SOPHIE KERR'S GREAT NOVEL

"STAY OUT OF MY LIFE!"

By Sophie Kerr

CHAPTER XXII

"YOUR foolish, Jane," Amy said after the doctor had gone. "Of course I'm here, but a nurse could do a lot more to make you comfortable."

But Jane would not listen.

That prospect did not disturbe her nearly so much as Jane's unchanging resolve to give her child for adoption as soon as it should be born. No matter what she said, she could not move Jane one inch. They argued about it until both were sharp and exhausted.

"You're not logical," cried Jane. "You don't believe a child is better off with people who'll love it than with someone who never will be able to stand looking at it! Why, on that score I'm doing the right thing. You want to sentimentalize over it. You don't understand that maternity can be nothing but a physical thing. I never did like children particularly, and I'll hate this one."

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"Maternity can't be only physical. And anyway, you're shirking, Jane. You thought you'd make a grand free noble gesture and you haven't the nerve to see it through. You ought to be ashamed to say you'll hate this child. You can't hate it. It's part of your body and your soul. You might as well say you hate yourself."

"I might say that, too."

"Well, you wouldn't mean it. You think very well of yourself. You always have. But you'd really hate yourself, loathe yourself, if you abandoned this child to anybody who's willing to take it. You'll never know what becomes of it."

"I don't want to know."

"Why, you wouldn't do that to a puppy or a kitten! You'd not give one of them away without being sure it had a good home and wouldn't be abused or ill-treated. Oh, Jane, it would be unforgiveable."

"It's no use. I'm going to do it. You simply don't understand."

They went over it again and again. But Jane continued to search after channels of adoption which would give the protection of secrecy to the mother in spite of all Amy could say, and at last refused to answer, put her hands over her ears and kept them there whenever Amy protested. "Leave me alone, can't you? I feel so wretched already," she said. At last Amy felt it was better to say nothing more, because she saw how ill Jane was and how near her time, but she thought, "As soon as the child is born she'll feel differently. She's bound to."

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Emma brought in the papers. "The war's begun!" she cried. "Germany invading Belgium. And England's going in!"

Amy looked at the headlines and laid the paper aside. "I'm going to telephone home," she said. "I want to talk to Father. Maybe somebody at the college can help get Professor Hart and Howard out safely. They could cable to the ambassador, I should think. They must do something."

She looked round at Jane and saw her face drawn into a strange awed grimace. "Send for the doctor," she whispered, "and the nurse." She dropped over on the sofa, limp, moaning.

In the stress of the next 47 hours Amy had not an instant even to think of Howard, much less try to send a message to him. Doctor Lacey, still lamenting that Jane was not in a hospital, and the nurse, a starchy crotchy Miss McNeal, who echoed the doctor's complaints, took full possession of the apartment and their demands and exactions kept Amy and Emma rushing. The child was long in coming, not eager, Amy thought, to enter a world where it was unwanted. Jane did not suffer very much. "She's perfectly normal. Everything's all right," Miss McNeal kept saying, "but it's so inconvenient here. If we were only in a hospital now!"

Early in an August morning the baby came and before dawn Jane's child was born, a girl, small, but perfect and strong. When she had been bathed and rubbed with oil and her few garments put on her, Miss McNeal handed her over to Amy. "Lay her to sleep somewhere safe," she directed, "since there's no crib."

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Amy sat down with the child in her arms and looked at it. She had never seen so young a baby before and this queer little dark-eyed wrinkled creature seemed to her rather a blind little mole or mouse than a human child, a little ugly fumbling animal, utterly helpless, unwelcomed, to be flung into any possible fate—the callous cruelty of it struck Amy afresh. She was caught in a violence of revolted anger such as she had never known before in all her life.

"But it's impossible!" she thought. "Jane can't do it. If she does I'll hate her forever. But she can't, no one could. This little, little baby!" Presently Doctor Lacey came out of Jane's room.

"It's an odd thing," he told Amy, "but I happened to hear a day or so ago of some people who want to adopt a girl baby with good blood, you know—I'll get in touch with them and find out what can be arranged. They stipulated just what Miss Terry wants in one way—I mean, they don't want to know the real mother's name and they don't want her to know theirs—to prevent the mother claiming the child later on, you understand."

"But Jane's hardly seen her baby, doctor," stammered Amy, "I'm hoping when she does, she won't let it go."

Doctor Lacey shrugged. "She told me to go ahead, to hurry."

Amy held the child closer, walked past the doctor and into the bedroom where Jane, in a bleak and druggish aura, lay exhausted. Yet, as Amy looked down at her she was conscious that even in these few hours Jane had recovered some of her old self, some of her old beauty and vitality. The knowledge that her ordeal was over was restoring her. Her eyes had a spark of strength renewed.

Amy spoke clearly and very gravely: "Are you still bound to give this child away, Jane, and let her belong entirely to someone else and never claim her back?"

The spark in Jane's eyes became almost gay. "You sound like the Bible," she murmured. "Yes, of course I'm going to give the child away. And such luck! Doctor Lacey knows of somebody."

"Then—will you give her to me?"

"I told you I'd do that the day you came. But you don't want her!"

"Yes, I want her. Only she must be entirely mine. Jane. My child! You must never try to get her away from me."

"I never will."

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(To Be Continued)

McKenzie Bridge

McKENZIE BRIDGE, Aug. 10.—A birthday wdinner was given Arthur Daniels, son of Bert Daniels at the "Sign of the Fir" Saturday evening. Guests included Louise Daniels, Bert Daniels, Alberta Daniels, Jean Pickett, Edna Humphries, Mr. and Mrs. Clifford Daniels and family and Arthur Daniels.

Mrs. Frank Viles entertained the Sewing circle on her lawn Wednesday afternoon. Cards took the place of sewing. A luncheon was served to eleven guests.

Mr. and Mrs. P. Sullivan of Eugene are spending a few weeks at "The Sign of the Fir."

Alice Hoffman has returned from her visit at Amity and is staying with her parents at their summer home on the McKenzie.

Mr. and Mrs. F. L. Walker, Patty Lou Walker and their daughter and son-in-law from California were up Sunday.

Albert Wachsmith is home from the hospital.

Mr. and Mrs. Harry G. Hayes are both recovering from a sick spell.

Irene Stewart of Corvallis who has been helping Mrs. Wachsmith at the Log Cabin inn leaves for home Saturday for a two weeks rest. Miss Stewart will teach the first grade at Garibaldi, Oregon.

Mr. and Mrs. P. Corpstein of Phoenix, Arizona, are stopping at the Log Cabin inn.

Geo. Newell Jr. who has been visiting Mr. and Mrs. J. R. Mitchell for ten days, returned to his home in Redmond, Ore.

Mr. and Mrs. Elmer Harden of Lebanon, Ore., had lunch with the Mitchells last Saturday.

Dr. R. R. Moton, head of the Tuskegee normal and industrial institute for negroes, in Alabama, has been invested with the title of president instead of principal, by popular vote.

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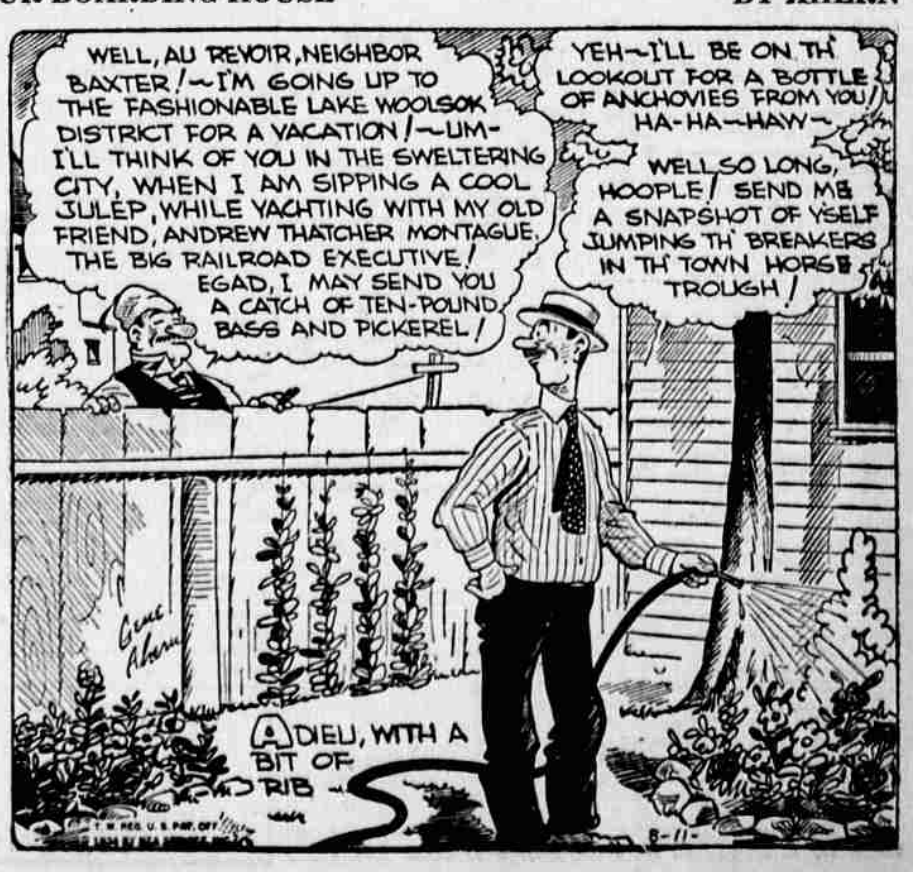
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