



By HELYN CONNELLY

BETTY JANE threw her purse at a chair and sat down heavily on the bed.

She wore her father's shirt and her brother's blue jeans, a costume she adopted a year before with Woody Anderson's permission.

"What's the matter, dear?" She jumped as the words cut the silence, but she didn't turn. She didn't want her mother to know anything was amiss—not yet, anyway. And then suddenly the tears came, like angry flood waters bursting through a barrier, unable to be restrained any longer.

Mrs. Miller was careful to keep a straight face as she wiped her 16-year-old daughter's face with her handkerchief. "Why, dear? Did Lance upset you?"

Betty Jane shook her head vehemently. Why did mother always think her brother was to blame for



"Gosh, you look wonderful like this!"

her tears? Grown women never cried over their brothers! "It's what Lance saw, not what he did," Betty said in a burst of confidence. As her mother waited she continued wretchedly. "He saw Woody buying a bottle of cologne. Cologne, mother, imagine! He was so glib when he told me I looked cute in jeans and now he's two-timing me with some fluffy female who actually uses cologne! Oh, how can men be so beastly!"

"Darling, how do you know the cologne isn't for you? Maybe Woody thinks you've outgrown your jeans."

"He knows what I think of these pink and white girls who use that horrible concoction! He wouldn't dare get me any. And besides, I already told him I wanted roller skates for Christmas. . . . I have to be ready for the new rink that's opening next month, don't I? I thought Woody and I would be going together, but now that's all over." She threw her arms around her mother and cried tragically. "Oh, mother, I'll never smile again! I definitely won't."

This time Mrs. Miller smiled over her daughter's head. She well recognized the stage Betty Jane was going through and decided she must take a hand. "You're sure the cologne wouldn't be for a sister or a cousin?"

"He hasn't a female in the family, and his mother never uses it, so who else could it possibly be for? I'll bet it's for Estelle Bryan. All the other fellows like her but Woody used to say she was too fragile. Oh, mother, how he's deceived me!"

HER mother arose. "Well, dry your eyes, Betty, dear. It's Christmas Eve and you want to be happy today. Woody will probably come over with your roller skates tonight and we'll surprise him. If he likes fragile girls, he'll get one."

Betty Jane sat up straight. "Mother, not that horrible blue dress you bought me!"

"You wash up and put that dress on, Betty."

"We'll wait for you downstairs." With that, Mrs. Miller closed the door on her tomboy daughter and hurried downstairs. As she reached the bottom step the doorbell rang and she admitted Woody Anderson, a lanky boy with unruly red hair and freckles marching in perfect formation over the bridge of his nose. He was clutching a box, obviously containing the roller skates requested by Betty Jane.

"She'll be right down," Mrs. Miller informed him, then left him alone for the surprise.

It came a half-hour later when Betty Jane made her appearance. The blue dress looked even better than she had hoped it would.

"Gosh, Betty Jane!" Woody contributed to the conversation. The smile broadened. "For me, Woody?" she asked, nodding toward the box. "Is it cologne? Lance saw you buying some." So casual, so indifferent.

"Oh—gosh, no, Betty Jane. Gee, you asked for skates and I got them for you. I bought cologne for Miss Lindsay, the English teacher that helped me with my essay for that contest."

"How sweet of you." She stepped down into the living room and accepted the box from Woody. "Thank you," she said gravely. "Yours is under the tree."

"Gee, I didn't think I'd ever like you dressed up as a girl, Betty," he gulped. "Estelle looked so awful and I was proud to have you run around with me in blue jeans, but, gosh, you look wonderful like this!"



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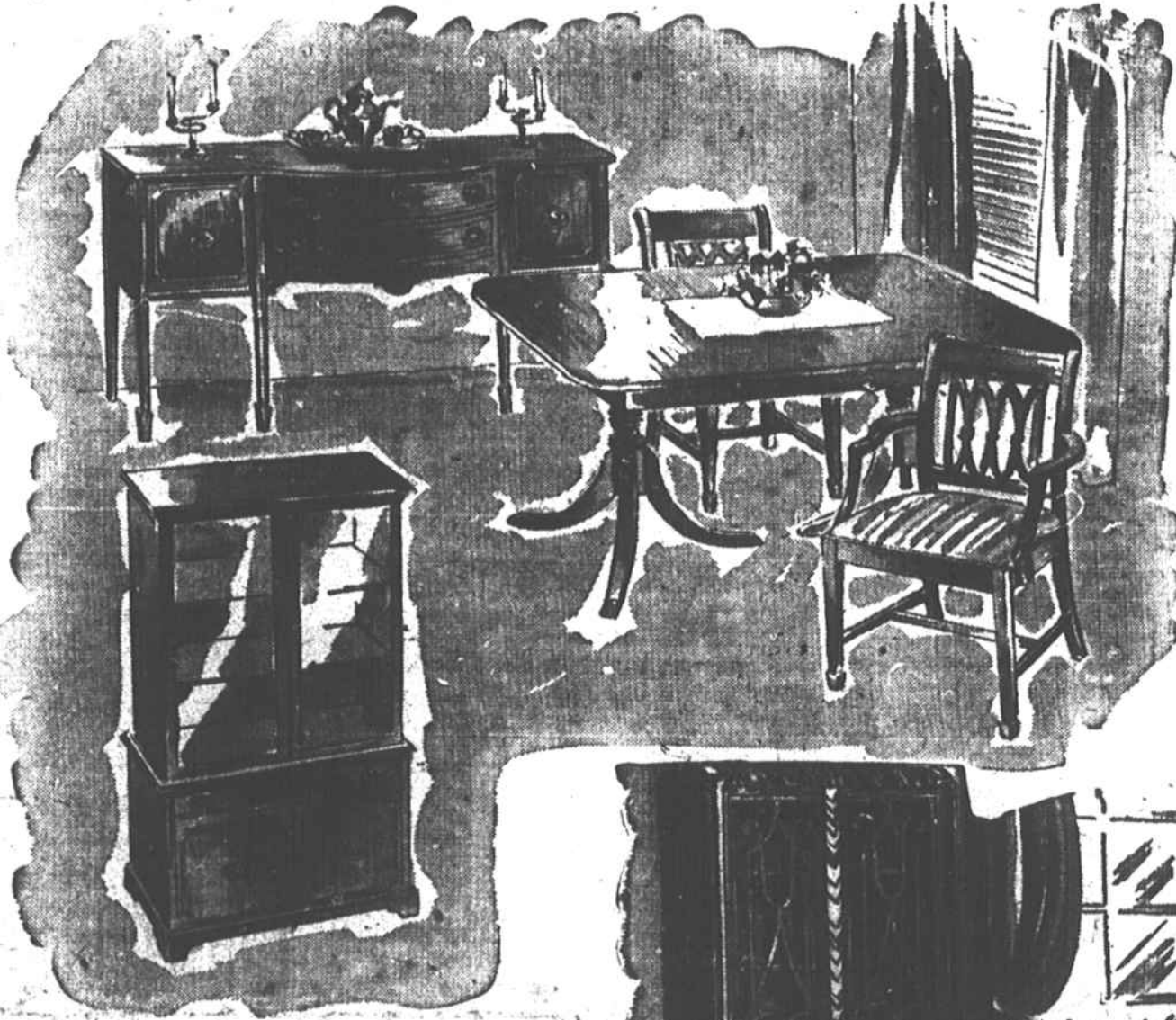
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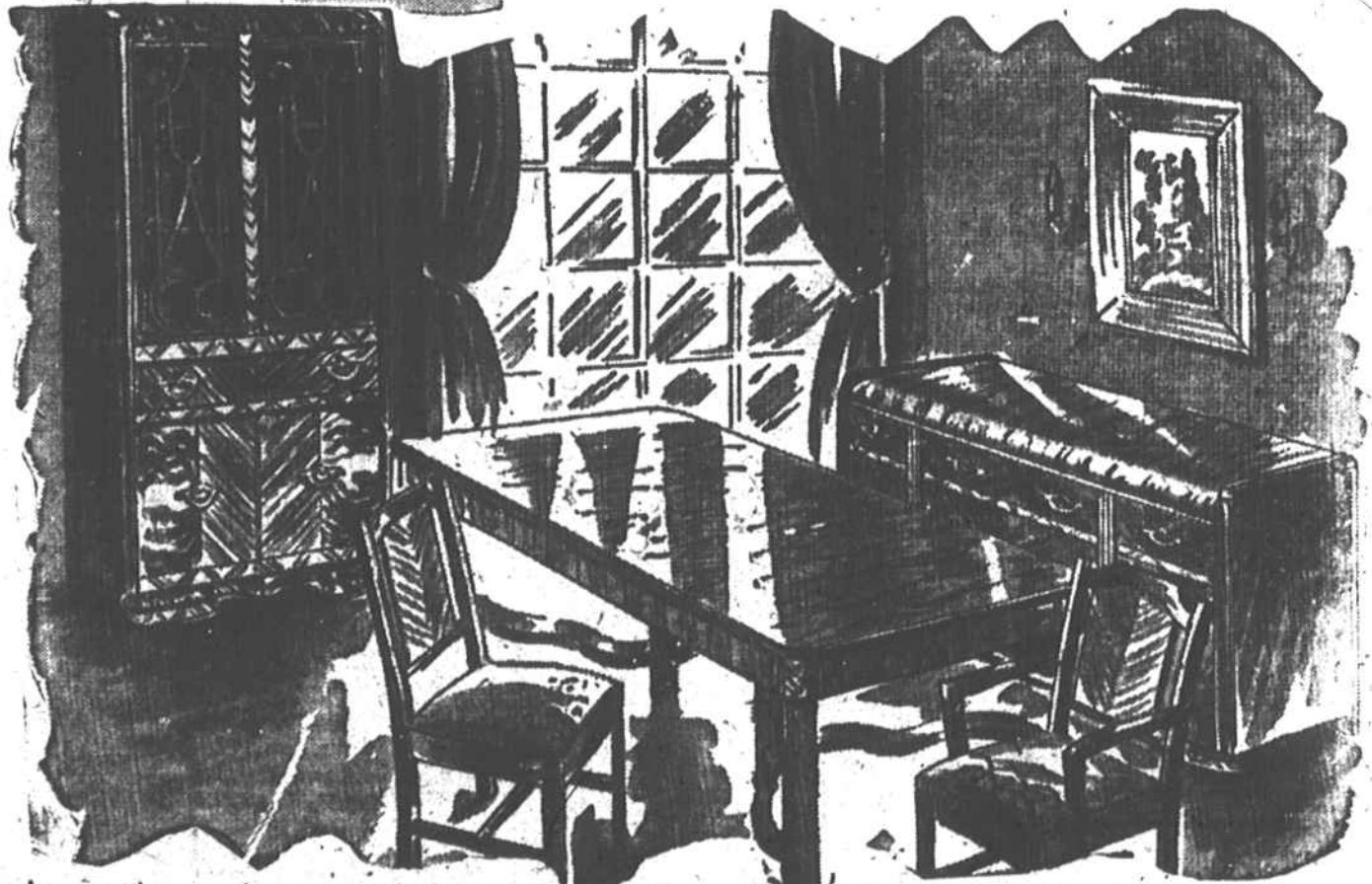
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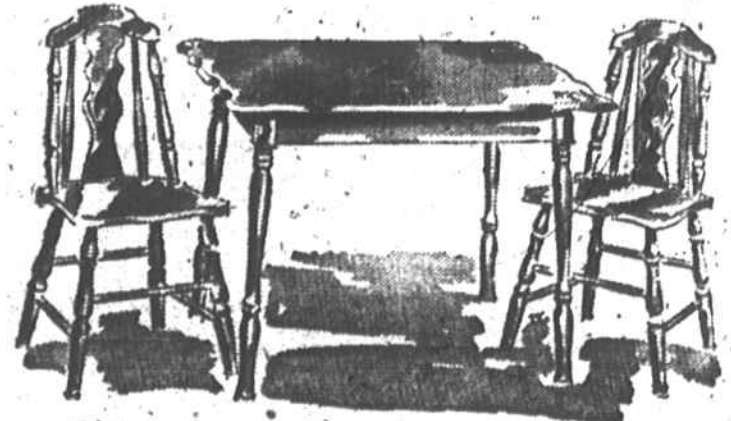


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