

The Free Press' Short Story

The Little Gray Coupe

By NINDE HARRIS

Once little coupe was the most luxurious one in the entire big saloon room. Dark gray with a lighter trim, it was, just the shade Mother liked for her hats and gloves. It was a special paint job, according to the company's star salesman who knew how Jerry must adored his mother, and that the motive lack of his struggle for success was to repay her for all the years of labor she had put into his education.

The salesman, Mr. Kiske-Miller, knew of Jerry's rating with the Kirke-Miller firm of architects. He even assured Jerry he could get credit.

Audrey Burleigh had told Jerry about the coupe. While they ate lunch together at the Lincoln tea room, Jerry had confided his plans to have his mother's old coupe over-hauled and repainted for a Mother's Day gift. Quite impulsively then Audrey had said, "Oh, Jerry, the May Shop has the kind of car you must get your mother when you get rich! It looks just like her. I saw it yesterday when I stopped for their advertising copy. Jerry, it's a dream."

Jerry had not meant even to look at that car. It seemed so far out of the question then. His present salary had to be stretched to send a monthly check to his married sister, whose husband had lost his job, and to allow Mother a little extra money to carry on her advertising copy. Jerry, it's a dream."

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The trip out to Lantern Hollow a few evenings had shown Jerry how dilapidated Mother's old car was. The car had rattled, the engine had banged and the brakes had not worked. Contrition had soiled Jerry because of the near-brakes, for danger had lurked near.

Mother all spring as she had driven up and down slippery hills between Lindendale and the Hollow.

He had not known, when he talked to Audrey, that John Kirke would give him what he termed "the chance of a lifetime." Even now as he looked at the beautiful car he had to pinch himself to be sure he was not dreaming, to make his voice sound casual when he said, "I can't be sure I can buy it, Shirley, but I'd like to."

Back out on the street Jerry held his head high and strode with dignified steps toward the Westhaven High School building, toward the chance of his lifetime. The job would make possible the purchase of the new car as a Mother's Day gift. Nothing was too nice for Mother, who had served as matron of the Friendly Inn and sacrificed every thing so that her children could have educations.

"The chance of a lifetime," he drawled to himself as he opened the iron door of the High School building, in which he had once been a pupil and entered its high ceilinged, old-fashioned hall.

"It's a question of whether to remodel or rebuild Westhaven," John Kirke, the senior member of the architect firm had told him. "The slate fire marshal shut off the third floor of the building three months ago. The board is renting two residences for classrooms for the pupils who met in those rooms. The decision seems to depend greatly on our advice about remodeling that old building. Frankly, they told me so."

"I am tied up in those factory plans and I'm at the critical stage with the new elevator. We're going to give you ten days on that High School down there. Frankly, we're going to let you decide play a big role in our advice to the board. And we're going to give you a special bonus, a percentage of our returns from that school job."

The older man had gone into detail with the assets of the school board. "They'll have to borrow to the limit of their bonded indebtedness to erect a new building," he had ended. "But they'll do it to provide a proper school building for Lindendale youth if it can't be done by remodeling."

While John Kirke had talked, gleams had come into the younger man's eyes. Jerry had then gone to the safe in his own cubby hole of an office and taken from it an elaborate set of blue prints. "Plans for a model High School building," he explained. "They were what you might call my 'cheats.'

The older man studied them. He was enthusiastic with his praise. "Slowly then he said, "I wonder if you can adapt some of these plans to remodeling Westhaven. I'm wondering."

Jerry had hardly heard the last suggestion as he looked far ahead and saw standing on the Westhaven grounds the beautiful model school building. Even then his mother entered his mind. How she would delight in that building! Even then some voice had seemed to whisper to him, "With the commission from the new building you can buy her the coupe." Audrey mentioned.

Now as he travelled through the great old-fashioned building he seemed not to notice the strong joists, the solid walls, the double windows which could be converted into the wide lovely ones of his model building. He seemed not to notice how the halls could be widened by tearing out the old-fashioned coat

rooms, that the vast basement space below the proper quarters for modern lookers, that the building was placed on the lot so that his model auditorium and gymnasium could be added that the proper kind of stairways in the widened hall would make the thicket that safe from fire hazards again.

He dropped onto the steps and began to make plans to visit the superintendent of schools with his plans for the model building. A school man would appreciate those plans, knowing that the board would vote with him.

He simply forgot the remodeling idea. He forgot everything except the beautiful new building until he was passing the Eskay sales company on his way back to his office. He began then to think of the beautiful coupe there. He knew now that if he only presented his plans nicely and well that would be his gift for Mother.

That evening he told Audrey Burleigh that he was going to buy the coupe for Mother. The beautiful curve of her lips, the gleam in her dusky eyes in response to his antennae caused him to tell her about the proposed new High School building. He even took her down to the big building that held the Kiske-Miller offices to show her his plans or the model school building.

He felt a thrill of pleasure as he heard her say, "This cafeteria! Oh, Jerry, if we only had had that when we were in school. And the library with its alcoves. The auditorium! Jerry, that will become the city's long-dreamed-of auditorium. But Jerry, taxes are so high. People will protest."

"But they won't raise taxes, don't need to. And," Jerry was a salesman now. "The school board can do just like a family does when it builds a new home, take out building and loan or issue bonds and then economize to reduce them."

He wondered if Mr. Kirke would take him along when he faced the High School with the model plans for the new building. He told Audrey of some changes he must make in his plans to make them more suitable to Lindendale. The next day Jerry started on these changes. He was glad the two partners were too busy to ask many questions about the school project, glad when Mr. Kirke was summoned to another city to confer with the president of the elevator company, who was then too ill to leave his home.

If Mr. Kirke could not get back before the next school board meeting, then he, Jerry Mount, would have the opportunity of carrying the plans to the board meeting and talk to board members about their advantages. That drove him to working night and day to make more changes in them.

Even as he worked he thought of the beautiful coupe he was to buy for Mother. He telephoned, Audrey breaking off her engagement so he could work. He telephoned Mother every evening instead of going home to dinner.

One rainy night, just three evenings before the school board was to meet, Jerry rushed down the main street to get a hurried dinner at the tea room. Round a corner, he flushed straight into a shabby, lone house of their own.

Jerry knew from the hidden note in her voice Peter had told her other things, knew too that his mother would never embarrass him by talking about them. His own arm around her waist tightened. "It was good of Peter," he said. "Were they pretty roses?"

"Just like he bought the own mother," she replied. "And he was so happy. And I'm happy, too. Oh, Jerry, Son, you've made this the happiest Mother's Day any mother could have, remembering that everybody has a mother, too, rememberings."

Her voice broke. "Oh, I'm forgetting," she blushed through her tears. "We're having waffles for breakfast. My treat to you on Mother's Day, my treat to you."

As she worried Jerry knew the trim gray coupe would have been a calamity instead of a pleasure to her, for she could not have driven that out to her beloved Lantern Hollow. Late without her welfare work there would not have been happy.

Mother's arm suddenly went around Jerry's shoulders. "Peter Jessup brought me some roses, Jerry," she whispered. "Well, you were gone. And he said to tell you he thinks he'll get the job of coach at the high school for good. His salary as substitute will make it possible for him to move his mother and sister into a little house of their own."

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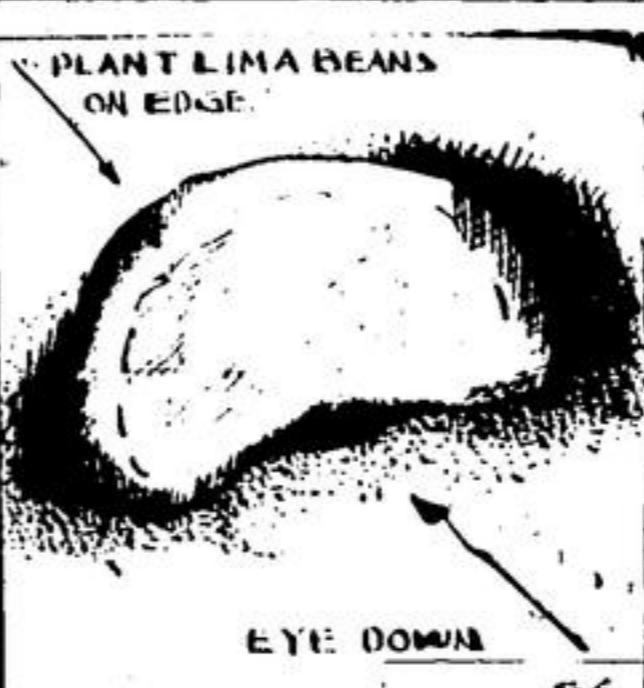
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He was just quite finished when Peter burst into a tragic voice, asking questions about the finances of the school board. "Could the board erect this new building and not have to drop teachers to build it? Would they have to cut salaries until teachers could not live in decent condition? Would they—"

Jerry stared at Peter in amazement. Not until then had he realized how shabby Peter was; how hungry he had been eating the food placed before him. Jerry had difficulty to draw from Peter a story of tragedies, of how the easy to which he had been elected High School coach had reduced its teaching staff so that it could meet bond payments, the bonds having been issued to pay for new school buildings.

"I went first, because athletics doesn't seem so necessary when you have to economize," he continued. "You don't know how we have had to live, how we had to come back to stay with my uncle, so we wouldn't starve. I'm hoping to get odd jobs to help out." His hand went over Jerry's impulsively.

"Don't think I'm a wet blanket, Jerry.

Weekly Garden-Graph
Written by DEAN HALLIDAY
For Central Press Canadian

A seed that stands up to grow

Bush lima beans are not content to relax in a seed bed, but they prefer to be planted "standing up" ready to grow. Bush lima beans are susceptible to cold, so should not be planted until air and ground have become thoroughly warm.

Bush lima beans mature earlier than the pole lima beans.

As shown in the illustration, plant bush lima beans about one inch deep, placing them on edge, eye down. By planting them with the eye down they sprout more quickly. Lay out the rows from two and one-half to three feet apart and plant the beans six inches apart in the row.

Bush lima beans require a rich soil and when the plants begin to bloom the application of a commercial fertilizer will increase the yield greatly.

Canadian War Trucks Proven In Stiff Tests

Demonstration of New Transport Units Made on Rough, Tough Ground

The gun may bump high over a bump and drop down deep in a ditch, but still it goes on and on. No smooth pavements is necessary to get this weapon to its destination. Drawn by a four-wheel drive tractor, it must go or disintegrate. But the tractor makes nothing of ordinary obstacles and tests in whatever position they found themselves. If one got stuck and one did in a steep ditch in soft ground, another made a job of hauling it out so quickly. It seemed simple.

Canadian plants are to provide 9.1 per cent of the mechanized transport which will be used by troops abroad. This is possible only because of the co-operation of The Ford Company of Canada and The General Motors Corporation of Canada with the Department of National Defense. They have enjoyed the assistance of allied industries so that new wheels, new bodies and other equipment could keep pace with the production schedule of the automobile plants.

The units on parade at Rockcliffe were some of the new output of Canadian factories. Fifteen hundred-weight trucks pulling anti-tank guns, field gun trailers, 3-ton load carriers, engineer derrik, 30-tonne-dwight load carriers and wireless trucks were displayed. And it does not matter whether these come out of Ford or General Motors factories many of the parts are interchangeable.

There might be a General Motors body on a Ford chassis or vice versa and the vehicle would be just as efficient. When these vehicles work in conjunction with the British forces, wheels, tires and bodies will be interchangeable with those of the British Army. It would be possible for a variety of the standard type four-wheel drive to have a General Motors front assembly, a Ford rear one and wheels and body made by a British factory or any part of this combination.

The parentage may be pure at the start but nobody knows how mixed the stock eventually may become.

Simplification and standardization of mechanical units has been carried out to the utmost degree. Not in this war as in the last will there be multiple makes of trucks, each requiring special stores of repair parts and replacements. Any one of the new type put out of business can become a reserve of spare parts for others. How much the task of the repair parks and workshops is relieved by this development most of us can imagine for ourselves. The vehicles are in no sense experimental. They have been all tried and proved and have acquitted themselves satisfactorily under all conditions. Numbers of interested people, including the Acting Minister of National Defense, Hon. C. G. Power, the Acting Deputy Minister, Col. H. DesRochers, the Chief of the General Staff, Major-General T. V. Anderson, and them undertaken several tests and come through without check, under the direction of Col. N. O. Carr, Director of Mechanization and Artillery.

GRATEFUL TO BRITAIN

The ruler of one of the smallest kingdoms in the British Colonial Empire was an interested spectator when the Macchinese trooped the Oboi in Singapore on Ladymont Day. His dignity was the Rajah of Perak, a tiny state in the North of the Malay Peninsula, which has lived under British protection for more than thirty years. The gratitude of Perak for peace and freedom under the British flag has been shown by a gift of nearly \$60,000 for Imperial war funds.

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As the Royal 22nd Took Over at Buckingham Palace



Their Majesties, the King and Queen, above, watch from a balcony of Buckingham Palace as the Royal 22nd Regiment of the C.A.S.F. step smartly past during the ceremonial of taking over guard duty at the palace. This was the first time that Empire troops not of purely British descent ever mounted a guard at the palace.

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