



The Girl from His Town
 by Marie Van Vorst
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CHAPTER XXIII.

In the Sunset Glow.
 He lived through a week of bliss and of torture. One minute she promised to marry him, give up the stage go around the world on a yacht, whose luxuries, Dan planned, should rival any boat ever built, or they would motor across Asia and see, one by one the various coral strands and the gold and sands of the east. He could not find terms to express how he would spend upon her this fortune of his which, for the first time, began to have value in his eye. Money had been lavished on her, still she seemed dazed. Then she would push it all away from her in disgust—tell him she was sick of everything—that she didn't want any new jewels or any new clothes, and that she never wanted to see the stage again or any place again; that there was nowhere she wanted to go, nothing she wanted to see—that he must get some fresh girl to whom he could show life, not one whom he must try to make forget it. Then, again, she would say that she loved the stage and her art—wouldn't give it up for any one in the world—that it was fatal to marry an actress—that it was mad for him to think of marrying her, anyway—that she didn't want to marry any one and be tied down—that she wanted to be her own mistress and free.



No One Would Have Dreamed That She Ever Had Known Another Love.

He found her a creature of a thousand whims and caprices, quick to cry, quick to laugh, divine in everything she did. He never knew what she would want him to do next, or how her mood would change, and after one of their happiest hours, when she had been like a girl with him, she would burst into tears, beg him to leave the room, telling him that she was tired—tired—tired, and wanted to go to sleep and never to wake up again. Between them was the figure of Pontotowsky, though neither spoke of him. She appeared to have forgotten him. Dan would rather have cut out his tongue than to speak his name, and yet he was there in the mind of each. During the fortnight Dan spent thousands of pounds on her, bought her jewels which she alternately raved over or but half looked at. He had made his arrangements with Galore peacefully, coolly and between the two men it had been understood that the world should think the engagement broken by the duchess, and Dan's attention to Letty Lane, already the subject of much comment, already conspicuous, was enough to justify any woman in taking offense.

One day, the pearl of warm May days, when England even in spring-time touches summer, Blair was so happy as to persuade his sweetheart to go with him for a little row on the river. The young fellow waited for her in the boat he had secured, and she, motoring out with Higgins, had appeared, running down to the edge of the water like a girl, gay as a child let out from school, in a simple frock, in a marvelously fetching hat, white gloves, white parasol, white shoes, and as Dan helped her into the boat, pushed it out, pushed away with her on the crest of the sun-flecked waters, spring was in his heart, and he found the moment almost too great to bear.

The actress had been a girl with him all day, giving herself to his moods, doing what he liked without demur, talking of their mutual past, telling him one amusing story after another, proving herself an ideal companion, fresh, varied, reposeful; and no one to have seen Letty Lane with the boy on that afternoon would have dreamed that she ever had known another love. They had moored their boat down near Maidenhead, and he had helped her up the bank to the little inn, where tea had been made for them, and served to him by her own beautiful white hands. He had called for strawberries, and, like a shepherd in a pastoral, had fed them to her, and as they lingered the sun

set came creeping steadily in through the windows where they sat.

As they neither called for their account nor to have the tea things taken away, after a while the woman stealthily opened the door and, unknown, looked at one of the prettiest pictures ever within her walls. Letty Lane sat on the window seat, her golden head, her white form against the glow, and the boy by her side had his arms around her, and her head was on his breast. They were both young. They might have been white birds blown in there, nesting in the humble inn, and the woman of the house, who had not heard the waters of the Thames flow softly for nothing, judged them gently and sighed with pleasure as she shut the door.

Here at Maidenhead Dan had left his boat and the motor took them back. Nothing spoiled his bliss that day, and he said her name a thousand times that night in his dreams. Jealousies—and, when he would let himself think, they were not one, they were many—faded away. The duties that a life with her would involve did not disturb him. For many a long year, come what might, be what would, he would recall the glowing of that sunset reflected under the inn windows, the singing of the thrushes and the flash of the white dress and the fine little white shoes which he had held in the palm of his ardent hand, which he had kissed, as he told her with all his heart that she should rest her tired feet forever.

There grew in him that day a reverence for her, determined as he was to bring into her life by his wealth and devotion everything of good. His loving plans for her forming in his brain somewhat chaotic and very much fevered, brought him nearer than he had ever been before to the picture of his mother. His father it wasn't easy for Dan to think of in connection with the actress. He didn't dare to dwell on the subject, but he had never known his mother, and that pale ideal he could create as he would. In thinking of her he saw only tenderness for Letty Lane—only love; and in his room the night after the row on the river, the sunset room of the inn, something like a prayer came to his young lips, and, when his short form was finished, a smile brought it to an end as he remembered the line in Letty Lane's own opera:

"She will teach you how to pray in an Eastern form of prayer."

The ring he had given the duchess of Breakwater had been her own choice, a ruby. He had asked her, through Galorey, to keep it and to wear it later, when she could think of him kindly, in an ornament of some kind or another. The duchess had not refused. The ring he bought for Letty Lane, although there was no engagement announced between them, was the largest, purest diamond he could with decency ask her to put on her hand! It sparkled like a great drop of clear water from some fountain on a magic continent. In another shop strands of pink coral, set through with diamonds, caught his fancy and he bought her yards of them, ropes of them, smiling to think how his boyhood's dreams were come true.

He never saw Ruggles except at meals, hardly spoke to the poor man at all, and the boy's absorbed face, his state of mind, made the older man feel like death. He repeated to himself that he was too late—too late, and usually wound up his reflections by ejaculating:

"Gosh almighty, I'm glad I haven't got a son!"

CHAPTER XXIV.

Ruggles' Offer.

He felt as he waited for her in that flower-filled room, for she had recovered from her distaste for flowers, as he glanced at the photographs of women like herself in costumes more or less frank, more or less vulgar, he felt as though he wanted to knock down the walls and let in a big view of the west—of Montana—of the hills. With such a setting he thought he could better talk with the lady whom he had come to see.

Ruggles held an unlighted cigar between his fingers and gooseflesh rose all over him. His glasses bothered him. He couldn't get them bright enough, though he polished them half a dozen times on his silk handkerchief. His clothes felt too large. He seemed to have shrunk. He moistened his lips, cleared his throat, tried to remember what kind of fellow he had been at Dan's age. At Dan's age he was selling a suspender patent on the road, supporting his mother and his sisters—hard work and few temptations; he was too tired and too poor.

Miss Lane kept him waiting ten minutes, and they were hours to her guest. He was afraid every minute that Dan would come in. The thoughts

ne had gathered together, the plan of action, disarranged itself in his mind every time he thought of the actress. He couldn't forget his vision of her on the stage or at the Carlton, where she had sat opposite them and bewitched them both. When she came into the sitting-room at length, he started so violently that he knocked over a vase of flowers, the water trickling all over the table down on to the floor.

She had dazzled him before the footlights, charmed him at dinner, and it was singular to think that he knew how this dignified, quiet creature looked in ballet clothes and in a dinner dress, whose frankness had made him catch his breath. It was a third woman who stood before Ruggles now. He had to take her into consideration. She had expected him, saw him by appointment. She had not climbed to her starry position without having acquired a knowledge of men, and it was the secret of her success. She showed it in the dress in which she received her visitor. She wore a short walking skirt of heavy serge, a simple shirtwaist belted around, a sailor hat on her beautiful little head. She was unjeweled and unpainted, very pale and very sweet. If it had not been for the marks of fatigue under her eyes, she would not have looked more than eighteen. On her left hand a single diamond, clear as water, caught the refracted light.

"How-de-do! Glad you are back again."

She gave him a big chair and sat down before him smiling. Leaning her elbows on her knees, she sank her face upon her hands and looked at him, not coquettishly in the least, but as a child might have looked. From her small feet to her golden head she was utterly charming.

Ruggles made himself think of Dan. Miss Lane spoke slowly, nodding toward him, in her languid voice: "It's no use, Mr. Ruggles, no use."

Holding her face between her hands, her eyes gray as winter's seas and as profound, she looked at him intently; then, in a flash, she changed her position and instantly transformed her character. He saw that she was a woman, not an eighteen-year-old girl, but a woman, clever, poised, witty, understanding, and that she might have been twenty years older than the boy.

"I'm sorry you spoke so quick," he said.

"I knew," she interrupted, "just what you wanted to say from the start. I couldn't help it, could I? I knew you would want to come and see me about it. It isn't any use. I know just what you are going to say."

"No, ma'am," he returned, "I don't believe you do—bright as you are."

Ruggles gazed thoughtfully at the cold end of his unlighted cigar. It was a comfort to him to hold it and to look at it, although not for anything in the world would he have asked to light it.

"Dan's father and me were chums. We went through pretty much together, and I know how he felt on most points. He was a man of few words, but I know he counted on me to stand by the boy."

Ruggles was so chivalrous that his role at present cost him keen discomfort.

"A lady like you," he said gently "knows a great deal more about how things are done than either Dan or me. We ain't tenderfeet in the west, not by a long shot, but we see so few



"Dan's Father and Me Were Chums."

of a certain kind of picture shows that when they do come round they're likely to make us lose our minds! You know, yourself, a circus in a town fifty miles from a railroad drives the people crazy. Now, Dan's a little like the boy with his eyes on the hole in the tent. He would commit murder to get inside and see that show." He nodded and smiled to her as though he expected her to follow his crude simile. "Now, I have seen you a lot of times." And she couldn't help reminding him, "Not of your own accord, Mr. Ruggles."

"Well, I don't know," he slowly admitted; "I always felt I had my money's worth, and the night you ate with us at the Carlton I understood pretty well how the boy with his eyes at the tent hole would feel." But he tapped his broad chest with the hand that held the cigar between the first and second fingers. "I know just what kind of a heart you've got, for I waited at the stage door and I know you don't get all the applause inside the Gaiety theater."

"Goodness," she murmured, "they make an awful fuss about nothing." "Now," he continued, leaning forward a trifle toward her languid, half-interested figure, "I just want you to think of him as a little boy. He's only twenty-two. He knows nothing of the world. The money you give to the poor doesn't come so hard perhaps as this will. It's a big sacrifice, but

I want you to let the boy go."

She smiled slightly, found her handkerchief, which was tucked up the cuff of her blouse, pressed the little bit of linen to her lips as though to steady them, then she asked abruptly: "What has he said to you?"

"Lord!" Ruggles groaned. "Said to me! My dear young lady, he is much too rude to speak. Dan sort of breathes and snorts around like a lunatic. He was dangling around that duchess when I was here before, but she didn't scare me any."

And Letty Lane, now smiling at him, relieved by his break from a more intense tone, asked: "Now, you are scared?"

"Well," Ruggles drawled, "I was pretty sure that woman didn't care anything for the boy. Are you her kind?"

It was the best stroke he had made. She almost sprang up from her chair. "Heavens," she exclaimed, "I guess I'm not!" Her face flushed.

"I had rather see a son of mine dead than married to a woman like that," she said.

"Why, Mr. Ruggles," she exclaimed passionately, addressing him with interest for the first time, "what do you know about me? What? What? You have seen me dance and heard me sing."

And he interrupted her. "Ten times, and you are a bully dancer and a bully singer, but you do other things than dance and sing. There is not a man living that would want to have his mother dress that way."

She controlled a smile. "Never mind that. People's opinions are very different about that sort of thing. You have seen me at dinner with your boy, as you call him, and you can't say that I did anything but ask him to help the poor. I haven't led Dan on. I have tried to show him just what you are making me go through now."

If she acted well and danced well, it was hard for her to talk. She was evidently under strong emotion and it needed her control not to burst into tears and lose her chance.

"Of course, I know the things you have heard. Of course, I know what is said about me!"—and she stopped.

Ruggles didn't press her any further; he didn't ask her if the things were true. Looking at her as he did, watching her as he did, there was in him a feeling so new, so troubling that he found himself more anxious to protect her than to bring her to justice.

"There are worse, far worse women than I am, Mr. Ruggles. I will never do Dan any harm."

Here her visitor leaned forward and put one of his big hands lightly over one of hers, patted it a moment, and said:

"I want you to do a great deal better than that."

She had picked up a photograph off the table, a pretty picture of herself in "Mandalay," and turned it nervously between her fingers as she said with irritation:

"I haven't been in the theatrical world not to guess at this 'Worried Father' act, Mr. Ruggles. I told you I knew just what you were going to say."

"Wrong!" he repeated. "The business is old enough perhaps, lots of good boys are old, but this is a little different."

He took the turning picture and laid it on the table, and quietly possessed himself of the small cold hands. Blair's solitaire shone up to him. Ruggles looked into Letty Lane's eyes. "He is only twenty-two; it ain't fair, it ain't fair. He could count the times he has been on a lark, I guess. He hasn't even been to an eastern college. He is no fool, but he's darned simple."

She smiled faintly. The man's face, near her own, was very simple indeed. "You have seen so much," he urged, "so many fellows. You have been such a queen, I dare say you could get any man you wanted." He repeated, "Most any man."

"I have never seen any one like Dan."

"Just so; he ain't your kind. That is what I am trying to tell you."

She withdrew her hand from his violently.

"There you are wrong. He is my kind. He is what I like, and he is what I want to be like."

A wave of red dyed her face, and, in a tone more passionate than she had ever used to her lover, she said to Ruggles:

"I love him—I love him!" Her words sent something like a sword through the older man's heart. He said gently: "Don't say it. He don't know what love means yet."

He wanted to tell her that the girl Dan married should be the kind of woman his mother was, but Ruggles couldn't bring himself to say the words. Now, as he sat near her, he was growing so complex that his brain was turning round. He heard her murmur:

"I told you I knew your act, Mr. Ruggles. It isn't any use."

This brought him back to his position and once more he leaned toward her and, in a different tone from the one he had intended to use, murmured:

"You don't know. You haven't any idea. I do ask you to let Dan go, that's a fact. I have got something else to propose in its place. It ain't quite the same, but it is clear—marry me!"

She gave a little exclamation. A slight smile rippled over her face like the sunset across a pale pool at dawn.

"Laugh," he said happily; "don't keep in. I know I am out-fashioned as the deuce, and me and Dan is quite a contrast, but I mean just what I say, my dear."

She controlled her amusement, if it was that. It almost made her cry

with mirth, and she couldn't help it. Between laughing breaths she said to him:

"Oh, is it all for Dan's sake, Mr. Ruggles? Is it?" And then, biting her lips and looking at him out of her beautiful eyes, she said: "I know it is—I know it is—I beg your pardon."

"I asked a girl once when I was poor—too poor. Now this is the second time in my life. I mean just what I say. I'll make you a kind husband. I am fifty-five, hale as a nut. I dare say you have had many better offers."

"Oh, dear," she breathed; "oh, dear, please—please stop!"

"But I don't expect you to marry me for anything but my money."

Ruggles put his cigar down on the edge of the table. He looked at his chair meditatively, he took out his silk handkerchief, polished up his glasses, readjusted them, put them on and then looked at her.

"Now," he said, "I am going to trust you with something, and I know you will keep my secret for me. This shows you a little bit of what I think about you. Dan Blair hasn't got a red cent. He has nothing but what I give him. There's a false title to all that land on the Bentley claim. The whole thing came up when I was home and the original company, of which I own three-quarters of the stock, holds the clear titles to the Blairtown mines. It all belongs now to me, if I choose to present my documents. Dan knows nothing about this—not a word."

The actress had never come up to such a dramatic point in any of her plays. With her hands folded in her lap she looked at him steadily, and he could not understand the expression that crossed her face. He heard her exclamation: "Oh, gracious!"

"I've brought the papers back with me," said the westerner, "and it is between you and me how we act. If Dan marries you I will be bound to do what old Blair would have done—cut him off—let him feel his feet on the ground, and the result of his own folly."

He had taken his glasses off while he made this assertion. Now he put them on again.

"If you give him up I'll divide with the boy and be rich enough still to hand over to my wife all she wants to spend."

She turned her face away from him and leaned her head once more upon her hands. He heard her softly murmuring under her breath, with an absent look on her face, accompanied by a still more incomprehensible smile.

"That's how it stands," he concluded.

She seemed to have forgotten him entirely, and he caught his breath when she turned about abruptly and said:

"My goodness, how Dan will hate being poor! He will have to sell all his stickpins and his motor cars and all the things he has given me. It will be quite a little to start on, but he will hate it, he is so very smart."

"Why, you don't mean to say—"

Ruggles gasped.

And with a charming smile as she rose to put her conversation at an end, she said:

"Why, you don't mean to say that you thought I wouldn't stand by him?" She seemed, as she put her hands upon her hips with something of a defiant look at the elder man, as though she just then stood by her pauperized lover.

"I thought you cared some for the boy," Ruggles said.

"Well, I am showing it."

"You want to ruin him to show it, do you?"

As though he thought the subject dismissed he walked heavily toward the door.

"You know how it stands. I have nothing more to say. He knew that he had signally failed, and as a sudden resentment rose in him he exclaimed, almost brutally:

"I am darned glad the old man is dead; I am glad his mother's dead, and I am glad I have got no son."

The next moment she was at his side, and he felt that she clung to his arm. Her sensitive, beautiful face, all drawn with emotion, was raised to his.

"Oh, you'll kill me—you'll kill me! Just look how very ill I am; you are making me crazy. I just worship him."

"Give him up, then," said Ruggles steadily.

She faltered: "I can't—I can't—it won't be for long"—with a terrible pathos in her voice. "You don't know how different I can be; you don't know what a new life we were going to lead."

Stammering, and with intense meaning, Ruggles, looking down at her, said: "My dear child—my dear child."

In his few words something perhaps made her see in a flash her past and what the question really was. She dropped Ruggles' arm. She stood for a moment with her arms folded across her breast, her head bent down, and the man at the door waited, feeling that Dan's whole life was in the balance of the moment. When she spoke again her voice was hard and entirely devoid of the lovely appealing quality which brought her so much admiration from the public.

"If I give him up," she said slowly, "what will you do?"

"Why," he answered, "I'll divide with Dan and let things stand just as they are."

She thought again for a moment and then as if she did not want him to witness—to detect the struggle she was going through, she turned away and walked over toward the window and dismissed him from there.

"Please go, will you? I want very much to be alone and to think."

(TO BE CONTINUED)

UNDERWOOD CARRIES FLORIDA.

Latest Returns Show That Congressman Has Won in Florida by Nearly Two to One.

Jacksonville, May 1.—Oscar W. Underwood of Alabama is the choice of the Democrats of Florida for the Democratic nomination for president of the United States, according to incomplete returns received up to an early hour today in the presidential preference primary in Florida yesterday. Incomplete returns at this hour indicate that he has a substantial lead over Woodrow Wilson, and The Times-Union of this city today claims that he will have a two-thirds majority over his opponent.

Park Trammell is leading Cromwell Gibbons for the governorship.

FEATURES OF POSTOFFICE BILL.

Democrats Succeed in Removing "Gag" Rule—Newspaper Regulations.

Washington, April 30.—The perfected postoffice appropriation bill, as agreed upon after a session of the House which lasted until 7.50 o'clock tonight, contained several new features of legislation advocated by the Democrats.

One was an abrogation of the rule, described by Democrats as a "gag" rule, which prevented Federal employees in the postal service from complaining to Congress of their treatment.

The bill contains a provision which would compel newspapers, magazines and other periodicals to publish the names of their managing editors and stockholders who own stock valued at more than \$550.

The Barnhart bill also provides that all editorial or reading matter for which money has been received must be labelled advertisement.

A compromise on the parcel post and express provisions occupied most of the time of debate. These questions are given to a committee of three Senators and three Representatives for study and report to the next session of Congress.

In the meantime a rural route parcel service is provided. Its rates are 5 cents for the first pound and 1 cent for each additional pound up to 11 pounds. All of this mail matter is confined to rural route service.

A general parcel post service of 12 cents a pound for 11 pounds is contained in the bill.

A proposal by Representative Reddenberry, of Georgia, to prevent the circulation of newspapers containing liquor advertisements in dry territory was defeated.

SOUTH CAROLINA CROP.

Ginners Report Showing Total Yield of Cotton.

Total number of bales of cotton ginned, counting round bales as half bales, and excluding linters, for the crops of 1910 to 1911, inclusive:

County.	1911	1910
Abbeville	42,162	32,804
Alken	151,361	36,160
Anderson	80,382	63,175
Bamberg	28,019	16,572
Barnwell	67,601	42,958
Beaufort	7,040	9,904
Berkeley	17,118	12,465
Calhoun	31,730	21,441
Charleston	11,586	14,169
Cherokee	16,542	14,793
Chester	36,012	28,381
Chesterfield	36,418	29,873
Clarendon	54,222	36,069
Colleton	21,916	15,571
Darlington	57,700	40,369
Dillon	50,576	40,376
Dorchester	19,295	14,183
Edgefield	40,356	26,430
Fairfield	33,486	25,682
Florence	58,902	33,916
Georgetown	5,935	3,464
Greenville	54,442	37,269
Greenwood	45,546	29,744
Hampton	25,797	16,612
Horry	16,164	8,486
Kershaw	36,193	23,063
Lancaster	31,137	24,556
Laurens	54,686	42,312
Lee	47,713	28,459
Lexington	34,011	24,177
Marlboro	75,942	66,412
Newberry	46,426	33,826
Oconee	22,824	15,196
Orangeburg	87,976	56,596
Pickens	22,520	15,163
Richland	22,613	15,249
Saluda	30,470	19,437
Spartanburg	78,145	59,711
Sumter	50,613	33,335
Union	23,029	18,167
Williamsburg	38,701	24,790
York	49,403	41,508
The State	1,692,146	1,210,363

Babe Crickendale, white, and Steve Johnson, colored, have been arrested in the Dark Corner of Greenville county for the murder of Tom Adams, colored.

It would surprise you to know—the great good that is being done by Chamberlain's Tablets. Darius Downey, of Newberg Junction, N. B