

Life Begins At 62½

By George B. Russ

Emma Lou didn't call her sister-in-law a fool and a blabber mouth; she brushed her aside with contempt—and, left off speaking to her simply because she wouldn't promise to work for her socially prominent friend, Mrs. Lorraine Burton.

Whenever Curtis was in the house with the family, Emma Lou kept to her room. Miss Madie was, naturally, uncomfortable being shut off by her sister-in-law but she lost no sleep over the matter. Besides, there are certain advantages in having the avenues of communication closed between you and certain persons. A lot of things were left undone simply because she didn't know if Emma Lou wanted her help. Yep, she cashed in on the good sister-in-law's stupidities. She cleaned her own room, took care of her mending, Bible reading and cooking her own meals, such as they were, and ate to the tune of mute silence. Common sense had taught her how to crack the other fellow's head with the same stick he was trying to use to crack her head. Therefore, Emma Lou suffered a great deal more from the communication gap than her garrulous in-law.

Like the average man, Curtis had no idea that his domain and slowly dust and cobwebs were settling everywhere. His sister's sudden absence from the range, preparing the evening meal and prattling about the weather and the neighbor's business, didn't arouse his curiosity. His supper would be late, but this small inconvenience was worth the pleasure Emma Lou derived from having Madie out

of her kitchen, although she loathed culinary associations.

Emma Lou's effiteness no longer annoyed him; he had learned to live with her sniffing 'n blowing 'n falling about with the vapors or whatever it was that caused her torpidness; so, he spent his evenings at home doing exactly what he wanted to do at any given moment -- watching TV.

Miss Madie didn't relish her sister-in-law's discomfort, however, there was a heartwarming compensation in watching her "slung over a barrel." No woman in her right mind should let another person's handicap overshadow their own happiness as much as Emma Lou was allowing Lorraine Burton's need for domestic help to sap the life out of her.

Curt's wife huffed 'n puffed for days before she let her real tale of woe be known.

Between the gold and pink bathroom and her French Provincial bedroom with its drapes of gold lace, Mrs. Perkins moaned and groaned; she was lost for the right words to say that should shift the bulk of her burden to the shoulders of her silly-nilly sister-in-law. Ben Pratt had hopped, jumped skipped and fawned for the Kaypots until his mainspring had broken. He was deathly sick from "pure 'n divine worn-out-ness." Old Ben had used up every ounce of his "life giving energy." The man had to be cared for like a baby.

Miss Madie was more aware of Ben's state of affairs than she made manifest to anyone, especially, his "hotsy tosy daughter." Nevertheless, she kept a watchful eye upon the fat lady and kept a safe distance while she watched. If

anything started falling, she wanted the floor to catch it. She was sure the floor was the better "catcher" for a whale-of-a woman like Emma Lou.

Praying three times a day was as natural to Miss Madie as drinking a cool glass of water when her throat was parched. She prayed for many things like being blessed with a kind, loving, considerate husband; but, her chances of enjoying any kind of man were "second to none."

In fact, she had ceased beseeching God to send a good man her way; instead, she entreated Him to give her a seat in His kingdom. After a week of Emma Lou's covorting, Miss Madie entered her secret closet and wrestled with God, begging Him to give Emma Lou courage to face up to her great problem.

"Lord let her mantle of misery fall on stronger shoulders. Shoulders able to withstand whatever hardships that might befall them." She didn't tell God that Emma Lou wasn't

worth what the bears grabbed at, because, there are some things one just don't tell the heavenly father. But a single day did not pass that she didn't pray for her ailing sister-in-law; "Lordy, you make the weak and the strong; the fat and the thin; and, you said in your Holy word that you don't suffer none of your chillun to bear more than they are able to carry. Release Emma Lou's burden upon the shoulders of them that is more able to withstand. My proud as a peacock sister-in-law is weaker than a May chicken." To be continued—

The United States and Cuba have signed a five-year agreement that calls for extradition or stiff prosecution of hijackers without forbidding U.S. asylum for refugees who flee Cuba for political reasons.

Japan asks role in planning for Indochina.

G.E. urges simplification of energy regulations.



DON'T FENCE ME IN, cry young girls who demand comfort as well as style. No, they needn't wear overalls; they'd rather pick up on corduroys in sunshine colors, casually tailored by Cinderella. A little tomboy (left) will feel just right in a ready for action warm-up jacket. The multi-striped rib knit trim matches the cotton sweater. Feminine flare leg pants complete the outfit. A bright sweater works for sister, too, but she trades pants for a scooter skirt.

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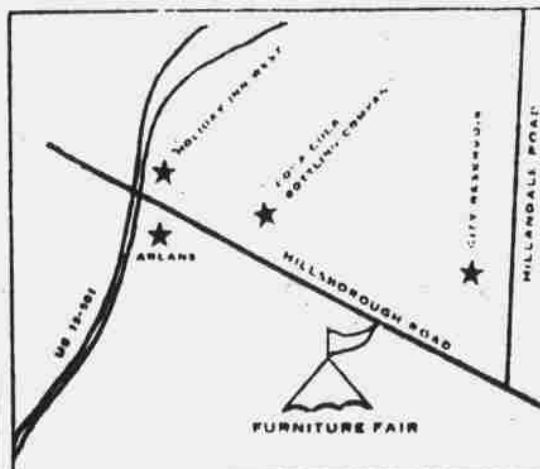
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