

# THE ENCHANTED BARN

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But the young man saw how it was, and he bowed as gracefully as if asking about barns was a common habit of young women coming into his office.

"Oh, certainly," he said; "won't you just step in here a moment and sit down? We can talk better. Edward, you may go. I shall not need you any longer this evening."

"But I am detaining you; you were just going out!" cried Shirley in a panic. "I will go away and come again—perhaps." She would do anything to get away without telling her preposterous errand.

"Not at all!" said young Mr. Graham. "I am in no hurry whatever. Just step this way, and sit down." His tone was kindness itself. Somehow Shirley had to follow him. Her face was crimson now, and she felt ready to cry. What a fool she had been to get herself into a predicament like this! What would her mother say to her? How could she tell this strange young man what she had come for? But he was seated and looking at her with his nice eyes, taking in all the little pitiful attempts at neatness and style and beauty in her shabby little toilet. She was awfully conscious of a loose fluff of gold gilded hair that had come down over one hot cheek and ear. How disheveled she must look, and how dusty after climbing over that dirty barn! And then she plunged into her subject.

## CHAPTER III.

"I'm sure I don't know what you will think of my asking," said Shirley excitedly, "but I want very much to know whether there is any possibility that you would rent a beautiful big stone barn you own out on the old Glenside road near Allister avenue. You do own it, don't you? I was told you did, or at least that Mr. Walter Graham did. They said it belonged to 'the estate.'"

"Well, now you've got one on me," said the young man with a most engaging smile. "I'm sure I don't know whether I own it or not. I'm sorry. But if it belongs to grandfather's estate—his name was Walter, too, you know—why, I suppose I do own part of it. I'm sorry father isn't here. He of course knows all about it—or the attorney—of course he would know. But I think he has left the office. However, that doesn't matter. What was it you wanted? To rent it, you say?"

"Yes," said Shirley, feeling very small and very much an impostor; "that is, if I could afford it. I suppose perhaps it will be way ahead of my means, but I thought it wouldn't do any harm to ask." Her shy eyes were almost filled with tears, and the young man was deeply distressed.

"Not at all, not at all," he hastened to say. "I'm just stupid that I don't know about it. Where did you say it was? Out on the Glenside road? A barn? Come to think of it, I remember one of my uncles lived out that way once, and I know there is a lot of land somewhere out there belonging to the estate. You say there is a barn on it?"

"Yes, a beautiful barn," said Shirley anxiously, her eyes dreamy and her cheeks like two glowing roses. "It is stone and has a wide grassy road like a great staircase leading up to it, and a tall tree over it. There is a brook just below—it is high up from the road on a little grassy hill."

"Oh, yes, yes," he said, nodding eagerly. "I see! It almost seems as if I remember. And you wanted to rent it for the summer, you say? You are—ah—suppose?" He looked at her respectfully. He knew the new woman, and honored her. He did not seem at all startled that she wanted to rent a barn for the summer.

But Shirley did not in the least understand. She looked at him bewildered a moment.

"Oh, no! I am only a stenographer myself—but my mother—that is—she paused in confusion.

"Oh, I see, your mother is the farmer, I suppose. Your home is near by—near to the barn you

want to rent?"

Then she understood. "No, oh, no!" she said desperately. "We don't want to use the barn for a barn at all. I want to use it for a house!"

It was out at last, the horrible truth; and she sat trembling to see his look of amazement.

"Use it for a house!" he exclaimed. "Why, how could you? To live in, do you mean, or just to take a tent and camp out there for a few days?"

"To live in," said Shirley doggedly, lifting her eyes in one swift defiant look and then dropping them to her shabby gloves and thin pocketbook, empty now even of the last precious nickel. If he said anything more she was sure she should cry. If he patronized her the least bit or grew haughty now that he saw how low she was reduced, she would turn and fly from the office and never look him in the face.

But he did neither. Instead, he just talked in a natural tone, as if it were the most common thing in the world for a girl to want to live in a barn and nothing to be surprised over in the least.

"Oh, I see," he said pleasantly. "Well, now, that might be arranged, you know. Of course I don't know much about things, but I could find out. You see, I don't suppose we often have calls to rent the property that way—"

"No, of course not," said Shirley, gathering up her scattered confidence. "I know it's queer for me to ask, but we have to move—they are going to build an apartment house where we are renting now—and mother is sick. I should like to get her out into the country, our house is so little and dark; and I thought, if she could be all summer where she could see the sky and hear the birds, she might get well. I want to get my little sisters and brothers out of the city, too. But we couldn't likely pay enough rent. I suppose it was silly of me to ask."

"Not at all!" said the young man courteously, as though she had been a queen whom he delighted to honor. "I don't see why we shouldn't be able to get together on some kind of a proposition—that is, unless father has other plans that I don't know about. A barn ought not to be worth such a big price. How much would you feel like paying?"

He was studying the girl before him with interested eyes; noting the well set head on the pretty shoulders, even in spite of the ill fitting shabby blue coat; the delicate features; the glint of gold in the soft brown hair; the tilt of the firm little chin, and the wistfulness in the big blue eyes. This was a new kind of girl, and he was disposed to give her what she wanted if he could. And he could. He knew well that anything he willed mightily would not be denied him.

The frightened color came into the delicate cheeks again, and the blue eyes fluttered down ashamedly.

"We are paying only \$15 a month now," she said; "and I couldn't pay any more, for we haven't got it. I couldn't pay as much, for it would cost 60 cents a week apiece for George and me to come in to our work from there. I couldn't pay more than \$12! and I know that's ridiculous for such a great, big beautiful place, but—I had to ask."

She lifted her eyes swiftly in apology and dropped them again; the young man felt a glow of sympathy for her and a deep desire to help her have her wish.

"Why, certainly," he said heartily. "Of course you did. And it's not ridiculous at all for you to make a business proposition of any kind. You say what you can do, and we accept it or not as we like. That's our lookout. Now of course I can't answer about this until I've consulted father; and, not knowing the place well, I haven't the least idea what it's worth; it may not be worth even \$12." (He made a mental reservation that it should not be if he could help it.) "Suppose I consult with father and let you know. Could I write or phone you, or will you be around this way any time tomorrow?"

Shirley's breath was fairly gone with the realization that he

was actually considering her proposition in earnest. He had not laughed at her for wanting to live in a barn, and he had not turned down the price she offered as impossible! He was looking at her in a kindly way as if he liked her for being frank.

"Why, yes," she said, looking up shyly. "I can come in tomorrow at my noon hour—if that would not be too soon. I always have a little time to myself then, and it isn't far from the office."

"That will be perfectly all right for me," smiled young Graham. "I shall be here until half past one, and you can ask the boy to show you to my office. I will consult with father the first thing in the morning and be ready to give you an answer. But I am wondering if you have seen this barn. I suppose you have or you would not want to rent it; but I should suppose a barn would be an awfully unpleasant place to live, kind of almost impossible. Are you sure you realize what the proposition would be?"

"Yes, I think so," said Shirley, looking troubled and earnest. "It is a beautiful big place, and the outlook is wonderful. I was there today, and found a door open at the back, and went in to look around. The upstairs middle floor is so big we could make several rooms out of it with screens and curtains. It would be lovely. We could live in picnic style. Yes, I'm sure mother would like it. I haven't told her about it yet, because if I couldn't afford it I didn't want to disappoint her; so I thought I would wait until I found out; but I'm just about certain she would be delighted. And anyhow we've got to go somewhere."

"I see," said this courteous young man, trying not to show his amazement and delight in the girl who so coolly discussed living in a barn with curtains and screens for partitions. He thought of his own luxurious home and his comfortable life, where every need had been supplied even before he realized it, and, wondering again, was refreshed in soul by this glimpse into the brave heart of the girl.

"Then I will expect you," he said pleasantly, and, opening the door, escorted her to the elevator, touching his hat to her as he left her.

Shirley would not have been a normal girl if she had not felt the least flutter in her heart at the attention he showed her and the pleasant tones of his voice. It was for all the world as if she had been a lady dressed in broadcloth and fur. She looked down at her shabby little serge suit—that had done duty all winter with an old gray sweater under it—half in shame and half in pride in the man who had not let it hinder him from giving her honor. He was a man. He must be. She had bared her poverty-stricken life to his gaze, and he had not taken advantage of it. He had averted his eyes, and acted as if it were just like other lives and others' necessities; and he had made her feel that she was just as good as any one with whom he had to deal.

Well, it was probably only a manner, a kind of refined, courteous habit he had; but it was lovely, and she was going to enjoy the bit of it that had fallen at her feet.

On the whole, Shirley walked the 10 blocks to her narrow little home feeling that she had had a good day. She was weary, but it was a healthy weariness. The problem which had been pressing on her brain for days, and nights too, did not seem so impossible now, and hope was in her heart that somehow she would find a way out. It had been good to get away from the office and the busy monotony and go out into the wide, open out-of-doors. It was good also to meet a real nobleman, even if it were only in passing, and on business.

She decided not to tell her mother and the children of her outing yet, not until she was sure there were to be results. Besides, it might only worry her mother the more and give her a sleepless night if she let out the secret about the barn.

One more little touch of pleasantness there came to make this day stand out from others as beautiful. It was when she turned into Chapel street, and was swinging along rapidly in order to get home at her usual time and not alarm her mother, that a car rolled quickly past to the middle of the block, and stopped just under a street light. In a moment more a lady came out of the door of a house, entered the car, and was driven away. As she closed the car door Shirley fancied she saw something drop from the lady's hand. When Shirley reached the place she found it was two great, luscious pink rosebuds that must have slipped from the lady's corsage and fallen on the pavement. Shirley picked them up almost reverently, inhaling their exotic breath and taking in their delicate curves and texture. Then she looked after the limousine. It was three blocks away and just turning into another street. It would be impossible for her to overtake it, and there was little likelihood of the lady's returning for two roses. Probably she would never miss them. Shirley turned toward the house, thinking she ought to take them in, but discovered that it bore the name of a fashionable modiste, who would, of course, not have any right to the roses, and Shirley's conscience decided they were meant by Providence for her. So, happily, she hurried on to the little brick house, bearing the wonderful flowers to her mother.

She hurried so fast that she reached home 10 minutes earlier than usual, and they all gathered around her eagerly as if it were some great event, the mother calling half fearfully from her bedroom upstairs to know whether anything had happened. She was always expecting some new calamity, like sickness or the loss of their positions by one or the other of her children.

"Nothing at all the matter, mother, dear!" called Shirley happily as she hung up her coat and hat, and hugged Doris. "I got off earlier than usual because Mr. Barnard had to go away. Just see what a beautiful thing I have brought you—found it on the street, dropped by a beautiful lady. You needn't be afraid of them, for she and her limousine looked perfectly hygienic; and it wasn't stealing, because I couldn't possibly have caught her. Aren't they lovely?"

By this time she was up in her mother's room, with Doris and Carol following close behind exclaiming in delight over the roses. She kissed her mother, and put the flowers into a glass beside the bed.

"You're looking better tonight, I believe, dear," said the mother. "I've been worried about you all day. You were so white and tired this morning."

"Oh, I'm feeling fine, mother, dear!" said Shirley gayly, "and I'm going down to make your toast and poach you an egg while Carol finishes getting supper. George will be here in 10 minutes now, and Harley ought to be in any minute. He always comes when he gets hungry. My! I'm hungry myself! Let's hurry, Carol. Doris, darling, you fix mother's little table all ready for her tray. Put on the white cloth, take away the books, set the glass with the roses in the middle very carefully. You won't spill it, will you, darling?"

(To Be Continued Next Week)

### Bismarck's Humor.

From the Kansas City Star. There was a well defined though unsuspected vein of humor in Bismarck, the Iron Chancellor of Germany that used to be. Journeying through the empire at one time he found himself lodged in a hotel that had no call bell to summon the servants. His own servant was quartered in another part of the building and there was no means of communicating with him when he wanted him. The proprietor of the hotel, when asked to supply the missing call bell, replied that guests were required to furnish their own conveniences, and there was no reason why he should make an exception of Bismarck. The proprietor thereupon left Bismarck's room but he had hardly reached the bottom of the stairs when a pistol shot was heard. Badly frightened, the proprietor raced up the stairs and from room to room until he came upon Bismarck seated at his writing table, a smoking pistol lying at his elbow.

"What happened? What happened?" cried the proprietor. "Nothing at all to be alarmed at," Bismarck answered. "I merely summoned my servant. It is a perfectly harmless signal, and I trust you will become accustomed to it."

The next day Bismarck was supplied with a call bell.

### Tyrant Beauty.

My mind is set on earnest days  
And nights of quiet sleeping.  
But beauty over all my ways  
A tyrant watch is keeping.

She haunts me in a lovely face,  
By pool and stream she stays me,  
Her form in every cloud I trace,  
Her starry sky betrays me.

Hers is the mantling down of snow,  
Hers is the solemn warning  
Of dirges that the north winds blow,  
And hers the burst of morning.

She forges all the human ties  
That bind me to my neighbor;  
She wreathes the laurel crown that lies  
Upon the brow of labor.

A golden bird in a budding tree  
Pours out his heart in singing—  
Which tells the more of beauty, he  
Or the bud where the sap is springing?

No time or place is left to me  
By night or day for resting;  
Her finger points, and I must be  
Adventuring and questing.  
Let this austere dominion cease,  
O beauty, to distress me,  
Or grant to me a vast increase  
Of power to express thee.  
—Leslie Pinckney Hill, in the Philadelphia Public Ledger.

## In a new size package



10 for 10 cts MANY smokers prefer it. They'll find that this compact package of ten Lucky Strike Cigarettes will just suit them.

Try them—dealers now carry both sizes: 10 for 10 cts; 20 for 20 cts.

## It's Toasted

**Prophet Without Honor.**  
The office girl is not a Hoosier, and of course is not expected to know everything. And yet—  
On the occasion of the municipal concert, she was asked if she intended going to hear "Elijah."  
"Elijah who?" she inquired.—Indianapolis News.

**Cuticura Soothes Baby Rashes**  
That itch and burn with hot baths of Cuticura Soap followed by gentle anointments of Cuticura Ointment. Nothing better, purer, sweeter, especially if a little of the fragrant Cuticura Talcum is dusted on at the finish. 25c each everywhere.—Adv.

**THREW FLOWERS AND GEMS**  
London Crowd Benefited by Woman's Enthusiasm Over the Ending of the Great War.

During the peace rejoicings one night in London several guests standing at the upper windows of a West End restaurant began to throw roses down to the crowds packed in the street below. A woman in evening dress, after throwing out numbers of roses, took a bracelet from her arm and tossed it to the people, following this with a ring from her finger. Then, after throwing more roses, she took the ornaments from her hair and threw these also into the struggling mass of people below.

An elderly man at an adjoining window threw out several spoons and forks, and then, finding nothing else at hand, threw an apple which was deftly caught and promptly returned, striking the window close by, but, fortunately, without breaking the glass. The women then began to throw out treasury notes, wadding them into small balls and flinging them one by one to the excited crowd. After getting rid of seven or eight notes, she expressively spread out her hands to indicate that she had nothing more, and was loudly cheered.

**Exasperating.**  
Two things that try a woman's temper are to get ready for company that doesn't come and to have company come when she isn't ready.

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