



Can a woman triumph over a lost love,
lost children and lost health?—A powerful
story by one of our most noted writers

The Wind's Way

by LAURA GOODMAN SALVERSON

LITTLE GUSTAF sat on a big rock and watched great aunt Borga's sad old house. Overhead in an immensity of azure sky, fluffy ridges of white cloud moved dreamily like long files of small lambs drifting together. Back of him, where the prairie humped itself to counterfeit a hill, hundreds of sheep ranged the stubble.

These things were well enough. So, too, great aunt Borga's three-room house until yesterday. A grey old house, half covered in peavine in summer, more than half hidden in snow in winter. A tipsy grey house with floors like a washboard and long crooked windows that leered into the darkness once the lamps were lit. A good enough house in which to dream of trolls and to sleep with head covered. A hard old house, like great aunt herself, and, one would think, as invulnerable.

But now she was dead—the old one; and her house looked desolate.

Little Gustaf drew his eyes down from the feathery clouds and began a fresh inspection. Yes, it was queerer than queer not to see great aunt in her hide-bottom chair beside the leaning doorway . . . queerer still that now her voice no longer whipped his nervous little body into frightened activity; he somehow missed it. It was so terribly silent in the house and out. More than once that morning he had been on the point of telling the two neighbor women, who had come to "dress the dead," not to whisper. Great aunt hated whisperers. Oh, he knew. Many the strapping he'd got for whispering. But except to give him a bowl of black porridge neither one took any notice of him.

That gave him an idea which now troubled him. Behind the big stove, under a shelf for milk pans and skillets, hung the curled brown strap great aunt had wielded so skillfully to punctuate her charity. Doubtless it was very sinful, but—thanks to those absent-minded neighbors—that ugly bit of rawhide was buried under the rock he sat on so contentedly.

This worried him somewhat at intervals. To take things was a troll's habit . . . and the big silence swirled about him peculiarly—nosed into his peace like the frightened thought of great aunt formerly had done. Sighing deeply, little Gustaf wished the man who drove away the two cows hadn't taken Grepa, the dog, with him. Grepa had such a loving red tongue and a soft way of crowding near in the darkness. A heaviness like a stone on the breast fell upon Gustaf at the thought of it. Doubtless great aunt had been very virtuous to let him have Grepa under the cot of nights . . . he was half minded to dig her strap up again.

The rumble of wheels interrupted him. Down the dusty road a ramshackle democrat creaked nearer and nearer. Now he recognized the black team. It was Herman Jaeger from "store Baer"—Big Farm. What could he want at great aunt Borga's?

Little Gustaf was not long left in doubt. Herman had passed few words with Petra Gillis, who had taken charge in great aunt's house, when she called him sharply:

"Gustaf! Come nu, quickly. Quickly, boy, make use of your legs."

When, just a shade terrified, Gustaf stood before them—the stout, dishevelled woman, and the great gawk of a man—Petra frowned and motioned toward the doorway. "There's your things in the brown bag. Fetch them, Gustaf. Herman Jaeger is taking you home."

"Ja." Herman shifted his snuff and struck an attitude calculated to impress the woman whose one-time charm he

had coveted long ago. "Ja, Gustaf, my boy. I'll make a man of you. No old woman's darling. Make speed now, the missus don't hanker to wait meals for anyone."

Under her fat, Petra nursed a dash of coquetry. "Nu ja, Herman, a woman understands that. With a great farm like yours there's need to have system." Then, knowing well the faults of Margot Jaeger and her "cross," she added maliciously: "Ja, sure, with such a household, Herman, there's need of more than system."

Herman climbed into the democrat as disquieted as Petra had intended. Why in thunder had he changed his mind anyway? No good ever followed

such shiftings. True, Petra wasn't the slim, laughing girl he'd courted but there was gentleness in her. Ja, and understanding. Her eyes were softly brown . . . Margot had had a good farm. Herre Gud, the thing had cost him dear enough! But he collected himself sharply. In a primitive fashion Herman felt constrained to loyalty. This was no way to be thinking. He spat into the road and avoided Petra's eyes. "Nu, there, Gustaf, a little speed.

(Continued on page 30)



The democrat halted at the back door, and the door itself flung open to reveal an astounding spectacle

The Wind's Way

Continued on page 13

Ja, hop into the back, you'll be well enough in the hay." Petra edged closer. "Herman," she smiled, "if it's true that Johanna is failing . . . perhaps you'd remember there's friends of yours would be glad to help any time."

Herman responded with a growl. "Ja, ja, thanks, Petra. But you know Margot . . . Ja, well, goodbye Petra Gillis." "Fool," thought Petra, as she watched the rig whirl away. "Ja, fool he, that Herman Jaeger!"

BUT little Gustaf, sitting in the back of the democrat, seeing great aunt Borga's sad old house grow sadder and sadder as the distance widened, was suddenly alive with hot little aches and queer misgivings. He'd often heard great aunt speak of Herman and his Big Farm. Ja, the biggest in the district, and he'd often wished to see it. But now he was on the way, carted like a bag of meal for next day's fodder, he'd much rather be off on the little hill behind great aunt's house. Oh, oh, he wanted it! And he wanted Grepa. A sob tore at his throat and he bit into his arm to keep back the sound. He knew now, in the terrible revelation of childhood, that this was an end of something precious and dear.

Great aunt had beaten him, had scolded him. But there had been Grepa and the long sweet hours on the hill with nothing to do but keep an eye on the cows and be near when great aunt called him. The grey old house, almost lost to view, registered itself permanently in little Gustaf's mind. A sad old house, full of years and strange dreams.

A sudden bend in the road wiped out all of the familiar world and thrust upon Gustaf a terrifying loneliness. On and on through deepening poplars and occasional fields, the rheumatic democrat bore him. The farther he went the faster the horses seemed to travel; and never once did the big man in the front seat cast a word at the little boy behind. Little Gustaf had not lived by himself for nothing, however. On the very brink of shameful tears he remembered the way the yellow leaves were carried away by winds in autumn. He had watched them long hours—envied them . . . well, now he was being whirled away like they . . .

This comforting thought about to flower, the jolting vehicle pitched around another curve and stopped short.

"Hey, there, you Gustaf. Open the gate—we're home," Herman bawled out gruffly. Trembling with the shock of it, Gustaf half fell to the ground and with legs far from steady flew to the fence. The gate was too high, too heavy, too ponderous, but something eager and proud in the frail little boy kept him straining till the clumsy thing swung wide enough. Herman scowled boorishly; "Prut! You need marrow, young one, and work for the hardening."

Gustaf didn't mind so much. He was puffing, his heart thumped sorely, but he had done it! He had done it! If Herman Jaeger made light of him, why that was only what all others had done. Oh, he knew his limitations, did small Gustaf. A sickly boy with no kin in the world—or worse. That was the way great aunt had expressed it. The "worse" he had never quite understood, but doubtless it expressed him and his attributes perfectly.

But now Herman's yellow frame horse caught his eye. A huge house, thought little Gustaf. As big as half a barn and as ugly. Saffron yellow with blue borders, it sat in the midst of flat greening fields like some tropical monster. And this was the house great aunt had said cost all of five thousand dollars. Little Gustaf gravely decided that something must surely be wrong with him as everyone hinted, for try as he would, he saw no grace whatever about that gigantic yellow box. There wasn't even a peavine to cling its scarlet bloom against the barefaced walls.

The democrat halted at the back door and the door itself flung open to reveal an astounding spectacle. One behind the other, two children edged out upon the porch—a weazened boy with a hump on his back, and a thin little girl with tangled yellow hair and wide vacant eyes. The boy with the hump jumped up and down like a monkey, shouting a queer mixed greeting: "Pa, pa! Johanna fell down stairs again! Bump, bump, down, down, like a ball! Ma said, 'Next time you'll break your neck, Johanna, and save us the trouble.' Ha! Ha! Ha!" He laughed uproariously and struck out at the vacant Johanna who stood like a statue beside him. "And when Hilda picked her up, Johanna said—"

"Shut up! Shut up, before I make you!" Herman bellowed like a goaded animal. "Shut up, Jergens, and tell your ma I'll stable the horses—"

Like a troll of darkness Margot appeared in the doorway, a tall, rawboned woman with the eyes of a hawk. "Nu, Herman Jaeger, you'll leave the horses stand till Ole gets them. Dinner's waited half an hour already."

Without a word Herman tied the horses. "Gustaf," said he a moment later, "step forward. Speak to the missus—"

"speak up, there's none here to bite." But Gustaf couldn't speak up. He was much too terrified of the granite woman who stared him up and down so coldly.

"Humph! A spindly brat!" Margot's thin lips curled back from remarkably fine white teeth in a cruel smile. "Come here, boy Gustaf." She caught hold of his arms, pinched hard into the flabby muscles, spun him about smartly and gave him a swift shove over the threshold. "In with you; you're starved as a guttersnipe," said she, and laughed in a way to remind one of breaking glass.

Still, had poor Gustaf known it, his thinness, his fear, his very worst defects, spoke in his favor with the strange mistress of Big Farm. With the hand of God so heavy on her own children, it was hardly to be expected that perfection in another's progeny would ameliorate resentment she hugged to her breast.

In the house a deeper dread than ever descended upon Gustaf. There was a coldness here which differed vastly from the coldness of great aunt's little house. Great aunt had chilled one certainly with her sharp speech and feelingly vitriolic burned like a volcano. Great aunt had been guilty of cruelty, but one suspected also she had the courage to love.

Not that young Gustaf had known it, or could analyze the difference. But the something in him which fed upon the clouds and slanting sunlight and slow shadow had made him sense it. Here, in Herman Jaeger's big house the cold was the cold of dead things, of dead things unregretted.

The kitchen was large, oblong, well lighted, for the five windows were bare of curtains, as indeed was every window in that house. The gigantic range shone with black and glowed with fire, yet it seemed to Gustaf the warmth it gave no comfort. In the middle of the floor a long table stood riveted down with iron brackets. A blue and white oilcloth served for cover. The dishes were heavy ironstone ware. Gustaf remembered with an odd pang that great aunt had always set their little table with Norway china and little white centers done in Hardanger. He had given it no thought before. Now it seemed it had represented something intimate and treasureable.

But the food which Hilda, the "hired help," a red-haired, fresh-faced country girl, brought to the table was of a sort Gustaf had never known. Great dishes of steaming vegetables drained in butter, and a cut of meat hot from the black kettle that positively brought Gustaf's eyes out of his head. And biscuits and bread and piles of raisin cake . . . oh, oh, Gustaf came out of his agonizing fear to appreciate that even an icheous may have its compensations.

So far he had stood quiet silent and neglected, his shabby grey cap in his hands. Herman had gone to the sink behind the door to wash himself and slick back his thatch of hair. When he strode to the table, Margot swung round from stirring something on the stove. "Wash yourself, boy—what's his name—Gustaf? And take your place by Jergens. You'll need a deal of feeding to be worth your keep!"

THEN happened a strange thing. Just as the shy young boy was about to slip into his place, Johanna gave a queer little cry and darted at him. "No, no! Jergens pinches—Jergens—!" Whatever thought had been forming in her mind fled away, the vacant expression descended like a mask, but her hand still clutched his arm.

Herman dropped the knife from his hand; Hilda stood irresolute, half frightened, and a thundercloud dawned on Margot's brow. Everyone turned to her—waited for her to

end the strange tension. She ended it with that cold brittle laugh of hers.

"Nu, well, don't stand like a fool, boy—Gustaf. Don't you understand what Johanna said? She wants you beside her. Jergens, get up and take Johanna's place—and keep it hereafter."

Hence on, the meal progressed uninterrupted and since no one seemed to notice him, and Margot had piled his plate prodigiously, small Gustaf forgot his nervousness and ate as he had never eaten before. But he was not unobserved. Margot watched him from the tail of her steely grey eye and strange thoughts drove at her. So this was Solvie's child! Solvie, who had stolen the lover of her youth only to desert him and his son when a fresh fancy took her . . . and Johanna, simple Johanna—she scowled at the thought and sent a plate of biscuits spinning toward her husband—Johanna liked the scare-rabbit little boy. Well, best to see how things would go . . .

Herman spake between gulps: "Guess I'll set Gustaf to piling green wood—it's all he's good for as yet."

Margot seemed not to hear. "Hilda," said she, "fetch that jug of milk I left in the pantry." Then turning to her husband: "Ole piles green wood well enough. There's more doing around the house than I have time for."

Herman flung a cautious glance at the masterful Margot and whatever he had meant to say remained unspoken. "Nu well, nu well," he muttered, and held out his empty cup for Hilda to refill.

Gustaf had no passion for piling green wood, but he thought when the door slammed behind Herman's back, and Jergens had hopped off after him, that it would be ever so much nicer in the wood yard, where he could watch the sky he loved and breath the fresh prairie vapors, than to wait about the house for dame Margot's commands.

Then again a strange thing happened. Simple Johanna, never clear on the obvious, revealed for the first time the possession of a singular faculty. Her thin little hand touched him timidly: "Never mind, Johanna knows . . . but the 'in-you-hurts' go with the wind—"

Margot read only madness in the queer words, but she marked well the friendly gesture and let it decide Gustaf's fate.

"Well, boy Gustaf," she said harshly, "it's not likely you'd be fit for much with those spindle legs and skinny arms of yours. Best to put you weeding the vegetable patch . . . and yes, Johanna—Johanna doesn't see well. Better keep an eye on her. You understand?"

"Yes, mam," Gustaf answered meekly enough and held out his hand to Johanna, "I'll watch her, Mrs. Jaeger, so she don't fall nowhere."



Dame Margot span her own yarn.

THAT was the beginning. As the days passed Margot noticed with a feeling of relief she would have considered weakness to confess, that into Johanna's vacant little face an expression of sweet peace was creeping. Ja, it took a secret load off her heart to feel that at last her unfortunate child was safe from bodily harm. Little Gustaf more than watched Johanna. He was, as it were, the mainspring of her hands and feet. But, what the sweet-faced child with her clouded intellect became to Gustaf, none knew save the God of winds and water and seed carried on the wings of storm.

Herman demurred at the arrangement only once. The cryptic reply he got from his Margot shut his mouth effectively. Nor did the mischievous little hunchback, who repulsed his mother with his unsightliness a thousandfold more than Johanna with her simplicity, play

his pranks on Gustaf with any security. Busy as she was, dame Margot had a way of catching Jergens and cuffing him soundly.

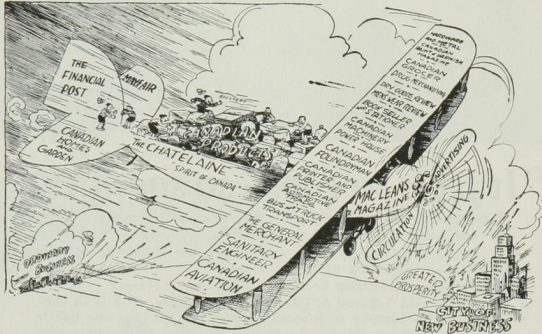
But though Gustaf met with no blows at the Jaegers, his happy moments were spent with Johanna roaming the woods for berries or hunting stray turkeys and eggs. Or, when together, they weeded in the garden. Simple Johanna was Gustaf's good fairy, for he knew and was duly grateful that the long hours of freedom were his because of her.

Simple Johanna brought him more. She brought him a sense of being necessary to someone. He was not good-for-nothing, sickly Gustaf to Johanna. He was her knight and champion in a world that plainly affrighted her. She nestled up to him as simply and contentedly after a run through the fields as Grepa had done.

With the wisdom of unbiased childhood Gustaf came to understand Johanna as none else [Continued on page 58]

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Designs for the Craftswoman

Continued from page 49

stamped on good quality huck, hemmed sixteen by thirty inches—a generous size—and with them boil-proof black floss. Stitches are the easy old standbys, satin, outline and running stitches only, with an instruction sheet as usual.

THE new shadow appliqué is simple to do and practical to launder. It gives the sheer glass curtains the most colorful transparency that one can possibly imagine. Between two thicknesses of marquisette, voile or organdie, the designs of flowers, leaves and urn are placed, basted, then sewed with even running stitches in two strands of floss, either in black or in the colors of the materials. No edges are turned on these which, of course, simplifies the work and gives similar finished appearance from both sides. Design spots must be of a firm weave.

The design itself is worked in four colors, rose-pink, blue, yellow and green, suitable for almost any bedroom or living room. A pleasing variety of hue with perhaps a dominant one around which the harmony is planned, is more favored today than the extreme oneness of color once stressed in a room's furnishings. Placed in a vertical panel, the posies solve the problem of French doors or a single door panel. It may be centred on a sheer bedspread over some plain tint undercovering. Horizontally placed for glass curtains, the same units are in a hem which graduates from about four to nine inches at the centre, as shown in the sketch. In either placing, the veiled color with light shining through, is a con-

stant joy. If you do not care to buy our tints and curtain material, pattern number 227 will be sent for 18 cents. This supplies exact cutting pattern for each part with instructions and diagram showing their placings. If you want to buy the material for the design parts, nineteen units for one panel or curtain, stamped on finest, firm weave, fast color gingham in the four colors, as number 228 at 45 cents, will be sent to you.



Silhouette towels are fun to embroider and make splendid gifts. A pair of them, stamped on good quality huck, is number 619 at 67 cents.

The Bride Furnishes Her Home

Continued from page 19

pieces of furniture away from their logical place along the walls, and scatter ornaments and photographs indiscriminately on tables, mantelshelf, piano, desk, and so on. It is impossible ever to achieve a restful or

pleasant atmosphere with such decorating tactics as these. Let the bride conserve her space as she would her charm, and let her remember that many a home has failed in its mission by being over-ambitious.



The Wind's Way

Continued from page 3

ever would. She couldn't, for some queer reason, think—she felt. Her thoughts expressed in words were like a tangle of thickets, but behind them was, none the less, the feeling that had lit up her dim little soul.

Gustaf knew when Johanna got down on her knees by a bed of daisies that she was feeling their message. Indeed, she looked at him sometimes with a peculiar glow in her face and a finger to her lips as if she heard them speaking. And when she sat still as a golden image in the leafy forest, the birds would circle round her yellow head and the tiny squirrels run across her little feet unafrighted.

From Johanna, Gustaf learned how loud the silence speaks; how friendly at heart are the tiny forest creatures. Sometimes after such quiet hours the cloud passed from Johanna's mind and she brought to Gustaf a

flying thought or two from the hidden country of her innocent spirit: "Gustaf," she said to him once, "God is like a big lap to sit in . . . but you can't hear His heart for crying . . ."

ALL in all it was a peaceful time for Gustaf. True, no one troubled to bespeak him kindly except Hilda, who occasionally on the sly called him her *stakels unge*, her good little one. But in her cold fashion Margot valued the boy for the peace of days he brought her. Even Herman was beginning to see that there were many ways of service. The storms that had always followed Johanna's mishaps were now no more—Herre Gud, he'd feed a dozen orphans for such a blessing!

But it was in late September that Gustaf,

Continued on page 61

unknown to himself, won as much of Margot's good graces as any mortal could. He was picking potatoes in the big field bordering the highway—that obtrusive government highway which, to Margot's everlasting chagrin, destroyed the privacy of her treasured kitchen garden where gooseberries and currants and a lilac bush or two relieved the monotony of endless rows of cabbage and carrots and cauliflower. Margot was no less fond of savories and grew a variety of herbs for drying. On this particular September morning she was on her knees gathering majoram and sage, and quite hidden from view by the dark-leaved lilac trees, when a group of children came shrieking down the road. As if by appointment they stopped outside the fence where Gustaf and Johanna were filling potato sacks.

"Hey, Gustaf!" called a shrill voice Margot recognized well enough, "aren't you ever going to school?"

"I don't know," answered Gustaf, "maybe I don't want to."

"Ho, ho!" laughed the second torment, "you'd want to if you could. Orphans ain't got no wants anyhow."

Silence far from golden prevailed a moment, then the first voice flung out boldly: "Ho, you'll be crazy like the rest if you don't, Gustaf—crazy like Johanna!"

"Hee, hee! Crazy Johanna! Crazy Johanna!" A chorus of voices pitched into the cruel refrain.

Margot arose from her knees, anger burning red in her heart. But Gustaf was quicker. Little and thin, he was over the fence like a monkey. "Get away!" he screamed. "You lie! You lie! Johanna's not crazy. Johanna's good. Johanna's beautiful and good . . . Johanna is still, like God."

It was so unexpected and sudden; so out of all believing that the entire group just gaped astonishment, and before they could recover someone had spied Dame Margot and given warning. Like so many yelping coyotes the lot of them took to their heels and fled.

But Gustaf had not seen Margot. Without a glance toward the house he rejoined Johanna crouching beside a pile of sacks. He put his protective arms about her. "Never mind, Johanna," said he, knowing very well that for all her clouded intellect she had felt the unkindness intended. "Never mind. That was just a bad noise."

Margot winced; her hand unconsciously crept to her heart. How pitiful they were, these two . . . Ja, but now Johanna's pale cameo-face lighted with a smile never to be forgotten. "I know, I know." Her voice rang true as running water. She flung wide her little hands in rapturous dismissal: "Like that, the wind takes all the hurt away, Gustaf. Some day Johanna goes too."

That night at supper Margot told Gustaf he was to have for his own the small room that opened off the kitchen. "I'm not hankering for a sick brat come winter," was the way she put it. But Gustaf got no less joy, for all that, out of a featherbed and spring, not to mention a lamp that routed every shadow while he said his long Scandinavian prayers.

That winter Margot indulged another peculiar whim. She decided to board the teacher. As usual Herman backed down on his argument before it was fairly made. After all, if Margot wanted to increase her labors, why should he care? The house was hers, anyway. He hadn't even the heart to question her about the board money. What she would do with it, or why she should trouble about such a trifle—she, with he knew not how much in the bank!

The teacher was no less puzzled. For the first remark he got from Mrs. Jaeger rudely jumbled the opinions he had had of her. "Alex Tomlinson," said she, "I knew your pa. He was a decent sort—could keep his mouth shut, you understand. You'll lack for nothing here but the price you've got to pay mayn't suit you . . . I want you to teach boy Gustaf after hours. Ja, and I'll expect you to follow your pa's example."

Gustaf could hardly believe his senses

when Alex called him that first evening. Called him into his cheerful warm room to sit at a shining oak table, dignified by books and papers and a brass weight to keep foolscap from flying about. Oh, oh—it was surely a dream! Margot would call him in a moment to run down cellar or to fetch cream from the milkhouse. But Margot never called him till the two hours agreed upon ended. A world heretofore undreamed of opened to the boy. Queerer than queer, the things to be learned and the thrill of the learning!

In the daytime Gustaf worked in the wool room. For Dame Margot span her own yarn, knitted the family stockings, mitts and sweaters, and wove the bed blankets. The wool room was the largest in the house; its wide, gleaming windows opened on the garden and the grain fields. It was furnished with a primitive loom, a knitting machine, benches and tables, baskets and bins, and long racks for hanging the skeins after dyeing. There was a sewing machine in the farthest corner—a modern invention in an ancient room.

Gustaf was almost as happy here as he was in the fields. Indeed, when he and Johanna sat in the midst of billowing piles of soft wool, carding for dear life, it seemed to the imaginative boy that they were spinning next summer's clouds. Here, too, Margot left off much of her harshness. In a blue gown and white apron, sitting at her spinning wheel, she seemed another woman. Sometimes she even sang. Plaintive snatches barely heard above the merry whirring of the wheel . . . quiet passages known and loved in the homeland . . . in "Gamle Norge," where she had been young and full of gaiety like other girls.

There were other pleasures besides. Hilda had found her a lover and in consequence had developed a violent interest in dress. Every evening when the seemingly endless duties were done, she settled down with a pile of catalogues before her. To make certain of missing no opportunity, Hilda sent for every available catalogue. Clothes were the immediate necessity but you could never tell . . . Ja, it was best to be informed on everything whatsoever. Furniture, machinery, livestock and seeds.

Oh, oh! sang that larking heart of Gustaf's at sight of Hilda's seed catalogues. He hadn't even known such colors existed! Not on paper . . . in the sunset, yes. But on paper! And who, if you please, put them there? Alex explained about printing but that did not satisfy Gustaf. No, no, Alex didn't understand. A machine couldn't put those lovely things on blank paper!

Well, Alex had to admit that someone drew them first; made the design, so to speak. Gustaf felt as if something gigantic, strong and eternal stirred in his breast. He grew pale; he shivered with nervous excitement. And he turned to simple Johanna. "Oh, Johanna, now I know! That is what I'm going to do. I'm going to put the clouds and the trees and flowers on paper."

"And the Big Silence," said Johanna, "God's silence, Gustaf, that wraps you round and round."

EIGHT years later, when Gustaf was fifteen, Margot fell from the hayloft where she was hunting for nests and hurt her spine. Fortunately, an automobile had replaced the ancient democrat so that Jergens brought assistance from town in remarkably good time. But even then it proved useless. Unless, that is, from Margot's point of view. The doctor saved her life after a fashion, but she was never able to walk again; would never be good for anything again.

Herman could scarcely comprehend it at first. Margot the capable, the tireless, the strong—to lie all day in bed from week's end to week's end! Slowly it began to dawn on him what a power his wife had been. Elsa, who had replaced Hilda of former days, was a middle-aged woman, but before a month had elapsed everything seemed bound from bad to worse. Things were forever being left till tomorrow—a tomorrow that never dawned. Jergens's temper grew unbearable. He had a natural

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Builds-up Brain, Nerve and Body

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bent for mechanics and liked tinkering with the farm machinery, but he hated having to help Elsa with the cows. And when Jergens hated a thing he had a way of making everyone near him suffer.

Gustaf, of course, had no say in what was assigned to him. But, partly because his health had never been robust, and more especially, since Johanna, despite her eighteen years was neither content nor safe—ignominious jobs that Jergens sneered at—fell to him.

The chickens, the pigs, the silly turkeys, and the now negligible flock of sheep, these were his care. Still, since Margot permitted him half days at school, and already some faint hope of some day reaching the city was forming in his mind, he troubled himself with nothing else.

Margot was the one who troubled. Not so long before her accident the teacher had come to Big Farm about Gustaf. He was certain, this inquisitive teacher, that the lad had genuine talent. Had the makings of a real artist in him! Margot had laughed him to scorn. Ja, well, if it were so, what was that to her? Hadn't she fed him and clothed him for eight years already? Was she not entitled to some return? Some intelligent service to equalize the years he hadn't been worth his keep?

The teacher was stubborn and stuck to his point. Gustaf would never be worth his keep on the farm. God had made him for a different mission. Humph! Margot chuckled at that. . . . God had queer ways of appointing his agents then or made a poor business of getting his own where he wanted them! Let God go on making his artist!—she'd have no hand in such doings. . . .

But now, lying on her back in a cloister-bare upper chamber, she thought about it recurrently. She was thinking about it when Herman blundered in one mid-morning. "Nu, then, how are you?" he began, looking down at the pale, eagle-eyed woman in nervous discomfort. "No worse—eh, Margot?"

"No worse, Herman. But what's troubling you? Is it the insurance or the payment on the tractor?"

"No, no. It's like this, Margot: there's nothing right since—since your accident. Elsa's all right—ja, sure, you'd not have hired her unless—but she can't manage like you, Margot."

"Well?" The sick woman's voice was arctic-crisp though her eyes had about them a volcanic intensity. "Out with it, Herman Jaeger. Who can manage as I did?"

Herman shifted uneasily, slow waves of red dyeing his bull neck. "Nu, da, Margot, I didn't say there's any could do as you've done. But . . . ja, well, I thought—she's a kind woman, Margot—"

Margot laughed that chilling brittle laugh of hers. "So? You're thinking of Petra Gillis? Petra Gillis from Upsala?"

"She's a kind woman," reiterated Herman mulishly. "She'd be a comfort to you, Margot. Ja, I know she's a kind woman."

Margot closed her eyes a long moment, as much to hide a contemptuous amusement as to shut out the vision of Herman, stupid, burly—the husband she had married to assuage a wounded pride. When she opened them again she almost smiled. "Nu, ja, doubtless you're right, Herman Jaeger. Petra Gillis is kind enough—quite kind enough!"

Two days later Petra Gillis, a trifle stouter for the intervening years but otherwise little changed, came to pay her respects to the bedridden mistress. She was neatly dressed and her wavy brown hair made an agreeable frame for her high-colored healthy peasant face.

"Margot Jaeger," said she, taking the invalid's hand with genuine sympathy. "it's sad I am to see you like this." Margot knew that she meant it. Petra may have hated her formerly but now pity set her on a pinnacle where she could view Margot with magnanimous sympathy. Ja, Petra would find the business of heaping coals of fire on a rival's head too sweet a pastime to forego it readily! Smiling cynically Margot pointed

to a chair. "Make yourself comfortable, Petra, and let's come to terms. You'll have a free hand about the house but there are some things I'll manage. No, don't interrupt me. What proof are words one way or the other? Ja, well, then it's this: There's to be no interfering with Gustaf. He does as I say and none else, none, Petra Gillis. I trust that's clear?"

"Clearer than clear," sniffed Petra and went out feeling slighted.

THE YEAR dragged on into spring. Petra proved in no ways the capable executive Margot had been, but she managed to introduce a certain atmosphere of lazy comfort heretofore lacking. Elsa had grown gossipy at table and Herman often indulged a quiet smoke before returning to the fields. "Now, Herman," Petra would encourage him, "a bit of rest don't hurt at your age. The work goes better for it."

Even Jergens had mellowed his biting speeches. Petra pitied him into it. "Ja, poor one," she'd say, "it's no wonder you're bitter." Which, of course, took all the joy out of his snarling. But with Johanna she made no headway; from the first the girl shrank from her. To inhabit the same room with Petra affected Johanna painfully. Consequently, Petra not only disliked the afflicted daughter of the house, but stood in actual fear of her. Who was to say when that harmless figure might break into violence? Ja, it was thanks to Gustaf they weren't all murdered long ago! Poor, patient Gustaf! But Gustaf, fiercely loyal in his boy's heart to poor Johanna, resented Petra's garrulous overtures and tactless praise as he had never dreamt of resenting slights and abuses.

Alot in her barren chamber Margot somehow sensed the trend of things. But, it cannot truthfully be said to have increased her misery. What Herman and Jergens and Petra chose to think or plan affected her little. True, Jergens she pitied somewhat: he was so ugly—ugly as the union that had caused his being. But he was sharp enough, and shrewd enough. And the wealth she meant to leave him would efface many an impertinence. Herman, too, would be paid. . . . Ja, thanks be! She would play the piper for his sorry music! But Johanna, simple Johanna—Herre Gud! There was the thing that twisted her heart. How criminal her marriage had been—aye, and how foolish. How foolish to have thought one wrong would right another. . . . How despicable she had been to marry Herman just because he was handsome in a healthy animal fashion and was coveted by pretty Petra Gillis. Fool, fool, to imagine that any panacea of pride could tear the image of the beloved from her own jealous heart!

There was none to see her now. Surely, she might indulge a healing tear, the burden of memories was so wormwood-bitter. A bitterness revealed innocent whenever she looked at Johanna. Johanna the beautiful, the innocent, the dead-in-life! She thought sometimes that Johanna was her very soul—Margot Poen's soul before she had sold herself for pride's sake—her own soul, outside herself and utterly bewildered. Aye, Johanna's body was a negligible, soft thing in which the lost soul fretted ceaselessly. Even so, poor Johanna's pale unconscious flesh sheltered a pure spirit, whereas she, Margot Jaeger, was nothing but a body animated by cold pride. Aye, Johanna was the real trouble. There was no way to pay off Johanna. The things of this world were meaningless to her—ja, as meaningless as they were to God himself.

A timid knock interrupted Margot's sorry musings. Very shamefaced, Gustaf edged in through a crack in the door, in his hands a generous sheaf of spring flowers and tender green leaves. "I thought maybe you'd like them. You'll know how the fields are by looking at them—there's ever so many kinds."

Margot felt ashamed; the thing touched her so deeply. But being Margot, she frowned: "Nu, ja, put them in the pitcher yonder, Gustaf." She wanted to thank him but the habit of years was too strong. Still, she couldn't let him go. "Sit down, Gustaf,

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I want to talk to you. No, don't be scared, child; I've no fault to find." Strange it had never struck her before how pitiful it was that none should expect but harshness of her. Harshness, and in the old days, physical comfort . . .

"Just why did you think I'd care to imagine the fields, now I'm bedridden, Gustaf?"

Gustaf's slate-grey eyes widened perceptibly. "Why—why—guess I don't know why, Mrs. Jaeger; only they're beautiful."

"Beautiful? Ja, well—Johanna too is beautiful; it's not always worth much—beauty!"

At once the shy lad bristled. "I'm not meaning to be smart, Mrs. Jaeger, but Johanna's like the sunshine. Johanna's like—"

"Ja, there, there, boy Gustaf. Never mind. Tell me instead what you'd like best in the world?"

Instantly his heart spoke. "To make pictures, Mrs. Jaeger, beautiful pictures."

"But what good are pictures?" dame Margot pursued relentlessly.

Again Gustaf looked his astonishment. "Why—why—oh, Mrs. Jaeger, pictures keep things for you . . . things like dreams and thoughts, and . . . oh, everything!"

Margot laughed at that. And to Gustaf's wonder there was no metallic coldness about it. "Run on, now, Gustaf. See to the lambs. Petra tells me there are some feeble ones. Run on, child, you're a good lad, boy Gustaf!"

Gustaf wondered as he ran down the stairs why this unwanted kindness should make him feel so sad—so crumpled inside. Surely, it was queerer than queer, the way a boy's heart acted.

That same evening while Petra and Elsa made a great to-do over the supper preparations, Gustaf bethought himself of a sickly little lamb heartlessly disowned by an unnatural mother. The poor little creature had nestled in Johanna's arms like a tired child, but so far all attempts to feed it had failed. On Petra's own suggestion he brought it to the kitchen where the comfort of fire and warm milk might coax it back to life.

To Gustaf's happy surprise the experiment was progressing beautifully when Jergens stamped in, slamming the door behind him. The sudden noise and the strange voice terrified the little creature. With a desperate effort the lamb burst from Gustaf, barely escaping the coal scuttle. Gustaf plunged after his baa-ing patient and in his nervous haste upset a gorgeous lemon pie just removed from the oven.

Petra was not a bad-tempered woman. But lemon pies were her speciality. Besides, she was exceeding hot from a day's bread-baking. In sudden fury she caught Gustaf by his collar-band and smacked him soundly. Poor Gustaf, aghast at his crime, scarcely felt the blow—scarcely resented Jergen's ill-natured snicker.

But Johanna, until now a vacant watcher from the hallway, "felt" the whole brunt of it. A hurt, shameful and stinging, had come to Gustaf . . . the hateful stranger in the house had struck him! Eya! the blow fell on Gustaf but the rebound shattered Johanna. With a shriek to freeze one's blood Johanna pounced upon Petra, clawing and biting with the frightful strength of the mad.

Fortunately, Herman heard the shrieking and came on the jump. It took all his strength to tear the girl loose. Petra was an ignoble sight, the blood streaming down her face from great gashes, her hair wild about her, her blouse and apron in shreds. Johanna was terrible. She seemed no longer human. Gentleness and grace, forever worsed by senseless black fury, she rolled her poor eyes aimlessly, moaning and hissing like an animal in pain.

The slightest move on Petra's part set the stricken girl writhing. Herman's teeth chattered with horror. Jergens stared transfixed, his nasty wit for once silenced. Gustaf, pale as death, implored in vain to be recognized. When Elsa brought a stout rope to bind Johanna he fled upstairs sobbing piteously.

He scarcely knew whither he stumbled. Not till he reached Margot's door did he hear her calling—calling and jangling her bell in frenzied agony. The mere look of her steadied Gustaf. Before such awful suffering all lesser grief gave way.

She had pulled herself high on her pillows and hung forward on her hands staring at the door in helpless misery. A broken heap of human woe, old as the oldest pain, so she seemed to boy Gustaf. He leaped forward: "Mrs. Jaeger, Mrs. Jaeger, you'll kill yourself! You'll break your cast—"

"God, what do I matter, child! Gustaf, what's wrong down there . . . what started the . . . mischief?"

Strange how little fear he had of Margot now. Instead, he fell to stroking her cold hands awkwardly, slow tears rolling down his face. "Oh, Mrs. Jaeger, it's my fault. It's my fault. The blow didn't matter—I didn't mind it—But Johanna's so good—"

"Someone struck you, is that it?"

"Oh, she should have, Mrs. Jaeger. I deserved it. I knocked down her pie—but I didn't mean it."

"You knocked down a pie and Petra struck you?"

Gustaf began weeping, mortally ashamed of himself; utterly miserable. Petra would think him a sneak, Margot despise him for a baby, and Johanna, his own loving Johanna, was forever lost!

Margot let him cry; her thoughts busy with a thousand things; her ears intent on sounds from below. So, thought she bitterly, Petra had struck the boy for a paltry accident—a pie made in her kitchen from her larder and for a price! Petra had struck Gustaf after being told that she should never interfere with either him or Johanna . . . Herre Gud! She knew what those dreadful sounds signified . . .

Lagging steps dragged up the stairs. Margot's face went a shade whiter if that be possible, her eyes narrowed to mere slits. Her husband was coming to tell her the dreadful truth. Never a time so terrible as this—never a moment when she had hated him so utterly!

But Herman was not a man to hate when he stumbled toward her. He was so frightened, so shaken, so unbelievably pitiable . . . a hulk of a man with will and energy and heart wrung out of him. Even his voice came broken and hoarse. "Gud. She's gone, Margot—clean gone! I've sent Jergens for the doctor."

Margot had meant to accuse Petra but thought better of it. "What started it?" she asked instead, and was answered by Elsa who came hurrying forward with a message from the now all but hysterical Petra.

"'Twas just a light cuff, Mrs. Jaeger. Sure the lad didn't even blink. But poor Johanna took it amiss . . . And now Petra Gillis wants me to say she's of a mind to go this very night. Ja, she won't stay, Mrs. Jaeger—in danger of her life!"

Herman groaned like a wounded bear. Despite her suffering Margot could have laughed to hear him. Poor Herman! How well she knew what a comfort his flattering Petra was . . . Well, she'd die when her time came and they might rejoice as they wished, but first she had other things to accomplish.

"When the doctor comes," said she coolly, "tell him to come to me. Ja, and tell Petra that for the night at least she's well enough where she is. In the morning I'll see her too."

What passed between Margot and the doctor none ever knew, except that they decided it was best to remove Johanna to an institution in the city. But the day after, Herr Isfeld drove up to the house to be closeted for several hours with the mistress. Petra didn't like the look of that. Herr Isfeld was a clever lawyer, and she, for one, didn't trust him to be above influencing a sick woman's judgment. But there again curiosity got little satisfaction. When Petra hinted, Margot came out bluntly and silenced her forever: "Now you've got Johanna out of the way, and Gustaf will soon follow, what more do you want, Petra Gillis? Ja, what more? Sure, if I could



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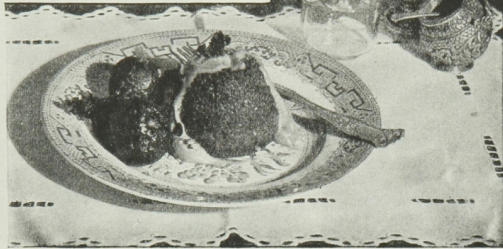
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hasten the process I'd die for you . . . eh, why not? You so kind to poor Herman!"

Yes, for all her broken back and pain-ridden body, Margot had a power that commanded attention. Margot had inherited more than Big Farm from her thrifty father; a fact not to be forgotten in that household.

Two days after Johanna's pitiful departure Margot called for Gustaf. As usual she came to the point at once: "I suppose you know there's no longer any reason why I should keep you here?" said she, harsh as of old.

But Gustaf had lost his fear of Margot. "I know, Mrs. Jaeger, but I'd like to stay . . . I'm pretty strong now, Mrs. Jaeger."

"So! You've changed your mind about those silly pictures?"

"No, but—"

"There, there, boy Gustaf. Buts aren't of any account. There's something I want you to do. You're to go to the city—to a place I've arranged and you're to learn that painting nonsense. And sometimes . . . that is when you want to, you understand, you might visit Johanna."

"Mrs. Jaeger! Oh, Mrs. Jaeger! I didn't know you were so good! I didn't know anyone but God and Johanna were so good!"

"There, there, run away now. Get your few things ready. Herr Isfeld comes for you this evening."

But when he was gone Margot turned her face to the wall and wept as she hadn't

wept since Gustaf's mother robbed her those age-long years ago.

BECAUSE there is truth in this story it ends as life has a way of ending. Petra stayed on at Big Farm and if she resented Margot's stubborn vitality, she none the less served her faithfully. Johanna died quietly a year after Gustaf won his first honors. The following summer he went to Toronto and began a definite struggle in the field of art. At twenty-six his two canvases "Lost Cottage," Great Aunt Borga's vine-covered cottage, and "The Dreamer," Johanna glorified, won him permanent fame.

When Margot got his telegram she thought her duty done and her cup running over. But, when two months later, he rushed in upon her, such a beautiful unspoiled sparkling young man, she felt ashamed to have suspected God of such niggardliness.

When, still later, he hung upon the wall his sketch of the great portrait—Johanna as he had known her to be, Margot flung wide her arms. "Boy Gustaf! Boy Gustaf! It is all true what you said. God and Johanna, they made you to be a keeper of dreams."

"Perhaps," Gustaf returned seriously. "But you were the wind that whipped us all into action. Mother Margot, if I'm proud at all it's because I've made good your high expectations."

"There, there!" Margot gave him a shove as of old. "Go down now, boy Gustaf. Petra has made you her famous lemon pie!"



You Can't Love the Boss

Continued from page 11

She was silent. He ventured a glance at her. She was exquisite. A soft red cloak trimmed with ermine showed up the glossy blackness of her hair. It was nice the way her hair curled over her white skin about the ears. She turned suddenly and he met her eyes. "Well?" she questioned.

He tried hard. But somehow she was still Miss Dent. He felt he knew that he ought to make an effort to forget that she was taking him out; that she was worth more money than he was; that she was his boss. But somehow . . .

"Where are you taking me tonight?" He made a half-baked attempt at jollity.

He felt a white kid-gloved hand insert itself insinuatingly into his. "Where would you like to go, Harvey?"

Harvey? Was she crazy? He felt his own fingers tighten spasmodically. But her hand slid away.

"I—er—well anywhere you think suitable, Miss Dent," he replied.

She turned her head away, and he thought he heard her give a little chortle. Was she laughing at him? In a flash he became furious. "Let's go to the Old Orchard," he said.

Almost before he had realized, he seized hold of the mouthpiece, shouting instructions to the chauffeur.

Immediately afterward a species of panic settled upon him. What had he done now? She was the boss. Supposing she had made plans already? Oh, well—he leaned back to await developments.

They had the cabaret dinner, and came out in time for the theatre. After the theatre the big car was waiting for them outside. It took them back to her apartment.

It was the first time he had been up there. She left him in its green and white coolness.

He noted the art moderne lamps and sofa. He tried to gather together his recollections of the evening. It seemed imperative that he should do this immediately, so that he should know how he stood with her.

It was bewildering. She insisted on calling him "Harvey" and he persisted with "Miss Dent," all the evening. She was charming, he thought to himself. And yet, was that all he thought of her? He struggled to separate the girl—the lovely dark creature in patrician red, with eyes like lambent wells—from the steady hazel eyes, the straight and small mouth, the trim and composed figure of Miss Dent, of Dent's Incorporated.

"Well, let's be comfortable," the voice of the lovely creature drawled behind him.

He turned, and saw that she had slipped on something a little less formal. He could not explain the precise difference, but he saw that this was foaming and shimmering, revealing and deliciously feminine.

She sat down on the art moderne and reached for a cigarette. "Aren't you going to smoke, Harvey?"

"Oh, thanks," he said nervously. He fumbled with a match, and gave her a light. Over the top of the flame her eyes met his. They were assured, confident, unembarrassed . . .

"For goodness sake, relax, man," she whispered in an amused voice. "I'm not going to eat you."

Harvey pulled himself together. He inhaled deeply, puffing out the smoke in a long confident stream from between straight lips.

"Really, Miss Dent, I'm quite comfortable," he said. "It's awfully nice in here . . ." She laid her cigarette down. The foaming and shimmering billowed itself, and he