

HER FATHER'S DAUGHTER



GENE STRATTON-PORTER

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By **GENE STRATTON-PORTER**

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A GIRL OF THE LIMBERLOST,  
THE HARVESTER, FRECKLES, ETC.

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TO  
JAMES SWEETSER LAWSHÉ  
TO WHOM I OWE ALL THAT I KNOW  
ABOUT THE FLOWERS OF CALIFORNIA

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## **CHAPTER I.**

### **“What Kind of Shoes Are the Shoes You Wear?”**

“What makes you wear such funny shoes?”

Linda Strong thrust forward a foot and critically examined the narrow vamp, the projecting sole, the broad, low heel of her well-worn brown calfskin shoe. Then her glance lifted to the face of Donald Whiting, one of the most brilliant and popular seniors of the high school. Her eyes narrowed in a manner habitual to her when thinking intently.

“Never you mind my shoes,” she said deliberately. “Kindly fix your attention on my head piece. When you see me allowing any Jap in my class to make higher grades than I do, then I give you leave to say anything you please concerning my head.”

An angry red rushed to the boy's face. It was an irritating fact that in the senior class of that particular Los Angeles high school a Japanese boy stood at the head. This was embarrassing to every senior.

“I say,” said Donald Whiting, “I call that a mean thrust.”

“I have a particular reason,” said Linda.

“And I have 'a particular reason',” said Donald, “for being interested in your shoes.”

Linda laughed suddenly. When Linda laughed, which was very seldom, those within hearing turned to look at her. Hers was not a laugh that can be achieved. There were a few high places on the peak of Linda's soul, and on one of them homed a small flock of notes of rapture; notes as sweet as the voice of the white-banded mockingbird of Argentina.



“How surprising!” exclaimed Linda. “We have been attending the same school for three years; now, you stop me suddenly to tell me that you are interested in the shape of my shoes.”

“I have been watching them all the time,” said Donald. “Can't understand why any girl wants to be so different. Why don't you dress your hair the same as the other girls and wear the same kind of clothes and shoes?”

“Now look here,” interposed Linda “You are flying the track. I am willing to justify my shoes, if I can, but here you go including my dress and a big psychological problem, as well; but I think perhaps the why of the shoes will explain the remainder. Does the name 'Alexander Strong' mean anything to you?”

“The great nerve specialist?” asked Donald.

“Yes,” said Linda. “The man who was the author of half-dozen books that have been translated into many foreign tongue' and are used as authorities all over the world. He happened to be my father There are two children in our family. I have a sister four years older than I am who is exactly like Mother, and she and Mother were inseparable. I am exactly like Father; because we understood each other, and because both of us always new, although we never mentioned it; that Mother preferred my sister Eileen to me, Father tried to make it up to me, so from the time I can remember I was at his heels. It never bothered him to have me playing around in the library while he was writing his most complicated treatise. I have waited in his car half a day at a time, playing or reading, while he watched a patient or delivered a lecture at some medical college. His mental relaxation was to hike or to motor to the sea, to the mountains, to the canyons or the desert, and he very seldom went without me even on long trips when he was fishing or hunting with other men. There was not much to know concerning a woman's frame or he psychology that Father did not know, so there were two reason why he selected my footwear as he did. One was because he be believed high heels and pointed toes an outrage against the nervous province, and the other was that I could not possibly have kept pace with him except in shoes like these. No doubt, they are the same kind I shall wear all my life, for walking. You probably don't know it, but my home lies near the middle of Lilac Valley and I walk over a mile each morning and evening to and from the cars. Does this

sufficiently explain my shoes?”

“I should think you'd feel queer,” said Donald.

“I suspect I would if I had time to brood over it,” Linda replied, “but I haven't. I must hustle to get to school on time in the morning. It's nearly or quite dark before I reach home in the evening. My father believed in having a good time. He had superb health, so he spent most of what he made as it came to him. He counted on a long life. It never occurred to him that a little piece of machinery going wrong would plunge him into Eternity in a second.”

“Oh, I remember!” cried the boy.

Linda's face paled slightly.

“Yes,” she said, “it happened four years ago and I haven't gotten away from the horror of it yet, enough ever to step inside of a motor car; but I am going to get over that one of these days. Brakes are not all defective, and one must take one's risks.”

“You just bet I would,” said Donald. “Motoring is one of the greatest pleasures of modern life. I'll wager it makes some of the gay old boys, like Marcus Aurelius for example, want to turn over in their graves when they see us flying along the roads of California the way we do.”

“What I was getting at,” said Linda, “was a word of reply to the remainder of your indictment against me. Dad's income stopped with him, and household expenses went on, and war came, so there isn't enough money to dress two of us as most of the high school girls are dressed. Eileen is so much older that it's her turn first, and I must say she is not at all backward about exercising her rights. I think that will have to suffice for the question of dress but you may be sure that I am capable of wearing the loveliest dress imaginable, that would be for a school girl, if I had it to wear.”

“Ah, there's the little 'fly in your ointment'—'dress that would be suitable.' I bet in your heart you think the dresses that half the girls in high school are wearing are NOT SUITABLE!”

“Commendable perspicacity, O learned senior,” said Linda, “and amazingly true. In the few short years I had with Daddy I acquired a fixed idea as to what kind of dress is suitable and sufficiently durable to wear while walking

my daily two miles. I can't seem to become reconciled to the custom of dressing the same for school as for a party. You get my idea?"

"I get it all right enough," said Donald, "but I must think awhile before I decide whether I agree with you. Why should you be right, and hundreds of other girls be wrong?"

"I'll wager your mother would agree with me," suggested Linda.

"Did yours?" asked Donald.

"Halfway," answered Linda. "She agreed with me for me, but not for Eileen."

"And not for my sister," said Donald. "She wears the very foxiest clothes that Father can afford to pay for, and when she was going to school she wore them without the least regard as to whether she was going to school or to a tea party or a matinee. For that matter she frequently went to all three the same day.

"And that brings us straight to the point concerning you," said Linda.

"Sure enough!" said Donald. "There is me to be considered! What is it you have against me?"

Linda looked at him meditatively.

"You SEEM exceptionally strong," she said. "No doubt are good in athletics. Your head looks all right; it indicates brains. What I want to know is why in the world you don't use them."

"What are you getting at, anyway?" asked Donald, with more than a hint of asperity in his voice.

"I am getting at the fact," said Linda, "that a boy as big as you and as strong as you and with as good brain and your opportunity has allowed a little brown Jap to cross the Pacific Ocean and a totally strange country to learn a language foreign to him, and, and, with the same books and the same chances, to beat you at your own game. You and every other boy in your classes ought to be thoroughly ashamed of yourselves. Before I would let a Jap, either boy or girl, lead in my class, I would give up going to school and go out and see if I could beat him growing lettuce and spinach."

"It's all very well to talk," said Donald hotly.

“And it's better to make good what you say,” broke in Linda, with equal heat. “There are half a dozen Japs in my classes but no one of them is leading, you will notice, if I do wear peculiar shoes.”

“Well, you would be going some if you beat the leading Jap in the senior class,” said Donald.

“Then I would go some,” said Linda. “I'd beat him, or I'd go straight up trying. You could do it if you'd make up your mind to. The trouble with you is that you're wasting your brain on speeding an automobile, on dances, and all sorts of foolishness that is not doing you any good in any particular way. Bet you are developing nerves smoking cigarettes. You are not concentrating. Oka Sayye is not thinking of a thing except the triumph of proving to California that he is head man in one of the Los Angeles high schools. That's what I have got against you, and every other white boy in your class, and in the long run it stacks up bigger than your arraignment of my shoes.”

“Oh, darn your shoes!” cried Donald hotly. “Forget 'em! I've got to move on or I'll be late for trigonometry, but I don't know when I've had such a tidy little fight with a girl, and I don't enjoy feeling that I have been worsted. I propose another session. May I come out to Lilac Valley Saturday afternoon and flay you alive to pay up for my present humiliation?”

“Why, if your mother happened to be motoring that way and would care to call, I think that would be fine,” said Linda.

“Well, for the Lord's sake!” exclaimed the irate senior. “Can't a fellow come and fight with you without being refereed by his mother? Shall I bring Father too?”

“I only thought,” said Linda quietly, “that you would like your mother to see the home and environment of any girl whose acquaintance you made, but the fight we have coming will in all probability be such a pitched battle that when I go over the top, you won't ever care to follow me and start another issue on the other side. You're dying right now to ask why I wear my hair in braids down my back instead of in cootie coops over my ears.”

“I don't give a hang,” said Donald ungallantly, “as to how you; wear your hair, but I am coming Saturday to fight, and I don't think Mother will take any greater interest in the matter than to know that I am going to do battle

with a daughter of Doctor I Strong.”

“That is a very nice compliment to my daddy, thank you, said Linda, turning away and proceeding in the direction of her own classrooms. There was a brilliant sparkle in her eyes and she sang in a muffled voice, yet distinctly enough to be heard:

“The shoes I wear are common-sense shoes, And you may wear them if you choose.”

“By gracious! She's no fool,” he said to himself. In three minutes' unpremeditated talk the “Junior Freak,” as he mentally denominated her, had managed to irritate him, to puncture his pride, to entertain and amuse him.

“I wonder—” he said as he went his way; and all day he kept on wondering, when he was not studying harder than ever before in all his life.

That night Linda walked slowly along the road toward home. She was not seeing the broad stretch of Lilac Valley, on every hand green with spring, odorous with citrus and wild bloom, blue walled with lacy lilacs veiling the mountain face on either side; and she was not thinking of her plain, well-worn dress or her common-sense shoes. What she was thinking was of every flaying, scathing, solidly based argument she could produce the following Saturday to spur Donald Whiting in some way to surpass Oka Sayye. His chance remark that morning, as they stood near each other waiting a few minutes in the hall, had ended in his asking to come to see her, and she decided as she walked homeward that his first visit in all probability would be his last, since she had not time to spare for boys, when she had so many different interests involved; but she did decide very finely in her own mind that she would make that visit a memorable one for him.

In arriving at this decision her mind traveled a number of devious roads. The thought that she had been criticized did not annoy her as to the kind of criticism, but she did resent the quality of truth about it. She was right in following the rules her father had laid down for her health and physical well-being, but was it right that she should wear shoes scuffed, resoled, and even patched, when there was money enough for Eileen to have many pairs of expensive laced boots, walking shoes, and fancy slippers? She was sure she was right in wearing dresses suitable for school, but was it right that she must wear them until they were sunfaded, stained, and disreputable? Was it right

that Eileen should occupy their father and mother's suite, redecorated and daintily furnished according to her own taste, to keep the parts of the house that she cared to use decorated with flowers and beautifully appointed, while Linda must lock herself in a small stuffy bedroom room, dingy and none too comfortable, when in deference to her pride she wished to work in secret until she learned whether she could succeed.

Then she began thinking, and decided that the only available place in the house for her use was the billiard room. She made up her mind that she would demand the sole right to this big attic room. She would sell the table and use the money to buy herself a suitable worktable and a rug. She would demand that Eileen produce enough money for better clothing for her, and then she remembered what she had said to Donald Whiting about conquering her horror for a motor car. Linda turned in at the walk leading to her home, but she passed the front entrance and followed around to the side. As she went she could hear voices in the living room and she knew that Eileen was entertaining some of her many friends; for Eileen was that peculiar creature known as a social butterfly. Each day of her life friends came; or Eileen went—mostly the latter, for Eileen had a knack of management and she so managed her friends that, without their realizing it, they entertained her many times while she entertained them once. Linda went to the kitchen, Laid her books and package of mail on the table, and, walking over to the stove, she proceeded deliberately and heartily to kiss the cook.

“Katy, me darlin’,” she said, “look upon your only child. Do you notice a 'lean and hungry look' on her classic features?”

Katy turned adoring eyes to the young girl.

“It's growing so fast ye are, childie,” she said. “It's only a little while to dinner, and there's company tonight, so hadn't ye better wait and not spoil your appetite with piecing?”

“Is there going to be anything 'jarvis'?” inquired Linda.

“I'd say there is,” said Katy. “John Gilman is here and two friends of Eileen's. It's a near banquet, lassie.”

“Then I'll wait,” said Linda. “I want the keys to the garage.”

Katy handed them to her and Linda went down the back walk beneath an arch

of tropical foliage, between blazing walls of brilliant flower faces, unlocked the garage, and stood looking at her father's runabout.

In the revolution that had taken place in their home after the passing of their father and mother, Eileen had dominated the situation and done as she pleased, with the exception of two instances. Linda had shown both temper and determination at the proposal to dismantle the library and dispose of the cars. She had told Eileen that she might take the touring car and do as she pleased with it. For her share she wanted her father's roadster, and she meant to have it. She took the same firm stand concerning the Library. With the rest of the house Eileen might do as she would. The library was to remain absolutely untouched and what it contained was Linda's. To this Eileen had agreed, but so far Linda had been content merely to possess her property.

Lately, driven by the feeling that she must find a way in which she could earn money, she had been secretly working on some plans that she hoped might soon yield her small returns. As for the roadster, she as well as Eileen had been horror-stricken when the car containing their father and mother and their adjoining neighbors, Mr. and Mrs. Thorne, driven by Marian Thorne, the playmate and companion from childhood of the Strong girls, had become uncontrollable and plunged down the mountain in a disaster that had left only Marian, protected by the steering gear, alive. They had simply by mutual agreement begun using the street cars when they wanted to reach the city.

Linda stood looking at the roadster, jacked up and tucked under a heavy canvas tent that she and her father had used on their hunting and fishing trips. After a long time she laid strong hands on the canvas and dragged it to one side. She looked the car over carefully and then, her face very white and her hands trembling, she climbed into it and slowly and mechanically went through the motions of starting it. For another intent period she sat with her hands on the steering gear, staring straight ahead, and then she said slowly: "Something has got to be done. It's not going to be very agreeable, but I am going to do it. Eileen: has had things all her own way long enough. I am getting such a big girl I ought to have a few things in my life as I want them. Something must be done."

Then Linda proceeded to do something. What she did was to lean forward, rest her head upon the steering wheel and fight to keep down deep, pitiful

sobbing until her whole slender body twisted in the effort.

She was yielding to a breaking up after four years of endurance, for the greater part in silence. As the months of the past year had rolled their deliberate way, Linda had begun to realize that the course her elder sister had taken was wholly unfair to her, and slowly a tumult of revolt was growing in her soul. Without a doubt the culmination had resulted from her few minutes' talk with Donald Whiting in the hall that morning. It had started Linda to thinking deeply, and the more deeply she thought the clearer she saw the situation. Linda was a loyal soul and her heart was honest. She was quite willing that Eileen should: exercise her rights as head of the family, that she should take the precedence to which she was entitled by her four years' seniority, that she should spend the money which accrued monthly from their father's estate as she saw fit, up to a certain point. That point was where things ceased to be fair or to be just. If there had been money to do no more for Eileen than had been done for Linda, it would not have been in Linda's heart to utter a complaint. She could have worn scuffed shoes and old dresses, and gone her way with her proud young head held very high and a jest on her lips; but when her mind really fastened on the problem and she began to reason, she could not feel that Eileen was just to her or that she was fair in her administration of the money which should have been divided more nearly equally between them, after the household expenses had been paid. Once rebellion burned in her heart the flames leaped rapidly, and Linda began to remember a thousand small things that she had scarcely noted at the time of their occurrence.

She was leaning on the steering wheel, tired with nerve strain, when she heard Katy calling her, and realized that she was needed in the kitchen. As a matter of economy Eileen, after her parents' passing, had dismissed the housemaid, and when there were guests before whom she wished to make a nice appearance Linda had been impressed either to wait on the table or to help in the kitchen in order that Katy might attend the dining room, so Linda understood what was wanted when Katy called her. She ran her fingers over the steering wheel, worn bright by the touch of her father's and her own hands, and with the buoyancy of youth, found comfort. Once more she mechanically went through the motions of starting the car, then she stepped down, closed the door, and stood an instant thinking.



“You're four years behind the times,” she said slowly. “No doubt there's a newer and a better model; I suspect the tires are rotten, but the last day I drove you for Daddy you purred like a kitten, and ran like a clock, and if you were cleaned and oiled and put in proper shape, there's no reason in the world why I should not drive you again, as I have driven you hundreds of miles when Daddy was tired or when he wanted to teach me the rules of good motoring, and the laws of the road. I can do it all right. I have got to do it, but it will be some time before I'll care to tackle the mountains.”

Leaving the cover on the floor, she locked the door and returned to the kitchen.

“All right, Katy, what is the programme?” she inquired as lightly as she could.

Katy had been cook in the Strong family ever since they had moved to Lilac Valley. She had obeyed Mrs. Strong and Eileen. She had worshiped the Doctor and Linda. It always had been patent to her eyes that Mrs. Strong was extremely partial to Eileen, so Katy had joined forces with the Doctor in surreptitiously doing everything her warm Irish heart prompted to prevent Linda from feeling neglected. Her quick eyes saw the traces of tears on Linda's face, and she instantly knew that the trip the girl had made to the garage was in some way connected with some belongings of her father's, so she said: “I am serving tonight but I want you to keep things smoking hot and to have them dished up ready for me so that everything will go smoothly.”

“What would happen,” inquired Linda, “if everything did NOT go smoothly? Katy, do you think the roof would blow straight up if I had MY way about something, just for a change?”

“No, I think the roof would stay right where it belongs,” said Katy with a chuckle, “but I do think its staying there would not be because Miss Eileen wanted it to.”

“Well,” said Linda deliberately, “we won't waste any time on thinking. We are going to have some positive knowledge on the subject pretty immediately. I don't feel equal to starting any domestic santana today, but the forces are gathering and the blow is coming soon. To that I have firmly made up my mind.”

“It's not the least mite I'm blaming you, honey,” said Katy.

“Ye've got to be such a big girl that it's only fair things in this house should go a good deal different.”

“Is Marian to be here?” asked Linda as she stood beside the stove peering into pans and kettles.

“Miss Eileen didn't say,” replied Katy.

Linda's eyes reddened suddenly. She slammed down a lid with vicious emphasis.

“That is another deal Eileen's engineered,” she said, “that is just about as wrong as anything possibly can be. What makes me the maddest about it is that John Gilman will let Eileen take him by the nose and lead him around like a ringed calf. Where is his common sense? Where is his perception? Where is his honor?”

“Now wait, dearie,” said Katy soothingly, “wait. John Gilman is a mighty fine man. Ye know how your father loved him and trusted him and gave him charge of all his business affairs. Ye mustn't go so far as to be insinuating that he is lacking in honor.”

“No,” said Linda, “that was not fair. I don't in the least know that he ever ASKED Marian to marry him; but I do know that as long as he was a struggling, threadbare young lawyer Marian was welcome to him, and they had grand times together. The minute he won the big Bailey suit and came into public notice and his practice increased until he was independent, that minute Eileen began to take notice, and it looks to me now as if she very nearly had him.”

“And so far as I can see,” said Katy, “Miss Marian is taking it without a struggle. She is not lifting a finger or making a move to win him back.”

“Of course she isn't!” said Linda indignantly. “If she thought he preferred some other girl to her, she would merely say: 'If John has discovered that he likes Eileen the better, why, that is all right; but there wouldn't be anything to prevent seeing Eileen take John from hurting like the deuce. Did you ever lose a man you loved, Katy?’”

“That I did not!” said Katy emphatically. “We didn't do any four or five

years' philanderin' to see if a man 'could make good' when I was a youngster. When a girl and her laddie stood up to each other and looked each other straight in the eye and had the great understanding, there weren't no question of whether he could do for her what her father and mither had been doing, nor of how much he had to earn before they would be able to begin life together. They just caught hands and hot-footed it to the praste and told him to read the banns the next Sunday, and when the law allowed they was man and wife and taking what life had for them the way it came, and together. All this philanderin' that young folks do nowadays is just pure nonsense, and waste of time.”

“Sure!” laughed Linda. “When my brave comes along with his blanket I'll just step under, and then if anybody tries to take my man I'll have the right to go on the warpath and have a scalping party that would be some satisfaction to the soul.”

Then they served the dinner, and when the guests had left the dining room, Katy closed the doors, and brought on the delicacies she had hidden for Linda and patted and cajoled her while she ate like any healthy, hungry young creature.

## **CHAPTER II.**

### **Cotyledon of Multiflores Canyon**

“‘Ave, atque vale!’ Cotyledon!”

Linda slid down the side of the canyon with the deftness of the expert. At the first available crevice she thrust in her Alpine stick, and bracing herself, gained a footing. Then she turned and by use of her fingers and toes worked her way back to the plan, she had passed. She was familiar with many members of the family, but such a fine specimen she seldom had found and she could not recall having seen it in all of her botanies. Opposite the plant she worked out a footing, drove her stick deep at the base of a rock to brace herself, and from the knapsack on her back took a sketchbook and pencil and began rapidly copying the thick fleshy leaves of the flattened rosette, sitting securely at the edge of a rock. She worked swiftly and with breathless interest. When she had finished the flower she began sketching in the moss-covered face of the boulder against which it grew, and other bits of vegetation near.

“I think, Coty,” she said, “it is very probable that I can come a few simoleons with you. You are becoming better looking ever minute.”

For a touch of color she margined one side of her drawing with a little spray of Pentstemon whose bright tubular flower the canyon knew as “hummingbird's dinner horn.” That gave, her the idea of introducing a touch of living interest, so bearing down upon the flowers from the upper right-hand corner of her drawing she deftly sketched in a ruby-throated hummingbird, and across the bottom of the sheet the lace of a few leaves of fern. Then she returned the drawing and pencil to her knapsack, and making sure of her footing, worked her way forward. With her long slender fingers she began teasing the plant loose from the rock and the surrounding soil. The

roots penetrated deeper than she had supposed and in her interest she forgot her precarious footing and pulled hard. The plant gave way unexpectedly, and losing her balance, Linda plunged down the side of the canyon catching wildly at shrubs and bushes and bruising herself severely on stones, finally landing in a sitting posture on the road that traversed the canyon.

She was not seriously hurt, but she did not present a picturesque figure as she sprawled in the road, her booted feet thrust straight before her, one of her long black braids caught on a bush at her back, her blouse pulled above her breeches, the contents of her knapsack decorating the canyon side and the road around her; but high in one hand, without break or blemish, she triumphantly held aloft the rare Cotyledon. She shrugged her shoulders, wiggled her toes, and moved her arms to assure herself that no bones were broken; then she glanced at her drawings and the fruits of her day's collecting scattered on the roadside around her. She was in the act of rising when a motor car containing two young men shot around a curve of the canyon, swerved to avoid running over her, and stopped as abruptly as possible.

"It's a girl!" cried the driver, and both men sprang to the road and hurried to Linda's assistance. Her dark cheeks were red with mortification, but she managed to recover her feet and tuck in her blouse before they reached her.

"We heard you coming down," said the elder of the young men, "and we thought you might be a bear. Are you sure you're not hurt?"

Linda stood before them, a lithe slender figure, vivid with youth and vitality.

"I am able to stand," she said, "so of course I haven't broken any bones. I think I am fairly well battered, but you will please to observe that there isn't a scratch on Cotyledon, and I brought her down—at least I think it's she—from the edge of that boulder away up there. Isn't she a beauty? Only notice the delicate frosty 'bloom' on her leaves!"

"I should prefer," said the younger of the men, "to know whether you have any broken bones."

"I'm sure I am all right," answered Linda. "I have falling down mountains reduced to an exact science. I'll bet you couldn't slide that far and bring down Coty without a scratch."

"Well, which is the more precious," said the young man. "Yourself or the

specimen?”

“Why, the specimen!” answered Linda in impatience. “California is full of girls; but this is the finest Cotyledon of this family I have ever seen. Don't mistake this for any common stonecrop. It looks to me like an Echeveria. I know what I mean to do with the picture I have made of her, and I know exactly where she is going to grow from this day on.”

“Is there any way we can help you?” inquired the elder of the two men.

For the first time Linda glanced at him, and her impression was that he was decidedly attractive.

“No, thank you!” she answered briskly. “I am going to climb back up to the boulder and collect the belongings I spilled on the way down. Then I am going to carry Coty to the car line in a kind of triumphal march, because she is the rarest find that I have ever made. I hope you have no dark designs on Coty, because this is 'what the owner had to do to redeem her.’”

Linda indicated her trail down the canyon side, brushed soil and twigs from her trousers, turned her straight young back, carefully set down her specimen, and by the aid of her recovered stick began expertly making her way up the canyon side. “Here, let me do that,” offered the younger man. “You rest until I collect your belongings.” Linda glanced back over her shoulder. “Thanks,” she said. “I have a mental inventory of all the pencils and knives and trowels I must find. You might overlook the most important part of my paraphernalia; and really I am not damaged. I'm merely hurt. Good-bye!”

Linda started back up the side of the canyon, leaving the young men to enter their car and drive away. For a minute both of them stood watching her.

“What will girls be wearing and doing next?” asked the elder of the two as he started his car.

“What would you have a girl wear when she is occupied with coasting down canyons?” said his friend. “And as for what she is doing, it's probable that every high-school girl in Los Angeles has a botanical collection to make before she graduates.”

“I see!” said the man driving. “She is only a high-school kid, but did you notice that she is going to make an extremely attractive young woman?”

“Yes, I noticed just that; I noticed it very particularly,” answered the younger man. “And I noticed also that she either doesn't know it, or doesn't give a flip.”

Linda collected her belongings, straightened her hair and clothing, and, with her knapsack in place, and leaning rather heavily on her walking stick, made her way down the road to the abutment of a small rustic bridge where she stopped to rest. The stream at her feet was noisy and icy cold. It rushed through narrow defiles in the rock, beat itself to foam against the faces of the big stones, fell over jutting cliffs, spread in whispering pools, wound back and forth across the road at its will, singing every foot of its downward way and watering beds of crisp, cool miners' lettuce, great ferns, and heliotrope, climbing clematis, soil and blue-eyed grass. All along its length grew willows, and in a few places white-bodied sycamores. Everywhere over the walls red above it that vegetation could find a footing grew mosses, vines, flowers, and shrubs. On the shadiest side homed most of the ferns and the Cotyledon. In the sun, larkspur, lupin, and monkey flower; everywhere wild rose, holly, mahogany, gooseberry, and bayoneted yucca all intermingling in a curtain of variegated greens, brocaded with flower arabesques of vivid red, white, yellow, and blue. Canyon wrens and vireos sang as they nested. The air was clear, cool, and salty from the near-by sea. Myriad leaf shadows danced on the black roadbed, level as a barn floor, and across it trailed the wavering image of hawk and vulture, gull and white sea swallow. Linda studied the canyon with intent eyes, but bruised flesh pleaded, so reluctantly she arose, shouldered her belongings, and slowly followed the road out to the car line that passed through Lilac Valley, still carefully bearing in triumph the precious Cotyledon. An hour later she entered the driveway of her home. She stopped to set her plant carefully in the wild garden she and her father had worked all her life at collecting, then followed the back porch and kitchen route.

“Whatever have ye been doing to yourself, honey?” cried Katy.

“I came a cropper down Multiflores Canyon where it is so steep that it leans the other way. I pretty well pulverized myself for a pulverulent, Katy, which is a poor joke.”

“Now ain't that just my luck!” wailed Katy, snatching a cake cutter and

beginning hurriedly to stamp out little cakes from the dough before her.

“Well, I don't understand in exactly what way,” said Linda, absently rubbing her elbows and her knees. “Seems to me it's my promontories that have been knocked off, not yours, Katy.”

“Yes, and ain't it just like ye,” said Katy, “to be coming in late, and all banged up when Miss Eileen has got sudden notice that there is going to be company again and I have an especial dinner to serve, and never in the world can I manage if ye don't help me!”

“Why, who is coming now?” asked Linda, seating herself on the nearest chair and beginning to unfasten her boots slowly.

“Well, first of all, there is Mr. Gilman, of course.”

“Of course,” conceded Linda. “If he tried to get past our house, Eileen is perfectly capable of setting it on fire to stop him. She's got him 'vamped' properly.”

“Oh I don't know that ye should say just that,” said Katy “Eileen is a mighty pretty girl, and she is SOME manager.”

“You can stake your hilarious life she is,” said Linda, viciously kicking a boot to the center of the kitchen. “She can manage to go downtown for lunch and be invited out to dinner thirteen times a week, and leave us at home to eat bread and milk, bread heavily stressed. She can manage to get every cent of the income from the property in her fingers, and a great big girl like me has to go to high school looking so tacky that even the boys are beginning to comment on it. Manage, I'll say she can manage, not to mention managing to snake John Gilman right out of Marian's fingers. I doubt if Marian fully realizes yet that she's lost her man; and I happen to know that she just plain loved John!”

The second boot landed beside the first, then Linda picked them both up and started toward the back hall.

“Honey, are ye too bad hurt to help me any?” asked Katy, as she passed her.

“Of course not,” said Linda. “Give me a few minutes to take a bath and step into my clothes and then I'll be on the job.”

With a black scowl on her face, Linda climbed the dingy back stairway in her



stocking-feet. At the head of the stairs she paused one minute, glanced at the gloom of her end of the house, then she turned and walked to the front of the hall where there were potted ferns, dainty white curtains, and bright rugs. The door of the guest room stood open and she could see that it was filled with fresh flowers and ready for occupancy. The door of her sister's room was slightly ajar and she pushed it open and stood looking inside. In her state of disarray she made a shocking contrast to the flowerlike figure busy before a dressing table. Linda was dark, narrow, rawboned, overgrown in height, and forthright of disposition. Eileen was a tiny woman, delicately moulded, exquisitely colored, and one of the most perfectly successful tendrils from the original clinging vine in her intercourse with men, and with such women as would tolerate the clinging-vine idea in the present forthright days. With a strand of softly curled hair in one hand and a fancy pin in the other, Eileen turned a disapproving look upon her sister.

“What's the great idea?” demanded Linda shortly.

“Oh, it's perfectly splendid,” answered Eileen. “John Gilman's best friend is motoring around here looking for a location to build a home. He is an author and young and good looking and not married, and he thinks he would like to settle somewhere near Los Angeles. Of course John would love to have him in Lilac Valley because he hopes to build a home here some day for himself. His name is Peter Morrison and John says that his articles and stories have horse sense, logic, and humor, and he is making a lot of money.”

“Then God help John Gilman, if he thinks now that he is in love with you,” said Linda dryly.

Eileen arched her eyebrows, thinned to a hair line, and her lips drew together in disapproval.

“What I can't understand,” she said, “is how you can be so unspeakably vulgar, Linda.”

Linda laughed sharply.

“And this Peter Morrison and John are our guests for dinner?”

“Yes,” said Eileen. “I am going to show them this valley inside and out. I'm so glad it's spring. We're at our very best. It would be perfectly wonderful to have an author for a neighbor, and he must be going to build a real house,

because he has his architect with him; and John says that while he is young, he has done several awfully good houses. He has seen a couple of them in in San Francisco.”

Linda shrugged her shoulders.

“Up the flue goes Marian's chance of drawing the plans for John Gilman's house,” she said. “I have heard him say a dozen times he would not build a house unless Marian made the plans.”

Eileen deftly placed the strand of hair and set the jewelled pin with precision.

“Just possibly things have changed slightly,” she suggested.

“Yes,” said Linda, “I observe that they have. Marian has sold the home she adored. She is leaving friends she loved and trusted, and who were particularly bound to her by a common grief without realizing exactly how it is happening. She certainly must know that you have taken her lover, and I have not a doubt but that is the reason she has discovered she can no longer work at home, that she must sell her property and spend the money cooped up in a city, to study her profession further.”

“Linda,” said Eileen, her face pale with anger, “you are positively insufferable. Will you leave my room and close the door after you?”

“Well, Katy has just informed me,” said Linda, “that this dinner party doesn't come off without my valued assistance, and before I agree to assist, I'll know ONE thing. Are you proposing to entertain these three men yourself, or have you asked Marian?”

Eileen indicated an open note lying on her dressing table.

“I did not know they were coming until an hour ago,” she said. “I barely had time to fill the vases and dust, and then I ran up to dress so that there would be someone presentable when they arrive.”

“All right then, we'll agree that this is a surprise party, but if John Gilman has told you so much about them, you must have been expecting them, and in a measure prepared for them at any time. Haven't you talked it over with Marian, and told her that you would want her when they came?”

Eileen was extremely busy with another wave of hair. She turned her back and her voice was not quite steady as she answered. “Ever since Marian got

this 'going to the city to study' idea in her head I have scarcely seen her. She had an awful job to empty the house, and pack such things as she wants to keep, and she is working overtime on a very special plan that she thinks maybe she'll submit in a prize competition offered by a big firm of San Francisco architects, so I have scarcely seen her for six weeks.”

“And you never once went over to help her with her work, or to encourage her or to comfort her? You can't think Marian can leave this valley and not be almost heartbroken,” said Linda. “You just make me almost wonder at you. When you think of the kind of friends that Marian Thorne's father and mother, and our father and mother were, and how we children were reared together, and the good times we have had in these two houses—and then the awful day when the car went over the cliff, and how Marian clung to us and tried to comfort us, when her own health was broken—and Marian's the same Marian she has always been, only nicer every day—how you can sit there and say you have scarcely seen her in six of the hardest weeks of her life, certainly surprises me. I'll tell you this: I told Katy I would help her, but I won't do it if you don't go over and make Marian come tonight.”

Eileen turned to her sister and looked at her keenly. Linda's brow was sullen, and her jaw set.

“A bed would look mighty good to me and I will go and get into mine this minute if you don't say you will go and ask her, in such a way that she comes,” she threatened.

Eileen hesitated a second and then said: “All right, since you make such a point of it I will ask her.”

“Very well,” said Linda. “Then I'll help Katy the very best I can.”