

**LITTLE SISTER**

By ETHEL M. FARMER.

Mary Ann stood at the side of the road and watched her transient visitor settle herself comfortably in her new roadster. It seemed only a minute before she had waved goodbye and had disappeared from view.

It was one of those glorious mornings in early April, when the sun shone exceptionally bright and the sky seemed exceptionally clear, but a slight frown passed over Mary Ann's face as she slowly retraced her steps to her home and to a bag of unfinished darning. Virginia's last words kept running through her mind.

"Of course you know that Kenneth receives his discharge tomorrow and we are all going to meet the train," she had said.

Mary Ann was delighted to know that her neighbor was coming home but the village rumors which were circulated troubled her. She wondered if Virginia's "hope chest" was really filled to overflowing and if she had really bought material for a wedding gown. She did not blame Kenneth if it were true, for Virginia was the prettiest and richest girl in the village.

Yet all the villagers knew and loved Mary Ann, although it was quietly agreed that she was far from good looking. Every one called her "Little Sister" for she had always seemed like a little sister to them all.

Mary Ann's frown soon changed into a smile and she began to sing snatches of songs, for she could never scowl or sigh very long. Then suddenly her bag of work fell to the floor with a thud and she ran eagerly out of the door and down the narrow, cobbled path. She was just in time to throw open the gate for an elderly man who was leaning heavily on his cane as he walked along.

"How is dad after his walk this lovely morning?" She asked cheerfully.

"Fine," he replied, "but a little tired."

He rested his hand for a moment on her shoulder and smiled at her solicitude.

"Do not worry," he assured her, "I am better. Did you know that our neighbor was coming tomorrow?" he asked suddenly, "and the village is planning a hearty welcome? You must be sure to be at the station when he comes."

Her eyes sparkled and her voice was eager when she spoke.

"I will go if you are all right."

"Of course you will go, because I will be all right," and he laughed a deep, rich laugh, for he thought of the happy reunion of his dearly beloved daughter and her old schoolmate. He knew how she had watched the papers with great anxiety while he was in the trenches, and how she had waited with great anticipation and expectations for his home-coming.

It was no wonder that a deep flush passed over "Little Sister's" face when her father said teasingly: "I suppose you and Kenneth will soon be hunting up your old playgrounds?"

The next day dawned clear and beautiful and the air seemed charged with enthusiasm and excitement. The quaint little village was gayly decorated with flags and bunting and strains from the band filled the air.

in their last attempt to have a good rehearsal before the train arrived. Self-satisfied Virginia sat alone in her car, waiting for the parade to start. She seemed more dignified and prouder than ever as she watched the moving mass with great contempt. She seemed pleased to think that she was unmoved and unexcited and only wondered if Kenneth would like her new silk dress and jaunty black hat.

But where was "Little Sister?" Many searched the crowds for her, for she was one of the people who was always missed. But the long parade started for the station without her.

She stood alone at the door of her home and watched the cheering crowd move along. Her father was sick and she dared not leave him alone.

When the train whistled in the distance, the crowd of well-wishers moved with one accord nearer the tracks, and the band began its music. All eyes scanned the doors and windows of the train as it stopped and the travelers began to climb off. At last Kenneth was spied and they rushed to him.

Then the people gave cheer after cheer while Kenneth was being transferred from the train to the top of a large baggage truck, where he was to give a speech.

He seemed to be in excellent spirits and told them about many of his experiences. His ankle had been injured in one of the battles and it would be a long time before he could walk without crutches, but his cheerful smile showed them that he was glad that he was able to do his bit for his country.

After the great festivities were over the returning hero rapped at his old playmate's and neighbor's door. He could hardly wait until the door was flung open and Mary Ann rushed joyfully out to greet him.

"Little Sister" smiled contentedly when he told her the story of his life overseas. And all this time another girl was sitting sedately in her parlor waiting for her "gentleman caller." If she had happened to walk by a certain humble, little cottage, she would have seen two old playmates reunited.

A few months later a very pretty wedding ceremony was performed when a certain "Little Sister" was made "Little Wife," but the "Village Belle" was not present.

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**The Guilty One**

By IZOLA FORRESTER

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The morris chair was deep and broad, with mahogany frame and heavy leather cushions. It was the favorite seat of two in the house of Evans, Henrietta, the little gray marmoset, and Mr. Huntly Evans, her master. Standing by the west part of the upper bay window it overlooked the expanse of park and reservoir, and caught the sunset glow nightly.

Sometimes Jacqueline, Huntly's sister, used to wish she might forget the look in their eyes as they stared out at the park, just like prisoners who catch a glimpse of fair fields and hills from behind the bars. It had been that way ever since Huntly had come up from Buenos Aires and the specialist had told him there was little hope of his recovery from the mountain fever. And, since then, each day he had visibly grown weaker, and Henrietta had seemed in her dumb, piteous way, to sense the change.

She would perch on the back of the chair, just above his shoulder, and watch his face with her strange, brilliant, anxious eyes, as if she understood his troubles, and he abstractedly would sometimes stroke the silken fur of the little marmoset, as if he, too, found comfort in her sympathy.

Jacqueline frankly did not like her, any more than she liked her mistress, the gay Senorita Alvarez. They had met her first on Huntly's trip up to the Alvarez mines in Ecuador, and had been lavishly entertained at her father's estate there.

"Her name is Signa," Huntly had told her the first night of their visit. "I never dreamt girls could look like her, Jack, did you?"

"She is too exotic, like one of those flaming mountain flowers," Jacqueline had demurred. "Don't be so susceptible to just beauty, Hunt."

But he had loved Signa and had risked all before he had known her a fortnight. And in return she had



She Would Perch on the Back of the Chair.

laughed at him, told him she would never marry an American, and had given him Henrietta to solace him. Then had come the long spell of fever and the trip back home.

"Of course," the specialist told Jacqueline, "you must know he has some trouble preying on his mind. If we could lift that and give him a spur toward health, a will to live, as it were, he would probably get back to the normal."

She had not answered. He had written to Signa often, and not a word had come back in reply. The mail was placed on the little teakwood stand in the lower hall. She always saw it first after the maid had laid it there. And never was there one from Ecuador. Henrietta seemed to know why she watched for one. She would follow her downstairs and linger while she glanced over the letters, sometimes springing up beside her on the stand and eyeing them eagerly. But the days passed without word, and Huntly grew gradually worse, until there came the wireless brief out of the blue, as it were.

"Arrive Monday. SIGNA." She dared not give it to him at once. The shock might hurt him, but gradually she broke the news, while Henrietta perched on the chair back and almost seemed to understand her mistress was coming north to them.

"But it's so absurd, when I haven't heard from her," Huntly protested brokenly. "She must have written."

"Wait until she comes and then see," warned his sister tenderly. It was a little past ten when Senorita Alvarez arrived. Her father was with her, too, slender and dapper and somewhat bored, as Jacqueline remembered the little silver magnate. Signa cast her sables from her on a stand in the lower hall, and stood like some glowing goddess of the South, smiling down on her hostess.

"You see I have kept my word," she exclaimed. "Is he better, Jack? I

could not wait. I made my father bring me to him. He has received all my letters?"

"Not a single one," protested Jacqueline reproachfully, and then there came a leaping gray form like a shadow past her, into Signa's arms, chattering, burrowing affectionately.

"Ah, precious, how are you?" laughed Signa delightedly. "See how she knows me? She loves the perfume of the jasmine I always have about me. See?"

But Jacqueline was leading the way upstairs to Huntly's room knowing well she brought him a speedy cure. He stood up from the morris chair to greet them, his eyes fairly devouring the sight of the girl he loved, when Henrietta slipped from her arms and made for the chair, digging and poking away industriously and eagerly under the leather cushion. One by one she drew forth letters, six of them, some chewed lovingly around the edges, others merely slipped away for safe keeping. And each envelope carried the faint scent of cape jasmine.

"Oh, the pet!" cried Signa, excitedly. "See what she has done, hiding all my letters to you, Huntly, because she thought they were mine. At home she would take my gloves and handkerchiefs, anything at all, and put them away for me, and she knew the perfume. Isn't she clever?"

But Huntly eyed the little marmoset with a malediction in his gaze which only Jacqueline understood. Days and weeks of waiting and loneliness, hopelessness, because of Henrietta's loyalty to cape jasmine.

"You shall not read them now," Signa said; "not until afterward. But you do not know why I am here. She laughed and spread out her hands widely before him. "I come all this way, senior, to tell you I have changed my mind. If you do not mind, I have decided to marry an American."

Henrietta looked from one to the other and climbed contentedly to the top of the morris chair, with the last letter clutched in her little black paw.

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