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Carolyn of the Corners By RUTH BELMORE ENDICOTT

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Aunt Rose seemed to take some time to digest this; but she made no further comment in regard to the matter, only saying: "Let us go into the house, Carolyn May. You must take off your hat and bathe your face and hands."

Carolyn May followed the stately figure of Aunt Rose Kennedy into the blue-and-white kitchen of the old house, with something of the feeling of a culprit on the way to the block.

Such a big kitchen as it was! The little girl thought it must be almost as big as their whole apartment in Harlem "put together."

The little girl took off her plain black hat, shook back her hair and patted it smooth with her hands, then plunged her hands and face into the basin of cool water Aunt Rose had drawn for her at the sink.

Such a dignified, upright, unresponsive woman as she seemed standing there! And so particular, neat and immaculate was this kitchen!

Carolyn May, as she dried her face and hands, heard a familiar whine at the door. It was Prince. She wondered if she had at all broken the ice for him with Aunt Rose.

"Oh," the little girl mused, "I wonder what she will say to a mongrel."

CHAPTER II. Going to Bed. Mr. Stag had fastened Prince's strap to the porch rail and he now came in with the bag.

"Is that all the child's baggage, Joseph Stag?" asked Aunt Rose, taking it from his hand.

"Why—why, I never thought to ask her," the man admitted. "Have you a trunk check, Carolyn?"

"agustion," agreed her uncle. Aunt Rose did not even smile. "Bless me!" Mr. Stag exclaimed suddenly.

"A telegram for you, Joseph Stag," replied the old lady composedly. "Well!" muttered the hardware dealer, and Carolyn May wondered if he were not afraid to express just the emotion he felt at that instant.

"Who brought it, and when?" he asked finally, having read the lawyer's night letter.

"A boy, 'This morning,'" said Aunt Rose, utterly calm. "And I never saw it this noon," grumbled the hardware dealer.

"Hannah's!" exclaimed Mr. Stag. "Why, that ain't been slept in since she went away."

"It is quite fit, then," said Aunt Rose, "that it should be used for her child. Trouble nothing about things that do not concern you, Joseph Stag," she added with, perhaps, additional sternness.

Carolyn May did not hear this. She now produced the letter from her lawyer.

"There it is, Uncle Joe," she said. "I—I guess he tells you all about me in it."

"Hum!" said the hardware man, clearing his throat and picking up his hat. "I'll read it down at the store."

"Shall—shall I see you again to-night, Uncle Joe?" the little girl asked wistfully. "You know, my bedtime's half-past eight."

"Well, if you don't see me tonight again, you'll be well cared for, I haven't a doubt," said Uncle Joe shortly, and went out.

Carolyn May went soberly back to her chair. She did not eat much more. Somehow there seemed to be a big lump in her throat past which she could not force the food.

"It is time for you to go to bed, Carolyn May," said Aunt Rose firmly. "I will show you the room Hannah Stag had for her own when she was a girl."

The little girl. "And if I do get into it I'm liable to sink down and down, and down till I'm buried, and won't ever be able to get up in the morning."

The window was open and she went to it and looked out. A breath of honeysuckle blew in. Then, below, on the porch, she heard the uneasy movements of Prince. And he whined.

"Oh, poor Princey! He doesn't know what's become of me," thought Carolyn May.

Downstairs, in the great kitchen, Aunt Rose was stepping back and forth, from table to sink, from sink to dresser, from dresser to pantry.

"But tonight—why! tonight there isn't anybody cares whether I go to bed or not! But Prince! Prince, he knows just how—how empty I feel!"

"Come here, Carolyn May," she said quite as sternly as before.

The old lady sat in one of the straight-backed chairs, her hands in her comfortable lap. Her wet blue eyes were raised to her composed face timidly.

"If you wish to say your prayers here, before going upstairs, you may, Carolyn May," she said.

"Oh, may I?" gasped the little girl. She dropped her hands into Aunt Rose's lap. Somehow they found those larger, comforting hands and cuddled into them as the little girl sank to her knees on the braided mat.

If the simple "Now I lay me" was familiar to Aunt Rose's ear from long ago she gave no sign. When the earnest little voice added to the formal supplication a desire for the blessing of "Uncle Joe and Aunt Rose" the latter's countenance retained its composure.

"Do you need any help, child?" asked Mrs. Kennedy, standing in her soldierly manner in the doorway. It was dusky there and the little girl could not see her face.

"Oh, no, ma'am," said Carolyn May faintly. "Very well," said Aunt Rose and turned away. Carolyn May stood in the middle of the room and listened to her descending footsteps.

"Well—she'll be a nuisance," Mr. Joseph Stag, going down to his store, past the home and carpenter shop of Jedidiah Parlow, at which he did not even look, finally came to his last time these fifteen years had

destination in a very brown study. He disturbed had been by the arrival of his little niece that he forgot to question and cross-question young Chetwood Gormley regarding the possible customers that had been in the store during his absence.

"And I tell you what I think, mother," Chet said, with his mouth full of supper that evening. "I think he's coming's going to bring about changes, Yes, ma'am!"

"Mrs. Gormley was a faded little woman—a widow—who went out sewing for better-to-do people in Sunrise Cove. She naturally thought her boy Chetwood a great deal smarter than other people thought him."

"You know, mother," he said, "this evening of the arrival of Carolyn May, 'I never have seen any great chance to rise, workin' for Mr. Joseph Stag.'"

"But he pays you, Chet," his mother said anxiously. "Yep, I know. Don't be afraid I'll leave him till I see something better," he reassured her.

"And she's just died, or something, and left this little girl," Chet continued. "Mr. Stag's bound to think of something now besides business. And maybe he'll need me more. And I'll get a chance to show him I'm worth something to him. So, by and by, he'll put me forward in the business," said the boy, his homely face glowing.

"Who knows? Maybe it'll be Stag & Gormley over the door one of these days. Stranger things have happened."

Perhaps even Chetwood's assurance would have been quenched had he faced then known the thoughts in the hardware merchant's mind. Mr. Stag sat in his back office poring over the lawyer friend, a part of which read:

From the above recital of facts you will plainly see, being a man of business you will see, that Mr. Cameron's financial affairs were in a much worse condition when he went away than he himself dreamed of.

I immediately looked up the Stuyvesant Building and Loan Association. It is even more moribund than the papers state. The fifteen hundred dollars Mr. Cameron put into it from time to time might just as well have been dropped into the sea.

You know he had only his salary on the Morning Beacon. They were rather decent to him, when they saw his health breaking down, to offer him the chance of going to the Mediterranean as correspondent. He was to furnish articles on "The Debris of a World War"—stories of the peaceful sections of Europe which have to care for the human wrecks from the battlefields.

It rather cramped Mr. Cameron's immediate resources for your sister to go with him, and he drew ahead on his expense and salary account. I know that Mrs. Cameron feared to allow him to go alone across the ocean. He was really in a bad way; but she proposed to come back immediately on the Dunraven if he improved on the voyage across.

Their means really did not allow of their taking the child; the steamship company would not bear of a half-fare for her. She is a nice little girl, and my wife would have been glad to keep her longer, but in the end she would have to go to you, as I understand, there are no other relatives.



If the Simple "Now I Lay Me" Was Familiar to Aunt Rose's Ear She Gave No Sign.

CHAPTER III. "Well—she'll be a nuisance," Mr. Joseph Stag, going down to his store, past the home and carpenter shop of Jedidiah Parlow, at which he did not even look, finally came to his last time these fifteen years had