

Storm Country Polly

by Grace Miller White

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"I JUST COULDN'T"

SYNOPSIS.—Occupying a dilapidated shack in the Silent City, a squatter settlement near Ithaca, New York, Polly Hopkins lives with her father, small Jerry, and an old woman, Granny Hope. On an adjacent farm, Oscar Bennett, prosperous farmer, is a neighbor. He is secretly married to Evelyn Robertson, supposedly wealthy girl of the neighborhood. Marcus MacKenzie, who owns the ground the squatters occupy, is their determined enemy. Polly overhears a conversation between MacKenzie and a stranger, in which the former avows his intention of driving the squatters from his land. The stranger sympathizes with the squatters, and earns Polly's gratitude. Evelyn Robertson discovers from her mother her marriage to the ignorant farmer. Polly conveys her message and Oscar makes threats. He insists Evelyn meet him that night. Polly has her father and Larry Bishop, a squatter, take an oath to do MacKenzie no injury. Evelyn unsuccessfully tries to get money from her mother with which to buy off Bennett and induce him to leave the country, giving her her freedom. She and MacKenzie avow their love. At the arranged meeting that night Bennett threatens Evelyn with exposure unless she gives him money. Polly meets Robert Percival, and they are mutually attracted. Polly's feeling being adoration. Oscar kills Polly's lamb and Percival thrashes Oscar. MacKenzie orders the squatters to leave. Evelyn plans to marry MacKenzie.

CHAPTER VIII—Continued.

"Darling," he broke forth, "I'm just so happy, I can't have a row with Bob. Why don't you talk to him about the squatters? He'll listen to you, Eve! But, darling, that's a detail." He took one of her hands and kissed the tips of her slender fingers. "The most important thing to be considered now is when are you going to marry me? I can't, I simply can't wait much longer! Oh, Eve, Eve, I want you!"

Fiercely he drew her head against him; and the silence that followed was fraught with rapture for them both. Oh! She wanted to be his wife, to forget the past two wretched years. If Oscar did not stand in her way, how quickly she would give this man the happiness he craved and drink deep of it herself.

"When, my love?" breathed Marcus thickly, caressing her. "When, dear?"

Gravely she lifted her head and looked into his eyes for a few seconds. "When you buy the Bennett farm," she ventured. "It—it—"

"And get rid of the squatters too, I suppose," he laughingly interrupted. "And get rid of the squatters too," nodded Evelyn. Then she kissed him softly and whispered, "My sweetheart!"

A moment later she moved to release herself; and with another kiss he let her go. Then he smiled whimsically.

"Now it's settled, dearest," he said, rising. "I won't give you a minute's peace until you begin on your pretties, though the way you've set the day



"Oh, Eve, Eve, I Want You!"

makes it rather indefinite." He waved his arm in a wide-open gesture, and finished: "But I'll see that it's mighty soon."

Mrs. Robertson's daughter was in a brown study before the fire when that lady came into the room, a few minutes later.

"Marc went early tonight, didn't he, Eve?" she questioned, as she dropped into a chair.

"He had to go and meet someone about those tiresome squatters," Eve explained. "I'm sick of the sound of

their names. Marcus says if he can't get rid of them, he'll leave Ithaca."

A step in the hall closed the conversation for the time being, and a moment later Robert Percival joined them. In silence Mrs. Robertson studied his face. She wondered what had changed him so perceptibly in the last little while. He looked almost haggard to her searching eyes. She was about to question him as to his health when the young man turned to Evelyn.

"Eve, dear," he began hesitatingly. "I want something done very badly, and perhaps you can accomplish it for me."

A lazy smile stole to Evelyn's lips. "And you know, Bob, I'll do it if I can," she responded. "Tell me what's on your mind, honey."

"Certainly; why, yes, indeed," interjected Mrs. Robertson. "You know, Bob, Eve and I will do anything we can for you!"

The expression of anxiety, which his face had worn since he had seen the last of Polly Hopkins, lifted a little.

"That's fine!" he exclaimed heartily. "There's nothing like a fellow's own women folks, is there? And you're just as good to me as if I belonged to you."

Mrs. Robertson bridled consciously, pleased with her nephew and pleased with herself.

"Why, Robert, dear," she returned, "you do belong to us. God bless you, boy, you're my baby and Eve's little brother. Now tell us what's bothering you."

"It's Marc's row with the squatters! I can't get the poor devils out of my mind. Eve, can't you get him to leave the settlement people alone? I'd let them have some of my land, but it doesn't touch the lake, and they couldn't make a living on it."

Evelyn arose and crossed the room to the table. She had not expected this. Her promise to MacKenzie flashed into her mind!

"I don't like interfering with Marc's business, Bob," she demurred. "Besides, he wants to improve the property down there, and he can't while the fishermen stay on the shore!"

Gently, for Robert had always been like a younger brother to her, and she loved him dearly, Evelyn explained MacKenzie's plans and showed how impossible it was for her, under the circumstances, to interfere with them. Then she crossed to his side and bent over him.

"Robert, dear," she begged. "Forget about the squatters. They aren't anything special to you!" To head off an objection that she saw in his eyes, she hurried on: "They're poor and unfortunate, I know, I'm sorry for them. We all are; but you can't deny they're worthless and filthy, and worst of all, they haven't any right to be where they are. You won't let them come between you and Marc and me, will you?"

Without giving the man a chance to answer, Mrs. Robertson interrupted: "Mercy, Eve, why of course he won't! Marc will soon be one of the family. People of our social standing don't wrangle over such cattle as the squatters." She turned smilingly to the young man and ended sweetly: "You feel that way, don't you, Bob?"

Disregarding both the lady and her question, Robert got up, his lips grim and his fine brow corrugated with lines. Evelyn and Marcus could do as they pleased; he would take his stand right there.

"Evelyn," he said slowly, "I should be sorry to have anything come between us. You've always been like a dear sister to me. I suppose it's natural and right for you to see this the way Marc does. You're engaged to him, but you can tell him for me I'm going to help the squatters any way and every way I can."

Too angry to listen to any more arguments, he pushed his chair to one side and left the room.

Mrs. Robertson looked daggers at her daughter and as soon as she could get her breath, broke out:

"Now, Evelyn, see what a storm you've stirred up! Why didn't you use a little diplomacy? That was the least you could have done. You get Marc and Bob by the ears, and where'll you be!"

"Oh! I don't know! I don't know!" moaned Evelyn. "Don't talk to me any more. I'm just about crazy. I'm going to bed! Good night!"

CHAPTER IX.

In spite of the weight of apprehension that pressed upon the Silent City, Polly's soul insisted on singing with gladness. She found opportunity, even in the midst of her busy hours, to live over and over the adventures of that evening in the Robertson house. When she remembered how Robert had held her in his arms, her happiness made her almost faint.

She allowed Jerry's gingham blouse to fall neglected in her lap, as in imagination she dwelt on every incident of her visit. She recalled the thrilling tenderness in Robert's words, and her face grew soft in delightful reverie.

A sound at the door brought her thoughts back and she glanced up, startled. Unnoticed, the blouse dropped to the floor as Evelyn Robert-

son came in. Embarrassed and in silence, Pollyop arose and offered her a chair.

"You ain't feeling well, I bet," she burst out, wiping the dust from the rope seat of the rocker with her skirt. "You look white like the moon does before a rain. Go on, an' sit down!"

Sinking back, Evelyn looked steadily up at her. Then she caught at the hand resting on her shoulder.

"Pollyop, I've come to you because you're the only friend I have," she exclaimed, tears misting her eyes.

"I'm awful glad you come to me," Polly breathed softly. "You want me to run to Oscar again? I can't stand the sight of that duffer, but I'll go just the same. Have you got a letter?"

Wiping her eyes, Evelyn shook her head.

"No, but Oscar wants to see you," she replied. She paused and studied the girl. "Polly," she continued, "don't you want to do something for your people? There's a way, Pollyop, that you can—"

"Impulsively Polly could not wait. 'Do you mean help Daddy Hopkins an' the rest of 'em?' she interrupted. Evelyn nodded.

"Yes, every one in the settlement." A brilliant smile lit up Pollyop's countenance.

"I'd give inches out of my hide to do that," she declared. "Go on, an' yap it to me."

"Then sit down, dear," entreated Evelyn, "and don't stare at me so!"

To have saved her life, Pollyop could not drag her eyes away, but obediently she sat down on the floor. Evelyn fidgeted under the searching, honest gaze.

"You know, Polly," she stammered.



"I'm Awful Glad You Come to Me," Polly Breathed Softly.

"How it is between Mr. MacKenzie and me. I can make him do anything I say. Oh, if I were free from Oscar Bennett!"

"Then you could marry Old Marc, huh?" Polly interposed with a bob of the chestnut curls, "an' boss him, I bet."

"Something like that, Polly," Evelyn admitted. "That's why I've come to you. When I'm free, I can make Mr. MacKenzie let up on your people."

Anxiously weighing every word, Polly's quick mind ran on ahead.

"An' to do that," she threw in, "you got to get shut of Oscar! I don't blame you for wantin' to, but how be you goin' to work it, Miss Eve? I can't see no help for the squatters if your marryin' Old Marc's part of it."

"That's what I'm trying to tell you, Polly," was the quick retort, "but I want your promise. You help me, and I'll help you and your people. Oscar says he'll free me if—if you'll marry him."

For an instant Polly's head whirled as if it had been suddenly struck and over her came a weight almost unbearable. Then slowly she shook her curly head.

"I couldn't do that, ma'am," she choked. "I just couldn't."

"But you said you would," retorted Evelyn sharply. "You must. I can save the squatters, and I will; but only on condition that you help me get rid of Oscar Bennett. Mr. MacKenzie is going to buy the Bennett farm, and—"

"An' Oscar'll be goin' away somewhere else?" put in Polly. "Is that it? He'd take me away from Daddy Hopkins an' from—"

She caught herself just in time. She had it on the tip of her tongue to add the name of Robert Percival, but of course she did not.

"I couldn't ever do that," she ended. "Never, never!"

The blue eyes looked into the brown eyes seriously.

"Oh, yes, you can," insisted Miss Robertson. "Oscar's not the worst in the world, and he'll have a lot of money when he leaves Ithaca. He loves you, Pollyop, and he'd make life easy and pleasant for you."

A thoughtful moment or two passed, while Polly Hopkins gazed at her hands locked together in her lap.

"You can't tell me nothin' about Oscar," she remarked at length. "I know the dirty duffer, an' I don't know nothin' good about him, you can bet your boots on that." She paused while through the open doorway her eyes were fixed upon a fleecy cloud, high up in the deep blue sky. "But that don't make no difference," she continued. "If I linked up with Oscar, would that pup, Old Marc, let the squatters stay in the Silent City?"

"Why, Polly, dear, of course he will! I talked with Oscar last night, and I'll speak to Mr. MacKenzie just as soon as you promise to do what Oscar wants."

Again the smiling face of Robert Percival cut across Polly Hopkins' mental vision, and through the silence of the shanty she heard his voice—deep, low and like music. Then the evil face of Bennett wormed itself into her mind. Her lids drooped, and she shuddered.

"I couldn't do it, ma'am," she wailed. "I just couldn't do that!"

Evelyn arose and stood over her.

"You must, Polly," she asserted again. "Good heavens, it's the chance of your life! Of course you'll do it, Polly Hopkins. Take a little time to think it over. I'll bring Oscar to see you some day when Mr. MacKenzie and my cousin Robert are away."

At the sound of that beloved name, Polly's head fell forward.

"Scout now," she said, her curls hiding her face. "I'll think about it."

After Evelyn had gone, Polly mechanically resumed her sewing. It seemed that her heart's joy had wholly died within her. Patiently she tried to turn her attention to the work in her hands, but again and again she caught herself sitting with idle fingers.

Finally, worried by the conflicting emotions that were crowding in upon her, Polly flung herself into the open and ran swiftly along the ragged rocks to a little glen where many a time she had been before. Here she waded through the brook and sank down beside it. Mind-picture after mind-picture passed before her. She saw Daddy Hopkins happy with Jerry in the shanty, no longer afraid to fish and hunt. Then she visioned the Silent City, safe at last, and saved by her. Her head sank into her hands; and sobs racked her slender body.

But it was not long before she sat up and tossed back her curls. It seemed as if she had heard a voice. She turned her head slowly; and lo, Robert Percival was standing across the creek, smiling at her.

"I followed you, Polly Hopkins," he called, and springing across the water, he added: "You ran so fast I lost you at the corner of the ragged rocks, and it's taken me all this time to find you."

He sat down beside her and took her hands; but Polly could not look up at him. Embarrassed beyond utterance, she withdrew her fingers, letting them fall listlessly. Robert laughed. Her lovely face, first white then scarlet, only told him that she was glad to see him, and spoke of girlish innocence, dear to all men.

"You went away so suddenly the other night," he ran on. "I didn't have a chance to say half I wanted to. I had something for you, too, but couldn't get away until today to bring it down."

He pulled a little roll of paper from his pocket and handed it to her. Wonderingly she opened it, and there was an exact reproduction of "The Greatest Mother in the World."

Polly was so overcome she continued silent.

"Don't you like it, little Pollyop?" queried Robert, putting his fingers under her chin and raising her face to his.

"Yes!" she whispered, blushing. "Sure, sure I do. I love it."

"Then why don't you smile?" he demanded; and as she shyly complied with his request, he ran on: "I've talked with MacKenzie, and he's so set— Confound it! He makes me so hot I can scarcely listen to him. But, Polly dear, I'll do everything I can. I've got money and friends, as well as he has, and I'll use 'em too. Will you trust me, sweet?"

She bowed her head in grateful assent. How she thrilled at the touch of the warm white hand!

"Look at me, dearie," he begged, and when she did flash him a rosy glance, he caught her to him. "I love you, little girl," he whispered.

"An' love's the greatest thing in Ithaca, ain't it?" she murmured in trembling confusion.

"Yes, yes," he breathed. "Little girl—oh, my littlest dear—"

His voice trailed away, and his passionate kisses made Polly Hopkins forget everything but him. Primal passion rose within her. She had found her man, and nothing should take him from her.

"I'll keep the baby an' the shanty 'till you get back, Daddy darlin'."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Dutch children are dressed in exactly the same style as their parents.

THE NEW BLOUSES

AN OUTFIT FOR SPRING WEAR

Tunic, Hip-Length and Tuck-In Models Are in Favor.

Beads, Jet Girdles, Flowing Sleeves, Among Embellishments That Adorn These Garments.

Among the newest offerings in blouses are smart tunic blouses that fall almost to the ankles. Other chic over-blouses drop just to the hips, and there are clever little blouses that hide themselves inside the skirt band. One does not see so many blouses this season as formerly, but the selection at the shops is even more elaborate.

For formal afternoon occasions, there is a long tunic blouse of Spanish lace, with wrist length flowing sleeves piped at the bottom. The lower section of the blouse is split almost up to the hips, and all the edges are piped. A slim jet girdle looped at the side lends becoming fullness at a low waistline. One needs only to complete this attractive blouse with a slip of black canton crepe, or she might attempt a colored slip, such as tangerine or midnight blue.

An imported blouse is fashioned of henna georgette elaborately embroidered in fine steel beads. It is a simple slip-on affair with the oval neck so fashionable this season. Short kimono sleeves are banded with a clever design of the steel beads, and across the front of the blouse great motifs are spread. A sash of plain henna georgette is tied in the back.

A blouse similar to this comes in steel gray georgette with the bead trimming and is unusually smart worn with a suit of Harding blue duvetyne.

Black georgette beaded in the finest gold beads will find a welcome in the wardrobe of the woman who likes something a bit different. A long, loose unbelted blouse, completed by an accordion plaited skirt of crepe makes an interesting costume.

Another type of blouse distinctive



This charming spring suit consists of a gray broadcloth skirt and a uniquely cut coat of blue serge, crossed diagonally by matching gray stripes.

for use with a tailored suit is of natural pongee silk, with contrasting pipings in either red, green, brown or blue silk. A few tucks, and a round collar, cut in square scallops with cuffs and a peplum to match are noticeable features. The scallops are piped in the contrasting silk, and a string tie finishes the neck.

CHAPEAU HINTS FOR SPRING

Fruits and Flowers in Abundance Are Predicted for Use on Variety of Headgear.

The wizards of millinery art are busy planning the creations that will adorn milady's proud head this spring. Some of the advance models are already on display and if there is anything in signs, the spring is due for a rainbow of color in contrast to the sombre of winter.

There is a new shade of violet bound to be becoming to the fair skinned and blond or brunette type equally well. It is a sort of blue when first discovered, yet, one could not safely call it blue without fear of having one's neighbor call it violet. So subtle is the color note, that it is truly charming. Rose, too, has a strange new blend. It mixes with orchid to form a decidedly new shade for spring millinery.

Fruit and flowers in abundance are predicted. According to present signs, the hats will be small, but brimmed. At front, just above the short brim, a multitude of colorful fruits and flowers nestle together. Novelty fruit, such as pink grapes on a violet hat is shown. Silver grapes on gray are new and fascinating. So also are the green and yellow and blue fruits that nestle together to form a bizarre effect at the front of a tangerine hat in chiffon taffeta.

Separate Skirts.

Separate skirts will have their usual run of favor for spring and summer, especially for sport wear, and plain skirts promise to be more popular this year than the plaited models. Of course, plaited skirts are shown, but the plain ones are in the majority, and this holds true, no matter whether the fabric is of silk, cotton or wool.

THE TWEED DRESS AND CAPE



This season presents a tweed dress and cape which promises to rival the ever popular tweed suit. This model is distinguished by the binding of lacquered ribbon. The semi-sport hat is embroidered in colors.

THE UMBRELLAS FOR SPRING

Not Much Change in Style; Favorite Colors Are Brown, Navy, Red Purple, Green.

Very little new is being shown in the spring lines of umbrellas. Some new patented features, such as removable covers, folding handles, etc., are furnishing talking points, but the colored silk umbrellas with a matching or harmonizing pyroxilin handle and flat carrying strap or thong is in greatest demand. The colors are the usual street shades, such as brown, navy, red, purple and green.

A novel feature in men's umbrellas is the introduction of this season of colors, says Dry Goods Economist. A London smoke, dark brown and hunter's green are all being shown in men's umbrellas. As to whether these will become popular is still a question, but men wear soft hats in these colors and there is reason to believe they will carry umbrellas in these very dark tones.

Children's lines continue to grow in variety and also popularity.

Boudoir Garments Are Wool Trimmed.

Among the very popular and practical boudoir robes of the present season is the garment made of a light silk, such as crepe de chine and china silk, interlined with lambs' wool and daintily quilted. Frequently wool embroidery supplies the trimming touch, although quite as many are entirely untrimmed. Washable flannel kimonos are also popular and dainty, and wool challis is used for serviceable boudoir garments. For spring some very dainty cotton crepe negligees are be-

ing shown, and the low waistline so much featured in outer apparel enters the negligee field also, some rather pleasing effects having been developed.

Neck Ribbons Again.

The flapper set in Paris has resurrected the neck ribbon, and it is fast gaining in popularity. The girls are wearing a band of ribbon tightly about the neck, just below the chin. It is usually about half an inch wide, and the colors run all the way from bright yellow to black. Some of the wearers have a small gold ornament, such as a miniature heart, hanging from the ribbon by a chain in front. It is just a fad and probably won't last more than a couple of months.

Summer Underwear.

Fine saten, either in plain or self-striped weave, is an excellent fabric choice for warm weather undergarments. Another practical undergarment fabric is fine sheer cotton crepe. This is available in many colors and patterns. This crepe is used effectively for warm weather negligees as well as undergarments, with pipings and bindings in plain color cotton or silk fabric or of ribbon.

Beautiful Hands.

To develop hand muscles regulated exercises are most useful. With the fingers outstretched and the arms held straight before you from the shoulder forward, bend the hands downward 20 times. Then bend them upward in the same way from the wrists. Exercise each finger in turn similarly and the joints of the fingers. Then with one hand squeeze the finger tips in turn and manipulate each joint.