

# Old Lady Number 31

By LOUISE FORSSLUND

Author of "The Story of Sarah" "The Ship of Dreams" Etc.

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Captain Abraham Rose and Angelina, his wife, have lost their little home through Abe's unwise purchase of Tenney gold mining stock. Their household goods sold, the \$100 auction money, all they have left, will place Abe in the Old Ladies' home, or Angelina in the Old Ladies' home. Both are self-sacrificing but Abe decides: "My dear this is the last time I've had a chance to take the wust of it."

CHAPTER II—Continued.

Under the pink rose a soft pink flush bloomed on either of the old lady's cheeks. Her eyes flashed with unconquerable pride, and her square, firm chin she held very high; for now, indeed, she was filled with terror of what "folks would say" to this home leaving, and it was a bright June afternoon, too clear for an umbrella with which to hide one's face from prying neighbors, too late in the day for a sunshade.

Angy tucked the green-black affair which served them as both under her arm and swung Abe's figured old carpetbag in her hand with the manner of one setting out on a pleasant journey. Abe, though resting heavily on his stout, crooked cane, dragged behind him Angy's little horsehair trunk upon a creaking, old, unusually large toy express wagon which he had bought at some forgotten auction long ago.

The husband and wife passed into the garden between borders of boxwood, beyond which nodded the heads of Angy's carefully tended, outdoor "children"—her roses, her snowballs, her sweet-smelling syringas, her wax-like bleeding-hearts and her shrub of bridal-wreath.

"Just a minute," she murmured, as Abe would have hastened on to the gate. She bent her proud head and kissed with furtive, half-ashamed passion a fluffy white spray of the bridal-wreath. Now overtopping the husband's silk hat, the shrub had not come so high as his knee when they two had planted it nearly a half-century ago.

"You're mine!" Angy's heart cried out to the shrub and to every growing thing in the garden. "You're mine. I planted you, tended you, loved you into growing. You're all the children I ever had, and I'm leaving you." But the old wife did not pluck a single flower, for she could never bear to see a blossom wither in her hand, while all she said aloud was: "I'm glad 'twas Miss Holmes that bought in the house. They say she's a great hand ter dig in the garden."

Angy's voice faltered. Abe did not answer. Something had caused a swimming before his eyes which he did not wish his wife to see; so he let fall the handle of the express wagon and, bending his slow back, plucked a sprig of "old-man." Though he could not have expressed his sentiments in words, the garden brought poignant recollections of the hopes and promises which had thrown their rose color about the young days of his marriage. His hopes had never blossomed into fulfillment. His promises to the little wife had been choked by the weeds of his own inefficiency. Worse than this, the bursting into bloom of seeds of selfish recklessness in himself was what had turned the garden of their life into an arid waste. And now, in their dry and withered old age, he and Angy were being torn up by the roots, flung as so much rubbish by the roadside.

"Mother, I be dretful sorry ter take yew away from your posies," muttered Abraham as he arose with his green sprig in his hand.

With shaking fingers, Angy sought a pin hidden beneath her bonnet. "Father, shall I pin yer 'old-man' in yer buttonhole?" she quavered. Then as he stooped for her to arrange the posy, she whispered: "I wouldn't care, 'cept fer what folks must say. Le's hurry before any one sees us. I told everybody that we wa'n't a-gwine ter break up till terrormer mornin'."

Fortunately, there was a way across lots to the Old Ladies' home, an unfrequented by-path over a field and through a bit of woodland, which would bring the couple almost unobserved to a side gate.

Under ordinary circumstances Angelina would never have taken this path; for it exposed her carefully patched and newly polished shoes to scratches, her fragile, worn silk skirt and stiff, white petticoat to brambles. Moreover, the dragging of the loaded little wagon was more difficult here for Abraham. But they both preferred the narrower, rougher way to facing the curious eyes of all Shoreville now, the pitying windows of the village street.

As the couple came to the edge of the woodland, they turned with one accord and looked back for the last glimpse of the home. Blazing gold-red against the kitchen window flamed the afternoon sunlight.

"Look at that!" Angy cried eagerly, as one who beholds a promise in the skies. "Just see, father, we couldn't 'a' made out that winder this fur at all of the sun hadn't struck it just so. I declar' it seems almost as ef we could see the rocker, tew. It's tew bad, Abe, that we had ter let yer old rocker go. D' yew remember—?" she laid her hand on his arm, and lifted her gaze, growing clouded and wistful, to his face. "When we bought the chair, we thought mebbe some day I'd be rocking a leetle baby in it. 'Twas then, yew ricollec', we sorter got in the habit of callin' each other 'father' an' 'mother.' I wonder ef the young 'uns had come—"

"Le's hurry," interrupted Abe, almost gruffly. "Le's hurry."

They stumbled forward with bowed heads in silence, until of a sudden they were startled by a surprised hail of recognition, and looked up to find themselves confronted by a bent and gray old man, a village character, a harmless, slightly demented public charge known as "Ishmael" or "Captain Rover."

"What yew goin', Cap'n Rose?"

The old couple had drawn back at the sight of the gentle vagabond, and Angy clutched at her husband's arm, her heart contracting at the thought that he, too, had become a pauper.

"I'm a-takin' my wife ter jine the old ladies over thar ter the hum," Abe answered, and would have passed on, shrinking from the sight of himself as reflected in poor Ishmael.

But the "innocent" placed himself in their path.

"Yew ain't a-goin' ter jine 'em tew?" he bantered.

Abe forced a laugh to his lips in response.

"No, no; I'm goin' over ter Yaphank ter board on the county."

Again the couple would have passed on, their faces flushed, their eyes lowered, had not Ishmael flung out one hand to detain them while he plucked the other hurriedly into his pocket.

"Here," He drew out a meager handful of nickels and pennies, his vacant smile grown wistful. "Here, take it, Cap'n Rose. It's all I got. I can't count it myself, but yew can. Don't yew think it's enough ter set yew up in business, so yew won't have ter go ter the poorhouse? The poorhouse is a bad place. I was there last winter. I don't like the poorhouse."

He rambled on of the poorhouse. Angy, panting for breath, one hand against the smothering pain at her heart, was trying, with the other, to drag "father" along. "Father" was shaking his head at Ishmael, at the proffered nickels and pennies—shaking his head and choking. At length he found his voice, and was able to smile at his would-be benefactor with even the ghost of a twinkle in his eye.

"Much obliged, Cap'n Rover; but yew keep yer money for terbacery. I ain't so high-toned as yew. I'll take real comfort at the poorhouse. S'long; thank yer. S'long."

Ishmael went on his way muttering to himself, unhappily jingling his rejected alms; while Angy and Abe resumed their journey.

As they came to the gate of the Old Ladies' home Angy seized hold of her husband's arm, and looking up into his face pleaded earnestly:

"Father, let's take the hundred dollars fer a fambly tombstun an' go ter the poorhouse tergether!"

He shook her off almost roughly and lifted the latch of the gate.

"Folks 'd say we was crazy, mother."

There was no one in sight as he dragged in the express cart and laid down the handle. Before him was a long, clean-swept path ending apparently in a maze of shrubbery; to the left was a field of sweet corn reaching to the hedge; to the right a strong and sturdy growth of pole lima beans; and just within the entrance, beneath the sweeping plumes of a weeping willow tree, was a shabby but inviting green bench.

Abe's glance wandered from the bench to his wife's face. Angy could not lift her eyes to him; with bowed head she was latching and unlatching the gate through which he must pass. He looked at the sun and thoughtfully made reckon of the time. There were still two hours before he could take the train which—

"Let's go set down a spell afore—" he faltered—"afore we say good-by."

She made no answer. She told herself over and over that she must—simply must—stop that "all-of-a-tremble" feeling which was going on inside of her. She stepped from the gate to the bench blindly, with Abe's hand on her arm, though, still blindly, with exaggerated care she placed his carpetbag on the grass beside her.

He laid down his cane, took off his high hat and wiped his brow. He looked at her anxiously. Still she could not lift her blurred eyes, nor could she check her trembling.

Seeing how she shook, he passed his arm around her shoulder. He murmured something—what, neither he nor she knew—but the love of his youth spoke in the murmur, and again fell the silence.

Angy's eyes cleared. She struggled to speak, aghast at the thought that life itself might be done before ever they could have one hour together again; but no words came. So much—so much to say! She reached out her hand to where his rested upon his knee. Their fingers gripped, and each felt a sense of dreary cheer to know that the touch was speaking what the tongue could not utter.

Time passed swiftly. The silent hour sped on. The young blades of corn gossiped gently along the field. Above, the branches of the willow swished and swayed to the rhythm of the soft south wind.

"How still, how still it is!" whispered the breeze.

"Rest, rest, rest!" was the lullaby swish of the willow.

The old wife nestled closer to Abraham until her head touched his shoulder. He laid his cheek against her hair and the carefully preserved old bonnet. Involuntarily she raised her hand, trained by the years of pinching economy, to lift the fragile rose into a safer position. He smiled at her action; then his arm closed about her spasmodically and he swallowed a lump in his throat.

The afternoon was waning. Gradually over the turmoil of their hearts stole the garden's June-time spirit of drowsy repose.

They leaned even closer to each other. The gray of the old man's hair mingled with the gray beneath Angelina's little bonnet. Slowly his eyes closed. Then even as Angy wondered who would watch over the slumbers of his worn old age in the poorhouse, she, too, fell asleep.

CHAPTER III.

The Candidate.

The butcher's boy brought the tidings of the auction sale in at the kitchen door of the Old Ladies' home even while Angy and Abe were lingering over their posies, and the inmates of the home were waiting to receive the old wife with the greater sympathy and the deeper spirit of welcome from the fact that two of the twenty-nine members had known her from girlhood, away back in the boarding-school days.

"Yop," said the boy, with one eye upon the stout matron, who was critically examining the meat that he had brought. "Yop, the auction's over, an' Cap'n Rose, he— Don't that cut suit you, Miss Abigail? You won't find a better, nicer, tenderer and more juicy piece of shoulder this side of New York. Take it back, did you say? All right, ma'am, all right!" His face assumed a look of resignation; these old ladies made his life a martyrdom. He used to tell the "fellars" that he spent one-half his time carrying orders back and forth from the Old Ladies' home. But now, in spite of his meekness of manner, he did not intend to take this cut back. So with MacMavellan skill he hastened on with his gossip.

"Yop, an' they only riz one hundred dollars an' two cents—one hundred dollars an' a postage-stamp. I guess it's all up with the cap'n an' the Old Men. I don't see 'em hangin' out no 'Welcome' sign on the strength of that."

"You're a horrid, heartless little boy!" burst forth Miss Abigail, and, flinging the disputed meat on the table, she sank down into the chair, completely overcome by sorrow and indignation. "You'll be old yerself some day," she sobbed, not noticing that he was stealthily edging toward the door, one eye on her, one on tomorrow's pot roast. "I tell yew, Tommy," regaining her accustomed confident amiability, as she lifted the corner of her apron to wipe her eyes, "Miss Ellie will feel some kind o' bad, tew. Yew know me an' her an' Angy all went ter school tergether, although Miss Ellie is so much younger'n the rest o' us that we call her the baby. Here! Where—"

But he was gone. Sighing heavily, the matron put the meat in the icebox, and then made her slow, lumbering way into the front hall, or community room, where the sisters were gathered in a body to await the new arrival.

"Waal, say!" she supplemented, after she had finished telling her pitiably brief story, "thar's trouble enough to go around, hain't thar?"

Aunt Nancy Smith, who never believed in wearing her heart on her sleeve, sniffed and thumped her cane on the floor.

"You young folks," she affirmed, herself having seen ninety-nine winters, while Abigail had known but a paltry sixty-five, "yew allers go an' cut yer pity on the skew-gee. I don't see nothin' to bawl an' beller erbout. I say that any man what can't take kere o' himself, not ter mention his wife, should orter go ter the poorhouse."

But the matriarch's voice quavered even more than usual, and as she finished she hastily bent down and felt in her deep skirt pocket for her snuff-box.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Legal View.

A Cleveland attorney took the Mediterranean trip a month ago. It was his first time across the water, and he stated on his return that he would have had a perfectly glorious time but for the silly questions asked him by customs officials. It was on the pier at New York that his woes came to a climax. The officer looked up in amazement. "Open your trunk, please," commanded the custom-house officer. "Have you anything in there but personal property?" he continued. "What do you mean by personal property?" countered the lawyer. "For heaven's sake, don't you know what personal property is?" "I thought I did," answered the attorney. "And I can assure you that there is no real estate in my trunk."—Cleveland Plain Dealer.

Profound Consular Advice.

The American commercial representative abroad should say what he means. We have just been reading a consular report from the Uganda district, Africa, which informs us that "human beings acquire the sleeping sickness from biting flies." If this is really a fact, the obvious advice is: Substitute beetles or roaches. Don't bite flies; swat them!—Judge.

## NO NAMES IN THIS STORY OF A BABY

Child of Love Match Is Abandoned in Fear.

### PARENTS MARRIED IN SECRET

Blue-Eyed Mary Cannot Go Back to Arms of Mother Who Years ago First Born—Old Feud to Blame.

There are no names in this story—because of a blue-eyed, five-year-old Mary, who should never know until she is old enough to know and understand and possibly forgive.

Because of a man and wife who stumbled in the path, who suffered in secret and who will continue to suffer while life lasts—and they should be permitted to retain their secret.

Because of a man and woman to whom God denied offspring and who have taken into their hearts and homes the baby abandoned by a boy and a girl when expediency overruled love.

And, because—

The "moving finger" wrote that they should hate each other with the cold, deadly, never-dying malevolence of a Kentucky feud. They did, and they do to this day, but no one knows the reason why.

In early manhood they left the Blue Grass state and fate, with the malignant persistence with which she pursues those ensnared in her web, brought their wandering footsteps to a halt in a little town in Michigan. There they settled.

#### Banker and Lawyer.

They grew with the community. One became the leading banker and the other its prominent lawyer. Success came, but the old-time rancor remained. When the amenities of social or business life lifted a commanding finger courtesy ruled, but that was all.

And they married. To the lawyer was born a son and unto the banker a daughter was given.

Fate, remorseless, threw boy and girl together in school, in play and in the youthful activities of a small town. Pinafore and knickerbocker friendship grew as the years rolled by, and one day—before they were out of school—the chrysalis of friendship burst and radiant love came forth.

For a while boy and girl kept their wonderful secret to themselves. It would have been sacrilege to talk about it. Then the brutal realities of life crept into the roseate picture. Would papa—? Would he—and he forget that horrible mysterious something that had embittered two lives? Daughter crept to daddy's arms and whispered the tale; son stood before father and told the story.

#### Meet in Secret.

The old hatred blazed forth and weeping girl and angry boy went forth to meet in secret and wonder why fate was so unkind.

One day they married, not in the home town, but in another not far away.

At first it was a secret, but soon it became apparent that it could not be a secret forever. So on some pretext or the other they left their respective homes and met in "the Wisconsin woods." There for several weeks they lived a life of utter freedom. But the greatest day in a woman's life was approaching and she journeyed to Chicago. A baby—a little girl—was born in Oak Park.

Today they are ashamed of what they did. Five years of anguish and remorse have not balanced the scales. She could not, would not go back home with a baby; he—well, he admits it today—was a coward. They decided to abandon the child.

Mr. and Mrs. Chester T. Bradford live in Evanston. They, too, had a baby, but it was upstairs in its crib while the little buggy stood on the veranda of the Bedford residence. Fate placed it there. The young father had a friend who lived in Evanston, a well-to-do young man, who necessarily must live in a good neighborhood. And with the address as a pivot in seeking a house in which their baby would receive at least a chance of decent upbringing, the young couple started for Evanston. Half a block before they reached their friend's house they saw the empty buggy, and into it they dumped their baby—and flew.

There was another desolate home in Chicago. It was different from the little Oak Park cottage—but hardly less desolate. There were spacious grounds about the house, and from the exterior it was beautiful. But to the occupants, the home was dreary, as the halls gave no echoes to pattering feet of children.

They wanted a baby, and appealed to the Illinois Home and Aid society. They were shown several children which had been placed in the care of the society, and one, a little girl with blue eyes, attracted them.

#### Legally Adopted.

So they took the little girl into their home, and in a short time it had lost its desolation. The halls echoed with the laughter and prattle of the child, and the man and his wife were happy. They decided that the child should never be taken from them, so they legally adopted her. Fate again intervened, for she was

named Mary, and Mary was the name of the girl wife who had placed her baby in the empty buggy on the Bradford porch.

Back to Michigan went the young husband and wife. They made their marriage known—but there was no reconciliation of the graying Kentuckians. They accepted the situation, that is all. Three other children came to gladden the home; the husband prospered at his practice. The wife smiled by day and wept by night. Their thoughts wandered back eternally to the little girl who had been left in the little buggy on the porch. They loved the children who had come later in life, but there was a constant yearning for their first born.

What had become of her? Had the wheel of destiny crushed out the life she had given? If she was alive, had she fallen into the hands of kindly foster parents, or was she being buffeted by want and adversity?

Conscience and fate did not let them forget for long. Did they go to the theater there, inevitably, in the wolf of the story was a baby. Sometimes abandoned. Flotion that came their way seemed to be built almost entirely on stories in which girl babies played a part. Even the movies flashed accusing pictures.

The minds of the parents conjured up terrible pictures of the fate of their daughter. At length, unable longer to stand the uncertainty, the father hired detectives to go to Evanston and trace if they could the fate of his child.

Then the stage was set by fate. The detectives had struck the trail, but a blank wall blocked the way when they sought the name of the man and woman who gave the love and protection denied by father and mother. Mary's foster father heard and the only mother Mary knew wept. Lawyers were called in. It was agreed there should be a meeting of the lawyers.

#### Mary's Real Father.

Mary's real father went—as his own lawyer. And Mary's foster father went—as his own lawyer. They met in a hotel lobby as lawyers and went to a room as lawyers. The man from Michigan sat on the edge of the bed, the man from Chicago on a chair. Tongues were silent, but eyes searched and spoke.

"You," said the man from Chicago, "are the father of little Mary."

"And you," said the man from Michigan, "have my daughter."

"Listen," said the Michigan man. And he told the story of five years of hell, of sleepless nights, anguish and regret, suffering and self-condemnation.

"And you listen to me," said the man from Chicago. And he told the story of five years of a new heaven and earth.

The adoption of a child through court proceedings gives that child irrevocably to the foster parents. The man from Michigan, as a lawyer, knew that legally his child was lost to him. He had had and had abandoned. To him who stepped in as his substitute the law gave a good title.

Mary will never know that when she was playing with her dolls on the lawn two men were looking at her through the rose hedge. Both were crying.

Mary couldn't understand why daddy's eyes were wet when he hugged her in his arms a moment later and she didn't see the man from Michigan as he lurched down the street.

### ONE THING IS OVERLOOKED

Shaves and Saves, and Plans Bright Future With Fiancee, but Now Dream is Ended.

During five years Alexander Schwartz shaved and saved in a Chicago barber shop. Several evenings each week he put on his best clothes and tried his best conversation. He was making plans for his future.

On those occasions a young woman shared in the plans, helping him to make them.

Schwartz shaved thousands of faces and cut the hair on thousands of heads during those five years. He expected that after he had been married a few years he would own a shop and sit beside a cash register that tinkled pleasantly. His fiancee agreed that to a bright man like him such a lucrative future was more than probable.

Meanwhile Schwartz went on shaving and saving. Recently, however, he had to take some time off. He appeared in court before John E. Owens, county judge. There he learned that in the years of shaving and saving and dreaming he had overlooked provision for his mother's future.

"You must pay \$3 a week for her support," said the judge.

Schwartz declared that if he did so, saving would be impossible.

"Earn more money, then," said the judge.

"I make only \$15 a week," said Schwartz, "and if I use \$3 of that for another purpose, I shall be unable to marry. My girl has been waiting five years. She is tired. She will quit me if she has to wait any longer."

"You must contribute to the support of your mother," said the judge. "Wait until you earn money enough, or until you agree to support both your mother and a wife before you are married."

Elevated.

"You say our friend is rising in political life?"

"Yes. He's rising, all right. He used to be on the level, and now he's known as the man higher up."

## MOTHER OF SCHOOL GIRL

Tells How Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound Restored Her Daughter's Health.

Plover, Iowa.—"From a small child my 13 year old daughter had female weakness. I spoke to three doctors about it and they did not help her any. Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound had been of great benefit to me, so I decided to have her give it a trial. She has taken five bottles of the Vegetable Compound according to directions on the bottle and she is cured of this trouble. She was all run down when she started taking the Compound and her periods did not come right. She was so poorly and weak that I often had to help her dress herself, but now she is regular and is growing strong and healthy."—Mrs. MARTIN HELVIG, Plover, Iowa.



Hundreds of such letters expressing gratitude for the good Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound has accomplished are constantly being received, proving the reliability of this grand old remedy.

If you are ill do not drag along and continue to suffer day in and day out but at once take Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound, a woman's remedy for woman's ills.

If you want special advice write to Lydia E. Pinkham Medicine Co. (confidential) Lynn, Mass. Your letter will be opened, read and answered by a woman and held in strict confidence.

### EARTH'S MOST LONELY SPOTS

Islands Where Communication With the Great World is at Rare Intervals—Tristan da Cunha.

Though scientific progress has made it possible to do a double journey between England and America in a fortnight, there remain many islands with which it takes years to communicate.

Of these the most isolated islands is St. Kilda, some three miles long and two miles broad. The inhabitants lead lives of great loneliness, for it takes a month to get to the next island, and the sea often makes any communication with St. Kilda impossible for months.

The group of eight Phoenix islands in the Pacific has a total population of only 158, while another little bit of the British empire is Fanning Island. This is a landing place for the Pacific submarine cable, and usually there are about one hundred people in the place.

The loneliest of all parts of British territory is the island of Tristan da Cunha, in the South Atlantic, which is also the smallest inhabited island in the empire. It is 1,800 miles from land, has a population of 74 Scottish Americans, and the inhabitants get news of the outer world usually once every two years.

#### Fly Screens.

A teacher in the third grade recently introduced the word "veil" to the attention of her pupils.

"What does veil mean?" she asked. There was no response. "Ladies wear them," she explained. Then a small boy spoke up.

"Please teacher," he said, "it is a black cloth which dose ladies wear over der faces when de flies is biting."

#### The Usual Process.

"They are going to put your resolution on the table."

"I'm not surprised. I expected it to be dish'd."

## Summer Days

Call for a dainty, wholesome food—such as

# Post Toasties

with cream.

There's little work, and much satisfaction in every package of these crisp bits of perfectly cooked and toasted Indian Corn.

Appetizing flavour, substantial nourishment and convenience of serving are all found in Post Toasties.

Sold by Grocers