

Storm Country Polly

by Grace Miller White
Illustrated by R.H. Livingstone

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Granny Hope had been in the Hopkins' shack since the first winter snow. Her own hut stood on a little point about a quarter of a mile away. In it she had lived alone ever since her husband had gone down in the Big Blow, a storm that was a tradition in the settlement, and which only the oldest inhabitants of the Silent City could remember.

One day Polly had found her sick in bed, and, as she had led the forlorn billy goat home, so did she bring Granny Hope, never realizing that in the tottering old figure she was entertaining an angel unaware. All she knew was that Granny's toothless smile, her cheerful words of love and kindness, made the sun shine brighter and the meager food more filling.

During the winter, Mrs. Hope had encouraged the girl to read. At first that had been difficult, for the shanty contained nothing but the tattered Bible the old woman had brought with her. Over and over Polly had read the miseries of Job the patient, the long lamentations of Jeremiah, who always put her in mind of Daddy Hopkins; and she also knew by heart the story of the crucifixion of Jesus, who, so the Bible said, was the best man that had ever walked the globe.

So had those winter days of close companionship with the woman who had lived long and suffered much, and who now was almost ready to go on to larger experiences, brought out in Polly Hopkins a greater capacity for loving. The squatters called her "Pollyop, the love-lass," and sometimes, "Polly of the sun." Granny Hope explained this by saying: "They all love you, Polly, an' it's out of your own heart they get the feelin' of joy when they see ye."

From behind the wood-box near where the goat stood, Pollyop took up an ax. Tenderly she bent and placed a kiss upon the goat's horny head. Then she touched Granny Hope.

The woman lifted her lids and smiled at the girl.

"What's the matter, love-lass?" she murmured.

"I'm goin' out, Granny," replied Polly. "If Daddy comes, tell 'im I'll be back in a while."

Into the rain she went, her bare feet carrying her swiftly over the ragged rocks, her curls gathered under her chin like a warm glistening hood. When later she appeared in front of the shanty, her gingham skirt was filled with rusty pans and old pieces of tin. She placed them on the doorstep, and looking hesitatingly at the willow tree, went back into the house.

From a peg Polly took a pair of her father's trousers and clambered into them, tucking her skirts out of sight and rolling up the trouser legs, for Daddy Hopkins was much taller than his daughter. Into one of the big pockets Polly thrust a handful of nails. It was a grotesque looking girl



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who a few minutes later was flattening out the pans and the old bits of tin upon the stone. When that was finished, she gathered them up and, ax in hand, climbed into the willow tree and onto the roof. Daddy Hopkins would be glad when he came home and found the shack dry and warm. Then she began her task of hammering the pieces of tin over the holes through which the water dripped. Once in a while she stopped working, and, flat on her stomach, sought for smaller cracks.

Just as she had finished the last hole, she heard the sound of horses' hoofs and men's voices. With the fear of the persecuted, she crouched close to the roof, and like some frightened animal, crawled to the edge of it. Squatters did not speak like that, neither did they ride horseback.

There in the lane, astride two magnificent animals, were two men. One she recognized instantly. Polly had every reason to know the tall man whose dark, handsome face had cast deep shadows over the Silent City. Marcus MacKenzie had been for years the Nemesis that hung over the Cayuga lake squatters. Even during his absence on war work abroad, his long arm had often reached back to the Silent City to pick away some husband and close the prison gates behind him.

Pollyop had a passionate desire to throw the ax at him. She knew there was not a heart in all the Silent City that did not beat with dread at the very mention of his name.

Then she caught a glimpse of the other man's face and forgot her terror of Marcus MacKenzie. In Ithaca and about it she had seen many soldiers but never anyone like MacKenzie's companion. He was dressed in an officer's uniform, and, as his horse whirled him into better view, the frown faded from Pollyop's brow as she gazed wonderingly upon him. She marked his flashing glances that swept the Silent City. She noted with a strange little thrill the beauty of the clearcut features, the full, kindly mouth and the smooth, tanned skin.

Marcus MacKenzie was speaking rapidly, and though Polly could not hear what he said, she knew he was talking of the squatters. Then words that made her tingle with joy came distinctly to her ears.

"But you can't turn a lot of folks out of their homes, Marc," rang forth a deep, rich voice. "Where under the heaven would they go if you did?"

"Anywhere they d—n please," snarled MacKenzie contemptuously. "If they were all dead, they'd be better off, and Ithaca too."

Polly's hand tightened on the ax-handle. To let it fly straight into the face of the haughty Ithacan would have been satisfaction indeed!

"Have you tried to buy them out?" asked the other.

"No, and I don't intend to," was the sharp retort. "They'll go because I'll make them go, that's all. I've been too busy for the last two years to make much of a dent among them, but, now I'm home for good, I mean to clear them off." An outward gesture of the officer's hand told Polly he was not in sympathy with MacKenzie's threat. "You can't judge of the situation, Bob," Marcus went on, "because you've been gone for years. Evelyn can tell you what they are, though."

The speaker wheeled his horse and pointed his riding whip straight at the Hopkins' shanty; and Polly's curly head drew quickly back.

"One of the worst of them lives there!" she heard plainly. "He's sort of a mayor of the settlement. Jeremiah Hopkins! And such a tribe as that but holds can't be found anywhere else in this county. A worthless, tangle-haired girl and a boy half in the grave, and I heard only this morning they're harboring a hag by the name of Hope. They live like pigs, too."

"The poor things haven't much of a chance to live otherwise, have they, Marc?" The question evidently required no answer. "Well, what do you think of that?" he went on. Then he read aloud: "If your heart is loving and kind, come right in. If it ain't, scoot off! Why, that's beautiful!"

The warm, velvety brown the rich man's threats had made a hard glare was brought back to Polly's eyes by these words. She could have hugged the speaker as hard as she sometimes did Daddy Hopkins!

"Rubbish!" sneered MacKenzie. "Perfect rot! Your aunt was saying this morning that the Hopkins girl is as odd as she is filthy. The very idea of having a thing like that hung up!" Polly saw the younger man reach out and touch the speaker with a gloved hand.

"Love isn't rubbish, wherever you find it, old chap!" he exclaimed. "It gives even a squatter shack a glimpse of heaven. You ought to help these people, Marc. Give them a chance; make something of them, and they won't bother you." Burning tears filled Polly's eyes. To hear him speak in sympathy with her fishermen friends touched her deeply. And he had spoken of love in the same way Granny Hope did, too. Pollyop had never imagined Old Marc's kind ever thought of the meek—the lowly—and the hungry. Far above the world, up in the skies beyond the clouds where the blue was, right alongside the crucified Saviour, Polly Hopkins

placed this new friend of the Silent City. Her thoughts were interrupted by MacKenzie speaking.

"They're pigs, Bob. I tell you," he repeated roughly, "and what I brought you down here today for—"

Polly lost the rest of his sentence. Back and yet farther back she slipped over the roof. She had never heard anything so dreadful as this. In fact, she had always quite liked pigs, but she had never thought of comparing the shanty or Granny Hope and Daddy Hopkins to a barnyard and its occupants.

She heard the men ride away; and once more she sat up. By raising her body a little, she could see them walking their horses along the road that led its crooked way through the settlement.

MacKenzie's straight, thick-set figure made her shudder, but the slim, boyish one beside him brought a queer little thrill to her heart.

"He's a beautiful angel himself," she murmured, and taking up the ax, she slipped down the tree and dropped to the wet ground. Granny Hope straightened up as Polly entered the kitchen. Swiftly the girl crawled out of her father's trousers and tossed back her curls.

"What's the matter, pretty brat?" queried the woman drowsily. "I got to find Daddy," replied Polly, her voice shaking. "Old Marc's back an' he's after us squatters a-flyin', an', Granny—"

She paused, her face softened, and she smiled.

"Yes, honey?" prompted Mrs. Hope. "Old Marc had a beautiful angel with him," went on the girl, "an' he likes us squatters. He stood right up to that rotten MacKenzie. I heard him, I did." She crossed to the old woman's side. "Love's able to send an angel slapping down to this old earth to help us, huh, Granny Hope?"

"Yep, sure—sure, honey-girl," murmured Granny, and once more her head bobbed forward, and she slept.

Polly Hopkins crept out of the hut and sped away along the shore toward Dad Man's ravine.

CHAPTER II.

About the time Polly Hopkins began to repair the shack roof, Evelyn Robertson came into the room where her mother sat reading. The girl was dressed to go out and was drawing a pair of gloves over her ringed fingers.

"Where are you going, Eve?" inquired the lady. "It seems to me that you're running out altogether too much. There's your piano! You haven't practiced in months. Now don't blame me, Eve, if, when Marcus asks you to play, you fall flat."

A dull red run into the girl's cheeks, but she made no reply as she smoothed the wrinkles from her gloves.

"The good Lord knows," continued the mother irritably, "that I've kept at you enough. Now Marc and Robert are home, how are you going to entertain them? Men demand so much."

The experiences of the past two years had taught Evelyn that lesson. It had been demand, demand and more demanding ever since, on girlish impulse, she had secretly married Oscar Bennett.

"And you heard what Marcus said last night about the Silent City folks,"



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went on Mrs. Robertson. "What you want of that Hopkins girl I don't understand. Marcus says her father is the most dangerous man among the lot of them, and the girl herself is queer."

"Oh, don't talk about the squatters all the time," cried Evelyn. "I hate the very sound of the word. What's Polly Hopkins, anyway? . . . Now Marcus is home—"

"Darling," the mother interrupted eagerly, "it has always been my hope that you and Marc would grow to care for each other. He is so rich and so handsome! Now, isn't he?" A groan almost leapt from Evelyn's lips. What a fool she had been! Here she was married to a man she loathed, a man she was ashamed of! The realization that another man, rich, good-looking and in every way desirable, had turned his serious eyes upon her, almost made her blurt out the whole story to her mother; but having kept silent so long, she dared not

speaking now. All through the night she had tossed and turned, hunting some way to get Oscar Bennett out of her life without Marcus MacKenzie knowing anything about it. She dared not go to Oscar himself; Polly Hopkins was the only hope she had. All Bennett cared for was money. He was as tired of her as she was of him. Perhaps he would go away quietly and set her free if she gave him money enough. Would her mother give it to her?

"Mother, do you honestly want me to marry Marc?" she asked, trembling.

Mrs. Robertson caught at the outflung hand. "I do, I do indeed, darling," she answered. "And he'll ask you too, I'm sure. Perhaps not today or tomorrow, for he's just renewing his acquaintance with you. By the way he looked last night I could tell he was considering it."

A handkerchief dropped from Evelyn's fingers, and she stooped to pick it up.

"If I lead Marcus on," she suggested, rising, "and—get him to ask me to marry him, will you give me any sum of money I want?"

Her voice shook with emotion, and her young face seemed suddenly old and haggard. Mrs. Robertson had never seen her daughter in such a state.

"Sit down a minute, Evelyn," she commanded. "Now tell me what you want money for. I know very well that you haven't spent what I've allowed you upon yourself. That's why I've refused you so much lately. No more secrets or mystery! I want the facts. Now tell me this minute."

The girl dropped into a chair and buried her face in her hands. "I can't," she whispered.

For some time she remained in the same attitude, while her mother studied her silently. At length the girl lifted herself erect.

"I can't explain," she broke out, "and I suppose you're thinking all kinds of things. I can't help it if you do. You'll have to give me the money I need, if you want me to marry Marc. There's no 'ifs' and 'ands' about that. If you'll give me the money"—she faltered, wiped her lips and concluded slowly, "I'll marry Marcus MacKenzie."

"You must be crazy, Eve," Mrs. Robertson said in a cold voice, "to talk to me like that. If you have any secrets from me, it's time you told them."

"Well?" shot from Evelyn sharply, "suppose I have? It's my secret, isn't it? Are you going to help me or not, that's the question."

It was evident to Mrs. Robertson that the situation was not to be trifled with. In a twinkling her daughter had changed from a meek and timid girl to an aggressive woman. To try to bully her any more would be a mere waste of effort.

"Heavens," she began, "this is a pretty how to do, I must say. I can't imagine why you should want money. It doesn't make much difference, anyway. There are more reasons than one why you can't get it from me."

"What are they?" fell from the girl's lips.

"The first is," returned the mother, tartly, "I don't like being held up in this high-handed manner by my own daughter."

She paused; and Evelyn caught her breath. If that were all, she would row and rage until she got what she wanted.

Mother and daughter were staring at one another, each demanding an explanation. Evelyn did not intend to make any! Mrs. Robertson weakened before the steely-blue in the girl's eyes.

"But the main reason is," she went on, "I haven't got it. I don't own this house, nor—"

Evelyn sprang to her feet and confronted her mother. Her face was drawn into cruel lines, and her hands were gripped spasmodically. "You lie," she burst forth. "You've always lied to me about money."

A bitter smile drew down the corners of the older woman's mouth. She knew how true the accusation was. "Well, this time," she answered, "I'm telling you the simple truth. I not only do not own this house, but—"

"Then who does own it?" interjected the girl.

"Your cousin, Robert Percival," was the quick response; "and he's supplied all the money we have used. Now perhaps you won't try to get something out of me I haven't got."

"Mother!" cried the girl, in agony. "I told you, Eve, that you should know the truth," Mrs. Robertson continued. "You've asked for it, and here it is. When Robert's father and mother died, I came here to take care of him. I had nothing then and have nothing now. You were only a baby, and I've always kept the facts from you. When Robert went to war, he arranged that if he didn't come back, I should have the home and enough money to keep us."

Evelyn's eyes widened. Of a surety this was the truth.

"Then we aren't rich?" she demanded huskily.

"No, that we're not!" responded the lady, "and what's more, we are dependent upon Robert for everything." With a quick gesture Evelyn caught her mother's arm, despair changing the lines on her face. "Oh, you needn't be so theatrical, my dear," said the woman. "Robert's never given me the slightest reason to feel he thought us a burden. I'm quite like his mother, as I should be. The only thing necessary is that you should fatten your own nest before Bob makes up his mind to get married. I know very well you've turned down many a young man in Ithaca. Now

WOUNDED ASK PRESIDENT NOT TO FORGET



Wounded and disabled soldiers are supporters of the bonus for all but not to the exclusion of special legislation for disabled. A delegation of wounded from the Walter Reed hospital, Washington, was appointed to call on the President and Congress asking that pending legislation aimed to assist them be not overlooked in handling the bonus question. The picture shows the delegation leaving the White House, escorted by the President.

SPARKS DENIES HE FAILED WITH RENT

Denial that he has failed to pay the rent of the Grand theater in the O'Kane building from which the proprietor, Hugh O'Kane, has brought suit to evict him is made by J. B. Sparks. According to Sparks the rent has been offered to O'Kane but refused.

Sparks claims that the eviction suit is based on spite because of the complaint he brought against O'Kane in January under the city ordinance requiring certain temperatures in public buildings.

BELONG TO PREHISTORIC DAY

Bones of Whales Possibly Ten Thousand Years Old Recently Unearthed on English Farm.

The skeletons of two whales, dating back, it is supposed, 10,000 to 12,000 years, were found by two workmen on a farm near Peterborough, according to the Westminster Gazette. Some of the teeth and bones were submitted to Doctor Garrod of Alconbury hill, Huntingdonshire, and he, in company with two zoological experts, visited the farm and obtained all the bones, with the result that one of the whales has been set up.

The whales were lying side by side under the pent, and just embedded in the clay. On the whole the bones are in good condition, and those that have been taken out carefully are scarcely damaged.

It is believed that many thousand years ago these whales, and perhaps others, swam up a creek when the wash came further inland, and got caught at the top of a spring tide in a place where they were unable to turn.

Another theory has been advanced, though it is rather far-fetched. Some years ago a prehistoric boat was dug up in the same field, and the suggestion has been made that the crew of the boat was hunting the whales at the particular period.

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