



CHAPTER I

A girl and a greyhound were running in the dark. Not running away, not going anywhere; running in a sort of rounded square, running with a desperate delight in running, in motion, in smooth and lovely speed.

In the morning there would be mountains above and beyond, belittling them, but in the intimate dusk the hills had their hour, large and mild and kind, brooding the earth below them. Sometimes the girl looked up at them, but the dog kept her eyes on the dimmed, immediate foreground. There was a certain similarity between them—both young, fleet, with thin, strong legs and flat flanks and excellent wind, and both of a bronze brindle-brown. There was, likewise, a kinship of spirit, or at least of deportment, for each was shy, secret, disdainful. Presently they stopped running and stood still, breathing deeply and easily, happily tired. The greyhound pressed delicately against the girl's knees and slid a long muzzle into a slender hanging hand.

"Lightning . . ." the girl said absently. "Lightning, dear . . ." She turned toward the one open edge of the field. "Come!"

The Santa Clara valley rolled out beneath them, twinkling and trembling with lights, golden and crimson like a carnival, but just below them the windows of Danavale glowed gently. Danavale was not a town.

It had over a dozen residences generously spaced in a gracious landscape, with orchards and vineyards and gardens, stables and oak groves and tennis courts and swimming pools, which formed a sort of architectural chronology from the Great-grandmother Dana house, with its needless early-seventies skimping of porch and hall, down to that strange, modern container of Ardine La Mont Dana.

The girl and the greyhound halted before the pioneer house. It was narrow-chested, narrow-hipped, outmoded as a calico wrapper or a boot-jack, behind its low picket fence and its cinnamon pinks and china asters and candytuft.

She opened the gate and went up the dim path and rang the strident bell, and waited.

The great-grandmother opened the door herself. "Sairy Lynn! Come in!"

"I can't stay, Great-granny. I'm late for dinner now."

"My stars, I should say you are! after seven. Where you been, child?" She peered up at her out of eyes like embers.

"Walking."

"Didn't you know your beau's back?"

"I knew."

The old woman laughed a shrill, impish cackle. "And a dinner party and a new dress spread out on the bed—and here you be, traipsin' over the hills in the dark! You better march yourself home, quick's ever you can step on it! There'll be the devil to pay."

The great-grandparents had crossed the plains in a covered wagon and Great-grandmother Sarah Ann Kittredge Dana was, to all intents and purposes, still in it, well up in her nineties, content to potter about her house and dooryard and wait for the dutiful droppings-in of her daughters and granddaughters and great-granddaughters.

"I know," Sarah Lynn said somberly. "I can't help it."

A voice came down the narrow sudden stairs. "Hi! Sarah Lynn!"

"Hello, Uncle Lynn! I'll come up for a moment. I can't stay." She ran up the precipitate steps.

Lynn Dana lived with the ancestress on the upper floor of the old house. He had been sitting in a chair for more than half his life—approximately since the day he had made the winning touchdown for Stanford and failed to scramble up with his yelling teammates.

"I can't stay," Sarah Lynn said again halting on the threshold of his door.

"I should think not!" he looked at the clock. "You can't even be here! My eyes deceive me. At this very instant, in the habiliments of high festivity you sit at the festive board." He regarded her linen shorts, her pull-over, her brown, bare knees. "Duncan arrived?"

"I suppose so. Lightning and I have been up in the hills."

He laughed. "Well, you're due down in the valley now, young woman, and you'd best be on your way."

"Rather stay with you and Great-granny," she said sullenly.

"And we'd rather have you! But it isn't on the cards this evening. Hop it, my dear!"

Sarah Lynn leaned in the doorway for a long moment. "All right; I'll go. But I won't do it! Nothing can make me—not even Mother." She departed swiftly, without farewells.

A small figure was waiting in the shadows of the big house of her father.

"Hello, Penny!" Sarah Lynn said.

Miss Ethelinda Pennington had been her governess in the old days and was still a component part of the Edwin Dana household. Sarah Lynn Dana was the lode star of her existence and she had not said ten words of praise to her in the 17 years she had been with her. She spoke now in shocked rebuke.

"Sarah Lynn! Dinner's waiting! Mr. Duncan's been here since six! Your mother is greatly disturbed. Wherever have you been?" She was hustling her along a garden path toward a side door.

"Running."

"Running away! Really, Sarah Lynn, at your age! I wonder at you!"

"Not running away; running round and round in circles, the way I always do, Penny," her charge said bitterly. "Never getting anywhere."

They went into the house and instantly there was a soft rustle and a muted exclamation and her mother was upon her, big and beautiful, sunnily sweet.

"Darling!" she cried. "I know you couldn't have realized how late it is! Are you quite all right? Then it doesn't matter! You'll be down just as soon as you possibly can—in your sweet new dress!" She kissed her. "Hurry, darling. Oh, Duncan! This naughty child walked farther than she realized and she hadn't a watch, but she'll be ready in two minutes!"

A pallid youth who looked as if he might have been born in a dinner coat had come into the hall. "Sarah Lynn!" he said gladly.

She gave him a limp hand. "Hello, Duncan! I'll hurry, Mother." She ran upstairs.

Duncan followed Sarah Lynn onto the wide veranda, down the steps, onto the lawn. The greyhound came toward them in lovely leaps but stopped in chill reserve at sight of Duncan, her ears flattening.

"I've always liked dogs," he said a trifle defensively, "but I can't see this pooch very far. I've got a good Boston bull at home; regular dog." He came closer. "No; I'm not crazy about your hound but I am crazy about you, Sarah Lynn." His hand clasped her elbow, slid down to her hand, cool, unresponsive. "No fool-

ing!"

"Duncan, please! Let's not begin that all over again."

"I'm going to begin it again and finish it, this time! Listen, Sarah Lynn; I've never wanted anything in all my life that I didn't get."

"It's only because you can't have me. Ever since you were born they've handed you everything you cried for—rattles and kiddie-cars and skates and sleds and a pony and a car and a yacht. Now you think they're going to hand you—me. My mother, your mother. But they won't; they can't."

He laughed contentedly. "They don't have to! You'll do it yourself. Oh, I'm not going to rush you! I can play a waiting game. But just get it through your head that you belong to me."

Sarah Lynn thought he was rather pathetic with his fragility and his pallor and his elegance, casting himself for the character of the conquering male.

She detached herself, not ungently, walked away, stood looking up at the stars. Suddenly a single planet separated itself from its fellow and moved smoothly across the sky. Shooting star? Flying star? Plane. Sometime, she told herself, sometime she would fly away in the night.

(Continued Next Week)

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Before me, a notary public in and for the State and county aforesaid, personally appeared Theo. B. Davis, who, having been duly sworn according to law, deposes and says that he is the owner of the Zebulon Record and that the following is to the best of his knowledge and belief, a true statement of the ownership, management, etc., of the aforesaid publication for the date shown in the above caption, required by the Act of August 24, 1912, embodied in section 411, Postal Laws and Regulations, printed on the reverse of this form, to wit:

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