

The Girl Who Had No Chance

By MARION RUBINCAM

Chapter 22.
LITTLE DETAILS.
Christmas eve was Saturday that year, and Saturday was the day when Ruth's various "boarders," as she called them, paid their bills. By this time the girl had almost a house full. A foreman from one of the factories had taken a room. The man who was to be head of one of a chain of retail stores opening a branch in Markettown, had come with his wife and rented the big parlor and the little study back of it, which Ruth fitted up as a bedroom.
Altogether she took in enough to more than make ends meet. She was setting aside a little sum each week in the bank, to pay the fare of her father and mother when they came back. She even had enough to send them a \$10 bill as a present, and to buy them things she knew they would need—shirts and collars for her father, and material for a dress her mother should have.
"And when they come back," she told Mrs. Belding, "we'll live in the third floor, and in the Fall I'll not rent the bedrooms on this floor, so they can have their old rooms back."
But it meant more work for Ruth. The teachers were but little trouble; but the foreman and the manager and his wife took their breakfasts with Ruth. That meant that Ruth had to be up very early, and cook and serve breakfast for this group. Then there was the quite heavy housework, for so many people, and in the evening dinner for herself and Mrs. Belding. The other people dined at a nearby boarding house, then.
But Saturdays were her days of reward, for the nice new bills came then. As she began to see her way ahead, she began to plan on going to the city next year for her business course.
"I'll have a chance yet," she told Mrs. Belding.
She had not quite gotten over the vague feeling of being hurt—not at any one, merely at events that had shaped themselves as to deprive her of her chance to get ahead in the world.
For spending her days doing housework and cooking meals would get her nowhere! She was too tired to plan much, to read much; she knew little of what was going on in the world. The four walls of the big house were closing in on her like a prison.
But it was only to be this winter! Then her parents would come home, and her mother would run the house, and they would save enough money for her to go to the city in the Fall! And Tim would be there, they could

see each other often. All the time she was studying a business course, he would be working hard, getting ahead, and they would be married—some time. She could find a position, even if she was married, and go on working. Lots of married women did! Tim!
The thought of him was less comforting lately. He had been gone a couple of months, or very nearly—could it be possible that he cared less for her in that time? His letters expressed very little of his feeling. "I'm not much on writing," he told her once.
But always he ended his letters with three sacred words: "I love you!"
And Ruth treasured each letter. When she was tired or depressed, she would read the last letter, simply to look at that one little sentence. Sometimes Tim was moved to a real love letter, but of late the simple "I love you" had been all.
But it had been enough, for Ruth asked little of her love. But now, between Mrs. Belding's comment on Myra's letter, and the letter her chum sent her, Ruth was beginning to be very much afraid. Finally she took the little old lady into her confidence, and told her about Tim.
"And he's 22. And when he was here at home, you were the little girl in the town—and you are Ruth. None of the others can hold a candle to you."
"But Tim didn't like Myra. One letter recently he said so."
"Didn't like her here. You were around. Who would notice Myra when you were around? But you're here, and out of sight, and he's in the city, and it's new to him, and he's dazzled by everything."
"And there's Myra in her borrowed evening gowns, and her cousin's fine apartment, making an impression on him. Don't tell me, I know. I've been young, too, and ambitious, and I've been in cities and I know what they do. Lights, and people, and fine clothes and money being spent like it was,

water—" Mrs. Belding drew a lurid picture of city life.
"But he wanted to marry me!"
"Well, you get to the city then, and get him away from that girl! Don't you see it's because they're near each other and both a bit homesick. It's as natural!"
"But Myra wouldn't take him away from me, she knows I love him."
"She wouldn't, wouldn't she! Give her a chance. She wouldn't mean to—"

Was even this to be taken away from her, Ruth wondered. No chance to be allowed to work and study—no chance to hold the love she had gained?
Tomorrow—"The City Again."

Heart Problems

Dear Mrs. Thompson: Last fall at a dance, while visiting a friend, I met a boy who paid a great deal of attention to me. He took me to several dances.
A short time ago I was back at my friend's attending a party. This boy brought me home and asked if he might write to me. I gave him permission. Since then we have been corresponding in a friendly way. But two weeks ago I received a letter from him, very humble but sentimental, telling me how much he loved me.
As I am only twenty, I feel I am too young to take anyone seriously. Should I write to him telling him so, or would it be better to have a date and frankly tell him?
He is a very nice boy and isn't the kind that tells every girl the same line, and he isn't mushy.

PEGGY.
I believe you would find it easier to express yourself in a letter than to try to talk the matter over with the young man. Doubtless he will be willing to continue the friendship until you are older and ready to make so important a decision as becoming betrothed.

Dear Mrs. Thompson: I have been going with a boy for over a year and he gave me a watch of his to remember him by. My parents disapproved

of my going with him and so I requested him to take back the watch. He said he would trust me with anything of his. Then he gave me a wrist watch for Christmas, and a set of knives for my birthday. Then about six months ago we disagreed and broke up.
He has written two letters wanting the jewelry. Would it be all right to keep it after he refused to take it when I wanted him to? If it is broken should I give him money to fix it? If he wants to come back, would it be right or would you let him hunt and see if he can find a clean lady like the girl he once went with?

GRACE G.
Return the jewelry. It will not be necessary to send money to have repair work done, but it would be courtesy to have the jewelry repaired before sending it back.

I doubt if the young man will want to come back. Since he is asking for the return of the jewelry it is evident that he through. Perhaps he has found another lady already.

Dear Mrs. Thompson: I am a girl of sixteen and very fond of having a good time and will do anything to please my girl friends. Sometimes I get silly in a crowd just to make them laugh. It is my nature. I only do that because I like to see everybody around me happy. Am I ruining my character if I stay out late, about ten o'clock in the evening, running around the street and asking the boys to take us home? Of course I do not go by myself. I always have some girl friends with me, but I do all the talking. We really don't mean it. We just do it for fun. Do you think the people will think wrongly of me? Please advise me how to be a good girl.

AN UGLY DUCKLING.
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