

Chase Josephine

Marjorie Dean, College

Junior



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CHAPTER I – A MUSICAL WELCOME

“Remember; we are to begin with the ‘Serenata.’ Follow that with ‘How Fair Art Thou’ and ‘Hymn to Hamilton.’ Just as we are leaving, sing ‘How Can I Leave Thee, Dear?’ We will fade away on the last of that. Want to make any changes in the programme?”

Phyllis Moore turned inquiringly to her choristers. There were seven of them including herself, and they were preparing to serenade Marjorie Dean and her four chums. The Lookouts had returned to Hamilton College that afternoon from the long summer vacation. This year, their Silverton Hall friends had arrived before them. Hence Phyllis’s plan to serenade them.

Robina Page, Portia Graham, Blanche Scott, Elaine Hunter, Marie Peyton and Marie’s freshman cousin, Hope Morris, comprised Phyllis’s serenading party. The latter had been invited to participate because she was still company. Incidentally she knew the songs chosen, with the exception of the “Hymn to Hamilton,” and could sing alto. She was, therefore, a valuable asset.

“I hope Leila has managed to cage the girls in Marjorie’s room,” remarked Blanche Scott. “We want all five Sanfordites in on the serenade.”

“Leave it to Irish Leila to cage anything she starts out to cage,” was Robin’s confident assurance. “If she says she will do a thing, she will accomplish it, somehow. Leila is a diplomat, and so clever she is amazing.”

“Vera Mason isn’t far behind her. Those two have chummed together so long their methods are similar. They were the first girls I knew at Hamilton. They met the train I came in on. Nella Sherman and Selma Sanbourne were with them. Two more fine girls. Portia looked pleasantly reminiscent of her reception by the quartette to which she now referred.

“I heard Selma Sanbourne wasn’t coming back. I must ask Leila about that.” Robin made mental note of the question.

“That will be hard on Nella,” observed Elaine Hunter, with her usual ready sympathy. “They have always been such great chums.”

“Sorry to interrupt, but we must be hiking, girls.” In command of the tuneful expedition, Phyllis tucked her violin case under her arm in business-like fashion and cast a critical eye over her flock.

“Be sure you have your instruments of torture with you,” she laughed. “One time, at home, three girls and myself started out to serenade a friend of ours. Before we started we had all been sitting on our veranda, eating ice cream. One of the girls was to accompany us on the mandolin. She walked away and left it on the veranda. She never noticed the omission until we were ready to lift up our voices. So we had to sing without it, for it was over a mile to our house and she couldn’t very well go back after it.”

“Let this be a warning to you mandolin players not to do likewise.” Marie turned a severe eye on Elaine and Portia, who made pretext of clutching their mandolins in a firmer grip.

“My good old guitar is hung to me by a ribbon. I am not likely to go away from here without it.” Blanche patted the smooth, shining back of the guitar.

“We couldn’t have chosen a better time for a serenade,” exulted Robin. “It is a fine night; just dark enough. Besides, there are not many girls back at Wayland Hall yet. We won’t be so conspicuous with our caroling.”

Meanwhile, in a certain room at Wayland Hall, wily Lelia Harper was exerting herself to be agreeable to her Lookout chums. Three of them she had marshaled to Marjorie’s room on plea of showing them souvenirs of a trip she had made through Ireland that summer.

The souvenirs had been heartily admired, but even they could not stem Muriel's and Jerry's determined desire to entertain. First Jerry innocently proposed that they all walk over to Baretto's for ices. Leila and Vera exhibited no enthusiasm at the invitation. Next, Muriel re-proposed the jaunt at her expense. Vera cast an appealing look toward Leila. The latter was equal to the occasion.

"And are you so tired of me and my pictures of my Emerald Isle that you want to hurry me off to Baretto's to be rid of me?" she questioned, in an offended tone.

"Certainly not, and you needn't pretend you think so, for you don't," retorted Muriel, unabashed. "Your Irish views are wonderful. So is Baretto's fresh peach ice cream. Helen was there and had some this afternoon. She said it was better than ever. I was only trying to be hospitable and so was Jerry. Sorry you had to take me too personally." Muriel now strove to simulate offense. She turned up her nose, tossed her head and burst out laughing. "It's no use," she said, "I couldn't really fuss with you if I tried, Leila Greatheart."

"I am relieved to hear it," Leila returned with inimitable dryness.

"Lots of time for Baretto's and ice cream yet tonight. It's only half-past eight." Marjorie indicated the wall clock with a slight move of her head. "We can leave here about nine. We'll be there by ten after."

"Certainly; we have oceans of time," Leila agreed with alacrity. "The ten-thirty rule is still on a vacation and won't be back for a week or so."

"Oh, I haven't told you about my new car," Vera began with sudden inspiration. "Father bought it for me in August. It is a beauty. He is going to send James, his chauffeur, here with it. It may arrive tomorrow. I hope it does." Vera launched into a description of her car with intent to kill time. Phyllis had set the hour for the serenade to the Lookouts at a quarter to nine.

"It will be good and dark then," she had told Leila and Vera. "We will have to come as early as that, for we are going to Acasia House to serenade Barbara Severn, and to Alston Terrace to sing to Isabel Keller. Last, we are going to serenade Miss Humphrey. We'll have to hustle, in order to go the rounds and get back to Silverton Hall before eleven o'clock. I depend on you, Leila, to keep that lively bunch of Sanfordites in until we get there."

Leila, aided by Vera, was now endeavoring to carry out Phyllis's request. She was privately hoping that the serenaders would be on time. Should they delay until nine or after, they were quite likely to gather in under the window of a deserted room.

Readers of the "Marjorie Dean High School Series" have long been in touch with Marjorie Dean and the friends of her high school days. "Marjorie Dean, High School Freshman," recounted her advent into Sanford High School and what happened to her during her first year there. "Marjorie Dean, High School Sophomore," "Marjorie Dean, High School Junior," and "Marjorie Dean, High School Senior," completed a series of stories which dealt entirely with Marjorie's four years' course at Sanford High School. Admirers of the loyal-hearted, high-principled young girl, who became a power at high school because of her many fine qualities, will recall her ardent wish to enroll as a student at Hamilton College when she should have finished her high school days.

In "Marjorie Dean, College Freshman," will be found the account of Marjorie's doings as a freshman at Hamilton College. Entering college full of noble resolves and high ideals, she was not disappointed in her Alma Mater, although she was not long in discovering that an element of snobbery was abroad at Hamilton which was totally against Hamilton traditions. Aided by four of her Sanford chums, who had entered Hamilton College with her, and a number of freshmen and upper class girls, of democratic mind, the energetic band had endeavored to combat the pernicious influence, exercised by a clique of moneyed girls, which was fast taking hold upon other students. The end of the college year had found their efforts successful, in a measure, and the way paved for better things.

In "Marjorie Dean, College Sophomore," the further account of Marjorie's eventful college days was set forth. Opposed, from her return to Hamilton College by certain girls residing in the same house with herself, who disliked her independence and fair-mindedness, Marjorie was later given

signal proof of their enmity. How she and her chums fought them on their own ground and won a notable victory over them formed a narrative of pleasing interest and lively action.

Now that the Five Travelers, as the quintette of Sanford girls loved to call themselves, were once more settled in the country of college, their devoted friends had already planned to honor them. Leila and Vera, who invariably returned early to college, had encountered Phyllis on the campus on the day previous. Informing her of the Lookouts' expected arrival on the next afternoon, Phyllis had planned the serenade and demanded Leila's help. Leila had rashly promised to keep the arrivals at home that evening. She was now of the opinion that a promise was sometimes easier made than fulfilled.

"Since Vera has told you everything she can remember about her new roadster, I shall now do a little talking myself." Leila was having the utmost difficulty in controlling her risibles. She dared not look at Vera; nor dared Vera look at her. "Ahem! When I was in Ireland," she pompously announced, "I saw –"

Came the welcome interruption for which she had been waiting. Clear and sweet under the windows of the room rose the strains of Tosti's "Serenata." A brief prelude and voices took it up, filling the evening air with harmony.

"Thank my stars! A-h-h!" Leila relaxed exaggeratedly in her chair, her Cheshire-cat smile predominating her features.

"You bad old rascal!" Marjorie paused long enough to shake Leila playfully by the shoulders. Then she hurried to one of the windows. Jerry, Muriel and Lucy had reached one. Ronny and Vera were at the other. Marjorie joined them. Leila made no move to rise. She preferred sitting where she was.

"Keep quiet," Jerry had admonished at the first sounds. "If we start to talk to them, they'll stop singing. Whoever they are, they certainly can sing." Her companions of her mind, it was a silent and appreciative little audience that gathered at the open windows to listen to the serenaders.

There was no moon that night. It was impossible to see the faces of the carolers, nor, in the general harmony of melodious sound, was it possible to identify any one voice. An energetic clapping of hands, from other windows as well as those of Marjorie's room, greeted the close of the "Serenata." Then a high soprano voice, which the girls recognized as Robin Page's, began that most beautiful of old songs, "How Fair Art Thou." A violin throbbed a soft obligato.

The marked hush that hung over the Hall during the rendering of the song was most complimentary to the soloist. The serenaders were not out for glory, however. Hardly had the applause accorded Robin died out, when mandolins, guitar and violin took up the stately "Hymn to Hamilton."

"First in wisdom, first in precept; teach us to revere
thy way:

Grant us mind to know thy purpose, keep us in
thy brightest ray.

Let our acts be shaped in honor; let our steps be
just and free:

Make us worthy of thy threshold, as we pledge our
faith to thee."

Thus ran the first stanza, set to a sonorous air which the combined harmony of voices and musical instruments rendered doubly beautiful. It seemed to those honored by the serenaders that they had never before heard the fine old hymn so inspiringly sung. The whole three stanzas were given. The instant the hymn was ended the familiar melody "How Can I Leave Thee Dear?" followed.

“That means they are going to beat it,” called Jerry in low tones. “Let us head them off before they can get away and take them with us to Baretti’s. We’ll have to start now, if we expect to catch them. They’re beginning the second stanza. We’ll just give *them* a little surprise.”

With one accord the appreciative and mischievous audience left the windows and made a rush for the stairs. Headed by Jerry they exited quietly from the house and stole around its right-hand corner.

Absorbed in their own lyric efforts, the singers had reached the third sentimentally pathetic stanza:

“If but a bird were I, homeward to thee I’d fly;
Falcon nor hawk I’d fear, if thou wert near.
Shot by a hunter’s ball; would at thy feet I fall,
If but one ling’ring tear would dim thine eye.”

Ready to leave almost on the last line, they were not prepared for the merry crowd of girls who pounced suddenly upon them.

“How can you leave us, dears?” caroled Muriel Harding, as she caught firm hold of Robin Page. “You are not going to leave us. Don’t imagine it for a minute.”

CHAPTER II – UNDER THE SEPTEMBER STARS

“Captured by Sanfordites!” exclaimed Robin dramatically. “What fate is left to us now?” Despite her tragic utterance, she proceeded to a vigorous hand-shaking with Muriel.

“Now why couldn’t you have stayed upstairs like nice children and praised our modest efforts in your behalf instead of prancing down stairs to head us off?” inquired Phyllis in pretended disgust. “Not one of you has the proper idea of the romance which should attend a serenade. Of course, you didn’t *know* who was singing to you, and, of course, you just simply *had* to find out.”

“Don’t delude yourself with any such wild idea,” Jerry made haste to retort. “We knew Robin’s voice the minute she opened her mouth to sing ‘How Fair Art Thou.’ Now which one of us were you particularly referring to in that number? I took it straight to myself. Of course I *may* be a trifle presumptuous, Ahem!”

“Yes; ‘Ahem!’” mimicked Phyllis. “You are just the same good old, funny old scout, Jeremiah. Somebody please hold my violin while I embrace Jeremiah.”

“Hold it yourself,” laughed Portia. “We have fond welcomes of our own to hand around and need the use of our arms.”

Full of the happiness of the meeting the running treble of girlhood, mingled with ripples of gay, light laughter, was music in itself.

“The Moore Symphony Orchestra and Concert Company will have to be moving on,” Elaine reminded after fifteen minutes had winged away. “This is Phil’s organization but she seems to have forgotten all about it. We are supposed to serenade Barbara Severn, Isabel Keller and Miss Humphrey while the night is yet young. I can see where someone of the trio will have to be unserenaded this evening.”

“Couldn’t you serenade them tomorrow night?” coaxed Marjorie. “We had it all planned to go to Barette’s before we hustled down to head you off. The instant I recognized Robin’s heavenly soprano I knew that the Silvertonites were under our windows. I guess the rest knew, too. We didn’t want to talk while you were singing.”

“Very polite in you, I am sure.” In the darkness Elaine essayed a profound bow. Result, her head came into smart contact with Blanche’s guitar.

“Steady there! I need my guitar for the next orchestral spasm.” Blanche swung the instrument under her arm out of harm’s way.

“I need my head, too,” giggled Elaine, ruefully rubbing that slightly injured member.

“Do serenade the others tomorrow night.” Ronny now added her plea. “How would you like to take us along with you, then? Not to sing, but just for company, you know. I never went out serenading, and I fully feel the need of excitement.”

“What you folks need is fresh peach ice cream and lots of it,” Jerry advised with crafty enthusiasm. “It’s to be had at Giuseppe Barette’s.”

“I know of nothing more refreshing to tired soloists than fresh peach ice cream,” seconded Vera. “I leave it to my esteemed friend, Irish Leila, if I am not entirely correct in this.”

“You are. Now what is it that you are quite right about?” Leila had caught the last sentence and risen to the occasion.

“Such support,” murmured Vera, as a laugh arose.

“Is it not now?” Leila blandly commented. “Never worry. There is little I would not agree with you in, Midget. Be consoled with that handsome amend. As for you singers and wandering musicians, you had better come with us.

“We’ll feed you on fine white bread of the wheat
And the drip of honey gold:

We'll give you pale clouds for a mantle sweet,
And a handful of stars to hold."

Leila sang lightly the quaint words of an old Irish ditty.

"Can we resist such a prospect?" laughed Phyllis. "How about it, girls? Is it on with the serenade or on to Baretti's?"

"Baretti's it had better be, since we are invited there by such distinguished persons," was Robin's decision. "Leila, you are to teach me that song you were just humming. It is sweet!"

Her companions were nothing loath to abandon their project for the evening in order to hob-nob with their Wayland Hall friends. They came to this decision very summarily. Now fourteen strong, the company turned their steps toward their favorite restaurant.

They were nearing the cluster lights stationed at each side of the wide walk leading up to the entrance of the tea room, when Lucy Warner stopped short with: "Oh, girls; I know something that I think would be nice to do."

"Speak up, respected Luciferous," encouraged Vera. "You say so little it is a pleasure to listen to you. I wish I could say that of everyone I know," she added significantly.

"Have you an idea of whom she may be talking about?" quizzed Leila, rolling her eyes at her companions.

"She certainly doesn't mean us, even if she didn't say 'present company excepted.'" Muriel beamed at Leila with trustful innocence. "Go ahead, Luciferous Warniferous, noble Sanfordite, and tell us what's on your mind."

"I had no idea I was so greatly respected in this crowd. I never before saw signs of it. Much obliged. This is what I thought of." Lucy came to the point with her usual celerity. "Why not serenade Signor Baretti? He is an Italian. The Italians all love music. I know he would like it. You girls sing and play so beautifully."

"Of course he would." Marjorie was the first to endorse Lucy's proposal "This is really a fine time for it, too. It's late enough in the evening so that there won't be many persons in the restaurant."

"It would delight his little, old Giuseppeship," approved Blanche.

"No doubt about it," Robin heartily concurred. "We ought to sing something from an Italian opera. That would please him most. The Latins don't quite understand the beauty of our English and American songs."

"We can sing the sextette from 'Lucia,'" proposed Elaine. "It doesn't matter about the words. We know the music. We have sung that together so many times we wouldn't make a fizzle of it."

"Yes, and there is the 'Italian Song at Nightfall' that Robin sings so wonderfully. We can help out on the last part of it." Tucking her violin under her chin, Phyllis played a few bars of the selection she had named. "I can play it," she nodded. "I never tried it on the fiddle before."

"That's two," counted Robin. "For a third and last let's give that pretty 'Gondelier's Love Song,' by Nevin. It doesn't matter about words to that, either. There aren't any. People ought to learn to appreciate songs without words. Giuseppe won't care a hang about anything but the music. If any of you Wayland Hallites decide to sing with us, sing nicely. Don't you dare make the tiniest discord."

"She has some opinion of herself as a singer," Leila told the others, with comically raised brows. "Be easy. We have no wish to lilt wid yez."

Having decided to serenade the unsuspecting proprietor of the tea room, the next point to be settled was where they should stand to sing.

"Wait a minute. I'll go and look in one of the windows," volunteered Ronny. "Perhaps I shall be able to see just where he is."

"He is usually at his desk about this time in the evening. We'll gather around the window nearest where he is sitting," planned Phyllis.

Ronny flitted lightly ahead of her companions, stopping at a window on the right-hand side, well to the rear. The others followed her more slowly in order to give her time to make the observation. Before they reached her she turned from her post and came quickly to them.

“He is back at the last table on the left reading a newspaper. There isn’t a soul in the room but himself,” she said in an undertone. “The time couldn’t be more opportune.”

“Oh, fine,” whispered Robin. “We can go around behind the inn and be right at the window nearest him.”

“The non-singers, I suppose we might call ourselves the trailers, will politely station our magnificent selves at the next window above the singers to see how the victim takes it,” decided Jerry. “Contrary, ‘no.’ I don’t hear any opposing voices.”

“There mustn’t be *any* voices heard for the next two minutes,” warned Portia Graham. “Slide around the inn and take your places as quietly as mice.”

In gleeful silence the girls divided into two groups, each group taking up its separate station.

“I hope the night air hasn’t played havoc with my strings,” breathed Phyllis. “I don’t dare try them. Are we ready?” She rapped softly on the face of her violin with the bow.

Followed the tense instant that always precedes the performance of an orchestra, then Phyllis and Robin began the world-known sextette from “Lucia.” Robin had sung it so many times in private to the accompaniment of her cousin’s violin that the attack was perfect. The others took it up immediately, filling the night with echoing sweetness.

From their position at the next window the watchers saw the dark, solemn face of the Italian raised in bewildered amazement from his paper. Not quite comprehending at first the unbidden flood of music which met his ears, he listened for a moment in patent stupefaction. Soon a smile began to play about his tight little mouth. It widened into a grin of positive pleasure. Giuseppe understood that a great honor was being done him. He was not only being serenaded, but he was listening to the music of his native country as well.

His varying facial expressions, as the sextette rose and fell, showed his love of the selection. As it ended, he did an odd thing. He rose from his chair, bowed his profound thanks toward the window from whence came the singing, and sat down again, looking expectant.

“He knows very well he’s being watched,” whispered Marjorie. “Doesn’t he look pleased? I’m so glad you thought of him, Lucy.”

Lucy was also showing shy satisfaction at the success of her proposal. She was secretly more proud of some small triumph of the kind on her part than of her brilliancy as a student.

Had Signor Baretto been attending a performance of grand opera, he could not have shown a more evident pleasure in the programme. He listened to the entertainment so unexpectedly provided him with the rapt air of a true music-lover.

“There!” softly exclaimed Phyllis, as she lowered her violin. “That’s the end of the programme, Signor Baretto. Now for that fresh peach ice cream. I shall have coffee and mountain cake with it. I am as hungry as the average wandering minstrel.”

“Let’s walk in as calmly as though we had never thought of serenading Giuseppe,” said Robin. “Oh, we can’t. I forgot. The orchestra part of this aggregation is a dead give-away.”

“We don’t care. He will know it was we who were out there. There is no one else about but us. I hope he won’t think we are a set of little Tommy Tuckers singing for our suppers. That’s a horrible afterthought on my part,” Elaine laughed.

“Come on.” Jerry and her group had now joined the singers. “He saw us but not until you were singing that Nevin selection. He kept staring at the window where the sound came from. We had our faces right close to our window and all of a sudden he looked straight at us. You should have seen him laugh. His whole face broke into funny little smiles.”

“He may have thought we were the warblers,” suggested Muriel hopefully. “We can parade into the inn on your glory. If I put on airs he may take me for the high soprano.” She glanced teasingly at Robin.

“Oh, go as far as you like. It won’t be the first instance in the world’s history where some have done all the work and others have taken all the credit,” Robin reminded.

In this jesting frame of mind the entire party strolled around to the inn’s main entrance. At the door they found Giuseppe waiting for them, his dark features wreathed in smiles.

“I wait for you here,” he announced, with an eloquent gesture of the hand. “So I know som’ my friendly young ladies from the college sing just for me. You come in. You are my com’ny. You say what you like. I give the best. Not since I come this country I hear the singing I like so much. The Lucia! Ah, that is the one I lov’!

“I tell you the little story while you stan’ here. Then you come in. When I come this country, I am the very poor boy. Come in the steerage. No much to eat. I fin’ work. Then the times hard, I lose work. All over New York I walk, but don’t fin’. I have *no one cent*. I am put from the bed I rent. I can no pay. For four days I have the nothing eat. I say, ‘It is over.’ I am this, that I will walk to the river in the night an’ be no more.

“It is the very warm night and I am tired. I walk an’ walk.” His face took on a shade of his by-gone hopelessness as he continued. “Soon I come the river, I think. Then I hear the music. It is in the next street jus’ I go turn into. It is the harp an’ violin. Two my countrymen play the Lucia. I am so sad. I sit on a step an’ cry. Pretty soon one these ask the money gif’ for the music. He touch me on shoulder, say very kind in Italian, ‘*Che c’è mai?*’ That mean, ‘What the matter?’ He see I am the Italiano. We look each other. Both cry, then embrac’. He is my oldes’ brother. He come here long before me. My mother an’ I, we don’t hear five years. Then my mother die. Two my brothers work in the *vigna* for the rich vignaiuolo in my country. My father is dead long time. So I come here.

“My brother give me the eat, the clothes, the place sleep. He have good room. He work in the day for rich Italian importer. Sometimes he go out play at night for help his friend who play the harp. He is the old man an’ don’t work all the time. So it is I lov’ the Lucia. They don’t play that, mebbe I don’t sit on that step. Then never fin’ my brother. An’ you have please me more than for many years you play the Lucia for me this night.”

CHAPTER III – A VERANDA ENCOUNTER

It lacked but a few minutes of eleven o'clock when the serenading party said goodnight to Signor Baretti and trooped off toward the campus. The usually taciturn Italian had surprised and touched them by the impulsive story of his most tragic hour. He had afterward played host to his light-hearted guests with the true grace of the Latin. No one came to the inn for cheer after they entered in that evening, so they had the place quite to themselves. After a feast of the coveted peach ice cream and cakes, the obliging orchestra tuned up again at Giuseppe's earnest request. Robin sang Schubert's "Serenade" and "Appear Love at Thy Window." Phyllis played Raff's "Cavatina" and one of Brahms's "Hungarian Dances." Blanche Scott sang "Asleep in the Deep," simply to prove she had a masculine voice when she chose to use it.

"We'll come and make music for you again sometime," promised kind-hearted Phyllis as they left their beaming host.

"I thank you. An' you forget you say you come an' play, I tell you 'bout it sometime you come here to eat," he warned the party as they were leaving.

"Talk about truth being stranger than fiction, what do you think of Giuseppe's story?" Jerry exclaimed as soon as they were well away from the inn. "Imagine how one would feel to meet one's long-lost brother just as one was getting ready to commit suicide!"

"One half of the world doesn't know how the other half lives," Ronny said with a shake of her fair head.

"To see Giuseppe today, successful and well-to-do, one finds it hard to visualize him as the poor, starved, despondent Italian boy who cried his heart out on the doorstep." Vera's tones vibrated with sympathy. The Italian's story had impressed her deeply.

The girls discussed it soberly as they wended a leisurely way across the campus. Even care-free Muriel, who seldom liked to take life seriously, remarked with becoming earnestness that it was such stories which made one realize one's own benefits.

"Be on hand tomorrow night at eight-thirty sharp," was Phyllis's parting injunction to the Wayland Hall girls as the Silvertonites left them to go on to their own house. "We have three fair ladies to sing to and we don't want to slight any of them."

"I think we ought to get up some entertainments of our own this year. I never stopped to realize before how few clubs and college societies Hamilton has. There's only the 'Silver Pen', – one has to have high literary ability to make that, – the 'Twelfth Night Club' and the 'Fortnightly Debating Society.' We haven't a single sorority," Vera declared with regret.

"Miss Remson told me once of a sorority that Hamilton used to have called the 'Round Table.' It flourished for many years. Then all of a sudden she heard no more of it. She said Hamilton was very different even ten years ago from now. There was little automobiling and more sociability among the campus houses. There were house plays going on every week and different kinds of entertainments in which almost everyone joined."

"That's the way college ought to be," commended Vera. "Even if Hamilton hasn't yet won back to those palmy days, we had more fellowship here last year than the year before. Why, during Leila's and my freshman year here we were seldom invited anywhere. We hardly knew Helen Trent until late in the year. Nella and Selma, Martha Merrick and Rosalind Black were our only friends."

"And now we are to lose Selma." Leila heaved an audible sigh. She had already informed the girls of Selma's approaching marriage to a young naval officer.

"Did Selma know last year she was not going to finish college?" asked Muriel. "If I had gone through three years of my college course I wouldn't give up the last and most important year just to be married."

"That is because you know nothing about love," teased Ronny.

“Do you?” challenged Muriel.

“I do not. I have a good deal more sentiment than you have though,” retorted Ronny. “I can appreciate Selma’s sacrifice at the shrine of love.”

“So could I if I knew more about it,” Muriel flung back.

“Precisely what I said to you. So glad you agree with me,” chuckled Ronny.

“I don’t agree with you at all. I meant if I knew more about what you were pleased to call ‘Selma’s sacrifice,’ not *love*.” Muriel’s emphasis of the last word proclaimed her disdain of the tender passion.

“Hear the geese converse,” commented Leila. “Let me tell you both that Selma had to lose either college or her fiancé for two years. He was ordered to the Philippines to take charge of a naval station on one of the islands. They were to have been married anyway as soon as she was graduated from Hamilton. As it was she chose to go with him. So Selma gained a husband and lost her seniorship and we lost Selma. I shall miss her, for a finer girl never lived.”

“Nella will miss her most of all,” Vera said quickly. “We must try to make it up to Nella by taking her around with us a lot.”

They had by this time reached the Hall. Girl-like they lingered on the steps, enjoying the light night breeze that had sprung up in the last hour. Marjorie’s old friend, the chimes, had rung out the stroke of eleven before they reached the Hall. College having not yet opened officially, they claimed the privilege of keeping a little later hours.

As they loitered outside, conversing in low tones, the front door opened and a girl stepped out on the veranda. She uttered a faint sound of surprise at sight of the group of girls. She made a half movement as though to retreat into the house. Then, her face turned away from them, she hurried across the veranda and down the steps.

Though the veranda light was not switched on, the girls had seen her face plainly. To four of them she was known.

“Who was *she* and what ailed her?” was Muriel’s light question. “She acted as though she were afraid we might eat her up.”

“That was Miss Sayres, President Matthews’ private secretary,” answered Leila in a peculiar tone. “As to what ailed her, she did not expect to see us and she was not pleased. We have an old Irish proverb: ‘When a man runs from you be sure his feet are at odds with his conscience.’”

CHAPTER IV – A CONGENIAL PAIR

“Well, here we are at the same old stand again.” Leslie Cairns yawned, stretched upward her kimono-clad arms and clasped them behind her head. Lounging opposite her, in a deep, Sleepy-Hollow chair, Natalie Weyman, also in a negligee, scanned her friend’s face with some anxiety.

“Les, do you or do you not intend to try to make a new stand this year for our rights? I think the way we were treated last year after that basket-ball affair was simply outrageous. I don’t mean by Miss Dean and her crowd, I mean by girls we had lunched and done plenty of favors for.”

“If you are talking about the freshies they never were to be depended upon from the first. Bess Walbert stood by us, of course. So did a lot of Alston Terrace kids. She did good work for us there.”

“Every reason why she should have,” Natalie tartly pointed out. She was still jealous of Leslie’s friendship with Elizabeth Walbert. “You did enough for *her*. She certainly will not win the soph presidency, no matter how much you may root for her. She was awfully unpopular with her class before college closed. I know that to be a fact.”

“Why is it that you have to go up in the air like a sky rocket every time I mention Bess Walbert’s name?” Leslie scowled her impatience. “You wouldn’t give that poor kid credit for anything clever she had done, no matter how wonderful it was.”

“Humph! I have yet to learn of anything wonderful she ever did or ever will do,” sneered Natalie. “I am not going to quarrel with you, Leslie, about her.” Natalie modified her tone. “She isn’t worth it. You think I am awfully jealous of her. I am not. I don’t like her because she is so untruthful.”

“Why don’t you say she is a liar and be done with it?” ‘So untruthful!’ Leslie mimicked. “That sounds like Bean and her crowd.” Displeased with Natalie for decrying Elizabeth Walbert, Leslie took revenge by mimicking her chum. She knew nothing cut Natalie more than to be mimicked.

“All right. I will say it. Bess Walbert *is* a liar and you will find it out, too, before you are done with her. Besides, she is treacherous. If you were to turn her down for any reason, she wouldn’t care what she said about you on the campus. I have watched her a good deal, Les. She’s like this. She will take a little bit of truth for a foundation and then build up something from it that’s entirely a lie. If she would stick to facts; but she doesn’t.”

“She has always been square enough with me,” Leslie insisted.

“Because you have made a fuss over her,” was the instant explanation. “She knows you are at the head of the Sans and she has taken precious good care to keep in with you. She cares for no one but herself.”

“Oh, nonsense! That’s what you always said about Lola Elster. I’ve never had any rows with Lola. We’re as good friends today as ever.”

“Still Lola dropped you the minute she grew chummy with Alida Burton,” Natalie reminded. “Lola was just ungrateful, though. She has more honor in a minute than Bess will ever have. She isn’t a talker or a mischief-maker. She never thinks of much but having a good time. She hardly ever says anything gossipy about anyone.”

“I thought you didn’t like Lola?” Leslie smiled in her slow fashion.

“I don’t,” came frankly. “Of the two evils, I prefer her to Bess. My advice to you is not to be too pleasant with Bess until you see what her position here at Hamilton is going to be. I tell you she isn’t well liked. You can keep her at arm’s length, if you begin that way, without making her sore. If you baby her and then drop her, look out!” Natalie shook a prophetic finger at Leslie.

“We can’t afford to take any chances this year, Les. With all the things we have done that would put us in line for being expelled, we have managed by sheer good luck to slide from under. If we hadn’t worked like sixty last spring term to make up for the time we lost fooling with basket-ball we wouldn’t be seniors now. I don’t want any conditions to work off this year.”

“Neither do I. Don’t intend to have ’em. I begin to believe you may be right about keeping Bess in her place.” Natalie’s evident earnestness had made some impression on her companion.

“I *know* I am,” Natalie emphasized with lofty dignity. “Are you sure she doesn’t know anything about that hazing business? She made a remark to Harriet Stephens last spring that sounded as though she knew all about it.”

“Well, she does not, unless someone of the Sans besides you or I has told her of it.” Leslie sat up straight in her chair, looking rather worried. “I must pump her and find out what she knows. If she does know of it, then we have a traitor in the camp. Mark me, I’ll throw any girl out of the club who has babbled that affair. Didn’t we doubly swear, afterward, never to tell it to a soul while we were at Hamilton?”

“Hard to say who told Bess,” shrugged Natalie. “Certainly it was not I.”

“No; you’re excepted. I said that.” Leslie’s assurance was bored. She was tired of hearing Natalie extol her own loyalty. It was an everyday citation. “That hazing stunt of ours doesn’t worry me half so much as that trick we put over on Trotty Remson. I am always afraid that Laura will flivver someday and the whole thing will come to light. If it happens after I leave Hamilton, I don’t care. All I care about is getting through. If I keep on the soft side of my father he is going to let me help run his business. That’s my dream. But I have to be graduated with honors, if there are any I can pull down. At least I must stick it out here for my diploma.”

“What would your father do if you flunked this year in any way?”

“He would disown me. I mean that. I have money of my own; lots of it. That part of it wouldn’t feaze me. But my father is the only person on earth I really have any respect for. I’d never get over it; *never*.”

Leslie’s loose features showed a tightened intensity utterly foreign to them. Her hands took hold on the chair arms with a grip which revealed something of the nervous emotion the fell contingency inspired in her.

The two girls had arrived on the seven o’clock train from the north that evening. They had stopped at the Lotus for dinner and had reached the hall shortly before the beginning of the serenade. Leslie had been Natalie’s guest at the Weymans’ camp in the Adirondacks. Thus the two had come on to college together instead of accepting Dulcie Vale’s invitation to journey from New York City to Hamilton in the Vales’ private car, as they had done the three previous years. Since the hazing party on St. Valentine’s night, Leslie and Dulcie had not been on specially good terms. Leslie was still peeved with Dulcie for not having locked the back door of the untenanted house as she had been ordered to do. Had she obeyed orders the Sans would not have been put to panic-stricken flight by unknown invaders. While those who had come to Marjorie’s rescue might have hung about the outside of the house, they could not have found entrance easy with both back and front doors properly locked.

“I don’t know what is the matter with me tonight.” Leslie rose and commenced a restless walk up and down the room, hands clasped behind her back. “That music upset me, I guess. I wonder who the singers were. Serenading Bean and her gang. Humph! Nobody ever serenaded us that I can recall. I suppose Beanie arrived in all her glory this afternoon, hence those yowlers under her window tonight.”

“They really sang beautifully. Whoever played the violin was a fine musician. I never heard a better rendition of ‘How Fair Art Thou.’” Fond of music, Natalie was forced to admit the high quality of the performance, even though the serenade had been in honor of the girl of whom she had always been so jealous.

“I don’t care much for music unless it is rag-time or musical comedy stuff. Sentimental songs get on my nerves. I hate that priggish old ‘Hymn to Hamilton.’ I hope Laura got out of here without being seen.” Leslie went back to the subject still uppermost in her mind. “It was risking something to send for her to come over here, but I was anxious to see her and find out if anything had happened this summer detrimental to us. I didn’t feel like meeting her along the road tonight.”

“Oh, I don’t believe anyone saw her,” reassured Natalie. “It was after eleven when she left here. The house was quiet as could be. I noticed it when I went out in the hall before she left to see if the coast was clear. Not more than half the girls who belong here are back yet. Bean and her crowd had gone to bed, I presume. You wouldn’t catch such angels as they even making a dent in the ten-thirty rule.”

“That’s so.” Leslie made one more trip up and down the room, then resumed the chair in which she had been sitting. “Well, I’ll take it for granted that Sayres made a clean get-away. One thing about her, she will stand by us as long as she is paid for it. Besides, she would get into more trouble than we if the truth were known. That’s where we have the advantage of her. She has to protect herself as well as us. What I have always been afraid of is this: If Remson and old Doctor Know-it-all ever came to an understanding he would go to quizzing Sayres. If she lost her nerve, for he is a terror when he’s angry, she might flivver.”

“Don’t cross bridges until you come to them,” counseled Natalie. She was beginning to see the value of assuming the role of comforter to Leslie. One thing Natalie had determined. She would strain a point to be first with Leslie during their senior year. She had importuned Leslie to visit her for the purpose of regaining her old footing. She and Leslie had spent a fairly congenial month together in the Adirondacks. Now Natalie intended to hold the ground she had gained against all comers.

“I’m not going to. I shall forget last year, so far as I can. I certainly spent enough money and didn’t gain a thing. Our best plan is to go on as we did last spring. If I see a good opportunity to bother Bean and her devoted beanstalks, I shall not let it pass me by. I am not going to take any more risks, though. If I manage to live down those I’ve taken, I’ll do well.”

“I know I wouldn’t *raise a hand* to help a freshie this year,” Natalie declared with a positive pucker of her small mouth. “Think of the way we rushed the greedy ingrates! Then they wouldn’t stand up for us during that basket-ball trouble.”

“Put all that down to profit and loss.” Leslie had emerged from the brief spasm of dread which invariably visited her after seeing Laura Sayres. “We had the wrong kind of girls to deal with. There were more digs and prigs in that class than eligibles. That’s why we lost. I am all done with that sort of thing. If I can’t be as popular as Bean,” Leslie’s intonation was bitterly sarcastic, “I can be a good deal more exclusive. As it is, I expect to have all I can do to keep the Sans in line. Dulcie Vale has an idea that she ought to run the club. Give her a chance and she’d run it into the ground. She has as much sense as a peacock. She can fan her feathers and squawk.”

Natalie laughed outright at this. It was so exactly descriptive of Dulcie.

Leslie looked well pleased with herself. She thoroughly enjoyed saying smart things which made people laugh. It was a sore cross to her that after three years of the hardest striving she had not attained the kind of popularity at Hamilton which she craved. Yet she could not see wherein she was to blame.

Gifted with a keen sense of humor, she had tricks of expression so original in themselves that she might have easily gained a reputation as the funniest girl in college. Had good humor radiated her peculiarly rugged features she would have been that rarity, an ugly beauty. Due to her proficiency at golf and tennis, she was of most symmetrical figure. She was particularly fastidious as to dress, and made a smart appearance. Having so much that was in her favor, she was hopelessly hampered by self.

CHAPTER V – A LUCKY MISHAP

The serenading expedition of the next night was the beginning of a succession of similar gaieties for the Lookouts. As Hamilton continued to gather in her own for the college year, the Sanford quintette found themselves in flattering demand.

“If I don’t stay at home once in a while I shall never be able to find a thing that belongs to me,” Muriel Harding cried out in despair as Jerry reminded her at luncheon that they were invited to Silverton Hall that evening to celebrate Elaine Hunter’s birthday. “You girls may laugh, but honestly I haven’t finished unpacking my trunk. Every time I plan to wind up that delightful job, along comes some friendly, but misguided person and invites me out.”

“Stay at home then,” advised Jerry. “If that last remark of yours was meant for me, I am *not* misguided and I shall *not* be friendly if you hurl such adjectives at me.”

“Neither was meant for you. You are only the bearer of the invitation. Why stir up a breeze over nothing?”

“If you don’t go to Elaine’s birthday party she will think you stayed away because you were too stingy to buy her a present. We are all going to drive to Hamilton this afternoon after classes to buy gifts for her. Don’t you wish you were going, too?” Ronny regarded Muriel with tantalizing eyes.

“Oh, I’m going along,” Muriel glibly assured. “You can’t lose me. What I like to do and what I ought to do are two very different things. After this week I shall settle down to the student life in earnest. My subjects are terrific this term. I am sorry I started calculus. I had enough to do without that.”

“This will have to be my last party for a week or two,” Marjorie declared. “I haven’t done any real studying this week, and I owe all my correspondents letters. I feel guilty for not having done more toward helping this year’s freshies. I’ve only been down to the station twice.”

“They’re in good hands. Phil and Barbara have done glorious work. They have had at least twenty sophs helping them. It’s a cinch this year. Very different from last.” Jerry gave a short laugh. “Phil says,” Jerry discreetly lowered her voice, “that not a Sans has come near the station since she has been on committee duty there to welcome the freshies. I told her it didn’t surprise me.”

“I didn’t know Miss Cairns and Miss Weyman had come back until I happened to pass them in the upstairs hall,” Muriel said.

“They were here for a couple of days before Leila knew it, and she generally knows who is back and who isn’t. Miss Remson told Leila she didn’t know it herself until the next day after they arrived. The two of them came back together on the night we were serenaded. They simply walked into the house and went to their rooms. She didn’t see them until noon the next day.” It was Veronica who delivered this information.

“Did Miss Remson say anything to them on account of it?” questioned Muriel.

“No; she wasn’t pleased, but she said she thought it best to ignore it. It was just one more discourtesy on their part.”

“That accounts for our meeting Miss Sayres on the veranda.” Lucy’s greenish eyes had grown speculative. “She had been calling on those two. We spoke of it after she passed, you will remember. Leila said ‘No,’ they had not come back yet. We wondered on whom she had been calling at the Hall. While we can’t prove that it was Miss Cairns and Miss Weyman she had come to see, that would be the natural conclusion,” Lucy summed up with the gravity of a lawyer.

“I object, your honor. The evidence is too fragmentary to be considered,” put in Muriel in mannish tones. She bowed directly to Marjorie.

“Court’s adjourned. I have nothing to say.” Marjorie laughed and pushed back her chair from the table. “I’m not making light of what you said, Lucy.” She turned to the latter. “I was only funning with Muriel. I think as you do. Still none of us can prove it.”

“I wish the whole thing would be cleared up before those girls are graduated and gone from Hamilton,” Katherine Langly said almost vindictively. “I wouldn’t care if it made a lot of trouble for them all. Miss Remson has stood so much from them and she still feels so hurt at Doctor Matthews’ unjust treatment of her. I can’t believe he wrote that letter. She believes it.”

“I don’t see how she can in face of all the contemptible things the Sans have done,” asserted Jerry.

“She believes it because she says he signed the letter, so he must have written it. I told her the signature might be a forgery. She said ‘No, it could hardly be that.’ I saw she was set on that point, so I didn’t argue it further.”

“Excuse me for abruptly changing the subject, but where are we to meet after classes this P.M.?” inquired Muriel.

The chums had left the table and proceeded as far as the hall, where their ways separated.

“Go straight over to the garage. Our two Old Reliables will be there with their buzz wagons. Be on time, too,” called Jerry, as with an “All right, much obliged, Jeremiah,” Muriel started up the stairs. Half way up she turned and asked, “What time?”

“Quarter past four. If you aren’t there on the dot we shall go without you. None of us know what we are going to buy, so we want all the time we can have to look around. Remember, we have to hustle back to the Hall, have dinner and dress.”

“I’ll remember.” With a wag of her head Muriel resumed her ascent of the stairs and quickly disappeared.

The others stopped briefly in the hall to talk. Marjorie was next to leave the group. She remembered she had intended to change her white linen frock, which did not look quite fresh enough for a trip to town. Her last recitation of the afternoon being chemistry, she knew she would have no time to return to the Hall before meeting her chums at the garage.

Alas for the pretty gown of delft blue pongee which she had donned with girlish satisfaction at luncheon time. An accident at the chemical desk sent a veritable deluge of discoloring liquid showering over her. Despite her apron, her frock was plentifully spotted by it.

Ordinarily she would have made light of the misfortune. As it was she felt ready to cry with vexation. She would have to change gowns again in order to be presentable for the trip to Hamilton. The girls had set four-fifteen as the starting time. She could not possibly make it before four-thirty.

Her first resolve was to hurry over to the garage immediately after the chemistry period and tell the the girls not to wait for her.

In spite of Jerry’s assertion to Muriel that they would not wait a moment after four-fifteen, Marjorie knew that they would strain a point and linger a little longer if she did not put in an appearance at the time appointed. Recalling the fact that Lucy was in the Biological Laboratory, situated across the hall from the Chemical Laboratory, Marjorie decided to try to catch Lucy before she left the building and send word to the others to go on without her. She could then hurry straight to the Hall, slip into another gown and hail a taxicab going to the town of Hamilton. There were usually two or three to be found in the immediate vicinity of the campus.

“Oh, there you are!” Marjorie hailed softly, when, at precisely four o’clock Lucy emerged from the laboratory across the hall. “I thought you would be out on the minute on account of going to town. I left chemistry five minutes earlier for fear of missing you. Just see what happened to me.” She displayed the results of the accident. “I am a sight. Tell the girls not to wait. I must go on to the Hall and make myself presentable. I’ll take a taxi and meet them at the Curio Shop. If they’re ready to go on before I reach there, tell them to leave word with the proprietor where they are going next.”

“All right. What a shame about your dress. Do you think those stains will come out?” Lucy scanned the unsightly spots and streaks with a dubious eye.

“I know they won’t.” Marjorie voiced rueful positiveness. “This is the first time I ever wore this frock. I gave it a nice baptism, didn’t I? Well, it can’t be helped now. I mustn’t stop.” The two had

come to the outer entrance to Science Hall. "See you at the Curio Shop." With a parting wave of the hand Marjorie ran lightly down the steps and trotted across the campus.

Always quick of action, it did not take her long, once she had gained her room, to discard the unlucky blue pongee gown for one of pink linen.

"Just half-past four. I didn't do so badly," she congratulated, consulting her wrist watch as she hastened down the driveway toward the west gate. "Now for a taxi."

No taxicab was in sight, however. Three of these useful vehicles had recently reaped a harvest of students bound for town and started off with them. Five minutes passed and Marjorie grew more impatient. To undertake to walk to Hamilton would add greatly to the delay in joining the gift seekers. True she might meet a taxicab on the way. Whether the driver would turn back for a single fare she was not sure. She determined to walk on rather than stand still. If she were lucky enough to meet a taxicab on the highway she would offer its driver double fare to turn around and take her into town.

The brisk pace at which she walked soon brought her to the western end of the campus wall. Presently she had reached the beginning of Hamilton Estates. And still no sign of a taxicab!

"It looks as though I'd have to walk after all," she remarked, half aloud. "How provoking!" She would reach the Curio Shop about the time the others were starting for the campus was her vexed calculation. Besides, there was Lucy, who would patiently wait for her when she might be going on with the others. They had planned to visit two or three shops.

In the midst of her annoyance, the sound of a motor behind caused her to turn. To her surprise she recognized the driver and machine as being of the regular jitney service between the campus and the town. His only fare was a young man, evidently a salesman who had had business at the college. He was occupying the front seat beside the driver.

The latter stopped at Marjorie's sign and opened the door of the tonneau for her. Very thankfully she stepped in. Engaged in conversation with the salesman, the man at the wheel drove along at a leisurely rate of speed. Marjorie could only wish that he would hurry a little faster.

Coming opposite to Hamilton Arms, Marjorie forgot her impatience as her eyes eagerly took in the estate she so greatly admired. The chrysanthemums had begun to throw out luxuriant bloom in border and bed, while the bronze and scarlet of fallen leaves lay lightly on the short-cropped grass.

Almost opposite the point where Hamilton Arms adjoined the next estate, Marjorie spied a small, familiar figure trotting along at the left of the highway. It was Miss Susanna Hamilton. In one hand she carried a good-sized splint basket from which nodded a colorful wealth of chrysanthemums in little individual flower pots. She was bare-headed, though over her black silk dress she wore the knitted scarlet shawl which gave her the odd likeness to a lively old robin.

Marjorie leaned forward a trifle as the machine came opposite Miss Susanna. She viewed the last of the Hamiltons with kindly, non-curious eyes. The taxicab had almost slid past the sturdy pedestrian when something happened. The handle of the splint basket treacherously gave way, landing the basket on the ground with force. It tipped side-ways. Two or three of the flower pots rolled out of it.

Forgetting everything but the mishap to Brooke Hamilton's eccentric descendant, Marjorie called out on impulse: "Driver; please stop the taxi! I wish to get out here!"

CHAPTER VI – THE LAST OF THE HAMILTONS

The man promptly brought the machine to a slow stop. He was too well acquainted with the whims of “them girls from the college” to exhibit surprise. Having paid her fare on entering the taxicab, Marjorie now quitted it with alacrity and ran back to the scene of the mishap.

“Please let me help you,” she offered in a gracious fashion which came straight from her heart. “I saw the handle of that basket break and I made the driver stop and let me out of the taxi.”

Without waiting for Miss Susanna’s permission, Marjorie stooped and lay hold on one of the scattered flower pots. Thus far the old lady had made no effort to gather them in. She had stood eyeing the unstable basket with marked disgust.

“And who are you, may I ask?” The brisk manner of question reminded Marjorie of Miss Remson.

“Oh, I am Marjorie Dean from Hamilton College,” Marjorie said, straightening up with a smile.

For an instant the two pairs of dark eyes met. In the old lady’s appeared a gleam half resentful, half admiring. In the young girl’s shone a pleasant light, hard to resist.

“Yes; I supposed you were one of them,” nodded Miss Susanna. “Let me tell you, young woman, you are the first I have met in all these years from the college who had any claim on gentle breeding.”

Marjorie smiled. “There are a good many fine girls at Hamilton,” she defended without intent to be discourteous. “Any one of a number I know would have been glad to help you.”

“Then that doll shop has changed a good deal recently,” retorted the old lady with rapidity. “Nowadays it is nothing but drive flamboyant cars and spend money for frivolities over there. I hate the place.”

Marjorie was silent. She did not like to contradict further by saying pointedly that she loved Hamilton, neither could she bear the thought of not defending her Alma Mater.

“I can’t say that I hate Hamilton College, because I don’t,” she finally returned, before the pause between the two had grown embarrassing. “I am sure you must have good reason to dislike Hamilton and its students or you would not say so.”

The pink in her cheeks deepened. Marjorie bent and completed the task of returning the last spilled posy to the basket.

“There!” she exclaimed good-naturedly. “I have them all in the basket again, and not a single one of those little jars are broken. I wish you would let me carry the basket for you, Miss Hamilton. It is really a cumbersome affair without the handle.”

“You are quite a nice child, I must say.” Miss Susanna continued to regard Marjorie with her bright, bird-like gaze. “Where on earth were you brought up?”

Signally amused, Marjorie laughed outright. She had raised the basket from the ground. As she stood there, her lovely face full of light and laughter, arms full of flowers, Miss Susanna’s stubborn old heart softened a trifle toward girlhood.

“I come from Sanford, New York,” she answered. “This is my junior year at Hamilton. Four other girls from Sanford entered when I did.”

“Sanford,” repeated her questioner. “I never heard of the place. If these girls are friends of yours I suppose they escape being barbarians.”

“They are the finest girls I ever knew,” Marjorie praised with sincerity.

“Well, well; I am pleased to hear it.” The old lady spoke with a brusquerie which seemed to indicate her wish to be done with the subject. “You insist on helping me, do you?”

“Yes; if it pleases you to allow me.”

“It’s to my advantage, so it ought to,” was the dry retort. “I am not particular about lugging that basket in my arms. I loaded it too heavily. Brian, the gardener, would have carried it for me, but I didn’t care to be bothered with him. I am carrying these down to an old man who used to work

about the lawns. His days are numbered and he loves flowers better than anything else. He lives in a little house just outside the estate. It is still quite a walk. If you have anything else to do you had better consider it and not me.”

“I was on my way to town. It is too late to go now.” Marjorie explained the nature of her errand as they walked on. “The girls will probably come to the conclusion that I found it too late to go to Hamilton after I had changed my gown. One or another of them will buy me something pretty to give to Elaine,” she ended.

“It is a good many years since I bought a birthday gift for anyone. I always give my servants money on their birthdays. I have not received a birthday gift for over fifty years and I don’t want one. I do not allow my household to make me presents on any occasion.” Miss Susanna announced this with a touch of defiance.

“It seems as though my life has been full of presents. My father and mother have given me hundreds, I guess. My father is away from home a good deal. When he comes back from his long business trips he always brings Captain and I whole stacks of treasures.”

Marjorie was not sure that this was what she should have said. She found conversing with the last of the Hamiltons a trifle hazardous. She had no desire to contradict, yet she and her new acquaintance had thus far not agreed on a single point.

“Who is ‘Captain,’” was the inquiry, made with the curiosity of a child.

Marjorie turned rosy red. The pet appellation had slipped out before she thought.

“I call my mother ‘Captain,’” she informed, then went on to explain further of their fond home play. She fully expected Miss Susanna would criticize it as “silly.” She was already understanding a little of the lonely old gentlewoman’s bitterness of heart. Her earnest desire to know the last of the Hamiltons had arisen purely out of her great sympathy for Miss Susanna.

“You seem to have had a childhood,” was the surprising reception her explanation called forth. “I can’t endure the children of today. They are grown up in their minds at seven. I must say your father and mother are exceptional. No wonder you have good manners. That is, if they are genuine. I have seen some good imitations. Young girls are more deceitful than young men. I don’t like either. There is nothing I despise so much as the calloused selfishness of youth. It is far worse than crabbed age.”

“I know young girls are often selfish of their own pleasure,” Marjorie returned with sudden humility. “I try not to be. I know I am at times. Many of my girl friends are not. I wish I could begin to tell you of the beautiful, unselfish things some of my chums have done for others.”

Miss Susanna vouchsafed no reply to this little speech. She trotted along beside Marjorie for several rods without saying another word. When she spoke again it was to say briefly: “Here is where we turn off the road. Is that basket growing very heavy?”

“It is quite heavy. I believe I will set it down for a minute.” Marjorie carefully deposited her burden on the grass at the roadside and straightened up, stretching her aching arms. The basket had begun to be considerable of a burden on account of the manner in which it had to be carried.

“I couldn’t have lugged that myself,” Miss Susanna confessed. “I found it almost too much for me with the handle on. Ridiculous, the flimsy way in which things are put together today! Splint baskets of years ago would have stood any amount of strain. If you had not kindly come to my assistance, I intended to pick out as many of those jars as I could carry in my arms and go on with them. The others I would have set up against my own property fence and hoped no one would walk off with them before my return. I dislike anyone to have the flowers I own and have tended unless I give them away myself.”

“I have often seen you working among your flowers when I have passed Hamilton Arms. I knew you must love them dearly or you would not spend so much time with them.”

“Hm-m!” The interjection might have been an assent to Marjorie’s polite observation. It was not, however. Miss Susanna was understanding that this young girl who had shown her such unaffected courtesy had thought of her kindly as a stranger. She experienced a sudden desire to see Marjorie

again. Her long and concentrated hatred against Hamilton College and its students forbade her to make any friendly advances. She had already shown more affability according to her ideas than she had intended. She wondered why she had not curtly refused Marjorie's offer.

"I am rested now." Marjorie lifted the basket. The two skirted the northern boundary of Hamilton Arms, taking a narrow private road which lay between it and the neighboring estate. The road continued straight to a field where it ended. At the edge of the field stood a small cottage painted white. Miss Susanna pointed it out as their destination.

"I will carry this to the door and then leave you." Marjorie had no desire to intrude upon Miss Susanna's call at the cottage.

"Very well. I am obliged to you, Marjorie Dean." Miss Susanna's thanks were expressed in tones which sounded close to unfriendly. She was divided between appreciation of Marjorie's courtesy and her dislike for girls.

"You are welcome." They were now within a few yards of the cottage. Arriving at the low doorstep, Marjorie set the basket carefully upon it. "Goodbye, Miss Hamilton." She held out her hand. "I am so glad to have met you."

"What's that? Oh, yes." The old lady took Marjorie's proffered hand. The evident sincerity of the words touched a hidden spring within, long sealed. "Goodbye, child. I am glad to have met at least one young girl with genuine manners."

Marjorie smiled as she turned away. She had never before met an old person who so heartily detested youth. She knew her timely assistance had been appreciated. On that very account Miss Susanna had tried to smother, temporarily, her standing grudge against the younger generation.

Well, it had happened. She had achieved her heart's desire. She had actually met and talked with the last of the Hamiltons.

CHAPTER VII – TWO KINDS OF GIRLS

“You are a dandy,” was Jerry’s greeting as Marjorie walked into their room at ten minutes past six. “Where were you? Lucy said you ruined your blue pongee with some horrid old chemical. It didn’t take you two hours to change it, did it? I see we have on our pink linen.”

“You know perfectly well it did not take me two hours to change it. A plain insinuation that I’m a slowpoke. Take it back.” In high good humor, Marjorie made a playful rush at her room-mate.

“Hold on. I am not made of wood, as Hal says when I occasionally hammer him in fun.” Jerry put up her hands in comic self-defense. “You certainly are in a fine humor after keeping your poor pals waiting for you for an hour and a half and then not even condescending to appear.”

“I’ve had an adventure, Jeremiah. That’s why I didn’t meet you girls in Hamilton. I started for there in a taxicab. Then I met a lady in distress, and, emulating the example of a gallant knight, I hopped out of the taxi to help her.”

“Wonderful! I suppose you met Phil Moore or some other Silvertonite with her arms full of bundles. About the time she saw you she dropped ’em. ‘With a sympathetic yell, Helpful Marjorie leaped from the taxicab to aid her overburdened but foolish friend.’ Quotation from the last best seller.” Jerry regarded Marjorie with a teasing smile.

“Your suppositions are about a mile off the track. I haven’t seen a Silvertonite this afternoon. The lady in distress I met was – ” Marjorie paused by way of making her revelation more effective, “Miss Susanna Hamilton.”

“*What?* You don’t say so.” Jerry exhibited the utmost astonishment. “Good thing you didn’t ask me to guess. She is the last person I would have thought of. Now how did it happen? I am glad of it for your sake. You’ve been so anxious to know her.”

Rapidly Marjorie recounted the afternoon’s adventure. As she talked she busied herself with the redressing of her hair. After dinner she would have no more than time to put on the white lingerie frock she intended to wear to Elaine’s birthday party.

Jerry listened without comment. While she had never taken the amount of interest in the owner of Hamilton Arms which Marjorie had evinced since entering Hamilton College, she had a certain curiosity regarding Miss Susanna.

“I knew you girls would wait and wonder what had delayed me. I am awfully sorry. You know that, Jeremiah,” Marjorie apologized. “But I couldn’t have gone on in the taxi after I saw what had happened to Miss Susanna. She couldn’t have carried the basket as I did clear over to that cottage. She said she would have picked up as many plant jars as she could carry in her arms and gone on with them.”

“One of the never-say-die sort, isn’t she? Very likely in the years she has lived near the college she has met with some rude girls. On the order of the Sans, you know. If, in the past twenty years, Hamilton was half as badly overrun with snobs as when we entered, one can imagine why she doesn’t adore students.”

“It doesn’t hurt my feelings to hear her say she disliked girls. I only felt sorry for her. It must be dreadful to be old and lonely. She is lonely, even if she doesn’t know it. She has deliberately shut the door between herself and happiness. I am so glad we’re young, Jeremiah.” Marjorie sighed her gratitude for the gift of youth. “I hope always to be young at heart.”

“I sha’n’t wear a cap and spectacles and walk with a cane until I have to, believe me,” was Jerry’s emphatic rejoinder. “Are you ready to go down to dinner? My hair is done, too. I shall dress after I’ve been fed. Oh, I forgot to tell you. I bought you a present to give Elaine. We bought every last thing we are going to give her at the Curio Shop.”

“You are a dear. I knew some of the girls would help me out. I supposed it would be you, though. Do let me see my present.”

“There it is on my chiffonier. You’d better examine it after dinner. It is a hand-painted chocolate pot; a beauty, too. Looks like a bit of spring time.”

“I’ll look at it the minute I come back. I’m oceans obliged to you.” Marjorie cast a longing glance at the tall package on the chiffonier, as the two girls left the room.

At dinner that night Marjorie’s adventure of the afternoon excited the interest of her chums. She was obliged to repeat, as nearly as she could what she said to Miss Susanna and what Miss Susanna had said to her.

“Did she mention the May basket?” quizzed Muriel with a giggle.

“Now why should she?” counter-questioned Marjorie.

“Well; she was talking about not receiving a birthday present for over fifty years. She might have said, ‘But some kind-hearted person hung a beautiful violet basket on my door on May day evening!’”

“Only she didn’t. That flight of fancy was wasted,” Jerry informed Muriel.

“Wasted on you. You haven’t proper sentiment,” flung back Muriel.

“I’ll never acquire it in your company,” Jerry assured. The subdued laughter the tilt evoked reached the table occupied by Leslie Cairns, Natalie Weyman, Dulcie Vale and three others of the Sans.

“Those girls seem to find enough to laugh at,” commented Dulcie Vale half enviously.

“Simpletons!” muttered Leslie Cairns. She was out of sorts with the world in general that evening. “They sit there and ‘ha-ha-ha’ at their meals until I can hardly stand it sometimes. I hate eating dinner here. I’d dine at the Colonial every evening, but it takes too much time. I really must study hard this year to get through. I certainly will be happy to see the last of this treadmill. I’m going to take a year after I’m graduated just to sail around and have a good time. After that I shall help my father in business.”

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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