

# SHORT ROMANCES OF EVERY DAY LIFE

## Forgive and Forget

By Clyde Weldon

LITTLE Bobbie's eyes were popping with excitement as he burst into the living room where his mother sat reading the evening paper.

"See, mother," he cried, breathlessly, as he pulled a large, brown envelope from his blouse, "I met a man down the road, and he told me to give you this for your business."

As Mrs. Merwin tore open the envelope, she gave a quick start of surprise. A large roll of bills lay before her!

"Why, Bobbie, boy!" she exclaimed, her pretty face showing her bewilderment, "tell mother everything that happened."

Bobbie had now regained his breath. "I was pickin' daisies over me in Jenkins' field, and when I was comin' home, I met Mr. Bob."

"Mr. Bob!" echoed his mother, in a startled tone.

"Yep, I mean 'yes.' He doesn't live 'round here, I guess, 'cause he asked me lots of questions—he didn't even know you had a store 'till I told him."

"What was he like, Bobbie?" Mrs. Merwin was trying hard to be calm. "Well," answered Bobbie, after a little reflection, "he was awful tall and had nice, twinkly eyes and clean teeth and no mustache."

Mrs. Merwin was silent for a few moments. "Did he ask you about your father?" she finally asked.

"Yep, and I told him my Dad ain't 'round here for ever so long—"

"And how many times has mother asked you not to talk to anyone about your father?" There was a reproachful look in Mrs. Merwin's brown eyes.

"I didn't tell him the worst things," replied Bobbie stoutly. "I didn't tell him my Dad left you an' me when I was a baby—I never said afore Grandpa died he always pounded his cane on the floor when he asked 'bout my Daddy, and I never said—"

"What did he say when he gave you the money?" interrupted Mrs. Merwin, as she nervously fingered the large roll of bills.

"He just told me to give it to you for your business, then—"

Bobbie answer to the burning questions in her brain.

Why had Bob Merwin, for surely it was he, sent her this money? Memories of her father's anger when he had driven Robert from the house, of her remorse because she had told her father of the quarrel with Robert, and of Robert's wrath as he swore never to look again at the wife who was ruled by an unreasonable father, loomed up with startling clearness, as she meditated. There was a touch of tenderness, possibly he feared arrest and had tried to dispose—a timid knock on the door—interrupted her thoughts. Robert had lived, had, acted too hastily. Yet, these thoughts did not help to answer the questions which troubled her.

Suddenly, with an apprehensive shiver, she snatched up the evening paper and searched for a little item which, earlier in the evening, had received but a glance. Yes, there it was—"Whitton general store robbed Bobbie and—"

Robert Smith, a clerk in wife had hastily picked up the money in the store, very cleverly made away with \$1,000—"

She waited to read no more, but hurriedly counted the bills. Then, with a little shudder, she thrust the money away; \$1,000 lay on the table before her!

A strange, stern look crept into Letty Merwin's eyes. When last she had heard of Robert he had been working in Whitton. Now she believed she could easily see why he had not come to her with the money. Possibly he feared arrest and had tried to dispose—a timid knock on the door—interrupted her thoughts. Robert had lived, had, acted too hastily. Yet, these thoughts did not help to answer the questions which troubled her.

"I couldn't go away, Letty," murmured the man brokenly. "I tried to, but somehow, I couldn't. I don't expect your forgiveness," he went on, as she didn't speak, "and I know I shouldn't had come; but I met little Bobbie and—"

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ey and was silently offering it to self?" she faltered, after an awkward pause.

"I was afraid you'd feel that way—yet I hoped—"

"You thought I'd take this money?" said Letty, so coldly, so harshly, that she herself hardly recognized her voice.

"I hoped, that is, until—" he paused, for Letty was holding before him the newspaper and was pointing to the robbery item with an accusing finger. "Does that mean anything to you?" she asked quietly—too quietly.

The man read the item without betraying the slightest emotion. "I guess I deserve that—perhaps more," he replied in a low voice. He took a bank book out of his pocket and opened it to a page which showed that \$1,000 had been withdrawn a few days before. The book also showed regular weekly deposits for over two years. He then took a bunch of pay envelopes from another pocket.

"I guess these will tell the story," he said slowly, "because the envelopes check up with the bank book deposits."

An ashamed blush reddened Letty's cheeks as she read "Ridgerton National Bank" on the book and noticed a single dollar in the balance column.

"Why didn't you come to me your-

"I had been looking forward to for weeks, just waiting for my money to reach the thousand mark. I was nearly home when I met Bobbie and learned from him how things are. Funny—the prattling of a little youngster can really mean a great deal sometimes."

"What did Bobby tell you?" Letty's voice had a suspicious tremor in it. "He just repeated the gossip that is probably around the village. Evidently he heard some of them say that his dad, who had been away for a long time, would be 'sneaking back,' now that his mother was successful in business." The man turned toward the door.

"The old gossip," cried Letty indignantly. "I didn't know—Bobbie didn't tell me all. They don't know or understand—"

"Understand what?" The man caught his breath sharply.

"Understand that I've always been waiting for you to come back to Bobbie—and me," answered Letty softly. "Can you forgive me?" She pointed to the newspaper item.

"Forgive?" he repeated, a happy light breaking over his tired face. Together they stole into the room beyond, where Bobbie, with one chubby hand tucked under his chin, lay dreaming.

"It's a terrible situation," said Dr. Pratt.

"It is," admitted his wife, sadly. "And I don't know how we can remedy it. If only dear mamma were not quite so dictatorial!"

"One would think," ruminated the physician, "that she was the doctor and I the office boy. If she doesn't like a patient's looks, or manners, or expression, she refuses him admission; says I'm out, or sick, or dead; anything to make it certain that he will never call again. And Shepard, across the street, only too anxious as he is, to grab my practice!"

"But what can we do?" wailed the doctor's pretty wife. "We can't deny her a home, can we? Poor mamma!"

"Poor me! Poor you! Poor children. But cheer up, little one, I have something in view."

"Something in view?" repeated Mrs. Pratt, uneasily.

"Don't worry. It's not murder or banishment I'm contemplating for your dear mother. What I had in mind was matrimony."

"Matrimony!" Mrs. Pratt looked as if she rather doubted her husband's sanity.

"I said it. Matrimony. A home of her own, so we'll be able to enjoy pleasant reflections, 'I hope you ours. Your mother will be quite don't mind if we—if we have company, and the person I have in mind is thoroughly able to look after himself."

Mrs. Pratt, who was not wholly without humor, smiled. "Who is it?"

"Alwyn Pratt, my uncle. Since his wife died, a year ago, he's been very unhappy for lack of someone to scrap with. I'm in hopes that you and I—the doctor—"

Mrs. Pratt laughed in spite of herself. "Edwin, that's not nice of you, tange; says I'm out, or sick, or dead; anything to make it certain that he will never call again. And Shepard, across the street, only too anxious as he is, to grab my practice!"

"I know her. Therefore I'm bringing Uncle Alwyn to dinner tonight. Goodby, dear. Some of the patients your mother couldn't drive away are waiting for me to see them."

Mrs. Colwell, Dr. Pratt's mother-in-law, dressed for dinner that evening with the satisfied air of one whose time has been well spent, as indeed, it had been. She had emerged victorious from several skirmishes with the cook, had expressed herself spiritedly to the children's nurse, and had expelled from the house two of her son-in-law's patients for reasons best known to herself. She was, therefore, in very good humor.

"Mother, dear," said Mrs. Pratt, Surely Edwin has—has a right to ask his people to the house."

"He has not! He—"

The door bell rang sharply. The dinner guest had arrived, and Mrs. Colwell's resentment grew as she saw her daughter put on her sweetest smiles for a despised Pratt.

"Edwin's uncle, Mr. Alwyn Pratt—a very nice old gentleman, indeed."

Mrs. Pratt's words sounded weak and unconvincing, however, Mrs. Colwell was a difficult lady to please at all times. On general principles she disapproved of almost everybody, and particularly did she disapprove of her son-in-law's relatives. What ever claims to distinction they had, they were not Colwells, nor did they sufficiently appreciate their good fortune in being connected with Colwell's name.

She looked at her daughter with angry disdain. "Edith, how could you! One of that family! And without asking me!"

"Don't be angry, mother," pleaded Mrs. Pratt. "Edwin invited him. Surely Edwin has—has a right to ask his people to the house."

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## Matrimony and Mother

By Joella Johnson

"Company!" Mrs. Colwell, started incredulously. "Company, and I don't know it? Who is coming?"

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er, in that sweet, gracious manner of hers, so much more delightful than the pudding itself."

Mrs. Pratt threw an appealing glance at her mother. In vain. Mrs. Colwell's outraged feelings could be repressed no longer.

"I am curious," said she, "as to what a member of the Pratt family knows about manners, gracious or otherwise."

"Hm!" said Mr. Pratt, with a chuckle. "Not much, maybe. Just enough to know when they are misbehaving. Sorry you don't like the Pratts. Our people don't show their feelings as plainly. We proved it when my nephew here married your daughter. Not that we were disappointed in the little lady, bless her. She's everything that could be desired. But we disapproved of—of her connections."

"Her connections?" Mrs. Colwell gasped. She was the only living relative of her daughter. Her connection! Why, I considered it the appointment of my life when my daughter married Dr. Pratt! Don't you boast about your family! One of the worst gamblers in the city. He—"

"Oh, madame!" protested Uncle Alwyn. "Don't say that! Joe's not a rascally barber. A more pains-taking and affectionate man I never saw. He's shaved me for years, and I'm not ashamed of him. It might be a good deal worse. For example, his daughter turned a deep purple. He restrained her."

"Don't worry. Everything is going fine," he whispered.

Mrs. Colwell's furious voice filled the room. "It isn't true that your grandfather stole a horse. He had to buy the horse, and—"

"Dear lady," said old Alwyn blandly, "did I say your grandfather stole a horse? Far be it from me to make so vulgar a statement. I didn't know your grandfather. I didn't even know the horse. Moreover—"

"You—you—at least you can't deny it—strong."

life wrecked in this foolish manner. Abstractedly he heard a train whistle in the distance. Grace threw a few more things into her trunk. Lionel caught her hands and drew her to him.

"It's ridiculous to make a fuss over such a disgusting uncle! A perfect pig of an uncle, whose chief worry is what to put in his stomach!"

"He's been awfully good to us. He's given us the house we live in."

"With him inside of it, I'm afraid I can't summon up any feeling of gratitude," she flung back.

"Well, you'll have to apologize to Lionel. He'll apologize to me, and you, too, or else you'll stay here made one unfit for civilized society. Would they please forgive a grumpy old bachelor who wished them nothing but happiness?"

Lionel looked at Grace, and Grace looked at Lionel, who kissed her slowly but surely the ship began to settle into its sticky culinary mess. The captain tore his hair. It was very well to assert husbandly authority, but if Grace paid no attention to him—One couldn't see one's and a smooth sea.

## A Culinary Catastrophe

By Phil Moore

THE catastrophe took place two years after the wedding, rocking passenger who's passengers previous to which the little bark of domestic happiness, guided by the tiny god of love, had sailed smoothly and tranquilly over the sea of matrimony with never a glimpse of trouble.

The blow came suddenly. Without warning the clouds gathered, the storm broke, and before the occupants knew it, the tight little craft was wedged in a soft, but unyielding mass of lemon pie.

It was awful!

To have struck a real rock would have been misfortune enough, but to have one's life's happiness buried in an oozy, sticky mess of lemon meringue was galling. It lacked dignity.

The skipper, Lionel Strange, knew it. So did his little mate, Grace. They knew, too, after a while, that their predicament was the result of taking on a well-meaning but boat-rotting passenger who's passengers previous to which the little bark of domestic happiness, guided by the tiny god of love, had sailed smoothly and tranquilly over the sea of matrimony with never a glimpse of trouble.

The passenger was Uncle Ed. The good ship, all unconscious of what lay before it, was sailing under the fairest of skies, on the smoothest of waters, when Lionel received a letter from Uncle Ed, to the effect that he was weary of roaming under foreign skies, that he had a hankering for home and kindred, and would like to rest his tired body in the land of his birth. Would it be possible for Uncle Ed to have been with them a few days, that he was more than a trifle spoiled.

He was a jovial old uncle, and they enjoyed him immensely—for a while. Though loath to admit it, Ed and Grace discovered, after a few days, that he was more than a trifle spoiled.

He was finicky in the matter of food, and after a few sessions with Dora in the kitchen, Grace was ready to fear and trembling, she undertook to announce to the world that a rich bachelor uncle was not such a desirable acquisition as one might childishly imagine. Dora's culinary efforts, which had hitherto been more than passable, failed to please Grace. Grace endeavored to do the cooking herself; a courtesy which Uncle Ed failed to appreciate, and which only served to further enrage the already belligerent Dora.

It was of no use.

After a couple of weeks Grace began hoisting distress signals. Lionel volunteered to assist her, but his efforts were productive only of scorn from Grace and ridicule from Uncle Ed.

The climax came when Grace, finished, "should have been sent to jail for it."

Grace rose, her eyes glittering. "You—you—nasty—old—glutton!" she said, distinctly, and left the room.

Lionel followed, after a suitable interval. He found her packing her trunk.

"What's that for, Grace?" he asked, with husbandly authority.

"I'm leaving you, so you can enjoy Uncle Ed's society," she retorted.

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"It's too choice to divide with anybody."

"Grace, that's ridiculous," said Lionel, sternly. "I'm surprised at more criticism on your cooking!"

"It's ridiculous to make a fuss over such a disgusting uncle! A perfect pig of an uncle, whose chief worry is what to put in his stomach!"

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ROSEMARY flushed and stammered over the contents of the parcel which had come by the stout little box and tissue paper wrappings had unfolded a shining, new, nicked key. Lest anyone should ask silly questions about it, she dropped the key into her pocket and the papers on a blazing stick in the kitchen range. And she was angry all over again with Ben Baker.

"What an old stick-in-the-mud," she scorned. "I suppose he's up to some stunt with this key and thinks he's being funny! Well, what he gets is a freeze tight."

Illness and a lean purse had driven Rosemary to vacation at her uncle's farm on the Rockdale road. At the end of a previous summer cut there she had vowed never again to set foot in the remote vicinity of Ben Baker, whose folks owned a farm of Bald Pat Mountain, and might with whom she had found cause for quarrel after a true-sweethearting became a habit.

As Rosemary went along the wood-

## The Key to Happiness

By Claire Wesson

Rosemary roamed on and on, marveling at the ruins. She remembered what Ben used to tell her about the winter storms and knew that a giant among them must have been this way. He quoted Hiawatha:

"And whenever through the forest Raged and roared the Wintry tempest, And the branches, tossed and troubled, Creaked and groaned and split asunder, 'Kwasind!' cried they, 'that is Kwasind! He is gathering in his firewood!'"

And for a fancy she had remembered her "Hiawatha" and called him

"Kwasind!" "For his strength allied to goodness."

Curiosity drew Rosemary on toward the oak knoll where they had often kept tryst together. And when the path opened ahead she stopped in amazement. The oaks had been sawed off, chopping-block high; only one had been trimmed and left to cast its shade on the red roof of a boarded cabin. The foundation was of native stones and a trail of stepping stones wound from her feet to the beautifully grained oak door. It was the materialization of what Ben said, distinctly, and left the room.

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path that sunny morning she found the trees amazingly transformed. The trees around the farmhouses had been so well trimmed that she had not correctly estimated what damage the sleet and ice storm of the previous winter had wrought. Even here in the woods verdure covered its raw nakedness, and the fresh sap color of their limbs, which lay in neat piles under each tree, the maples had of their limbs, which lay in neat piles under each tree, the maples had of their parent stems; the black oaks that stood at intervals among the other trees were shattered worst.

Rosemary gripped the settle back. How splendid he was! And full of sweet possession of the place, she touched a lighted match to the dill and watched it burn. And she was just thinking this place was ready for the touches of a woman's hand," she admitted.