

The Girl Who Had No Chance

By MARION RUBINCAM

ANOTHER HEART Chapter 60

"Now tell me all about why you are going away and where and what you're to do," Ruth said to Langley Williams as they started off on the long Sunday afternoon tramp that had become almost a habit with them.

Langley outlined his new work briefly. He was going on to Ohio, where two large factories in one city had sent for him to go over their plants and "reorganize."

"I can see how the efficiency principle works out at home," Ruth said after a short silence. "It's a pleasure to watch mother work for instance. She never makes a false motion or an unnecessary step. She does an enormous amount of housework with very little effort. When father is given any manual work he does it clumsily and badly, though he is the most intelligent member of the family."

"It often works out that way, I think you have a good combination of what, in my work, I call both mental and physical intelligence. Keep up the thing you are doing now. Get your playgrounds in the town and put through the present ideas for clubs and concerts, and I think in the end you'll find organizing social work your career."

"That needs training, too, which I can't afford," she said. "Some social workers are trained. I think you have a talent for it, and can overcome the lack of technical training by reading, and by practising your ideas here in Marketown. By the way, I've gotten the factory here to promise you \$100 for the work you did in getting up the play ground and gymnasium. It's not much but business is bad just now, otherwise I would have gotten more for you."

"I'm grateful for that," Ruth answered. "It's needed at home." "And you can't put it aside toward this business training course you want?"

Ruth shook her head. "They followed a road that led up a steep hill, and went through a sparse bit of woods. On the other side was a broad flat rock shelter from the wind, with the sun pouring full upon it. In this was a place they sat down awhile to talk. Miles of winter landscape spread out before them; the collection of houses that made up Marketown, the river, the railway and beyond, flat meadows that went into a gray mist of distance."

"In a way your work supplies me with a wish you were coming along to investigate some conditions among the factory people I could get you a well paid position doing that."

"I can't leave mother—not with father as ill as he is." There was a little silence again which the girl broke. "I'll miss you, and I'll miss our long walks."

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Do you own freedom from sentimentality? "I'm free from sentiment, as you call it, because I'm in love with another man," Ruth said simply.

"I know that," she knew it the afternoon you came to my office and asked me to take you on a ten mile walk before dinner."

"The man isn't in love with me. That is, he was, but he liked another girl better and married her."

"Does he live here?" "No." "Ruth gave him no further clue and he asked for none. And after a time Langley drifted into talk of his own romance."

"She wasn't a bit like you. She was tiny. She hadn't an idea beyond the next dance or a new dress, yet she was clever enough to give an impression of knowing a lot. She was the essence of every feminine and frivolous. And I adored her. I've knocked around a lot and met all sorts of men and women, but this one—well, she seemed to fit my idea then of everything a woman should be."

Ruth waited wondering about the rest of the story, hating to ask. "She threw me over four years ago to marry a man with a lot of money, and the last I heard she was living in a huge house in Chicago, with four motors and a staff of servants and the finest pearl necklace in the state. Well, God bless her, she wanted that sort of life and she's got it. I used to hope she'd be miserable married for money, but she isn't. For money is about all she wants—money, and all the clothes and the admiration and the luxury it will buy for her."

"Did you hate her a lot?" "You should have," she said. "I hated her for a week, maybe. No, I don't hate her. I can't. I'm no understanding of her. For the image of her as I used to know her—when she was in love with me—that is—keeps coming up between me and any other woman—and I—"

"I don't know why I haven't fallen in love with you," he went on but his tone was so matter of fact that there was no sentiment in it at all. "I admire you and like you more than any girl I have ever known. And yet the thing I've liked best about you is that you're so practical."

"I'll miss you, and I'll miss our long walks." "I'll miss you, and I'll miss our long walks."

for a safe playground for the factory children. In the end of the winter, the Club—grown now to the place where those who were not members were all anxious to join—purchased an old farm a mile from the town, and made themselves a country club too. Ruth, who had been president of the first group, was now made secretary and handled the really important work connected with forming the permanent club, doing up the club house, and working for new reforms.

"I've had my whole life taken from me," she told her father one night as she sat by his bed—for he was in bed most of the time now. "So the only thing to do is to make a new life."

One day she called a meeting of the Civic Committee. "There's no reason why we can't buy up the Main Street Playground, and make it a permanent affair," she said. "And in the evenings in summer have band concerts there. We've a band in town that plays for our dances; we can hire it, or we can get up an amateur orchestra from the town people who can play."

And this, too, was voted on—until, until there had been weeks of delay and discouragement. Not for all big things come slowly.

One day she tramped far out over the fields beyond the town, over the river, and south where there was a rather barren tract of land, and nothing but an occasional shanty. She often took long walks alone, in a way that satisfied her more than if she had gone with some of her friends.

And one day, walking over this uninteresting land, she had the very biggest idea of all—and idea so big that it took her weeks of thinking before she believed its possibilities. And then she wrote about it in detail to Langley.

So the winter wore along, the cold weather turned milder, and March came and was almost over. Ruth was enormously busy—and only happy when she was busy.

A social life was growing up in the town, and Ruth was its centre. She decided every few weeks in the now much worn gray chiffon dress, and she wore the now shabby blue suit to her office, and at home, the wash dresses her mother made. The club voted her salary for her work, and the extra money was badly needed.

"I'll be rich yet," she told her mother when the increase made his appearance. "You'd better be settling down and marrying someone," was the response to this.

"But I don't like any of these Marketown boys—" "If you want to be an old maid, of course," Mrs. O'Neil said, and most viciously. "But your father and I could manage with the two houses if you did marry, and I'd like to see you settled."

Ruth turned away. There was no understanding of her mother. And one day she overheard a girl in the club say—"Well, of course she does all the work, but none of the boys like her much. Men don't like the dreadfully efficient women do they?"



BEST FOR BABY BEST FOR YOU BABY'S OWN SOAP Softening and healing, the flower-fragrant lather of Baby's Own Soap promotes a healthy beautiful skin.

ed to form a determined little point that made her face even more attractively shaped. Ruth was developing into a beautiful woman—but it was not so much the beauty of face and skin and figure, as the beauty of fine intelligence.

And with the spring, the reward of all her work and her loneliness began to materialize. Looking back she traced it to the letter Langley sent in answer to her times called it.

"Your plan seems excellent to me," he wrote. "Of course I'd like to come back and go over that ground again. You'll need a lot of capital behind you, it will take millions to finance such an idea. And, to be frank, there are hundreds of small towns in the country where your idea would apply as well. It's all a matter of getting your money for it in Marketown."

A few weeks later, she had another letter, in which he said he was coming back to Marketown on his way through to New York, and would see her then. So it happened that one Spring afternoon Ruth took Langley out over the flat fields beyond the river—unproductive land that yielded nothing but weeds rocks and mosquitos.

"You see," she began, "I'd like to get our Civic Committee to buy up some of this land, or get a grant of it from the town—which would have to buy it from the men who now own it. It could be bought very cheap just now."

"Then I want the Committee, to the town, to offer it free as factories, perhaps not large ones, but even a few small ones, would help the industry here, we could offer special inducements in the way of water-power and such things. The factories once here, in that way we'll build up our town, of course. The merchants will back us since more people means more trade."

"Of course! I suppose you've been reading of the developments along these lines at the other cities. In New England, for instance. They talked it over for an hour. Then Ruth went on with the rest of her idea.

wards the town. "I'll tell you more tomorrow." "You are a wonder Ruth," the man said in frank admiration of her.

LETTERS Chapter 63

Ruth and Langley spent several afternoons going over the fields beyond the river. The more he talked about it, the more Langley became impressed with the possibilities of Ruth's idea.

"Of course it isn't original," she said, when he praised her. "The idea for the factory playground wasn't original either. I had been reading about such things in magazines. And this idea of model workmen's cottages has been tried before, England has done it, we have been doing it here—"

"It doesn't matter whether you originated the idea or not; you, of all people in this sleepy town, have had the sense to apply it. What good is an idea if it isn't applied?"

"None, I suppose," Ruth answered. "The river is deep enough to float coal barges from the mines above here. That means cheap fuel," Langley speculated. "I say, Ruth, I'll borrow a horse and we'll drive around here until we know this country for a radius of 30 or more miles. I'm getting a lot of ideas. There's plenty of raw material here that could be used—"

One day he came to her with a broad grin on his face. "I'm settling down here in Marketown, Ruth. You may be burdened with me as a neighbor for the rest of your life."

"Are you staying? I'm awfully glad." Impulsively she held out her hand, and they shook. There was not the least touch of sentiment. It was as friendly and as casual as though two men had shaken hands.

"My old factory wants me back he explained. It's not to do any more re-organizing, it's to keep them up to their present efficient standard. They're building the new factory this spring, and they'll double their help."

"That means they'll have to import labor," Ruth remarked. "And that means those vacant Mile End houses will be rented. I think I'll have Mr. Riley take them up and repair them; there's no reason why he can't have them to rent."

Langley laughed. "It seems to me you run Riley's business for him."

the waste fields and offer inducements for factories to come. But this work was slow, and the details were often difficult to work out.

One day, coming in from her office, Ruth found a letter with a New York postmark on it. It was in Myra's hand writing.

Ruth had dropped the Weeda. Somehow she could not see them. She could not listen to gentle Mrs. Weed rambling on about Myra and her new duties, without feeling so depressed that she was almost ill for days. So, as tactfully as she could, she broke away from the Weeds' and the Weeds' circle of friends, and little by little, she had lost all track of Myra herself.

The letter sent a little shiver through her, and she hesitated to open it. Why should this come back to her now? Hadn't she built up her own life again on the wreck of that old one? Why should Myra try to come into her thoughts now—now when her new work and her new pleasures were making her forget her consort?

Yet she opened the letter: "I hate losing you when we've been such friends," Myra wrote. "So I told Tim last night I was going to write to you and here I am. Mother says she hardly sees you any more, you're so busy with clubs and civic societies and such. I always knew you would do something grand, I told Tim that."

"I haven't much exciting to tell you, I see Gaby sometimes, but not so much lately. I'm going to have a baby, you know, and it keeps me in, so if people want to see me, they have to come to me. And we have been living way up town because it's cheaper, and we want to save a little. Babies cost a lot. I'm feeling fine—"

Ruth put down the letter with a little sick, sinking feeling. GREAT PLANS Chapter 64

It took Ruth a week to get over the queer little sick feeling that came with Myra's letter. For some time she had almost thought that she was all over her love for Tim and that she had built up her life again.

She knew she was not happy. But then how could she be when money was so hard to make, when her outlook was narrowed by the little town she lived in, when her progress, her career, as she some times called it, was made slow because she had never had a chance. And too, there was the worry over father's failing health—and between her and her mother there was gradually growing a spirit of antagonism.

One by one, her old school mates were marrying. Though she was only 20, she had not even one devoted admirer to her credit, as the other girls would express it. Ruth, they said, was to be an "old maid."

But the girl did not care for this though she was conscious of the comment. She went about her work and built up her plans, and decided that men and love would have no part in her life.



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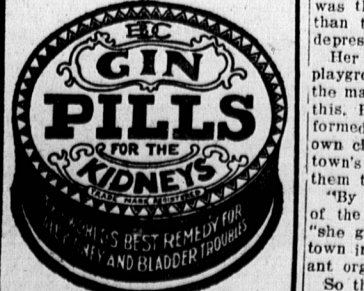
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ALONE Chapter 61

Langley Williams went away with a cordial friendly handshake. And Ruth went on with her work and her reading, conscious that her mother was bitterly disappointed. But the only thing that she said was—

"I did think he might be a little in love," this was by her mother. "Not a bit—neither he nor I. And after all, Mother, I have so much work I want to do that being in love would only interfere. And her mother said nothing more. Every week or so a short letter would come from Langley, telling the work he was doing and offering ideas as to things Ruth might do."

And so that long winter passed. It is necessary to give only a short account of it, though a great deal really happened. Ruth grew nervously tired of the office, where so little happened so she began making a personal investigation of all the houses her employer handled, and she made a list of necessary improvements.

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Mrs. OSCAR A. ANDERSON, Box 15, Leslie, Sask.

WITH THE SPRING Chapter 62

Looking back over her life Ruth decided that its crisis was reached that winter. Never before had she been so much alone. During the previous year she had been through a winter of doubt, and a summer of sad conviction—over the loss of Tim's love. But with his marriage to Myra, something was snapped in her, she could not tell what. Later she knew it was the nervous tension she was under, and that from the moment he was finally married, finally and absolutely separated from her, she began to feel better.

This next winter she worked harder than ever before, harder even than when she tried to run a large rooming house without any help. Her young face grew more serious and more mature, a little taller and a little slimmer, her hair had become more brown than blonde, and she had become greatly indefinite, seemingly.

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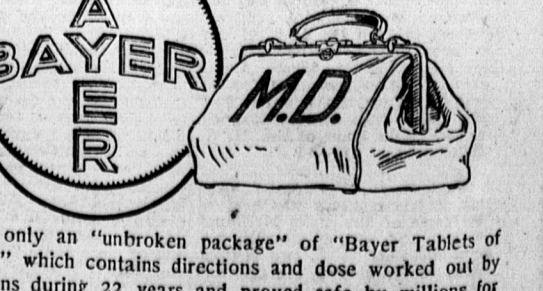
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