

# "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.

CHAPTER LX

The rest of that black winter night always stood out in Mary Rose Middleton's mind like a weird and terrible dream. A hideous nightmare. The wild howling of the wind outside was part of it, and the beating of the savage storm against the windows of the hallway where she sat. So was the sickening medicinal smell of the hospital.

She remembered afterward how it, the Fitzroy's Japanese chauffeur had come up to speak to her, grinning to hide his grief. Fifteen years before it had been he who had taught young Tom to drive.

"Bad night—very rainy," he said. "I think poor Mr. Tom—he skid into other car. Man in other car hurt—poor Mr. Tom's neck broken! You see poor Mr. Tom's car all smashed down at corner of your street, eh?"

And it was not until then that Mary Rose realized that one of the wrecked cars she had passed on her way was the one in which she and Tom had raced with the wind so many, many times!

Slow tears rolled down her white cheeks, as she remembered how he had looked behind the driving wheel of that car. She could see him now, his red hair blown straight back, and his blue eyes narrowed as he guided the "stink wheel" over the roads of the open country, with her at his side.

Strong and laughing and brave with youth he had been—that was so crushed and broken, now. She got up and tiptoed into the room where he lay.

"We aren't giving him any more morphine for a while," Miss Sims whispered to her. "The minister'll be here, soon. Dr. Tom's father seems to think it'll make him happy to know you're married to him. I don't know—I don't believe much in these deathbed marriages, myself."

The door opened and Tom's father came in.

"Don't you want your mother here with you, Mary Rose?" he asked, putting his arm around her.

But Mary Rose shook her head.

Poor little mother—she thought—there had been enough sorrow and heartbreak in her life without adding this unhappy memory to it. This marriage of Mary Rose's to her old playfellow and friend on his deathbed.

She looked down at the gray face on the pillows, and saw that Tom had opened his eyes a little, once more, and was watching her with a great peace and contentment in them. She laid her hand, with its bright ring, lightly on the bandage that bound his forehead.

And suddenly something that he had said to her, long ago, flashed across her brain, like lightning across darkness—"Sometimes I know when things are going to happen to me, and I know this—that you and I are going to be married, sometimes, sure as death!"

Sure as death! And so they were going to be married—sure as death!

To Mary Rose it seemed as if death were waiting, somewhere out in the darkness, somewhere outside where the wind rattled the windows and doors like an impatient hand—She shivered.

At four o'clock the minister came to marry them—Dr. Broderick, of St. Thomas' church, where Tom had gone to Sunday School, and where as a young boy, he had sung in the choir.

Tom's mother had collapsed and was in a drugged sleep in the room across the hall. But his father and Miss Sims, in their white linen robes, stood side by side behind the dresser where two tall candles flickered.

To Mary Rose they seemed like figures in a dream—this dreadful dream that went on and on—

Nothing seemed real to her but the familiar and beautiful words of the marriage service. She had read them over so many times that she knew them by heart.

"Dear beloved—we are gathered together here in the sight of God—to join together this man and this woman—"

And at the sound of them, Mary Rose's heart seemed to swell with unbearable pain. Her throat ached with the effort to keep down the lump that rose in it, and her eyes smarted with tears that she did not dare to shed.

She knew that Tom's eyes were on her, and that she must not let him

know that her heart was breaking. She must be the bride that would make him happy—a bride who was glad of her marriage.

The smile that she gave him was as radiant as the sun rising over dark stormy waters. It was such a smile as a bride of June might have sent to her lover from under a veil weighted with orange blossoms—and seeing it, Miss Sims, that hardened veteran of the wards, broke down and cried aloud.

"Like a baby," as she confessed that morning at 7 o'clock breakfast to the other nurses. "I've seen many a sad sight in my seventeen years of battling around from hospital to hospital—but never anything like that marriage, last night."

When it was over, old Dr. Fitzroy led Mary Rose out into the wide hall, with its rubbery smell and staring white walls.

"I'm going to send you home with you, now my girl," he said to her very gently. "You've been very brave."

He stooped his gray head, and kissed the white forehead.

"No," Mary Rose answered him clearly. "I'm going to stay with Tom right to the end."

"That may not come for hours and hours," Tom's father told her, and for a moment his voice had the professional sharpness of a great doctor. "A broken neck doesn't always mean immediate death—and Tom won't know you, anyway. They're giving him some more morphine."

Then suddenly his voice choked up, and he couldn't go on.

He opened the door of the room where his wife lay, prostrated by her grief, and closed it behind him.

Mary Rose stood where he had left her for a long time—turning and twisting the ring on her finger, the ring that Tom had carried in his pocket for weeks. The ring that made her his wife.

Outside the rain had ceased, and the wind was almost still.

Mary Rose turned to the window and raised the shade. She could see the illuminated face of a clock, high up in the tower of some distant building. It was half past five.

She found her coat and her hat and slipped into the cold dawn, and started home, alone.

Very quietly she let herself into the little brown house, and went softly into the kitchen and made a pot of coffee. But when it was made she could not drink it. The very smell of it made her ill.

As she started up the stairs, her mother's sleepy voice from above, startled her: "Is that you, Mary Rose? What time is it? Was Tom badly hurt?"

Mary Rose went into her room, and sat down beside her on the bed. She opened her lips to speak, but no sound would come from them. She felt her mother's hand on hers, and her insistent voice again: "Was Tom badly hurt, Rose?"

Somehow or other she managed to tell her the whole story, between the spasms of sobbing that racked her whole body—and her mother held her in her arms and cried with her. Cried with her for the sorrow and the grief and the cruelty of life that is part of its poignant glory.

It was daylight before Mary Rose was in her bed. And above the roofs of the city the sun had come up and was shining as if there was nothing but happiness and joy in the whole world.

It was then that she remembered that today was Christmas Eve.

She lay down on her pillows, and incredibly, she fell asleep at once.

When she awakened her room was aglow with pale December sunlight. The handle of the door turned, and her mother opened it just a crack and peeped in.

"I'm awake, dear. Come in," Mary Rose said, and raised herself on her elbow. "What's the word from the hospital?"

Mrs. Middleton came up. She was carrying a little tray in her hands, and she came and set it down on the bed.

"Why, Tom seems to be resting comfortably, the nurse said," she told the girl. "They're going to phone if there's any change. Here's this bit of toast. You eat it and I'll run down for the coffee. It's all made."

Mary Rose looked at the little watch that was strapped to her

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wrist. It was 4 o'clock. She had slept all day long!

"No," she said, "I'm going to get up and move around or I won't be able to sleep tonight. You take the toast downstairs and I'll eat it when you have your supper."

The paper was lying on the corner of the kitchen table when Mary Rose went down to the kitchen. As she started to open it, her mother took it from her.

"There's a piece in it about you and Tom," she said, narrowly watching her. "Are you sure you want to read it?"

"Why, of course—" And Mary Rose turned it to the front page.

There was the piece about half-way down the printed page: "Romantic Wedding in Hospital."

It told about the bedside wedding of "Miss Mary Rose Middleton and Dr. Thomas Fitzroy Jr., who have been sweethearts from childhood." And it explained that Tom had been seriously injured, but did not hint that he could not possibly recover. In fact, it was quite a cheerful little article, when you stopped to remember that Tom was lying at the point of death.

"Flossie saw it in the paper and called up right way," Mrs. Middleton said, pouring vegetable soup into two blue bowls and taking a painful of browned crackers out of the oven. "I forgot to let her know about it. I declare I didn't know which end I was on, after you came home this morning and told me you were married! Lots of people called up today—Aunt Henny Blair, and Mr. Dexter from the works, and that nasty Miss MacFarlane that Flossie used to work for—"

"John Manners must have seen it, too," Mary Rose said to herself. "I wonder what he thinks—"

Then she made herself stop thinking of John Manners. She must not let herself think of him. She must put him out of her mind—forget that she loved him. She must remember that she was married to a man who was dying, a mile or two away. Married to Tom, whom she loved as she might have loved a brother.

"It doesn't seem much like Christmas Eve, does it?" Mrs. Middleton asked her presently, when they had drunk their soup, and were beginning the cold meat loaf. "I remember last Christmas Eve—and how you and Tom and I trimmed that little tree for the dining room table."

From the darkness of the front hall the telephone rang and she got up and answered it.

"It was the hospital," she said, when she came back into the kitchen. "Now, Mary Rose, keep a stiff upper lip—there's no use breaking down at a time like this. The nurse says Tom can't live more than an hour or so. And she wants you to go there right away."

(To Be Continued)

## WELL, CAN YOU BLAME THE GIRL?

Marriage License Tossed Aside When Bank Roll's Size is Revealed.

If you're going to fourflush, keep your bank book hidden until you hear your fiancée tell the minister "I do."

Recently, announcements for a wedding were sent out, the orchestra was hired, and receptions planned, for it was to be a ceremony to make folks "sit up and take notice."

And then the near-bride discovered her fiancé's bank account had only \$5 instead of the \$3,500 as he had represented. And she called off the marriage.

"That's one way of explaining why marriage licenses sometimes are returned to the county clerk's office without being used. But such cases are few, according to Miss Margaret F. Mahoney, license clerk in the office of County Clerk Albert Losche.

Bring Them Back

When licenses are returned it usually is because one of the parties has misrepesented things.

"They usually bring 'em back and

say 'changed our mind,'" said Miss Mahoney.

A flashy young salesman recently secured a license to wed "one of his girl friends." An acquaintance read the notice in a newspaper and on meeting the salesman "and wife" congratulated the couple.

The girl, registered astonishment, when greeted as Mrs—

Women Too Busy

And the young man said, "Oh, I was drunk when I got the license. Since I sobered up I wouldn't think of using it." Selection of the minister, who is to perform the ceremony often provides argument leading to the "change of mind."

With so many women working nowadays, they do not have time to come in and sign up, said Miss Mahoney.

"Women just don't think when they get in love. Many times women, old enough to know better, come in three or four weeks after the marriage and want to find their husband's record. They don't investigate until after they have been deserted."

"It's better to think first, then act," said Miss Mahoney, who has issued approximately 75,000 licenses in the past twelve years.

Rocky Mountain air mail pilots enjoy a summer of two months, July and August.

Fibers of some kinds of milkweed have been used in making rope.

## FRUIT CROPS ARE LARGE

Apples and Peaches in State Free From Pests.

Free from pests and diseases, Indiana's 1926 peach and apple crops will be unusually large, according to a survey just completed by Assistant State Entomologist Harry F. Dietz. Reports from all over the State indicate a fruit crop of exceedingly high quality.

The insect pests found most prevalent by Dietz were the cottony maple scale, flea beetle, army worm, wire worm, blister beetle, stalk borer, turnip aphid, flea and yellow fever. Fire blight and winter killing were the main diseases. Army worm outbreaks have occurred in Johnson, Pike, Rush, Shelby, Boone, Hamilton and Hancock Counties, but the damage to corn has been slight, Dietz said.

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reported. More than 100 acres of corn was killed in northeastern Bartholomew County by the wire worm, he reported.

Canada produces four-fifths of the world's supply of asbestos.

It is possible that ancestors of the modern whale had hair like other mammals.

## EVERYTHING DEPENDS

on the stomach. When it goes wrong everything goes wrong. For stomach trouble take Todd's Tonic. You can take it:

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