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clapped his hands together. With one look at him Effie Beaver ran and ran and ran until she reached Beaver Pond. And while Effie was running homeward old Master All-Wise helped little Katy Tadpole to the edge of Lily Pond and gently put her in again.

Faithful Diamond

By Dora Raynor.

PART II.

But there was no sign of Tom that night. A few days after, when Diamond was feeling the loneliness to be almost intolerable—the days were not so bad and the customers were pleasant, but the evenings were long—one Wednesday afternoon, when all Melkford shops shut themselves up, Diamond clad in her best dress walked up to Burnside Farm. When she arrived she was tired. It was a good two miles walk, but she was glad of that in her heart of hearts, for she made an excuse to herself for Tom's non-appearance; it was so far from the village. She asked for Tom. The gardener, a rough-looking man, who stood at the gate, answered sharply.

"Opper? 'E's got his notice to quit to-day. We couldn't stand his impudent, foolish ways no longer. There 'e is."

With beating heart, Diamond beheld the only relation she had left in the world, a sulky-looking lad, with an untidy head of hair and a shabby suit, who came lounging round the house.

"My grandnephew, Tom!" she said, holding out her old hands which were delicately gloved in white cotton.

"Oh I say," muttered the boy. He came up unwillingly.

"Didn't you get my letter, my dear? I am your Aunt Eliza."

Her practised eye instantly took in the shabby details of his attire, and lingered on his shabby boots, and her heart sank at the sound of his rough voice.

"Ain't got no time for aunts," he said, rudely.

He brushed past her and disappeared. The gardener looked at her. "I thought so!" he said. "That lad's a wrong 'un. He'll never be no good."

"But if he's dismissed, where will he sleep to-night?" she said anxiously.

"On the road, very like," said the man, indifferently. "That's all he's fit for."

Miss Diamond said no more, and made her way homewards with a slow step. To think that her own grandnephew had come to this! She came to her cottage again feeling weary and disheartened. If he had only come to her—come to be mothered and made better. She prayed that he might yet come as she mechanically set about getting herself a cup of tea.

As she was pouring it out, the door burst open, and Tom Hopper stood before her.

"I'm so glad you've come, Tom," she said.

"I want some money," he blurted.

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"Yes, my dear, certainly," said the simple Miss Diamond. Tom had scarcely expected this ready acquiescence. She moved into the small shop, opened the till, and took out three shillings, which she held out to him. "Have some tea," she said soothingly. "Tom, I haven't seen you since you were a baby!"

"Can't stop. Going to London," he said.

"You can always come and live with me till we find you something else to do, my dear."

He shook his head violently. "Live here! Live with you!" He laughed scornfully and rushed out. Miss Diamond did not seek to detain him. She went to bed earlier than usual, praying again that he might be restored to her. He wanted kindness, kindness to drive away that half savage look from his eyes. He had lost his mother when he was nine. She pardoned everything, only longing for his return. She felt he was coming back to her. And that very night she was awakened by violent tapping at her door. She rose at once, believing that God was sending Tom back to her. She held a candle; and as she opened the door, the light fell on the faces of two strange men, carrying a burden.

"Are you Miss Diamond?"

"Yes, yes. Is that—"

"There's been a motor smash, and this boy, your nephew, got run over. He was asleep by the hedge."

"Come in, come in," said Miss Diamond, in a shaky voice.

They carried Tom Hopper in. He was insensible. "Doctor's coming," said one of the men. It is only his ankle, I think."

So it happened that Tom Hopper came, in spite of himself, to his aunt's home. She almost regained her old self in nursing him. For Tom was obliged, whether he liked it or not, to lie for a fortnight in bed with a bruised foot. And during that time Miss Diamond cooked for him all the dainty invalid messes that she had been accustomed to prepare for the beloved Bradells in the old days whenever they were ill. meals rather different to the bread and dripping Tom was used to.

Miss Diamond was very humble. She never believed for a moment that Tom would elect to stay with her when he got well. She said to herself over and over again that he would go off; it was a boy's nature to love freedom and to dislike a life with an old maid-

en aunt, even if it only meant lodging with her.

But great happiness was in store for Diamond, the only thing that could have made her happy—for, in spite of the Bradell's care and thought, a shop was not enough to satisfy her loving and unselfish heart. Miss Diamond made an effort, and spoke nervously one day as she sat by his bed:

"Would you like to live here, Tom. I have some money saved, and could buy you a bicycle if your work were far away." (She saw his boyish face light up at the word bicycle.) "Would it be very dull for you, dear Tom?"

The loutish, neglected, homeless boy looked at her bent figure and her mild old face. She had conquered; he had again the old certainty he used to have when his mother was alive that he had someone to care for him. He liked it; he could not give it up. He could not express himself, but he managed to blurt out sturdily, "Very well, Aunt Eliza—it's—it's all right, being here, it is."

And grace was given to old Diamond in this her divine moment not to burst into tears nor to kiss him and draw him to her arms. She simply blinked. She had known the Bradell boys; she knew Master Humphrey hated kisses. She merely said, while her old heart leaped and sang with joy, "Well, we must see about the bicycle to-morrow. Now, what sort shall it be?"

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