

# NOBODY'S GIRL

ANNE AUSTIN author of the PENNY PRINCESS

THIS HAS HAPPENED

The summer she is 16, SALLY FORD leaves the State orphanage, the only home she has known from the time she was four, to be "fitted out" to CLEM CARSON. At the Carson farm she meets DAVID NASH, athletic and student who is working on the farm during the summer. When Carson makes insulting remarks about David's friendship for Sally, David hits him a terrific blow. David and Sally run away and join a carnival. David is Cook's helper and Sally in a showgirl disguise as "Princess Lalla" is a crystal gazer.

NITA, a Hula dancer, becomes infatuated with David and shows her family for Sally. Sally tells Mrs. BYBEE, wife of the show owner, that her mother once lived in Stanton, the town where the carnival is now showing. The manager's wife agrees to investigate and learn what she can. She returns from her trip to tell Sally that the woman who left her at the orphanage was not her mother, but a maid hired to take the baby from the real mother in New York and disappear. As Sally leaves the Pullman after hearing this news from Mrs. Bybee, she sees Nita and believes she has seen the girl who was away from her for so long. She must run away again.

NOW GO ON WITH THE STORY

CHAPTER XXII

"POOR kid!" David consoled her after her first almost hysterical outburst. "I can't talk to you now, and you shouldn't be here. You've got to go back for your last performance. The show has to go on. They're been decent to us, and we can't throw them over without warning."

"But David, we've got to run away again!" Sally whimpered, clinging to both his arms, bare to the shoulders in anticipation of his work in helping to load the carnival for its thirty-mile drag to the capital. "We can't go back to Capital City!" "We'll be caught! Listen, David—"

"Go back to your show tent," David commanded her sternly. "I'll be working pretty late helping to load up, but I'll whistle a bar from 'Always' under your pullman window. We all sleep on the train tonight, and pull out for Capital City."

No Stomach Pains Or Back-ache Now

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Folks who drag themselves around, suffering from backache and stomach distress, will enjoy reading a letter recently written by Mrs. C. L. Larson, 817 Tenth Ave., Rockford, Ill. She says:

"For ten long years, I had severe stomach and kidney trouble and chronic constipation, and I suffered agony nearly all that time. After eating, gas formed, my stomach bloated, and I became nauseated. My kidneys pained me dreadfully, and were very irregular. I often had dizzy spells and headaches, and trouble with my eyes. My constipation was very bad for years. I had no appetite at all, and was so weak, nervous, and all worn-out that I really despaired of ever being well again."

"But what difference Vienna made in me. I heard people talking about this wonder medicine and finally I decided to try it. Now I can eat a hearty meal and not have any of the old gas, pain or bloating. It helped my kidneys wonderfully, too. The back-ache is all gone and I sleep fine all night. I am rid of the dizziness and headaches, and the constipation is greatly relieved. I feel well and strong all over, and it is simply wonderful to be in good health again."

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some time before morning. We pick up the engine at 3 o'clock, I believe. Plenty of time to decide what to do." He shook her a little to make her stop shivering and whimpering with fear. "Buck up, honey! I'm not going to let the police get you; neither is Pop Bybee. Dear little Sally!" and he stooped from his great height to brush the tip of her short, brown-powdered nose with his lips.

During the last performance in the Palace of Wonders, a village constable, his star shining importantly from the lapel of his Palm Beach suit, sauntered leisurely through the tent, eyeing the fresh-faced, good-looking girl who was making all the Smart-Aleck questions which the more timid members of the carnival crowd longed to ask and did not dare.

"Bet you wouldn't let me put any of that glass you're eatin' in my coffee," he guffawed to the ostrich man whom Gus, the Barker, was bullying at the moment. "I'm on to all you guys. Rock candy, ain't it?"

"Sure, officer," Gus interrupted his spiel to answer deferentially. "Won't you have a little snack with the human ostrich? I particularly recommend these nails. Boffo eats only the choicest six-penny nails; will accept no substitutes. And if a nail's rusty, out with it! Sort of an epicure, Boffo is! Have a handful of glass and nails with Boffo, officer! Big-hearted, that's Boffo!"

The constable refused hastily and the crowd roared with delight. The constable's officer of the law ambled over to make his disparaging inspection of Jan, the giant from Holland.

"Pull up your pants legs and let me see your stiffs," the constable ordered authoritatively. "I ain't the sucker you guys think I am. I'm on to your tricks—been going to carnivals man and boy for fifty years."

With his eyes as remote and sad and patient as if he had not heard or understood a word of the constable's insult, Jan obeyed, rolling his trousers to the knees. When the constable's representative of the law had pinched the pale, putty-colored flesh of Jan's pitifully thin calves and found them to be flesh-and-blood indeed, he passed on, red of face, furious at the snorts of laughter which filled the tent.

"What if he takes a notion to wash my face?" Sally shivered, bending low, in an attitude of mystic concentration, over the crystal which she was pretending to read for a farmer's wife who had no interest in Boffo, the human ostrich, but who did have perfect faith in the powers of "Princess Lalla."

"What if he is just pretending to be interested in the other freaks and is really looking for me? Has Nita dared to tip him off that Sally Ford is here?"

But her little sing-song voice droned on, predicting prosperity and happiness and "a journey by land sea" for the credulous farmer's wife.

"What's your real name, sister?" the constable demanded loudly, officially, stamping up the steps that led to the little platform.

"Please," Sally pleaded prettily, making her eyes wide and cloudy with mystic visions, "do not censure-up! The veision she will go away!"

"You let her alone, Sam Pelton!" the farmer's wife commanded tartly. "Go on, Princess Lalla. I think you're just wonderful—knowing about my mother being dead and even her name and all."

And Sally continued the reading with Constable Pelton breathing audibly upon her neck as she bent her small head gravely over the crystal. When she could think of nothing else to tell the highly pleased woman, she was desperate. It seemed to her that everyone in the tent was looking at her, reading panic in her trembling fingers.

"Gimme a knock-down to my past, present and future, Sister," the constable suggested with heavy sarcasm and jocularly. "Reckon an officer of the law don't have to pay. And you'd better make it a good one, or I'll run you in for obtaining money under false pretenses. Come on, now! Miss Holtzman has already give you a good tip-off, and I guess my star speaks for itself. Knowing my name and my business, you oughta be able to take a pretty good line for me, but if you don't tell me my wife's name, how many kids I got, where I come from, and anything else I'm a mind to ask you, I'll make you a present of free board and lodging at the county's expense."

Unknown to Sally, whose eyes were fixed, blind with fear, upon the crystal tightly cupped in her ice-cold palms, Gus, the Barker, had drawn near enough to hear the constable's threats and demands.

"Sure, officer!" he boomed heartily, to Sally's amazement, "just ask the little lady anything you like. She sees all, knows all. Step right up, folks, and hear Princess Lalla, favorite crystal-gazer to the Sultan of Turkey before she escaped from his harem, tell you fellow-townsmen, Constable Sam Pelton, the truth, the whole truth and something besides the truth, the truth, the truth, that are going to happen to him that Officer Sam don't yet dream of! Step right up, folks! Don't be bashful! Step up and get an earful about your esteemed fellow-townsmen and officer of the law."

Sally felt the ice melting slowly in her veins. Dear Gus! He was stalling, gaining time, subtly frightening the constable, whose face had gone redder and redder, whose eyes glared with furtive unease from the crystal to the grinning faces of his "fellow-townsmen," who apparently had no great love for Constable Sam Pelton.

Then that which Gus had arranged by means of a code signal took place. Two "schillers," hastily summoned by a carnival employee, suddenly broke into loud curses and sharp, slapping blows which echoed in the instantly quiet tent.

"Pick my pocket, would you?" the raucous voice of a "schiller" demanded between slaps and punches. "I seen you—sneakin' your hand in my pocket!"

Constable Pelton, glad to be able to assert his authority, glad also, possibly, to escape a too intimate revelation of his past, bounded from the platform, collared the fighting "schillers," and dragged them triumphantly away.

When the last stragglers of the carnival crowd had been ushered rather unceremoniously from the tent, Sally rose from her chair and pattered swiftly to where Gus, the Barker, stood talking with Pop Bybee, owner and manager of Bybee's Bigger and Better Carnival.

"Thank you, Gus! I was scared nearly to death! It was wonderful the way you stilled along till those two rubes—" she was already becoming familiar with carnival lingo—"got into a fight. Wasn't it lucky for me they did?" she added naively.

"Hell, kid!" Gus grinned at her and tilted his derby more rakishly over his left eye. "It was a frame-up. Them's our boys. The guy that pretended to have his pocket picked will swear he made a mistake, and the worst old Sam can do is to have 'em fined for disorderly conduct. I'll square it with 'em, and they'll be in Capital City by show-time tomorrow."

Pop Bybee chuckled richly, his bright, pale-blue eyes gleaming in the lobster-red expanse of his old face. "Didn't I tell you, child, that the law couldn't touch you long as you stuck with the carnival? Dave tells me you're babbling about running away again because we're hitting the trail for your home town tonight. You stick, Sally. Pop Bybee and Gus and the rest of us will take care of you."

Sally's lips parted to tell him of Nita's threat to tip off the police if she did not relinquish her claim upon David's love and friendship, but before the first word tumbled out, the old inhibition against tattling, taught her in the stern school of life in an orphanage, restrained her.

"You're all so good to me," she choked, then turned abruptly away to where "Plity Sing," the midget, was impatiently awaiting her husband's sedan-chair.

"I don't want to influence you unduly," the midget piped in her prim, high little voice, "but Mr. Bybee and Gus are right. You are safer with the carnival than anywhere else in the State, and if you run away I should be very sorry. I like you, Sally. I like you very much."

The dress tent was taken down by the "white hopes" almost before the women performers had had time to change from show clothes to nightgowns and kimonos. By 12 o'clock the lot was as bare of tents and booths and ferris wheels and motordromes and "whips" and merry-go-rounds as if those mechanical symbols of joy and fun had never existed.

And Sally lay on the lumpy, smelly mattress of her upper berth in the ancient Pullman car, waiting for her David's whistled signal—a bar of "Always." She was fully dressed.

Her heart sang the words—"I'll be loving you—always! Not for just an hour, not for just a day, not for just a year, but—always!"

She could have sent word to David by Gus or Pop Bybee that she had given up her frantic plan to run away; that he need not meet her in the darkness of the pulsing, hot June night. But—she had not—

It came then—clear and true the whistled notes of the song which her heart sang to David—"I'll be loving you—always!"

She edged over the side of the berth, the toe of her slipper groping until it found the edge of the lower berth in which the midget was sleeping. When she was safe in the aisle she cast a fearful glance up and down the car, and noted with uneasy surprise that Nita's berth, directly opposite the midget's, was still unoccupied, the green curtains spread wide so that the grayish-white blur of the sheet and pillow was plainly discernible in the

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