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Lafayette, P. Q., April 18th, 1922

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by Madam Richer

ENTER GLORIA Chapter 28

One of the worst things Dora had to bear that summer was the constant sight of Gladys and Morton together. She felt that if she could have gone away it would be easier. But of course that was impossible.

Jim never talked about Morton after the engagement to Gladys was announced. Dora could only guess how much he knew. At first she was sure he knew everything, but he was so awkwardly sympathetic. At first, too, he left the room as soon as Morton came in as possible.

Then she noticed that they stopped and talked while Jim was at work about the farm and Morton out on visits. And one day they were laughing together, and her father's arm rested familiarly on Morton's shoulder while he pointed out something to him.

"He's forgotten about it, or else he never knew," she decided.

Which was true. Jim was keenly aware at first of the little broken heart that was left at the end of the short romance and was touched and grieved. But Jim, who had never been happy, was afraid to let himself be miserable. If things worried him, he made himself forget them. At first it was hard, later it came easier. As he had a strong character, it was possible.

So Jim almost forgot that his lonely little daughter had built herself a dream castle out of next to nothing and was crying now over its tumbled ruins.

Madam J. RICHER

THE CITY LADY Chapter 29

The man who was in the same law office with Morton was about 40 or so. He was supposed to know a lot and keep his mouth shut to use the common expression that described him in the town. He acted as justice of the peace, did legal jobs, now and then took a case.

But legal affairs were never very complicated or exciting in Norris City, where deeds, mortgages, sales, wills were almost all that came his way. But he was supposed to have "something" they called away to use another descriptive term, so the lack of expensive fees did not trouble him. And he took out his love of excitement by reading the wildest detective stories and going faithfully to every new film at the "Esplanade." For the rest he was six feet and stoutish, with gray hair and a gray moustache parted in the middle and drooping lankly on each side. This was Jacob Nicholas.

Dora knew him slightly. She knew he took a great interest in Morton, and was coaching his law studies. Morton, meantime, was making a small salary as a clerk in the firm.

Morton was doing the honors. "Mrs. Gates, may I present Miss Nicholson?"

Dora had never known such a ceremonious introduction. She held out a hand that had gone ice cold, as usual, from nervousness. It was caught on a firm and friendly clasp and Mrs. Gates said:

"I'm so glad to meet you, Miss Nicholson. You know my cousin, Mr. Innisley, of course? And my small son, Francis?"

The little lad looked up at her with solemn dark eyes. Dora felt a sudden impulse to take him in her arms. He was the prettiest and the most appealing child she had ever seen in her life. She glanced at him, she saw the vast difference in her between his paleness and delicacy, and the robust and sometimes raucous children of her friends.

Mrs. Gates was chatting meantime.

"Morton, you don't mind being called that do you? I'm sure I'm old enough to be your mother. Morton has been telling me wonderful tales of a household of old furniture you see. (Dora didn't, she had never heard of a decorator) and would do well to part with any."

This was a way of buying! Dora answered that it wasn't hers, but her aunt's who was away. Mrs. Gates would have to wait and see.

"But I'd love to show it to you. It's such fun to show it to people that like it," she added.

They explored the small house together. Dora walked as far from Morton as possible. Did he remember their first visit? The thick volume of speeches they had read lay on the window sill where they first found it. The door to the tunnel below house opened to a push-rain had come in all the broken windows.

"What a crime to let these things go to ruin!" Mrs. Gates murmured to her cousin. But Dora heard and answered:

"I've pushed the things I liked best into corners where they would be protected. And she began pulling out chairs and cradles and broken tables.

Mrs. Gates bent forward eagerly. Some she admired—"that's ordinary. This cutting is most unusual. Jacob, do you see the veining in the wood's claw on this leg? Probably imported by the tons, of the kind I should like to have, but they weren't doing such delicate work here at that time—possible a European cabinet maker who had emigrated. It's hard to tell."

"How do you know all this? I've wondered so about them, but the library hasn't any books about them." Dora got up her courage to ask.

"Do you like these things? I've a book with me, a guide to old furniture—do you want to borrow it? I'll be here nearly a week." Mrs. Gates offered.

And Dora got up courage to answer that she would love it and arrange to stop at the Innisley's and borrow it next day. Peter appeared then and the talk turned to him.

"Sell! Sure! But I hear those things are worth money," he said craftily. Mrs. Gates, from a social woman and to a shrewd business woman and they began to hither and thither to the yard where little Francis stood and began talking to him—to avoid talking to Morton. It was easy to talk to this child—

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GLORIA Chapter 30

"Now, tell me your name," Mrs. Gates began as they started work. "Dora—that is, Dora's my nice name. I've a silly name. Aunt Maude doesn't like it." She hesitated, then gave it. "Pandora."

"Pandora?" It was music when the visitor pronounced it. "A sweet name, but not after a very sweet character. But it suits you in a way, because one could nickname you Pan."

A tiny pink stole into the girl's cheeks. Pan! What a lovely name. Pan was a mischievous little god. Pan was a prankish creature who danced through the pages of Story books.

"Yes, Pan. It's rather elfin and so on."

The girl's astonishment was overwhelming. Why—that would be more wonderful than that beautiful—elfin, she thought.

On no, in the black sheep. There are two of us, you see, and Gladys is all the nice things. "But you're the one that's getting married! You're the daughter!" Mrs. Gates said she might sell the cause of the expenses of his daughter's wedding ceremony.

"Oh no—that's Gladys. No one would want to be broke off. Although this exquisite lady would care about her."

The woman saw in a flash more things than Dora could have revealed in an hour. She was silent a moment, then tactfully changed the talk.

"Speaking of the appropriateness of names, mine is honest. Gloria. A deluded mother gave it to me when I was a baby, because my eyes were dark and my hair gold—or she thought it might be gold." A white hand went to her dark locks.

Dora to please her had given her some small tasks, such as arranging china on the table, and cakes on the plates. She watched her while she worked.

Gloria Gates may or may not have been pretty. It depended upon whether she felt tired or not, whether or not she was pleased, and upon the general task of the observer. Gloria had straight black hair—the straightest and blackest that Dora had ever seen. She wore it, usually, pulled straight back from her face, revealing most of her ears—which were small and very white, and all her low white forehead. She always wore earrings of the most bizarre and very dark. Her nails a little too long, and a little too pinkly polished. She kept them this way deliberately, for their pink artificiality set off her white skin and dark hair and eyes.

Dora wondered how her dress was made. It was pale green, gaudy, it seemed simple, but was impossible to copy—which meant it was very expensive. With it she wore an orange color toque and black drop earrings. Dora—no one else in Norris City, had never seen such a startling figure. As soon as she sat at the table comfortably, Dora slipped her dishes. Jim silently helped her. "Too bad to have this extra work," he sympathized finally.

"Oh, but I was so glad to have them," she protested. She would wash millions of meals and dishes to have seen and listened to this woman who was so totally different from anything she had seen or read about.

Next day since she could do more or less as she pleased when her aunt was away, she invented errands and drove into town. Taking all her courage into her hands, she went to the Innisley's and asked for the furniture book. She drove back with slack lines looking for a book.

"How do you know all this? I've wondered so about them, but the library hasn't any books about them." Dora got up her courage to ask.

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TABLETS 25¢

GLORIA Chapter 31

The second visit was Tuesday. Wednesday Dora received a letter. The first she had had for months—her only in the Spring.

This one said:

"Dear child, when you can, would you come in and talk to me awhile? I'm always home late in the afternoon. Mrs. Innisley and I gossip over teacups. Come and join us. Haven't you errands to do—the town tomorrow?"

The letter was read and reread until Dora knew it word for word. Then it was slipped into the pages of the diary, where everything precious went.

She had never heard of a letter written like that. Who would want to talk to her? Surely Mrs. Gates couldn't be serious! She Dora never could say anything anyone would want to listen to!

Of course she shouldn't go. The men—her uncle, her father and one of the big men, came in to see her for supper at six, their midday picnic not being enough to keep them going over the hard day's work. Sue was aware of the cooked-a-little dinner at noon, an annoyed.

"I'll have to go in town with the buggy. It'll be back by six," laid the table ready and after doing everything she could towards the evening meal, she drove off to the town.

"I deserve a little recreation now and then," she told herself to prop up her dying courage—for she knew her aunt would not approve.

Mrs. Gates was in.

"Here's the girl who lies awake all night to read about old furniture," she cried. "Come here, my dear. It was sweet of you to drive in to see me."

Dora found herself alone with this new friend and Mrs. Innisley, who was Mr. Innisley's mother and sixty-odd years old. She wasn't so afraid of old people, but she could think of nothing to say, for all that. It was the old feeling, her tongue cleaving to the roof of her mouth, her throat tight, nervousness making her numb.

Mrs. Gates, who guessed all this, put out a hand and drew her down to the sofa.

"It's a long drive and you must be tired. Here, you shall have a cup of tea, and don't say a word until you've drunk it."

It acted like magic!

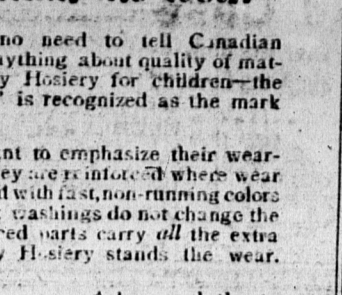
Being told to keep still for five minutes, drinking the stimulating tea, her throat muscles relaxed, a little of her self-assurance came back, she looked humbly and gratefully at this new friend. And the

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Mercury Hosiery

Dora saw Mrs. Gates again before the week was over. Two days later, in fact, she heard the sweet gallop of a horse across the big yard that separated house from barn and outbuildings and looking up from her work, saw her new friend bring her horse to a stop so suddenly that he reared a bit and then pranced and reared again at the fence around the kitchen garden. Dora was at work there, gathering vegetables for supper.

She did not know Gloria. Gates could ride—she never saw a woman ride so well. Mr. Innisley's other excitement besides movies and detective stories, was half-broken horses. He could control them easily with his powerful hands on the reins—Gloria, it seemed, had decided to ride this one. She had on to Dora—another amazing costume, a gray linen riding habit with breeches and smart black puttees, and she rode astride.

The excitement of her galloping entrance brought Peter out to see his chickens racing across the yard and a strange horse stretching his neck to sample his young corn.

"Hey, what do you want?" he called rudely.

"Nothing with you, my dear man in the same tone of voice. This costar answered curtly over her shoulder.

Peter didn't approve of women riding astride. He didn't approve of the red tie that sat so jauntily against her gray linen suit. He didn't approve all, approve of riding breeches. He scowled at the fleeing chickens.

"Hi! We're high toned today," he said, coming forward and backing the horse, to a safe distance from the garden fence. "I won't sell you my furniture—in that tone of voice!" He considered this rejoinder very clever. It put him in a better humor at once.

Gloria's face drew up in a black frown, and Dora saw how her temper could be as bitter as her smile could be sweet.

"Your furniture's not so valuable as all that," she retorted. "I did not come for it anyway, but to ask your niece to a little party tomorrow."

"My niece has her work to do and no time to go racing the town with a woman—with you."

A quick exchange followed, in which Peter got more than he gave, and Dora covered behind the corn and shivered. Uncle Peter had a temper to be dreaded when he was roused. He left finally, and she came forward, Gloria sat on her now quiet horse, smiling triumphantly.

"I wouldn't dare come now," Gloria faltered and could not be coaxed.

"I'll send Morton for you," Gloria answered—she never took "no" seriously—and off she went.

And next night, out drove Morton, and took Dora in to the party—three miles of almost dead silence on the way in, three miles of short snatches of talk on the way back. Dora went and left early, enjoying the older people, sitting back and saying nothing.

Monday Gladys returned, triumphant. With her came a brand new trunk packed full of clothes.

"We've spent three times what we planned. My, but we saw—such pretty things," Aunt Maude said. And the trunk was emptied while light silk dresses, silk stockings, lace-trimmed blouses, ribbons and belts and bags were turned about the room.

"The grandest trousseau anyone about here ever had," Gladys bubbled, held aloft something sheer and pink and lace. "This cost \$4.98. I wish you could see the tissue—the trousseau of the girl who was marrying the man she herself was in love with. I only hope Morton appreciates it."

But many things hurt, all life was a series of hurts, little and they slid along, they overlapped, they made one big hurt than went on and on as the days went on. Morton drove out that evening and sat with Gladys on the dark porch. Dora could hear her cousin's loud and joyous—and long silences—she was merely buying a present.

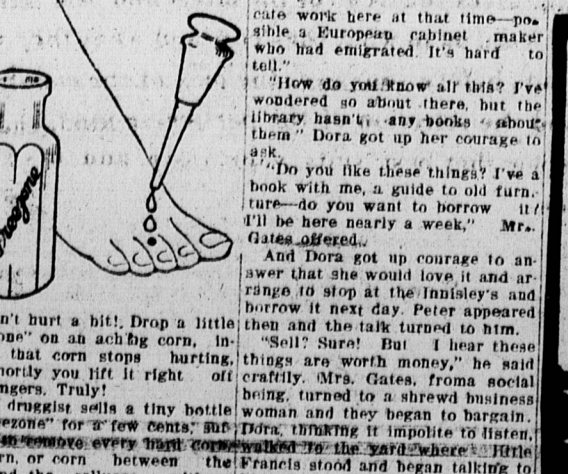
And so it went on. Dora tried to enthrone the thought of the new clothes the loveliest things she had ever seen. But one of the hardest things for a woman to go through, is to see a more fortunate woman show off her bridal finery. It

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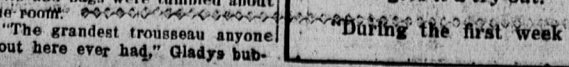
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