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CHAPTER XIII. (Continued.)

Nan's Departure.

Theodore found Nan sitting by the window in the dark. She had rocked the baby to sleep, and was thinking over the happy afternoon that seemed now so like a beautiful dream. She lighted her lamp when Theodore came in, and brought out the food that food that she had put aside for him, and while he ate she told him of all that had happened. He did not eat much and he was very silent, so silent that at last she paused and said, anxiously,

"You aren't sick, are you, Theo?"

"No," he replied, gravely, "an' Nan, I'm real glad you're goin' to such a nice place." But though he spoke earnestly, there was in his voice a ring of pain that Nan detected instantly, and guessed its cause.

"I'm going to miss you dreadfully, Theo," she said, quickly, "and I don't know what Little Brother will do without you. That's the one thing about it that I don't like—to think of you all alone here with no place to stay evenings."

"Mr. Scott says I can have a room where he lives—at Mrs. Rawson's," answered Theodore. "It's a fine room—bigger'n this, an' it's got checked straw carpet an' three windows."

"Oh, Theo, how glad I am!" cried the girl, delightedly. "That's just splendid. Don't you like it?" she added, as the boy still sat with serious eyes fixed on the floor.

"Like it? The room you mean? Oh yes, it's a grand room, but I don't think I'll go there," he answered, slowly.

The gladness died out of Nan's face. "Oh, Theo, why not?" she exclaimed, in a disappointed tone.

He answered again, slowly, "I think I shall stay here an' take this room o' yours 'stead o' my little one."

"This is ever so much better than yours, of course, an' if you do that you can keep my furniture, and I s'pose you'd be comfortable, but 'twould be lonesome all the same, and I shouldn't think you'd like it half so well as being with Mr. Scott."

"Course I wouldn't like it half nor quarter so well, Nan, but this is what I've been thinkin'. You know there's a good many boys in these two houses that don't have no place to stay evenin's, 'cept the streets, an' I was thinkin' as I came home to-night, how fine 'twould be if there was a room where they could come an' read an' play games an' talk, kind of a boys' club room, don't ye know, like the one Mr. Scott was tellin' 'bout they're havin' in some places. I think he'll help me get some books an' papers an' games, an' maybe he'll come an' give us a talk sometimes. It would be grand for fellers like Jimmy Hunt that ain't bad yet, but will be if they stay in the streets every evenin'."

"Theo, I think it's a splendid idea, only there ought to be just such a room for the girls. They need it even more than the boys do." Nan hesitated a moment, then added, earnestly, "Theo, I'm proud of you."

Theodore's face was the picture of utter amazement as he gazed at her. "Proud—of me?" he gasped. "I'd like to know what for."

"Well, never mind what for, but I want to say, Theo, what I've thought ever so many times lately. When I first knew you, you were good to Little Brother and me, so good that I can never forget it, but you weren't—"

"I was meaner'n dirt," interposed the boy, sorrowfully.

"No, but you'd never had any chance with nobody to teach you or help you, and I used to hate to have you touch Little Brother, because I thought you were not good."

"I wasn't," put in Theodore, sadly. "But since you came back from the bishop's you've been so different, and it seems to me you're always trying to help somebody now. Theo—if Little Brother lives, I hope he'll be like you."

Theodore stared at her in incredulous silence. "Like me. Little Brother like me," he whispered, softly, to himself, the colour mounting in his cheeks. Then he arose and walked over to the bed where the child lay, with one small hand thrown out across the bedclothes. The soft, golden hair lay in pretty rings on the moist forehead, but the little face looked waxen white.

Theodore stood for a moment looking down at the baby, then suddenly he stooped and kissed the outstretched hand, and then without another word he went away.

Nan's eyes were full of tears as she looked after him.

"How he does love Little Brother," she thought. "He's going to miss him awfully."

Monday was a busy day for Mrs. Rawson. She had engaged a seamstress to finish off Nan's dresses, and having seen the woman settled to her work, she set off herself for the tenement house, a boy going with her to carry a small valise.

She found Nan busy baking bread. The place was very warm and the girl looked flushed and tired. Mrs. Hunt had carried the baby off to her cooler rooms.

"Nan, child, you've not taken up the cooking again?" exclaimed Mrs. Rawson.

"I had to do some—not very much," replied the girl, gently.

"But, my dear, I thought you understood that we didn't want you to do this any more."

Nan only smiled as she set the last loaf in the oven.

The lady went on, "Nan—we want you to go away to-morrow."

Nan looked up with startled eyes. "So soon!" she exclaimed as Theodore had done.

"Why should there be any delay about it? Every day that you stay here is so much actual loss to you and to the baby, too," added Mrs. Rawson.

With a bewildered air Nan dropped into a chair, saying, hesitatingly,

"But how can I get ready to go to-morrow?"

"Easily enough, if you let the cooking go. I was wondering as I came along what you would do with your furniture."

To Mrs. Rawson's eyes the few poor bits of furniture looked worthless enough, but she realized that it would seem quite otherwise to the girl who had bought them with her own hard earnings.

But now Nan looked up with shining eyes and in eager words told of Theodore's plan and the lady's face brightened as she listened.

"It's a fine plan," she replied, heartily, "and it means a deal for such a boy as Theodore to have thought of it."

"And when he might have gone to your house, too," added Nan, softly. "Mrs. Rawson, he'll be very lonely when Little Brother is gone."

"Yes, he'll miss you both sadly, but Nan, you mustn't worry about Theodore. Mr. Scott loves the boy and will look out for him, you may be sure of that. But now we must talk about your journey. I've brought the things that I thought you would need on the way, and I'd like you to try on this dress."

She lifted the pretty wool suit from the valise as she spoke, and Nan began to take off her faded calico. The colour rose in her face as she did so, for she hated to have Mrs. Rawson see her poor under garments, but the

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