

# Joy by Barbara Webb

A Story of the Loves, Trials, Temptations and Triumphs of an American Girl

**SYNOPSIS**  
JOYCE, a young girl, penniless and penniless, becomes a telephone operator in a hotel, and she loves GUY, DEACON, returns to college. An older friend of Guy's introduces her to a circle of society girls and ruins her himself. Joyce's mother, MARY, who is revealed as the wife of FORRESTER MALTBY, a man of means, and who has never seen her since marriage, while Joyce goes to New York for the body of her son, who died in the service. MARY, who has opposed the marriage bitterly.

**CHAPTER XVII**

**A Mother's Tragedy**

She felt that this problem, Gladys had left her was one that was too much for her to cope with. True, she might telephone the message to Mrs. Maltby, or she might send a written note by a messenger. But she longed to perform the service in person, that she might defend Gladys as far as possible from her mother-in-law's censure.

As she was musing the matter over in her mind the thought of Duke's mother came to her. Mrs. Deacon might even know Mrs. Maltby. Joyce could tell her the story from Gladys' point of view. Mrs. Deacon could advise Joyce.

"Perhaps she'll even go with me, thought Joyce.

She hurried down to the telephone and a few minutes later was talking to Duke's mother.

"Yes, indeed, Joy. I can see you this morning, right away, if you wish," said the kind voice. "Can you come up here?"

"That's just what I'd like to do," said Joyce. "You see it's something confidential and I want to talk to you and ask your advice."

"Then let me send the car down for you. Can you be ready in half an hour?"

"Yes, I can," said Joyce gratefully. "That is awfully kind of you, Mrs. Deacon."

While she waited she thought over the story she had to tell and decided to tell it without any reservations.

Mrs. Deacon had sent the family motor after Joyce and was waiting for her in her own little upper sitting room, a room that she loved, for it were all the treasured old pieces of furniture that had been hers, and her mother's, and her grandmother's before her.

"Can the child have become involved with Carter DeLand?" she wondered. "Or can it be that she has some further word from her mother? At any rate she herself is a dear girl and I feel very glad that she has turned to me."

She was sitting at her old fashioned walnut desk when Joy was shown in.

She made the girl sit in a low Martha Washington rocker, while she settled herself on an old fashioned sofa at the girl's side.

"Now tell me all about it," she said encouragingly.

Joyce plunged into her story, first telling Mrs. Deacon the history of her friendship with Gladys.

"Maybe I'm wrong," she said, "but I just somehow felt that Gladys herself would be sorry if she didn't let her mother know in time to do something."

"You are very right, my dear," said Mrs. Deacon. "I remember the story well. It was in all the papers several years ago how Forrester Maltby had married this chorus girl, how his people objected. Then they all rather dropped out of sight."

My own impression was that Gladys' devotion to Forrester was the girl had lost interest in him when he went into the sanitarium. I know Mrs. Maltby slightly. She is a very distant woman. She was intensely proud of her son. The family has a history of alcoholism and she nearly died of shame when Forrester was expelled from college because of drunkenness.

Then when he had this stroke in New York and she found a chorus girl presiding over his apartment, I can see how it was a serious blow.

I think that her husband left all his money to her in trust for Forrester because of this tendency to alcoholism. That would account for his not having any income of his own."

"Do you think I should go to see her myself?" asked Joyce.

Mrs. Deacon looked at the brave little figure before, willing to face so complicated a situation for the sake of her friendship. "She's as genuine as the sunshines," she thought. "Would you like me to go with you?" she asked aloud.

"Oh, Mrs. Deacon, if you only would! I've been wanting to do this, but I didn't quite dare. I didn't know how you'd feel about it."

"Joy clasped Mrs. Deacon's hand in her gratitude.

They left the house presently and Mrs. Deacon gave the chauffeur the address of the Maltby's home.

They drove up a fine driveway bordered with tall trees and Mrs. Deacon gave the chauffeur her card to send in to Mrs. Maltby. In a few moments a grave and ancient old butler admitted them to a high reception room where a small grate fire was doing its best to drive off the morning chill.

There was the rustle of a skirt and a tall thin woman entered the room. She was dressed in black silk and had about her an air of gloomy sternness. Joyce felt her heart sink.

"Good morning, Mrs. Maltby," said Mrs. Deacon rising and extending her hand. "This is my young friend, Miss Dicinc."

Mrs. Maltby took Mrs. Deacon's hand and bowed frigidly to Joyce.

"It has been some time since I re-

ceived any caller in the morning," she said. "The old custom of calling or leaving cards seems to have died entirely."

"Yes, it has," Mrs. Deacon agreed. "And perhaps it isn't fair to you to think any longer that we have come on a social call. Miss Dicinc, who has lived for several months with your son's wife, has something to tell you."

At this mention of her son's wife, Mrs. Maltby became more frigid than ever. Joyce was honestly frightened, but a glance from Mrs. Deacon, steady and kind, cheered her and she began her story.

With all her young ardor, she tried to make Mrs. Maltby see Gladys' devotion to Forrester.

With all her power of sympathy she tried to soften the girl's decision to go after her husband's body without notifying the mother.

"Truly, Mrs. Maltby," she concluded. "I believe that Gladys cared very deeply for your son. So much so that she is going to sell the engagement ring he gave her to help pay for the expense of bringing him home."

"I shall certainly do nothing so undignified as quarrel over my son's body with this young person," said Mrs. Maltby after a pause. "The news of his death is no surprise to me. I have been expecting it for some time as I have kept closely in touch with conditions there. There is a family burying ground in the park about the house here. All the Maltbys for several generations have been laid to rest there. May I ask you to use your influence with this girl to persuade her to let me place Forrester's body there—beside his father?"

There was a quaver in her voice and Joyce for the first time felt a certain fear of the woman leaving her. "Why, she's lonely, and terribly sad," thought Joyce.

"Why not ask her yourself?" Joyce suggested. "I am sure that if you make her see how much it means to you, she will be glad to do it."

"I should never expect to have this girl understand my point of view," said Mrs. Maltby stiffly.

"I think the thing that would count most with Gladys would be the feeling that she might have some part with you in keeping her husband's memory alive," said Joyce.

"And I think the thing that would count most with her would be the knowledge that if she can prove that my son made his marriage while of sound mind she is helpless to half a million dollars," said Mrs. Maltby with a certain cold passion.

"Half a million dollars?" said Joyce faintly.

"Under the terms of his father's will, Forrester was to inherit half a million dollars unconditionally on his thirtieth birthday. He was thirty last month, just ten days before he died."

Mrs. Deacon made a slight movement. "Do you intend to contest the marriage, Mrs. Maltby?" she asked.

"I fully intend to prove that my son married this girl while he was under the influence of liquor. I understand that they have never lived together as man and wife. I have no intention of surrendering any part of the Maltby fortune to an adventuress," Mrs. Maltby spoke with cold finality.

"Then I think you have done all that is necessary for you to do, Joyce," said Mrs. Deacon, rising.

"But you cannot expect Mrs. Maltby to let her husband rest where she is not welcome to visit his grave," she added to the older woman.

"Wait!" Mrs. Maltby motioned her guests into their chairs again. For a time she sat thinking, her lips moving from time to time as in pain.

"Suppose I agree in writing to make no effort to keep—my son's widow—" she spoke the words with effort, "to keep my son's widow from her share of his estate. Do you think she would be willing for me to have a mother's part in this last rite that any human can perform for him?" She made no effort to control the slow tears that coursed down her face.

"I think that all you need to do is to be a little friendly to her," said Joyce. "She doesn't really hate you. And right now she is all ready to let you do whatever you think is your part in caring for him."

Mrs. Deacon sent a glance of approval at Joyce.

"Then I shall send her a wire at once asking her if she will let me meet her when she arrives with my son's body," said Mrs. Maltby. "And although I shall not mention it now in time I shall tell her that she will come into an estate of five hundred thousand dollars. May I ask you both to accompany me?"

She rang a bell. "Let me offer you some refreshment," she said.

Presently the butler appeared with a tray on which stood three glasses of thin sweet old wine. There were tiny English biscuits on a plate. He offered the tray gravely to the three women.

They made their farewells, promising to meet Mrs. Maltby at the station Monday morning.

Gladys, wan from weeping, and the strain of the journey, cast a glance of suspicious surprise at her mother-in-law when she saw her with Joyce and Mrs. Deacon, though she kissed the offered cheek promptly.

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Here are the answers to "Now You Ask One" for today. The questions are printed on page 7.

1. Marco Polo.  
2. Sir Henry M. Stanley.  
3. Capt. Robert F. Scott.  
4. The Pere Marquette.

5. Antoine de la Mothe Cadillac.  
6. Fagelan.  
7. Captain Cook.  
8. Stefansson.

9. An English navigator who explored the west coast of North America, for whom the city of Vancouver is named.

10. In 1909.

BETWEEN ALABAMA AND NEW JERSEY STREETS

stone silently out to the great pile of stone, that had housed three generations of the Maltby family.

Joyce left at noon to go to work. The brief funeral services were to be held late that afternoon and Forrester Maltby would rest beside his father and his grandfather, his short and unhappy life at peace.

When she got home that night she found Gladys huddled on the bed, her eyes red with crying, her whole aspect woe-begone.

Joyce kissed her sympathetically. "Poor Gladys," she said. "You've had a hard time."

"I had the worst time of all today when she was so good to me," said Gladys. "What did you do to her, Joyce? She sent me a thousand

dollars by telegram when she wired Forrester buried in the family burying ground. She asked me today to wear my rings," holding up her thin white hand to show Joyce the solitaire and diamond set wedding ring. "And she told me, 'Gladys stopped for breath, she told me I would inherit five hundred thousand dollars."

"She told me that, too. It's rather wonderful, Gladys, though it doesn't seem right to think much about it with Forrester just dead," Joyce said soberly. "I suppose I'll be losing you soon."

"I'm not going to take that money."

"Not going to take it?" Joyce repeated.

"Not a penny of it," said Gladys.

"First because I never really was Forrester's wife. I was fond of him and I did what I thought was duty to him, but I never loved him. But most of all I can't touch that money. Joy, because for two years I've been desperately in love with another man."

(TO BE CONTINUED)

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