

Storm Country Polly

by Grace Miller White

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CHAPTER XIV—Continued.

"Good 'nough for 'er!" gasped Polly, tensely, rolling her hands in her apron. "An' she yelled so hard you could've heard her near to Illica, Pol!" moaned Larry. "Me, an' Lye gagged 'er."

"Holy smut!" fell from Pollyop, as the picture his words had made burned itself across her mind.

"Her man's been gone all day to Cortland," continued the squatter in a monotone. "Lye found out Old Miss Robertson's been tryin' to reach hold of him."

"Hope she don't!" interjected Polly. "Not till we get done with his woman. Are you goin' to tote her over here?"

The man nodded.

"Don't dare to till later, when the squatters is in bed," he answered, slapping on his cap. "If—if you change your mind, Pol, come along over; an' I'll cut 'er loose an' let 'er go."

A harsh sound, something like a chuckle of malicious satisfaction, slipped through Polly's lips and stopped the man at the door.

"That ain't no ways likely, Larry," she said huskily. "Bring 'er here, an' when I'm done with her, she'll have to be took."

She caught Bishop by the arm, whirling him around.

"An' listen, Larry," she continued with cruel emphasis, "an' all the time keep rememberin' how Betty wailed her life into the grave, an'—an' that Old Marc done it."

Overcome by the words she had thrown at him so deliberately, Bishop flung away, and the girl, quaking at what was about to happen, heard him running along the shore toward his shack.

It seemed to Polly Hopkins that every minute was an hour long, and every second filled with intolerable anxiety. Would the soft-hearted Larry repent and surrender the prize she longed to get her fingers on?

In extreme nervousness she went from one thing to another, never finishing what she began. She paced the hut floor until she was dripping wet with apprehensiveness. She had no means of knowing when Lye and Larry would come; so she dared not stir from the shack.

Many times she shoved aside the window blind and looked out. But the world outside was wrapped in a white silence. She could not even glimpse the peaked roof of a fisherman's hut, for between her and the Silent City was a flowing curtain of snow, the flakes falling like feathers from an open bag.

Larry would keep his word, she told herself over and over. She was glad it was such a night! The better could the squatters carry out their death plan.

Unnoticed by the girl, the wood burned to embers in the stove, and the hut grew colder by degrees. In one of her half hours of measuring the shanty's length, she halted, breathing on her frost-bitten fingers. She drew about her shoulders the blanket which had covered Wee Jerry in his hut days.

Her mind brought back to the baby away off in some unknown place, she cried weakly as she replenished the fire. Had the wicked ones of the earth made Jerry forget Daddy Hopkins who up in Auburn was ignorant of his whereabouts? Many times Polly had taken up her pen to write him of her, but it always dropped from her fingers before it reached the paper. Daddy could not do anything; and she would not add to his heavy burden.

She was at the stove, her cold, stiff fingers spread over it, when the sound of footsteps outside sent her headlong to the door. Appallingly terrified, she dragged it open.

Then, in deadening silence, Lye Braeger and Larry Bishop carried a large bundle through the doorway and threw it down on Polly's bed.

Heavy-lidded, the girl gazed upon it, her eyes widening in joy, joy at the thought of Old Marc's misery; joy at the thought of getting even. The frightful emotion that surged through her here relation only by contrast to the delights of a few months back, when her willing legs had trotted the country over to help every one that needed her. It wasn't the same! Polly at all. This Polly lifted her foot and kicked the bundle none too lightly.

"We had a h—l of a time gettin' 'er here, Pol," growled Lye Braeger. "Outside it's like if a million crazy devils was bowlin' over the hills. But we brought 'er just the same! Now do what you like with 'er, brat!"

White teeth gleamed through the maniacal smile that parted the girl's lips. At last! She had not lived through interminable days for nothing!

"Scout out, you!" she ordered, waving her hand at them, "an' keep a watch about till I get done!"

Braeger made for the door as if anxious to be gone; but Larry Bishop held to the spot where he stood.

"She's a woman, Polly Hopkins," he muttered, his eyes turning from the cot to the rigid girl. "If she is Old

Marc's wife. He's home too, so Lye says!"

"What do I care where the pup is?" she thrust in vehemently. "Course she's a woman! So be I; an' so were your dead Betsy."

Then she stamped her foot tempestuously.

"Get out of here an' watch for MacKenzie an' his folks," she snapped. "It's about time he were stormin' the Silent City, I'm thinkin'."

Roughly she shoved the men out into the blizzard and closed the door. Then she stood with her back to it, deep sobs racking her body.

Now as she had almost died, and Wee Jerry too, so would Marcus MacKenzie. The vicious hope that she could see him writhe in his grief took possession of her.

Distraughtly she placed the bar across the door, making sure it was locked. Then, creeping to the cot, she gazed down at the wet bundle. There, where she had helped Oscar Bennett over dark rough places into the light of Eternity, lay the dearest dear of her bitterest enemy.

She uttered an exclamation when she saw a lifting shudder go over the thing on the bed. A smile flitted across her face, and her hands came together convulsively.

Slowly she knelt down and unwrapped the thick blanket; and Evelyn MacKenzie was staring out at her, dull eyed and terrified. A dark rag completely filled her mouth; and Polly grinned at her.

"Do you know what squatters do to chickens they swipe from you rich folks?" she asked huskily.

Although she could not speak, Evelyn heard and understood. She closed her eyes, her face going drabber in the flickering light, but at a sound the weary lids flew open again.

Polly had stepped to the wood-box and was picking up the ax. She brought it forward, and smiling the same sinister smile, showed it to the pallid girl.

"This" was all she said, tapping the handle.

Evelyn struggled; and Polly laughed, a wicked laugh, no more like the ripple which Daddy Hopkins had loved to hear than the bark of a wolf is like the lark's morning song.

Tears rose into Evelyn's eyes and rolled down her cheeks. The smile faded slowly from Polly's face. Ever had excruciating agony touched her; like a sunbeam through a rift in a storm cloud, the old Polly leaped up to take heed of another's hurt. This feeling she crushed down; but she put the ax on the floor and squatted beside the bed.

Scarcely had she done this before a loud knock came on the door. She threw the blankets over Evelyn and went swiftly forward and lifted the bar.

Larry Bishop thrust the upper half of his body into the room.

"Old Marc an' his gang are in the Silent City lookin' for his woman," he whispered hoarsely.

"Where's Lye?" came in a hiss from the squatter girl.

"Off up the road watchin'," returned Bishop. "What'd you do to 'er, brat?"

"Come in," said Polly, in an undertone, grasping the end of his scarf and pulling him through the doorway.



"This," Was All She Said, Tapping the Handle.

"Keep settin'," breathed Pollyop. "They'll be stoppin' here fast enough!"

Of a sudden the door burst open, and Marcus MacKenzie, covered with snow, entered. With him were two of his neighbors and several squatters.

Polly enjoyed a glimpse of Old Marc's agonized face; then she grinned at him.

"What's the matter, mister?" she asked, showing an expanse of even white teeth. "What do you mean by bustin' into my house like this, sir?"

MacKenzie threw a glance to the girl to the squatter in the chair.

"My wife's gone!" he cried in desperation. "T—"

"So? Now is she?" broke in Polly, smiling wider. "You don't say! Well, golly me! That's too bad. Some other feller run off with 'er—mebbe!"

And when she saw him trying to master his emotion, forcing back the heavy groans that interfered with his efforts to answer, she laughed. Never before had she been reckless in his presence. She knew this was one time Marcus MacKenzie did not want to fight. He needed the help of the squatters to search the Storm country for his wife—his bride, the very apple of his eye.

He did not look at all like the flashing-eyed enemy of her people. All at once he had changed from a cynical, handsome man of the world to a pleading, pale-faced husband.

Just then the wind shook the shanty violently; and over his big frame passed shudder after shudder.

"She's been gone, oh God, I don't know how long," he groaned aloud, the haggard expression deepening in the lines about his mouth as he spoke. "I'll give—I'll give more money than any of you ever saw—" He flung around on Bishop and thrust out an importunate hand.

Larry had been watching him covertly, in moody silence. When Marcus addressed him directly, he threw back his head and let out loud malevolent sounds more like the howls of hyenas than the laugh of a human being; and Polly Hopkins joined in again, too, dreadful sounds that made her thin, lovely face look old.

"This is a queer place to come for your woman," she taunted MacKenzie. "To a squatter's shack, huh? I didn't know before that rich women came to the Silent City, least of all, yours."

MacKenzie took a step toward her.

"Oh, I was sure she wasn't here," he thrust in eagerly. "But I want help—the aid of every one of you, Money," he cried again, convulsively. "Money, do you hear? Money, I said—"

Polly was witnessing just the picture that she had been holding in her mind's eye for many days.

"Money can't buy everything, mister," she jeered at him. "Mebbe your woman's in the snow. Tomorrow's Thanksgiving day. Mebbe you'll miss 'er if she ain't home with you. Scout out of here. Don't be laggin', Old Marc, or she might freeze to death somewheres. It's a bad night."

The last statement, true to every word, brought a deep sob from MacKenzie's throat. It was immediately followed by more of the bitter laughter.

So changed was Polly of the Silent City that the gaping squatters who did not know what was going to happen wondered at her. They knew her no longer as Polly, the love-lass, or as Polly of the Sun.

A low rumble sounded in the girl's throat. She coughed, then flung out: "I said, it's a bad night!" Scout out, mister, an' look for your d—n livelier woman somewheres else."

Uttering an oath, MacKenzie fled, followed by his companions, leaving Larry Bishop staring at the pale squatter girl.

CHAPTER XV.

There was gloomy silence in the shanty until the horses' hoofs could be heard no longer in the snow outside. Larry Bishop crouched low in Jeremiah's rocking chair, pulling in nervous tension at his fingers until the joints cracked. He shot Polly Hopkins a furtive glance but dropped his thick lids before the unearthly expression in the girl's eyes. She had lost the look of heavenly compassion that had given cheer to the squatters.

As his mind went back to the spring days when she had so often smiled comfort into his own aching heart, he breathed a deep sigh. The sound of his breath, catching in his throat, brought Polly scrambling from the cot.

Unmindful of the morose squatter, she began pacing the floor, holding icy fingers to her aching temples.

"Best take the pillows off'n her, Pol," muttered Bishop. "She'll smother if you don't."

The girl paused and threw him a glance over her shoulder.

"Get out of here, you Larry," she bade him in fierce emphasis. "She'd better smother than get what's comin' to 'er. You an' Lye hang around a while till I call you. When I'm done with 'er, you'll have to sink her in the lake."

Staggering to his feet, Larry brushed away the water that had gathered in glistening drops upon his brow.

"God, kid," he growled, "you can't seem human no more. It's all so d—d terrible I'm gettin' haunted. If you change your mind, Pol, an' not kill 'er—"

A gurgling noise came from under the pillows on the cot, and as if an unseen hand were pushing her forward, Pollyop strode to the bed and jerked away the small feather ticks.

Evelyn's eyes sought out the squatter man in mute pleading. Polly laughed; and gray with horror at her merciless attitude, Larry slunk to the door.

"I guess this ain't none of my business," he mumbled, and opening it, he fled as if pursued by a vindictive spirit of the Storm country.

Again with swift, long strides the girl went to the door and barred it. Then with utmost deliberation she lighted several other candles and set them in different parts of the hut until a flood of light was diffused through the room.

A long deep sigh fell from her lips as she finished her task. She wanted to see every wave of pain that shot across Evelyn MacKenzie's pallid face; and that was why she approached the cot and stood looking down upon the twisted figure.

All she had endured through the rich girl's perfidy swept over her like a tidal wave. Out of the dark dream



He Fleed as if Pursued by a Vindictive Spirit of the Storm Country.

of Jerry's going she could hear through the moaning willows the weird last cries of the baby. The memory almost drew a shriek from her. Then she rolled the living bundle from the bed and propped it into a sitting position.

As wickedly deliberate as her every act had been, so did she lift the ax from the floor.

"Like a chicken," she taunted, smiling down into Evelyn's haggard face.

Evelyn struggled, and a muffled sound came from back of the gag in her mouth.

While Polly contemplated her, an emotion she used to know so often rose within her and tugged at her heart until the hurt made her clutch at her side. She dropped down and ran her fingers under the heavy cord with which the girl was bound.

"Rope's hurtin' you, huh?" she queried.

An affirmative bob of her head was the only answer Mrs. MacKenzie could give.

"I'll unho 'em a bit," said Polly sulkily. "Loosen' up a few strings don't say you won't get what's comin' to you."

With her strong, white teeth and deft fingers she untied the heavy knots that pinioned the slender arms.

"Did the squatters give you anything to eat?" she asked, rocking back on her heels. "If you was in Larry's hut so long with that thing in your mouth, then I bet you're hungry!"

It was scarcely perceptible, the negative shake that followed this question.

"If you've got to die you might as well go on a full belly," ended Polly, getting up.

She took a piece of hard bread and poured some hot water on it. Watching Evelyn frowningly, she beat them together with a tin spoon. Of course, the stuff was tasteless without sugar; Polly knew it very well, because that was what she had for supper every night.

She turned away from the cup in her hand and went to a small cupboard over which hung a flimsy curtain. Back behind a few old dishes she had hidden a little sugar one of the squatter women had given her. She had kept it against Daddy Hopkins' home-coming and for Jerry, too—perhaps. With woeeful, in-caught sobs, she poured half of it into the cup. Then she crossed to Evelyn and picked up the ax.

"I'm goin' to take this rag out of your mouth," she said, "an' mind you don't squaw, or I'll send you double-quick to your first man. Now hold still! This'll hurt a bit!"

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Not a Second Time.

What a man has done you can do. But those who have been done you can't do so easily.

Nearly all the knowledge in the world has been acquired at the expense of somebody's burnt fingers.

\$90,000 STOLEN IN N. Y. ROBBERY

Four Bandits Bind Man and Wife and Seven Servants; Ransack House.

ONE OF GANG IS CAPTURED

The Last of the Quartette of Robbers Leaving the House Was Captured by Police After a Short Chase.

New York.—The most amazing daylight robbery New York has known in many years occurred in the home of Alfred R. Shattuck, retired financier, 19 Washington Square North, when four armed bandits overpowered Mr. and Mrs. Shattuck and their seven servants, bound them all with rope, locked them in a wine cellar and stole jewelry valued at \$90,000.

The robbers ransacked the dwelling for about an hour and a half, but as they were leaving, one was captured and in an overcoat he had abandoned in his flight through Washington square, jewels valued at \$20,000 were found.

Assuredly they gathered their loot, most of which it was said had been taken from a safe which had been forced open.

Charles Zaug, head butler, finally managed to free his hands after an hour's tugging until his fellow prisoners, and by manipulating the lock, he told police, opened the door slightly and peeped to see if any of the bandits were near. The four were upstairs collecting their loot. Zaug, followed by his assistant, reached the street. He ran to the home of a neighbor and the police were summoned by telephone.

The last of the quartet was coming down the front steps when the police arrived. This man was captured after a short chase. He gave the name of Eugenio Diazet, a Spanish laborer. He refused to tell who his companions were.

Unable to Meet Proposals.

Berlin.—Germany cannot fulfill the conditions of the allied moratorium proposals, government spokesmen said. It was authoritatively denied, however, that the government had rejected the allied reparation commission's conditions.

Chancellor Wirth and Minister Rathenau will continue the German policy used so often since the end of the war: "Negotiate, but never say no."

The allied demands include payment of \$750,000,000 gold marks in cash, and 1,450,000,000 in kind during 1922.

Germany undoubtedly will ask further negotiations possibly attempt to have the matter brought up to Genoa.

Former Emperor Not Expected to Live.

Lisbon, Portugal.—There is little hope that former Emperor Charles of Austria-Hungary will survive his illness, according to advice received here from the island of Madeira. In addition to pneumonia there are cerebral complications. The doctors have resorted to the administration of oxygen.

The one-time emperor has made his will.

It is rumored that the bishop of Funchal has been summoned to the bedside of former Emperor Charles to administer the last sacrament.

Plants Tree in Honor of Dead.

Seattle, Wash.—Honors were rendered the heroic dead of two nations in a ceremony at Sunnyside on the Washington Memorial highway, between Seattle and Tacoma. Marshal Joffre of France planted an elm on Memorial Height in honor of French dead.

Marshal Joffre, in a brief speech, expressed the wish that "the trees will be a living reminder of eternal friendship between the two greatest republics of the world."

General Wood's Son Weds.

Manila, P. I.—Miss Katherine Thompson of Wilmington, Del., and Second Lieutenant Osborne Wood, son of Governor General Leonard Wood, were married here. The ceremony was performed at the Malacanán palace, official residence of the governor general.

Strike Out Free Seed Item.

Washington, D. C.—By a vote of four to three, the senate subcommittee struck from the annual agricultural appropriation the house item of \$300,000 for the free distribution of seeds by members of congress.

Bandits Raid Newspaper Office.

New York.—Three bandits walked into the accounting room of the New York Tribune in Park Row, across the street from City Hall police station, held up two clerks and a watchman and escaped with \$1,000.

Tornado in Alabama.

Cullman, Ala.—Several persons were reported injured in a tornado that swept Crane Hill, ten miles from here. At West Cullman, fifteen residences and six business houses were badly damaged.

Embezzlement is Not Proven.

Farjo, N. D.—Judge J. T. Cole of the Cass county district court, has ruled that embezzlement has not been proven in the preliminary hearing against A. C. Townley, national nonpartisan league headquarters.

Miserable With Backache?

Why put up with that nagging backache? You can't be happy when every day brings morning lameness, sharp, shooting pains and that all-worn-out feeling. The best way to get well is to find the cause of your trouble and correct it. Likely, a cold or a chill has slowed up your kidneys and that is why you have backaches, stabbing pains, headaches and dizziness. Just take things easier and help your weakened kidneys with Doan's Kidney Pills. Doan's have helped thousands and should help you. Ask your neighbor!

A Nebraska Case

Mrs. Mike Campbell, W. Main St., Genoa, Neb., says: "I was bothered with my kidneys being back and dizzy spells came on when I spoke of my eyes. My kidneys acted too often. Doan's Kidney Pills cured me so I haven't had kidney trouble in several years."

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FOSTER-MILBURN CO., BUFFALO, N. Y.

All Played Out at Quitting Time? You Need TANLAC

The World's Greatest Tonic

His Immediate Needs.

Midnight was 30 minutes distant. The cafeteria was experiencing its nightly rush as the young men returning from their "dates," satisfied their appetites before retiring.

A young chap rushed up to the counter.

"Say," he demanded, "I want something to eat, quick. I've been out to one of those upstage dinner parties and I was afraid to eat for fear I'd pull a boner. Give me a hamburger, a piece of pie and a jar of dirty water."

Children's handkerchiefs often look hopeless when they come to the laundry. Wash with good soap, rinse in water blued with Red Cross Ball Blue. —Advertisement.

Not in China.

Traveler—The Chinese make it an invariable rule to settle all their debts New Year's day.

Stay-at-Home—Yes, but the Chinese don't have a Christmas the week before.

Mrs. Emma Gunter

Deceatur, Ill.—"At various times during my married life I have been greatly benefited by two of Dr. Pierce's medicines, Golden Medical Discovery and Favorite Prescription. The Golden Medical Discovery restored me to health at one time when I had a deep-seated bronchial cough and was in a weakened, debilitated state of health; and during one of my expectant periods Favorite Prescription proved not only to be a splendid tonic and nerve but I had practically no suffering. It is a pleasure to recommend medicines so reliable as Dr. Pierce's and I do so at every opportunity."—Mrs. Emma Gunter, 1228 N. Calhoun St.

Your neighborhood drugist can supply you with either of these famous remedies in tablets or liquid. Do not neglect your health. Write Dr. Pierce, Pres. Invalids' Hotel, Buffalo, N. Y., for free medical advice.

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Are Usually Due to Constipation

When you are constipated, there is not enough lubricant produced by your system to keep the food waste soft. Doctors prescribe Nujol because its action is so close to this natural lubricant.

Nujol is a lubricant—not a medicine or laxative—so cannot gripe. Try it today.

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