

There's Only One

By
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CHAPTER VIII—Continued

She went to the servants' entrance of the apartment, rang the bell. A middle-aged man in a houseman's coat opened the door. "Oh, the new maid," he said. "Mr. Cayne said you'd be coming. This way."

Rachel followed him into a large hot kitchen where a stout woman was arranging an elaborate tea tray. "This is Lena, my wife," he said. "My name's Towers. What's yours?"

"My name's Rachel," she said meekly, adding still more meekly, "pleased to meet you both."

"I'll show you your room," said Mrs. Towers, giving Rachel a cold prolonged stare. "And you get along with this tray, Bert, the madame's rung twice. You're to go in and see her as soon as you've taken off your coat and hat, Rachel. Come right along."

Down a back hall was her room—no smaller than the one she had at Pink's, Rachel noticed—with white iron bed, unmade, a bureau with wavy mirror, a chair and table, a stationary stand.

"Bedding and towels is in the bureau," said Mrs. Towers, "but don't stop to fix anything now, the madame's waiting. There's the closet, put your hat and coat in there. Mr. Towers and me have a room two doors down, the bathroom's between. Come ahead."

With a strong sense of masquerade and warning herself to be very careful, Rachel followed Mrs. Towers again through the back hall, then at the Fitcher door they turned into another hall which led to the front. At a mirrored door Mrs. Towers paused and tapped, then opening it, announced in sugary tones: "Here's the new girl, madame."

Rachel found herself in a long, too-decorated, too-crowded, too-colorful drawing room. Directly before her against the light were a smallish woman dressed in fluttery pastel chiffons and a very young man, lounging in one chair, his feet on another. And for the first time in her life she waited to hear her own mother's voice.

"Now where on earth," said Mrs. Cayne fretfully, "did Peter pick up such a great overgrown gawky creature?—she's sure to be clumsy."

The shock of the unfeeling comment sent the blood flying to Rachel's face. She couldn't speak. Then the very young man said, "Look, she's blushing!" and began to laugh.

His laughter brought back Rachel's composure. She comprehended that this was her half-brother, Peter Cayne's and Elinor's son, and she remembered that she must play her part. "Good afternoon, madame," she stammered, "I hope—I hope I—will be able to do the work satisfactorily."

"I suppose you haven't a uniform? Not even an apron?" said Mrs. Cayne.

"No, madame."

"There, you see, Holbrook," Elinor Cayne turned to her son. "Your father leaves everything to me. He would have it that I needed a maid and he sends one who hasn't so much as an apron."

"What color uniforms are you going to get for her? Why don't you try something interesting—soft blue or violet or bright pink?" Holbrook Cayne's voice was not boyish and he seemed older than his seventeen years, though he was slender and did not very tall.

"Your father would have a brain storm!" Mrs. Cayne laughed now. Then she spoke again to Rachel. "What's your name?"

"Rachel." As she said it Rachel wondered if her mother would ask her last name, but Mrs. Cayne seemed satisfied and as she was busy with the teapot Rachel could look at her closely for the first time, the blue eyes Anne had described, the dark hair, the fair white skin, the general loveliness and an amazing you feel as of outline and manner. "Youthful," thought Rachel, "but obviously not young. And this is my own mother! How strange, how strange this is!" Mrs. Cayne's many rings, the bracelets clinking down her arm as she lifted the cup, the twisted bar of diamonds in the chignon at her breast recalled Rachel to the reason she had been sent there. "I must be careful, I must be awfully careful," she thought. Aloud she said: "If you don't need me to do anything right away, madame, I'll unpack my suit-

case. Or if you'd like me to I could go out and buy an apron to use tonight."

"But I do need you to do something," Rachel followed the small fluttering figure down the hall again and into an astonishing bedroom, rococo pink and blue with endless mirrors. "There, look in that closet and you'll find some evening dresses that need pressing. I don't know which one I'll wear tonight, so you can press them all. That closet's for evening clothes alone. This one over here is for day things."

The evening dress closet was wide and deep, with so many gowns of every color, every material, that Rachel paused in surprise.

Mrs. Cayne was impatient. "Take the first row and get them done before dinner, I'll wear one of them. You can do the others tonight."

"It's a tryout for me," thought Rachel. She took an armful of dresses and went back to Mrs. Towers, who indicated a small laundry beyond the kitchen with an iron and pressing board.

The dresses were expensive and elaborate, too elaborate, too showy. Rachel worked at them carefully, surprised to find herself almost without feeling. She wasn't even disappointed, she was simply numb and blank.

Mrs. Towers called her. "The madame's ringing for you."

"I'm not half done," said Rachel.

"Take 'em all back and don't say nothing. She won't look 'em over," advised the cook with a shrewd, not unfriendly glance. "She don't know good work from bad. She just likes to think she's making people step."

Thus warned, Rachel carried the dresses back to the bedroom. Mrs. Cayne was sitting before her dressing table taking off her bracelets.

"I'll wear that blue crepe, I think," she said, and Rachel laid it carefully on the bed. "Silver sandals—on the rack in the evening dress closet. And I want my bath quite warm, but not hot. Heaps of scent."

Rachel brought the slippers and was sent for fresh stockings and underwear from one of the tall in-laid French chests. There seemed to be no end to Mrs. Cayne's wardrobe. The bathroom was an exotic arrangement of colored marbles, mirrors, plate glass, silver. Rachel started the water, added quantities of gardenia bath salts and was startled to see how somber and shabby she looked in her old knitted suit in the middle of the glitter and luxury. She fetched a negligee of crushed pink velvet, pink velvet mules bordered with white fur, helped Mrs. Cayne to take off her chiffons and to slip out of her girdle.

"Press every dress before you hang it up, that's most important," said Mrs. Cayne absently. She was absorbed in watching her reflection from every possible angle with open pleasure. Rachel put the room in order while Elinor bathed. The door opened and Mr. Cayne looked in. He recognized Rachel with satisfaction. "Here you are then," he said, nodding. "Where's Mrs. Cayne?" "Taking her bath, sir."

"Oh Elinor," called her husband, "want to see a show tonight?"

"I can't tonight. Holbrook and I are going to the movies."

Mr. Cayne came into the room, his keen glance ran over the bracelets and rings on the dressing table, he put out a cautious finger, moved them, counting. "I'll go with you," he said.

Mrs. Cayne's voice was sweet, but faintly mocking. "Dear, you won't like it, I'm chaperoning a party of Holbrook's friends."

"No, I couldn't stand that." He looked round at Rachel with a sly twinkle. "How do you like your new maid?" he called.

"She's terribly overgrown and gawky and rather dumb. I don't see why you couldn't get me someone experienced."

"Oh pooh, nobody ever suits you." Rachel realized that this remark was in the nature of explanation and apology to her. She seized another armful of dresses and escaped to the laundry. When she came back Mr. Cayne had gone to his own room and Mrs. Cayne was waiting to be dressed. She was in much better humor. Rachel tried to seem accustomed to her work, buckled the sandals deftly, manipulated the hooks and snaps with concentrated attention. Just before the gown went on Mrs. Cayne settled herself to the prolonged labor of make-up

It was plain that she enjoyed the process and she did it skillfully. Rachel watched her with an obscure painful resentment, which she could not reason away.

When Elinor's face was tinted to her pleasure she stepped into the dress she had selected, a blue crepe exactly the color of her eyes, and Rachel drew it up over the slim hips, adjusted the intricate shoulder straps and buttoned 25 tiny buttons down the back. Then Elinor again put on her rings and bracelets and brooch, reshaped her lips, touched perfume to each wrist and behind each ear and finally, directing Rachel to move the long mirrors so that they would offer her entire reflection, she walked back and forth the length of the room, observing her effect intently.

When she was quite satisfied, she had more orders for Rachel. "I'll want my mink coat and muff and that little hat of blue velvet flowers and a blue velvet bag. Have everything ready as soon as dinner's over, and you might as well open the beds-



"I'll Wear That Blue Crepe, I Think," She Said.

Towers will show you, you'll have to do that regularly. But you don't need to wait up until I come in tonight."

Rachel went back to the kitchen and asked if there was anything she could do to help Mrs. Towers, an offer which pleased the woman. "No, you go on and unpack your bag and make your bed," she said. "She may think up something for you to do tonight."

"I have the rest of those dresses to press," said Rachel.

"You take them out of the closet and shake them and put them back. She won't notice. Is she going out tonight?"

"She and—and—young Mr. Cayne are going to the movies with some of his friends."

"You better call him, Mr. Holbrook, that's what they like. Mr. Cayne not going?"

Rachel reported the conversation on that subject and Mrs. Towers smiled grimly.

"She likes to run around and pretend Mr. Holbrook's her beau. She can't get away with it when Mr. Cayne's along. Go ahead now, fix your bed, we don't begin our dinner till the dessert's gone into the dining room."

"I'm awfully obliged to you for helping me out, Mrs. Towers," said Rachel. "Any time you want me to do anything here please say so."

"That's all right. I guess we'll get along. You can call me Lena if you want."

Lena liked her. Rachel knew that was an asset. She hurried into her tiny room and made haste to unpack and put the bedclothes on the bed, then scrubbed her face and hands and smoothed her hair flat again for her curls were perking up—everything at top speed to be ready if Mrs. Cayne rang for her and to keep her thoughts off the display of vanity and uselessness she had just seen. It had disturbed and hurt her in a way she could not explain nor forgive; she was shaken with disappointment which she must not—yet—admit.

When Rachel went back to the kitchen dinner was going into the dining room. The serving table was

filled with massive silver and red and gold French china and Lena was making fresh toast, draining artichokes and stirring golden Hollandaise sauce all apparently at the same time. Towers, impressive in his dress suit, had just carried in boned stuffed squabs, he brought out the platter, seized the tray with gravy, wild grape jelly and buttered crumbs in individual dishes and disappeared again. He and Lena had the serving beautifully systematized, it was fascinating to watch, every one of the many dishes was ready for him exactly as he needed it. Lena glanced up only once as she spooned and garnished and turned from the stove to the serving table: "You could set our table if you want, Rachel," she said "on the side there, the dishes in the cupboard up above, see?"

So Rachel prepared the table for her first meal under her mother's roof in the kitchen with the cook and the butler. She did it carefully, anxious to win Lena's approval, but it took only a few moments, she had it finished before the salad was served. It was a marvelous-looking salad, white and red wreathed with green cress, and it came chilled from the icebox with its plates. The sight and smell of the food made Rachel very hungry and Lena guessed it. She ladled out a bowl of soup and handed it to her: "They take their time," she said "but that's no reason why you should starve."

Towers narrowed in. "They're going to have coffee at the table on account of her and the boy going out." He looked at Rachel: "You better be ready to jump."

Rachel slipped down the hall past the dining room door to Mrs. Cayne's bedroom and took out the coat, hat and gloves, but she could not find a blue bag and was wary of rummaging. Presently Mrs. Cayne came in, head in the air, bright with triumph. "The blue bag's in that chest, top drawer—no, no, stupid, the bag with the lapis top's the one I want!"

She flung that direction at Rachel but otherwise hardly noticed her, for she was again intent on herself in the mirrors. But when she was ready, the little blue velvet hat set exquisitely on her exquisite little head, her slim body wrapped in the softness of her furs, she had one thing more to say and she said it with thoughtless cruelty: "Borrow an apron from Lena before I see you again, you're too depressing in that dreadful old rag."

The atmosphere in the kitchen had greatly changed when Rachel went back for the rest of her dinner. Towers had taken off his coat and he and Lena were leisurely and thoroughly eating their way through the generous remainders of the family's meal. They piled Rachel's plate, but she had lost her hunger. "I'm tired," she told them, wishing they wouldn't chew so audibly and visibly.

"Got to wait up for her?" asked Towers, taking another squab.

"No, she said not to, tonight. But she said I was to open the beds, that you'd show me how she likes it done and then I'm to do it regularly."

Towers and Mrs. Towers exchanged meaningful looks. "She don't want Mr. Cayne to know what time she gets in. She wouldn't take the car, she knew Yates would keep tabs on 'em." This was Towers' explanation.

"What was she nagging him for tonight?" asked Lena.

"Wants an ermine cape and some jewelry, pair o' clips, I think. They only cost seven thousand."

"She's got enough jewelry now to stock a shop," said Lena to Rachel, "and she takes no more care of it than if it came from the five-and-ten. Did you see where she keeps it?"

"No, I didn't." Rachel hid her now stimulated interest.

"It's all in a little wall safe behind her dressing table and half the time she don't remember to lock it. If Mr. Cayne didn't look after it she wouldn't know what she's got, nor where she'd put it."

"She don't keep track of anything," added Towers.

"I don't see how she can," said Rachel. "I never saw a place so full of ornaments."

Towers wagged his head. "It's a junk shop, that's what it is. Mr. Cayne used to have the nicest neatest bachelor apartment before he got married! But she likes things fancy, everything."

(TO BE CONTINUED)

Uncle Phil Says:

Laws Are a Retreat

It isn't laws that Americans need to enable them to get along together, but a decent regard for each other.

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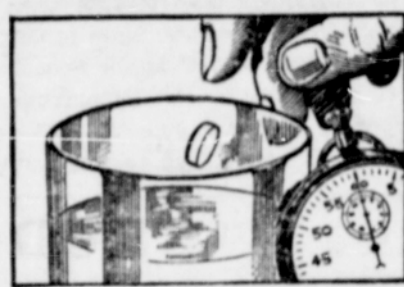
It's Considered Eccentricity

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