

# NOBODY'S GIRL

By ANNE AUSTIN author of the PENNY PRINCESS

## THIS HAS HAPPENED

The summer she is 18, SALLY FORD is "farmed out" to CLEM CARSON and leaves the State Orphanage, the only home she has known. She is a good girl, but she is young. When Carson makes insulting remarks about her innocent friend, David, she hits him a terrible blow.

David and Sally run away and join a carnival. David, as cook's helper and Sally as a side-show discounted as "Princess," become infatuated with David and threaten to turn Sally out of the carnival if she doesn't keep "hands off."

## NOW GO ON WITH THE STORY

### CHAPTER XXVI

SALLY's first impulse, when she saw the children of the orphanage come tumbling into the Palace of Wonders tent, was to flee. She was so conscious of being Sally Ford, whose rightful place was with those staring, shy little girls in white lawn "Sunday" dresses, that she completely forgot for one moment of pure terror that to them she would merely be "Princess Lalla," favorite crystal gazer to the Sultan of Turkey before she escaped from his harem."

Cowering low in her high-backed gilded chair, in an effort to make herself as small and inconspicuous as possible—a useless effort really, since she was by far the prettiest and most romantic figure in the tent, dressed as she was in Oriental trappings—she watched the children whom she knew so well, with a pang of homesickness.

Not that she would want to be back with them! But they were her people, the only chums she had ever

known. How well she knew how they felt, liberated for one blessed afternoon from the bleak corridors of the orphanage, catapulted by someone's generosity into fairyland. For to them the carnival was fairland. These romance-and-beauty-starved orphans saw only glamor and wonder, believed with all their hearts every extravagant word that Gus, the Barker, uttered in his steorior bawl.

But where was Mrs. Stone—"old Stone-Face"—herself? Sally knew very well that the children had not come alone. While Gus was dis couring grandiloquently upon the talents of Boofo, the human ostrich, Sally sat very prim and apparently composed, her watchful eyes veiled by the scrap of black lace that reached to the tip of her adorably little nose. Undoubtedly the philanthropist was a man—it was nearly always a politician courting favor who won it cheaply and impressively by "treating" the orphans to a day at the circus or carnival if he could not find a movie. But if he were present, as the philanthropic politician invariably was, Sally could not find him. That was odd, too, for he was usually the most prominent person at such an affair, taking great pains that no reporters who might happen to be present should overlook him and his great kindness of heart.

Then little old-maidish Miss Pond, sentimental little Miss Pond, who had befriended Sally by telling her all she knew of the child's parentage, came hurrying nervously into the tent. She had undoubtedly been detained at the ticket booth and was sure, judging from her anxious, nervous manner, that the children had gotten into mischief during her brief absence.

Thelma had cut a deep gash in her cheek; it would leave a scar. Six-year-old Betsy had a summer cold and no handkerchief; her cheeks were painted poppy-red with fever, or perhaps it was only excitement.

There was a new little girl whom Sally had never seen before, such a homely little runt of a girl, with enormous, hunted eyes and big freckles on her putty-colored cheeks. Her snuff-colored hair had been clipped close to her scalp, so

When Miss Pond joined her timidly, so that single threads of it caught the light from the gas jet that burned bright all night in the rather dark tent. Her skin, pale with the heat of the day, was creamy-white, lineless, smooth and rich, so that Sally's fingers longed to touch it reverently. Surely it could not feel like other flesh: it was made of something finer and rarer than cells and blood, dermis and epidermis.

Her small, lovely mouth, soft and full-lipped as a child's, was tender and amused and proud, the mouth of a woman who has always been adored for her beauty, but whom admiration has not cheated of very human emotions. Sally wished that she could see the eyes more closely, for even while they were wide and laughing, sending out little sparkles of color and light, she thought there was a hint of sadness in them, of restlessness, as if only a part of her attention was given to the carnival and to the children.

She was very small and slight, shorter even than little Miss Pond, who had to look down as she talked to her. But for all her adorable smallness she carried herself with a certain arrogance. Every movement she made as she and Miss Pond talked together and then joined the children was proud and graceful.

She was wearing a summer sports suit of silvery-green, knitted silk, which showed to the best advantage the miniature Venus proportions of her body. As she swung toward the children, nodding acquiescent to Miss Pond's eager suggestions, little Eloise Durant, the child who had been the "new girl" of Sally's last day in the orphanage, catapulted herself from the huddling mass of children and impulsively seized her hand. The swift, cordial smile with which she greeted the child and released her hand as quickly as possible kept Sally from resenting the

action. But Eloise, still hypersensitive, knew that she had been deliberately snubbed and hung back as (To Be Continued)

Gus, the Barker, herded the orphans toward Jan the Giant's platform.

(To Be Continued)

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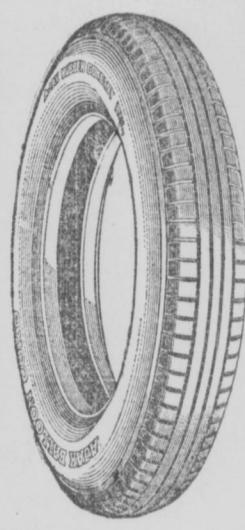
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