

# There's Only One

By SOPHIE KERR

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## SYNOPSIS

Preparing to close her summer home and spend the winter in France with a great aunt, Anne Vincent, a middle-aged widow, accedes to the pleas of her adopted daughter Rachel, twenty and pretty, that she tell about her real mother. Anne, an unselfish, understanding soul, finds the task difficult, since she feels Rachel is putting a barrier between them. Rachel learns that her real mother was beautiful eighteen-year-old Elinor Malloy, deserted by her young husband, before Rachel's birth. He was killed in the World war.

## CHAPTER I—Continued

"Who wasn't wanted," put in Rachel.

"—who couldn't be cared for, he, I mean Dr. Ayres, talked to Harry—and then one day they brought you in and put you in my arms and you—you went into my heart, too, my darling, you were my own. You've been my own ever since. Harry loved you, too, in the same way. We asked about adopting you, there wasn't any great difficulty, and so we did it, legally of course, and in the other way too—I mean we adopted you into our thoughts and—hopes and plans and, most of all, into our love.

"Now one more thing, Rachel. I've never brought you to the attention of your mother in any way, I've never even seen her except for our one talk when I left the hospital. I know that she married Peter Cayne, I saw that in the papers, and I know her mother, Mrs. Rhodes, died a little later. Dr. Ayres told me when we were arranging the adoption that Mrs. Rhodes was incurably sick and couldn't live long. So there was one reason why she was so insistent that Elinor give up the child."

"But, mother, didn't Elinor herself mind? Didn't she want to keep me?"

"Rachel, you seem to have a sentimental streak I never noticed before. Darling, physical motherhood is a normal process of nature but it doesn't inevitably carry affection and solicitude with it. Elinor married when she was nothing but a child, her mother drilled and hammered into her all the disadvantages of her marriage and had made you seem a frightful care and handicap. Don't you see? Under other circumstances she might have clung to you through everything."

"How soon did she marry again?"

"That same year, in September."

"Has she any children by that marriage?"

"I believe there's a son."

"She's never asked to see me or tried to get in touch with you—to know about me, mother? Never once?"

"There was a shake of fear in Anne's voice though she tried to keep it calm and even. "No, Rachel. I think she must have accepted the adoption as final, just as Harry and I did. She may have seen you secretly, I don't know. But once you were mine, you were mine, and I no more would have brought you to her attention than I would if you had been born to me. Our ways don't cross. Mr. Cayne has a great deal of money and they figure more or less in the kind of society that newspapers feature, I mean she's always a patroness for some of the big balls and they go to the Riviera or Egypt or Palm Beach in winter, and have a country place in Connecticut, they're not the top, as you young ones call it, but I'd call them fairly prominent. Mr. Cayne's in some sort of machinery business."

"Anne suppressed a tremulous sigh, it had been so different, so much harder than she had ever imagined. The way Rachel had listened, the questions she had asked and their implications—all these stirred Anne with apprehension. What was behind all this? What was going on in Rachel's mind? How far away and strange the girl seemed. It wasn't much more than a week ago that Rachel had suddenly begun to inquire about her parents, the people of her own blood, and had insisted on knowing the truth about them, not much more than a week, and at the very time when their usual easy summer round had been broken into by preparations for leaving the cottage and for Anne's journey to France and the separation it entailed from her daughter."

"It seems to me I've told you all I know, Rachel," she said, dully. "I've tried not to impute motives or make guesses appear as facts."

"I wish you'd tell me again how she looked when you saw her. And I'd like to know what she said, and what you said—exactly."

"I don't know if I can remember exactly what we said, but I'll try. They put me in a wheeled chair because I was still weak, and the nurse wheeled me into the ward. She was sitting up in bed, she had on the high-necked common hospital gown and a blue dressing gown over it, cheap woolly stuff but a lovely color, like her eyes. Her hair was loose, very dark against the pillow. She—she looked at me with a good bit of curiosity and she smiled. She

looked like a child! But what we said was so trivial—"

"Can't you recall any of it?" Anne hesitated, because she must tell Rachel a lie. "I believe she said you were healthy and I—well—I said something about wanting you very much and that I'd take care of you. I told her that I wanted to leave the hospital within the week and hoped that everything could be arranged before I went, and she said her mother would know about that. All the time I was there I was thinking of her beauty, it was so arresting and so—complete. We shook hands when I left and her hand was soft and delicate, yet very alive."

Rachel was gazing down at her own hands, long and strong and brown. "I don't want to know anything more right now," she said. "Mother darling, you were sweet to be so patient. I didn't realize it would be so hard for you."

"She knows more of what's going on in me than I do about her," thought Anne. Then, aloud: "It wasn't so very hard, Rachel. You had to hear it some day, I suppose." She rose and brushed the sand from her skirt. "I'm going back and finish up the bills and tell Mr. Kreel he can use the radio this winter. Coming along?"

"Not right yet. If Bob comes back we might go out and fish a little before dinnertime."

Anne walked back alone over the dunes remembering what Rachel's mother had said that she would not tell Rachel. The little creature had been self-possessed and callous. "It's odd," she had said, "that your baby died and mine didn't. It ought to have been the other way round." Even now Anne could not recall that cool smiling speech without a stab of angry loathing.

## CHAPTER II

Rachel sat still after Anne had left her, she was stirred and excited, she hoped that Anne did not know how much nor how strangely. A faraway hail brought her back to the day and the hour. A little one-lunged boat was put-putting into



"She's Never Showed the Slightest Interest in Me."

the bay and Bob Eddis's red sweater identified it. "Hey," he called, "hey, Rache, over here—" waving his arm toward the side of the beach where landing was easiest. Rachel leaped up and ran to meet him, her white scarf flying behind her like a banner, then, as he steered in close, she snatched off her shoes, waded barelegged through the shoal water and climbed expertly over the side.

"You looked comic running along," said Bob, swinging the boat around. "Your legs are as brown as the sand so your white shoes seemed to be going all by themselves."

"And so what? You need a shave and your sweater's foul and your pants are a disgrace to the whole pant world. Are we going fishing?"

"If you want. I've got bait and tackle."

"How's the engine doing?"

"Terrible, but I guess she'll last the trip."

"Don't let's go out too far. Mother and I have to finish packing this evening."

Bob frowned at this. "Wish you weren't going."

"Wish you'd show some sense and give up your idea of wintering here, like a woodchuck. You could get a job in New York."

"I've got a job here. New York's jammed to the gunnels with bright young men hunting for jobs. I did three months of that last winter and never again, so help me. Set the lines out, we can troll right off the lighthouse and if the engine goes dead they'll see us."

With Rachel intent on the lines and bait Bob could watch her openly and his too-thin, too-old face took

on a young and telltale softness. "She's gorgeous like that," he thought, "one long curving line as clear and clean as marble." Aloud he asked, "What's on your alleged mind?"

"Nothing," said Rachel, twitching at a hook.

"Go on, I know better. What's it all about?"

"Your mother's swell, she's grand, plus ultra. If she was bawling you out I'm with her, a hundred per cent."

"Bob, listen. I wouldn't tell anybody else in the world about this, but I know you won't spill it around. Mother was telling me about my real mother. She's always said she would when I was twenty-one, but a little while ago I got thinking about her going over to France and if anything happened to her I might never know. So I've been trying to get her to tell me and finally she gave in. I can't tell you how it makes me feel, I'm not quite sure myself. I seem to be someone else. Maybe it'll wear off, but right now—

you see I keep on puzzling about them, my real father and mother in relation to myself. What did they give me that was in their natures, what did they have to give? How much am I theirs and how much am I—"

"Why do you think about it at all? You've known all the time you were adopted, everyone's known it. You used to brag about it disgustingly the first summers you came here and make all of us kids feel as jealous as the devil because we'd merely been born. What's all the sudden uproar about? She hasn't written to you or anything, has she, your real mother?"

"No. She's never shown the slightest interest in me, apparently doesn't care whether I'm dead or alive."

"That's what's burning you up, you always did hate being ignored."

Rachel tilted her head cockily. "I never am ignored," she said.

"You rose to that one like a bluefish. Go on, get those lines over and stop beeing. How do you get this way? Look out, that one's twisted."

Rachel applied herself to paying out the lines with perfect calm. "What's burning you up is that we're talking about me and not about you," she said amiably. It had eased her tension to tell Bob, some of the strange bitterness she'd felt was gone. Proportion was coming back to her life.

They stayed silent, absorbed in their catch. At the tenth fish Bob dropped the lines. "That's enough; two for you and one for me and two for the Kreels and five for Mrs. Duffy's boarding-house. Look, Rache, you steer around the lighthouse into the lower bay and I'll get out my trough and clean these fish right now. How's about it, wench?"

"All right. You can come along up and eat with mother and me; there won't be much, for Ada's brother is sick and she hadn't been working for us for three days, just when we needed her most, of course, with all the packing. But there'll be enough, with the fish."

"I'll have to stop in my house and wash and put on clean clothes. Your mother would throw me out if I showed up in these stinking rags."

"Bob, I do think it's dumb of you to stay on here running a town library and doing carpentry and woodwork on the side," said Rachel after a pause.

"That's your theme song, isn't it? Nevertheless I'm going to stay. There's only one bad spot in the program, Rachel, you won't be here. I wish you'd stay with me."

"Oh, Bob, are you going to begin on that again?"

"I certainly am and I shall keep right on till you give in. You think it's dumb for me to stay here in this perfectly grand place and keep on with my work and be independent and not worry about money, but you're the dumb one, going back to New York and racketing round with that crazy crowd, gin and hot jazz

measure the daily precipitation, the wind gauge to determine the rate at which the wind is blowing, the duff hygrometer to determine the inflammability of the surface fuel, the hazard indicator stick to determine the same thing on the heavy slashings, dead trees and large branches; the hazard indicator scale will tell the per cent of moisture content in the slashings by weight, the wind vane the direction of the wind and the psychrometer determines the relative humidity. "The relative humidity," says the foresters, "is one of the most important factors in the control of forest fires."

This new technique will be employed in all national forests throughout the Lake states beginning this year.

The rain gauge will be used to

and wisecracks and a lot of cheap foolishness."

"My heavens, you're full of purity and virtue all of a jump. Don't be one of those tiresome people who find something odd to do and then try to convert everybody else to doing it. It only shows they know it's no good and want to bolster themselves up."

"That's not fair."

Rachel smiled. They had almost reached the pier, first of a row of half a dozen that made the mooring place of Rockboro's fleet. "It's as fair as saying my friends are gin and jazz babies. They're not and you know it. Anyway, I'm going to get a job. And mother thinks it's all right." The boat slid alongside the pier and Rachel climbed out.

"Going to tie up?"

"Yes, catch." He threw the rope and turned to put a tarpaulin over the engine, then set the basket of cleaned fish on the pier and leaped out beside Rachel. "Six o'clock," he said. "Heaps of time."

They sauntered the length of the pier and up from the water front through a short street of small houses and stores to Rockboro's main thoroughfare.

At length they came to a shabby mansard house. "Here's Duffy's. Take out the fish you want to give her and I'll go on with the rest."

"Come into the shed a minute and look at my drawing for a mantel swag. I've got some new wood, too, best pine I've had this year. I'll go through the kitchen and meet you round there." He picked out five fish and disappeared down the side path.

Just beyond Mrs. Duffy's and set well back in her yard was a building which had once been a woodshed and was now Bob Eddis's living quarters and workshop. He had put in windows and painted the outside white with a red roof and red trim, but its original purpose was still obvious. Rachel always felt a tinge of curiosity when she entered the place, it made her see a man who was not in the least like the one who ragged and joked with her, fished with her, danced with her and took her to the movies. This was an austere and ascetic man with his ideas and philosophy organized to his satisfaction. The living room was as bare as a room could be, with white walls and a black floor, two spilt chairs, a black oak table and chest and small bed, this last covered with an exquisite white quilt, the plumed design and fine stitching a marvel of ancient taste and skill. One entire wall was a cupboard in part of which he hung his clothes; in the other the cooking stove and sink, his few pans and dishes were kept compact and hidden. As Rachel looked round it she had an instant's vision of herself living there with Bob, serene, contented, a life without stress, leisurely, thoughtful, tender. "No," she thought, "it's too—adult for me. This isn't a place for youth."

Bob came bursting in from the outside door. "Now look!" he said and pulled down a long elaborately drawn design of a swag in fruit and leaves. "How's that?"

"It's grand. But it'll be awfully hard to carve."

"That was the idea. Anybody can do easy bits." He smiled at her. "You think I'm just a nut, don't you, Rache? You don't see how I can get such a kick out of a piece of wood and a bunch of tools?"

"If you want to hear it again I'm pleased to oblige. I think you're practically everything. Now I'm going home and you skin into clean clothes and come right along."

She saw Anne sitting on the terrace and waved her hand and called to her from the road: "Bob's coming up for dinner and I've brought some fish. I'm going to take a couple over to the Kreels."

(TO BE CONTINUED)

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"I made my version of sheer wool with a subdued herringbone weave. It will be my number one attire for a long spell ahead."

### One Who Knows.

Miss Keep-the-Home-Beautiful, in the center, expresses herself: "Even when I do housework I like to look and feel fit."

"When I dash out to the store or go across lots to the neighbor's to borrow an egg, I don't bother to change my dress because I have the feeling I'm doing all right as I am. I wouldn't think of a new season coming on without running up a generous supply of crisp, fresh dresses for myself. They seem to set one right, you know, and give you the spirit to pitch into any day's work like a champion."

### The Last Word.

Miss Third Party goes in for that new kind of glamour in the simple model at the right. Says

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she: "I feel that Fall is really the season to step out and hob-nob with Fashion and the Joneses. This frock, which is my weakness in plum-colored wool, was as easy to make as it is to wear."

"Later on I'm going to have a velvet version with short sleeves—these slim lines and elegant shoulders were just made for this queen of all fabrics—and evidently I go for things royal."

### The Patterns.

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Pattern 1304 is designed for sizes 34 to 46. Size 36 requires 3 3/4 yards of 35-inch material, plus 1/2 yard contrasting.

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