



The Shadow of the Sheltering Pines

by GRACE MILLER WHITE

A New Romance of the Storm Country

(Continued from last week.)

"Could you think of me as your father, dear?" he said after an emotional silence.

"I'm not fit for that," sighed Tony. "No, no, not that. I come from people who are not your kind, Cousin Paul. You know that! Everybody does! Then I'm not so good as you think I am. First of all I haven't always told you the truth."

"So my brother told me," remarked Doctor Paul. "Long ago he took me into his confidence about the poison in my medicine. I've watched you for two years, Tony, and it seems to me that I know every secret of your soul. I'm sure you love me, dear child. I'm going to adopt you legally for my daughter. After this I'm your father, and I give warning to my Captain MacCauley that if he tries to take you from me, he's going to have some fight on his hands. From now on, I'm not Cousin Paul. I am—what?"

"My father," gulped Tony. "It seems as if I couldn't stand so much happiness. And if you're my father, that makes Cousin John—"

"Your uncle," laughed a voice from the door. "So Paul has told you, has he, little girl? Well, Tony, you wouldn't have slept a wink one night if you'd heard our argument about you. We spent several hours wrangling which of us should adopt you. I said I should because I saw you first, and Paul—"

"Has the prior right because you saved me, Tony?" interrupted Paul. "Now I think the family had better know of our changed arrangements."

Paul Pendlehaven acted as spokesman when Mrs. Curtis and her daughter, Katherine, had been summoned to the library. He told them very gravely that as his will now stood, his brother, John, and his cousin, Sarah, were the beneficiaries of it. Mrs. Curtis smiled at him and arranged the lace ruffles around her neck.

"You've always been most generous, Paul dear," she simpered.

"But now," went on the doctor, paying no heed to the lady's remark, "our household's going to have a mistress."

Katherine lifted her chin from the palm of her hand, and Mrs. Curtis straightened up. Were her ambitions going to be realized after all? Was it Paul who was going to put her in her rightful place? The smile broadened on her lips, and she sank back with a happy sigh. She had to admit Cousin Paul looked very handsome, yes, even handsomer than Cousin John. What a fool she had been not to have caught him sooner.

"The woman you put at the head of your home will be most fortunate and happy, dear Paul," she murmured.

"I hope so," returned Pendlehaven, and Doctor John pulled at the corners of his mouth to keep back a malicious grin.

"I'm going to adopt Tony Devon—" Doctor Paul had only time enough to make this statement when Mrs. Curtis jumped to her feet.

"You couldn't do that!" she cried. "That would be wicked, Paul, absolutely wicked! Oh God, don't do that!"

Without heeding in the slightest his cousin's bitter ejaculation, Paul Pendlehaven picked up a box that lay at his elbow. With much ceremony he opened it and took out an exquisite pearl necklace.

"I do not need to remind any of you," he said, turning his eyes from his brother to his two white-faced cousins, "that these belonged to my dear wife. I have always considered them the property of her daughter too. That is the reason, Katherine, why I've always refused your request to wear them. But now I have a daughter."

He turned smiling eyes upon Tonnibel. "I shall allow her to wear them whenever she wishes, and if—her lost sister isn't found, then they are hers—hers forever."

A long hissing breath broke from Sarah Curtis, and a gasp came from Katherine.

"I couldn't wear them," Tony got out at length, "I simply couldn't."

"Not to please me, your father, Tonnibel?" demanded Paul, almost brusquely.

"And me, your new uncle?" laughed Doctor John. "Why, honey, little girl, he reached out and took Tonnibel's hand, 'don't look as if you'd lost your last friend!'"

Then Paul Pendlehaven drew Tonnibel Devon to his side, and, when he had clasped the jewels around her neck, he lifted her face and kissed her.

"There, little daughter!" His voice choked with emotion, but he conquered his feelings and went on, "they're very lovely, very precious, Tony, doubly so because you're wearing them."

"Oh," she exulted, "how happy I am! . . . It isn't the pearls, though they're simply great, but it's that I have some real people." She turned a flushed and radiant face to

each man. "Somebody that's my very own. My mother's dead, and my father—"

"Is in prison," snapped Mrs. Curtis vindictively. "I'm wondering who he'll say to all this when he comes home."

"His opinion won't make any difference to us," Paul Pendlehaven stated coolly. "He has forfeited every right to any claim on Tony."

"Hideous!" exclaimed Mrs. Curtis, and "Well, I never," dropped from Katherine.

"And," went on Doctor Paul, relentlessly, for he knew the barbs that were being thrust into the souls of his two cousins. "I'm going to change my will in favor of my new daughter here—"

"And I mine in favor of our young Salvation Army captain who is going to marry my new niece," chuckled Doctor John. "I guess that's all we have to say, Paul."

In silence Katherine and Mrs. Curtis faded from the room, carrying with them bitter humiliation and nursing outraged feelings.

"It's all your fault, mamma," scolded Katherine, bursting into tears when they were in the seclusion of their own apartments. "You've whined and wept yourself right out of Cousin John's life, that's what you've done. God, how I hated that girl when I saw Caroline's pearls around her neck!"

"What are you doing now?" thrust back her mother. "Aren't you crying as if your heart would break? I tell you tears—"

"Oh Lordy, tears! What good do they do?" came sharply. "Here we are without a future, without a home! That interloper will see we go the moment Paul gets out those papers! Oh, what shall we do?"

"I wish that man—her father, I mean—was out of jail," mused Mrs. Curtis. "I really believe he could do something, Katie. Perhaps, Reggie—"

Katherine wiped her eyes with a sudden movement.

"Mamma, why don't you send for Reggie?" she questioned. "Now, listen to me. Reggie confided in me before he left that he really was fond of that girl, and if—Oh, mamma, I've thought of a wonderful thing. Send for Reggie, shove the girl under his nose every minute. Let him cut Philip out—"

"And perhaps have my son marry that thing," objected the mother curtly. "That thing, as you please to call Tony Devon, is one of the prettiest and richest young women in this county." Katherine snapped back. "She's helpless to the Pendlehavens, and engaged to be married to a man who owns half the town. Thing, eh? Well, I think she's a little higher up in the world at this moment than my half-brother, Reggie, if you want my opinion."

That night an urgent message from the frantic mother traveled by wire to Reginald Curtis, summoning him home.

CHAPTER XV.

The Last Card.

One day some weeks later, Reginald Brown walked rapidly along the boulevard past the row of squat

He had received word that Uriah Devon, released from prison, would anchor the Dirty Mary near the Hogue in her accustomed place. Devon was on deck when Brown ran up the gangplank.

"So you came, old top," was Uriah's greeting. "It's good you did; I want to know what's doin'."

A woman came to the door of the cabin and peered out. When she saw the newcomer, she scowled and went back.

"I thought you said she was dead," commented Reggie, with a wag of his head toward the spot where the woman had stood.

"Well, she ain't! Worse luck!" growled Uriah. "I told that to the kid to make her feel bad. Ede was willing to be dead for a while, anyhow. What's the news of Tony?"

"Oh, she's a lady now," answered Reggie, sarcastically. "The Pendlehavens have sent her to school ever since you went away. My mother tells me Paul Pendlehaven's going to adopt her. And what do you think else?"

"I dunno," grunted the other. "Good God! Don't sit there tearin' me to pieces with curiosity. Fire ahead, and tell me."

"She's copped Phil MacCauley," returned Reginald; "Ithaca's snob of a Salvation Army captain, the fellow who threw me in the lake that day, and he's as rich as the Pendlehavens put together."

"Well, he won't get 'er," asserted Uriah, sharply. "I've told you the girl's rich too. Her father's got money to burn."

"A lot of good that'll do you, Ry," sneered Reggie. "She wouldn't look at the likes of you and Edith. You aren't in her class any more."

"Ain't I so?" queried Devon, grouchily. "I reckon her hide ain't no tougher nor thicker'n it used to be. I'll thump it—out of 'er once or twice; I'll show 'er what class she's in."

"You'll have to catch her before you beat her, won't you, Ry?" Reggie inquired tauntingly. "How're you going to get your hands on her? Tell me that, will you?"

"Yep, Mr. Mealy-mouth, I will," thrust back Devon. "We got to steal 'er." He clenched his heavy fist and swung it menacingly and suggestively.

"What's left of 'er when I'm done with 'er 'll marry you all right. That over, I'll tell 'er who she is, providin' you promise to halve up the stuff with me."

"I did promise you once, didn't I?" asked Reggie, sulkily. "Of course, I will, but what's the use of dreaming? The Pendlehavens're too much for us. Now that Paul's well, and he and John are a big team, and they worship the ground that girl walks on. You're biting off more'n you can chew, Ry. You aren't any too strong, you know. A prison record doesn't help any."

Uriah grunted and followed a ring of smoke with his frowning eyes.

"She's my girl," he said at length. "I'm goin' to have 'er."

"I thought you said she wasn't," put in Reggie, suspiciously.

"Well, she don't know that, does she?" Devon retorted. "Nobody knows but you and Ede, besides me."

"His voice lowered to a growl. "I'd marry her if she didn't have a cent."

"You don't need to make any such sacrifice, old horse," said Devon. "Your eyes will bung out of your head when you hear her name."

Reginald argued he should know who the girl was before he married her, but Uriah wouldn't give up his secret. Indeed, he unfolded to the prospective husband how he planned to capture Tonnibel, and sent Reggie away convinced, red hot to perform his part in the scheme. At last, he was to have the girl he wanted and money too.

The next morning Reggie approached his mother with an air of secrecy.

"A minute, mater," he said softly. "Just a minute! I've seen Tony Devon's father. There! Now sit down, old lady, while I tell you something."



Ry Says the Only Way Is to Kidnap Her Bodily.

Ry says the only way is to kidnap her bodily and force her to marry the man he promised her to," the boy explained. "What do you think of that?"

"Paul would kill him," gasped Mrs. Curtis her eyes taking on an expression of fear.

"He won't have a chance if Devon works 'is present scheme," replied Reggie, "but you and Kathie have to help us."

In the terror that overtook her, Mrs. Curtis shook her head.

"I don't want anything to do with it," she objected, wobbling in tears.

"We'd lose our home, Paul and John would turn us out. They've threatened to many a time!"

"Well, when I assure you our beloved cousins won't know anything about it, not even after it's over, won't you try to help us?" queried the young man. "Now, if it goes through all right, you catch Cousin John on the rebound, and Kathie'd be sure to rope in Phil."

"What joy that would be!" ejaculated Mrs. Curtis. "What about it?"

Then Reggie told her, in very low tones, the plan they had concocted.

"You talk it over with Kathie," he advised, lighting a cigarette, "and you'll have to see Devon about the money."

"I'll get it for him if I have to sell my jewels and Kathie's too," promised the woman, her eyes sparkling in anticipation. "I'll go and tell her right away."

Meanwhile, all unconscious that Uriah Devon had been released from prison and was conspiring against her, Tonnibel Devon was entering heart and soul into the Salvation Army work with Philip. Each evening she went with him to headquarters where her fresh, young voice and her kindness drew many a poor soul for comfort and courage.

One week after Reginald Curtis had confided his secret to his mother, and she had told it over again in whispers to Katherine, at an hour when the Pendlehaven brothers were absent, Uriah Devon came quietly to the house. Reggie met him and took him immediately to Mrs. Curtis' room.

Uriah paused embarrassedly before her, made a curt bow and twisted his cap between his fingers.

"Sit down, Ry," invited

"Now tell my mother how you are going to carry this thing out."

Uriah sat on the edge of a chair. "I ain't goin' to do anything, or tell what I'm goin' to do, till I get the money," he said crisply. "I've got to have five thousand dollars first."

"Five thousand dollars, old lady," grinned Reggie, turning to his mother. "You'll have to cough up. . . . Now, for God's sake, don't cry! Dig!"

"I'll need the whole five thousand to get 'er away, and to keep 'er after I get 'er. She'd come streakin' back if I don't rope 'er up."

"I'll get the money for you tomorrow," sighed Mrs. Curtis, wiping her eyes, "and you mustn't come here when my cousins are home." She relapsed into silence and then added: "I warn you against—against Philip MacCauley too."

Mrs. Curtis had been all eyes and ears for even the slightest happening in the Pendlehaven home, since she had almost stripped her jewel-box and Katherine's to get the money Tony's father demanded. Now she had it tucked away, ready to deliver it, but as the time went by and she had no chance to send for Uriah to come for his daughter, she began to give up hope that the house would ever be rid of the presence which was a constant thorn in her flesh. But it does seem that sooner or later Fate plays the lucky cards into the hands of the undeserving, and so it happened in the case of the conspirators against Tonnibel Devon. Like all things waited for, the opportunity came one day while the family was at dinner.

Phillip MacCauley entered in great excitement.

"You look as if you had swallowed the sun, my dear lad," smiled Doctor Paul.

"I've got to go away," flushed the boy, laughing, "and I won't go alone." He gazed meaningfully at Tonnibel.

"Pardon my rushing in this way, but—but I want Tony to go with me."

Mrs. Curtis flashed him a dark look. He rarely paid her, or her frowning daughter, any attention nowadays, so he did not notice that a pallor settled on Katherine's face, or that her fork fell from her limp fingers to the plate. The mother saw her daughter's mental distress, however, and studied the young man's face, groaning to herself. He had grown so manly and handsome in the past two years, and he was the one person she desired for her son-in-law. He was rich, too, which only added to his attractiveness.

"You might explain a little more, my boy," Doctor John spoke up in a deep voice.

An embarrassed laugh fell from Phillip's lips.

"There isn't any secret about it," he answered. "I'm going abroad for the Salvation Army for a year, longer perhaps, and it would be too much to ask me to go all by myself."

Lines appeared between Doctor Paul's brows. At last the day had come when he must give up the girl who had taken a rare place among those he held dearest. He noticed with a quick sigh that Tony's eyes deepened softly, and her red lips were parted in a smile.

"I'll hurry up our marriage a little," Phillip continued, "but—but—" The sound of a chair scraping back from the table broke off his statement.

"Then we'll adjourn and talk it over," remarked Doctor John. "You ask a mighty big thing, Phil, when you demand our little girl without more warning."

"Little girl," sneered Mrs. Curtis, after the four had left the dining room. It happened, though to her surprise, that Doctor John sought her out within the hour.

"Those children have won Paul and me over, Sarah," he said a little grimly. "They're going to be married a week from today. It won't be much trouble to prepare the house, will it? You needn't make a fuss. It'll be very quiet. Tony can buy everything she needs in New York on her honeymoon."

In the rage that overtook her, Mrs. Curtis wished the speaker dead at her feet.

"The house isn't mine, Cousin John," she said maliciously, "but, of course, I'll do what I can, although Katherine isn't at all well. I fear the child is going to be ill."

Doctor John found Katherine with her eyes dull and heavy, prescribed for her, and, before leaving the room, announced:

"Paul and I are going over to Syracuse tomorrow afternoon to make a few purchases, but we'll be back on the night train. Stay in bed, Kathie, until morning, and you'll be all right."

The moment he had disappeared, Katherine sprang up.

"Tomorrow they're going away! You heard, you heard, mother?" she cried. "Now then, where's Reggie?"

"Darling," advised Mrs. Curtis, moved to tears by her daughter's distress, "I have a premonition! We'd better not interfere at all. Oh, child, if you could only get your mind off that boy! He isn't worthy of a love like yours. We've got a nice home—"

"Nice home!" hurled back Katherine, wildly. "Nice home! Look what she's got! Just think of her and then of me! Oh, God, that such misery could be in the world! I'll never forgive you, mamma, if you don't keep your promise to me."

"Don't say that, darling, don't," groaned Mrs. Curtis. "I'll see your brother, and who knows," she brightened and smiled through her tears; "who knows but what that horrid girl will be gone by tomorrow night?"

CHAPTER XVI.

In the Balance.

Reginald Brown and Uriah Devon were seated in close conference along the path that led to the Dirty Mary. Reginald had rehearsed all he had learned from his mother.

"Unless we do it tonight, Ry," said he, "it's all up. What do you say?"

Uriah broke off a blade of grass and drew it with a squeak through his crooked teeth.

"We'll get the kid," he snarled. "Mother's awful worried, though," Reggie continued, "but I told her, 'No risk no gain,' and I'd go a long way on the road of risk to get Tonnibel Devon."

"Well, we'll get 'er," monotoned Uriah, with a far-away look in his bloodshot eyes.

"After I'm married to her," took up the boy, "you'll tell me who she is, eh?"

"Yep," replied Uriah, "I'm goin' down to the scow now. Good-by, and be sure to tell your mother to put up the sign we spoke of if everything's clear for me to butt in."

Edith Devon looked up from the boat deck as her husband approached. He sat down on the bench beside her, a grizzled smile on his face.

"Ede," he asked, "seen any change in me lately?"

"Yes, I have," she returned. "You ain't boozin' haf so much, and you've been kinder and better-hearted to me."

"Mebbe it's because I've got religion," Uriah explained. "Religion makes a man repent of all his cussed acts. I'm sorry now, Ede, for the way I've treated you and the kid."

He couldn't have uttered words more welcome to Edith Devon. For the first time in years, she leaned her



It Took Some Effort on the Man's Part Not to Shove Her Away.

head against him. It took some effort on the man's part not to shove her away.

"And matters have took a mighty big change in the last two days," he continued. "Ede, I know, for years you been worryin' your life out about Tony. I fixed it up."

Mrs. Devon was on her feet almost before the last words fell from her husband's lips.

"How fixed it up, Riah?" she gasped.

"Now don't get panicky if I tell you something," Uriah cautioned her, slyly, "but I went to Pendlehaven and told him I copped the kid, and not you, and I says: 'Mr. Pendlehaven, you've had 'er for two years, and she's your brat. Now keep 'er!'"

Edith fell back on the bench as if the man had dealt her a blow.

"The kid's awful fond of you," he continued impressively, "and I up and told 'er you was livin', and to-night you're goin' to see 'er."

"She's goin' to get married to a rich young feller," he went on. "Ain't you glad, Ede?"

Wasn't she glad! No words could express Edith's feelings at that moment. How many times her heart

had ached for a sight of the pretty child she'd had so many years.

"Didn't Pendlehaven say nothin' about sending us up for it?" she asked timidly.

"Not a thing," retorted Uriah. "Not by a d-d sight, he didn't! He was too glad to know Tony was his, to make any fuss. Anyhow, she wouldn't let 'im. Why, my God! That little kid kissed me!"

Edith exclaimed in delight.

"I've told you more'n once, Uriah," she said, leaning against him again, "Tony'd like you if you'd let 'er. When we goin' to see 'er, Ry?"

"Oh, after a while," said he. "After supper! She's awful busy gettin' ready for a swell blowout. Lord, but she's pretty!"

"She always was that," answered Edith, and she fell into a deep reverie. Unobserved by his wife, Uriah Devon made ready to leave the Dirty Mary for some weeks. So absorbed was Edith in her thoughts that she paid no heed to her husband's sly caresses. He knew they would not dare to return to the boat with Tony until after she had been forced to marry Reginald Brown. Uriah would gladly have abandoned his wife forever, but in making his plans, had foreseen that, if they met with much opposition from Tonnibel, the woman, under his threats, could handle her. At nine o'clock they started for Ithaca, Uriah carrying a small black bag, and in his pocket his revolver.

They entered Pendlehaven place through the service gate, and, when they passed the garage, the man noticed with satisfaction that Reginald's automobile was standing ready for use. Close to the mansion, he placed

his wife out of sight under a rose bush.

"I'm goin' in and get Tony, Ede," he explained. " 'Twas a promise I give the kid, she could see you alone first. Just sit here, 'til I come back. You don't want to see Pendlehaven, eh?"

Edith shuddered and shrank back. "No, I don't," she whispered. "I just want to talk to the baby a minute. I want her to forgive me before we go away. We been cussed mean to that kid, Uriah."

Devon made a grunting assent, left Edith sitting behind the rose bush and slipped up the steps of the house.

A little while before, Reggie Brown, well filled up on brandy, had descended to the library to wait for Devon. If he hadn't had this thing on, and the importance of it hadn't weighed on him all the long day, he'd have gone to bed, his head ached so, but his desire to capture Tony Devon kept the fumes of alcohol from completely befuddling his brains. Inside the library, he stood swaying near the door, tapping his pocket from time to time to make sure he was armed. Then he stumbled across the room, threw himself on the divan and in another moment had forgotten in a drunken sleep that there was any such person in the world as Tonnibel Devon.

Meanwhile, Mrs. Curtis was walking the floor upstairs, half mad with anxiety, and Katherine, in a state of nerves, was smoking one cigarette after another.

"God! When she's gone," broke forth the girl. "I'll know what happiness means!"

"So will I," echoed Mrs. Curtis. "It's almost time for me to go down, isn't it? I hope that man won't disappoint us."

"Don't fear about that," sneered Katherine. "He's even more anxious than we are. So's Reggie, but I don't envy you telling Tony her mother's alive."

"I think you might do it," complained Mrs. Curtis with a sniff. "All the anxiety and worry of this thing has fallen on me."

"That's because you're so clever, my sweet," retorted Katherine, sarcastically. "Oh, go on down and don't act as if you were afraid of your own shadow. Say, Rege was drunk as anything at dinner."

"Disgustingly so," sighed the mother as she went out. "I hope to the high heavens he'll straighten up some day."

First Mrs. Curtis stole down to the library. There she found Uriah Devon, standing with his hat in his hand, and, as he saw her, he made a grinning bow.

"Where's Rege?" he asked eagerly. "Upstairs, I think," replied Mrs. Curtis in a low voice. "He's had too much to drink. Did you bring your wife?"

"Yep; she's outside," was the man's answer. "And the kid? Does she know Ede's still in the land of the livin'?"

"No, but I'll tell her now," returned Mrs. Curtis desperately. "Here's the five thousand dollars." She thrust a roll of bank notes into his hand. "I'll send Tony right down," ended the woman and she went swiftly out.

Uriah glanced about the room in anticipation. He intended not only to take Tony with him, but everything else of value he could lay his hands on. Edith had often described the valuables kept in a wall-safe in this very room. Mrs. Curtis had no more than closed the door before, however in hand, he began his search. An exclamation of delight almost escaped his lips when he discovered the safe-door was unlocked. He grinned at the carelessness of the rich as he flung into the black bag the boxes of jewelry, completely stripping the safe of its contents. He didn't take time to look over his haul! That would come later.

All through the day Tonnibel Devon had told her joy over and over to herself. Now, almost ready to retire, she was sitting reading the Bible. It seemed most appropriate that on this night she should sing with the Poet the Psalms of Thanksgiving.

A knock at the door caused her to close the book and put it on the table before she called: "Come in."

At the sight of Mrs. Curtis she rose to her feet, startled.

"I've good news for you, child," choked the woman, and Tony went forward eagerly.

"What?" she demanded. "Is Phillip—"

"Now, don't get nervous, my dear," came in quivering interruption. "But—but you were not correctly informed about your mother. She's—she's downstairs."

A violent emotion overtook the girl. She knew then she had never really believed what Uriah told her.

"My mother!" she breathed, her eyes deepening in color. "My dear little mother! Oh, let me go to her!"

"She's in the library. This is a happy day for you, my dear—for all of us. You'd better dress, hadn't you?"

Tonnibel hadn't even heard the last words. She fled down the stairs and into the library, panting for breath. Her cup of happiness was full to the brim, now that Edith had come back to her. She halted, closed the door and ran into the room.

"Ede, mummy dear!" she called softly, so overcome she could not