

IRISH EYES

by Kathleen Norris

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"Fir'st I'll tell you me name, the man presently said, in a thoughtful, unhurried fashion. "I'm Paul Mc Cann. Then I want ye to take that fifty and put it back in the purse—I'll make it up to Gertrude.

"But more than that," he added, and was still, Sheila could not have spoken to save her soul.

"More than that," he commenced again, still regarding her thoughtfully, "I want to do something for ye—for your mother. The rent, now. It is very har'rd on a widow to pay

it, as I well know. And then maybe one of our ger'rls would have a little coat—and a hat—something a ger'rl could use—"

Sheila's one hope now was to escape. The money burned in her hands; she did not want it. Her shabby dress had so worked upon his generous sympathy that he would not be content now without some pledge of help; this beggar should have a hat, a coat, promise of rent money.

"I am poor, and my mother is a widow, but I have a hat, and I don't speak with a brogue!" she thought of bursting out. But he would think she was crazy—

She hesitated. It was too late. Mamie was in the room, obviously with plans against little Veronica's peace.

"Yes, run along wit' Mamie, lovey," the father said. "But hold a moment—" he interrupted himself, as Sheila was about to go with the others, "I want your name, me dear'r, and to hear a bit more of ye."

Sheila sat down again, but before he could speak there was an interruption.

"Here they all are!" Veronica shrilled from the doorway. There was a great sound of bustle and confusion in the hallway; laughter, voices.

"It's our Gertrude—she's getting married to my boy Peter next Tuesday," the man began, when Gertrude herself interrupted him.

She stood in the doorway, a stunning slim girl in a black suit and carrying sable furs. Her laughing voice came into the library. Sheila, who had gotten to her feet, stood staring at her, and at the man who stood beside her. A tall man, with black curly hair—

The floor rocked beneath her feet; her mouth felt dry and her head swam. She knew this man—she knew this man. He had kissed her, on a certain hot summer night beside the sea, under a low, hot moon. No other man had ever kissed her—it was Peter!

"Uncle Paul!" said Gertrude. "If you could have seen Norah Gaynor get mixed up with Peter's legs coming down the aisle, you'd remain away next Tuesday! Honestly, I never was so embarrassed in my life—"

She stared at the red-headed girl, but there was nothing unfriendly in her stare.

"Gertie, is your aunt there?" the judge asked.

Sheila could move her eyes to him, but she could not look at the door.

"She was," Gertrude said. "But of course the minute she saw her, Von put up a squawk, and Aunt Ellie went upstairs with her."

"I'll ge' her!" the judge said. Gertrude turned back into the hallway with him; Sheila and Peter were face to face for one whirling minute.

"Don't give me away!" she breathed.

"I won't," he said quickly, agitatedly. "But I have to see you. I have to see you. When can I see you. I have to see you. When can I see you? I've been trying to find

you." There was no more time; Judge Mc Cann was returning, and with him was a tall, delicate-looking woman who turned an eager gaze toward Sheila. Gertrude and Peter disappeared; the others went back into the library.

"This young lady bought Gertrude's purse at the rummage sale yesterday, Mamma."

"Oh, at St. Leo's?" Mrs. Mc Cann asked, in a soft, pleasant voice.

"Yes, ma'am," Sheila managed to say.

"Do you live near St. Leo's, dear?"

"No, ma'am. I live out in the Bronx. But I work down near St. Leo's."

"She found some money in Gert's purse—fifty dollars," the man said. "Fifty dollars!" Mrs. Mc Cann echoed, surprised. "She's terrible with money," she added, shaking her head disapprovingly.

"One ger'rl comes all the way down from the Bronx to give back the money she needs, that another ger'rl loses," Paul Mc Cann said.

Mrs. Mc Cann shook her head again, looked at him mildly.

"Isn't that so, Papa?" she agreed, regretfully.

"Ellie, is that fair?" he demanded, challengingly.

The woman was serious, sympathetic.

"Indeed it's not," she said, with a sigh. "Oh, dear, dear, dear!"

"Well, then, you make a suggestion," he said, belligerently. "You handle it. Are we going to let it go, like that?"

Mrs. Mc Cann looked with infinite kindness and with a half-smile at Sheila. The smile invited the girl into her confidence. "He's like that," it seemed to say, "but it's only his way of showing he is stirred." Aloud she said, "It seems to me the only thing to do, Papa, is do all we can to make the other little girl happy, too."

There was such goodness, such simple friendliness and sympathy in her quiet, middle-aged face, as she made this suggestion, that Sheila felt guiltier and more unhappy than ever.

"That young girl who was here a minute back is our ward, Gertrude Keane, and it was her purse you found," Mrs. Mc Cann went on. "She and our Peter are getting married on Tuesday. Judge Mc Cann and I feel very happy about it."

Sheila was ashamed, dazed, frightened. She wanted only to escape.

"Tell me your name," the judge said, stopping short in a restless turn about the room.

"Sheila Carscadden."

"Carscadden!" he shouted. It was as if a gun had been fired in the room. "You're from Albany!"

"No, sir. We live in the Bronx."

"I know ye, I know ye," he muttered, transfixed. "Look at the red head on her, Mamma. She's Con Carscadden's ger'rl. Of course she is." He snapped his fingers, walked the floor again. His excitement communicated itself to the two women, and Mrs. Mc Cann said sympathetically, "Now, take it easy, Papa."

"Con! Con Carscadden," Paul Mc Cann exclaimed suddenly, pointing a stout finger at Sheila. "That's who your papa was."

"My brother Neely's named for him, Cornelius."

"We were boys together in the old laundry days up in Albany," the man said. "I thank God for this, Mamma. I've prayed for this! Manny's the time I've prayed that I'd run into poor Con's children. That was the cheapest fifty dollars I ever spent, that Gert lost on us. You've hear'd me talk of this Carscaddens Mamma? This is Con's ger'rl."

"I've heard you talk many's the time, Paul," said his wife, almost as pleased as he, in her quieter way.

He wiped his forehead, blew his nose. His blue eyes were brimming.

"'Twas God sint this child our way," he said, clearing his throat. "I hope it was, indeed," said his wife.

"Your father was my fr'nd, my dear," the man told Sheila simply. He sat down, patted her hand; he was breathing hard. "I'll be yours.

"There's Joe and Angela and me,

You may lay to that," he said. "You'll never have cause that you'd regret this night's work. Con Carscadden's ger'rl. And there's others, is there?"

"There's Joe and Angela and me,



"And she raised you all without him, did she?"

at home. And Marg'ret and Neely's married," Sheila explained, her eyes shining with tears.

"And she raised you all without him, did she?"

"My sister Angela was born after Papa died."

"My God, my God, my God," he muttered, "all of you, here in this city, needin' help, and I not knowin' it! Well, your har'rd times are over. I'll stand to you. I'll stand to all of ye."

He was walking about again, agitated, impatient. Sheila was all but crying; there were tears in Mrs. Mc Cann's sympathetic eyes.

"Well, she'll want some supper," he said. "Mamie said she'd look out for her. Con's ger'rl, and the spit of his sister Julia. She'd a fine, coarse head of red hair on her, too. Mamma, we'll have to kape an eye on these youngsters of Con's."

"We will, Paul."

"They'll have fri'nds, now," he said, trembling with emotion, his handkerchief out again. "They'll have good times, now. You'll have to see Con's widow, Ellie—find out what we can do."

"I'll do it tomorrow, Paul," Mrs. Mc Cann rose, held out her hand. "Come with me, Sheila," she said. "We'll get something to eat, and then I'll take you upstairs, and see if we can't find a little hat and coat of Gertrude's that'll fit you. You're a real big girl, but she wears bigger clothes than you'd think."

Talking comfortably, she went with Sheila through a very confusion of big, dark, richly furnished rooms toward a dining-room and into a bright clean pantry beyond it. And here, true to her promise, Mamie had indeed arranged a meal of coffee and salad, a little baked custard, a chocolate eclair.

Sheila, who had dined heartily on fish-balls and prune shortcake only an hour before, realized wretchedly that she must appear to be ravenous. When providentially Mrs. Mc Cann and Mamie left the pantry for a few minutes, she seized the opportunity to pour the custard and the coffee down the sink drain, and bury most of the salad in the little white enamel-ware garbage tin that was already half filled with dead flowers and lemon peels. She was eating the eclair when they returned.

They had with them a heavy soft, dark-blue coat with a fur collar—the coat of any girl's dreams, and a small, soft blue hat.

"Here," said Mrs. Mc Cann, in her gentle voice and with her gentle smile, "these'll go well with the bag. They're Monica's—she's up at Kenwood, and she'll be glad for an excuse to get new ones."

Her hands lingered in motherly fashion about Sheila, as she helped to put them on. She smiled at the results, and Mamie brought her hands together with one convulsive clap of triumph.

Sheila, her sense of shame deepening every second, hung her head as she stood before them. It was all like a nightmare. Their warmth, their kindness; their goodness were all completely disarming.

"You've the purse, dear, and the money in it. And tell Mamma that Judge Mc Cann was one of your papa's old friends, and that I'll be over tomorrow to have a little talk with her. And you've your nickel for the subway—?"

"You're awfully kind to me, Mrs. Mc Cann," Sheila could only mumble. She had completely abandoned the brogue, but neither of the other women was apt to notice the omission.

"Kind, my dear! When the Lord has been so good to me," Ellen Mc Cann said humbly. She went with Sheila across the wide hallway again; it was darkened now, but there was still a dim indication of lighted lamps beyond the library archway, and in some smaller room there were subdued laughter and the sound of voices. Mrs. Mc Cann herself opened the big front door for her guest.

(Continued Next Week)

Raleigh, capital of North Carolina, is planning to observe its 150th anniversary in 1942.

ADMINISTRATRIX NOTICE

Having qualified as administratrix of the estate of Cynthia Rodgers, late of Wake County, North Carolina, this is to notify all persons having claims against the estate of said deceased to exhibit them to the undersigned at Zebulon North Carolina on or before the fifteenth day of March, 1941, or this notice will be pleaded in bar of their recovery.

All persons indebted to said estate will please make immediate payment.

This the 14 day of March, 1940.

Ollie V. King, Admx., Estate of Cynthia Rogers, deceased.

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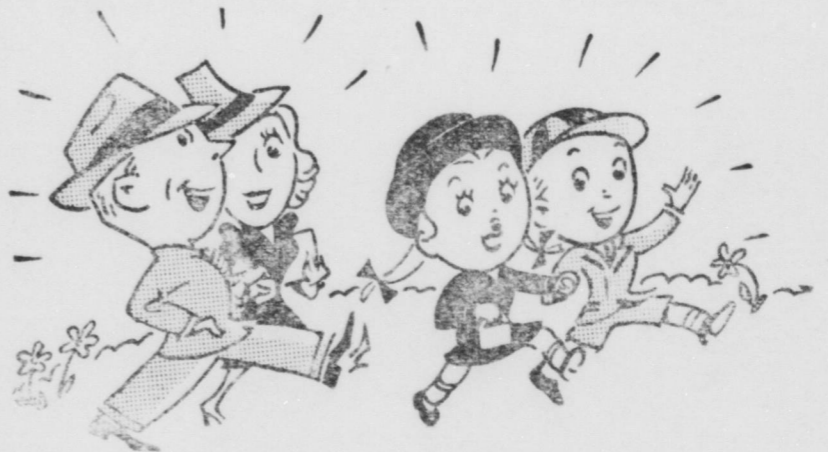
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