



SHORT STORIES OF LOVE AND ADVENTURE



The Love That Won

By Elsie Endicott

In silence Marcia and David climbed the hill. Something more than the crisp, January air had deepened the radiant color in the girl's cheeks, as she turned at the top of the hill to face the man.

"I've made up my mind, David, and I'm going," she said defiantly. "The ice is safe enough, Mr. Merrick; everybody says so," she corrected hastily, "and I guess other people know as much about it as you do."

David winced at the scorn in her voice. "Well, then, promise me that you'll stay on the meadow, Marcia," he said resignedly. "The river's unsafe—I don't care what that cad of a Merrick says—"

"He isn't a cad," flashed Marcia angrily. "He's just the nicest man I ever knew, and you're just jealous and envious of him, David Weatherby."

David reddened resentfully. "The man has bewitched you, Marcia," he retorted sharply. "You've not been the same since he came here. You can't see what everybody else sees; he went on hotly, "that it's not you he

wants, but the money that's in his hand to you—"

"Stop, David," cried Marcia, white with passion. "You're a coward to say such things behind another man's back—oh, I wouldn't have believed it of you."

The sob in her voice melted David's anger. "Forgive me, Marcia," he said humbly, but I couldn't help it. It maddens me to see you go on believing in his deceitful ways—I've loved you so all these years, Marcia, he stammered huskily, folding a strong brown hand over her little gloved one.

"You're too late, David," she said coldly, snatching away her hand. "Mr. Merrick asked me last night to marry him."

"But you won't, Marcia?" implored the man.

"That's my affair, David Weatherby."

With a groan he drew back from her, turning away his face.

"I'm going back now, Marcia," he said dully, at last. "You're not needing my company any longer."

Impulsively the girl held out her hand to him. "David, I—"

But with unseeing eyes he strode past her, and she watched him go swiftly down the hill they had just climbed, watched, until the alder bushes at a bend of the road hid him from view; then slowly she went on home alone, wondering dully what life would be like without David.

As she hurried about getting her father's supper and preparing for the skating party that night, Marcia soon forgot her troublesome thoughts.

Alone in her pretty chamber, she consoled smilingly to the radiant reflection in her mirror that "she was young and wanted a good time." To be sure, she loved her; but she had come to accept the fact as a part of the plan of creation. David's love had no thrills in it—it was just the plain, homespun sort—and she wanted—

Impulsively she turned off the lights, as if to shut out the vision of a man's laughing lips and mocking black eyes. Then slowly she went down into the

big living room to wait for Chester Merrick.

At 8 o'clock he came for her, and they set forth gaily toward the skating ground. Marcia's heart beat fast with happiness.

Over the tree tops a golden moon was rising majestically, and in the white light of its glory the snow lay glistening about them like myriad diamonds.

"Oh, how lovely it is out doors to-night!" cried Marcia, as they walked briskly along the moonlit road.

"Yes, but not half as lovely as you—"

"Don't please," said Marcia quickly. "You promised—"

"Forgive me," he said. "But how long am I to wait for my answer, Marcia?"

The girl shook her head. "I don't know," she replied evasively. "I'm not sure," she hesitated.

"Of what, Marcia?"

"That I care enough," she answered simply.

Merrick laughed softly. "Oh, that's

all right," he said lightly. "I'll make you care—give me a chance, Marcia!"

She thrilled at his words, and the look in his eyes. Here within her reach was a cup of joy held out to her—why not take it and be happy? Even as she trembled with desire, David's words came strangely back to her.

"It's not you he wants, but the money that's in his hand," he said.

She thought of her beautiful ancestral home, of her proud old father absorbed in his books, and she shuddered with an unknown fear. Was David right?

With an effort she shook off the spell of the man and the hour.

"You'll have to wait," she said coldly; and he, seeing the change in her, submitted with veiled impatience.

The ice was thickly dotted with happy young couples, when Marcia and Merrick arrived at the meadow.

For awhile they mingled with the crowd. Both were expert skaters; and as they glided an and out among the throng, Marcia's fears slipped from her

and she was the gayest, loveliest of them all.

Merrick watching her, felt his pulses leap and his determination grow. He guided her away from the laughing crowd, out where the meadow joined the river.

Marcia thought of David's warning. "Do you think the river's safe?" she asked.

"Perfectly. As if I'd lead you anywhere that wasn't safe!" he reproached her gently.

She laughed and glided away from him, down the moonlit river alone.

Meanwhile that night, David had closed his book in disgust. What did it matter whether he became a lawyer or not, now that he had lost Marcia? He had been a fool to think she would ever care for a cripple like him.

Rising, he decided to take a walk, as was his habit when troubled.

Unconsciously he took the river road. In the distance he could hear the merry voices of the skaters on the meadow, and a sudden fear smote him, as he thought of Marcia. Would Merrick dare to take her on the river?

David quickened his steps. At the point where the meadow joined the river he vaulted the wall, walked across the field and came out upon the river bank.

The river was deserted.

"I'm a fool," thought David, "I'll go home."

But he didn't; being David, he sat down upon a log under a pine instead. He had been used to taking care of Marcia so long that it never struck struck him now that he was a cripple. Suddenly he caught his breath sharply. Was that Marcia and Merrick out there on the river? Leaping to his feet, he stood waiting tensely in the shadows.

He saw the girl leave Merrick's side, heard her laugh and the treacherous ice crack.

Too late, he called a warning to her, with a despairing cry she sank into the black waters.

Fortunately the river was narrow here, and Marcia was but a short distance from David's side of the bank when the catastrophe happened.

When she rose the first time, David's strong arms lifted her to safety and carried her to the river bank. To his surprise Merrick had disappeared.

Marcia opened her eyes slowly.

"David," she whispered into his white face, "I knew you'd come. You're always going to take care of me, aren't you, David?"

"Do you want me to, Marcia?" he asked huskily.

"Forever and ever," she breathed. And David was satisfied.

He found her kneeling on a white bear skin before the hearth, the freight gleaming over the rosy satin of her gown, making her hair dusky with shadows and her eyes a-dance with flames. And cascading from her lap, strewn about the floor, everywhere were letters square of paper, ribbons, envelopes!

With a quick movement she tossed the one she was reading into the fireplace before she waved a welcome to him.

"Gracious, Billy, how early you are!"

"Yes, but I thought we could talk before the dance. You look—say, Pris, he challenged, "you look like a valentine and tonight I'm in the mood to say—may I be your—"

"Are you? Well, don't say it!" interposed Priscilla hastily. "It's not my mood at all, I'm cleaning up—I'm burning love letters."

Billy recovered quickly. He was used to rebuffs from Priscilla. This was his twelfth attempted proposal to her and it began to seem more natural to consider her as a "pal" than as a fiancee.

"Let me help," he picked up an envelope. "Oh, I say, Pris! This is mine! Let's not burn this!"

"All right, you can have it," she teased. "Silly boy! It is beautiful, but I tell you I'm house cleaning!"

"Pris, are you in love with anyone else?"

"No, indeed, that's why I'm burning these up. Want to kindle this for me? Use the white birchwood. It's more romantic."

"You, romantic!" he sniffed as he obeyed. "You haven't even a heart!"

"You've told me 11 times that I had yours. Here, put that down, sir!"

Billy stared suspiciously at a blue-ribboned packet he had started to toss to the flames.

"Aha, so we don't burn all the letters? That looks—"

She snatched them from him, shamefaced but dimpling. "That looks, does it? Well, it's nothing at all, but I don't want to burn them somehow."

"Somehow? Humph!"

"Well, I've had them longer than any of the others."

She sat back on her heels and watched the leaping fire. Then she laughed softly.

"You don't know him, Billy. Shall I tell you—"

"Yellow curls and blue eyes, I suppose—an Apollo!"

"No, but I called him 'Sir Galahad,'"

she confessed. "He had black hair and red cheeks and twinkly eyes, but such a Holy Grail sort of look just the same. We went through grammar school together. Then his minister father became a missionary and they moved to the Philippines. I haven't seen him since—not for 10 years. We never corresponded. There are notes written in school, invitations and things. They're so different from the others." She seemed trying to justify herself to him.

"I'll bet it's because of Sir Galahad that you treat the rest of us so," hazarded Billy.

"Oh—well, I sometimes wonder myself," the girl admitted, "but more likely I—"

"Say," said Billy, "What was there about Sir Galahad that made him so different from the rest of us?"

"He—Priscilla smiled with dreamy reminiscence—at the blue-ribboned packet,—he could wiggle his ears."

"The donkey!" sputtered Billy.

Priscilla started indignantly—"why!" Then she sprang, laughing to her feet and reached for her cloak.

"Poor Billy," she soothed him. "It does sound amusing, but just now I can't think of anything else distinctive about him. Let's on to the dance."

It was during the first dance that Billy said suddenly:

"Well, I suppose I could practice?"

"Practice what?"

"Sir Galahad's parlor trick."

"Billy Martin! Don't you dare or I'll never—"

Have you seen the diplomat yet?" Hissed Helene's whisper in her ear as the couples happened to bunch in a corner. "The best-looking thing, and he's been everywhere and—"

But the couples had drifted apart again and Priscilla, forgetful of the diplomat, turned impulsively to Billy.

"Billy, I've just had an idea!"

"No!"

"Yes, I have—" she paused until they finished some intricate steps.

"Billy, I think—I don't believe you're in love with me."

"Well, I've told you—"

"But I think it would be best—Billy, why don't you fall in love with Helene?"

"I might just as well!" fumed Billy.

"Good! I've begun to think," she added, seriously, "it isn't fair to dawdle you when I'm perfectly sure—"

"You're all right, Priscilla," he patted her approvingly and in big brother fashion. "But, Pris, before you marry a man for his ears, consult me."

"Poor boy! Sir Galahad rankles. Billy, who is that black-haired, distinguished looking man? Billy, who is he?"

"He? Oh, he's that diplomat."

"Billy, introduce him to me! Next dance! Will you, please?"

"Sure, what's the rush?" questioned the faithful.

But the orchestra leader began waving his arms frantically—"Men on one side of room—girls on other!"

Laughing, the couples complied. These dances were highly informal.

"Men advance on run to choose—" boomed the deep voice again, and the music commenced a new theme of whimsy allurements.

Daah—slide—a stampedé descende! upon the expectant line of girls and—

"Pris, please—"

"Miss Bartelle, may I?"

"Just this one—"

As usual, an unfair percentage of swallow-tails clustered urgently in front of Priscilla. There was a witchery about the girl and they adored her.

She smiled up at them, puzzled for a new way of choosing. She had counted out before. She had taken the shortest, the fattest, the—

She caught sight of the black-haired

diplomat in the background—and then she dimpled—

"I wonder," she considered, whimsically—"can any of you wiggle your ears?"

There was a moment of startled silence, then a mad quiver of facial contortions.

"By George, what—"

"Oh, I—"

"Have a—"

"Sure," grinned the diplomat, and proved it as he offered his arm.

"Pris, you imp," he said, boyishly. "I wasn't sure it was really you—"

"Sir Galahad!" she exclaimed, "those ears!" and then grew unaccountably shy as he led her away.

Then They Canned Him.

Customer—Where will I find the candlabra?

New Floorman—All canned goods are in the grocery department on the fourth floor.

NOW then, 'Dreams' get a hustle on you with those copies, and put the long stop on that high powered car driven by the Duke of Killcrankie. Even in these days of help shortage we want efficiency just the same." Miss Johnson's razor-like voice struck on Ann Flower's ear like ice.

A titter of amusement went around the office at the head clerk's intended witticism, and many eyes were turned for a moment to the gloomy corner where the girl had sat for two years, the target for all the teasing of the department. Somehow or other it had leaked out that Ann Flower indulged in day dreams, hence the nickname, "Dreams," and the merciless sarcasm that was her lot. What Ann's "dreams" were, her fellow clerks only judged by their own, perhaps, or from the fact that the little Sunderlander had come among them with the history of being the petted darling of wealth and

Southern aristocracy, until a gambling father had forced her into the work markets of the North, followed by the death of both parents shortly afterward.

Ann pressed feverishly forward with her typewriting. She knew that she was slow that morning, but her head ached, while tears, big, silly tears, smarted her eyes, blotting out the splash of Spring sunlight on the grimy wall opposite.

Today she longed to creep away from the clatter of the office, to sit in a lane bordered with apple trees and starry with pear blossoms—to hear someone call "Honey" or "Dear" in that soft, endearing tongue. Away from the barbed jests of the clerks, who really didn't mean to be unkind, and could not understand how much she wanted to be just one of them, with no "dreams" of dukes or her lost home of wealth.

"Dreams,—I mean Miss Flower,

the 'boss' wants you in his office." Again Miss Johnson's voice smote Ann's ear like ice, and all eyes flashed to her corner.

"The boss" repeated Ann stupidly.

"Yes, the 'boss,' and don't keep him waiting," snapped Miss Johnson.

Ann Flower stumbled to her feet. All eyes seemed to burn into her back as she passed up the room. She knew she had not done her work well during the last week, but they did not know what it was to sit up at night and finally have to see a golden haired baby die! Perhaps they did not know what it meant to leave the distraught mother sewing for a living to keep two other little tow heads from hunger. Ann had not been satisfied with the doctor, and that morning had herself telephoned for another physician, not the kind that usually calls at apartment houses on the East side of the city, but there was something so insistent, so softly appealing and pite-

ous in the girl's voice over the wire that Dr. Sunderland had promised to come.

"Good morning, Miss Flower," the "boss" voice came to the girl's senses through waves of pain, but it had lost its keen edge and his steel blue eyes looked at her with a misty softness.

"Sit down; no, just here," he indicated a chair near his desk. It was then that Ann was conscious that there was someone else in the office, a tall young man with smiling eyes.

"This is Dr. Sunderland. . . ."

"Oh, the children are not worse?" Ann interrupted the "boss" introduction in a frightened voice.

"No, the kiddies are going to pull through in fine shape, thanks to your foresight, Miss Flower."

The "boss" cleared his throat. "Dr. Sunderland has told me, Miss Flower, that you have been sitting up at night with a sick baby for over a week, until it died; you have also been helping

out the mother with two other children all this Winter with your salary; you could just as well have left her and gone to more comfortable quarters."

"But I couldn't; she was good to me . . . and it was hard for her to get a boarder who liked children . . . and I did. I'm sorry if my work suffered here . . . but I couldn't leave her when the baby got ill—and died!" Ann Flower's purple blue eyes grew big and piteous.

"Honey," the voice of the "boss" was just as soft as any of her Southern "mammies," and he came to her side and patted her on the shoulder, "I did not know that I had such a real, live girl in my employ! I guess my character reading expert is worth what I pay him after all, if he gets some like you, bless your heart! But Dr. Sunderland wants to have a talk with you; you've come from a home where there is a pretty sick bunch, and he's afraid

that you may be in for a dose. We don't want it spread around the office, and whatever the damage is, remember, I foot the bills."

Poor little "Dreams" head seethed in a whirl of aches and surprises after the "boss" left her in Dr. Sunderland's care. It was so good to feel his cool fingers on her wrist, to be treated with a tenderness that seemed to want to make those big, silly tears come again.

It was a dream of wonderful peace, to find oneself in a cool, gray and white hospital room, with a pretty red-haired nurse ready to do one's bidding. But there were days when little Ann Flower did not answer to Dr. Sunderland's "Dear" with a smile of shy welcome, and nights when he would come and shake his head and turn hastily from the pretty, fever-fushed face and wonder why he never found the best in our scheme of life, to lose it again.

There were days, too, when Miss Johnson and the department could not bear to see the patch of sunlight shine on the dust covered typewriter cover in the gloomy corner, without a catch in their throats when they remembered how they had teased dear, patient little "Dreams." Days when the "boss"

would sit in his office and think how much one little underpaid tylist had done . . . while he, with his thousands, only "canned" them to see if he was losing out on his character reading expert in engaging help! What had he to boast of in the way of character anyway?

But days came "when Dr. Sunderland's "Dear" won the day.

"I take my vacation next week . . . and I am going South," he announced in his most professional manner one day.

The shadows got tangled up in Ann Flower's lashes. It would be so lonely without this big, dependable young Northerner, who somehow could call her both "Honey" and "Dear," just as endearingly as they did in the South.

"This 'Honey' has left you pretty weak, and I want you to make the trip under my care."

"But . . ."

"No 'buts' in this case, we are going to be married before we start, that is, if you are willing, Honey, dear!"

And Ann Flower whispered happily from his arms, "They can't call me 'Dreams' again, I've realized the only 'dream' I ever had . . . just a home, and you!"

SWINGING along the suburban road, he was as wholesome pleasing an old gentleman as could be found in a day's travel—the sort whom folks turn to give the second glance. His cheeks reminded one of firm, rosy apples, and optimism and good cheer were written large on every feature.

"Say, Caruso," he addressed a bird who had burst into a frenzy of song over his head, "don't ruin your vocal chords just trying to climb an octave higher than the rest of the chorus."

Stopping to rest in the shade, with head tilted sideways and eyes darting everywhere, missing not an item of Mother Nature's wardrobe, he was not unlike a bright, inquisitive sparrow himself. A bit of paper was nailed to the tree, and he stepped closer to read it, then chuckled like a boy who, lagging to school on a day when the fish are biting, hears that the teacher is sick.

"By jove!" he cried, snapping his knee. "Something new and original under the sun at last!" This was the notice:

"Wanted the worst way a grandad. Apply to Edward Boylston."

"Now I have a hunch," murmured the old gentleman, "that I might be a successful candidate for this position.

in spite of no references. But how the dickens do I apply? Hi, there!" as he caught sight of a brown head cautiously peeping over the hedge: "do you know where I can locate Mr. Edward Boylston?"

The brown head slipped through a gap in the foliage, followed by eight years' growth of boy. "It's me—I'm him. Say, are you a granddaddy? I've been watching ever since I put the sign up, and you're the first one who looks as if you had 'perience."

"Let's sit down and talk it over like business men," proposed the elderly boy, and the younger was quick to respond. "Well, you see, I never had one, and when I came here to live with grandma because—because—" A swelling in his throat made speech difficult, and the listener patted his knee sympathetically.

"I think I understand, old man; just leave that out."

"Well, since I came here the kids around our street brag something fierce about their grandads and what they did in the war, and some have graves to decorate. I can't even put a flag on my daddy's grave because it is in France." He choked again.

"Grandma's all right, but she doesn't understand us men. When I get hurt, instead of saying, 'Brace up, young

fellow, me lad,' like Tim Ayer's granddad, she says, 'Oh, poor lamb, don't cry!' Just like I was a sissy girl. When I said if the next war didn't come too soon I was going to be an officer she said, 'Heaven forbid,' and if I talk about war she just looks sad. Why, last year Guy Ainsley rode right in the procession 'longside his granddaddy, with a real uniform on! Say, are you a Veteran?"

"I was too young to get into the ranks till the last year," confessed the candidate, "and then went as drummer boy, but I got a wound and a medal at that. It strikes me, young fellow, my lad, that you and I are made for each other, but how do you think I will qualify in your grandmother's opinion?"

"Gee! I never thought of that," said the advertiser; "let's go and see. I like you fine myself, and if she does you'll knock the spots out of any fellow's granddad that I know."

They marched up the lane in true

military style and there on the war-torn piazza sat the dearest specimen of old ladyhood you would wish to see. Truly, she looked good enough to eat. Her eyes were bright like the stranger's and the apple tints in her cheeks more delicate. If matches were made in heaven, it really seemed an oversight on the part of some guardian angel that these two kindred spirits had not gone into partnership long ago.

"Well, Prudence," said the visitor with a gallant bow, "we meet again. Edward, my boy, will you run away now and make out a list of duties that a granddaddy is supposed to perform?"

As he sped away the old gentleman gave her the gist of what I have told you and then added a bit more on his own account straight from the shoulder.

"Prue," said he, "you know I've loved you most ever since I was out of short dresses. Puppy love, calf

love, youth's and manhood's love was all yours, and now in the last stages is as deep as ever, though somehow you have always eluded me. First, your circumstances were so much better than mine that I went away without speaking till I could give you the comforts you deserved. That was a fatal mistake, for when I returned you were pledged to another, and much good did my money do me. It grew till I felt ashamed to make any more, and retired from business to enjoy life. And do I enjoy it?"

"Over there in the city I rattle around in my great house and get so lonely that the other day I smacked the butler on the back and cracked a joke, and he wouldn't have been half so horrified if I had slapped the cook's face. They told me to play golf to take up my mind. I can ruin the best links inside of an hour, and if that is improving my mind I could just as well go out in the back yard and swat the turf with a baseball bat.

"Since your husband died I've asked you to marry me four times and you've always put me off with a poor excuse. This makes the fifth and last."

"I'm blest!" croaked a raucous voice from the shadows, "what would Elizabeth say?" and cackling parrot laughter gave the little old lady time to correct her confusion.

"Polly is right," she said. "What would Elizabeth and everybody else say?"

"Don't be a prude, Prudence! Whose business is it? What does your own heart say?"

"My head says, 'I'd be an old simpleton,'" she snapped. "I've always tried to live up to my name, but—lo marry at our age!"

"As I said before, Prudy, this is final. If you refuse, you not only wrong me, but the boy. Think what my money would do for him! You want him to have the best—don't you? Just as his parents would if they had lived, and you know that your finan-

cial circumstances are not what they once were."

"Well," said the besieged, oh, so loth to surrender, and yet visibly weakening her defenses, "if you put it that way, I will admit that I get lonely myself. Elizabeth is wrapped up in her career and only comes home nights because she feels it her duty to look after me, so of course she would be relieved in a way. So, if you wish it, Joel, Yes! and I must say it is real good of you to want us."

Only the parrot saw how that answer was received, and rasped out in a shocked tone, "What would Elizabeth say?"

Quite Carried Away.

Critic—This snowstorm you have painted is very realistic.

Artist—It must be. Why, a friend of mine called the other day, and after seeing it he put on my artics and walked off.

When Dreams Come True

By Phil Moore

When Dreams Come True. By Phil Moore. The Love That Won. By Elsie Endicott. An Accomplished Man. By Joella Johnson. The Fifth Proposal. By Parke Whitney.