

# Idle Island

By  
**ETHEL HUESTON**

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## CHAPTER XI—Continued

"Oh, you monster—the poor dear trusting heart," she muttered, all in the same breath.

Auntalmiry, flushed and radiant with excitement, was the first to arrive for the party. She was joyously pleased at the unusual tenderness of Alice Andover's greeting, and took her all about the room to point out to her, with shy pride, how cleverly she had managed things, explaining all the little economies she had used, the ruses to which she had resorted in her desire to make least money go farthest. Alice was sympathetic, solicitous, warmly approving, but kept always one sharp and terrified eye upon Gay, both of them in a panic of fear lest the creature upstairs regain his sober senses and spoil the party for which Auntalmiry had worked so hard.

At Gay's direction, Auntalmiry took up her position by the window, with Alice Andover and Gay on either side, and pressed the electric button which set the solitary pine a-sparkle with colored lights from top to bottom, flashing a brilliant holiday greeting all over that end of the island.

"It is the last invitation," she cried, and her thin little voice quavered with excitement. "Come to my party, come to my Christmas party! Everybody can see it. It will guide them up the hill. How the children will laugh! It is very nice, Gay."

The island trooped to the party in a body, a long stream pouring up the hill through the snow, so that all in a moment it seemed the Lone Pine was a surge and a throb with life. There was much laughter, much shrill squealing, the piercing staccato of children's voices, the high nervous laughter of young girls, and deeper older voices, calling loud and cheery greeting.

"If this babel doesn't wake him up, he might as well be dead," whispered Alice Andover.

"I'll go and have a look," said Gay. "It is enough to bring the trees to life."

Gay listened outside the bedroom door a moment, hoping to hear the muffled heavy breathing that presaged the sleep of their unwelcome guest. But with the din from below she could hear nothing, so she opened the door quickly and stepped in. The room was wrapped in silence, utter and heavy, and in the darkness she could not distinguish the shadow by the window-seat that was Buddy Bridges. She pressed the button that flooded the room with light and showed in a flash its emptiness. The rug lay in a rumpled heap upon the floor, but Buddy Bridges was not there.

The window was open. Gay ran over and looked out, but in the shadow of rocks and trees by the house she could distinguish nothing. Her eyes swam giddily.

"Such—a Christmas," she stammered. Already with that vividly creative mind of hers she could see him lying on the rocks, a bleeding mangled shape, Auntalmiry's son. Suddenly she was afraid to be alone, and ran downstairs. Alice Andover awaited her coming at the foot of the steps.

She read fear in Gay's eyes.

"What now, good heavens, what now?"

"He is gone. He is not here."

"Gone! Gone where? Gone how?"

"Come: Let's look." In the joyous confusion that reigned about the Christmas tree, with Santa Claus noisily distributing the pretty gifts, with the burble of his bells, the laughing voices, the crackle of tissue paper, and the treble of children's voices over all, they went out unnoticed. And with an electric flashlight, looked beneath the window for the crushed and bleeding—

Yes, he had certainly dropped down into the bank of snow. There were many signs of tramping, footprints, but the white snow bore no stains of red. And Buddy was not there. The outraged divinity whose patience still is infinite had guarded Auntalmiry's boy that night.

So they went back, with what nonchalance they could muster, and joined the merriment within. But Gay was sick at heart. Everybody had come to the party, the Captain was there, the two ministers were there, even Buddy Bridges had come home. But Rand came not.

"Well, well," boomed Santa Claus, "well, well! Here's another present for little old Auntalmiry! Auntalmiry!"

Santa Claus, powerful young giant that he was, caught her up bodily into his arms, so that she was quite crushed in the shaggy fur of his big coat.

"Auntalmiry, Auntalmiry!" chorused the children gaily.

And then, on the wave of that lov-

ing joyous call, the door opened, and he stood there, soft hat crushed low on his forehead over the big dark eyes, collar turned up about his chin—tall, thin, and weak, very pale, Buddy Bridges.

Santa Claus, with little Auntalmiry still in his arms, turned as the others did, to look at this one who came so unceremoniously into the party, his face alone unsmiling, set and grim.

He crossed without a word into the center of the room, walked swaggeringly, perhaps to hide the fact that he could not stand erect without swaying weakly, and stood before Santa Claus, with Auntalmiry in his arms. It was she who moved first, moved vaguely, slipping to the floor, and then, not seeming to walk, seeming to float rather, she was beside him, her eyes riveted to his eyes, haggard and dark-lined, and her fingers crept softly up his coat toward his face, touching the curve of his chin uncertainly, inquiringly, as though it were by feeling she would be convinced.

"Almiry, come away," broke in Alice Andover harshly, but it was pity that hardened her voice. "Come away. He's drunk."

"It's Buddy," Auntalmiry said faintly. "It's Buddy. It is Buddy."

"Come away, I tell you; he's drunk." Then suddenly Buddy Bridges laughed. "Drunk," he shouted weakly but with derision in his voice. "Oh, it's you, Alice Andover, up to your old tricks! Drunk! So that's what you thought. Well, I thought you were crazy, the pair of you, stuffing me up with cognac, locking me in—I'm not drunk, mom, I'm sick. They couldn't tell the difference."

Ever, eye in the bright, disordered, crowded room was intent upon Buddy Bridges, who held his mother in his arms, and laughed with her, wept with her, and talked to her in a fond weak voice. "Sick as a dog. In the hospital—weeks. Weak as the dickens. I was in the hospital when they told me you were here. I got out of bed—knocked two Internes down—sick as I was. Came on here—clear from California, mom. Twice I fainted away, and when I came to, they had me off the train and in hospital again. But as soon as I got my wind, I beat it again. Came on. Drunk! Isn't that like her, mom? I'd know in a minute it was Alice Andover! You haven't changed much, mom—a little. How his eyes caressed her! Twenty-five years, mom. Not a word from you in twenty-five years. I wouldn't have believed it, mom. It was—not just—like you. Was it because they sent me to the pen, mom?"

"The—pen, Buddy? The pen?"

"Oh, hush, you fool," begged Alice Andover.

"In Jersey. Twenty-five years—"

"Buddy, you don't mean the penitentiary—Buddy—"

"Mom, didn't you know it? Didn't you ever know it?"

"Buddy—"

"Mom, you've just forgot. You know it. You must have known it. It was in the papers—Is—is she all right?" he asked falteringly of all the room. "You must have known it."

Alice Andover was tall and fine in her dignity. "Yes, Buddy Bridges, we knew it. We all knew it. But nobody told her. Almiry never knew to this day—"

"Nobody told her—"

Alice Andover's dignity was simply killing. "On our island, Mr. Bridges," she said greatly, "we tell one another no news unless it's good news. There was nobody here low-down enough to tell Auntalmiry that her son had gone to jail."

"Buddy—" Auntalmiry's voice was pleading.

"Aw, mom, it wasn't much. A roughhouse, a row over a game. You know I was always quick in a scrap. It wasn't much. But a man was hurt. So they sent me up for it. But, mom, since then, everything fine and dandy. No nonsense since. Got a fine woman, got three nice kids, made a lot of money—Great, mom." And then, suddenly, mercurial man as he had been a mercurial boy, he glowered, glowered with sudden anger around the room. "See here," he demanded sharply, "who sent me that paper-marked Portland paper—that told me mom was dead? Twenty-five years ago! One of you sent me a paper—that lied."

U. S. Grant Won Bride While Fording River

Ulysses S. Grant selected an odd time to propose marriage to Julia Dent. Lieutenant Grant from West Point had met Julia while on a visit to the home of his chum in St. Louis. He fell in love with her and decided to return to pursue his attentions, relates Edna M. Colman in "White House Gossip."

Their betrothal occurred while they were fording the Gravois river. They were in a light rig, the young man driving. The waters were swollen and the current so swift from the recent heavy rains that they were in grave danger. The manner of her clinging to him in her fear of the water inspired him with the courage to pro-

Telephonic Impasse

A telephone operator was at one end of the wire and a little girl, who had answered her ring, at the other. The operator, obeying one of the rules laid down by the company, was trying to get the child to call an older person. She began, according to the rule, by asking:

"Is your mama there?"

"No."

"Is your sister there?"

"No. There's no one here but grandma and me and the cat. Grandma can't hear and the cat can't talk."

The silence throbbed. Everybody looked at Alice Andover. She was the administrator, and this was a terrible charge he brought.

Alice Andover did not flinch. She turned directly on the Captain.

"John Christian Wallace, do you mean to tell me that you dared to take it upon yourself—without consulting me—the natural administrator—"

The Captain removed his pipe and ambled amiably into the arena, a gentle, dignified little old figure. He put an affectionate hand on Buddy's arm. His voice was wavering with age and with excitement, but he was not daunted.

"Buddy, I say to myself, 'Jalbird or no Jalbird, he's Auntalmiry's son. He's got a right to know she's gone.' We said plenty of hard things against you, times enough, but nobody ever said that Buddy Bridges didn't love his mom. 'No,' says I, 'he's got a right to know it.' So I marked the paper, and sent it right off to you, Buddy, in jail or what-not, for I don't hold to them as says—"

"But, Gramp," he interrupted, for everybody called the Captain Gramp, "Gramp, she was not dead! She was not dead!"

"No, but we thought she was. It said in the paper she was. We didn't know till next day, or day after, that she pulled through after all. 'No,' says I, 'he's her son,' and as soon as I read in the paper she was dead, I marked it and mailed it, and—"

"But, Gramp, my God, when you found out—that she wasn't dead—"

that she had pulled through— Why, in God's name, didn't you let me know?"

The Captain was crestfallen, taken aback. But he rallied, slowly. "Wh-what say?" he asked feebly, hand to his ear.

"Why didn't you send me word—let me know—when you found out that it was a mistake, and she had not died? I never knew. When I got out I headed west and never came back. Never wanted to come back if mom was gone. Why didn't you let me know?"

"God bless my soul," ejaculated the Captain feebly. "Didn't you know she wasn't dead? Just think of that now. His own mother not dead, and he didn't even know it. Dear, dear, Buddy, I never thought of it from that day to this. I supposed of course a boy would know it if his own mother wasn't dead."

When the last fired but happy voice had sent its final "Merry Christmas" ringing back across the snow, when Auntalmiry, with Buddy's weak arm about her, had disappeared beyond the arc of light that underlined the solitary pine, Gay turned back into the bright disordered rooms and closed the door slowly. She was very sad. The brightness of the room in all its gay confusion depressed her, and she stood, a tired dejected figure in the midst of it, and pressed her burning face into her cold clasped

Wives Purse Guardians

Statisticians say that in working and middle class families from 75 to 85 per cent of all money is spent by the wives.

Man thinks he supervises the buying because he makes out the checks for bills, but actually he knows little or nothing about those bills. He thinks his wife is no financier because she makes mistakes in adding a column of figures. He forgets that real financiers never trust themselves, but use adding machines. He forgets that the financing comes in the planning of how the income is to be spent to achieve certain ends and avoid bankruptcy. That the majority of homes are solvent redounds to the credit of the women within them.—Helen C. Bennett in Liberty.

The function of woman is to serve the race. The function of man is to serve the woman and the child.—American Magazine.

Hands. Tears came to her eyes. A sob swelled in her throat. She wept noiselessly. What was the success of all the noisy merry party to her, when Rand had not come, and she knew not where he was?

In her heart she knew that Rand had not remained away of his own volition, that something had kept him against his will. He had pledged her to solemn secrecy in regard to his movements, but his prolonged absence without word or reassurance terrified her greatly. She sank down into the window-seat and looked out. The tall, gayly lighted pine was hateful, garish to her saddened eyes. Impatiently she pressed the button, and the hillslope was plunged into darkness.

"It—it's that d-d old clubhouse," she said bitterly. "I have a big notion to—to burn it down."

With the passionate words came sudden determination. She could not bear this anxiety, she must know the worst, however bad it be. She would slip into the forest, and reconnoiter. Rand had sternly ordered her to keep entirely out of the woods and away from the Little club, but Gay, in an emergency like this, and goaded by her fears for him, was not one to be balked by obedience. If she found the gang in the Little club, she would call the police, immediately, have the place raided, and demand Rand of them. In her thoughts, vividly, she saw the slim worn face, the shapely strong hands of the one who had come to her on the waves in the Little cove. Almost she saw Rand's face, like that, with the merry eyes closed, the mocking lips set hard, swept by salt water.

"Oh, no," she cried faintly. Then she sprang to her feet, and pounded hotly up the stairs. She was feverish with excitement now, her face flaming, her lips parched, her eyes tingling hot. But her slender, strong hands were like ice.

"If they catch me, I do not care," she told herself hotly. "I've got to find him." She could not bear that recurring, evanescent vision of Rand's face on the winter sea.

The cold fingers tore her party dress from her, pulled on heavy silk and woolen undergarments, her thickest woolen stockings, stout boots. She donned her warmest blouse beneath the fawn-colored suede wind-breaker, and bloomers beneath her heaviest knickers. The leather cap she pulled down to her ears, caught up her leather-fur-lined gloves, and then her dark-colored slicker, enveloped all.

"If they see me, they'll think I'm a man," she said sturdily to her stout reflection in the glass, "with this cap, this slicker, these boots."

Schooled by the experience of six months on the island, Gay slipped a flashlight into one pocket, and her pistol in the other. She was trembling all over.

"But I'm not afraid," she said firmly. She pressed the last electric button, and the cottage merged into the darkness that covered all the coast. She opened the door gingerly an inch at a time, listening intently. The island was asleep in the darkness. There was no moon; the stars, red and cold, were pin-points of ice.

She did not hesitate. She quite confidently believed that she would rather die than endure the suspense of uncertainty. Not daring to use her flash, she made her way through the snow slowly, from tree to tree, toward the Little club, stumbling often, running into unsuspected pines, falling over hidden shrubs. But she went on. When she came at last to the row of trees that circled the clubhouse, she stood for a long moment, as Rand had taught her, flattened against the bark, listening.

Neither sound nor sigh from within. "Sealed," she thought, "hermetically sealed."

She crept cautiously around the corner, feeling her way inch by inch until she reached the spot where Rand had taken out the rocks to get under the piazza. It had seemed simple enough as she had watched him, and Gay felt she could easily do the same thing, and thus obtain a view of the interior, perhaps a confirmation, or denial, of her fears. But for all the strength of her young arms, for all the power of her stubborn will, she could not so much as stir the smallest of the rocks, which were now deeply wedged into the frozen soil, packed solidly, presenting a firm and immovable barricade to entrance under the piazza.

Thus balked, she stopped a moment to consider. One thing was absolute, she would not go home. But she was puzzled as to wise procedure.

Tempted for a moment to fire her pistol into the air, hoping that fear of a raid would draw the gang from the shelter of the clubhouse, second thought convinced her it would be sheer foolhardiness. At last she decided to go down into the cove, to examine the great door and look for a light beneath the window curtains.

Getting into the cove itself was very difficult, for the crevices among the rocks were covered with snow, and she was obliged to claw her way along, hand over hand, sounding with her feet for standing ground. Down, down, she slid, from rock to rock, from snowy crevice into snowy crevice, kicking, holding on with both hands like grim death, down, lower and lower, until she attained the level beach of the cove. She moved warily now, feeling the great helplessness of her position. In the woods she could at least run for cover. Here in the cove she was at the mercy of whoever might come upon her. Softly, keeping in the shadow of the rocky cliffs, she crept to the clubhouse door.

She ran her hand over the locks carefully, and then softly turned the knob. Well oiled, silently it moved beneath her hand. The door to the Little club was open.

CLOTHES IDEAS FROM ABROAD By Mae Martin

Last fall when I was in France, I admired the dress which the daughter of our hostess was wearing, and she confessed it was three years old, originally rose-beige, now dyed a rich, deep shade of red! The French are eternally surprising you with thrifty little tricks like that—tricks which it pays to imitate.

Most of us have dresses which, if allowed to remain their original color, are discarded or seldom worn. Redyed, they become favorites again.

Just get a package or two of true, fadeless Diamond Dyes, and try your hand at tinting or dyeing. You'll be amazed to see how easy it is to use Diamond Dyes. They never disappoint you. The "know-how" is in the dyes. They are real dyes like those used when the cloth was made. They never give things that redyed look, like make-shift, inferior dyes. The more than sixty colors you can get from them include everything that's fashionable.

My new 64-page illustrated book, "Color Craft," gives hundreds of money-saving hints for renewing clothes and draperies. It's FREE. Write for it, NOW, to Mae Martin, Home Service Dept., Diamond Dyes, Burlington, Vermont.

Machinery Has Freed Women From Drudgery

It is a fascinating topic to debate whether man lives up to his inventions, or whether his inventions follow him. One can argue forever to prove that women today are better educated and more intelligent, because it is necessary for them to know how to manage the electrical equipment which confronts them in both industrial and domestic life, or to prove that the electrical equipment has provided the opportunity to develop the use of their heads instead of their hands alone. It is of small importance what the answer is. The fact remains that homes are more charming places in which to live, offices are more attractive places in which to work, and women are more interesting human beings, because electrical machinery has come into existence to do the body-breaking mind-destroying routine tasks, which for so many years constituted woman's entire field of endeavor.—Exchange.

Dress-Alike Party

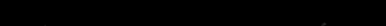
Perhaps the dinkiest dance I have been to lately was Lady Joram's. All the dancers were dressed exactly alike—up to the masks, which grinned. There were some charming embarrassments. And the queer thing was that when everybody was asked for breakfast, even then, somehow, we all seemed alike. Quite remarkable, wasn't it?—"Lady of Fashion," in G. K.'s Weekly.

Leap-Year Hint

Mr. Bach (moralizing)—"After all, man is weak." Miss Willing—"In union there is strength."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Here in the Cove She Was at the Mercy of Whoever Might Come Upon Her.



## "Busy" Men Can Learn Lesson From Genesis

"Big Business Is Too Busy," says Bruce Barton in McClure's Magazine. He begins his article with this suggestion:

"Once a year the president of every company should assemble his entire staff and read the first chapter of Genesis aloud. It is the supreme record of the way in which work used to be done."

"A clear-cut program."

"An early morning start."

"No conversation or consultation."

"Each day's work finished at the end of the day."

"Real rest at the end."

"Let us refresh our memories with a glance at the seven-day program:

"First day—The Almighty said:

"Let there be light; and there was light."

"Second day—The Almighty said: Let there be a firmament . . . and it was so."

"Third day—The Almighty said: Let dry land appear. Let the earth bring forth grass and herbs and fruit trees . . . and it was so."

"Fourth day—He made the sun and moon and stars."

"Fifth day—He created all fish and fowl."

"Sixth day—He created animals; also Adam and Eve."

"Seventh day—He rested."

Illustration of a man in a suit.

Illustration of a woman in a dress.

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