

THE MAKE-BELIEVE WIFE

By KATHLEEN NORRIS
Author of Hildegarde—My Best Girl—The Foolish Virgin

CHAPTER XXXIX

"But—but you just thought Bert was the protected bewilderer, and you didn't care!"

"Oh, Bert!" she laughed, and wiped her eyes and choked again. "It's over—the excitement's over—she said, in an awed whisper. "And you've won! Hugh, can you believe it?"

"No, I really can't—and that—that we're happy again," he admitted with his artless, kind smile.

"And now, what do we do, Hugh? Can't we go home, and see your mother, and have them all congratulate you?" Beatrice asked childishly, blowing her nose and wiping her eyes again and looking at him expectantly.

"Congratulations! Yes. We'll go home now." Hugh came over to her chair and knelt down and put his arms about her, and she rested her head on his shoulder, so that their eyes were close together.

"Never, never to make you unhappy any more!" he said earnestly, humbly.

The blue eyes smiled with Beatrice's new wisdom.

"Oh, yes, you'll make me unhappy again," she said, "and jealous and anxious and furious. We'll worry over children some day, Hugh, and I'll have pneumonia, and you'll have typhoid, and I'll like people you don't like and you'll like people I don't like." "Never!"

"But that," she said, her forehead wrinkled against his, her voice was rich with content—"that's marriage, darling," she said, wistfully, dreamily.

"That's heaven!" Hugh agreed slowly.

At about seven o'clock that night it was raining again in North Underhill, and Bert, coming quietly in at the side door of the old Chaltoner house—the door that opened into the pantry hall—was splattered and damp with rain.

He saw Nelly there, being violets and primroses in a silver bowl.

"Any news?" Bert asked.

"There's all the news in the world," said Nelly placidly. "They got home at six, five minutes after like the laughing and running around there was in it, you never see. They'd stopped at your grandmother's, and they had time to buy these—"

Nelly indicated the flowers—that were—making the whole room smell sweet.

"Hello, eh?" Bert said blankly.

"I asked Mrs. Chaltoner was she tired," Nelly went on inexorably, "and she just went off in a gallop. What would tire me?" she said.

"Well, I says, dancing all night at the Lambert's ball (or a waltz), I says, and strolling off into the rain at four o'clock in the morning—maybe that would tire you," I says, "and maybe not." "Oh, no," she says, as mild as you get this minute, Mr. Bert. I went down to the city," she says. "And Mr. Chaltoner and Stone came down and brought me home."

Nelly gave a laugh of triumph and relief. Her complexion had

been an apt one, and Bert remained perfectly quiet, deadly pale, quiet, watching her. She put some enigmata stems of primroses into a vase and wiped the crystal bowl one by one with a white cloth, glad only of an audience, not noting him at all.

"However, she wanted dinner upstairs, and Emma bill me a good fire, for it's going to snow, if you ask me, and the paper said, 'Heavy snow.' Nelly resumed, "So she fixed herself all up there on her cot, like she loves to do, and they had this lamp on and that one out, and then that one on and the other off, until you die at them! And then nothing would do but Mr. Chaltoner had his jacket she gave him for his birthday on, and his slippers, and him in his chair, and her brushing her hair all over her head, like one of them Elysian dolls—and all this while the greatest laughing going on—mind you—"

"What—that did she wear, Nelly?"

"That white woolly thing and the silk cover he give her—would you back me that, yes, Mr. Bert? They're going to have dinner up there, said Nelly, but will you be here, for maybe—"

"No! I'll not be here. You see, I've got a new job, Nelly."

"I heard you saying something about it."

"For Heaven's sake! Wouldn't you think they hold their heads up, like that, that was, Mr. Bert? Nelly nudged, of the flowers.

"I'm dining with my grandmother tonight," Bert pursued, "and off tomorrow morning."

"Well, it isn't Europe, anyway," Nelly said politely.

"No, couldn't go to Europe," Bert answered, she did not hear him. She called Emma to help her carry the vases upstairs.

Bert went out the side door again. He stopped in the wet autumn garage, and looked up at the line of lighted windows overhead among the thinning branches. His faith in Hugh's dressing-room, and in a glowing conservatory in all in Beatrice's upstairs sitting room, inside were freighted and bright; Hugh deep in his chair, wearing woolly and happy and waiting for dinner; and Beatrice—radiant, wrapped in white, her bare feet showing under the light silk cover—Beatrice, brushing her mass of silky copper curls into an aureole, like that of an Italian doll.

Bert stood in the wet garden a long time. The rain was cold, light and sparse—already turning to sleet. It was patterning audibly on the wet leaves under the eaves—suddenly all the lights blazed in a radiance, up and down the driveway, and the streets, unfriendly, twinkling through the night.

After a while he turned up his collar, and to his right his grandmother's house, a few blocks away, and began to walk rapidly, his head sink between his shoulders.

SMATTER POP—Apology Accepted



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Vie for Honors at Rodeo



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The opening of President Porfirio Gil at Mexico. The snap shot is a type of radio microphone that can be moved about to follow "speaking talkers." At the moment of the snap the President was surrounded by a visible audience of some 1,000.

By C. M. PAYNE



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By GLENN CHAFFIN and HAL FORREST



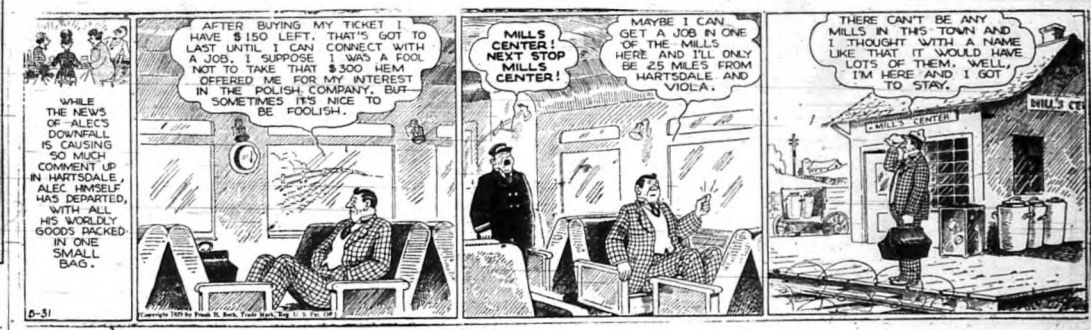
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