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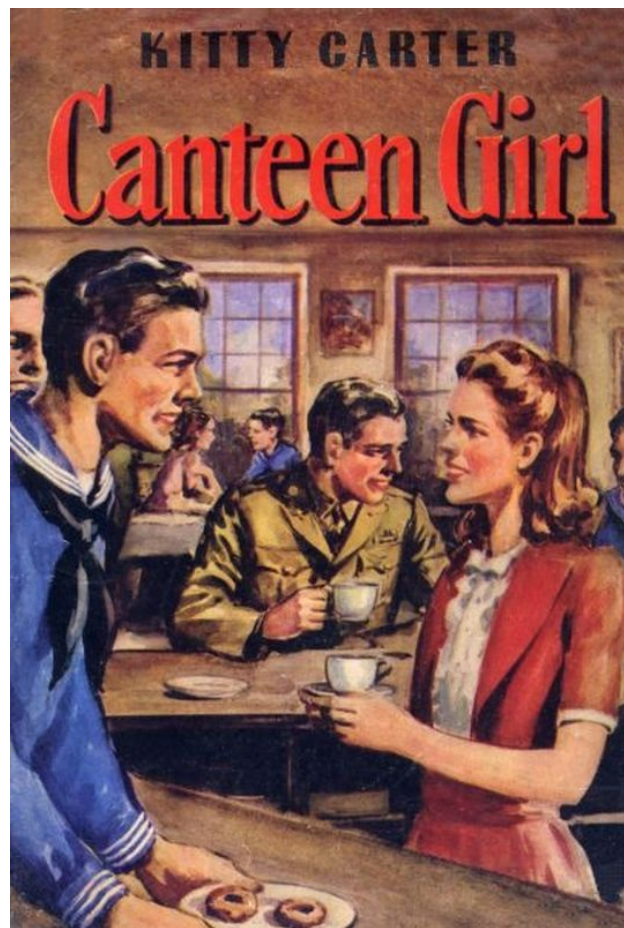
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KITTY CARTER  
**Canteen Girl**

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KITTY CARTER

Canteen Girl

*Story by*  
RUBY LORRAINE RADFORD

*Illustrated by*  
HENRY E. VALLELY



FIGHTERS FOR  
FREEDOM  
*Series*

WHITMAN PUBLISHING COMPANY  
RACINE, WISCONSIN

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All names, characters, and events in this story  
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*Billy and Kitty Waved to the Tall Man*

# KITTY CARTER

## Canteen Girl

11

### CHAPTER ONE

#### THEY ALSO SERVE

"Oh, Kitty, look!" Little Billy Carter jumped up and down in delight beside his tall sister. "There's Daddy!"

"Where?" Kitty asked as she searched the files of marching troops for a look at her dad.

Billy pointed with his chubby finger. "Yonder! The straightest, bestest of all!"

Then Kitty's heart swelled with pride, too, as she watched a tall man with the other medical officers from the Naval hospital. They were all wonderful, those rhythmical, moving lines of blue, green and khaki, but for the two Carters the heart and soul of it all was the Chief Pharmacist's Mate they called Dad. They were sure the war could never be won without him.

It was a gala day in Bayport, for every organization had turned out to boost the Community Chest drive. Now a military band was passing, while Billy's small feet kept time, and scuffed out the soles of his shoes. Kitty had had no idea a six-year-old could wear out so many shoes till she had come home from college a short time ago. Was it really only a few weeks ago? To Kitty it seemed ages, for her whole program of life had been changed in that time.

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"There come the WACs, to give Hitler whacks," Billy prattled.

"And there are the WAVES, our American braves."

Kitty laughed though her heart was like stone as she repeated the silly rhyme she had made up for Billy at Christmastime when she told him she was going to join the WAVES. How little she had dreamed during that happy vacation that Aunt Nina would be gone in another month, and Billy would have no one to look to except his big sister.

But Kitty couldn't keep back the blinding tears as the WACs and WAVES passed in their trim uniforms, their heads held high, their eyes bright in the knowledge that they were doing their share to help win the war.

"When are you going to be a WAVE, Kit, and wear a pretty uniform?" Billy wanted to know.

"I've decided not to be a WAVE, darling," Kitty looked straight ahead for fear he would see her tears.

"But you said you were going to help win the war. Dad says we all must."

"Look, there come the tanks!"

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Billy forgot his puzzlement over his sister's change of plans, for the tanks were followed by jeeps, trucks and more lines of marching men and women. At last the parade went on down Bay Street, but Kitty still stood staring at the moving stream of passenger cars in its wake, though she really saw nothing that passed. Somehow she felt cheated, out of it all. After a while an insistent, small hand tugging at hers brought her back to the present.

"Aren't we going to see the ducks in the park? You promised."

"Yes, of course. It'll be fun watching the ducks. Let's go across to the bay walk."

They succeeded in crossing the street finally, and hurried down the path curving around the bay shore. In sight of the water Kitty's spirits always lifted. After all it was for such as Billy that this war was being fought, that they might be free to go to parks and feed ducks, and walk along a bay shore without fear of bombs overhead. As Dad had said, she was really doing more than her bit, giving him a start in life.

Bayshore Park was a lovely spot of green under magnificent moss-draped live oaks. By the time they reached it the parade had broken up and marines, soldiers and sailors were scattered about the green slopes, resting after their long march. At the duck pond Kitty took a small package of bread crumbs for the ducks from her purse and handed them to Billy.

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As she sat on a bench near by, her attention was suddenly caught by a group of Canteen workers serving a lunch to the tired soldiers. There were young girls in the Corps, some even younger than she, laughing and talking with the men as they served them coffee, doughnuts and sandwiches from a long table under the trees. How hungry the boys seemed and how appreciative of having some girls to talk to!

Now she recognized one of the girls from near her home over on Palmetto Island. Why Sally Bright was still in high school! How could she get into the Canteen Corps?

"Look, Kitty, the sailor made me a boat!" Again Billy's voice recalled her from her abstraction.

She discovered a young yeoman squatting by the pond with Billy as they launched a magnolia-leaf boat, with an oak-leaf sail. Billy was gobbling half a sandwich the sailor had given him.

"You shouldn't have given him your sandwich!" she exclaimed.

The young man sprang to his feet, apparently seeing her for the first time.

"They're so good," he explained. "I couldn't eat with him looking on." He had brown eyes that twinkled as he spoke.

"They do look good," she admitted.

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"Let me get you one? These Canteen girls sure have a genius for making sandwiches."

"Oh, no, don't bother, please. I'm not hungry."

"I've a kid sister who's learned lots about good food since she's been a Canteen worker."



"Kid sister?" repeated Kitty, puzzled.

He laughed. "Well, she's not such a kid after all, I guess. Junior in college."

"How can she be a Canteen worker and go to college, too?"

"Oh, she has plenty of extra time to get in her Canteen quota of hours. A girl can do Canteen work anywhere she happens to be living."

"Oh, I didn't know that. You mean they don't have to sign up for full time or go away from home to do that work?"

"Sure!"

"Oh say, why didn't I know about this before?"

The sailor's face grew serious at the desperate way in which she spoke. "Why? Would you like to do Canteen work?"

"I'd like to do anything to help."

"Well, gal, nobody's keeping you from it! There's Miss Pearson right over yonder. I'll introduce you to her. Heard her say she's going to start a new nutrition class next week."

He caught her hand and started across the green to the end of the long table where an efficient-looking woman, in a blue uniform with spotless white collar and cuffs, was pouring coffee. Within a few feet of her the sailor stopped suddenly.

"What *is* your name? After all, introductions are awkward without having the names of both parties."

They laughed self-consciously.

"Kathryn Carter—Kitty they call me, of course."

"I'm Yeoman Brad Mason."

"I knew you were a yeoman—your crossed feather insignia," she told him. "You see my dad's been in the Navy ten years."

His face brightened. "Oh, then we're practically in the same family. And now that the formalities are over we'll proceed to business."

Kitty glanced toward the end of the table and realized that Miss Pearson had overheard their little conversation. The three of them laughed, and the ice was completely broken.

"Since introductions are now unnecessary, Miss Pearson," said Brad, "let me explain that this young lady has suddenly discovered there's such a thing in this man's war as a Canteen Corps."

Kitty flushed. "Oh, really now, I've always known about them, but just got the idea of doing that work myself."

"It's certainly the duty of everyone to serve somewhere."

Kitty felt a slight edge on Miss Pearson's tone, and was aware that her eyes swept over her smart sweater suit and the jaunty blue tam.

"I've always meant to do my bit the minute I got my degree," Kitty hastened to explain. "But I've thought and dreamed and worked toward going into the WAVES."

"Well, why don't you? They're doing a marvelous work."

Kitty's eyes wandered to where Billy poked at his sail boat with a long stick. "I can't go now," she said in a low tone. "My aunt who has taken care of my little brother since my mother died, also left us six weeks ago. Dad's in the service, and there's no one left with Billy but me."

Miss Pearson followed Kitty's glance to the little form beside the pond. Her voice was warm with understanding as she said, "Yes, he's your first responsibility." Then she smiled gently as she added, "But I know it was hard for you to give up your dream of being a WAVE."

"Don't think I'm bitter about it," Kitty hastened to assure her. "I adore Billy. He's worth any sacrifice I could make. But if I could help somewhere to hasten the end of this war, nothing would make me happier."

"That's certainly *our* aim." Miss Pearson glanced with a comradely look at Brad.

"I'll say!" he agreed heartily.

"Do you think I could get into the Canteen Corps? Mr. Mason says you don't have to live away from home."

"Of course, they'll be delighted to have you, my dear. Come over to the station wagon, and I'll give you some leaflets telling about our work."

"Wait a minute till I get Billy. He'll be sure to fall in the pond if I go out of sight."

"You go 'long. I'll look after Billy," volunteered Brad. "I like that boy. He's enough like my oldest sister's kid to be his twin."

As they turned toward the station wagon that had brought over the Canteen supplies, Kitty began to have misgivings.

"Maybe I can't do this sort of thing at all. You know I majored in music at school."

"You like to eat, don't you?" retorted Miss Pearson in that snappy, business-like way she had.

"I'll say, and cook, too! It's one of my hobbies."

"Well then, what are you worrying about?"

She reached to the car seat and took out a brief case packed with notebooks and leaflets.

"This little book will tell you what the Canteen Corps is."

As Kitty took the blue book with the Red Cross on the cover she exclaimed, "Oh, it's part of the Red Cross work?"

"Of course. What did you think it was?"

"I hadn't thought. This will make it all the more wonderful, working with the Red Cross. You know I think that's the most marvelous organization. It's simply great what they do for anybody, anywhere."

Miss Pearson smiled at the exaggeration. "Well, my dear, it's not quite so comprehensive as that. But we do stand ready to help in all emergencies, and that's where the Canteen workers play such an important part. We are ready to feed people after air raids, storms, floods, and disasters of all kinds."

"Oh, that is important!"

"And we must work under all sorts of handicaps. We often have to prepare large quantities of food right out in the open."

"I learned something of outdoor cooking in my Girl Scout work years ago," said Kitty proudly.

"Then you already have a splendid foundation. Some scouts are helping us this afternoon."

"What must I do to get in? When can I start?"

"First you must take a course in nutrition. I'm starting a new class next Monday morning."

"Is the class filled? I hope I can get in."

"I already have a full class, but I can make room for someone like you. You see lots of women take this course, even when they can't follow it up with Canteen work."

"When this course is finished may I sign up for Canteen work?"

"You have to follow the nutrition course with a course in Canteen work."

"Wish I'd started sooner so I'd be ready for work now."

"The course may seem long, but there's much more to Canteen work than the foundation course and emergency feeding. We do so many things. We often serve refreshments at blood donation centers. We have Snack Bars in USO halls. Sometimes our Canteen women help with school lunch counters or in day nurseries."

"There's one over on Palmetto Island where Billy sometimes goes."

"So you live on Palmetto Island? That's all to the good. We're badly in need of workers there."

"Oh, I'm so happy to learn about this! And you still think I can do it and not neglect my duty to Billy?"

"Of course, my dear. We have many mothers with several children, who manage to keep up their quota of Canteen hours every year and not neglect their homes. In fact they're better mothers and homemakers for having taken the courses."

"I've got to hug somebody—you!" exclaimed Kitty, impulsively throwing her arms around Miss Pearson. "It's so wonderful to find something I can really do to help."

When Miss Pearson had told her the time and place of the nutrition class, Kitty hurried back to Billy, wondering if she would ever have patience to wait till Monday to begin her training.

## CHAPTER TWO

## A STRANGE MEETING

"Will I be eating sandwiches you made the next time the Canteen serves here?" Brad Mason's eyes twinkled teasingly as he put the question to Kitty when she returned to the duck pond.

"Maybe."

"Are you really going to take the Canteen course?"

"I wouldn't miss it for worlds! And say, I owe you a vote of thanks. If you hadn't dropped those remarks about the Canteen work I might never have thought of joining."

"And what a prize they would have missed!"

Kitty flushed as she took Billy's hand and told him it was time to go home. It was strange how Brad Mason seemed like someone she had always known.

"Wait a minute, now!" exclaimed Brad, pretending to be angry. "You can't walk out of my life like this. After all we've been introduced properly with Miss Pearson as witness."

Kitty glanced up into his face as she buttoned Billy's coat. Then they laughed gayly.

"At least you might tell me where you live," Brad persisted.

"On Palmetto Island near the hospital. My dad works there. He's a Chief Pharmacist's Mate."

"Not really!"

"Maybe you know him, since you're in the Navy."

"Why, were as good as in the same family. I work in the registrar's office at the hospital."

Kitty thought he was joking and said so. "I don't remember ever seeing you there."

"Been on leave for two weeks, and I had a little sick spell before that."

"Oh, then that explains it."

"Odd I never saw you before."

"I came home from college about a month ago. Dad's been down here two months."

"Yeah, I know him well. He's tops!"

"We think so, don't we, Billy?"

"You bet! He's the bravest man in the whole Navy."

Kitty made a move to leave the park, but Brad followed.

"I didn't parade. I got into town only today. Couldn't I ride the bus back to the island with you?"

"I came in our launch. I have to wait and meet someone who is coming in on the four-thirty train. But say, if you're not in a hurry we'd be glad to have you ride back across the bay with us. There's plenty of room."

"That'll be swell."

The town busses were so packed with people going home from the parade they decided to walk to the railroad station as it was only a few blocks down the street. When Billy got too tired Brad took him astride his shoulders and didn't seem to care a bit if anyone stared at him.

"Going to meet some girl friend?" he asked when they were in sight of the station.

"No, a new nurse is coming to the hospital. I think she has worked in some hospital with Dad before. He knew all the island busses would be jammed after the parade, so suggested I come over in the launch and bring her back."

As Kitty had never seen Hazel Dawson she was a little uneasy for fear she would slip through the train gates unrecognized. There were several smartly uniformed women among the travelers, WACs, and WAVES and Women Marines. Most of them hurried by as if familiar with the station and town. Then she saw a brisk-looking Navy nurse, following a redcap loaded with bags. Kitty was still hesitating when the nurse paused suddenly and looked her straight in the face.

"Are—are you—?" Kitty began.

She got no further when the nurse exclaimed, "Why you must be Kitty Carter, or her duplicate."

"Then you *are* Miss Dawson?"

"No other. But I didn't expect anyone to meet me."

Kitty explained about the parade and the crowded busses, then introduced Brad and Billy.

"This really is an honor. It seems almost like going home to have someone meet me," said Miss Dawson happily.

They caught a taxi outside the station. After the flurry of seeing about baggage Hazel Dawson seemed tired as she settled back in the car seat. Kitty glanced fleetingly at her face to see a weary, worried expression in her eyes.

"Tired?" she asked sympathetically. Somehow she felt strangely drawn to this older woman. She judged Ensign Dawson to be somewhere in her thirties. Evidently she had already seen real action. On her coat she wore the yellow ribbon for South Pacific service, and two stars indicating she had been in two major engagements. Her eyes held the shadowed, yet kindly light of one who eased much suffering.

"Not too tired," she replied to Kitty's question as she forced a smile to her lips. She studied the girl's face thoughtfully a moment before she added, "So you're Kitty Carter."

"They say I look like Dad."

"You do. I had no trouble recognizing you. Wherever your dad is he always keeps your picture and Billy's on his desk."



*"Then You Are Miss Dawson," Kitty Said*

"So you've served with him before?"

"We worked together several months in the Pacific, and were in the same hospital at Annapolis."

"I didn't visit Dad when he was at Annapolis. You see ever since the war began I've been cramming, winter and summer, to get my degree. I wanted to get through as soon as I could and join the WAVES."

"Yes. Your father told the you had to change your plans." Hazel sent an understanding glance toward Billy, sitting on Brad's lap.

"But I'm going to be able to help after all," said Kitty eagerly.

"Really? Then you've made arrangements for the boy?"

"Oh no. I can help and still keep our little home. I'm going into Canteen work."

"That's splendid!"

"I might never have thought of it if I hadn't met Brad Mason today."

"Oh, you only met today."

Brad grinned boyishly. "I thought it was important to get acquainted with her, even if I did have to use Billy as a go-between."

"Billy as a go-between!" exclaimed Kitty, shocked. "Do you mean you made that sailboat for him with an ulterior motive?"

"I'll have to plead guilty!" But Brad's hearty laugh betrayed no sense of guilt. "When I saw you sitting on that bench looking so pensive I said to myself, 'Now there's a pretty girl who needs cheering.'"

"And we women have the idea it's the service men who need cheering," said Hazel.

Kitty laughed in spite of her chagrin. "Well. I'll have to hand it to you for being a cheerer-upper," she admitted.

"How did he stir up your interest in Canteen work?" asked Hazel, entering gayly into their banter.

Kitty gave a sprightly account of their meeting, and ended by saying. "And before I knew what had happened I had practically joined the Canteen Corps and invited Brad to ride home with us."

"But you can bet she wouldn't have done it if you hadn't been coming along. I know Kitty's kind. She's a stickler for form."

"Oh, not really!"

"Just the same it'll do you no end of good being a Canteen worker," Brad persisted.

Kitty was about to make a saucy retort when Billy piped up. "Look, Kit, there's the Red Cross station wagon!"

Sure enough they were passing the park where the station wagon was being loaded again. Miss Pearson glanced her way and waved.

"I think she's going to be nice to work with," said Kitty happily. "I can hardly wait till Monday to begin my training."

"Can I ride in the station wagon with you when you're a Canteen worker?" Billy wanted to know.

"If they'll let you."

At the corner where they had to turn toward the docks, the taxi was held up by traffic. A crowded Palmetto Island bus in front of them was loading passengers. A dozen or more people couldn't get on at all. Among them Kitty noticed Lieutenant Cary, one of the physicians from their own hospital. It seemed a shame to leave him to wait for the next bus when there was plenty of room in their launch.

As the taxi crept through the traffic near the spot where the young lieutenant stood, she called out to him, "Come down to the dock." She pointed down the side street toward the bay. "We'll give you a ride over to the island in our launch."

He acknowledged her invitation with a dignified bow. When they moved on Kitty turned to Brad and said, "Seemed a shame not to pick him up. You know him of course—Lieutenant Cary?"

"Oh, yes."

Kitty was surprised to find Brad's cool tone reflecting some of her own instinctive dislike of the man. She tried to disregard the feeling for she scarcely knew Lieutenant Cary. She had encountered him only a few times in her father's office at the hospital. Though he made obvious efforts to be friendly Kitty had an unaccountable aversion for him. But she could not let her ungrounded prejudice go so far as to make her pass by one of her father's co-workers, when she had plenty of room to take him home. Transportation conditions were bad enough, without anyone traveling with unused space.

Brad was most helpful in loading Hazel's suitcases into the launch. By the time they had loaded the launch and warmed the motor, Lieutenant Cary came sprinting toward them. Brad and Miss Dawson saluted their superior officer as the physician paused a moment on the dock.

"This is really kind of you, Miss Carter," Cary said, stepping into the launch. "I had no idea there'd be such a traffic jam when I came over."

"Miss Dawson, may I present Lieutenant Cary?" said Kitty, while Cary still stood beside her in the middle of the launch.

He bowed with what Kitty thought exaggerated formality under the cramped conditions. "You're the new nurse scheduled to begin work tomorrow, I presume?"

"That is correct, Lieutenant Cary."

Kitty felt as if icy spray had been dashed into her face at the coolness of the tone.

"You're no relation of Mate Willard Dawson, I presume?" questioned the Lieutenant.

"I'm proud to say he's my brother!" Hazel Dawson spoke the words almost with defiance.

Kitty, standing between the two wondered what all this meant. Their antagonistic attitude was most unaccountable. She glanced at Brad to find a strained, embarrassed look on his face.

Kitty deliberately raced the engine to end the awkward moment. As she slowly and skillfully steered the launch through the harbor traffic, she wondered what all this meant. Who was this mysterious Willard Dawson, and why should Hazel be so stiff-necked in her assertion that he was

her brother? Fortunately Hazel was in the prow, while Lieutenant Cary sat in the stern with Brad. Billy always wanted to stand in the prow, so Nurse Dawson kept a protecting arm around him while Kitty ran the boat.

Kitty's father had said many times that she had been born with the salt of the sea in her veins, like all the Carters. Two generations of naval officers had been preceded by a great-grandfather who was captain of his own sailing vessel, so Kitty had only been following the family tradition when she aspired toward the WAVES. But she decided that afternoon as she headed back toward Palmetto Island that serving the Canteen was the perfect substitute under the circumstances.

The noise of the motor made conversation difficult, and she was rather glad of it, for the afternoon had been so eventful she had much to think about. First and foremost was her delight in making a service link. And meeting Brad—that was something she would never forget! And Hazel Dawson, too. She sensed it was the beginning of a new and different sort of friendship. She wondered why the thought of Dr. Cary chilled her ardor. Did Brad know why these two seemed to freeze on meeting? She meant to ask him when she had a chance.

Hazel caught her attention, waving toward the receding shores. "Beautiful country—marvelous!" she exclaimed, above the noise of the motor.

"You'll love it here." Kitty told her. "I'll take you boat riding, even if we have to row to save gas. You must see these intriguing marshes, and the beautiful shore lines with the wonderful live oaks draped in Spanish moss."

"This is my first trip south, in my own country," Hazel told her.

Palmetto Island now came into view with its many smokestacks marking the sky line. A fringe of palmettoes farther east was lost in the mists where the inland waterways met the sea. Kitty pointed to the western shore where a large white building stood on the point.

"There's the Bernard General Hospital," she said to Hazel. "Our house isn't far away, and the Marine Base is farther east and south."

"A lovely spot!"

Kitty thought she caught a wistful note in Hazel's voice, and her eyes were almost sad as she drank in the beauty of green marshes, the blue sky, and the bluer sea.

On reaching the island docks Kitty phoned her father as they had previously arranged to send down a car. When she came out of the warehouse where she had used the phone, Lieutenant Cary was gone.

"We could have taken him up with us," she said, embarrassed that she had failed to invite him specifically before she had gone to phone her father.

"He said he had to stop on the way up to see a friend," Brad explained. "He left his thanks to you for giving him a lift." Then to Kitty's amazement Brad added in a low tone through almost closed teeth, "Good riddance, if you ask me!"

That night at supper Kitty gave her father an account of her unusual afternoon, the main point of which was to tell him she wanted to begin Canteen training.

"I'm proud of you, Kitty, that you wouldn't give up till you found some way you could serve under the circumstances," said her father.

"Then you do think I can do it?"

"Of course. There's nothing to prevent it."

"We'll have to pay Jane extra to stay with Billy the nights I'm on duty. Can we afford that?"

"Certainly, my dear. I've been thinking we might fix up that room behind the kitchen so Jane can be here all the time."

"That's a swell idea, Dad. I'd think she'd be glad to have a place rent free. Last week she had to borrow money to pay her rent."

They talked over further details of the new arrangement for their combination nurse and cook. But even while they discussed their domestic problems Kitty's mind kept going back to the meeting between Lieutenant Cary and Ensign Dawson.

Finally she blurted out, "Dad, did you ever know Willard Dawson, Hazel's brother?"

He glanced at her sharply. "No, he left before I came. I was sent to take his place."

"Then he worked a while with Lieutenant Cary?"

"Of course. Cary has been here six months. But why do you ask?"

Then Kitty attempted to give him an account of the meeting on the launch, and the animosity she felt existed between the two strangers.

Her father tried to brush her suspicions aside. "You mustn't get the habit of attributing motives to every little thing people do, Kitty. Often people are merely tired or preoccupied, and their coolness has no significance at all."

But Kitty was not satisfied with this explanation. She felt that her father knew much more about the mysterious Willard Dawson than he had revealed.

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## CHAPTER THREE

### THE USO PARTY

All the next day, though Kitty had many obligations and numerous things on her mind, her thoughts continually returned to the peculiar circumstances of her boat ride from town. There was something very mysterious about the whole business. She felt certain her father had evaded telling her all he might have. Was the new nurse involved in some mystery?

Suddenly Kitty recalled Brad's worried expression at the meeting of the two. He looked like one who suspected the cause of the disharmony. Though she could not question Nurse Dawson there was no reason why she shouldn't talk to Brad about what had happened. Maybe she would see him at the USO party Saturday night.

As she dressed for the party the following night, Kitty's thoughts were busy with what she would say to Brad. All the girls were wearing gay evening clothes, even though they were pre-war gowns, for this made the occasion seem festive for the boys.

Vera Parsons, a member of the Motor Corps, who drove the station wagon around to collect the girls for the USO parties, honked before Kitty had quite finished dressing. She threw her coat around her shoulders, caught up the skirt of the fluffy evening dress of pale yellow, and hurried toward the front door.

She felt buoyantly happy as she kissed Billy good night and joined the girls. Life had become an interesting adventure once more, with a goal to work toward. She had the happy feeling of one who had at last found a niche into which she fitted perfectly.

Kitty had been to only one other USO dance, for she had been in no mood for parties when she first joined her father on the island. She missed her Aunt Nina too keenly. It was Vera Parsons who made her realize these dances were not like most others. She would not be going merely for her own pleasure, but to help the boys forget they were homesick and lonely and still had a big job ahead of them.

"You know they won't allow just any sort of girl to go to these dances," Vera told her. "Only those of the highest caliber. They're not always easy to find, especially on an island as small as Palmetto. We need all the nice girls we can get to help us out."

So Kitty had attended the dance last Tuesday, and enjoyed it immensely. It was then she had noticed, though only casually, the Snack Bar which the Canteen operated. Tonight she planned to give the bar more than a brief inspection, and to get acquainted with the workers.

Vera knew all the girls and introduced Kitty. She had been on the island a year and was acquainted with everyone who was helping with war work. Vera was a most capable girl, large and rather muscular, but with such a wholesome attitude Kitty warmed to her at once. She had come upon her the first time on a sandy road running through a palmetto thicket. Vera was changing a tire with as much ease as a garage mechanic. Kitty later learned that she was the type of girl who doesn't hesitate to put her hands to any task. Her reddish brown hair, snapping brown eyes and gusty manner won her friends wherever she went.

"Well, Kitty Carter's soon going to be one of you!" was her method of introducing the Canteen candidate to the girls behind the Snack Bar. "Kitty, this is Mrs. Evans. She's Chairman of the Corps over here, and this is Sally Bright and Judy Conner."

"We'll surely be glad to have you," spoke up Mrs. Evans, a thin, sprightly woman in her fifties. Though much older than the other two, she was still young enough in spirit to be comradely.

"I can hardly wait to begin my training," said Kitty, perching on one of the stools, and leaning her elbows on the counter.

"When do you start?" asked Sally.



*"We'll Be Glad to Have You," Mrs. Evans Said*



"Monday. The nutrition class first."

"Yes, that must come first," Mrs. Evans told her. "It's a prerequisite to the Canteen course. We have to know a lot about food since our job is feeding people under all sorts of circumstances."

"And we have to know how to wash a stack of dishes as high as the Washington Monument," put in Judy Conner with a groan.

"Fortunately no one has to do that all the time," Mrs. Evans explained. "We take turns doing the different tasks so everyone has an opportunity to gain all-round experience."

"I'm always glad when it comes my turn to make out menus," said Judy. "But Sally actually likes to clean up. Can you imagine that?"

Sally's button nose wrinkled as her round face spread into a grin. "Strange, but true. I like to bring order out of chaos."

"Isn't it wonderful that we have a group where different ones like to do different things?" said Mrs. Evans happily.

"I like to cook," Kitty told them. "I like experimenting and creating new concoctions and trying out new recipes."

"I'm afraid there won't be much opportunity for new dishes in this work, but you'll be given plenty of opportunity to cook if you like that."

Kitty glanced at Sally with a look of appreciation. "But I just can't imagine anyone really liking to clean a kitchen."

"They're rare birds," giggled Judy.

"It gives my esthetic nature a keen satisfaction to leave a kitchen spick-and-span after the hullabaloo is over," Sally explained.

"Sometimes she is too anxious to clean," Judy reported. "She has a way of cleaning up bowls and spoons before the cooks have finished with 'em."

Sally went back to the kitchen to end their teasing, and Kitty asked, "Is the nutrition course very hard?"

"Oh, no. Miss Pearson makes it very interesting. You learn all about food needs in emergencies and food values for all times," explained Mrs. Evans.

"I guess we could all learn a lot about that."

"Indeed we could! Part of our work, too, is giving instructions and demonstrations to people. Good health and sane living are so dependent on proper diet."

"More so than most people will admit," said Judy. "You'll learn about that in nutrition class."

"Well, it seems I'm in line to learn lots that will help me even after the war is won," Kitty answered, and she felt her interest and anticipation in the work increasing.

"The most exciting part of the work comes at the time of an emergency," explained Mrs. Evans. "I helped once during a flood out in Mississippi. That was when I first went into Canteen work."

"When we read about such things in the papers they seem so unreal and far away," said Kitty, suddenly feeling a great sense of responsibility in her new undertaking. She realized now that a Canteen worker must have the courage and endurance of a true soldier if she was to fulfill her obligations.

There was much more she wanted to ask Mrs. Evans and the girls, but at that moment the band began playing and Jimmy Barnes, a young storekeeper, came to ask her to dance with him.

The second dance had just begun when someone tapped her partner on the shoulder. Kitty looked over the sailor's shoulder to see the spotless white of a Naval officer's uniform. She was surprised to recognize Lieutenant Cary.

She could not suppress a startled exclamation, "Oh, you?"

"Sorry to break in, but I had to apologize for leaving yesterday at the dock without telling you how much I appreciated the ride from town, but I was late for an appointment."

"Oh, that was O.K. Dad had told me to phone so we'd have a way of getting Miss Dawson's bags up from the dock."

"So she's an old friend?"

Though the young doctor's words seemed harmless enough Kitty was instantly on the defensive. Guardedly she replied, "I never saw her till yesterday."

"Though you met her at the train?"

Kitty noticed how blond the Lieutenant's eyebrows were when he lifted them with a skeptical expression. She made no reply to his last remark, not knowing how best to speak.

He seemed to take the hint that the subject was closed, and after an interval said, "You dance beautifully."

"Thanks."

"You look charming tonight," he persisted.

She flushed in spite of not wanting him to pay her compliments. She was about to make a pert retort when she reminded herself that he, too, was in the service, even though she disliked him personally. After all she had come here to try to make these men who were serving her country a bit happier. Suddenly she caught sight of Brad watching her with a puzzled expression.

To her relief the band crashed out the finale at that moment, and Brad came to claim her for the next dance.

"So glad you came," Kitty said cordially.

"No gladder than I am." He grinned as he looked her over with a sauciness at which no one could take offense. Then he whistled softly.

"Gosh, but you look like a dream walking!"

"But I came here to dance, not walk."

"You didn't come here to dance with Lieutenant Cary from now on if I have anything to do with it."

"Why he dances divinely." Kitty found herself defending the man she didn't like just to take Brad

down a peg or two.

"Maybe he learned his dance steps where the great Strauss waltzes were born." Brad glanced around before he added "Vienna."

"You mean?"

"We can't talk here," he warned quietly.

"I wanted to talk to you about something, too."

"Did you?" he asked eagerly.

He took her arm and started toward the rear door. Some steps led down to a court with a fountain in the center and natural palms around it. There were dim lights, and a hostess to make everyone welcome.

Brad found a seat at the far end where the lights were dimmed enough for them to catch a glimpse of the stars. Kitty glanced around to be sure that no one else was within hearing distance.

"Brad, did you notice anything odd yesterday when I introduced Nurse Dawson to Lieutenant Cary?"

"Plenty!" He spoke the word with significance.

"They seemed to have an innate animosity for each other when obviously they had never met before."

"If you ask me, Kitty, it was a blow to Lieutenant Cary to discover Ensign Dawson on her way to Bernard Hospital."

"But why?"

"Well, I hardly know how to tell you. It seems so intangible—sort of hunch."

"It must be a mighty big hunch, for I have the same sort of feeling that something's wrong somewhere. Miss Dawson looked so sort of burdened."

"Guess she has enough to make her feel depressed and definitely self-conscious at being sent to this hospital of all places."

"Why?"

"Something happened while her brother was here. He left under a sort of shadow. Was shipped off to Santiago."

"You mean he almost got a bob-tail?"

"Well, not quite. But I heard things were terribly mixed up in his work. He was Chief Pharmacist's Mate like your dad."

"I wonder what was wrong?"

"That's what I haven't been able to find out. But on several occasions I heard him and Lieutenant Cary having rather hot arguments. I could never get to the root of their trouble."

"Then you think Lieutenant Cary had something to do with Dawson's leaving the hospital?"

"I'm convinced of it."

"Did you know him very well?"

"I wasn't there long before he left, but I liked him an awful lot."

"Naturally Lieutenant Cary would resent Nurse Dawson being sent to the same base."

"And he didn't make any bones about showing it," said Brad in disgust.

Kitty watched some couples go back to the dance hall as the band struck up again. After an interval she said, "Brad, I believe Dad knows something about all this."

"He ought to, if anyone does. They put him in the position Dawson had filled."

"He shut up like a clam when I told him what happened in the launch yesterday."

Kitty sat turning the opal ring on her third finger, as she puzzled over the complications.

"You have nice hands—capable," Brad told her.

"That's from all the years of piano practice. You have to have piano, you know, along with voice training."

"Some time will you sing for me?"

She smiled up into his eager eyes. "I'd love to. But right now, Brad, I can't think of anything but this queer business we've stumbled on. I have a queer feeling it may mean real trouble at the hospital."

"Oh, I don't think it's anything as serious as that. But I'll tell you frankly I don't trust Lieutenant Cary. He's a man who'll bear watching, all right. I heard that just a year before the war broke out he was studying surgery in Vienna and Berlin."

## CHAPTER FOUR

### EMERGENCY FEEDING

Kitty was glad the sun was shining brightly Monday morning when she ran to the window to look out. She felt eager and ready to tackle the toughest sort of job. She could face her friends with new assurance now, for she was soon to be a part of the great army of workers dedicated to restoring peace to a troubled world.

For a while at least, while their gasoline allowance lasted, she was going back and forth in the launch, as that would save at least an hour each day in transportation time. Two other girls from the island were going to take the course with her and share those rides, so she felt justified in the use of gasoline. She had spent the early years of her life on the Gulf coast and was perfectly at home on the water. And how she loved it!

Vera Parsons had decided to add the Canteen course to her other lines of service, and Sally Bright's sister, Lana, was joining also.

"I hope the course won't be too dry," mused Lana, when they were crossing the bay that first morning.

"It won't be if Miss Pearson's in charge," Vera assured her. "She could put pep into a snail."

"I wish I could begin work right now," said Kitty. "I don't see how I'll have patience to wait to finish the courses."

"There's nothing to keep you from helping right now," Vera told her. "There're lots of Canteen Aides."

"Canteen Aides?"

"Girls who haven't taken the courses but do volunteer work in emergencies."

"Oh, that's great! I want to get into it as soon as possible. I've felt like a shirker these last weeks."

"I don't see why you call yourself a shirker," consoled Lana. "With a kid brother, a dad and a cottage to look after, I should think you'd have your hands full."

The nutrition classes were being held in the Power Company's demonstration kitchen. The trio from Palmetto Island found about thirty women and girls gathered when they arrived. Miss Pearson, spotless in her attractive uniform, was already giving out mimeographed sheets for study. All the seats toward the back were taken, but Kitty and her friends found folding chairs near the demonstration table, where Miss Pearson had her materials spread out.

Kitty thought how easy it was to slip into the old habit of making notes at lectures when she took a notebook and fountain pen from her purse. Miss Pearson had not been lecturing half an hour when Kitty realized how valuable the classes were going to be. She could use the information now and long after the war.

"I want to sketch briefly what we must cover in this course," Miss Pearson began. "As a foundation every one must know the requirements of good nutrition, and the value of different kinds of food."

Kitty thought how little attention she had paid to such matters in the years she had been concentrating on her music. She had eaten what was put before her at school, and had given no heed to it unless she became ill and the doctor restricted her diet.

When Miss Pearson mentioned that she would give assistance in planning menus to fit food rationing situations Kitty was really delighted. That planning had been a mathematical problem to her ever since she had started housekeeping.

Field trips to large kitchens of the community, and to food preserving plants promised interesting diversions to classroom activities.

"Tomorrow morning I've arranged for us to visit the Bayshore Bakery after class," Miss Pearson told them. "There you'll learn a little about mass production. You see we have to be prepared to cook large quantities of food in times of emergency."

Kitty saw that there was going to be real work, also, in the course. At the bottom of their instruction sheets were some questions that must be answered next day in class.

"We can discuss these going and coming in the boat," Kitty suggested to her friends as they were going out.

"I really think it's going to be fun," Lana said.

"And very valuable, too," said Kitty.

"I noticed a couple of women from over at the oyster cannery settlement," said Vera. "Every woman over there ought to be taking this course for the good of her family. Miss Pearson is going to show us how to make a little bit go a long way."

"That's surely something we can all use," said Kitty.

Their excursion to the bakery was followed by a visit to the oyster cannery, the community cannery, a near-by cafeteria kitchen, and to a school lunchroom, which was most efficiently organized.

"Every person in that lunchroom took our nutrition course when I first gave it," explained Miss Pearson.

Kitty found it hard to believe at the end of the first week that half her nutrition course was already complete. She had enjoyed every minute of it. To be a part of a great scheme like this, in which everyone was cooperating for the general welfare gave her a glow of satisfaction. She didn't

mind at all that she had to work till bedtime to finish her home duties, to see about Billy's clothes, and plan her own food program for the next day. In her carefree days at college she had not dreamed there was so much to be done in the world.

Classes were held in the evening during the second week of the course. This was a compromise to fit the needs of several housewives, who found it difficult to leave home in the morning. This arrangement made it necessary for Kitty, Vera and Lana to ride the island busses, as the girls could not go alone in the launch at night.

Palmetto Island was connected with the mainland by a long causeway across the marshes. This made the bus trip about three times the length of the boat ride.

The second evening, as the girls were returning home about ten-thirty the bus stopped near the oyster cannery to pick up some passengers. One of them was a sailor, wearing the crescent of the galley service. He impressed Kitty as being a raw recruit. Though Kitty was preoccupied with her own thoughts about the Canteen work, she had the fleeting idea that the boy must be on his way back to Bernard Hospital. She probably would never have thought of him again had not something rather peculiar happened.

The sailor stood just in line of her vision on the crowded bus. The man next to him had been smoking a cigar when he came aboard, and now held it in his hand. Suddenly as the bus lurched around a corner red-hot ashes from the end of the cigar fell on the sailor's shoe. Instantly a spurt of flame ran diagonally across the boy's shoe, as if some inflammable liquid had been spilled on it. Hastily the sailor stamped out the flame with his other foot. It all happened and was over in a flash. Kitty was impressed enough by the incident, however, to notice that the young man got off the bus at the hospital station.

Even then she would probably have forgotten the incident but for the strange events of the following day. She was roused at dawn by the telephone. It was Mrs. Evans, Chairman of the island Canteen unit.

"There was a big fire over at the oyster cannery last night," she told Kitty. "Practically every shack on the point was burned down."

"Oh, how terrible! Can I do anything?"

Kitty knew that the oyster cannery district was the poorest housed section of town.

"Indeed there is! We need every Canteen worker we can get to help prepare for these homeless people."

"I'll be right down," said Kitty promptly.

"Could we use your launch?"

"Oh yes. I'm sure Dad won't object."



*A Spurt of Flame Ran Across the Boy's Shoe*

"We are already loading the station wagon, but that won't hold all we need. Miss Pearson phoned from Bayport for us to bring dishes, equipment and all the help we can get."

"I'll be down as soon as I can put on my clothes," Kitty promised.

How thankful she was that they had arranged for Jane to have the small room behind the kitchen. Kitty roused her and gave careful instructions about the house and Billy, in case she would have to be gone all day. Then she told her father about the call, and in ten minutes was on her way down to the Canteen.

She helped Vera finish loading the station wagon and they drove over to the dock where her boat was housed. With the aid of Sally and Lana they filled the boat with pots, pans, all sorts of utensils and dishes, and what canned goods they had in stock. So many willing hands made quick work of the packing. They left only room enough for Mrs. Evans, the two Bright girls and Kitty. Judy Conner was going to help Vera pack the rest of their things in the station wagon and drive around over the causeway.

Not until they were seated in the boat and on their way to Bayport did Kitty find time to ask about the fire.

"The old cannery was a regular firetrap anyhow," said Sally.

"It's a miracle the fire didn't sweep on to the shipyards," Mrs. Evans remarked. "There was a strong northeast wind blowing that carried burning brands right in that direction."

"Sounds like sabotage," put in Lana.

"I doubt it," said Mrs. Evans, who had a way of thinking the best of everything and everybody. "A careless match or hot cigarette ashes could have started the fire in any of those dumps."

The mention of cigarette ashes made Kitty think of the cigar ash falling on the sailor's shoe in the bus. Then with a feeling of shock she recalled that the sailor had come aboard the bus in the oyster cannery district. Could there possibly be any connection between the two fires? She knew that gasoline or kerosene was often used by saboteurs in setting fires. Perhaps the main motive had not been the destruction of the cannery and shacks, but the shipyards and government docks beyond.

Resolutely she tried to dismiss the entire affair, thinking how unjust it was to be suspicious of people she didn't know. At least she would say nothing about it to anyone else, but she decided to do some investigating on her own if opportunity came.

There was so much to be done on reaching the scene of the disaster, however, that for a time Kitty forgot all about the incident on the bus. The Bayport Canteen workers had already set up a kitchen in a small playground near the center of the oyster cannery district.

She was amazed at the devastation that had been wrought in a few short hours. Practically every home that had surrounded the oyster cannery and docks had been burned to charcoal. The firemen, seeing it was impossible to save the poorly built shacks in the strong gale, had concentrated on preventing the spread of the fire to the essential war industries near by.

"It may be the best thing that could have happened to these people," said Miss Pearson, when the island group of workers arrived. "We'll see that proper housing units surround the cannery if it is rebuilt."

Kitty had her initiation that day in the wonderful work which the Red Cross does in emergencies. As there was no adequate kitchen within easy reach of the homeless people, cooking racks had been set up in the open.

"If this were night and there was danger of air raids," Miss Pearson explained to a group of Canteen apprentices who stood around the cook fire, "we'd have to cover our cook fire completely to keep it from being seen overhead."

"My brother in the Coast Guard says even a match struck in the marshes can be seen by a passing plane," Sally told them.

Soon pots were steaming with coffee, while huge saucepans held bubbling cereal. Kitty, with three other girls, improvised a table and benches where the children could sit to eat. In her group was Mrs. Janice, a member of the nutrition class, whom Vera had pointed out as a resident of the cannery district. She was an uneducated woman with an eager willingness to do everything in her power to help. Three of her sons were in the service. Though she and her other two children were now left homeless, she was doing her bit to help her fellow sufferers.

"There's talk that the cannery was set afire," she told Kitty when they went off together to tear some loose planks from a small section of the cannery that had not burned.

"Really! What have you heard about it?" Kitty said, encouraging Mrs. Janice to talk.

"The night watchman said he saw a stranger in dark clothes hurrying past the factory not ten minutes before he discovered the fire." Then she added in a lower tone, "A sailor, too, he claims."

Could it be possible that the boy she had seen on the bus had done this awful thing? But Kitty tried not to show her suspicions as she said, "But people must constantly pass by the cannery."

"That's so, of course, but you know how it is. You hear all sorts o' talk. People round here were mighty careful 'bout fire, knowing how shoddy our houses were."

"Maybe it's a blessing in disguise. You'll certainly have better homes to live in after this."

With the aid of Mrs. Janice's fourteen-year-old son, Jerry, they found a half dozen boards from which they managed to make a table. The Canteen workers were soon helping the hungry children to bowls of hot cereal and milk as they lined up at the table. Some of them were upset at being separated from their parents, but Kitty had a way of stilling their fears as she satisfied their hunger.

When their breakfast was over, Kitty gave each of them an apple and herded them over near the swings. She solicited the aid of some older boys and girls to keep the younger children amused while their parents ate. Then for two hours she helped wash the mountain-like pile of dishes.

"How long will we have to feed them?" she asked Mrs. Evans, when she was finally drying her hands.

"Tired already?"

"Oh, no—that is, of course I'm tired, but I didn't mean it that way. I was just wondering what's to

be done about all these people. Where will they sleep tonight? What will they do till more homes can be built?"

"And well you may, my dear," said Mrs. Evans kindly. "The town is packed to capacity with war workers. In spite of that many homes have already made room for some of these people. The Red Cross will provide tents for others until permanent shelter can be found. In the meantime they are dependent on the Canteen Corps for food."

Kitty's eyes were starry as she looked at her leader. "It's wonderful work, isn't it, Mrs. Evans?"

"Indeed it is!"

"If this fire was the work of saboteurs, it only makes us dedicate ourselves all the more devotedly to bringing peace and harmony in the end."

"Sometimes the most loyal person can let carelessness make him the worst sort of saboteur," said Mrs. Evans significantly.

Kitty thought she had more reason than anyone else for doubting that that fire had been started by a careless patriot. She had thought at first that she would keep quiet about the little incident on the bus last night, but now she made up her mind to take Brad Mason into her confidence. Brad might be in a position to make some investigations that she could not about the sailor.

## CHAPTER FIVE

## THE SNACK BAR

Nutrition classes were suspended for the duration of the emergency.

"You'll learn more through actual experience now," Miss Pearson told them, "than I could teach you in many lessons."

Kitty spent as much time as possible during the next three days helping to feed the homeless cannery workers and their families. Tuesday evening she was much too weary to go to the regular USO party, and so she had no opportunity to see Brad till the following Saturday.

By that time her excitement over the fire had cooled, and she was afraid he would think her silly to accuse the strange sailor of having anything to do with it. A score of times she had heard her father say, "When in doubt say nothing." So she wisely followed his advice.

There was so much work to be done in the closing days of the nutrition class that she had no time to think of anything else. The course had opened up to her a whole new world of practical interest.

"I can't believe we've learned so much in two weeks," she said to Lana and Vera.

"I'm surely glad Miss Pearson taught us every day, instead of once a week as they do in some places," said Vera.

"I'll say," agreed Lana. "It's much better to do it in two weeks instead of ten."

"And it's been so much fun, too," said Kitty. "Only think of the places we've visited—packing plants, canneries, bakeries, restaurant kitchens. It's so interesting to learn about all the food industries around this part of the country."

"I've got a whole notebook full of recipes, and ideas about food I can put to good use when my Jim comes back from Italy," said Vera.

"Huh," laughed Kitty, "I don't have to wait for anybody to come back."

Lana laughed too. "That's right. You have a dad and little brother to experiment on right now."

On the last evening, as they were going over to class, Kitty said to her two pals, "Strange, but I don't feel a bit nervous over the exam."

"It's been so practical and interesting there's no sense in anyone being nervous," Vera agreed.

"I wish I felt as certain as you two," said Lana, who was still poring over her tables of vitamins and caloric values.

At this final meeting all except three members of the class signed up to go on with the Canteen work, though Kitty and her two friends were the only ones from Palmetto Island. Kitty felt a real glow of pride when she received her certificate at the conclusion of the course. Each member of the class was also given a recipe book to help with her own home menus.

The Canteen course that followed immediately under Mrs. Evans gave quite a different kind of instruction. The brief experience they had already had in emergency feeding made them keenly appreciative of all the phases of the Canteen instruction. Step by step they discussed all the angles of the work; planning menus for large scale feeding, food preparation, and here the course they had just taken was of invaluable aid. They also discussed methods of food service and how to keep a Canteen orderly and spotless. Kitty was one of the group who received some practical experience in serving food at the blood donation center twice a week.

Two days before this course ended there was a railroad wreck twenty-five miles from town. Kitty went with the mobile canteen to supply food for the rescue crew who were working to clear the wounded from the wreck. It happened to be Hazel Dawson's day off, and she, too, went in the Red Cross station wagon, and worked like a trooper, giving first aid to the wounded.

"Tired?" asked Hazel gently as they were riding home in the Red Cross car at ten o'clock that night.

"I didn't know I was tired till I sat down," Kitty admitted. "But Hazel, isn't it wonderful to be able to help people at a time like this?"

"There's nothing in life quite so wonderful. You have the spirit of a real Canteen worker, Kitty. It's a privilege to feed men's bodies when they're hungry, but it's still more wonderful to give comfort to their souls and anxious minds as I saw you doing several times today."

Kitty had had no greater sense of pride when she donned her cap and gown at graduation than she felt the day she was entitled to wear her Canteen uniform the first time. She was going over to Bayport to meet a troop train with several of the workers.

The Belgian blue poplin dress made her bright eyes seem all the bluer. Her heart was beating proudly when she arranged her cap behind the auburn hair rolled softly into a pompadour. She had a feeling of real pride in those red crosses on her pocket and the white band of her cap. Some day she meant to earn service bars, too. Mrs. Evans wore a chevron and three bars, representing seven years of service.

Although the girls did not wear their uniforms at the Snack Bar, Kitty donned the official apron she was allowed to wear there on the first evening after finishing her course. Though she had done much volunteer work at the bar she felt somewhat elated tonight over being a full-fledged Canteen worker.

She was in an expansive mood and said as she and Judy were slicing bread for sandwiches, "Let's make 'em extra large, with plenty of stuffing just to celebrate our graduation."

"You might make that special dressing you were telling me about," Judy suggested.



"May I, Mrs. Evans?" Kitty asked.

"Of course. The boys always enjoy something different."

Kitty had learned to make a tart creole sauce for sandwich filling from their cook in New Orleans, so she prepared a bowlful. By the time the boys began to drift into the hall the air was fragrant with coffee and chocolate, and trays of sandwiches were ready.

Brad, knowing it was Kitty's initiation night, was one of the first bluejackets to plant his elbows on the counter and demand a sandwich.

"And a cupa cawfee, too, wench, and be snappy about it!" he said with mock gruffness.

She made a face at him as she turned to get the coffee.

After one bite of the sandwich Brad's eyes bulged. "Oh boy! This tastes like something from Toni's swanky joint in New Orleans."

Kitty laughed in delight. "Our old cook used to work at Toni's. She gave me lots of his secrets."

Jimmy Barnes sat beside Brad taking huge bites of a sandwich. He enthusiastically added his praise to Brad's. "Boy, but this is really seasoned up like home cooking."

"About the best seasoning they give us up at the hospital is the shrimp creole."

"And they only have that about twice a month," added Jimmy in disgust.

Kitty's curiosity stirred. Maybe this was her chance to learn something about the staff in the galley.

"Do you know the cooks very well?" she asked.

"Only a passing acquaintance," said Brad. "Our Chief Commissary Steward is named Krome—an old timer at the job."

"I saw a thin, dark-looking chap on the bus the other night with a crescent on his arm. Do you happen to know him?"

"Quite a number down there," said Jimmy dubiously. "Only one I've talked to very often is a fair young chap, named Ned Miller."

"There's one named Punaro fits your description," Brad told Kitty. "He empties wastebaskets on our floor."

"Right young—about eighteen or nineteen?" Kitty persisted.

"About that. Only been in a few months. Why?"

"Oh, nothing. I just happened to see him the other day on the bus."

A few minutes later Brad and Jimmy went off to play a game of pingpong with some of the girls and for the next hour Kitty was very busy at the bar. Later during a lull in their business she glanced down the hall and noticed that Lieutenant Cary was playing chess with someone in the south corner of the room. They were about the only two who had not patronized the Snack Bar during the evening.

"What's so interesting over there?" Brad's teasing tone jolted Kitty out of her curious speculation.

"Who's that playing chess with Lieutenant Cary?" she asked in a low tone.

Brad glanced to the south corner of the room and replied, "Krome."

"You mean the head cook up at the hospital?"

"What's so surprising about that?"

"Somehow I thought Lieutenant Cary would be too snippity to play chess with the cook."

"Why Krome's Chief Commissary Steward. Lieutenant Cary has no reason to be high-hat to him. He was in the service long before Cary ever thought of such a thing."

"Is that so?"

"Sure."

"But Dr. Cary is a lieutenant."

"Just the same he's only been in the service a few months. He's one of the physicians recently recruited."

"Oh, I see," murmured Kitty in a significant tone. Then she asked, "Do you know anything about the cook?"



*"What's So Interesting There?" Brad Asked*

Brad laughed. "I know he can dish up some mighty good chow on occasion."

"He looks as though he didn't object to good eating himself. He must weigh two hundred and twenty-five at least." Kitty tried to make her tone seem trivial in case anyone else had overheard their conversation.

"I'll be trotting along," Brad said. "I promised to make a fourth for bridge over yonder."

Kitty held his eyes a moment and lowered her voice to say, "There's something I want to talk to you about when I have a chance."

"I'll see you home if you can get through before eleven. We can talk on the way up."

"Fine," she agreed.

Brad had scarcely taken his seat with the other players when Lieutenant Cary and Chief Krome came toward the bar.

Excitedly Kitty whispered to Judy, "Let me wait on them if they come here."

Judy sent her a surprised look. "You're welcome to them. I wouldn't be interested."

"Neither am I, in the way you think," retorted Kitty with a laugh.

She thought what an odd pair they made as they came toward the Snack Bar. Lieutenant Cary was as lean and alert as a bloodhound, while the square-rigged Krome was almost a head shorter. Kitty would have felt curious about any man who was friendly with Lieutenant Cary, even if her curiosity had not already been stirred by one of Krome's assistants, so that the association brought the Chief Steward under suspicion also.

Vera came out of the kitchen just as the two men straddled the stools at the counter and she took Lieutenant Cary's order. Kitty's hand was a little unsteady as she poured Krome's cup of coffee.

"We have some special sandwiches tonight," Judy explained to the two customers, "made by our new Canteen worker, Miss Kitty Carter."

"I'll take two," Krome spoke up promptly.

When Kitty faced the head cook squarely he seemed such a hearty, good-natured sort her suspicions evaporated like the steam above his coffee cup.

"So you're now a full-fledged Canteen worker." Though Lieutenant Cary's smile and words were friendly enough his tone held a slight cynicism.

"I wasn't a bit prouder when I donned my cap and gown at graduation from college, than when I put on my uniform the first time," she said frankly.

"They got something when they got you, young lady," spoke up Krome warmly. "These sandwiches ain't to be sneezed at."

"Why, I'm thrilled that you think so! They tell me you can serve some very good things over at the hospital, and I can vouch for it myself the few times I've eaten there."

"So you're Chief Carter's daughter?"

"And proud I am to have the honor."

Krome finished the last crumb of his sandwich, and said, "How about giving me the recipe for that sandwich filling?"

Kitty looked disconcerted. "If you feed the boys on it at the hospital they may not want our sandwiches down here."

"I'll promise not to do that."

Kitty laughed. "Oh, really, I wouldn't be that selfish. You're welcome to the recipe. And maybe you'd do me a favor in return."

Krome looked surprised. "Me do you a favor?" he asked, indicating himself, then Kitty with his fat hand. Then he laughed as if it were a great joke.

"I heard the boys talking about your grand shrimp creole—and that they don't get it often enough. How about giving me that recipe?"

"Oh, that? Sure. We'll swap recipes then. I'll bring it next time I come."

When the men had gone Judy said with a sniff, "If you ever get a recipe out of him you'll do better than Mrs. Evans has. He's promised her several and never brought them."

"Maybe he'll pay more attention to my request if he wants a recipe from me."

At ten-thirty when Kitty put on her light wrap to go home she was really tired. But how glowingly happy she felt at the realization that her job had been well done! Brad was waiting for her.

Though it was only March there was more than a hint of spring in the balmy night air, and the stars seemed close and warm in a sky like deep purple porcelain. Neither of them spoke while they walked the first block.

Then Brad said, "You wanted to ask me about something?"

"Yes, I did. But somehow it seems absurd to be suspicious of anyone on a night like this."

"Well, forget it." After an interval he asked, "Think you're going to enjoy the Canteen work?"

"I'm crazy about it. But really it seems so little to do when there's so much to be done."

"It's all the little bits put together that's going to help us win this war."

"And prepare us to live in a more wonderful peace afterward. It's learning to work together that's so important."

"One person pulling in the wrong direction can upset the whole works."

Kitty made no reply, but she thought he must know what was on her mind even before he added, "I figure you've been wondering why Krome and Cary seem so intimate."

"You hit the nail on the head!"

"We've both put a big question mark behind Cary, and when we see Krome buddying with him he gets a question mark, too."

"Not only Krome."

"That chap, Punaro, you were asking about?"

"Uh-huh."

"What's he done?"

"I've hesitated a long time about mentioning it. It may seem I'm straining at a gnat."

"Let's have it," he urged.

"You do hate to suspect people of being spies and saboteurs, especially when they're right in the hospital with your own father."

"All the more reason you shouldn't take any chances."

Quickly Kitty gave Brad an account of the little incident on the bus three weeks earlier. "It seems sort of absurd now that I'm talking about it for the first time to think the boy might have had anything to do with the fire at the oyster cannery, but that's exactly what I have been thinking."

"I don't think your suspicions are unfounded."

"If he used gasoline or kerosene to start that fire it was still fresh enough to flame up from those cigar ashes. And he certainly did get on the bus right at the cannery station."

"If that fire was the work of saboteurs the objective was no doubt the shipyards, not the cannery."

They walked on to Kitty's door in silence. Then Brad said, "I sure wish you'd told me about this when it happened."

"Why? I can't see that we can do anything."

"Maybe I could have managed to get a squint at Punaro's shoes."

"Punaro's shoes? But the gasoline, or whatever it was, had already burned off."

"But shell dust would still have been on the soles next morning."

"Say—that's so! I hadn't thought of that."

"You know all that land around the cannery has been built up of oyster shells," explained Brad. "It was once only a marshy bog they tell me. If Punaro set that fire he'd be obliged to get shell dust on his shoes."

"The only paved sidewalk runs along the street where the bus stopped," explained Kitty. "I noticed that the day we went over to open the Canteen."

"There's a possibility I might still find out something."

"How?"

"He probably stopped wearing those shoes with the burned stain. If he discarded them right away they'd probably still bear the evidence of shell dust."

"And even if you found out he'd really been there, Brad, where would it take us?"

"I don't know, but you can just be sure, Kit, I'm not going to let a thing like this slide by."

## CHAPTER SIX

## A REVELATION

Kitty was still thinking of her conversation with Brad when she went in to help Jane with breakfast the next morning. What could they do about it, even if they had positive proof that the Punaro boy had visited the oyster cannery on the night of the fire? He could claim he had gone there to see friends, and they would have accomplished nothing by their prying. She hoped Brad wouldn't get in any trouble about it.

"How did you like your Canteen work?" her father asked at breakfast.

"Oh, fine!" she exclaimed, her thoughts returning to the real work of the previous evening. "It's really loads of fun. I'm going to be on duty every other night."

"You'll be doing more than your quota of hours, won't you?"

"Oh, I don't mind that. This is no time to stick to quotas, you know."

"You spoke a truth then, Kitten," her father said proudly.

"We have so few workers over here on the island each of us will have to do double duty. It's going to be loads of fun."

"I'm so pleased you've found your place in the war program. I was sure you would."

Kitty glanced at her father gratefully as she handed him the hot muffins Jane had brought in.

"No, thanks. I have plenty."

"But, Dad, you always eat two. And you haven't eaten half your eggs. That's very unpatriotic with eggs so high."

He laughed. "I'm beginning to see the effects of your nutrition course already."

"I'll admit it's made me food conscious, and I was already point conscious."

"I must hand it to you women for having a streak of genius with handling rationing points."

"I'm ashamed to admit it, Dad, but I find myself figuring up point values first and almost forgetting what a thing is going to cost."

"I've had a few worries myself over supplies," he said, and Kitty saw the furrow deepen between his brows.

"How's that, Dad?" she asked eagerly, hoping he would open up about what was on his mind.

"Oh, you have problems enough without being burdened with mine," he said.

Kitty ate the last half of her muffin with some orange-blossom honey, then she sat looking thoughtfully at her father. She had been so absorbed in her own activities lately she had paid scant heed to his failing appetite. Now she realized he had eaten very little for several days.

"Dad, don't you think you'd better take a tonic or something?" she said finally. "Your appetite is just about gone."

He tried to laugh off her anxiety. "Oh, I'll pick up in a day or so. I've been rather preoccupied with things at the office."

His admission gave her a start. "Anything wrong?"

"Nothing that can't be adjusted in time, I hope."

"You couldn't tell me about it?"

"No sense in burdening you with my problems. Kitty. You have enough on your shoulders now."

"Maybe I could help. Sometimes problems clear up after talking them over with others. Every time I've ever brought my troubles to you they seem to vanish in thin air."

"There're some things a man can't talk over with anyone, Kitten, when he's in the service. He has to keep things from even his own daughter, whom he'd trust with his very life."

Kitty was now certain that there was something radically wrong. Was it possible that it could in any way be connected with the clues she had picked up in the last few weeks? Willard Dawson, Chief Pharmacist's Mate, who had just preceded him, had been involved in some sort of trouble at the hospital. Was her father becoming involved in the same sort of complications? The idea that he, also, might be relegated to some remote base, filled Kitty with terror. The life they were living here together seemed a paradise when she feared that something tragic might happen to end it.

After her father had gone to the hospital Kitty couldn't put him from her mind. She decided she must do something to lift him out of his depression. Later when she was in the kitchen helping to fix Billy's breakfast plate, she remarked to Jane that she was afraid her father wasn't very well.

"Reckon he worried 'bout somepen, Miss Kit?"

"Why? What makes you think that?"

"Las' night atter us all in bed I hear him pacin' back an' fo'th, back an' fo'th, like somepen whut's trapped."

"Somepen whut's trapped," kept ringing in Kitty's head after she left the kitchen. This morning she felt like someone who had picked up half a dozen pieces of a jig-saw puzzle out of which she could make no sense at all. If she had had any idea of what was back of it all she might have pieced them together in an orderly pattern.

Later as she gathered fresh nasturtiums from the little flower bed under the living-room window, the vision of Lieutenant Cary and Chief Krome playing chess rose up to trouble her. Surely they could have nothing to do with her father's anxieties. Yet she could not forget the mutual antagonism which Cary and Hazel had shown each other instantly, and she felt instinctively that they were all involved in a strange chess game which she had to play blindfolded. But she was determined, if her

alertness could prevent it, that her father would never become a pawn to be sacrificed as Willard Dawson had been.

Suddenly she had a sense of guilt that she had given her father so little companionship lately. Then she thought of Nurse Dawson, and something he had said when she first arrived, "We must have her over to dinner some evening. It means so much to people in the service to go into real homes."

"Why not have her over tonight?" she thought. She had an evening free of Canteen work, and Dad definitely needed cheering up. She hurried to her desk drawer to study her ration books to see if there were enough points left for a decent roast. Since Dad had been eating two meals at home he also had books, which helped out greatly, and with Jane's books added she had much more latitude in her buying.

Her father had just reached his office when Kitty got him on the phone. She made her tone as sprightly as possible when she asked, "Dad, how about having Hazel over to dinner tonight?"

His voice had an eager quality when he answered, "Oh, fine, Kitten! It wouldn't be too much bother?"



*"How About Asking Hazel Over Tonight?"*

"No, indeed! I've been wanting to for a long time. And this evening I haven't another thing to do. Will you ask her?"

"Maybe you'd better phone her. I won't have an opportunity to see her till lunch, and by that time she may have made other plans."

"O.K., old dear, just as you say."

"Tell her I'll call for her at six."

Kitty thought as she dialed the hospital that her father had let slip an important point. In mentioning that he wouldn't see Hazel till noon, he implied that they must eat together every day. The thought made her feel very happy.

When Kitty finally got in touch with Hazel and gave her the invitation she eagerly accepted.

"Is she comin'?" Jane wanted to know as she stood in the doorway, awaiting the answer.

"She and Dad were as pleased as two kids being invited to a picnic. We'll have to give them a swell feed, Jane, and see if this improves his appetite."

Kitty dashed off to the market to see what she could get for their dinner. She did a weekly shopping in Bayport on Saturdays. In order to save gasoline she tried to manage the rest of the time with what she could pick up on the island.

It proved to be a busy day for both her and Jane. While the negro girl was busy in the kitchen, Kitty tried to brighten up the rather shabby furnishings of their little cottage. She reminded herself that it was wartime and one must make the best of undesirable living conditions. They had brought their own silver and linens from their old home on the Gulf coast, and with these she made the table look very pretty. The bowl of nasturtiums in the center gave quite a festive air.

"Ain't no use to worry 'bout de looks, Miss Kit," Jane consoled her when she arranged and re-arranged the flowers to get the right effect. "Us make de grub taste good enough an' dey won't think 'bout nothin' else. Dese ain't no times to worry 'bout de frills o' livin'."

Kitty had often thought that Jane, with a little more education, would have made a fine philosopher. Certainly she would never die of worrying over what couldn't be helped.

Kitty wore sweater suits so constantly she felt really dressed up when she put on one of her old silk prints and let her hair down from its tight ringlets to fall in soft auburn curls about her face. It seemed to belong that way with the flowered print.

Though Kitty had intended cultivating Hazel Dawson's acquaintance she had actually been with her only once since her arrival. Then she and her father and Hazel had eaten lunch together in the hospital dining-room, where there was little chance for connected conversation. So Kitty was also glad of this opportunity to develop their friendship.

Hazel couldn't praise Kitty's delicious dinner enough, and remarked several times how wonderful it was to be in a real home.

"It's nothing like the lovely bungalow we had in New Orleans," said Kitty. "Of course we had our own things there. But I'm not complaining. It's too wonderful that we can be together in any sort of home now."

After a while Kitty slipped into the background and listened while her father and Hazel discussed other places they had worked, and mutual friends who were now scattered far and wide. The meal was not half over before Kitty was certain her father had more than a passing interest in this nurse. His preoccupation of the morning had vanished with the genial companionship.

"I'm hoping I'll get a chance at overseas duty again," said Hazel.

"You wouldn't want to go till you finish the job you came here to do."

"Oh, no! No, indeed! I wouldn't be satisfied to go anywhere till that's done."

Kitty glanced speculatively from one to the other. Their words implied much. When Hazel looked across the table to find a puzzled expression on Kitty's face, she instantly changed the subject.

"Don't forget, my dear, that you promised to take me on a tour of these inland waterways."

"I haven't forgotten, but there was so much to be done while I was taking my Canteen course."

"I'm so interested in this coast country. It's really beautiful."

"In a week or so the weather will be getting very mild, then we'll make a day of it when you have some time off," Kitty promised.

After dinner Kitty excused herself to see about Billy, who had eaten earlier and been put to bed.

As she went down the hall she heard Hazel say to her father, "I've been wanting to tell you something I have just uncovered."

Then for the first time Kitty felt certain that Hazel Dawson had come to the Bernard Hospital in the double capacity of nurse and investigator in behalf of her brother. In order to give them plenty of time for consultation she stayed in Billy's room an hour, reading him bedtime stories.

His sleepy eyes had been closed some time when her father poked his head in the doorway and asked, "Kitten, aren't you coming back to the living-room?"

She tried to smile disarmingly as she said softly, "Billy felt sort of out of it all. I had to make it up to him."

"I want you to sing for Hazel," he added as they went down the hall.

"Oh, please do!" exclaimed Hazel, who overheard them. "I've always wanted to hear you sing."

"This old piano is terribly out of tune, and I'm out of practice, but I'll try."

She sang a simple little lullaby first, and gaining courage from their praise, she sang the aria she had learned for her closing recital at school.

"Oh, Kitty darling, your voice is really beautiful, so full and rich. You *must* go on with your music! All the world ought to be hearing that beautiful voice."

Hazel's words once more stirred Kitty's old ambition, that had been overshadowed of late by circumstances.

"When the war is over, maybe," she tried to speak with an indifference she did not feel. "But right now I have other jobs to do."

"Haven't we all!" said Hazel significantly, and turned to meet her friend's understanding glance.



Later when her father had gone to take Hazel home, Kitty sat at the window a long time. She felt an unaccountable loneliness, even while her heart rejoiced at what the evening had revealed. What a wonderful wife Hazel would make for her dad! His loneliness had long been a source of unhappiness to her. Finally she went to her room, humming softly the lullaby, hoping that those suspicions at least had good foundation. Maybe some day after the war she would have a home of her own. What a comfort it would be to know Dad was not left alone!

## CHAPTER SEVEN

## THE TANGLED WEB

A wild March gale was howling over the island the following evening. Though rain poured in torrents Kitty found a score of marines and sailors already in the USO hall when she arrived at the Snack Bar. On such nights she always thought of the boys across the water, who were fighting in all sorts of weather. The Snack Bar and the cozy atmosphere of the big hall made her wish they could all share this comfort.

Nell Cruger, the USO hostess, was worried when she remarked to Kitty, "Vera just phoned from out at Thompsons' place that she's stuck in the mud but will get here as soon as she can. We haven't half enough girls to keep the boys entertained till then."

"Oh, depend on Vera to get out of any sort of tight spot," replied Kitty confidently. "She'll be along after a while with a station wagon full of girls."

Kitty had her own Canteen duties to look after and was quite busy for half an hour before she realized that Vera had not yet arrived. Only one carful of girls had come in, and although they were doing their best to make the boys have a pleasant evening, there was still not nearly enough girls. Kitty decided the Canteen girls would have to do double duty by helping the USO hostess.

She was about to tell Mrs. Evans she would go outside into the hall to be some boy's partner for a dance when she noticed a lonesome-looking fellow at her own Snack Bar. She had served him a cup of coffee when he first came in and had made overtures of friendship which had been indifferently received. He still sat on the end stool, looking dejectedly into space, half his coffee still in the cup.

"Anything else you'd like?" she asked.

"No, thanks," he replied, without changing his position or looking toward her.

She went back to the kitchen a moment later to get some more cream, and Sally, elbow deep in suds, said, "Poor boy, he's been sitting there in a fog for the last half hour. Guess he's got something rather bothersome on his mind."

"He looks like a new one in the service," commented Kitty.

Later as she wiped the counter clean she noticed the sailor's fresh, fair complexion not yet tanned by the southern sun. There was something about him that made her think of Billy. Her own little brother might look like that when he was grown up. In twenty years she hoped there wouldn't be another war to catch him in its snares. If it had to happen she knew she would thank any Canteen worker who would cheer him.

She pushed a neatly wrapped sandwich toward the sailor. "These sandwiches are really good," she said encouragingly. "Wouldn't you like to try one?"

Then he turned slightly and looked at her for the first time. "I couldn't swallow a bite," he said.

His gentle gray eyes were as pathetic as a frightened lamb's. Kitty couldn't bear it. She darted back to the kitchen to tell Mrs. Evans about him.

"He's been sitting there utterly dejected for the last half hour."

"He's Ned Miller," explained Sally. "I've noticed him several times lately—seems awfully depressed."

"He doesn't even know they're dancing and playing games out there in the hall," Kitty said.

"I'll see if I can draw him out," Mrs. Evans volunteered.

She strolled from the kitchen and pretended to be busy at the counter. In a casual manner she addressed Ned, "Wouldn't you like to dance a bit?"

"No, thanks, I don't want to dance." His tone was flat from lack of interest.

"They're scarce of girls tonight, but we're not so busy either. I could spare one of the Canteen girls to play a game of checkers with you, if you like."

"No, thanks."

Just inside the kitchen door Kitty and Sally listened to Mrs. Evans's overtures of friendship.

Finally she spoke in a motherly tone. "Son, you're worried about something. Isn't there anything I can do for you?"

Then the pleading gray eyes looked up at the motherly face and this time they were swimming in tears. For a moment he seemed to be appraising her. Finding the sympathy of her heart reflected in her eyes he finally blurted, "I—I want to hold a baby."

Kitty, watching beside Sally in the background fairly held her breath at this unexpected retort.

"A baby?" repeated Mrs. Evans.

Ned dug into his pocket and brought out a yellow sheet of paper. The girls saw it was a telegram as he handed it to her.

"Our baby came yesterday. They're—they're in California. I—I've been so scared for her the last week I haven't had good sense. I can't believe it's all over and she's all right."

"Oh that's wonderful!" exclaimed Mrs. Evans. "And a boy, too. Eight pounds."

He grew more confidential at her warmth and understanding.

"If—if I could only hold a baby once to see how it feels. I've never held a baby. Maybe I can believe I'm a father when I know how a baby feels."

Hot tears blinded Kitty's eyes, and her throat tightened. How tragic it was to be three thousand miles away from your firstborn, with no real hope of ever seeing him before you were sent across!

"Sally, I'm going to find a baby for him to hold if there's a young baby on this island!" Kitty

whispered.

Sally wiggled her button nose as she, too, blinked back the tears. "Say, but that's tough! Where'll you find a young one, Kit? I don't know where there's a young baby."

"I'll find one. You'll see," said Kitty and dashed out to the telephone.

In two minutes she had Hazel Dawson on the phone. Surely she would know if any of the wives of the service men up at the hospital had young babies.

Hazel was rather surprised at Kitty's unusual request, but after a little thought said, "Mrs. Harper's baby is about ten days old. She came back from the hospital in town yesterday, I believe."

"Do you think you could possibly arrange for me to bring Ned Miller up to see it?" asked Kitty.

"I'm sure they'd be glad to have him visit them," Hazel said kindly. "Suppose you come past the hospital tomorrow at four-thirty when I get off duty and I'll go with you."

"Oh, you're an angel! If you could only see this pathetic boy, you'd do anything in the world to make him a little happier."

Kitty tried not to seem too excited over her success when she went back behind the bar. Mrs. Evans was still talking to Ned when she joined them.

"The Harpers have a young baby," she said almost bluntly.

He glanced at her quickly, and his sensitive face flushed. "Maybe you think it's silly of me," he apologized. "But it's an awful feeling to be three thousand miles away from your wife and baby."

"You're not silly at all! I'd be thrilled to pieces to go to see the Harpers' baby with you. They're friends of Hazel Dawson. You know Ensign Dawson up at the hospital?"

"Sure. She's always ready to help somebody."

"The Harpers' baby is a few days older than yours, but then they'd feel the same."

"You're so kind to go to all that trouble for me."

"I'll pick you up in our car tomorrow at four-thirty. I'm going over to get Miss Dawson anyhow. She said she'd go with us and make arrangements with the Harpers."

"I just can't thank you enough." A smile actually brightened Ned's face as he spoke.

While Kitty was still talking to him Vera came in with half a dozen girls. After she turned them loose in the hall she went behind the Snack Bar looking rather excited. Kitty suggested that one of the new arrivals dance with Ned, and when they had gone she said to Vera, "Hear you had quite a time."



*"You're Not Silly at All," Kitty Told Him*

"I'll say."

"Were you alone when you got stuck?" asked Sally.

"Sure! You never get stuck when there's anyone along to help."

"Where were you?" asked Kitty.

"On that lonely stretch of road leading to the Thompson place. I went out there to get Nancy. Rain had made the sand all gooey this side of Waco bridge, and I got stuck fast."

"In that dark, swampy road?" asked Sally.

"It would be there," said Vera in disgust. "I worked till nearly dark trying to get out, then I started on foot toward Thompsons'. I was just about to cross the bridge over Waco Creek when I heard oars up the stream."

"I'd have been scared stiff there by myself," said Sally with a shiver.

"I was too mad over being stuck to feel scared," Vera stated. "I yelled for that boatman to come and help me out—told him I was stuck."

"Well?" said Kitty, sensing there was something very peculiar to come. "He did help you, of course."

"Not that sneak! The minute I yelled for help those oars stopped and I never heard another sound."

"Why, he couldn't help but know it was a woman calling!" Kitty exclaimed.

"Sure, he knew it was a woman in trouble."

"I can't understand that," said Sally. "I've lived round here all my life, and all the natives, white and colored, will go to no end of trouble to help a person out of a tight spot, 'specially women."

"I figured he was no native, and up to some skulduggery," said Vera. "I went on down the road and got Nancy Thompson's brother, and we searched that creek with flashlights as far as we could go."

"And found nothing?" asked Kitty.

"That sneak had cleared out while I was gone. If you ask me there's plenty happening on this island that's not printed in the papers."

Secretly Kitty agreed with her. The incident made her only more determined not to relax her vigilance about certain peculiar people she was watching.

The next afternoon Kitty was waiting outside Hazel's door at the hospital promptly at four-thirty. She soon heard the soft, but brisk step of her friend coming down the hall.

"Come in, while I freshen up a bit," Hazel invited.

Kitty had never been in her new friend's room, and felt a little flutter of excitement as she went inside. Hazel proffered the only rocker invitingly.

"You sit there and rest a minute dear, while I powder my nose and brush my hair. You look as fresh as if you hadn't had your household to look after all day."

"I must admit I haven't had any idle moments," Kitty confessed.

While Hazel was in the bathroom Kitty glanced around the room that had been made so homelike with many individual touches. On the dresser she noticed a picture of a handsome man, evidently slightly older than Hazel. Her heart sank with misgivings. Perhaps Hazel was already engaged to someone. For a moment she felt a pang of jealousy and resentment. But she simply couldn't believe Hazel would lead her father on if she were in love with someone else.

"Who's the gorgeous-looking man?" she asked frankly when Hazel returned to the room.

"That's my brother."

"Oh, yes, of course—your brother, Willard, I've heard you speak about."

"But how did you know his name? I—I never mention him here."

"The day I met you in the launch Lieutenant Cary spoke of him."

"Oh-h!" Hazel's tone became a degree cooler. "He used to be stationed here," she added after a moment.

"So Dad said. He was sent here in his place, I understand."

"I hope we don't live to regret his asking for this post."

"You—you mean Dad asked for this appointment?"

"Oh, beg pardon. I thought you knew that."

"No, I didn't. I knew nothing about it till Dad wrote me he was coming to Palmetto Island, and it would be a grand place for me and Billy to live."

Why had both her father and Hazel asked to come here after the trouble Hazel's brother had had? To cover her confused thoughts Kitty took the picture from the dresser and studied the face frankly. Now she could see a resemblance to Hazel. In that strong chin, firm mouth and the wide frank eyes she could find no evidence of one whose conduct might merit his being relegated to some obscure Naval station.

As she and Hazel went out to meet Ned Miller in the lobby below she was more convinced than ever that there was something mysterious going on, in which her father was deeply involved.

Hazel proved herself an understanding pal that afternoon. She made it seem the most natural thing in the world that Ned should want to see a tiny baby. Kitty thought she had never seen anyone so frightened and so awkward as Ned when he first took that little blanketed form in his arms. But with every passing minute his stiffness and embarrassment grew less. Before their brief call was over he had promised to carve the baby a wooden bowl and spoon for his first eating.

"I like to carve things," he said. "I made one for my own youngster two months ago."

He seemed to expand to new importance as he spoke. When Kitty and Ned left together Hazel stayed on for a longer visit with her friends. As they drove away Kitty remarked, "I didn't notice till this afternoon that you're one of the boys who work in the galley."

"I like it pretty well there," admitted Ned. "I like doing things with my hands. Glad they didn't put

me where I have to work at a desk or anything like that.”

“And it helps a lot when you like the people you work with,” said Kitty, not without an ulterior motive.

“My boss is fine—good natured as they make ‘em.”

“Krome you mean? Chief Steward Krome?”

“Only one trouble about him—he snores like a steam engine. You punch him and wake him up, and he goes right back at it again.”

“Isn’t there a thin, dark fellow named Punaro down in the galley?”

“Yeah! He collects waste from over the hospital and does things like that. Looks after the kitchen garbage too.”

“I saw him over at the USO the other night playing chess with Lieutenant Cary.”

Ned sent her an odd look and said, “You did?” After an interval he added diffidently, “I’m not the kind to talk about people, Miss Kitty, but if you were my sister I wouldn’t want you to be letting him take you home from Canteen, or anything like that—not Punaro!”

“Thanks for the hint, Ned.” She wanted to ask him more but didn’t know how without betraying those she felt she had no reason to suspect. They parted in the lobby as Kitty turned off toward her father’s office. But she thought how odd it was—that at almost every contact she made, the tangled web of clues she was picking up became more bewildering.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

## WHAT'S IN A TITLE?

When Kitty told Hazel about the shortage of girls at the USO on that stormy night her friend said, "Stop by for me next time you go to Canteen. My evenings are rather lonely. I'll be glad to help entertain the boys."

"I'll have to get a card for you, but that won't be any trouble," said Kitty.

However, Hazel's remark about her lonely evenings left Kitty somewhat at sea. Her father was away from home several evenings a week, and she had thought he was spending them with Hazel. Now she felt she had been mistaken.

Next time Kitty was on duty at the Snack Bar she went over to the hospital for Hazel, and together they walked the five blocks to the USO hall. As they walked along the main street in the twilight they caught glimpses of the docks, with their dimmed boat lights at each street intersection.

"I love living here, don't you?" said Kitty.

"Under different circumstances it would be quite an interesting post."

"Under different circumstances?" Kitty's tone implied her puzzlement.

"I'm in rather an awkward spot, you know. My brother had a very unpleasant time here—was blamed for something of which he was innocent."

"Oh, I'm sorry."

"Naturally I still feel the cloud hanging over me. I'll never be quite happy till my brother is cleared."

"Is there anything I can do? I wish I could help."

"I'm afraid there's nothing anyone can do outside the service."

Kitty wanted to ask for more details, but the tone of Hazel's last remark suggested that the subject was closed. In fact she felt very much surprised that her friend had been as frank as she had about the matter.

At the USO hall they separated for a while, Hazel to help amuse the boys while Kitty went into the Canteen quarters. When she slipped off her coat and put on her apron, she went out to the bar to find Ned Miller waiting for her. He seemed as bright as a sunny day after a long rainy spell.

"Miss Kitty, you'll never guess what's happened!" he exclaimed.

"Your wife and baby aren't flying to Palmetto Island already?"

"Oh, no, nothing so marvelous as that, but surprising enough."

"Then spill the news, Ned, and don't keep me in suspense," she encouraged.

"The Harpers have asked me to be godfather for their son."

"Oh, Ned, that's super!"

"Imagine me a father and a godfather all in one week!"

Judy, Sally and Mrs. Evans drew nearer to add their congratulations to Kitty's.

"You've all got to drink a hot chocolate with me to celebrate," continued Ned proudly. "It's on me this time!"

Mrs. Evans poured the chocolate, and topped it with an unusually generous spoonful of whipped cream.

"This is on the Canteen," she said, and they all made merry over the great event.

"You must all come to the christening a week from Sunday at the little chapel a block from the hospital."

Hazel came presently and took Ned off for some dancing. As Kitty watched them go there was a tender light in her eyes. How happy she felt to realize that she had made the sun break through the fog for at least one boy!

During a lull in business some time later she drew up a stool and watched the activities in the large hall. At the right in an open space around the piano a dozen or more couples danced while a marine kept the keys warm with his nimble fingers. In the space directly in front of the bar were tables where couples and foursomes played all manner of games. Some boys lolled on couches or in large armchairs with books or magazines, while others sat at desks against the wall, writing letters home, apparently unmindful of the confusion around them.

Presently Kitty's survey was checked as her gaze came to rest once more on Lieutenant Cary playing chess again. This time the players were sitting so she could see the profiles of both men. Instantly she recognized the physician's partner as the dark-faced boy, Punaro, whom she had seen on the bus that memorable night before the big fire at the cannery.

The last time she had noticed Cary here he was playing with Chief Commissary Steward Krome. She wondered why he was on such intimate terms with the galley staff. Presently she was aware that Hazel Dawson had returned to the bar and was sitting on a stool across the counter.

"Does Lieutenant Cary come here very often?" she asked.

"Only occasionally."

"Does he always play chess with someone from the galley?"

Kitty sent Hazel a surprised glance. "Yes, both times I've seen him playing. The other night it was the Chief Commissary Steward, Krome."

"I can understand that. Krome has his rank. But tonight he buddies with the boy who empties our

wastebaskets.”

Kitty bent closer and lowered her voice. “Do you know anything about him—the Punaro fellow?”

Hazel showed surprise at the question as she countered, “Why do you ask? Do you know anything about him?”

“He was here the other night.” She thought of adding that they had come home on the same bus the night of the cannery fire, but caution silenced her. There were too many around who might have keen ears.

Brad came in later.

“You’re almost a stranger,” Kitty greeted him.

Hazel went off with one of the boys who claimed her for a dance, and Brad leaned closer.

“I was too busy to come sooner, but I wanted to get over here in time to see you home. Something to tell you.”

“I brought Hazel with me. We’ll have to take her back to the hospital before we can talk.”

“Sure.”

“Glad you came,” she added after a moment. “You can go with me to hunt up Chief Krome. He promised me that shrimp creole recipe.”

“Yeah! Sure, we want it for that picnic tomorrow.”

“They say the only way you ever get a recipe out of Krome is to go after it. He looks too easygoing to let the mild matter of a promise like that weigh on his mind.”

“Sure is nice of you Canteen girls to go down on the beach and fix that supper for us tomorrow. Ned Miller’s looking forward to it, too. You sure lifted his countenance, Kit.”

Kitty flushed. “Oh, I guess I got as big a kick out of it as he did.” There was an awkward pause and she looked about for something to change the subject. Finally she nudged Brad’s arm and whispered, “Take a look over in the south corner at those chess players.”

Brad glanced at them and whistled softly. “The trail grows warmer, Kitty.”

“Find out anything about Punaro?”

“Plenty. But we’ll save that till later. But when you see two suspected ones hobnobbing it begins to look as though something is brewing.”

An hour before closing time Kitty saw the chess players leave their board and go out. They hadn’t patronized the Snack Bar all evening.

That was one night Kitty was glad when it was time to go home. She had had no opportunity for a private talk with Brad for some time, and she had much on her mind. At the hospital they left Hazel at her door and took the elevator down to the basement.

“Surely am glad you came along, Brad,” said Kitty. “I wouldn’t like to be hunting up Chief Krome at this hour of the night by myself.”

There was no one in sight when they got off the elevator at the basement floor. “I’ve never been down here before,” Kitty remarked, as she followed Brad toward the Chief Cook’s quarters.

“Quite a nifty arrangement,” Brad explained. “Extending out front this wing of the hospital is a platform running right down to a dock over the water. Supply boats come almost right up to the building. Saves an awful lot in transportation of fuel and food.”

Kitty felt no particular interest in what Brad said. She was eager to get the recipe from Krome and return to the street where she and Brad could talk without fear of being overheard. Brad knocked on Krome’s door several times, but got no answer.

“Must be out,” Kitty said, disappointed.

They were about to turn away when Ned Miller came running down the stairs. “Looking for Krome?” he asked, seeing them outside the Chief Cook’s door.

“He promised me that shrimp creole recipe, and they say I’ll have to run him down to get it,” Kitty explained.

“I’ll go ask him for it for you,” offered Ned, eager to be of service to Kitty. “I saw him up in the recreation room as I came through, playing chess with Lieutenant Cary.”

“Oh, you did!” exclaimed Kitty.

But Ned was already hurrying back toward the stairs. They were about to follow when Brad said, “Come, while we’re down here I’ll show you the dock.”

Not wanting to be rude enough to tell him it didn’t interest her in the least, Kitty followed Brad toward the double doors that stood wide open at the end of the cement passage. There was only a shaded light outside. Her first impression was a confused one of several barges huddled against the dock piled high with boxes, crates, kegs and all manner of freight.

Then suddenly she saw a man at one of the barges. Her pulse quickened when she noted it was filled with refuse. The man had his back to them, pushing something onto the barge. It seemed to be a large box, but Kitty had only a glimpse for the man threw a strip of old sail over it and turned sharply at the sound of their footsteps. As he came toward them there was indignation in his very stride.

“What do you want here?” he growled.

As he spoke and came nearer the glow from the hallway, Kitty recognized Punaro, who less than an hour ago had been playing chess in the USO hall with Lieutenant Cary.

“We’re looking for Krome,” said Brad with aggravating nonchalance.

“He’s not down here,” stated Punaro. “You’ll find him up in the recreation room playing chess with Dr. Cary.”

“Thanks. Thanks a lot,” Brad said, and Kitty wondered why his thanks was so profuse.

When they went down the hall they found Ned returning from above. “Chief said if I’d bring his recipe book he’d find the thing you want and let you copy it,” Ned explained. “He’s just about to checkmate Lieutenant Cary and can’t leave his game right now.”

When Ned went into Krome’s quarters Kitty whispered to Brad, “Did you notice anything queer out there?”

“Plenty.”



"Punaro throwing a strip of sail over a box on the barge?"

"You'd make a grand detective, Kitty!"

"And I noticed more, but we'd better wait till we get outside to talk."

Lieutenant Cary sent them an unwelcome look when they went upstairs, but Krome was quite good-natured about the interruption. He handed Kitty his own pen and a bit of notepaper on which to write the recipe. He chuckled and advised her to spice it up sharply for the boys.



*"What Do You Want Here?" Punaro Asked Them*

When at last they were outside in the cool moonlight Kitty slipped her arm through Brad's and whispered, "There's something mighty queer going on."

"You're telling me!"

"I wouldn't trust that Punaro one minute! I'll bet you a hundred dollars he's sneaking something out of the hospital on that barge."

"What and where to, it now becomes our job to find out."

"Did you notice anything queer about his knowing instantly where Krome was?"

"I'll say. It looks to me as though Cary got Krome tied up in that chess game while Punaro does what he pleases in the galley."

"That's a wise deduction, Mr. Holmes, but Dr. Watson noticed something else."

Brad laughed in spite of his uneasiness. "I'd call you the Sherlock Holmes and me Dr. Watson. You were the first to begin picking up clues."

"Strange how so many things have come up to make me know something's wrong. Even Ned Miller warned me the other day when I mentioned Punaro—that I mustn't ever let him bring me home, that he's not my kind."

"Ned's in a position to know, Kitty, right down there working with him. And say, this is what I wanted to tell you up at the Snack Bar."

"Go ahead. I've been bustin' to hear."

"I noticed Punaro's shoes the other day when he came in to empty our wastebasket. There's a scorched streak across them, but he's evidently tried to polish it away."

"And you really think it could have been caused by a spark igniting spilled gasoline or kerosene?"

"It's possible, yes. But doing work like his, it might have been spilled acid, too. I'm afraid the circumstantial evidence there is far too weak to blame him for the cannery fire."

"Of course. But later developments seem to prove that my suspicions may not be entirely unfounded."

"Say, you were going to tell me something else you noticed out there just now."

"Do you realize he called Cary, doctor, not lieutenant?"

"You're right—he did!"

"Everybody else round here calls him lieutenant—those who've only known him since he came into the service."

"I'll say your perception is very keen, Kitty. It seems proof that Cary and Punaro knew each other before they came into the service. I'll try to find out where they both hail from."

"Do, Brad, if you can. This thing is beginning to look very serious. We've got to find out what it's all about."

## CHAPTER NINE

## INTO THE MARSHES

Kitty had so much on her mind that night she couldn't sleep until after one o'clock. She didn't even hear the alarm clock next morning, and was roused by the sunlight streaming across her bed. She pulled on her bathrobe and ran to the kitchen.

"What time is it?" she asked Jane.

"Eight o'clock. Yo' Pah done et breakfus and went to de horsepital."

"Why didn't you call me?"

"Wa'n't no use to bother you. You wus sleepin' jus' like a sho nuff kitten."

"But there was something special I wanted to talk to Dad about this morning."

"You'll see him tonight."

"But I'm going with a bunch of Canteen workers to fix supper for the boys on the beach late this afternoon."

Kitty had just started back to her room when the phone rang. She found it was Hazel Dawson.

"Listen, dear, I heard you say once you always go to town on Saturday morning," came her friend's voice over the wire.

"Yes, I do. Is there anything I can get you?"

"If it wouldn't be too much bother, I'd like you to get me a set of chessmen."

"A set of chessmen?" Kitty could not hide her surprise. Chess had become intimately associated in her mind with Cary and his partners.

Hazel laughed. "In my old age I've suddenly decided to become a chess fan."

"It does seem to be quite a fad around here," admitted Kitty.

"I haven't any way to get the money to you before you go."

"Oh, that's all right," said Kitty. "What price do you want to pay?" She recalled that her grandfather's ivory chessmen had been very valuable.

"Oh, the cheapest ones you can find will do for me, plastic or wood will be all right. I only want them so I can learn the game."

As Kitty put down the phone after this unusual request, she wondered what was behind it. She had no doubt that Hazel's motive in learning the game had some connection with Lieutenant Cary's chess playing. Yet the two made no pretense at friendship.

Though she had missed her father at breakfast Kitty was determined to see him before she went to town, so she decided to go to the hospital. By nine she had eaten breakfast and was ready for the weekly shopping expedition.

"Is you gwine to tek Billy to town wid you?" asked Jane seeing Kitty dressed so early.

"Yes. He has to have a new pair of shoes. Hope I can get some non-rationed ones. He's already used my last coupon."

"Dat boy can sho stomp out dem shoes."

"You'd better wake him up and give him breakfast by the time I come back. I'm going to run up to the hospital to see Dad a few minutes."

All the guards and attendants at the hospital knew Kitty as the daughter of the Chief Pharmacist's Mate. She always gave them a smile, a jaunty salute and passed in without comment. A few minutes later she slipped noiselessly into her father's office. He was busy going over some order sheets with a junior officer, so Kitty sat down near the door till he was at leisure.

"See you in a few minutes, Kitten," her father said when the petty officer went out and his stenographer came up with some letters to be signed.

Kitty thought how wonderful it was to live where she could occasionally drop in on her father at his work. He had not finished the letters when the door was opened wide and to her amazement young Punaro stepped in and picked up her father's half-filled wastebasket. He didn't see her till he turned to go back to the hall, where he had left the large canvas-sided container which he rolled along the halls to collect trash.

By the ominous look he sent her she knew instantly he recognized her as the same girl who had come upon him unexpectedly at the galley dock last night. Before he came back with the empty basket her father called her to his desk. He waited a moment till Punaro closed the door.

"What's on your mind, Kitten?" he asked, dropping his professional manner like a mask.

"Plenty," she said. "I don't like that Punaro fellow coming into your office for one thing."

Her father threw back his head and laughed. "Now, now, you mustn't be suspicious of everyone who has a slightly olive cast to his complexion."

"He has a very Italian name, too."

"You seem to forget they're fighting on our side now."

"Yes, but some of them here are still friends of the Hitlerites."

Knowing from experience that money could often make a person forget unpleasant things Mr. Carter took out his billfold. "Guess you'd like a little change for the trip to town."

Kitty laughed. "You've never known me to refuse money, have you, Dad?"

"Not yet." He handed her a bill. "You might get Billy that ball and mitt he's been begging for. It'll soon be warm enough for him to play outdoors all day. Maybe the ball will keep him from climbing so many trees."

Kitty smiled. "He's a regular monkey when it comes to trees. When I take him to the park he picks out the tallest and climbs up it like a cat."

"I'm afraid Nina spoiled him, letting him climb that old magnolia in our yard back home."

"Dear Aunt Nina, how I miss her." Kitty sighed as she put the money into her purse. "Yours is the second order for playthings I've had this morning."

"Why? Billy ordered something else?"

"Not Billy. Hazel Dawson wants me to get her a set of chessmen."

"Hazel wants a set of chessmen," he said, puzzled.

"Seems to be getting quite a fad. Lieutenant Cary plays every time he comes to the USO hall."

"Oh." Mr. Carter's tone carried a world of meaning.

"Oddly enough it's generally with someone from the galley. First it was Chief Krome and last night it was that young fellow, Punaro, who was in here just now."

Kitty's watching eyes caught the surprised look that came into her father's face.

"Dad, how long has Punaro been in the service?"

"I don't know. Two or three months, I imagine."

She felt he was annoyed with her, but couldn't keep from saying, "It doesn't take so many months for them to show their true colors, does it?"

"Why so much interest in this raw recruit?"



*Kitty Caught the Surprise on Her Father's Face*

"Some things have happened recently to stir my curiosity," she answered evasively. Her father's attitude repelled her further confidences, nor did she feel this was the place to talk too much. But she was determined to learn the one fact for which she had come.

"I must go now, Dad. But tell me one more thing."

"Anything you want to know except military secrets," he replied, becoming playful again, because she was so serious.

"Why do they haul the hospital refuse away on a barge instead of burning it in the incinerator as they do in other hospitals?"

"We had an explosion at the incinerator several weeks ago. For some reason they've been slow in getting it fixed."

"I see," said Kitty with a significant nod. "And in the meantime I suppose the garbage is hauled off somewhere in the marshes and burned?"

"That's right." Suddenly her father's face became very serious, and he sent her a penetrating glance. "What are you driving at, Kitty, with all these strange questions?"

"Haven't time to explain now," she said evasively. For so long Kitty had had to solve her own problems, when her father was at distant stations, that she had not yet learned how to make a confidant of him. Nor did she want to run the risk of having him put a stop to her investigations. But she made bold to ask one further question.

"Do you know where they haul the garbage, Dad?"

He led her to the window and pointed across the marshes. "See that smoke on the horizon."

"Yonder—way south?"

"That's it. That's where they burn it."

"Why so far away?"

"We couldn't stand the stench if it was too close. Even at that distance a southwest wind will bring the odor into my window. I'll surely be thankful when they use the incinerator again."

Kitty's mind was clicking like a teletype machine as she left the hospital. She hadn't used their boat in a week, and felt she was entitled to a little gasoline for explorations.

Billy looked forward to these weekly visits to town with keen delight, so Kitty didn't have the heart to curtail his enjoyment. They paid their usual visit to the toy department at the dime store, and took a peep at the ducks in Bayshore Park. At noon they ate at a lunch counter, perched on high stools, which Billy adored. Afterward Kitty made her weekly food purchases at the grocery store on Bay Street, opposite where she always left her boat.

When the grocery boy had packed her things into the launch Kitty looked at Billy, gave him a knowing wink and asked, "Want to go exploring?"

"Oh, Kit, where?"

"You'll see. 'Way into the marshes."

Billy's eyes grew round. "Into a cove or somepen, where pirates hide their booty?"

"No telling what we'll find 'way off in the marshes."

It was already one-thirty, and at five Vera was to pick Kitty up for the trip to the beach. She would have to do her exploring in that interval of time. She had made a careful note of the location of that smoke smudge on the horizon, as her father pointed it out from his office. However, Kitty didn't feel sufficiently familiar with the marshy inlets to take a short cut to the spot. She decided the safest course was to return near enough to Palmetto Island to get her bearings from there, and seek out the channel through which the barge from the hospital traveled in going to the dump.

"Aren't we gonner explore?" Billy asked in a disappointed tone when the smoke stacks of the Marine Base came into view.

"We're going to turn off into this inlet right here," Kitty reassured him.

A bit of wind was blowing, making whitecaps dot the deep green water. Though the weather was pleasant enough ashore, there was a sharp tang on the water that brought a glow to their cheeks.

In the narrowing inlet southwest of Palmetto Island, Kitty had to cut down her speed to keep from running aground in the curving channel. She had never been in this section of the marshes before, and she thought how easy it would be to get lost on the crisscross winding inlets that interlaced the marshy islands. Most of these green mud flats were treeless, but far off in the direction of that smoke smudge, which was her destination, the horizon was broken by palmettoes and pines.

"Where's the pirate's lair?" Billy finally asked, growing impatient to reach some destination.

"We're almost there," Kitty assured him. They were near enough now to see two or three spirals of smoke rising from a mound of rubbish dumped on a sloping shore.

Fortunately the wind was out of the east and carried smoke away from them, so Kitty had a clear view of the dump. She shivered to see buzzards circling above the smoking pile of refuse. What a fitting place, she thought, for spies to meet for their diabolical planning! Had some foreign agent met Punaro here this morning to take away that box of supplies she had noticed on the barge?

As she drew nearer she saw the rubbish was burning on an old oyster reef off the north end of a large island. The southern side was densely overgrown with palmettoes, pines, oaks and a tangled thicket of mangroves along shore.

"Get out the field glasses, Billy," she ordered "and we'll see if we can find any pirates."

"Oh-h!" gurgled Billy. He made a dive for the stern locker where they kept odds and ends. It was all wonderful make-believe to him.

Kitty had slowed the launch, and before she took the glasses she cut off the motor and let the boat drift. A quick survey of the dump heap made her want to explore, even if it was a repulsive spot, but that was out of the question with Billy along. She was afraid to come even this close for fear he would pick up some germ. The very thought made her hand him the glasses and start the motor again.

Though it was already growing late she decided to take a turn around the small island. She was glad she had taken the chance when she reached the opposite side. There she found a deep, open

channel, moving eastward toward the sea. Billy kept looking through the glasses toward the island while Kitty studied the channel.

"Looks deep enough to float a sub," she thought.

"Kit, let's go home!" exclaimed Billy, sudden terror in his voice.

"Why?"

"I saw somebody looking at us from the woods yonder. Maybe it was a pirate."

Though Kitty took the glasses from her small brother's hands she could see nothing in the mangrove jungle. Had it been only his vivid imagination, or had he seen someone? However, she did not tarry to find out as she gave her motor all the power it would take and headed for home.



## CHAPTER TEN

## THE BEACH PARTY

It was four o'clock by the time Kitty came ashore on Palmetto Island at a landing spot a block behind her house. She sent Billy home with an armful of bundles to bring Jane down to help with the unloading.

There was many a job to be done in the next hour, but Kitty had learned how to make every minute count. She put the groceries in the closet and the perishable food in the ice box, she planned the evening meal for her father and Billy, and had just put on her slacks when Vera drove up and honked the horn.

It was nice to sit back, temporarily free of responsibility, and enjoy her ride across the island with the competent Vera at the wheel. In the basket at her feet were the ingredients for Chief Krome's famous shrimp creole, all except the shrimp which the boys were at that moment catching.

The drive to the beach except carried them over a half dozen bridges, spanning marshy inlets. Finally they rolled off the pavement into a sand-rutted road, winding through a palmetto thicket. The station wagon turned off finally to the hard beach, and they rolled along within a few feet of the tumbling breakers.

As Kitty looked across the blue-green water mottled with whitecaps, she found it difficult to believe that enemy subs might, at that very moment, be lurking in the cool depths.

"Somebody sent down a boat off shore in the last twenty-four hours," said Sally. "Look at that oily scum on the water, and the junk floating ashore."

The receding tide had left part of a water-soaked bunch of bananas right in their path, while crates, bottles, empty boxes and splintered timbers bobbed up and down on the tide.

"We have just three hours to fix our chow, eat and get out of here," said Vera, "or I'll never get through that sandy road without lights."

"I suppose it is too close to the beach to use headlights in there," said Judy.

They all knew that no lights were permitted anywhere along the entire shore, and that the beach was even more carefully patrolled at night than in the day.

"I don't care to get stuck on a sandy road again," said Vera.

They were to meet the boys a mile downshore where an inlet cut through the beach to join the sea. The boys had already been shrimping a couple of hours in the shallows of this inlet. When the station wagon turned a sharp bend in the beach the girls saw a curl of smoke rising beyond a large sand dune that shielded the light of the campfire from possible watchers at sea.

Vera had to keep the car to a narrow strip of beach between the rolling dry dunes and the breakers. When the boys saw them pull up behind the dune they came trotting over to help unload.

"We've got the nicest mess of shrimp you ever saw," boasted Ned Miller proudly.

"How long have you been here?" asked Kitty.

"Long enough to catch something more than shrimp," retorted Jimmy.

"You're not ahead of us," Sally told them. "We saw rubbish washing up all along shore. A U-boat must have hit somebody out there."

"We don't claim we've located the U-boat," admitted Ned, "but we did find an old bateau hidden under some mangroves."

"At least five miles from any habitation," added Jimmy.

"Oh, I thought they had something," said Vera with a laugh. "If you had lived in this part of the country as long as I have, you'd be used to bateaux and old boats in all sorts of nooks."

Kitty watched Brad's face intently during this exchange, and finally their eyes met. His expression implied that he would tell her more later. There was no opportunity, however, in the next hour for them to talk privately. The boys were already preparing the shrimp for the pot, and Kitty quickly mixed the other ingredients.

The shrimp creole was soon cooking. In the meantime they sat on the sands around the campfire. Its warm glow was more than welcome in the biting salt air. Jimmy Barnes amused them with a hair-raising tale while they waited.

"The beach guard stopped to chat with us a few minutes ago," Jimmy began.

The Coast Guard Station was several miles down the coast from the Marine Base. Kitty had seen very little of those men since she came to Palmetto Island.

"Jim asked the chap if he didn't get lonesome down here," put in Ned.

"'Lonesome,' said the guard, 'why man, I've got a box seat at the livest show in America.' Then he told us something that'll make your eyes pop," explained Jimmy. "About a week ago he said a sub was hit right in sight of Palmetto Island, and you'd never guess what they found aboard."

"Cut out the suspense, Ned, and tell us what," Vera ordered.

"Fresh bread wrapped in Bayshore Bakery paper."

"No, not really!" exclaimed Kitty, recalling her interesting visit to the bakery, and the spicy little cakes each nutrition student had been given as a souvenir.

"Of course nobody can blame the Bayshore Bakery," Jimmy hastened to say. "But it only goes to show that the U-boats are getting all sorts of supplies from our own towns. They say that bread was fresh—couldn't have been more than a day old."

"It's hard to believe such things are going on," said Lana Bright, her big brown eyes wide as she

glanced anxiously toward the eastern horizon.

In the good old days there had always been steamers or small craft on the horizon, but now every ship that passed must be convoyed for protection against subs. Sally and Lana had been brought up on the southern coast and found it hard to realize that a death-dealing enemy could encroach on their childhood playground, as they had always considered the beach.

"And that's still happening even after most people feel we've practically got the U-boat situation in hand," commented Kitty.

"Yes, and when we take the complacent attitude that we've got any of this war business under control and sit down on the job there's bound to be trouble," stated Brad.

"That Coast Guard chap also told us about those oil tankers that were attacked right off this very shore last week," continued Jimmy.

"I heard the firing!" exclaimed Kitty. "At first I thought it was thunder, but Dad said when he came home that a U-boat had been sunk out here."

"And the guard saw the whole works," Ned told them eagerly. "He said the tankers were going down-coast when the sub attacked them. In two minutes he had the Coast Guard Station over his walkie-talkie, and ten minutes later our planes were dropping depth bombs. And boy, they got that sub! I'd have given anything to be down here! Makes me wish I'd gone into the Coast Guard!"

After hearing all this Kitty felt still more uneasy about her experience earlier in the afternoon. Could it be possible that the man Billy had seen on the island was the same who owned that boat hidden in the mangroves? She had noticed no boat herself, but one certainly could have been hidden in the dense shrubbery that overhung the water.

Kitty was relieved when their supper was ready, and the hungry boys had been served. Vera poured the hot coffee, and Sally supplied them with fresh bread from the Bayshore Bakery.

"Makes you feel sort of funny, eating this bread and knowing the Germans have recently eaten bread out of the same kind of wrappers," said Kitty, giving Brad a significant look as she handed him a high-piled plate.

"Let's sit over on that palmetto log," he suggested when she picked up her own plate.



*"The Coast Guard Saw It All," Ned Told Them*

Other couples had paired off, and Kitty was glad that at last she had a chance to talk privately with Brad.

"What about that boat you saw?" she asked in a low tone when they were seated.

"Wish the others hadn't spread the news around."

"Do you think it has any connection with the mysterious business we're trailing?"

"There's no telling. If it leaks out at the hospital that people are getting wise to the skulduggery it may put a temporary stop to the dirty business and throw us off the trail."

"Where did you see that boat?" Kitty asked.

"South end of that island—opposite where they're burning the hospital waste."

Kitty's fork stopped in mid-air, and she stared speechless at Brad a moment. "Why Brad, I passed that very spot today."

"You?" he exclaimed incredulously. "What were you doing there alone?"

"Not alone. Billy was with me." Briefly she gave him an account of her day, beginning with the conversation in her father's office. "Brad, I'm convinced Punaro is smuggling something out of the hospital with the garbage. Who knows but what he's the one keeping these U-boats supplied with fresh bread, green vegetables and stuff like that."

"They're getting it from somewhere, and that's a certainty," stated Brad. He was silent a moment, then said anxiously, "But Kitty, you shouldn't have gone off there in the marshes alone."

"Billy was with me. You forget I was practically brought up in a boat, Brad. I'm never afraid on the water."

"But it's dangerous now. Promise me, Kit, you won't ever go off like that alone again."

She laughed at his fears, but her pulse beat a little faster because of his solicitude.

"I may have to sometime, Brad. But I'll promise to be more careful."

"Why, anything could have happened to you. That man could have fired from the mangroves, and nobody would ever have known what had become of you two."

"But I had to know where that barge took the stuff, what the general situation was. I didn't even think about being nervous—that is, not till Billy told me about seeing the man through our glasses."

They were silent while they finished their supper, then Kitty said, "Brad, I've always heard—that spies come ashore from the subs in rubber boats."

"So they do."

"But didn't Jimmy say the one they saw was an old bateau?"

"So it was. Maybe that's the boat that comes out to meet the enemy boats. We've already caught several of the native fishermen round here in the pay of enemy spies. No doubt there're still plenty of others free and active."

"It seems incredible that anyone could be so unpatriotic and low."

"You don't know people like I do, Kit. Plenty of people will sell their very souls for a little money."

"But the risks they take! How do they get away with it?"

"You'd be surprised if you knew. Why, when we first went to war fishing boats all along the coast were supplying German subs with gasoline right under the nose of the authorities."

"And all of us so skimmed for gasoline!"

"Then the government took over most of the fishing boats, and conditions improved."

Kitty leaned closer and said with determination, "And Brad, we're going to put a stop to the dirty work going on at our hospital! If I can't give all my time to my country maybe I can help in this way."

"I'm afraid we've got a big job, Kit. But every day I become more certain that there's something going on round there that is really bad."

She glanced at him sharply. "Anything new turned up?"

He nodded. "It may or may not be important. I talked to Ivy, the man who looks after the incinerator."

"Oh! Do you think he's working with Punaro and maybe Lieutenant Cary?"

"No, I don't. I believe Ivy's on the level if ever a man was. He's terribly upset over not being able to get the incinerator fixed. He says repair parts have come twice, and both times they didn't fit."

"Somebody at the factory is trying to hold up the repairs?"

"Looks that way. And Ivy swears the explosion in the incinerator was the work of saboteurs. Poor fellow, he almost got a bob-tail for it himself. If he hadn't had such a wonderful record for five years back I guess he would have."

"What do you think all this adds up to, Brad?"

"Seems plain as the nose on a man's face. The incinerator is kept out of order to give a free hand to the spies in getting the stuff out of the hospital and into the marshes, where it can be picked up by the enemy."

Kitty felt the goose flesh prickle along her spine. She had never dreamed when she came to Palmetto Island and went into Canteen work that she would find herself in the midst of such dangerous intrigue.

## CHAPTER ELEVEN

## TERRAPIN ISLAND

Kitty saw her father reading the evening paper as Brad brought her home about nine o'clock.

"Won't you come in?" she asked, though she knew her voice betrayed her weariness.

"Not tonight. You've had a full day and better get some rest."

"I am tired," she admitted, but she felt a glow of happiness that he was so understanding.

"Guess your dad is sort of lonesome. He'll want to hear all about what you've been doing. He wouldn't like it, Kit, if he knew what chances you've been taking."

"No, I suppose not," she admitted. "I'd better be careful what I say, or he may try to stop my Sherlock Holmes business."

When she went into the living room her father glanced over the top of his paper. "Enjoy your trip to the beach?" he asked, still somewhat preoccupied.

"It was wonderful. Almost like old times." She sat on a footstool near him, and took off the kerchief that had bound up her hair. All the girls had worn slacks and kerchiefs for the picnic instead of their Canteen uniforms.

"A boat's been sunk offshore. The beach was full of wreckage."

"Yes. One went down not far from here yesterday."

"I had no idea so many were still being sunk."

"Far more than get into the papers."

"One of the boys told us about them capturing a sub that had fresh bread on it from Bayshore Bakery. That seems incredible!"

Her father let his paper slide to his lap and reached for his pipe. "Oh, they're getting supplies all the time—food, gasoline, and many other things, no doubt."

"Can't they put a stop to it?"

"Not as long as weak human beings can be bribed by the glint of gold."

"And for other reasons, too. Do you suppose any men are in our Army and Navy who are agents of the Nazis and Japs?"

"Certainly not, Kit," her father answered, then added a bit dubiously. "Well, I suppose it could happen. In an organization as large and as rapidly built as this, one might slip through. But you may be sure they would not stay long, for with our intelligence service, their activities would soon be brought to light."

"But sometimes even high officials are new men, haven't been in long—like the doctors they recruit." Kitty was thinking definitely of Lieutenant Cary, but didn't mention his name.

"Yes, of course. They have to give a man of that caliber a commission."

"And right away they're put into positions of authority where they can help the enemy, if they've a mind to."

"Yes, of course. But, as I said, they soon show their colors."

Her father paused, his match halfway to his pipe as he looked at her searchingly. "But why all this interest in such things, Kitten? You've become a walking question-box."

"Oh, the talk you pick up makes you wonder about lots of things," she replied evasively. "After I asked you this morning about the disposal of the waste I got to wondering what they do with all the food scraps."

Her father looked surprised at such a question and repeated, "Food scraps?"

"I often see the ward boys dumping food left by the patients into big buckets."

"Oh, that. It's contracted for by a cattleman. Beeson, I believe his name is. He lives on Terrapin Island, and uses the waste to feed his hogs."

Next morning Brad came by to go to church with Kitty. As they were walking home together she asked, "Brad, do you know where Terrapin Island is?"

"No, but I can find out. Up at the hospital they have some very fine, detailed maps of every island and inlet along this coast."

"Soundings, too, and water depths?"

"I should think so. I never studied them closely. They were done by some boys over at the Marine Base—fellows who used to work for the Coast Geodetic Survey."

"Wish I could have a look at them."

"Might stir up some comment, Kit. No use to lay ourselves open to questioning."

"No, of course not."

"What did you want to look up specially?"

"I was wondering yesterday when I went exploring if that inlet flowing around the south end of that island is deep enough to float a sub."

Brad laughed. "You can put that worry out of your mind, Kit. Any inlet along this coast that's deep enough to float a sub is thoroughly guarded and protected by netting at the sea entrance—under water of course."

"But that's no assurance that small rubber boats can't come in for supplies."

"Oh, no, nor that traitors from our shores can't slip out to waiting subs. And, of course, we know that's being done all the time."

"Brad, wouldn't it be wonderful if you and I could do something to nip that sort of thing in the bud?"

"Kit, don't be too sure we can do anything about it. We're dealing with clever crooks, with devilishly keen minds."

A few minutes later when Brad paused at Kitty's door she said, "Can't you come in and have dinner with us? Jane always fixes something a little extra because Dad eats dinner with us at noon on Sundays."

"You're a peach, Kit! It really would feel good to stick my feet under a home table once more."

Mr. Carter made Brad welcome while Kitty went back to have Jane set an extra place at the table.

They were half through dinner when Billy said, "Dad, let's go boat riding. You promised to take me some time."

"So you did, Dad, as soon as the weather was mild enough. It couldn't be a more perfect day to get out."

Mr. Carter glanced at Brad and said, "They forget a war's on, and we have to use gasoline sparingly."

"What's wrong with a bit of rowing?" suggested Brad. "A little exercise like that would do me good."

"Wouldn't do me any harm either," agreed Mr. Carter. "I sit in my office so much my muscles are getting flabby."

"How about asking Hazel?" Kitty suggested. "She's been wanting to explore these marshes a long time."

"A brilliant idea, Kitten!" Her father showed real interest now. "We can catch the rising tide up into the marshes and come back when it turns."

Brad laughed. "That method will certainly be much easier on the muscles."

Hazel had the day off and was delighted at the prospect of spending the afternoon out in the sunshine.

"Tell her I'll call for her at two-thirty," Mr. Carter told Kitty as she phoned.

"That'll give me half an hour to run up to the hospital," said Brad. "There is something I must attend to up there before I leave."

"Then I'll have time to pack some sandwiches and cookies, so we can eat our supper outdoors."

"Another brilliant idea," said her father. "We'll make an afternoon of it."

"That will give Jane the whole afternoon off. She needs a rest," said Kitty, as she hurried out to the kitchen to see what she could prepare on such short notice.

There was a long loaf of Bayshore Bakery bread that hadn't been opened. While she made chicken sandwiches from dinner left-overs she thought how strange it seemed to be eating bread from the same bakery as that eaten by the Nazis off shore. As she worked she wondered also what had taken Brad back to the hospital.

Her father had already left in his car to bring Hazel from the hospital when Brad came back and bolted on into the pantry.

"I made a little sketch from that big map," he told Kitty.

"So that's what you went for?"

"Thought we might have a chance to look up Terrapin Island while we're out," he said. "Come, let me show you."

He spread a hasty sketch on the dining-room table.

"I've been wondering if Terrapin Island is near the place where they burn the hospital waste."

"It's the very next island, see!" Brad traced with his finger the inlet that swung southwest around Palmetto Island, and farther south separated Terrapin Island from its neighbor, which they discovered was called Mangrove Island.

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Two hours later the picnickers came ashore on an island covered with virgin pines. By subtle suggestions Kitty and Brad had succeeded in heading their expedition toward the goal they had in mind. Mr. Carter and Hazel had no particular purpose but to enjoy the sunshine and bracing air, and so were amenable to suggestions. Kitty and Hazel insisted on doing their share of the rowing, so the trip was easy for all.

Billy was hilarious when they climbed up the bank to a deep carpet of pine needles under the towering trees.

"Oh, Daddy, let's stay here a long time and play!" he exclaimed.

"We can stay two whole hours before we start back. That's a very long time."

"I never saw such magnificent trees," said Hazel. Her eyes turned here and there as if she could not take in enough of the beauty.

"And smell the fragrance of the sun on the pine needles," said Kitty.

"A wise old Hindu told me once that man can gain renewed vitality in a pine grove quicker than anywhere else," Mr. Carter told them.

"Then anybody ought to live forever here," said Brad.

None of them had ever seen such a virgin forest. There was very little underbrush, just the towering pines rising from their thick carpet of brown needles, their green tops nodding against a blue sky, with a sweet sighing in the gentle breeze.

"This carpet of brown needles doesn't look as though a human foot had been set here for half a century," remarked Kitty.

"They're protected from the sea winds by that island to the east," said Mr. Carter. As he glanced that way his expression changed. "I do believe we've landed behind the island where they burn the hospital refuse."

Brad glanced at Kitty, but neither admitted that this was where they wanted to land. Billy picked up a branch for a gun and began to play Indian.

"Do you think this is really Terrapin Island?" Kitty asked in a low tone when she and Brad strolled off toward the eastern shore.

He took out his little map, and they studied it.

"Can't be any other," he said. "There're smoke smudges yonder. Must be the dump heap. We're directly west of it."

"But there's no sign of a hog range here."

"The map indicates it's a rather large island compared with many others round here. The hogs may be at the other end. These islands are often broken up by low lands that fill at high tide."

"Brad, do you suppose this Beeson could be helping get stuff to the German subs, too?"

"It all looks very suspicious to me, Kit. Here he is living right next to where the dump is. We have every reason to doubt Punaro's loyalty. He's obliged to have dealings with this hog raiser when he comes to get the stuff from the galley. You can't help judging people by those they're closely associated with."

Billy trailed after them as they picked their way along the eastern shore to the island. On this side there was a low bluff. Kitty glanced back to note that her father and Hazel were sitting under a pine in sight of their boat. She and Brad continued tramping down the eastern shore. When they had gone about a half mile they saw an old negro fishing from the bluff. On stiff-jointed knees he got to his feet as they approached.

"Howdy," he said, with the genuine courtesy of the old southern negro. "Y'all lookin' fer somebody?"

"Oh, no," said Brad. "We just came out here on a little boat ride and for a picnic supper."

The old man took off his battered felt and scratched his woolly head. "Reckon y'all bettah go some'ers else to eat yo' suppah. Massa don' like nobody in the pine grove. Reckon you see dem sign he stick up."

They had noticed "No trespassing" signs, but Kitty had thought that applied to hunting and fishing.

"We aren't doing a bit of harm," Kitty told the old man. "The trees are so beautiful. There's no reason why we shouldn't enjoy them."

"Yas'm, dat so, but jus' de same boss don't like nobody meddlin' round the pine thicket. Might set foire an' bu'n it up."

"We aren't going to cook anything. We brought a cold lunch. And if we did make a fire we'd put out every spark."

"Yas'm, dat whut I tell him too. I been libin' all mah life in dat shack yonder." The old man indicated a log cabin in a clearing a little farther south. "I ain't neber sot foire to de woods. But he can't be satisfy when he lease de place las' year till I come to lib in dat new house behind his."

"Oh, he only rented the island last year?" asked Brad.

"Yessuh! An' I has to be powerful keerful 'bout whut I does since he been here. I wouldn't be down here fishin' me mah ole fish place, 'cept he gone to town fer de day."

"So you're enjoying yourself while he's gone," said Kitty kindly.

"Yas'm. I sho' gits lonesome fer de ole times an' de easy ways, 'fore dis island was a hog lot."

"Oh, so your boss is the man who gets the refuse from the hospital?" asked Brad.

"Yassuh. I ain' neber see so much slop since I been born. In de ole days my Massa wouldn't ov tetched he hand to sich wuk, but not Mr. Beeson. He go fer dat stuff all de time hisself."

Kitty thought the old man looked to be eighty or ninety. His bloodshot eyes were deeply sunken in his wrinkled dusty brown face, while his once-large frame had little padding left on the bones.

"It was nice of Mr. Beeson to let you continue to live here after he rented the island," Kitty remarked, hoping to draw him out further.

"Yassum, but he can't he'p hisse'f. Massa's son, up nawth, whut own de island all dese years, say he won't rent to nobody, lessen I kin stay here de res' o' mah days an' lib in peace."



*"I Sho' Gits Lonesome," the Old Negro Said*



"I suppose the former owner wouldn't like it, if he knew you had been moved from your old home," said Kitty.

"No'm, he sho' wouldn't. But dey tells me young Massa done been sent crost de big water to fight dem Japs, an' I ain't had nobody to write him."

"I'd be glad to write for you," Kitty offered.

She was strangely drawn to this old man, not only because of the hints he had let slip to throw more light on the mystery they were trying to solve, but because she knew he represented the best of a forgotten era in the south.

"Dat moighty kind o' you, li'l Missie, but I don't know where to send de letter nohow."

"Is he in the Army or Navy?"

"De Navy, fer sho'. Us fambly always been people ov de sea."

"Brad, do you have a pencil and a bit of paper?"

"Sure," said Brad, producing what she desired.

"You give me his full name, uncle—"

"Uncle Mose all de chillun in de fambly calls me."

"Give me your sailor's full name and I'll try to find out where he is."

"Oh, Missie, if you do dat de Lawd'll bless you de res' o' yo' days. He name Charles Whitlaw Tradd. De bes' blood in all de low country flows in he veins."

Kitty wrote down the name and said, "It may take some time, but I'll come back to see you if I can find out where he is."

"Lawdy, Missie, hit good to talk to real quality folk like y'all once more. You sho' put me in mind o' ole Massa's bride when he brung her home to de island. You's as much like her as two peas in a pod."

"Thank you," said Kitty, and curtsied as she knew the old-fashioned girls used to do. "We must be going now, but we're glad we met you."

"It do a lonely old man good to talk to folks like you," he said with a respectful bow. "I ain't got nothin' but memories to live wid now."

When he was out of hearing Brad whistled softly, "Kit, I'll have to hand it to you for learning a lot from him. You worked your way right into his heart and found out plenty."

"Oh, really, Brad, I didn't purposely treat him nice just to pick him. I warmed to him the minute I saw him. He's the real thing."

"You bet!"

Suddenly Kitty stopped short, and exclaimed, alarm in her tone, "Brad, where's Billy?"

"Why, I'd forgotten about him!"

"I did too. I haven't seen him since long before we met the old man." Kitty ran ahead into the pine grove calling, "Billy! Billy, where are you?"

## CHAPTER TWELVE

## THE LOOKOUT

Kitty had never felt so conscience-stricken in her life as when she found Billy was lost.

"Maybe he went back and joined your father and Miss Dawson," Brad suggested.

"I don't think so. We'd come too far. He trailed us all the way, pretending to be shooting at us from behind trees. Oh, Brad, do you suppose he fell from that bluff into the water?"

"But he can swim like a fish."

"You go along the bluff and I'll go through the thicket," she directed.

She ran from him, darting here and there, calling frantically. If anything had happened to Billy she would never forgive herself for being so preoccupied with this strange jig-saw puzzle she and Brad were trying to work out.

Suddenly she stopped short under the towering pines, tears streaming down her eyes. "Oh, Billy darling, where are you?" she wailed. "Kitty will die if anything has happened to you."

Suddenly she caught the queer little noise he made in his throat when pretending to fire a machine gun at her. She glanced around, startled. He was nowhere in sight. That must have been something she heard, because she so wanted to hear it.

"Billy,—where are you?" she called almost desperately.

Again there came the playful sound, and this time Kitty thought it was overhead. She must be having hallucinations surely. Hopefully she moved in the direction from which she thought the sound had come. Suddenly a cone fell almost at her feet. Then there was a burst of childish laughter from the nearest treetop. She looked up to see a mischievous face peering down at her from the high branches. Her overwhelming relief was only momentary, for it was followed by terror lest Billy break his neck.

"Why, Billy Carter, how in the world did you climb that tall pine?"

"It was easy. Come up, Kit. You can see clear across the world."

"I'm not coming up, and you're coming down this very instant," she said firmly.

"It's fun up here! Let me stay," pleaded Billy.

Kitty saw Brad running toward them, attracted by their voices.

"Oh, look at him! In the top of that pine," she told Brad. "How will he ever get down?"

"I can get down," stated Billy, unexpectedly willing to show them the wonderful feat.

With the agility of a little monkey he swung through the wide-spreading branches that crowned the towering column of rusty brown. Kitty's hands were clenched agonizingly as he reached the smooth trunk, which had no supporting branches.

"Oh, dear God, bring him down safely," she prayed. Seeing Brad take a step toward the tree, she whispered, "Don't speak to him or make him nervous."

Then they saw an amazing thing. Billy's feet were seeking small niches cut in the trunk, and his hands holding to something that hugged the bark.

"I do believe there is wire wrapped all the way up that trunk," whispered Brad, noting that she had seen it too.

"Put there so somebody could climb up and down that tree easily," added Kitty. But at the moment she did not stop to realize how significant it might be. She was too grateful to know it was there to make Billy's descent less dangerous.

Thirty feet above the ground the sturdy limbs of a young oak spread around the pine trunk. Billy stepped lightly to those limbs and a few minutes later had scrambled safely to the ground.

Kitty caught him to her, moaning, "Oh, Billy darling, you might have broken your neck! Never do such a thing again."

"Huh!" he grunted, resenting being made a baby. "It was fun—like climbing our old magnolia back in N' Orleans. Aunt Nina let me play up there any time."

"I'm afraid Aunt Nina spoiled you terribly."

Billy stepped back and surveyed the tree with a proud air. "I never went so high before. You can see the ocean off yonder." He swung his arm seaward with a grandiose air. "The hospital, too. There was even a seat to sit on."

"A seat!" exclaimed Brad. "You mean boards nailed across the limbs to make a seat?"

Billy nodded. "I sat on it. The wind swings the top. It was fun. I was a bird up there!"

"Kitty, I'm going up!" Brad said, with sudden decision. "Somebody has a lookout here."

"Oh!" The very idea seemed to take Kitty's breath away.

A moment later Brad was scaling the tree by the route Billy had taken.

"He can climb 'most as good as me," boasted Billy. "I'm going up, too."

"Indeed, you're not! You're never going to climb such a high tree again."

While Billy picked up his imaginary gun once more and played at shooting them, Kitty's mind was in turmoil. Finding this tree lookout was certainly a sequel to what Uncle Mose had told them. It seemed quite obvious that the man who had leased Terrapin Island wanted to be sure that this end of the estate was kept entirely private, even to the extent of moving an ignorant old negro from his life-long home.

"Can you see very far?" she asked, when Brad reached the top.

"Plenty. The highest lookout that could be found in the entire marshes."

Kitty felt sure he must be right, for the ancient pine looked to be the father of all the pines in the entire thicket.

When Brad again stood beside her on the cushiony brown carpet of needles he said, "Kitty, that wire has been strung up there recently."

"How do you know?"

"It's still loose, and not embedded in the trunk anywhere."

"You must be right. Even wisteria vines growing around pine trunks soon press tightly into them."

"Kitty, I'm sure glad we headed for this spot."

"You're telling me! The minute Dad told me Beeson came over to the hospital to haul stuff off for his swine I thought he might be mixed up in the dirty business."

"Evidence is piling up bit by bit."

"Looks as though we ought to be able to bring 'em to justice sometime soon."

"But when you come to think of it, Kit, we haven't got a single thing that would really convict anybody of anything."

She looked puzzled and distressed. "That's true," she had to admit. "Just because some Bayshore Bakery bread was found on that sub, and because we saw a nailed-up box on a trash barge doesn't prove anything about 'who dunnit.'"

"And just because there's an easy way to climb this pine that has a seat at the top doesn't prove that anybody on this island is a spy."

"Of course boys have been building seats in trees for hundreds of years. Maybe it was old Uncle Mose's young 'Massa' when he was last here."

"Not very likely. That seat was put up there so recently that the nails aren't even rusty—and you know that doesn't take long in this salty air. And what's more, there's a boarded up shield on the side toward the Marine Base. It's so cleverly camouflaged you'd hardly know it from the ground—see."

Only after Brad pointed it out did Kitty see the brown painted wood in the thick upper branches.

"If they are using light signals for subs out at sea the Coast Guard would surely see them from the beach," said Kitty.

"They probably don't use lights, but some other signal code."

They walked slowly toward their landing place and Kitty let Billy run ahead to join her father and Hazel.

"He can hardly wait to tell them about climbing the pine," Brad said.

"We can't keep him from telling that," said Kitty, "but let's not mention how significant that pine seems. I—I'm afraid Dad may forbid my nosing about. I think he already has an idea I'm up to something."

"Maybe it would be better if he did forbid your nosing about, Kitty," said Brad unexpectedly. "No sense in your taking chances of coming out here to the marshes alone as you did yesterday."

"Oh, I won't do that again," she promised. "Now that I know there's real danger. But to be perfectly frank with you, Brad, I have an awful feeling that somehow Dad's good name may be at stake in the dirty business that's going on."

"You're not alone in wondering about that."

"You know Hazel Dawson let it slip out the other day that Dad asked for this appointment, and she practically admitted that she asked to be sent here, too. I know now that Dad and Hazel are old friends, and are pulling together with one purpose."

"To clear Chief Pharmacist's Mate Dawson."

"Exactly," said Kitty. "And if the same complications still exist my own dear dad may get in bad."

They were too near the others now for further discussion. As they joined the older couple Mr. Carter said, "You must have taken a long walk."

"We really did," Kitty told him.

"Billy has been telling us about his tree climbing."

"He almost scared the life out of me," Kitty reported. "Dad, you'll really have to scold him again about this tree climbing." However, she wanted to change the subject as quickly as possible and said, "Let's eat! I'm starved."

She had brought a luncheon cloth which they spread on the clean pine needles. Brad poured the iced tea from their thermos jug while she set out the sandwiches, cold ham, rolls, pickles and cookies. Food had never tasted quite so good to Kitty. As they ate, the pines made soft music in the gentle breeze, while the lowering sun painted long shadows on the woodland carpet. It seemed hard to believe that any evil deed could be done in so beautiful a spot, and that beyond these peaceful tide-washed shores a world was in chaos because of such intrigue everywhere.

## CHAPTER THIRTEEN

## A DREAM COMES TRUE

On Monday morning Mrs. Evans called Kitty to know if she could go over to Bayport, as they were short of workers for special Canteen duty.

"Sure. I'll be delighted," she said promptly. "What time shall I report?"

"Eleven o'clock."

"I'll be on the spot. I'm scheduled for dish-washing down at the Snack Bar tonight. Do you think I should be back from Bayport in time for that?"

"Oh, sure. It won't take long for the job over there."

Not until Kitty put down the phone did she remember that it was Monday, her busiest day at home. While Jane did the weekly washing she always looked after the lunch and household work. Instantly she decided to switch days on the housework, for she had made up her mind never to refuse a Canteen call if she could possibly serve. So at ten minutes of eleven she walked into the Bayport Canteen. She found that Vera Parsons had already come over from the island.

"Ah, on the dot," said Miss Pearson. "It's grand to have a few girls we can depend on to put aside personal interests for short-order calls."

"What's cooking?" Kitty wanted to know.

"Troop train coming through in half an hour, though we're never quite sure of the time," explained Miss Pearson. "The boys will appreciate some sandwiches and smokes and a little talk with you girls."

Kitty had met troop trains only a couple of times, but she loved it. The boys were always so full of fun and so appreciative of any little attention. They didn't have many troop trains through as Bayport was not on a main line. It was really only a small coast town that had spread out like a mushroom since war began. The small railroad station hadn't had time to catch up with the amazing growth of the rest of the place. The trains rolled along open tracks beside an inadequate ticket office and waiting rooms.

When the girls packed into the station wagon to drive over to the station, Kitty found herself sitting beside Mrs. Janice, who had lived in the oyster cannery district before the fire.

"Hope you found another house," Kitty remarked to her.

"Indeed I have, honey, in a better section of town, too."

"I'm so glad. I'm sure the new houses they build around the cannery will be much better than the old ones."

"They ain't making no plans to rebuild the cannery till after the war's over. But my boy, Jim, got a job in the Bayshore Bakery. We're living near there."

"Oh, Bayshore Bakery," repeated Kitty without realizing that there was a sort of question mark in her tone.

"Yeah, I know all them rumors 'bout the bakery—just because they found some of their bread wrappers on that captured sub. And how could the bakery help that, I ask you?"

"No fault of theirs," put in Beth Gilcrist, one of the town girls. "When they sell bread they can't be responsible for where it goes."

"Of course not. My Jim thinks they're fine people at the bakery, fair and square and considerate of their employees. I can't see where it's any fault of theirs that the Germans were eating their bread. There's a thousand ways they could have got it."

As they rode toward the station Kitty didn't doubt that she was right. There were a thousand ways the Germans might have got that bread, while she and Brad had been optimistic enough to hope they could discover the one way it had been done.

The girls were scarcely out of the station wagon with their sandwich trays slung over their shoulders, when they saw the smoke of the troop train far down the track. As if by magic people suddenly appeared from all directions to see the troops go through.

The Canteen workers had to do considerable elbowing to keep close enough to the track to serve the men. They tried to spread out so their wares would be available to all the coaches. However Kit and Beth found themselves side by side as they tried to keep the curious crowd from pushing them onto the track.

Suddenly Beth leaned close and whispered to Kitty, "Look to your left in a moment—that man's been down here to see almost every troop train since I've been in Canteen work."

Kitty glanced at the hard-featured man whom Beth indicated. In his broad-brimmed hat and knee boots he looked like a western cowhand, while his face was like some granite rock rising out of the mesa. Then in the push she lost sight of him. She and Beth separated as the train pulled into the station.

The boys already had their windows up, and were leaning out, waving at the crowd, calling greetings to the Canteen girls. Many of them had letters they wanted mailed. Eager hands reached down for the sandwiches and candy bars Kitty offered. They were not supposed to ask where the boys were going, but there was no law against asking where they had been. Kitty put that question to a sun-tanned chap, who thanked her so profusely for the sandwich and cigarettes.

"South Pacific," he replied. "Carolina's home. It sure looks good to me."

"Wish you happy landing for a long furlough," she said with a smile as she moved on down the

line.

Several handed her letters, which she put on the tray where the sandwiches had been. Suddenly through the din she heard someone call out, "Anybody round here ever heard of Terrapin Island?"

Kitty glanced in amazement toward the end of the coach to see a sunburned soldier looking over the crowd as he asked the question.

"Sure!" one man said. Another replied, "About twenty miles down the coast."

Most of them were low country people who were familiar with the name of Terrapin Island, even though few had been there.

Kitty pushed her way closer to the window from which the questioner leaned.

"Anybody know old Uncle Mose, a colored man who's been living there all his life?" the soldier asked.

Kitty could scarcely credit her hearing when he asked that. Was it possible he was the Tradd boy just returned from the Pacific? She was right under his window now. As she thrust her last sandwich into his hand she asked, "Are you—are you Charles Whitlaw Tradd?"



*Kitty Glanced at the Hard-Featured Man*

The young man reached down and seized her hand eagerly. "Not Whit himself," he said eagerly, "but his best buddy."

"Oh, this is a break!" exclaimed Kitty. "I never dreamed I'd find someone so soon who knows Mr. Tradd."

"Then you do know Whit and Uncle Mose and Terrapin Island?" The soldier spoke hurriedly, fearing the train might pull out at any moment.

"Uncle Mose and Terrapin Island, but not your Whit," Kitty replied. "Where's he—Whit?"

"Still in the South Pacific. I'd be there, too, but for a cracked ankle," he added ruefully.

Kitty's face showed her disappointment.

"But he told me if I ever got to Carolina I was to try to find out how Uncle Mose is faring."

"He's fine. I saw him yesterday. But he's awful lonesome and wants to hear from Whit."

"Say, this is a bit of luck!"

"Give me Whit's address," ordered Kitty. "I promised Uncle Mose I'd write a letter for him and send it to his young 'Massa' if I could get the address. Imagine meeting you!"

"And imagine meeting you!" The young man took out a card and scribbled an address rapidly on it. As he handed it down to Kitty he also gave her a dollar. "Take that and buy the old man some 'baccy' for his pipe. Tell him it's from Whit."

The train was beginning to move now, and Kitty trotted along beside it, handing up the last bar of chocolate from her tray. "What's your name?" she called.

"Kenneth Turner. My name and address are on back of the card, too. Write and let me know what Uncle Mose says. Say, what's your name?" he yelled as an after-thought, when it was almost too late.

"Kitty Carter," she laughingly called back.

Then with a final wave he was gone as he drew his head inside the window, leaving Kitty rather dazed as she looked at the card and the dollar in her hand. These were positive proof that the thing had really happened.

On the way back to the Canteen Kitty told the other workers of her experience. "You could never believe such a thing as that would happen. Why, it was only yesterday that I met Uncle Mose for the first time, when we ate our supper over on Terrapin Island. It's really a small world after all."

"Yeah, real small," said Vera sourly, "where everybody knows everybody's business."

Kitty looked at her friend, feeling somewhat taken aback, but she didn't ask what she meant until they were on their way back to Palmetto Island on the bus.

"You seemed to forget that people all around you heard every word you and that chap said," Vera retorted in a rather severe tone.

"Well, there was nothing secret about it."

"Maybe not. But there was one hard-boiled listener, who definitely registered the fact that you talked with Uncle Mose on Terrapin Island yesterday."

Kitty felt the blood rising to her cheeks as she realized that might be significant.

"That island's posted all over with 'No trespassing' signs," Vera stated. "And the owner was standing right there staring at you, and listening to everything you said."

"Not Mr. Beeson?"

"Of course."

"Which was he?"

"The tall hard-faced man in the Stetson and knee boots."

"That man? Why Beth Gilcrist pointed him out to me and told me he meets all the troop trains."

"As soon as that fellow yelled out about Terrapin Island I started over to talk to him, and I saw Beeson headed that way, too. Then after you took the floor he didn't open his trap. Just stood there glaring at you as if he could kill you with a look."

"Oh, how awful!" But Kitty couldn't tell Vera just how awful it was.

It was the middle of the afternoon when she reached home to find Jane starting out to take Billy for a walk.

"Yo' Pah phoned and said he would eat up to de horsepital tonight—got some extra work to do," explained Jane.

"Then we'll have a light supper early. I have to be at the Canteen at seven o'clock."

Billy kept tugging at Jane's hand, saying crossly, "Come on. I wannar go to walk."

"Billy, stop nagging Jane till we get through talking," chided Kitty.

"He been like dat all day, Miss Kit, pesterin' me 'bout first one t'ing an' den annuder."

"Maybe he needs a little outing. You two run along and I'll see about supper."

For the first time Kitty was a little late reaching the Canteen, but this had been a day when she found it difficult to keep up with all her obligations. It was her night for dish-washing duty. She had little to do until the dirty dishes began to pile up, so she strolled around the hall, talking to the service men. Suddenly she noticed Hazel Dawson at the chessboard, and to her amazement saw that Chief Krome sat opposite. She strolled over and put her hand caressingly on Hazel's shoulder.

"How are you progressing?"

"Slow going, I fear. I never tried to learn such a complicated game."

"She's doing fine—really she is," stated Krome. He glanced up and recognized Kitty. "Oh, it's you? Did the boys enjoy that shrimp creole the other night?"

"Sure did, thanks to the recipe."

Someone was playing a Brahms Waltz on the piano and Kitty hummed it softly.

"Sing it, Kitty dear. Those were lovely words set to the music that you sang for me the other night," Hazel said, glancing up from her board.

"Do please, Kitty," urged Jimmy Barnes, who stood near. "You've been promising to sing for us a long time."

"Come ahead," said Brad, catching her hand and leading her toward the piano.

"All right, if you insist," said Kitty graciously.

No sooner had her rich mezzo-soprano voice swelled with the piano accompaniment than the entire hall fell silent. Everyone turned toward her to look and listen entranced. For a moment after the last notes faded softly there was a breathless hush, then a storm of applause.

"More," someone called out.

"Give us another," a marine demanded.

Kitty leaned over and whispered to Sergeant Bradshaw at the piano. Laughing, he began the Australian folk song that was such a rage, *Waltzing Matilda*. Kitty sang the first verse, glancing around the room with her flashing smile as the words raced from her lips. Then at the chorus she lifted her hands with an impelling movement and said, "Everybody sing." Instantly the room rocked with nonsense and rhythm.

After the storm subsided Kitty sang *Tipperary*. While they clapped at the conclusion she ran off to the Canteen kitchen. Ned Miller was sent in to drag her out. She thrust her head through the doorway to call, "It's my night to wash dishes."

"We'll wash the dishes," came a chorus in retort.

"Against the rules. I'll sing another night."

She was flushed and buoyantly happy when she closed the door and turned back toward the sink.

"Gosh, you oughtn't to be washing dishes!" exclaimed Sally. "Anybody with a voice like that!"

"Fiddlesticks!" exclaimed Kitty. "They're badly in need of dish washers, and they obviously don't need singers."

"Don't they?" burst forth Judy. "Why Kitty, they ought to send you overseas to sing to the boys behind the fighting lines."

"Don't make fun of me, Judy."

Judy had really voiced a wish that lay in the deepest recesses of Kitty's heart. To such a career as that her daydreaming had constantly taken her since war began. But its fulfillment seemed beyond her wildest dreams. The practical side of her nature had tried to still those high ambitions as she planned to go first into the WAVES, and later into Canteen work.

"You have a way with the boys that makes them laugh and cry, cheer and clap," continued Sally.

"She sure has. That's the sort of entertainer they ought to be thrilled to find," added Judy.

Kitty didn't tell them that a thousand times in her daydreaming she had visioned herself doing what she had just done. It had given her the greatest thrill she had ever known.

When she finished the dishes she had a free interval until another pile accumulated, so she went outside to find Brad. She was eager to know what he would think of her experience at the troop train.

"Say, Kit, they're all crazy about your singing," said Brad when she joined him.

"Thanks, Brad."

"Captain Crawford heard you, and said you surely ought to be with the entertainers."

"Oh, Brad, I'm not half good enough for that!"

"Of course you are! You'll be surprised at what he went on to say."

Her eyes were shining as she waited expectantly.

"Said he was going to write a friend of his—an official talent scout. He said he must hear about you."

"I can't believe it!"

As they talked they crossed the long hall, and finally went out to their quiet corner in the court.

"I've something to tell you," Kitty said as they sat down. Then quickly she gave him an account of her experience at the troop train.

"I'm not surprised," Brad said. "I've felt rather sure Beeson must be the middleman in this business, after what we picked up Sunday. That tough old customer will be on the alert for you, if you ever go to the island again."

"I certainly intend to go."

"Not without me. I've been wanting to go back again for another look around."

"I've got to carry Uncle Mose his dollar's worth of smoking tobacco, and write that letter for him."

"Meeting that fellow from the Pacific does sort of put you under obligations."

"Guess I'd better get back to my dishes," said Kitty, rising. "Judy will be calling me a shirker if I don't. She doesn't enjoy this dish-washing part of the job any more than I do."

A few minutes later she was wielding the dish mop when Mrs. Evans came in to say, "Kitty, someone wants you on the phone."

She hurriedly crossed the hall to the near-by office, wondering if it was her father. She received quite a shock when she heard Jane's voice: "Miss Kit, reckon you bettah come home."

"Why? What's wrong, Jane?"

"It's Billy. Reckon he sick. He skin feel hot as fire to mah han', and he cough like he gwine choke to deaf."

"I'll be right home!" stated Kitty, and put down the phone with a bang.



## CHAPTER FOURTEEN

## MORE WORRIES

Kitty almost ran into Brad as she came from the telephone.

"What's wrong, Kit?" he asked, seeing the misery in her face.

"Billy's sick. I must go home at once."

"I'll borrow Bud Wilson's car and take you," he said.

"Thanks. That will help lots. I have to tell Mrs. Evans I'm going, and get my coat."

Brad was waiting near the kitchen door when she came out, his friend's car keys dangling on his finger.

"I really shouldn't have left him tonight," Kitty said contritely as she jumped into the car. "Jane told me he was cross all day. He's always cross before he gets sick."

Brad wasted no time in driving the five blocks to the house. He went in with Kitty to see if there was anything he could do. Jane had heard them coming and was already at the door to let them in when they crossed the porch.

"How is he?" asked Kitty.

"Reckon he mighty sick, Miss Kit."

Kitty hurried past her into Billy's little room. He lay on the bed, his round cheeks red, his mouth open as he struggled for breath. In a moment she was sitting on the bed, bending over him.

"Where do you feel bad, darling?"

His little hand went to his throat. Terrified she thought of diphtheria. "Why didn't you tell me you felt bad before I went off?" she chided.

He only moaned and tossed his head restlessly.

"I done call yo' Pah, honey. He's comin' right home," said Jane.

"Thanks, Jane. It's nice to have someone so dependable."

"I'll take a look at that throat," said Brad, "as soon as I wash my hands."

"Get him a fresh towel, Jane."

Kitty turned the bedside lamp on the flushed little face when Brad came back. She had already sent for a spoon to hold his tongue down. After one glance inside that swollen throat Brad said, "Um, badly inflamed. We've got to do something about this."

He and Kitty exchanged anxious glances. They heard steps running up the porch, and a moment later Mr. Carter was with them.

Kitty, met him at the door to whisper, "His throat. Oh, Dad, I'm so afraid of diphtheria!"

Before going near the boy Mr. Carter went to the bathroom to wash up. After a careful inspection of the throat he drew Kitty aside.

"Do you think it is?" she asked.

"Can't tell. I'm going to take him straight up to the hospital. We'll soon know there. You get out the car while I bundle him up."

"I'll drive you over," offered Brad. "I have Bud Wilson's car out there."

Kitty wrapped Billy in a warm blanket so that only his nose was exposed. They closed all the car windows, and Kitty sat in the back while her father held the child on the front seat beside Brad.

She wondered contritely why this had to happen when she had left her brother practically all day. Maybe if she had been home she would have noticed that he was ill earlier.

Mr. Carter was allowed to stay in the room with Billy while Dr. Fletcher examined him. In the meantime Brad paced the hall with Kitty.

"I'll never forgive myself for leaving him so much today, if there's anything I could have done to prevent this," Kitty said accusingly.

"That's silly, Kit! No sense in blaming yourself. You know how kids are. They almost always come down sudden like that."

"Do they?" She glanced hopefully at him through tear-dimmed eyes.

"Of course. I can remember how I used to play till I dropped, and in an hour or so would be burning with fever."



*Billy Moaned and Tossed Restlessly*

"But suppose it's diphtheria? They can die in a few hours of that."

"Not in these times with all the new treatment. That knocks things out in no time."

They were at the farther end of the hall when Kitty saw Hazel Dawson go into the room. "Oh, I hope they'll let Hazel nurse him," she said. "Then I'll be sure everything's being done for him that possibly can be done."

"They probably will."

"How long will it take for them to find out what it is?"

"Not long. Chief Carter will see to that."

At that very moment a white-uniformed interne came out of the room, followed by Mr. Carter. They hurried off toward the laboratory. The door stood slightly ajar when Kitty and Brad came nearer. Kitty saw Hazel inside and motioned to her.

"May I come in now?" she whispered.

"He's already sleeping. Perhaps you'd better not till we find out what it is."

"Will it take long?"

"No, not with your father around to see that everything is speeded up."

"Are you going to nurse him?"

"Yes, I'm glad to say. Your father asked for me."

"I'm so thankful! Now I'll know he has the best of care. Oh Hazel, I'll never forgive myself if—if anything—"

Kitty couldn't go on, and Hazel put an arm around her waist. Then she turned to Brad to say, "I think you'd better take her home. We'll see to everything here."

"I couldn't possibly go till I know what it is. Nobody can understand how I feel. I was away from him practically all day. Maybe if I'd put him to bed myself I would have touched him and found he had a fever."

"Don't be absurd, Kitty," said Hazel almost severely. "You couldn't have prevented his picking up some germ. Stop blaming yourself for what can't be helped."

"I know. You're only trying to make me feel better about it," said Kitty, wiping her tears with a large handkerchief which Brad had thrust into her hands.

"That's right. Dry your tears. You know men don't like to see a woman cry," Hazel reminded her.

Kitty smiled. "Brad's been awful good—helping us out."

"Keep it up a little longer, young man," Hazel directed. "You and Kitty can wait in the sun parlor until they bring back the report. Then I'll get Mr. Carter to look you up and let you know what the trouble is."

Kitty was glad to obey these instructions. Brad found some pictorial magazines and they sat on the couch, turning the pages, for there seemed nothing they could say while they waited. Kitty saw little of what was on those printed pages. Her ears were too alert for a familiar step in the hall.

"How easy it is to take all the good things of life for granted until something like this comes along," she thought. Ambition had been eternally prodding her to conquer new worlds, when within the four walls of her own home there should have been happiness enough to fill their three hearts to overflowing. She tried to tell Brad something of what she was thinking.

"But your desire to help in Canteen work, or any war work, is no reason why you should blame yourself for neglecting Billy," Brad said as he tried to make her see straight.

"I know—of course not." She brushed her hand across her eyes and back over her forehead.

"That's something we've all got to do—every man and woman in the country—or there won't be any homes left for us to be happy in."

"You're so sensible. It's such a comfort to have someone to talk to—just to sit here with me!"

"Gosh! I haven't done anything!"

Just then Kitty heard the long-expected footsteps in the hall and jumped up. Fortunately they had the sun parlor to themselves. All other visitors had long since gone home. Her father's face told her at once that the situation was better than they feared.

"A strep infection," he said in answer to her eager question. "We'll soon knock that out with the sulfa drug."

"What a relief! I think I would have died had it been anything worse."

"That's bad enough if not caught in time," her father stated.

"How in the world do you suppose he got it?"

"There's been a lot of it here at the hospital."

"But I never bring Billy to the hospital."

"He could have picked it up almost anywhere."

Then with an appalling recollection Kitty saw herself and Billy in their boat going past that hospital dump in the marshes. That was where he had got the germ, she was positive. Subconsciously she had known it from the very beginning. That's why she had felt so stunned by Billy's sickness. Now that she honestly faced the results of her own carelessness, she felt she couldn't endure it.

Noting her pale face and the misery in her eyes, Mr. Carter said, "Brad, please take her home for me."

"I couldn't leave till I know Billy's going to be all right, Dad."

"You can do absolutely nothing here, Kitty," her father said almost severely. "He's in most competent hands. Hazel's going to nurse him, and I plan to stay on for the night. I have my own room I can use any time. I'll see that everything possible is done. It will be a relief to me to know you're home in bed."

Kitty felt she could never sleep again, but said in a resigned tone, "All right, Dad. I'll go."

Seeing her so crushed he put his arm around her shoulder and went with her down the hall. "Go home and take a hot bath to calm your nerves, and get right into bed. I'll phone you at six in the morning."

That night as Kitty tossed about, sleepless for several hours, she made up her mind that if Billy recovered she would tell her father everything that had happened these last weeks to stir her suspicions. She blamed herself for her pride and conceit in hoping she, alone, could find an answer to those problems that were continually stumping the FBI.

She thought bitterly of what her psychology teacher had once said, "We're very complicated creatures, and how we sometimes hate to face the truth." And another time he had talked to their class about how human beings compensate for losses and disappointments. Yes, that was exactly what she was trying to do in making herself a private secret-service agent. She imagined she could do something big enough in uncovering some dastardly plot against her country. This would compensate for her not being able to do more to help the war effort. The fact that Billy had been her stumbling block all along, even though she adored him, made her feel all the more miserable now that his safety was involved.

It was late when her tired body and tortured mind succumbed to weariness and she slept. She slept so heavily then she didn't even rouse for the anticipated phone call at six o'clock. Jane was in the room when she opened her eyes, then sat up suddenly, ashamed that she had overslept.

"Has Dad phoned?"

Jane's kindly face told her that he had and that the news was good. "Yas'm, sho did. Billy's bettah, an' yo' Pah say you kin come see him."

Kitty scarcely had patience to eat her breakfast, which Jane insisted she must have before she left. Even with that delay she was at the hospital in an hour after waking. It was good to see her father smiling a welcome from the foot of the bed, and to see Billy drinking some milk through a tube, while the day nurse held a glass near his pillow.

"Oh darling, you do look better," she said eagerly.

"I'm all right, Kit. I like it at the hospital."

"Kit's going to stay with you while Daddy gets some sleep." She turned to her father and added, "You must go home and sleep some, Dad." His hollow eyes betrayed the fact that he had been up all night.

"I've had breakfast, but bed will be very welcome. If Billy's very good today maybe we'll take him home tomorrow. That new bike will be waiting if he takes his medicine well and gets strong in a hurry."

"I'll be a good boy, Dad," Billy promised.

Kitty spent the day at the hospital, and didn't go home until Hazel came in on night duty. Her father had gone to his office in the early afternoon, but he, also, was ready to go home as Kitty left. She was very tired, but so relieved that Billy was getting well that nothing else mattered.

As they walked home in the twilight she could still feel her father's depression. When they had gone a block in silence she slipped her hand through his arm and asked, "What's wrong, Dad? Billy's going to be all right, isn't he?"

"Oh yes. Yes indeed! His throat has cleared up remarkably fast."

"But you're still worried about something."

"I'm afraid I am, Kitten. It's not a new worry by any means. Things are rather messed up at the hospital in connection with my work."

"What do you mean, Dad? I've felt for a long time that something was wrong."

"I haven't wanted to worry you, but if you must know there's a shortage somewhere—a leak that I can't locate."

"Oh!"

"The inspector's coming next week." Her father's tone was bitter. "I wouldn't want to follow Dawson to Santiago, or somewhere else equally as remote."

## CHAPTER FIFTEEN

## A CONFESSION

Kitty waited until her father had eaten dinner before bringing up the subject that had weighed on her mind since the previous evening. She knew she would have no peace until she had made a clean breast of the whole thing. When her father was in his big chair in the living room she sank on the couch near by.

"Dad, how long does it take a germ—like a strep germ—to develop after a person gets infected?" she asked.

"Two or three days, sometimes sooner. We still have a lot to learn about such things."

"Then it's all my fault that Billy's ill."

"Your fault?" Mr. Carter dropped the paper he had just picked up.

"I thoughtlessly took him where there're plenty of germs. I—I was so intent on something I wanted to find out, I didn't even think of the danger."

"What are you talking about, Kitty? It's absurd blaming yourself for his illness. You've taken excellent care of him ever since you came from school."

"But, Dad, we went out into the marshes where they dump the hospital waste."

"You—what?" Her father stared at her, shocked. Then she could see by his expression that he was recalling their conversation about the disposal of the hospital waste.

"That's why I asked you where they dumped it. I went there Saturday afternoon."

"You and Billy alone?"

She nodded. "But I had a good reason for wanting to go, Dad, a very good reason."

He looked puzzled, but his tone was not unkind when he said, "I can't imagine any reason that would take a sensitive girl like you out to a dump pile."

"I know you think I'm crazy. But it's a long story and I'll have to start at the beginning."

"Well, sit back calmly and stop twisting that pillow."

Kitty tossed the pillow to the other end of the couch and burst into tears. "Oh Dad, I've been so miserable for the last twenty-four hours I could die. It's all because I'm too proud. I wanted to do something big for my country—something spectacular. I've let it make me indifferent to everything else."

"You're doing what you can, Kitten, in your Canteen work."

"Yes, I love that, but I wanted to do even more. I thought I could uncover the work of some saboteurs. I—I tried even to keep it all from you, to do it all myself, that is Brad and I."

"Kitty, calm yourself," her father said almost severely. "You're being very incoherent. Tell me what all this is about."

"I hardly know where to start to make you understand why I've been so secret about it."

"The place to start is at the beginning. I suppose all this has happened since you came home from college."

"Yes, of course. In fact the very day I decided to go into Canteen work." Then she told him of her experience in the launch when she had introduced Hazel and Lieutenant Cary. "That was the first hint I had that something was wrong somewhere. Brad was with me, and in on it from the very beginning."

"So you've been suspicious of Lieutenant Cary since then. Has anything else occurred to justify such suspicions?" asked Mr. Carter, viewing his daughter's confession more seriously now.

"Oh, lots of things—that is with people also closely associated with him." Then she told about Punaro and her belief that he was connected with the cannery fire, and later their coming unexpectedly upon him at the dock. "It looked to both Brad and me that he was hiding a tightly nailed box with the rubbish on the barge."

"Um-m," grunted her father significantly.

"Dad, that's why I wanted to go out to the dump pile and see what the situation was for myself."

Her father had risen and was now pacing the floor. He turned toward her sharply and said, "Surely you didn't go ashore there?"

"Oh, no, we only rode by it."

"Then Billy didn't get the germ from that dump—or there was no greater chance of his getting it there than anywhere else. But the foolish thing, Kitty, was you two going alone. You might have taken Brad with you as long as you had discussed these things with him."

"He was down at the beach for the afternoon. I picked up more clues down there, too, which made it seem certain supplies are going out from our hospital to the German subs. One of the Coast Guard men told about them finding Bayshore Bakery bread on one of those captured subs."

"If that was all they're getting I might not have so much to worry about," said her father.

Kitty glanced at him sharply. "What do you mean, Dad? You think they're getting more than that?"

"No doubt they are."

Kitty knew he was keeping something from her. However, she was determined now to tell him all. "Another strange thing happened yesterday that may or may not be significant."

"Yes. What was that?"

"It was odd, after seeing old Uncle Mose on Terrapin Island Sunday, someone on the troop train

yesterday asked me about him." Kitty gave a sprightly account of the veteran returned from the Pacific. "And by the way I have that dollar and must take some tobacco to the old man."

"And what connection does all this have with the clues you're running down?"

"Vera Parsons told me that the owner of Terrapin Island was near when I was talking to that fellow. She said he actually glared at me when he heard I'd been on the island. Of course it was all posted over with 'No trespassing' signs, and maybe we shouldn't have eaten our supper there."

"We did no harm. Those signs generally apply to hunting, fishing and fire-making."

"But Dad, Brad and I are wondering if this Beeson isn't in on the dirty work."

He paused in front of her, his face showing alert interest. "How do you figure that out?"

"Uncle Mose told us Beeson comes here to the hospital for food scraps for his hogs. Brad and I figure there's obliged to be a middleman to make the contact between the hospital and the spies from the subs."

Chief Carter's face was eager as he said, "Kitty, you may have picked up a missing link!"

She jumped to her feet now, and stood facing her father. "Dad, you've been keeping something from me, too!"



*"You May Have Picked Up a Missing Link!"*

"I'll have to admit I have, Kitten. You had enough on your young shoulders without being burdened with my problems."

Suddenly apprehension pierced her heart. It was one thing to work for the sheer thrill of trapping spies, but quite another to find her father was really involved.

"Dad, what is it?" she asked. "Does all this in any way affect you? A while back I thought it might and then—"

"I'm afraid it does, Kitty. But go on, I want to hear your reasons for believing Beeson is involved."

"For one thing he leased that island after we went into the war. That certainly could have been done with an ulterior motive. Second, he moved Uncle Mose out of his cabin up to the other end of the island. Uncle Mose used to live in sight of the hospital dump pile. Also he has a look-out in the pine thicket."

"A look-out?"

"Brad climbed the pine after we got Billy down Sunday. It's wired to make climbing easy. There's a seat at the top with a marvelous view of the entire marshes and out to sea."

"But you didn't mention all this Sunday."

"We thought right away it was connected with the whole dirty business. Hazel was along, so we decided to say nothing until we could figure things out better."

"Is that all?"

"We figured that a small radio could be carried up on Beeson's back, so he could direct action from his look-out. He could watch people coming from any direction, and warn small boats coming in from the subs. Seemed like a perfect set-up."

Her father looked at her a moment and a slow smile spread over his face, in spite of the anxiety still in his eyes. "Kitten, you show remarkable talent for becoming a first-class detective."

She pursed her lips. "Too nerve-racking, Dad."

"Is that all you've picked up about Beeson?"

"Beth Gilcrist, a Canteen worker over in Bayport, who meets all the troop trains, told me Beeson meets most of them, too."

"Hm-m, so he does, eh? He seems to have no scarcity of gas for these trips back and forth."

Mr. Carter sat down on the couch, and stared into space, as he thought over what she had told him.

"And another thing. Brad found out from the man who looks after the incinerator that repair parts have come for it twice, and were not what he ordered."

"Hm-m, looks like somebody at the factory may be cooperating in keeping it out of order," Mr. Carter surmised.

"That's exactly what Brad and I figured out. That's why we feel so certain the barge goes into the marshes for more reasons than to haul off garbage."

Mr. Carter made no reply to this but just sat staring ahead of him. Kitty recalled what he had said as they were coming home that evening. The inspector was coming down and there was a shortage in his department. She had thought when he mentioned it that he meant a financial shortage. Now an appalling possibility entered her mind.

"Dad, could your shortage have anything to do with all this?"

"Definitely it could, Kitty. The amazing things you have just told me may help me clear up a very embarrassing situation."

Kitty recalled that he had said once that there were some things he couldn't talk about even to his own daughter, but she now ventured to ask, "Can't you tell me about it now, Dad?"

"I'm going to," he retorted in a tone that implied his desperation. "But this is for you alone, Kitty. Not even Brad is to know."

Her eyes widened. "But you think he is trustworthy, don't you?"

"Of course—absolutely! Nevertheless this is to go no further."

"Certainly. If that's the way you want it."

"As you have probably guessed Willard Dawson lost out here for the very shortage I am now facing."

"But I'm sure he was not to blame either. Who could look at his fine face and believe him capable of—of anything dishonest? He simply couldn't be a traitor any more than you, Dad!"

"Of course we feel certain of that. That's why I asked to be sent here. I've been in hopes of clearing up the situation."

"Hazel came here for the same reason, didn't she?"

"Yes, she did. But so far—that is until you told me all this tonight I've run into nothing but snags."

"Just what did you mean when you said there was a shortage?"

"All medical supplies must pass through my hands. I have to O.K. all orders. I have been most careful in making those orders—yet at the end of each month the sum total of materials used far exceeds the normal use of a hospital our size."

"You mean medicines, bandages and things like that, Dad?"

"All expendable supplies used in the hospital—medical supplies, of course."

"Those are the kind of things they'd be badly in need of on a German sub?"

"Yes, of course."

"Do you suppose those sneaks are getting some of the stuff out of the hospital along with the food?"

"In fact, Kitty, the whole set-up may be for the purpose of getting our medical supplies instead of food. Almost anyone can get hold of food to let the enemy have, but the drug business is quite a different thing."

Kitty felt the gooseflesh prickle along her spine.

"Oh, Dad, suppose I hadn't paid any attention to all those queer things!"

"Don't be too complacent about it all, Kitty. We haven't caught the saboteurs yet, nor pinned



anything on anybody.”

## CHAPTER SIXTEEN

## FURTHER REVELATIONS

They brought Billy home from the hospital the next day. Like most husky youngsters he was soon playing around the house, and by the end of the week seemed none the worse for his experience.

"I'm afraid you have a somber rival in your son," Kitty said one evening to her father.

"How's that?" asked Mr. Carter, forcing himself out of his preoccupation.

"He has quite a crush on Hazel—talks of her constantly."

Her father laughed in a self-conscious manner. "Oh, he has, eh?"

"He wants me to invite her to supper again and let him sit up late."

Mr. Carter laughed. "You must do that, Kitten. But for Hazel's watchful care Billy might not have recovered so quickly."

"I'm sure of that."

"And by the way, my dear, I've talked with Hazel about what you told me the other night."

"Oh, did you?"

"She told me about the chess playing—Lieutenant Cary hobnobbing with Krome, Punaro and men from the galley."

"When I saw him playing with Punaro I thought they must be two of a kind. I was already suspicious of them both. But Krome seems a good-natured sort. Somehow I hate to think he may be in on the dirty work."

"Hazel doesn't think he is—quite the contrary. And it wouldn't be very likely. A man who's been in the service ten or twelve years."

"Did Hazel tell you why she's been learning to play chess? I was very curious but didn't dare ask."

To Kitty's surprise her father laughed heartily. "Hazel's keen, and certainly has done a grand job as detective since she's been here, but I doubt if she'll make a go of the chess racket."

"What do you mean?"

"She has a theory that Lieutenant Cary engages Krome in a chess game every time Punaro wants to get away with something in the galley."

Something clicked in Kitty's mind. "And there's every reason to believe she's right!"

"Huh, so you're backing her up in the far-fetched idea!"

"Not far-fetched at all, and I'll tell you why. The other night when Brad and I ran into Punaro down at the dock, we told him we were looking for Chief Krome. Right away he said, 'He's upstairs in the recreation room, playing chess with Dr. Cary.' Note he said Dr. Cary, not Lieutenant."

There was a slightly quizzical expression on Chief Carter's face as he asked, "Well, is that significant?"

"Very. A man who had known Cary before he went into the service would call him doctor under excitement, and Punaro was not only excited, but furious at us."

"Kitten, I become more certain every day that you should give up your Canteen work and join the FBI."

"No, indeed! I have more pleasant ambitions for service to my country," she retorted.

"So Punaro knew just where his Chief was the other night?"

"Just like that!" said Kitty, snapping her fingers. "It certainly looks as though Hazel's got the right idea—that Lieutenant Cary keeps Krome occupied while Punaro has a free hand below."

"Does sound plausible," her father conceded.

"But you haven't told me Hazel's idea in learning to play chess herself."

"Oh, I think she hopes to engage Cary sometimes in a chess game, when he would prefer to have Krome as a partner."

Kitty laughed. "She thinks then that Krome may go below and find Punaro at his dirty work."

"She said if that could happen it would be worth the discomfort of sitting opposite Cary for a game of chess."

On Friday evening over a cup of coffee and a doughnut at the Snack Bar Kitty and Brad made plans to go to Terrapin Island the following afternoon, as Brad would have the afternoon off.

When Kitty went to town Saturday morning she spent the dollar the veteran had given her for smoking tobacco, and bought a new pipe as her own gift to Uncle Mose. This time she left Billy in good hands, for her father was taking Hazel into Bayport to a picture, and Billy was to go with them. So Kitty started off with Brad in their launch early in the afternoon with a free mind. With patriotic zeal they put their hands to the oars, instead of using the gasoline in the tank.

"Kit, I've been doing a little spying since we last had a chance to talk," Brad told her.

"Hope you picked up something valuable."

"I've been watching the barge movements."

"Oh, yes. I've wondered if that could be done."

"Punaro takes the stuff off to the dump every second morning. He uses a fast little motor boat for towing, which ought to make the haul in about an hour over to the dump and another hour back."

"Is that his schedule?"

"Oh, no! He leaves at dawn and barely gets back to the hospital in time for chow at noon. Last time I had a day off I made it my business to watch his movements."

"Does anybody go with him?"

"No. It's really a one-man job, which suits his purpose very well. I figure Punaro has at least two hours leeway to contact his accomplices."

They rowed past the hospital and soon turned south through the marsh-bordered inlet. The water was rather choppy and there were ragged, wind-swept clouds overhead, but neither of them were afraid of a little rain.

They were almost in sight of the pines on Terrapin Island when Kitty said, "There's probably someone else upstairs in the hospital who's involved in all this—someone besides Cary and Punaro."

"What makes you think that?"

She had to be careful not to reveal anything her father had told her. But she thought Brad might be in a position to pick up information her father couldn't get.

"If Punaro is actually supplying the subs with fresh food, doesn't it seem possible they might take other things, too—medical supplies, for instance?"

"You're right. I hadn't thought of that."

Brad's pull on the oars quickened as his thoughts raced ahead with this new idea.

"Slow up!" exclaimed Kitty, when she was out of breath trying to keep in rhythm. "This is no marathon, you know."

Brad suddenly drew in his oar and turned to face her. She was glad enough to drift for a few minutes and rest.

"Kitty, now that you mention that fact I recall seeing Punaro talking several times with Petty Officer Brinson."

"Brinson?"

"One of the ward attendants. I thought it was only about clearing the trash from the wards. But I bet Brinson could get away with plenty if he had a mind to."

"I'm glad you told me about him, Brad. I haven't had a chance to tell you I talked to Dad about all this."

"You did?"

Kitty nodded. "I was so unhappy about it all when Billy got sick. I felt that somehow I was to blame, so I just told Dad everything."

"What did he think?"

"Plenty!"

"I mean what does he think we ought to do with all this information we've been picking up?"

"He didn't say. You know a man in his position can't say much, even to his daughter."

"That's true, of course."

"The inspector's coming down soon, he said. I have a feeling he plans to take it up with him." Kitty decided she had better change the subject, for fear it might slip out that her father was dangerously involved.



*Brad Suddenly Turned to Kitty*

The tide had carried them in closer to Terrapin Island while they talked. As Kitty saw the beautiful pine-clad bluff rising out of the surrounding green marshes she said, "Wouldn't that make a grand place for a summer home?"

"I'll say. And if the old Hindu your father told us about was right, those pines ought to have enough vitality to make us immortal."

Kitty laughed and picked up her oar. "We'd better go on and see Uncle Mose, or this storm's going to catch us before we get home."

They didn't stop at their former landing place, but rowed on along the inlet flowing east of the island. It was indeed a lonely spot. They now had a good view of Mangrove Island beyond a mile strip of marshy flats, which were interlaced with tidewater creeks. A couple of cranes stood knee-deep in water, but took flight at the sound of approaching oars, their long legs trailing behind them like streamers. A line of pelicans moved out toward sea, their wings alternately flapping and poised, as they followed the impulses of their leader.

"Don't you love it here?" exclaimed Kitty.

"I'll say. It's really God's country."

They passed the spot where they had found Uncle Mose fishing, and saw his log cabin far back among the trees.

"What'll we do if Beeson won't let us see Uncle Mose?" asked Kitty a little nervously. "The old negro told us his new house is right back of Beeson's place."

"Surely he wouldn't be so rude as to prevent us seeing the old darky."

"You never can tell. Those 'No trespassing' signs may apply to callers also."

A half mile farther on they came in sight of the Tradds' old summer home. No doubt it had once been a fine residence, but even from the water they could see that its tabby walls were crumbling, and the paint had long since worn off the columned porch. Though the grounds were neglected and weed-grown, old azaleas, in full bloom, made gorgeous splashes of color. Wisteria vines had been left to run riotously over several pines, and the lavender blossoms were now hanging far up the brown trunks.

"Seems a shame for a man like Beeson to have such a heavenly spot," said Kitty, when they shipped their oars, and Brad made the boat fast to a rickety dock in front of the house.

The tide had just begun to rise, so that their boat was eight or ten feet below the level of the dock. There was a ladder, however, by which they could go up. Brad had just given Kitty a hand to help her up when there came a furious baying of hounds from the direction of the house. A moment later they saw three vicious-looking dogs making for the dock.

"We can't take a chance on them!" exclaimed Brad, realizing at once that this was how Beeson kept intruders away from his house.

Kitty tumbled back into the boat, while Brad released their line, so they could push off. He was not a moment too soon, for the dogs dashed along the dock and hung over the edge, their fierce jaws dripping as they barked furiously.

"What a reception!" exclaimed Kitty. "It really looks as though Uncle Mose won't get his smoking tobacco today."

"No launch tied up here. I suppose Beeson is away, and this is the guard he has set."

"Would an honest man be so careful that nobody comes prowling around?"

"I doubt it."

"Sally and Lana Bright have lived in this low country all their lives. They say the doors of their country house are never locked."

"Those who do the most skulduggery are likely to be very suspicious of other people."

Their boat was carried off toward a shelving beach by the current. Noting this the dogs left their high perch on the dock and ran around to head them off from landing anywhere else.

"Well trained, aren't they?" Brad commented.

"Sure looks like it."

"I suppose we can turn around and go home the way we came," Brad said ruefully.

"I hate to be checkmated like this," Kitty said in disgust.

She reached for her oar when suddenly Brad exclaimed, "Wait! There comes somebody."

Kitty glanced in the direction he pointed. "Why, it's Uncle Mose himself!"

The old man came hobbling down the weed-grown path. When he was in hearing distance Kitty called out, "Hi, Uncle Mose! It's your friends. Call off the dogs."

Uncle Mose came to the water's edge and peered at them with dimming eyes before he said, turning to the dogs, "Shut up, you hounds! Quit dat racket! Don' you know quality folks when you sees 'em?"

He finally had to get a stick to send the hounds slinking back toward the house. Brad pushed their boat closer to the shelving shore where the old man stood.

"After that reception I guess we'd better stay in the boat," suggested Brad.

"I have good news for you, Uncle Mose," Kitty said when they were close enough to speak without yelling.

"Yassum. I sho be pleased to hear it."

"I got young Tradd's address." Then Kitty told him of meeting Tradd's buddy on the troop train.

"He gave me a dollar to buy you some tobacco so I brought it along."

She stood in the prow to offer the gift while Uncle Mose waded a few feet into the water.

"And here's a pipe I brought you, too," added Kitty.

The weathered old face crinkled into a smile. "I sho proud o' dis, Missie. Hit moighty thoughty o' you to come way out here to brung it to me." He crammed the gifts into his coat pockets.

"But I promised to write a letter for you, too. If you'll tell me what you want me to say I'll write to Mr. Tradd."

"Oh, Missie, would you do dat fer sho?"

"Of course."

"We ain't got much time, Missie. Mah boss due back here pretty soon now. He done tole me I ain't to pass no words wid y'all if you come back here again."

Kitty glanced uneasily north along the inlet, but it was empty in the slanting sunlight that had broken through ragged clouds.

"So he warned you, eh? He was down at the station the day that boy gave me the money for your tobacco."

"So dat how he know you's gwine come again. I don't hafter mind whut he say. I ain't he nigger. I'll be a Tradd nigger till I die, an' I ain't gwine set here an' see him bring disgrace on dis island."

"What do you mean, Uncle Mose?"

The old man came closer, almost knee deep in water now. His gnarled brown hands gripped the side of the boat as he said, "I ain't able to row no boat crosst to de mainland where us got ole fr'en's, so I ain't hab no one to trus' 'bout whut gwine on round here till y'all come."

"Then I'm very glad we came," said Kitty encouragingly.

"I's been libin' on dis earth nigh on to a hunnert year, an' I'se larn to know people you can trus' at fust sight. Y'all sho belongst to dat class."

"Thank you, Uncle Mose. We'll try to live up to your good opinion of us." Kitty saw it was useless to try to hurry him, though she was terrified for fear Beeson would come and catch them here.

"What was it you want her to write?" asked Brad, not quite so patient as Kitty.

"Suh, I sees you's a sailor an' defender o' our country like mah young Massa. You wear de same color uniform, too, an' I knows you's to be trusted."

"I hope so, Uncle."

"An' you knows as well as I does dat it ain't right fer no white man in dese times to be hobnobbin' wid furriners. Dis war we's fightin' is wid furriners, ain't it?"

"It sure is, Uncle Mose," replied Brad. "But what white man is hobnobbing with foreigners?"

"Mr. Beeson. Dey comes here right often at night—an' always goes away wid boxes an' bundles."

Kitty and Brad exchanged startled glances.

"How do you know his callers are foreigners?" asked Brad.

"Dey talks a langwidge I ain't never heard round dese parts."

"You were close enough to hear them talk?" asked Kitty.

"Mr. Beeson think I'se sleepin'. Mah sight ain't so good no mo', but mah hearin' keen, an' I know when dem stranger come ashore."

"You heard their motorboat, I suppose," said Brad.

"Naw suh. Dey don' come in no motorboat. Nothin' but ole bateau. Whilst dey was up to de house one dark night I went down to de water an' seen it."

Kitty's cheeks were pale, her eyes apprehensive when she met Brad's troubled glance.

"I hear Mr. Beeson talkin' 'bout buyin' dis island. You tell young Massa fer me, Missie, not to sold it. Reckon Mr. Beeson bootleggin' or somepen. He gwine bring disgrace on dis place."

Kitty didn't take time to tell him that the bootlegging of other days was mild to what she now knew Mr. Beeson was doing. But suddenly she lifted her head in alarm. She had caught the sound of a distant motorboat.

"Reckon dat him now! Y'all bettah lef' out o' here right now," warned Uncle Mose.

## CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

## A NARROW ESCAPE

"You got time to cross yonder an' hide in de marsh," Uncle Mose told Kitty and Brad when they heard the sound of the approaching motorboat.

"Let's get going," said Kitty, picking up her oar. "You'd better hide your tobacco and new pipe, Uncle Mose."

"Yas'm, sho will." The old man's sunken eyes turned toward the inlet. "You kin hear de motorboat a long time 'fore she come in sight."

"I'm glad you told us what you did, Uncle Mose," said Kitty. "Don't you worry. Mr. Beeson will never buy this island."

"T'ank de Lawd! You tell young Massa I keep de trus' an' look atter de place like he ask me to."

Brad was impatient to be off, and Kitty bent her back to the oar as he pulled away from the little harbor. Glancing at Uncle Mose before they turned a point in the shore, she saw him waving his battered felt hat at them and pointing straight across the marsh.

Instead of turning north by the way they had come they headed for the tide-filled creeks that cut the marshy wastelands into jig-saw patterns. They could have used the motor for greater speed, but Kitty knew the noise would carry for quite a distance across the empty wastes. Not until they had gone almost a mile up one of the winding creeks did they pause behind the shelter of some tall marsh grass.

"Hope we don't get stuck in here," said Brad. "Tide's so low."

"But it's already turned. That's a help." She rubbed her tired hands together a moment and said, "Uncle Mose gave us an earful, didn't he?"

"I'll say!"

"Looks as though that's the final piece to complete the puzzle."

"Maybe and maybe not, Kit. We've got to catch 'em with the goods before we can really bring conviction."

"Sure is risky for that poor old negro. Beeson doesn't look like the kind of man who would hesitate to put the old man out of the way if he interferes with his plans."

"You're right."

"Maybe we should have brought him away with us just now."

"Oh no, that would never do. Beeson would be sure you were responsible—after what happened at the troop train the other day."

"I guess you're right. That would make him cut off his traffic with the Germans till suspicion dies down."

"Kit, it's come to the point where we no longer have a right to keep all this to ourselves."

"You mean the FBI should know?"

"Certainly. It's not mere surmise now. What Uncle Mose told us bears out accurately the theories we've been forming."

"You're right, Brad." Even though they had prided themselves on their discoveries so far, Kitty had to admit that the affair was now too dangerous for them to handle. She could never forgive herself if, through their bungling, Uncle Mose lost his life.

"But we've got to get out of here first," said Brad. "It's beginning to look as though we're in for a real blow, Kit."

"A real sou'easter."

Suddenly Brad half rose and peered above the strip of marsh grass behind which they were hiding. "Listen, Kit, sounds like Beeson's boat is coming right in here."

"Good heavens! What'll we do?"

She crawled over to the stern locker and hunted for the field glasses. As she adjusted them she stood in the boat and scanned the western horizon. Finally she concentrated her gaze on a section of the inlet near the pine bluff.

"No. He isn't in the marshes. Even with the wind taking the sound from us, the bluff must be a sort of sounding board to throw it back."

"We'll have to be careful—wind's blowing from us to him," cautioned Brad.

She let Brad have the glasses and he watched while Beeson towed the barge to the dock. "Uncle Mose is already there to carry the food scraps up to the hogs," he explained as he watched.

"Can you see anything that looks like supplies for the Germans?" she asked.

"Not at this distance."

He handed her the glasses and she watched until Beeson went stomping up to the house in his knee boots.

Great masses of purple clouds boiled in the western sky, while the tall marsh grass lay almost level under the rushing wind.

"We'd better beat it for home!" exclaimed Kitty. "Looks to me as if this is turning to a hurricane." On the Gulf coast she had often seen storms come up like this in a very short time.

"There was a hurricane reported south of here—guess we're getting an edge of the gale," said Brad.

They debated whether to return to the inlet with which they were familiar, but decided the safest

course would be to follow the marshy creek, even though it might take them longer to get home. Brad still had the little map which he had sketched in his billfold. They studied that, trying to figure out the most direct route back to Palmetto Island.

"This creek swings round mighty close to Mangrove Island," Kitty said dubiously.

"That's better than going too close to Terrapin Island."

Acting upon their decision they picked up their oars again. They were now moving against the force of the rising tide and found progress slow. They made several elbow turns and eventually found themselves close enough to Mangrove Island to make a landing, if they had so desired.

"I've wanted to explore it ever since you boys told me about seeing the boat in the mangroves on the other side," Kitty said.

"No time to explore now," Brad stated rather shortly. "If I ever get you out of this saboteurs' nest I'll never bring you into the marshes again—till the war's over."

Kitty laughed. "I'm not afraid, Brad. What's there to be afraid of now?"

Even as she spoke there came a pinging sound, piercing and sharp above the howl of the wind. Almost simultaneously Brad groaned and slapped his hand to his shoulder as he toppled backward into the bottom of the boat. The oar slipped from his limp fingers and bobbed off on the tide.

"Lie down, Kit! Lie down!" he ordered even as he fell.

"Brad, are you hurt?" she wailed.

With his right hand he seized her arm and pulled her to the bottom of the boat beside him. The hand was wet with blood from the wound in his shoulder.

"He got me all right. But keep low! Don't lift your head above the gunwale."

Two more shots came whistling across the boat.

"We've got to get out of here!" stated Brad desperately.

Even if they had two oars to use Kitty knew it would be suicide to sit up to row.

"I'll start the motor," she said.

On her stomach she wiggled toward the motor. At such a disadvantage she wondered if she could get the engine going. But she must! There was no other way for them to get away from that shower of lead.

"But you can't see to steer," said Brad. "We'll go headlong into the marsh."

"We've got to take a chance. I have a general idea of the channel beyond here—passed this way the other day when Billy and I came here."

To Kitty's infinite relief the starter responded to her touch. The sound of that motor was only an invitation to more shots. This time they were aimed low, evidently with the hope of puncturing the boat's side and hitting them as they crouched below the gunwale. But the lead spattered harmlessly into the water.





*"Brad, Are You Hurt?" Kitty Wailed*

By holding the lower curve of the wheel, and watching the tree-lined shore, Kitty could steer, and give the motor as much speed as she dared. When they had gone several yards, and just after a fresh spatter of lead struck their stern, she took a chance on lifting her eyes high enough for a look ahead.

Three more shots trailed them, but fell short of the mark, and a few minutes later they felt that they must be out of range. By the smudge of smoke at their right Kitty knew they were now passing the dump pile, with open, safer water ahead. Not until then did she dare give the boat any real speed.

She glanced down and saw Brad's face drawn and white at her feet. Blood had run from his coat to the bottom of the boat. Kitty rose from her crouching position and saw a sheltering arm of marshland ahead. When she rounded this so the boat was hidden from Mangrove Island she cut off her motor and bent over Brad. When she unbuttoned his coat she found his shirt saturated with blood.

"A little lower and it would have gone through your heart," she said anxiously. "Wait, I'll try to stop that blood."

She was thankful her father always kept the launch prepared for emergencies. They never went out without field glasses, flashlights, a lantern, a jug of water, tins of food and a first-aid kit.

Her deft fingers cut away the bloody clothes. She cleaned the wound as best she could, then bound it tightly to check the blood.

"You seem to know how to do it," he said gratefully.

"I took two first-aid courses at school, but haven't had much chance to practice."

"Hope you don't have another chance like this any time soon," he said ruefully.

With the blood checked Brad struggled to a sitting position, his left arm lying limp in his lap.

"You knew somebody was watching us before the shot came," said Kitty with conviction, recalling his sudden anxiety to have her safely home.

He nodded. "I didn't say anything. I didn't want to frighten you. I thought it might be somebody quite harmless."

"Far from it!"

"Kit, I thought I saw the blue of a sailor's uniform."

"Oh, then it wasn't Germans, hiding there till Beeson came back?"

"I may have been mistaken about the clothes, but anybody from the island could have seen us watching Beeson go ashore at his dock."

"That's so," Kitty admitted. "No doubt they have field glasses, too."

"It wasn't likely to be anybody from the U-boats. They'd take too much risk coming ashore any time but at night."

"A sailor's uniform," she repeated. "Could it have been Punaro?"

"It's possible. Of course Cary wears blue, too."

"But I thought you said Punaro always brought the stuff out here in the early morning?"

"You forget this is Saturday afternoon. He's off, too," Brad reminded her.

She realized then how ghastly white he had grown. His lips had a bluish look, and he was trembling slightly in the chill wind. She was afraid of shock from the loss of blood, and hurried back to her motor. She must take him to the hospital as speedily as possible.

## CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

## A CALLER IN THE DARK

By the time Kitty was in sight of the hospital the storm had reached gale proportions, and even the inland, sheltered waterways were whipped into tumbling whitecaps.

"Shall I go straight to the unloading dock behind the hospital?" she asked.

"Against regulations. Nothing's supposed to come ashore there but supplies."

She was afraid Brad couldn't walk to the hospital from any of the small landing docks farther east, but she decided he could wait in the boat while she went to their house for the car.

"It'll probably be better to go ashore somewhere else anyhow," she told him.

"Wish I didn't have to go back to the hospital just now," he said. "If it gets around that I was shot in the marshes, Lieutenant Cary will be sure to hear about it—may put a crimp in drawing a noose around the criminals' necks."

"Why didn't I think of that before?" said Kitty. "I'll take you to our house. Surely Dad will be back from town by the time we get there. He'll know what's best to do."

"I hate to be so much bother, but that does seem the most sensible thing. You can phone Dr. Williams. He's the closest friend I have among the doctors. He'll take care of the wound and keep his mouth shut, too."

"Sure. That's just what we'll do."

"I don't have to report for duty till Monday. Nobody will get curious about me till then."

When Kitty turned the bend in the channel and rounded the point on which the hospital stood, she thought she had never faced such a howling gale. She glanced toward the island and saw that the hurricane flag was flying.

Brad ducked his head and clung to the seat. Kitty anchored herself to the wheel, and steered for the landing behind their cottage. Already lights were twinkling along shore, though enough twilight lingered for her to come in to the dock without too much uncertainty.

Never before had she attempted to make her moorings in such a choppy sea. The stormy wind had forced the rising tide up rapidly. She was glad of this for it would spare Brad a climb to the dock. She was afraid the force of the storm would pound the launch against the pilings, so she cut off their motor and with the remaining oar worked toward the lee side of the dock. It took all her skill to make any progress as she had to move straight into the teeth of the rushing wind that swept diagonally across the island. Brad was powerless to help her, for his one hand was needed to hold himself to the seat.

"Don't try to help!" Kitty called to him, as he started to crawl forward. "I'll make it. The least little strain will start that place bleeding again."

In spite of her warning after Kitty got the boat close enough Brad seized their line and tossed it deftly over a hook on the dock. The rope creaked and the boat quivered at the sudden restriction.

"Can you make it up the ladder?" Kitty asked anxiously.

There were only three or four steps to climb, but even that would be a strain on Brad in his weakened condition.

"Maybe you'd better go ahead and give me a hand," he was forced to admit. "Guess I'm no good."

She hadn't realized how weak he was until she tried to help him up that ladder. She had to pull him by his good arm every step of the way. When he reached the dock he collapsed at her feet. Desperately she glanced toward the village, hoping for help, but the storm had evidently driven everyone to shelter. A small boat battled the gale half way between them and the hospital, but the howling wind would drown her call for help.

She was afraid to leave him on the dock while she went for help. The gale might grow strong enough any minute to sweep him into the water. There was danger of opening the wound again if she tried to move him, but she had no choice. Carefully she lifted his head against her knees, locked her hands under his arms and dragged him down the dock to the shelter of a twisted oak that grew on the shell bank.

She was already wet from the mist and spray and now rain came in a sudden deluge. It mingled with the tears streaming down her cheeks as she ran the block and a half to her home. With a thankful prayer she saw that the lights were on. Jane, at least, must be there.

"Let me in!" she called, actually pounding the door with her fists.

Jane swung the door in almost at once. "Why, Miss Kitty, you looks like a scarecrow!"

"Is Dad here?"

"Yas'm. He sho is, an' he just about on he haid cause you ain't come home."

Her father was pulling on his raincoat as he came out of his room.

"Why Kitty, what's wrong? Why are you so late?"

"Dad, we couldn't help it. Brad's shot!"

"Shot?"

"From the marshes."

"Where is he now?"

"I got him ashore here—but couldn't bring him any farther."



*She Helped Him Across the Dock*

"He's not dead?"

"Oh, no! I mean I hope not. He must have fainted when I was helping him to the dock. He lost so much blood."

"Which dock?"

"Ours—behind the house."

"I'll get the car. You'd better come, too, Jane. I don't want Kitty to strain herself, helping me lift him."

Billy was already in bed, so Mr. Carter closed the door softly. "He'll be all right. We'll be back in a few minutes. I'll drop you two off here before I take him on to the hospital."

He hurried out to get the car and Kitty followed him saying, "But we don't want to take him to the hospital. He doesn't want them to know."

"What are you talking about, my child? That's the place for him."

"Not under the circumstances, Dad."

Kitty tumbled into the car beside him, and Jane got into the back, praying aloud excitedly. Mr. Carter started the motor and they raced out the drive.

"Please do as I say, Dad," persisted Kitty. "Just this once, Dad. There's no time to tell you everything, but we've learned things this afternoon that may put a stop to all this awful business."

Mr. Carter made no reply for a moment, grimly intent upon his driving in the rain. Finally he said, "I've been a fool, Kitty, to let you go ahead and get into something like this."

Kitty was too miserable over Brad to pay much attention to her father's rebuke. "There, he's under the oak yonder," she directed, when they turned the corner and raced down the block.

They found Brad had recovered consciousness, and was sitting with his back propped against the tree trunk.

"So silly of me to check out," he apologized when they approached him. "I figured you'd gone for the car."

"Think you can get in?" asked Mr. Carter.

"Sure," Brad tried to make light of his weakness.

But he was a dead weight on Mr. Carter as he helped him to his feet.

"Guess you've lost a lot of blood, old boy. Where did they hit you?"

"Just under my shoulder blade. Kitty bound it up, but I'd spilled plenty before she got a chance to do that."

Kitty breathed easier when he was in the front seat beside her father. She and Jane sat in the back. Nothing more was said until Mr. Carter stopped the car in front of their house, instead of going into the drive.

"Jane, you get out and stay with Billy. Kitty, you can come on up to the hospital with us if you'd rather."

There were tears in Kitty's voice when she wailed, "But Dad, we don't want them to know about this at the hospital!"

"This is no time to think of such things, Kitty. It's quite evident Brad will need a blood transfusion. The hospital is the proper place for that."

When Jane got out and her father drove on toward the hospital Kitty couldn't keep the tears back. What a mess she had made of the whole business! If she had known Brad must go to the hospital it would have been so much easier to stop at the supply dock, regulations or no regulations. Now everybody at the hospital would know, anyhow, that he had been shot. How the talk would fly from mouth to mouth.

Even if Punaro wasn't the guilty party he would learn about it. If he was really in league with Beeson he, in turn, would get the facts, and surmise that they had visited Terrapin Island again. In that event she feared for Uncle Mose's safety. But after all, she thought finally, what did any of this matter compared with Brad's welfare?

Her father had a stretcher brought down to take Brad to the emergency room. As Kitty followed into the hospital she said, "Dad, if Brad's blood is type one I'll be glad to give him blood for a transfusion."

Her father turned and flashed her a smile. "Thanks, Kitten. But I think we have a generous supply of all types here. I'll go on to the emergency room and see what his condition is."

"Oh, Dad, I don't think I can stand it if Brad dies. It's all my fault. I was the one who suggested going out there today."

"Stop blaming yourself, my child, for everything that goes wrong!"

He took a key from his pocket. "Here's the key to my office. Wait up there where it's quiet. I'll come up later and tell you how Brad is—and I want to hear all about what happened."

Kitty was glad he had thought of this, for her wet clothes and troubled face would certainly invite questions from any friends who might see her. She hurried out to the wing and up the steps to the second floor, instead of taking the elevator.

She had never been in the administrative wing at night when everyone was off duty. There was light in only one office as she went down the short hall on the upper floor. Strangely enough she felt more nervous there than she had in the lonely marshes before the shooting. She was tempted to turn back and go to Hazel's room, but she knew that would invite questions and call for explanations, for which she was in no mood at the moment. In her father's office she could be quiet to calm herself after so much excitement and strain.

She unlocked the door and touched the light button. She crossed to her father's desk chair and sat down a moment. She felt she couldn't live through this interval while waiting to hear about Brad. To divert her mind she reached for a book in a rack at the back of the desk. It proved to be a medical tome, whose language seemed dry as dust to her excited mind.

In the basket at the right of the desk were some addressed envelopes and a stack of orders that had been made up and signed by her father, but had not yet been mailed. Her eyes ran down the

list of drugs and supplies that had been ordered.

While sitting there she suddenly shivered, and realized her clothes were wet through. Noticing one of her father's coats hanging on a rack in the corner, she put it on, and went to the big armchair near the window. She took off her wet shoes and socks and tucked her feet under her woollen skirt until they were warm.

The chair faced the window and as she sat there she recalled that her father had pointed out the location of Mangrove Island from that very window. How long ago it seemed! She wondered if Punaro, or whoever had shot at them, was still out there.

Wind shook the window as it came howling in from the sea. The rain had stopped, however, and Kitty wondered if she could see anything across the marshes at night. She padded across the office on bare feet and switched off the light. While her eyes became accustomed to the darkness she sat on the window ledge peering out, wondering if the Nazi spies would dare come ashore in such a storm to pick up their loot. Would anyone be so foolhardy?

The night was impenetrably black under lowering clouds. She could see nothing except the glow at the Marine Base to the east, and a few house lights in the settlement around the hospital.

Then anxiety for Brad swept over her again. There was no use trying to think of anything else. Unhappily she sank back into the leather chair. She pulled her father's coat closer about her, sat on her feet again and was soon comfortably warm. The wind came in from the sea like giant breakers rolling up a beach. It crashed against the big building, then there would be a momentary lull before the next gust came. To Kitty's alarm, now that she paused to listen, each blast seemed worse than the one that had just struck. As soon as she heard from Brad they would go back to the cottage for Billy and Jane. She had been through too many storms on the Gulf coast to feel safe in a small house on a night like this.

Under the circumstances it didn't seem possible she could have dozed, but Kitty came to herself with a start at the sound of a key in the door. Instantly she was on the alert. Her father had given her his key. If it were he, she thought, he would have rapped and called to her to let him in. Cautiously she crouched deeper in the leather chair.

As the door swung inward noiselessly she saw by the light from the hall a tall familiar form step into the room. He closed the door softly, then switching on a flash he moved quickly toward the desk. As the flashlight circled about the desk top for a moment it tilted so that reflected illumination struck the sneak's face. Her surmise had been correct; it was Lieutenant Cary.

In the dark corner the terrified girl watched breathlessly. Her eyes were just above the chair back, as Cary examined the order blanks in the large basket on the desk. Apparently finding what he wanted, he took up the sheaf of papers and buttoned them under his coat.

Kitty was almost beside herself with terror. So it was really Cary who did the underhand business that got both the Chief Pharmacist's Mates into trouble. She couldn't let him get away with it. But what in the world could she do in her defenseless position?

Lieutenant Cary was almost at the door when, without any premeditation, Kitty found herself saying in the fiercest tone she could command, "Don't move another step, Lieutenant Cary, or I'll shoot!"



*"Don't Move or I'll Shoot!"*

## CHAPTER NINETEEN

## TRAPPED

The instant Kitty made that threat she was appalled at her daring. Lieutenant Cary might have a pistol and fire in her direction in the darkness. Terrified she crouched in the chair. Cary didn't move or speak for what seemed an eternity. Then she heard an almost imperceptible rattle of paper. He must be trying to slide those orders from under his coat, to remove the evidence of his guilt.

"Leave those papers under your coat!" she ordered.

The paper rattling ceased. Then suddenly she caught the sound of footsteps in the hall. It would do no good for her to scream and call for help. Anyone passing down the hall was not likely to have a key that would fit this door. She couldn't forget that Cary might have a gun. But would he dare use it with someone in hearing?

Kitty decided this was the best moment for action. Her bare feet made no sound as she glided across the floor. If she could only reach the door while someone else was near she might have a chance. Even after having been in darkness for quite a while her dilated eyes could distinguish little in the room. No doubt their surroundings were still more veiled to Cary.

She had only reached the back of the desk when she heard a key slip into the door lock. Relief flooded over her in a great wave, only to be followed by stark terror at what Cary might do if her father came in and found him here.

The door swung in and the light flashed up. Almost at the same moment Cary hurled himself at Chief Carter. The impact was so completely unexpected that Carter was thrown back against the partly open door, and it closed with a bang.

"So, it's you, Cary!" exclaimed Mr. Carter, even as he went down.

Kitty seized Cary's coat as he made a lunge at her father. A moment later she realized that someone, who had been coming here with her father, had been shut out by the banging door. He was now pounding it impatiently. Kitty sprang to open it, and a blue-uniformed officer, whom she had never seen before, rushed to her father's aid. Fortunately he was armed, and a minute later had backed Cary into a corner. The order sheets from Chief Carter's desk had slipped from under the physician's coat and were scattered over the floor.

Her father got to his feet and faced the officer. "Well, Captain Rogers, this is a bit of luck!"

The Captain laughed shortly, without shifting his gaze from Cary. "We scarcely dared hope to catch him in the act."

"I expect we'll have to give credit for the catching to my daughter," replied Chief Carter, glancing proudly at Kitty.

"How did you manage it, young lady?" asked the severe-looking Captain.

Kitty thought how terrified she would be to face him at a trial. He had the look of a man whose dealings with law-breakers had soured him on the world.

"I must confess I didn't do any managing," Kitty admitted ruefully. "I was sitting here waiting for Dad when in came Lieutenant Cary."

"Waiting in the dark?" her father asked.

"I turned off the light to watch the storm—see what I could see outside," Kitty floundered.

"So—he didn't realize anyone was in here?" asked the officer.

Kitty's excited breath caught in her throat a moment before she could explain, "He went straight to Dad's desk with a flashlight, and picked up those order sheets." She pointed to the papers strewn over the floor. "He stuffed them under his coat."

"We must have come just as he did that," surmised her father.

"No! It seemed an eternity. I told him not to move or I'd shoot."

"But Kitty, you had no gun!" exclaimed her father. "Why do you take such foolhardy chances, my child?"

"Then you came! I was going to try to get out the door while someone was passing. I didn't dare hope it was you."

Though Captain Rogers hadn't taken his eyes off Cary for a moment, Kitty saw the shadow of a smile twitch around the straight lines of his mouth. Then he spoke suddenly, "Mr. Carter, please phone Minger to come up with some handcuffs. Our Lieutenant here looks like a volcano that may erupt at any moment. No doubt it's bitter for him to know he has been caught by this alert young lady."

Cary, at bay in the corner, seemed turned to stone. His baleful glances had swept from one to the other as they spoke, but otherwise not a muscle of his face changed to betray his real feelings. No doubt the Nazis had trained him so well, that to die for the Fuehrer, in an attempt to serve him, was a coveted sacrifice.

The Petty Officer with the handcuffs came up in an amazingly short time, Kitty thought. He, too, was a stranger to her. When the irons had been snapped over the physician's wrists Captain Rogers said, "Take him away, Minger. I'll join you later."

Lieutenant Cary's head was held high as he walked out. His only act of defiance was to step deliberately on the scattered order blanks.

Kitty could scarcely wait for the door to close before she asked, "Oh, Dad, tell me about Brad. Is he going to be all right?"

"We hope so, Kitten," her father replied gently. "The wound isn't so bad. The bullet was extracted



without too much trouble, and no bones were shattered."

"He lost so much blood before I could do anything for him," she said with regret.

"His strength will come back as soon as he has a transfusion."

"Oh, Dad, it's all been so awful!" wailed Kitty. Suddenly she threw her arms over his shoulders and burst into tears.

Her father held her to him a moment consolingly. "This last experience was a little too much, eh, Kitten?"

"I just knew he was going to kill you the minute you opened that door!"

"Well, he didn't! Let's hope the worst is over now." Mr. Carter went toward a cabinet in the corner. "I'm going to fix you a small dose of medicine to calm your nerves."

"Oh, I'll be all right in a moment."

"No, you'd better take this," her father insisted. "You'll need it to fortify you. We still have much to talk about. Captain Rogers may want to ask you some questions."

"Why? Is he—"

"Yes. He's the man I sent for when you told me all you had uncovered the other day."

Kitty felt rather stunned at this information, yet relieved, too. She would be glad to get the whole business off her mind, and all this information into responsible hands.

Captain Rogers had gathered the scattered papers and was examining them while Kitty drank the medicine and let her father lead her again to the big armchair. He placed two other chairs close, then found an old sweater and wrapped it around his daughter's bare feet.

"You mustn't get chilled after such a trying day," he said.

Then he joined Captain Rogers at his desk and they stood conferring in low tones for a few minutes. Gradually Kitty began to feel relaxed, and infinitely relieved that the suspense of these last weeks had at last reached a climax. She was now impatient to talk over everything with her father and his superior officer. There was much she wanted to know, too.

"Feeling better?" asked her father, coming back and standing by her chair. He took the damp kerchief from her head, and ran his fingers through her tumbled curls.

"Oh, much!"

"Well, suppose you tell us what happened this afternoon when you and Brad went out to Terrapin Island."

Captain Rogers came over and sat astride a straight chair, his arms folded over the back as he faced her. This informality instantly put Kitty at her ease, while she gave a detailed account of her afternoon up to the time she had brought Brad home.

"Young lady, you have shown remarkable keenness in handling this situation," said the Captain.

Kitty flushed. "Oh, no. I've made lots of mistakes. You don't know."

"Oh, yes, I do," he retorted. "Your father has told me everything up to date. However, I must admit you made one mistake in the very beginning."

She met his piercing brown eyes squarely. "I know," she nodded. "I should have reported my very first suspicions to the FBI."

"Exactly! No sensitive young lady should attempt to deal with Nazi or Jap saboteurs."

"But I was afraid to tell anyone until they had been maneuvered into a position where they could really be caught."

Captain Rogers laughed unexpectedly. "She doesn't have a very high regard for the secret investigators of her country, eh, Carter?"

"Oh, I don't mean it that way!" Kitty hastened to apologize. "But you see from the very beginning I—I was afraid that somehow this office—Dad's office—was involved. One doesn't run to the FBI about things where one's father may be concerned."

Captain Rogers glanced significantly at the Chief Pharmacist's Mate. "Well, Carter, I suppose that puts a stop to my scolding." He suddenly grew serious again as he turned to Kitty to say, "Young lady, if you had known what perfect confidence we have in this dad of yours you would have had no fears. When we sent him here we knew he was the one man who could stop the dirty business going on—if anyone could."

It was Chief Carter's turn to look surprised. "But I asked to be sent here!" he exclaimed.

Captain Rogers laughed. "You were only one step ahead of us. We had planned to ask you to take this post in hopes of clearing up the trouble."

"Then you knew the fault was not in this office?"

"Certainly."

"But you dumped Chief Dawson down in Santiago."

"That was only a blind to throw the guilty parties off the track until we could pin the goods on them. Dawson understands all that, but is pledged to secrecy."

"Well, for goodness sake!" burst forth Kitty. "If I'd had any idea of all that I would have told everything long ago."

"If several people had had an idea of all this we might never have sprung this trap," explained Captain Rogers.

"You speak as if it were really sprung," said Kitty eagerly.

"It is—practically."

"It seems rather certain that Punaro is responsible for young Brad Mason's wound. He was away from the hospital all afternoon. I'll order his arrest shortly. As for Beeson, he's practically a prisoner on that island until this blow is over. We'll be prepared to handle him as soon as we can get out there."

"You won't let anything happen to poor Uncle Mose?"

"We'll do our best. The old dinky is certainly entitled to his reward, too, in opening your eyes to so much."

"But there are others. Brad thinks one of the ward attendants may be helping, too."

"Oh, yes. They figure they have a perfect set-up," said Captain Rogers. "First they put the

incinerator out of order to make an opening for traffic into the marshes. Lieutenant Cary, with the assistance of your father's stenographer—"

"Dad's stenographer?" exclaimed Kitty, completely shocked.

"I was just as surprised as you, Kitten, when that amazing fact dawned on me," explained Mr. Carter. "Miss Dales seemed such a quiet, clinging vine sort I couldn't feature her daring to mix in anything like this."

"Why, Dad, I can't believe it! She acted as though she would do anything in the world for you."

"She had been Dawson's secretary, so I thought surely she was all right."

"We were rather relieved you kept her on," put in Rogers. "We had our suspicions of her all along. Any change might have put them too much on the alert."

"If you hadn't given me a hint about her, Captain Rogers," said Carter, "I might not have thought of setting this trap tonight. We finished up these order sheets just before I left the office and I told her to mail them."

"Instead she left them where Cary could get them tonight—as she has done numberless times before, so he could add his order for medicine for the German subs, above your signature."

"Exactly!" said Mr. Carter.

"So that's why there's been so much suspicion about the orders that go in," said Kitty. "But how has Lieutenant Cary been getting hold of the extra supplies when they come back?"

"The shipments are carried to Cary's office. That's in the normal routine. It is a very simple matter for him to take out the extra things he has ordered. Punaro, in collecting rubbish, places the supplies intended for German subs under the trash in his dump cart, and later hides it aboard the rubbish barge."

"And Beeson?" asked Kitty. "You really think he's the middleman?"

"No doubt of that," replied Captain Rogers. "He probably carts off quite a bit of fresh food with him when he comes for scraps for his hogs."

"That's just what we figured," said Kitty. "And I suppose Hazel Dawson was right about Lieutenant Cary playing chess with Krome to keep him occupied while Punaro gets away with the dirty work in the galley?"

"No doubt that's been his program."

While they had been talking, the fury of the wind had increased. Mr. Carter kept glancing uneasily toward the rattling windows.

"Captain, if you'll excuse me I think I'd better go back to our bungalow and bring my little boy and his nurse here. This wind is reaching an alarming force."

"Yes, yes, of course! They say it's likely to reach hurricane proportions by morning."

Mr. Carter got up quickly. "I'm afraid it's going to be ahead of schedule. Our small cottage is no place to spend the night."

Kitty threw aside the old sweater and jumped to her feet, frightened for Billy.

"No, dear, you'd better not come with me. No use for you to get wet again," said her father. "You've been through enough for one day. Hazel is on night duty. You can get some sleep in her room."

"Yes, young lady, you mustn't take any more chances. We may need you here in the morning anyhow to answer further questions."

"I'll stop by and tell Hazel you're going to her room," said her father when they started out. "I'll arrange for Billy and Jane somehow here. Restrictions will be let down for such an emergency. So you just put everything out of your mind and get some sleep."

## CHAPTER TWENTY

## REWARDS

Mr. Carter's orders for Kitty to put all worries out of her mind and sleep, were easier given than followed. She knew that very well as she entered Hazel's room. She thought a hot bath would do her more good than anything else. There were plenty of fresh towels on the rack in the bathroom, and Kitty was sure her friend would want her to make herself at home. She was just rubbing down after a relaxing soak, when she heard someone come in.

"That you, Hazel?" she called.

"Yes. Your dad told me you were here. I came as soon as I could get away."

"Could you lend me some pajamas? I helped myself to a bath."

"You're more than welcome, darling. I'll get you something to sleep in."

A moment later a pair of flowered pajamas were thrust inside the bathroom door. When Kitty came out arrayed in the sleeping garments two sizes too large for her, Hazel had the cover already turned down on the bed.

"You hop right in, and I'll tuck you up for the night."

"You're an angel to let me rest here."

"It's a privilege. The hospital will be jammed tonight."

"I won't feel easy till Billy and Jane are safely in. Where do you suppose they'll sleep?"

"Your father is having a cot put in his own room for Billy. Jane will sleep in the maids' quarters. They're putting up cots in the recreation room and library for other people. Everyone on the island has been ordered to take refuge in the larger buildings. They say none of the cottages will be safe by morning."

"There'll be lots for the Canteen workers to do after this."

"So you'd better stretch out there and get some sleep. But first drink this warm milk I brought you. Your father said you'd had no supper."

Kitty's heart swelled with gratitude. "You're a dear, Hazel. I love you very much."

Hazel suddenly put down the cup of milk and sat on the side of the bed, catching Kitty's hands in hers. "And I love you very much, too, darling. It'll be wonderful to have a daughter like you."

Surprised, Kitty asked, "You mean—you really mean—?"

"Yes. I mean your father and I have planned to marry as soon as we could clear up this trouble."

"Oh, Hazel, I *am* delighted!"

"He had only a moment just now to whisper that the worst is over, and that you helped bring it about."

Kitty's eyes were shining. "There's so much to talk about I don't think I can sleep. If I could only know Brad's going to be all right I'd be too happy for words."

"But you must sleep, dear. Your father said you've been through awful things and must rest. Here, drink this milk and go to sleep. I'll come in as soon as you wake up and tell you how Brad is."

Kitty drank the milk while Hazel stood beside her bed. As she handed her the cup she said softly, "It'll seem almost like having my own mother again, Hazel, to have you."

Quick tears welled in her friend's eyes. "Nothing you could have said would make me feel more welcome, Kitten." With a quick movement Hazel brushed the tears aside and said, "Now I must hurry back to my ward. I'll see you in the morning."

As Kitty settled down on the pillow she had no idea she could sleep. Even if her mind had not been so full of things to think about the howling wind was enough to keep anyone awake. She had not realized how utterly weary she was until she sank into that soft bed. The bath and the warm milk seemed to have magic effect, for almost at once she felt drowsy and soon slept.



*"Oh, Hazel," Kitty Said, "I'm Delighted!"*

When she roused the shades were drawn, but she could see it was day. The wind was still blowing, but not with such fury as when she had gone to sleep. She glanced at the bedside clock and was shocked to see it was eleven-thirty. Hazel should have long since had her turn in the bed. When she sat up she saw her two suitcases on the floor, all stuck over with labels from her college days. Dear old Dad, he thought of everything. At least she would now have something to wear if their cottage had blown down during the night.

Her first thought on waking had been of Brad. How had he fared through the night? She found her yellow and blue plaid skirt and a blue sweater among the things her father had brought. She had dressed and was just brushing her hair when she heard someone at the door and turned to see Hazel.

"I feel terrible that I slept so late!" Kitty exclaimed.

"I'm delighted you could sleep. I put just a bit of sleeping powder in that milk last night. I was sure you'd need it."

"Oh, you did! Guess I wouldn't have slept without it. My mind was in such a turmoil. How's Brad?"

"Much better. He wants to see you as soon as you wake. Room eighteen, third floor."

"Oh, I'm so relieved." Kitty gave a final flip to her hair, and turned to Hazel. "You look fresh as ever. Where did you sleep?"

"Oh, I had a good rest in Elsie's room while she was on duty." She sat down near the window. "Your dad and I had a long talk over our breakfast. He told me everything. You've been a wonder, Kitty."

"But I won't feel easy till Punaro and Beeson are captured. Did they arrest Punaro last night?"

Hazel shook her head. "No, he didn't come in."

"Seems no doubt he was the one who shot Brad."

"The FBI have gone out now in a powerful motorboat. The wind is down enough for them to take a chance. They're afraid to wait too long for fear the pair will get away."

"Did the storm do much damage on the island?"

"I hate to tell you how much, dear. You can get a view of the destruction from Brad's room."

Kitty was instantly alert. "Then we'll need every Canteen worker on the island. I must try to get in touch with Mrs. Evans. I suppose all the wires are down."

"Oh, yes. But Mrs. Evans and her family slept in the recreation hall. She asked me to tell you to report to the USO as soon as possible."

"Glad to know it weathered the blow."

Kitty couldn't go anywhere until she saw for herself how Brad was. The nurse was just propping him up for his dinner as Kitty entered.

"Surely is grand to see you eating, Brad!" she said happily when she went in.

Though his left arm was bound against his body he could feed himself with his right hand.

"That transfusion put the kick right back into me," Brad said. "Sorry I was such a nuisance last night."

"Don't be silly!"

She followed the nurse to the door and closed it tightly. "Brad, the whole thing came to a climax last night. Feel able to hear about it?"

"Sorry you don't get the privilege, Kit, but Chief Carter and Captain Rogers were in here a couple of hours ago. They told me everything. You've really been super through it all."

"I'm glad they talked with you. Hazel told me they've gone out to Terrapin Island now to get Beeson and Punaro. Sure hope no harm comes to Uncle Mose before they get there."

"Hope so, too. We can use the old darky when we build our summer cottage in the pine thicket."

"Our summer cottage in the pine thicket!" exclaimed Kitty and laughed suddenly. "Oh, Brad, what a dreamer you are! They must have you sort of doped still."

But he was entirely himself as he looked at her seriously. "Really, Kit, wouldn't you like that?"

"I think I would, Brad," she replied just as seriously. "But we've an awful lot to do first."

"Oh, of course. We've got to finish this big job!"

"And I can't stay here long now. There's work to be done down yonder."

She moved toward the window as she spoke. A few blocks away she could see where the storm had struck with full force. It looked as though a giant mowing machine might have laid everything level in its path.

"Oh, our cottage is ruined!" she burst forth.

"Sorry, Kit. Your dad told me about it."

How happy they had been there, she thought. But, of course, they had owned neither the house nor the furniture, so their loss was nothing to compare with that of many others near by. And they would be needing her services right now. There were many hungry mouths to feed and she must hurry off to her Canteen work. This was no time to dream of a bright future or stop to talk over a troubled past.

A few minutes later she ate a hasty lunch with her father and Billy before she put on her Canteen uniform to report for duty at the USO. The wind was still too high for them to feed the homeless outdoors, so the hall was turned into an emergency dining-room. Kitty worked hard all day and until the last dish was washed that night. It was almost twelve o'clock when she finally returned to the hospital to get a few hours' sleep in Hazel's bed.

She was roused next morning by Hazel standing by her bed. "I'm going to have breakfast with your father. Wouldn't you like to come along?"

"Yes, indeed!" Kitty was out of bed with a bound, and soon had on her clothes. "Anything develop while I was away yesterday?" she asked.

"Very satisfactory development. They got Beeson all right."

"How about Uncle Mose?"

"He was quite safe in his cabin, so they left him there."

"That's a relief! What about Punaro?"

"He wasn't on Terrapin Island, or Mangrove either. There's a possibility his boat went down in the storm, when he tried to return here—or perhaps get to Terrapin Island. They found the rifle."

"The rifle!" exclaimed Kitty.

"The one that shot the slug into Brad. It was in a cache on Mangrove Island along with several boxes of medicine and hospital supplies. The stuff all bore Punaro's fingerprints."

"The gun, too?"

Hazel nodded. "The whole set-up seems quite clear now," she continued. "The Germans have evidently been coming in as far as Mangrove Island in their rubber boat. There they change to different clothes and an old bateau kept hidden in the mangroves, in case they meet anyone on their way to Terrapin."

"The same boat the boys found in the mangroves, I suppose."

"No doubt it was. They found enormous supplies of canned goods and other foods stored at Beeson's place."

"Makes me shiver now that I really know what chances we took," said Kitty, when they were ready to go down.

"And well you may shiver, my child. It's a miracle you came through it with a whole skin."

"Poor Brad didn't."

"Oh, Brad'll be all right. He's going to have breakfast with us."

"Not really!"

A few minutes later they found her father, Brad and Billy waiting for them in the dining-room.

"What a wonderful family reunion!" exclaimed Kitty.

When they had been served Chief Carter leaned across the table and skid to his daughter, "Kitten, I have a nice surprise for you."

"Oh, Dad, I don't know if I can stand any more. First we nip this saboteur business in the bud, then I hear that you and Hazel are going to be married, and—and Brad talks deliriously about building us a summer home in the pines on Terrapin Island."

"Now it's our turn to be surprised, isn't it, Hazel?" exclaimed her father.

"Well, not exactly. My eyes have been open for quite a while."

"But now you talk of another surprise," said Kitty.

"And this includes you both," said Chief Carter, suddenly growing serious again. "Captain Rogers has just told me that you both will be given service awards, for special help to your country."

"Oh, Dad, not really!"

"I didn't do anything but get shot!" exclaimed Brad, but Kitty could see a slight color rising in his pale cheeks.

"You did so! I couldn't have done anything without you."

"Well, we won't have any argument over that. You're both entitled to recognition," stated Chief Carter.

"Oh, Dad, I'm so thrilled! I've wanted so to help, but I never dreamed it would turn out like this."

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## Transcriber's Note

Punctuation has been normalized. Variations in hyphenation have been retained as they were in the original publication. The following changes have been made:

She realized now that a {Canten changed to Canteen} worker {Page 40}

pounding the door with her {firsts changed to fists} {Page 216}

\*\*\* END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK KITTY CARTER, CANTEEN GIRL \*\*\*

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