

"THE GOOD BAD GIRL"

—BY— WINFRED VAN DUZEN

Chapter 40

Perry moved out of the dark, stepped squarely into the bar of light and stood there debonnairely, waiting.

He held out his arms. Mimsi faced him whitely from the shadows and felt the world slipping away beneath her feet.

Yet even as she began to flutter, mothlike toward the light, a breeze stirred the roses; their scent revived the memory of the weeks just past.

"Perry! Why—why you're home!" Her words came in little gasps as if she had been running a race.

"I came home to you, Mimsi. Aren't you going to greet me? Perhaps I shouldn't have surprised you so?"

"Of course, dear. You're frightened, aren't you? I'm a clumsy idiot. Shall we have the lights? No? Well, I like the dark too. I'm going to sit over here."

"Perry," she said softly, "I've done a terrible thing. I've spent loads of your money."

"Oh!" His laugh was pleasant and wholly sincere. "You darn little kid, that's what I wanted you to do. Didn't I say you were to have everything I could get you? Is that what's on your mind? Forget it, youngster!"

"But—but I'm afraid you don't understand. Perry, there's been times since you went away when I thought I could—well, take things as they come. When I thought I could see things your way. Believe as you do about everything. About marriage. I've tried, dear. Tried my best."

"And I went on staying here, getting in deeper. Oh, I'm not planning to speak out of anything. I couldn't do that. I know now if I didn't before, I'm putting it up to you. I'll do whatever you say. But . . . Oh, Perry, let me go! Please let me go!"

"Why Mimsi!" he said. "Why little Mimsi!" He arose, stood before her. "Did you think I was trying to tie you up—trying that way. That rather hurts dear. I'm sorry."

She was weeping now, miserable and ashamed.

"Listen, girl. Will you believe me when I say that whatever I've done has been only with the thoughts of your good? Just that; just your good. I'm not completely a rotter! Surely you're to go if you want to. Do you think I'd try to hold you if you want to go?"

"Only don't forget what I've already told you. I love you more than anything in the world. I have loved you and will love you. Don't forget that, Mimsi."

Words tumbled through her mind, hurting and humiliating. "Honi soit—Merle had said that. Merle saw clearly. 'Evil to him who evil thinks.' She'd thought evil of Perry and now it seemed he was proving true and only she was debased by her own thought."

"Will you forgive me? I'm all twisted somehow. If you'd come yesterday—"

"It's all right, sweetheart. Yesterday—what happened today?"

Then she told him of Harbeck and her promise. "You see I wanted to pay you what I owe; I wanted to get to work so I could pay you soon. I thought—oh, I'm sorry, sorry!"

He came nearer; suddenly she was in his arms, holding up her lips for his kisses, smiling through her tears.

"It's for a year, dearest; only a little year—"

"You do love me, Mimsi! Do you love me enough. You'll come to me then? You surely will come to me Mimsi . . ."

Later he asked if she meant that he was not to see her for a year. "Oh course I'll see you!" she said "I didn't promise never even to see you!"

"But do you have to go on with this? Throw it over, girl. Harbeck won't be out anything. I'll see to that. If you're determined to study let me fix things for you. I can do whatever he can. Will you? For me?"

Perry urging her to break her word! The thought jarred somehow; offended the uncomproising sense of honesty that tranquillity had bred in her

bones and that persisted in spite of everything.

"No," she told him. "I must keep my promise. It's for the best really. I can see that. What difference will a year make if this—what we feel now—is genuine?"

"And perhaps . . . Perry, mightn't you see things differently? Oh, I know you think I'm old-fashioned. I suppose I am. But I'd never feel right—I'd never feel really married to you—without all the old way of going about it; the license and ceremony and all. In a year—couldn't you manage somehow? Get a divorce—do something. To please me?"

He drew away. There was something hazy, rather cold and entirely final in the gesture. "We've been over that," was all he said.

She left for her new home shortly afterward, taking her clothes and the white collie.

Chapter 41 Winship White scrubbed a pain-smudged hand on his smock, and offered it to Mimsi in welcome. There was a new deference in his manner yet his eyes twinkled wickedly and the shaggy brows went through a whole series of gymnastics.

"So you took my advice, Miss Marsh. That's good—very good! Make an 'old master' of you yet, maybe! Now I suppose the old corner won't be good enough. My word, now,

of course it won't!" He began to pad around in circles with the smock gloating out behind his tubbiness.

"Wait, Mr. White, please!" called Mimsi, laughing. "Don't take it so hard. The old corner is wonderful and I wouldn't change it for worlds. You look like a fat old angel flying around that way, with wings sort of dragged. And you never used to call me 'Miss Marsh.'"

"My word!" He galloped up and gave her a bear hug. "Now we'll get on, child. That's a girl. How lovely you are! Like a school kid."

She said, "It's the dress;" and flushed. Then, rather defiantly, "Mr. Harbeck made me get it. There are others, all about like this. I moved into the place he sent me, too. I want you to know about it."

He was serious all at once. "Has it occurred to you that you may be mistaken, my dear? I have known Eli Harbeck for years. He commands great wealth. Almost any woman—of the sort . . . Don't look so startled!"

Her eyes were the color of old gold, and wide with surprise. "You mean," she said slowly, "there are dozens of girls more beautiful and brilliant—more desirable than I am that he could call by raising his finger? You mean these elaborate plans—educating me—that I wouldn't be worth the

bother if . . ." Her voice trailed off.

Suddenly she held out her hand and White shook it solemnly. "Thank you for saying that," she told him. "It's something to remember."

She bent over her drawing board, handling the crayons lovingly. It's like getting back home—back home," she thought. And the words put themselves into a tune that hummed through her head. She thought she never had been so happy as she was that day.

The luncheon hour passed unnoticed; the shadows of afternoon gathered and she still was hard at work. White left without disturbing her.

When finally she looked up it was quite dark. She was cramped and aching with fatigue but felt, nevertheless, as if a light were burning inside of her; a new light that never would be dimmed.

Suddenly she remembered that she was to report to Harbeck. It was far past the hour. She flew to the telephone, heard the voice of the Jap hissing in reply. He kept saying "Iss—iss."

Convincing that he hadn't understood a word, she packed up the drawing she had been working on, pulled her hat over her ears and rushed into the street. She was smiling and breathless when she fitted the key into her door.

Luck frowned to meet her; she followed him through the tiny hall into the living room which was all alight.

"Why," she began, "Who's here?" There was a door at the left of the hall that she had supposed gave on an extra closet; she had not inspected it as yet. Now it opened and a woman in gingham and a white cap came out. She was middle-aged, rather grim faced, and her general air was one of great capability.

"I'm the maid, Miss Marsh," she said pleasantly enough. "Shall I serve your dinner at once, please?"

"Oh, I didn't know—Mr. Harbeck sent you?"

"I live here permanently." Her tone implied that Mimsi was a mere

visitor. "My room is off the kitchen."

Mimsi laughed then. "I didn't even know there was a kitchen! May I see it please?"

She looked into a kitchen nearly as large as her living room and bedroom put together. There was a clever little breakfast nook at one end; she judged that a door toward the east led to the extra bedroom.

"May I have dinner in the breakfast nook? It's sweet!"

"Certainly, Miss Marsh. My name is Bassett."

Very well. Is it Mrs. Bassett?"

"Just Bassett, please."

The dinner was dainty and delicious and Mimsi was in high spirits when she went into the living room and began to get up the stand for her drawing board. But Bassett was at her shoulder.

"Mr. Harbeck has sent books for you, please. He wishes you to read evenings. Will you look them over—"

She preceded Mimsi to the bedroom where shelves had been put up and filled with volumes. There were copies of the Outline of History; a textbook of psychology; several books of poems.

But I wanted to draw!" the girl protested.

Without a word the woman handed her a sheet of notepaper; she recognized Harbeck's writing.

"No art stands alone," she read. "All is supported by history, legend, story, the mechanism of the human mind. Please be good enough to obey orders."

"So Bassett isn't just a maid," she thought. "She's a spy sent here to watch me."

However she took down a book. And soon she was deep in the Idylls of the King.

To Be Continued.

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Fresh country eggs will not be true to name unless the rooster is removed from the flock and the eggs gathered frequently and kept in a cool place.

GASTONIA CLUBS WILL COME HERE

Gastonia Gazette. Gastonia clubmen will meet with members of other clubs in this territory at the Cleveland Springs hotel on June 25, if plans made by the Interclub council at their meeting Wednesday afternoon are carried out. This council is composed of three officials from each of the various luncheon clubs of the city. At the meeting held yesterday afternoon at the Gastonia chamber of commerce the council approved and endorsed heartily the proposal to go.

meet with the other clubs of the surrounding counties at the Cleveland Springs meet. The chamber of commerce of Shelby and the Kiwanis club of that place have issued an invitation to practically every city within a radius of 50 miles to meet with them. This endorsement by the local club at their next regular meeting. Judging by the favorable comment that has been heard from all sides, the proposal will go through unananimously. A full program is being arranged forward to a rousing celebration for all the visitors. It has been removed that a big barbecue will be the main feature, and all Gastonians who have commended the council approved and endorsed heartily the proposal to go.

POPULAR SEASHORE EXCURSION TO Norfolk and Virginia Beach, Va. VIA SOUTHERN RAILWAY SYSTEM SATURDAY, JUNE 19, 1926. Round trip fare from Shelby to Norfolk \$10.00, Virginia Beach \$10.50. Tickets good until June 22nd. Through Pullman sleeping cars and day coaches. Wonderful opportunity to visit this splendid seashore resort. Fine surf bathing, boat excursions and good fishing. For further information and sleeping car reservations call on any Southern Railway Agent or address: R. H. GRAHAM, Division Passenger Agent Charlotte, N. C.



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