

MISS LULU BETT

by Zona Gale

Illustrations by Irwin Meyers



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"Yes, it is," said Di. "But," she added, "I know I could love almost anybody real nice that was nice to me." And this she said, not in her own right, but either she had picked it up somewhere and adopted it, or else the terrible modernity and honesty of her day somehow spoke through her, for its own. But to Lulu it was as if something familiar turned its face to be recognized. "Di!" she cried. "It's true. You ought to know that." She waited for a moment. "You did it," she added. "Mamma said so." At this onslaught Lulu was stupefied. For she began to perceive its truth. "I know what I want to do, I guess," Di muttered, as if to try to cover what she had said. Up to that moment, Lulu had been feeling intensely that she understood Di, but that Di did not know this. Now Lulu felt that she and Di actually shared some unsuspected sisterhood. It was not only that they were both badgered by Dwight. It was more than that. They were two women. And she must make Di know that she understood her. "Di," Lulu said, breathing hard, "what you just said is true, I guess. Don't you think I don't know. And now I'm going to tell you—" She might have poured it all out, claimed her kinship with Di by virtue of that which had happened in Savannah, Georgia. But Di said: "Here come some ladies. And goodness, look at the way you look!" Lulu glanced down. "I know," she said, "but I guess you'll have to put up with me." The two women entered, looked about with the complaisance of those who examine a hotel property, find criticism incumbent, and have no errand. These two women had out-dressed their occasion. In their presence Di kept silence, turned away her head, gave them to know that she had nothing to do with this blue cotton person beside her. When they had gone on, "What do you mean by my having to put up with you?" Di asked sharply. "I mean I'm going to stay with you." Di laughed scornfully—she was again the rebellious child. "I guess Bobby'll have something to say about that," she said insolently. "They left you in my charge." "But I'm not a baby—the idea, Aunt Lulu!" "I'm going to stay right with you," said Lulu. She wondered what she should do if Di suddenly marched away from her, through that bright lobby and into the street. She thought miserably that she must follow. "And then her whole concern for the ethics of Di's course was lost in her agonized memory of her terrible, broken shoes. Di did not march away. She turned her back squarely upon Lulu, and

pouring water when Dwight entered the dining room. "Ah!" said he. "Our festive ball gown." She gave him her hand, with her peculiar sweetness of expression—almost as if she were sorry for him or were bidding him good-by. "That shows you you dress for!" he cried. "You dress for me, Ina, aren't you jealous? Lulu dresses for me!" Ina had come in with Di, and both were excited, and Ina's head was moving stiffly, as in all her indignations. Mrs. Bett had thought better of it and had given her presence. Already Monona was slinging. But no one noticed Monona, and Ina did not defer even to Dwight. She, who measured delicate, troy occasions by avoirdupois, said brightly: "No, Di. You must tell us all about it. Where had you and Aunt Lulu been with mamma's new bag?" "Ina," said Lulu, "first can't we hear something about your visit? How is—?" Her eyes consulted Dwight. His features dropped, the lines of his face dropped, his muscles seemed to sag. A look of suffering was in his eyes. "She'll never be any better," he said. "I know we've said good-by to her for the last time." "Oh, Dwight!" said Lulu. "She knew it, too," he said. "It—it put me out of business. I can tell you. She gave me my start—she took all the care of me—taught me to read—she's the only mother I ever knew—" He stopped, and opened his eyes wide on account of their dimness. But eventually they were back again before that new black bag. And Di would say nothing. She laughed, squirmed, grew irritable, laughed again. "Put an end to this, Lulu," he commanded. "Where were you two—since you make such a mystery?" Di's look at Lulu was piteous, terrified. Di's fear of her father was now clear to Lulu. And Lulu feared him, too. Abruptly she heard herself temporizing, for the moment making common cause with Di. "Oh," she said, "we have a little secret. Can't we have a secret if we want one?" "Upon my word," Dwight commented, "she has a beautiful secret. I don't know about your secrets, Lulu." Every time that he did this, that fleet, lifted look of Lulu's seemed to bleed. "I'm glad for my dinner," remarked Monona at last. "Please excuse me." On that they all rose. Lulu stayed in the kitchen and did her best to make her tasks indefinitely last. She had nearly finished when Di burst in. "Aunt Lulu, Aunt Lulu!" she cried. "Come in there—come. I can't stand it. What am I going to do?" "Di, dear," said Lulu. "Tell your mother—you must tell her." "She'll cry," Di sobbed. "Then she'll tell papa—and he'll never stop talking about it. I know him—every day he'll keep it going. After he scolds me it'll be a joke for months. I'll die—I'll die, Aunt Lulu." Ina's voice sounded in the kitchen. "What are you two whispering about? I declare, mamma's hurt, Di, at the way you're acting..." "Let's go out on the porch," said Lulu, and when Di would have escaped, Ina drew her with them. It was a warm dusk, moonless, windless. The sounds of the village



"Di, Dear," said Lulu. "Tell Your Mother—you Must Tell Her." street came in—laughter, a touch at a piano, a chiming clock. Lights started and quickened in the blurred houses. Footsteps echoed on the board walks. The gate opened. The gloom yielded up Cornish. Lulu was inordinately glad to see him. To have the strain of the time broken by him was like hearing, on a lonely winter wakening, the clock strike reassuring dawn. Cornish, in his gentle way, asked about the journey, about the sick woman—and Dwight talked of her again, and this time his voice broke. Di was curiously silent. When Cornish addressed her, she replied simply and directly—the rarest of Di's manners—in fact, not Di's manner at all, Lulu spoke not at all—it was enough to have this respite. After a little the gate opened again. It was Bobby. In the besetting fear that he was leaving Di to face something alone, Bobby had arrived. And now Di's spirits rose. To her his presence meant repentance, reconciliation. Her laugh rang out, her

replies came archly. But Bobby was plainly not playing up. Bobby was, in fact, hardly less than glum. It was Dwight, the irrepressible fellow, who kept the talk going. "Mamma!" Monona shouted from her room. "Come and hear me say my prayers!" Monona entered this request with precision on Ina's nastiest moments, but she always rose, unabashed, and went, motherly and dutiful, to hear devotions, as if that function and the process of living ran their two divided channels. She had dispatched this errand and was returning when Mrs. Bett crossed the lawn from Grandma Gates, where the old lady had taken comfort in Mrs. Bett's ministrations for an hour. "Don't you help me," Mrs. Bett warned them away sharply. "I guess I can help myself yet awhile." She gained her chair. And still in her momentary rule of attention, she said clearly: "I got a joke. Grandma Gates says it's all over town Di and Bobby Larkin eloped off together today. He!" The last was a single note of laughter, high and brief. The silence fell. "What nonsense!" Dwight Herbert said angrily. But Ina said tensely: "Is it nonsense? Haven't I been trying and trying to find out where the black satchel went? Di!" Di's laughter rose, but it sounded thin and false. "Listen to that, Bobby," she said. "Listen!" "That won't do, Di," said Ina. "You can't deceive mamma and don't you try!" Her voice trembled, she was frantic with loving and authentic anxiety, but she was without power, she overshadowed the real gravity of the moment by her indignation. "Mrs. Deacon—" began Bobby, and stood up, very straight and manly before them all. But Dwight intervened, Dwight, the father, the master of his house. Here was something requiring him to act. So the father set his face like a mask and brought down his hand on the rail of the porch. It was as if the sound shattered a thousand flaments—where? "Dinna!" his voice was terrible, demanded a response, ravaged among them. "Yes, papa," said Di, very small. "Answer your mother. Answer me. Is there anything to this absurd tale?" "No, papa," said Di, trembling. "Nothing whatever." "Can you imagine how such a ridiculous report started?" "No, papa." "Very well. Now we know where we're at. If anyone hears this report repeated, send them to me." "Well, but that satchel—" said Ina, to whom an idea manifested less as a function than as a leech. "One moment," said Dwight. "Lulu will of course verify what the child has said." "If you cannot settle this with Di," said Lulu, "you cannot settle it with me." "A shifty answer," said Dwight. "You have a genius at misrepresenting facts, you know, Lulu." "Bobby wanted to say something," said Ina, still troubled. "No, Mrs. Deacon," said Bobby, low. "I have nothing—more to say." In a little while, when Bobby went away, Di walked with him to the gate. It was as if, the worst having happened to her, she dared everything now. "Bobby," she said, "you hate a lie. But what else could I do?" He could not see her, could see only the little moon of her face, blurring. "And anyhow," said Di, "it wasn't a lie. We didn't elope, did we?" "What do you think I came for tonight?" asked Bobby. The day had aged him; he spoke like a man. His very voice came gruffly. But she saw nothing, softened to him, yielded, was ready to take his regret that they had not gone on. "Well, I came for one thing," said Bobby. "To tell you that I couldn't stand for your wanting me to lie today. Why, Di—I hate a lie. And now tonight—" He spoke his code almost beautifully. "I'd rather," he said, "they had never let us see each other than to lose you the way I've lost you now." "Bobby!" "It's true. We mustn't talk about it." "Bobby! I'll go back and tell them all." "You can't go back," said Bobby. "Not out of a thing like that." She stood staring after him. She heard some one coming and she turned toward the house, and met Cornish leaving. "Miss Di," he cried, "if you're going to elope with anybody, remember it's with me!" Her defense was ready—her laughter rang out so that the departing Bobby might hear. When Di had gone upstairs, Ina said to Lulu in a manner of cajoling confidence: "Sister"—she rarely called her that—"why did you and Di have the black bag?" So that after all it was a relief to Lulu to hear Dwight ask casually: "By the way, Lulu, haven't I got some mail somewhere about?" (To Be Continued.)

CHIRO IN PRISON. Says Jealousy of Medicos Is Cause of His Conviction. In keeping with his statement of the day before, R. Lyman Love, local chiropractor, recently tried for practicing without a state license, made his way to the county jail yesterday afternoon, following the adjournment of sessions court, to begin serving a 90-day sentence imposed upon him by Judge John S. Wilson in case he refused to leave the state or desist from his profession, says the Charleston American of Friday. Soon after entering the jail Dr. Love repeated his statement that he would resume his practice at the conclusion of his imprisonment. A short while before leaving for the jail Dr. Love made the following statement to a representative of the American: "It is not my wish to break a law as I have always been a law abiding citizen, having lived in the state for a period of 26 years. I have practiced as a chiropractor for two years and in this time have cured many hundreds of people. Professional Competition. "I can realize the medical doctors' standpoint in this matter. I believe it all a matter of professional competition. I really would like to obtain a chiropractic license from a state examining board and would be happy if there were one in this state. All the same, I am sure that in the end broad-mindedness and fair play will prevail and only the competition between the conflicting professions will be for the advancement of humane treatment. "I am going to jail for the benefit of the sick. I am conscientious in my work and have the right to believe in its good to people through years of tests and by the good words of people cured. I feel that this gives me the right to fight for the profession, and the thought of jail does not make me forget my duty. An Honest Permit. "If I did escape breaking the law by taking a permit from a medical board which does not know chiropractic, would my license be a real honest permit which says that I am fully capable to cure human ailments? Is it not true that the men on the state examining board were never on the inside of a chiropractic school? There may be

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a few licensed men who call themselves chiropractors, and they received their education from a correspondence school." Dr. Love expressed much confidence in the establishment of a state examining board for chiropractors in the near future, stating that he knew of many medical doctors who were in favor of such a board. He also felt positive that on the score of fair play the legislature will give chiropractors the rights granted them in many other states. Dr. Kenneth Todd of North Carolina, is in charge of Dr. Love's office and expects to remain in charge until Dr. Love is released. In spite of the prison atmosphere Dr. Love seems to show the same cheerful manner as on the day of the trial and looks as if serving a sentence on account of principle is not such a gloomy job after all. Insect Kills Boll Weevil.—A bug that kills the boll weevil has been found. He has been found in Marlboro county and caught in the act. He was found by Mrs. Floyd Prevatt near Lester last Saturday on a quilt in her yard, with his bill thrust into a boll weevil and holding the impaled weevil up in the air, sucking the life out of it. Mr. Prevatt put the bug into a bottle with several boll weevils and the bug immediately attacked them by sticking his bill into their backs and sucking them to death. Several weevils were killed in a few hours. This weevil killer is about a half inch long and a quarter inch or more wide. He is black with a small yellow spot in the middle of his back, and yellow fringe on his wings. He has a long bill, tucked back under his throat when not in use. When in action this bill is thrust into the weevil, as the weevil punctures a cotton square.—Pee Dee (Bennettsville) Advocate. Swearingin's Defeat.—One of the biggest surprises in the recent South Carolina primary election was the signal defeat of Superintendent of Public Instruction Swearingin. One of the state newspapers said the reason the people voted for his opponent was because of his "dictatorial manner in handling the affairs of the office and his unwillingness to see and agree with the folks who had opinions contrary to his own." A "high and mighty manner" has been the downfall of men since the beginning of history—political history.—Monroe (N. C.) Enquirer.

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