

IRISH EYES

by . . .
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CHAPTER XIV—Continued

"Frank may be dying, and you can talk about him like that!" Sheila said, her face ashen white. Her dress was still dusty and rumpled, her face dirty, and she had a deep purple bruise on one temple. But there was a flaming beauty—a force—in her aspect, as she faced the other girl, that made Bernadette draw back.

"Pretend that you love him, why don't you?" Bernadette said, in a frightened dogged voice.

"I don't have to! I thought you did!"

"Your kind always pretend that they love everyone," Bernadette said, in bitter contempt. "It's all love, and how a boy isn't understood at home, and things like that!"

"My kind!" Sheila echoed, with a bewildered look about the stricken circle.

"Yes, your kind! The kind that goes to a place like Atlantic City with a rich man's son!"

"Look here," Joe Carscadden said, suddenly taking a part in the conversation. "Look here, Miss What's-your-name. You be careful what you call my sister, will you, or you'll find yourself in trouble! Sheila isn't responsible to you for what she does—no, nor the newspapers, either!"

"I've just been talking to her," Joe continued, warming at the sound of his own voice, "and she's been working hard in a hotel down there at Atlantic City, with no more idea that Frank Mc Cann knew where she was than—"

"Than the babe itself!" Mrs. Carscadden supplied, as he paused for breath, and for a smile.

"Joe, you believe me, don't you? Sheila stammered, bursting into tears.

"I believe you," Joe said, angrily, "and I've had enough of these rich folks that pretend they want to help a girl, just because she's honest enough to return fifty dollars their daughter didn't even know she'd lost! I don't care if my father and yours were friends in Albany."

Joe went on wildly, "I don't want my sister to have anything more to do with you!"

"Joe—Joe—" the judge began sorrowfully, placatingly. Joe shook off the friendly hand.

"I'll bid you all good day!" he said, heatedly. "Come on, Ma. Come on, Sheila!"

They went out, Sheila and her mother and brother, into the night. "The way it was, Mamma—" Sheila began.

Helping her mother and Joe with the dishes, she was back in the home kitchen, back in an old faded gingham apron, with her bronzed hair tied up severely in a handkerchief. Sheila had returned from church, she had enjoyed once again the delights of a leisurely home breakfast with the family, and she was now retreating to them, for the hundredth time, some of the lesser details of her adventures.

Mrs. Carscadden now having finished the dishes, was at the sink, occasionally mopping its already well-mopped surface absently. Joe, really listening, was pretending to read the pages of the paper.

"Don't tell me how it was, Sheila," her mother said resignedly, "I can bear anything but that."

Sheila put her head down on the table and laughed.

"No one was ever good as you can make yourself out to be, when you've bust up two good engagements, and thrown a family like the Mc Canns into grief and sorrow!" Mrs. Carscadden observed.

"It may not be your fault," her mother continued oracularly, "but there's a few cud get themselves mixed up in trouble the way you do an' kape such an innocent face on you. Whatever you'd be doin' to get into one of them Zeppelins I don't know, an' that you'd come down near Newark, New Jersey, is no more than you deserve! A little before that," Mrs. Carscadden continued, in a droning, resigned sort of monotone, "it was disappeared you were, an' no one had spache or sight of ye for days. An' before that again, it was married in Boston, Massachusetts, ye were, by a justice of the peace, or was it a district attorney, Joe?"

"It was neither, Ma," Joe said, and Sheila laughed again. She was not deeply concerned; she was thinking of something else this morning.

She had made up her mind to something the day before yesterday, and since the instant of her decision the world had been singing for Sheila. She was going to call on Frank Mc Cann.

The terrible day of the plane crash was now almost two weeks in the past; Sheila had had no communication since with the Mc Cann family. The unfortunate pilot of the plane had been buried, the physicians had reported Frank as making good progress toward recovery, and newspapers had turned to other matters. Joe Carscadden had telephoned the Mc Cann house almost every day, and had extended sympathy and made inquiries for the whole family, and it had finally been decided by her mother, Angela and Joe that Sheila should write Frank a "nice note," telling him how glad

she was that he was getting well, and expressing her heartiest good wishes for his marriage to Miss Kennedy.

Sheila had half-heartedly agreed to this. She would have preferred, herself, to do nothing in regard to Frank. Without being able to analyze exactly how she felt, she sensed that there was mystery, there was provocation, about complete silence. But a nice letter was simply a nice letter; it ended everything. Everything was ended, of course. But somehow Sheila had had a feeling, deep in her heart, that there would be one more act.

She wanted to see Frank once more, to be sure that everything was all right between him and Bernadette, to close up their own sensational experience with one little, friendly talk.

But the manner in which Joe and Ma had discussed the propriety of even a letter had shown Sheila plainly that the thought of a call was quite out of the question. So she had dutifully written, almost as dictated by her authorities.

The first days following the accident had been a time of strange lassitude and weariness to her. Sheila had lain on the big bed, in the center room, dreamy and silent, or she had come out to take the kitchen rocker, listening to the talk that had gone on about her, very gentle and sweet, but apparently broken in body and spirit.

During these days the house had been full of company. Every relative and friend the Carscaddens had, and they were legion, had come in and out of the kitchen as if it were a club. Marg'ret had come, panting from the stairs; Lizzie had come; Neely and Lew had come. The teapot had never cooled, nor run dry, in this exciting time.

After almost a week of it, Sheila had appeared suddenly to awaken. She had washed her hair, had put her wardrobe in order. The sensations, the thrills, were all over. Now for a job, and a stretch of unromantic routine and duty.

And first duty of all, and in another sense, last, the nice letter to Frank had been written.

Unexpectedly, and bringing all the thrills back with a dizzying rush,



Sheila was back in the home kitchen.

Frank had instantly answered. Sheila's letter had been written on a Wednesday night; on Thursday afternoon, when she had been alone in the house, the postman's whistle had drawn her down to the door and there had been the miracle!

A letter from Frank. Sheila would not have believed that any six penciled lines could be so wonderful. Seven lines, for he had written, "sitting up for the first time," across the top.

He was glad she was all right, and it was fine getting her letter, and next time they tried flying they would take out some insurance first. And he was hers affectionately.

It was that last word that shook her to the depth of her soul and turned the whole world bright. Sheila had thought of nothing else from that moment but the prospect of seeing him. Instantly she had known that she must see him, and her life had centered about this meeting; she had gone no further in her thoughts. She would see Frank again; his dark face and his slow smile; they would talk together. The mere thought had made her happy, and she had floated in a world of dreams, awaiting the opportunity to escape unquestioned from the house and go to her marvelous hour. After that, let him marry Bernadette as soon as he liked!

It was on this particular Sunday, two weeks after the airplane smash-up, that she knew her chance had come. Her mother and Angela were going to church in the afternoon. Some special Lenten sermons far down-town on Eighteenth Street drew them away from home; Joe of course would be somewhere with Cecilia. The presumption had been that Sheila would spend the afternoon quietly resting; nothing had been said about it, simply because

there had seemed to be no other reasonable thing for Sheila to do.

But Angela and Mrs. Carscadden were no sooner out of the house than Sheila was dressing. She trembled for sheer joy as she put on her best clothes. They were not handsome clothes, but the blue coat had been brushed and pressed by her own hands, and there was another dark-blue hat. Looking at herself in the cramped little mirror over the sideboard, she knew she had never looked any better.

No subway today. It was the first day of real spring. Winter could come back again, but today was languid and sweet and soft, with blue in the sky, and florists' windows bursting with new blossoms and freesias, lilac and lilies. Roses were everywhere; potted little red roses, on feathery light branches.

Sheila took the elevated road, and sat looking out of a window, only half sensing what she saw and heard. Children, mad with spring, were running and screaming in the streets below her. Church bells rang, and the whistles of boats sounded newly sweet and soft from the river. Windows were open today; the world was all abroad. Some of the walking women carried small sheaves of blessed palm, and some of the men had little crosses of it pinned on their coats.

Sheila walked from the elevated train to the Mc Cann house steadily, yet without any hurry. She was going to see Frank; nothing could keep her from seeing Frank; there was no need for haste. The day was singing in her heart like a glorious song; it was a thrilling day, and yet it was a soft day, too, filled with languorous charm.

CHAPTER XV

"Maybe they won't let me see him!" Sheila thought. But she knew that Frank's father and mother were away; they had gone to the big Charity Drive lunch—their names had been in the paper. And when Joe had telephoned this morning, to ask as usual for Frank, Mrs. Mc Cann's voice, Joe said, had been quite cheerful—Frank had been out yesterday, and had sat up for supper with Miss Kennedy the night before, and she and the judge had no anxiety in leaving him today. Sheila anticipated no trouble, and sure enough, everything went smoothly. There had been something in Sheila's spirit all day that had promised smoothness; she had had no doubts of what the outcome of today's venture would be. Mamie admitted her, and if there was any hesitation or doubt in her manner, Sheila did not see it. The girl, following her, walked straight through the great spacious hall, and mounted the stairs, and crossed the upper hallways to the doorway of Frank's room.

The door stood open; Sheila saw open windows, and pots and jars of exquisite flowers, beyond. She began to tremble now, and felt as much like crying as smiling as she walked into the room. Mamie did not announce her, merely stood at the door.

Frank was alone, dressed, seated in a great chair piled with pillows, his bandaged left arm strapped across his breast. Over his silk shirt he wore a loose blue silk coat; his hair was neatly brushed, he looked thin, and a little pale.

As Sheila walked slowly to his chair, her unsmiling eyes fixed on him, he glanced away from the window, and instantly a sort of magic seemed to be shimmering about her, and she felt hardly conscious of what she was doing.

"Why, look who's here!" Frank said, with his broadest smile. "Well, I am glad to see you! How are you? Sit down, sit down. No, pull your chair nearer. I'm all alone."

Sheila sat down, and looked at him.

"Do you know, I've been thinking about you, and want to see you?" Frank asked. And as she did not answer, he went on, "Funny thing, I was talking about you, only last night. Bernadette was here—Miss Kennedy, you know."

"I know," Sheila's voice was very faint. His nearness, the sight of the hard, blue-shaven jaw again, the flash of his white teeth, the half-smile in his Irish eyes, were too much for her. The tones of his voice made her heart feel as if it were melting wax.

"I said to Bernadette that you were the darndest kid I ever saw," Frank said. "I said I had the funniest feeling of—being responsible for you!"

"Is this your room, Frank?" she interrupted.

"Nope. I'm up on the next floor; it's not so grand as this."

"Whose room was this?"

"Well, this used to be an upstairs sitting-room. Then Pop put the kitchen and the dining-room into the basement floor, and turned the old dining-room into a library, and gave Mom a sitting-room next to that, and this has been a sort of spare room ever since. And beyond the bathroom, there—the room where they set my arm—is Gert's room."

"And that reminds me that she's coming down to dinner tonight," Frank went on. "And Pete's home, got here yesterday. And we think

they've been writing to each other, and that they've made it up."

"Peter and Gertrude?"

"Yep."

"Oh, I'm glad!" Sheila exclaimed.

"Honest, are you?"

"Oh, honest!" And she looked at him in surprise.

Frank was eyeing her with a teasing expression.

"I thought you liked Pete?"

"Well, I don't."

"You're not jealous, anyway," he said. And after a minute he added,

"I don't believe that after five years of being engaged, you'd suspect a man of anything, would you, Sheila?"

"I wouldn't be engaged for five years," Sheila answered.

"You wouldn't! Why not?"

"Because—" She was thinking it out. "Because I wouldn't want any man to feel—sure of me, for five years," she formulated it slowly.

There was a silence.

"I don't think any man would!" Frank presently said, with a not quite natural laugh. And after a minute he added dryly, "Fortunately for me, Bernadette doesn't agree with you."

"So you don't think you could be faithful to any man for five years?" he asked, as Sheila did not speak.

"I didn't say that. I only meant that—if I loved a man, I wouldn't want to wait five years—to—to be his wife," Sheila answered simply.

"You wouldn't want to be sure?"

"I would be sure."

Frank mused on this, watching her steadily.

"What would you call being sure?"

"Sheila thought a while before she answered, looking down, biting her full, red lower lip.

"Dividing the world into two parts," she said, after a pause, "him



"If it isn't Pete, who is it?"

—and the rest. Never going anywhere that you didn't hope to meet him, never doing anything without thinking whether he'd like it or not. Hoping—hoping that everyone else would hate him!"

"Hate him! Love him, you mean?" Frank ejaculated incredulously, as she hesitated.

"Hate him—so that you could make it up to him by loving him all the more," she said.

Frank could only stare at her.

"I don't love Bernadette like that; I'm glad when anyone else admires her," he finally observed. "And she feels the same way about me."

"Then you're different," Sheila commented mildly.

"How do you know that love is like that?" Frank demanded.

"It is for me."

"It would be for you?"

"It is. Her head was singing; she felt her hands cold and wet.

A silence.

"You mean—Peter?" Frank asked respectfully.

"Peter!" Sheila cleared her throat. "No, not Peter," she said.

"You mean you don't love Peter any more?"

"I never did. We just had a—a case," the girl explained, "and he promised he'd come to see me, and he didn't come, and that made me mad—I thought more about him than if he had, maybe."

"Well, come on—" Frank said encouragingly. "You've only made half a confession! If it isn't Pete, who is it?"

"Peter was the—the first gentleman I'd ever known," Sheila, instead of answering, said hurriedly and nervously. "I liked him, for that."

"So much so that he didn't keep his word to you?"

"He lost my address."

"And forgot your name?"

"I forgot his," the girl said honestly, laughing. "But you see we're not in the telephone book, and he said that the only Carscadden that looked possible to him was in Brooklyn."

"You're dodging the issue," Frank pursued. "You can't do that when you're talking to a lawyer, you know. Come on—out with it—whom do you like?"

"I might know what I thought about it, without being—it," Sheila stammered.

"It and it! What d'you mean by it?"

"Well, I might know what being in love was, without being in love." She was suddenly scarlet, the clean color flooding up under her transparent skin like a flame.

"Yes, but you aren't guessing!" he answered shrewdly. "Be a sport, Sheila. I won't tell on you!"

(TO BE CONTINUED)

AROUND the HOUSE Items of Interest to the Housewife

Wall outlets for electrical devices used in the kitchen, pantry or butler's pantry should be placed at table height. This permits the use of shorter cords with cooking utensils, eliminating coils that are likely to get in the housewife's way.

Cakes or cookies in which honey is used as a sweetening require a rather moderate temperature for baking. If the oven is too hot they will burn.

Don't bang porcelain or enameled kitchen equipment against stoves, tables or sinks. It will chip or crack if it is roughly handled. Many of the more modern, attractive pieces require special care.

Standing on a heavy rug or rubber mat will go a long way toward preventing fatigue during long periods of ironing.

Ice cubes or desserts are frozen faster in a mechanical refrigerator if a quarter-cup of water is poured on the freezing surface before the trays are put in place.

Cloths saturated with polishing liquids if stored away in a closet often cause spontaneous combustion. Keep these cloths in a covered tin container.

To prolong the life of a large rug, shift it around every six weeks or so. This prevents constant wear on those sections covering the most-traveled part of the room.

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