

The Impossible Boy

By NINA WILCOX PUTNAM

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Gypsies and artists, solid folk, reckless Bohemians, bold conspirators and a performing bear unite to keep this story pacing down the road to Arcady. From the care-free life of wandering gypsies along the highway you are carried to the strangest, gayest spot in Gotham's fascinating Bohemia.

CHAPTER I.

Of Introductions.

"You see, Mr. Jones, so many people are introduced, who never really meet," said Pedro, "that it seems a pity those who could meet have to wait for an introduction, eh?"

Mr. Jones stopped licking his front paw, and raised his head, the tip of his nose twitching attentively. For several moments he looked at Pedro with an unwavering stare, and then, with a sudden remembering what he had been about, resumed the lavender process. It might be mentioned passing that Mr. Jones was a small brown bear, fat, young and intelligent. Pedro rolled over in the dried yellow grass, luxuriating in its warmth, and in the pungent odor of autumn foliage turned to flame by long absorption of the summer sun. To the south lying in the stubby grass life seemed just now to hold all too many possibilities, and he was filled with a sort of self-pity, because he could not see them all.

Although it was only mid-afternoon he had already stolen away from Beau-jean, Rico and the others, in order to fight out the battle of an important decision in privacy. But now that he was alone with his problems and his bear he found himself afraid of the former, and to put off the evil moment when he must think in good earnest he talked to the animal. The bear reached out a slim, brown hand and took up one of the newly laved

"How do you do, Mr. Jones?" said Pedro. "I am delighted to meet you. That's how they do it, eh? Now, tell me, what is one has to say to another before two others are permitted to make an inquiry after the health? What do you think, Mr. Jones?"

The bear gave a little grunt and said he knew into the boy's palm. "Ah! I knew you would agree," exclaimed Pedro. He gave the creature an affectionate tweak and spread his slender length upon the ground again.

"I liked that girl," he continued. "You should have seen her, Mr. Jones; she had red hair. Not horrid red, but rosy like—like joy! All curls and curling it was. And such a beautiful pale face. She looked at me, and I did not dare to look at her, because she would have been angry, and that would have been a pity. Why should she speak to a young man to whom she had never been introduced? Of course, she would not! I wish she had, because I liked her. . . . I could look at her. That was something! There was a line, amigo, from her chin to the base of her throat—ah!"

wife, Guneviere, and the great, grizzly Koko had joined them. That made a company of six, for already there was Rico, his bear and his Anna, and Nita—that wicked Old Nita, who danced the "coquette" herself when they bears and all, went late one night to the Bal Bodin in Montmartre. How funny she had looked, dancing with her shapeless old mouth a-smiling!

Tramp steamers! The smell of them came sharply across the autumn wind. Weeks of motion and stench, and then at last the dying of the engine-throb, the crowding and the jostling, and the great rush out upon the shore of some new land. On such a voyage it was that Carlos and Hermania had joined them, bringing a cinnamon bear.

Where had not these eight been—what roads they had traveled together under sun and moon! This host of memories Pedro felt in their essence, in a single breath, as it were, bereft of detail save for some picture of a small incident or two, trivial, but never to be forgot. The heart of that past life he held for a moment in his own. No! no! he could not give it up. And yet, this other call, which had been with him, it would seem, since birth, was now grown too strong for resistance. Before his eyes he must see the thought of his heart depicted by the labor of his brain and hand. He must paint! He was an artist, an artist!

"I will go!" said Pedro shudderingly. Then, as if shedding the past, he squared his shoulders. "Come!" said he to the animal. "We shall return to camp and tell them what we are going to do." Not until he was within a hundred yards of the road did Pedro realize that he had been trespassing on what now evinced itself to be a country estate of some pretensions; and at this point the fact was made manifest by the sight of a cedar and fir hedge. Near by was a closed gate, flanked by pillars of old brick and soapstone, giving access to a narrow footpath which wound along at the base of the hill he had just crossed.

Apparently he had been dreaming away the afternoon upon the farming section of the place. The sleeping ground which lay between him and the hedge was smooth and soft, and tempted by it, Mr. Jones lay down and rolled a little way. Then he got up and trotted on some distance in advance of his master. The road was very near now, and there came a sound of pattering footsteps from it and the swish of light garments. Through the somber evergreens Pedro could see a gleam of white, moving swiftly. Then came the noise of heavier tramping—a man's step this time—a man in haste at that. Then a woman screamed, her frightened cry ringing out sharply.

The bear, moved to curiosity by the sound, plunged through the hedge and disappeared, and Pedro, grasping his staff like a cudgel, set off down the slope at a run, reaching the hedge close to the gateway, her purse clasped frantically to her bosom, stood a girl.

only a moment later than the bear. The fragrant branches whipped across the boy's face as he rushed past, emerging breathless upon the highway. A dramatic scene awaited him. Down the road a thoroughly frightened tramp was speeding from the terrifying and wholly unexpected apparition of the bear, a cloud of dust enveloping his horrified retreat. Close to the gateway, her purse clasped frantically to her bosom, stood a girl, bewildered and alarmed—a girl whom the last sunbeams bathed in glory, gleaming on her hair that was "red-gold, like joy." And to complete the picture, there stood Mr. Jones, erect upon his hind legs, his tongue lolling out and his clumsy paws waving from her to Pedro.

was a tramp. He wanted my little silk purse . . . but the bear frightened him away; he came so suddenly—the bear did, that is. In another instant that dreadful man would have had my bag. Not that I would have cared so much about the money, you know," she added a trifle apologetically, "but I have registered letters in it for my father. I have just come from the post office, and if they had been lost . . . but, perhaps, you do not understand English?"

"Oh, yes!" said Pedro taking his eyes from her slender throat and flashing a brilliant smile at her. "Oh, yes, indeed, I understand you!" "Then please let me thank you," said she, her interest in him growing every moment. "But there is nothing for which I may receive thanks!" he protested. "Actually, she seemed to consider the bear's introduction sufficient. Fumblingly he removed his wide, soft hat and clasped it upon his heart with both hands. How she stared! Waiting for him to speak again, she gave her chin a tilt which accentuated that heavenly line. Involuntarily he pictured drapery behind it, his artist's soul longing to depict it. Like a Madonna.

"It should be blue!" he said aloud in a queer, choked voice. "What did you say?" asked the girl with a puzzled expression. At realization of his speech his confusion became complete, and suddenly his one idea was to escape her watchful eyes.

"—that is to say, er—it was Mr. Jones entirely," he stammered. "—I did nothing, nada! It was all the bear." "But he is your bear, evidently," she replied, "and I insist that he share the thanks with you." "Thank you!" said Pedro eagerly. "You do not know the exquisite delight—er—ah—oh!" Gasping, he sought to extricate himself from the awkwardness of the impulsive compliment he had half-blurted out. "Forgive me, gracious lady, er—er—I must go now!" he finished lamely. "Well, I give you my most grateful thanks, whether you take them or not," said she with a smile.

But he was now too embarrassed to rally and did what one often does upon attaining a desired situation: became suddenly panicky and ran away from it. "I shall hold your words in my heart," said he, and then, with a gesture half beseeching, half apologetic, and wholly graceful, he swept his hat upon his head, and calling the bear, set off down the road. The wording of his speech was odd and unexpected, and the manner of his departure so precipitant that it looked like a retreat. For as long as he remained in sight she stood gazing after him, her interest in him cemented by his flight. With a sigh she was scarcely conscious of uttering, so faint it was, she reluctantly turned in at the gate in the hedge and went slowly along the little winding path.

CHAPTER II. A Belief in Signs. But Pedro walked rapidly, so that the bear had difficulty in imitating the pace. The youth had now definitely made up his mind to take the new course of action, for this second vision of the beautiful lady had confirmed his resolution, and he felt he must get back to the others quickly, in order to tell them before he had time to change his mind. As he walked he kept muttering "blue, blue!" and his brows were knit furiously.

He had to pass some villas with a semi-suburban look about them, and then an elm-shaded street, where commerce and conservatism rubbed shoulders. Next, by switching off from this neighborhood, he passed between rows of frame houses, which diminished in their appearance of importance and prosperity the farther he went, until finally the street, if such it could properly be called at this point, was fringed only by shafts that leaned inquisitively over the gutters, or braced themselves at a fearsome angle against the slanting little gardens at their backs.

low, eh? What's to eat?" he inquired, stooping over the kettle. "Greens! Is that all?" "There is rye bread—a single loaf," responded Nita. "Thanks to your going off by yourself, we have only taken in a few pesetas all day!" "You know very well, Aged One," responded Pedro, "that you take in as much alone as with me, or very nearly. And as for going off! . . . Well, I have something to tell you, but all must hear. Let us gather together first, and eat."

So far the conversation had been in Spanish, the native tongue of these two. Now, as the conversation became general, they fell into a patois English, the language of the road, sometimes slipping into French, sometimes back into Spanish, their talk being as polyglot as their origin. "Now, do you want to hear, eh?" Pedro asked, addressing the company. "If so, I shall tell my plan."

Beau-Jean replied first, in his deep, husky voice. "Let the little one tell his notion. The plans of Pedro have brought

many a laugh, and so many a coin from the crowd on the market street." "My shoes will not stand another mending," said Hermania. "If Pedro can tell a plan to get others I will heed." "The lad has wit; did he not conceive the praying trick for Koko?" mumbled Old Nita. "Come, child, what has thy brain devised now to help us?" "Oh, don't, don't!" cried Pedro. "Why do you say these things on this night of all nights? I cannot endure it! Call me evil names, and abuse me, rather! Please! It is almost too hard for me to do, and yet I must! Amigos! It is for myself only that I am planning—my notion will not help you, alas!"

He buried his face in his hands, and for a moment there was an astonished silence. Such an outburst of emotion on the part of their joyous Pedro was a thing undreamed of by any of them. Into the silence the voice of Old Nita broke tremulously. "Hast thou sinned, even as I, that thou weepest so? What is it, Pedro of my heart?" "No, no!" he cried, raising his head. "I have not sinned, but I have seen a line—an exquisite curve from an oval chin to the base of a white throat."

"Ah! In love!" exclaimed Rico and Anna simultaneously. "No; again no!" cried Pedro. "I do not love it, but I've got to paint it!" There was another interval of puzzled silence, broken this time by Beau-Jean. "Oh, little Pedro," said he, "what do you mean by 'paint it'?" "Just that," said Pedro, striving to conquer his emotion. "I am going to be an artist, a painter. Don't you understand?"

The little group stirred relievedly. This was nothing so terrible, after all. Then for a few moments all spoke at once, voicing their relief. Hermania's query made itself evident above the clamor of the rest. "But why does this distress you so? Always, always you have made pictures. Pictures of us all, of everywhere, of everybody; always, always scribbling little pictures upon bits of paper! Where is the trouble?" "The trouble comes because I shall have to leave you all," said Pedro sadly. "I must go to the city, where I can have the right things to work with, and colors—colors—colors! I must learn about them. It will be hard, but I can do it."

"How will you do so?" asked Pedro eagerly. "I do not know that, either," responded Beau-Jean. . . . Next morning the eight set out together for the city. Whatever strange undertaking Pedro was considering, they would all go along and assist if possible. And so, without any idea save that of action, they set forth, determined though indefinite.

The coppers of yesterday were all expended for breakfast, and the first step toward the beginning of a day being accomplished, they betook themselves to the railroad track and walked beside it. But noon came and passed, and still no granite towers loomed before their expectant eyes. Finally, to rest themselves, they turned from the wearying, shining vista of rails, and seated themselves upon the dead grass beside the mile post that bore the discouraging legend: N. Y. 25 M.—Harrison 1 M.

By this time all were tired and hungry. Worse yet, the bears were hungry—a condition to be reckoned with before the need of the masters. "Let us go," suggested Pedro, "into the town which this dusty road leads to, and dance the bears, pass the hat, and eat, eh?"

The suggestion needed no seconding. With groans and complaints they got to their feet again, and set off for the village. But fate was not smiling upon them just then. The town was almost deserted at this hour. Besides which, near the end of the performance, Toto, who was supposed to "sing," raised his voice from his usual growling monotone to a hungry growl. That sent the watchers running off in all directions. Ruefully Old Nita counted the earnings. "Only seven pennies in all," she complained. "Better to have rested beside the railroad."

"It is not enough to feed one bear, even," remarked Beau-Jean, "and I am as hungry as two." Meanwhile Pedro was talking to himself. "You got them into this; otherwise they would have traveled the regular way. Now you get them out." Then Pedro noticed a dingy lunch wagon by the broken curb, some fifty feet away. At the entrance it stood a fat man with a diemal, flabby face. His hands were tucked beneath an apron whose immaculate whiteness shone out conspicuously among the gray surroundings. The man was motionless, as though he had become petrified while waiting for customers who never came.

"Ah!" said Pedro aloud, "I have an idea! Stay where you are, all of you, until I beckon." Then, thrusting his hands into his pockets, he strolled nonchalantly away in the direction of the lunch wagon. It was a dingy affair, as has been said, and upon its tawdry sides the lettering had grown dim. Still, it was easy enough to make out the inscription: —The Elite— Pies, Coffee, Milk, Frankfurters

Over the doorway was an invitation to "walk in," and underneath this the owner's name—"Isaac Lovejoy, Prop."—had been printed small. Pedro gilded up to the individual who, it would seem, bore this name and title. "Business thriving 'bout here?" asked Pedro conversationally, by way of an opening. "The man gave him a glance, but without moving to do so. "Nope!" he replied. "What! In a place where travelers must pass so often?" Pedro exclaimed, lifting his eyebrows. "Yep!" said the man, still motionless.

him before they really knew what they were doing. Nor did it fall this time. The flaccid face of the lunch-wagon man expanded into a broad grin. "That's it!" exclaimed Pedro. "That's what?" asked the man, growing serious again. "Oh, don't spoil it!" cried the lad, "that smile is just what you need to attract customers!" This time the man laughed. "Well," said he, "what is your proposition, young one?"

"I have some friends with me," began Pedro; "all those over there and the bears. We are all hungry, see? Now I will paint you a picture on the side of your wagon, and also I will paint for you a new sign; and if, when I have finished, you agree that the sign and the picture will bring you customers in the future, you will feed us all, not forgetting the bears, eh?" The fat man considered a long time before replying, and Pedro watched him anxiously.

"Well," he said at last, "the old dog-wagon couldn't look no worse'n it do now; an' my stock what I have laid in will get spoiled if it don't get eat. You can have a try, young one, if you like."

"Hurray!" said Pedro, and hurried over to tell Nita and the others. A musty hardware store that also sold grain and lumber, furnished a few crude materials. The fat man paid for them, and Pedro carried them over to the cart and set to work. "Please, one thing," he begged of its proprietor, "don't you look till all is finished."

"All right," agreed the man, "I'll sit here, just inside the door, and read out the paper till you're done." Pedro answered nothing, but gave a glance at a little mirror that hung just opposite to where the unconscious Mr. Lovejoy sat, whipped off the old green coat and began working frantically. The proprietor settled himself on the little stool near the door, and, faithful to his promise, unfolded a pink evening paper. Cautiously, and speaking not at all, Old Nita drew near, leading Mr. Jones. They sat down in the dust beside the step and watched Pedro in silence. Then came Beau-Jean and Koko, followed by Gummy, who settled themselves beside the old woman. Before half an hour was gone all the town, for the first time in the lunch wagon's history, had clustered before its door. As for Pedro, he had forgotten that there was a world which might come to gape and criticize. He was working.

But if the painter was unconscious of the crowd, the proprietor was not. Twice he wanted to move, but dared not; and as the crowd increased, so did his impatience. For half an hour longer or more Pedro worked, glancing now and then at the little mirror just inside the door, in which Mr. Lovejoy's unconscious face was reflected. There began to be an occasional tittering from the crowd, and then, later, spontaneous bursts of laughter. "When kin I come out?" cried Mr. Lovejoy at intervals. "Wait," commanded Pedro. Ever- ishly he added the finishing touches to his production, and then at length stood back and invited his patron to descend. As the fat man came down the steps there was a little burst of applause which he was at a loss to understand until he stood before his transformed place of business.

All the old lettering, already faint, had been obliterated, and in the center of the largest space was a portrait of himself—a large, laughing portrait, just like him, yet irresistibly merry. It was a face at which one instantly smiled in sympathy; indeed it wore the very "smile to attract customers," as Pedro had said. Over this extraordinary production Pedro had painted in neat, black letters: I. Lovejoy Eating Is Joyful Come in and Eat— I Love to See You Do It Then underneath: Lovejoy's Luscious Lunches

THE NEWS TOLD IN PARAGRAPHS Latest Happenings Gleaned From All Over the State. LIVE NOTES AND COMMENTS.

Kill 151, 221 Flies in Campaign—1,500 Miners Go On Strike—Horse Racer Killed in Wreck, Daughter Dying.

Building permits in Harrisburg in August aggregated \$101,000.

Harrisburg has cut down its first improvement loan of \$1,090,000 to \$555,000.

Sunbury Fire Company, No. 1, will visit Harrisburg and York, September 17 and 18.

Swatara Township opened two schools in churches, due to overcrowding.

Steelton and Middletown report large increases in number of pupils attending the schools.

Joseph H. Bone was appointed alderman of the Fifth Ward of Lancaster city.

Alton Meyer died of tetanus caused by stepping on a rusty nail at a farm about two miles from Mifflin. He was twenty years old.

The fly-swating contest conducted by the Bangor troop of Boy Scouts, came to an end with a total of 151,221 flies killed.

Petitions by five hundred freeholders of West Shamokin, Fairview and Edgewood, were presented to Shamokin Councils, praying for admission to that place.

Large transfer sheds of the Pennsylvania Railroad burned with their contents at Corry. A freight house and a dozen cars were badly damaged. The loss is placed at \$25,000.

Mrs. Susan Cadden, fifty-four years old, of Lansford, is in a critical condition with a fractured skull suffered by falling down stairs while walking in her sleep.

Two Germans and one Russian renounced their claim of allegiance to their native countries at York and were given citizenship in the United States.

Rev. W. H. Orr, for two and a half years pastor of the Waynesboro Presbyterian Church, has accepted a call to Hollidaysburg and will leave Waynesboro about October 1.

George Miller and George Bachman are dead and Elmer Leith, all of Heltown, may die from typhoid fever. The trio recently were helping a farmer in Pleasant Valley harvest, and all drank freely from an old well.

Alfred Klingler and boy friends, of Locust Gap, were mixing carbide and water when a lighted match fell in a can containing the carbide. Klingler, who was holding the can, received the full force of the explosion in his face. He was severely burned.

The 1,500 employees of the Price-Pancoast mine of the Scranton Coal Company are on strike. They declare they will not return to work unless the six fire bosses at the plant returned to the union. The six joined about a year ago, but withdrew several weeks ago.

Dr. A. Lee Buddinger, Guy J. Hartline and Harmon Welshons, the former a dentist, and the others teachers in the Mt. Carmel High School, were injured by their automobile wrecking near Trevorton. The front axle broke and the occupants were hurled to the ground.

The Board of Public Grounds and Buildings arranged for the restoration of Rothermel's painting of the Battle of Gettysburg and other war paintings in the "War Gallery" of the State Museum. The paintings have not been well displayed because of the flag cases which formerly occupied the place.

B. N. Earle Wynn and T. Harold Jackson, of West Chester, are home from an extended trip to Europe. While in England they were arrested on charge of being German spies, but proved their identity by means of letters and other papers in their possession. Their cameras were taken from them by their captors.

Eualen J. Schwoyer, of Allentown, the veteran liverman and driver of race horses in the fair circuits, was instantly killed and his daughter, Elizabeth, fatally injured when their team was struck by an engine on the Jersey Central Railroad at Newport. Two men on the wagon escaped by jumping. Miss Schwoyer was carried 400 yards on the smokestack of the engine.

The large barn on the Ard Yatter estate near Lawistown, was entirely destroyed by fire. The summer's crops and farming implements were burned, the loss amounting to several thousand dollars.

The thirteenth annual reunion of the Main Family Association, comprising the families of the descendants of Randal and Elizabeth Main, who came from Cheshire, England, about 1652, was held at Lenape Park, September 7.



"Hast Thou Sinned, Even as I?"



Close to the Gateway, Her Purse Clasped Frantically to Her Bosom, Stood a Girl.



"You Win!" He Said to Pedro.

(TO BE CONTINUED.) A MAN at the altar is worth two to the parlor.