

## TAMING THE GREAT MONSTER

(© by D. J. Walsh.)

ANNA HALL and her daughter Vanny looked at each other, bit their lips and then smiled weakly. They had already shed tears enough to redden their eyelids. Tears, indeed, had been their first expression after reading the lawyer's letter. But they were swift to recover. Life had trained them to do that, at least.

"Well," the mother said, as she replaced the letter in its envelope, "we know the worst, anyhow. And perhaps, dear, it serves us right for expecting—"

"But, mother," broke in Vanny, "you know Uncle Zenas always said he'd do something for us. He promised it and one has a right to expect a promise to be kept. We weren't counting chickens before they were hatched or anything like that, though, of course, a little money would come in handy, especially now that you are not well. And as long as he was giving, it does seem to me he might have left us something besides that old automobile of his." She choked, swallowed hard, and smiled again bravely. "It's—it's funny. What are we going to do with an automobile? We neither of us ever handled a bit of machinery larger than an egg-beater in our lives, and I have no time for it, anyway. It takes every ounce of strength I have to keep up my office work at the mill. I suppose we might sell it," she added, hopefully.

"As if we could find a buyer in a small place like this for a \$6,000 car, even though it was second-hand!" Mrs. Hall sighed. Well, I guess it is funny, as you say, dear, but we must make the best of it."

"That's all we can do," Vanny returned slowly.

Certainly Uncle Zenas had done an unaccountable thing in leaving such a legacy to people whom the bequest of a few hundreds, even, would have greatly relieved in the way of finance. Uncle Zenas had loved a joke and had continued to perpetrate them until the moment his falling hand signed his last will and testament. A public institution got his money and his widowed niece the huge touring car which, driven by a colored chauffeur, had been wont to take him on daily airings.

The car arrived by way of the worst road in all that locality—a road which was a foot deep with mud after a heavy rain; it was coated, plastered, splashed with soil and the two women beheld it with woe-filled hearts. It was a monster and an impotent monster at that, for it seemed to breathe its last just as it reached the shelter of the apple tree that shaded the Hall house. The man who had brought it departed without an attempt to bring it to life.

Vanny stood looking at it with her small, dark, sweet face puckered into an expression of suffering. She was sick at heart, but she would not let her mother know.

"Poor old beast!" she said. "It—it's almost as big as the house," gasped Mrs. Hall. "Where are we going to put it, Vanny? We haven't any barn."

"I don't know," Vanny replied. "Well, I think of that later. First of all I'm going to use my Saturday afternoon at home to clean it."

"You don't know how?"

"Well, I've seen them at the garage doing things to cars with a sponge and hose. I'm going to try and see what kind of a complexion the creature has, anyway. Just wait till I get my garden suit on."

Vanny in her garden suit looked like a nice boy of sixteen, but she had not a boy's strength and vigor. By the time she had squirted a half-ton of water on the car and polished it dry she was exhausted. But the car was transformed. It was worn, of course, but like a piece of battered mahogany. It commanded respect.

"It can't live under the apple tree forever," Vanny said. "I've got to find a home for it. I think I'll go in and take a scrub myself, mother. Then if you'll find me a good supper I'll try to look after the dear old monster further."

"Why, do you like it, Vanny?" asked Mrs. Hall with a note of surprise in her voice.

Vanny laughed. "I believe I could easily, but I'd have to have more than a speaking acquaintance with it. I'd—I'd have to learn to manage it, you know, mother."

"That great thing! With your slender shoulders and small hands! Oh, Vanny, you frighten me."

"Mother, dear, I shall do nothing unwise. But women do drive big cars. Don't you remember seeing them in the city? And—and I always did have a fondness for Una and the Lion." She laughed tremendously and ran upstairs.

When she came down ready for supper she looked fresh and cool and rested. After supper she went out and looked at the car. She stroked the glossy varnish admiringly. Suddenly she spoke to her mother, who had followed her out of the house and was watching her anxiously:

"I'm going down to the garage to talk to Mr. Pike."

She was gone barely ten minutes and came hurrying back looking very much distressed.

"Mr. Pike is all alone and can't leave the place. And, anyway, moth-

er, he confessed he knew nothing about this kind of a machine. I think he was afraid to try to handle it. So there you are! No help from that direction. But I can't let the monster stand under the apple tree all night. Those awful Kemp kids will be swarming all over it."

"Well, what are you going to do?" asked Mrs. Hall in despair.

Vanny drew a deep breath.

"I'm going over to Wilson's to phone to Paul Scott."

"Vanny!"

"Yes, I am. I know the Scotts have hardly been aware of our existence for the last six years since that lucky venture which sent the Scott name and fame higher than a rocket. I'm not beholden to them, but, mother, Paul is home now and he does know cars of this kind. I've got to do something with this one and he's the only person who can help me. So I'm going to pocket my pride and ask him. Here goes."

From this second expedition she returned radiant.

"Paul's coming right down. He was just as nice as he could be. He called me Vanny just as he used to."

Ten minutes later a car paused at the curb and Paul Scott, glowing and athletic, came swiftly across the grass to where Vanny waited, putting a few finishing touches to the monster as she did so.

"Why, this is some car, believe me!" the young man cried. He walked around it. Then he opened the hood and did some unintelligible but successful thing with it. The monster choked, sputtered, then began to purr like a contented cat.

"Step in, both of you," Paul said, "and we'll try its paces. Then I'll tell you, Vanny, you must let me teach you to run it. You can keep it in our garage meanwhile. I'm home now for two weeks and I'm sure in that time you will learn to handle the machine. As soon as you do, you and your mother will get no end of fun out of it."

Out on the smooth state road the monster behaved like a gentleman—behaved so well that Vanny took her courage between her even white teeth, and let Paul teach her how to handle the wheel.

It was the first of many delightful lessons. By the end of the two weeks of Paul's stay Vanny had acquired the mastery of the big car and was really enjoying herself. Besides her new accomplishment, she had gained in self-reliance and color, for the fresh air and change was just what she needed after long hours of desk work.

Moreover, she and Paul had become the best of friends. He had promised to find a buyer for the monster in the city and one day he wrote her that he was sending a man down.

"Cars are cars, remember, Vanny," he wrote. "You ought to get three thousand dollars at least for the monster."

Three thousand dollars! Vannie was nearly wild with delight. Three thousand dollars!

And three thousand dollars was what she got. But even with the check in her hands, her heart was heavy as she saw the old car driven away.

The days seemed very empty after that. She had loved the monster more than she knew. She missed it. She missed all it had meant to her, Paul and—

Then one day Paul came.

"I had to come and see how you were getting along without the monster—and me," he said, smiling. "You see, Vanny, I find I want you very much more in the city than I thought I had learned to do here in the country. You're the most wonderful girl I ever knew. You did more than tame the monster, Vanny. You made me love you with all my heart and want you for my wife."

### Teach Child Service, Is Advice of Writer

Children should never be made to feel that they are the center of the family universe. A few demands from parents are advisable in that they make for unselfishness and thoughtfulness in the child. One may, unless one is careful, be selfish in the practice of unselfishness.

Parents must not live just for their children. It's a calamity for the little folk to be in the limelight of even their parents' interest all the time. They must have their own chance to see the parents as important people who are to be loved and planned for, quite in the same way that the parents love and plan for them. It's a poor love that cannot work two ways.

Parents have to make sacrifices but children must have their chance to make theirs, too. Giving up everything for the children sounds well, but gives the little people meager opportunity to learn service.—Clara I Judson in Child Life.

### Once Pacific Continent

A study of the plant life of some of the southern Pacific islands off the coast of Peru reveals the fact that it is unlike that of nearby South America, but bears a remarkable resemblance to that of Australia, New Zealand, the Fiji islands and other far away places in the Pacific. This is interesting in view of the theory sometimes advanced that there once was a Pacific continent, which vanished in the same way that the Atlantis of Plato's story vanished.

There is no indigenous animal life. There are thousands of goats, however, descendants of the goats of the pirates who used to make these islands their havens. There are wild dogs and cats also in abundance, and they originated in the same way.

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