

Mad Pursuit

Chapter 28
BACK TO AUNT EM'S

Nora swayed slightly at Damon's accusing words, but she rose with a savage will, clutching at the chair back. The walls of the Thayer home were rising and flowing toward her like a mighty wave that crashed on her to suck her under in the crawling undertow.

When she looked up she saw Jon was in the room, looking from her to Damon. Damon was speaking with a voice like splintered glass.

"The pictures on exhibition were not painted by Julian Lake. Nicholas painted them. And she admits it."

"Nora!" Jon cried.

His eyes judged her without pity. "You urged me all along not to let your father have the show. You knew then..."

"I didn't know! How could I know?"

"Then why did you beg me not to have the pictures exhibited?"

"I was ashamed. My father's pictures were so—bad."

"You see she must have known all the time," Damon said in a low voice.

"God," Jon said as though to himself, "I couldn't have believed it."

She looked at him, imploring him for understanding. But he would not look at her. Nothing she could say would make them believe.

She stood beside her father in the ranks of thieves; thieves who robbed the dead.

She saw Jon fling out of the room. Damon sat very still, looking down at her hands.

"I must go."

She must have said it; but her voice sounded very far away as though it belonged to someone else. It must be her body that was walking with such stiff uncertain steps out of the room. It must be she who had made her way to the high-road and began to walk, not knowing where she was going.

A man in an old car saw her moving uncertainly from one side of the road to the other. He stopped and asked her if he could drive her into town. She got in without even answering. He turned to speak to her but he saw then that tears were running down her cheeks. So they drove to the city where she told him where she lived. He left her at her door. She had even forgotten to thank him.

If only she could hide somewhere, she thought, so that never again would she have to meet them face to face. She couldn't unlock the door her fingers tumbled so with the key. She began to cry weakly, and then someone had opened the door from the inside and Fergus stood there looking at her.

"What is the matter?"

"Nothing! Nothing! What could be the matter?" she cried wildly.

But no, this was not the way. She must be quiet and calm. Fergus took one of her hands. It was ice-cold. He led her into his office and shut the door.

He brought something to drink. She tried to drink it. But she could not swallow. She put the glass down on his desk.

"It would be better if you would tell me, Nora. I may be able to help you."

"Fergus, don't make me," she said pitifully, "I'm so horribly afraid."

He was looking at her. That was better. He sat in his chair tilted back, looking away from her to the window.

"If I could go away somewhere—"

"You can face it, Nora. You're brave," he said confidently.

"If I tell you, Fergus, you won't blame him—oh Fergus, Julian's like a child who takes anything he wants and uses it."

Little by little she told him the story. She sat waiting for his judgment. But none came. His dark head was bent. The telephone rang. It continued to ring and ring. After a while it stopped ring-

ing. They still sat there.

"I'll go to see him tonight," Fergus said. "I'll tell him all you have told me. The show must be closed. I'll ask him to promise that the paintings shall be turned over to Jon Thayer, and that he chooses about it. I'm afraid your father will have to face it."

"He's never faced anything in his life. He's always run away."

"That, too, can be managed."

"You are good, Fergus. Fran used to tell me—but I never knew until now—you don't think Julian is wicked? He isn't—he's only—"

"Spitful," Fergus said.

For the first time tears rolled over her cheeks.

"I'm sorry, Nora."

"Don't be sorry for me. I can bear it. It doesn't matter to me. It's for him. He isn't selfish, Fergus. He wanted all this for us. For Fran and Aunt Em, for me. He was going to make us happy. He had such plans—"

"You're going up to bed now, Nora. I'll give you something to make you sleep. You don't want to see your aunt now?"

She only shook her head. He left her at the head of the stairs with two white tablets. She caught his hand and laid it against her cheek.

"I hope you'll be happy—you and Fran," she choked.

Then without knowing what she did she tore off her clothes and got into bed. After a night of misery she stood up and went downstairs. She could barely meet Hallie's eyes, but Hallie began to talk rapidly and nervously about a story she was writing. The children were subdued. A cloud seemed to hang over the house. Nora went to the office as usual; but Mr. Dusenbury after one look at her face did not say anything about her absence of the day before. Everyone was so-licitous and remarked that she looked ill.

"I see your father has an exhibition of paintings in the city," Miss Brown, the bookkeeper, said, but Nora turned away so abruptly the kind little woman was hurt.

Somehow she got through the day and when she came down the wooden steps that evening she saw Fergus himself standing waiting for her. Yes, he had seen her father. The show would be closed. But Fergus seemed to have little else to say.

"What is he going to do?" Nora gasped.

"He's going away. He says he'll let you know later."

"Oh, Fergus! Fergus!"

"They were in the car now. Fergus brought out something and gave it to her. It was a check. Nora sat looking helplessly down at this money that would mean salvation for all of them.

"Fergus, would you take me out to—Jon's now—I'd like to give them this money. Then I shall see what they want me to do."

"Nora, you're a little brick!" he said.

Her eyes looked at him with despair.

"If you only knew—I'm not. I'd rather die than face Damon. She seems to hate me. And they believe that I—that I know it all the time. You know I wouldn't do a thing like that, don't you?"

He caught her hand and gripped it hard.

"It's better to get it over at once. I'll drive you out there now, if you say."

Nora saw they were going along the river road. She asked him, "Do Hallie and Aunt Em know?"

"I told them."

"I suppose they think I—knew."

"They believe utterly in you."

Nora's eyes burned; she put her cold hands against her cheeks.

"I must be brave," she told herself over and over.

Fergus left her at the door of the Thayer house.

"Fergus, do you mind leaving"

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LITTLE ORPHAN ANNIE Just One Of Those Things

Panel 1: "HMM-M... A VERY INTERESTING CASE, DOCTOR-VERY INTERESTING INDEED."

Panel 2: "HMM-M... YES, DOCTOR-MOST RARE-HE SEEMS TO HAVE GREAT VITALITY-I BELIEVE HE WILL PULL THROUGH WITHOUT MUCH DOUBT-UNUSUAL- SO NEAR THE BRAIN."

Panel 3: "ABOUT HIS EYES, DOCTOR-WHAT CHANCE WOULD YOU SAY HE HAS TO SEE AGAIN?"

Panel 4: "OH, NONE AT ALL, DOCTOR-NONE AT ALL- QUITE IMPOSSIBLE- HE WILL BE TOTALLY BLIND- BUT OTHERWISE HE WILL BE QUITE AS GOOD AS NEW AGAIN VERY SHORTLY."

Panel 5: "I KNOW WHAT YOU ARE THINKING-A VERY BAD THING, DOCTOR-VERY BAD-OF COURSE IN OUR PROFESSION WE SEE SO MUCH SADNESS-WE HAVE TO HARDEN OURSELVES- STILL, A THING LIKE THAT- IT'S A SHAME-A STRONG MAN-THE APPEARANCE OF A GENTLEMAN-SAY-HMM-M... BUT BLINDNESS IS AS BAD FOR THE POOR AS FOR THE RICH-WORSE IN FACT."

Panel 6: "WELL, DOCTOR- WE MUST HURRY- WE HAVE MANY MORE PATIENTS AWAITING US- TRY TO FORGET THAT CASE, DOCTOR-PATHETIC- TERRIBLE- VERY TRUE- BUT JUST ONE OF THOSE THINGS THAT HAPPENS."

REG'LAR FELLERS Wasteful Woman

Panel 1: "HERE'S THE ICE CREAM MOM! HURRY UP AN' DISH IT OUT!"

Panel 2: "ONEY- THAT LIL' TERNY WENTY BIT FOR ME?"

Panel 3: "NO! THIS IS FOR PUDDINHEAD!"

Panel 4: "WHAT! THAT GREAT BIG MOUNTAIN OF ICE CREAM FOR HIM?"

TAILSPIN TOMMY The Cowboy Aviator

Panel 1: "THIS BIRD'S FLIGHT IS THE BEST NEWS REEL STUFF THAT'S BEEN STAGED SINCE THE BURNING OF ROME!"

Panel 2: "HOLD IT FOR A STILL, COWBOY!"

Panel 3: "HUH?"

Panel 4: "HERE'S BETTY LOU BARNES-AND TOMMY TOMKINS-LET'S GET 'EM IN AND MAKE IT A THREE-POINT JUBILEE!"

Panel 5: "LET US STAY OUT, BOYS! THIS IS SKEETER'S PARTY!"

Panel 6: "EVERYTHING I DID WAS EASY ENOUGH-MY ONLY REGRET IS THAT MY PAL, TOMMY TOMKINS COULDN'T HAVE STAGED TH' SHOW FOR YOU! HE'D HAVE PUT ON A REAL ONE!"

Panel 7: "SKEETS IS SOME BUDDY! IF HE OWNED THE MINT HE'D WANT TO GIVE ME NINE-TENTHS OF IT FOR SPENDING MONEY!"

Panel 8: "ISN'T THAT SWEET OF HIM?"

Panel 9: "COME ON, FOLKS! WE'VE GOT A PRETTY GIRL TO GO WITH THIS!"

DUMB DORA Voicing Her Opinion

Panel 1: "YOUR TROUBLES ARE OVER! I HAVE EVEN BIRTH TO A LARGE GOLD-PLATED IDEA."

Panel 2: "SPEAK ON, LAD- AND QUICKLY"

Panel 3: "YOU WANT TO CHANGE YOUR HAIR- YOU CAN'T MAKE UP YOUR MIND WHAT STYLE WOULD LOOK BEST- AM I RIGHT?"

Panel 4: "SO FAR- SO GOOD"

Panel 5: "I'VE SOLVED THE PROBLEM- WHAT WOULD YOU SAY IF I ASKED YOU TO DYE YOUR HAIR? YOU KNOW, BECOME A BEAUTIFUL BLONDE?"

Panel 6: "I WOULDN'T SAY A WORD"

Panel 7: "I CAN'T TALK AND LAUGH AT THE SAME TIME!"

Panel 8: "OUT OF A BILLION STYLE OF HAIR-DRESS DORA MUST CHOOSE THE SMARTEST... NO WONDER SHE'S BEWILDERED! HELP HER, HOUT!!"

BRINGING UP FATHER

Panel 1: "HEAR COMES OROUKE, AND HE'S ON CRUTCHES"

Panel 2: "WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU?"

Panel 3: "TALKING BACK TO MY WIFE, BUT IN ALL- RIGHT NOW"

Panel 4: "WELL, WHAT IS THE IDEA OF THE CRUTCHES?"

Panel 5: "THAT'S EASY, JIGGS -"

Panel 6: "IF I THROW THEM AWAY, SHE'LL MAKE ME LAZE AGAIN!"

MUTT AND JEFF Two Fast Ones-But Not Over The Plate

Panel 1: "CHECK LOOKS ALL RIGHT- BUT YOU'LL HAVE TO GET SOMEBODY TO VOUCH FOR YOU!"

Panel 2: "OKAY!"

Panel 3: "YOU'LL HAVE TO GET SOMEBODY TO ENDORSE THIS DRAFT"

Panel 4: "THAT'S EASY"

Panel 5: "AND THEN- I VOUCH FOR MUTT"

Panel 6: "AND I GADDOSE FOR JEFF"

Panel 7: "I SAY, OLD DEARS, DO YOU NEED A CHARACTER WITNESS?"

Panel 8: "NO THANKS- WE JUST HAD TWO-"

ACROSS

1. Minors spring
2. Title of a monk
3. Edge
4. Resume
5. Vestibule
6. Common fruits
7. Determina
8. Feminine name
9. Frozen water
10. On the ocean
11. Telephone girl
12. Fifty-four
13. Color
14. Set for a painting
15. Scenes of action
16. Handle
17. Waive in water
18. If
19. Catholic cathedral
20. Rivers
21. Ardent affec-tion
22. Devout
23. Epic poem
24. Reluctant
25. Snoring letter

Solution of Yesterday's Puzzle

C	L	O	I	D	I	E	T	S	G	R	O	W	
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DOWN

1. Place in an- other setting
2. Female sheep
3. Oily sub- stance
4. Yex colloq.
5. Measure of surface
6. Circuit of a race track
7. Eddie Turner
8. Contemptible
9. Peran
10. Hub out
11. Music drama
12. Statute
13. Maudslowi
14. Name
15. Spire
16. Long fish
17. Thrifty
18. At no time
19. Productive
20. Lugane
21. Equipments
22. Beverage
23. Tibetan priest
24. Above
25. Outlet
26. Greasy
27. Broad metri-
28. Undersand
29. Wain
30. Half score
31. Tax being

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