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The Wall Flower
by Marion Rubincam

Chapter 46
Several things happened before Pandora had lived in the city long.

She found herself possessed of what was her wardrobe of un-dreamt-of luxury. She found herself the mistress of Gloria's household. She was in charge of Francis and the new cook, a huge negress who could get up the most delicious meals, whose intentions of keeping the place clean were always good, but whose inborn laziness was too much for the best of intentions.

"She sees a room as a perfectly round place," Pandora said once with a humorous exasperation. "There are no corners in her world. And she takes a nap every day after luncheon."
"This brought a laugh from Gloria. "Never mind, her muffs are dreams of delight and her roast chicken something to die for," she said. "We take what we can get these days and give thanks. Pandora, do you know my young friend, George has taken a great fancy to you?"

"Has he?" Pan asked in surprise. "Has he?" mimicked Gloria. "Is that so strange?"
"Yes," Pan answered. "For if he does, he's the third person who has."

And at Gloria's incredulous smile she went on:
"My father, who is as little as I and you, who are so very kind and sympathetic."
She did not mention Morton, who was always in her mind, the memory of whom still hurt sorely. But she treasured this new liking in one afternoon a few days later, her eyes lit up with the greatest joy at seeing him.

"But Gloria isn't here, she's not coming home until late," she said. "She's going from her office to dinner and then to the theatre."
"Then you'll ask me to have tea with you?" George said and settled himself down into his favorite cushioned chair.
"That's how our friendship began. How long are you staying?" he asked once.
"As long as Gloria wants me," Pan answered. "But I'm not much use now. Frankie is better and she has a cook. I suppose I'll go back to the farm in the Spring."

The queer depressed feeling came over her again at the idea. The farm—and Gladys—and the baby who would be born in the late Summer; and Morton driving out each day from his office, Grandma White's scolding and her father's restlessness to get away—began closing down on her like prison walls!

"You like Gloria, don't you?" she heard George ask. And at once the prison walls vanished.
"Oh, I adore her," she cried her hands unconsciously clasping together as he said it. "You—you can't imagine what she's been to me. She's the most wonderful woman I ever knew."

George laughed.
"A large compliment."
"But she's just—the girl paused for an adequate word, then added "perfect."
"A little critical expression, applied to her, making the man look fiercer and fiercer again."
"What a thing it is to be young, naive and inexperienced enough to believe still in perfection!" he said. "I don't know whether I envy you the youth that point of view implies, or feel sorry for you because of the bitterness and disillusionment still ahead of you."

"I've had the bitterness and disillusionment," Pan said, suddenly able to talk freely to this man.
"You!"
"Yes."
Then, just as suddenly, her old shyness came back and her self-confidence she had gained fled away from her.
"A man or woman?" George asked.
"Oh, a man." She had to answer. "I never met a woman I could like at all, until I met Gloria. She's been everything wonderful. She couldn't be disillusioning."
George smiled again.
"You still have faith. That proves how young you are. It's only been half a disillusionment."
Pan glanced at him shyly.
He was lounging back in the big chair, his legs straight out in front of him, feet crossed. One hand was thrust in his pocket, one had the inevitable cigarette that he so rarely puffed at, loosely held between his fingers of his finely modelled hand.
He was staring into the fire, not looking at Pan at all.

The girl thought suddenly how tired he was! His eyes had lines at the corners, there were lines at each side of his mouth. She wanted at once to feed him eggs and cream and make him take afternoon naps and long, country walks. She lost forever her shyness of him when she gained a pity for him.

"What had been his disillusionment and disappointment? Gloria? Gloria was married she knew. "You are in love with Gloria," she thought out loud.
A CONCERT
Chapter 47
"Have you found that out all ready?" George asked and smiled at her. "We're all in love with Gloria."
Pan took her hand from her mouth, where it had flown the instant she realized her thoughts and been expelled aloud.
Of course! She knew. George was in love with her friend. Who could help it?
She felt awfully sorry for him. He must be unhappy about it.
George meantime did not seem particularly unhappy, he seemed rather amused.
"You're a naive child," he said finally. "Do you like music?"
"No," Pan answered. "That is I never hear any. I like dance records on phonographs well enough, because they don't try to be anything but tunes in a special sort of time, but I don't care for the classical things."
Then she added:
"I ought to. Aunt Maude says I haven't any musical sense, because I didn't like the way our piano teacher played at her concert."
"It shouldn't either," George answered and Pan felt suddenly justified in her dislike of Miss Ehrbridge's hurry-scurry rendering of various "classical" selections.
"There's a nice concert tonight," George went on. "Better come with me. We'll have a bite of dinner first in a quiet little restaurant I know of."

Not for worlds would he have missed the chance of taking this young girl to her first concert! George had lived in a world of women who had read and travelled flirted, intimated and tasted most of the experience of life—until most of them had lost their capacity to enjoy living. At least they had been educated beyond the enjoyment of simple pleasures.
He was rewarded beyond his greatest hopes.
He would have been sufficiently rewarded by the joy that lit up Pan's dark eyes and the flush that came into her pale skin. Think of being asked to dinner in a restaurant with a fascinating man! It was the first time this had happened to her.
George wisely took her to a tiny French restaurant where they served simple table d'hôte meals and where Madame knew most of her customers. It was, of course, quite grand to the child new to the city.
The big concert hall awed her. She listened, entranced, to the well modulated buzz that rose from a couple of thousand throats.
"Isn't it pretty," she whispered. "It sounds like the hum of bees in the sun."
George smiled. The buzz of talk before a concert always annoyed him. Suddenly however, he found the gigantic humming—not pretty but at least bearable.
New York that Winter had the best music in the world and this was one of the most famous orchestras with a conductor of international reputation.
"She's getting the finest of everything for a first taste," he thought. "I wonder how she'll take it."

Then when the symphony started to reach his ears, he lost himself as he always did in the soaring sweeping melody of the symphony.
There was a symphony, an intermission, then a shorter piece, and a dramatic close with a Scriabin's overture in music, ecstasy so great as to be almost unbearable. As the music rushed to its crescendo, with strings, brasses, woodwinds and drums and over all the echoing notes of the organ, the girl's hands gripping the arms of her seat so tightly that the bones stood up from the flesh.
He turned ever so slightly. Pan was staring ahead with flushed face and wide eyes, her chest rising and falling with her quick agitated breathing. When the last note echoed away, or rather melted into the thunderous applause, Pan was crying.
"You poor child," George said and laughed a little. "I shouldn't have started you off on something so emotional. Come along, I'll take you home and tell Gloria to put you to bed."
Pan wiped her eyes and protested and apologized. She felt she had utterly disgraced herself.
"I'm sorry," she kept repeating. "Don't be sorry for being youthful and emotional, George said. "Be glad you can feel things so."
Pan didn't understand. The concert had given her a violent headache, she couldn't understand that either, because she loved it. Gloria was in when they returned and she gladly went to bed and left them talking in the living room.
"A strange little creature," George remarked. "A bundle of nerves and fears, starved for self-expression, starved for beauty and knowledge."
You'll do her good, Gloria you're the sort of stimulating mental tonic she needs. I'm not sure whether she'll do you good though, she'll be a responsibility!"

THE LIGHT BREAKING
Chapter 48
Gloria drew her feet up under

BEECHAM'S PILLS
for Sick Headaches

Cinderella and her coach. Pan which he preferred to pictures of about old masters and their works studded at last before the gem of collection, a Raphael Madonna at the top of the stairs.
"My head is ready to burst, just like last night," she said. "Why do you suppose that happens when I like these so? I do like them but I can't find a way to say it."
"Silence is often the greatest praise and it never inappropriate," George told her.
"But that—she gestured to the superb picture, "makes me feel sad its so curious."
"You're learning rapidly," George said suddenly. "I think that after all you have the gift of self expression as you have the gift of appreciation."

GLORIA TALKS
Chapter 49
After that first visit Pan took Frank to the picture gallery every day. She read his child's books about the paintings, and found the nearest public library, to get out still more volumes on Flemish or Italian art.
"We did the Dutch school today," Frankie informed his mother with an important air one afternoon when she came in from her office.
"Oh you did? And what do you mean by that?" Gloria asked, pulling him into her lap.
"Frankie explained in detail and with great seriousness.
"Such a learned old man as you are becoming!" Gloria exclaimed laughing.
"Why don't you run and play in the park while Pan acquires wisdom and culture from the old masters?"
"Now you're making fun of me!" Frankie sulked a little, looking at his mother's merry eyes and the smile that showed her dazzling white teeth. "I don't like being made fun of!"
"Oh you don't!" She caught him back as he started to climb away. "Son where is your sense of humor? I believe you were born without one. Shall we play mother bear and little bear?"
"Oh yes!" And the child's seriousness vanished instantly. Instead of looking like a queer little old man he looked again like a small and boisterous youngster. The romping game ended on the floor and when Bobby appeared for tea, Gloria was sitting, flushed and laughing and cheered on by the white Frankie growled at her from the bear's cave under the desk.
"What a versatile creature you are!" Bobby grinned from the doorway. "You can amuse a child as successfully as you can persuade a fat old lady to spend four times what she ought to on her house!"
"The child's the harrier," Frankie called back, fleeing to his room to make herself presentable for tea.

Gloria was alone at home that night, which was an unusual occurrence. For she was so enormously popular that she had more demands on her time than she could meet, and as she tried to go everywhere she was usually rushing from work to play and back to work and again on some frivolous errand to reach bed exhausted long after midnight.
"I've committed the most heinous of all social faults," Gloria moaned that evening when the last tea guest departed. "I've accepted two dinner engagements for one evening; the worst is the people know each other and if I keep one I'll infuriate the other hopelessly."
"So you'd better keep the one I'll call up and say you're ill, which is perfectly true, you look like a ghost," Pan said.
And she phoned two expectant hostesses and was so nice that neither-minded having her well balanced dinner party upset at the last moment.

Gloria, lying on the couch, did suddenly look ill.
Their dinner appeared on its tray and was served on the little low table that did for breakfast and tea as well.
"We have a new cook," Gloria murmured looking at the thin little negro maid disappearing through the doorway. "I didn't know that."
"No, I got her yesterday," Pan said. "She seems all right—you're so busy I didn't want to bother you about it."
Gloria leaned back with a tired, lithe smile.
"What a competent girl you are!" she murmured. "Why do you call yourself stupid? My house and my son have been perfectly managed ever since you came here—"
"It takes no intelligence to run a house and family," Pan interrupted.

"It takes more than most women give to it!" Gloria answered quickly. "Pan, you have the knack of making a place homelike. Believe me, it's a great gift and a rare one. Why do you envy these women who come to my tea parties, with their smart frocks and ready talk?"
"They know so much, they're so clever!"
"They know a very limited amount about most things, but they've been trained to talk as though they knew more than they do—that's their only cleverness. When they buy a house, they hire me to paint and furnish it because they haven't originality or taste. When they want clothes, they go to my equivalent among the dress-makers, and have clothes made for them, as they have their homes designed for them. Their amusements come ready made in the form of theatres, and half of them have orders with booksellers to send

them the fashionable books each week, so even their ideas come ready made!"
Pan laughed at this. She piled wood in the fireplace when the meal was over, and going to Gloria's desk began sorting the business and social letters that were piled on it, making a pencilled list of future engagements. Later she found a blank book, and by writing, in days and dates, turned it into an engagement book.
"I'll buy you a real one tomorrow," Gloria suggested, watching her.
"Why will do, why spend unnecessary money?"
Gloria laughed a little. There was a silence while Pan worked busily, making a special pile of letters to be answered.
Suddenly Gloria remarked, "I heard from my husband today."

A STORY
Chapter 50
The girl had often wondered about this mysterious "husband" she had a natural curiosity and a great deal of sympathy for Gloria when she thought of it.
So she kept still now, hoping her friend would go on. So as not to disturb her, she kept on with her writing, carefully making up the blank book with days and dates for months ahead.
"He thinks he may come over to America," Gloria went on.
"Is he—I mean, I didn't know he was away," Pan murmured.
"The last I saw of him and of Europe was when I left him," Gloria said. "And I hope I never see a foreign country again as long as he's living there."
She was quite changed when Pan glanced at her. She looked old around her mouth, which had hardened into a tight line. The fine wrinkles about the eyes were plain now, though they were usually hardly noticeable, her skin was so firm and clear. But Gloria was the curious sort that could age ten years in as many minutes, and then could throw them off as easily as she could toss her head, under the exhilaration of excitement.
She wanted to talk now—the fire, the comfort of the couch, the warmth of the rug Pan had thrown over her knees, the quiet little listener, drew her on to confidences.
"The odd thing was that yesterday I passed the minister that married us."
"He stopped me and asked me how Frank was? Fancy, it was like raising a ghost! I couldn't hurt him, so I said he was well. I've no doubt it's quite true. He asked where we were, and I said that Frank was in Paris on business, just now."
She stopped and laughed a little.
"He probably is, but his business would be mostly with some of the Folies Bergere girls."
"When were you married?" Pan ventured to ask.
"Ten years ago—when I was old enough to know better. But Frank was awfully charming then. He was in the Consular Service and we went to Tunis. Oh, my dear—a golden sun and a burning sapphire sky, houses painted pink and white and green, and every sort of gay color—and such a garden! You can't imagine how beautiful a tropical garden can be!" Her voice trailed off. Gloria began talking spasmodically, starting sentences, half finishing them, staring into the fire while her eyes saw the terraced gardens, the dazzling white roads, the shaded courtyards of the houses, the smart young men and women who wintered in Northern Africa.

"She told Pan stories of the gay, irresponsible life there, young men who loafed and flirted, young men who slaved for promotion "as much as one can in such a climate," she added.
"And the moonlight! It was too much for poor Frank's head which was never strong when there was a pretty woman around. I did such a silly thing the first time I found him out—we'd been married five months. I was giving a huge dinner that night, and there was a striped awning near a clump of flowering bushes. He'd disappeared with the most beautiful guest—they looked so silly, caught spooning like school boy and girl. But I fainted and he never forgave me."
"But—how awful!" Pan was genuinely shocked. "How brutal!"
"No, quite right," Gloria answered, her face a little hard again.
"There's a sort of code, a sense of good sportsmanship, that applies to everything. I shouldn't have given them away by showing my surprise; I mean I should have let the people away as soon as I knew who was sitting under the

(Continued on Page 11)

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Chapter 48
Gloria drew her feet up under

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