

# LOVE FOR TWO

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CHAPTER XLVIII  
Rod stepped into the tiny hall and then halted abruptly. For a few seconds he fancied he had entered the wrong house. That was absurd. This was Baker's place, all right. But what was going on? Who could be here?

"Why, Baker, of course," he told himself, though still puzzled. He'd never thought about the possibility of the man having a wife. This looked like a woman's work. But it was funny they hadn't waited until he was out of the house. Perhaps they wanted him to leave at once.

He was still in the hall when suddenly he was rooted to the spot by a greeting called out to him from the kitchen. Was this an hallucination?

"Rod, is that you?" the voice sounded, a bit shaky. "Come out and help me with the steak, will you?"

Rod moved on into the living room, feeling just as he should have felt—completely bewildered. This couldn't be! Now he knew he was the victim of his own mind. His brooding over the past had brought him to the verge of insanity.

That table. He stood staring at it, without answering the voice from the kitchen. Oh, he was still too sane for that! Of course there were no places laid for two, no gorgeous red roses, and a lace cloth.

Then he sniffed. "Oh, Lord," he groaned, "do I only imagine that heavenly smell?"

"Well, aren't you coming?" the voice from the kitchen was growing impatient—just like a wife's. For answer he moved over and touched the roses. Their feel was unmistakable. Did people imagine they felt things, too—things that weren't there? Rod had a touch of panic.

He drove out to the kitchen like a veritable madman. He would find out if he could see the owner of that voice! If he could . . . there was no doubt about it . . . he was ready for the straightjacket.

He saw her, standing before the kitchen table, fussing with a thick steak, and not trusting him would look up at him. He lifted his arm and drew his coat across his eyes.

Bertie Lou waited for him to say something. She heard only a half-suppressed sound of helpless misery that brought her head up with a jerk.

"Why, what's the matter with you?" she cried and rushed over as though she feared he was going to fall and she could save him. Her touch on his arm had a strange effect. What happened there was far from Bertie Lou's plans.

Rod simply took her and held her. Held her as a drowning man would hold to life. Bertie Lou could scarcely breathe. And she couldn't think at all.

A humorous phrase came to her mind—"this is so sudden." It made her laugh. And the laugh, though it was barely audible for lack of strength behind it, was a sound of pure happiness. No, she was not thinking.

But she had to breathe, and when she finally struggled out of Rod's embrace she remembered in a rush all that she had forgotten in this last moment.

And Rod remembered too. Bertie Lou belonged to Marco Palmer. Rod's eyes instantly became points of anguish of the soul so intense that Bertie Lou was compelled to look away from him.

"Why did you do that?" she said brokenly.

"Because I love you, Bertie Lou," Rod answered, his voice vibrant with emotion.

"Oh, but you don't," she cried. "If you did you never could have believed what you told Lila!"

"Lila?" Rod repeated dully. "Yes," Bertie Lou faced her cheeks aflame. "Lila told me what you saw at Marco Palmer's house. I went to her when I learned that she had been out here. Oh, Rod, she hurried on in a rush, 'how could you believe such a thing?'"

Rod stared at her a moment in dumb questioning. Then: "My God, what a blind fool I've been," he exclaimed bitterly. "Bertie Lou, you will never forgive me, will you?"

Bertie Lou sank into a chair and buried her face on her arms. Rod came over and knelt behind her. "Listen to me, please," he begged. Bertie Lou did not raise her head. Neither did she draw away from the hand he put tentatively on her arm.

"I must have been mad," he went on, "but I have seen, Bertie Lou. I had been disillusioned, and I was sure you didn't love me. You went away in such an unaccountable fashion; you hardly wrote—just short, cool notes. . . ."

"I knew about you and Lila," Bertie Lou interrupted in muffled tones. "I found out before I went away. There wasn't anything to find out then," Rod said with painful honesty.

Now Bertie Lou raised her head. "You told me a lie," she charged him reproachfully. "I asked you why you were late, and you said you had worked at the office, or something. And you had been to Lila's apartment!"

"Yes," Rod admitted. "I had, but I couldn't tell you why, Bertie Lou. I didn't want to worry you."

"And you were there when I called your office just after I got that telegram from home," Bertie Lou added. "I knew then that you were in love with Lila."

"No, don't say that!" Rod pleaded. "I won't lie to you again, ever, even for your own sake. Please believe me. I didn't care much for Lila then—except that I believed her a wonderful friend. Later I thought I did. But it has been you, Bertie Lou, first, last and always since I first loved you. And there was nothing with Lila that I can't tell you about."

Bertie Lou allowed him to take her hands. "Will you let me tell you why I lied to you?" he asked to break the silence in which she struggled for faith in him. She nodded.

Then Rod told her about the necklace and the bracelets. "She did that to cause trouble between

us!" Bertie Lou cried at one point in the story. "Oh, Rod, if only you had told me why you had to save your money!"

"I couldn't when you came back from Wayville," he answered. "You had changed so. I mean I thought you had. I'm ashamed of it, Bertie Lou, but I didn't believe you would want to pay Lila the insurance money."

"I know. She had made you think I was a selfish little beast," Bertie Lou said.

"And you had a date the first night you were home," he reminded her.

"It surprised Marco more than it did you," Bertie Lou answered smiling. "I never would have gone out with him if you hadn't told me you were having dinner with the Lores."

And so they went on, bringing up their grievances, laying them, clearing away their misunderstandings and coming nearer to each other than they ever had been before.

Suddenly Rod remembered that Bertie Lou's presence in the Baker cottage was unexplained. "Tell me how you happen to be here," he urged her.

"It's where I should be," she boasted proudly. "Right in our own home!"

She enjoyed Rod's evident perplexity, but she did not keep him long in suspense. "I had this house built with the money you sent me," she told him. "Lila did us one good turn, even if she didn't mean to. She forced us to save some money."

"But \$2,000 wouldn't build this house," Rod protested.

Bertie Lou put her hands on his shoulders and looked into his eyes. "Don't say it that way," she cautioned him. "It sounds as if you didn't believe me. And we must never doubt each other again. Or lie. One little lie led to all the trouble we had."

"But," he began before that—the night of our wedding I asked myself if you loved me. I should have believed that you wouldn't have married me if you didn't. And I should have kept on believing it."

Rod took her hands off his shoulders and pressed them to his lips. "A man never had a sweeter bride," he told her, "but a man's a man, Bertie Lou. And that means that sometimes he's a fool. Only a wise woman can help him then. You were too proud and too good."

Bertie Lou smiled at him. "Well,

try it again," she warned him, "and I'll fight for you like a fishwife."

"I think I'll stick to the hearthside," Rod replied. "But I still would like to know how you financed this house. And that doesn't mean that I think you stole the money or anything like that, but just as a matter of curiosity. . . ."

"I bought it on terms, of course, silly. And it's half yours. You were the first person to answer my ad."

"With chicken feed in my pocket! But I've got a position. I take possession of a cage on Monday. It's special work and there will be a lot of overtime, but it's with a big organization and no. I've something to work for besides bread and butter."

"Thank goodness I've found a paying tenant for this house at last," Bertie Lou applauded. "You don't know how I've worried about the future payments."

Rod laughed. "You can sell the flowers and vegetables I've grown. A lot of your five dollars a week went for seed."

"Then you must have been living on crackers and cheese," Bertie Lou declared, jumping up. "And I've the loveliest dinner for you! But you will have to help me with the steak."

"I can cook it to the queen's taste," Rod assured her. Suddenly Bertie Lou paused over lifting the steak to the broiler.

"You said that the first time we cooked a meal in our own home," she reminded him.

"This is a new start, too," Rod replied solemnly. "And this time we will make a go of it, won't we, Bertie Lou?"

"Let's go right out after dinner and send telegrams to our parents," Bertie Lou suggested; "and I've got to telephone poor little Bessie Rogers. She will sit up for me I'm afraid. She never trusted you very much and I think she guessed that I was head over heels in love with my caretaker. And she may discover that I've brought a week-end bag. I expected you to leave tonight," she added naively.

"Tell her that you've given me the job for life," Rod said. "I'm never going to stop taking care of you again."

"For five dollars a week?"

"For love of the only girl in the world!"

THE END.

## THE NEW Saint and Sinner

By Anne Austin © 1928 By NEA Service Inc.

"And then I'll call up two or three business men I know and tell them to give you a job or I won't leave any more. Pat's company might have something for you, but it's an awful dump—they manufacture Pat's invention, you know."

"No, Tony," Crystal rejected the suggestion with the bit of self-respect which her encounter with Miss Manley had left her. "I'll try the agencies."

"I'll have to get a job legitimately, or not at all. But if you've got a dress I could borrow—"

And she shuddered as she glanced down at the yellow silk she had thought so enchanting.

"There! It's a little long, but I can pin up the shoulder straps in a jiffy," Tony Tarver said back on her heels and started up at her, Crystal Pathway, approvingly.

"This lovely golden brown brings out all the high-lights in your hair and makes your eyes two shades darker and brighter. You have got the loveliest eyes, Crystal."

"I love the beige trimming, especially the kick in the skirt. Isn't the georgette coat trick, though? You look like a Vogue model in it—four inches taller and pounds slimmer."

"You'll find beige stockings in the second drawer of that high-boy. Now for shoes—golden-brown kid, of course. And she jumped up to rummage in her closet for the right pair."

"They're gorgeous, but they're too narrow," Crystal groaned, when her broad but high-arched feet were inserted into Tony's pumps, size five triple A.

"I'll like you downtown in the car," Tony encouraged, darting about the room again. "Here's the very hat! Isn't it ducky?—just the color of the dress, soft as velvet and jaunty as a cadet's cap. Jerk it about any old way to get the best line for your face. And speaking of faces—"

Tony paused before Crystal, laid her hands on her chum's shoulders, and studied the too-much-made-up face long and critically.

"Listen, darling," she suggested at last, her lovely voice tactfully casual, "skip into the bathroom and scrub your face clean of every smidgen of make-up. Then let me try my hand at glorifying the American girl."

Crystal flushed, painfully, but she obeyed, and a few minutes later she was seated on Tony's dressing table bench, with Tony's firm, quick fingers playing over her scrubbed, slightly freckled face.

As she worked, Tony talked: "Natural complexions are coming back, darling—honest! Freckles are in! I'm not going to try to hide yours under layers of cold cream and powder. Aw, please, honey, trust Tony!" she pleaded, as Crystal started to protest.

"Just a wee bit of massage cream, well worked in, so the light dusting of powder will blend nicely. Now! You look awfully young and cute. Just a dash of rouge, well spread, so it will look natural."

"Doesn't this shade look grand? Your orange rouge is too artificial."

"Now, child, you do your lips, but only the thinnest, evenest film of lip salve. Shines hurt much, darling."

"Terribly," Crystal confessed. "And I haven't a pair to my name that would match this dress."

"Blow yourself to a pair," Tony tossed off, not suspecting that the

twenty-dollar bill in Crystal's green leather handbag was all that remained of her dead father's small estate.

"The dress, hat and stockings are yours, you know. . . . Don't be an idiot!" she scoffed, as Crystal made a feeble protest. "Brown isn't one of my colors."

"Oh, by the way, you'll want a handbag to match that outfit. Here's a water snake bag, almost exactly the shade of the beige trimmings. . . ."

"All set? You do look stunning, Crystal. . . . Let the georgette coat hang for it. It isn't a wraparound. I tell you, Crystal, you look as if you'd had so many big-money jobs that you'd turn up your funny little nose at anything less than fifty a week."

"Just look calm and efficient and not too anxious, but not snooty, either, and I'll bet you'll have a swell job by the middle of the afternoon. . . . Darling Crystal!"

"Don't cry, and don't bother to thank me, or I'll crown you! Come along, No, don't you dare to put any more rouge on!"

To Be Continued

### Dial Twisters

Daylight Saving Time Meters Given in Parentheses

WFBM (73.1) INDIANAPOLIS (Indianapolis Power & Light Co.)—Wednesday—

Noon—Correct time, courtesy Julius C. Walk & Son, Lester Huff on studio organ.

12:30—Livestock markets, Indianapolis and Kansas City.

4:00—Correct time: Sea Time trio with soloists.

4:50—Items of interest from Indianapolis Times Want Ads.

5:00—Correct time: "Say It With Flowers," Bertram's.

5:30—A chapter a day from the New Testament.

5:50—Care of the Hair and Scalp.

6:00—Baseball scores right off the bat, Indianapolis Star.

6:00—Twilight hour.

6:30—Josephine Asmann on studio organ.

7:00—"Back Seat Driving" (from a legal standpoint), Judge Delbert O. Winthrop.

7:00—WFBM concert orchestra with soloists.

8:00—Studio recital.

8:30—Club social orchestra.

9:00—"The Four Kings."

9:30—Goodness Gracious Gregorizers.

9:50—Earle Bow Jones, staff pianist.

10:15—"The Columbian."

Star.

WKBF (229) INDIANAPOLIS (Hoosier Athletic Club)

A. M.—Recap exchange.

10:15—Brunswick Panopticon.

10:25—Interesting bits of history, courtesy of Indianapolis public library.

10:30—WKBF shopping service.

11:30—Livestock and grain market.

P. M.—Weather and shipper's forecast.

5:00—Late news, bulletins and sports.

6:00—Dinner concert.

8:00—Steinners Music Studio.

8:30—Goldie, Esther and Gladys.

9:00—Indiana's Job's Daughters.

### OUT OUR WAY



### BOOTS AND HER BUDDIES



### FRECKLES AND HIS FRIENDS



### WASHINGTON TUBBS II



### SALESMAN SAM



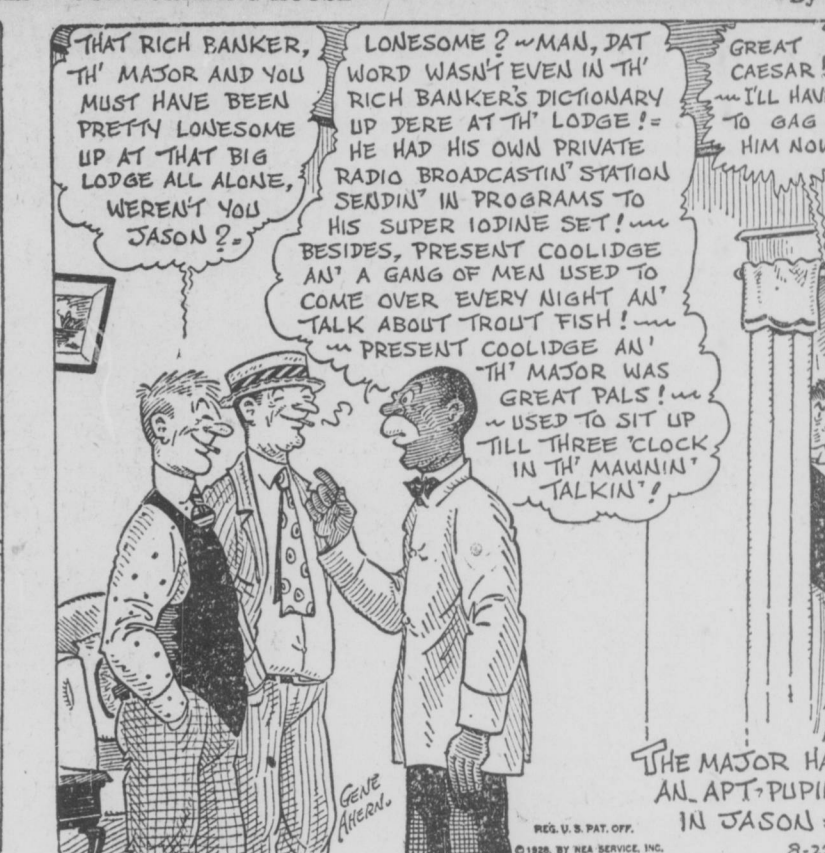
### MOM'N POP



### THE BOOK OF KNOWLEDGE



### OUR BOARDING HOUSE



### By Martin



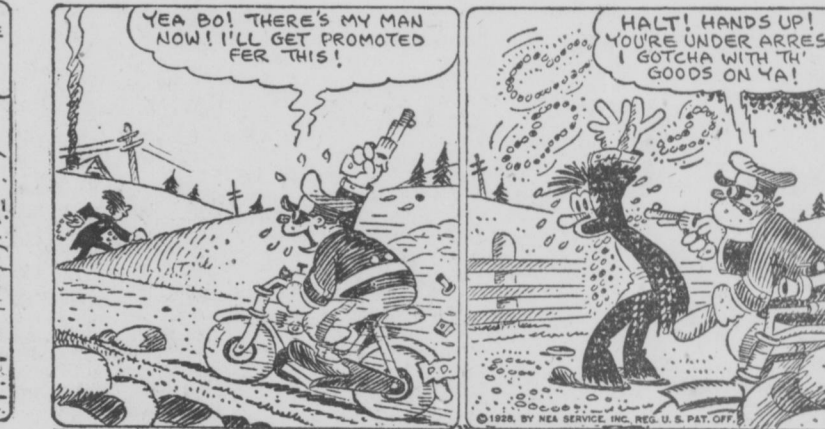
### By Blosser



### By Crane



### By Small



### By Taylor



### SKETCHES BY BESSEY. SYNOPSIS BY BRAUCHER

