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## Carolyn of the Corners

(Continued from page 6.)

away," said the carpenter gruffly.

"I wonder," she said. "But, you see, she isn't wholly a Stagg."

This, of course, did not explain matters to Carolyn May in the least. Nor did what Aunt Rose said to her on the way home in the hot, stuffy hack help the little girl to understand the trouble between her uncle and Mr. Parlow.

"Better not let Joseph Stagg see you so friendly with Jeddiah Parlow. Let sleeping dogs lie," Mrs. Kennedy observed.

### CHAPTER V.

#### A Tragic Situation.

Such was the introduction of Carolyn May to The Corners. It was not a very exciting life she had entered into, but the following two or three weeks were very full.

Aunt Rose insisted upon her being properly fitted out with clothing for the summer and fall. Carolyn May had to go to the dressmaker's house to be fitted and that is how she became acquainted with Chet Gormley's mother.

Mrs. Gormley was helping the dressmaker and they both made much of Carolyn May. Aunt Rose allowed her to go for her fitting alone—of course with Prince as a companion—so, without doubt, Mrs. Gormley, who loved a "dish of gossip," talked more freely with the little girl than she would have done in Mrs. Kennedy's presence.

One afternoon the little girl appeared at the dressmaker's with Prince's collar decorated with short, curly shavings.

"I take it you've stopped at Jed Parlow's shop, child," said Mrs. Gormley with a sigh.

"Yes, ma'am," returned Carolyn May. "Do you know, he's very lib'ral."

"Lib'ral?" repeated Mrs. Gormley. "I never heard of old Jed Parlow being accused of that before. Did you, Mrs. Maine?"

Mrs. Maine was the dressmaker; and she bit off her words when she spoke, much as she bit off her threads. "No, I never—heard Jed Parlow—called that—no!" declared Mrs. Maine emphatically.

"Why, yes," little Carolyn May said quite eagerly, "he gives me all the shavings I want. I—I guess folks don't just understand about Mr. Parlow," she added, remembering what her uncle had first said about the carpenter. "He is real lib'ral."

"It's a wonder to me," drawled Mrs. Gormley, "that he has a thing to do with a certain party, Mrs. Maine, considerin' how his daughter feels toward that certain party's relation. What d'you think?"

"I guess—there's sumpin'—to be said—on both sides o' that controversy," responded the dressmaker.

"Meanin' that mebbe a certain party's relative feels just as cross as Mandy Parlow?" suggested Mrs. Gormley.

"Yep," agreed the other woman.

Carolyn May listened, much puzzled. She wondered just who "a certain party" could be.

Mrs. Maine was called away upon some household task and Mrs. Gormley seemed to change the subject of conversation.

"Don't your uncle, Mr. Stagg, ever speak to you about Mandy Parlow?" she asked the little girl.

Carolyn May had to think about this before answering. Then she remembered.

"Oh, yes," she said brightly.

"He does? Do tell!" exclaimed Mrs. Gormley eagerly. "What does he say?"

"Why, he says her name is Miss Amanda Parlow."

Mrs. Gormley flushed rather oddly and glanced at the child with suspicion. But little Carolyn May was perfectly frank and ingenuous.

"Humph!" ejaculated Chet's mother. "He never says nothing about bein' in love with Mandy, does he? They was goin' with each other steady once."

The little girl looked puzzled.

"When folks love each other they look at each other and talk to each other, don't they?" she asked.

"Well—yes—generally," admitted Mrs. Gormley.

"Then my Uncle Joe and Miss Amanda Parlow aren't in love," announced Carolyn May with confidence, "for they don't even look at each other."

"They used to. Why, Joseph Stagg and Mandy Parlow was sweethearts years and years ago! Long before your mother left these parts, child."

"That was a long time 'fore I was borned," said the little girl wonderingly.

"Oh, yes. Everybody that went to The Corners' church thought they'd be married."

"My Uncle Joe and Miss Mandy?"

"Yes."

"Then, what would have become of Amanda Rose?" asked Carolyn May.

"Oh, Mrs. Kennedy hadn't gone to keep house for Mr. Stagg then," replied Mrs. Gormley. "He tried several triflin' critters there at the Stagg place before she took hold."

Carolyn May looked at Mrs. Gormley encouragingly. She was very much interested in Uncle Joe and Miss Amanda Parlow's love affair.

"Why didn't they get married—like my papa and mamma?" she asked.

"Oh, goodness knows!" exclaimed Mrs. Gormley. "Some says 'twas his fault and some says 'twas hers. And mebbe 'twas a third party's that I might mention at that," added Mrs. Gormley, pursing up her lips in a very knowing way.

"One day," she said, growing confidential, "it was in camp-meeting time—one day somebody seen Joe Stagg drivin' out with another girl—Charlotte Lenny, that was. She was married to a man over in Springdale long ago. Mr. Stagg took Charlotte to Faith camp meeting."

"Then, the very next week, Mandy went with Evan Peckham to a barn dance at Crockett's, and nobody ain't ever seen your uncle and Mandy Parlow speak since, much less ever walk together."

One particularly muddy day Prince met the returning hardware merchant at the gate with vociferous barking and a plain desire to implant a welcoming tongue on the man's cheek. He succeeded in muddying Mr. Stagg's suit with his front paws, and almost cast the angry man full length into a mud puddle.

"Drat the beast!" ejaculated Mr. Stagg. "I'd rather have an epileptic fit loose around here than him. Now, look at these clothes! I declare, Carolyn, you've jest got to tie that mongrel up—and keep him tied!"

"All the time, Uncle Joe?" whispered the little girl.

"Yes, ma'am, all the time! If I find him loose again, I'll tie a bag of rocks to his neck and drop him in the deepest hole in the brook."

After this awful threat Prince lived a precarious existence, and his mistress was much worried for him. Aunt Rose said nothing, but she saw that both the little girl and her canine friend were very unhappy.

Mrs. Kennedy, however, had watched Mr. Joseph Stagg for years. Indeed, she had known him as a boy, long before she had closed up her own little cottage around on the other road and come to the Stagg place to save the hardware merchant from the continued reign of those "trifling creatures" of whom Mrs. Gormley had spoken.

As a bachelor Joseph Stagg had been preyed upon by certain female harpies so prevalent in a country community. Some had families whom they partly supported out of Mr. Stagg's larder; some were widows who looked upon the well-to-do merchant as a marrying proposition.

Aunt Rose Kennedy did not need the position of Mr. Stagg's housekeeper and could not be accused of assuming it from mercenary motives. Over her back fence she had seen the have going on in the Stagg homestead after Hannah Stagg went to the city and Joseph Stagg's final female relative had died and left him alone in the big house.

One day the old Quaker-like woman could stand no more. She put on her sunbonnet, came around by the road to the front door of the Stagg house, which she found open, and walked through to the rear porch on which the woman who then held the situation of housekeeper was wrapping up the best feather bed and pillows in a pair of the best homespun sheets, preparatory to their removal.

The neighbors enjoyed what followed. Aunt Rose came through the ordeal as dignified and unruffled as ever; the retiring incumbent went away wrathfully, shaking the dust of the premises from her garments as a testimony against "any sich actions."

When Mr. Stagg came home at supper time he found Aunt Rose at the helm and already a different air about the place.

"Goodness me, Aunt Rose," he said, biting into her biscuit ravenously, "I was a-going down to the mill-hands' hotel to board. I couldn't stand it no longer. If you'd stay here and do for me, I'd feel like a new man."

"You ought to be made over into a new man, Joseph Stagg," the woman said sternly. "A married man."

"No, no! Never that!" gasped the hardware dealer.

"If I came here, Joseph Stagg, it would cost you more money than you've been paying these no-account women."

"I don't care," said Mr. Stagg recklessly. "Go ahead. Do what you please. Say what you want. I'm game."

Thereby he had put himself into Aunt Rose's power. She had renovated the old kitchen and some of the other rooms. If Mr. Stagg at first trembled for his bank balance, he was made so comfortable that he had not the heart to murmur.

Of course, Carolyn May let Prince run at large when she was sure Uncle Joe was well out of sight of the house.

it she was very careful to chain him up again long before her uncle was expected to return.

Prince had learned not to chase anything that wore feathers; Aunt Rose herself had to admit that he was a very intelligent dog and knew what punishment was for. But how did he know that in trying to dig out a mole he would be doing more harm than good?

The mole in question lived under a piece of rock wall near the garden fence.

When Uncle Joe came home to dinner on one particular Saturday he walked down to the corner of the garden fence, and there saw the havoc Prince had wrought. In following the line of the mole's last tunnel he had worked his way under the picket fence and had torn up two currant bushes and done some damage in the strawberry patch.

"And the worst of it is," grumbled the hardware dealer, "he never caught the mole. That mongrel really isn't worth a bag of dornicks to sink him in the brook. But that's what he's going to get this very evening when I come home. I won't stand for him a day longer."

Carolyn May positively turned pale as she crouched beside the now chained-up Prince, both arms about his rough neck. He licked her cheek. Fortunately, he could not understand everything that was said to him, therefore the pronouncement of this terrible sentence did not agitate him an atom.

Carolyn May sat for a long time under the tree beside the sleeping dog and thought how different this life at The Corners was from that she had lived with her father and mother in the city home.

Only that big ship, the Dunraven, had not sailed away with her papa and her mamma!

Carolyn May had been very brave on that occasion. She had gone ashore with Mrs. Price and Edna after her mother's last clinging embrace and her father's husky "Good-by, daughter," with scarcely a tear.

Of course she had been brave! Mamma would return in a few weeks, and then, after a time, papa would likewise come back—and oh! so rosy and stout!

And then, in two weeks, came the fatal news of the sinking of the Dunraven and the loss of all but a small part of her crew and passengers.

Vaguely these facts had become known to Carolyn May. She never spoke of them. They did not seem real to the little girl.

But now, sitting beside the condemned Prince—her companion and



The Little Girl Felt Bitterly Her Loneliness and Grief.

only real comforter during these weeks of her orphanhood—the little girl felt bitterly her loneliness and grief.

If Uncle Joe did as he had threatened, what should she do? There seemed to be no place for her and Prince to run away to.

"I'm quite sure I don't want to live," thought Carolyn May dimly. "If papa and mamma and Prince are all dead—why! there aren't enough other folks left in the world to make it worth while living in. I don't believe. If Prince isn't going to be alive, then I don't want to be alive, either."

By and by Prince began to get very uneasy. It was long past his dinner hour, and every time he heard the screen door slam he jumped up and gazed eagerly and with cocked ears and wagging tail in that direction.

"You poor thing, you," said Carolyn May at last. "I s'pose you are hungry. It isn't going to do you a bit of good to eat; but you don't know it. I'll ask Aunt Rose if she has something for you."

She got up wearily and went across the yard. Aunt Rose stood just inside the screen door.

"Don't you want any dinner, Carolyn May?" she asked.

"No, ma'am. I guess I'd better not

eat," said the child.

"Why not?"

"'Cause my stomach's so trembly. I just know I couldn't keep anything down, even if I could swallow it. But Prince'll eat his, please. He—he don't know any better."

"Tut, tut!" murmured the woman. "He's the most sensible of the two of you, I declare."

The minutes of that afternoon dragged by in most doleful procession. There was no idea in the little girl's mind that Uncle Joe might change his intention and Prince be saved from the watery grave promised him. When she saw the hardware dealer come in to the yard almost an hour earlier than their usual supper time she was not surprised. Nor did she think of pleading with him for the dog's life.

The little girl watched him astance. Mr. Stagg came directly through the yard, stopping only at the shed for a moment. There he secured a strong potato sack, and with it trailing from his hand went half-way up the knoll to where there was a heap of stones. He stooped down and began to select some of these, putting them in the bag.

This was too much for Carolyn May. With a fearful look at Uncle Joe's uncompromising shoulders, she went to the tree where Prince was chained. Exchanging the chain for the leather leash with which she always led him about, the little girl guided the mongrel across the yard and around the corner of the house.

Her last backward glance assured her that the hardware dealer had not observed her. Quickly and silently she led Prince to the front gate, and they went out together into the dusty road.

"I—I know we oughtn't to," whispered Carolyn May to her canine friend, "but I feel I've just got to save you, Prince. I—I can't see you drown-ed dead like that!"

She turned the nearest corner and went up the road towards the little closed, gable-roofed cottage where Aunt Rose had lived before she had come to be Uncle Joe's housekeeper.

Carolyn May had already peered over into the small yard of the cottage and had seen that Mrs. Kennedy still kept the flower-beds weeded and the walks neat and the grass plot trimmed. But the window shutters were barred and the front door built up with boards.

Carolyn May went in through the front gate and sat down on the doorstep, while Prince dropped to a comfortable attitude beside her. The dog slept. The little girl ruminated.

She would not go back to Uncle Joe's—no, indeed! She did not know just what she would do when dark should come, but Prince should not be sacrificed to her uncle's wrath.

A voice, low, sweet, yet startling, aroused her.

"What are you doing there, little girl?"

Both runaways started, but neither of them was disturbed by the appearance of her who had accosted Carolyn May.

"Oh, Miss Mandy!" breathed the little girl, and thought that the carpenter's daughter had never looked so pretty.

"What are you doing there?" repeated Miss Parlow.

"We—we've run away," said Carolyn May at last. She could be nothing but frank; it was her nature.

"Run away?" repeated the pretty woman. "You don't mean that?"

"Yes, ma'am, I have. And Prince. From Uncle Joe and Aunt Rose," Carolyn May assured her, nodding her head with each declaration.

"Oh, my dear, what for?" asked Miss Amanda.

So Carolyn May told her—and with tears.

Meanwhile the woman came into the yard and sat beside the child on the step. With her arm about the little girl, Miss Amanda snuggled her up close, wiping the tears away with her own handkerchief.

"I just can't have poor Prince drown-ed," Carolyn May sobbed. "I'd want to be drown-ed myself, too."

"I know, dear. But do you really believe your Uncle Joseph would do such a thing? Would he drown you dog?"

"I—I saw him putting the stones in the bag," sobbed Carolyn May. "And he said he would."

"But he said it when he was angry, dear. We often say things when we are angry—more's the pity!—which we do not mean, and for which we are bitterly sorry afterwards. I am sure, Carolyn May, that your Uncle Joe has no intention of drowning your dog."

(Continued on next page.)

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