

The Daily Novelle

Tom Brent, Hiker

By LILIANE MONTGOMERY MITCHELL

KATHLEEN IRWIN opened her eyes and saw the brilliant sunshine. She smiled and said to her sister, who was already dressing: "Another lovely day, eh?"

And quite as suddenly as her face had brightened she smiled. The sunbeams fell into a straight line. It was Easter! Easter Sunday, the Hiker's Club was to have a picnic on the shore of the lake. Every other Sunday Kathleen had been joyous over the prospect of a day in the woods after the long week of working at the music counter.

But every other Sunday had been a day of gloom. Kathleen had put on her white collar and cuffs on her tricot dress and had freshly gazed her face in the mirror, so that she might look new after her water bath and brushing and she had been as well off as any girl in the club. Tom Brent had evidently thought that she looked better than after the other girls, for he, as hiker-in-chief, as he proudly called himself after he had been chosen leader of the subsequent picnic, had taken her as chosen Kathleen every time to hike with him and lead the rest.

And now it was Easter Sunday! The day that every one in the club would have new clothes, a new suit, probably, new gloves, new low shoes, new hat, new everything. And Kathleen was to hike with Tom Brent. She had a new dress, but she had no new hat, no new gloves, no new shoes, no new anything. It was a fine thing to have a new dress, but she had no new hat, no new gloves, no new shoes, no new anything.

Her hat was raffish, with silk ribbons. Her shoes were strappy slippers with wonderful heels just like the ones in the magazine section of the Sunday paper. Kathleen could have drawn with great accuracy this outfit, for Myra had told her that she had a sack moment in the music department. To be sure, Myra had had to get most of the things at a first-class department store, but she had no idea what did matter? There was never enough money to go around anyhow, and what difference did it make where it was laid out?

For the moment Kathleen regretted her desire to keep her hat silk. Myra had said she had been going to buy a new hat, but she had not. Her men loved good clothes, Kathleen knew. There was no reason to suppose that Tom Brent was any exception to the rule.

Kathleen was late at the meeting of the Hikers at 2 o'clock. As she slipped in at the rear of the procession, which was moving westward to the railroad station, which would take them to Hubbard's Woods, where they would start the long walk, it seemed to her that every one of the girls who would every one who had ever been invited to become a member must have turned out on this beautiful Easter Sunday to show all the rest of the club that had been invited in the past few weeks.

She saw Tom Brent look about him several times, and she thought she might feel that he ought to ask her to accompany him today, merely because he had seen her every other Sunday and he did not want to change him by her old winter coat that looked so out of place in the brilliant sunshine.

In the train she saw him start through several times, evidently in search of some one, but each time he was stopped by questions as to where Kathleen was, and she would say she was at the end of the train. It was a 4 o'clock train, and she was walking near Kathleen, stopped short.

"What shall I do?" she cried indignantly. "Oh, Kathleen, you have only your old routine on. Can't you let me take your coat to cover up my best suit?" Kathleen was already unbuttoning the coat when the voice of Tom Brent cut in. "Miss Erichson, you ought to bring proper wraps. The wraps, let Kathleen needs her own best. Come on, Kathleen, I've been looking all over for you ever since we started. What was the big idea, sneaking along here at the end of the train? You found yourself being swept along toward the head of the procession."

"But I didn't have anything new to wear," she said, looking down at her dress. Kathleen and her sister looked at each other. "I didn't want to," Kathleen said. "I loved about you," cut in Tom Brent. "How ridiculous it looks to wear high heels and silk ribbons on a hiking trip! Pretty clothes are all right in their place, but not hiking!"

hushily. "We've been taking hikes together for a long time now. Why not keep it up and hike right through life together?" "Dear me, I hope you haven't caught cold," said Kathleen irrelevantly. And that night as Kathleen and her sister were taking down their hair Kathleen listened dreamily to her sister's words. "Well, another lovely day gone, sis."

"Yes, but this was the very loveliest one of all," Kathleen murmured as she laid her hairpins on the dressing case.

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