



G ♦ L ♦ A ♦ D

Chapter
1

Miss Polly

Miss Polly Harrington hurried into her kitchen this June morning. She didn't usually move so quickly. In fact, she took pride in being a calm person. But today she was actually hurrying.

Nancy looked up from washing the dishes. She'd been working in Miss Polly's kitchen for only two months. But she already knew that her employer never hurried.

"Nancy!"

"Yes, ma'am," Nancy answered, as she kept drying the pitcher in her hand.

"Nancy," Miss Polly commanded. "When I talk to you, I want you to stop what you're doing and listen to me."

Nancy's face darkened. She was so upset at being scolded that she almost dropped the pitcher. "Yes, ma'am. I will, ma'am," she stammered. "I kept doing my work because earlier you told me to hurry up with the dishes."

Miss Polly frowned.

“That will do, Nancy. I did not ask for explanations. I asked for your *attention*.”

“Yes, ma’am,” Nancy sighed. Would she ever be able to please this woman?

This was Nancy’s first real job. Her father had died recently, and she needed to help support her sick mother and her three younger sisters. At first Nancy was pleased to work in this large house up on the hill. She’d always known that Miss Polly Harrington was one of the richest people in town. But now she also knew that Miss Polly was a stern woman who always wore a severe expression on her face. She frowned if a door banged or if a knife made noise when it fell on the floor. And she never smiled—even when the doors and the knives were quiet.

Now Miss Polly gave her more orders. “When you’ve finished your morning work, you may clear out of the little attic room at the top of the stairs. Then make up the cot bed. And of course, sweep and clean the room.”

“Yes, ma’am.”

Miss Polly hesitated. Then she said, “I suppose I may as well tell you now, Nancy. My niece, Miss Pollyanna Whittier, is coming to live with me and will sleep in that room. She is eleven years old.”

“A little girl coming here, Miss Harrington? Oh, won’t that be nice!” exclaimed Nancy. She was thinking how her own little sisters brought

sunshine to their home.

“Nice? Well, that isn't exactly the word I would use,” Miss Polly answered stiffly. “However, I intend to make the best of it. I'd like to think that I'm a good woman. And I know my duty.”

Nancy's face darkened again. “Of course, ma'am. I just thought that a little girl might . . .” She hesitated. “Well, she might brighten things up for you.”

“Thank you,” Miss Polly answered dryly. “However, I see no need for that.”

Thinking that this lonely little stranger should be welcomed into her new home, Nancy suggested, “But of course you—you'd want to have her, your sister's child.”

“Well, really, Nancy,” Miss Polly replied, looking down her nose. “Just because my sister was silly enough to get married and bring one more unnecessary child into this crowded world—well, I can't see why I'd particularly want to take care of her myself. However, as I said before, I know my duty. See that you clean the corners, Nancy,” she finished sharply, leaving the room.

“Yes, ma'am,” sighed Nancy, picking up the half-dried pitcher.

Miss Polly went into her room and looked again at the letter she had received two days ago. It had come to her home in Beldingsville, Vermont, all the way from a remote town out West. And it had come as an unpleasant surprise.

Dear Madam:

I regret to inform you that the Reverend John Whittier died two weeks ago, leaving one child, an eleven-year-old girl. He left almost nothing else except a few books. As you know, he earned very little money as the pastor of our small mission church.

I understand that he married your sister, who died some time ago, and that you did not get along well with him. But he thought that for your sister's sake you might want to bring up the child among her own relatives in the East.

Please let us know right away if you can take her. A man and woman from here can travel with Pollyanna as far as Boston. There they can put her on a train to Beldingsville.

Respectfully yours,
Jeremiah O. White

With a frown, Miss Polly put away the letter. She'd written back yesterday, saying, of course, that she would take the child. It would be an unpleasant task, but she knew her duty.

Miss Polly remembered when one of her two older sisters, Jennie, was only twenty years old. Her family wanted Jennie to marry a wealthy, older man. But she refused. Against her family's wishes,

Jennie insisted on marrying a young minister, who was full of youthful ideals and enthusiasm. So she went out West with him, to become a missionary's wife.

After that, the family had nothing more to do with her. Jennie continued to write for a while. In her last letter, she wrote that she had named her baby "Pollyanna" in honor of her two sisters, Polly and Anna. But a few years later a note arrived from a little town out West. In it, her heart-broken husband told them of Jennie's death.

Miss Polly then thought about all the changes that the past twenty-five years had brought to her own life. She was forty now, and completely alone in the world. Father, mother, sisters—all were dead. For years, she had been living on the money her father left her. And there she lived—alone in the large house. Some people pitied her lonely life and encouraged her to have someone live with her. But Miss Polly wanted neither their sympathy nor their advice. She said she was not lonely. She liked being by herself. She preferred quiet. But now—

Miss Polly frowned, her lips tightly shut. She was glad, of course, that she was a good woman. She knew her duty, and she was strong enough to do it. But "Pollyanna"! What a ridiculous name!



Chapter
2

Old Tom and Nancy

In the little attic room, Nancy swept and scrubbed hard. She made sure that she cleaned the corners especially well. Nancy was afraid to disobey her employer. But her angry jabs at the dirt showed her true feelings. “I just wish I could dig out the corners of her *soul!*” Nancy muttered. “Now *that* could sure use some cleaning! How can she stick that blessed child ’way off up here in this hot little room. In the winter, it’s not even heated! And with all the rooms in this big house to pick and choose from! ‘Unnecessary’ children, indeed! Humph!” snapped Nancy, wringing her rag so hard her fingers ached. “It’s not *children* that are unnecessary!”

When she’d finished her task, Nancy looked around the bare little room in disgust. “Well, my part’s done,” she sighed. “There’s no dirt here anymore—but there’s mighty little else, either. Poor



little soul! A fine place to put a homesick, lonely child!”

As she left, she closed the door with a bang. “Oh, dear!” she exclaimed. But then she said stubbornly, “Well, I don’t care. I hope she *did* hear the bang!”

In the garden later that afternoon, Nancy stopped to speak with Old Tom. He’d been pulling weeds and shoveling paths on the Harrington property for many years.

“Mr. Tom,” Nancy began, checking to make sure that no one could see her. “Did you know that a little girl was coming to live here with Miss Polly?”

“A *what?*” the old man asked, straightening his bent back with difficulty.

“A little girl.”

“Aw, you’re just joking,” Tom answered. “Next you’ll try to tell me that the sun’s going to set in the *east!*”

“But it’s the truth. Miss Polly told me so herself. It’s her eleven-year-old niece.”

The man’s jaw dropped. Then a tender light came into his faded eyes. “Why, it can’t be—but it must be—Miss Jennie’s little girl! And to think I’ve lived to see it!”

“Who was Miss Jennie?” Nancy asked.

“She was Mr. and Mrs. Harrington’s oldest daughter. And she was an angel! She was twenty when she married and went away. I heard that all her babies died except the last one. That must be the one that’s coming.”

“And she’s going to have to sleep in the *attic*. Shame on *her!*” Nancy muttered.

Old Tom frowned. But then he grinned and said, “I wonder what Miss Polly will do with a child in the house.”

“Humph!” snapped Nancy. “I wonder what a child will do with *Miss Polly* in the house!”

The old man laughed. “I’m afraid you don’t like Miss Polly very much.”

Nancy snarled, “As if *anybody* could ever like her!”

“I guess maybe you didn’t know about Miss Polly’s love affair,” Tom said quietly.

“Love affair? Not likely. Not *her!*”

“Oh yes. And the fellow’s still living right here in this town!”

“Who is he?”

“Oh, I can’t tell you that. It wouldn’t be right.” The old man was still loyal to the family he had served and loved for so long.

“But it just doesn’t seem possible—*her* and a lover!”

Old Tom shook his head. “You didn’t know Miss Polly the way I did. She used to be so beautiful. And she would be now, if she’d just let herself be.”

“Beautiful? *Miss Polly?*”

“Why yes. If only she’d just loosen her hair and let it fall gracefully, like she used to. And wear lacey dresses and all. You’d see how beautiful she is. You know, Miss Polly isn’t old, Nancy.”

“Oh, no? Well, she’s awfully good at *looking* old!” Nancy snapped.

“Yes, I know,” nodded Old Tom. “It all started when she had trouble with her boyfriend. Ever since, she’s been bitter and hard to deal with.”

“That’s for sure,” said Nancy, indignantly. “There’s no way to please her, no matter how hard you try! I’d leave if my family didn’t need the money. But someday I may just boil over and tell her how I feel. And then of course it’ll be ‘Goodbye, Nancy’ for me.”

Old Tom shook his head sadly. “I know how you feel. But believe me, that would be a mistake.”

“Nancy!” called a sharp voice.

“Yes, ma’am,” Nancy answered, hurrying toward the house.