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WHATEVER SHE LIKED

A RY ISABEL ECGLESTONE MACKAY

Miss Lenore Helmick, with the cab

waiting paused at the door and looked back with that gracious smile which she kept in celd storage and produced occasionally for the benefit of her

-I have no further directions." to one's self-respect to address one's It was no longer Miss Helmick's sitshe always said "Miss Helmick."

you are not afraid of burglars?" "Not at all, Miss Helmick." "Very well. Now don't forget—the which were Miss Helmick's hobbies, glass and pewter, but otherwise what looked bright and cosy behind their ever you like! Good-bye and a merry glass doors, the firelight reflected it-

Una locked after the retreating cab

vicii a shadowy shille. Then she closed the door and returned to the kitchen to finish washing the luncheon dishes. Una Lee was supposed to be Miss Helmick's secretary, but as there were no secretarial duties and plenty of housework, the name may be taken in a Pickwickian sense, merely. The euphemism was supposed to spare Una's feelings ("such a nice refined girl!") and perhaps it did. Una never said that it didn't.

To day as she washed the lunchen dishes she made them clatter more than usual and to their clattering she sang a little song to the tune of John Brown. The words seemed to be these:

"Lenore Helmick is a selfish, selfish thing "Lenore Helmick is a selfish, selfish thing

"Lenore Helmick is a selfish, selfish thing

"A selfish, selfish thing!" "And the very last straw," she ad-

ded in a louder voice, "was to tell Remember, Una," said she, "dur- me to do exactly as I like!" s my absence you are quite free. She shut the cupboard door She shut the cupboard door with a Employ your time as you see fit, with bang and went into the sitting room the exception of the glass and pewter to put out the fire in the grate. But at the door a sense of difference in bodice lapped over at the back and "Thank you, Miss Helmick." Una the room came to her. She drew a held a theory that it is not derogatory long breath: Miss Helmick was gone. employer as "mam"; but in practice ting room. It was just a sitting room for anyone who wanted to sit in it. "And Una, you are quite sure that Why put the fire out at all? Una looked around with an appraising air. The old china and glass and pewter, sefl in polished furniture. "But as I

aloud. "I r' not like to have the Rev. nick. for a wall decoracat who was the only kissed her. occupant of the room looko portrait and purred apcertainly was a fright of

The wall looked ,cleaner, more friendly without it, and Una and the cat settled down contentedly together upon the hearth rug.

A fire is such a splendid thing for Of course, as we have hinted before, Una was a philosopher. She accepted her state in life as Miss Helmick's secretary and intended to go on accepting it until such time as she should have saved enough to take her teacher's certificate. But she hated it with a perfectly unphilosophical hatred and there were times when she declared that she would give her soul for dozens of silk stockings and real lace and dresses made at Stitts. This proved that she had never yet learned much about souls. The cat who wore a beautiful gown herself, understood the girl's feelings exactly and expressed her sympathy by purrs and rubs and soft nosings.

"I should so like to know what it all feels like!" said Una, after a long pause and apropos of nothing. Then, suddenly, as if inspired by an energizing idea, she tumbled the cat upon the rug and ran out of the room.

That night the cat had no five o'clock tea, no saucer of cream, no bit of buttered toast. She was, in fact, a neglected cat, and wondered very much what had happened to her comfortable cat-world. No one came near her, the door of the sitting room did not open again until long after the room was dark save for the glow of the sinking fire. Then it opened rather softly and a lady came in. The cat was puzzled, for the lady seemed to be neither Miss Helmick nor Una. She was just a lady and a very pretty one. She wore a gown of Dutch blue. It had a square-cut neck and high, puffed sleeves both banded with dull blue and gold embroidery; a band of the same confined soft masses of brown hair. The gown was very long and, as the lady lifted it to keep herself from tripping, it could be seen that her stockings were of Dutch blue silk and that the slippers, which matched them, were several sizes too large. An observant person, too, why the lady wore a long pair of black little detail-missed by a mere catthe lady's eyes matched her gown! When the intruder had brightened up the fire, which she did in a most business like manner, she sank down in front of it and gathered the amazed cat into her Dutch blue lap. She seemed like, a person utterly at peace with the world. Presently, as the reawakened fire began to ask, with many cracklings, for more fuel, the

lady without rising stretched out her and and pressed an electric bell. Its summons could be heard thrillg somewhere in the Ment house but footstep answered it. Then an odd ing happened. She in the chair

tured toward the door and spoke, ith a little abrupt commanding air. someone who was not there.

Una you may put some more coal on the fire cat looked up with a surprised

d 122," the voice this time was invisible maid beside se it'e. "I would like you to of man to soften," clocolate and light re-Ant for eleven o'clock. Some-

en to drop in to-night." Te the words uttered ringing of the door their prophecy. Save for ing promptitude there strange in this but its he lady was more than t the first tinkle she sprang her chair, one hand flew to her heart, her lips were breathless. She looked ther badly frightened girl. dand by the sudden moveed comfortably upon the

the bell rang. to it rang and then con-Some one was keep- the girl's eyes fell. a flagger upon the button! The together and snatchhawl-like rug from the paned if carefully around her, would neck and the white or arms above the gloves. went to the door. are need to a blast of icy wind,

was tall and big and a The girl felt glad of that. "hably not notice the lernement upon her hair. She first moment of the to door. After that she to feel anything man was gazing at test admiration and that absence of reonly wit old ac-

er of reich snow flakes and-a

my word!" said the rl felt her small or emped firmly in his then, before she to the stepped in and

> ther in the lighted and other with mutill held her hands. cres which were grey idenly misty. He and there was a s in his voice as he

d the girl finding her " am not sure-" d surprise swept over the Then with a gleeful took of his fur cap. w know me now don't you,

Where had she heard hat name-Yes, of course it had been iss Helmick's name before she had reisted upon the more poetical Lencre." In a flash the girl's quick brain, guessed whom the stranger must be. Miss Helmick talked much ately of a cousin who was vaguely

"Oh. yes. I know you nowo" she blushed charmingly. It was done. But she had not cal-

as I like, said Una | culated upon the consequences; for in the most natural way in the world the big stranger caught her up and

"O-oh!" breathed Una, shrinking back against the wall. She had turned quite white. But the stranger did not It had side-burns, a rigid notice; he was busy hanging up his overcoat.

"You have changed" he said abruptly when a moment later they faced each other in the firelit room. "But not much more than I expected. You are still small and dark and elfish, only—" a mischievious smile twinkled in his blue eyes--"do you remember what you used to look like?" "N-no."

"Well, look here." He took from his jocket a small carte-photograph. "You would never send me a photograph but I had one just the same. I stole it from Aunt Emma. She used to say that you had the family face and would grow up like her. Once in a while I had an awful fear that you might!" He laughed boyishly and together they bent over the faded photograph. It was the picture of a thin girl of fifteen or thereabouts; she wore a white dress ending in a frill at the ankles; a long braid of black hair was draped with careful artistry over her shoulder. Una recognized the photograph, for, once in helping Miss Helmick put her desk in order, they had come upon a copy of this same photograph. Miss Helmick had burned it promptly, declaring that she had certainly never been such a fright as that! But Una, looking from the full grown aggressiveness of her employer to the shy awkwardness of the girl in the photograph, had felt a decided impulse in favor of the lat-

"It doesn't look much like me, Ina, shyly after a moment. "Not a bit"; -cheerfully, "I always said you would change. Aunt Emma used to call you the ugly duckling, and we all know what happens to ugly ducklings."

The girl glanced swiftly at the piano-top whose principal ornament was a panel photograph of Miss Helmick, tall, full-bosomed, commanding, with more than a hint of double chin! Still, if she intended to carry off the situation, there must be no weaken-

"If I may have my hand," she said demurely, "I will turn up the lights." "Need we? It is so comfy this way. You always understood me, Lenny. If Aunt Emma had been here she would have had lights galore and music and feasting. Do you know," with suede gloves. There was another an embarrassed laugh, "It was because I was half afraid of something like that, that I did not send a definite telegram. But I might have known

you better." "It is only proper prodigals who have feasts," said the girl. "You do not look hungry enough, or poor enough, or repentent."

"But I may be, all three. It is not pleasant to come back to empty places. If it had not been for you should have stayed away from here. The old tragedy is still in the air." "Need we speak of it?" Una had never heard of the old tragedy, and

her reluctance might easily seem to be born of sympathy. "No. It is all past. But there is one question. Do you think my

father-softened-at the last?" The girl thought swiftly of the portrait of the Reverend Horatio Helmick, of the side-burns, the lantern jaw, the

"I do not think," she said with con-

viction, "that your father was the kind "No. He was hard. never been able in all these years to feel that I was in the wrong." "You were not," said Una with suspicious promptness.

"All the same, without you, this old place would be full of ghosts!"/ The girl's soft laugh rang out. Ghests were not a dangerous topic. "Even as it is, I'll swear I saw a ghost at the station," he continued more cheerfully, "the ghost of Aunt Emma. Someone in this town looks appallingly like Aunt Emma. What a tartar she was! But I have some pleasant memories. Do you remember the day she sent us berrying? I think that was one of life's golden days!" He gave her a long clear look and

"Do you know," he went on, "your letters are not a bit like you. You wrote seldom and when you did you were to very business like, all about people, and things and glass and pewter and old china. You seemed to live in a whirl. But it is very peaceful here."

Una indicated the glass and pewter in the glass cabinets. "They are most interesting." she said, "and if you think I am not busy you are mistaken. work all day and I study at night. never have a minute. This is a holiday. I am doing-whatever I like." He gave her an understanding

"I know; I've felt like that too. There have been times when I have hated my work," "I hate mine always," calmly. That is the tragedy of life, that one cannot choose one's work."

"But one can!" "You-perhaps." Her tone was low "I--too-sometime!" He drew a little closer to where she sat in the firelight. "Why do you wear gloves?" He asked suddenly. "They feel so unfriendly.

The girl blushed furiously. 'I wear gloves to hide my hands. But if you like-" She stripped the long gloves from her fingers and held them out to him. By the firelight he could see that the nails were broken and stained. They belonged to hands that work hard and roughly. "I have seen hands like this be fore," he said, and bent down and kissed them.

"All the same," he added, 'I do not like to see your hands like this. Is it really necessary to work so hard?" He glanced around the pleasant

"Have you a maid?" The girl snatched her hands away. "Oh, I suppose a maid's hands would "Not to me," serenely. "Why should they? It is your hands that matter to me. I'm not a socialist I don't

(Continued on next page)

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