

“My Best Girl”

By KATHLEEN NORRIS

FIFTH INSTALLMENT

“A lot of it’s blue,” he said curiously. But he liked her blind admiration, nevertheless.

“Does your mother work?” she asked him one day.

“Yes,” she stared, considered.

“Not now,” he said. “She split a board the other day,” he said with a straight face.

Maggie saw nothing unusual in this. She visualized a sturdy, barrel-chested old woman helping with the family supply of linings.

“What does your father do, Joe?”

“The only real work I do does now is on a golf course at a country club,” he answered sheepishly.

“A country club?” she asked, widening her eyes.

“A country club?”

It was a shame to tease her, but when she was such a simple little thing, Joe reflected, Grumpy it to face, crying little hands, mawkish and blubbering a size too big.

Maggie was talking.

“But she was quite a swell, she didn’t have much money, and she was so old. Mackenzie was in the business then, and she says he named his son for him.”

There was a familiar ring about these facts, could she possibly be speaking of her employer and of his father?

“What on earth are you talking about?” he asked blankly.

“Merrill,” she answered readily.

“Mackenzie was the brains, they say—he was the ‘Mack’—but he’s dead. But Merrill is the soul of honor and he not only has the faculty of giving good men about him, but he has made a small fortune out of the Mack, took care of most of her family, and has kept several of her relatives out of jail for what they done wrong in or worse as well.”

“Joe was starting at her oddly, a glow came over his face.”

“Who taught you that piece?”

“Everyone knows that.”

“Is—that—?” he grinned, Reluctantly he kept out of jail, that was possible. Uncle Tex and young Joe.

“He looked at her, missing in his turn.”

“I’d like to walk Maggie in on the old man, some day—or better yet, walk him into the store and introduce Maggie as the fine, independent girl he’s always talking about,” he reflected. “I’d say, ‘You keep suggesting that I get out somewhere and meet a real girl—well, she’s real. Maggie. And she’s going to stay right off the floor of the Mack into the position of your only daughter.’”

“I might bluff it, anyway,” he thought. “Maggie’s such a little thing, she’d enjoy playing the part. She’d make an excellent carry-off like a conundrum.”

“But he couldn’t play any games with Maggie. The poor kid was falling in love with him fast enough as it was.”

“It’s probably her first crush,” Joe thought, watching her without a tinge of generous pity. “She’ll have it bad. But it won’t hurt her, it never hurts anyone.”

She was far enough from any appreciation now, at all events, as she chattered on of everything she found interesting, sometimes making him laugh, sometimes—odds—giving him a prick behind the eyes that owed itself to a very different sensation. Maggie had never thought of love, for herself.

Her own affairs, indeed, were entirely secondary.

But she betrayed in all her talk with almost every word and glance.

“I’ll tell you what, Joe, I like you better than anyone else except my own family.”

“Don’t like me as well as your sister, huh?”

“Well, I like some things about you as well as I like anything about Gie,” she might finally decide.

The little figure dived against a length of drab-gained brick wall, the small, hard-worked hands were cramped in one of her rare moments of idleness, and her absentminded staring eyes wore an unusual expression of sorrow and doubt. Joe’s heart jerked.

“I hope you’re not becoming something that you can’t catch, Maggie,” he said to himself more than once.

One day he brought her a long envelope, which, upon opening it, in an expectant flutter, Maggie found full of printed “G’s,” large and small, from magazines and newspapers.

“Oh, Joe, it’s awful cute the way you learn me,” she said, her betraying eyes luminous, her whole being glowing toward him visibly, irresistibly. And she presently reported that her mother and sister had made dry, half-contemptuous reference to the fact that she did not drop the ubiquitous final consonant any more.

She told him that he had brought her all her luck.

“It was the day you first”—she paused—“first came,” she resumed

briskly, landing upon her very, “That’s not on this piece alone. And then, meaning that you gave me one that’s just going home. Well, I put it on the clock and we’re just about five by that time. It’s made a difference in my life. It’s made a difference in my life, in everything.”

“I see a difference in you,” he said seriously.

“Oh, Joe, honest—do you?”

“Honest I do.”

“Do?”

“Well, in everything. The way you talk, the way you look, the way you act,” he said.

“Oh, I wish—” she said elatedly.

“I wish you could see the difference in our kitchen. Pop, ah, I ask each other every night. ‘Is it ideal?’ And we’d go to bed unless it is.”

It soothed him to have her so openly, so completely adoring.

She thought him brilliant, she thought him wise, and witty and lovely when his own failed him.

“And her laughter,” the divine, the pitiable side of him had been revealed on her—Joe first thought Maggie’s when first he saw her laugh. She lived in a delicious tale of it.

That little soft touch on his coat, that little soft girl-person jumbled against his shoulder for a moment, in the crowded aisle, those black fringed eyes brimming with mirth and affection—those were all damned agreeable things, his thoughts would agree.

A hundred times, a thousand times he heard her call herself lucky.

With her usual eager rush she related a hundred reasons. Her mother—her wonderful family, her mother—described in a “pencil,” her dashing father, who had such a good job, and her father—without whose assistance Maggie’s yearnings toward the “ideal life” would have been crushed in the mud, and whose companionship meant everything to the washer of the Johnson dishes and the keeper of the Johnson kitchen.

“But what’s had hard luck, Joe,” she agreed pitifully.

“This vexed him too. Or perhaps the pricking, uncomfiable emotion it aroused, was not vexation, but something deeper—something nearer companionship. Of course he had had a rotten deal. But for Maggie to be the girl to see it!

“How do you mean I’ve had hard luck?”

“Oh, well, every way! You weren’t raised for this kind of work—and you hate it, and you keep thinking that you’d rather be somewhere else, doing something else, an you don’t like these girls here in the Mack?”

“Oh, my mother, look well!” she asked.

“None. Don’t know a damn thing about cooking,” Joe confessed.

“Don’t your father help her none any?” Maggie asked.

“Never. The old man is no more cook around the house than a paper monkey.”

“Joe, I do think that’s pretty hard on you. Who makes your bed?”

“Oh, anybody. Last night I had dinner with some friends of ours named Russell, Joe volunteered.”

“And did she give you a good dinner?”

“Oh, yes—she cooks all right!” An odd look came into Joe’s eyes. “Her daughter was there.”

“Daughter? Ah, her husband?”

“No. Mill—Milly’s not married.”

“The daughter isn’t?”

“None.”

“Mill—Milly’s girl, huh?”

“None. Milly’s about—nineteen.”

“I guess she’s pretty, ain’t she?”

“She’s beautiful.”

But he told himself that he must stop this teasing while he saw her suddenly daunted face, the gallant efforts she made to appear quite herself.

But he saw that her color had faded and that the little hand that steadied the boxes was itself unsteady.

He felt oddly shaken. He recoiled to his own business, filled with a scorching sensation that he “must” somehow make this up to Maggie. “Bang it!”—the very making up would carry the matter farther, and that would be no good.

He shook himself physically. He would make the thought away. He unclipped with the roadster parked in a few blocks away, and the corner of one of Joe’s “G’s” most beautiful homes used at the corner. He nudged a blurt, playing at work, here in one of the stores he would largely own some day!

More bewildering still, he was beginning to like this play work.

But, oddly, unexpectedly, there were moments when the Mack filled his soul with a deep content. Joe revelled in the rush and hurry, the absurdity and yet seriousness of everything that went on in the Mack. Even Smith and Flennung sometimes took Joe into their councils, as they wandered importantly to and fro.

Joe’s championship of Maggie helped her from the very beginning—an obvious fact that made her still more his abject slave. On a dismal, early January day Maggie first appeared in what might have been called her normal form, he heard the congratulations that the busy girls flung to her from all sides, and contemplated himself that he was partly responsible at least.

She had some no more than electricity everyone by discarding mawkish, leechy, and without permission, the disgusting ticking apron. That was all. But the effect was astonishing.

Everybody looked at her, every body praised her, and the packing-room boys went down like a row of ten-pins.

It was on this same day that she said to Joe, with a carefully careless air:

“I’ll bet, if you fell in love, Joe, it would be with a regular lady, wouldn’t it?”

“How do you mean, regular young lady?” Joe asked.

“Well, I mean you know, a—nice—sort of—maiden—” Maggie looked at him, “I mean—” she began abruptly, “maiden,” for in stance, that there are lots of girls in this store that you couldn’t call young ladies,” she said, turning scornfully.

“No, you might call them nice girls,” Joe conceded, “and you might call them smart girls. But no, you’d hardly call them young ladies.”

“Like school teachers and librarians,” said Maggie.

“Yes, I guess school teachers and librarians would be young ladies all right,” Joe laughed. “Leave it to you to think a thing like that!” he said.

“My aunt was a school teacher, Joe,” she said, “Joe, how would a person who wasn’t a lady get to be one? Somebody must of commended once, you know.”

“Well, reading the backs of newspapers and magazines about manners, for one thing.”

“That helps a lot, and to be always looking for the right way to do things, to be quiet and gentle and listen to the way nice persons speak. And those of course, there’s always the rule that a lady puts the feelings of others before her own—thinks of others first.”

“You think all that together, don’t they, Joe?” she said, in deep thought.

“I don’t get you, Miss Johnson.”

“Here’s what I was thinking. Last Sunday in church, they said something about believing that you have a good thing, an’ you have it. Not will have it but have it. An’ that’s like the ideal life—I wrote that up on the same card. It was in my prayer book, an’ I got it straight. Now, those two things go together, don’t they, Joe?”

“They do,” he said, struck. “But I think that you were smart to see that, Maggie.”

CONTINUED NEXT WEEK

Fake—Lucinda paints and powders a good deal, doesn’t she?”

Bosch—Yes, when you kiss her it’s just like eating a marshmallow.

“I was sending the winter in San Antonio, Texas, when I first heard of Sargon. The treatment appeared to me because of its thorough scientific background, I decided to try it for a very bad form of chronic constipation, which I was entirely unable to correct with ordinary laxatives and purgatives used in general practice.”

“I was also subject to severe bilious attacks. My complexion had become yellow, as though I had jaundice. My appetite was below normal. My food did not digest or assimilate, causing gas and indigestion. I was losing weight and strength rapidly.”

“Three bottles of Sargon and one bottle of the Pills relieved me entirely of these troubles, and I no longer have any liver or biliary symptoms. In fact, I am in better physical tone than in years.”

“Sargon undoubtedly represents a real advance in the field of medicine”—Dr. Gilbert S. Lambert, San Francisco. —Advertisement.

DR LAMBERT NOW ENDORSES SARGON



DE. GILBERT S. LAMBERT

Make Farm Repairs With Cheap Material

With materials of all kinds low in price and labor cheaper than in many years, many North Carolina farmers may find it convenient to make permanent repairs about their places before the rush of spring work begins. New buildings, needed may be constructed now at a cost much lower than the last few years.

“Many of our farm buildings have suffered severe deterioration in the last few years because of the low farm income as compared with the high cost of materials and labor,” says A. T. Holman, agricultural engineer at State College. “Farmers desiring to make permanent repairs of old buildings, or build new ones, need not have been discouraged from doing so because of the expense. However, prices are lower now and it may be the best possible time to make these necessary additions and repairs.”

Mr. Holman says there are many excellent plans available for the county farm agents to those farmers wishing to construct new buildings. These plans have been designed by the department of agricultural engineering at State College and are so planned that the resulting buildings will be efficient and economical.

Good buildings are essential on every farm, points out Mr. Holman. It takes less feed to maintain livestock in a comfortable, sanitary barn. Corn losses are less when the grain is stored in a rat-proof crib as compared to leaving it in the field or under some makeshift shelter. Many tons of good hay are damaged each winter and spring because it is allowed to stand exposed in stacks. Cotton is low in price, but will be worth less if it is exposed to the effects of rain and weather, he says.

“I’ve found a handy parking place.”

“Yeah?”

“It has side one drawback.”

“What’s that?”

“There’s a car in it.”

Church Announcements

ADVENT CHRISTIAN
REV. S. E. GRAGO, Pastor
Sunday School each Sunday at 10:45. Morning service at 11 o’clock.

FIRST BAPTIST
REV. P. A. BICKS, Pastor
Sunday School 9:45 a. m., J. T. C. Wright, superintendent. Preaching at 11 a. m. and 7 p. m. E. Y. U. U. 6 p. m. Brotherhood 6:00 p. m. Mid-week prayer service on Wednesdays at 7:30 p. m.
Choir practice on Friday, 7 p. m.

METHODIST CHURCH
DR. O. J. CHANDLER, Pastor
Sunday School 9:45 a. m., J. D. Rankin, Superintendent.
Preaching at 11 a. m. and 7 p. m. by Dr. Chandler.
Epworth League, 6:15 p. m.
Prayer meeting on Wednesday at 7 p. m.
Choir practice on Friday, 7 p. m.

LUTHERAN CHURCHES
St. Marks, Bailey’s Camp
Preaching service the first Sunday of each month at 11 a. m. Sunday School every Sunday at 2:45 a. m. Professor C. I. Sawyer, superintendent. Luther League, meets every Sunday every Sunday at 12:45 a. m. Sunday at 7 p. m. Vesper service at 7 o’clock p. m.

Grace—East Boone
Service every second and fourth Sunday at 11 a. m., and every first and third Sunday at 8 p. m. Sunday School every Sunday at 2:45 a. m. Professor C. I. Sawyer, superintendent. Luther League, meets every Sunday every Sunday at 12:45 a. m. Sunday at 7 p. m. Vesper service at 7 o’clock p. m.

Holy Communion Congregation—Clark’s Creek
Preaching service the third Sunday of each month at 11 a. m. Sunday School every Sunday at 9:45 a. m. Perry Townsend, Superintendent.

Banner Elk Station
Service every fourth Sunday at 3 o’clock p. m.

To all these services the public is most cordially invited.

J. A. YOUNT, Pastor.

WATAUGA CHURCH
REV. H. M. WELMAN, Pastor
Henson’s Chapel—Second and Fourth Sundays, 11 a. m. Sunday School at 9:45. J. B. Horton, superintendent. Epworth League, 6 p. m. Valle Crucis—Preaching every First and Third Sunday at 11 a. m. Sunday School 10 a. m. J. M. Shall, superintendent. Epworth League every Wednesday night.
Mabel—Preaching every Second and Fourth Sunday at 8 p. m. Sunday School 10 a. m. Robert Castle, superintendent.
Salers—Preaching every first Sunday at 8 p. m.

THE FARMER FEEDS ‘EM ALL

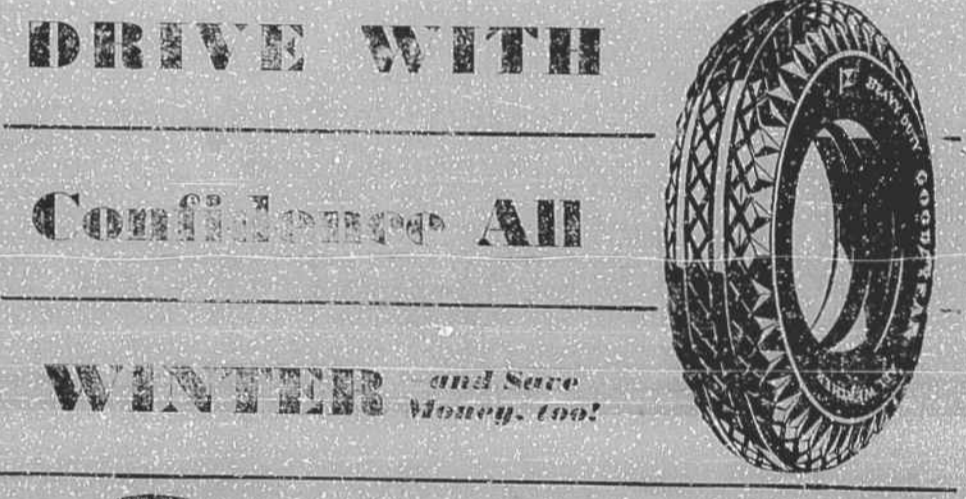
The politician talks and talks. The actor plays his part. The soldier marches on parade. The goldsmith plays his art. The scientist pursues his gear. O’er the terrestrial ball. The sailor navigates his ship. But the farmer feeds them all.

The preacher pounds the pulpit desk. The cooker reads the tips. The tailor cuts and sews his cloth. To fit the human shape. The dame of fashion, dressed in silk. Goes forth to dine, or call. Or drive, or dance, or promenade. But the farmer feeds them all.

The workman wields his shiny tools. The merchant shows his wares. The aviator above the clouds. A dizzy journey dares. But art and science soon would fade. And commerce dead would fall. If the farmer ceased to reap and sow. For the farmer feeds them all.

—Anonymous.

Miss Peachblow: I hope you won’t feel hurt because I refused you. Mr. Breaker: Not at all! Not at all! I assure you, I feel honored, positively honored. I’d rather be rejected by you than anyone I know.



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PINKY DINKY By Terry Gilkison

POP, WHO IS SUPPOSED TO BE THE OLDEST PERSON WHO EVER LIVED?

METHUSAELH HE WAS 900 YEARS OLD PINKY!

GEE! WHAT A GREAT LOT OF BIRTHDAY PRESENTS HE MUST HAVE GOTTEN—AND WHAT CAKE!

PINKY DINKY JINGLES

GIM ME
GIM ME
GIM ME

PINKY—OH HE GOES TO SCHOOL AND BIL CHUMS WITH JIMMIE—

FATTY LIKES TO ACT THE FOOL AND IF ALWAYS KNOWN AS GIMME!

TERRY GILKISON