

Storm Country

Polly

by Grace Miller White

Illustrated by R.H. Livingstone.

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Polly's voice trailed into silence; and Larry sent one hasty look over her head. The wrath smiled sadly at him and was gone. He shook himself and struggled to his feet. Then a broad, wicked grin spread his lips apart, and he laughed aloud. Polly, still on the floor, laughed, too, hysterical sobs catching at her throat, and a desire to scream forcing her hands to her mouth. Such awful sounds were unusual in the Silent City, where even honest mirth was no longer heard because the men and women scarcely dared breathe for fear an enemy from Ithaca would suddenly appear.

"Glory be to God!" ejaculated the man, hoarsely, "that's the howl of it, brat! It'll be a whack for my dead woman, an'—"

"An' a good whack for the Hopkins tribe, too," cried Polly, scrambling up.



She Turned to the Door but Halted With Her Hand on the Latch.

"It'll be a black Thanksgiving for Old Marc, huh, Larry?—I'm goin' back home now."

She turned to the door, but halted with her hand on the latch.

"You promised I could do it, Larry," she reminded him. "You'll tell Lye Braeger that, too, won't you?"

Sinking limply into his chair, Bishop wiped his wet lips.

"Yep, lass," he assented with a groan. "You can turn the trick; I promise you that."

If Jeremiah Hopkins had seen his girl, his Polly of the Sun, when she went home that night, he would not have recognized her. Her face was crafty, pitiless, and as white as the snow under her feet.

Then she waited stoically day after day, feeding the billy goat but absent-mindedly, asking no questions of Larry or Lye Braeger how soon her idea could be carried out. She believed that they would leave no stone unturned to even up with Marcus MacKenzie.

Early one evening Larry Bishop burst into the Hopkins hut without the formality of a knock. He looked years older than he had but yesterday; and Pollyup got up, locking and interlocking her fingers.

"Well?" she asked from between chattering teeth.

"It's done, by God!" he hissed, almost strangling behind a shaking hand. "It were most awful, Polly. If I'd stuck a hog in the gizzard, the squealin' couldn't 'a' been worse."

The speaker's tones, his half-bent figure, his shifty glances, brought a grunt from the girl.

"An' you're gettin' sorry by the minute, Larry Bishop, I can see that," she returned, giving him a smart rap. "Stand up, Larry man. Once—"

A sudden rush of emotion thrust into her throat such an ache that for several seconds she was unable to conclude. "Once," she repeated, after clearing away the huskiness with a hacking cough, "I thought love were the greatest thing in the world. But it ain't, Larry Bishop, it ain't!"

Bishop fidgeted with his cap, turning it around and around by its brim. When he looked up, the burning glow had died from the depths of his eyes.

"It's a sickenin' thing to see a woman suffer that bad," he muttered. "God, brat!—Nope! Don't say nothin' till I tell you what me an' Lye did!"

At the memory of it, the speaker wiped drops of sweat from his face. "She belted about lovin' her ma," droned Bishop, "an' the way she holled in my hut for her man was something scandin'ous."

"Sofia. Some awful thinkin', Larry man!"

The squatter's sudden grayness and swallowing hard as if something had stuck in his windpipe was the only evidence he gave that he had heard the cruel words.

"We got 'er just after dark," he continued, wearily. "She's been tied up in my shack ever since."

"Good'nough for 'er!" gasped Polly, tensely, rolling her hands in her apron.

"An' she yelled so hard you could've heard her near to Ithaca, Polly," moaned Larry. "Me an' Lye gagged 'er."

"Holy smut!" fell from Pollyup, as the picture his words had made burned itself across her mind.

"Her man's been gone all day to Cortland," continued the squatter in a monotone. "Lye found out Old Miss Robertson's been tryin' to reach hold of him."

"Hope she don't!" interjected Polly. "Not till we get done with his woman. Are you goin' to tote her over here?"

The man nodded.

"Don't dare to till later, when the squatters is in bed," he answered, snapping on his cap. "If—if you change your mind, Polly, come along over; an' I'll cut 'er loose an' let 'er go."

A harsh sound, something like a chuckle of malicious satisfaction, slipped through Polly's lips and stopped the man at the door.

"That ain't no ways likely, Larry," she said huskily. "Bring 'er here, an' when I'm done with her, she'll have to be took."

She caught Bishop by the arm, whirling him around.

"An' listen, Larry," she continued with cruel emphasis, "an' all the time keep rememberin' how Betty wailed her life into the grave, an'—an' that Old Marc done it."

Overcome by the words she had thrown at him so deliberately, Bishop lunged away, and the girl, quaking at what was about to happen, heard him running along the shore toward his shack.

It seemed to Polly Hopkins that every minute was an hour long, and every second filled with intolerable anxiety. Would the soft-hearted Larry repent and surrender the prize she longed to get her fingers on?

In extreme nervousness she went from one thing to another, never finishing what she began. She paced the hut floor until she was dripping wet with apprehensiveness. She had no means of knowing when Lye and Larry would come; so she dared not stir from the shack.

Many times she shoved aside the window blind and looked out. But the world outside was wrapped in a white silence. She could not even glimpse the peaked roof of a fisherman's hut, for between her and the Silent City was a flowing curtain of snow, the flakes falling like feathers from an open bag.

Larry would keep his word, she told herself over and over. She was glad it was such a night! The better could the squatters carry out their death plan.

Unnoticed by the girl, the wood burned to embers in the stove, and the hut grew colder by degrees. In one of her half hours of measuring the shanty's length, she halted, breathing on her frost-bitten fingers. She drew about her shoulders the blanket which had covered Wee Jerry in his hut days.

Her mind brought back to the baby away off in some unknown place, she cried weakly as she replenished the fire. Had the wicked ones of the earth made Jerry forget Daddy Hopkins who up in Auburn was ignorant of his whereabouts? Many times Polly had taken up her pencil to write him of the child, but it always dropped from her fingers before it reached the paper. Daddy could not do anything; and she would not add to his heavy burden.

She was at the stove, her cold, stiff fingers spread over it, when the sound of footsteps outside sent her headlong to the door. Appallingly terrified, she dragged it open.

Then, in deadening silence, Lye Braeger and Larry Bishop carried a large bundle through the doorway and threw it down on Polly's bed.

Heavy-lidded, the girl gazed upon it, her eyes widening in joy. Joy at the thought of Old Marc's misery; joy at the thought of getting even. The frightful emotion that surged through her bore relation only by contrast to the delights of a few months back, when her willing legs had trotted the country over to help every one that needed her. It wasn't the same Polly at all. This Polly lifted her foot and kicked the bundle none too lightly.

"We had a h—l of a time gettin' 'er here, Polly," growled Lye Braeger. "Outside it's like if a million crazy devils was howlin' over the hills. But we brought 'er just the same. Now

do what you like with 'er, brat!"

White teeth gleamed through the minacious smile that parted the girl's lips. At last! She had not lived through interminable days for nothing!

"Scout out, you!" she ordered, waving her hand at them, "an' keep a watch about till I get done!"

Braeger made for the door as if anxious to be gone; but Larry Bishop held to the spot where he stood.

"She's a woman, Polly Hopkins," he muttered, his eyes turning from the cot to the right girl, "if she is Old Marc's wife. He's home too, so Lye says!"

"What do I care where the pup is?" she thrust in vehemently. "Course she's a woman! So be it; an' so were your dead Betsy."

Then she stamped her foot tempestuously.

"Get out of here an' watch for MacKenzie an' his folks," she snapped. "It's about time he were stormin' the Silent City, I'm thinkin'."

Roughly she shoved the men out into the blizzard and closed the door. Then she stood with her back to it, deep sobs racking her body.

Now as she had almost died, and Wee Jerry too, so would Marcus MacKenzie. The vicious hope that she could see him writhe in his grief took possession of her.

Distraughtly she placed the bar across the door, making sure it was locked. Then, creeping to the cot, she gazed down at the wet bundle. There, where she had helped Oscar Bennett over dark rough places into the light of Eternity, lay the dearest dear of her bitterest enemy.

She uttered an exclamation when she saw a lifting shudder go over the thing on the bed. A smile flitted across her face, and her hands came together convulsively.

Slowly she knelt down and unwrapped the thick blanket; and Evelyn MacKenzie was staring out at her, dull eyed and terrified. A dark rag completely filled her mouth; and Polly grinned at her.

"Do you know what squatters do to chickens they swipe from you rich folks?" she asked huskily.

Although she could not speak, Evelyn heard and understood. She closed her eyes, her face going drabber in the flickering light, but at a sound the weary lids flew open again.

Polly had stepped to the wood-box and was picking up the ax. She



"This," Was All She Said, Tapping the Handle.

brought it forward, and smiling the same sinister smile, showed it to the pallid girl.

"This," was all she said, tapping the handle.

Evelyn struggled; and Polly laughed, a wicked laugh, no more like the ripple which Daddy Hopkins had loved to hear than the bark of a wolf is like the lark's morning song.

Tears rose into Evelyn's eyes and rolled down her cheeks. The smile faded slowly from Polly's face. Ever had excruciating agony touched her; like a sunbeam through a rift in a storm cloud, the old Polly leaped up to take heed of another's hurt. This feeling she crushed down; but she put the ax on the floor and squatted beside the bed.

Scarcely had she done this before a loud knock came on the door. She threw the blankets over Evelyn and went swiftly forward and lifted the bar.

Larry Bishop thrust the upper half of his body into the room.

"Old Marc an' his gang are in the Silent City lookin' for his woman," he whispered hoarsely.

"Where's Lye?" came in a hiss from the squatter girl.

"Off up the road watching," returned Bishop. "What'd you do to 'er, brat?"

"Come in," said Polly, in an undertone, grasping the end of his scarf and pulling him through the doorway, "an' if MacKenzie comes here, yappin' for his woman, laugh at him—laugh, an' laugh till your sides split, Larry."

She closed the door, pushed Bishop into a chair, and then deliberately crawled into bed beside Evelyn. Upon the inert figure of the bound girl she piled two pillows.

Then she and Larry waited, scarcely breathing, until voices seemed to come through the clapboards from every direction.

"Keep settin'," breathed Pollyup. "They'll be stoppin' here fast enough!"

Of a sudden the door burst open, and Marcus MacKenzie, covered with snow, entered. With him were two of his neighbors and several squatters.

Polly enjoyed a glimpse of Old Marc's agonized face; then she grinned at him.

"What's the matter, mister?" she asked, showing an expanse of even white teeth. "What do you mean by bustin' into my house like this, sir?"

MacKenzie threw a glance from the girl to the squatter in the chair.

"My wife's gone!" he cried in desperation. "I—"

"So? Now is she?" broke in Polly, smiling wider. "You don't say! Well, golly me! That's too bad. Some other feller run off with 'er—mebbe!"

And when she saw him trying to master his emotion, forcing back the heavy groans that interfered with his efforts to answer, she laughed. Never before had she been reckless in his presence. She knew this was one time Marcus MacKenzie did not want to fight. He needed the help of the squatters to search the Storm country for his wife—his bride, the very apple of his eye.

He did not look at all like the flashing-eyed enemy of her people. All at once he had changed from a cynical, handsome man of the world to a pleading, pale-faced husband.

Just then the wind shook the shanty violently; and over his big frame passed shudder after shudder.

"She's been gone, oh God, I don't know how long," he groaned aloud, the haggard expression deepening in the lines about his mouth as he spoke. "I'll give—I'll give more money than any of you ever saw—" He flung around on Bishop and thrust out an importunate hand.

Larry had been watching him covertly, in moody silence. When Marcus addressed him directly, he threw back his head and let out loud malevolent sounds more like the howls of hyenas than the laugh of a human being; and Polly Hopkins joined in again, too, dreadful sounds that made her thin, lovely face look odd.

"This is a queer place to come for your woman," she taunted MacKenzie. "To a squatter's shack, huh? I didn't know before that rich women came to the Silent City, least of all, yours."

MacKenzie took a step toward her.

"Oh, I was sure she wasn't here," he thrust in eagerly. "But I want help—the aid of every one of you. Money," he cried again, convulsively. "Money, do you hear? Money, I said—"

Polly was witnessing just the picture that she had been holding in her mind's eye for many days.

"Money can't buy everything, mister," she jeered at him. "Mebbe your woman's in the snow. Tomorrow's Thanksgiving day. Mebbe you'll miss 'er if she ain't home with you. Scout out of here. Don't be luggin', Old Marc, or she might freeze to death somewheres. It's a bad night."

The last statement, true to every word, brought a deep sob from MacKenzie's throat. It was immediately followed by more of the bitter laughter.

So changed was Polly of the Silent City that the gaping squatters who did not know what was going to happen wondered at her. They knew her no longer as Polly, the loveless, or as Polly of the Sun.

A low rumble sounded in the girl's throat. She coughed, then flung out: "I said, it's a bad night! Scout out, mister, an' look for your d—n lily-livered woman somewheres else."

Uttering an oath, MacKenzie fled, followed by his companions, leaving Larry Bishop staring at the pale squatter girl.

(To Be Continued.)

AMERICANS FIGURE IN GERMAN PLAYS

(By United Press to The Bend Bulletin.)

BERLIN, June 10.—The German opera poets are turning more and more toward America for new ideas. A new play, much applauded, is "Inn of Love." The main figure is an American, hunting for liquor.

The German press and the man on the street seem to think that is the chief occupation of the American these days, when he is not scheming to rob some more or less innocent foreigner.

Bulletin Want Ads bring results—try them

NOTICE OF SHERIFF'S SALE

In the Circuit Court of the State of Oregon for Deschutes County.

Mrs. M. J. Brandon, Plaintiff, vs. Edmund Brandon and J. A. Elliott, Defendants.

By virtue of an execution, judgment order and decree and order of sale issued out of the above-entitled Court in the above-entitled cause to me directed, and dated the 3rd day of June, 1922, upon a judgment and decree made and entered on the 31st day of May, 1922, in favor of the plaintiff, in the sum of \$5,000.00 with interest thereon at the rate of eight per cent per annum from and after June 18, 1921, for the further sum of \$500.00 attorney's fee, and for costs and disbursements taxed and allowed in the sum of \$21.50, and the costs on and upon said writ, commanding me to make sale of the following described real property situate, lying and being in Bend, Deschutes County, Oregon, and particularly described as follows, to-wit:

Lot 10 of Block 5 of Mill Addition to Bend, Oregon, according to the duly recorded map and plat thereof on file and of record in the

office of the County Clerk in and for Deschutes County, Oregon, and also Lot 22 in Block 15, and Lot 3 in Block 19, all in Park Addition to Bend, Oregon, according to the duly recorded map and plat thereof on file and of record in the office of the County Clerk in and for Deschutes County, Oregon, and also an undivided two-thirds interest in and to the real property described as follows: Beginning at a point in the south line of Greenwood Avenue in Lot 1 of Block 13 of Bend, according to the official plat thereof on file and of record in the office of the County Clerk in and for Deschutes County, Oregon, which point is 35.50 feet east of the northwest corner of said Lot 1 of said Block 13, thence east along the south line of Greenwood Avenue 63.13 feet; thence south 38° 33' 30" west 103.53 feet; thence north 51° 26' 30" west 50 feet; thence north 35° 47' east 64.15 feet to the place of beginning.

execution, judgment order, decree and order of sale, and in accordance with the commands of said writ, I will on Monday, the 3rd day of July, 1922, at 10 o'clock A. M., at the front door of the Court House in Bend, Deschutes County, Oregon, sell at public auction, subject to redemption, to the highest bidder for cash in hand, all the right, title and to the real property described as follows: Beginning at a point in the south line of Greenwood Avenue in Lot 1 of Block 13 of Bend, according to the official plat thereof on file and of record in the office of the County Clerk in and for Deschutes County, Oregon, which point is 35.50 feet east of the northwest corner of said Lot 1 of said Block 13, thence east along the south line of Greenwood Avenue 63.13 feet; thence south 38° 33' 30" west 103.53 feet; thence north 51° 26' 30" west 50 feet; thence north 35° 47' east 64.15 feet to the place of beginning.

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