

The Shadow of the Sheltering Pines

A New Romance of the Storm Country

By GRACE MILLER WHITE

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CHAPTER XIII.

Good for Evil.

That night for dinner, five people sat about the Pendlehaven table. Reggie, pale and miserable looking, sat next to his mother, and Phillip MacCauley was opposite Doctor John. Katherine, silent and morose, was at her own place. She had heard her mother's version of the afternoon's happening in amazement and anger, and it only added to her discontent to hear Cousin John tell the tale to Phillip.

"Sarah thinks," went on the doctor, "that we should have tamely given her up without a word to that brute."

"I can't see how you can keep a man's child from him, Cousin John," excused Mrs. Curtis, a dull red mounting to each high cheekbone.

Pendlehaven laughed.

"She wouldn't have been much use to him in prison, my dear Sarah," was his answer.

"What're you talking about?" demanded Reggie, turning red-rimmed eyes on his mother.

"Your Cousin John insists on keeping the daughter of a man named Devon in the house here when her father wants her home," she replied.

Reggie's face grew a misty gray.

"Devon," he repeated mechanically, "I didn't know we had any such girl here!"

"She's always with Cousin Paul," remarked Katherine, with a sidelong glance at Phillip. "It does seem, satisfying, though, to know who she is. Mother says she comes of common stock."

MacCauley's face grew dark, and Pendlehaven cast a glance of anger at his young cousin.

"Both Kathie and I" began Mrs. Curtis. "Why, Reggie, my darling, I never saw you look so sick in my life!"

"Aw, cut it!" growled the boy, unsteadily. "Tell me what became of the girl's father."

"He's going to jail for a nice long rest," interjected Pendlehaven. "It seems he was mixed up in a theft in Syracuse."

Reginald got up from the table.

"I don't want anything more to eat," he growled, as his mother started to reconstruate with him. "I'm going to bed."

When he got upstairs, he looked at himself in the glass. How white and thin he had grown! He looked as if he had died and was trying to come to life again. He was frightened almost out of his wits too. Then Tonnibel Devon really was in the house. It hadn't been her ghost that had thrown him bodily from the window sill after all. Urrah, knowing that, had come and made a demand for his daughter and had been arrested. Perhaps he would be arrested also, and for a crime worse than stealing. Had the girl mentioned the fact of his trying to poison Paul Pendlehaven? If she hadn't, could she? When Mrs. Curtis came in to ask how he felt, he was cramped in a big chair, shivering as if he had been attacked with ague.

"My goodness, Reggie, you look awful," she said, coming to his side.

"My son is ill," Mrs. Curtis explained tearfully, "and he must go away. I haven't any money, but if Paul knew about it he'd help me. Will you ask him?"

Tony thought a minute.

"Not tonight!" she replied. "Mebbe Doctor John—"

"No, he hates my son," the other cried passionately. "Oh, you mustn't say anything to him about it."

Tonnibel Devon was awfully tempted to refuse the haughty woman who had pulled her around by the hair only that afternoon. But she remembered Phillip, remembered his love for her, and relented.

"Come along back tomorrow morning, and mebbe I can get you some," she answered, walking away. Then over her shoulder she flung back, "I'll try, anyhow."

With this last statement Mrs. Curtis had to be satisfied. Reggie suffered dreadfully the night through, his mother sitting at his bedside. Tony Devon also had been awake most of the night. In the morning after breakfast, she set about gathering courage to approach Doctor Paul.

With Susan Fidget in her arms, she sat down beside him, and now the minute was there to speak, Tony didn't know how to begin. But to begin meant to begin, Tony had learned, so she coughed and blurted:

"Your cousin, Mrs. Curtis, is kind of pretty, ain't she?"

"She would be if she didn't cry so much," responded Doctor Paul.

This gave Tony the opening she wanted.

"Her boy's awful sick, so she says," she broke out, "that's why she cries. If he don't go away, he'll die, mebbe."

The lovely gray eyes grew darker as they searched his, and Doctor Paul leaned over and looked keenly at her.

"Did Cousin Sarah ask you to come to me, little girl?" he questioned in a kindly tone.

Tonnibel nodded.

"She says Doctor John don't like her boy, and mebbe you'd help her," said the girl, blushing.

The man considered the red face a moment.

"Would it please you to have me help her and him?" he then queried. "I should think you'd be the last person to ask that. My brother told me she's always very unkind to you."

"She don't know any better," replied Tony. "She's never learned what lovin' awful hard means, and mebbe she's so worried over her boy she's got to be horrid to some one."

Paul Pendlehaven laughed, then he grew grave. "Perhaps that's it. Now do you think you could find my cousin and bring her here?"

Tonnibel looked at him doubtfully.

"She might make you nervous," she said dubiously.

"I don't think so," replied the doctor, smiling. "I'm so much better. We won't speak of this to John, and I won't get nervous." He made the last promise because the girl's face was troubled and anxious.

Tonnibel nodded and hurried out. She knew which room Mrs. Curtis occupied and sought the other wing of the house. When she knocked at the door, a woman's voice called a low: "Come in!"

Tony stepped inside and, turning, shut the door before she took a survey of the room. When she did, she almost fainted. Reggie Brown, the awful man she had known in the canalboat days, the man who had dropped the poison into Paul Pendlehaven's medicine, was seated very near Mrs. Curtis, and Katherine was by the window, wearing a very bored expression.

An exclamation came from each one of the three as the girl faced them, looking as if she were ready to collapse.

"You didn't get the money then, girl," demanded Mrs. Curtis, sharply. "Reggie dear, I didn't tell you last night, but your Cousin John refused me when I asked him for help, and I had to reach Paul through—"

Tony's eyes were on Reginald, who was crouching lower in his chair. Her forehead, staring step broke off the speaker's explanation.

"You want the money for him?" she cried, pointing a finger toward the cringing boy.

Mrs. Curtis nodded.

"Yes, he's my son," she answered.

Tony drew a long breath, letting it hiss out through her teeth.

"If he's your son, ma'am," she said falteringly, "then you got a murderer for a son. He tried—he tried to poison Doctor Paul."

Mrs. Curtis got up slowly, a cold rage rising in her pale eyes. Katherine came forward to her mother's

side, but Reginald remained silent.

"You lie," snarled Mrs. Curtis.

"I don't lie," cried Tony, hoarsely. "I don't lie, either. Look at him, and see if he ain't guilty. He did put poison in Doctor Phil's medicine, and I pushed him off the window. But I didn't know he was your son."

By forcing her eyes around, the mother caught sight of her boy.

"Reggie," she screamed, "for God's love, don't look that way. Why don't you tell the luzzy she lies! Tell her you'll go to your cousins and let them know of her accusations. I'll go myself!"

She darted across the room, but Reginald's husky voice called her back.

"Don't do that," he walled. "Don't do it, materal! What she says is true. I did exactly that thing. I—I tried to kill Cousin Paul."

Mrs. Curtis sank down with a groan, and Katherine uttered a cry.

"I thought you wanted me to, materal," went on the boy, wearily. "I thought you said, if he died, we'd get money—"

"But, my God, I didn't want you to kill him," mumbled Mrs. Curtis.

"I didn't," said Reggie.

"But you tried," thrust in Tonnibel. "And you've told my cousins, eh?" he asked hopelessly.

"No, I didn't," denied Tony. "I s'pose mebbe I would have, but I didn't know you belonged here. I knew you used to steal with my daddy and do all sorts of wicked things—"

Mrs. Curtis cried out again.

"But I didn't know you'd try to kill a poor sick man," Tony went on, "and then send your ma to get money of him."

"I can't tell him, I know you will, you terrible girl," screamed Katherine, no longer able to restrain herself.

Tonnibel thought quickly. Cousin Paul Pendlehaven lived in the house with an enemy who had tried to take his life. This same enemy had tried to destroy her, too.

"You said he was going away?" she questioned Mrs. Curtis presently. "Didn't you?"

"If I get money," put in Reggie, drearily, "I will."

"Doctor Paul wants to see you, ma'am," said Tonnibel, her dark gray eyes fixed on the woman, "and if he goes," she pointed at Reginald, "and stays a long time, I'll keep him, see?"

Completely overlooking Katherine, Tony ran out of the room. The next day she didn't look up when she heard Doctor John tell Doctor Paul that Reginald had left Ithaca. When she peeped at Doctor Paul, he smiled at her.

(Continued in the next issue.)

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"My Goodness, Reggie, You Look Awful!"

awful," she said, coming to his side. "Tell me, child, what's the matter?"

"There's matter enough," faltered the boy. "If you don't want me arrested like that man today, then give me some money to get out with."

He dropped his head, and for a moment she stood staring at him. Then her mother-heart relaxed, and she sank beside his chair.

"Darling," she crooned, "darling boy, go to your Cousin John and tell him all about it. He will forgive you and help you—"

The boy bounded up, maddened beyond endurance.

"Great God," he cried, "he'd box

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