Girl Unafraid

By Gladys Johnson

CHAPTER XXVII.

Ardeth had expected no gifts. Amazingly they came, to move her to tears. A robe from Jeanette — a lovely silken thing, the russet and copper tones lighting her tawney hair and golden eyes to something of their old flame.

A volume of poems in a hand-tooled leather binding. A gift from Mary Eastwood. Several of the verses were marked and on a card Mary had written: "I, too, went through a dark hour, Ardeth, and I found these brought a little comfort."

Ardeth held the card against her cheek for a moment as though it were the kind, white hand of the giver.

From Tom came a long string of amber. And written in Tom's cramped, square writing, "These made me think of your eyes."

Tremulous thankfulness welled up in the girl's heart, breaking the ice of loneliness. Ah, life was not all bitter. Friends . . people who loved her for herself.

And in the middle of the afternoon, a florist boy with a long box.

White roses, unreal in their waxen perfection. White roses, on a bed of cool, green maidenhair. A fragrance as faint as happiness remembered from dreams. White roses . . . . as though for a dead girl . . . .

No card in the box. But she needed no card to know they came from Ken.

Scalding tears dropping on the waxen petals as she lifted them from the box. Oh, this tug on her heart. Ken, longing for her . . . . thinking of her even as she thought of him, this bitter Christmas. Easier to bear if he had forgotten her. . . .

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Winter passing — merging into spring. Daylight lingering in the eastern sky when she left the shop now. Up at the corner where Ken used to wait for her, daffodils and iris replaced violets on the flower stand.

Gayer than the flowers the spring costumes of the patrons who crowded the smokerie.

Cecile had wearied of the whim of mourning. She blossomed into an extreme and expensive suit of orchid tweed. A smart French helmet of orchid felt was pulled down over the taffy waves of her hair and a choker of amethysts clasped her long white throat. Nor did the symphony end here. Cecile's upper eyelids were orchid shadowed and her long oval nails were tinted mauve.

"The woman positively makes me ill!" said Mary Eastwood vigorously to Ardeth. "She reminds me of food slightly turned."

A crowd in the smokerie today. Seven times had Ah-Ling brewed tea and emptied ash trays. Cyril Underhill was in his element, murmuring his scandalous footnotes to the tinkle of appreciative feminine laughter.

Echoes of the talk drifted out to the girl who tended the outer shop and Ardeth's lip curled. They were reading extracts from The Spy. Hot blood mounted to the girl's face. She hated that insidious magazine. Hated the idle scandalous women. Thank heaven they were soon gone.

Sound of the outer door opening. She looked up — caught her breath.

Ken, coming in.

A bleak moment when Ken's eyes clung to her own. A moment when the little shop seemed to race to a great distance. When the sound of voices, the clatter of tea cups from the smokerie appeared to die, so that she and Ken faced each other across the blank greyness which held neither time nor reality.

Sharp dismay in the girl's heart. Oh, he was so changed. It was not so much that he looked older, as that something of youth was gone.

The compelling Ken of that golden Sunday on the marshes — the laughing Ken who had dragged her away from Tom on the toboggan — little of them left in the man who now came slowly into the shop.

Yet the brilliant Ken of those days never dragged on her heart strings as the sight of him dragged now. Ardeth felt her face go cold. Her hand moved in a little flutter to her throat.

"Why . . . Ken . . . "

He came over to the glass case. Faced her and she gained the impression that he put a tight leash on his mind to keep from going to pieces.

"I guess if the dead come back, it's like this—" He tried to smile and the result hurt her.

"Oh, no. . . . . " Her voice was bleak. "Why . . why . "

He answered the unspoken question "To take Cecile home. You mustn't think I came on purpose. You mustn't think that, Ardeth. I had to talk to myself to get here. But she asked — and I couldn't refuse without — without —"

She finished the thought in her mind. Refusal to call for her would have led to a scene with Cecile. A scene bristling with sneers at Ardeth. Sneers which would have hurt him.

Ken's eyes were drinking her in as a thirsty man would gulp water. The dear naturalness of her. The warm human quality. The tender curve to the soft lips. The sweet frankness of her gaze. . . . After months of Cecile's glittering artificiality, the man found them doubly dear.

A wave of yearning love went over his heart. He found himself asking in a shaking voice: "How are you getting on, Ardeth? What do you do . . . "

Again that odd little movement as though her hands would fly away. "Oh . . . . I get on. The shop. And I read a lot."

Her eyes had found a place where the bright hair brushed her temple. A place his lips had known.

He gave a little harsh laugh. "Hard to believe, isn't it Ardeth — don't let this keep you from life. You know what I mean — your own life. Just because mine is wrecked . . . "

"Oh, no." Her voice was faint. She began to stroke the long, black ostrich feathers of a fan.

"Well, I was beginning to think you were never coming, Ken!" Cecile's high voice sliced through the air. She stood in the doorway of the smokerie, surveying them through the violet haze of her perfumed cigarette. The pale gray eyes held a bright, malicious smile as they swept the other girl's face.

This glimpse of Ken made it harder to bear. If he had deliberately hurt her, her pride would have braced Ardeth. She could have forced herself to go out with Tom — made herself forget that delirious, happy time. But to see him unhappy — knowing he was yearning for her . . .

A few nights later, as she walked up the hill toward her hotel she heard her name called. Neil stood beside her.

"Neil!" Her voice was slightly incredulous. Not since that stormy scene with Aunt Stel had she seen Neil. He had sunk out of sight with that earlier life of hers which had become dreamlike.

It was so long since she had even thought of Neil that she looked at him with secret embarrassment. All resentment had died — all feeling toward him, in fact.

"Just happened to be passing—caught sight of you——" he explained awkwardly.

An embarrassed little pause when neither knew what to say. Neil had fitted his step to hers — was walking up the hill.

(To Be Continued)

TRAGEDY PREVENTS FAMILY REUNION

(Associated Press Leased Wire)

TUCSON, Ariz., Dec. 15 — An anticipated Christmas reunion was turned to tragedy today when George Starr, 22 years old, fell underneath a freight car on which he was trying to catch a ride to his home in Sacramento, Cal. He was killed instantly.

Harry Skelton of Salem, Oregon, who said he met Starr yesterday at Deming, N. M., and rode blind baggage with him into Tucson, told police the youth's relatives had sent him money to obtain his discharge from the United States cavalry. Starr was musetred out of the service at Marfa, Texas, a few days ago, Skelton said.

PORTILLO DRAWS WITH DON FRASER

(Associated Press Leased Wire)

WENATCHEE, Wash., Dec. 16.—Tony Portillo, Los Angeles, and Don Fraser, Spokane, fought six fast rounds to a draw in the Christmas fund fight card here last night. Fraser was down once in the second round for a nine count but came back strong. Portillo's hitting on the break and his low blow also counted against him. They are welterweights.

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ROSEBURG GUARD DRILLED, PRAISED BY CAPT. CANADAY

The Roseburg National Guard company was inspected and drilled last night by Captain H. A. Canaday, who complimented the men on the way they performed their duties and the spirit manifested in their general duties. Responding to a request for a speech, Captain Canaday, now of the infantry reserve, cited his experiences with the guard at Medford, Oregon, where he was company commander for several years. He also told of the purpose of training in the guard, how the soldiers were more valuable to their city, county state and national governments than persons who have had no military training, and how, by devoting part of their time to the guard, they are fulfilling their duties of citizenship and are better citizens than men who do not take their citizenship obligations seriously.

The company's schedule last night also comprised instruction in physical training and Captain Micelli's demonstrations in first aid to and carrying of wounded men. Lieutenant Bowker discussed training plans for next quarter with noncommissioned officers. Company officers furnished a turkey lunch.

Range firing with the machine guns was conducted Sunday by Lt. Bowker and the men firing qualified as follows: Privates Dunn and Karlinger, 1st class gunner; Privates Hanson and McKibben, 2nd class gunner. Every man who has fired for record on the outdoor range this winter has qualified. The only instruction these men have had is the firing with the sub-calibre attachment on the range in the basement of the armory. Firing on the range will be conducted every night this week and spectators will be welcome. The nexdrill of the company will be January 5, 1931.

50,000-WATT RADIO STATIONS ADVISED

(Associated Press Leased Wire)

WASHINGTON, Dec. 15 — The family on the far away ranch, the miner, the rural housewife and the metropolitan listener would have equal radio reception advantages under recommendations made today to the radio commission.

In a report recommending that 20 of the 24 stations be permitted to increase their power to 50,000 watts, Ellis A. Yost, commission examiner, held "the rural and small town listener is entitled to receive better radio broadcasting than it is possible for the local and regional stations to provide. All are entitled under the law to radio broadcasting service both of transmission and reception, equal to that provided the metropolitan listener." He urged that all clear channel stations use the 50,000-watt power to carry through this idea.

VOODOOISTS SAID TO HAVE SLAIN CHILD

(Associated Press Leased Wire)

HAVANA, Dec. 16 — The secret police are investigating reports that Voodoo worshippers near Havana recently decapitated a small child for the purpose of making a sacrificial offering to Chango, the mythical god of the cult.

Cuban Voodoo worshippers are descendants of former African slaves, who practice human sacrifice as a part of their religious ceremonies.

Voodooism in any form is sternly frowned upon, but occasionally crops up in spite of the vigilance of authorities. Whenever one of the secret meeting places is discovered it is immediately broken up, and the paraphernalia used in their incantations, which consists of bones of animals, human hair, roots, herbs, frogs and the like, is seized and destroyed.

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12-Year-Old Boy an Addict

What is regarded as one of the most horrifying examples of narcotic poisoning on record is that of 12-year-old John Simmons (left), who is said to be a drug addict. When police raided the home of John's father, Alfred Simmons, a cab driver of Brooklyn, N. Y., they found $15,000 worth of drugs, and the boy in a dazed condition. A physician said the boy was under the influence of dope. John is shown with his mother, Mrs. Constance Simmons, and his brother, Harold.

TOOZE'S TRIAL SET FOR FEBRUARY 2ND

(Associated Press Leased Wire)

PORTLAND, Ore., Dec. 16 —The trial of Walter L. Tooze, Portland attorney, and 23 others charged with conspiracy to violate the national prohibition act, was scheduled for February 2, by Federal Judge John H. McNary. Thirty-six persons were named in the conspiracy indictment returned by the county grand jury but only 24 were placed under arrest.

The kind of wool flannel robes men like. Colorful but not brilliant. Just the thing for loafing around the home. Price $10.50 at Harth's Toggery.—Adv.

AMERICAN LEGION

Regular meeting of Umpqua Post No. 16, at the armory Tuesday evening at 8 o'clock. Try to be present.

Her Kindness Pays In $25,000 Bequest

Miss Pauline M. Smyser, a nurse, of York, Pa., has been rewarded to the extent of $25,000 for kind services. She was bequeathed this amount by her employer, the late Dr. Bernard W. Shirey, York surgeon and well known sportsman.

Toys, toys, Christmas toys. All new large assortment. 400 different kinds to choose from at prices to suit each customer. Stearns & Coenoweth, Oakland, Ore.—Adv.

HORROR OF RUSSIAN CAMPS DESCRIBED

(Associated Press Leased Wire)

LONDON, Dec. 16 — Charging that literally thousands are on the brink of starvation in Russian timber camps, with many dying daily after working 12 hours or longer a day with scanty rations, ragged clothing and poor housing, three Russian refugees here described conditions in the camps.

The stories of the refugees were contained in a letter from Sir Hilton Young, member of parliament, to Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald.

Horrors of disease and starvation in the soviet's frigid Archangel camps were described by the three men who stowed away on a timber boat bound for England. The prime minister promised to investigate the revelations.

The refugees said each man is given 2¼ pounds of bread for each day's work. If he has been unable to finish the assigned task in the allotted time, they declared, part of his ration is withdrawn.

More than 50,000 political prisoners are engaged solely in loading boats at Archangel, the refugees declared. A proportionate number is said to be scattered through the vast forests, felling and transporting trees.

More than 135,000 prisoners are said to be concentrated in a string of unsanitary camps along the Dvina river where the temperature often is 45 degrees below zero.

POPULATION ONE IN OREGON TOWN

BAKER, Ore., Dec. 15 —Bourne, Oregon's one man town, which broke into the news in connection with the Oregon census report, is 30 miles west of Baker and was at one time a prosperous mining community.

It was named for ex-senator Jonathan Bourne, who was interested in mining there many years ago. The city was the center for several large gold mines, since closed down.

At the peak of its activity from 1900 to 1905, when it had near two thousand population, it produced about $12,000,000 in gold. There has been no activity there for years.

The one inhabitant, D. L. McConnel, a retired miner, is now employed as caretaker at one of the mining properties.

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