or his daughter. And all the time they were for my girl."

His voice broke on the last word. But after a pause he went on: "For months before I married Flossie I knew she was going around with some one besides me. But I thought if she'd found some fellow that she liked better than she did me, I'd step out when the time came. But I never dreamed that she was having a rotten affair with a married man! You can see how things were between them when he gave her things like this! Why, that one ring cost over \$1,000!"

At that Flossie gave a little moaning cry and ran down the stairs. "Sam Jessup, what you're saying is a lie!" she was raging at him, when Mary Rose followed her into the sitting room. "I don't care how much that ring cost—I never had a love affair with Dexter! I never cared two shakes of a dead lamb's tail about him!"

Sam cut her words short. "Yeah, that's why he gave you sapphire and pearls—because you hated him so!" His words grieved through his teeth. "Tell that to the judge, Flossie!"

The girl went white to the lips. "To the judge?" she whispered, her eyes fixed and staring. "You wouldn't try to divorce me, Sam, would you?"

Sam didn't answer at once. And Mary Rose, with a leaden sinking of her heart, realized that he had actually made up his mind to divorce Flossie.

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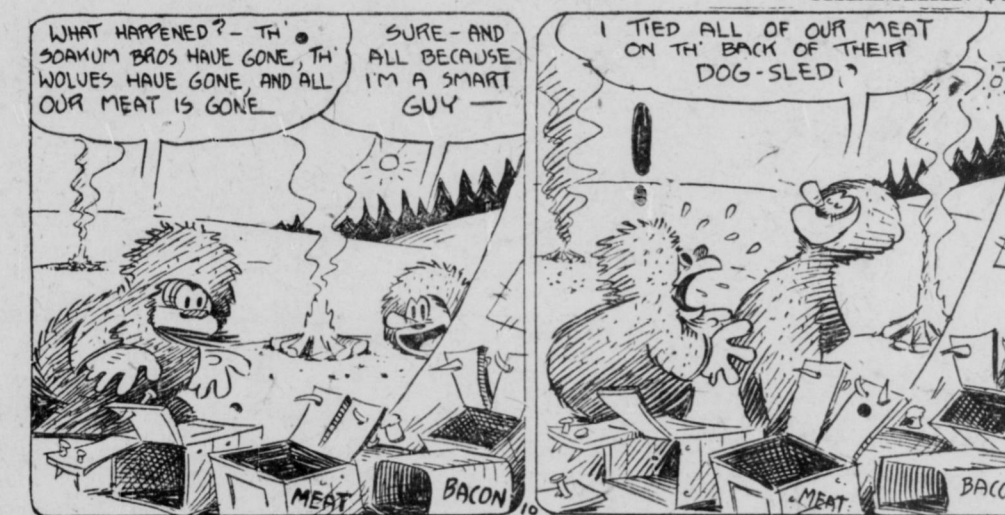
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"You'd get your death putting that cold wet thing on, when you go out again! You may be a doctor, but you don't know much!"

She spread the slicker out on two chairs before the kitchen stove, and found herself in his arms when she turned around from it. "No, don't!" she sighed, but he covered her protesting mouth with a long kiss, holding both of her hands crushed in one of his, while the other held her so close to him that their hearts beat against each other.

He kissed her again and again—on the soft curve of her cheek, the fluttering eyelids and the hollows of her throat where a little pulse beat.

He kissed her as if he never could have enough of her—and a few hours afterward, Mary Rose was thankful that she had let him kiss her that way.

"This is positively my last appearance here," he said to her, when he had lifted her up bodily and carried her down to the parlor and set her down in the chair before the glowing grate. "That is, unless you'll let me put this on your hand."

He drew the little wedding ring he had bought for her from his pocket. He looked up at her, and she was struck by the tired whiteness of his face.

"Either you tell me tonight that you'll marry me, or I'm never coming here again," he went on, in an almost matter-of-fact voice. "I can't stand seeing you, holding you in my arms, and then—going away from you. It's driving me out of my

mind—" He put his head down on her lap, and drew his hands down over her until they were clasped around her knees.

She stood up. "No, Tom, it's no use," she said, holding her aching head between her palms and slowly shaking it. "It's no use!"

She was still standing that way when she heard the front door slam behind him and the sound of his motor above the driving rain and wind.

It seemed only a few minutes later that the telephone in the hall startled her by its loud ringing.

She did not know the voice that answered her when she said "Hello."

"This is Miss Sims at the hospital," it informed her crisply. "Dr. Fitzroy has just been brought in, injured. Could you come here, right away?"

(To Be Continued)

## MR. FIXIT

Grape Vine Jungle Obstructs Thirty-Fourth St.

Let Mr. Fixit present your case to city officials. He is the Times' representative at the city hall. Write him at The Times.

The W. Thirty-Fourth St. jungle is marked by growths of wild grape vines, it would appear from a letter Mr. Fixit pursued today.

DEAR MR. FIXIT: Will you please see what you can do to get some grub and wild grape vines cut from both sides of 1467 and 1465 W. Thirty-Fourth St? They are so dense that they keep off the air and

MR. AND MRS. WALTER PECK, MR. AND MRS. M. GALE.

Board of health authorities are a bit doubtful of their legal powers in this instance, but have promised Mr. Fixit to make a thorough investigation.

DEAR MR. FIXIT: Will you please ask the city officials if since they have not enough money at the time to put in a new bridge over the canal at W. Twenty-Fifth St. for general traffic, would they construct a foot bridge there. NORTH-INDIANAPOLIS COMMUNITY CLUB.

Mr. Fixit has a ray of hope. The street superintendent's department hopes to obtain enough money from the gasoline tax fund soon to repair a number of bridges over the city. City council probably will authorize the money at its next session Monday.

DEAR MR. FIXIT: My garbage has not been emptied for three weeks. Will you please tell me why they miss our alley? I have a good can with a lid, as required.

MRS. ALMA CANDELL, 1505 Chester Ave.

Orders have been issued by the sanitary board to the collector on your route to get busy.

HAY COMES FIRST

SPRINGFIELD, Mass.—When there's hay to be done, what's a little matter of \$1,500,000? At least the hay had the call recently, when a meeting was called to decide a \$1,500,000 dairy pool merger. It was a fine day to rake and mow, and so many of the farmer-stockholders were absent that no vote could be taken.

14 CHILDREN BEFORE 28

HOLLISTER, Cal.—Mrs. Joseph Churchill, 107 years old, does her own housework and cooks the meals for her husband, 99, whom she married forty-nine years ago. She wears without glasses. Only one of fourteen children born to a previous marriage is alive. All of them were born before she was twenty-six years old.

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