



SHORT STORIES

OF LOVE AND ADVENTURE



Happiness

By Phil Moore

LENA EVERHARD stood there on the back step of her father's new country home. She looked the picture of Summer in her thin, fluffy dress of white dashed with color from the pink ribbon at her waist and sleeves, and with the light breeze ruffling her sunny hair.

Her eyes, a soft brown, twinkled brightly with humor—eyes that the sunlight now turned into a golden brown.

She raised herself on tiptoe. "Oh, dear! How can anyone cover up a beautiful rose hedge with a high stone wall, ugly and, yes, inhuman. It must be just heavenly behind that hedge and to think that a grouchy old man is to be there—and so romantic a spot."

She gave a little sigh. "He must be a grouchy, or he'd take that old stone wall down."

Unsuccessful in obtaining one little peek over the wall, she settled herself on the doorstep, and began reading her brother Ted's letter from college. Soon her little white shod feet began tapping the step.

"Ted seems to have found a paragon," she half sneered. "I always hated him on pedestals. This chum, Jim Burton, must be a wonder. Him! This hedge interests me more. I wish Ted could get home. He's been gone so long. We are such chums. Why couldn't he have come with this Jim of his?" She sighed a little, folded the letter, and jumped to her feet. She stood gazing at the enormous clusters

of red and of pink roses that hung over the top of the wall.

"They're hanging over in my yard, and I'm just going to get a ladder and pick some, before that grouchy man moves in there."

The ladder proved too short to secure many sprays, but finding a hole in the wall, she felt repaid at the sight of a glorious riot of rose color in the garden.

"And all for one lone, selfish man to enjoy. It's a shame," she murmured, as she stood perilously balanced on the ladder, she caught the smell of cigar smoke.

"Why, I do believe the Grouch, that's his name, has arrived. He mustn't see me," and down the ladder twinkled two little white feet.

The wall was long and well filled with overhanging roses, and they supplied Lena with flowers for several days.

Never once could she catch a glimpse of the grouchy behind the rose hedge.

But one day as she stood perched high in the air a stern voice bellowed: "Stop stealing those roses!"

So astonished was the pretty thief that she lost her footing vainly tried to grasp a rose twig and fell to the

ground, where she lay moaning, unheeding sights or sounds.

Suddenly a tall form landed beside her. "Are you hurt at my beastly words? I thought it was boys. Will you ever forgive me?"

"O-oh, my ankle—hurts so," wailed the girl, then looking up, she quavered: "Are you—the grouchy's garden?"

"She began to whimper a little, the pain was so intense.

"The what, who?" queried the man gravely, yet with eyes that twinkled with humor.

"I mean the grouchy old man's garden? Our neighbor here?"

"O-oh, I see. Ye-es, yes, I take care of the roses. Come I'll help you into the house."

"Do you think I'll be laid up long with my ankle. Please say no—do," she begged.

"I sincerely hope not. Yet a sprain is slow, you know. See here, I don't suppose your folks would allow a gardener to call and see how you progress?"

"It was all my fault," Lena shook her head. "I don't suppose so," she drawled longingly, as he noted how handsome was the face bent over her.

"But I don't care if they don't. Why

just come, that's all."

"Well, they can't stop me throwing roses over the wall every morning, can they?"

"No!" the girl answered decisively. "So every morning found fresh roses on Lena's table. One day she even found a note tucked inside the cluster.

"How presuming!" she gasped, while her eyes glistened at his bravery.

Together with the roses a long letter from brother Ted enlivened a little the slow crawling hours. She even felt a slight interest in Ted's hero, Jim Burton, who had won such glorious track meets, and was such a favorite. She wondered if he was as handsome as the gardener. He couldn't be.

"I hope Ted won't confound me with match-making visions of J. B. and me. Yes, here it is!" And she read:

"Little Sis, I'd want no better thing to happen than for you and Jim to meet—he saved my life, you know—"

and some day—perhaps—"

She tossed her pretty head. "While Jim Burton may be a hero, and while I'm so grateful to him for Ted's life, and long to tell him so, it doesn't mean matrimony."

Right here the gardener's pair of merry gray eyes seemed to dance between the lines of the letter. Coming

back to earth she shrugged her shoulders and puckered up her pretty mouth.

"Absurd!" Lena overheard, letting visions like those enter your brain!" Yet that same little sly mix selected an upper back room overlooking a certain rose garden, where she nursed her sprained ankle—just to catch a glimpse of—the roses, of course.

And one day she actually threw a weighted message right into the garden and it was picked up by the man whose name the note bore.

It said: "Where is the grouchy—still smoking behind the hedge, while you tend his roses? I'm awful lonesome. I may sit near the wall Wednesday if they'll let me."

Artful little thing, as if she didn't surmise the answer that followed: "I'll be there, if you'll reply to my line on June, etc. Grouch still smokes in the same place. Never mind; he's—"

deaf!"

So it came about that a girl distractingly pretty, in a pale blue gown, hair glistening in the bright June sun, eyes shining with expectation, sat one afternoon beneath the rose wall.

"Oh, what is so rare as a day in June!" sang a musical voice on the other side of the wall.

Back came the answer: "It would be if Lena were all in tune."

A laughing mass of masculine humor and sunshine landed plump at her side, and bowing low presented her with an immense bunch of the choicest roses.

"Oh, I thank you, Mr.—Mr.—why, isn't it funny, I've never heard your name, Mr.—?"

"Lindsay, at your service, fair Lena," supplied the man. "Excuse me, that's all the name I've heard."

"Lena Everhard. Listen. My brother Ted comes next week. You'll like him. They may let me go to meet him."

"Lindsay's eyes danced at the sight of her. Say that's great. Boob that I was to cause that sprain. I'll make it up to you."

"Make it up—How?"

"Oh, in roses, or—some way."

"But the Grouch may not like it. By the way, he must be pretty easy on you. You seem to have so much time, you know."

"He's not grouchy when one knows him. Stone walls don't make a grouchy. Say, wouldn't it be jolly if he'd pull down this wall—just grow the rose hedge?"

Lena drew in her breath ecstatically. "Why, it would be a rose heaven!"

she breathed. Before she could add another word a lively about of "Hey, little sis!" sounded from the gateway.

"Ted! It's Ted! and I can't go to him!" she trembled. But the college boy had vaulted over the gate.

"By all that flies high in the air, Burton—Jim! Where did you come from, old fellow? I should judge by Lena's pink cheeks that you were old friends," Ted chuckled.

There sat Ted's sister, wide-eyed, open-mouthed, with not one sign of welcome for Ted.

"Burton, Jim!" she gasped, and sat gazing into the smiling, mischievous eyes of the man at her feet. Then at his garden suit.

"Then you are—the Grouch behind the hedge—you, the owner of the roses and ugly wall—and Ted's—paragon?" At that the "paragon" roared, as he replied:

"James Lindsay Burton, 'at your service, ma'am, and owner of the roses and—yes, I hope—some day,' he added audaciously.

Ted threw his cap high in the air, yelling:

"Say yes, sis. Best fellow in the world."

But all the girl said was: "And you, too, in it, Ted? Come here and get your kiss of welcome!"

At which Burton looked so longingly at them, the irrepressible brother shouted:

"Yours won't be long on the way, Jim!"

"Silly," blushed Ted's sister.

WELL, Freddie, what's the trouble now? Got the 'I'm right—the world's wrong' blues?"

"Oh, nothing—particular." The nondescript yellow head sank dejectedly on the lanky hands. Freddie was not handsome—nor yet even good looking, but there was something in his honest pale blue eyes that won your respect.

"Then," the girl was insistent, "what is the particular little thing that's worrying you? Out with it, child!" And Marjorie drew up a chair near him, regardless of the unwritten letters in her note book.

"Well, if you must have it, it's about the picnic. I haven't anybody to take, and I can't go alone very well."

Marjorie laughed with relief. "Oh, is that all? Why, Freddie, I didn't know you cared about girls. I thought you were going with the fellows!"

The girl laid one slim white hand on the boy's sleeve, and murmured consolingly:

"Never you mind, Freddie dear, just sit tight until the picnic comes, and I'll see to it that you don't go alone!" And she was gone.

Freddie's jaw dropped in amazement. What struck her? Gone sentimental? Girls are funny. How on earth could she help him? Freddie never had taken a girl out in his life. It must be

the effect of voting:

"Well, if you want my opinion," chirped Miss Murp, nibbling fudge. "I've always liked Freddie. He's a nice boy, and I don't blame Marjorie one bit! I dropped my notebook the other day, and he picked it up for me as nice as you please."

Miss Sophia, another stenographer, single, golden-haired and with high matrimonial aspirations, listened eagerly, but said nothing. She was as cold and haughty as a lovely statue, making it a rule never to mix with those beneath her.

The subject veered to the picnic. It was to be a sort of outing for the employees of the company, and a whole day had been allotted to it. Therefore it was quite an event in the drab lives of the office force.

"Going, Miss Sophia?" queried Olive, the engaged one.

Miss Sophia's fine eyebrows were elevated. "I haven't decided yet. I'm sure I don't know."

"Oh, my dear, you simply must go; and wear your golden outfit and you'll win the beauty prize."

"Well, maybe."

In her corner, ostensibly clacking her typewriter, Marjorie listened, and her eyes sparkled. Oh, the very thing! Just then the bell rang for lunch, and with one accord the office force arose, pushed back chairs and rushed madly for the lockers. Marjorie cornered Miss Wilkinson.

"Oh, Miss Wilkinson, I wonder if you would help me out of a fix. I've promised Freddie Lockes I'd go to lunch with him, and I've such a headache I simply can't make it. Would you go in my place? He's such a disappointed baby! I'll spend my lunch hour in the rest room, I guess. Will you, please?"

"Why, yes, I will, Miss Stewart. Sorry your head aches," and she swept grandly toward the washroom. Marjorie chuckled, then sought Freddie. That worthy gentleman was in the act of putting his shabby brown hat on

the back of his yellow head.

"Freddie, put your hat on straight and go wash your hands and face! I've told Miss Wilkinson you'd take her to lunch. Hurry now!"

"You what?"

"Oh, you stupid! Didn't you want me to help you get a girl? Well, I've got the prettiest one in the office; and you stand there gazing blankly at me. Get a move on! She's washing up now."

But Freddie was grasping her firmly by the shoulders, regardless of time. "Explain more fully!" he demanded. So Marjorie explained in a very few words, then pushed the astonished Freddie toward the washroom. He was hopeless.

When he reappeared his freckled face was shining, his hands remarkably clean and his hair sopping wet. Marjorie produced her powder puff, and in spite of all protests managed to put enough on his face to cover the awful shine.

"There now!"—she straightened his tie—"go along and have a good time. Got money enough? Well, here's a five, and don't forget to pay it back Friday. Take her to Morrison's; tip the waiter half a dollar; ask her to the picnic and, for the love of Pete, act as if you knew something!"

"But what are you going to do for lunch? Does your head ache very badly?"

"No, silly, it doesn't ache at all. That was only an excuse. Go along now!" Then she fled.

Miss Wilkinson then joined him—very much painted, powdered and coiffed. She was just a trifle more congenial than usual. Together they went down in the elevator—a strange pair. That luncheon was a terrible ordeal for poor Freddie. Miss Wilkinson's cool, appraising eyes seem to see through the miserable little farce. When dessert came along, Freddie swallowed his Adam's apple with considerable difficulty, and blurted—"Miss

Wilkinson—will you go to the picnic with me?" Then the girl opposite him melted.

"Why, yes, I will, Freddie. It's nice of you to ask me. I wanted to go so much." And so it was settled, yet Freddie didn't seem as happy as he should have been. Somehow the blue eyes of plain little Marjorie seemed to haunt him. He might have asked her! He never thought of it!

The day of the picnic the merry crowd gathered at the appointed place, and special cars conveyed them to the woods, a wonderful spot—full of colors of autumn. Miss Wilkinson sat beside the radiant Freddie—a creature of wonder beauty.

Her sport skirt was of golden silk, her blouse of sheer white, her sweater and smart toque of golden silk, and her hair was beautifully arranged. Surely she would win the beauty prize!

Yet, as the day wore on, Freddie wasn't as happy as he thought he was.

Marjorie wasn't there. Miss Wilkinson was plainly bored, and more aloof than ever. She lost out in the beauty contest to a dainty slim little thing whose cheeks were like wild roses and guileless of cosmetics. It didn't seem to soften her any. Freddie worried a little about his finances. Girls were expensive!

At 5 o'clock the limit was reached. Freddie couldn't stand it. "I say, Miss Wilkinson, shall we go back now?"

"Yes, we might as well. I've got an engagement for the evening."

So back they went, in comparative silence, for Freddie was deep in thought. When he left her at her door, the boy hurried to the deserted office building. As he was the first one in each morning, he had a key and he quietly went in and consulted the roll book. . . . "Stewart, Marjorie, 6497 Suffolk street." He closed the book, and went down to the street. A half hour later he rang the bell at the Stewart home and asked for Marjorie. When she appeared, with amazement on her face, he took her hand. "Marjorie dear, come out to supper with me and let's go to a movie. Will you, please?"

The girl looked at his eager, homely face, the blue eyes pleading and said: "Wait—I'll get my hat and coat!"

I'M sorry, dear, I know that I promised to take you to the dance to-night, but something came up that makes it necessary for me to work. It means a whole lot to me if I finish it tonight," said John.

"Well, it seems to me," stared Marjorie, his wife, "that you might consider me in the scheme of things once in a while. If you don't take me I'll go, anyway, so there."

"Marjorie," answered her husband, sternly, "you know what I think of women who go to dances without their husbands."

"I don't care what you think," said Marjorie, hotly, "other women do it, and if you don't think enough of me to drop your tiresome old work for one night and take me to this dance that I have planned and planned on I'll go alone."

"If you do, Marjorie," said her husband, getting up from the table, "then you and I will be through with each other. Remember what I say."

"Very well, I'll be good and glad of

it. I'm just getting sick and tired of your tyranny, anyway."

But, after he had left for the office, and Marjorie had put three-year-old Marion to sleep for the afternoon, she threw herself on her bed and cried passionately. After a while she fell into a troubled sleep; and while she slept she dreamed.

The divorce proceedings were over. Marjorie had defied John and gone to the dance, and he had kept his word. She sat in her mother's parlor, with Marion (a sympathetic court had awarded the child to her), thinking over her future.

"Now, Marjorie," began her mother. "I am going to make a few suggestions, which I think, if you are sensi-

ble, you will listen to. I should advise you to go to the city."

"But, mother," faltered Marjorie, "I intended to stay here with you."

"No," said her mother, firmly, "that would not do, neither for your own sake nor ours."

"In the first place, Randolph is a small, narrow-minded town, and you know what their attitude is toward a woman whose husband divorces her. It would be different if you had divorced John; but as it is, you and Marion would have to suffer untold slights and snubs, and you were always sensitive! Another thing, your sisters must have their chance to marry well, and it is not fair to them that you stay here. I may seem hard to you, but I can not forget that after all it

is our own fault; you had your chance at happiness, and you deliberately threw it away."

A month later found Marjorie installed in a tiny apartment in a near-by city with Marion, and a trim little maid who was to perform the double duty of caring for Marion and the little apartment.

Marjorie, with the small income at her disposal, had started a small millinery establishment. Before her marriage to John, she had taken a course in millinery; she had the knack of making smart hats and it stood her in good stead now.

As the weeks flew by she always cherished the hope that John would relent and come for her. She knew he had loved her deeply, and she was sure

that some day she would come home from the little shop, and find him waiting to ask her forgiveness and take her and Marion back home with him.

But no word came from him, and one day when she was looking over the home paper which her mother always sent to her the room suddenly went black before her eyes. On the very front page she read the announcement that John was to marry one of the season's most popular buds. Surely she was to pay in full for her folly. She had nothing further to live for. She was face to face with the fact that she had been living all these dreary months in the hope that he would come for her. After a time she became calm and thought out a course to pursue.

She rang for the little maid and told her to pack Marion's small suit case and get her ready for a short trip. "I am going to send her to her grandmother's in the country. She hasn't been so well lately, and it will do her a lot of good," she explained.

Then she sat down and wrote a short note to her mother:

"Dear Mother—I am beginning to realize that you were right. I did throw away my happiness and I have nothing to look forward to now. I hope that John will be happy in his new life. I am sending you Marion and I want you to give her to John. He always wanted her and I know that she will be happy with him. I am going to end it all. With all the love in the world. MARJORIE."

She gave the maid instructions to deliver the note to her mother, and she kissed the little girl good-by. "Have a good-time at grandma's, dear, and don't forget mother while you are gone, will you?" she cried.

After they had gone she put the little apartment to rights and retired to her room. She closed the window tightly, placed a rug against the crack of the door, and stuffed some paper into the keyhole. She then turned on the gas and threw herself on the bed.

"Wake up, dear," said John, shaking Marjorie gently. "It is after 5, and you'll have to hurry if we are going to the dance. I finished my work earlier than I expected, and I tried to get you on the phone to let you know, but no one answered."

Marjorie looked at him in a dazed manner, and then burst out crying. "Oh, John, I had a dreadful dream."

"Now, now, stop your crying, and get ready, because if your eyes are all red, you won't make a hit at the dance," laughed John.

ANOTHER night call," muttered the young doctor, as he took down the receiver, "and it's from Marie's house."

"This has been a hard day. This morning when I called to see Marie she said that her cousin was coming from the country and she'd have to entertain her. I don't see why she got mad when I told her if she was willing to wait for the ring until next month I'd help her. She might know I can't spend money on entertainments and save up for the diamond. Anyway, she refused to wear mother's pearl. It seems to me girls are getting awfully exacting. But I wonder why I don't feel the least bit sorry. I hope it isn't she that's ill," he added.

Emitting a deep sigh, he flung on his overcoat, put on his hat and picked up his bag. When he reached the house he was met at the door by Mrs. Carver.

"Oh, weren't you good to come out at this hour," she thanked him. "Joe must have eaten too much pie or candy, for he complains of fierce cramps. Jennie is upstairs trying to ease him. Isn't it awful that such a

thing should happen the first night she is here. Marie wouldn't get up. She said to send for the doctor, because she couldn't do anything."

"What an agreeable cousin Jennie must be to tend to the ceaseless wails of an 11-year-old boy with cramps!" thought Dr. Branbridge. "I wish I knew such amiable people."

When he got upstairs he found a neat little young lady bustling about in a very methodical manner.

"I had some very good powders with me, so I gave him one. He feels much better now, I think," explained Jennie. "You are Dr. Branbridge, I suppose. I feel as though you were one of the family, so I did not hesitate to speak to you. You must pardon my audacity, but I felt grieved to hear that it was on my account that a dispute arose between Marie and you. She ought to

be excused for not wanting to help Joe, for I know that she would do all she could for her brother if she were in better humor."

"It wasn't your fault in the least. If Marie wasn't satisfied, I would rather that she find it out in time, than always to be repenting. You seem more like a city girl than the country maiden I expected you to be," he complimented.

"Well, you see, I—I," she stammered. "I am really a city girl, but father and I have lived so long in the country that I suppose Marie considers me rather a rural cousin."

The little sufferer, who had been the object of their attention, had meanwhile been blessed with sleep.

"I hope I shall meet you soon again," he said, as he held out his hand. "but don't be disturbed with thoughts of

your cousin."

During the following weeks, in which Marie seemed to be enjoying herself without Bob Branbridge's help, the doctor was so busy that he had little chance of seeing the fair nurse.

One day, as he was making a call, he saw Jennie taking a walk. He quickly caught up to her in his runabout.

"Would you like to come for a spin?" he asked. "I have to make a few visits, but I won't be long."

"Certainly," she consented.

His first stop was at the Deane's. Little Albert had a bad case of croup. When he took his patient's temperature, he saw that a raging fever had set in. Some serum that held the only chance of the boy's recovery was in his office five miles away. If he went back, there was no hope that he would return in time. What was he to do?

Then he thought of Jennie. He wondered if she could drive. He ran out to ask her.

The girl was seated in the machine, waiting patiently for him to return.

"I have a very sick patient," he told her. "If I had one of my serums in the dark bottle on the left hand side of my desk, I might save his life. Can you drive into town and get it?"

"Well, I know how to steer the car and how to stop it. If you start it here, I can get someone in town to start it there. I'll try my best to bring back the bottle in time."

He got in and set the engine going. She slid into the chauffeur's seat and wheeled away.

What an eternity it seemed that he had to wait. But Jennie was handing him the serum in a little over half an hour. A hard battle for life was on.

How he wished he had an experienced nurse with him! If he did, the fight would be so easy.

As he turned around, he saw Jennie standing in attendance with a borrowed apron. "I just love to do this kind of work. Can't I help you?"

"I am inclined to think that you are a heaven-sent gift!" he replied.

There! he was always saying something wrong, because he had made her blush. But she was as pretty as a budding rose when the red stole into her cheeks.

Over the bed of the little sufferer, they bent, easing his pains. It was just at sunset that they had the pleasure of seeing the flickering life flame up strongly. The battle was won!

He stretched out his hand to thank her. As he drew her to the window to watch the sun go down on a successful

day, he murmured to her that old, yet ever new, story. As she spoke her consent with her eyes, the sun, smiling on the lovers, set in the west.

Had Cellaritis.

Bill and Sam met for the first time in several months. It was the conventional greeting, in which each "asked after" the health of the other, and they drew off to one side of the street to have a few moments of conversation.

"Where've you been all these days, Bill?" Sam inquired. "You haven't been laid up, have you?"

"Yep, been laid up for a time."

"You aren't looking awful good. Hope it wasn't anything serious."

"Not so very serious, but it's the first time I've been out in three months."

"What was the matter with you?"

"Nothing at all, as a matter of fact, but I couldn't make the judge see it that way."

We hope somebody will make a moving picture of the British cabinet in session. We would like to see a celluloid George.