

Storm Country Polly

by Grace Miller White
Illustrated by R.H. Livingstone.

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CHAPTER XI.

Over a week had passed since Hopkins had stood before his peers to be judged of a crime the law would not overlook. His lawyer, a good one and well paid by Robert Percival, had fought strenuously for a new trial; but after much deliberation on the part of the judge, the motion had been denied; and this was the last day of Jeremiah's stay in the county jail.

It was soon after luncheon time that a high-powered motorcar was carrying Evelyn Robertson and Marcus MacKenzie to the Bennett farmhouse. The purchasing of the farm had been settled, as far as Marcus was concerned, although Eve's pleading and Oscar's stubbornness had made him offer more for the place than it was really worth.

When the farmer walked up to the automobile, as it stopped before his door, Oscar paid no attention to Evelyn, sitting beside MacKenzie, save to give her an awkward bow.

"You've spoken to this squatter girl about what you want, Bennett?" asked Marcus, going to the point at once.

"Yes, sure I have," growled Oscar. "I told you that 'other day; but Polly seems to be always holding off for something. If she toes the mark, then I'll sell my farm and take her West. I won't have that brat of a Jerry, though, but I suppose Polly'll make a row when I tell her that."

"You won't be worried with the boy, Bennett. I'm going to have the Children's society take him. Hopkins will serve a long term, and if you marry Polly, the rest of the pests will scatter after a while. I'll be glad to be rid of the whole Hopkins tribe. But that girl is like a burr; she sticks tighter, the more you pull!"

"That's the bargain, Mr. MacKenzie. I sell the farm at the price we talked if I get Polly Hopkins. If I don't get her, then I won't sell. I can make a good living here for me and my mother, and I don't intend to leave this country without Pollyop."

The thought of his staying around Ithaca filled Evelyn with dread. She knew something of the tenacity with which he clung to any notion that might take possession of him. How could she have ever submitted to his caresses? And the words, "Until death do us part," rang in her ears, filling her with nauseating disgust.

"I wish he were dead this minute," she thought passionately.

She was waiting for Oscar to continue, but he evidently did not intend to; so, settling back as if anxious to start, she said coldly:

"I'll go to her then, as soon as I can."

"When—today, ma'am?" asked Oscar eagerly.

If she had to approach Polly Hopkins about this disagreeable matter, the sooner the better, Evelyn thought.

"Yes," she consented languidly. "I might go now, I suppose."

"But you won't find her home till night, Eve," Marcus informed her. "She's gone to see her father before he goes to Auburn. I tried to put the quibus on that, but Bob cut us up so I told the sheriff to let her in."

"Then I'll telephone you later, Mr. Bennett," said Evelyn, lifting her chin haughtily as if he were really beneath her consideration. "Good afternoon!"

The hours passed slowly by. It seemed an eternity to Oscar while he waited the call from Evelyn. When he heard her voice over the telephone, he answered gruffly.

"Now, don't be nasty, Oscar," ordered Evelyn imperiously. "I'm doing the best I can. I'm in a booth talking, and if you'll meet me at seven, we'll go together to Polly Hopkins. Does that suit you all right?"

"You don't suit me very well," Oscar grumbled into the receiver. "I'd like to give you the licking of your life, my lady."

Evelyn's laugh came ringing across the wire.

"Don't put yourself out, my dear man," she taunted. "Now, don't start bullying me over the phone, Oscar, for I won't stand it. Hold your temper if you can possibly do so. For once do as I tell you! Will you?"

"Oh, I suppose so," Bennett rapped out. "Where'll I meet you?"

"Well, let me see. At seven on the boulevard, near the lane."

"All right!" and Oscar slammed up the receiver without waiting to hear any more, and proceeded about his farm tasks. Thoughts of anger toward Eve, now so overbearing and contemptuous, were soon crowded out, however, by anticipation of the time when Polly would belong to him—he his to love or abuse at his own sweet will, for Oscar had little doubt that the squatter girl would eventually yield to his will.

Pollyop, meanwhile, quite unconscious of Oscar's vicious intentions,

was already utterly overwhelmed with misery.

After the meager supper was over that night, she sat crouched near the woodbox, her arm around Billy Hopkins' stringy neck. Granny Hope was in bed and Wee Jerry, having cried himself to sleep, was in Jeremiah's room, rolled up in a blanket.

For the first time in her life Polly had seen her father weep. How impetuously she had kissed away his tears! How she had hung to his neck! When they had been forced to leave him, Jerry had shrieked his misery all the way through the streets of Ithaca.

To make the matter worse, it began to rain, to thunder and lighten. And now, a forlorn, lonely little creature, she sat listening to the tempest outside with no company but the billy goat.

How listless and hopeless she felt! Only when the thunder rolled over the lake, and the lightning flashed across the sky, did she lift her head. When she was happy, Polly loved the storms, but now, with Daddy in Auburn, how could she bear the thrashing rain and the moan of the willow trees as they swung to and fro over the shanty roof?

She found herself wishing fearfully that the storm would sweep off to the south and down behind the hills. Over and over in her mind went the thought that perhaps she could have helped Daddy if she had done what Evelyn wanted her to. Why hadn't she consented to marry Oscar two weeks ago? She knew why, and, blushing, blamed herself. She could not keep the image of Robert Percival from smiling at her.

All of a sudden a frightful flash of lightning made dim the flicker from the small candle, and was followed instantly by a thunderous roar that shook the very earth. Mingled with it came a woman's scream. Polly struggled to her feet. Some one was in trouble! Some squatter-woman was calling her. She dashed toward the door just as it flung wide open, and Evelyn Robertson rushed in.

"Polly Hopkins," she cried, grasping the squatter girl's arm, "Pollyop, something struck Oscar, and he's dead in the road!"

Frantically she drew the dazed Polly over the threshold. The darkness was dense, and the torrents of rain pelted their faces. Another zigzag streak of fire ran across the sky, making a vivid picture as it blazed. Cornell university into plain view. In the white light of it, Polly saw a man lying face down in the path leading to the shanty. He made no effort to get up as the two girls bent over him.

"Mebbe he ain't dead," muttered Polly, shuddering. "Let's lug him in the hut."

Between them they dragged the heavy, inert body into the shanty and shut the door. Oscar looked dead when they turned him over. His face was livid, and his eyes tightly shut.

"The thunder hit him, huh?" questioned Polly, awestruck.

Shudder after shudder ran over Evelyn.

"I don't know," she moaned. "Yes, I suppose so. Oh, it was dreadful!"

She began to cry, wringing her hands desperately.

"Don't do that," begged Pollyop, with a shiver. "Come on an' help me get 'im up on my bunk."

Weak from the shock, Evelyn was of little service in lifting Oscar. But the bed was low, and finally after much tugging, he was rolled lifelessly over on his back, stretched to his full length on the rickety cot.

Standing side by side, the girls looked anxiously down upon him.

"I guess mebbe he's dead, ain't he?" queried Polly woefully.

Shaking off her superstitious terror, Evelyn touched the prostrate man. Perhaps he was dead; and out of somewhere a thought shot into her mind that if he were, her troubles were over.

"I don't know," she whispered. "But he looks so!"

Pollyop shoved Evelyn aside and slipped her arm under Bennett's head. She seemed to have lost all aversion to him. She realized then only that a human being was suffering, perhaps dead. At her tender touch the man's eyes flew open; and, panic-stricken, Pollyop withdrew her arm and was back beside the other girl before she spoke.

"He's got life in him, Miss Eve," she chattered between her teeth. "Look at his eyes! God, ain't it awful!"

Quietly Oscar lay gazing at the girls as they stared at him. Polly was the first to go to him.

"Feel awful sick, eh, Oscar?" she asked in a low tone.

The man did not answer even by a movement of his lids.

"He can't talk," she went on, looking around at Evelyn. "He ought to have a doctor. Can't you go up to the boulevard an' get Doc Bacon?"



In the White Light of It Polly Saw a Man Lying Face Down in the Path Leading to the Shanty.

A fresh burst of tears so choked Evelyn Robertson that for a space she could not answer.

"No, I can't go out in this awful storm again," she finally replied. "Of course, I can't," she repeated, swallowing. "I'm afraid. I won't go! I won't take a step. If any one goes—"

"Then stay by him," interjected Polly, dutifully, "an' I'll go!"

Asklined to declare that she was afraid to be left alone with Oscar, Evelyn watched Pollyop as she went out and softly closed the door behind her.

Polly Hopkins lingered several moments to accustom her eyes to the night's blackness. Beyond to the east Lake Cayuga rushed on toward Ithaca as if its intentions were to swallow the little town in one huge mouthful. Pollyop crouched over mechanically words which fell hourly from Granny Hope.

"Ask an' it shall be given thee," she whispered. "Then if that's so, let me get some one to help Oscar!"

Through the clatter of the elements she heard the sound of footsteps off in the dark road. An answer to her prayer was about to step out of the night gloom. She hoped it was Larry Bishop or Lye Braeger. Opening her lips, she gave the weird, crying, squatter-call of the Storm country; and a voice that clutched at her heart answered her.

Then, by the next flash of jagged lightning, she saw Robert Percival coming toward her.

"Is that you, Polly?" he called.

"What's the matter?"

"Yep," she faltered timidly. "I got some one sick in the shanty."

Of all the people she had expected to see, he was the last. As she waited for him to approach, Pollyop's active mind grasped the fact that now Robert would know what his cousin had done. She saw no way to keep him in ignorance of Evelyn's relation to Oscar, and she was too excited to think of an excuse to keep him outside.

"Pollyop," commenced Robert, "I had to see you if only for a few minutes. Wait a second before you go in."

Confused and agitated, the girl did not stir a step until he was bending over her. One arm went around her shoulders, one tender hand pressed her head against his breast.

"Daddy's gone!" she choked almost inaudibly. "They've took him to Auburn, huh?"

"Yes, dear child," answered Robert, his own throat full with emotion.

"But what I came to tell you is this, dear. I've already set things moving to bring him back. I couldn't sleep tonight until I saw you."

A long shudder ran the length of Polly's body; her legs grew so weak she would have fallen but for the strong arms holding her up.

"I want him awful bad," came up in a breath to the pale young man.

"And I say, Polly dear, that he's coming home," repeated Robert, "and every day I want you to expect him. Will you trust me, darling?"

He had asked her that question once, but that was before Old Mar had railroaded Daddy Hopkins to Auburn.

"Will you, Pollyop?" urged Robert passionately, lifting her face and laying his warm lips on hers.

With swift-coming breaths she flung both arms around his neck.

"I'll trust you every day an' all day!" She hesitated and turned her head. A sound in the hut had frightened her. She knew Robert had heard it, too, for he reached out his hand to open the door.

"We'll go in," said he, taking her arm and gathering both of her hands into his.

By a sudden movement, Polly pushed him backward.

"I'd rather you'd make off," she told him, unsteadily. "Mebbe I can find a squatter."

"No, my dear," returned Robert. "When you need help, and I'm here, you can't call any one else."

While he was speaking, he had disengaged his hands and had lifted the latch.

Trembling from head to foot, Pollyop followed him into the hut.

TRIED TO SELL MAN HIS OWN PET DOG

SANTA ROSA, Cal., April 29.—Two men are reported to have been battered up at Guerneville, one of them being sent to the hospital, as a result of having tried to sell Bernard Sears his own dog.

The other day Sears missed his pet dog. The next day a man is declared to have brought the dog to Sears, offering to sell it to him for \$150.

Sears claimed the dog, and the man denied the claim. Sears thereupon turned loose on the visitor, and afterward gave his companion a sound beating.

Sears is once more the undisputed owner of the dog—and the dog seems to be very familiar with the premises.

JEFFRIES FINDS NEW WHITE HOPE

LOS ANGELES, April 29.—Jim Jeffries, down on his Burbank ranch pondering over just what percent of alcohol will be permitted in his new evangelistic religion, has taken time enough off to discover a new "white hope" whom, he believes, can eventually sock Jack Dempsey a "Jack Johnson" wallop and win the heavy-weight crown and bank account.

Jeff's protegee is a home product, coming right from his own Burbank dairy, where he milks the cows. He's New Carpenter, and no stage name

about it, either. Carpenter is 21 years old, 195 pounds, and a clever amateur boxer. Jeff recommended the boy to Frank Crowley of the Hollywood stadium. Crowley gave Carpenter a workout at Tommy McFarland's gym and was so impressed that he's going to give him a curtain raiser try on the card in the near future, matching him with Jack Brady.

Removing the Pinfeathers. To remove obstinate pinfeathers from a fowl use one of the ordinary little (ten-cent) strawberry hullers that can be bought almost anywhere.

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ARTHUR H. MEYERS MANAGER

throb of happiness made his pulses beat faster. "The Greatest Mother in the World" still held her place on the wall. While he was contemplating the wonder of the picture, his thoughts went back to the day he had given it to his Littlest Mother in the World. Billy-gout Hopkins mousing in the wood-box brought his thoughts back, but not soon enough to catch the meaning glance that Evelyn shot at the squatter girl, who was gazing steadily at her. With a fling of contempt Miss Robertson walked to him and laid her hand on his arm.

"No, I'm not the least sick, Bob, but—just now—" she hesitated, then continued hurriedly: "There's a little boy here; and I often bring him food and candy. When I got here," she whirled around and flung her hand toward the cot, "this man was so terribly sick that I told Polly Hopkins she ought to get a doctor. Naturally, I consented to stay until some one else came, but I never expected—you!"

The explanation brought a groan from Pollyop.

Slowly Robert drew his gaze from Oscar's pallid countenance and turned to her. He looked so shocked and hurt that she impulsively moved toward him.

"How'd he come here?" Robert exclaimed, going to the bedside. "Why, it's Bennett! What's he doing here?"

So passionate were his tones, so full of that demanding quality that Evelyn, fearing Pollyop would tell the truth, again caught hold of him.

"He's in love with Polly Hopkins, Bob," she offered, trying to speak calmly, "and really it's none of our business. Is it? But I do think he ought to have a doctor."

Robert staggered back, flashing a glance at the squatter girl which seemed to burn her through and through.

"Are you married to him?" he demanded of her.

Her pale lips framed the single word, "No."

"Then how in God's name came he here in your—"

(To Be Continued.)

NOTICE OF SHERIFF'S SALE

By virtue of an execution duly issued by the Clerk of the Circuit Court of the County of Marion, State of Oregon, dated the 10th day of April, 1922, in a certain action in the Circuit Court for said County and State, wherein Carrie E. Bunt, as plaintiff, recovered judgment against M. L. Gray and Ella Gray, defendants, J. D. Rogers and Rosa Rogers, defendants, for the sum of two hundred fifty and no/100 Dollars, and costs and disbursements taxed at eighteen and no/100 Dollars, on the 28th day of May, 1915.

Notice is hereby given that I will on the 3rd day of June, 1922, at the front door of the Court House in Bend, Oregon, Deschutes County, at 10 o'clock in the forenoon of said day, sell at public auction to the highest bidder, for cash, the following described property, to-wit:

Lots 3 and 4 of Block 12, Kenwood Addition to the City of Bend, taken and levied upon as the property of the said M. L. Gray and Ella Gray, or as much thereof as may be necessary to satisfy the said judgment in favor of Carrie E. Bunt against said defendants with interest thereon, together with all costs and disbursements that have or may accrue.

S. E. ROBERTS, Sheriff.

Dated at Bend, Oregon, April 29, 1922. 123-128-134-140-146c

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