

# Sisters

by KATHLEEN NORRIS



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KATHLEEN NORRIS

CHAPTER XVI—Continued.

"Good-night, old girl!" Something in the tone touched her, with a vague hint of unhappiness, but she did not stop to analyze it. She went back through his room, and through the little passage, and rejoined Martin. The freedom of Peter's apartment Alix had always taken as naturally as she did the freedom of her father's.

"Can't hear us, eh?" Martin asked, when again she stood beside him.

"Positively not!" she answered.

"Look here," he said, abruptly. "What brought me up here is this. Who's making love to 'erry?"

Indignant, and with rising color, she stared at him.

"Who—what?"

"She's having a nice little quiet flirtation with somebody," Martin said, with a significant and warning smile. "Who is it?"

"I don't know who's been talking to you about Cherry, Martin," Alix said, sharply, "but you know you can't repeat that sort of rotten scandal to me!"

"I don't mean any harm—I don't mean any harm!" he assured her, with a quick attempt to quiet the storm he had raised. "Don't get mad—don't get mad! But I happen to know that there's some attraction that's keeping Cherry here, and I came up to look over the ground for myself. Do you see? Come on, now, put me on!"

Alix made an effort at self-control. "Martin, you're mistaken!" she said, quietly. "You have no right to listen to any one who tells you such things, and if it wasn't that you're Cherry's husband I wouldn't listen to you! But you'll have to take my word for it that it's a lie. We three have lived up here without seeing any one—any one! Cherry has hardly spoken to a man, except Peter and Antonio and Kow, since she came!"

"Who is this George Sewall?" he asked, shrewdly.

"The lawyer! Oh, heavens, Martin! Why, George was a beau of mine; he's a widower of fifty, and has just announced his engagement to the trained nurse that took care of his boy!"

"H'm!" Martin commented.

"If any one mentioned Cherry's name in connection with George," Alix said, firmly, "that was a perfectly malicious slander!"

"Sewall's wasn't mentioned!" Martin said, hastily.

"Whose name was mentioned, then?" Alix pursued, hotly.

"Well, nobody's name was mentioned," Martin took a great many creases and rubbed papers from his vest pockets, and shifted them over. "Finally, with a fat, deliberate hand he selected one and put the others away. "This is from my mother," he said. "My aunt, Mrs. North—"

"We saw her here, a week or two ago!" Alix said as he paused.

"Well, she was in Portland, and saw the folks," said Martin. "And my mother writes me this—"

And after a few seconds of searching he read from the letter:

"Bessie North saw Cherry and Mrs. Joyce in Mill Valley, and if I was you I would not let Cherry stay away too long. A wife's place is with her husband, especially when she is as pretty as Cherry, and if Bessie is right, somebody else thinks she's pretty, too, and you know it doesn't take much to start people talking. It isn't like she had a couple of children to keep her busy."

"That's all of that," said Martin, folding the letter. He eyed Alix keenly. "Well, what do you think?" he asked, triumphantly.

"I think that's a mean, wicked thing to say!" she said, indignantly. "No, Martin," she said, silencing him, as he would have interrupted her, "I know she is beautiful and young, and I know—because she's told me—that you and she feel that your marriage is a mistake, but if you think—"

"Oh, she said that, did she? Now, look here," with his air of assurance. "By George, she had something on her mind when she met me today. She was fussed, all right, and it wasn't all the surprise of seeing me, either. First she wanted to telephone you—then she fussed over your message—"

"Cherry gets flattered very easily!" Alix reminded him.

"Well, she was fussed all right this morning. She said not to mention it to Alix, because she had promised that it should go on time. I thought maybe she meant that you wanted her to go herself; no, she said, a note would do—"

"I don't know what you're talking about!" Alix said, puzzled.

"Your note!" Martin explained.

"What note! I didn't write any note," Cherry telephoned—"

"No," he said, patiently and perfunctorily, "you wanted—Cherry—to say—good-by—to—those—people—who—were—sailing? That was all. She wrote it; it got there in time, I guess. Anyway, I heard the girl say 'rush to the boat!'"

"Oh!" Alix said. "Oh—" she added. Her tone betrayed nothing, but she was thoroughly at sea. "Did I ask Cherry to say good-by to any one?" she asked herself, going back to the beginning of the long day. Instinct warned her that nothing would be gained by sharing her perplexity with Martin. "I give you my word that she hasn't been five minutes alone with any one but Peter and me!" she said, frankly, looking into Martin's eyes.

"Now, are you satisfied?"

"Sure, I'm satisfied!" he answered. "I'll take your say-so for it," he yawned. "Trouble with Cherry is, she hasn't enough to do!" he finished sapiently.

"I'm a poor person with whom to discuss Cherry!" Alix hinted, with an unsmiling nod for good-night.

And she looked at Cherry's corn-colored head, ten minutes later, with a thrill of maternal protectiveness. Cherry was evidently asleep, buried deep under the blue army blankets. But Alix did not get to sleep that night.

She did not even undress. For it was while sitting on the side of her bed, ready to begin the process, that through her excited and indignant and whirling thoughts the first suspicion shot like a touch of flame.

"I'll tell Peter all this when Martin has gone," Alix decided. "He'll be furious—he adores Cherry—he'll be furious—he thinks that there is no one like Cherry—"

The words she had said came back to her, and she said them again, half-aloud, with a look of pain and almost of fear suddenly coming into her eyes.

"Peter adores Cherry—"

And then she knew. Even while the sick suspicion formed itself, vague and menacing and horrible. In her heart, she knew the truth of it. And though for hours she was to weigh it and measure it, to remember and question and compare all the days and hours that she and Peter and Cherry had been together; from the moment the thought was born she knew that it was to be with her an accepted fact for all time to come.

For a few seconds Alix felt ill, dazed, and shocked almost beyond enduring. She sat immovable, her eyes fixed, her body held rigid, as a body might be in the second before it fell after a bullet had cleanly pierced the heart.

Then she put her hand to her throat, and looked with a sort of terror at the silent figure of Cherry. Nobody must know—that was Alix's first clear thought. She was breathing hard, her breast rising and falling painfully, and the blood in her temples began to pound; her mouth was dry.

With a blind instinct for solitude she went quickly and silently from the sleeping porch, and into the warm sitting room. For a few minutes Alix stood, with one foot on the chain that linked the old brass fire dogs, her elbow on the mantel, and her cheek resting against her arm.

"No," she whispered, almost audibly. "No—it can't be that! It can't be Cherry and Peter—Oh, my God! Oh,

And she began to remember a hundred—a thousand—trifles, that made it all hideously clear. Words, glances, moods subtler than either, came back to her. Cherry's confusion of late, when the question of her return to Martin was raised, her indifference to her inheritance, her restless talk during one hour of immediate departure, and during the next of an apparently termless visit; all these were significant now.

"I am desperately unhappy!" Cherry had said. And immediately after that, Alix recalled wretchedly, had come a brief and apparently aimless talk about Alix's rights, and her eagerness to share them with her sister.

"Poor Cherry!" the older sister said aloud, standing still for a moment, and pressing both hands over her hot eyes. "Poor little old Cherry—life hasn't been very kind to her! She and Peter must be so sorry and ashamed about this! And Dad would be so sorry; of all things he wanted most that Cherry should be happy! Perhaps," thought Alix, "he realized that she was that sort of a nature, she must love and be loved, or she cannot live! But why did he let her marry Martin, and why wasn't he here to keep me from marrying Peter? What a mess—mess—mess we've made of it all!"

As she used the term, she realized that Cherry had used it, too, this same evening, and fresh conviction was added to the great weight of conviction in her heart.

"Oh, Peter—Peter—Peter!" she moaned, writhing as the cry escaped her. "Why couldn't it have been me, why couldn't you have loved me that way? I know I am not so pretty as Cherry," Alix went on, resuming her restless walk, "and I know that those things don't seem to mean as much to me as to most women! But, Peter," she said softly, aloud, "no wife ever loved a man more than I love you, my dear!" She remembered some of his half-laughing, half-fretful reproaches, when he had told her that she loved him much as she loved Buck, and that, in these respects, she was no more than a healthy child. "I may be a child," said Alix, feeling that a dry flame was consuming her heart, "but a child can love! My dear—my dear—"

"I wish I could cry," she said suddenly, finding herself sitting on a log where low oaks met the forest and the open meadows. "But now we must face this thing sensibly. What is to be done? They must not know that I know, and in some way we must get out of this tangle. Even if Peter were free, Cherry would not be free," she decided, "and so the only thing to do is to help them, until it dies away."

No suspicion of the truth stabbed her, although she remembered Martin and his strange tale of a message and wondered about it a little in her thoughts. To whom had Cherry been sending that telegram if not to Peter? And if to Peter, why had she not simply telephoned? Because she had known that Peter was not in his office, because she had been going to meet him somewhere. But where? Well, at the boat. Martin had heard



"No," She Whispered. "No, It Can't Be That."

my God, it has been that, all the time, that, all the time—and I never knew it—I never dreamed it!

"It's Peter and Cherry! They have come to care for each other—they have come to care for each other," she said to herself, her thoughts rushing and tumbling in mad confusion as she rested and tried the new fear. "It must be so. But it can't be so!" Alix interrupted herself in terror, "for what shall we do—what shall we do? Cherry in love with Peter. But Peter is my husband—he is my husband—"

And in a spasm of pain she shut her eyes, and flung her head as if suffocating. The beating of her heart frightened her. "I shall be sick if I go on this way!" she reminded herself. "And then they will know. They mustn't know. But Peter—" she whispered suddenly. "Peter, who has always been so good to me—so generous to me—and it was Cherry all the time! Even those years ago, when we used to tease him about the lady with the crinolines and ringlets. It was she. But why didn't he ask her instead of me?" wondered Alix, and with an aching head and a frowning brow she began to piece it all together.

The terrible truth rose triumphant from all her memories. Sometimes for a second hope would flood her with almost painful joy, but inevitably the truth shut down upon her again, and he would die, and she realized afresh that sorrow, stronger than before, was waiting to seize her again.

"Well—I can't stand it in here!" Alix said, suddenly. She crossed to the door, and opened it, and slipped noiselessly out into the night, catching a coat from the rack as she passed.

The night was wrapped in an ocean fog, there was no moon and no stars, but the air was soft and warm. With no goal in view, Alix climbed upward, walking rapidly, breathing hard, and frequently speaking aloud, as some poignant thought smote her, or standing still, too sick with pain, under an unexpected rush of emotion, to move.

"He would have told me about it—why didn't I let him!" ran Alix's thoughts. "I thought of some older woman, I don't know why—anyway, I didn't care so much then. But I care now! Peter, I care now! I can't give you up, even to Cherry. It is nonsense to talk of giving him up," Alix told herself, sitting down in the inky dark on a log against which her wild walk had suddenly brought her, "for we are all married people, and we all love each other. But oh, I am so sorry! I am so sorry, Peter," she whispered, as if she were speaking to him. "You couldn't help it, I know that. She is so pretty and so sweet, Cherry—and she turns to you as if you were her big brother!"

She got to her feet and went on.

"What am I thinking about—it's absurd! Can't people like each other, in this world, just because they happen to be married! Peter would be the first to laugh at me. And is it fair to Cherry even to think that she would—"

"Oh, but it's true!" the honest impulse interrupted, mercilessly. "It is true. Whether it's right or wrong, or sensible or absurd, they do love each other; that's what has changed them both."

And she began to remember a hundred—a thousand—trifles, that made it all hideously clear. Words, glances, moods subtler than either, came back to her. Cherry's confusion of late, when the question of her return to Martin was raised, her indifference to her inheritance, her restless talk during one hour of immediate departure, and during the next of an apparently termless visit; all these were significant now.

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her tell the boy that he must catch the boat.

Alix did not guess the truth. But she guessed enough to make her feel frightened and sick. She could not suppose that Cherry and Peter had planned to go away on that boat together, because at most her thoughts would have grasped the idea of one or two days' absence only, and they had given her no warning of that. But until this instant the thought of the passionate desire that enveloped them had not reached her; she had imagined Cherry's feeling for Peter to be something only a little stronger than her own.

Now she thought of Cherry's beauty, her fragrance and softness, the shine in her blue eyes and the light on her corn-colored hair, and knew that life for them all, of late, had been mined with frightful danger.

"Cherry would be disgraced, and Martin—Martin would kill her, if he found her out! . . . Oh, my little sister! She would be town talk; she is so reckless, she would do anything—she would be a public scandal, and the papers would have her pictures—Dad's little yellow-headed Charity! Oh, Dad," she said, looking up into the dark, "tell me what to do! I need you so! Won't you somehow tell me what to do?"

Silence and darkness. But even in that gloom Alix could tell the fog was lifting, and a sudden sweep of breeze, like a tired breath, went over the tops of the redwoods.

Steadily came the change. The darkness, by imperceptible degrees, lifted. "Light!" Alix whispered, awestruck. And a few moments later she added, "Dawn!"

It was dawn indeed that was creeping into the valley, and as it brightened and deepened and warmed momentarily, Alix felt some of the peace

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"Bucky! Did You Miss Me, Old Fellow?"

and glory of it swelling in her tired heart. She was still sitting on the log, dreamily watching the expanding beauty of the new day, when there was a crashing in the underbrush behind her, and wild with joy, and with twigs and dried brown grasses on his wet coat, Buck came bounding out of the forest, and leaped upon her.

"Bucky!" she faltered, as he stood beside her, his quick tongue flashing ecstatically, close to her face, every splendid muscle of his body wriggling with eager affection. "Did you miss me, old fellow? Did you come to find me?"

She had not cried during the long vigil of the night, when a storm had raged in her heart, and had left her weak and sick with dread. But there was peace now, and Alix locked her arms about the dog's shoulders, and laid her face against his satiny head, and cried.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

## MONARCH A MEAN NEIGHBOR

Sennacherib, Ancient Ruler of Egypt, Evidently a Bully of the Highest Order.

Going about knocking down other king's cities when they failed to "kiss his feet," was one of the playful habits of Sennacherib, ruler of Egypt some two thousand years ago, according to cuneiform tablets just placed on exhibition at the University of Chicago. Sennacherib kept a "diary" of his "playful habits." The big stone slabs were brought to the United States, with other records of ancient Egypt, by Prof. James H. Breasted. "In my third campaign I marched against the land of Hatti (Palestine)," said Sennacherib in his "diary." "The kings of the west land brought rich gifts before me for the fourth time and kissed my feet." "Hezekiah, the Judean, who had not submitted to my yoke, I besieged and took 46 of his strong-walled cities, together with countless small cities, by assault of battering rams and siege engines, attack by foot soldiers and by mines and breaches. I captured some two hundred thousand people, some small and great, men and women, oxen and innumerable sheep." "Hezekiah himself I shut up in Jerusalem like a caged bird." Other tablets showed that Sennacherib had a Cheops "jazz band," a dromedary "toddler" and desert "home brew."

Technical. The dramatic triangle, Robert, is caused by people not being on the square. When a man laughs at misfortune it's generally that of another.



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### HIS POINT QUITE REASONABLE TAKES UMBRELLA TO MASTER

A Good Logic in Negro's Contention as to Lion's Probable Change to a Meat Diet.

Clever Dog That Keeps a New York Comuter Dry When He Gets Caught in Rain.

A negro employed at one of the Hollywood movie studios was drafted by a director to do a novel comedy scene with a lion.

"You get into this bed," ordered the director, "and we'll bring the lion in and put him in bed with you. It will be a scream."

"Put a lion in bed with me!" yelled the ducky. "No, sah! Not a-tall. I quits rhyt here and now."

"But," protested the director, "this lion won't hurt you. This lion was brought up on milk."

"So was I brung up on milk," wailed the ducky, "but I eats meat now."—Los Angeles Times.

New Medical Standards for China.

The United States Pharmacopoeia is being translated into the Chinese language under the direction of the Philadelphia College of Pharmacy and Science. Before the war Germany tried to have the German Pharmacopoeia translated into Chinese, with the object, of course, that German manufacturers might export to China drugs of German standards. Great Britain has made similar attempts.

Commuter's Impression.

"Is this an accommodation train?" asked the traveling man.

"Only in a technical sense," replied Mr. Crosslots. "As a matter of fact it's one of the most disoblging trains I ever rode on."

"I'll show you a regular dog," said Gardiner to his friend Johnson, whom he had invited to dinner at his home in Long Island, according to the New York Sun. They had alighted from the train and it was raining. Gardiner gazed up and down the street anxiously.

"What are you looking for?" asked Johnson.

"There!" exclaimed Gardiner, ignoring his friend's question and pointing down the street. "There's a regular dog."

A Belgian police dog came running toward the station with an umbrella in its mouth. The dog stopped in front of Gardiner.

"That's my dog," said Gardiner. "On rainy days my wife gives him an umbrella and he brings it down to the station so I don't have to walk home in the wet."

The Caddie's Retort.

"How are you playing?" we asked a gofer at the club the other day.

"You know me," said the man. "My regular game—a lot of careless work, but now and then a good shot. Always there are some good shots sprinkled through the day like plums in a pudding."

Timely Advice.

"I want to leave footprints on the sands of time."

"Well, keep out of the mud."

## Whose fault is it when your husband is cross at breakfast?

If you hit your thumb with a hammer you wouldn't blame your thumb for hurting.

You can avoid this possibility if you'll stop drinking tea and coffee and drink instead, rich, pleasing Postum.

Then why blame your husband whose nerves may have been pounded by coffee, and whose rest probably has been broken by the irritation of the caffeine it contains?

If you stay awake half the night you don't feel any too cheerful.

The caffeine of coffee and the thein of tea are known drugs. If their use is persisted in, sooner or later the nervous system may give way.

Then you may have insomnia, or disturbed sleep. Your nerves and tissues will be robbed of that stability essential for normal and happy living.

Postum comes in two forms: Instant Postum (in tins) made instantly in the cup by the addition of boiling water. Postum Cereal (in packages of larger bulk, for those who prefer to make the drink while the meal is being prepared) made by boiling for 20 minutes.

**Postum for Health**  
There's a Reason