

JUST A GIRL BY JANE PHELPS

DETERMINATION FOLLOWS ENCOURAGEMENT

CHAPTER 50. We went directly home. I was frightened, nervous, utterly miserable—I felt sure the most miserable girl in all the world.

"I don't know what I would have done if I had been alone and that fellow had spoken to me," I said to Mary. She had come into my room—to return my call, she said.

"I'm glad to see you," she said. "I've been thinking about you a good deal since you left."

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A STRANGE HELPFUL FRIENDSHIP

Chapter 51.

Mary had been in the house only half a day and yet I already was beginning to feel a dependence upon her. Just before she had bade me good night she said:

"I ain't tryin' to make you tell me nothin', Zena Stewart, and don't go thinkin' so. But I know some-thing's worryin' you. Don't do it! Grit your teeth and tell them all to go straight to—you know where. A girl has to be poor and needs work. And don't give in to the blues. They're bad for you. And don't let freshies worry you neither. They can't hurt you."

"Oh, but it does hurt! Just to think they take me for that kind of a girl hurts. You see, Mary, I had a wonderful father. I loved him dearly. He used to say he wanted his girl to be good, really good, more than anything else. I think if there was nothing else that would always keep me good—to please Dad. And when I think people doubt me in any way it makes me terribly unhappy."

"You mustn't let it! You can't have everything in this world. You can't be poor and thin-skinned too. Some folks expect an awful lot," she said this so comically that I laughed.

"That's right, laugh a little! It sorts of helps a lot to laugh. A girl has to have a little fun once in a while even if I have to make it for a certain one I know."

"Will you come in and have a cup of tea with me in the morning?" I asked. "I make it myself."

"I'll be here with my hair in a braid!" she declared. Then ran away to her room.

"I'm so glad she came to-day," I said aloud after she left me. I could not have got thru the day alone.

But I soon forgot all about Mary Murphy in thinking of other things. My quest for work, Mother—and Kenneth Lawrence. What would this man who talked about not being able to breathe in cities, think if he knew of my having been suspected? I sat down and wrote him a letter, giving him my address, but saying nothing of my changed circumstances. An address would mean nothing to him as far as having any idea of the locality went.

But after I had written that letter, I tore it up. I would not put him in the position that such a letter would. If I couldn't be perfectly honest with him, I would have nothing to say to him—ever.

Thoughts of Kenneth Lawrence were near and dear to me. I had been wondering until almost morning, trying to see just a little way into the future; trying to brace up my determination to win success and money for a home for mother.

I thought, too, of that flashy young fellow in the restaurant. Would I have that sort of thing too in my life? Mary said I would—that she did. But he never had spoken to me when alone. I would tell Mary she must be more quiet in public. I was sure she would not be offended.

I wondered what Mother would think of Mary. She WAS funny. Dad would understand. He would have appreciated loneliness, and all that it meant to me. He would know and understand the longing for companionship which made me grasp eagerly at the offer from the first young girl I had met, even though she were an uneducated girl like Mary. If her heart were all right, Dad would never cavil at any deficiencies of education.

Before my tea was quite ready, Mary came in:

"Oh, I forgot to rap. I ought to, oughtn't I?"

"Yes, Mary. I am afraid you ought to. The fear she would think I was trying to correct her, I added: "Mother never allowed me to go in anyone's room without rapping, not even her's or Dad's."

Without a word Mary went out into the hall, and rapped on the door.

"Come in," I said laughing. "The top of the mornin' to yeest!" she affected a brogue.

"Oh, how good it seems to have some one of my own age near me, I could not help saying. "I have been so lonely, Mary. You see, I don't know a soul in Chicago."

"Well, you do now! And I'm mistaken if it wasn't the best thing Mary Murphy ever done when she beat Mrs. Lynch down 50 cents and took that room. I don't mean best for you—I wouldn't be so bold. But best for me. I ain't never had any chance to talk to a girl like you before. I didn't sleep a wink wonderin' if I ever could learn to sling the language the way you do—so natural like too."

"Of course you will! I'll help you, teach you all I can if you want me to."

"Want you to? Why I'd go down on my knees and thank you if you'd do that. You don't know how I want to know things."

CHAPTER 52. Mary drank her tea, ate a roll and hurried away. I dreadfully wanted to tell her to make her hair smooth, and to sew the buttons of her shoes but didn't dare for fear she would be hurt.

"I'll wait until I have known her longer," I said aloud as I cleared up our breakfast dishes—two cups, two spoons, and two knives—then I'll try to have her make herself neat. She does look so careless, and she wouldn't be half bad looking if she were neater."

But, as on the night before, I soon dismissed thoughts of Mary Murphy to think of my own affairs.

"How I wish I could have office work. I would not be obliged to see so many people, or to stand all day."

"Beggars mustn't be choosers," I grumbled as I started out. I had the cheap collar and cuffs on, and had taken a light wing out of my hat, a Fifth Avenue chapeau, that looked stylish even after I had done so.

I had my list of stores in my pocket. I left the car at what I judged to be the nearest point to one of them. As I hurried along the street, I passed a white-fronted eating place. There was a large sign in the window:

"Waitresses wanted—good pay." I hesitated before the window. Could I wait upon people? Would I earn more? I knew that \$8 would be as much as I could get in any department store to begin with—perhaps not that, as I knew in the one I had left that girls who commenced at the notion counter only received \$6. I had been fortunate—so I had thought—to be assigned to wait!

"Do you want work, miss? a man I had noticed in the doorway said to me.

"Yes, I am looking for work," I replied as I moved toward him.

"Come in, please. I am the manager."

I followed him into the place—a big room with long tables set up, chairs each side. A few belated customers were eating their breakfasts, and the girls in white dresses and canvas shoes were scurrying back and forth waiting upon them.

He took me into a tiny room at the back, with "Manager" in large letters on the door.

"Have you ever worked in a restaurant?" he asked.

"No, sir, but I think I could please you. I would try—that is, if the pay is as large or larger than in a store. I was on my way to one when I was attracted by your sign."

"I was becoming glibful. While I had not said I was sure of work in a store, I had implied it."

"We pay \$8 and your meals."

The food had looked good, and the smell of the cooking really made me reel hungry. Then the manager looked kind, although he had a harassed look also.

"I am greatly in need of waitresses," he said as I remained quiet.

"I had expected to hear the words references and experience. I was not disappointed."

"Where have you worked? And what are your references?" he asked as I still hesitated.

"I only just came to Chicago a few days ago. I have no references. But I am sure I can please you if you will give me a trial." As my chance of the place receded, it became more desirable.

"It is against my principles to hire girls of whom I know nothing, but yes, I will give you a trial if you will come." He had looked at me keenly all through the interview. "You look modest and honest," he added.

"Thank you. I would like to try it," I replied, shivering a little when he said I looked honest.

PREPARING FOR THE NEW WORK CHAPTER 53. I had just about enough money to buy the white dress the management required the girls to wear. But as my room rent was paid in advance, and I would have to spend nothing for food, I decided to risk it.

"You can come at once!" Mr. Harper, as he told his name was, asked.

"In the morning, yes." Then without scarcely realizing that the idea had ever entered my own mind I said:

"There's a girl in the same house with me, she works in a shop now—would you like her to come if she would?"

"If she is neat and willing. You can come at once!"

"The twins got mosquito bitter."

"The twins got mosquito bitter."

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say she has a position now."

"Have her come and see me. You live in the same house, where?"

I gave him our address. He wrote it down carefully, just as some one called him on the telephone.

"Be here at 8 tomorrow morning. You will be given your hours and shown your duties by one of the head waitresses." Then, as he took up the receiver, "Bring the other girl along if you can."

I spent the morning shopping. I bought the cheapest things I could find that would answer. If I didn't suit, or for any reason did not stay with them, I would have no use for a cheap white uniform.

"I have taken a place in a restaurant," I told Mrs. Lynch. I got the same pay and my meals besides.

I was glad to be able to tell her this as it would obviate any questions she might have felt inclined to ask about my leaving her sore.

"It's afraid I am that you will get sick almighty them big trays. You ain't used to doin' hard work, and it's hard work to wait on folks. I tried kaptin' boarders once, and most out of me mind I want their fassin' and wamin' things they wasn't willin' to pay for a tall. Folks is mighty queer when it comes to their stomachs. Then folks what ain't never had nothin' anyway is the worse."

"I'll not get sick," I told her, smiling at her queer talk. Sometimes she spoke quite correctly for a few words. But if she said very much she lapsed into the funniest brogue and pronounced her words in such a funny way that I had all I could do not to laugh at her. And I wouldn't her her feelings for anything.

"I ain't so sure you won't. But you can tell about that after you've tried it."

I mended and washed all the rest of the day. I had now learned to wash my clothes so they looked fairly well. At first they were so queer looking, sort of gray, I hated to have any one see them, and yet I rubbed them clean. But now I had a tiny wash board which I put in the basin, and a box of soap powder, and I took infinite pains, so that they looked fairly well.

I was beginning to have a lot of respect for girls and women who did those things well. I never had given a thought to my beautifully laundered clothes, nor to the maids who did them, any more than to the cook or the servants. Now I dimly realized that all of them had to learn how to do their work so perfectly, and I wondered if they had found it hard, or if, because they were born poor, it had come easily and naturally.

I could scarcely wait for Mary to come home. She told me in the morning that it would be after 6, but that if I wanted to wait for her we would go out to dinner together.

"Not in that place we went last night! That's too rich for my blood. I know a little place what sells grub for half. It's pretty good too."

I had promised to wait, but I could not help wondering if the place were clean. I felt sure Mary would not be too particular. Its cleanliness had been on the attractions of the cafeteria for me.

MARY DECIDES TO GO WITH ZENA CHAPTER 54. "Hurry up, Mary, and get ready"

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for dinner! I have such a lot to tell you!" I exclaimed as I heard her step on the stairs and went out to meet her.

"I'm all ready, come on."

"Oh, you're not going without washing up and fixing your hair, are you?" I asked without thinking.

A slow fush crept over her face. "I never bother!" she replied with an air of bravado, although I easily saw her embarrassment. "But if you think I need to be beautify, here goes for te beauty parlor!"

"I always feel so much better if I bathe my face and brush my hair," I said as a sort of an apology.

"I guess I do too," he replied good naturedly. "Only I'm too lazy or too dog-goned tired to pretty up when I get home. Land sakes, I thought I'd go mad today! That manager found fault with me and I told him where he got off right quick. He needs girls so I can afford to be assey if I feel like it."

"I wish I had some of your grit," I laughed. "I am afraid to say my soul is my own."

"You won't be after you have lived in Chicago while. If there's one thing this pork-packing town learns a girl, it is how to look out for number one. You get to be like the hogs."

"You are too funny for anything, Mary, but do hurry! I want to talk to you, and I can't while you are running around." She had changed her dress—towards she told me it had been because she thought I was ashamed of her looks.

"I'm all ready but my waist."

"Oh, wait a minute! I found one in my trunk today I had almost forgotten I had. If you'll not be insulted, I'll give it to you."

"Insulted at havin' a new waist! Didn't I tell you livin' here made you get hoggish!"

The waist was a rather gay one which, after trying on, I had decided I could not wear.

"I never even had a nightmare that I'd have a waist like this," she said with tears in her eyes.

The waist was very extreme in style and a really lovely shade of blue—very becoming, really to Mary. It suited her blonde hair. Mary could wear it with impunity, and blue eyes admirably. I knew it may seem strange that a waist which would have caused adverse comment had I worn it, could be worn by a girl like Mary. But with her it would simply mean a shop girl's love of fancy. If I should wear it, I had learned to fear it would presuppose something else, something I wanted desperately to avoid. Dad used to say:

"People could do more to stop gossip if they would more carefully avoid the appearance of evil. People do not know our motives; they judge us by our acts."

"Ain't I the goods that?" Mary exclaimed as she preened herself before the glass. "This must have cost a heap," she said soberly after a moment. "You oughtn't to give it to me."

"Yes, I ought to!" I returned lightly. "It looks lovely on you, just matches your eyes."

Mary could say of nothing but the waist until we reached the restaurant only a couple of blocks away. As I feared, it was none too clean, but we went in and found a table. After our dinner had been put on the table I said:

"Now I'm going to talk! Don't you mention that waist again or I'll take it back!"

"Over my dead body, if you do," she chuckled.

"Now listen, Mary, are you especially fond of your work?"

"Fond of it? Lord, how I hate it! You ought to see—"

"Never mind to see. Would you like to work in the same place I'm going to? Of course I don't know how much you earn where you are."

"Nine dollars. I send three home to Ma—Pa's dead, and she ain't none too strong."

"This place only pays \$8, but they give you your meals."

"Oh, it's slinging hash, is it? Well, I guess if I get all my meals given to me, I don't know what it would be better than what I get now. I'd do it anyway just to be with you." She looked affectionately, not at me, but at the waist.

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Mrs. Lilian Taylor Tells How Cuticura Healed Her Baby

CHAPTER 52. Mary drank her tea, ate a roll and hurried away. I dreadfully wanted to tell her to make her hair smooth, and to sew the buttons of her shoes but didn't dare for fear she would be hurt.

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