

There's Only One

By SOPHIE KERR

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CHAPTER I

"This room might be a man's office, stripped like this," said Anne Vincent from the flat desk where she was ostentatiously busy with a pile of bills and a check-book.

"But think how feminine it is with rugs and the curtains and the cretonne covers and the china dingbats on the mantelshelf," said Rachel; adding, as she stuffed two more packages into the boxed window-seat, "Do you think I've used enough mothballs? Remember how the mice made nests in here last winter!"

Both women had spoken louder than was necessary and there was the tension of a topic avoided in their voices. The living room of the cottage was bare except for the furniture, even the bookshelves had been emptied and the pictures taken down.

Anne twisted about to look at Rachel's packing. "You put in the whole two boxes? That'll surely be enough. It was Mrs. Kreele's fault—the mice, I mean."

"Poisonous woman!" said Rachel and banged down the lid of the window seat. "Every time I see her and that squabby sister of hers walk by I want to rush out and beat them with my tennis racket!" Her work finished, she rose and stretched her tall young slender-

off the terrace before the low single house which had been their home for ten summers. It was the last but one of the straggling village street, there was only the roadway between it and the dunes. The single house beyond theirs was an ugly square high-elbowed thing with stiff shell-bordered walks, and a gypsy kettle, on a tripod painted a flaming red and filled with clashing magenta geraniums, beside the front door. As Anne and Rachel crossed the road this front door opened swiftly and a little anxious man hailed them.

"You be out some time, Mis' Vincent?"

"I don't know exactly, Mr. Kreele," said Anne, "but you can go in and turn on the radio."

"Thank you, ma'am. There's a program offerin' a nice book of photographs and a tube of cold cream I aim to get and if there's any new contests I want to try 'em." He explained breathlessly and was inside their house with the last word.

"Couldn't we leave the house open and the electricity on so he can have the radio after we're gone? It's so mean of Mrs. Kreele to lock theirs up except when she wants to hear something herself, I'd like to get round her somehow."

"I suppose we could. He has such fun writing for samples and entering all the contests, it's pathetic."

"Do let's do it, mother."

"All right, my dear, the electricity won't cost much. And if the weather's very cold he can build a fire. I'll give him written permission."

They had reached the beach, a half-circle of sand scooped in between points of rock which went far enough out on each side to break the sweep and drag of the waves. The Vincents' bathing house lay so unobtrusively back among the dunes that this little scallop shell of quiet and peace seemed never to have known man's trespass, yet it had been a favorite haven of rum runners during the latter half of the great prohibition farce. Now those days were over and the village and summer people found the larger beach below the town more convenient for bathing, so this one had come to be Rachel and Anne Vincent's exclusive property, their outdoor living room and extension of summer days.

They sat down facing the sea, their backs against the length of pale water-washed Norwegian fir which once held the mainsail of a skimming saucy clipper. Anne, uneasy, disturbed, made a most uncharacteristic fuss in settling herself, while Rachel watched her with growing impatience.

"It can't be as dreadful as you're making out," said Rachel at last, half laughing, but with nervous excitement beneath.

Anne pulled her wits together. "It's not dreadful at all, I simply don't know where to start."

"Tell me her name. I don't even know her name. I've always rather hoped it was Rachel, like mine."

"Oh, Rachel, darling, have you been thinking about her so much! Why didn't you tell me? I—" she caught back her emotion, took an easier tone: "Rachel, your mother's name was Elinor, Elinor Malloy. She was only about eighteen when you were born, she wasn't through high school when she was married. And your father's name was Edwin Malloy. They were just a couple of youngsters who ran off and got married without knowing one another, without thinking about it—"

"A sort of joke, I suppose."

"Don't be bitter. They were so young, they had no idea they didn't realize—but I'll have to go back and begin properly. I never saw your father, but your mother was one of the loveliest, no, she was absolutely the loveliest creature I ever laid my eyes on. She didn't seem quite real, she was so lovely."

"Was she light or dark?"

"Very fair skin, very dark hair, very blue eyes. Everything in her appearance was accented and distinct and yet there was a complete fusion so that her beauty stood clear and perfect. She's only—let's see—she's only thirty-eight years old, Rachel, now, nine years younger than I. And she's still beautiful, but in a different way."

"How do you know? I thought you said you'd only seen her once, years ago."

"Her pictures come out in the newspapers now and then, the society columns—"

"They do! Oh, mother, who is she? Have I seen her pictures?"

"She's Mrs. Peter Holbrook Cayne."

"She's married someone else?"

"Rachel, darling, I want to get through this as quickly as I can and afterward I'll answer your questions. You must try to understand about her. Your grandfather—her father—died and left your grandmother with very little money and this child to take care of and life was very hard—and meager—for both of them. Uncertain, too, insecure. Mrs. Rhodes—"

"But who's Mrs. Rhodes?"

"Your grandmother, Elinor's mother. Did I forget to say her name? I'm mixing this up dreadfully."

"No, no, I've got it straight. My mother was Elinor Rhodes and she married Edwin Malloy."

"Yes, that's right. Mrs. Rhodes did fine sewing and embroidery for her friends to help along, monograms on table linen and that sort of thing, it didn't amount to much and she must have been very anxious about Elinor. There seems to have been no one who took any interest, or perhaps she was proud—and shy. She kept her daughter with her and sent her to school. And one day Elinor came in with Edwin Malloy—he was a young clerk in the corner drugstore—and she had married him. Now remember, Rachel, I'm simply telling you the story I heard. I never met Mrs. Rhodes. Even so, I can understand what a shock this marriage was for her. If she'd had the means she probably would have had it annulled, because Elinor had lied about her age. But she could do nothing, so she took them into their cramped apartment to live with her. And from the first they weren't happy, nothing went right. Your father was apparently just a good-natured, good-looking boy with almost no education and no family, he made very little money, he wasn't ambitious, he wasn't clever. Mrs. Rhodes detested him and kept lamenting the marriage all the time, and there was Elinor herself with her beauty and her youth and her pliable unformed nature—you can see them, can't you?"

"Yes. It must have been tragic. For all of them."

"Tragic and pitiful. You must remember this of your mother, Rachel; she was very young and had married where she had no chance of being happy, not even ordinarily contented—"

"Mother, you're apologizing for her!"

"I'm not apologizing, but I want you to understand her. I'll go on. They were married in June, 1915, and they stuck it out through the summer. Then Elinor discovered that you were coming and she was so frightened and her mother so angry that your father—you see, he was young too and not the sort to face anything hard and difficult, so—he ran away."

"Deserted her! But that was foul!"

"I think it was the best thing he could have done, he wasn't their kind, there was no way to work it out and—well, anyway he went. Like a good many other unsettled young men he went over to France—this was before America went into the war, remember—but he found a place as orderly in one of the hospitals and in January he came down with pneumonia. Edwin Malloy died in France and you weren't yet born. So there was poor little scared Elinor and her mother struggling along with hardly any money, anxious and not very well, not knowing what in the world they'd do with a child to bring up—it was desperate for them all."

"I can see why I wasn't welcome."

Anne disregarded this. "And when at last—no, I must put in a little here about Harry and me. I had gone to the hospital a few weeks before Elinor did, of course I knew nothing about her then, I'd never even heard of her. My baby died as soon as it was born, Rachel, and one of my nurses inadvertently let me know that I could never have another. So I—I was very ill, I don't think I'd have tried to get well except for Harry, he was so wonderful to me, he put aside all he was feeling and just took care of me. When Elinor was brought in I didn't see her, she was put into a ward and I was in a private room, but we both had Dr. Ayres; he'd known Mrs. Rhodes in her prosperous days and she had gone to him and begged him to take care of Elinor and poured out her troubles, so then, do you see, with my disappointment and grief for my baby and this lovely healthy child—you—

who—"

(TO BE CONTINUED)



"It Must Have Been Tragic."

ness, pulled her white sweater down and adjusted her belt. She watched Anne from the corners of her eyes. At last she went over to the desk and sat on the edge of it. "Aren't you almost done?"

"There are ever so many more."

"Are you checking every item?"

"Yes, of course. Why don't you take a last swim? Where's Bob? I thought he asked you to go out in his boat?"

Rachel swung her feet obstinately. "You're stalling, mother. You want to get away without telling me a thing. It's no use. Bob's gone out alone and I'm not having a swim. You can just come out of that mess of eggs and potatoes and cords of wood and talk."

"Rachel, I've always told you that when you were twenty-one, if you wanted to hear—or before, if there was good reason—"

"There's plenty good reason. You're going abroad and Great-aunt Helene may hang on to you for ages!"

"If I stay more than six months you can join me: You know that."

"Don't evade. It's only another year till I'm twenty-one and I'm just as mature and sensible now as I will be then. The way you act I'm beginning to feel as if there was something perfectly rotten—"

Anne Vincent's protesting hand stopped her. "Darling, no! Don't say such things. There's nothing rotten or foul or poisonous or any other of your favorite bad adjectives about it—really. Give you my word."

"Then why do you want to hold out on me?"

"Maybe I'm a little jealous."

"Mother, darling lamb, don't be rick. Jealous of what?"

Anne's grasp tightened. "I'm afraid I'm jealous of your interest in your real mother, Rachel. I'd like you not to think of her."

"But I don't think of her as my mother. I don't. She's never thought of me as her child, that's evident enough. She was glad to get rid of me. Wasn't she?"

"I can't answer yes or no; it's not as simple as that." Anne considered the sea a moment longer, wondering, doubting, uncertain. If she could only understand Rachel's urgency! Then she resolved. "I see I'll have to explain things, I don't want you to be getting strange notions. Let's go down to the beach; it's so dreary here with everything packed."

They linked arms as they stepped

Find American Flag With 38 Stars; Old Banner Is Presented to a History Class

An American flag which proudly boasted a Union of 38 states, was recently discovered by Boy Scouts in an abandoned building on the bluffs above the Merrimack river, near Fern Glenn, states a writer in the St. Louis Globe-Democrat.

When the 38-starred flag was our national emblem Colorado had just been admitted to the Union, and North and South Dakota, Montana, Washington, Idaho, Wyoming, Utah, Oklahoma, New Mexico and Arizona, were still territories, not yet admitted to the right to statehood. That was in 1876, about 100 years after the birth of the Union had been accomplished through the Declaration of Independence. The flag, however, may have been anywhere from 48 to 61 years old, for the thirty-ninth star came into the

Union with North Dakota, in 1889.

The property upon which the old flag was found was once owned by Captain Schaaf, who died at an advanced age several years ago. He was a noted shot and was associated with the police department as a coach in its target practice. The buildings have long since fallen into disuse and ruin. The discovery was made while the Scouts were using one of them as temporary headquarters for a day of patrol activity.

The union of the flag is in perfect condition. The stripes, however, have been tattered and worn at the ends. Troop 332 has offered to place the flag in the custody of the history class of Maplewood high school, to become the property of the high school unless the rightful owner is found.

AROUND the HOUSE Items of Interest to the Housewife

- Dainty Shoulder Straps.**—When making your undies try using narrow velvet ribbon for the shoulder straps. The velvet side next to the skin acts as a grip, while the satin on top looks dainty. You will find that ribbon-velvet straps will outlast any garment.
- Save the Curtains.**—A finger cut from an old glove and slipped over the end of a curtain rod enables it to be pushed through the curtain hems of the finest net without catching and tearing the fabric.
- For Basting Roasts.**—Leftover fruit juices, especially those from spiced fruits, make excellent basting liquid for roasts, chops and ham dishes.
- In Preparing a Chicken Dinner.**—A live chicken usually weighs a third more than a dressed chicken. Allow half a pound of dressed chicken per person.
- A Combination Dish.**—Two parts of tomatoes simmered with one part of celery makes a good combination dish.
- Devised Cheese.**—One dessert-spoon grated cheese, one teaspoon milk, one pinch celery salt, (optional), cayenne, one-half teaspoon made mustard. Mix all ingredients to smooth paste. Spread on any unsweetened biscuit (cream crackers). Place under a red-hot grill to brown. Serve immediately.
- Raspberry Shrub.**—To three quarts of red raspberries and one quart of sugar add one cup of vinegar. Cook slowly for half an hour and strain through cheesecloth. Pour into sterilized bottles and seal. Serve over ice cubes diluted with water to taste.

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