

MERRILY WE LIVE

ADAPTED FROM THE FAMOUS GOLDEN AGE MOVIE

by LUCY HUFFAKER

Chapter One

Mrs. Kilbourne looked at the large wooden soup ladle she had picked up from the breakfast table and asked the butler in a voice, "Is this the one?"

"No, ma'am," answered the butler, "it's the wrong one. The one you want is the small one." Mrs. Kilbourne, who had been moving in a daze since she regained her feet after fainting half an hour before (he fainting rather easily) murmured something about Ambrose. Mrs. Kilbourne, in turn, murmured that Ambrose was so wonderful. He, more than any other, understood her. She had ever taken in had justified her belief in human nature. Her family hesitated a moment. They loved her, they disliked hurting her. But she had to be told that Ambrose had disappeared sometime during the night and taken all the silver with him! Tears on the part of Mrs. Kilbourne's tenderness on the part of her family followed. Then shouts of joy when Mrs. Kilbourne, through her sobbing, stated that never again would she take a tramp into the house. Mrs. Kilbourne said it was worth losing the silver if she meant that. Kane said he was glad his mother was showing common sense for once. Marian, who was just beyond being a little girl, said she was fed up with tramps, too. Jerry said nothing, but she was thinking that nothing would ever change her mother, heaven bless her. Grosvenor almost smiled—he felt it beneath his dignity to serve in a house which harbored tramps.

But Grosvenor did not smile a few minutes later when he answered the door bell and saw a young man, shabby and unshaven, standing there. In fact he tried to slam the door in his face. Wade Rawlins might have been turned away if Mrs. Kilbourne had not appeared at that moment and told Grosvenor to let the man in. In her most gracious manner she said she was glad he had come to them; he was to come right in and have his breakfast. He tried to introduce himself—Wade Rawlins, of New York, novelist, who for a long had been roughing it on the Pacific Coast and was stranded when the rickety old car he was driving had backed over a ravine as he was trying to adjust the motor. He wanted to telephone. But Mrs. Kilbourne was not one to be interrupted nor deterred from being kind and hospitable. Grosvenor, looking as if he might break his own high record by fainting twice within an hour, went to the kitchen.

"Come in, dear," called Mrs. Kilbourne as her younger daughter came to a sudden stop in her rush through the door. "You must meet our new chauffeur—you do drive, don't you? This is my daughter Marian and I don't think I caught your name? Wade Rawlins—oh, of course, and a very nice name it is, too."

Marian's acknowledgement of the introduction was a sharp whistle. Mrs. Kilbourne took her by the hand and said they must go and see what was keeping Grosvenor so long; she did hope they wouldn't find him sprawling on the floor. It was really getting to be too much of a habit.

Wade was alone and through an archway he saw a telephone. If he could reach it.

"Come on! Beat it! Beat it! Beat it!" ordered an angry young voice. "You probably have worked on mother's weakness, but you won't get around the rest of us! We have some sanity left, if we haven't any silver. We're through with tramps. Why don't you get a job driving a truck or digging ditches, instead of trying to mooch a room and food for nothing?"

Jerry's breath had given out, so Wade managed to say she did not understand the situation. That brought her breath back.

"Why do you stand there like a wooden Indian?" she demanded. "If you knew the meaning of the word self-respect, you'd have been out of here before—"

She stopped short as the door to

the butler's pantry opened, and her mother's voice called to them.

"So you two have become acquainted, have you? How nice. Grosvenor, put the tray down, then go and make sure Wade's room is ready for him and lay out all the uniforms. You see, Wade, we have had so many drivers that surely one of the uniforms will fit you."

Wade managed to say he hadn't come for a job nor food. He wanted to phone. Mrs. Kilbourne said of course he could phone all he liked—there was a phone in his room in the garage. But first he must eat and of course he had a job now.

"Mother," said Jerry firmly. "I'm going to phone father. If he gets this shock suddenly, he will go mad."

"It is sweet to think of your father," said Mrs. Kilbourne. "And tell him—"

"I've changed my mind," said Jerry. "What's the use? This house will always be goofy as long as we are in it, anyway."

She walked out. Marian followed her and Mrs. Kilbourne went to speak to the gardener.

Wade drew a long breath. Now was his chance. He didn't want to



Wade did not want to leave this strange household. He was enjoying it immensely.

phone now; all he wanted was to get away from this house, which was evidently some sort of luxurious private sanitarium for lunatics. He slipped across the room and had almost reached the door when a voice said, "Oh no, you don't." He recognized Grosvenor's voice, but it came to him dimly, for the butler creeping up behind him, had clamped down on his head a basket filled with flowers.

"What's going on here?" cried Jerry dashing into the room.

"This person was trying to make a get-away," said Grosvenor. "And I thought I could trust you," said Jerry in a long-suffering voice to Wade.

She took the basket from Wade's head and in answer to Grosvenor's protests, said she did not care what he had seen; this was their new tramp. She had appointed herself the judge of who was to stay, who was to go. There would always be a tramp and so they might as well keep this one. He couldn't be any worse than the others; he might be better.

"Perhaps you will take my word for it that I didn't attempt a robbery. It is your privilege to have me searched. I will not resist—nor object."

"No one will search you. But just because I'm naturally curious why were you trying to run away?"

"I just wanted to get out of here."

"That's gratitude for you. Here you have a chance for a more abundant life, as the saying goes—and well, you won't go, let me tell you. Here, Grosvenor, it's all settled. Now take him to his room, get him a razor, towels, clean clothes—everything he needs. Well, what are you waiting for?"

"Only to say, Miss Kilbourne, I'm leaving. This is too much."

"You'll leave when I say you may and not one minute before. If I hear one word more about your going, your first wife will hear from me."

Wade took the bills from Mr. Kilbourne, as one who knew he had gone down to defeat, sighed. "You understand, don't you?" Jerry said to Wade. "He's sort of a bigamist. Now you may go and do your phoning, whatever it is."

But Wade did not phone. He did not want to leave this strange household. Why, it would furnish him with enough material for a dozen novels!

Wade had just decided he was tired and was ready for bed when he heard some one drive up to the garage, stop a car, and run in. He threw a lounging robe around him and went to see who it was.

Kane was at the phone, talking in a voice, low and throbbing with excitement and fear.

"Betty?" he said. "Everybody's in bed. I tell you it would never do to wake father now. He'd be so furious I never could get anything out of him. I'll get it—I'm not one to waver. Yes, yes, I know no one forced me to play, but—do ask them to be reasonable. Yes, I know you okayed my credit—but five grand and—no, no! That would ruin everything. Don't come, Betty. No telling what father would do. Give me till noon—"

Kane replaced the phone and

rushed toward the car. Then he saw Wade.

"You're not leaving," said Wade firmly. "And don't waste time asking why I listened. I didn't mean to eaves-drop, but it's a good thing I did. And you don't need to explain what happened. This Betty person introduced you to a couple of friends—you all had two or three drinks—some one suggested cards—they lost at first or won little—then—but five thousand dollars! They did take you to the cleaners, didn't they? Picture, as I've drawn it right? So what? You are going to bed and leave this to me. I'm older than you; I've been around more; I think I know something about tough guys. My work has made me interested in them and their psychology—but I won't go into that. You can trust me. Give me this Betty's phone number and you go to bed. I'll fix them."

Wade had just finished the phone call to the number Kane gave him, and gone to the door for a breath of air when another car drove up to the house. It was a taxi-cab and some one seemed to be having difficulty in getting out.

"This is my house, you say?" the voice was thick but it was undoubtedly Mr. Kilbourne's. "Well, what's wrong with it? Let that pass, however. Thanks for the ride. Will be seeing you as per arrangement, some other time."

"But my fare?" said the driver.

"It's five dollars."

"What's five dollars between friends?" asked Mr. Kilbourne. "You just keep it and forget it. I won't be a big roll tonight. If you don't believe it, look at this."

Wade walked hurriedly toward the cab.

"I'll pay you whatever your meter reads," said Wade to the driver firmly.

"Who are you butting in?" asked the driver.

"Yes," said Mr. Kilbourne, "who are you coming between friends?"

Wade took the bills from Mr. Kil-

bourne, looked at the meter, paid the driver and told him to drive on. "Quiet!" roared Mr. Kilbourne. "Folks trying to sleep."

Suddenly a light streamed from an upper window. Wade had just time to thrust Mr. Kilbourne into a clump of bushes when some one came to the window and called down to ask if anything was wrong.

"Don't be alarmed, Mrs. Kilbourne," said Wade. "Just a drunk who said he lived here. I got rid of him."

He waited until the light had gone out and then managed to get Mr. Kilbourne into the house and up the stairs. He was just going out when he saw Marian, munching cookies, coming in from the dining-room. He asked her if it wasn't quite late for a school-girl to be up. Her answer was disconcerting. "Probably," she said, "but I don't need any help, at least. You see I'm sober so—"

"How would it be for you and me to have a little secret, Miss Marian?" he asked. "Good friends should have them and if you're willing, I'd like for us to be friends. So—what do you say to both of us forgetting what we think we saw and heard and never mention it, even to each other? What do you say we shake on it?"

Marian put out her hand. As she went up the stairs, she leaned over and said she thought he was a swell guy.

The night was not yet over for Wade. He let himself out of the house and was just starting for the garage, when he noticed a parked car.

"We're engaged, Jerry," said a voice rather sullenly.

"Says who?" answered a voice, rather angrily.

"Why—why everybody, I guess. Ever since we were kids, I've taken it for granted, sort of. So—"

Instead of words there came then two sounds which Wade did not understand, until Jerry jumped from the car and said: "That for you! And the next time you kiss me when I've told you not to, I'll slap you harder."

The car drove rapidly away. It was then that Jerry noticed Wade.

"Will you be good enough to tell me," she asked in a voice which suggested ice and snow and sleet, "what you mean by prowling around like this and more especially by snooping on me?"

"I am sorry, Miss Kilbourne," said Wade. "I like to walk at night before going to bed. I had no intention of prying into your affairs—or anyone's. As a matter of fact, I was thinking of, I did not see you until just now and I did not hear anything which was said."

"Very well," said Jerry. "Good night."

But just as she neared the door and opened her purse, she stopped. She called to him. She had no key, she explained. She didn't want to awaken anyone by ringing the bell. How would she get in? Wade suggested she try one of the windows. She seemed to be giving the matter careful consideration, then said they were all too high. He assured her he would be glad to help her.

He lifted her easily to one which was open, but Jerry insisted she could not make it and he must put her down. Again he lifted her; again she said she could not make it.

"All right," said Wade, "we'll try it another way."

He got down on all fours and told her to get on his back. Then she swung across the ledge.

"Good night," she said, "and thank you."

"Good night," he answered—"and you are more than welcome."

He had gone but a few steps when she called him back.

"Sorry to be awkward," she said, "but I dropped my purse. Will you be good enough—"

It had opened when she threw it to the ground. Beside it lay her key!

Next chapter: The Kilbournes give a dinner party more important than they had expected it to be.

PENDER ROAD NEWS

Mr. and Mrs. R. C. Ausbon and their daughter, Esther, and son, Edgar, Mr. and Mrs. Staley Askew and daughter, Irma Gene, all of Henderson, were Sunday guests of Mr. Ausbon's brother-in-law and sister, Mr. and Mrs. Willie Lane. Mrs. Will Morgan, of Winfall, visited her sister, Mrs. Lane, in the afternoon.

Mr. and Mrs. Raymond Skinner and children, of Hertford, spent Sunday with Mr. and Mrs. Stephen Elliott. Mr. and Mrs. Lloyd Elliott and three children, of Elizabeth City, called in the afternoon.

On Sunday Mrs. W. C. Lassiter visited her daughter, Rosa, who was in St. Vincent's Hospital, Norfolk, Va., where she was operated on Monday of last week for appendicitis.

Mrs. Luna Bateman, Mrs. G. R. Bateman, Mr. and Mrs. Glenn Hobbs, all of near Elizabeth City, and Mrs. R. A. Perry visited Mrs. Reuben Stallings on Wednesday.

Mrs. H. S. Davenport spent Sunday in Norfolk, Va., with her brother and sister-in-law, Mr. and Mrs. Geo. Earl Dall.

Ernest Griffin, of Norfolk, Va., was the Saturday night guest of Mr. and Mrs. J. Ed Lane.

Mr. and Mrs. Neil Spruill, of near South Mills, and Mrs. J. E. Eaves called on Mrs. Reuben Stallings Friday.

Mr. and Mrs. E. Y. Berry, Mrs. B. A. Perry and Stephen Elliott attended the funeral of Elbert White, in Edenton, Thursday.

Mrs. R. A. Perry and son, J. E.,

and Miss Jeannette Perry, of Hertford, spent Sunday with Mr. and Mrs. Glenn Hobbs, near Elizabeth City.

Raymond Farmer, Mrs. Mamie Farmer and Mrs. B. A. Berry motored to Elizabeth City on Friday.

Mrs. Lula Byrum, of Edenton, is visiting her daughter, Mrs. W. M. Harrell.

J. E. Eaves, Mr. and Mrs. Louis Eaves and son, Howard, motored to Edenton Thursday.

Mr. and Mrs. Louis Proctor and son, L. C., spent Sunday with Mr. and Mrs. Billie Whedbee.

Debbie, the small daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Irvin Whedbee, has measles. Mrs. A. J. Dall returned to her home in Norfolk, Va., Monday after spending several days with her daughter, Mrs. Reuben Stallings.

Mr. and Mrs. Neil Spruill, of near South Mills, were luncheon guests of Mr. and Mrs. E. C. White on Friday. Mrs. V. L. Proctor visited Miss Rosa Lassiter, who was a patient at St. Vincent's Hospital, Norfolk, Va., last week.

Those calling to see Mr. and Mrs. Reuben Stallings Sunday were: Mrs. Mamie Blanchard and Miss Lottie Lee Blanchard, of Hertford; Mrs. Mamie Farmer; Rev. W. O. Henderson, of Elizabeth City; Mr. and Mrs. Will Corprew, of Camden; Mr. and Mrs. Charlie Harrell, of Hertford; Mrs. V. L. Proctor; J. E. Eaves, Mr. and Mrs. Louis Eaves, Shelton Bateman, and Mrs. Maggie Umphlett.

Mrs. Luna Bateman, of near Elizabeth City, is spending the week with her niece, Mrs. Reuben Stallings.

CUMBERLAND

Miss Mary Elizabeth White spent this week in Norfolk, Va., with her brothers, Roscoe and Leigh White.

Miss Ruth Hurdle visited Mrs. Effie Miller Sunday afternoon.

Mr. and Mrs. Wallace Morgan called to see Mr. and Mrs. C. L. Godwin Sunday evening.

Mrs. T. E. Morgan, Mrs. E. U. Morgan, Mrs. Clifton Morgan, Mrs. Ernest Stallings, Mrs. E. C. Hollowell, Mrs. Alvah Madre, Mrs. H. D. Hurdle, Mrs. George Roach, Mrs. Effie Miller, Mrs. David Miller and

Miss Celesta Godwin attended the W. M. U. meeting at Bethel Baptist Church last Thursday.

Mrs. U. D. Hurdle and son, Billy, visited Mrs. Arthur Pierce Sunday afternoon.

Mr. and Mrs. George Roach and Mrs. Eva Stallings visited Mr. and Mrs. C. H. Simpson in Hertford on Sunday afternoon.

LEAVES HOSPITAL

Miss Rosa Lassiter, who has been a patient at St. Vincent's Hospital in Norfolk, Va., returned to her home in the Bethel community.

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