

# "THE GOOD BAD GIRL"

## The Story Of New York— And A Girl.

—By—  
Winifred Van Duzen

### Chapter 14

The telephone awakened Mimi. She looked around. Merle's shabby studio in bewilderment. Then everything came back; Trixie lying with blue shadows on her face, clutching the sheet in her frozen hands; Trixie carried down the stairs on a stretcher; the black ghosts.

The telephone kept ringing. Merle called to see if she were up. Dear Merle.

She reached for the instrument; answered in a thin little voice. Not Merle. Perry!

He kept repeating, "Hello!" And then, "Good Lord, is that you, Mimi?" "Yes. I was afraid up home. I came over here—"

A long pause. He said, in a different, "I'm downstairs. Tell Merle I'll be right up," and broke the connection before she could answer.

An old dressing robe was tossed across the screen, she'd moved about the couch. She barely had time to catch it up, snuggle into the folds, before Perry was at the door. He looked at her appraisingly, out of hard eyes.

"Where's Lenore?" "Over across the hall. Have you heard anything? Trixie—is she better? Or—have you heard, Perry?"

He glanced at her bare feet under the edge of the robe, lighted a cigarette deliberately.

"So this was your game! Sent me packing so you could chuck yourself into another man's arms! Nifty racket, you're got! Innocent country girl stuck. Ye gods! I fell for it! Well," he laughed disgracefully, "Live and learn!"

Dismay, perplexity, and a miserable sense of injustice closed on Mimi; burned in her cheeks. But the man read guilt in the flush and sneered.

"You're—oh, you're horribly mistaken, Perry! I'm not even sure that I know what you mean."

"You know what I mean all right enough! You're foolish is all! Why you scatter-brain, what do you want to throw yourself away for on a tramp artist? What's it going to get you? With your looks—you can just about take your pick. Why listen, Mimi, he said rather huskily, coming close, "I can give you things worth while! My apartment over on the Square—"

"It's something to think about! You can have a car—charge account everywhere."

She was very white now and he took hold of her arms, awkward in the heavy woolen of Merle's old robe.

"I'm crazy about you, Mimi. The moment I saw you I said, 'She's for me.' You'll never regret it. Why don't you say something? Don't you understand?"

"Yes, Yes. I understand—now—"

She struck him in the face. There was muscle in the arm behind her slender hand and the blow sent him reeling.

"She didn't see him go. And when Merle came in, an hour later, she was sitting, white lipped and bright eyed, staring straight ahead.

"Why Perry's been here. He misunderstand. He said—"

She sobbed out the story then. With Merle sitting on the arm of the chair and her face buried in the rough

nap of the jacket. Merle, with the understanding eyes, and the long, artist's fingers touching her.

"I'll see Perry. Don't think about it any more. He'll believe me—"

grimly.

"But he said it to me! I can't forget!"

"Yes you can. Yes, Mimi. Listen, my dear—don't you know that nothing—no suspicion or wrong—from outside yourself can hurt you? It's only what's inside your own heart that has power to injure. You know you did the right thing coming here—that you're wholly honest, don't you?"

"Yes, Merle—dear."

"There—that's fine! My gee, do you care what anyone else thinks as long as you know? Their suspicions are arrows shot against a stone wall."

"It's hard to remember."

"I'm afraid many things are going to be hard for you, little Red-head. His fingers slipped down, lay against her cheek. "Perhaps I shouldn't say this. But—I'm going to. I'm as poor as—as only an artist with nothing but a lot of faith in himself can be. It's not for always. Still, the next few years—they'll be a struggle."

"Even so I could help you over the rough places. If you were my wife we could get on somehow, until the jolly old ship comes in. It's out in the blue somewhere, headed home. You wouldn't be so alone."

"I'm not saying how I feel about you. It wouldn't be fair. I mean I don't want to influence you by saying that I adore you. I do—but don't think of that. Would you want to marry me child?"

Marry Merle! Why she'd never thought . . . S sweet, oh, sweet! Merle's sweetness. Like gold in all the gray of fear and disappointment. Gold—a golden light. Billows of golden light all around her . . .

This must be love. Not the queer, half-shamed tingle she felt for Perry. This Merle, with his gentleness, his strength and sureness. Strength you never had felt except in Daddy. It rested you so; made you feel strong, too.

She wanted to say "Yes," but the word caught in her throat. What did she care for shabbiness, the struggle he talked about? Her head came up gladly, proudly.

Then, through the swirling gold, she saw the mantel with its drift of sketches; it portrait. The portrait of Connie Duer.

Connie Duer's cold, beautiful eyes looking at her out of the frame. With contempt. Warning. No light now; no gold. Only gray.

"Merle, you're sweet—sweet—"

"I know, dear. I don't blame you. Well, we'll be the best of friends there ever were!"

"Shall I take you up St. Nicholas avenue now? I'll telephone White and he won't expect you. I've a married sister living up in Yonkers. Let's go up this evening. I've told her about you. And forget what I said. Just forget, dear!"

### Chapter 15

Mimi aired and dusted the little apartment; folded Trixie's things; and hung them away. It wasn't as hard as she'd expected it would be. The black ghosts were gone.

That was Merle's doing! He had laid the ghosts by his kindness. Wonderful Merle! If only—no, no, not Don't think of it for a minute! Do one unselfish thing, can't you? Reach out of the gray and do one unselfish thing! He deserved the best. Not a wife hanging on his neck like a millstone. Dragging him down. Connie Duer loved him. Surely, surely she loved him! She could smooth his way. He'd go up—up—oh, stop crying! Lucky to have him for a friend!

Late in the afternoon Merle came and Mimi rode to Yonkers in the subway with him and a taxi took them through the town to a low stone bungalow in an enormous yard. A slender young woman with tawny skin and humorous brown eyes like Merle's greeted them with two little children clinging to her skirts.

"This is Mimi, Alice."

The young woman took both of Mimi's hands and kissed her cheek. "It's kind of you to come. Tom'll be delighted. Tom! Tom Hart! Where is that man?"

Her husband's greeting was as friendly as her own, and they led their guests to the warm, pleasant living room where Mimi removed her wraps. Alice Hart looked at the girl, aglow with the crisp air of early Spring; at her flaming hair.

"My dear, how lovely you are! Merle said much, but he didn't say that I was to meet a startling beauty. No wonder Winship White is putting you in all his pictures. I'm sure he's very lucky to have you for a model!"

Sincerity, kindness, the feel of home!

Mrs. Hart dashed about, picking up toys. They were scattered over the floor; a small locomotive, a doll with hair; a yarn paddle-dog.

"I can't keep those Indians from

playing all over. That's—well, of all things."

She stood before her guest, laughing. The baby girl was in Mimi's lap, tiny arms tight around her neck, while Junior, age five, climbed up with his chubby hands at the red hair.

"Shall I take them away? I'm afraid they're annoying. Unless you like children."

"Please—I love them so! Darlings! Darling little lambs! Do you like Mimi, brother?" She crooned and gurgled with pure happiness.

Alice glanced at her brother. The rapt look in his eyes made her speak quickly: "Have you painted her, dear? You might do a new Madonna."

He said, "Sometime," absently and the baby screamed when her nurse came to take her away.

"She doesn't make."

Tom declared, with frank "You must come often!"

Mimi started to say "Yes. But all at once she thought, "No, I can't come often. In a little while he will marry Connie Duer and she will come. Alice will kiss her and she will sit here at their table."

It was the first time since she left Tranquility that Mimi had sat at dinner in a real home. Restaurants, the kitchen on St. Nicholas avenue. Nita Mori's dingy room. Tramping from place to place.

She thought, "I'm getting to be a drifter. You drift if you haven't a home. This is what I love so. Security, affection. Perhaps it wasn't intended for me."

Alice said, kindly, "Your name is unusual. Is it professional?"

"No," said the girl from Tranquility. "Mother lived just long enough after I was born to call me Mimi. It's after a girl in a book. Some Frenchman wrote it."

"Mother left word for me that the first Mimi was happy because she knew how to dream true. Life wallowed her hard and folks thought she never got what she wanted most. But she did—in her dreams."

"Mother said your dreams are about all that count for much because your dreams are you. The real you. So if you dream true, why you're true!"

Tom was nodding and smiling, completely captivated. But Alice mused, "You've come to the City of Shattered Dreams, dear!"

"Dreams can't be shattered," Mimi cried. "No, if you dream true!"

"And I'm going to dream true. I'm going to dream wonderful things about fame and fortune. And maybe about love. True love. I must know it is true, no matter what the world thinks about it!"

Again Alice glanced at her brother. "Dreams about love! Have you found Gogo, Mimi?"

"Gogo?" repeated the girl. "Oh, he's the boy in the book, the one Mimi loved. I don't know. She—she only loved him in dreams, didn't she? Only in her dreams . . ."

"Why, maybe I have. Maybe I've found Gogo."

To Be Continued

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## OFFERS PRIZE FOR NEWSPAPER WORK

### Gastonia Man Offers \$500 Prize Through North Carolina Press Association

Gastonia, N. C., May 7.—By the generosity of Mr. H. Separk, of Gastonia, one of the leading textile manufacturers in the South, a cash prize of \$500 for excellence in the editorial or reportorial departments, or both, of North Carolina newspapers, will be awarded next year, according to announcement made here today by Jas. W. Atkins, president of the North Carolina Press Association.

Interested in the welfare and upbuilding of his native State in things live, educational and cultural, as well as material, Mr. Separk believes that the newspapers have a wonderful opportunity, through their editorial and news pages, to aid very materially in bringing about a still better era in the Old North State. To stimulate the editors of the State in their efforts to bring about a more ideal commonwealth he offers this prize. Details as to the definite thing or things for which the award shall be made and the manner of its handling are left to the executive committee of the press association. These details will be worked out and definite information put before the association at its annual meeting in Hickory in July. It is the belief of the executive committee that through the liberality and interest of other North Carolinians, this prize may be established as an annual award. The North Carolina Press Association is the first State organization of newspapers in the South to offer an editorial prize of this size.

Mr. Separk is head of the Gray-Separk chain of textile mills in Gaston county, is an alumnus of Duke University and a member of the board of trustees of that institution and a past president of the Gastonia Rotary Club. His private library is said to be one of the largest and finest in the entire State.

As a rule it takes unreasonable people to afford momentum enough to accomplish a reasonable reform.

Correct this sentence: "When I consult a doctor," said the man, "I do exactly as he advises."

## A SCORE CARD FOR HUSBANDS OF FARM

The Progressive Farmer.

We suggest that each Mr. Farmer score himself by the following question score cards, allowing a maximum of 8 1-3 points for each question to which he can answer "Yes," without qualification. At the same time, Mrs. Farmer might be asked to score her husband also, and see whether her estimate agrees with his. The ideal farm husband can answer "Yes" to each of the dozen inquiries propounded by the score card for Farm Husbands, and we wonder how many such "100 percent good" husbands there are among our readers! Here is the list of questions:

1. Are you a "good, safe provider"? Do you maintain worthy standards of living in your home, such as your finance warrants, and yet avoid extravagance and "time prices" debts, such as might prevent your being a "good provider" later on? Have you made a will and taken out some insurance to protect your wife in case of your death?

2. Does your wife have for her own some fund, such as the butter and egg money, and do you let her spend this as she pleases without criticism and without expecting it to buy two dollars' worth for every dollar?

3. Have you provided proper working equipment for the home as rapidly as you have bought it for your own work? Is your wife as well supplied with such labor-saving equipment as an oil stove, a fireless cooker, a washing machine, running water, and electric lights as you are supplied with two-row cultivators, disc harrows, reapers, gasoline engines, and trucks?

4. Are you interested in the appearance of your home and home grounds? Do you have house and outbuildings painted, if possible? Do you help cheerfully with the heavy work of keeping the home grounds clean, attractive and well cared for? Do you keep your hogs, calves and poultry away from the front yard and your wife's flowers?

5. Do you assume responsibility for the fuel supply, seeing to it that your wife always has plenty of dry wood and does not have to build fires and carry out the ashes?

6. Do you provide "mind-food" as well as body-food for the family by providing such papers, magazines, books and educational recreation as you can afford? Do you average spending at least "a nickel a day" for mind-food?

7. Do you come to your meals punctually at the hour you expect them to be ready?

8. Have you done your part to furnish a year-round garden, a good cow, and plenty of feed for your wife's poultry?

9. Do you assume your full share of the responsibility of bringing up the children—in training and educating them to be honorable, industrious and courteous, encouraging and stimulating them in school work?

## HENDERSONVILLE LOSS BY FLAMES IS OVER \$50,000

Hendersonville, May 7.—Fire of undetermined origin early today destroyed the buildings housing Smith's bakery and the Clinic Barber Shop, on Main street, in the heart of the city with a loss of approximately \$50,000 and only a small amount of insurance.

Other buildings in the district were threatened before the blaze was brought under control after more than an hour's work on the part of the firemen and citizens who came to their aid. The buildings, one-story brick structures and their contents were completely destroyed. The loss to the bakery is placed at \$20,000, including the building and to the barber shop at \$30,000.

### For Church Causes

Governor McLean is to come in for more praise when he takes time in the rush of state and private affairs to call a church meeting at Greensboro, attend and preside over the session himself and agree to add still more burdens to the already enormous pack which he is already carrying.

The meeting, called by the governor, was for the purpose of perfecting a Stewardship advisory council for his denominations, which happens to be Presbyterian. The organization was perfected, and we bespeak great things for it.

Only prominent business men, financially able to take over stewardship problems and thoroughly capable of serving in an advisory capacity were called into the meeting. Probably the fact that the governor called the session had much to do with their putting aside business cares and attending the session.

In all probability the meeting will mark a new departure in church support and financial affairs. If even a comparatively few men who attended the meeting catch a true vision of the cause presented there, incalculable good and benefit will be certain to result.

North Carolina is fortunate in having a governor who is not only a business man and an efficient public affairs to use his influence and his servant who but can likewise take time out from his public and private life for the furtherance of Christian and wholesome atmosphere which it provides.—Rocky Mount Telegram.



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## QUESTION OF CHOICE

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