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\*\*\* START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE CINDER POND \*\*\*

# **THE CINDER POND**

**BY**

**CARROLL WATSON RANKIN**

**AUTHOR OF "DANDELION COTTAGE,"**

**"THE CASTAWAYS OF PETE'S PATCH," ETC.**

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**ILLUSTRATIONS BY**

**ADA C. WILLIAMSON**

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**NEW YORK**

**HENRY HOLT AND COMPANY**

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**To**

**SALLIE and IMOGENE**

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**NEXT SHE HAD FLOWN AT HIM AND HAD KISSED BOTH OF HIS BROAD RED CHEEKS.**

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### **THE PERSONS OF THE STORY**

- JEANNETTE HUNTINGTON DUVAL: Aged 11 to 14: The Principal Cinder.  
Small Cinders from the Cinder Pond.  
MICHAEL: Aged 8 to 10  
SAMMY: Aged 4 to 7  
ANNIE: Aged 3 to 6  
PATSY: A Toddling Infant  
LÉON DUVAL: Their Father.  
MOLLIE: A Lazy but Loving Mother.

MRS. SHANNON: A Cross Grandmother.  
CAPTAIN BLOSSOM: A Faithful Friend.  
BARNEY TURCOTT: A Bashful Friend.  
WILLIAM HUNTINGTON: A Grandfather.  
CHARLES HUNTINGTON: A Polished Uncle.  
MRS. HUNTINGTON: A Polished Aunt.  
Their Perfect Children.  
HAROLD: Aged 12  
PEARL: Aged 15  
CLARA: Aged 14  
JAMES: A Human Butler.  
MR. FAIRCHILD: Both Polished and Pleasant.  
MRS. FAIRCHILD: A Grateful Parent.  
ROGER FAIRCHILD: An Only Son.  
MRS. ROSSITER: A Motherly Mother.  
ALLEN ROSSITER: The Family "Meeter."

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—*Frontispiece*

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## THE CINDER POND

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### CHAPTER I

#### THE ACCIDENT

The slim dark girl, with big black eyes, rushed to the edge of the crumbling wharf, where she dropped to her hands and knees to peer eagerly into the green depths below.

There was reason for haste. Only a second before, the very best suit of boys' clothing in Bancroft had tumbled suddenly over the edge to hit the water with a most terrific splash. Now, there was a wide circle on the surface, with bubbles coming up.

It was an excellent suit of clothes that went into the lake. Navy-blue serge, fashioned by Bancroft's best tailor to fit Roger Fairchild, who was much too plump for ready-made clothes. But here were those costly garments at the very bottom of Lake Superior; not in the very deepest part, fortunately, but deep enough. And that was not all. Their youthful owner was inside them.

That morning when Jeannette, eldest daughter of Léon Duval, tumbled out of the rumpled bed that she shared with her stepsister, the day had seemed just like any other day. It was to prove, as you may have guessed, quite different from the ordinary run of days. In the first place, it was pleasant; the first really mild day, after months of cold weather. In the second place, things were to happen. Of course, things happened *every* day; but then, most things, like breakfast, dinner, and supper, have a way of happening over and over again. But it isn't every day that a really, truly adventure plunges, as it were, right into one's own front yard.

To be sure, Jeanne's front yard invited adventures. It was quite different from any other front yard in Bancroft. It was large and wet and blue; and big enough to show on any map of the Western Hemisphere. Nothing less, indeed, than Lake Superior. Her side yard, too, was another big piece of the same lake. The rest of her yard, except what was Cinder Pond, was dock.

In order to understand the adventure; and, indeed, all the rest of this story, you must have a clear picture of Jeanne's queer home; for it *was* a queer home for even the daughter of a fisherman. You see, the Duvals had lived on dry land as long as they were able (which was not very long) to pay rent. When there were no more landlords willing to wait forever for their rent-money, the impecunious family moved to an old scow anchored in shallow water near an abandoned wharf. After a time, the scow-owner needed his property but not the family that was on it. The Duvals were forced to seek other shelter. Happily, they found it near at hand.

Once on a time, ever so far back in the history of Bancroft, the biggest, busiest, and reddest of

brick furnaces, in that region of iron and iron mines, had poured forth volumes of thick black smoke. It was located right at the water's edge, on a solid stone foundation. From it, a clean new wooden wharf extended southward for three hundred feet, east for nine hundred feet, north for enough more feet to touch the land again. This wharf formed three sides of a huge oblong pond. The shore made the fourth side. The shallow water inside this inclosure became known, in time, as "The Cinder Pond."

After twenty years of activity, the furnace, with the exception of the huge smoke-stack, was destroyed by fire. After that, there was no further use for the wharf. Originally built of huge cribs filled with stone, planked over with heavy timbers, it became covered, in time, first with fine black cinders, then with soil. As it grew less useful, it became more picturesque, as things sometimes do.

By the time the Duvals helped themselves to the old wharf, much of its soft black surface was broken out with patches of green grass, sturdy thistles, and many other interesting weeds. There were even numbers of small but graceful trees fringing the inner edge of the old wharf, from which they cast most beautiful reflections into the still waters of the Cinder Pond. No quieter, more deserted spot could be imagined.

Jeannette's father, Léon Duval, built a house for his family on the southwest corner of the crumbling dock, three hundred feet from land.

When you have never built a house; and when you have no money with which to buy house-building materials, about the only thing you can do is to pick up whatever you can find and put it together to the best of your small ability. That is precisely what Léon Duval did. Bricks from the old furnace, boards from an old barn, part of the cabin from a wrecked steamboat, nails from driftwood along the shore, rusty stove pipe from the city dump ground; all went into the house that, for many years, was to shelter the Duvals. When finished, it was of no particular shape and no particular size. Owing to the triangular nature of the wharf, at the point chosen, the house had to ramble a good deal, and mostly lengthwise—like a caterpillar. For several reasons, it had a great many doors and very few windows.

For as long as Jeanne could remember, she had lived in this queer, home-made, tumble-down, one-story cabin; perched on the outside—that is, the *lake* side—of the deserted wharf.

On the day of the mishap to Roger Fairchild's navy-blue suit, Jeanne, having put on what was left of her only dress, proceeded to build a fire in the rusty, ramshackle stove that occupied the middle section of her very queer home. Then, without stopping to figure out how many half-brothers it took to make a whole one, she helped three of these half-portions, all with tousled heads of reddish hair, into various ragged garments.

Perhaps, if all the Duvals had risen at once, the house wouldn't have held them. At any rate, the older members of the family stayed abed until the smaller children had scampered either northward or eastward along the wharf, one to get water, one to get wood.

And then came the adventure.

Roger didn't *look* like an adventure. Most anyone would have mistaken him for just a plump boy in *very* good clothes. He carried himself—and a brand-new fish-pole—with an air of considerable importance. He had risen early for some especial reason; and the reason, evidently, was located near the outer edge of the Duval dock; because, having reached a jutting timber a few feet east of the Duval mansion, he proceeded to make himself comfortable.

He seated himself on the outer end of the jutting timber, attached a wriggling worm to the hook that dangled from the brand-new pole, and then, raising the pole to an upright position, proceeded to cast his baited hook to a spot that looked promising. He repeated this casting operation a great many times.

Unfortunately, he failed to notice that the outward movement made by his arms and body was producing a curious effect on the log on which he sat. Each time he made a cast, the squared timber, jarred by his exertion, moved forward. Just a scrap at a time, to be sure; but if you have *enough* scraps, they make inches after a while.

When the insecurely fastened log had crept out five inches, it took just one more vigorous cast to finish the business. Roger, a very much surprised young person, went sprawling suddenly into the lake. Straight to the bottom of it, too; while the log, after making the mighty splash that caught Jeannette's attention, floated serenely on top.

Jeannette, whose everyday name was Jeanne, promptly wrenched a great fish net that was drying over the low roof of her home from its place, gathered it into her arms, and rushed to the edge of the dock.

She was just in time. The boy had come to the surface and was floundering about like a huge turtle. Jeanne threw a large portion of the big net overboard, keeping a firm grasp on what remained.

"Hang on to this," she shouted. "Don't pull—just hold on. There! you couldn't sink if you wanted to. Now just keep still—keep *still*; I tell you, and I'll tow you down to that low place where the dock's broken. You can climb up, I guess. Don't be afraid. I've pulled my brother out four times and my sister once—only it wasn't so deep. There, one hand on that plank, one on the net. Put

your foot in the crack—that's right. Now give me your hand. There—stand here on my garden and I won't have to water it. My! But you're wet."

Roger *was* wet. But now that he was no longer frightened, he was even angrier than wet. To be saved by a *girl*—a thin little slip of a girl at that—was a fearful indignity. A fellow could stand falling in. But to be saved by a girl!

To make it worse, the dock was no longer deserted. There were folks gathering outside the tumble-down shack to look at him. A fat, untidy woman with frowzy reddish hair. A bent old woman with her head tied up in a filthy rag. A small dark man with very bright black eyes. Two staring children. The morning sun made three of the tousled heads blazed like fire. But the boy's wrath blazed even more fiercely. To be saved *by a girl!* And all those staring people watching him drip! It was too much.

Without a word of thanks, and with all the dignity that he could muster, plump young Roger marched past the assembled multitude—it seemed like that to him—straight along the dock toward the shore, leaving behind him a wet, shining trail.

With much difficulty, because of his soggy shoes, he climbed the rough path up the bank to Lake Street, crossed that thoroughfare to clamber up the exceedingly long flight of stairs—four long flights to be exact—that led to the street above. A workman going down met him toiling up.

"Hey!" the man called cheerfully. "Looks like you'd had an accident. Fell in somewheres?"

There was no response. Roger climbed steadily on. By sneaking through backyards and driveways, he managed at last to slip into the open door of his own home, up the stairs, and into his own pleasant room, where he proceeded, with some haste, to change his clothes.

He owned three union suits. He had one of them on. One was in the wash. The other *should* have been in his bureau drawer—but it wasn't. To ask for it meant to disclose the fact that he had been in the lake—a secret that he had decided never to disclose to *anybody*. With a sigh for his own discomfort, young Roger dressed himself in dry garments, *over* his wet union suit.

"But what," said Roger, eyeing the heap of sodden clothing on the floor, "shall I do with those?"

Finally he hung the wet suit in the closet, with his dry pajamas spread carefully over them. He concealed his wet shoes, with his socks stuffed inside, far back in a bureau drawer.

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## CHAPTER II

### PART OF THE TRUTH

Roger, with his rather long hair carefully brushed, sauntered downstairs to the nicely furnished dining-room, where his mother was eating breakfast. Mrs. Fairchild was a most attractive little woman. Like Roger, she was blue-eyed and fair. She was taller, however, than Roger and not nearly so wide.

"Good morning," said she, with a very pleasant smile. "I guess we're both late this morning. Your father's been gone for twenty minutes."

"Good morning," shivered Roger.

"Dear me!" said Mrs. Fairchild, catching sight of her son's remarkably sleek head. "I do wish you wouldn't put so much water on your hair when you comb it. It isn't at all necessary and it looks *horrid*—particularly when it's so long. Do be more careful next time."

"I will," promised Roger, helping himself to an orange.

"It must have taken you a great while to dress. I thought I heard you stirring about hours ago."

"Yes'm," returned Roger, looking anywhere except at his pretty mother.

"I'm glad you remembered to put on your old clothes, since it's Saturday. But—why, *Roger!* What is that?"

"That" was a thin, brownish stream, scarcely more than an elongated drop—trickling down the boy's wrist to the back of his plump hand. Roger looked at it with horror. His drenched, fleeced-lined underwear was betraying him.

Mrs. Fairchild pushed up his coat sleeve, turned back the damp cuff of his blue cotton shirt, and disclosed three inches of wet, close-fitting sleeve. She poked an investigating finger up her son's arm. Then her suspicious eye caught a curious change of color in the bosom of his blue shirt. It had darkened mysteriously in patches. She touched one of them. Then she reached up under his coat and felt his moist back.

"Roger, how in the world did your shirt get so wet? Surely you didn't do all that washing yourself?"

"No'm."

"Have you been outdoors?"

"Yes'm."

"Watering the grass?"

"No'm."

"Hum—Katie says somebody dug a hole in my pansy bed last night. It's a splendid place for worms. Have you, by any chance, been trying your new pole?"

Silence.

"*Have* you, Roger?"

"Ye—es'm," gulped Roger.

"Did you fall in?"

"Ye—es'm."

"How did you get out?"

"Jus—just climbed out."

"Roger Fairchild! You're *shivering!* And that window wide open behind you! Come upstairs with me this instant and I'll put you to bed between hot blankets. It's a mercy I discovered those wet clothes. I'll have Katie bring you some hot broth the moment you're in bed."

Roger, under a mountain of covers, was thankful that he hadn't had to divulge the important part Jeanne Duval had played in his rescue. All that morning, when his mother asked troublesome questions, he shivered so industriously that the anxious little woman fled for more hot blankets or more hot broth. The blankets were tiresome and he already held almost a whole boyful of broth; but *anything*, he thought, was better than telling that he had been pulled out of the lake in a smelly old fish net; and by a girl! A *small* girl at that.

But, in spite of his care, the truth, or at least part of it, was to come out. The very next day, a small red-headed, barefooted, and very ragged boy appeared at the Fairchilds' back door. He carried a fish-pole in one hand, a navy-blue cap in the other. Inside the cap, neatly printed in indelible ink, were Roger's name and address; for Roger, like many another careless boy, frequently lost his belongings.

"My sister," said Michael Duval, handing the cap and the pole to the cook, "sent these here. She pulled 'em out of the lake—same as she did the fat boy what lives here."

"How was that, now?" asked Katie, with interest.

"Wiv a fish net. It was awful deep where he fell in—way over *your* head."

"Wait here, sonny. I'll tell the missus about it."

But when Katie returned after telling "Missus," she found no small red-headed boy outside the door. Michael had turned shy, as small boys will, and had fled. Neither Katie nor Mrs. Fairchild, gazing down the street, could catch a glimpse of him.

But Mrs. Fairchild managed to extract a little more information from Roger, now fully recovered from his unlucky bath.

Yes, the water was deep—ten miles deep, he guessed—because it took an awful while to come up. Yes, he had been pulled out by *somebody*. Perhaps it *might* have been a girl. A *big* girl. A perfectly tremendous girl. A regular giantess, in fact. She had reached down with a long, *long* arm, and helped him up. A fishnet? Oh—yes (casually), he believed there *was* a fish net *there*.

"Where," asked Mrs. Fairchild, "*was* that dock?"

"Oh, I dunno—just around anywhere. There's a lot of docks in Bancroft—a fellow doesn't look to see which one he's *on*."

"But, Roger, where does the girl *live*? We ought to do something for her. I'm *very* grateful to her. You ought to be too. Can't you tell me where she lives?"

"Didn't ask her," mumbled Roger. "I just hiked for home."

"And you don't know her name?"

"No," said Roger, truthfully. "I didn't ask her *that*, either. I'm glad I got my pole back, anyhow."

"Roger," said his mother, earnestly, "hereafter, when you go fishing, I shall go with you and sit beside you on the dock and hold on to you. Another time there might not be a great big, strong girl on hand to pull you out. We *must* thank that girl."

"I *hate* girls," said Roger, who had finally escaped from his persistent mother. "And *small* ones—Yah!"

The girl that he thought he hated most was eleven years of age, and small at that. Yet, because of her carefree, outdoor life, she was wiry and strong; as active, too, as a squirrel. Also, she did a

great deal of thinking.

Little Jeanne Duval loved the old wharf because it was all so beautiful. She liked the soft blackness of the cindery soil that covered the most sheltered portions of the worn-out dock. She liked the little sloping grass-grown banks that had formed at the inner sides of the dock, where it touched the Cinder Pond. She liked to lie flat, near the steep, straight outer edge of the dock, to look into the green, mysterious depths below. *Anything* might be down *there*, in that deep, deep water.

The Cinder Pond was different. It was shallow. The water was warmer than that in the lake and very much quieter. There were small fish in it and a great many minnows. And in one sunny corner there were pollywogs and lively crawfish. Also bloodsuckers that were not so pleasant and a great many interesting water-bugs.

Then there were flowers. Wherever there was a handful of soil, seeds had sprouted. Each spring brought new treasures to the old dock; each year the soil crept further lakeward; though the planking was still visible at the Duval corner of the wharf.

The flowers near the shore were wonderful. Pink and white clover, with roses, bluebells, ox-eyed daisies, black-eyed Susans, wild forgetmenots, violets. And sometimes, seeds from the distant gardens on the high bluff back of the lake were carried down by the north wind; for, one summer, she had found a great, scarlet poppy; another time a sturdy flame-colored marigold.

What she liked best, perhaps, was a picture that was visible from a certain point on Lake Street. That portion of the so-called street, for as far as the eye could reach, was *road*—a poor road at that. There were no houses; and the road was seldom used. From it, however, one saw the tall old smoke-stack, outlined against the sky, the long, low dock with its fringe of green shrubbery reflected in the quiet waters of the Cinder Pond; and beyond, the big lake, now blue, now green, or perhaps beaten to a froth by storm. Jeanne *loved* that lake.

Seen from that distance, even the rambling shack that her father had built was beautiful, because its sagging, irregular roof made it picturesque. Jeanne couldn't have told you *why* this quiet spot was beautiful, but that was the reason.

On the portion of the dock that ran eastward from the Duval house, there were a number of the big reels on which fishermen wind their nets. These, seen from the proper angle, made another picture. They were used by her father, Barney Turcott, and Captain Blossom. Barney and "Old Captain," as everybody called Captain Blossom, were her father's partners in the fishing business. Two of them went out daily to the nets, anchored several miles below the town of Bancroft. The third partner stayed on or near the wharf to sell fish to the chance customers who came (rather rarely indeed) on foot; in a creaking, leisurely wagon; or perhaps in a small boat from one of the big steamers docked across the Bay.

Jeanne's playfellows were her half-brothers Michael, aged eight, Sammy, aged five, and Patsy, who was not quite two. Also her half-sister Annie, whose years were three and a half. Jeanne and her father were French, her stepgrandmother said. Her stepmother, Mollie, and all her children were mostly Irish.

"But," said Jeanne, a wise little person for her years, "I love those children just as much as if we were all one kind."

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## CHAPTER III

### JEANNETTE'S QUEER FAMILY

Although it was picturesque, the Duval shack was not at all nice to live in. Perhaps one person or even two *neat* persons might have found it comfortable, but the entire, mostly untidy Duval family filled it to overflowing. The main room, which had been built first, was kitchen, parlor, and dining-room. It contained a built-in bunk, besides, in which Mrs. Duval slept. South of it, but with no door between, was Léon Duval's own room. Around the corner, and at some little distance, was a fish-shed. North of the main room, toward land, there was a small bedroom. North of that another small bedroom. Doors connected these bedrooms with the main room and each contained two built-in bunks, filled with straw.

Jeannette spent a great deal of time wondering about her family. First, there was her precious father. *He* belonged to her. His speech was different from that of Mollie, her stepmother. It differed, too, from the rough speech of the other fishermen that sometimes dried their nets on the dock, or came there to *make* nets. Even Old Captain, who lived in part of an old freight car on the shore near the smoke-stack, and who was very gentle and polite to little girls, was less careful in his speech than was Léon Duval. Her father's manners were *very* nice indeed. Jeanne could see that they sometimes surprised persons who came to buy fish.

Sometimes, when the old grandmother wished to be particularly offensive, she called Jeanne's father "a gentleman." Old Captain, too, had assured her that Léon Duval was a gentleman.

No one, however, accused Mollie of being a lady. Slipshod as to speech, untidy, unwashed,

uneducated, and most appallingly lazy, Mollie shifted the burden of her children upon Jeanne, who had cared for, in turn, each of the four red-headed babies. Fortunately, Jeanne liked babies.

Mollie and her mother, Mrs. Shannon, did the housework, with much assistance from the children. In the evening Mr. Duval sat apart, in the small room next to the fish-shed, with his book. He read a great many books, some written in French, some in English. He obtained them from the city library. He read by the light of a lamp carefully filled and trimmed by his own neat hands. This tiny room, with no floor but the planking of the dock, with only rough boards, over which newspapers had been pasted, for sidewalls and ceiling; with no furniture but a single cot, a small trunk, a large box and three smaller ones, was always scrupulously clean. It was Léon Duval's own room. Like Léon himself, it was small and absolutely neat.

Jeannette and Old Captain were the only two other persons permitted to enter that room. In it the little girl had learned to read, to do small problems in arithmetic, even to gain some knowledge of history and geography. She had never gone to school. First, it was too far. Next, Mollie had needed her to help with the children. Besides she had had no clothes. Mollie's *own* children had no clothes.

To do Mollie justice, she was quite as kind to Jeannette as to her own youngsters. In fact, she was kinder, because she admired the little girl's very pleasing face, her soft black eyes, and the dark hair that *almost* curled. She *liked* Jeanne. She was anything but a *cruel* stepmother.

She had proved a poor one, nevertheless. Good-natured Mollie was thoroughly and completely lazy. She wouldn't work. She said she couldn't work. Mollie's ill-tempered mother was just about as shiftless; but for her there was some excuse. She was crippled with rheumatism. She was also exceedingly cross. Jeannette was fond of Mollie, but she disliked her stepgrandmother very much indeed. Most everybody did.

Jeanne couldn't remember when there hadn't been a heavy, red-headed baby to move from place to place on the old wharf, as she picked flowers, watched pollywogs turn into frogs, or talked to Old Captain. She didn't mind carrying babies, but her father disliked having her do it.

"Don't carry that child, Jeanne," he would say. "It isn't good for your back. Make him walk—he's big enough. If he can't walk, teach him to crawl. The good God knows that he cannot hurt his clothes."

Old Captain and Léon Duval were great friends. At first they had been rivals in business, the Captain with a fish-shop in one end of his freight car, Duval with a fish-shop on the wharf. Before long, however, they went into partnership. A good thing for Duval, who was a poor business man, and not so bad a thing for the Captain.

"What are you captain *of*?" asked Jeannette, one day, when her old friend was busy repairing a net.

"Well," returned Old Captain, with a twinkle in his fine blue eye, "some folks takes to makin' music, some folks takes to makin' money, some folks takes to makin' trouble; but I just naturally takes to boats. I allus had *some* kind of a boat. Bein' as how it was *my* boat, of course I was Captain, wasn't I? So that's how."

"Didn't you ever have any wives?"

"Just one," replied Old Captain, who loved the sound of Jeannette's soft, earnest little voice. "One were enough. Still, I'm not complainin'. If I'd been real pleased with that one, maybe I'd have tried another. I was spared that."

"Supposing a beautiful lady with blue eyes and golden hair should come walking down the dock and ask you to marry her," queried Jeanne. "What then?"

"I hope I'd have sense enough to jump in the lake," chuckled Old Captain.

"Oh *then*," cried Jeanne, seriously, "I do hope she won't come. I was only thinking how glad you'd be to have her boil potatoes for you so they'd be hot when you got home."

"Most like she'd eat them all herself. An' she *might* make things hotter than I'd like."

Old Captain's eyes were so blue that strangers looked at them a second time to make certain that they were not two bits of summer sky set in Captain Blossom's good, red face. Once his hair had been bright yellow. The fringe that was left was now mostly white. He was a large man; nearly twice as large, Jeanne thought, as her father. He was *good*, too. Of course, not twice as good as her good father, because she wouldn't admit that anybody *could* be better than her beloved "Daddy."

As Captain Blossom said, some people take to music, others to boats. Old Captain, however, took to both; but he had but one song. Its chorus, bawled forth in the captain's big, rather tuneful voice, ran thus:

"We sailors skip aloft to reef the gallant ship,  
While the landlubbers lie down below, *below*, BELOW;  
While the landlubbers lie down below."

Jeanne hoped fervently that *she* was not a landlubber. One day, she asked Old Captain about it.



"What," said he, "when you lives on a dock? No, indeed," he assured her. "You're the kind that *allus* skips up aloft."

One evening, when the sun was going down behind that portion of the town directly west from the Duval shack; and all the roofs and spires were purple-black against a glowing orange sky, Jeanne seized Sammy and Annie; and, calling Michael to follow, raced up the dock toward the huge old furnace smoke-stack. She was careful never to go *very* close to that, because Old Captain had warned her that it was unsafe; so she paused with her charges at a point where the dock joined the land.

She loved that particular spot because the dock at that point was wider than at any other place. It had been wider to begin with. Then, tons of cinders had been dumped into the Cinder Pond and into the lake, on either side of the wharf; filling in the corners. This made wide and pleasing curves rather than sharp angles, at the joining place.

"Now, Mike," said she, "you sit down and watch the top of that chimney. And you sit here, Sammy, where you can't fall in. Look up there, Annie. What do you see?"

"Birdses," lisped Annie.

"Gee! *Look* at the birds!" exclaimed Michael. "Wait till I shy a rock at them."

"No, you don't," replied Jeanne, firmly. "Those are Old Captain's birds. I'll tell him to thrash you if you bother them. He showed them to me last night. Now watch."

Everybody watched. The birds were flying in a wide circle above the top of the old chimney. They had formed themselves into a regular procession. They circled and circled and circled; and all the time more birds arrived to join the procession. They were twittering in a curious, excited way. This lasted for at least ten minutes. Then, suddenly, part of the huge circle seemed to touch the chimney top.

"Why!" gasped Michael, "they look as if they were pouring themselves right into that chimney like—like—"

"Like so much water. Yes, they're really going in. See, they're almost gone. They're putting themselves to bed. They're chimney swallows—they sleep in there. See there!"

Two belated birds, too late to join the procession, scurried out of the darkening sky, and twittering frenziedly, hurled themselves into the mouth of the towering stack.

"They're policemen," said Michael. "They've sent all the others to jail."

"Then what about that one!" asked Jeanne, as a last lone bird, all but shrieking as it scurried through the sky, hurled itself down the chimney.

"*That* one almost got caught," said Sammy. "See, there's a big bird that was chasing it."

"A night-hawk," said Jeanne. "Old Captain says there's always *one* late bird and one big hawk to chase it. Now we must hurry back—it'll soon be dark."

As the old wharf, owing to the rotting of the thick planking under the cinders, was full of pitfalls, even by daylight, the children hurried back to their home, chattering about the swallows.

"Will they do it again tomorrow night?" asked Michael.

"Yes, Old Captain says they do it every night all summer long. That's their home. Early in the spring there's only a few; but as the summer goes on, there are more and more."

"Will oo take us to see the birdses some nother nights?" asked Annie.

"Yes, if you're good."

"Does 'em take they's feathers off?"

"Oh, Sammy! Of *course* they don't."

"Does 'em sing all night?"

"No, they sleep, and that's what you ought to be doing."

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## CHAPTER IV

### WHAT WAS IN AN OLD TRUNK

"Where you been?" demanded Mrs. Shannon, crossly, from the doorway of the shack. "Hurry up and put Sammy and Annie to bed and don't wake Patsy. Your pa wants you to say your lessons, Jeanne. I gotta go up town after yeast. Come along, Mollie, we can go now. Here's Barney with the boat."

Her family tucked into bed, Jeanne slipped into her father's room.

"Here I am," said she. "I'm not a bit sleepy, so you can teach me a lot."

Jeanne seated herself on her father's little old leather trunk—the trunk that was always locked—and patted it with her hands.

"There's my spelling book on the table, Daddy. There's a nice pink clover marking the place."

Her father looked at her for a moment, before reaching for the book. He *liked* to look at her; it was one of his few pleasures.

A soft clear red glowed in her dark cheeks and her eyes were very bright and very black. She was small and of slender build, but she seemed sufficiently healthy.

"Father, why do I have to speak a *different* language from Mollie's?" (She had never called her stepmother by any other name, since her fastidious father had objected to "Maw.") "What difference does it make anyway, if I say I *did* it or I *done* it?"

Here was rebellion! Her small dark father looked at her again. This time not so contentedly.

"Arise from that trunk," said Mr. Duval, whose speech retained a slight foreign touch that most people found most pleasing. "I think I shall have to show you something that I have been keeping for you."

Jeannette hopped up, gleefully. She had always wondered what that trunk contained. Now, it seemed, she was about to find out. From a crack in the wall, Mr. Duval fished a small key, fitted it to the lock, turned it, and lifted the lid. There was a tray containing a few packages of letters and a small box.

Her father opened the little box and drew from it something that had once been white, but was now yellow. Something wonderfully fine and exquisite, with a strange, faint perfume about it. A lace handkerchief. Even Jeanne, who knew nothing of laces, felt that there was something especially fine and beautiful about the filmy thing in her hands.

"Was it—was it—"

"Your mother's," assented Mr. Duval. "Is it like anything of Mollie's? Well, your mother wasn't like Mollie. She was fine and exquisite like this little bit of lace. Now, here is something else for you to see."

Mr. Duval placed in his daughter's hand a small oval frame containing a wonderful bit of painting. A woman's beautiful face. The countenance of a very *young* woman, with a tender light in her brown eyes. And *such* a pretty mouth. And oh! such dainty garments, so becomingly worn.

"Your mother," said the little man, briefly.

"Why!" gasped Jeanne. "She was a *lady!*"

"Yes," admitted her father. "She was a lady."

"And when she died, you married *Mollie!*"

"When she died, I died too, I think. I was ill, ill. I walked through the streets with you in my arms one day, here in this strange town when your mother's sickness compelled her to leave the steamboat. You were two years old. In my illness, I fell in the street near the door of Mollie's mother's house, near the cemetery where they had laid your most beautiful mother. They took me in and cared for me and for you. For weeks I was very, very ill—a fever. I did not improve—I *wanted* to die. But slowly, very slowly I grew better. Your mother had married against her father's wishes. Her father, I knew, would not receive you; and *I* would ask no favors.

"Mollie was young then and very good to you. I knew almost nothing about her except that she was giving you a mother's care. For that reason, when Mrs. Shannon said it was the thing to do, I married her. You understand, my Jeanne, it was not because I cared for *her*—it was just because I cared for *nothing* in the whole world. Perhaps not even very much for you. I seemed to be asleep—numb and weak. It was two years before I realized what I had done for myself. Then it was too late. Of course I could not take Mollie and her mother to the town where I had lived with your mother; so I was obliged to find work here. I tried to be good to Mollie. She has always been kind to you. And now do you know why I want *your* speech to be different from Mollie's?"

"Yes, yes," cried Jeanne. "I'll *never* say 'I done it' again! Or 'I should have went' or 'I ain't got no money.' Oh, I *wish* I'd *never* said them. Daddy! Do you s'pose I *could* grow up to be a *lady?*"

Her father looked at the eager young creature.

"Yes," he said, "I believe there's a way. But it's a hard, heart-breaking way for one of us."

"If *you're* the one," said Jeanne, "I guess I'll stay just me and *not* be a lady. Anyhow, a girl has to grow up first, doesn't she?"

"Of *course*," returned Mr. Duval, with a sudden brightness in his dark eyes and something very like a note of relief in his tone. "There's still time for you to do a lot of growing. But these things had to be said. Now let us put the treasures away and do our spelling, or Old Captain will get here and put an end to our lessons."

"Will you show me the picture again, some day, Daddy?"

"Some day," he promised, opening the spelling book at the pink clover.

The next day was bright, the weather was warm, and the little Duvals, to put it frankly, were very, very dirty. Jeanne, who had charge of the family while lazy Mollie dozed in one of the frowzy bunks, decided to give her charges a bath. There was a beautiful spot for the purpose along the edge of the Cinder Pond. The bottom at that place was really quite smooth and sandy. A tiny bit of beach had formed below the sloping bank of fine cinders and never were young trees more useful than those in the two clumps of shrubbery that screened this little patch of sandy beach. The shallow water was pleasantly warm.

"Me first! Me first!" shrieked Annie, who had wriggled out of her solitary garment, and was already wading recklessly in.

"Ladies first, *always*," said Jeannette. "Mike, you and Sammy go behind that bush and undress. Then you can paddle about until I'm ready to soap you. Here, Patsy! Keep out of the water until I get your clothes off. There, Annie, you're slippery with soap. Go roll in the pond while I do Patsy. Don't get too far away, Sammy, I want *you* next."

"Annie make big splash," said that youngster, flopping down, suddenly. "Annie jump like hop-toad."

"Now, Annie, you've hopped enough. You watch Patsy while I do Sammy. Sammy! Come back here. Michael! Bring Sammy back. Goodness, Sammy! How wet you are—don't put your hands on me."

"Wonst," remarked Sammy, eyeing the big bar of yellow soap, thoughtfully, "I seen *white* soap—white and smelly. The time the boat with big sails on it was here."

"Once I *saw*," corrected Jeanne. "Old Captain said that was a yacht. I liked that lady with little laughs all over her face. *You* remember, Michael. She took us aboard and showed us the inside. My! wasn't that grand! She showed us the gold beds and nice dishes and everything."

"What for did the boat come?" asked Sammy.

"They broke something and had to take it to a blacksmith to be mended. They stayed here most all day."

"Sammy tried to *eat* their smelly soap," said Michael.

"Aw! I didn't," denied Sammy. "I just licked it like I done the cheese that was on the cook's table. He gimme the cheese. But I'd ruther a-had the soap—it tasted better."

"You sure *needed* soap," teased Michael.

"I'd like to be all smiling on my face like that pretty lady," said Jeanne, wistfully. "And she hadn't any holes in her clothes."

"*Oo* got a pretty face," assured Annie, patting it with one plump hand.

"So have you when it's clean. Why don't you wash it yourself as I do mine? I'm sure you're big enough."

"Nuffin to wipe it on," objected Annie.

This was true. The family towel was a filthy affair when there *was* one. Even if Mollie had had money, it is doubtful if she would have spent it for towels. As for *washing* anything, it was much easier to tuck it into the stove or to drop it into the lake. Mollie simply *wouldn't* wash; and since Mrs. Shannon's hands had become crippled with rheumatism, she couldn't wash. Jeannette, however, washed her own shabby dress. Her father washed and mended his own socks and shirts. Also he had towels for his own personal use and those he managed to launder, somehow. Time and again he had provided towels and bed-linen for his family; but Mollie, who grew lazier with every breath she drew, had taken no care of them. One by one, they had disappeared.

"I think," said Jeannette, wisely, "that it would be a very good thing if I knew how to sew. Then, perhaps, father could get me some cloth and I could make things. I'd love to have nice clothes."

"Grown-up ladies," contributed Michael, "wears a lot of white things under their dresses—twenty at a time I guess. I seen 'em on a clothesline. The lady what was hangin' 'em up says, 'Don't you trow no mud on them *underclothes*.'"

"*Any* mud," corrected Jeanne, patiently. "And *saw*, not seen."

"The lady said '*no* mud,'" insisted Michael.

"Then maybe she wasn't a truly lady. Sometimes you see a truly lady in a little gold frame and *she* never says 'I done it.'"

"How *could* she?" demanded practical Michael, to whom Jeanne had intrusted the cake of soap, in order that he might lather himself while she rinsed Annie's hair. For this process, Annie sat in the Cinder Pond, whose waters were so placid that, even when the lake outside was exceedingly rough, there were no treacherous waves to trouble small children. Both boys could swim. Jeanne,

too, could swim a little, but was too timid to venture into very deep water.

"There," said Michael, returning the precious cake. "Gimme the rag and I'll rub if I *got* to. Here, Sammy, I'll rub *you* first."

"Aw, no," protested Sammy, backing away. "Let sister do it—she rubs *softer*."

The bath lasted a good long time, because, the worst of the agony over, the happy youngsters wished to play in the water. It was only with great difficulty that Jeanne finally coaxed her charges back into their clothes.

"I don't blame you," she mourned, "for hating them. I *do* wish you had some clean ones."

Mollie was peeling potatoes outside the cabin door, when Jeanne returned home with her spotless family. She was peeling the vegetables wastefully, as usual. Mollie could go everlastingly without things; she couldn't economize or take care of what she had. Or at least she didn't.

"Mollie," said Jeanne, "I've been thinking that I'd like to sew. Could you teach me, do you s'pose?"

"Me? *I* couldn't sew," laughed Mollie, good-naturedly, her soft fat body shaking as she laughed. "I never did sew. Ma always done all that. I could tie a bow to pin on a hat, maybe, but *sew*—lordy, I couldn't cut out a handkercher!"

Mrs. Shannon, in spite of the warm sunshine, sat inside, huddled over the stove. Her fingers were drawn out of shape with rheumatism. Her knees and her elbows were stiff. She sat with her back bent. Out of her shriveled, unlovely face her eyes gleamed balefully.

"Granny," asked Jeannette, rather doubtfully, "could *you* teach me to sew?"

"I could, but I won't," snapped the old woman. "Let your father do it—your *his* young one. If he'd make money like a man ought to, you could buy clothes ready-made. But he ain't no money-maker, and he never will be."

Jeanne backed hastily out of the shack. Even when Mrs. Shannon said pleasant things, which was not very often, she had a rasping, unpleasant voice. Clearly there was no hope in *that* quarter.

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## CHAPTER V

### THE SEWING LESSON

Jeanne's father was out in the fishing boat with Barney; but Old Captain was mending a net near the door of his box-car. Perhaps *he* could help her with this new and perplexing problem. She would ask.

So, with her family trailing behind, she paid a visit to the Captain.

"Captain," said she, "can you mend anything besides nets?"

"Men's pants," returned Old Captain, briefly.

"Could you *make* anything? A shirt, you know, or—or an apron?"

"Well," replied the Captain, doubtfully, "I could sew up a seam, maybe, if somebody cut the darned thing—hum, ladies present—the *old* thing out."

"Could you teach *me* to sew a seam! You see, these children haven't a single clean thing to put on. If I could sew, I could make clothes for them, I believe, because I *think* Daddy would buy me some cloth."

"Well now, Jeannie, if you could manage to get the needle threaded—that there's what gets me. Hold on—I got a *big* one, somewhere's—now where did I put that needle!"

Old Captain rose ponderously to his feet, shuffled about inside his cabin and finally returned with a large spool of dingy thread, a mammoth thimble, and a huge darning needle. Also, he had found a piece of an old flour sack.

"Now, sit down aside me here and I'll show you. First you ties a knot—Oh, no! First you threads the needle like this—Well, by gum, went in, didn't she? An' *then* you ties the knot—a good big 'un so she won't slip out. Then you lays the edges of the cloth together, like this, and you pokes the needle through—Here you, Sammy! You'll get your nose pricked!"



THE SEWING LESSON

Inquisitive Sammy retired so hastily that he fell over backward.

"Now, you pull up the slack like this—Hey, Mike! I *did* get you—Say, boys, you sheer off a bit while this here's goin' on. I'm plum' dangerous with this here tool."

"What do you do with the thimble?" asked Jeanne, when she had removed placid Annie to a safe distance.

"Durned if I didn't forget that. You puts it on this here finger—no—well now, you puts it on *some* finger and uses it to push the needle like that."

"How do you *keep* it on?" asked Jeanne, twirling it rapidly on an upraised finger.

"I guess you'd better use the side of this here freight car like I allus does," admitted Old Captain. "Just push her in like that. Now, *you* try."

Jeanne sewed for a while, according to these instructions, then handed the result to her teacher. The Captain beamed as he examined the seam.

"Ain't that just plum' beautiful!" said he, showing it to Michael. "That little gal can *sew*. But I ain't just sure them is the right tools—this here seam in my shirt now—well, it ain't so goldarned—hum—hum—ladies present—so tarnation thick as that there what I taught ye."

At their worst, the good old Captain's mild oaths were never very bad. Unhappily Jeanne had heard far more terrifying ones from sailors on passing boats. As you see, Captain Blossom *tried* to use his very best language in the children's presence; but his best, perhaps, wasn't quite as polished as Léon Duval's.

"I don't see any large black knots in your shirt seam," observed Jeanne. "Mine look as if they'd *scratch*."

"Maybe they cuts 'em off," returned the Captain, eying the seam, doubtfully. "No, by gum! This here's done by machine. Yours is all right for hand work. But I tell ye what, Jeannie. You come round about this time tomorry and maybe, by then, I can find better needles. An' there was a

sleeve I tore off an old shirt—maybe that'd sew better."

"I've always wondered," said Jeanne, "how people made buttonholes. They're such *neat* things. Can *you* make buttonholes?"

"To be sure I can. Nothin' easier. You cuts a round hole and then you takes half hitches all around it. I'm a leetle out of practice just now; but when I've practiced a bit—you see, you got to get started just right. But it's pretty soon to be thinkin' about the buttonholes."

"Do you makes the holes to fit the buttons or do you buy the buttons to fit the holes?"

"Well," replied the Captain, scratching his head, "mostly I makes the holes first like and then I fits the buttons to 'em. That's what I done on this here vest. You see, the natural ones was too small. Besides I lost the buttons, fust lick."

Interested Jeanne examined Old Captain's shabby waistcoat. There was a very large black button to fit a very large buttonhole. Next, a small white button with a buttonhole of corresponding size. Then a medium-sized very bright blue button with a hole to match that. The other two buttons were gone, but the store buttonholes remained.

"Three buttons—as long as they're *big* enough," explained Old Captain, "is enough to keep that there vest on. The rest is superfloo-us. Run along now, but mind you come tomorry and we'll have them other tools."

"I will," promised Jeanne.

"Me'll sew, too," promised Annie.

"Me, too," said Sammie.

"How about *you*, Mike?" laughed Old Captain.

"Aw, *I* wouldn't sew. That's girls' work."

The children had no sooner departed than Old Captain washed his hands and hurried into his coat. Feeling in his pocket to make sure that his money was there, he clambered up the steep bank, back of his queer house, to the road above. This was a pleasant road, because it curved obligingly to fit the shore line. The absence of a sidewalk did not distress Old Captain.

Half an hour later, Jeanne's friend, having reached the business section of the town, peered eagerly in at the shop windows. There seemed to be everything else in them except the articles that he wanted. Presently, choosing the shop that had the *most* windows, he started in, collided with a lady and a baby carriage and backed out again. He mopped his bald pink head several times with his faded red handkerchief before he felt sufficiently courageous to make a second attempt. Finally he got inside.

"Tarnation!" he breathed. "This ain't no place for a man—I'm the only one!"

A moment later, however, he caught sight of a male clerk and started for him almost on a run. He clutched him by the sleeve.

"Say," said Old Captain, "gimme a girl-sized thimble, a spool o' thread to fit, and a whole package o' needles."

"This young lady will attend to you," replied the man, heartlessly deserting him.

The smiling young lady was evidently waiting for her unusual customer to speak, so the Captain spoke.

"Will you kindly gimme a girl's-size needle, a spool o' thread, an' a package o' thimbles."

"What!" exclaimed the surprised clerk.

"A thimble, a needle, a thread!" shouted the desperate Captain.

"What size needles?"

"Why—about the size you'd use to sew a nice neat seam. Couldn't you mix up about a quarter's worth?"

"They *come* in assorted packets. What colored thread?"

"Why—make it about six colors—just pick 'em out to suit yourself."

"How about the thimble? Do you want it for yourself?"

"No, it's for a girl."

"About how big a girl?"

"Well, she's some bigger 'round than a whitefish," said the Captain, a bit doubtfully, "but not so much bigger than a good-sized lake-trout. Say, how much *is* them thimbles?"

"Five cents apiece."

"Gimme all the sizes you got. One of each. She might grow some, you know."

"Anything else?"

"Yep," returned Old Captain. "Suppose we match up them spools with some caliker—white with red spots, or blue, now. What do you say to *that*?"

"Right this way, sir," said the clerk, gladly turning her back in order to permit the suppressed giggles that were choking her, to escape.

The big Captain lumbered along in her wake, like a large scow towed by a small tug. He beamed in friendly fashion at the other customers; this dreaded shopping was proving less terrifying than he had feared. His pilot came to anchor near a table heaped with cheap print.

"We're having a sale on these goods," said she.

"What's the matter with 'em?" asked Old Captain, suspiciously.

"Why, nothing," replied the clerk. "They're all good. How much do you need? How many yards?"

"Well, just about three-quarters as much and a little over what it'd take for you. No need o' bein' stingy, an' we got to allow some for mistakes in cuttin' out."

"If you bought a pattern," advised the clerk, "there wouldn't be any waste."

"But," said Old Captain, earnestly, "she needs a waist and a skirt, too."

"I mean, you wouldn't waste any cloth. See, here's our pattern book."

Old Captain turned the pages, doubtfully. Suddenly his broad face broke into smiles.

"Well, I swan! Here she is. This is *her*—the girl them things is for. Same eyes, same hair, same shape—"

"But," queried the smiling clerk, "do you like the way that dress is made?"

"No, I don't," returned Captain Blossom. "It's got too many flub-dubs. I wouldn't know how to make *them*. You see, I'm a teachin' her to sew."

Finally, by dint of much questioning, the girl arrived at the size of the pattern required and the number of yards. Then Old Captain selected the goods.

"Gimme a *bluer* blue than that," he objected. "You got to allow a whole lot for to fade. Same way with the pink. Now that there purple's just right. And what's the matter with them red stripes? And that there white with big black spots. No, don't gimme no plain black—I'll keep *that* spool to mend with. Now, how about buttons? The young lady's had one lesson already on buttonholes."

"We're having a sale on those, too. Right this way. About how many?"

"About a pint, I guess," said Old Captain. "And for Pete's sake mix 'em up as to sizes so they'll fit all kinds of holes."

This time the clerk giggled outright.

"They're on cards," said she. "Here are three sizes of white pearl buttons—a dozen on each card. Five cents a card."

"Make it three cards of each size," returned the Captain, promptly. "She might lose a few. And not bein' flower seeds, they wouldn't sprout and grow *more*. Now, what's the damage for all that?"

The Captain's money smelled dreadfully fishy, like all the rest of his belongings; but the good old man didn't know that. He was greatly pleased with himself and with his purchases. But when he reached the open air, he paused on the doorstep to draw a deep breath.

"'Twould a taken less time to bought the riggin' fer a hull boat," said he, mopping his pink countenance. "But I made a rare good job of it."

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## CHAPTER VI

### MOLLIE

When Jeannette, according to her promise, arrived the next afternoon, the impatient Captain, who wished he had said *morning*, escorted her inside the old box-car. Sammy and Annie were at her heels; but Patsy was having a nap. The rough table was nicely decorated with folded squares of gorgeous calico. The cards of buttons, spools of thread, and glittering thimbles formed a sort of fancy border along the edge. The packets of needles were placed for safety in the exact center of the table.

"Them's yourn," said the Captain. "This here's a pattern. You spread it on you to see if it fits. It's your size."

"But," said Jeanne, "I wanted the clothes for the *children*."

"That's all right. You cut it out like this here paper. Then you just chop a piece off the end, wherever it's too long. There's enough for you and the little chaps, too. I'll get my shears and we'll do like it says on the back of the pattern."

The old shears, unfortunately, declined to cut; but the Captain sharpened the blade of his jack-knife, and, after Jeanne had laid the pieces, according to the printed directions, succeeded in hacking out the pink dress. The Captain insisted that Jeanne should begin on the pink one. He liked that best. Fortunately the shop girl had been wise enough to choose a very simple pattern; and Jeanne was bright enough to follow the simple rules.

"With one of them there charts," declared Old Captain, admiringly, "I could make a pair o' pants or a winter overcoat—all but the sewin'. My kind's all right in summer; but 'twouldn't do in winter—wind'd get in atween the stitches. Here, you ain't makin' that knot big enough!"

"Don't you think a smaller one would do?" asked Jeanne, wistfully. "I don't like such big, black ones. See, this little one doesn't; come through when I pull."

"Well, just add an extry hitch or two when you begin—that's right. Why, you're a natural born sewer."

It was a strange sight—the big red Captain and the slight dark girl, side by side on the old bench outside the battered freight car; Old Captain busy with his net, the eager little girl busy with her pink calico. If it seemed almost *too* pink, she was much too polite to say so. She had decided that Annie should have the purple and that Sammy should have the blue. Little Patsy wouldn't mind the big black spots. As for the red stripes, that piece could wait.

"You see," thought Jeanne, "I'll ask Father to buy Michael some regular boys' clothes. A pair of trousers anyhow. If he doesn't get him a shirt too, I suppose I *can* make him one out of that, but I'd *rather* have it for Annie. And I do hope I can squeeze out a pair of knickerbockers for Sammy. There was enough pink left for one leg—but I'll do his blue clothes before I plan any *extra* ones."

Jeanne's fingers were as busy as her thoughts; and, as the Captain had hoped, the seams certainly looked better when done with the proper tools.

"I *like* to sew," said Jeanne.

"Well," confided the Captain, "I can't say as how I *do*."

Suddenly, wild shrieks rent the air. Sammy was jumping up and down in a patch of crimson clover. One grimy hand clasped a throbbing eyelid.

"Sammy smelled a bumby-bee," explained Annie, when Jeanne, dropping her pink calico, rushed to the rescue.

There were many other interruptions, happily not all so painful, before the new garments were finished; but, for many weeks, Jeanne's sewing traveled with her from end to end of the old dock; while she kept a watchful eye on her restless small charges.

"Father," asked Jeanne, one evening, when the pink dress was finished and Michael had received what the Captain called "a real pair of store pants," "aren't Michael and Sammy and Annie and Patsy your children, too?"

"Why, yes," replied Mr. Duval.

"Then why don't you take as much pains with them as you do with me? You never scold Michael for eating with his knife or for not being clean or for saying bad words. You didn't like it at all the day I said those bad words to Mollie's mother. *You* remember. The words I heard those men say when their boat ran into the dock. You said that ladies *never* said bad ones. Of course you couldn't make a lady out of Michael; but there's Annie. Why *is* it, Daddy?"

"Well," returned Mr. Duval, carefully shaved and very neat and tidy in his shabby clothes, "they are Mollie Shannon's children. You are the daughter of Elizabeth Huntington. Your full name is Jeannette Huntington Duval. I want you to live up to that name."

"Do you mean," asked Jeanne, who was perched on the old trunk, "that Mollie's children *have* to be like Mollie?"

"Something like that," admitted Mr. Duval.

"That's a pity," said Jeanne. "I *like* those children. They're *sweet* when they're clean. And Michael's almost always good to the others."

"Perhaps it wouldn't be right," said her father, "to make Mollie's children better than she is. They might despise her and be unkind to her. It is best, I fear, to leave things as they are."

"Don't you *love* those other children?" queried Jeanne.

"You are asking a great many questions," returned her father. "It is my turn now. Suppose you tell me through what states the Mississippi River flows?"

Mr. Duval admitted to himself, however, that he did *not* love those other children as he loved Jeanne. He tried hard, in fact, not to hate them. They were so dreadfully like Mollie; so dirty, so untidy, so common. Dazed from his long illness, half crazed by the death of his beautiful young



wife, he had married Mollie Shannon without at all realizing what he was doing. He hadn't wanted a wife. All he thought of was a caretaker for wailing Jeannette, who seemed, to her inexperienced father, a terrifying responsibility.

Mollie, in her younger days, with a capable, scheming mother to skillfully conceal her faults—her indolence, her untidiness, her lack of education—had *seemed* a fitting person for the task of rearing Jeanne. Bolstered by her mother, Mollie looked not only capable, but even rather pleasing with the soothed and contented baby cuddled in her soft arms. At the moment, the arrangement had seemed fortunate for both the Duvals and the Shannons.

Duval, however, was not really so prosperous as his appearance led the Shannons to believe. He had arrived in Bancroft with very little money. Time had proved to his grasping mother-in-law that he was not and never would be a very great success as a money-maker. Some persons aren't, you know. As soon as Mrs. Shannon had fully grasped this disappointing fact, she suffered a surprising relapse. She began to show her true colors—her vile temper, her lack of breeding, her innate coarseness. Her true colors, in fact, were such displeasing ones that Léon Duval was not surprised to learn that Mollie's only brother, a lively and rather reckless lad, by all accounts, had run away from home at the age of fourteen—and was perhaps still running, since he had given no proof of having paused long enough to write. When his absence had stretched into years, Mrs. Shannon became convinced that John was dead; but Mollie was not so sure. The runaway had had much to forgive, and the process, with resentful John, would be slow.

Of course, without her mother's aid, easy-going Mollie resumed her former slovenly habits, neglected her hair, her dress, and her finger nails. Most of her rather faint claim to beauty departed with her neatness.

After a time, when his strength had fully returned and his mental powers with it, Duval realized that he had made a very dreadful mistake in marrying Mollie; but there seemed to be nothing that he could do about it. After all, the only thing in life that he had ever really cared for was buried in Elizabeth Huntington's grave.

At first, Jeanne had been precious only because she was Elizabeth's daughter. As for Mollie's children, they were simply little pieces of Mollie. With the years, Mollie had grown so unlovely that one really couldn't expect a fastidious person to like four small copies of her. Unfortunately, perhaps, Léon Duval was a *very* fastidious person.

Mrs. Shannon, perpetually crouched over the battered stove for warmth, had a grievance.

"If Duval earned half as much as any other fisherman around here," said she, in her harsh, disagreeable voice, "we'd be livin' in a real house on dry land. And what's more, Mollie, you ain't gettin' all he earns. He's savin' on you. He's got money in the bank. I seen a bankbook a-stickin' out of his pocket. You ain't gettin' what you'd ought to have; I *know* you ain't."

"Leave me be," returned Mollie. "We gets enough to eat and more'n a body wants to cook. Clothes is a bother any way you want to look at 'em."

"He's a-savin' fer *Jeanne*," declared the old lady. "'Tain't fair to you. 'Tain't fair to your children."

"Well," said Mollie, waking up for a moment, "I dunno as I blame him. I likes Jeanne better myself. She's got *looks*, Jeanne has; an' she's always been a *good* child, with nice ways with her. Neither me nor mine has much more looks nor a lump o' putty."

"You'd have *some*, if you was tidy."

"Well, I ain't," returned Mollie, truthfully. "You got to lace yourself in, an' keep buttoned up tight an' wear tight shoes an' keep your stockings fastened up an' your head full o' hairpins if you wants to look neat, when you're fat, like I be. I hates all of them things. I'd ruther be comfortable."

Jeanne had often wondered how soft, plump Mollie *could* be comfortable with strands of red hair straggling about her face, with her fat neck exposed to the weather, her uncorseted figure billowing under her shapeless wrapper, her feet scuffling about in shoes several times too large. Even when dressed for the street, she was not much neater. But that was Mollie. Gentle as she was and thoroughly sweet-tempered, it was as impossible to stir her to action as it was to upset her serenity. As for wrath, Mollie simply hadn't any.

"You could burn the house down," declared Mrs. Shannon, "an' Mollie'd crawl into the Cinder Pond an' set there an' *sleep*. Her paw died just because he was too lazy to stay alive, and she's just like him—red hair and all. If it was *red* red hair, there'd be some get up and go to them Shannons; but it *ain't*. It's just *carrot* red, with yaller streaks."

"When Annie's hair has just been washed," championed Jeanne, after one of Mrs. Shannon's outbursts against the family's red-gold locks, "it's lovely. And if Sammy ever had a lazy hair in *his* head, I guess Michael pulled it out that time they had a *fight* about the fish-pole."

"Where's Sammy now?" asked his grandmother, suspiciously. "'Tain't safe to leave him alone a minute. He's always pryin' into things."

"He and Michael are trying to pull a board off the dock for firewood."

That was one convenient thing about the wharf. You could live on it and use it for firewood, too,

provided you were careful not to take portions on which one needed to walk. To anyone but the long-practiced Duvals, however, most of the dock presented a most uninviting surface—a dangerous one, in fact. If you stepped on the end of a plank, it was quite apt to go down like a trap-door, dropping you into the lake below. If you stepped in the middle, just as likely as not your foot would go through the decayed board. But only the long portion running east and west was really dangerous. The section between the Duvals and dry land, owing to the accumulation of cinders and soil, bound together with roots of growing plants, was fairly safe.

"Of course," said Jeanne, who sometimes wished for Patsy's sake that there were fewer holes in the wharf, "if it were a *good* dock, we wouldn't be allowed to live on it. And if people *could* walk on it, people *would*; and that would spoil it for us. As it is, it's just the loveliest spot in the whole world."

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## CHAPTER VII

### A MATTER OF COATS

Mrs. Shannon had been right about Mr. Duval. He *was* saving money. Also, it was for Jeanne; or, at least, for a purpose that closely concerned that little maiden.

What Mrs. Shannon had not guessed was the fact that Old Captain and Mr. Duval had discovered—or, rather, had been discovered by—two places willing to pay good prices for their excellent whitefish and trout. The *chef* of a certain hotel noted for planked whitefish gave a standing order for fish of a certain size. And a certain dining-car steward, having once tasted that delicious planked fish, discovered where it was to be obtained in a raw state and, thereafter, twice a week, ordered a supply for his car.

The townspeople, moreover, liked to buy fish from Old Captain's queer shop in the end of his freight car. The third partner, Barney Turcott, whose old sailboat had been equipped with a gasoline motor, had been fortunate in his catches. Altogether, the season was proving a satisfactory one.

Sometimes Duval looked at his bankbook and sighed. He had vowed to save the money because it was *right* to save it for the unhappy purpose for which he wanted it. But when he should have enough! Duval could not bear to think of that moment. It meant a tremendous sacrifice—a horrible wrench. Yet every penny, except what was actually needed for food, went into the bank. And the fund was growing almost *too* rapidly for Duval's comfort.

One evening, when Jeanne stepped over the high threshold of her father's little room for her lesson—no matter how tired the fisherman might be, the daily lesson was never omitted—she found Mr. Duval kneeling beside the little old trunk. It was open and the tray had been lifted out. From the depths below, her father had taken a number of fine white shirts—what Old Captain called "b'iled shirts." A pair of shoes that could have been made for no other feet than Léon Duval's—they were so small, so trim, and yet so masculine—stood on the table. Beside them were two pairs of neatly-rolled socks—of finest silk, had Jeanne but known it. Still in the trunk were several neckties, a suit of fine underwear, also a suit of men's clothing.

Duval carefully lifted out the coat and slipped it on. It fitted him very well.

"Tell me, little one," said Duval, eagerly, "if it looks to you like the coats worn by the well-dressed men of today?"

"I—I don't think I've *seen* very many well-dressed men—that is, to notice their clothes," said Jeanne.

"Nor I," said her father. "I am on the lake daytimes, where the well-dressed are apt to wear white flannels and are nineteen years of age. Often there is a pink parasol. The *lake* fashions, I fear, are not for a man of my sober years. In the evening, the well-dressed man is either indoors or in his overcoat. I think I must ask you to do me a favor."

"I'd love to, Daddy. What is it?"

"Tomorrow, you will be taking this book back to the library for me. On the way there and on your way back, through the town, whenever you can, walk behind a well-dressed gentleman. I want you to study the seams and the tails of the coat. Now look well at these."

Mr. Duval, decidedly dandified in his good coat, turned his back to his daughter.

"Observe the seams," said he. "The length of the tails, the set of the sleeves at the shoulder. At the cut also in front; at the number of buttons. Tomorrow, you must observe these same matters in the coats of other men. Above all, my Jeanne, do not seem to stare. But keep your eyes open."

"I will, Daddy. I know exactly what you mean. When I made this pink dress for myself and the things for Annie and Sammy, I looked at the clothes on other children to see how wide to make the hems, how long to make the sleeves, how high to make the necks, and where to make things *puffy*."

"And you made a very good job of it all, too, my little woman. I am proud of your skill with the needle and greatly obliged to your good friend, Old Captain. Now look again at the seams in the back and then for our lesson. But first bring a plate of water and a large spoon. I will teach you how to eat soup."

The garments were put away and the trunk closed by the time Jeanne returned. The soup lesson amused her greatly.

"I can eat it much *faster*," she said, "the way Sammy does. And it's hard, isn't it, not to make a single bit of noise! I think I'm getting *funny* lessons—sitting with both feet on the floor and standing with my shoulders straight and cleaning my finger nails every day, and brushing my teeth and holding my fork. And last night it was writing letters. I liked to do that."

"There is much more that I *should* teach you, my Jeannette, that I am unable. I am behind the times. Fashions have changed. Only a gentlewoman could give you the things that you need. But books—and life—Ah, well, little Jeanne, some day, you shall be your mother's true daughter and I shall have done one good deed—at a very great cost. But take away these dishes—you have eaten all your soup."

"It was pretty *thin* soup," laughed Jeanne. "What are we to try next?"

"Another letter, I think."

"That's good," said Jeanne. "I like to do letters, but I'm *so* afraid I'll forget and wipe my pen on this pink dress. I almost did last time."

The next day Jeanne remembered about the coat. Unfortunately it was a warm day and an inconvenient number of well-dressed men had removed their coats and were carrying them over their arms. But those were mostly stout men. She was much more interested in short, slender ones. Happily, a few of slight build were able to endure their coats. Jeanne's inquisitive eyes all but bored twin holes in the backs of a number of very good garments. At first she had been very cautious, but presently she became so interested in her queer pursuit that she forgot that the clothes contained flesh and blood persons.

Finally a sauntering young man wheeled suddenly to catch her very close to his heels.

"Say," said he, grinning at her, "I've walked twice around this triangle to see if you were really following me. What's the object?"

"It's—it's your coat," explained Jeanne, turning very crimson under her dusky skin.

"My coat! What's the matter with my coat?"

"The—the style."

"What! Isn't it stylish enough to suit you?"

"It's the *seams*. I'm—I'm using them for a pattern."

"Ah, I see. Behold the lady tailor, planning a suit of clothes for her husband."

"I *haven't* any husband," denied Jeanne, indignantly. "I'm too young to be married. But I'm awfully glad to see the *front* of your coat. I've seen a great many backs; but it's harder to get a good look at fronts. Good-by."

"Queer little kid!" said the young man, pausing to watch Jeanne's sudden flight down the street. "Pretty, too, with those big black eyes. Looks like a French child."

In her flight, Jeanne overtook a boy of about her own height, but far from her own size. He was stout and he puffed as he toiled up the hill. Where had she seen that plump boy? Was it—yes, it was the very boy she had pulled out of the lake, that pleasant day in May, when the lake was still cold. What *should* she do if that grateful boy were to thank her, right there in the street! Having passed him, she paused irresolutely to look at him. After all, if he wished to thank her, he might as well have a chance to get it over.

But Jeanne needn't have been alarmed. Roger glanced at her, turned bright scarlet, and dashed into the nearest shop. Jeanne, eyeing the window, wondered what business a boy could possibly have in that particular place. So did Roger after he got inside. It was a hair-dresser's shop for ladies. He bolted out, tore past a bright pink dress, and plunged into a tobacco shop. That at least was a safe harbor for a *man*.

"I guess," said Jeanne, surprised at Roger's sudden agility, "he didn't know me in these clothes. Next time I'll speak to him."

That night, Jeanne asked her father to try on the old coat, in order that she might compare it with those she had seen. He slipped it on and turned so that she might view it from all sides.

"I'm afraid, Daddy," said she, sorrowfully, "that none of the *best* coats are quite like yours. You have *more* seams, closer together and not so straight. And your tails are longer. And you fold back differently in front."

"I feared so," said Mr. Duval. "This coat was not new when I laid it away and the styles have changed perhaps more than I suspected."

"I am sorry," apologized Jeanne.

"I fear I am not," said Mr. Duval, with one of his rare smiles. "You have put off an evil day—for *me*. It is too warm for lessons. Let us pay Old Captain a visit. You must see the big trout that Barney brought in today."

Not only Barney's big trout but Barney himself was at Old Captain's. Jeanne liked Barney. He was younger than either of his partners and so exceedingly shy that he blushed whenever anybody looked at him. But he sometimes brought candy to the Duval children and he whittled wonderful boats. He never said anything, but he did a great deal of listening with his large red ears.

This time, at sight of Jeanne, Barney began to fumble awkwardly at his pockets. Finally he pulled forth a large bag of peanuts and a small brown turtle. He laid both in her lap, for by this time Jeanne was perched on the bench outside the old car.

"Thank you, Barney," smiled Jeanne. "We'll have a tea-party with the peanuts tomorrow and I'll scoop out a tiny pond, some place, for the turtle. Isn't he lovely!"

Barney grinned, but made no other response.

"I'm glad you folks come," chuckled Old Captain. "Barney here has nigh about talked me to death."

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## CHAPTER VIII

### A SHOPPING EXPEDITION

Still, it appeared, even the matter of the out-of-date coat could not put off the evil day forever. One Saturday night—the only night that stores were open in Bancroft—Mr. Duval took Jeanne to the business section of the town, where they entered the very store in which Old Captain had made his purchases.

The month was September and the pink dress, washed many times by Jeanne herself and dried in the full sunshine on the old dock, had faded to a more becoming shade.

Unlike the Captain, Léon Duval behaved quite like an ordinary shopper. He carried himself with dignity and seemed to know exactly what he wanted. He said:

"Stockings for this little girl, if you please."

The clerk, after a hasty glance at the rather shabby garments of her customers, laid some cheap, coarse stockings on the counter.

"Better ones," said Mr. Duval.

"Not good enough," said he, rejecting a second lot. "Something thinner and finer. Yes, these are better. Four pairs, please."

"Now I shall want some underwear for her. Lisle-thread or balbriggan, I think. Also two chemises, night-dresses, whatever petticoats are worn now and a good, serviceable dress—a sailor suit, I think. And after that shoes."

"Why, Daddy!" gasped Jeanne. "I thought you were going to buy *nails*. You *said* nails."

"Nails, too, perhaps; but first these."

Jeanne regarded her father thoughtfully. He had always been very gentle with her, but of late—yes, certainly—he had been very much kinder to her. And now, all these clothes. Was he, perhaps, going to send her to a real school—the big public school that stood so high that one could see its distant roof from the wharf? A lack of proper clothing had heretofore prevented her going—that, the distance, and her usefulness at home. She was older now, she could manage the walk. Michael disliked the task, but he *could* look after the younger children. But with *clothes*, she could go to school. That would be splendid. Perhaps, in another year, Michael could have clothes, too.

But how particular her father was about hers. The chemises must have a little fine lace on them, he said. And the petticoats—the embroidery must be finer. Yes, the blue serge dress with the fine black braid on the sailor collar would do nicely. And next, a small, neat hat.

Jeannette gasped again. A hat! She had never worn a hat except when she had gone "up town" and then it hadn't been any special hat—just anybody's old cap. But, of course, if she went to school she'd need a hat.

"Now, if you please," said Mr. Duval, "we'd like to see some gloves."

"Kid, or silk?"

"Whichever is the more suitable."

"It's getting late for silk. Maybe you'd better take kid."

Mr. Duval did take kid ones. The sales-woman, with many a curious glance at her unusual customers, fitted a pair of tan gloves to Jeanne's unaccustomed fingers. Her fingers *wouldn't* stay stiff. They doubled and curled; but at last the gloves were on—and off again. Jeanne gave a sigh of relief.

Then there were shoes. Jeanne was glad that the holes in her stockings were quite small ones. Supposing it had been her other pair! *All* holes! As it was, the man to whom the clerk had transferred her customer seemed rather shocked to see *any* holes. Was it possible that there were people—even entire families—with *no* holes in their stockings? The fat boy that had tumbled off the wharf that morning and hadn't known her afterwards in the new pink dress, probably that fortunate child had whole stockings, because everything else about him seemed most gloriously new and whole; but surely, the greater part of the population went about in holes. Mollie, Mrs. Shannon, her father—even Old Captain. She had seen *him* put great patches in his thick woolen socks.

But what was the clerk putting on her feet! She had had shoes before. Thick and heavy and always too large that they might last the longer. Mollie had bought them, usually after the first snow had driven barefooted Jeanne to cover. But never such shoes as these. Soft, smooth, and only a tiny scrap longer than her slender foot. And oh, so softly black! And then, a dreadful thought.

"Daddy," said Jeanne, "I just love these shoes for *myself*; but I'm afraid they won't *do*. You see, Sammy gets them next. They aren't *boys'* shoes."

"These are *your* shoes, not Sammy's," replied her father.

When Mr. Duval had paid for all the wonderful things, they were tied in three big parcels. Jeanne carried one, her father carried two. It was dark and quite late when they finally reached the wharf.

"We will say nothing about this at home," said Mr. Duval, when Jeanne proposed stopping to show the things to Old Captain. "For the present, we must hide them in the old trunk. I have no wish to talk about this matter with anybody. It concerns nobody but us two. Can you keep the secret—even from Old Captain?"

"Why, I *guess* so. Will it be *very* long? I'm afraid it will bubble and bubble until somebody hears it. And oh! That darling hat!"

"Not long, I fear."

"I'll try," promised Jeanne.

"Give me that package. Now, run along to bed. I guess everybody else is asleep."

It was a long time before excited Jeanne was able to sleep, however. One by one she was recalling the new garments. She wished that she might have had the new shoes under her pillow for just that one night.

Perhaps the only thing that saved the secret next day was the wonderful tale that she told the children, after she had led them to the farthest corner of the old wharf.

"The beautiful princess," said she, "wore a lovely white thing called a chemise—the *prettiest* thing there ever was. It was trimmed with lovely lace that had a blue ribbon run through it. There was a beautiful white petticoat over that and on top of *that* a dress."

"What for," asked Sammy, the inquisitive, "did she cover up her pretty chemise with all those things? Was she cold?"

"Oh, no. Only *grand*. A chemise is to wear *under*."

"I'm glad I'm not a princess," said Michael. "Botherin' all the time with blue ribbons. Didn't she wear no crown?"

"*Any* crown. No, she had just a little dark blue hat the very color of her dress, some brown gloves and oh! the *smoothest* shoes. They fitted her feet just like skin and she had stockings—"

"Aw, cut out her clothes," said Michael. "What did she *eat*?"

School had started. Jeanne knew it because on her last trip to the library she had met a long procession of boys and girls hurrying homeward; chattering as only school children can chatter. But still Mr. Duval had said nothing to Jeannette about *going* to school. The home lessons went on as usual, and the wondering pupil hoped fervently that she was not outgrowing that hidden wardrobe. *That* would be too dreadful.

The following Saturday evening, Mr. Duval shopped again. This time, he went alone; returning with more bundles. These, too, were concealed. The wharf afforded many a convenient hiding place under its old planks; and this time, even Jeanne failed to suspect that anything unusual had happened during the evening. There were never any lessons Saturday night; and this particular evening she had been glad of the extra time. She was finishing the extra dress she had started for Annie, the red and white striped calico. Mollie was in bed and asleep, Mrs. Shannon was dozing over the stove, Jeanne sat close to the lamp, pushing her needle through the stiff cloth.

"There!" breathed Jeanne, thankfully. "The last button's on. Tomorrow I'll dress Annie up and take her to call on Old Captain. He'll like her because she'll look so much like the American flag."

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## CHAPTER IX

### THE FLIGHT

Tuesday had been a wonderful day. Never had the lake or the sky seemed so softly blue, the air so pleasant or the green bushes so nearly like real trees. The two boys had been good all day and Annie and Patsy had been *sweet*. There had been a late wild rose on the bush near Old Captain's freight car—a deep rose streaked with crimson. The Captain, heavy and clumsy, had scrambled up the bank to pluck it for Jeannette, who had placed it carefully in a green glass bottle on her father's little table.

Her lesson the night before had been a queer one. Her father had taught her how to dress herself in the new garments. Also, he had given her an obviously new brush and comb, and had compelled her to use them to reduce her almost-curly hair to a state of unaccustomed order. That had taken a *very* long time, because, when you have been using a very old brush and an almost toothless comb your hair does get snarled in spite of you.

Her lessons were getting so queer, in fact, that she couldn't help wondering what would come next. What came was the queerest thing of all.

The rose in the green glass bottle on her father's table filled the little room with fragrance. Again the door was fastened and the lid of the trunk cautiously lifted.

"Fix your hair as you did last night," directed Mr. Duval, in an odd, rather choked voice. "Put on your clothes, just as you did last night. Be very quiet about it. You were in the Pond today?"

"Yes, Daddy."

"Good! Then you are clean. I will wait outside until you are dressed."

"Are we going some place, Daddy?"

"Yes," replied her father, who had taken a parcel from the box on which he usually sat. "Dress quickly, but neatly, and put on your hat. Put the gloves in your pocket. Then sit quietly here until I come for you."

Eyes shining, pulses leaping, Jeannette got into her new garments. But where were the extra ones that had been in the trunk? The two frilly night-dresses, the other chemise, the other petticoat, the extra stockings? Never mind. Her father, she was sure, had taken good care of them.

"There! my hair's going better *this* time. And my feet feel more at home in these shoes. And oh! My white, white petticoat—how *nice* you are! I *never* had truly *white* things. I suppose a real princess has heaps and heaps of them."

Mr. Duval had neglected to supply stocking-straps. It is quite possible that he didn't know that little girls' stockings were fastened that way. Motherless Jeanne certainly didn't. Mollie's were never fastened at all. Old Mrs. Shannon tied *hers* with a string. Jeannette found two bits of raveled rope, hanging from a nail. They, she thought, would answer the purpose.

"It's only for this evening," said Jeanne, eying with dissatisfaction the bits of frayed rope. "I'll find something better tomorrow—some nice pieces of pink calico like my dress, maybe."

Next she got into the pretty sailor suit and smoothed it into place. Then the good little dark blue hat was put on very carefully. Last of all, Jeanne lifted down the small, cheap mirror that hung on the rough wall.

"I certainly do look *nice*," said she. "I think Elizabeth Huntington would like me."

Most anybody would have thought the same thing. Certainly her father did when, a moment later, he opened the door.

"Turn out the light," said he. "It is time to start."

Hand-in-hand the pair stole silently along the pier to the low place where Roger Fairchild had climbed out of the lake. Here a small boat awaited them. In it were two rectangular objects that Jeanne did not recognize. They were piled one on top of the other, and the little girl was to sit on them. Blushing Barney Turcott had the oars. Evidently he was to do the rowing. Duval climbed in and took the rudder strings.

They were some distance from the dock, with the boat headed toward the twinkling lights of Bancroft, before anybody said a word. After that, while the men talked of fish, of nets, and of prices, Jeanne's investigating fingers stole over the surface of the objects on which she sat, until finally she discovered handles and straps. They were suitcases! People coming out of the Bancroft station sometimes carried them. Was it possible that she was to ride on a train or on one

of the big lake steamers that came four times a week to the big dock across the Bay in the harbor of Bancroft? She who had never ridden in much of anything! Where *could* she be going?

When they disembarked near the foot of Main Street, Mr. Duval handed a letter to Barney Turcott.

"Please hand this to Mrs. Duval tomorrow morning," said he.

Barney nodded. Then, for once, he talked.

"Pleasant journey, sir," said he. "Good-by, Jeanne. I suppose—"

"Good-by," said Mr. Duval, taking the suitcases. "Come, Jeanne, we must hurry."

Jeanne wondered what Barney had supposed.

"I have our tickets," said Mr. Duval, as the pair entered the station; Jeanne blinking at the lights like a little owl. "Come this way. Our train is over here."

"Lower five and six," said he, to the colored man who stood beside the train. Jeanne wondered if the colored gentleman owned it; she would ask her father later.

Then they were inside. Her eyes having become accustomed to the light, Jeanne was using them. She didn't know which was the more astonishing, the inside of the coach or her father.

Like herself, Mr. Duval was clad throughout in new garments. He wore them well, too. Spotless collar and cuffs, good shoes and socks, and a suit that had the right number of seams in the proper places. He was all right behind, he was all right in front. Jeanne eyed him with pride and pleasure.

"Why, Father!" she said. "You don't even *smell* of fish."

"I'm glad to hear it," said he, his eyes very bright and shining. "Before I came to Bancroft I was dressed every day like this—like a gentleman. So you like me this way, eh?"

"That way and *any* way," she said. "But, Father. Where are we going?"

"You will sleep better if I tell you nothing tonight. Don't worry—that's all."

"But, Daddy, are we going to *sleep* here? I don't see any beds."

Presently, however, the porter began pulling beds right out of the air, or so it seemed to Jeanne. Some came down out of the ceiling, some came up out of the floor—and there you were, surrounded by beds! Oh, what a fairy story to tell the children!

A few whispered instructions and Jeanne knew how to prepare for bed, and how to get up in the morning. Also what to do with her clothes.

"We change in Chicago in the morning," added her father; "so you must hop up quickly when I call you."

Jeanne could hardly sleep for the joy of her lovely white night-dress. Never had the neglectful Shannons provided her with anything so white and soft and lovely as that night-dress for *daytime*, let alone night. Disturbing, too, was the motion of the train, the alarming things that rushed by in the darkness, the horrible grinding noises underneath, as if the train were breaking in two and shrieking for help. How *could* one sleep!

But finally she did. And then her father's hand was on her shoulder. After that, only half awake, she was getting into her clothes. Oh, *such* a jiggly, troublesome business! And one rope garter had broken right in two.

Next they were off the train and eating breakfast in a great big noisy station that seemed to be moving like the cars. Jeanne was whisked from this into something that really moved—a taxicab. After that, another train—a *day* coach, her father said. Jeannette was thankful that she didn't have to go to bed in *that*; but oh, how her head whirled!

And now, with the darkness gone, all the world was whizzing past her window. A shabby world of untidy backyards and smoke-blackened houses, huddled horribly close together—at least the Duvals had had no untidy neighbors and certainly there had been plenty of elbow room. But now the houses were farther apart. Presently there were none. The country—Oh, that was *much* better. If one could only walk along that woodsy road or play in that pleasant field!

"Jeanne," said Mr. Duval, touching her hand softly, "I'll tell you now where we are going. It happens that you have a grandfather. His name is William Huntington—your mother's father, you know. Some weeks ago I wrote to an old friend to ask if he were still living. He is. Your mother's brother Charles and his family live with him: a wife and three children, I believe. Your aunt is undoubtedly a lady, since your uncle's marriage was, I understand, pleasing to his family. Your mother was away from home at the time of our marriage and I met only her parents afterwards. Your grandfather I could have liked, had he liked me. Your grandmother—she is dead now—seemed the more unforgiving. Yet, neither forgave."

"Do they know about *me*?" asked Jeanne.

"They knew that you were living at the time of your mother's death. I want them to *see* you. If

they like you, it will be a very good thing for you. It is, I think, the *only* way that I can give you what your mother would have wanted you to have; the right surroundings, the proper friends, education, accomplishments. You are nearly twelve and you have had *nothing*. If anything were to happen to me, I should want you with your mother's people rather than with Mollie. This—visit will—help you, I think."

"Shall I like my grandfather? And my uncle? I've never had any of *those*, you know."

"I hope so."

"But not as well as you, Daddy, not *half* as well—"

"We won't talk about it any more just now, if you please. See that load of ripe tomatoes—a big wagon heaped to the top. We don't have such splendid fruit in our cold climate. See, there is a farm. Perhaps they came from there. Such big barns and comfortable houses."

"Daddy," said Jeanne, "what does a lady do when her stocking keeps coming down and coming down? This morning I broke the rope—"

"The rope!" exclaimed astonished Mr. Duval.

Jeanne hitched up her skirt to display the remaining wisp of rope.

"Like that," she said.

"My poor Jeannette," groaned Léon Duval, "it is certainly time that you were with your mother's people. You need a gentlewoman's care."

"But, Daddy. You said we'd be on this train all day, and it's only nine now. My stocking drops all the way down. Haven't you a bit of fish-twine anywhere about you?"

"Not an inch," lamented Mr. Duval. "But perhaps the porter might have a shoestring."

"Shoestring? Yass, suh," said the porter. "Put it in your shoe foh you, suh?"

"No, thank you," replied Mr. Duval, gravely; but Jeannette giggled.

"Daddy, if you'll spread your newspaper out a good deal, I think I can fix it. There! That's ever so much better."

They spent the night in a hotel; Jeanne in a small, but *very* clean room—the very cleanest room she had *ever* seen. She examined and counted the bed-covers with much interest, and admired the white counterpane.

But she liked the outside of her snowy bed better than the inside, after she had crawled in between the clammy sheets.

"I wish," shivered Jeanne, "that Annie and Sammy were here with me—or even Patsy, if he *does* wiggle. It's so smooth and cold. I don't believe I like smooth, cold places."

Poor little Cinder from the Cinder Pond! She was to find other smooth, cold places; and to learn that there were smooth, cold persons even harder to endure than chilly beds.

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## CHAPTER X

### THE ARRIVAL

In the morning Jeanne dressed again in her new clothes. Then the travelers had breakfast. By this time, you may be sure, Jeanne was very grateful for her father's past instructions in table manners. They had proved particularly useful in the dining-car, where Mr. Duval had added a few more lessons to fit napkins, finger-bowls, and lamb chops.

After a leisurely meal, they got into a street car in which they rode for perhaps twenty minutes along paved streets lined with high buildings or large houses very close together. Then they got out and walked along several blocks of very hard pavement, until they came to a large gray house with a tall iron fence. They climbed a number of stone steps leading to a tightly closed, forbidding door.

"Your grandfather lives here," said Mr. Duval, ringing the bell.

A very stiff butler opened the door, ushered them in, and told them to be seated in a very stiff reception-room, while he presented the letter that Mr. Duval had handed him. Jeanne eyed the remote ceiling with wonder and awe.

The butler returned presently with six persons at his heels. They had evidently risen hastily from the breakfast table, for two of them had brought their napkins with them. A very tremulous old man, a large, rather handsome woman, a stout, but decidedly mild-looking gentleman, two tall girls, and a boy; all looking as if they had just had a shock of some kind. They did not shake hands with Mr. Duval. They all gazed, instead, at Jeanne. A great many eyes for so small a target. Jeanne could feel herself shrinking under their piercing glances. For what seemed like a very



long time, no one spoke. But oh, how they looked and looked and looked! Finally, Mr. Duval broke the embarrassing silence.



**JEANNE, LEFT ALONE WITH THE STRANGERS, INSPECTED THEM WITH INTEREST**

"You have read my letter?" he asked, addressing the older man.

"Yes."

"Then pardon me, if I suggest that you grant me an interview apart from these young people. I have much to say to you, Mr. Huntington."

"In here," said the mild gentleman, opening a door.

"Remain where you are, Jeannette," prompted her father.

Jeannette, left alone with the strangers, inspected them with interest. The girls looked like their mother, she decided; rather smooth and polished on the outside—like whitefish, for instance, with round, hard grayish eyes. The boy's eyes were different; yellow, she thought, or very pale brown. His upper lip lifted in a queer way, as if nothing quite pleased him. They were all rather colorless as to skin. She had seen children—there had been several on the train, in fact—whose looks were more pleasing.

She began to wonder after a while if somebody ought not to say something. Was it *her* place to speak? But she couldn't think of a thing to say. She felt relieved when the three young Huntingtons began to talk to one another. Now and again she caught a familiar word; but many of their phrases were quite new to her. At any rate, they were not speaking French; she had heard her father speak that. She had heard too little slang to be able to recognize or understand it.

Jeanne had risen from her chair because her father had risen from his. She thought now that perhaps she ought to resume her seat; but no one had said, as Old Captain always did: "Set right down, Honey, an' stay as long as ye like." Visiting Old Captain was certainly much more comfortable.

Still doubtful, Jeanne took a chance. She backed up and sat down, but Harold, yielding to one of his sudden malicious impulses, jerked the chair away. Of course she landed on the floor. Worst of

all, her skirt pulled up; and there, for all the world to see, was a section of frayed rope dangling from below her knee. The shoestring showed, too.

For half a dozen seconds the young Huntingtons gazed in silence at this remarkable sight. Then they burst into peals of laughter. The fact that Jeanne's eyes filled with tears did not distress them; they continued to laugh in a most unpleasant way.

Jeanne scrambled to her feet, found her chair, and sat in it.

"Who are you, anyway?" asked the boy. "The letter you sent in gave the family a shock, all right. And we've just had another. Elastic must be expensive where you came from; or is that the last word in stocking-supporters? Hey, girls?"

His sisters tittered. Poor Jeanne writhed in her chair. No one had *ever* been unkind to her. Even Mrs. Shannon, whose tongue had been sharp, had never made her shrink like that.

"I am Jeannette Duval," returned the unhappy visitor. "My mother was Elizabeth Huntington. This is where my grandfather lives."

"Goodness!" exclaimed the taller of the two girls, whose name was Pearl; "she must be related to us!"

"Elizabeth Huntington is the aunt that we aren't allowed to mention, isn't she?" asked the younger girl.

"Yes," returned the boy. "She ran away and married a low-down Frenchman and my grandfather turned her out. That old gardener we had two years ago used to talk about it. *He* said she was the best of all the Huntingtons, but of course he was crazy."

"Say, Clara," said the older girl, "we'll be late for school. You, too, Harold."

The three deserted Jeanne as unceremoniously as they did the furniture. Left alone, Jeanne looked about her. The floor was very smooth and shiny. There were rugs that looked as if they might be interesting, close to. There were chairs and tables with very slender, highly-polished legs. There was a large mirror built into the wall—part of the time she had seen six cousins instead of three—and a big fireplace with a white-and-gold mantel.

"That's a queer kind of stove," thought Jeanne, noting the gas log.

After a thousand years (it seemed to Jeanne) the four grown-ups returned. Her father came first.

"You are to stay here for five years," said he, taking her hands in his. "After that, we shall see. We have all decided that it is best for you to be here with your mother's people. They have consented to care for you. I shall pay, as I can, for what you need. For the rest, you will be indebted to the kindness of your grandfather. I need not tell you, my Jeanne, to be a good girl. You will write to me often and I will write to you. And now, good-by. I must go at once to make my train."

He kissed Jeanne first on one cheek, then on the other, French-fashion; then, with a gesture so graceful and comprehensive that Jeanne flushed with pride to see it, Léon Duval took leave of his relatives-in-law.

"He *isn't* a low-down Frenchman and I *know* it," was her comforting thought.

Poor child, the rest of her thoughts were not so comforting. Five years! Not to see her wonderful father again for five years. Not to see good-natured Mollie, or Michael or Sammy or Annie or Patsy—Why, Patsy would be a great big boy in five years. There would be no one to make clothes for the children, no one to make Annie into a lady—she had firmly intended to do that. Unselfish mite that she was, her first distressing thoughts were for the other children.

"A maid will come for you presently," said the large, smooth lady, addressing Jeanne, "and will show you your room. I will look through your clothes later to see what you need. I am your Aunt Agatha. This is your Uncle Charles. This is your grandfather. I must go now to see about your room."

Her Uncle Charles nodded carelessly in her direction, looked at his watch, and followed his wife.

The room to which the maid escorted Jeanne was large, with cold gray walls, a very high ceiling, and white doors. The brass bed was wide, very white and smooth. The pillows were large and hard. The towels that hung beside the stationary basin looked stiff and uninviting. Jeanne wondered if one were supposed to unfold those towels—it seemed a pity to wrinkle their polished surface. Altogether it was not a cosy room; any more than Mrs. Huntington was a cosy person.

Jeanne turned hopefully to the large window. There was another house very close indeed. The gray brick wall was not beautiful and the nearest window was closely shuttered.

"Where," asked Jeanne, turning to the maid, who still lingered, "is the lake?"

"The lake!" exclaimed the maid. "Why, there isn't any lake. There's a small river, they say, down town, somewhere. *I* never saw it—pretty dirty, I guess. When your trunk comes, push this button and I'll unpack for you, if you like. There's your suitcase. You can use these drawers for your clothes—maybe you'd like to put them away yourself. I'll go now."

Jeanne was glad that she had her suitcase to unpack. It was something to do. But when she

opened it, kneeling on the floor for that purpose, she found that it contained two articles that had not been there earlier in the morning. She remembered that her father had closed it for her on the train. Perhaps *he* had put something inside.

There was a small, new purse containing a few coins—two dollars altogether. It seemed a tremendous sum to Jeanne. The other parcel seemed vaguely familiar. Jeanne removed the worn paper covering.

"Oh!" she breathed rapturously.

There was her mother's beautiful lace handkerchief wrapped about the lovely little miniature of her mother. Her father, who had cherished these treasures beyond anything, had given them to *her*. And he had not told her to take good care of them—he had *known* that she would.

"Oh, *Daddy*," she whispered, "it was *good* of you."

When Jeanne, who had had an early breakfast, had come to the conclusion that she was slowly but surely starving to death, the maid, whose name proved to be Maggie, escorted her to the dining-room.

In spite of her father's instructions, she made mistakes at the table, principally because there were bread and butter knives and bouillon spoons invented since the days of Duval's young manhood. At least, however, she didn't eat with her knife. Unhappily, whenever she did the wrong thing, one or another of her cousins laughed. That made her grandfather frown. Some way, embarrassed Jeanne was glad of that.

She was to learn that her cousins were much better trained in such matters as table manners than in kind and courteous ways toward other persons. Their mother was conventional at all times. She *couldn't* have used the wrong fork. But there were certain well-bred persons who said that Mrs. Huntington had the very *worst* manners of anybody in her set; that she never thought of anybody's feelings but her own; but the self-satisfied lady was far from suspecting any such state of affairs. She thought herself a *very* nice lady; and considered her children most beautifully trained.

Happily, by watching the others, Jeanne, naturally bright and quick, soon learned to avoid mistakes. As she was also naturally kind, her manners were really better, in a short time, than those of the young Huntingtons.

Her new relatives, particularly the younger ones, asked her a great many questions about her former life. Had she really never been to school? Weren't there any schools? Was the climate *very* cold in Northern Michigan? Were the people very uncivilized? Were they Indians or Esquimaux? What was her home like? What was the Cinder Pond? Sometimes the children giggled over her replies, sometimes they looked scornful. Almost always, both Mr. and Mrs. Huntington appeared shocked. It wasn't so easy to guess what old Mr. Huntington thought.

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## CHAPTER XI

### A NEW LIFE

At the conclusion of Jeanne's first uncomfortable meal with her new relatives, Mrs. Huntington detained the children, for a moment, in the dining-room.

"Next week," said she, "Jeannette will be going to school. You are not to tell the other pupils nor any of your friends, nor the maids in this house, anything of her former life. And you, too, Jeannette, will please be silent concerning your poverty and the fact that your father was a common fishman."

"Gee!" scoffed Harold, holding his nose. "A fishman!"

"He was a *gentleman*," replied Jeanne, loyally. "He was *not* common. Mollie was common, but my father wasn't."

"No gentleman *could* be a fishman," returned Mrs. Huntington, who really supposed she was telling the truth. "You will remember, I hope, not to mention his business!"

"Yes'm," promised Jeanne, meekly.

"Yes, Aunt Agatha," prompted Mrs. Huntington.

"Yes, Aunt Agatha," said Jeanne, thoroughly awed by the large, cold lady.

"Now we will see what you need in the way of clothes. Of course you have nothing at all suitable."

Jeanne followed her aunt upstairs. Mrs. Huntington noted with surprise that the garments in the drawers were neatly folded. Also that they were of astonishing fineness.

"Did your stepmother buy these!" asked the lady.

"No. My father."

"These handkerchiefs, too!"

"Yes, he bought *everything*."

"But you have only six. And not enough of anything else. And only this one dress!"

"That's all. Father didn't put any of my old things in. They weren't much good—I suppose Annie will have my pink dress."

Mrs. Huntington wrote many words on a slip of paper.

"I shall shop for these things at once," said she. "You need a jacket and rubbers before you can go to school. Of course you haven't any gloves."

"Yes, ma'am—yes, Aunt Agatha. Here, in this drawer."

"They're really very good," admitted Mrs. Huntington. "But you will need a heavier pair for everyday."

"And something for my stockings," pleaded Jeanne. "I guess father didn't know what to get. You see, most of the time I went barefoot—"

"Mercy, child!" gasped Mrs. Huntington, looking fearfully over her shoulder. "You mustn't tell things of that sort. They're *disgraceful*. Maggie might have *heard* you."

"I'll try not to," promised Jeanne. "But my stockings *won't* stay up."

Mrs. Huntington wrote another word or two on her list.

"Anything else?" she asked.

"Things to write a letter with—oh, please, ma'am—Aunt Agatha, could I have those? I want to write to my father—he taught me how, you know."

"Maggie will put writing materials in the drawer of that table," promised Mrs. Huntington. "I'll ring for them now. I'm glad that you can at least read and write; but you *must* not say 'Ma'am.' That word is for servants."

"I'll try to remember," promised Jeanne.

Jeannette's first letter to her father would probably have surprised Mrs. Huntington had she read it. Perhaps it is just as well that she didn't.

DEAR DADDY [wrote Jeanne]:

The picture is safe. The handkerchief is safe. The purse is safe. And so am I. I am *too* safe. I should like to be running on the edge of the dock on the dangerous side, almost falling in. See the nice tail on the comma. I like to make commas, but I use more periods. The periods are like frog's eggs in the Cinder Pond but the commas are like pollywogs with tails. That's how I remember.

Mrs. Huntington is not like Mollie. Mollie looks soft all over. Some day I shall put my finger very softly on Mrs. Huntington to see if she feels as hard as she looks. Her back would be safest I think. She is very kind about giving me things but I do not know her very well yet. She does not cuddle her children like Mollie cuddles hers. She is too hard and smooth to cuddle.

There are little knives for bread and butter and they eat green leaves with a funny fork. I ate a round green thing called an olive. I didn't like it but I didn't make a face. I didn't know what to do with the seed so I kept it in my mouth until I had a chance to throw it under the table. Was that right?

There is no lake. They get water out of pipes but not in a pail. Hot and cold right in my room. Maggie, she is the maid, showed me how to make a light. You push a button. You push another and the light goes out. She said two years ago this house was all made over new inside.

This is another day. My bed is very big and lonesome. I am like a little black huckleberry in a pan of milk when I am in it. I can see in the glass how I look in bed. I have a great many new clothes. I have tried them on. Some do not fit and must go back. I have a brown dress. It is real silk to wear on Sunday. I have a white dress. It looks like white clouds in the sky. And a red jacket. And more under things but I like the ones you bought the best, because I like *you* best.

This is four more days. I have been to church. I stood up and sat down like the others. I liked the feathers on the ladies' hats and the little boys in nightgowns that marched around and sang. Next Sunday I am to go to Sunday School. Mrs. Huntington says I am a Heathen.

I got a chance to touch her. Her back *is* hard. Now I will say good-by. But I like to write to you; so I hate to send it away but I will begin another letter right now. Maggie will put this in the letter box for me. I like Maggie but I am afraid I will tell her about my past life. Mrs. Huntington says I must never mention bare feet or fish.

Yours truly,  
JEANNETTE HUNTINGTON DUVAL.

P.S.—Mrs. Huntington told a lady I was that, but *you* know I am just your Jeanne. I love you

better than anybody.

Jeanne, you will notice, made no complaints against her rude young cousins and passed lightly over matters that had tried her rather sorely. From her letters, her father gathered that she was much happier than she really was. Perhaps nobody *ever* enjoyed a letter more than Mr. Duval enjoyed that first one. He went to the post office to get it because no letter-carrier could be expected to deliver mail to a tumble-down shack on the end of a long, far-away dock. He read it in the post office. He read it again in Old Captain's freight car, and when Barney Turcott came in, he too had to hear it.

Then Mollie read it. And as she read, her face was quite beautiful with the "mother-look" that Jeanne liked—it was the only attractive thing about Mollie. Then the children awoke and sat up in their bunks to hear it read aloud. Poor children! they could not understand what had become of their beloved Jeanne.

Afterwards, Mr. Duval laid the letter away in his shabby trunk, beside the little green bottle that still held a shriveled pink rose, the late wild rose that Jeanne had left on his table that last day. He had found what remained of it, on his return from his journey. It was certainly very lonely in that little room evenings, without those lessons.

Jeannette Huntington Duval found school decidedly trying at first. The pupils *would* pry into her past. Their questions were most embarrassing. Even the teachers, puzzled by many contradictory facts, asked questions that Jeanne could not answer without mentioning poverty or fish.

Yes, she had lived in the country (*is* on a dock "in the country"? wondered truthful Jeanne). No, she *truly* didn't know what a theater was; and she had never had a birthday party nor been to one. What did *keeping* one's birthday mean? Jeanne had asked. How *could* one give her birthday away! Of *course* she knew all the capitals of South America. Mountains and rivers, too. She could draw maps showing them all—she *loved* to draw maps. But asparagus—what was that? And velvet? And vanilla? And plumber?

"Really," said Miss Wardell, one day, after a lesson in definitions, "you *can't* be as ignorant as you seem. You *must* know the meaning of such words as *jardinière*, *tapestry*, *doily*, *mattress*, *counterpane*, *banister*, *newel-post*, *brocade*. Didn't you live in a house?"

"Yes'm—yes, Miss Wardell," stammered Jeanne, coloring as a vision of the Duval shack presented itself.

"Didn't you sleep on a mattress?"

Jeanne hung her head. She had guessed that that thick thing on her bed was a mattress, but how was she to confess that hay in a wooden bunk had been her bed! Fortunately, Jeanne did not *look* like a child who had slept on hay. She was small and daintily built. Her hands and feet were beautifully shaped. Her dark eyes were soft and very lovely, her little face decidedly bright and attractive. She suffered now for affection, for companionship, for the freedom of outdoor life; but never for food or for suitable garments. It is to be feared that Mrs. Huntington, during all the time that she looked after Jeannette, put *clothes* before any other consideration. The child was always properly clad.

Unfortunately, in spite of all Jeanne's precautions, her cousins succeeded in dragging from her all the details of her former poverty. They never got her alone that they didn't trap her into telling things that she had meant *not* to tell. At those times, even Harold seemed almost kind to her.

Mean children, they were pumping her, of course, but for a long time honest Jeanne did not suspect them of any such meanness. After they had learned all that there was to know, Jeanne's eyes were opened, and things were different. Sometimes Harold, in order to embarrass her, told his boy friends a weird tale about her.

"That's our cousin, the Cinder Pond Savage," Harold would say. "Her only home was a drygoods box on the end of a tumble-down dock. She sold fish for a living and ate all that were left over. She never ate anything *but* fish. She had nineteen stepsisters with red hair, and a cruel stepmother, who was a witch. She wore a potato sack for a dress and never saw a shoe in her life until last month. When captured, she was fourteen miles out in the lake chasing a whale. Step right this way, ladies and gentlemen, to see the Cinder Pond Savage."

Harold's friends seemed to consider this amusing; but Jeanne found it most embarrassing. The strange boys always eyed her as if she really were some little wild thing in a trap. She didn't like it.

Clara put it differently. "My cousin, Jeanette Huntington Duval, has always lived on my uncle's estate in the country. She didn't go to school, but had lessons from a tutor."

But, however they put it, Jeannette realized that she was considered a disgrace to the family, a relative of whom they were all secretly ashamed. And her father, her good, wonderful father, was considered a common, low-down Frenchman, who had married her very young mother solely because she was the daughter of a wealthy man.

"I don't believe it," said Jeanne, when Clara told her this. "My father *never* cared for money. That's why he's poor. And he's much easier to be friends with than *your* father—and he reads a

great many more books than Uncle Charles does, so I know he isn't ignorant, even if you do think he is. Besides, he writes beautiful letters, with semicolons in them! Did *your* father write to you that time he was gone all summer?"

Clara was obliged to admit that he hadn't.

"But then," added Clara, cruelly, "a *real* gentleman always hires a stenographer to write his letters. He doesn't *think* of doing such things himself, any more than he'd black his own boots."

"Then," said Jeanne, defiantly, "I'm glad my father's just a fishman."

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## CHAPTER XII

### A HELPFUL GRANDFATHER

During that first winter, Jeanne was fairly contented. Her school work was new and kept her fairly busy, and in her cousins' bookshelves she discovered many delightful books for boys and girls. Heretofore, she had read no stories. She had been too busy rearing Mollie's family.

Shy and sensitive, for several months she made no real friends among her schoolmates. How *could* she, with a horrible past to conceal? To be sure, when she thought of the big, beautiful lake, the summer days on the old dock, the lovely reflections in the Cinder Pond, the swallows going to bed in the old furnace chimney, the red sun going down behind the distant town, the kind Old Captain, the warm affection of Mollie's children, not to mention the daily companionship of her nice little father, it seemed as if her past had been anything *but* horrible. But no city child, she feared, would ever be able to understand that, when even the grown-ups couldn't.

From the very first, her Uncle Charles had seemed not to like her. And sometimes it seemed to Jeannette that her Aunt Agatha eyed her coldly and resentfully. She couldn't understand it.

But James, the butler, and Maggie, the maid, sometimes gossiped about it, as the best of servants will gossip.

"It's like this," said James, seating himself on the corner of the pantry table. "Old Mr. Huntington is the real master of this house. Young Mrs. Huntington comes next. Mr. Charles is just a puddin'-head."

"You mean figure-head," said Maggie.

"Same thing. Now, Mr. Huntington owns all this (James's comprehensive gesture included a large portion of the earth's surface), and naturally Mr. Charles expects to be the heir, when the old gentleman passes away. Now, listen (James's voice dropped, confidentially). There's a young nephew of mine in Ball and Brewster's law-office. One day, when he was filing away a document with the name Huntington on it, he mentioned me being here, to another clerk—Old Pitman, it was. Well, Old Pitman said it was himself that had made a copy of old Mr. Huntington's will, leaving all that he had to his son Charles. Now lookee here. Supposin' old Mr. Huntington was to soften toward his dead daughter for runnin' away with that Frenchman, and was to make a new will leavin' everything to his grand-child—that new little girl. Between you and me, she's a sight better child than them other three put together."

"He wouldn't," said Maggie. "Of course, he might leave her *something*."

"That's it. Mark my words, Mr. and Mrs. Charles can't warm to that child because they're afraid of her; afraid of what she might get. She's a frozen terror, Missus is."

"Well, they're as cold to her as a pair of milk cans, them two. Maybe that's the reason."

Possibly it was. And it is quite possible, too, that neither Mr. nor Mrs. Charles Huntington realized the reason for their lack of cordiality. Only, they were *not* cordial.

At first, Jeanne had seen but little of her grandfather. On pleasant days he sat with his book in the fenced-in garden behind the house. On chilly days, he sat alone in his own sitting-room, where there was a gas log. But sometimes, at the table, he would ask Jeanne questions about her school work.

"Well, Jeannette, how about school! Are you learning a lot?"

"Ever so much," Jeanne would reply. "There are so many things *to* learn."

One day, when he asked the usual question, Jeannette's countenance grew troubled.

"Next week," she confided, "we are to have written examinations in *everything* and there are a thousand spots where I haven't caught up with the class. Mathematics, language, United States history, and French. The books are different, you see, from the ones I had. I'll have to *cram*. Mathematics are the worst. I *can't* do the examples."

"Suppose you bring them to me, after lunch. I used to think I was a mathematician."

That was the beginning of a curious friendship between the little girl and the very quiet old man.

After that, there was hardly a day in which Jeanne, whose class was ahead of her in mathematics, did not appeal for help.

She liked her grandfather. He seemed nearer her own age than anyone else in the house. You see, when people get to be ninety or a hundred, they are able to be friends with persons who are only seventy or eighty—a matter of twenty years makes no difference at all. Mr. Huntington was sixty-eight, which is old enough to enjoy a friendship of *any* age.

But when people are young like Pearl and Clara, two years' difference in their ages makes a tremendous barrier. Clara was almost three years older than Jeanne, and Pearl was fourteen months older than Clara. Harold was younger than his sisters but older than Jeanne, who often seemed younger than her years.

Pearl and Clara looked down, with scorn, upon *any* child of twelve. Indeed, they had been born old. Some children are, you know. Also, it seemed to their grandfather, they had been born *impolite*. For all that they called her "The Cinder Pond Savage," Jeanne's manners were really very good. She seemed to know, instinctively, how to do the right thing; that is, after she became a little accustomed to her new way of living. And she was always very considerate of other people's feelings. So was her grandfather, most of the time. But Mrs. Huntington wasn't; and her children were very like her; cold, self-centered, and decidedly snobbish.

Jeanne was quite certain that her girl cousins had never *played*. Harold, to be sure, occasionally played jokes on the younger members of the family or on the servants; but they were usually rather cruel, unpleasant jokes, like putting a rat in Maggie's bed, or water in Pearl's shoes, or spiders down Clara's back. For Jeanne, he reserved the pleasant torture of teasing her about her father.

"Ugh!" he would say, holding Jeanne's precious mail as far as possible from him, while, with the other hand, he held his nose, "this must be for you—it smells of fish. Your father must have sold a couple while he was writing this."

Sometimes he would point to shoe advertisements in the papers, with: "Here's your chance, Miss Savage. No need to go barefoot when your five years are up. Just lay in a whopping supply of shoes, all sizes, at one-sixty-nine."

His grandfather liked his youngest grandchild's manners. He told himself, once he even told his son, that he couldn't possibly give any affection to the daughter of "that wretched Frenchman" who had stolen *his* daughter. Perhaps he couldn't, just at first. No doubt, he *thought* he couldn't. But he *did*. 'Way down in his lonesome old heart he was glad that mathematics were hard for her, because he was glad that she needed his help.

"Just what are you thinking?" asked her grandfather, one day.

"I was making an example," explained Jeanne. "I've been here seven months. That leaves four years and five months; but the last two months went faster than the first two. If five years seemed like a thousand years to begin with, and the last two months—"

"I refuse," said her grandfather, with a sudden twinkle in his eye, "to tackle any such example as that."

"Well," laughed Jeanne, "here's another. Miss Wardell asked us in school today to decide what we'd like to do when we're grown up. We're to tell her tomorrow."

"Rather short notice, isn't it?"

"Ye—es," said Jeanne. "You see, ever since I visited Miss Warden's sister's kindergarten, I've thought I'd like to teach *that*. But I thought I'd like to get married, too."

"What!" gasped her grandfather.

"Get married. I should like to bring up a family *right*—with the proper tools. Old Captain says you have to have the proper tools to sew with. *I* think you have to have the proper tools to bring up a family. Tooth-brushes and stocking-straps, smelly soap and cold cream and underclothes."

"Have you picked out a husband?" asked her grandfather.

"That's the worst of it. You have to have one to earn money to buy the proper tools. But it's a great nuisance to have a husband around, Bridget says. She's had three; and she'd rather cook for Satan himself, she says, than a husband!"

"Jeannette! You mustn't repeat Bridget's conversations. Does Mrs. Huntington like you to talk to the servants?"

"No," returned Jeanne, blushing a little. "But—but sometimes I just have to talk. You see—well, you see—"

"Yes?"

"Well, Bridget likes to be talked to. I'm not sure, always, that anybody else—well, it's easy to talk to Bridget."

"How about me?"

"You come next," assured Jeanne.

The next day Jeanne returned from school with her big black eyes fairly sparkling. She went at once to her grandfather's room.

"I've decided what I'm going to do," said Jeanne. "I'm going to be married."

"Why?" asked her grandfather.

"Well, you see, if I had a kindergarten, I couldn't tuck the children in at night. That's the very nicest part of children—tucking them in. But the husband wouldn't need to be *much* trouble. He could stay away all day like Uncle Charles does. What does Uncle Charles *do*? When he isn't at the Club, I mean?"

"He is in a bank from nine until three every day."

"Only that little bit? I guess I'd rather have an iceman. He gets up very early and works all day, doesn't he? Anyway, Miss Wardell said I didn't need to worry about picking *him* out until I was twenty. Sometimes I wish Aunt Agatha liked kittens and puppies, don't you? They're so useful while you're waiting for your children."

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## CHAPTER XIII

### BANISHED FRIENDS

"I have a letter from Old Captain," confided Jeanne, that same afternoon. "Don't you want to read it? You wouldn't laugh at it, *would* you?"

"Certainly I wouldn't laugh," assured her grandfather, taking the letter.

DEAR AND HONORED MISS [wrote Old Captain, in a large, sprawling hand]:

This is to let you know that it is a warm day for April. The lake is still froze. It seems as if the sun shines more when you are here. Sammy lost his freckles for a while, but they come back again last week. Michael and Annie were here yestiddy. He says your father is teaching him to read. As I am a better hand with a boat-hook than I am with this here pen, I will close, so no more at present.

Your true friend and well-wisher,

CAPTAIN JOHN BLOSSOM.

"Old Captain *is* my true friend," explained Jeanne. "He taught me to make dresses and things. But I've learned some more things about sewing in school. I can put in a lovely patch, with the checks and stripes all matching; and darn, and hem, and fell seams, and make buttonholes. Old Captain's buttonholes were so funny. He cut them *round* and all different sizes. I'm ever so glad Michael is learning to read. It's too far for small children to walk to school. Besides, their clothes—well, their *best* clothes aren't just right, you know. I guess they haven't *any* by this time."

"Do you really like those children?" asked her grandfather.

"I love them. Annie and Patsy are sweet and Sammy is so funny. He's so curious that he gets too close to things and either tumbles in or gets hurt. Once it was a wasp! I guess I couldn't live with people and not like them a little."

"Then you like your cousins?"

"I—I haven't lived with them very long," evaded Jeanne.

Her grandfather chuckled. *He* had lived with them for quite a while.

With the coming of June, Jeanne began to yearn more than ever for the lake. She told Miss Wardell about it the day she had to stay after school to redraw her map.

"Jeannette," asked the teacher, "what possessed you to draw in all those extra lakes? You know there are no lakes in Kansas."

"That's why I put them in," explained Jeanne, earnestly. "There ought to be. If there were a large lake in the middle of each state with all the towns on the shore, it would be much nicer. But I didn't mean to hand that map in, it was just a play map. You see, when you can't have any real water you like to make pictures of it."

"Are you lonesome for Lake Superior?"

"Oh, yes. Last Sunday, when the minister read about the Flood I just hoped it would happen again. Not enough to drown folks, you know, but enough to make a lot of beautiful big lakes—"



enough to go round for everybody."

"You've been to the park?"

"Yes, but the lake there isn't as big as our Cinder Pond, and its brick edges are horrid. It looks *built*."

"Of course it is artificial; but it's better than none."

"Ye-es," admitted Jeanne, very doubtfully. "I guess I like real ones best."

Along toward spring, when her "past" had become a little more comfortably remote, Jeanne had made a number of friends among her classmates. She had particularly liked Lizzie McCoy because Lizzie's red hair was even redder than that of the young Duvals, and her freckles more numerous than Sammy's. And Lizzie had liked Jeanne.

But when Lizzie had ventured to present herself at Mrs. Huntington's door, she had been ushered by James into the awe-inspiring reception-room, where Mrs. Huntington inspected her coldly.

"I came," explained Lizzie, nervously, "to see Jeanne."

"I don't seem to recall your name—McCoy. Ah, yes. What is your father's business?"

"He's a butcher," returned Lizzie.

"Where do you live?"

"Spring Street."

Mrs. Huntington shuddered. Fancy anyone from Spring Street venturing to ring at her exclusive portal!

"Jeannette is not at home," said she.

Susie Morris fared no better. Susie was round and pink and pleasant. Everybody liked Susie. Several times she had walked home with Jeanne; but they had always parted at the gate.

"Do come in," pleaded Jeanne. "I'll show you my new party dress. It's for the dancing school party; next week, you know."

"All right," said Susie.

The dress was lovely. Susie admired it in her shrill, piping voice. The sound of it brought Mrs. Huntington down the hall to inspect the intruder.

"Jeannette," she asked, "who *is* this child?"

"Susie Morris. She's in my class."

"What is her father's business?"

"He's a carpenter," piped Susie.

"Where do you live!" asked Mrs. Huntington.

"Spring Street," confessed Susie.

Mrs. Huntington shuddered again. *Another* child from that horrible street! A blind child could have seen that she was unwelcome. Susie, who was far from blind, stayed only long enough to say good-by to Jeanne.

"You must be more careful," said Mrs. Huntington, "in your choice of friends."

"Everybody likes Susie," returned Jeanne, loyally.

"Her people are common," explained Mrs. Huntington. "I should be *glad* to have you bring Lydia Coleman or Ethel Bailey home with you."

"I don't like them," said Jeanne.

"Why not?"

"There isn't a bit of fun in them," declared Jeanne, blushing because their resemblance to her cousins was her real reason for disliking them.

"Well, there's Cora Farnsworth. Surely there's plenty of fun in Cora."

"I don't like Cora, either. She says mean things just to *be* funny," explained Jeanne, who had often suffered from Cora's "fun." "I don't like that kind of girls."

"Lydia, Ethel, and Cora live *on the Avenue*," returned Mrs. Huntington. "You *ought* to like them. At any rate, you must bring no more East Side children home with you. I can't have them in my house."

Mrs. Huntington always talked about the Avenue as Bridget, who was very religious, talked of heaven. When their ship came in, Mrs. Huntington said, they should have a home in the Avenue. The old house they were in, she said, was quite impossible. Old Mr. Huntington, Jeanne gathered,

did not wish to move to the more fashionable street.

Jeanne wondered about that ship of Aunt Agatha's. The river—she had seen it once—was a small, muddy affair. Surely no ship that could sail up that shallow stream would be worth waiting for. She asked her grandfather about it.

Her grandfather frowned. "We won't talk about that ship," said he. "I don't like it!"

"Don't you like boats?" asked Jeanne.

"Very much, but not that kind."

Jeanne was usually a very well-behaved child, but one Saturday in June she fell from grace. An out-of-town visitor, a very uninteresting friend of Mrs. Huntington's, had expressed a wish to see the park. Pearl, Clara, and Jeanne were sent to escort her there. It was rather a bracing day. Walking sedately along the cement walks seemed, to high-spirited Jeanne, a very tame occupation. Presently she lagged behind to feed the crumbs she had thoughtfully concealed in her pocket to a sad squirrel with a skinny tail. He was not half as nice as the chipmunks that sometimes scampered out on the Cinder Pond dock, but he reminded her of those cheerful animals. The squirrel seized a crumb and scampered up a tree. Jeanne looked at the tree.

"Why," said she, "it's a climb-y tree just like that big one on the bank behind Old Captain's house. I wonder—"

Off came Jeanne's jacket. She dropped it on the grass, seized the lowest branch, and in three minutes was perched, like a bluebird, well toward the top of the tree.

About that time, her cousins missed her and turned back. Unhappily, the park policeman noticed the swaying of the topmost branches of that desecrated tree and hurried to investigate. Clara and Pearl arrived in time to hear the policeman shout:

"Here, boy! Come down from there. It's against the park rules to climb trees."

Jeanne climbed meekly down, much to the astonishment of the policeman, who grinned when he saw the expected boy.

"Well," said he, "you ain't the sort of bird I was lookin' for."

"I should think," said Pearl, who was deeply chagrined, "you'd be *ashamed*. At any rate, we're ashamed *of* you."

"I shall tell mother about it," said Clara, virtuously. (Clara's principal occupation, it seemed to Jeanne, was telling mother.) "The idea! Climbing trees in the park! Right before mother's company, too. I don't wonder that Harold calls you the Cinder Pond Savage."

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## CHAPTER XIV

### AT FOUR A.M.

Jeanne spent a very dull summer. Part of the time, her cousins were away, visiting their grandmother, Mrs. Huntington's mother. Jeanne had eyed their departing forms a bit wistfully.

"I wish," thought she, "they'd invited *me*." The sea, she was sure, would prove almost as nice as Lake Superior, unless, of course, one happened to be thirsty. Unfortunately, the grandmother had had room for only three young guests. Possibly she had been told that Jeanne was a "Little Savage," and feared to include her in her invitation.

After school closed, she had only her grandfather, the garden, books, and her music lessons.

She *hated* her music lessons from a cross old professor. It was bad enough to hear Pearl and Clara practice, without doing it herself. Her thoughts, when she practiced, were always gloomy ones. Once, downstairs, Maggie had sung a song beginning: "I am always saddest when I sing."

"And I," said Jeanne, in the big, lonely drawing-room, whose corners were always dark enough to conceal most any lurking horror, "am always saddest when I practice. I'd *much* rather *make* things—that's the kind of fingers mine are."

However, after she had discovered that two very deep bass notes rolled together and two others, higher up, could be mingled to make a noise like waves beating against the old dock, she felt more respect for the piano. Perhaps, in time, she could even make it twitter like the going-to-bed swallows.

The garden had proved disappointing. Jeanne supposed that a garden meant flowers—it did in Bancroft. But this was a city garden. The air was always smoky, almost always dusty. The garden, except just after a rain, never looked clean. There was a well-kept hedge, but it collected dust and papers blown from the street. The best thing about it was the large fountain, with three nymphs in the center, pouring water from three big shells. The nymphs were about Jeanne's size and looked as if they had been working for quite a number of years. Besides the fountain, there were four vases of red geraniums, two very neat walks, and some closely-trimmed, dusty grass.

Also, some small evergreen trees, clipped to look like solid balls, and one large elm. Her grandfather often sat under the elm tree on an iron bench. Fortunately, he didn't object seriously to caterpillars.

One day, he discovered Jeanne, flat on her stomach, dipping her fingers into the fountain.

"My dear child!" said he, "what *are* you doing?"

"Just feeling to see how warm it is," said Jeanne, kicking up her heels in order to reach deeper. "It's awfully cold, isn't it? If there weren't so many windows and folks around, I think I'd like to go in swimming."

"Swimming! Can you swim?"

"Of course," returned Jeanne. "I swam in the Cinder Pond."

From time to time, homesick Jeanne continued to test the waters of the fountain. In August, to her delight, she found the water almost lukewarm. To be sure, the weather was all but sizzling. Her grandfather, accustomed to seeing her dabble her fingers in the water, was far from suspecting the shocking deed she was contemplating.

Then the deed was accomplished. For thirteen blissful mornings, the Cinder Pond Savage did something that made Harold seem, to his mother, like a little white angel, compared with "that dreadful child from Bancroft." Of course, it *was* pretty dreadful. For thirteen days, Jeanne slipped joyfully from her bed at four o'clock, crept down the stairs, out of the dining-room door, and along the walk to the fountain. She slipped out of her night-dress, slid over the edge, and, for three-quarters of an hour, fairly revelled in the fountain. For thirteen glorious mornings—and then—!

Mrs. Huntington had had a troublesome tooth. She rose to find a capsicum plaster to apply to her gum. To read the label, it was necessary to carry the box to the window. She glanced downward—and dropped the box.

Something white and wet and naked was climbing out of the fountain. Had some horrid street-boy dared to profane the Huntington fountain?

The "boy," poised on the curb, shook his dark head. A bunch of dark, almost-curly hair fell about his wet shoulders.

"Jeanne!" gasped Mrs. Huntington. "What *will* that wretched child do next!"

Jeanne was late to breakfast that morning. She had fallen asleep after her bath. When she slipped, rather guiltily, into her place at the table, her Uncle Charles, who ordinarily paid no attention to her, raised his eyebrows, superciliously, and fixed his gaze upon her—as if she were an interesting stranger. Her grandfather, too, regarded her oddly. So did her Aunt Agatha.

"I'm sorry I'm so late," apologized Jeanne. "I slept too long."

"You are a deceitful child," accused Mrs. Huntington, frigidly. "You were *not* asleep. For how long, may I ask, have you been bathing in the fountain?"

"About two weeks," said Jeanne, calmly. "It's *lovely*."

"Lovely!" exclaimed Mrs. Huntington. "It's *disgraceful*! And for two weeks! Are you sure that no one has seen you?"

"Only a policeman. He was on horseback. You see, I frightened a blue-jay and he squawked. The policeman stopped to see what had frightened him, but I pretended I was part of the statue in the middle of the fountain."

Uncle Charles suddenly choked over his coffee. Her grandfather, too, began suddenly to cough. Dignified James, standing unobserved near the wall, actually *bolted* from the room.

Mrs. Huntington continued to frown at the small culprit.

"You may eat your breakfast," said she, sternly. "Come to me afterwards in my room."

There was to be no more bathing in the fountain—even in a bathing suit. Jeanne learned that she had been a *very* wicked child and that it wouldn't have happened if her father hadn't been "a common fishman."

"I am thankful," concluded Aunt Agatha, "that your cousins are out of town. *They* wouldn't *think* of doing anything so unladylike."

After that, Jeanne's liveliest adventures were those that she found in books. Fortunately, she loved to read. That helped a great deal.

She was really rather glad when the dull vacation was over and, oh, so delighted to see Lizzie and Susie! All that first week she couldn't *help* whispering to them in school, even if the new teacher did give her bad marks and move her to the very front seat.

"I'd go home with you if I *could*," said Jeanne, declining one of Susie's numerous invitations, "but I have to go straight home from school, always."

"You went into Lydia Coleman's house, yesterday," objected jealous Susie.

"Only to get a book for my cousin. Besides, that's right on my way home."

"Maybe if *you* lived on the Avenue, Susie," sneered Lizzie, who understood Mrs. Huntington's snobbishness only too well, "she'd be allowed to go with you."

"Hurry up and move," said Jeanne. "I'd *love* your house, Susie. I know it's a home-y house. I liked your mother when she came to the school exercises and I'm sure I'd like any house she lived in. But you see, I do so many bad things without knowing that I'm being bad, that it never would do for me to be *really* bad. Besides I promised my father I'd mind Aunt Agatha, so of course I have to. I'd love to go home with *both* of you."

Next to her grandfather, Jeanne's pleasantest companion out of school was the small brown maid in the big mirror set in her closet door. There were mirrors like that in all the Huntington bedrooms, so it sometimes looked as if there were two Claras and two Pearls and two Aunt Agathas, which made it worse if either of the girls were snippish, or if Aunt Agatha happened to be thinking of the fountain. Apparently, Mrs. Huntington would *never* forget that, Jeanne thought.

But to Jeanne's mind, the girl she saw in her own mirror had a *nice* face, even if it was rather brown. She liked the other child's big, dark eyes; now serious, now sparkling under very neat, slender eyebrows, with some new, entertaining thought. The mirror-girl's mouth was just a bit large, perhaps, with red lips, full of queer little wiggly curves that came and went, according to her mood. Her nose, rather a small affair, at best, did it turn up or didn't it? One couldn't be quite sure. Lizzie's turned up, Ikey Goldberg's turned down; but this nose seemed to do both. For that reason, it seemed a most interesting nose, even if there were no freckles on it.

When lips are narrow and straight, when noses are likewise absolutely straight, as Pearl's and Clara's were, they may be perfect or even beautiful, but they are not *interesting*. A wiggly mouth, as Jeanne said, keeps one guessing. So does an uncertain nose.

Then there was the mirror-child's chin. Not a *big* chin like the one in the picture of Bridget's first husband, the prize-fighter; nor a chinless chin like Ethel's.

"Quite a good deal of a chin, I should say," was Jeanne's verdict.

Then the rest of the mirror-child. A little smaller, perhaps, than many girls of the same age; but very nicely made. Arms the right size and length, hands not too big, shoulders straight and not too high like Bridget's, nor too sloping like Maggie's. A slight waist that didn't need to be pinched in like Aunt Agatha's. Legs that looked like *girls'* legs, not like piano legs—as Hannah Schmidt's did, for instance, when Hannah wore white stockings. The feet were small. The hair grew prettily about the bright, sociable face.

"You're just about the best *young* friend I have," declared Jeanne, kissing the mirror-child. "I'm glad you live in my closet—I'd be awfully lonesome if you didn't."

Jeanne, however, was not a vain little girl, nor a conceited one. She simply didn't think of the mirror-child as *herself*. The girl in the mirror was merely another girl of her own age, and she loved her quite unselfishly. Perhaps Jeanne's most personal thought came when she washed her face.

"I'm so glad I don't have beginning-whiskers like the milkman," said she, "or a wart on my nose like Bridget's. It's much pleasanter, I'm sure, to wash a smooth face like this."

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## CHAPTER XV

### ALLEN ROSSITER

In November there came a day when nobody in the Huntington house spoke above a whisper. There was a trained nurse in the house, three very solemn doctors coming and going, and an air of everybody *waiting* for something.

James told Maggie, and Maggie told Jeanne, that old Mr. Huntington had had a stroke.

"Is my grandfather going to die?" asked Jeannette, when Maggie had patiently explained the serious nature of Mr. Huntington's sudden illness.

"I don't know," returned Maggie. "Nobody knows, not even the doctors."

For a great many dreary days, her grandfather remained "Just the same," until Jeanne considered those three words the most hateful ones in the English tongue. Then, one memorable morning—*years* later, it seemed—she heard Dr. Duncan say, on his way out: "A decided change for the better, Mrs. Huntington."

Jeanne was so glad that she danced a little jig with her friend in the mirror. Often, after that, she waylaid the pleasant white-capped nurse to ask about the invalid; but Miss Raymond's one response was "Nicely, my dear, nicely." For weeks and weeks, Jeanne saw nothing of her

grandfather; consequently, her mathematics became very bad indeed. But at last, one Sunday morning, the nurse summoned her to her grandfather's room.

"Your grandfather wants to see you," said Miss Raymond. "You must be very quiet and not stay too long—just five minutes."

Five minutes were enough! There was a strange, wrinkled old man, who looked small and shriveled in that big white bed. Her grandfather's eyes had been keen and bright. The eyes of this stranger were dull, sunken, and oh, so tired.

"How do you do?" said Jeanne, primly. "I'm—I'm sorry you've been sick."

"Better now—I'm better now," quavered a strange voice. "How is the arithmetic?"

"Very bad," said Jeanne. "Miss Turner says I plastered a room with two bushels of oats, and measured a barn for an acre of carpet, instead of getting the right number of apples from an orchard. You have to do so *many* kinds of work in examples, that it's hard to remember whether you're a farmer or a paperhanger. I suppose wet things *would* run out of a bushel basket, but wet measure and dry measure get all mixed up—"

"I think your grandfather is asleep," said the nurse, gently. "You may come again tomorrow."

As Mr. Huntington improved, Jeanne's visits grew longer. After a time, he was able to help her again with her lessons. But all that winter, the old man sat in his own room. In February the nurse departed and James took her place. James, who had lived with the family for many years, was fond of Mr. Huntington and served him devotedly. As before, Jeannette spent much time with her grandfather. Also, in obedience to their mother's wishes, the young Huntingtons entered the old man's room, decorously, once a day to say good morning. Neither the children nor Mr. Huntington appeared to enjoy these brief, daily visits. Jeanne was certainly a more considerate visitor. She was ever ready to move his foot-stool a little closer, to peel an orange for him, to find him a book, or to sit quietly beside him while he dozed.

One day, in March, he told her where to find some keys and how to fit one of them to a small safe in the corner of his room.

"Bring me all the papers in the first pigeon-hole to the left," said he. "It's time I was doing some spring housecleaning."

"I love to help," said Jeanne, swiftly obedient.

He sorted the papers, dividing them into two piles. "Put these back, and bring me everything in the next hole."

Jeanne did that. This operation was repeated until all the papers, many quite yellow with age, had been sorted.

"These," said her grandfather, pointing to the documents on the chair beside him, "are of no use. We'll tear them into small pieces and wrap them in this newspaper. That's right. Now, do you think you could go to the furnace and put this bundle right on top of the fire, without dropping a single scrap? Do you know exactly where the furnace is?"

"Yes," said Jeanne. "When I first came, I asked Maggie what made the house warm. She said the furnace did. I wanted to see what a furnace *was*, so she showed it to me."

"Where is Mrs. Huntington?"

"She's out with the girls—at the dressmaker's, I think."

"And Bridget?"

"Asleep in her room. This is Maggie's afternoon out: Bridget *always* sleeps when Maggie isn't here to tease her."

"What is James doing?"

"I guess he's taking a nap on the hat-rack. He does, sometimes."

"Very well, the coast seems to be clear. Put the bundle in the furnace, see that it catches on fire. Also, please see that you don't."

"I've *cooked*," laughed Jeanne, "and I've never yet cooked *myself*."

In five minutes, Jeanne was back. "James is snoring," said she. "He does that only when Aunt Agatha is *very* far away. Listen! He does lovely snores!"

"Did the trash burn?"

"Every scrap," replied Jeanne. "I opened the furnace door, after a minute or two to see. The fire was pretty hot and they burned right up."

"It is foolish," said her grandfather, "to keep old letters—and old vows."

During the Easter vacation, the Huntingtons entertained a visitor, an attractive lad of fifteen, whose home was in Chicago. His name was Allen Rossiter.

"He's sort of a cousin," explained Harold. "His grandfather and my grandfather were brothers."

Jeanne decided that Allen was a pleasant "sort of a cousin." A fair, clean-looking lad with wide-awake blue eyes, Allen was tall for his age and very manly.

"I've heard a lot about you," said Jeanne, the day Allen paid his first visit to old Mr. Huntington. "You've been here before, haven't you?"

"Yes. You see, my father's a railroad man, so, naturally, I have to practice traveling because I'm going to be one, too. I've learned how to order a meal on the train and have *almost* enough left to tip the porter."

"You've accomplished a great deal," smiled Mr. Huntington.

"More than that," said Allen. "I know how to read a time-table. How to tell which trains are A.M.'s and which are P.M.'s. Which ones are fast and which are slow. Here's a time-card—I have ten lovely folders in my pocket. Tell me where you want to go, Jeannette, and I'll show you just how to do it."

"To Bancroft," said Jeanne. "It's 'way, 'way up on Lake Superior."

"Here's a map. Now, where is it?"

"About there," said Jeanne. "Yes, that's it."

"And here's the right time-card. You go direct to Chicago—"

"I know that," said Jeanne.

"But you want a fast train. Here's a dandy. It starts at 9:30 P.M. That's at night, you know. You are in Chicago at noon. The first train out of there for Bancroft leaves at eight o'clock at night. Then you change at Negaunee—"

"*That's* easy," said Jeanne. "You just walk across the station and say: 'Is this the train to Bancroft?' Daddy told me always to *ask*. But what do I do in Chicago? That's the hardest part."

"You go from this station to *this* one. Here are the names, do you see? There, I've marked them. I'll tell you what I'll do. You telegraph and I'll meet you and put you aboard the right train. When do you start?"

"Just three years and three months from now, right after school closes."

"Well," laughed Allen, "you certainly don't intend to miss that train. But I'll meet you. I'm the family 'meeter.' I meet my grandmother, I meet my aunts, and all my mother's friends. I'm *always* meeting somebody with a suitcase full of *bricks*. Anyway, nobody ever brings a light one. But your shoes, I'm sure, wouldn't weigh as much as my grandmother's—she's a *big* grandmother."

"May I keep this time-card?" asked Jeanne, earnestly.

"You may," returned the smiling lad, "but it'll be pretty stale three years from now."

"*And* three months," sighed Jeanne. "But having this to look at will make Bancroft seem *nearer*."

"So," said Mr. Huntington, "you're going to be a railroad man?"

"Yes," replied Allen. "If they have railroad ladies, by that time, Jeannette, I'll give you a job."

"I shan't need it," said Jeanne. "I'm going to be married."

"To whom?" asked Allen. "Got him picked out?"

"The iceman, I think. Oh, does a railroad man stay away from home a great deal?"

"Almost all the time, my mother says."

"Goody! That's what I'll have—a railroad man."

"I'll wait for you," laughed Allen. "You're the funniest little kid I've met in a long time."

"I don't have to decide until I'm twenty," said Jeanne, cautiously. "I *might* find a more stay-away husband than that."

The next morning the postman brought a letter from Jeanne's father. As usual, Harold, who had rudely snatched the mail from James, held Jeanne's letter behind him with one hand and held his nose with the other.

"What's the matter?" asked Allen.

"Fish," returned Harold, pretending to be very ill. "Her father's a fishman, you know. You can smell his letters coming while they're still on the train."

Allen glanced at Jeannette. She was red with embarrassment and very close to tears.

"You young cub," said he, "I've heard all about Jeanne's father from my grandmother. I don't know what he's doing now, but the Duvals were a splendid old French family even if they *were* poor. 'Way back, they were Huguenots—perhaps you've had those in school. Anyway, they were

fine people. And Jeannette's father was well educated and a gentleman. It isn't a bit worse to sell fish than it is to sit all day in a bank. I'd *rather* sell fish, myself.... Particularly, if I could do the catching."

"You'd better not let mother hear you," said Clara, primly. "*We* aren't allowed to say anything about Jeannette's people."

"I'm sure we don't *want* to," said Pearl, virtuously.

"Well," returned Allen, "my grandmother says that the Duvals began being an old family long before the Huntingtons did—that's all I know about it; but my grandmother never tells fibs, and she knew the Duvals. The rest of us don't. Hurry up and read your letter, Jeannette. We're all going to the park to feed the animals—which one shall we feed *you* to?"

Jeanne laughed. Allen had hoped that she would. It was a nice laugh, quite different from Harold's teasing one.

At the park, Jeanne had another embarrassing moment when Clara maliciously pointed out the tree that Jeanne had climbed; but Allen had pretended not to hear. Harold, who had carried an umbrella because Pearl had insisted, slashed the shrubbery with it and used it to prod the animals. He annoyed the rabbits, tormented the parrots, the sea lion, and finally the monkeys.

"Quit it," said Allen.

"You're a sissy," retorted Harold, unpleasantly.

"No, I'm not. *Men* don't torment animals."

"Harold *always* does," said Pearl.

"It's hard enough to live in a cage," said Jeanne, "without being poked. There! Mr. Monkey has torn your umbrella."

"Little brute!" snarled Harold, aiming a deadly thrust at the small offender. "I'll teach you—"

Allen wrenched the umbrella from his angry cousin. "Let *me* carry it," said he. "There's a guard coming and you might get into trouble."

Allen's visit lasted for only five days. Jeanne was sorry that he couldn't stay for five years. *He* respected her father. If that had been his *only* admirable trait, Jeanne would have liked him.

"Remember," said Allen, at parting, "that I am to act as your guide three years and three months from now."

"I won't forget," promised Jeanne, who had gone to the station with her cousins to see the visitor off. "I have your address and I learned in school how to write a long, long telegram in *less* than ten words. You'll surely get it some nice warm day in June, three and a quarter years from now."

How Jeannette kept this promise, you will discover later.

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## CHAPTER XVI

### AN OLD ALBUM

"There's a great big piece of news in my letter from daddy," confided Jeanne, who had been summoned to sit with her grandfather. He had been alone for longer than he liked. Since his illness, indeed, he seemed to like someone with him; and Jeanne was usually the only person available.

"What kind of news?" he asked.

"Good news, I guess. My stepgrandmother is gone forever. And I'm sort of glad."

"What! Is she dead?"

"Oh, no! I wouldn't be glad of *that*. You see, she had a bad son named John, who ran away from home ever so long ago. He was older than Mollie. His mother and everybody thought he was dead—it was so long since they'd heard anything from him. But he wasn't. He was *working*. They never guessed he'd do that. He hadn't any children, but he had a real good wife—a very *saving* one. After she died he didn't have anybody, so he thought of his poor old mother—"

"About time, I should think."

"Yes, *wasn't* it? Well, he went to Bancroft to hunt for his mother, and he's taken her to St. Louis to live. He gave Mollie some money for clothes and quilts and things; but it won't do a mite of good."

"Why not?"

"Mollie would be too lazy to spend it; or to take care of the things if she had them. Her mother

spent a great deal for medicine for her rheumatism; but Mollie just bought things to eat—if she bought *anything*. She loved to sit outside the door, all sort of soft and lazy, with the wind blowing her pale red hair about her soft, white face; and a baby in her lap. I can just see her, this very minute."

"I can't see," said Mr. Huntington, testily, "why your father ever married that woman."

"He *didn't*," said Jeanne. "She married *him*—Barney Turcott said so. Daddy had nursed my mother through a terrible sickness—I *think* it was typhoid, he said—and in spite of everything he could do, she died. Afterwards he was almost crazy about it—about losing her. He couldn't think of anything else. And while he was like that, *he* had a fever and was sick for a long, long time. Before he was really well, he was married to Mollie. Barney said the Shannons took ad—adventures—no, that isn't it—"

"Advantage."

"Yes, that's it. Advantage of him. They thought, because his clothes were good, that he had money. But they took very good care of me at first, Barney said. But Mollie kept getting lazier and lazier, and father kept getting stronger and healthier. But the better he got, the more discouraged he was about having Mollie and all those children and not enough money. You see, he wasn't *really* well until after they were living on the dock—Barney said the fresh air was all that saved him, and that now he's a different man. Mollie's cooking is enough to discourage anybody; but Barney says: 'By gum! He stuck by her like a man.'"

"My child! You mustn't quote Barney quite so literally. Surely, he didn't say all that to *you*?"

"No. Barney never talks to anybody but men, he's so bashful. He was telling another man why he liked my father. They were reeling a net."

"Where were you?"

"Behind them, peeling potatoes. I didn't know *then* that it wasn't polite to listen."

"You poor little savage."

"I don't mind," assured Jeanne, "when *you* call me a savage; but when Harold does, I *feel* like one."

Jeanne had been warned never to mention her mother in her grandfather's presence; and she had meant not to. But by this time, you have surely guessed that Jeanne, with no one else to whom she could talk freely, was apt to unbottle herself, as it were, whenever she found her grandfather in a listening mood. She was naturally a good deal of a chatterbox; but, like many another little chatterbox, preferred a sympathetic listener. Sometimes, as just now, she spoke of her mother without remembering that she was a forbidden subject. But now, some of the questions that she had been longing to ask, thronged to her lips. Her grandfather was so very gentle with her—Oh, if she only dared!

"What *are* you thinking about?" asked Mr. Huntington, after a long silence. "That is a very valuable picture and you are looking a hole right through it."

"I was wondering," said Jeanne, touching her grandfather's hand, timidly, "if you wouldn't be willing to tell me something about my mother. Nobody ever has. What she was like when she was little, I mean. When *she* was just thirteen and a half. Did she ever look even a tiny little scrap like *me*?"

"Yes," replied her grandfather, quite calmly, "you *are* like her. Not so much in looks as in other ways. You are darker and your bones are smaller, I think; but you move and speak like her, sometimes; and you, too, are bright and quick. And some part of your face *is* like hers; but I don't know whether it's your brow or your chin. Now you may clean my glasses for me and hunt up my book; I think James must have moved it. It's time you were changing your dress for dinner."

After that, Jeanne learned a number of things about her mother. That she had loved flowers when she was just a tiny baby, that pink was her favorite color. That she had liked cats and peppermint and people. That she was very impulsive, often doing the deed first, the thinking afterwards. And yes, her impulses had almost always been kind. Once (Jeanne's grandfather so far forgot his grievance against his only daughter as to chuckle softly at the remembrance of the childish prank) she had felt so sorry for a hungry tramp that the cook had turned away, that the moment cook's back was turned Bessie had, at the risk of being severely burned, pulled a huge crock of baked beans from the oven, wrapped a thick towel about it, slipped outside, and thrust it upon the tramp. The tramp *had* been burned; and they had had to send for a policeman, in order to get his bad language off the premises.

Jeanne had heard this story the night that she had had her dinner with her grandfather. She was supposed to be eating in the breakfast-room with her cousins; but when Maggie had cleared Mr. Huntington's little table, that evening, preparatory to bringing in his tray, Jeanne had said: "Bring enough for me, too, Maggie. I'm going to stay right here. You'll let me, won't you, grand-daddy?"

"I'll *invite* you," was the response. "I don't know why I didn't think of doing it long ago."

You see, whenever the Huntingtons entertained at dinner, as they frequently did, the children were banished to the breakfast-room. Between Pearl's snippishness, Clara's snubbing, and



Harold's teasing, these were usually unhappy occasions for Jeanne. And generally the three young Huntingtons quarreled with one another. Besides, with no elders to restrain him, Harold was decidedly rude and "grabby."

"I think," said Jeanne, after one particularly uproarious meal during which Harold had plastered Pearl's face with mashed potato and poured water down Jeanne's back, "that I've learned more good manners from Harold than from anybody else—his are so very bad that it makes me want nice ones."

After the meal with her grandfather was finished, he showed her where to find an old photograph album, hidden behind the books in his bookcase.

"There," said he, opening it at a page containing four small pictures. "This is your mother when she was six months old. She was three or four years old in this next one, and here is one at the age of twelve. She was seventeen when this last one was taken."

"Is this all there are?" asked Jeanne, who had studied the four little pictures earnestly. "Of her, I mean?"

"Yes, only those four. Young people didn't have cameras in those days, you know."

"Keep the place for me," said Jeanne, returning the book to her grandfather's knee. "I'll be back in just a second."

She returned very quickly with the miniature of Elizabeth Huntington Duval that she had been longing to show to her grandfather.

"My father had a friend who was an artist," said Jeanne, breathlessly. "He painted that soon after they were married. For a *present*, father said. Wasn't it a nice one?"

"Why, I'm delighted to see this, my dear," said her grandfather, gazing eagerly at the lovely face. "It's by far the best picture of Bessie I've ever seen. It is very like her and her face is full of happiness—I'm very glad of that. I had no idea of its existence. I am very glad indeed that you thought of showing it to me."

"So am I," said Jeanne. "You're always so good to me that I'm glad I could give *you* a pleasure for once."

"You must take very good care of this," said Mr. Huntington. "It's a very fine miniature."

"I always do," returned Jeanne. "I thought it was ever so good of my father to give it to me—the only one he had."

"It was, indeed," said Mr. Huntington, appreciatively. "Now, put it away, my dear, and keep it safe."

In the dining-room, to which the guests had just been ushered by James in his very grandest manner, a lady had leaned forward to say, gushingly, to her hostess:

"What a *lovely* child your youngest daughter is, Mrs. Huntington. I saw her at dancing school last week and simply fell in love with her. So graceful and *such* a charming face. She came in with your son."

"Clara *is* a lovely child," returned Mrs. Huntington, complacently.

"I think," said the guest, "my little son said that her name was Jeannette."

"That," said Mrs. Huntington, coldly (people were always singing that wretched child's praises), "was merely my husband's niece, who has been placed in our care for a short time. That time, I am happy to say, is almost half over. She is a great trial. Fortunately, *my* children have been too well brought up to be influenced by her incomprehensible behavior; her hoidenish manners."

At this moment there came the sound of a sudden crash, followed by shrieks faintly audible in the dining-room. Although Mrs. Huntington guessed that Harold had at last succeeded in upsetting the breakfast-room table; and that either Pearl or Clara had been burned with the resultant flood of soup, she turned, without blinking an eyelash, to the guest of honor on her right to speak politely of the weather.

It was Jeanne who rushed to the breakfast-room to find the table overturned and all three of her cousins gazing with consternation at a wide scalded area on Clara's white wrist. It was Jeanne, too, who remembered that lard and cornstarch would stop the pain. Also, it was Jeanne whom Mrs. Huntington afterwards blamed for the accident. Her bad example, her wicked influence was simply ruining Harold's disposition.

"Sure," said Maggie, telling Bridget about it later, "that lad was *born* with a ruined disposition. As for Miss Jeannette, there's more of a mother's kindness in one touch of that little tyke's hand than there is in Mrs. H.'s whole body. And think of her knowing enough to use lard and cornstarch. The doctor said she did exactly the right thing."

## A LONELY SUMMER

Jeanne had liked her first teacher, Miss Wardell, very much indeed. And pretty Miss Wardell had been very fond of Jeannette; she knew that the child was shy, and the considerate young woman managed frequently to shield her from embarrassment, and to help her over the rough places.

Miss Turner was different. She said that Jeannette made her nervous. It is possible that the other thirty-nine pupils helped; but it was Jeanne whom she blamed for her shattered nerves. It is certain that Miss Turner made Jeanne nervous. No matter how well she knew her lesson, she *couldn't* recite it to Miss Turner. A chatterbox, with the right sort of listener, Jeanne was stricken dumb the moment Miss Turner's attention was focused upon her.

"What a *very* bad card!" said Mrs. Huntington, at the end of May. "It is even worse than it was last month. Pearl and Clara had excellent cards and Harold had higher marks in two of his studies than you have. You are a very ungrateful child. You don't appreciate the advantages we are giving you. When school is out, I shall engage Miss Turner to tutor you through the summer."

"Horrors!" thought Jeanne.

"Miss Turner tutored Ethel Bailey all last summer," continued Mrs. Huntington. "Mrs. Bailey says that Ethel now receives excellent marks."

"From Miss *Turner*," said Jeanne, shrewdly. "Ethel doesn't know a thing about her lessons. She's the stupidest girl in our grade. I *know* mine, but it's hard to recite. If I *must* have a tutor, couldn't I have Miss Wardell?—I *liked* her and she'd be glad of the extra money because she takes care of her mother. Oh, *please* let me have Miss Wardell."

"No," returned Mrs. Huntington, firmly, "Miss Turner will know best what is needed for your grade. You are learning *nothing*. Only forty in history."

"Well," sighed Jeanne, "I'm not surprised. I said that Benedict Arnold wrote 'The Star-Spangled Banner' and that Lafayette painted Gilbert Stuart's portrait of Washington. I *knew* better, but oh, dear! When Miss Turner looks me in the eye and asks a question, my poor frightened tongue always says the wrong thing."

"She'd freeze a lamp-post," said Harold, for once agreeing with his cousin. "I had her last year. Don't look at her eyes—look at her belt-buckle when you recite."

"I *have* to look at her eyes," sighed Jeanne, miserably. "One is yellow, the other is black. I *hate* to look at them, but I always have to."

"I know," agreed Harold. "I had ten months of those eyes myself. I hope you'll never meet a snake. You'd be so fascinated that you couldn't run."

"Miss Turner's eyes have nothing to do with the question," said Mrs. Huntington. "Mrs. Bailey said she made an excellent tutor, so I shall certainly engage her."

"Perhaps," suggested Harold, consolingly, when his mother had left the room, "she won't be able to come. She *may* want a vacation."

"Oh, I *hope* so."

"So do I," said Harold, making a face. "You see, my marks in Latin are about as bad as they make 'em. It *may* occur to mother to let Miss Turner use up her spare time on *me*. Wow!"

"Anyhow," said Jeanne, "I'm much obliged to you for trying to help."

All too soon it was June. School was out and Jeanne hadn't passed in a single study. Even her deportment had received a very low mark. Miss Turner, contrary to Jeanne's fervent hope, had gladly accepted the position Mrs. Huntington had offered her. Mrs. Huntington broke the discouraging news at the breakfast table.

"Your lessons will begin at nine o'clock next Monday, Jeannette," said she, firmly believing that she was doing the right thing by a strangely backward student. "With only one pupil, Miss Turner will be able to give all her attention to you."

Again Harold agreed with his cousin. "I'm sorry for you," said he. "All of Miss Turner's attention is more than any one human pupil could stand."

"Mother," suggested Clara, not without malice, "why don't you let Miss Turner help Harold with *his* lessons—ouch! you beast! stop pinching me."

"Why, that," approved Mrs. Huntington, "is a *very* good idea. I'm glad you mentioned it. Still, you are going to your grandmother's so soon—I fear Harold's Latin will have to be postponed."

So great was Harold's relief that he collapsed in his chair.

The summer was to prove a dreary one. Besides a daily dose of Miss Turner, Jeanne was worried, because, for six weeks, there had been no letter from her father. Previously, he had written at least twice a month and, from time to time, had sent her money; that she might have a little that was all her own. Indeed, Mr. Duval, who had no lack of pride, had every intention of repaying the Huntingtons as soon as he could for whatever they had expended for his daughter. But that

would take time, of course.

At any rate, Jeanne was well provided with pocket money. To be sure, Pearl, who loved to order expensive concoctions with queer names at soda-water fountains, usually borrowed the money, sometimes forgetting to return it. Also, thus adding insult to injury, Pearl always invited her own friends to partake of these delicacies without inviting Jeanne, even though that wistful small person were at the very door of the ice-cream parlor. Pearl, several years older than her cousin and much taller, didn't want *children* tagging along.

But now, for six weeks, there had been no letter from her father and no money. She didn't care about the money. When you are going *home* in three years, eleven months, and fourteen days, you are so afraid that you won't have enough money for your ticket when the time comes that you *save!* Jeanne had saved her money whenever she could, and, with the thrift that she had perhaps inherited from some remote French ancestor, had hidden it in the fat pincushion of the work-box that Mrs. Huntington had given her for Christmas. She had hidden it so neatly, too, that no one would ever suspect that dollar bills had gradually replaced the sawdust. Only her grandfather knew about the money, and he had promised not to tell.

But after Jeanne had intrusted him with the secret, and when James was shaving the old gentleman, Mr. Huntington had suddenly chuckled.

"I beg your pardon, sir?"

"I am thinking about my youngest grand-child," explained his master. "She is the wisest little monkey I ever knew. She has enough common sense for a whole family."

"She has that," agreed James. "Mrs. Huntington, sir, wouldn't dast try to teach cook how to make a new pie, cook's that set in her own conceit, much less do any cooking herself; but that there little black-eyed thing comes in last month with a new dessert that she'd learned in her Domestic Science, and if cook didn't sit right down like a lamb and let her make it. What's more, Bridget asked for the rule and has made it herself every Sunday since. Cook says many a married lady is less handy than that small girl. She's got brains—"

"That'll do, James. I like your enthusiasm, but not when you gesticulate with that razor—I can't spare any of my features. But I agree with you about the child. She is thoughtful beyond her years."

The postman came and came and came, and still there was no letter. Old Captain, to be sure, had written oftener than usual and, when one came to think about it, had said a great deal less. She knew from him that spring had come to the Cinder Pond, that the going-to-bed swallows had returned, that the pink-tipped clover had blossomed, that the mountain-ash tree that had somehow planted itself on the dock promised an unusual crop of berries, that the herring were unusually large and abundant but whitefish rather scarce. Also the lake was as blue as ever—she had asked about that—and Barney had a boil on his neck. But not a word about her father or Mollie or the children. Usually there had been some new piece of inquisitiveness on Sammy's part for the Captain to write about; for Sammy was certainly an inquisitive youngster if there ever was one; but even news of Sammy seemed strangely lacking. And he had forgotten twice to answer Jeanne's question about Annie's clothes; if the little ready-made dress that Jeanne had sent for Christmas was still wearable or had she outgrown it.

Then came very warm weather, and still no real news of her relatives and no letter from her father. Once, he and Barney had taken rather a long cruise to the north shore. Perhaps he had gone again; with Dan McGraw, for instance, who was always cruising about for fish, for berries, or for wreckage. Dan had often invited her father to go. Still, it did seem as if he would have mentioned that he was going; unless, indeed, he had gone on very short notice. Or perhaps—and that proved a most distressing thought—perhaps she had been gone so long that he was beginning to forget her. Perhaps Michael, to whom he had been giving nightly lessons, had taken her place in her father's affections. Indeed, Harold had once assured her that fathers *always* liked their sons better than their daughters. Perhaps it was so, for Uncle Charles, who paid no attention whatever to Pearl and Clara, sometimes talked to Harold.

As before, the young Huntingtons had gone to their seashore grandmother. Jeannette, of course, had to remain within reach of Miss Turner, who now gave her better marks, in spite of the fact that her recitations were no more brilliant and even less comfortable than they had been in school.

Her grandfather, who seldom interfered in any way with Mrs. Huntington's plans, had objected to Miss Turner.

"She may be an excellent teacher for ordinary children," said he, "but she isn't Jeannette's kind, and she isn't pleasant."

"She is not unpleasant to *me*," returned unmoved Aunt Agatha, whose opinions were exceedingly difficult to change. "At any rate, it is too late to discuss the matter. I have engaged her for the summer, at a definite salary. Next summer, if it seems best, we can make some different arrangement."

"Then I suppose we'll have to stand it," sighed Mr. Huntington, "but it seems decidedly unfortunate that when ninety-nine school-ma'ams out of a hundred have *some* measure of attractiveness, you should have chosen the hundredth."

Perhaps Mr. Huntington might have made some further effort toward dislodging Miss Turner; but shortly after the foregoing conversation, he was again taken ill. For more than a week he had been kept in bed and James had said something to the cook about "a slight stroke."

But to Jeanne's great relief this illness was of shorter duration than the preceding one. He was up again; and spending his waking hours in a wheeled chair under the big elm in the garden. Jeanne, however, could see that he was not so well. His eyes had lost some of their keenness, and often the word that he wanted would not come. He seemed quite a good many years older; and not nearly so vigorous as he had been before this new illness. Jeanne hovered over him anxiously.

Sometimes Mrs. Huntington told visitors that she feared that her father-in-law's faculties were becoming sadly impaired.

"He seems to dislike me," she added, plaintively, when she mentioned "impaired faculties" to her husband. James overheard this. Indeed, James was *always* overhearing things not meant for his too-receptive ears, because he was so much a part of the furniture that no one ever remembered that he was in the room or gave him credit for being human. James told Bridget about it.

"The old gentleman," said he, "nor anybody else doesn't need impaired faculties to dislike *that* lady. If she's got any real feelings inside her they're cased up in asbestos, like the pipes to the furnace. They never comes out. She's a human icicle, she is. I declare, if she'd get real mad just once and sling the soup tureen at me, I'd take the scalding gladly and say, 'Thank you kindly, ma'am; 'tis a pleasure to see you thawing, just for once.'"

James, you have noticed, was much more human in the kitchen than he was in the dining-room. Mrs. Huntington, who had lived under the same roof with him for many years, would certainly have been surprised if she had heard him, for in her presence James was like a talking doll, in that he had just two set speeches. They were, "Yes, ma'am" and "No, ma'am."

"She's padded with her own conceit," said Bridget, "and there's a cast-iron crust outside that. She shows no affection for her own children, let alone that motherless lamb."

"If she ever swallowed her pride," said Maggie, "'twould choke her."

"Then I hope she does it," said James, going meekly to the front of the house to say "Yes, ma'am" and "No, ma'am" to his frigid mistress. For if James were more talkative in the kitchen than he was in the dining-room he was also much braver.

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## CHAPTER XVIII

### A THUNDERBOLT

Then, out of what was seemingly a clear sky, came a thunderbolt. Jeanne's self-satisfied Aunt Agatha, at least, had noticed no gathering clouds; and for that reason, perhaps, was the harder hit. Something happened. Something that no one had ever dreamed *could* happen in so well-ordered a house as Mrs. Huntington's.

There is no doubt that the impaired faculties of old Mr. Huntington had a great deal to do with it. Possibly the "impaired faculties" combined with his ever-increasing dislike for his daughter-in-law had even more to do with it. Anyway, the astounding thing, for which Mrs. Huntington was never afterwards able to forgive "that wretched child from Bancroft," happened; but, as you shall see, it wasn't exactly Jeanne's fault. She merely obeyed her grandfather. It was not until the deed was done that she began to realize its unfairness to Mrs. Huntington, to whom Jeanne was not ungrateful.

This is how it happened. Jeanne, who had never really *complained* in her letters to her father, in her conversations with her grandfather, or in fact to anybody; Jeanne, who had borne every trial bravely and even cheerfully, had, for three days, burst into tears every afternoon at precisely four o'clock. You see, this was the time when the postman made his final visit for the day. As the lonely little girl usually spent her afternoons in the dismal garden with her grandfather, he had witnessed all three of these surprising outbursts. She hadn't said a word. She had merely turned from the letters that James had laid on the table, and sobbed and sobbed and sobbed. For two days her grandfather had not seemed to notice. Nowadays, he *didn't* notice a great deal. On the first occasion of her weeping, he had even fallen into a doze, while Jeanne, her head on the littered table, had cried all the tears that had *almost* come during the preceding weeks.

The third afternoon, her grandfather appeared brighter than he had for days. He noticed, while she watched for the postman, that the child's face seemed white and strained, that there were dark rings about her eyes. Again there was no letter from her father. Again she broke down and sobbed.

"Tell me about it," said he, with a trembling hand on Jeanne's heaving shoulder.

As soon as Jeanne was able to speak at all, she poured it all out, in breathless sentences mixed with sobs. She was lonely, she wanted a letter from her father, she wanted her father himself, she wanted the children, she wanted the lake, she wanted to go home—she had wanted to go home

every minute since—well, *almost* every minute since the moment of her arrival. She hated Miss Turner, she hated to practice scales, she hated the hot weather, she was homesick, she wanted Mollie to *smile* at her—Mollie was always good to her. And oh, she wanted to cuddle Patsy.

"He—he'll *grow up*," wailed Jeanne. "He won't be a baby if I wait three—three years, or wu—one muh—month less than three years. I—I wu—wu—want to go home."

"Why, bless my soul!" said her surprised grandfather; with a sudden brightening of his faded eyes. "There's no good reason, my dear, why you shouldn't go home for a visit. I didn't realize, I didn't guess—"

"Aunt Agatha never would let me," said Jeanne, hopelessly. "I've asked her twice since school was out. It's so hot and I'm so worried about daddy. I thought if I could go for just a little while—but she says it costs too much money—that I mustn't even *think* of such a thing."

"Oh, she did, did she?"

Jeanne was startled then by the look that came into her grandfather's sunken eyes. It was a strange look; a malevolent look; a look full of malice. Except for the first few weeks of her residence with her grandfather his eyes had always seemed *kind*. Now they glittered and his entire face settled into strange, new lines. It had become cruel.

"Call James!" he said.

Jeanne jumped with surprise at the sharpness of his voice. Faithful James, who was snoring on the hat-rack—Mrs. Huntington being out for the afternoon and the hat-rack seat being wide and comfortable—hurried to his master.

"James," said Mr. Huntington, leaning forward in his chair, "not a word of this to anybody—do you promise!"

"Yes, sir," agreed James, accustomed to blind obedience.

"You are to find out what time the through train leaves for Chicago. Tonight's train, I mean. Be ready to go to the station at that time. You are to buy a ticket from here to Bancroft, Michigan—*Upper* Michigan—for my granddaughter. Reserve the necessary berths—she will have two nights on the sleeper. You will find money in the left-hand drawer of my dresser. If it isn't enough, you will lend me some—she will need something extra for meals and so forth. And remember, not a word to anybody. If necessary, go outside to telephone about the train."

"Very well, sir," said James. "I understand, sir—and by Jinks! I'm *with* you!"

"Good. Now, Jeannette, as soon as we know what time that train goes—"

"I *do* know," said Jeanne. "Nine-thirty, P.M. I have that time-card—the one that Allen Rossiter gave me—with the trains marked right through to Bancroft. But James had better make sure that the time hasn't been changed. And please, couldn't he send a telegram to Allen, in Chicago, to meet me! I have his address."

"Of course," returned Mr. Huntington. "I had forgotten that. Allen will be of great assistance. Now, go very quietly to your room. You are not to say good-by to anybody. No one but James is to know that you are going. Put on something fit to travel in and pack as many useful clothes as your suitcase will hold—things that you can wear in Bancroft. Have your hat and gloves where you can find them quickly and take your money with you. James will take care of everything else. Now *go*."

When Mr. Huntington said "Now *go*," people usually went. Jeanne *wanted* to throw her arms about her grandfather's neck, and say a thousand thank-yous, but plainly this was not the time.

She flew to her room. Fortunately the house was practically deserted, for Jeanne was too excited to remember to be quiet. Mr. and Mrs. Charles Huntington, however, had left at two o'clock for a long motoring trip to the country, and would not be home until midnight. It was Bridget's afternoon out and Maggie was busy in the kitchen.

"All the things I *don't* want," said she, opening her closet door, "I'll hang on *this* side. I shan't need any party clothes for the Cinder Pond. Nor any white shoes."

Of course the suitcase wouldn't hold everything; no suitcase ever does. Jeanne's selection was really quite wonderful. She would have liked to buy presents for all the children, but there was no time for that. Besides, to the Cinder Pond child, the city streets had always been terrifying. She had never visited the shopping district alone. But there was a cake of "smelly" white soap to take to Sammy and an outgrown linen dress to cut down for Annie, and perhaps Allen would find her something in Chicago for the others. She hoped Sammy wouldn't eat the soap.

The suitcase packed, Jeanne, who was naturally orderly, folded her discarded garments neatly away in the dresser drawers. No one would have guessed that an excited traveler had just packed a good portion of her wardrobe in that perfectly neat room. Certainly not Maggie, who looked in to tell her that her dinner was ready in the breakfast-room.

"And not a soul here to eat it but you," added Maggie.

"Couldn't I have it with my grandfather?"

"He said not," returned Maggie. "I was setting it in there, but he said he wanted to eat by himself tonight. He seems different—better, maybe. Sick folks, they say, *do* get a bit short like when they're on the mend."

At eight o'clock, Jeanne tapped at her grandfather's door. There was no response. She opened the door very quietly and went inside. Although he usually sat up until nine, Mr. Huntington was in bed and apparently asleep.

When you don't wish to say good-by to a person that you love very much and possibly never expect to see again, perhaps it is wiser to pretend that you are asleep. Jeanne left the softest and lightest of kisses on the wrinkled hand outside the cover, and then tiptoed to the hall to find James. Her only other farewell had been given to the mirror-child in her closet door.

"Ready, Miss Jeanne? Very well, Miss. I'll get your suitcase. We'd better be starting. It's a good way to the station and there's quite a bit to be done there. You can sit in a snug corner behind a newspaper, while I buy your tickets and all."

"I'll carry this," said Jeanne, who had a large square package under her arm. "It's my work-box. I shall need that. I expect to sew a lot in Bancroft, but it wouldn't go into my suitcase. And, James. I left two of my newest handkerchiefs on my dresser. Tomorrow, will you please give one of them to Maggie, the other to Bridget? I tried to find something for you; but there wasn't a thing that would do."

"Well," returned James, "it isn't likely I'll forget you, and the madam will be giving me cause to remember you by tomorrow."

When Jeanne was aboard the train and James, with a great big lump in his throat, had gulped out: "Good-by, Miss, and a pleasant journey to you," she yielded to the conductor as much as he wanted of her long yellow ticket.

Unconsciously she imitated what she called "Aunt Agatha's carriage manner." When Mrs. Huntington rode in any sort of a vehicle, she always sat stiffly upright, presenting a most imposing exterior. Jeanne was a good many sizes smaller than Aunt Agatha, but she, too, sat so very primly that no stranger would have *thought* of chucking her under the chin and saying: "Hello, little girl, where are *you* going all by yourself?" Certainly no one had ever ventured to "chuck" Aunt Agatha.

And then, remembering her other experience in a sleeper, Jeannette set about her preparations for bed, as sedately as any seasoned traveler.

She did one unusual thing, however. Something that Aunt Agatha had *never* done. As soon as the curtains had fallen about her, she drew from the top of her stocking a very small pasteboard box. The cover was dotted with small pin pricks.

"I'm afraid," said Jeanne, eying this object, doubtfully, "this car is pretty warm. Maybe I'd better raise the cover just a little."

She slept from eleven to four. Having no watch, she felt obliged, after that, to keep one drowsy eye on the scenery. She hoped she should be able to recognize Chicago when she saw it. Anyway, there was plenty of time, since she was to have breakfast on the train. Nobody seemed to be stirring. But *something* had stirred. When Jeanne looked into the little box on the window sill it was empty.

Making as little noise as possible, Jeanne searched every inch of her bed, her curtains, her clothes. She even looked inside her shoes.

"Oh, Bayard Taylor!" she breathed, "I *trusted* you."

And then, Jeanne was seized by a horrible thought. "Goodness!" she gasped. "Suppose he's in somebody else's bed—they'd die of fright!"

As soon as the other passengers began to stir, Jeanne hurriedly dressed herself. Then she pressed the bell-button in her berth.

"Mr. Porter," said she, "I wish you would please be *very* careful when you make this bed. I have lost something—you *mustn't* step on it."

"Yore watch, Miss? Yore pocketbook?" asked the solicitous porter.

"No," returned Jeanne, a bit sheepishly, "just my pet snail."

Happily, not very much later, the wandering snail was safely rescued from under the opposite berth.

"Is this yere *bug* what you-all done lost?" asked the porter, grinning from ear to ear as he restored Jeanne's property. "Well, I declare to goodness, I nevah did see no such pet as that befoh, in all mah born days."

"I hope," said Jeanne, anxiously, "that I can buy a tiny scrap of lettuce leaf for his breakfast. I didn't have a chance to bring anything."

## CHAPTER XIX

### WITH THE ROSSITERS

Not only Allen, but Allen's mother met the young traveler when she stepped from the train in Chicago. Such a bright, attractive mother, with such a nice, mother-y smile. No wonder Allen was a pleasant boy with gentle manners. It must be pretty nice, thought Jeanne, to live with a mother like that.

"We're going to take you home with us," said Mrs. Rossiter. "We brought the car so we can take your suitcase right along with us. We'll have lunch at home, with Allen's grandmother. She is very anxious to see you; she used to know your father's people, you know. They were neighbors once, in Philadelphia."

"I'll like that," said Jeanne.

"After lunch, we'll show you a little bit of Chicago—Lincoln Park, I think—and then we'll give you some dinner and put you on your train. You needn't worry about anything. Our young railroad man, here, has it all fixed up for you."

"That's lovely," said Jeanne, gratefully.

"Any adventures along the way?" asked Allen, who had carried the suitcase and the work-box, too, all the way to the automobile.

"Only one," said Jeanne. "I lost Bayard Taylor. He was a great American traveler, you know. We had him in school—"

"Was it a book?" asked Mrs. Rossiter. "Perhaps we can inquire—"

"I found him again," laughed Jeanne. "He was my pet snail."

"Where is he now?" asked Allen.

"In my stocking," confessed Jeanne. "Aunt Agatha had my jacket pockets sewed up so they wouldn't get bulgy. You see, I *wanted* a kitten or a baby or a puppy or *any* kind of a pet; but Aunt Agatha doesn't like pets—her own children never had any. But I just *had* to have something. And Bayard Taylor is it. A snail is a lovely pet. He is so small that nobody notices him. He doesn't need much to eat and he's so easy to carry around."

"I hope he doesn't do any traveling while he's *in* your stocking," laughed Mrs. Rossiter.

"He's in his little box," said Jeanne. "At my grandfather's I made a small yard for him under one of the evergreens with toothpicks stuck all around in the clay. He liked that and the little clay house I built."

"How do you know he did?" asked Allen. "He couldn't purr or wag his tail."

"He stuck up his horns and kept his appetite."

The Rossiters' house was homelike. Even the furniture wore a friendly look. An affectionate cat rubbed against Jeanne's stockings and an old brown spaniel trustfully rested his nose upon her knee. Jeanne liked them both, but she *loved* the big old grandmother, because she had so many pleasant memories of Jeanne's own grandmother.

"The finest little lady I ever knew," said she. "An aristocrat to the very tip of her fingers. And your grandfather Duval was another. Ever so far back, their people were Huguenots. Although they lost their estates, and their descendants were never particularly prosperous in business, they were always refined, educated people. Your father met your mother when she was visiting in Philadelphia. It was a case of love at first sight and your mother's hostess, a very sentimental woman she was, my dear, rather helped the matter along. They were married inside of three weeks; and you were born a year later in your grandmother's house in Philadelphia. She died very shortly after that and some business opening took your father to Jackson, Michigan. I believe he and your mother settled there. Her own people had not forgiven her hasty marriage; but I assure you, my dear, your young cousins have no reason to be ashamed of you. Your blood is *quite* as good as theirs."

Her tone implied that it was *better*.

"That's enough past history, granny," said Allen. "I want to show her my stamp collection, my coins, my printing press, and my wireless station on the roof."

Jeanne thoroughly enjoyed the noon meal—she hadn't supposed that nice persons *could* be so jolly and informal at the table. The ride through the park, too, was delightful.

"It's lovely," she said, "to have this nice ride. The wind is blowing all the whirligigs out of my head."

"I suppose you had lots of rides in the Huntingtons' new car—Allen says they have one."

"Not so very many. It was always closed to keep the dust out and Aunt Agatha liked to sit alone on the back seat. Sometimes she took Pearl or Clara. Never more than one at a time. She said it

looked common to fill the car up with children. But once in a while, when I had to go to the dentist or have something tried on, I had a chance to ride."

"Is there anything you'd especially like to see?" asked Allen.

"Yes," said Jeanne, promptly. "I'd like a good look at Lake Michigan."

"That's easy," said Allen. "You shall have *two* looks."

But when they reached a point from which Lake Michigan was plainly visible, Jeanne was disappointed. "Are you sure," she asked, "that that's it?"

"Why, yes," smiled Mrs. Rossiter. "What's wrong with it?"

"I thought," said Jeanne, "that all lakes were blue. This one is brown."

"It *is* brown, today," said Mrs. Rossiter. "Sometimes it has more color; but never that intense blue that you have up north. We once took a lake trip on one of the big steamers and I saw your blue lake then."

"Oh, this is a *nice* lake," said Jeanne, anxious to be polite, "but, of course, I'm more used to my own."

The Rossiters liked their visitor and urged her to remain longer; but Jeanne very firmly declined.

"I'd love to," she said. "And I would, if I were going *away* from home. But I'm just counting the minutes. It would be just like Patsy to grow another *inch* while I'm on the train tonight."

"I know just how you feel," assured Mrs. Rossiter. "But perhaps, when you are on your way back, you'll be able to stay longer."

"If she doesn't get back by the time she's twenty," laughed Allen, "I'm going after her. Just remember, Jeanne, I want to be on hand when you're ready to decide about that husband. I should hate to have that iceman get ahead of me."

"All right," agreed Jeanne, cheerfully. "Just hunt me up about six years from now. If I have time to bother with any husbands at all, I think, maybe, I'd rather have you around than the iceman."

"Be sure," said Mrs. Rossiter, at parting, "to let us know when you're starting back this way."

"I will," promised Jeanne. "I've had a lovely time. Good-by, everybody, and thank you *so* much."

Jeanne slept soundly that night and Bayard Taylor did no extra traveling, because Allen had made a tiny cage for him from a small wooden box, with bars of very fine wire.

At Negaunee, Jeanne succeeded in lugging all her belongings safely, if not comfortably, across the platform, from one train to the other.

"Is this the train to Bancroft?" she asked.

"It is," said the brakeman, helping her aboard.

The last half-hour of the journey seemed a year long. She had had no breakfast and she was sure that Patsy had gotten up earlier than usual that morning just on purpose to *grow*. Never was train so slow, never had fourteen miles seemed so many. The other passengers looked as if they had settled down and meant to stay where they were for *weeks*; but Jeanne was much too excited to do any settling. She wanted to get off and push. But at last a beautiful voice (that is, it sounded like a beautiful voice to the impatient little traveler) shouted: "All off for Bancroft."

In spite of her weighty belongings, the first passenger off that train was Jeannette Huntington Duval. There was a parcel-room in the station at Bancroft. Jeanne checked her suitcase—Allen had told her how to do that—put her check in her other stocking for safe keeping, and then, burdened only with her work-box, set out to surprise the Duvals. Her father, she was sure, would be willing to go for the suitcase that evening. He'd surely be home by now, even if Dan McGraw had taken him for a *long* trip. No doubt she had passed his letter on the way. And how those children would come whooping down the dock at sight of her! The sky was blue and all Jeanne's thoughts were happy ones.

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## CHAPTER XX

### A MISSING FAMILY

The walk was long, but at last Jeanne reached the blossoming bank, against which Old Captain's freight car rested. Nobody home at Old Captain's; but it was much too pleasant a day for a fisherman to stay ashore. One of his nets, however, hung over his queer house and his old shoes were beside his bed—the biggest, broadest shoes in all Bancroft; there was no mistaking *those*.

Half a dozen steps down the grassy dock and Jeanne stood stock-still. The lake! *There*, all big and clear and blue. And just the same—*her* lake!



A great big lump in her throat and suddenly the lake became so misty that she couldn't see it.

"What a goose-y thing to do," said surprised Jeanne, wiping away the fog; "when I'm *glad* all the way to my heels. I didn't believe folks really cried for joy; but I guess they do. I wonder where those children are. They ought to be catching pollywogs, but they aren't. And here are flowers just asking to be picked—Annie must be getting lazy. Why doesn't somebody see me and come *running*? And why isn't Mollie sitting outside the door in the sun? Why! How queer the house looks—sort of shut up."

By this time, Jeanne was almost at the end of the dock and her heart was beating fast. The house *was* shut up; not only that but *boarded* up, from the outside. It was certainly very strange and disconcerting.

Puzzled Jeanne seated herself on an old keg and reflectively eyed her deserted home.

"They've *moved*," she decided. "They've rented a house somewhere in town so Michael and Sammy can go to school. It's probably more comfortable, but I know the yard isn't half so beautiful. By and by, when I can stop looking at the lake, I'll find something to eat in Old Captain's house. I'm just about starved. I'll have to wait until he comes home to find out about everybody? I *wonder* why nobody told me."

It was five o'clock when Barney's boat touched at the dock. Old Captain climbed out. Barney followed. Together they picked their way along the crumbling wharf. Something brown—a *warm* brown that caught the glow from the afternoon sun—was curled on Captain Blossom's doorstep. When you've traveled for two nights and spent a long day outdoors on a breezy wharf, exploring all the haunts of your childhood, sleep comes easily. There was Jeanne, her head on her elbow, sound asleep.

Barney took one good look at the small, brunette face; and then, as if all the bad dreams he had *ever* had, had gotten after him at once, fled up the steep bank behind Old Captain's car and was gone. The Captain, when he had recognized his sleeping visitor, looked as if he, too, would have been glad to flee.

"So, so," he muttered, helplessly wringing his big hands. "Darned if I—hum, ladies present—dinged if I know what to do."

Suddenly Jeanne sat up and looked at him. Next she had flown at him and had kissed both of his broad red cheeks.

"Well!" she exclaimed. "It's *time* you were coming home. Where is my father? Where's *everybody*?"

"Well, you see," said Old Captain, patting her gently, "they ain't—well, they ain't exactly *here*."

"I can *see* that," returned Jeanne, exasperated by the Captain's remarkable slowness, "but where *are* they?"

"Well, now, Jeannie girl, maybe your father wrote you about Mis' Shannon's son John takin' her away to St. Louis last spring? Well, he done it."

"Yes?"

"After—well, after a while—Mollie was took sick. You see there was some sort o' reason for that there laziness of hern. There was something wrong with her inside. Her brother John come—I telegraphed him—and had her took to a hospital. Up at St. Mary's—t'other side of town. She's there yet. She ain't a-goin' to come out, they say."

"Oh!" breathed Jeanne, her eyes very big. "Oh, *poor* Mollie!"

"She's just as contented as ever," assured the Captain, whose consoling pats had grown stronger and stronger until now they were so nearly *blows*, that Jeanne winced under them. "I'll take you to see her first chance I git; she'll be thar for some time yet!"

"But the children," pleaded Jeanne. "Where are they?"

"Well, they're in St. Louis."

"Oh, *no*."

"I'm afeared they *be*. You see, Mis' Shannon was no good at housekeepin' with that there rheumatism of hern; so, John up and married a real strong young woman to do the work. When he come here to look after Mollie, he took Sammy and Annie and the little 'un back to St. Louis with him."

"And Michael?"

"I'll tell you the rest tomorry," promised the Captain, who had stopped patting Jeanne, to wipe large beads of perspiration from his brow. "I'm a hungry man and I got a heap o' work to do after supper. You got to sleep some'eres, you know. My idee is to knock open the doors and windys of the two best rooms in your old shack out there. This here fish car ain't no real proper place for a lady. It was me nailed them doors up after—hum—me nailed 'em *up*."

"After *what*?" demanded Jeanne.

"After—after breakfast, I think it was," dissembled Old Captain, lamely. "I wisht that mean skunk of a Barney—hum, ladies present—that there *Barney*, I mean, was here to help. Now, girl, I'm goin' up town to get somethin' fitten for a lady's supper—"

"I ate all your crackers and all your cheese," confessed Jeanne.

"Glad you did. You can put a chip in the fire now and again to keep her going. I'll start it for you and put the kettle on. Anythin' I can do for you up town?"

"Yes," said Jeanne, "I checked my suitcase at the station. Don't *you* carry it. Here's a quarter—get some boy to do it."

"Huh!" grunted Old Captain, "thar ain't no boy goin' to carry *your* suitcase. No, siree, not while I'm here to do it. Just let these here potatoes bile while I'm gone."

Jeanne, finding no cloth, spread clean newspapers over the greasy table, scoured two knives and a pair of three-tined forks with clean white sand from the beach, and set out two very thick plates, one cup and a saucer. After that, she washed the teapot and found Old Captain's caddy of strong green tea. Then she picked up a basket of bits of snowy driftwood from the beach—such clean, smooth pieces that it seemed a pity to burn them, yet nothing made a more pleasing fire.

Presently Old Captain returned with Jeanne's suitcase. With him was a breathless boy who had found it difficult to keep up with the Captain's long stride. The boy's basket contained bread, butter, eggs, and a piece of round steak. Also there was a bundle containing a brand-new sheet and pillow-case.

"Them thar's a present for *you*," explained Old Captain. "They was somethin' the matter with the towels—had *glue* in 'em, I guess. Stiff as a board, anyhow. But your paw left some in his room—"

"Where *is* my—"

"Now, I'm *cookin'*," returned Old Captain, hastily. "*When* I'm cookin', I ain't answerin' no questions. I'm *askin'* 'em. You can tell me how you got here and what started ye—I'm dyin' to hear all about it. But you can't ask no questions. And just remember this. I'm darn glad—hum—*real* glad you come. This here's a lonesome place with no children runnin' 'round; and I'm mighty glad to hear somethin' twitterin' besides them swallows, so just twitter away. First of all, who brung you?"

In spite of her dismay at Mollie's illness, in spite of her keen disappointment regarding the missing children, in spite of her bewilderment and her growing fear concerning her strangely absent father, Jeanne was conscious of a warm glow of happiness. Even if *everybody* had been gone, the Cinder Pond, more beautiful than ever, would still have been *home*.

But Old Captain's hearty welcome, and, more than all, the kindness that seemed to radiate from his broad, ruddy face, seemed to enfold her like a warm, woolly bathrobe. The Captain was rough and uncultured; but you couldn't look at him without knowing that he was *good*.

Supper was a bit late that night. Jeanne, very neat in her brown poplin dress, Old Captain, very comfortable in his faded shirt-sleeves, ate it by lamplight at the Captain's small, square table. Truly an oddly contrasted pair. But in spite of the fact that the Captain's heart was much better than his table manners, Jeanne was able to eat enough for *two* small girls.

After supper, the Captain lighted a big lantern, collected his tools, and trudged down the cindery road to the Duval corner of the old wharf. Presently Jeanne, who was clearing away after the meal, heard the sound of hammering and the "squawk" of nails being pulled from wood—noises travel far, over water that is quiet. When she had washed and dried the dishes, she followed Old Captain.

"Thought ye'd come, too, did ye! Well, she's all opened up. You'd best take your father's room—for tonight, anyway. It ain't been disturbed since—hum! The blankets is all right, I guess. There's a bolt on the door—better lock yourself in. Few boats ever touches here, but one *might* come. I'd hate like thunder to have ye kidnapped—wouldn't want to lose ye so soon. Did you bring along that sheet? Good. I'll leave you the lamp while I fixes up a bunk in Mollie's part of the house for my old bones."

The little room seemed full of her father's presence. An old coat hung behind the door. The little old trunk stood against the wall. On the big box that served for a table, with a mark to keep the place, was a library book. Happily, sleepy Jeanne did not think of looking at the card. If she *had* looked, she would have learned that the book was long overdue. Thanks to the big clean lake and the wind-swept wharf, there was no dust to show how long the place had been untenanted.

The music of the water rippling under the old dock, how sweet it was. The air that blew in at her open window, how good and how soothing. The bright stars peeping in through the little square seemed such *friendly* stars. Even the cold stiffness of the brand-new sheet was not sufficiently disturbing to keep the tired little girl awake.

She found her breakfast on the Captain's stove. Just in time, for the fire was out and a bright-eyed chipmunk, perched on the edge of the frying-pan, was nibbling a bit of fried potato. The Captain had disappeared. Jeanne didn't guess that he had purposely fled.

"There's so much to do," said Jeanne, eying the Captain's grimy teakettle, after she had finished

her breakfast, "that I don't know where to begin. If I could find my old pink dress—I know what I'll do, I'll *buy* something and make me a great big apron. Even my everyday clothes are too good for a working lady. But first, I guess I'll clean the room Old Captain slept in. Mollie kept a lot of old stuff that ought to be thrown away. I hope there aren't any rats. And I *must* remember to mail the letter that I wrote to my grandfather just before I got to Chicago. It's still in my work-box. I think some fresh hay would be nice for the Captain's bunk. There's a lot of long grass on top of the bank—perhaps I can cut some of that and dry it. I used to love to do that. I could make fresh pillows, too. But I *must* have something to work in."

A very ragged blue cotton shirt of Old Captain's was finally pressed into service. Of course it was much too big, but Jeanne tied up the flopping sleeves with bits of twine; found the Captain's broom, and marched down the dock.

The morning was gone by the time Old Captain's new room was cleared of rubbish. Jeanne, clad mostly in the old blue shirt, dumped it into the lake. Once her work had been interrupted by an old man who wanted to buy a fish. Jeanne, giggling at a sudden amusing thought, trotted down the dock to sell it to him from the end of the Captain's car. The business now was mostly a wholesale one; but neither Jeanne nor the customer knew that, so the fish were ungrudgingly displayed.

"Be you the fishman's little girl?" he asked, as Jeanne weighed the trout he had selected.

"I *be*," she returned, gravely. But as soon as the customer was out of earshot, Jeanne's amusing thought became too much for her.

"If Aunt Agatha could see me now," she giggled, "she'd drop into the Cinder Pond. And what a splendid splash she'd make! Think of Aunt Agatha's niece selling a fish! I hope I charged him enough for it. He looked as if he thought it a good deal."

It *was* a good deal. The Captain chuckled when she told him about it.

"You'd make money at the business," said he, "but I ain't going to have *you* sellin' fish. Besides, we ships most of 'em wholesale, out of town. They'd been none in that there box if Barney'd been tendin' to business."

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## CHAPTER XXI

### OLD CAPTAIN'S NEWS

When Jeanne had finished her morning's housecleaning, the room contained only the two built-in bunks, one above another, a small box-stove, a battered golden-oak table, that had once belonged to Mrs. Shannon, a plain wooden chair, and a home-made bench.

"Some day," said Jeanne, "I'll *scrub* that furniture, but if I don't eat something now I'll *die*. I'm glad James gave me too much money. And I have nineteen dollars in my pincushion. After I've had lunch I'll go shopping, for I need a lot of things. Old Captain shall have sheets, too; and I'll buy some cheap stuff for curtains—it'll be fun to make them and put them up. I wonder if oilcloth like Aunt Agatha had in her kitchen costs very much. That would be pleasanter to eat on than newspapers and very easy to wash. White would be nicest, I think. And if I could buy some pieces of rag carpet—my floor is pretty cold."

It was rather a long way to town, but Jeannette, freshened by a bath in the Cinder Pond and clad in a clean dull-blue linen frock, trudged along the road until she reached the sidewalk. Here she unfolded something that she carried in her hand—a small square of cloth. With it she carefully wiped the dust from her shoes.

"There," said she, throwing away the rag. "The Cinder Pond Savage looks a little more like Jeannette Huntington Duval."

She proved a better shopper than Old Captain. A new five-and-ten-cent store provided her with some excellent plated knives, forks, and teaspoons. She bought three of each—Barney might want to stay to supper sometime. Also a nice smooth saucepan, some fruit, some rolls, some cookies; besides the white oilcloth, which had proved inexpensive; and some other drygoods. So many things, in fact, that she wondered how to get them home.



**SHE ALMOST BUMPED INTO A FORMER ACQUAINTANCE**

"Where," asked the clerk, at the last place, "shall I send this?"

"It's out quite a little beyond the town," said Jeanne, doubtfully.

"This side of the lighthouse?"

"Yes."

"Well, we'll send it for you. The wagon is going to the life-saving station today. I'll send your other parcels, too, if you like."

"Good," said Jeanne, who meant to watch for the wagon where the road turned. "Now I'll be able to buy one or two more things."

Jeanne knew no one in the little town. When you live on a dock, your nearest neighbors are apt to be seagulls. But, as she turned the corner near the post office, where she was going to buy stamps, she almost bumped into a former acquaintance. It was Roger Fairchild, the boy that she had rescued more than two years previously. Roger was taller, but he was still quite plump.

"Oh," gasped Jeanne, recognizing him.

"*Did* the water spoil your clothes? I've always wondered about that."

Roger looked at her sharply. Was it—yes, it *was* that little shrimp of a girl that had pulled him out of the lake. She had grown a *little*, but she was that same child. The tomatoes in the corner grocery were no redder than Roger turned in that moment.

"Aw, g'wan," muttered embarrassed Roger, brushing past her. "I don't know yuh."

Jeanne felt slightly abashed. "I'm sure," thought she, glancing after him, "that that's the same boy. There can't be *two* as fat as that. Probably he doesn't know me in these clothes. Next time, I'll say a little more."

Of course Jeanne had learned under the Huntington roof that introductions were customary; but you see, when you've saved a person's life you feel as if that event were introduction enough without further ceremony. Also, when you've been kind to anybody, even an ungrateful boy, you have a friendly feeling for him afterwards. Besides, Jeanne rather liked boys, in a wholesome

comrade-y sort of way.

But if Roger seemingly lacked gratitude, his mother did not. She knew that Lake Superior was both deep and cold and that even the best of swimmers had been drowned in its icy waters. She felt that she owed a large debt of thanks to the tall, mysterious young woman who had saved her only child from certain death. For two years, she had longed to pay that debt.

The Captain and Barney were landing when Jeanne reached the freight car. She ran down to hold out a hand to Barney. But Barney put his big hands behind his back.

"They ain't clean," said he. Then he turned to Old Captain and spoke in an undertone. "*You* got to tell her," he said. "I know I promised, but I can't."

"I guess it's got to be did," sighed the Old Captain, "but you got to stand by."

"This part of the wharf," remarked Jeanne, "looks a great deal battered up. Aren't some of the timbers gone?"

"Yes," returned Old Captain. "You see there was a bad storm last May—Barney was out in it. It—it damaged his boat some."

"Was Barney alone?"

"No. Your father and Michael was with him."

"Barney," demanded Jeanne, "where's my father *now*?"

Barney, who was scooping fish into a basket, grabbed the handle and strode away as fast as his long legs would carry him. Old Captain shouted: "Barney!" but the younger man did not pause.

"Jeannie girl," said Old Captain, as they followed Barney down the wharf, "Barney's *ashamed* to meet you; but he ain't got no call to be. What happened weren't *his* fault. But he thinks you'll hate him like p'isen when you know."

"*What* happened?" pleaded Jeanne, pale with dread.

"It was like this. The squall came up sudden, an' the boat went over. A tug picked Barney up—he was hangin' on to the bottom of the boat."

"And—and daddy?"

"There was nobody there when the tug come but Barney."

"Was my father—you said daddy and Michael—they *did* go out that day? They surely *did* go in the boat?"

"Yes," returned Old Captain, sorrowfully. "They went and they didn't come back. That's all."

"They went and they didn't come back—they went and they didn't come back"—Jeanne's feet kept time to the words as the pair walked up the dock. "They went and they didn't come back."

Jeanne couldn't believe it. Yet, somehow, she had known it. All that summer, in spite of her brave assurances to herself, she had felt—fatherless. The fatherless feeling had been justified. Yet she *couldn't* believe it. Her precious father—and poor little Michael!

"Maybe—maybe you'd want to go inside and cry a bit," suggested the worried Captain. "Shall I—just hang about outside?"

Jeanne dropped to the bench outside the car. Her eyes, very wide open but perfectly tearless, were fixed on Old Captain. Her cheeks were white. Even her lips were colorless.

Captain Blossom didn't know *what* to do. A crying child could be soothed and comforted with kind words; but this frozen image—this little white girl with wide black eyes staring through him at the lake—what *could* a rough old sailorman do to help her?

Suddenly, a lanky, bowlegged boy, with big, red ears that almost flopped, came 'round the corner of the car.

"Say," said he, "I'm looking for a party named 'Devil'—Jane et a Hungry Devil, looks like."

"Right here," returned Old Captain. "It's Jeannette Huntington *Duval*."

Every inch of that boy was funny. Even his queer voice was provocative of mirth. Jeanne *laughed*.

But the boy had barely turned the corner before surprised Jeanne, a little heap on the bench, was sobbing sobs a great many sizes too large for her small body.

"It's soaked in," said the Captain, patting her ponderously. "There, there, Jeannie girl. There, there. Just cry all ye want to. I cried some myself, when I heard about it."

Presently the big Old Captain went inside his old car and there was a great clatter among the cooking utensils, mingled with a sort of muffled roar. He was working off his overcharged feelings.

Jeanne's sobs, having gradually subsided, she began to be conscious of the unusual disturbance inside the car. Next, she listened—and *hoped* that Old Captain wasn't saying bad words, but—

"Hum! Ladies present," rose suddenly above the clatter of dishes. The silence, followed by: "Dumbed if she hasn't eaten all the bread!"

Right after that the listening Captain heard the sound of tearing paper. A moment later, Jeanne was in the doorway—a loaf of bread in one hand, a basket of peaches in the other. Her face was tear-stained, but her eyes were brave. She even smiled a little, twisty smile—a smile that all but upset Old Captain.

"There's some rolls, too," she said, in rather a shaky voice. "Take these and I'll bring you the tablecloth. After this, I'm going to be the supper cook. I planned it all out this morning."

Jeanne, brave little soul that she was, was back among the everyday things of life. The greatly relieved Captain beamed at the shining white tablecloth and the cheap, plated silver. He picked up one of the new knives and viewed it admiringly.

"I ain't et with a shiny knife like this since I was keepin' bachelor's hall," said he. "I'll just admire eatin' fried potatoes with this here knife."

The Captain was very sociable that evening. He had to see the contents of all the parcels, and expressed great admiration for the checked gingham that was to be made into a big apron. Once, he disappeared to rummage about in the dark, further end of the long car. Presently he returned with a rusty tin box.

"This here," said he, "is my bank."

He opened it. It was filled with money.

"You see," said he, "when you earns more than you spends, the stuff piles up. Now here's a nice empty can. We'll set it, inconspicuous-like, in this here corner of the cupboard. Any time you wants any money for anything—clothes or food or anything at all—you look in this can. There'll be some thar. You see, you're *my* little girl, just now. The rest'll be put away safe—you can forgit about *that*. Was that there a yawn? Gettin' sleepy, are you? Well, well, where's the lantern?"

At the door of the Duval shack, Jeanne stumbled over something—a large basket with the cover fastened down tight. Jeanne carried it inside and lifted the cover. It contained four small kittens and a bottle of milk. A card hung from the neck of the bottle. On it was printed:

"We got no Mother. From BARNEY."

"Drat him," said the Captain, "them kittens'll keep you awake."

"Not if I feed them," returned Jeanne. "Of course I shall still love Bayard Taylor, but after all, kittens are a lot more cuddle-y than snails. I'm so glad Barney thought of them. They're *dear*—such a pretty silvery gray with white under their chins. I do hope they'll find me a nice mother."

By the time the kittens were fed and asleep, Jeanne, who had certainly spent an exhausting day, was no longer able to keep her eyes open.

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## CHAPTER XXII

### ROGER'S RAZOR

"This here is Saturday," said Old Captain, at breakfast time. "Our cupboard is pretty bare of bacon, potatoes, and things like that. I'll go up town after the fodder. Then this afternoon, me and you'll go to see Mollie. Most ginerally I takes her somethin'—fruit like, or a bouquet—old Mrs. Schmidt gives me a grand bunch for a quarter. It's quite a walk to that there hospital, so don't you go a-tirin' of yourself out doin' too much work; but I sure did enjoy my room last night—all clean an' ship-shape."

"Wait till *tonight!*" said Jeanne. "You'll have *sheets!*"

"Will I?" returned Old Captain, a bit doubtfully. "Well, I *may* get used to 'em. They does dress up a bed."

In spite of the squealing kittens, in spite of the many small tasks that Jeanne found to do, many times that morning her eyes filled with tears. Poor daddy and Michael—to go like that. Curiously enough, the remembrance of a drowned sailor, whose body had once been washed up on the beach near the dock, brought Jeanne a certain sense of comfort.

The sailor had looked as if he hadn't *cared*. He was dead and he didn't *mind*. He had looked peaceful—almost happy; as if his body was just an old one that he had been rather glad to throw away.

"His soul," Léon Duval had said, when he found his small daughter in the little crowd of bystanders on the beach, "isn't there. That is only his body. The man himself is elsewhere."

"*Father* doesn't care," said Jeanne, and tried to be happy in that comforting thought.

That afternoon, they visited Mollie.

"This bein' a special occasion," said Old Captain, "I got *both* fruit and flowers. You kin carry the bouquet."

It took courage to carry it, but Jeanne rose nobly to the occasion. She couldn't help giggling, however, when she tried to picture Mrs. Huntington, suddenly presented with a similar offering. There was a tiger lily in the center, surrounded by pink sweet-peas. Outside of this, successive rings of orange marigolds, purple asters, scarlet geraniums and candytuft, with a final fringe of blue cornflowers.

"If I meet that fat boy," thought Jeanne, wickedly, "I'll bow to him."

"Once I took a all-white one," confessed Captain Blossom, with a pleased glance at the bouquet, "but the nurse, she said 'Bring colored flowers—they're more cheerful.' 'Make it cheerful,' says I, to Mrs. S. Now that there *is* cheerful, ain't it?"

"Yes," agreed Jeanne, "it *is*. Even at Aunt Agatha's biggest dinner party there wasn't a *more* cheerful one than this. I'm sure Mollie will like it."

But *was* that Mollie—that absolutely neat white creature in the neat white bed? There was the pale red hair neatly braided in a shining halo above the serene forehead. The mild blue eyes looked lazily at the bouquet, then at Jeanne. The old, good-natured smile curved her lips.

"Hello, Jeanne," she said, "you're lookin' fine. You see, I'm sick abed, but I'm real comfortable—real comfortable and happy." Then she fell asleep.

"It's the medicine," said the nurse. "She sleeps most of the time. But even when she's awake, nothing troubles her."

"Nothin' ever did," returned Old Captain. "But then, there's some that worries *too* much."

They met Barney in the road above the dock. Jeanne held out her hand. Big, raw-boned Barney gripped it with both of his, squeezed it hard—and fled.

"You tell him," said Jeanne, with the little twisty smile that was not very far from tears, "to come to dinner tomorrow—that *I* invited him and am going to make him a pudding. Poor old Barney! We've got to make him feel comfortable. Tell him I bought a fork—no, a *knife* especially for him."

"Barney's as good as gold," returned Old Captain. "But, for a man of forty-seven, he's too dinged shy. 'Barney,' says I, more'n once, 'you'd ought to get married.' 'There's as good fish in the sea as ever come out,' says Barney. 'Yes,' says I, 'but ain't the bait gittin' some stale?'"

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"Is it *really* September?" asked Jeanne, one morning, studying the little calendar she had found in her work-box.

"Today's the fourteenth," replied Old Captain. "What of it?"

"I'm worried," said Jeanne. "I came to make a *visit*, but I haven't heard a word from Aunt Agatha or my grandfather about going back, or *anything*. Of course, I *ought* to be in school."

"There's a good school here. You have clothes—an' can get more."

"I don't *want* to go back to Aunt Agatha, you know. I'm sure she's *very* angry at me for running away. It took her a long, long time to get over it after I went swimming in the fountain. I suppose this is worse."

"Well, this here weren't exactly your fault."

"I'm bothered about my grandfather, too. I've written to him four times and I haven't heard a *word*."

"You told them about your father—"

"No," confessed Jeanne, "I didn't. I *couldn't* write about it to Aunt Agatha—she despised him. And I heard James say that any bad news or *anything* very sudden would—would bring on another one of those strokes. Of course they think I'm with daddy—I didn't think of that. I didn't *mean* to deceive anybody."

"Well," said Old Captain, "I guess your idee of not startling your gran'-daddy was all right. But you'd better write your Aunt Agathy, some day, an' tell her about your father. There's no hurry. I'd *ruther* you stayed right here."

"And I'd rather stay."

"Then stay you do. But before real cold weather comes we gotta fix up some place ashore for you, where there's somebody to keep a good fire goin'. Maybe me and Barney can build on an addition behind this here car—say two good rooms with a door through from here. But there's no need to worry for a good while yet. We're cozy enough for the present and October's sure to be pleasant—allus is. About school, now. I guess you'd better start next Monday. Whatever damage there is, for books or anything else, I'll stand it. An' if there was music lessons, now—"

Jeanne made a face. Old Captain chuckled.

"Maybe," said he, "there wouldn't be time for that."

"I'm *sure* there wouldn't," agreed Jeanne.

On Saturday, Jeanne went up town to buy food. But first she visited the five-and-ten-cent store to buy an egg-beater. Just outside, she came face to face with Roger Fairchild—and his mother.

Jeanne, an impish light in her black eyes (she was only sorry that she wasn't carrying one of Mrs. Schmidt's outrageous bouquets), stopped square in front of the stout boy and said:

"*Did* you spoil your clothes?"

As before, Roger turned several shades of crimson. Jeanne did not look almost fourteen, for she was still rather small for her years.

"*Did* you?" persisted his tormenter.

"Yes, I did," growled Roger. "Hurry on, Mother. I gotta get a haircut as soon as we've had that ice cream."

Jeanne explained the matter to Old Captain, who had heard about the accident to Roger.

"He's one of the kind of boys you can *tease*," said Jeanne. "I'm afraid I *like* to tease, just a little. He looks like sort of a baby-boy, doesn't he?"

Meanwhile, the boy's mother was questioning her curiously embarrassed son.

"Roger," said she, "who *was* that pretty child and what did she mean?"

"I dunno," fibbed Roger.

"Yes, you *do*. *What* clothes?"

"Oh, old ones—don't bother."

"I *insist* on knowing."

"Aw, what's the use—the ones that got in the lake and shrunk so I couldn't wear 'em," mumbled Roger. "Come on, here's the ice-cream place."

"How did *she* know about your clothes?" persisted Mrs. Fairchild.

"Aw," growled Roger, "she was hangin' 'round."

"When you fell in?" demanded Mrs. Fairchild, eagerly. "Does she know that noble girl that saved you? Does she—*does* she, Roger?"

"Oh, I s'pose so," said Roger. "How should *I* know—come on, your ice cream'll get cold."

"But, Roger—"

"Say," said desperate Roger, whose chin was as smooth as his mother's, "if you ever buy me a razor, I wish you'd buy *this* kind—here in this window. Look at it. That's a *dandy* razor."

"A razor!" gasped Mrs. Fairchild. "What in the world—"

Roger gave a sigh of relief. His mother had been switched from that miserable Cinder Pond child. He chatted so freely about razors that his mother was far from guessing that he knew as little about them as she did.

"Fancy you wanting a razor!" commented his astonished mother.

"There's no great rush," admitted Roger, feeling his smooth cheek, "but I bet I'll get whiskers before you do."

"They'll be pink, like your eyebrows," retaliated Mrs. Fairchild, "but never mind; my eyebrows grew darker and yours will."

"Gee!" thought Roger, "I'm glad I thought of that razor—that was a close shave."

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## CHAPTER XXIII

### A NEW FRIEND FOR JEANNE

The very next day, when Old Captain and Jeanne were coming away from the hospital, they met Mrs. Fairchild going in to visit a sick friend. The impulsive little lady pounced upon Jeanne.

"Please don't think that I'm crazy," said she, in a voice that Jeanne considered decidedly pleasing, "but you're *just* the person I wish to see. One day, more than two years ago, my son Roger fell into Lake Superior and was *almost* drowned. He says that you know the girl—a very *large* girl, Roger said she was—that saved his life. Just think! Not a word of thanks have I ever been able to give her. I am *so* anxious to meet that brave girl."



"Well," said Old Captain, with a twinkle in his eye, "you're meetin' her right now. She tore a hole two feet across that there net o' mine savin' your boy. That's how I come to know about it."

"Not this *little* girl!"

"It was mostly the net," said Jeanne, modestly. "I just threw it over the place where he went down. His fingers *had* to grab it. I lived right there, you know, and I had pulled my little brother Sammy out ever so many times. He was *always* tumbling in."

"My dear," declared Mrs. Fairchild, "I'm going home with you. I want to see the exact spot. Roger has always been so vague about it. Get into my car—it's just outside the gate—and I'll drive you there. I must run in here first, but I won't stay two minutes."

It was Old Captain's first ride in an automobile, and he was surprised to find himself within sight of his own home in a very few minutes after leaving the hospital.

"This here buggy's some traveler," said he, admiringly.

They escorted Mrs. Fairchild to the end of the dock, to show her the spot from which Roger had taken his dangerous plunge. She looked down into the green depths and shuddered.

"Ugh!" she said, "it *looks* a mile deep. Oh, I'm *so* thankful you happened to be here."

Next, she inspected the shack on the dock; after that, the Captain's old freight car.

"And you *live* here!" she said, seating herself on the bench outside and drawing Jeanne down beside her. "I want you to tell me all about it and about *you*. I want your whole history."

By asking a great many questions (she had lived with Roger long enough to learn how to do that) she soon knew a great deal about Jeanne, her life on the wharf, her two years with the Huntingtons, her father's wishes for her. Jeanne found it not only easy but pleasant to chatter to her sympathetic new acquaintance.

"This is a beautiful spot in summer," said Mrs. Fairchild, when she had the whole story, "but it is no place for a girl in winter. The minute cold weather comes, unless your people have already sent for you, I am going to carry you off to visit me. Of course, if you didn't happen to like us, you wouldn't have to stay; but I do want you to try us. *You* know who Mr. Fairchild is, Captain Blossom—the lawyer, you know—so you see you can trust us with her. At any rate, my dear, you can stay with me until your people send for you. You see, neither Mr. Fairchild nor I will be able to rest until we've had a chance to know you better and to thank you—to *really* thank you. I'm *very* grateful to you. Roger's our only child; you saved him for us. I've had you on my conscience for more than two years. You *will* come, won't you?"

"If I could think about it just a little," said Jeanne, shyly.

"You must persuade her, Captain Blossom. You *know* she'd be better off with me—so much nearer school and other nice girls of her own age. I shall simply love to have her—I'm fond of her already."

Mrs. Fairchild was a pretty little woman, impulsive, kind-hearted, and very loyal in her friendships. One had only to look at her to know that she was good. Not a very wise woman, perhaps; but a very kind one. Her son Roger—she had lost her first two babies—was undoubtedly rather badly spoiled. Had her other children lived, Roger would certainly have been more severely disciplined.

"I'm coming tomorrow afternoon," said she, at parting, "to take this little girl for a ride."

"That'll be lovely," returned Jeanne.

After that, Mrs. Fairchild made a point of borrowing Jeanne frequently. Her comfortable little open car often stopped in the road above the Captain's old freight car to honk loudly for Jeanne, and she often carried the Cinder Pond child home with her, and kept her to meals. Mrs. Fairchild was the nearest approach to a girl companion that Jeanne had ever had. Jeanne *liked* the pretty, fair-haired lady, who was so delightfully young for her thirty-seven years. She also liked Mr. Fairchild child, whose clothes were quite as good as those of her Uncle Charles, while his manners were certainly better—at any rate, far more cordial.

"I'm crazy about dolls," confessed Mrs. Fairchild, one day, when she had Jeanne beside her in the little car. "I've promised to dress a whole dozen for the church guild. I want you to help me buy them right now. Won't that be fun? And we'll dress them together. You shall choose the dresses for six of them. Isn't it a shame I never had any little girls of my own?"

Of course sympathetic Mrs. Fairchild heard all about Sammy, Annie, and Patsy, and how disappointed Jeanne had been to find them missing.

"I'm *worried* about them," confessed Jeanne. "Their new uncle *may* be good to them, but I'd like to know for *certain*. I'm bothered most about Annie. She's such a good, gentle little thing and Mrs. Shannon was always awfully cross to her."

"While we're dressing our other dolls," said Mrs. Fairchild, "we might make a little dress for Annie."

"She's almost six," sighed Jeanne. "I do wish I could watch her grow up—and teach her to be *nice*."

But, of course, making a dress for her will help a little!"

Of Roger, Jeanne saw but little. At first he avoided her; still, he *did* speak, when they met face to face; and, in the course of time, he was even able to say, "Hello, Jeanne!" without blushing.

Jeanne went to school. It was a long walk and she hated to miss a single moment of the outdoor life on the old dock; but going to school was something that she could do for her father. Her clothes were beginning to trouble her a little. Some were wearing out, others seemed to be getting smaller. Jeanne, you see, was growing and her garments were not. Still, the other pupils were far from suspecting that Jeanne was a motherless, fatherless waif from the Cinder Pond. She was always neat; and even daintier than many of her classmates; but the washing, ironing, and mending necessary to insure this daintiness, meant considerable work on Jeanne's part.

One evening, when she had taken off her dress to replace a button, it occurred to Jeanne to feel in the pockets of her father's old coat—the coat that still hung behind the door of Léon Duval's room. She found in the pocket a letter that he had written. Except for a stamp, it was all ready to be mailed to *her*. She read it greedily.

There was the usual home news; but one paragraph stood out from all the others: "Be patient and learn all you can, my Jeanne. You, in turn, can teach it all to Annie and your brothers. Even the hated arithmetic you must conquer."

"Oh," sighed Jeanne, "I'm so glad I found this. I *will* conquer those mathematics, and I *will* teach those children, some day. Perhaps I'll have to teach kindergarten after all, so as to earn money enough to go after them. And dear me, they're growing older every minute. But, no matter how hard it is for me, I'm going to look after those children the very first minute I can."

While Jeanne was waiting for the first cold weather or else for news from the Huntingtons—one *couldn't* tell which would come first—she studied to such purpose that her first month's marks surprised even herself, they were so good.

Another night, when she had gone early to the shack in order to mend a long rent in her petticoat, she found herself with half an hour to spare before bedtime. She had left her books on Old Captain's table and the kittens were also in the Captain's car. For once, now that her mending was finished, she had nothing to do unless she were to dress, and go up the dock to Old Captain's. And that, she decided, was too much trouble for so short a time. She was obliged to stand on a box to reach the nail she liked best for her dress. As she did so this time, the lamplight fell upon a crack in the wall that was level with her eyes, and contained something that suddenly glittered. She fished the small object from its hiding-place; and recognized in it the key to her father's little old trunk. She looked at it thoughtfully. Perhaps, since she was so very lonely for her father, he wouldn't mind if she opened that trunk to see what articles he had handled last.

She moved the lamp to a box beside the trunk, turned the key, and lifted the cover. Her father's best suit was there, very neatly folded, and his shoes. From under these came a gleam of something faintly pink. Jeanne carefully drew it forth.

"My old pink dress!" she exclaimed.

Jeanne slipped it on. It was much too short.

"Why," said she, "what a lot I've grown!"

Upright in one corner of the trunk, Jeanne found a green bottle. It held a withered stalk to which two dried pink petals still clung.

"I left that bottle with a rose in it on father's table when I went away," said Jeanne. "He must have found it there when he got back and *kept* it. And this dress. He didn't give it to Annie. He *kept* it. And I'm glad. Sometimes, when I was so awfully lonesome at Aunt Agatha's, I used to wonder if my father really *did* love me. But now I *know* he did—every single minute. I'll put this dress back where I found it."

Another thing that came to light was her father's bankbook. She showed that, the next day, to Old Captain, who studied it carefully.

"I'm glad," said Jeanne, "that there's a little money. It may be needed for Mollie."

It was. One day, early in October, Mollie failed to waken from one of her comfortable naps. Thanks to Léon Duval's modest savings, poor Mollie was decently buried. Mrs. Fairchild took Jeanne and Old Captain and all the flowers from Mrs. Schmidt's little greenhouse to the very simple funeral.

"I've got to be a mother to Mollie's children just as soon as ever I can," said Jeanne, on the way home. "I was going to do it for daddy, anyway; but now I want to for Mollie, too."

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## CHAPTER XXIV

### MOLLIE'S BABIES

The following week, Jeanne and two of the kittens went to live with Mrs. Fairchild. The other two were to stay with Old Captain, who, it seemed, was fond of kittens. Jeanne was spared the necessity of dividing the snail. Bayard Taylor had run away! As snails aren't exactly built for running, Old Captain and Barney considered this a huge joke. Whether Bayard Taylor crawled over the edge of the dock and fell in, or whether one of the playful kittens batted him overboard, or whether he was hidden in some crevice among the cinders, nobody ever knew. Though diligently sought for, the great American traveler never turned up.

Mr. Fairchild warmly welcomed both Jeanne and the kittens and declared that he was delighted to have somebody to make the table come out even at meal times.

"With three people," said he, "there's always somebody left out in the cold. Now we can talk in pairs."

Mrs. Fairchild was like a child with a new toy. Jeanne's room was newly decorated and even refurnished for her. It was the very girliest of girl's rooms and the windows overlooked the lake. Jeanne was glad of that. It made it seem like home.

Next, her wardrobe was replenished. Mrs. Huntington had replenished Jeanne's wardrobe more than once; but this was different. Loving care went into the selecting of every garment, and it made a surprising difference. Jeanne *loved* her new clothes, her pretty, yet suitable trinkets; for Mrs. Fairchild's taste was better than Mrs. Huntington's and she took keen pleasure in choosing shades and colors that were becoming to Jeanne's gypsy-like skin. The Fairchilds were delighted with her appearance.

Roger proved a comfortable housemate. He wasn't a tease, like Harold. Jeanne neither liked nor disliked him. She merely regarded him as part of the Fairchilds' furniture—the dining-room furniture, because she saw him mostly at meals. Roger certainly liked to eat. When he discovered that the visitor showed no inclination to talk about his undignified tumble into the lake, he found her presence rather agreeable than otherwise. With Jeanne to consider, his mother hadn't quite so much time to fuss over *him*. He hated to be fussed over. Moreover, she couldn't look at Jeanne and the marmalade at the same time. Roger, who loved marmalade, was glad of that.

One morning the express wagon stopped in front of Mrs. Fairchild's house. The express-man delivered a large wooden box addressed to "Miss J.H. Duval."

"This must be for you, Jeanne," said Mrs. Fairchild.

"Why, yes," said Jeanne, eying the address. "I suppose I *am* Miss J.H. Duval. I wonder who sent it."

"Let's look inside," said Mrs. Fairchild. "We'll get Roger to open it."

The box proved, when opened, to contain every garment and every article that Jeanne had left at the Huntingtons'. The things had not been nicely packed and were pretty well jumbled together.

"I guess," said Mrs. Fairchild, shrewdly, "they were just *dumped* in. What *are* they, anyway?"

"The clothes I left behind me," returned Jeanne, who had flushed and then paled at sight of her belongings. "I guess—I guess Aunt Agatha doesn't want me to go back."

Jeanne didn't *want* to go back; yet it seemed rather appalling to learn so conclusively that she wasn't expected. Her lips began to quiver, ominously.

"I'm glad she doesn't," said Mrs. Fairchild, with an arm about Jeanne. "I want you myself. I couldn't *think* of losing you now. You see, I wrote to her and told her that you were to visit me; and about your father. I suppose this is her reply—it isn't exactly a gracious one."

"I'm afraid I've outgrown some of the things, but this party dress was always too long and the petticoats have big tucks in them."

"Perhaps we can send whatever proves too small to Annie."

"They'd be too big, for a year or two; but I'd like to keep them for her. I'm glad of my books, anyway, and daddy's letters—they're safe in this writing-paper box."

Suddenly Mrs. Fairchild began to laugh softly. Jeanne looked at her in amazement. Jeanne herself had been rather close to tears.

"I feel," said Mrs. Fairchild, "as if I'd been unexpectedly slapped in the face. I wrote Mrs. Huntington such a *nice* letter. And now this box—*hurled* at little you."

"Aunt Agatha always makes people feel slapped," assured Jeanne, brightening.

"Then I'm gladder than ever that she doesn't want you. I was horribly afraid she might."

Shortly after this, Old Captain, who had sent the news of Mollie's death to St. Louis, received a letter from Mollie's brother. Captain Blossom toiled up the hill to show it to Jeanne.

Things were going badly in John Shannon's family. Work was slack and old Mrs. Shannon was a great trial to her daughter-in-law, who was not very well. The children, too, were very troublesome. Their new aunt, it seemed, had no patience with "brats." They had all been sick with mumps, measles, and whooping cough and would, just as like as not, come down with scarlet

fever and chicken pox. Both Sammy and Patsy seemed to be sickly, anyway.

"You see," explained Old Captain, "them children didn't have no chance to catch nothin' in Bancroft—out on that there old dock where nobody ever come with them there germs. No wonder they're sick, with all them germs gettin' 'em to onct."

Altogether, it was a *very* depressing letter. It confirmed all Jeanne's fears and presented her with several new ones.

"They don't even go to school," sighed Jeanne. "But oh, I wish they had a nice aunt. There must be *some* nice aunts in the world; but I'm sure *she* isn't a nice one."

"I guess poor John picked the wrong woman," said Old Captain, shrewdly. "There's some that's kind to other people's children and some that ain't. John seemed a kind sort of chap, himself; but if his wife wan't a natural-born mother, with real mother feelin's, why all John's kindness couldn't make up for her cussedness, if she felt to be cussed. It's too bad, too bad. They was good little shavers. That there Sammy, now. I'd take *him*, myself."

"Oh," pleaded Jeanne, "I wish you'd take them *all*."

Old Captain shook his head. "My heart's big enough," he said, "but my freight car ain't."

"But the dock is," said Jeanne. "And there's the shack—"

"That shack's no place for children in cold weather. It's too far to school and *I* got to stay with my fish. Besides, I ain't goin' to marry no lady whatsoever to take care of no family of children. I'm a *durned*—hum, ladies present—real good cook and women-folks is mostly one kind outside and another kind inside. I had one wife and she give me this."

Jeanne and Mrs. Fairchild looked with interest at the inch-long furrow on the Captain's bald pate.

"She done it with the dipper," concluded the Captain.

"I'm sure I don't blame you," said Mrs. Fairchild, "for your caution."

"I s'pose," queried Old Captain, who seemed to be enjoying the glass of sweet cider and the plate of cookies that Mrs. Fairchild had offered him, "you ain't heard nothin' from the Huntingtons?"

"Well," explained Mrs. Fairchild, "I wrote to Mrs. Huntington two weeks ago, explaining matters and asking for news of Jeanne's grandfather—she has been very anxious about him, you know—"

"An' she ain't wrote *yit*? Well, the old *iceberg*!"

Jeanne giggled. She couldn't help it. She had so often compared chilly Aunt Agatha, whose frozen dignity had unpleasantly impressed older persons than Jeanne, with the curious ice-formations along the lake shore in winter. They looked, sometimes, precisely like smooth, cold ladies, waiting for the warm sun to come and melt them. Aunt Agatha, however, had not melted.

"She sent Jeanne's clothes," explained Mrs. Fairchild, "but she didn't write. Evidently, she is going to let us keep our nice girl."

Jeanne was glad she was to stay. But those poor children! The more comfortable she was herself, the more she worried over their possible discomforts. She possessed a vivid imagination and it busied itself now with those three poor babies. If Mollie had been too lazy to properly wash and clothe her children, at least she had cuddled and comforted them with her soft, affectionate hands. Even cold Mrs. Huntington had not been cross or ugly. She had merely been unloving. Suppose, in addition to being unloving, the new aunt were cross and *cruel*! Suppose she whipped those ailing babies and locked them up in dark closets! Jeanne worried about it before she went to sleep at night and awoke before daylight to imagine new horrors. No aunt *could* have been as black as Jeanne's fancy finally painted that one.

"That child is *moping*," said Mrs. Fairchild, one day. "In some ways, she is an old little person. Sometimes she reproaches herself for having deserted her grandfather—she fears he may be missing her. And she is *terribly* unhappy about those children. She thinks of them constantly and imagines dreadful things. Since that letter came, she hasn't been able to enjoy her meals for fear Annie and Sammy have been sent supperless to bed. I declare, some days, I'm more than half tempted to *send* for those children."

"Not with my consent," said Mr. Fairchild, firmly. "I am glad to have Jeanne here. It's a good thing for both of you and it isn't doing Roger any harm. I'm glad to feed and clothe and educate her; and to keep her forever if necessary; because she's all wool and a yard wide—you know what I mean. I like her well enough to do anything *in reason* for her. But Roger will have to go to college some day; and you know, my dear, I am only a moderately rich man. I can take good care of you three, but that's all. It wouldn't be fair to Roger to add three more or even two more to this family. You see, something might happen to *me*, and then, where would *you* be, with five hungry children to support?"

"Of course you're right," sighed Mrs. Fairchild; "but Jeanne is certainly unhappy about those children."

"She must learn to be contented without them," returned Mr. Fairchild. "She'll forget them, in time."

But Jeanne wasn't contented and she couldn't forget the babies that had been so much a part of her young life on the dock. Still, because she was a considerate young person, she tried not to talk about them; she even tried to pretend that she wasn't thinking of them; but Mrs. Fairchild knew, when she caught the big dark eyes gazing off into space, that they were seeing moving pictures of Sammy, Annie, and Patsy getting spanked by the crosses of aunts and scolded by the ugliest of grandmothers.

Of course she had written to them from time to time; but Sammy was barely seven and probably *couldn't* write. At any rate, no one had answered her letters or acknowledged her small gifts.

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## CHAPTER XXV

### THE HOUSE OF DREAMS

"Letters for everybody," said Roger, one morning; "even for Jeanne who *never* gets any. A bill for you, Father; an invitation for you, Mother; a circular for me; and Jeanne gets the only real letter in the bunch. It's from Chicago."

The Fairchilds were at the breakfast table and everybody looked eagerly at Jeanne.

"It must be from the Rossiters," said she. "I wrote to Mrs. Rossiter ever so long ago—oh! they've been to Alaska—they always travel a lot. And my letter followed them from place to place, and they didn't get it until just the other day. But oh! Here's news of my grandfather. I'll read it to you:

"We were so sorry to hear, through Mr. Charles Huntington, that your grandfather is in such a hopeless condition. He has been absolutely helpless for the past three months and his mind is completely gone. He knows no one and I am sure does not miss you, so, my dear, you need worry no longer about that. I doubt if he has been well enough, for a single day since you saw him last, to miss anybody."

"I'm sorry my grandfather is like that," said Jeanne, "but of course I'm glad he doesn't miss me. I'm afraid he won't be able to use the nice handkerchief that I'm embroidering that lovely 'H' on for Christmas. Poor grandfather. He's been sick so long."

"Anyway," said Mrs. Fairchild, seeking to divert her, "Annie will like her doll."

"Yes," said Jeanne, brightening, "she'll just love it. We never had any Christmas on the dock and the Huntingtons had a very grown-up one—no toys or trees or stockings. I've always wanted to *see* a 'Merry Christmas.'"

"You're going to," assured Mrs. Fairchild. "Captain Blossom shall come to dinner and we'll have a tree. He'd make a splendid Santa Claus, wouldn't he? We'll all be young and foolish and you shall invite Bessie and Lucy, and any other of your schoolmates that you like, to your tree—there'll be plenty of extra candy boxes and a lot of little trinkets that will fit *anybody*."

For Jeanne had girl friends! More than that, Lucy's father was a carpenter and Mrs. Fairchild didn't *care*. She said he was a *good* carpenter; and that Lucy was a sweet girl. And Bessie lived in an unfashionable part of town. Mrs. Fairchild didn't mind that, either; nor the fact that the girl's father sold meat in his corner grocery. Bessie, she said, was a dear, with *such* a nice mother. She had taken pains to find out.

Jeanne couldn't help remembering her experience with Lizzie, Susie, and Aunt Agatha; nor feeling that Mrs. Fairchild's attitude toward her friends was much pleasanter. She was having lunch with Bessie, one day in November, when Mr. Fairchild brought home a piece of news.

"Does anybody in this house happen to know the whereabouts of a young woman named Jeannette Huntington Duval?" he asked, when he came in that noon.

"Jeanne? She's having lunch with Bessie. It's Bessie's birthday."

"Good! And Roger?"

"Gone to Ishpeming for the ball game."

"Good again! I have something to tell you. A very good-looking young lawyer from Pennsylvania was directed to my office this morning in his search for the missing heir to a very respectable fortune."

"What *do* you mean?" demanded Mrs. Fairchild. "Whose heir? Whose fortune?"

"Jeanne's grandfather died nearly two weeks ago," returned Mr. Fairchild. "Although he is known to have made a will, many years ago, leaving all his money to his son Charles, no such will has been found among his effects. He kept it in his own possession. Unless it turns up—and you can believe me, the Huntingtons have made a pretty thorough search—his very considerable estate will be equally divided between his son Charles and Jeanne—*our* Jeanne. It is practically certain that the will no longer exists."

"I do hope it doesn't, since Mrs. Huntington was so horrid to Jeanne."

"So do I. You must tell Jeanne about her grandfather, I suppose; but it will be wiser not to mention the money until we are *sure*. I'm certainly glad we adopted her *before* this happened. I'd *never* have consented to adopt an heiress."

"Nor I," said Mrs. Fairchild. "I think I'd almost rather have her *poor*—it's such fun to give her things."

"Well, she *may* be, if that will turn up. Be sure you don't tell her."

"I won't," promised Mrs. Fairchild. "I'd hate to have her disappointed."

That afternoon, the good little woman broke the news of Mr. Huntington's death to Jeanne, who took it very calmly.

"Poor grandfather," she said. "I don't believe he *minds* being dead, as long as he couldn't get well. But Uncle Charles was always very kind to him."

"In what way?"

"Why, he gave him a comfortable home and that nice James to take care of him, and a trained nurse when he needed one—Aunt Agatha said that trained nurses cost a great deal. I guess Uncle Charles is glad now that he gave his father everything he needed."

So Jeanne had not known that the money had belonged to her grandfather or that the house that Mrs. Huntington always called "my house" had also belonged to the old man. She had loved him for himself. Mrs. Fairchild was glad of that. But she found keeping the secret of Jeanne's possible fortune a very great trial.

"You *know*, Edward," she complained to her husband, "I never *could* keep a secret. Do write to that lawyer man and find out for certain."

Still, she *kept* it; but she couldn't resist playing around the troublesome burden.

"What would you buy," she asked, the first time she was alone with Jeanne, "if you had oodles and oodles and oodles of money? An automobile? A diamond ring? A pet monkey? Or all three?"

"How big is an oodle?" asked Jeanne, cautiously.

"That's too much for me," laughed Mrs. Fairchild. "But suppose you had a million—or enough so you'd always have plenty for whatever you happened to feel like doing. Would you travel?"

"Yes," said Jeanne, "to St. Louis, to get those children. Sometimes I make up a sort of a story about that when I can't go to sleep. I find a great big chest full of money on the Cinder Pond beach, and then I spend it."

"How?"

"Well, first I go after those children. And then I buy the Cinder Pond and build a lovely big homey house like this on the green hillside back of it—across the road, you know, from where we go down to the dock. And of course I always buy the dock and the pond for sort of an extra front yard. Then, I have a comfortable big automobile with a very good-natured chauffeur to take the children to and from school and a rented mother—"

"A *what*?"

"A nice, mother-y person to keep house and tell the cook—a very good one like Bridget—what to give us for meals. I always have a nice supper ready for Old Captain, ready on his table to surprise him when he comes home at night. That is, in summer. In winter, he lives with us. Of course I'm having the children educated so they can earn their own living when they grow up, because I might want to be married some day—I've decided to wait, though, until I'm about twenty-seven, because it's so much fun to be just a girl. I'll have Sammy learn to be a discoverer, I think, because he's so inquisitive; and maybe Annie can sing in a choir—she has a *sweet* little voice. And Patsy loves grasshoppers—I don't know just what he *can* do."

"Perhaps he'll make a good naturalist, a professor of zoölogy," laughed Mrs. Fairchild, "but you've left *me* out."

"Oh, no, I haven't. You're my fairy godmother and my very best friend. You always help me buy clothes for the children and pick out wallpapers and rugs and things. You always have *lovely* times in my house."

"I'd certainly have the time of my life," agreed Mrs. Fairchild, "if your dream-house were real."

"Well," sighed Jeanne, "it isn't—in the daytime. I've only two dollars left in my pincushion. I guess that wouldn't raise a very large family. And there isn't any way for a chest of gold to be washed up on the Cinder Pond beach, because no ship could get inside the pond, unless it climbed right over the dock. And of course, without that chest, the rest of the dream wouldn't work. I've tried to move the chest to the *other* beach; but some way, it doesn't fit that one—other people might see it there and find it first."

"Yes," agreed Mrs. Fairchild, "the chest is certainly the most necessary part of that dream; but I

fear Old Captain is the only golden treasure the Cinder Pond has for us: I like him better every time I see him."

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## CHAPTER XXVI

### A PADLOCKED DOOR

Mr. Huntington's lawyers assured Mr. Fairchild, who had written to find out more definitely about the settling of Mr. Huntington's estate, that there was practically no doubt that Jeannette Huntington Duval, being her mother's sole heir, would inherit half of her grandfather's large fortune, safely invested in a long list of things, as soon as certain formalities had been observed. Further search had revealed no trace of the lost document. Undoubtedly Mr. Huntington had destroyed it.

Perhaps, if Jeanne had known that Aunt Agatha was all but tearing the old house to pieces in hopes of finding a certain very valuable document, she *might* have remembered that unusual day in March, when she had helped her grandfather "clean house" in his safe. But, happily for her peace of mind, she knew too little of legal matters to connect the burned "trash" with the fact that, somehow or other, half of the Huntington fortune was hers. No one happened to mention any missing document.

Mr. Fairchild, however, was still keeping the secret of Jeanne's possible fortune from everybody but his wife. He was cautious and wanted to be absolutely certain.

"I shall *burst*," declared Mrs. Fairchild, earnestly, "if I have to keep it much longer. Think of breaking *good* news to Jeanne—she's had so little."

One day, Mrs. Fairchild went alone to pay a visit to Old Captain. She returned fairly beaming.

"I invited him to our Christmas tree," said she. "He's willing to be Santa Claus. Barney's coming too."

Three days before Christmas, Jeanne obeyed a sudden impulse to call on Old Captain. She had purchased a pipe for Barney and wanted to be sure that it was just exactly right. Old Captain would know. It was Saturday. Old Captain would surely be home, tidying his freight car and heating water for his weekly shave.

But where *was* Old Captain? The door of the box-car was *locked*. Such a thing had never happened before. Locked from the outside, too. There was a brand-new padlock.

"I guess he's doing his Christmas shopping," said Jeanne. "Or perhaps he's *done* it and is afraid somebody'll steal my present. I wonder if it's a pink parasol, or some pink silk stockings. Dear Old Captain! He thinks pink is my color, and the *pinkier* it is the better he likes it. I do believe I'll buy him a pink necktie. But no, he'd *wear* it. Besides, I have that nice muffler for him. Well, it's pretty cold around here and I'd hate to freeze to this bench, and there's no knowing when he'll get back. Maybe Mr. Fairchild knows about pipes."

So Jeanne trudged homeward, but not, you may be sure, without a searching glance at the beach, where the dream-chest should have been—but wasn't.

"We're going to have our tree Christmas eve," said Mrs. Fairchild, that evening, when the family sat before the cheerful grate fire that Jeanne considered much pleasanter than a gas log. "But we won't take anything off the tree itself until Christmas night. On Christmas eve we'll open just the bundles we find *under* the tree. That'll make our Christmas last twice as long. Oh, I'm *so* excited! Jeanne, you aren't *half* as young as I am. Roger, you stolid boy, you sedate old gentleman, why don't you get up more enthusiasm?"

"I always get all the things I want and *then* some," said Roger, lazily, "so why worry?"

"You're a spoiled child," laughed Jeanne.

Mr. Fairchild, however, seemed to wear an air of pleased expectancy, quite different from Roger's calmness.

"Having a daughter to liven things up," said Mr. Fairchild, "is a new experience for us. You can see how well it agrees with us both. I hope, Jeanne, you're giving me a pipe just like Barney's—nobody *ever* gave me one like that."

"I'm awfully sorry," said Jeanne, "but I haven't the price. That pipe cost sixty-nine cents, and I haven't that much in all the world. You'll have to wait till my kindergarten salary begins."

Mr. Fairchild looked at his wife, touched his breast pocket where a paper rustled, threw back his head, and *roared*.

"How perfectly delicious!" exclaimed Mrs. Fairchild. Then *her* merry laugh rang out.

"What *is* the joke?" asked Jeanne. "Can *you* see it, Roger?"

"No, I can't—they're just havin' fun with us. But, if eleven cents would help you any—"

Roger's clothes fitted so snugly that it was rather a difficult task to extract the eleven pennies from his pocket; but he fished them out, one by one.

"There, as your Captain would say, 'Them's yourn.' I hope you won't be reckless with 'em because they're all I've got—except a quarter. You can't have that."

"Why!" said Jeanne, who had been counting on her fingers, "this makes just enough. I *had* fifty-eight cents. I wonder what Uncle Charles would have done if I'd bought *him* a pipe. He always smoked cigarettes—a smelly kind that I didn't like. I wouldn't have *dared*. He'd have been polite, but he would have looked at the pipe as if—as if it were a snail in his coffee!"

"Oh, Jeanne!" protested Mrs. Fairchild. "What a horrid thought!"

"*Isn't* it? Now when can I buy that other pipe? Not tomorrow, because of that school entertainment. That'll last until dark. Not the next day morning—"

"Very late the day before Christmas," decided Mrs. Fairchild, quickly, "I'll take you downtown in the car. Then you can take your parcels to Bessie and Lucy and invite them to the Christmas night part of the tree, while I'm doing a few errands. Remember, Christmas *night*, not Christmas eve."

When the time came to do this final shopping, Jeanne was left alone to select the pipe and to go on foot, first to Lucy's, then to Bessie's. Mrs. Fairchild was to call for her at Bessie's.

"I may be late," said she, "but no matter how long it is, I want you to wait for the car. It'll be dark by that time—the days are so short. You telephoned Bessie that you were coming?"

"Yes, she'll surely be home."

"Then that's all right. Be sure to wait for the car. Good-by, dear. Have a good time."

Jeanne paused for a moment to gaze thoughtfully after the departing lady.

"She looks nice, she sounds nice, and she *is* nice," said Jeanne. "I suppose Aunt Agatha had to stay the way she was made, but as long as there's so *much* of her, it seems a pity they left out such a lot. Perhaps they make folks the way they do plum puddings and don't always get the fruit in *even*. Maybe they forgot Aunt Agatha's raisins and most of the sugar and put extra ones in Mrs. Fairchild. Maybe I ought to try to like Aunt Agatha better—I'm glad I made her a needle-book, anyway, if it happens that she isn't to blame for *not* having any raisins. But it's nice not to have to *try* to like Mrs. Fairchild. I'd have to try *not* to."

The shops were very Christmas-y and all the shoppers seemed excited and happy and busy. There were parcels under all the arms or else there were baskets filled with Christmas dinners. Jeanne loved it all—the Christmas feel in the air, the Christmas shine in the faces. Unconsciously, she loitered along the busy street after the pipe was purchased, thinking all sorts of quaint thoughts.

"If my father and my grandfather are in the same part of heaven," said she, "I'm sure they must be friends by now, because they both loved me—and my mother. They'd have *lots* of things to talk about. Perhaps they can see me now. Perhaps they're glad that my heart is full of Christmas. I *know* they must be thankful for Mrs. Fairchild. But if Mollie can see *her* children— Oh, I *hope* Mrs. Fairchild got their box off in time. And I do hope that new aunt has *some* Christmas in her heart. All these people with bundles are just *shining* with Christmas."

Jeanne, of course, was far from suspecting that her own bright little face was so radiant with the holiday spirit that many a person paused for a second glance.

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## CHAPTER XXVII

### THE PINK PRESENT

Although Jeanne loitered outside shop windows and kept a sharp lookout for Old Captain, who *might* be shopping for pink parasols, although she lingered at Lucy's and stayed and stayed and *stayed* at Bessie's, it seemed as if it were taking Mrs. Fairchild a very great while to come with the promised car. It was that lady's husband who came with it finally.

"Come on, Sister," said he, when Jeanne appeared on the doorstep. "That other child is still finding things to put on that tree."

"Roger?" asked Jeanne.

"No, indeed. Mrs. Fairchild—*she's* our youngest, these days. So I had to come for you. Hop in—it's pretty cold for the engine. Did you buy that pipe? Good! We'll stop for some tobacco—shall I get you some for Barney? He's coming to the tree, too, is he? That's good. If his pipe draws better than mine I'll take it away from him. Now, you cuddle under the rugs and I'll stop for the 'baccy."

There were other errands after that. In spite of Mr. Fairchild's cheerful conversation concerning these various errands, it seemed to Jeanne that the fastest little car in Bancroft was very slow about getting home that evening. They arrived *just* in time for dinner.



Mrs. Fairchild met them at the front door.

"Don't waste a minute," said she, fairly dragging them inside. "Dinner's on the table. Your soup's getting cold. You can wash your hands in the downstairs lavatory, Jeanne—no time to go upstairs."

"Mother's so excited that her hair's coming down," observed Roger, at the table. "And she's so mysterious that I shouldn't be a bit surprised if she had a young elephant or a full-grown horse hidden upstairs in the spare-room closet. Look at her eyes."

"I feel," confessed Mrs. Fairchild, who had never looked prettier than she did at that moment, "as if I were jumping right out of my skin. *Did* I eat my soup! Or did Mary take it away?"

Roger roared.

"Oh, Mumsey!" he said. "You're younger than I was at *three*. If you had *two* girls to fix a tree for, you'd starve. You haven't touched your steak—what *is* that noise? This house is full of strange sounds—as if Santa Claus were stuck fast in our chimney. Shall I—"

Mrs. Fairchild hopped up, ran to the front hall, and slipped a record into the phonograph. A *noisy* record and the machine wide open.

"Why, Mumsey!" said Roger, as the clattering music filled the room, "I thought you hated that record."

"I didn't look," said Mrs. Fairchild, "to see what it was; but I'll admit taking it from the noisy pile."

A few moments later, Roger pushed his chair back.

"Please excuse me," said he. "I don't like the dessert we're going to have tonight."

"No, *please* sit still," pleaded his mother, hastily. "Put on another record—that nice brass-band one on top of the pile—and then come back to your place."

"I see," laughed Roger, "you're trying to drown the noises my giraffe is making upstairs."

He obeyed, however, and presently everybody's tapioca pudding was eaten.

"Now, good people," said Mrs. Fairchild, rising from her chair, "I'm going to slip into the parlor for one moment to switch on the lights and to make sure that—wait here, everybody, until I come for you."

"Of all the kids," declared Roger, "my mother's the *kiddiest* one."

"It's my first *merry* Christmas," said Jeanne. "*That's* why. She's just excited over *me* and my first tree."

"*Now* come," said Mrs. Fairchild, appearing in the parlor doorway. "You first, Jeanne."

With Mrs. Fairchild's fingers over her eyes, Jeanne was propelled across the hall into the big, best room.

"*Now look!*" said Mrs. Fairchild, stepping back.

Jeanne looked. The tall tree was ablaze with electric lights and glittering ornaments. Captain Blossom stood at one side of it, and Barney at the other. Both were grinning broadly.

Jeanne's dazzled eyes traveled from the top of the tree to the beaming faces beside it; and then to a point not very far above the floor, where the light shimmered upon three balls of reddish, carrot gold—and three pairs of bright, expectant eyes.

"*Sammy!*" shrieked Jeanne, darting forward. "*Annie! Patsy!* Are you *real*? Oh, you darling babies!"

It was true. There they were, dirty, ragged and rather frightened, especially Patsy, who couldn't understand what was happening.

"Captain Blossom and Barney have been keeping them quiet in the attic," explained Mrs. Fairchild. "The Captain went to St. Louis to get them and got to Bancroft with them this morning. They've been fed, but that's all. They haven't even had a bath. I wanted you to have the pleasure of doing *everything*. Annie is to sleep with you and the two boys are to have the nursery. There are night-dresses for them and a little underwear, but you are to have the fun of buying all the rest. There are toys under the spare-room bed and your box for them is there too. That's why we are having *two* celebrations. I *couldn't* keep those children hidden a moment longer. How do you like your presents?"

Jeanne, her arms full of children, turned slowly to face the Fairchilds. Tears were sparkling on her eyelashes, but her eyes were big and bright.

"*Oh!*" she said.

"You have also a little gift from your grandfather," said Mr. Fairchild, showing Jeanne a folded paper and then returning it to his pocket for safe-keeping. "I'll read this to you sometime when you're not so busy. I just wanted you to know that your grandfather has left you enough money to buy *two* Cinder Ponds, build a small orphan asylum, and feed and educate at least half a dozen small children."

"*Oh!*" said Jeanne, using the only word she seemed to have left.

"Santa Claus seems to be making up for lost time," said Roger, who had caught his mother wiping away happy tears and had feared for one dreadful moment that he himself was going to shed a couple. "He never gave *me* three children and a fortune all at one whack. And what I heard upstairs wasn't even a goat."

"Never mind," said Jeanne, with her little twisty smile, "I'll *buy* you one."

Then she went swiftly to Mrs. Fairchild, put her arms about that little lady's waist, and laid her cheek against hers.

"*You* are my nicest Christmas present," she said. "I just love you."

THE END

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## A MONTH LATER

Did you ever read the words "The End" and then turn over the pages at the back of the book to see if there wasn't just the least scrap more hidden *somewhere*? This time there is.

Everybody knows that you are quite clever enough to guess everything that happened afterwards to Jeanne and her family; but Old Captain wants you to know for certain that Annie was perfectly sweet and lovely in her new clothes, that Sammy was so bright and attractive in his that the first-grade teacher just loved him and gave him a splendid start along the road to knowledge; and that Patsy proved so good and so charming in every way that Mrs. Fairchild fairly adored him.

And this is

THE VERY END

\*\*\* END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE CINDER POND \*\*\*

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