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JUST A GIRL

BY JANE PHELPS

CHAPTER 62

Harold took me to a restaurant for supper. It was a quiet, inexpensive place, but clean and attractive. I would have enjoyed the good food, and watching the people, had it not been for our meeting Mike and Joe; but that had left me out of conceit with myself and everything else.

We walked part of the way home; then Harold proposed we ride.

"I don't want to tire you all out the first time. I hope to spend many Sunday afternoons with you," he remarked while we waited for the street car.

When he said goodnight he held my hand a little longer than was necessary, and it made me a bit uncomfortable. I didn't want him to make love to me—yet I had him to myself, so few acquaintances that I hated to say or do anything to hurt him.

When I told Mary about meeting Mike and Joe, and what they had said about being on their way to catch, she was furious.

"The nerve of them follows," she exclaimed. "What did that Mr. Moore say?"

"Nothing while they were around. Afterwards he said he would have them arrested if they annoyed us."

"Why didn't he knock them down?"

"He isn't the fighting kind, I guess." I flushed as I recalled my own feelings on the subject.

"Well, I don't care for that sort! He might be all right at that, but if he was my fellow I'd rather he gave them a hit in the jaw himself, than to talk of arresting them."

I laughed at Mary's expression, while I could but acknowledge that I felt much the same.

"I am afraid, Mary," I said after a time, "that meeting me with a man may make them bolder than they have been."

"You mean Mike and Joe?"

"Yes."

"Don't worry! We'll find some way to keep away from them."

"They must live near here somewhere. We may have to move on their account."

"Not on your life! This place suits us, is cheap and decent. We ain't going to be drove out by them two sports."

I, too, felt we should remain where we were. Mrs. Lynch was kind to us; often now she did little things for us—extras that made us feel that somehow she cared about us. It is strange how a little kindness affects one when lonely.

Even a poor, hard-working Irish woman's thoughtfulness helped me at this time, and I was sorely in need of help.

Harold Moore seemed changed after the Sunday I went walking with him. He assumed a protective air, and now he never tipped me. Often, however, I would find a rose by my plate, and once he left two tickets for a lecture at the Y. M. C. A. Mary and I went, and he took us home, although we told him it was unnecessary.

"He'll be asking you to marry him pretty soon," Mary said as we talked about him before going to bed.

"Nonsense!"

"No it ain't nonsense. I saw the signs tonight."

"But Mary, I have constantly refused to be with him. It is nearly three weeks since I went out on Sunday with him."

"That don't make no difference, didn't you tell me he had stopped tipping you when you wait on him? Don't he keep bringing you posies? Ain't I seen he can't half eat his 15 cents worth for watchin' you? He's got it bad, Zena, awful bad."

I don't agree with you, Mary. But if he is serious I am sorry for him, and I must not go out with him any more." I sighed. Even the sort of attention Harold Moore was able to give me had helped pass the time. Now I must send him away.

I wondered if he would feel "Nonsense!"

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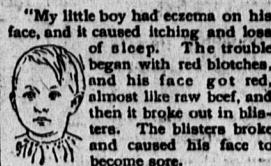
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about me as I did about Kenneth Lawrence. I would pity him if he did. Then, as always, I forgot all about everything in thoughts of Kenneth.

HAROLD MOORE'S KINDNESS Chapter 63

"Mother was ill. She had made light of her indisposition in her letter, but I was sure she was very seriously ill. I had to go out with him occasionally, encouragement."

"No, Mr. Moore, I cannot marry you," I said in a stilted manner, unlike my usual style. "I would not marry a man I did not love. It wouldn't be fair to him—nor to me."

"My thoughts leaping to Kenneth Lawrence."

"But Zena, I love you so dearly I think I could make you love me if you would trust me."

"No, I cannot marry you. I'm sorry," I added, "sorry if I have done anything to make you think I care. I have not meant to. I have enjoyed your friendship, but I cannot marry you."

"You have done nothing with which you should reproach yourself. I have cared so much that I have perhaps magnified your kindness to me. You are sure you cannot care ever?"

"Quite sure."

"I was a bit piqued that he took my refusal so calmly. I never let him suspect it. I was very young, but I had a romantic and sentimental side of me. You are sure you cannot care ever?"

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Sun and Wind Bring Out Ugly Spots, How to Remove Easily

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Simply get an ounce of Othine—double strength—from any druggist and a few applications should show you how easily it is to rid yourself of the homely freckles and get a beautiful complexion. Rarely more than one ounce needed for the worst case.

Be sure to ask the druggist for the double strength Othine as this strength is sold under guarantee of money back if it fails to remove freckles.

A PROPOSAL

Chapter 64

"Zena—may I call you that?" "The without waiting for an answer. "I may be presumptuous, but Zena, I love you! I am poor, but I have just had my baby raised. I could not have had the courage to tell you otherwise, and—Zena, will you marry me?"

Harold Moore waited for my answer.

I had consented once again to spend Sunday afternoon with him. We were sitting on the same bench where we had rested on that first Sunday I had gone out with him. In spite of Mary's warnings, I was surprised and a bit shocked. I knew I had no love for Harold Moore, but perhaps he had considered my friendly manner, my consenting to go out with him occasionally, encouragement."

"No, Mr. Moore, I cannot marry you," I said in a stilted manner, unlike my usual style. "I would not marry a man I did not love. It wouldn't be fair to him—nor to me."

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as good as most of them do. Often, as in my case, it is impossible for them to meet either young men or young women who are capable of being of help to them. And all work and no play is a hard life for a young girl or boy. In my case, my early life, my family, kept coarse, common pleasures from appealing to me.

But there are many poor girls who have had no early advantages, many who have little or no education save that of the shop and streets. Yet they keep themselves wholesomely good, and often resist temptation that would give them comfort and ease from hard work.

Such a girl was Mary Murphy, and I considered myself fortunate to have met her. Aside from the companionship which I enjoyed, she stood between me and many unpleasantnesses, a buffer for me in many ways.

Had it not been for her I could not have endured my life at times. DISSATISFACTION

Chapter 65

Often I said to myself that if only I could find it, there must be something different I could do. I was out of all notion that my fashionable education might be of some help to me, but I accepted as if a girl of good appearance, possessed of common sense and honesty, might do better things than wait upon people in a cheap restaurant.

But I dared not throw myself out of employment, and I could not look for anything better, while the restaurant I had not the strength. At times it seemed that I never could go on, I was so exhausted. And yet I did better than at first. To get home, crawl into bed as soon as I possibly could—nearly always I had something to do, mending, washing, something for the next day.

"I am tired all the time, so I had little courage to look for anything better, though the thought was almost constantly in my mind."

Mary was, I think, perfectly satisfied. She often said it was easy compared to the sweat shop work, making me wonder what that could have been like. But she knew I was dissatisfied, and seemed to think it only natural that I should be.

"You ain't been used to it, Zena, and I have. You see, she gets used to hard work when she don't blame you a bit for wanting to get something easier."

"It isn't the 'something easier' so much, Mary—albeit this is terribly hard at times—as it is that I can't see any future in it. I only earn enough to keep me going, and earn Mother so little I am ashamed because of Aunt Susan. If I could get into something where by hard work I could improve my position, I would feel better about things. But I feel terribly discouraged at times."

"Don't wish you'd married Moore, do you?"

"No, I never think of him. I did think of him once in a while, but only to wonder if he really cared, and if I had hurt him."

"Keep a stiff upper lip, Zena. Some things will turn up. Something he'll hate to see you fret. I often caught Mary watching me, closely, and I knew she felt anxious when I worried. I had grown very thin, and had lost my color. But I was well enough, and told her frequently that I didn't want to be fat."

"You'll slip down a crack in the sidewalk if you get any thinner," she said in reply. "I'd hate to have you disappear like that. Folks might think I had put you out of the way because I was jealous of your good looks."

"I haven't any nowadays, so don't worry on that score."

"Yes—you are pretty, Zena, but you look so worn out."

"I am worn out. But so are you, and so is every girl who works as hard as we do. So don't think anything about my looks. Just help me think of some way to find something different to do—something where I can advance by hard work."

"All right, I'll set my think tank to work. But—why I should hate to stay there with you, and—"

"I'm not gone yet!" I interrupted. "Then when I asked Mary what she had intended to say, she acted embarrassed and answered: 'Oh, nothing!'"

Mother wrote begging me to try and come to them for the holidays, so increasing my depression. I replied that it was impossible, then saved and determined in every way possible so that I might send her and Aunt Susan a nice remembrance.

"I guess it is good for us to have our mothers to take care of," Mary said as we planned for the money. But since it queer that we should both have a mother to work for?"

"It is rather strange that we should have found each other, but as for working for our mothers, I imagine many girls do the same. And why shouldn't we, Mary? They worked for us, took care of us when we were little and needed them. Turn about is only fair."

"I'd like to know your mother, Zena. I think she must be a great lady."

"What makes you think that?"

"Because if she wasn't, you'd be different—more like me."

"I only hope Mary I may be as good as that, are," I replied, and I meant it. Mary Murphy was good all thru—a true friend.

MARY'S PROMOTION

Chapter 66

I always felt uneasy and miserable whenever Mr. Watkins, the manager of the restaurant, was near me. He had asked me to go to the theatre once or twice, and for a motor car ride. I had gone once to the theatre, but refused to accept his invitation to ride unless

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Mary went also. Mr. Watkins had been very kind, very polite, to me. I had an uneasy feeling that if I had a chance he would make love to me.

He favored me now, and made things as easy for me as possible. While I appreciated this, I also felt that if he talked of love to me I would have to give up my position so I avoided him whenever it was possible. He was a quick-moving, business-like sort of a man, without much education, but with a good deal of executive ability.

Mary finally noticed his attempts to favor me, and chaffed me unmercifully.

"He's falling in love with you, sure as preaching!" she declared. "Now don't say 'nonsense' as you did about Moore. Remember, I guessed right about him!"

"I hope you are wrong, Mary. I would be very unhappy if you were right. It would mean I would have to leave."

The day after this conversation I thanked Mr. Watkins for something he had done for me.

"I always try to help the girls all I can," he replied. Then, lowering his voice, "But there ain't many like you here."

I felt horribly embarrassed. It may have been that my thoughts showed in my face, for he asked: "What are you thinking about?"

"Oh, nothing!" I returned, but I felt uncomfortable, almost like crying.