



Have a date with me tomorrow?

### The House of Dreams-Come-True

By Margaret Fedler

(Continued)

All these things had been in Lady Anne's mind when she had decided to enlighten Jean. She had seen, just as Judith had seen, whether Blaise was tending, fight against it as he might, and she was determined to remove from his path whatever of stumbling-block and hindrance she could. And, in this instance, she felt instinctively that Jean's own attitude might constitute the greatest danger. Any woman, as sincere and sensitive as she, might easily be driven in upon herself, shrinkingly misunderstanding Blaise's deliberate aloofness, and thus unconsciously assist in strengthening that barrier against love which he was striving to hold in place between them—and which Lady Anne so yearned to see thrown down.

It was to this end that she had reopened the shadowed pages of the past—so that no foolish obstacle born of sheer misunderstanding might imperil her son's hope of happiness if the time should ever come—as she prayed it would come—when he would free himself from the shackles of a tragic memory and turn his face towards the light of a new dawn.

#### CHAPTER XVI THE GIFT OF LOVE

There are some people to whom love comes in a single blinding flash; it is as though the heavens were opened and the vision and the glory their in a sudden, transcendent revelation. To others it comes gradually, their hearts opening diffidently to its warmth and light as a closed bud unfolds its petals, almost imperceptibly, to the sun.

With Jean, its coming partook in a measure of both of these. Love itself did not come to her suddenly. It had been secretly growing and deepening within her for months. But the recognition of it came upon her with an overwhelming suddenness.

Lady Anne, in recalling that bleak tragedy of the past, had accomplished more than she knew. She had shown Jean her own heart.

From those fierce, unexpected pangs of jealousy which had stabbed her as she realised the part played by another woman in Blaise's life—the woman who had been his wife—had sprung the knowledge that she loved him. Only love could explain the instant, clamorous rebellion of her whole being against that other woman's claim. And now, looking back upon the months which she had spent at Staple, she comprehended that the veiled figure of Love, face shrouded, had walked beside her all the way. That was why these even, uneventful weeks at Staple had seemed so wonderful.

The recognition of the great thing that had come into her life left her a little breathless and shaken. But she did not seek to evade or deny it. The absolute candour of her mind—candid even to itself—accepted the truth quite simply and frankly. No false shame that she had, as far as actual facts went, given her love unasked, tempted her to disguise from herself the reality of what had happened. For good or ill, whether Blaise returned her love or no, it was his.

But in her inmost heart she believed that he, too, cared—half-fearfully, half-joyfully recognising the pent-up force which surged behind the bars of his deliberate aloofness.

True, he had never definitely spoken of his love in so many words, but Lady Anne had supplied the key to his silence. The past still bound him! Alive, Neta had held him by her beauty; and dead, she still held him with the cords of remorse and unavailing self-reproach—cords which can bind almost as closely as the strands of love.

But for that—the hot color surged into Jean's cheeks at the sweet, secret thought which lay behind that "but." Blaise cared! Cared for her, needed her, just as she cared for and needed him. To her woman's eyes, newly anointed with love's sacramental oil and given sight, it had become suddenly evident in a hundred ways, most of all evident in his sullen effort to conceal it from her.

So much that he had said, or had not said—those clipped sentences, bitten off short with a savage impetuosity that had often enough troubled and bewildered her, now found their right interpretation. He cared. . . but the bondage of the past still held.

And with that thought came recollection. The brief, quivering ecstasy which had sent little fugitive thrills and currents racing through every nerve of her, died suddenly like a damped-out fire, as she realised all which that bondage implied.

It was possible he might never break the silence which he himself had decreed. From the very beginning he had recognized—and insisted upon—the fact that they two were only "ships that pass,"

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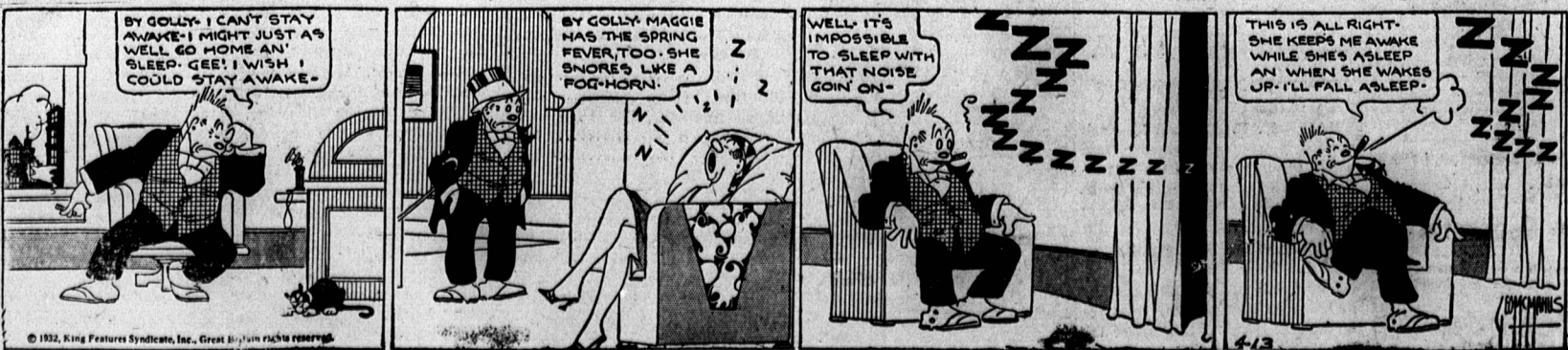
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