

LOVE FOR TWO

By RUTH DEWEY GROVES © 1928 By NEA Service Inc.

CHAPTER XXVII (Continued)
Rod reminded her that he would save—to pay her for the stolen jewels.

"You act as though I demanded my pound of flesh," Lila complained sorrowfully. "And I'm afraid, if you persist in that attitude, that Bertie Lou is not going to like having her spending curtailed. It will make a good impression with Cy, though, if you seem to be less reckless with your money."

Rod was plainly puzzled. Bertie Lou had been so sure that Cyrus had wished them to enjoy Rod's good salary...

"But it isn't so much the way she handles your money that makes me think she has changed," Lila explained. "She hasn't acted very well toward you."

"In what way?" Rod asked defensively.

"Well, she hurried off in a pretty cold-blooded manner, I think," Lila declared.

"She was upset—excited," Rod replied loyally.

Lila patted him on the shoulder. "Good boy," she applauded, "but if everything is so hunk-dory what are you worrying about?"

It was her trump card, "No Rod," she said as he hesitated for an answer. "I know you well enough to see that you're hurt. I've watched you struggling along under a lot of debts, trying to make both ends meet, get ahead, and save money to build that house you're always talking about. I've cautioned Bertie Lou many times against throwing money away. But New York went to her head, I'm afraid."

Rod stared at her as she spoke, bewildered at the discrepancy between her statements and Bertie Lou's.

Lila had risen to her feet and was leaning against a white pillar. She looked flawlessly beautiful in the pale moonlight that lent spirituality to her conventionally pretty features.

Her hair was dressed to fit her head like a gold cap, and her full throat rose from a lacy robe de style gown that was charmingly feminine and revealing.

Rod could not believe she was lying. She spoke so earnestly, almost sadly. "I can't tell you how sorry I am," she went on, "because if you're not happy, Rod..." Her voice trailed off wistfully.

Rod rose to make an answer. Why, Lila shouldn't say that! He was happy, perfectly happy. He was about to tell her so, when Cyrus joined them, with a demand for Lila to make some sandwiches.

The cook and maid had been given the evening off. The Lores had not expected to entertain tonight. Cyrus came up and put an arm around Lila's waist and drew her to him. Rod was facing them. What he saw then surprised him beyond words.

CHAPTER XXVIII

A SURGE of hate spread itself over Lila's features, contorting them into a fleeting ugliness. She turned her head quickly away from Rod's stare.

But even in the moonlight her expression had been an unmistakable indication of displeasure. Rod could not see clearly enough to recognize it as anything more than that. But it was sufficient to trouble him.

Thinking it over that night, he concluded that Lila had no love for Cyrus. He had come to believe that she had. But even with that revealing moment on the piazza to enlighten him he had not the faintest idea why she had been so much annoyed at her husband's demonstration of affection.

Lila, boiling with resentment over his intrusion upon her tête-à-tête with Rod, could have told him.

She could have explained that Cyrus had spoiled the moment she had been waiting for—the moment when Rod needed sympathy, the moment he seemed bewildered and doubtful of Bertie Lou's love.

For, despite his loyalty, Lila knew that he must be pondering over Bertie Lou's behavior.

She had poudered over it, too, until she received a clew. In a conversation with Rod on the subject of the detective she had engaged, she asked him if he had told Bertie Lou anything that could give her a hint of their secret. Rod said no, that he hadn't even told her he was at Lila's the afternoon he had returned the empty jewel case.

Lila remembered having told Bertie Lou that he had just left her on that occasion. Casually, she inquired of Rod how he had explained his lateness in arriving home, and he said he believed he had lied all so.

"Tony didn't want you, or she would not have given you to me. Were you glad, Richard? I never dreamed, when Tony and I were drawing up speculations for our heroes at school that I should find you here!" T. D. and H.

"You smiled at that, didn't you, Richard? 'Tall, dark and handsome'... Oh, you are, you are—all on that and more!"

"I shall smile at you like this," and poor Crystal wreathed her rouged mouth into a tender, slow, provocative smile, "and I shall say things that will make you laugh, things that will make you smile indulgently, and—so you won't think I'm slow—I'll say things that will shock you just a little."

"Well, the fat's in the fire with Bertie Lou," Lila told herself.

Abandoning all hope of deceiving Bertie Lou any longer, she decided to make the most of her erstwhile friend's absence.

When Bertie Lou returned—if she ever did—Lila knew that she would have little or no influence over her, no further opportunity to lead her into extravagances or things that Rod could criticize.

Perhaps Bertie Lou might induce Rod to give up his position with Cyrus.

There Lila faced the possibility of losing him altogether unless she could complete her sorcery before his wife returned.

No need now to consider Bertie Lou's friendship. At last she could speak freely, could start to sow the seeds of discontent in Rod's mind.

She was furious with Cyrus for having interrupted her initial move and for having reminded Rod that she belonged to another man.

But to Rod it seemed that he had gazed upon the secret travail of one who had made a ghastly mistake.

He pitied Lila. But he admired her tremendously for having kept her secret so well, for having lived so sportingly up to her bargain of exchanging her freedom for money.

At least she had whined. And if he had discovered what she had proudly hidden from the world it was purely by accident, he felt, and not by reason of any public display of yellow on Lila's part.

He thought of her unfailing man-

ifestation of affection and consideration for Cyrus, a man whom he knew she did not love, and compared it with Bertie Lou's treatment of him, whom he had believed she loved.

He observed Cyrus closely for the rest of his stay at The Birches.

There was nothing in his manner to indicate that he suspected Lila's true feelings toward him. Rod asked himself if it were not possible that he too might be taking his father's love for granted.

Was there any such a thing as love? Was it love to keep a man calling his home every hour to inquire if there was a letter for him?

And it was love that caused Bertie Lou to plunge him head over heels into debt—send him begging his father for a loan?

It looked very much like indifference and a shallow ambition, rather than love. Rod did not want to think so, but Lila had set herself to present Bertie Lou's character and conduct to him in this light.

And so sly, so false in her method of putting her destructive efforts in the guise of friendly advice and sympathy was she that Rod found himself thinking Bertie Lou had revealed herself as selfish and unloving.

It did not come suddenly, his verdict of her, but as the weeks wore on and she made no mention of returning to New York, Rod was compelled to believe that she did not mind being apart from him.

Then there was her cold letter when he had to refuse the money she asked for. Bertie Lou had hated writing for it, but she needed funds... she had used practically all her immediate cash for her fare home.

Bertie Lou would not let her mother know what she thought of Rod's loneliness, though she suspected that her mother had wondered at her willingness to remain away from him all these weeks and months.

She had surprised her mother's gaze bent upon her in grave meditation on many occasions lately. It was time to return to Rod and settle the thing or to open her heart to her mother and load her burdens on those still frail shoulders.

Bertie Lou returned to New York unannounced. Her hands trembled on the doorknob as she let herself in, but she stubbornly refused to release the tears that smarted her eyes.

Inside the front door she put down the small case she had carried and turned to admit the elevator boy with her suitcases.

When he was gone she summoned her maid, but there was no response. She went out to the kitchen and looked around. There was no food in the refrigerator. Rod must be eating out.

Further inspection of the apartment revealed that someone was taking care of it, for there was cleanliness and order all around. A woman by the hour, Bertie Lou concluded.

It was brief. The writer merely suggested that Bertie Lou should return to Rod at once if she wished to get him out of the clutches of a certain bleached blonde over whom he seemed to have lost his head.

As the writer had guessed, Bertie Lou was too proud to take any notice of the communication. She did not return to New York.

Her letters to Rod grew even colder and farther apart, and when she flatly demanded to know when she intended to return, she replied that she thought she might spend the summer with her mother.

The letter had done its work. It kept Bertie Lou away from Rod, as it was designed to do. Not as long, perhaps, as Lila—for it was Lila who was the guilty person—hoped that it would.

It was to be continued.

OUT OUR WAY

—By Williams



BOOTS AND HER BUDDIES

—By Martin



FRECKLES AND HIS FRIENDS

—By Blosser



WASHINGTON TUBBS II

—By Crane



SALESMAN SAM

—By Small



MOM'S POP

—By Taylor



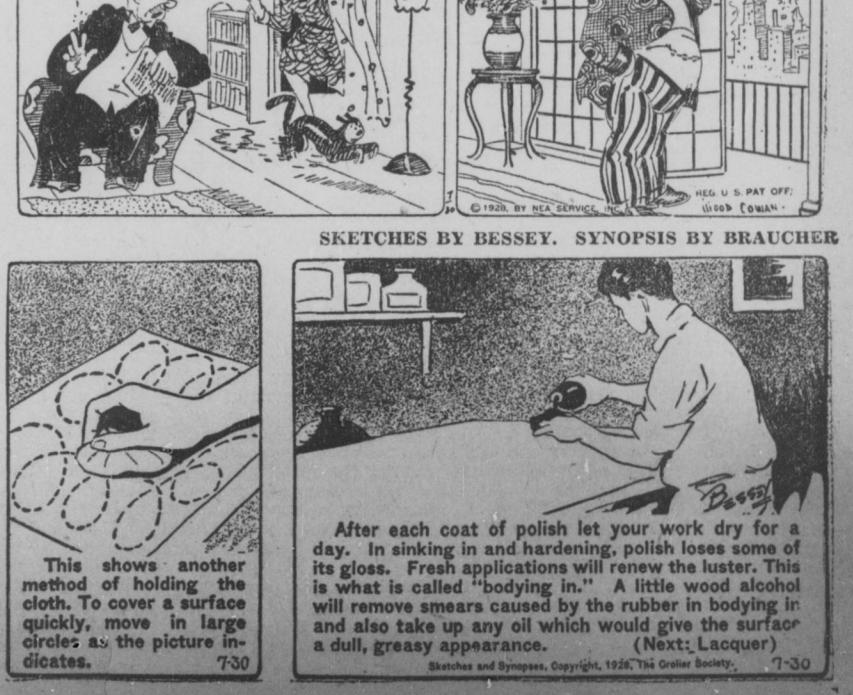
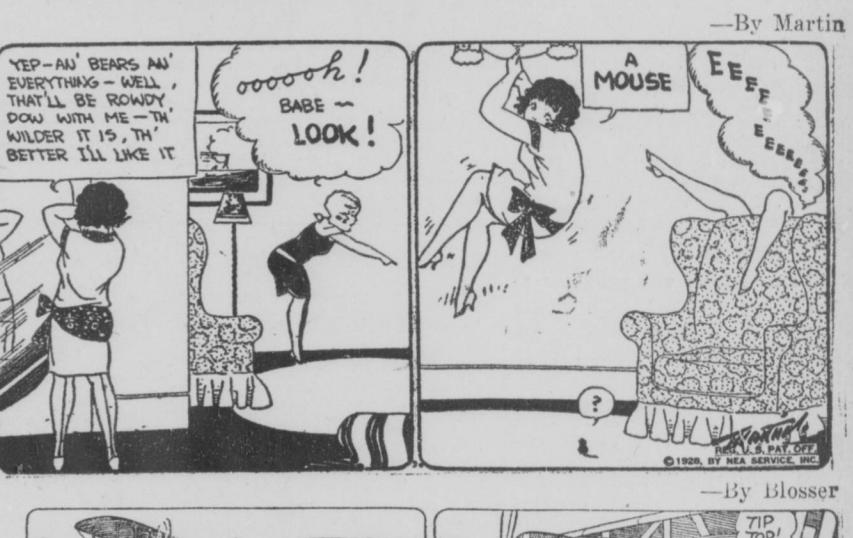
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SKETCHES BY BESSEY. SYNOPSIS BY BRAUCHER



OUR BOARDING HOUSE

—By Ahern



Rest Daylight Features

—Tuesday—
WBFB (122) INDIANAPOLIS
WBFB (123) Athletic Club
10:15—Panorama

10:23—Interesting bits of history, courtesy of Indianapolis Public Library

10:30—WBFB shopping service, Indianapolis

10:30—WBFB weather and shipping forecast

10:30—WBFB (124) Indianapolis and Litchi Co.

Noon—Correct time, courtesy Julius C. and S. Lester Huff on the studio organ

12:30—WBFB market report, Indianapolis and Kansas City; weather report

3:00—Play ball with the Indians, Kansas City at Washington Park

3:00—WBFB (125) Indianapolis and Litchi Co.

3:00—WBFB (126) Indianapolis and Litchi Co.

3:00—WBFB (127) Indianapolis and Litchi Co.

3:00—WBFB (128) Indianapolis and Litchi Co.

3:00—WBFB (129) Indianapolis and Litchi Co.

3:00—WBFB (130) Indianapolis and Litchi Co.

3:00—WBFB (131) Indianapolis and