

A Sweetheart at Thirty THE STORY OF A WOMAN'S TRANSFORMATION

As the July days came on our activity increased. I feel as though I had lost an hour some time a few weeks ago and that I haven't been able to make it up since.

"You know, the thing I miss most is the newspapers," I answered. They were my favorite recreation in the city, and they were a form of recreation I could have continued here at home.

"Yes, it is narrowing," I answered. "I suppose its narrowing through because we let it be so. There's Mrs. Potts; she doesn't live a narrow existence and she lives on a bigger farm than ours."

"It's only over the summer," Vi said, with a little sigh, beginning to dust the room. I'm simply existing until we can get back to our little flat again and college—and Bud.

"Perhaps, after all, it would be a good thing for Bud to come back and take over his father's farm, as Mrs. Pearson wants, I suggest—"

"Which is better to keep the man you love where he is safe though all other circumstances of life are out of key—or to choose the pleasant surroundings and trust that everything will come out all right?"

"I was silent out of sympathy. Violet was glimpsing a problem many a woman has to face—"

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ranked of the suburban dwellers too. Then Bud, could have almost enough of the town's excitement—but with the knowledge that the 12.01 was the last train home.

ESTHER'S NEW IDEA Chapter 50

We never did any work Sunday afternoons. That was a rule observed religiously in the house, and a very welcome rule too.

"Humph," said Esther, "I don't see any such fancy knowledge will do James any good. Won't make him plow any better, as Jim would say."

James is so interested in machinery said, I wonder what books or magazines I could get him about that?

Well, I guess I'll lie down a bit she announced. "What you don't Enid I'm going to rest too perhaps read I said starting upstairs to my room."

I looked at myself in the un-friendliness of my face. I did not look as well as usual. That is the tragedy of age after all—at least the tragedy of middle age.

considered unnecessary in the family. If you've nothing to hide you won't mind, and if you have anything to hide, I ought to know it was her method of excuse.

She had taken off her house-dresses and the flimsy corsets she sometimes wore and rolled around herself in a striped gingham dress; it was a striped gingham with the wreck of a ruffle around the wide skirt, and a hastily put in seam where the sleeves had been shorn off at the elbow.

These will keep the figure flexible and young, I said, and unconsciously I spoke in superior tones.

I glanced at her careless wrapper—and at the pretty kimono which somehow made me look much younger. Then I went on with my treatments, explaining what I was doing and why.

And again I felt that unseemly hand, clutching at my throat and stifling the life breath out of me.

In spite of the fact that we had been making preparations for the wedding of Laura and Charlie for weeks, as the day approached we were in a perfect frenzy of haste.

Laura doesn't seem to think it would be a legal ceremony if she didn't have all her usual ready and at least a dozen every known variety of finery.

And you can just as well do these cuspidors after you're married. And then, Esther worked her way into a state of nervous collapse, and carrying the whole family with her.

But one afternoon a few days before the ceremony, by a burst of temper, Laura finally secured the services of Vi and myself for the day. Esther doing the routine house and garden work.

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and myself finishing some crochet work for a sofa cushion. Satisfied and once more bland in expression, Laura settled herself to work and for a while there was silence.

But I should think you'd like some of this work to do after you move in, Vi remarked biting off a new piece of thread.

"No, I don't," said her sister decidedly. You've got awful sentimental ideas about things Vi. But you'll get over them.

"I want to marry him, Laura answered without hesitation. I'll be a good wife to him—and he'll be a good husband to me. I'll see to that. Again there was the thicket look when she so resembled her mother.

Life resumed its normal course. After the ceremony we settled down to quiet and comparative leisure. The actual routine of the work was harder, because there was one pair of hands less, but there was also less work.

Well, I got one of my children safely married, Esther remarked with deep satisfaction. She was cutting up four chickens for dinner that day, standing by the kitchen table with a cleaver in one hand and a long knife on the chopping board.

Laura being the oldest she ought to go first, she went on. Of course I always hoped I'd get you married, but you've waited so long you ought to be a bee's mate.

But are you sure? I asked, beginning to use the hair tonic and the massage, but keenly interested in this analytic discussion in spite of my frivolous occupation.

And there was the contrast between the two girls. One went cautiously and sanely, unimaginatively, doing the common sense thing, never rising to great heights always avoiding great depths.

Viololet was one of the prettiest of the dresses I had made, and I was urged by Esther to lay down and rest and then do my hair up very high and to "curl it a little."

It does look charming, I never saw our house look so well, I commented to Esther, gazing with pleasure at the flower filled rooms.

Laura had a white silk dress made, with many lace ruffles and a high collar. The excitement of the occasion made her face hot and warm, so it began to shine with a high gloss, and her nose grew red too.

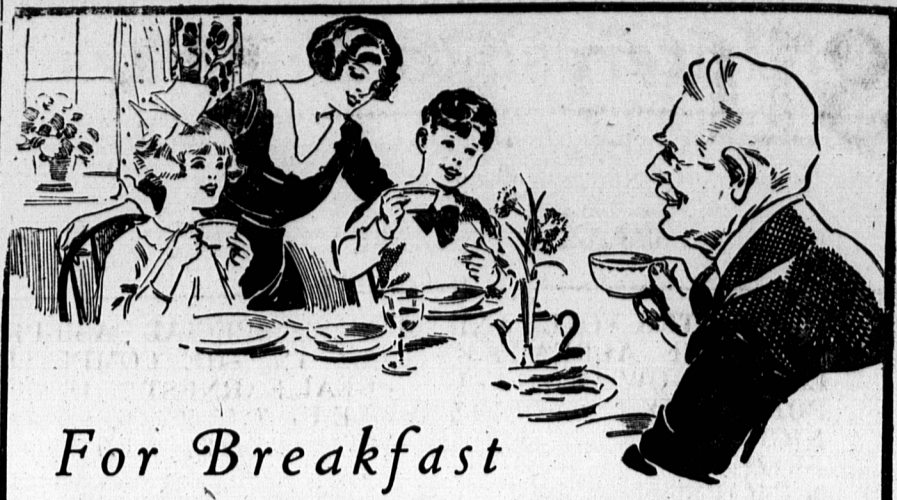
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destiny of the chicken, and her son. Again the idea of Esther as a sort of heartless Fury came to my mind.

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