

# Storm Country Polly

by Grace Miller White

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CHAPTER XVI—Continued.

She stooped and smoothed back the hair from Evelyn's wet brow.

"Now, while I'm gone you just lay quiet-like, askin' Jesus every minute that your man'll be hikin' here faster'n a crow can fly."

Evelyn raised her head.

"Kiss me, Polly dear," she begged, with streaming eyes.

"All right!" murmured the squatter girl. "Kisses're mighty comfortin', ain't they?"

She stooped and laid her lips on Evelyn's and, turning swiftly, left the room. Evelyn heard her snuffing the candles outside and then heard the latch click as Pollyop closed the door behind her.

Bounding out into the snow, Pollyop raced through the road toward Bishop's hut, for she had decided to speak to him before going on. She lifted the latch and peeped in.

Larry sat by the stove, puffing his pipe. He gave her but a glance then dropped his head mournfully.

"Where's Lye, Larry?" Polly asked in a hissing whisper.

"Gone home," came in a grunt.

"He's sick to his stomach, an' so be I. I'm most froze, too."

With her hand on the latch of the door which she had closed against the storm, the girl stood in shivering indecision. She felt intuitively the inner emotions going on inside the stolid speaker. She wanted to throw her arms about him and tell him all that had passed in her home during the last hour. But if she did, Larry would take the blame of the crime on himself. Of course he would! Pollyop knew the heart of Larry Bishop as if she had made it herself from God's own clay. If the person in her shack had been Old Marc, he would have had no compunction in putting him out of the way, but a woman—

"I don't want you for anything to-night, Larry Bishop," she broke out, fumbling with the latch. "An', mind you, dearie, never tell nobody you an' Lye swiped Old Marc's woman. That's a promise, Larry, ain't it?"

"Yep," replied Bishop, evasively.

"Then go to bed an' sleep!" returned Pollyop. "You'll get warm, an'—an'—I'll see you tomorrow—maybe. I won't be needin' you in my shanty tonight."

Then she went swiftly out, slammed the door and was away like a winter bird, before the squatter could question her.

Swiftly she ran on, her hair almost on end because, to save her friends, she must face the haughty MacKenzie himself. It had been her cruelty that had prompted their act, and now, besides saving Evelyn, she must shield them. The nearer she came to the MacKenzie house, the harder her heart pounded, with dread at the task before her.

In the meantime Marcus MacKenzie and his wife's mother were together, the lady stretched out on the divan, and Marcus pacing the floor. Since MacKenzie had left the Hopkins shack, he had ridden madly over the hills, urging every man available to help him find his wife. Secretly he had wept tears such as never had poured from his eyes before in all his supercilious days.

Having set in motion what aid he could summon from town and country, he had come back home to the hysterical mother. He had no comforting assurances to give her, or any to allay the burning grief within himself. Evelyn had disappeared as if the ground had opened and swallowed her up. He paused in front of Mrs. Robertson, his dark, handsome face working painfully.

"You're very sure she was feeling well just before she went out?" he inquired. "She didn't act as if she had anything to worry over?"

Mrs. Robertson used her handkerchief before she answered.

"I can't think of anything," she hesitated, "unless it was about Bob. Late-ly he's been so different. I asked Eve one day—"

She broke off and dissolved in tears.

"Yes, you asked her one day—what?" MacKenzie urged.

"Well, there's one thing certain," he ejaculated, after musing the room several times with long strides. "I can't stay here, but good God! I don't know where to go."

A deep groan fell from his lips, and he began with heavy tread to walk up and down again.

"Can't you think of any place she might have gone?" he begged. "You know all her friends. Where would she go if she had determined to leave home?"

"Leave home?" gasped Mrs. Robertson, her jaw dropping.

"Yes!" faltered Marcus. "I don't know whether she told you or not, but we had some words before I started for Cortland."

"Of course she didn't tell me," came from behind the lady's handkerchief. "She never tells me anything, but I heard it. You were quarreling over the squatters, and in Eve's condition, I think you might spare her a little."

"—She's not strong! So much wrangling makes her sick!—I wish Bob were home. Oh, dear, I can't stand it."

"It's Bob that's made all this trouble," snarled Marcus. "He's spent several months trying to circumvent me about the squatters, and Eve and I would have had no quarrels at all if he had attended to his own affairs."

He spoke moodily, conscious that he had treated his wife harshly, yet unwilling to admit it.

Mrs. Robertson, touched with the same feeling, sat up, wiping her face

and brushing back her hair. She, too, remembered now all the bitter words she had flung at her daughter.

"Marcus," she said. "If—we—get Eve back again—"

"If we get her!" he interjected, his face going snow-white. "Of course, we'll get her. Why say such ridiculous things?" He turned away to hide the emotion her tremulous question had filled him with. "It will be my death if we don't," he ended.

Mrs. Robertson raised on her elbow.

"But Marcus," she exclaimed, "there's been something on my mind ever since—since—Oh, you don't think the squatters have her, do you?"

"I don't know," moaned Marcus, and he sat down quickly as if his legs would no longer bear the weight of his body.

And they were sitting thus, each busy with his own unspeakable unliappiness, when the servant entered.

"There's a girl here, sir," she began, and Marcus sprang up.

"Bring her in," he cried. "Bring her in instantly!"

The maid hesitated.

"She's queer looking, sir," she said timidly, "and she's wet through. She's one of them squatters."

"Bring her in, I said," ordered Marcus once more, and the girl went out, closing the door softly.

Pollyop crept into the warm room, her teeth chattering, her legs unsteady. Her first glance fell upon Mrs. Robertson who, when she saw her, made a husky throat sound. Then the brown, fearful eyes traveled to the tall man, no longer an enemy to be hated, merely a wounded human creature, like her dear ones in the Silent City, to be loved and comforted.

"I got your woman in my shack," said Pollyop, straight to him, swallowing.

"God be thanked," screamed Mrs. Robertson.

Something snapped in MacKenzie's head, and for a moment he feared he

was losing his mind. Polly thought by the blank expression of his face that his wits had gone completely. Ignoring the woman whom she detested, she went rapidly to MacKenzie's side.

"I had her roped up in the bed when you were there tonight, mister," she told him, the words tumbling over each other in the haste of confession. "I were goin' to chop her head off to get even with you. But—but—my dead Granny Hope, an' the Biggest Mammy in All the World wouldn't let me."

It seemed an eternity to the quaking young speaker before Marcus threw up his head and took a long breath.

"She—she's alive?" he demanded hoarsely. "You're very sure she isn't dead? Girl," he bounded up and grasped Pollyop's arm, "if you lie to me—"

"I ain't lyin' to you, mister," interrupted Polly dully. "You don't need to be scared for Miss Eve, but now you'd best come along to my hut an' get her. She's mournin' for you in Granny Hope's coop-hole, covered up with blankets."

Something like a huge fist struck MacKenzie. The conviction that the squatter girl's words were true lifted him immediately from the bottom depths of hopelessness. The sudden flush of joyous relief brought with it a mental illumination, and he saw himself as others had seen him. The terrible, blighting uncertainty he had borne for a few maddening hours the girl before him had known for months. If she were to blame for his suffering, what was the measure of his own responsibility?

He turned swiftly to his mother-in-law and said huskily:

"Call some one to get this child some dry clothes. Take anything of Eve's you can find that will keep her warm, and for God's sake, take those ragged boots off her feet!" He sprang to the bell. "I'll order the team."

When he had given his orders to the servant who appeared at the door, he sank back into a chair, and Mrs. Robertson went swiftly out.

Utterly oblivious of the squatter girl's presence, Marcus MacKenzie buried his face in his hands. The new Pollyop, the Polly of the Sun, crept forward and touched him.

"Your woman's all right," she said huskily. "Don't cry! She told me about—the little kid a-comin' in the summer, an' she howled like mad to come along with me. But I says to her she couldn't walk all this way to you without dyin'."

The soft tones vibrated sympathetically as she voiced the assurances. MacKenzie thrust up his hand and clutched the slim brown fingers.

"Tell me something about it while we're alone," he whispered.

Pollyop shuddered.

"Well, sir," she began, so low that MacKenzie had to raise his head to hear, "all the squatters hate you, but none of 'em was wicked like me. I said, I did, that you couldn't be hurt no way only through your woman, an'—an'—I was goin' to cut her head off with the ax an' then sling 'er in the lake. I s'pose I'm goin' to get sent up for years, but I just had to come and tell you."

Before MacKenzie, aghast at the danger his dear one had faced, could answer, Mrs. Robertson entered, followed by Evelyn's maid.

"I'll get my coat," exclaimed Marcus, jumping up. "Dress the girl warm and send along Evelyn's fur motor coat."

A furtive smile curled the maid's lips as she helped pull off Jeremiah's heavy coat, and then grew broader as Pollyop slipped out of Daddy's great boots. Yet the woman admitted to herself as she dried the wet feet and attired the squatter girl in her mistress' beautiful clothes that she was pretty, even prettier than Mrs. MacKenzie.

When the robing process was finished, Mrs. Robertson glanced over the little girl and grudgingly acknowledged to herself that there was something of elegance in the girl's bearing, even if she were a squatter.

"Come here!" she said. A haughty gesture indicated the spot. "Right here before me."

Polly's shaking legs carried her within a few inches of the august presence.

"You're very sure, girl," asked Mrs. Robertson, "that my daughter's safe in your shack? How did she come there?"

Polly remembered Larry Bishop and Lye Braeger. She had been instrumental in bringing them within the prison shadows, and if any one suffered from the deed done that night, it must not be her friends. She alone must take the blame!

"I whedded 'er there, ma'am," she replied humbly. "I'm goin' to tell her man all about it."

through his mind, his thoughts flew to the squatter's hut where his frail young wife awaited him.

"Come along quickly," he said, going directly to Polly.

How changed he seemed, how gentle he was as he took hold of her arm and led her away; and so preoccupied was she with this thought that the beauty of the clothes which she wore made no impression upon her. She wondered dully when MacKenzie lifted her bodily into the sleigh and the coachman chirruped to the horses, just what he intended to do with her tomorrow.

She looked back upon the time the authorities had sent Meg Williams to a reform school and also recalled the girl's home-coming after her term had been served. Now that she, herself, was in danger of the like treatment, Pollyop searched her mind for the details that Meg had given of the horrible place.

As the horses trotted along the boulevard, Pollyop's chin sank into the warm fur about her neck, and until they turned into the narrow lane from the road, no one spoke a word.

"Go straight to the lake, Hank," ordered MacKenzie, and at the sound of his deep voice, Pollyop felt another shock of surprise. She had heard it so often in strident abuse! Now it was actually pleasant to listen to!

Down the hill through the furry flakes of snow the strong horses picked their way. Once the cutter nearly turned on its side but righted itself. The Hopkins hut was dark when they drove up before it. Marcus jumped into the snow, picked Polly out of the cutter as if she had been a kitten, and waded through the drift to the narrow path leading into the house.

He put the girl down before the door, and turning, called to the coachman:

"Drive the team down the road, Hank, out of the wind! I'll call you when I want you!"

It was Pollyop's trembling hand that unlatched the shanty door. It was she who struck a match and touched it to the candle. Then she pointed to Granny Hope's room.

"She's in there, mister," she said, trembling like an aspen leaf.

Then because she was about to face an outraged wife in the presence of a powerful husband, she sat down, shaking with fear from head to foot.

CHAPTER XVII

In the meanwhile a covered carriage containing two men and a little boy was making slow progress along the drifted boulevard. About two miles from Ithaca a double cutter, with sleigh bells ringing, dashed by them, the little light on the back of it glowing like a steady red eye until a sharp curve in the road blotted it from sight.

"Somebody else out, if 'tis a bad night," commented the older man, who held the boy.

"They went awful fast, too, Daddy Hopkins," murmured the child. "Didn't 'um, darlin'?"

"Yep, son," was the reply. "Sleighs go over the snow better'n wagons."

The words hardly penetrated the younger man's reverie. His thoughts were busy with a squatter girl who would have a real Thanksgiving the next day. Her joy he could picture, but he could not join it. All his thoughts of her were marred by another vision that poisoned his every moment. Never since he had found Oscar Bennett dying in Polly's bed had he known a peaceful instant.

When the vehicle came to the corner where MacKenzie's magnificent turnout had swung into the lane leading to the row of squatter shacks at the lakeside, Robert Percival opened the carriage door and thrust his head out.

"This is where we turn," he shouted to the driver. "Go slow! The drifts are deep all the way down."

When he settled again into his seat, he remarked:

"It's a bad night, Hopkins. Perhaps it would have been better to have waited until morning, after all."

The other man bent over the boy's head and laid his face against it.

"'Twould had to be something more'n a snowstorm to keep me in Ithaca all night," he returned. "Where my pretty brat is, I want to be."

"Of course, of course," sighed Robert.

But he did not utter aloud the thought which flung to his lips that he was tortured by the same wish, too. What he did say was:

"Your daughter will be asleep, I've no doubt."

## NAVY PROPOSAL IS UNDER FIRE

Bill to Cut Strength to 67,000 Men and 6,356 Officers is Attacked.

### 80,000 PERSONNEL URGED

A Reduction of Forces to the Extent Recommended by the Committee Would Ignore Basic Naval Policy by Conference.

Washington, D. C.—The proposal of the house appropriations committee for a navy in 1923 to 67,000 men and 6,356 officers was vigorously attacked in a minority report signed by five republicans and one democrat and in statements issued by Representatives Britten of Illinois and McArthur, Oregon, republican members of the house naval committee.

A reduction of the naval forces of the United States to the extent recommended by the committee would ignore the basic naval policy set down by the arms conference, the minority report declared, asserting that an enlisted personnel of 80,000 with 6,000 apprentices would be necessary to keep the United States abreast of Great Britain and ahead of Japan.

Representative Britten said if the bill "had been framed by British and Japanese delegates with the intention of wrecking the American navy, they could not have more deliberately reared the United States to a third rate power," while Representative McArthur said a canvas he had made gave him hope of the adoption of an amendment providing for 80,000 men.

"For the first time in its history," said the minority report filed by six members of the appropriations committee, "this country has adopted a naval policy. It means equality with the strongest. If that policy is now disregarded by adoption of the naval bill we will sink to the rank of a third-rate naval power with little voice in any future world councils."

"No one doubts that the potential superiority of the American navy was the controlling factor in the negotiations of the recent conference. Had our delegates negotiated a treaty that placed this country below Great Britain or Japan in naval strength, they would have been denounced as traitors—not a single vote of the senate would have been recorded in its favor—yet this bill proposes to place the country in that very position."

Findings \$10,000 in New Bills.

Washington, D. C.—A bundle of 2,000 new bills which showed no deterioration was found by a boatman floating in the Potomac river near the Virginia side, across from Washington. It was learned. The boatman turned the \$10,000 over to the department of justice.

Whether the bills came originally from the bureau of engraving and printing or whether their finding had anything to do with the order for an inventory to be taken in the division of the bureau which makes bank notes and other government securities, could not be learned.

U. P. To Spend \$19,000,000.

New York.—Approximately \$19,000,000 will be spent by the Union Pacific railroad this year for improvements, new equipment and short line extension, Robert S. Lovett, chairman of the board of directors, announced. Two extensions, one in southern Utah, and another in southern California, soon will be under construction, he said.

Irish Ship Line Chartered.

Dover, Del.—A charter was filed at the state department for the United States Trans-Atlantic Lines, Inc., with a capital of \$21,000,000. The concern is said to own and operate vessels.

German Floating Debt.

Berlin.—Germany's floating debt on March 20 was 272,000,000,000 marks, an increase since April 1, 1921, of 106,500,000,000 marks.

Gives 300,000 Francs for Stamp.

Paris.—A 1-cent British Guiana stamp, sold for 300,000 francs at the auction sale of the famous Baron Ferrar collection.

Man Late Fined \$1 Minute.

Chicago, Ill.—Held in contempt of court for being 50 minutes late in appearing, Paul Beranek was fined at the rate of \$1 a minute by Judge Caverly, the total being \$50. Beranek was summoned on a fraudulent check charge.

Girl Mother is Awarded \$10,000.

Fort Dodge, Ia.—Myrtle Freed, 18, mother of a baby 18 months old, was awarded \$10,000 in a breach of promise suit against William Carlsson, son of a prominent Fort Dodge family, by a jury in district court here.

Children Burn to Death.

South St. Paul, Minn.—Matthew Smith, 6, and Arthur Smith, 7, year old, were burned to death when they were trapped by fire which broke out in a grocery store over which they lived. Their parents, escaped.

Rail Workers Laid Off.

Hoboken, N. J.—One hundred and fifty employees of the Lackawanna railroad have been laid off because of conditions growing out of the coal miners' strike, an official of the road announced.



Mrs. W. H. Avis

Council Bluffs, Iowa—"A few years ago after motherhood I could not gain back my strength. I developed quite a severe case of woman's trouble, suffered with bearing pains which would be so severe I would have to lie down. I became so weak that all I wanted to do was lie and rest. It seemed that every spark of vitality had left me. I consulted a doctor and he said nothing but an operation would help me, but I would not consent. I had seen Dr. Pierce's medicines advertised, so at once began taking the Favorite Prescription and the Golden Medical Discovery and it was not long until I noticed my appetite was returning, I could eat, so I knew the medicine was doing me good. I took about twelve bottles and it was well worth it for it completely restored me to health, without the operation."—Mrs. W. H. Avis, 314 S. 19th St.

All druggists sell Dr. Pierce's Family Medicines—tablets or liquid.

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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.

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WORLD'S Standard Cold and Cough Remedy. Dissolve in hot water. Dr. W. H. Hill Company, Detroit.

PRICE 50 CENTS

She Didn't Want Much.

The marine, serving at Pearl Harbor in the Hawaiian Islands, wrote to his sweetheart that he would soon be home, and that he would be glad to bring her a souvenir if she would only tell him what she wanted. Shortly afterward he received this reply: "Dear George: Don't go to any expense. Just bring me a nice string of pearls from Pearl Harbor, and I'll be more than satisfied."

Every department of housekeeping needs Red Brass Ball Blue. Equally good for kitchen towels, table linen, sheets and pillowcases, etc.—Advertisement.

There is a tendency to believe that the farther away apples are raised the better they are.

The things that come to the man who waits are seldom the things that he has been waiting for.

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Removes Corns, Calluses, etc. stops all pain, restores comfort to the feet, makes walking easy. Use by mail or at Druggists. H. H. Hill, Chem. Wks., Patheville, N. Y.

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