To Live and To Suffer

Rebecca Blackley

“When I grow up, I'm going to marry the richest man in the world,” said Sally, importantly.

“Oh, Sally,” said Jean, “why do you want to do that? Mother says money isn’t everything—in these times you never know how long you’re going to have it anyhow. And suppose you married a man for his money and he lost it all? Now I’m going to marry someone like Leslie Howard—I think he’s divine. Sister took me to see his new picture last night, and honest girls, I just thrilled when he said to the heroine, ‘Dearest, I love you.’ I just adore men like that—you know—the gentle, sophisticated type.”

Ruth said nothing. She felt a scorn, closely akin to pity for them both. What did they know of love and husbands anyhow? With their actors and millionaires! Why she actually saw her ideal every day.....

But she couldn't discuss it with them—they were too young to understand.

She looked at the clock on Sally's dresser-half past two. In an hour and a half she would see him again.

“What kind of a man are you going to marry, Ruthie?” said Sally, interrupting her golden reverie.

Ruth started. “Oh, I don’t know,” she said vaguely. “Someone like Clark Gable, I guess.” He looked a little like Gable, only of course he didn’t have a moustache, and his ears were much nicer. But he did have dimples... two of them when he smiled. He had smiled at her yesterday....

“Yes... Clark Gable is gorgeous,” agreed Jean. “But I still think that Leslie Howard is my ideal... if he were only free...." She sighed. “I do hate to break up a home... especially when there are children.”

“Oh, Jean!” said Sally in a shocked voice. “You wouldn’t do that, would you?”

“I don’t know,” said Jean doubtfully. “But when one loves”... this last in the manner of Duse or Bernhardt... “one forgets all else.” This last sentence was suspiciously reminiscent of a particularly thrilling story in the latest Love Story magazine, but her listeners were too enthralled to quibble over such slight details. They sighed enviously.

“I suppose I’ll have a huge wedding,” said Sally pensively. “My husband’s position will demand it... and we’ll both have so many important friends we must invite. Of course you’ll be the bridesmaids. I think I’ll wear white satin... it’s so elegant.”

“Leslie and I will have a very quiet wedding,” said Jean decidedly.... “you know... a divorced man and all that... I suppose there will be heaps of publicity, but I can bear it for his sake.”

Ruth said nothing... she would elope, and it might be sooner than anyone suspected. Just four more years until she was sixteen and didn’t have to go to school anymore.... then they would marry. Of course her father would cast her off, but they could live on His pay. They would have a cute little home, and she would wear cute little housedresses. She would see him off every morning, and have his dinner waiting when he came home at night....

“Oh gosh!” said Sally. “It’s three-fifteen already. I have to go get the mail. You kids coming?”

“Oh no,” said Ruth hastily. “I have to go home and do some errands for mother—she’s making jam today. See you later...” and she dashed down the stairs and out the back door. Five minutes later, she ran breathlessly up the back steps of her home. She opened the screen door and stuck her head inside. “Want
me to get anything for you at the store, mother?” she asked. “I thought I’d go get the mail.”

Her mother raised her hot face from a critical survey of the jam boiling on the stove. “Yes, Ruthie,” she said. “You might bring me a dozen more jar tops. I expect I’ll need some more... this jam isn’t boiling down like I thought it would. Get some money out of the silver baking dish.”

Ruth hesitated. “Could I have a nickel, mother?” she said. “A nickel? Where’s all your allowance gone to? No, I don’t think you’d better...”

“Could I have a nickel?” she said. “I know I shouldn’t have spent all of my allowance, but it’s been so hot. I want an ice cream cone. Please...”

“Hello, Ruthie!” he said. “What’s yours this afternoon?”

Her heart was in her mouth. “I’ll... I guess... I’ll have a chocolate milk,” she gulped, finally. “O. K. Coming up!” Her eyes followed him fascinatedly as he poured milk into a glass... added chocolate... stirred it. “There you are,” he said, putting it before her with a flourish.

She could scarcely drink, her throat was so choked up. “Warm today, isn’t it?” he said sociably. “Yyyyyes...” she said. “Yes, it is warm, isn’t it?” She giggled nervously... looked at him with her most soulful expression, copied faithfully from Greta Garbo.

He looked at her anxiously. “What’s wrong?” he said. “Doncha feel good? Maybe I’d better get you a glass of water, huh?” She was chagrined. “Oh, no.” she said hurriedly... “I’m all right now. I was just faint for a minute...” She stared moodily out the window—oh the agony of love, unconfessed! Her faraway expression faded... yes, it was Sally and Jean. And they had seen her. “I guess perhaps I’d better be going,” she murmured, sliding down from her stool. “I’ll see you later.” This last with a dazzling smile which was not lost on her dumb-founded friends.

“So long,” she said carelessly, and sauntered out the door. She pretended that she hadn’t seen her friends, and walked rapidly down the street. Perhaps they wouldn’t follow. In vain... “Ruth!” shouted Sally. “Wait for us!” She slowed down...
reluctantly... she might as well get it over with.

"Ruth Bradstreet!" said Jean accusingly. "Why didn't you come down with us? I thought you said you weren't going downtown.

"I wasn't," protested Ruth unconvincingly, "but mother thought of something she needed in a hurry, so... ."

"Well," said Sally, "you certainly weren't hurrying over your drink! Say... !" with dawning suspicion. ... "Have you got a crush on Charlie Barnes? Oh... I'll bet you have!"

"I have not!" denied Ruth vigorously, but she was blushing uncontrollably.

"You have so! Ruth has a crush on Charlie Barnes! Ruth has a crush on Charlie Barnes!" chanted the two girls in unison.

Ruth turned on her tormenters. "The trouble with you two is that you don't know true love when you see it!" she gasped defiantly. "If you must know, Charlie loves me, but he says I'm too young yet, and that we'll have to wait a while."

The girls were suddenly quiet. A new respect was forming in their eyes. "Really, Ruth?" they chorused. "Oh when did he tell you? How did he say it? Do you meet him secretly? How long have you known?"

But the questions were coming a little too fast even for Ruth to cope with. She gathered a cloak of mystery protectively about her. "I'd rather not talk about it, please," she said in her best enigmatic manner. "The subject is too sacred. And now I'd like to be alone for a while. Do you mind? I'll see you in the morning," and she sauntered down the street nonchalantly. Eventually the truth must out, she realized, but for the present she was the Voice of Experience, for had she not lived? Suffered? Loved?

It's Golden

Mary C. Funkhouser

I have a sincere regard, an irrepres-sible attachment, nay, an unbounded affection for all things silent. Neat little "Quiet" signs on hospitals lawns delight me; warnings of "Silence Please" in business offices never fail to impress me; I even love people who go around, (whether for the benefit of colicky babies or rheumatic grandfathers) "shushing" others. They too are worshipers at my shrine, and I bow before them. I can enjoy a good serious-minded ghost because he at least does his haunting quietly, and I respect his native graveyard for the peace and restfulness of its mute community. A secret enterprise that I have long nourished is a Q. T. club for fellow hushmen. Our password would be "shhh," our countersign, the pressure of the index finger vertically against the lips, and we would have marvelous long meetings devoted solely to reverie and contemplation. In short, I have a yearning and ever increasing desire to tell the whole good-humored world courteously and deliberately, 'Peace, be still'—to make a master muffler and render its mundane mouth forever mute. Reader, I do not jest. Beneath this superficial surface, deep currents are flowing. I am serious.

This devotion to the hushed is well founded. I attribute it to the fact that the pricelessness of silence has accompanied all happy experiences, all long remembered incidents, all cherished scenes, thoughts, or emotions that I have ever known. Rooms by firelights—books—shadows—color—dreams, all such lovely things are mellowed by this magic master. It selects all great and worthy occasions as its own, predominates over all other influences. It envelopes the scene, blesses the situation, and deftly shapes the memory.