

# NEW JOY

By Aldis Dunbar

"I gave you up half an hour ago!" pouted Nancy, holding open the coupe door, as Rosalys Haven came flying down the marble steps. "You said half past eleven. You know very well how much I have to tell you! To the park, Jasper."

"Of course you have, my blessing," laughed Rosalys, dropping into the seat beside her friend with frank relief as they rolled away. "But I couldn't escape sooner. Such a potter in the committee! I left them still trying to decide whether gray-blue or cream and olive would be better for the breakfast-room."

"Olive and cream, I should say, with a touch of clear, vivid color here and there," mused Nancy Blundell, the impatient frown vanishing from her forehead. "I mean to have mine in—!" She drew a quick little breath and bit her lip.

"O-ho! Already!" A slender finger tilted up the wilful chin, as Nancy turned very red. "Let me look well at you, after such open confession as that. It does sound serious, on my word! Well, you must have known last evening how glad I was to hear the news. You might have worn some of them this morning, Nancy. He ought not to be jealous."

"I? Wear what?" with a puzzled infection.

"Nancy Blundell! Tell me, if you dare, that nothing reached you from me, about seven, last evening!" "Something did certainly come with your name on the cover!" asserted Miss Blundell, bending down to drag an oblong pasteboard box—a florist's box, by the printed label—from under the seat, and struggling with the knotted cord round it. "I brought it, so you could tell me what on earth it meant! There!"

She tore off the cover and pulled out—a boy's coat, somewhat worn, of brown corduroy. Other garments lay folded beneath.

Miss Haven leaned over with a cry of dismay. "Nancy! Why it's that suit of Corney's! Mother had it packed yesterday to send to a ragged boy down in Meekin Court, where Miss Cone lives! How ever did it reach you? O my dear—when I spent hours hunting the town over for that awful of lilacs and lilacs, because you loved them so!"

"Lilies-of-the-valley and white lilacs?" demanded Miss Blundell, pulling vehemently at a silken cord. "Jasper! Stop! How were they sent?" She turned to her friend. "Darker promised to take them without fail before dinner. Mother had some errands for him, too. She was letting Audrey help her when I went into the library. They were addressing some books for him to take to Aunt Charlotte, and a sheaf of carnations for Madame Van Zandt. I didn't hear the other places, but I left my—your box, I mean, on the table with the rest, and told Barker where it was. The address was on a card tied to it."

"Then Audrey mixed them up!" fumed Nancy. "Children are too meddlesome! All my lovely flowers gone astray! Rosalys, I must have them, if I laid every house on the avenue! Your mother will tell us where they might have gone, and we will try every place on her list! Oh, they would have come first of all the congratulations on my engagement, and the dearest! No one but—but Teddy should have had the shadow of a glimpse of them! Jasper! Drive to Mrs. —"

"One moment, Nani!" interrupted Rosalys. "These," crushing the despised corduroys into their box, "should have gone to Meekin Court this morning. Miss Achesah told mother that the boy had only tatters and patches to cover him. The society found him a home out West, and he was to be sent on with some other poor little waifs, in charge of their agent, this afternoon; but they had no clothes to fit him, and mother offered to supply some. Nancy, it's twelve o'clock, and here's the suit! Please! Meekin Court isn't so very far. Couldn't Jasper drive us down there first? Then I'll go anywhere you choose."

Miss Blundell shook her pretty head stubbornly. "My flowers before everything! The boy can go some other day!"

"Very well. I'll get out and take the next car into town," averred Rosalys, with equal determination. "Teddy must have his suit in time." "O Rosalys!" Nancy looked at her blankly. "I thought you—care for me!"

"I do! You know I do, Nan darling! But—" She prepared to step out. Miss Blundell caught her back and jerked the cord again.

"Meekin Court, Jasper! Drive as fast as you can! You don't know where it is?"

"Off Hopper street," explained Rosalys. "You're not angry with me, are you, Nancy?" as the coupe whirled around and off at a rapid pace.

But Miss Blundell sat back in her corner without replying, and looked obstinately out of the window as they rolled farther and farther from her flowers.

Not until they had left the paved business section for the cobblestones of Hopper street did she ask, indifferently:

"Who is your woman?" "Miss Achesah Cone. A queer, withered old maid who does plain sewing for mother sometimes. She's pitifully poor, I'm afraid, but the neatest worker. You'll come with me, Nancy?"

"I don't care for slumming," as the carriage stopped, and Jasper, disapproving of the locality in every seam and button of his livery, opened the door to say, "I can't go any farther, Miss Blundell."

Rosalys gave her one appealing glance as the unlucky box was lifted out. "It's awfully poor, Nan, but not quite a slum."

"Oh, I suppose I must! You'll stay an hour if I don't come," scolded Nancy, under her breath, following with an ill grace as Miss Haven, in her gown of pale gray, delicate lace with a suggestion of green leaves about her neck, passed through a brick archway into Meekin Court, a dark shaft among crowding tenements.

Nancy caught her own dainty skirts close about her as they entered the door of the tallest and dingiest rookery, and Rosalys Haven led the way up the narrow, rickety staircase. Queer, forsaken-looking heads were thrust from half-open doors as they passed, and on the second landing, as the two girls paused to take breath, a file of ragged urchins, with big, wandering black eyes, stood in a solemn row against the wall to let them pass.

"That in the soft color is mine," whispered one, putting out a hand toward Rosalys, then drawing it shyly back.

"No! It is the signorina in red I choose," returned a sober atom, "Ah, bellissima!"

But Nancy Blundell hardened her heart. What did she care for the wretched ragamuffins? At the top of the third flight only a single gleam straying through the crack in a door-panel revealed some one crouching on the floor. Nancy, startled by the sound of quick, sobbing breaths, would have turned and fled, but Rosalys spoke at once:

"Miss Cone's room is here."

With a gasped word, the dark figure sprang up, away from them. Rosalys took one step forward, when Nancy caught her arm.

"Rosalys Haven! Do you notice anything? In the air?"

"Notice what? Why—why—Nancy!" She gave a hasty rap at the door. "Let me speak to her!" she warned.

Into the gloom of the passageway came a sudden stream of light and rich perfume. Half-dazzled for an instant, the two girls could scarcely make out the tiny, worn figure that stood before them, fairly trembling with eagerness to speak.

"Miss Haven! The—the ain't it?" "Yes, it is," answered a faint tap at the door.

Rosalys stole a glance at her friend but the eyes fixed on the white lilacs were openly mutinous.

"It's my dinner," apologized Miss Cone, setting a plate on the table. "I couldn't stand any smell of cooking round them, let alone having a fire that'd wilt 'em. I ain't cold. So Miss Doni, she tried it and sent it up. Ectory's pretty sick, and I gave her some of the lilies to hearten him up. Land! Seems like he'd eat 'em! An' the Matsky baby—'twas a poor little thing, nothing but the merest skin and bone, but she went on dreadful when—when 'twas took yesterday. Havin' the flowers lyin' over it kind of eased it for her, poor thing! There's a lot of comfort in a posy when you're in trouble."

## CAUGHT COLD ON THE C.P.R.

A. E. Mumford tells how Psychine cured him after the Doctors gave him up

"It is twelve years since Psychine cured me of galloping consumption." The speaker was Mr. A. E. Mumford, six feet tall, and looking just what he is a husky healthy farmer. He works his own farm near Magneta, Ont.

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no words to tell! You—you never could know what it's been! But there! I'm lettin' you stand in for just a minute, can't you? I'll take your bundle. Do sit down after climbin' up them stairs!"

"It's the suit for Patsy Whalen," explained Rosalys, as they obeyed, half-mechanically.

"Then would you mind if I ran right down with it? He's that fidgety, for fear it wasn't comin'! But there! He never havin' had anything decent before, one oughtn't to blame him. I told him Miss Haven never forgot anythin' she said she'd do in all the years I've done plain sewin' for her! And to think of your comin' with it yourself! I'll be right up again."

"It is as well that I did give in and bring you here!" began Nancy, when they were alone, with defiance in her voice.

She would not meet Rosalys' imploring look, but let her eyes wander round the bare garret room with the sloping roof and two gable windows that let golden sunlight in on rough board partitions, the strip of faded ingrain carpet that crossed the uneven floor, and the glory of white, scented bloom that was everywhere—in tin cups, in cracked glasses, in blue, green and red jugs, on table, sewing machine, shelves. Even on the little iron stove, in which was no fire to temper the chill air, stood a pitcher with a blossoming branch.

"She must have known that it was a mistake!" went on Miss Blundell. "Such flowers in a place like this!"

"Respectfully. 'You get her explanation, and then I'll have a few words with her.'"

"Nancy! Could you, to-day?" "That's just it! It's my day! Those are my flowers, that I might never have seen at all! Oh, it's intolerable! Say what you like to her, Rosalys, but afterwards—"

There fell an ominous silence between the two, as Miss Achesah's labored steps on the stairway became audible.

"'Tis a climb!" she confessed, beaming at her guests with actual radiance in her hollow, wrinkled little face, as she perched on the edge of a low chair. "But when you do get up here there's sun; and to-day there's these!" touching a lilac spray with loving finger-tips. "If you could have been here last night, Miss Haven! Why, I never saw anything like it. You won't mind that I gave some away?" deprecatingly.

"I s'posed 'twas the clothes for Patsy, but when I opened the box—I couldn't think 'twas true! There ain't any one can guess how starved I get for a bit of bloom! Oh, there's 'Renzo!' as she answered a faint tap at the door."

Rosalys stole a glance at her friend but the eyes fixed on the white lilacs were openly mutinous.

"It's my dinner," apologized Miss Cone, setting a plate on the table. "I couldn't stand any smell of cooking round them, let alone having a fire that'd wilt 'em. I ain't cold. So Miss Doni, she tried it and sent it up. Ectory's pretty sick, and I gave her some of the lilies to hearten him up. Land! Seems like he'd eat 'em! An' the Matsky baby—'twas a poor little thing, nothing but the merest skin and bone, but she went on dreadful when—when 'twas took yesterday. Havin' the flowers lyin' over it kind of eased it for her, poor thing! There's a lot of comfort in a posy when you're in trouble."

"But your dinner is getting cold. Miss Achesah!" Rosalys moved as if to go.

"Time enough!" smiled Miss Cone. "There is more I wanted to tell you, 'f havin' the Doni youngsters, Beppo an' Pia an' Marco an' Sp'ranza, peepin' in all mornin' hadn't flustered me. They can't get done lookin' in! Nor some others, that needn't be talked about, poor souls! I tell you, Miss Haven, when I saw what you'd writ inside, 'New joy to you, from Rosalys,' I just cried. There was never a truer word. There's been that 'new joy,' lingerin' over the words, 'for all that's been nigh 'em since they came!'"

"And if you'd seen little Thyra Persen! Her folks, round on Hopper street, were mad with her for wantin' to marry Teddy Hallinan, that's a nice, decent, hard-working boy, if he is poor. Thyra'd told me how her aunt, down-stairs, was going to let 'em get married in her room last evening, but her folks wouldn't do a thing to make it nice. My, Miss Haven, when the flowers came from you, I just ran! We had 'em all down there, sweetenin' the whole room,—and some for Thyra's little thin white dress, that had been washed most to nothing, and some for Teddy's buttonhole, and we tied some into a wreath for her hair. She has pretty yellow hair, Miss Haven. Why, it made all the difference between just gettin' married and a real, beautiful wedding, that she'll always remember!"

"Oh!" cried Nancy Blundell, her bright eyes wet. "'T—I'm so glad you had them for her, Miss Achesah!'"

The Companion.

## THE MOTHER

A Tryst With Death and Who Kept It

(By Dion Calthrop.)

The son of the house lay at the call of Death. It was the evening of the fourth day of the sickness; the room was hot, and the watchers were weary. The boy turned his head from side to side and moaned; he had moaned but had not spoken for three days.

At last the father could bear the pain of this sight no longer, so he went out into the garden to breathe in the fresh air.

And Death, who was waiting in the garden, came to meet him.

"Who are you?" asked the father, knowing well to whom he was speaking.

"Thou knowest," Death replied.

"Art thou ready?"

"Ready?" the father asked, the sweat breaking out on his forehead.

"I must take a life from this house," said Death.

"Then take me," the father replied, "and leave my son, for I have watched him grow up straight as an arrow and as true. I have guarded him as the apple of my eye; he is my only son. I have set his face in the right way, and he shall walk cleanly. Take me, Death."

Death stretched out his hand and said, "Come."

Then the father felt the surge of life blood in his veins and suddenly was conscious of his great strength and his firmness, for he was still a man in the prime of life.

He looked about him and saw the loved sights of his native place, the trees by the church, now rapped in the mystery of twilight; the square tower of the church, cutting cleanly against the sky. Below him the river rolled, lapping the banks softly, all gray in the half light, and by the



river a fold of sheep.

All these things stirred his heart until now he had not realized so much that he was alive as that he was living.

Still Death held out his hand. The father struggled with his thoughts, but as he hesitated he grew weaker, and the desire for life grew more strong.

Here, at his feet, was the garden he had planted; nearby, the fields in which he had toiled. The flowers were folding themselves to sleep, it was still, so still that every living sound came the more clearly to him. A long way off the shriek of an engine whistle sounded; he knew the train it betokened, the town to which it went—was he never to go there again?

What was he to do? There was no answer to his inward prayer in all nature.

Birds shifted in the trees and rustled the leaves into life—everything breathed the magic of life to him, the life he was called upon to give up.

One of his horses kicked in the stable, and he made an involuntary movement in that direction—there was so much to do. Then his dog barked, and the sound cut him like a knife.

"Art thou ready?" said Death.

"No, no, I can not come," the father said in a broken voice.

Then he turned and went back into the house with a bowed head.

Not daring to go again into the room where his son lay, he went up to his own room and sat, with a fierce joy, listening to his heartbeats in the dark.

There was left in the sickroom the mother and the two sisters of the boy, and as the night crept on the younger sister, tired with watching, went softly from the room into the garden.

There she saw that figure waiting, and knew that she was with Death.

"I must take a life from this house," said Death.

"Spare my brother," the girl said in a trembling voice; "spare him and take me. For he is my second self—we are everything to one another. He will remember me always."

"Come, come, then," said Death, and he held out his hand.

Then the young blood raced through the girl, and fled on her feet with the restless activity of youth, and she looked at the shrouded figure, with the outstretched hand in fear.

She saw the stars above her, alive and blazing, not, as on some nights, cold, dead fires. She saw the tomb in the churchyard pointing like white fingers. There, like silver, in the starlight, lay the river, the river on whose banks they had so often played. The little path that ran from the garden gate to the dairy showed clear—she knew and loved every curve of it. Down the path she ran every morning for the cream.

Her life seemed dear to her, and her heart went suddenly cold; then she turned quickly and went sobbing into the house.

Later in the night the elder sister went into the garden, and there met Death.

"I am waiting," he said.

"I will go with you," she said bravely. "I am strong; I can face you for his sake. Together we have played, together read from the same book. I have taught him all I know out of my small store. I will go."

Again Death put out his hand.

Then the girl began to reason hastily with herself. She was on the brink of life; her life was not her own to give away. Already her courage oozed at the thought of her sacrifice. What of her lover? The dark mass of trees by the church, all purple-black in the gloom of night, called to her of the secrets of their shadow; here her lover's lips had met her own in that first kiss, the kiss that made her life so precious. Here, by her side, was the rose tree from which she had plucked the red rose which had been her signal to him that she loved him when she dared not speak.

The boy in there did not know of this keen joy of life, so he would not miss it. The red rose of the tree

den spoke to her; sweet clover, mimosa, carnations, roses, scenting the cool night air, came to her like chains binding her to the earth she loved so well.

Without a word she turned away, blinded with sorrowful tears, yet strong for her life.

Last, in the early morning, at day-break, came the mother, after calling the others to watch.

Tears had so stung her eyes that she did not at once see Death.

"Ah," she cried, catching at her breast, "you have come for him."

"I have come," said Death, "for a life from this house."

Then the mother drew herself up, smiling. "I am ready," she said simply.

He put out his hand.

"May I finish my task before I come to you?" she asked.

"I shall be waiting," he said.

The mother went into the house and looked about it, seeing that it was in order. Then she put her books and her keys into the older daughter's room. Last of all, she went into the room where her son lay and looked long on his face. Neither her husband nor her daughter dared to speak to her. As she looked at her boy she saw him as a wee baby when they had first put him into her arms, and, even now, as she looked, a smile, ever so faint, flitted across his face.

Then she went out.

The flowers were opening their sleepy faces, the cold wind of dawn blew stray curls of her hair over her forehead. She looked round once at the farm, the village, the church, at the house, and she thought of her husband—her daughter would see to all for her. Then she remembered—where was Death?

No figure was in the garden, but as she rubbed her eyes, one came up the path to the garden gate.

"I am ready," she said, holding out her hand.

The figure put out a hand and took hers. "My brother has gone," he said.

"And you?" she whispered.

"I am Life."

She turned with a quick movement to the house. On the threshold was her husband.

"Hush," he said, "he is asleep."

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