

Love Me, Love My Wife

By GEORGE B. RUSS

The cold, drippy days of October gave way to the icy cold, shorter days and longer nights of winter and Chad had not shown up at Aunt Effie's Snack Bar nor had he put in an appearance at the operator's home. And Effie felt that the world had crashed around her feet; nevertheless, she kept her heart out of the management of the Snack Bar. Her business was located in a section of Hayestown where she stood a chance of being robbed, raped and ridden out of town, therefore, her better judgement told her that she had better do her moaning and weeping in the wee hours of morning, in the safety of her bedroom, if she didn't wish to be fleeced-taken to the auction block -- by rabble-rousers who frequented Aunt Effie's Snack Bar.

Every morning, she arose at 6 o'clock, showered, made breakfast, checked bills; straightened her room, used a dust cloth and mop at least one room. In this way, she managed to keep the old fashioned 5 room house in tip-top shape. At 8 o'clock, she gathered up all the items she was taking with her and placed them inside the car, made recheck of windows, doors, faucets and appliances; then, she stood for a few minutes inside her bedroom and whisp-

ered a prayer for Chad's health and safety and a wish for him to soon return to her. "And dear God if his wife is doing anything to keep him away from me, put her out of the way."

Effie was sincere in her request; she did not care how Gladys was removed so long as she was out of the picture. She didn't ask God to send the death angel to remove the obstacle, however, she would have welcomed the news of her adversary's death. Chad, she felt, was a victim of some spell his wife had paid to have placed on him. Doctor Lockhart had hinted that much and she hadn't paid him to say more, a hint was all she needed to confirm her own suspicions. Usually, a deep sign dismissed her heartaches for the day.

Aunt Effie's Bar opened for business at 8:30 every day, including Sunday; with or without her crew of workers. Out of a staff of four, most of the time, only two could be depended upon to be on time and cold sober and wide awake. There was no middle of the road policy to use to enforce better service. Top-pay, free meals, uniforms, a day off each week, paid holidays, over time pay for Sunday work contributed very little to the quality of performance. With eyes in the back of her

head, she could not keep them from "knocking down" on the cash register or the stock. Staying on her toes, keeping her eyes wide open and her ears cocked only kept thefts down to a minimum. Besides, she had to listen to sob-stories, hard luck yarns, domestic problems and pay court fines in order to keep a part time staff of workers.

Making money kept her life line supple and alacritous. The sweetest music to her ears was the sound of Chad's voice and the ringing-up sound of the cash register. When business was dull and there was no ding-a-ling sound from the cash register, she pined for Chad, yearned to have him near her.

The morning after Thanksgiving was just such a morning and she broke her promise never to call Chad on his job. Chad had not come in, "this is Chad's late day," the person on the other end of telephone line had said and hung up before she was able to say, "dog-kiss-my foot," if she had wanted to say so. Angry now with Chad and the whole world, Effie began pouring her ire out on the help and by noon, she was alone in the Snack Bar. Her first impulse was to close shop, go home and have a good cry; then, call McDuffie and tell him that she was ready to dissolve the business -- sell out. And she might have done just that but at the moment her emotions were taking on the proportions of an exploding volcano, the front door opened and Chad strode inside, carrying a small box, a shoe box

to be exact. "Hi! Hi! Where is everybody? Chad shouted, pretending he had not recognized Effie standing in front of the shining coffee-urn. "Sugar-babe, you see me." Effie's voice was smidly scolding in tone. "Lady, what's with the quietness? Turn on the radio 'n make it seem like the season to be jolly."

"Shut up, Sugar-babe! You sound crazy." Effie wanted to scream her great joy, but she had no wish to make known to him just how happy she was to have him here. "I see you have decided to come to life again." Effie hoped to God, she sounded matter-a-factly. She wanted him near her, she needed him, would have given a pretty to have him close to her last night -- blues in the night can force one to do crazy things, but Chad must not know. He might laugh if he learned that she had hugged and kissed her pillow, cried into it until she was weak and trembling.

Chad walked behind the counter and stood beside Effie holding on to the shoe box, blushing like a school-boy; "I have just sold my first batch of Granny Lizzie's Peanut Candy."

"Pshaw! Whatcha mean?" "You won't make enough money selling Granny Lizzie's Peanut Candy to buy your self a change of underwear." "I have already done that, Effie." Chad's tone was snappish.

"Chad, you don't have to fool around making candy, like missionary sisters, to sell to buy the pastor a robe or a \$20.00 hat for his birthday present. Chad, I bought this place for us. You don't have to fume 'n sweat 'n worry yourself trying to make a living. We can make it right here. All you've got to do is stick with me." Effie pouted. Chad carefully placed the candy box on the counter between napkin holder, menu, salt and pepper shakers; "lady, you've been very nice. To tell the truth, you're more than nice -- you're sweet and generous, but -- you are also a woman, you'll go to any extremes to get what you want. Effie, I feel that you only want to out do Gladys and when you avenge whatever wrong she has done to you, I will no longer be the fish bone in your throat. You will give me the old hot seat. I had nothing when I came to you and --"

"Pshaw! Shut-up. You talk too much." A frown distorted Chad's sunny countenance; "You're going to get hurt -- telling me to shut up."

"Forget it." "There you go, lady." "Oh, hell." "Now you're cussing -- what's eating on you?" "If you don't know --" "Effie!" "I am going to close up this joint for the day." "But why?" "I want to be with you." "That's no excuse for closing up."

"But -- I want to spend some time with you. I don't want no short time. Chad, please be good to me." "Effie Jefferies! Take it easy babe. I'll need all my strength to make 'n sell my candy." Chad's laughter was soft and sensual. He made it so in order to torture Effie. "You can afford to act silly 'n tease me. Gladys has had you for nearly a month. You don't care if I fret and crave for loving."

"Effie!" "I'm true to you, Chad. The men in Hayestown can't say they have sampled my charms. You are lucky to have a girl friend who'll wait around for you." Effie's hands reached out and grapped Chad. "Not here, lady. Take it easy, you haven't sampled my candy." "Are you kidding?" "Nope. I have brought some for you." "You're crazy. I wouldn't eat a piece of that candy for a hundred dollars." "Ah! come off it. This is really good candy." "She helped you, didn't she?"

"Yes. Gladys is a real helper." "I thought so." "So what?" "Chad, you're stupid. Your wife knows we are in love. She is no fool. She got you with some chocolate cake -- I know, a friend of mine told me so."

"Told you what?" "She told me that you ate some chocolate cake at Gladys' house before you got married." "Go on, Effie! Gladys wouldn't touch that kind of stuff with a ten foot pole." "Pshaw! Maybe she didn't do it, but her old mammy did. Gladys was getting old and the old lady was afraid she'd get stuck with your slow-poke, dumb wife."

Chad removed the box from the counter; "oh, well-where you're going -- it's hard to tell!"

"I don't care how mad you get, I am not eating any of that candy!"

"Don't feel bad -- I've got to go to work."

"Work some hell!" "Be your self, Mrs. Jefferies."

"Chad, stay with me today, I will pay you for your day's work."

"A tempting offer -- but this is Friday."

"Yesterday was Thanksgiving. Continued on page 6B



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