Handmade Rainbows

By Mrs. Harry Pugh Smith

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INSTALLMENT SIXTEEN—The Story So Far

Laura Maguire is wife of happy-go-lucky Mike, editor and mayor of Covington, whom banker Mays is trying to ruin for criticising his banking methods. She is the mother of four children:

Tom, whose real estate job peters out in a bigger city but whose wife, Mary Etta, refuses to give up her secretary job to follow him to the smaller town. Divorce is impending.

Alec, at last with a job as a grocery clerk after a long siege of unemployment and running around with a flashy divorcee. He had brought Lou Knight, the town drunk's daughter, to his mother's home when her father died rescuing a crippled boy in a fire.

Shirley, at last married to Jaird Newsum though Ma Newsum wanted him to marry Connie Mays, the banker's daughter. Shirley and Jaird buy a hamburger stand.

Kathleen, who despite herself, becomes interested in Ritchie Graham, who aids her father in fighting Mays. She thinks of her mother's hardships when he tells her his wife wouldn't starve.

Kathleen tells Ritchie she has no wish to live in poverty.

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CHAPTER XXIII—Continued

"But she can't have gone. I tell you, she has nowhere to go," said Alec, his face very white.

Kathleen shrugged her shoulders. She was the last down to breakfast.

She flourished a small folded piece of paper. Alec reached out his hand but Kathleen shook her head. "It's addressed to Laura."

Alec's black eyes watched feverishly while his mother read the lines which Lou had written in a small, cramped, painstaking hand.

"Well?" he demanded sharply.

"She says that she thanks us for all our kindness but she can't impose on us any longer."

Mike swore under his breath. "Poor little devil," he said. "I daresay she felt as uncomfortable as a weed at an orchid show."

His younger son glared at him. "Listen," he cried fiercely, "maybe she never went to finishing school, probably she doesn't always know which fork to use, but she's instinctively a lady, that kid. I've met a raft of girls I'd die before I'd bring home to Mother. But—" his voice broke—"Lou wasn't one of them."

"Alec—" began Laura imploringly. But Alec had slammed the door behind him.

"Zowie!" cried Kathleen. "Is our little brother sore, or is he?"

"I must find that child if any of us are to live with Alec," Laura said.

CHAPTER XXIV

The telephone rang eight times before Laura finished the dishes. It was mostly friends and acquaintances calling to tut-tut about Shirley.

About nine Mike rang up. He had learned that a brief memorial service was to be held for Pete Knight at nine-thirty in the old mission church near the railroad shops. Mike himself was in conference and could not attend. But he thought Laura might like to. She did. Lou was certain to be there, no matter where she had taken refuge.

To save time Laura got out the family sedan. But two blocks from the house the old motor wheezed, choked and died. The gas feed was stopped up. Laura wasted precious minutes because sometimes you could unscrew the bottom of the vacuum tank and blow through it and all was well. But not this morning. By the time she gave up the struggle and called a taxi it was a quarter to ten. She had hopes, however, of arriving before the church was quite emptied, and did. But there had been only a handful present and these scattered quickly. Although Laura waited outside she saw nothing of Lou.

Alec did not appear. When Laura called the grocery store she discovered that her son had not shown up for work that day. So much for Alec's glowing promises of the night before. Laura could have wept.

"I must find Lou," Laura told herself.

But she didn't find her, or any trace of her, and Alec did not come home to dinner or telephone.

It grew steadily later, and no Alec. He had never stayed out all night before. But day had broken and a mocking bird was singing outside Laura's window before she heard Alec's step coming on tiptoe up the stairs. Laura got softly out of bed, and met him outside his door.

"Alec, darling, I've been so worried." There were tears in her voice.

"Sorry," he said stiffly.

"I tried to find Lou for you."

He shrugged his shoulders.

"Forget it. She couldn't be happy here. I realize that now."

He turned away and Laura went slowly back down the hall.

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On the last Saturday in June Laura Maguire decided to run up to the city for various and sundry reasons, none of them pleasant. It had been a month since Shirley's marriage, the squalliest month Laura had ever experienced. Nothing went right with depressing monotony.

In the first place Mike continued his tirades against Banker Mays and the latter retaliated with telling force. Every time the Clarion published a thrust at the financier both circulation and advertising accounts felt the shock.

Then there was Kathleen. Going everywhere with young Gene Mays and apparently delighted with his pursuit.

About Alec she had even less reason to feel happy. Alec had developed into a deep dark secret and Laura was afraid to probe into the complexities of his behavior. He resolutely kept his own counsel. And for ways that were weird he had developed a maddening propensity. He had not stayed out all night again. In fact, he was usually home by nine although he never lingered downstairs to visit with the others, but went straight to his room. He was gone every morning when Laura rose. Without breakfast. He said vaguely that he was dieting to preserve his girlish figure. He also said to expect him at table when they saw him. And that was seldom enough to worry Laura to the point of tears.

But on this sultry June morning it was about Tom Laura's concern was chiefly exercised. Tom had been home a month, doggedly working away in Colonel Shoup's office, making progress slowly but steadily and looking more drawn and haggard every day.

Laura had decided to take the bus to the city. It was cheaper than the train and money was becoming distressingly scarce in her establishment, with Mike's business steadily submerging. That was partly Laura's errand in town. Sometimes in a pinch she took orders from a Woman's Exchange for home canned fruits and vegetables. It didn't pay a lot and was hot tedious work, but Laura had on other difficult occasions collected several odd dollars that helped to turn a hard corner.

On the way out of town the bus passed what had formerly been Joe's place, now christened "The Oak Tree." Laura grinned to herself. Shirley was the only comfortable spot on her mother's horizon. The town had nearly burst its side with derisive laughter when Shirley and Jaird took on the hamburger stand. But people who dropped in at "The Oak Tree" to sneer, remained to envy. Curiosity may have accounted for the rush of business

"The Oak Tree."

the first week. But it was good food appetizingly served in attractive surroundings that swelled the cash register the second and third and fourth weeks. "The Oak Tree" had become quite the rage, as well as the rendezvous for the young elite.

Even Belle Newsum now pointed with pride to her son's achievement.

CHAPTER XXV

Laura's visit to the Woman's Exchange was not heartening. It appeared that everybody had had the same idea. The market was glutted with the products for which Laura had hoped to receive orders. But she did wangle a small commission. Fifty jars of watermelon preserves on the strength of one of old Aunt Julia's recipes which Laura had brought from her father's plantation.

By then it was almost two and she was hot, tried, diheveled and hungry. She went across the street to a large cafeteria which at that hour, fortunately, was not crowded, picked out the most economical dishes on the menu and, balancing her tray, made for a table in a secluded corner near a window—only to come face to face with Mary Etta.

Mary Etta had finished her lunch. Her black eyes looked startled when they recognized Laura who had instinctively ppaused beside her.

"How are you, Mary Etta?" she asked gently.

"I'm splendid of course," the girl said, as if daring Laura to think otherwise.

"Do you mind if I sit with you?" inquired Laura.

Mary Etta shrugged her sharp shoulders. Laura sat down.

"I'm grieved about you and Tom," said Laura at last.

Mary Etta's lip curled. "Why should you be?" she demanded. "You've got him back, haven't you? Mothers always take their sons away from their wives if they can. And you can. Because he thinks you're perfect."

A SELECTED STORY BY A GIFTED AUTHOR

Was there a sob behind her voice? Laura could not be certain.

"No, Mary Etta, I haven't got my son back. He's under my roof, yes. But his heart isn't."

"Why did he marry me and make me care when he wanted someone so different?" cried the girl in a tormented voice.

"Then you do care, Mary Etta?"

"Care!" Mary Etta laughed bitterly. "Do you think anyone could have had Tom and not care?"

"Why didn't you come to Covington with him?"

"Because he didn't want me. Because he's sick of the sight of me. He'll marry someone like you of course when I divorce him. My lawyer mailed Tom a notice yesterday."

"Mary Etta!"

The girl's haggard face twitched. "There's no use living on chained to the corpse of a dead love. I can at least set Tom free."

"And yourself?"

Mary Etta shivered. "I swore no one should ever matter enough to upset my life. I vowed I'd not be submerged as my mother was. But if it's any satisfaction to you, I didn't pull it off. You see," her voice sank, she looked away, "Tom does matter. More than anything on earth. You don't know what it's been like this past month. Wanting him! Missing him! Longing to go down on my knees and beg him to love me again."

Laura glanced at her wrist watch. "Can you be packed and ready to go home with me by six?"

Mary Etta started violently. "Go to Covington?"

Laura nodded. "If your lawyer mailed Tom those divorce papers yesterday, he got them this morning. And he's been in hell ever since. I'd cut my arm off to spare him that. But I can't. Only you can change Tom's hell to heaven."

Mary Etta's hands clenched. "Tom will be glad to be rid of me," she insisted.

"Tom loves you, Mary Etta. But he believes you're disgusted because he hasn't been a violent financial success like Harvey Leigh. Tom thinks you want a divorce to marry Leigh. And Tom will give you a divorce if you ask for it. But you mustn't. Shirley and I may be his ideal. But you are the woman he loves. You've got to go home with me tonight and tell Tom it's been a nightmare, but it's over."

Mary Etta's thin hands gripped the table tremblingly. "And I thought you hated me."

Laura laid her hand gently on the girl's quivering shoulder. "It doesn't matter about me. I bore Tom. I reared him. I've done everything I could for him. But long ago he passed from my keeping into yours. I don't hate you, Mary Etta. But I am afraid of you. Because you can make or break my son."

Great tears stood in Mary Etta's haggard eyes. "If I could be sure Tom wanted me—"

"I am sure."

"Oh, Mother!"

Mary Etta had never called Laura mother before. Laura stooped and kissed her while their tears mingled.

She would not come into the house with Laura. She was afraid of a public rebuff at Tom's hands. She asked Laura to tell Tom she was waiting outside in the car.

"Come." His voice sounded thin and stretched, and when Laura opened the door he was sitting at the reading table staring straight before him, and the face he turned to her was ghastly. And then she realized that he was alone.

"But where's Alec?" she asked. "Your father said Alec came in almost an hour ago."

"He went out again."

"But Mike didn't see him."

Tom said nothing only his eyes were very sorry for her. And suddenly Laura knew. Maybe she had suspected all along.

"He's only been pretending to sleep at home?" she whispered.

Tom nodded and Laura staggered a little.

"I'm so terribly sorry," said Tom, laying his hand on her arm. "You don't deserve such trouble as this."

She came back from a long distance to stare at him blankly and then to remember that after all Tom was also flesh of her flesh and he at least could be snatched from the burning.

"Mary Etta is outside in her car. She thinks you hate her and she's breaking her heart for you."

"You must be mad. She filed suit for divorce yesterday."

"I know. But she doesn't want a divorce, Tom. She wants to be taken into your arms and told you love her. Better than life. Better a thousand times than you have ever loved me or Shirley or any other woman."

"But I do love her like that," said Tom simply. "I always have."

He was gone. Taking the stairs two at a time. He had forgotten his mother and Alec. He had forgotten everything but the woman who was his to have and to hold.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

Sportlight

by Grantland Rice

MILLIONS of those who follow baseball on the field or through the sporting pages of the country have become steamed up over the stretch batting battle between Ted Williams of the Boston Red Sox and Joe DiMaggio of the New York Yankees. Here are the two great modern hitters, the ranking class of 1941 with .400 or thereabouts set as the winning goal.

They deserve all the plaudits and the hoarse huzzas of those who follow the base hit from the single to the home run. But if a few of these millions don't mind I'd like to take them back into a younger country and tell them the story of three major hitting contests that I believe overshadow Williams and DiMaggio.

Grantland Rice

It may be the encroaching years. It may be the humidity. But I'll stand on the figures and the class, as the multitudes of 1941 stifle a laugh.

Cobb-Jackson—1911

When the American league season of 1911 opened Ty Cobb, the Georgia Peach, had led his league four successive seasons. At the age of 25 he was just coming to his peak.

That same year a tall, lanky entry from Brandon Mills, S. C., had reported to Cleveland from New Orleans. His name was Shoeless Joe Jackson, "The Carolina Crashsmith," picked by Cobb, Ruth and Speaker as "the greatest natural hitter that ever lived."

"O, the brave song his black bat sung" as Shoeless Joe stepped into the ball. Cobb, on his way then to nine straight batting championships and a run of 12 league-leading years out of 13 in a row, kept waiting for the Carolina rookie to break. Cobb started above .400 and he kept above .400. But he couldn't shake off the gangling challenger with the free-wheeling and effective swing.

Ty Cobb

And those were the days when Ed Walsh was spinning his famous "spitter" through—when they were using emery balls, and every type of fuzz to make the ball dip and skid and duck and slide.

About Jackson

Who was this rookie who could neither read nor write, who had gone shoeless in most of his earlier games, to challenge the great Cobb? Connie Mack had turned him back in 1908 and 1909. Cleveland had turned him back to New Orleans in 1910. Why, we'll never know. For his lowest average in those years had been .354.

Even a blind man could sense the lyrical smoothness of his swing. That year Shoeless Joe carried Ty Cobb to the wire. Ty finished at .420. Jackson, the rookie, at .408. Ty needed his greatest year to beat Jackson out.

Was Shoeless Joe merely a one-year fluke?

A year later Cobb found himself down the stretch, again batting above .400, with Jackson now in the lead. Jackson was .420. It was here that Ty, applying winning psychology, refused to speak to Jackson in a Detroit-Cleveland series and Shoeless Joe, wondering what he had done to offend a friend, fell into a brief slump.

At least this is the story of those days. In any event, Ty went on to win with an average of .410 against Jackson's .395.

In those two seasons the Shoeless Swinger had averaged .402 for his first two years in the majors, yet he couldn't lead the league.

Cobb and Speaker

Cobb had run into a close call years before against Larry Lajoie, the most graceful ball player of all time and one of the game's great hitters. But he came to the campaign of 1916 for his tenth consecutive shot at the batting championship. Today they rave about one year at the top.

Here was his chance to lead his league 10 straight years. Cobb went into a tailspin. He batted only .371 as Speaker finished at .386.

He had been facing such pitching stars as Cy Young, Walter Johnson, Ed Walsh, Addie Joss, Rube Waddell, Eddie Plank, Chief Bender, Jack Coombs, Smoky Joe Wood—an amazing galaxy.

Except for this one year interlude, Cobb would have led the big parade 13 straight years. As it was he came back to make it 12 out of 13 and to finish with a 24-year average around .363.

We are removing no credit from the extremely able hitting of Ted Williams and Joe DiMaggio. We are merely offering them a target at which they can shoot.

Cobb—Jackson—Lajoie—Speaker—they were "far away and long ago." But they could lather that whirling apple. Don't let anyone tell you differently.

Kathleen Norris Says:

When Your Daughter Breaks Away

(Bell Syndicate—WNU Service.)

Bee sleeps on a couch in the sitting room, so when men come in to drink beer and smoke up the place she can't go to bed, and when she does go, the room is absolutely foul.

By KATHLEEN NORRIS

WE ALL love ourselves so much that it is hard to believe anyone can stop loving us. A wife feels a stunned surprise when she learns that her husband's affections are wandering elsewhere. Her heart remembers the happier days when every word and glance from her met his devotion and his admiration, and while she is not looking about for the affection of other men, nor expecting to be regarded as irresistibly attractive to men, she DOES feel that it is astonishing, as well as humiliating and agonizing, to have old Phil turn to another woman.

A child is deeply hurt if Mother even pretends to like some other child as well or better. A careless word from anyone we love, an evaded engagement, just the change in a tone of voice, will cut us to the soul.

Girls write me that the ardor of the boy of the moment seems to have cooled.

Lonely Mothers.

Mothers have suffered untold agonies over sons who have been weaned away by life and by new friends, or by exacting, jealous, beautiful young wives. To be a mother at all is almost inevitably to suffer this loss, and the world is full of gentle, wistful elderly women whose lives could be so easily glorified by a postcard, a call, a message from some loved son—but who never receive it.

Of late years a new phase of this old, old story has developed. I mean the independent daughter.

Some daughters marry at 20 or 22; set up happy little homes, go in for the ideal round of babies, hospitalities, home and social interests. Other daughters dance and flirt for a year or two, plan kitchen showers and bathroom showers for the other girls, wear bridesmaids' frocks, but don't marry.

Independent Daughter.

Then at perhaps 24 or 25, they demand independence. They want to go away from home, to join Peg or Joan in a separate establishment, to manage their own friendships and coming and going, to report to the family at home only when the fancy strikes them. They take jobs, interesting jobs in bookstores or tearooms, or they join friends who are doing interior decorating, selling real estate, or studying art, dancing, photography. They build for themselves lives so fascinating and absorbing that they really don't need Mother and Dad any more, and often they are somewhat heartless in their frankness in showing it.

"I've lost my daughter," writes an Illinois woman on this subject. "I have two older sons, both married, but I can't live with either, and see my two grandchildren only occasionally. My girl was my joy, companion, my great care since her father left me to marry another and younger woman. Now Beatrice is gone, too, but not to a husband. I could bear that. But she's keeping a sort of bachelor establishment downtown, in our home city, with two other girls, one of whom is a hard, divorced, disillusioned creature of about 30. Bee is only 21. She earns $22 a week fitting on baby shoes—she adores children, and her father still sends her an occasional check.

MODERN BACHELOR MISS

Here is a mother who wants her independent daughter to follow the dictates of the old song, "Tie Me to Your Apron Strings Again." She wonders if there are any other cases similar to her own. Struggling to bring up the child, after the loss of her husband, she succeeds until the bonds of her home begin to weaken. The daughter, now a woman, appears to value her complete liberty more than the opinion of her mother, who thinks her place is fixed, until marriage. The young daughter establishes herself in a downtown section of the city with another girl and a divorcee as roommates. Working for a small salary the trio crowd into a small space, and, according to the mother's measuring rule, live very unsatisfactorily. She believes that the girl's health, at least, is being impaired by her mode of living and asks Miss Norris to advise her where she has failed and how she may entice her daughter back home. The advice given by Miss Norris is sage and may be read by many mothers with benefit to their aching hearts.

Advice Not Wanted.

"I would gladly keep house for her and her friends—that is, decent friends, but they don't want that. No advice, suggestions, warnings from an older woman for them! Sometimes they don't make up their beds at all; Bee sleeps on a couch in the sitting room, so when men come in to drink beer and smoke up the place she can't go to bed, and when she does go, the room is absolutely foul.

"She brings me candy and books, kisses me, says she loves me. But it seems to me a strange kind of love that doesn't take obedience and respect into consideration, and a strange world when a girl that age can break away from the guidance of home. It has made me nervous and brooding, this knowledge that my own child prefers the society of others, and I seem to have dropped most of my own interests and to have lost hold on life because of it. I had always thought that when her schooling ended she would be at home for a year or two and then marry; I feel my life and myself a failure, and am wondering if you know of similar cases, and whether there is any cure, and where the fault lies?"

She signs it "Deserted Mother."

Yes, of course there are similar cases, Deserted Mother, thousands of them. In these days girls flock to our cities, even from the most luxurious and pleasant of homes, coop themselves up in small apartments, eat in cheap restaurants, run about in the rains of winter and the soaking heats of summer perfectly convinced that the change is royally worth while.

Winning Her Back.

Your Beatrice is only claiming the right that has always been her brothers'; the right to feel her own feet under her, and to carry her own share of life's responsibilities. If she has had the right home training, if she has a code, however broad, she'll come back.

Not back home, not to be questioned, criticized, managed any more. But back into your heart through her wifehood, her motherhood, her growing up to meet the problems about which you've been telling her, and the failures and humiliations from which even your love can't save her. Occupy yourself with an equal independence meanwhile, get interested in something that will make you interesting to her; stop reproaching, brooding, regretting. In that way, and only in that way, will you win her back.

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