

Life Begins At 62½

By George B. Russ

For one who was accustomed to "chewing her tobacco once then spitting her juice," Miss Madie was having a most difficult time trying to hide her "lie under a bushel."

"Mister Ben" was nosier than a hound in a rabbit patch. And unlike most fibbers, she didn't tell a fib then tell another to cover up the tell-tale marks of the first one. She just didn't have the right face for lying. Keeping a straight face was like the feather around the cat's mouth that swallowed the canary. Therefore, she clenched her teeth and gave whatever task before her a fraction more attention than was needed. She even spotted cobwebs where none existed. And long before noon, the apartment was spotlessly clean, "Mister Ben" was bathed, shaved, fed, and propped up in bed, playing dominoes. The game had been sent to him by his "terribly busy" daughter. Emma Lou had visited her father once during the month Miss Madie had been caring for him. Her excuse for neglecting her father was as flimsy as cheese cloth and just as full of holes, but Miss Madie decided that it was no "skin off her back" if "Mister Ben's" own daughter had no love in her heart for him. "Blood is thicker than water" when love is the preponderant. And many a parent has burdened their hearts to an untimely grave trying to hold on to an offspring that isn't worth a cuss, especially, the kind of cussing she'd like to put on most of Hagar's younguns. Half of them, she had had the misfortune of meeting, were too poor to stink but they all labored under the delusion that they are gifts to all mankind.

"Mister Ben" didn't seem to notice his "fatted calf" coming or going, so she was out of focus feeling sorry for him. She had no ax to grind her discomfidence on, something or somebody—not even Jeff Boykins—having someone make a chump of you, unbeknowningly, is one thing; but, it is a horse of another color to ask someone to let you have it between the eyes—chump she was and chump she had asked for.

A whole week had passed and she had heard nothing from Jeff Boykins—the sweet talking, good looking tantalizing tid-bit of masculine heart warmer had stolen her heart, addled her brain; in general, she was a wretch undone and to add gall to goose pimples, Mister Ben's bowels were running off like a goose after eating a mess of wild onions.

Experience had taught Miss Madie, she had learned the hard way, that self-pity is the worst kind of bedmate, therefore, she sought every available diversion to had company; nevertheless,

whatever she did to divert the pangs of pity, she was reminded of her recent absurdity. She was doing just fine with the needle and thread until an old ditty sprang into her befuddled brain: If I had a needle, as fine as I can sew; I'd sew my love to my side and down the road we'd go.

The one aspect of Miss Madie's dilemma lay in the fact that Jeff Boykins belonged to the South Hill set. A vegetable-peddler, shoe shine boy, ditch digger—a peg-leg man for that matter—could be forgotten at the first sign of fickleness but it was different being given the "dropped like a hot potato"

routine by a South Hill highbrow.

Prior to her meeting with Jeff Boykins, the folk in South Hill tickled Miss Madie. They all wore smug, well-fed expressions, good clothes and, most of them, drove fine cars; but, if you ever got close enough to a South Hill resident to speak, "it" acted as though you had committed mayhem. Speaking of living in a segregated neighborhood, South Hill was a breathing example of people looking down their noses at people who earn their bread by the sweat of their brows. You'd never suspect that most of the residents had migrated from "Black Bottom"—the slum section of Bayborough.

The Kaypots were rich and had traveled around the world three times but they didn't have half the class that the average South Hill resident wore like a badge of honor.

"South Hill is the worst place in the world to get lonesome in," Miss Madie spoke absently as she folded

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Mrs. Helen J. Brown was the hostess for a dinner party given on Sunday, April 29 in honor of Mrs. Ruth McCollum and Cordoza McCollum, Jr. who were celebrating birthdays. The dinner was held at the Holiday Inn with each guest choosing his or her own menu.

Miss Catherine Annette Page displayed her piano accomplishments by her musical selections during the dinner.

The most enjoyable dinner and fellowship were enjoyed by Mrs. Patricia Johnson, Mrs. R. E. Page, Miss C. Annette Page, Miss Lila Renee Page, Mrs. Ruth McCollum, Cordoza McCollum, Mrs. Nettie G. Davis, Mrs. Lottie Campbell, Mrs. C. S. Campbell, Mr. and Mrs. W. L. Watson, Mr. and Mrs. Dock Shaw, Mr. and Mrs. L. G. Harrison from Fayetteville, N.C. and Mrs. Carrie H. Mitchell of Hopewell, Virginia.

her sewing and tucked it inside the wicker sewing basket; "a body could get sick 'n die 'n your next door neighbor wouldn't know you had crossed over into the promise land."

She was combing her hair when a tap-tap-tapping sound on the front door stirred her out of her stupor. Suddenly, she was

all-ah-flutter—Continued.

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