

Our Weekly Serial Story Installment

STRAIT GATE

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WNU Service

CHAPTER XIII—Continued

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"My heart!" Gunnar said hoarsely. "My dearest heart!" He could not have known what he looked like, but he remembered to smile at her. Mrs. Dana came and pulled at his arm but he shook her off and bent lower, still smiling. "My heart—"

Sarah Lynn's eyes widened, the pupils distending, and a strange look of fright and something stranger still came into them. "No!" she cried. "Go away! Please, please go away!"

Mrs. Dana was pressing the button. "Now, do you hear?" she triumphed. "Do you hear?"

Gunnar thought it was delirium. He said gently, "It is Gunnar, my dearest one—to stay with you always!" He bent to kiss her.

But Sarah Lynn, pinioned and helpless, able to move nothing but her eyes, nevertheless, with every fiber of her being repelled him. "No, no! Go away! Never come again—never—come again!"

The press played it up and the radio buzzed with bulletins about Gunnar Thorwald's return flight across the Atlantic, but no newspapers came into Sarah Lynn's hospital room, and they never tuned in for news flashes—only for music or comedy programs, or an occasional playlet which was known to be pleasant and amusing.

Gunnar's name was not mentioned after the day of his visit. When, at length, he had been compelled to leave the room, he could hear Sarah Lynn's voice, spent but shrill, saying to her mother, "Make him go away! Make him go away!"

He had not waited to hear her mother's answer, hovering over her in an agony of protective tenderness, and he did not know that Sarah Lynn had cried, quietly, ceaselessly, for three days. The tears trickled out of the corners of her eyes and slid down her temples into her hair, and she could not lift her hand to wipe them away.

Her doctors and nurses were disturbed, but they didn't seem able to control it. "This isn't helping any," Miss Burke said.

"It is just the reaction, the great relief, after that distressing and cruel interview the other day," Mrs. Dana insisted. "Darling, you are safe with Mother, and no one is going to bother you again! Mother's right here!" She saw the nurse's cool gray eyes upon her and followed her out into the aggressively clean-smelling corridor. "It is perfectly natural," she said rather combatively. "She regards him as the cause of her misfortune, so of course she shrinks from him."

"You think so?" Miss Burke said levelly. "Well, I can't give all the answers, but that wouldn't be my diagnosis." She went away with her noiseless, heelless tread. She was glad she was going on her vacation; she hated to have cases get her as this one did.

Sarah Lynn persistently asked for the old family doctor from Los Gatos and they were obliged to send for him. He could contribute nothing, they felt sure, but if it was a comfort to the child—

"Suppose you just step out and let us have our visit alone," he said mildly. Then he sat down and patted her hand. "Well, Sarah Lynn, I brought you into the world, as the old saying goes, and I saw you through measles and chicken-pox and the rest of 'em. I'm mighty sorry about this. Was there anything special you wanted to say to me?"

She could not turn her head, but her eyes turned to him. "You tell the truth, always. Am I going to die?"

"No," he said heartily. "I'm not up on all the details of your case, of course, but I had a talk with Dunn. No, there's no doubt about

it, Sarah Lynn; you're going to live."

"Must I?"

He cleared his throat. "I guess you must, girl. I guess that's your chore."

Sarah Lynn said after a long pause, "I know doctors can't—kill people. It's only animals that can be—what do they say?—'put out of their misery.' But can't they—just not make people live?"

He shook his grizzled head. "That's their chore, Sarah Lynn, making people live." Then he said briskly. "But it's not going to be like this, you know, always."

Sarah Lynn said, "They used to give me stuff all the time to make me sleep. I wish they still did. If I have to live, I think they might do that for me."

"Pain still bad?"

"Not my back . . . my head, my heart. Will you ask them to give it to me again?"

"No," the old country doctor said. "I won't do that, Sarah Lynn. You wouldn't want me to. I guess it took plenty of grit to go up in your plane, and more than plenty to come down in a parachute. But I believe you have a lot of grit left." He stood up, looking down at her, his eyes very bright. "Yes, you've got to live, Sarah Lynn."

Conrad Jordan was Gunnar's only defender. All Danavale condemned him hotly. The elders considered it a blessing that he had gone—his presence, they understood from her mother, was only a torment to the poor child—but certainly he had acted most shabbily.

"What a heel!" Sarah Lynn's young brother said. "Gosh—what a heel!"

Because of his defection, because he was the alien, the intruder in the clan, Danavale had convinced itself that Gunnar Thorwald was, indirectly, the reason for Sarah Lynn's tragic accident.

Lynn Dana and Conrad Jordan agreed to cease discussing it. The flier stood loyally by the ace.

"I don't see what else the boy could do, Lynn. She turned from him—she shrank from him—in horror. She begged him to go away forever; she told him repeatedly that she never wanted to see him again."

"But—in her condition—"

"No; she was not under opiates; she was absolutely clear. Upon my word, I don't see how he could have acted otherwise."

Conrad Jordan went back to Tahoe to close his lodge for the winter. The man in the wheeled-chair wrote to his traveling cousin:

"I cannot help feeling that Gunnar acted ignobly. And yet—what could he accomplish by staying? If Sarah Lynn is to be helpless, what, after all, would they have in common? It was, we must in justice remember, a plant of hasty growth; not deeply rooted, I dare say. Flying brought them together. But now—even without her injury, I doubt if he could have fitted himself into our scene; eagles don't make barnyard fowls."

"They are bringing her home from the hospital in a few days. Her mother has turned over her own sitting-room to Sarah Lynn. Duncan Van Doren is a pattern of devotion, they tell me—constantly there, reading aloud, always on the job. Well, perhaps it helps a little; the test comes later, when they know whether she has a chance of more than partial recovery."

The typewriter was silent while he looked up at the pipe-rack above his fireplace, done in painstaking pyrography with unconvincing poppies painted in, and below, in rather wobbly letters, the verse:

It matters not how strait the gate,
How charged with punishments
the scroll,
I am the master of my fate;
I am the captain of my soul.

The girl who had made that for him, the golden-curved, violet-eyed, mother-of-pearl maiden who had sobbed that she would sit beside his chair all the long days of her life, had not been put to the test. If she had not died—He wondered. It was a fragrant memory.

Mrs. Edwin Dana's upstairs sitting-room had always been a place of cozy cheer, but now it fairly radiated and exuded joyous serenity. People came into the room with rising inflections, stepping lightly on the balls of their feet. They sometimes paused outside the door to arrange their smiles.

Miss Pennington sat there with her sewing, and young Bill racketed in on his return from school, and her father and the older brothers came for brisk and breezy chats before or after their dinner.

Her mother and Duncan, one or the other, were always there.

"Did you ever see such devotion?" people asked, almost reverently. "If Cousin Adelaide isn't the very essence of self-sacrificing



She begged him to go away forever.

mother-love! And Duncan, well, if ever a fellow deserved a reward—"

Mary Dana Webster told her husband, "I loathe having to admit it, because I never could see him with a binocular, but Duncan is certainly a wonder about this. Honestly, he is. I never gave him credit for really caring, tremendously; I thought the whole affair had been motivated by the mothers. But he must care, Neddy."

Her husband turned a lathered face. "Probably does, poor kid."

"Of course, I think he's getting a great kick out of his own nobility. No, really—I don't say that cattily. It doesn't detract from his credit. But I do think he dramatizes himself—Gunnar Thorwald, Norwegian ace, heartlessly flying home, deserting his helpless, paralyzed sweetheart; Duncan Van Doren standing by. Well, that's natural enough. And as for Cousin Adelaide, actually, she gets more beautiful by the hour, and I don't believe she was ever happier in her life."

"Oh, come, now," he reached for his shaving lotion. "That's pretty thick, old gal! After all her grief and shock and—"

She stood her ground. "I can understand it. Cousin Adelaide is one of those born-to-commanders, and for the first time Sarah Lynn is obeying. Even as a baby, she wriggled away, and was a contrary child, and she wouldn't make a proper debut, and she wouldn't be engaged to Duncan Van Doren. And then she would fly, and she would marry a strange foreign flier. Now her mother's got her, utterly. She's just as much in a cage as those

jittery canaries. She broods over her and feeds her like a baby bird in a nest."

To her husband's bewilderment she burst into angry tears.

CHAPTER XIV

Slowly, almost imperceptibly, month by month and then week by week, Sarah Lynn improved, inching her snail-like way up the hill of progressive recovery. The eminent bone specialist was delighted, the local doctor enthusiastic. She could turn her head; she could use her hands; she could have the bed tilted; the frame and the cast gave way to a brace. Joy, dewy and triumphant, pulsed through the pretty room, and Aunt Helena wore prophetic robes, swimming the gleaming lawns between the two houses.

Sarah Lynn told herself, "The inside of my mind is just like the inside of this room: it is peaceful and warm and I will keep flowers blooming in it and canaries singing and kittens playing. I won't let Lightning come into my room or into my mind because she whines and moans for me to go out and I am never going out any more." She was always faintly smiling and her eyes were never wide open. Her mother felt she needed mental stimulus. "Darling, now you're so marvelously improved, wouldn't it be nice to brush up on your French or review your art history?"

"It would be very nice," Sarah Lynn answered with her strange new docility. She had gained a little flesh and now her dark eyes did not overflow her face so completely.

Duncan read aloud pleasantly in a well-modulated voice which never grew hoarse. At least once a week he put the book down and picked up her hand and kissed it and asked her again to marry him.

"No; I couldn't do that to you, Duncan," she always told him gently. "That would be a dreadful way to repay all your kindness."

"There isn't any question of repayment, Sarah Lynn. But if you think I rate a reward—you know what I want!" His sensitive, fine-featured face would flush and his eyes mist for a moment. There was no possible doubt now as to the depth of Duncan's devotion and it gave him dignity; it actually made him seem larger. A sudden and excruciating toothache sent him to the dentist one afternoon when Mrs. Dana was doing sad duty at a funeral. "I'll call Penny to come and sit with you," he said, hurrying away.

The governess sat down and put on her reading-glasses. "I don't want to go on with Mr. Duncan's book and put him to the bother of catching up," she said. "I picked up some things I've been dipping into myself."

Miss Pennington cleared her throat. "I've been reviewing my

Scandinavian history a bit. Fascinating I find it." She kept her pale, protuberant eyes on the page. "The Norse women were very advanced, I was interested to discover, from the earliest periods. Advanced, I mean to say in the sense of their position. Famous housewives understood medicine in a crude way, and had a fine position in society, and were counted almost the equal of men. Very hospitable, they were! The traits of the Norse women—"

There was an odd, muffled sound from Sarah Lynn. "And the Norsemen," she said thinly. "Aren't you going to tell me about the traits of the Norsemen, Penny? Well, it's not necessary: I remember perfectly." She began to recite in a toneless sing-song: "The Norseman had a keen mind; his heart was as much steel as his sword; he loved battle and the stormy seas; he admired the strong, the brave; for the old and feeble he had no interest; for the suffering, no sympathy; the weak he despised."

The old governess stood up. "Oh, my dear! You mustn't—"

"Mustn't what, Penny? Mustn't remember? Then, why did you make me? Why did you make me?" She was trembling and shaking, and the calm and cheer of the pretty room shattered into fragments. "Don't you want me to have any peace?" The greyhound watched her anxiously.

"Oh, my dearie dear! Yes! Yes! But this isn't peace you have now, and I see where you're drifting, and there's no happiness ahead—"

"Happiness? Who's talking about happiness? Peace, I said—peace—the kind I used to have in the hospital when they gave me stuff to kill the pain instead of killing me. Then I learned to drug myself, and you want to take that away, too!" She was crying now, wildly, bitterly.

Miss Pennington put her arms round her. "Hush, poor lamb! Hush! You'll make yourself ill! Dearie, I don't want to torture you but—oh, Sarah Lynn, why did you send him away?"

She stopped crying for a moment. "Because he wanted to go, Penny."

"No, no! That's not true! He was crushed and haggard with sorrow—he was—"

"Yes. He was sorry. But I knew him, Penny. I knew what he thought about life and death. He said: 'To be alive, that is nothing, unless life is good.' And he said old and incurable and helpless people ought to be put out of the way of the well and strong. Survival of the fittest; that was what he believed in."

"No, no!" It was Miss Pennington who was weeping, now. "He didn't mean—" she was holding her, patting her. "And you're going to be well—"

(TO BE CONTINUED)

Boys' Military School in Britain to Act as Filter to Aid Army at Large

An experiment has been inaugurated at the Military College of Science at Woolwich, England, which, if successful, will be adopted by similar state institutions: secondary schoolboys and the abler young victims of "blind-alley" jobs in mechanical trades may henceforth be instructed in their avocation by a three-year course at the college.

So far instruction there has been entirely confined to officers and enlisted men, who have taken courses varying in length from two years, six months to four days. According to the military expert of the Times of London:

The college aims at acting as a filter through which knowledge shall pass to the army at large. The teachers visualize themselves as trainers of instructors so far as the bulk of their students are concerned, and also, in the advanced class, as trainers of officers for the technical staff of the Master General of the Ordnance.

On the less-advanced technical side one of the more remarkable departments is that in which artificer N. C. O.s receive instruction in the use and repair of wireless sets and

fire-control instruments. In the latter subject men of the Territorial army have been receiving instruction to be passed on to anti-aircraft units, particularly in the use of the Vickers predictor, an instrument which has had a great effect on the accuracy of anti-aircraft fire.

Predictors have been successfully tried in Spain, and though at present they cannot be effectively trained on an aircraft flying at more than 270 miles per hour, it is hoped that the limit may be raised to 350 miles per hour. One feature of the apparatus is that the result of the calculation is transmitted to the gun electrically and the gunner does not have to see the aircraft.

ImPLY—InFER

The speaker implies something, the hearer infers a meaning to his words. To imply is to suggest something not directly or specifically mentioned; to infer is to conclude that the meaning is so-and-so. In his speech the mayor implied that he was tired of working with a council that always opposed him. His hearers inferred that he would soon retire from office.