

# NOBODY'S GIRL

CHAPTER XXXVIII  
"CANFIELD is a county seat," David shouted exultantly before his long strides had brought him back to Sally. "The driver of the milk truck guessed why I wanted to know," he added in a lower voice, as he came abreast of her and took her hands to swing them triumphantly. "He says we crossed the State line about ten miles back and that the marriage laws are very easy on elopers here. In some States you have to establish a legal residence before you can be married, but there'll be no trouble like that here. Elopers from two or three bordering States come here to get married, he says. We're in luck, sweetheart."

"You didn't tell him our names?" Sally asked anxiously. "Mrs. Stone will have sent out a warning—" "I'm not quite such an idiot," David laughed, "even if I am crazy in love. Now the next problem is breakfast. I suppose a farmhouse will be the best bet. It wouldn't be safe for us to hang around Can-

field for three or four hours, waiting for the marriage license bureau to open. We're going to be married, darling, before the law has a chance to lay its hand on us."

They trudged along, the State highway, miraculously revived by hope that all their troubles would soon be over, their eyes searching eagerly for a farmhouse. And just over the rise of a low hill they found it—a tenant farmer's unpainted shack, from whose chimney rose a straight column of blue smoke.

They found the family at breakfast—the wife a slim, pretty, discontented-looking girl only a few years older than Sally; the husband, thick, short, dark and dour, at least a dozen years older than his wife; and a tow-headed baby boy of three.

The kitchen was an unpainted and unpurged lean-to of rough, weather-darkened pine. But Sally and David had eyes only for the tall stack of buckwheat cakes, the platter of roughly cut, badly fried

"side meat," the huge graniteware coffee pot set on a chipped plate in the center of the table.

"Breakfast?" the dour tenant-farmer grunted in answer to David's question. "Reckon so, if you can eat what we got. It'll cost you 50 cents a piece. I don't work from sun-up to sun-down to feed tramps."

"Oh, Jim!" the wife protested flushing. "Cakes and coffee ain't worth 50 cents. I might run down to the big house and get some eggs and cream—" she added uncertainly, her distressed brown eyes flickering from Sally and David in the doorway to her scowling husband.

"We'll be delighted with the buckwheat cakes and bacon and coffee and not think a dollar too much for our breakfast," David cut in, smiling placatingly upon the farmer.

"We're farmers ourselves and we're used to farm ways. How are crops around here, sir?"

"My name's Buckner," the dour farmer answered grudgingly. "I'll bring in a couple of chairs. Millie, you'd better fill up this here syrup pitcher and you might open a jar of them damson preserves."

"And I'll beat up some more hot cake batter," Millie Buckner fluted happily. "It won't take me a minute."

Sally and David washed their hands and faces at the pump outside the kitchen door, drying them on a fresh roller towel that Jim Buckner brought them.

"Run away to get married, have you?" the farmer asked in an almost pleasant voice, as he led the way to the newly-set table.

"Yes," David answered simply. "We walked all night and we're rather tired, but we thought there was no use in going in to Canfield until pretty near 8 o'clock."

"I guess Millie can fix up a bed so the little lady can snatch a nap between now and then," Buckner offered. "Pitch in, folks! It ain't much, but you're welcome. Farmer, eh?" and his narrow eyes measured David's splendid young body thoughtfully. "Aim to locate around here? Old man Webster, the man I rent this patch of ground from, is needing hands bad. He's got a shack over the hill that he'd likely fix up for you if you ain't got anything better in mind. Not quite as nice as this house—we got three rooms, counting this lean-to, and the shack I'm referring to is only one room and a lean-to, but the lit-

tle lady could fix it up real pretty if she's got a knack that way, like Millie here has."

Sally almost choked on her mouthful of buckwheat cake. Were all her dreams of a home to come to this—or worse than this? One room and a lean-to! She felt suddenly ill and was swaying in her chair when David's firm, big hand closed over her's that lay laxly on the table.

"Thanks, Mr. Buckner," she heard David's voice faintly as from a great distance. "That's mighty nice of you, but Sally and I have other plans."

Other plans! Sally smiled at him tremulously, adoringly, knowing full well that he had no plans at all beyond the all-important marriage ceremony. But after breakfast she lay down on the bed that Millie Buckner hastily "straightened" and drifted off to sleep, as happy as if her future were blue-printed and insured against poverty. For no matter what might be in store for her, there would always be David—exulted, sweeping her to his breast and kissing her regardless of the fact that the Buckners were still watching them. "I promise you it will never be as bad as that, honey. But maybe Jim Buckner promised Millie the same thing," he added in a troubled, uncertain voice.

(To Be Continued)

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