

# **BROKEN BARRIERS**

**BY  
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TO

RAY LONG

WITH AFFECTIONATE REGARD  
AND IN TOKEN OF  
THE OLD HOOSIER FELLOWSHIP  
OF MONTGOMERY AND BOONE

# **BROKEN BARRIERS**

# CHAPTER ONE

## I

As the train sped through the night Grace Durland decided that after all it didn't matter so much!

She had parted tearfully from the girls at the sorority house and equally poignant had been the goodbyes to her friends among the faculty; but now that it was all over she was surprised and a little mystified that she had so quickly recovered from her disappointment. Bitterness had welled in her heart at the first reading of her mother's letter calling her home. Her brother Roy, always the favored one, was to remain at the University to finish the law course, for which he had shown neither aptitude nor zeal, and this hurt a little. And they might have warned her of the impending crisis in the family fortunes before she left home to begin the fall term, only a month earlier.

But her resentment had passed. The spirit of adventure beat in her breast with strong insistent wing. With the fatalism of imaginative youth she was already assuring herself that some force beyond her control had caught her up and was bearing her on irresistibly.

She lay back at ease in her seat in the day coach, grateful that there were no acquaintances on the train to interrupt her reveries. She was twenty-one, tall, slightly above medium height and bore every mark of sound health and wholesome

living—a fair representative of the self-reliant American girls visible on the campus of all Mid-Western colleges. The excitement of her hasty packing and leave-taking had left a glow in her olive cheeks. Her hair, where it showed under her sport hat, was lustrous black; her eyes were brown, though in shadow they changed to jade,—variable, interesting eyes they were, that arrested attention by their quick play of emotion. They expressed her alert intelligence, her frank curiosity, her sympathetic and responsive nature.

When the train reached Indianapolis she left her trunk check with the transfer agent and boarded a street-car. At Washington street, she transferred to the trolley line that ran down New York street, where the Durland home faced Military Park. New York street between the old canal and the western end of the park had once been a fashionable quarter of the town, and the old houses still stood though their glory of the Civil War time and the years immediately succeeding had departed. The Durlands lived in a big square brick house, set well back in a yard that rose a little above the street. The native forest trees in the lots all along the block added to the impression of age imparted by the houses themselves. Under the branches of the big walnut in the Durland front yard the neighborhood children of Grace's generation had gathered to play. The tree was identified with her earliest recollections; it had symbolized the stability of the home itself.

She pushed open the iron gate and hurried up the brick walk. Her ring brought her mother to the door, clutching a newspaper.

“Why, *Grace!* I had no *idea*——”

She caught the girl in her arms, then held her away, looked into her eyes and kissed her.

“I’m so sorry, dear! I know what it means to you. It’s a terrible disappointment to all of us.”

“Oh, I understand everything, mother.”

“But I didn’t expect you so soon. I don’t see how you managed it. I thought you’d probably wait till Saturday.”

“Oh, I couldn’t have done that, mother.”

“How’s Roy? He didn’t write at all last week.”

“He’s flourishing and sent his love to everybody. He promises to work harder than ever now.”

“I’m sure he will. I know he was sorry to see you leave; he’d know what a wrench it would be for you.”

They had been talking in the hall, with Grace’s suitcase and tennis racket lying on the floor where she had dropped them. She pushed them out of the way at the foot of the old-fashioned stair that rose steeply just inside the door.

“Don’t bother about your things now, Grace. Your father’s in the sitting room and Ethel’s up in the spare room sewing. Have you had your supper? There’s some cold baked chicken in the ice-box and I can make you some hot tea.”

“Oh, I had supper before I left, mother.”

Mrs. Durland lifted her head and called her older daughter’s name and from some remote place Ethel answered. Mrs.

Durland was as dark as Grace, but cast in a larger mold, and while there were points of resemblance in their faces there was a masculine vigor in the mother that the girl lacked. Mrs. Durland's iron-gray hair was brushed back smoothly from her low broad forehead. She wore an authoritative air, suggesting at once managerial capacity; a woman, one would say, strongly independent in her thinking; self-assertive and obstinate, but of kind and generous impulses.

Grace was already in the sitting room, where she tip-toed up behind her father, who was absorbed in a book that he read as it lay on the table before him. His bent shoulders suggested that this was his habitual manner of managing a book. Grace passed her hands over his thick shock of disordered hair and patted his cheek; then bent and laid her face against his.

"Well, here I am, daddy!"

"Not home, Grace!" he exclaimed looking up at her bewilderedly. "They didn't tell me you were coming."

"I'm a surprise! Nobody knew I was coming tonight!"

"Well, well; I didn't know there was a train at this hour. It's nice to see you, Grace."

He turned to the open volume with an absent confused air, as though uncertain whether anything further was expected of him, then pushed his chair back from the table. Mrs. Durland had come in, followed quickly by Ethel carrying a work-basket and a blouse that she had been at work on when interrupted by the announcement of her sister's arrival.



Ethel was twenty-seven, an indefinite blonde, and not so tall as Grace. Her mother said that she was a Durland, specifically like one of her husband's sisters in Ohio, a person for whom Mrs. Durland had never evinced any great liking. Mrs. Durland was a Morley and the Morleys were a different stock, with the Kentucky background so precious in the eyes of many Indianians. Mrs. Durland's father had been a lawyer of small attainments in a southern Indiana county, but it was in her grandfather Josiah B. Morley, who sat in the Constitutional Convention of 1851, and was later a speaker of the Indiana house of representatives, that her pride concentrated. She had married Durland in Rangerton, where as a young man he had begun with Isaac Cummings the manufacture of a few mechanical specialties, removing shortly to Indianapolis with a number of Durland's inventions and Cummings's small capital as the foundation of their fortune.

"Things have changed some since you left, Grace. And I'm sorry you had to quit school," Durland was saying, while Ethel, having greeted her sister, sat down by the smoldering coal fire and resumed her sewing.

"It's all right, father," said Grace, who had taken off her hat and coat. "I came back as soon as I got the news so you and mother would know it's all right with me. We're all going to put up a cheerful front, no matter what happens."

"Of course we've all got to do that," murmured Ethel without looking up.

"It's hard on you children," said Durland. "It's all my fault; I've got nobody to blame but myself, Grace. Cummings always

seemed willing for me to go on as I did for twenty years, trying to improve on the old patents and develop new ideas. But ideas don't come as fast as they used to. I guess he thought he'd got everything I was ever likely to have to offer."

"It was certainly unkind, after all the years you'd been together. But I don't believe for a minute your work's done. You'll strike something bigger than any of your old inventions."

"That's what I've been telling father," said Ethel. "A man who's spent years inventing things is likely to find something big any time. Of course, without the shop father can't work as well, but he's going to have a shop of his own."

"Oh, that's fine, father!" exclaimed Grace. "Where is the new place going to be?"

"It's not much of a place," Durland answered apologetically. "I rented a little room in the Billings Power Building and am going to run a pattern and model shop. I hope to get enough work right away to pay the rent."

"I'm sure you will. Everybody who knows anything about the machinery business knows you're the inventor of the only good things Cummings-Durland make."

"They've changed the name of the company now," Ethel remarked. "They've cut father's name out."

"They changed the name in reorganizing the company," Durland explained patiently in his colorless tone. "I had some loans the bank wouldn't carry any longer; stock I put up as collateral had to be sold and Cummings bought it."

“A man who will do a thing like that will be punished for it; he won’t prosper,” said Ethel in a curious, strained voice.

Durland frowned at his older daughter. Evidently her remark was distasteful to him; he found no consolation in the prediction that unseen powers would punish Cummings for his perfidy.

“I’d probably have done the same thing if I’d been in his place. Everything he turned down—my new ideas, I mean—proved to be no good when I put my own money into ’em on the side. You’ve got to be fair about it.”

It was clear that he set great store by the new shop. The fact that he still had a place to work preserved his self-respect. With a place in which to continue his experiments he was not utterly condemned to the scrap heap. He lifted his head and his jaws tightened. Grace noted with pity these manifestations of a resurgence of his courage. His laborious life, his few interests outside the shop or more accurately the private laboratory he had maintained for years in a corner of the Cummings-Durland plant; his evenings at home poring over scientific books and periodicals; his mild unquestioning assent to everything his wife proposed with reference to family affairs, all had their pathos. She had always been aware that he had a fondness for her that was not shared by Roy and Ethel. Grace imagined that it was a disappointment to her father that Roy had not manifested a mechanical bent. In his gentle, unassertive fashion, Durland had tried to curb the lad’s proneness to seek amusement, to skimp his lessons—this in Roy’s high school days; but Mrs. Durland had always been quick to defend Roy; in her eyes he could do no wrong.

Ethel and her father were almost equally out of sympathy. Ethel was intensely religious, zealous in attendance upon a down-town church, a teacher in its Sunday school and active in its young people's society. While Mrs. Durland had long been a member of a West End church she was not particularly religious; she believed there was good in all churches; but she was proud of Ethel's prominence in a church whose membership was recruited largely from the prosperous. Ethel was on important committees and she was now and then a delegate to conventions of church workers in other cities; the pastor called upon her frequently and she had been asked to dinner at the houses of wealthy members of the congregation, though usually some church business inspired the invitation. In a day when the frivolity of the new generation was a subject of general lamentation, Ethel could be pointed to as a pattern of sobriety and rectitude. Durland had ceased going to church shortly after his marriage and his wife had accounted to his children for his apostacy on the ground of his scientific learnings. He never discussed religion; indeed, he rarely debated any question that rose in the family.

Mrs. Durland came bustling in carrying an apron which she was hemstitching and the talk at once became more animated.

"The Cummings are in their new house on Washington Boulevard, Grace. They've left the house on Meridian they bought when they moved away from here. They haven't sold their place; they've leased it for ninety-nine years to an automobile company. We're the only people on this block who were here when your father bought this house."

Ethel and her mother engaged in a long discussion of the Cummings family, not neglecting to abuse Isaac Cummings for his ungenerous conduct in dropping Durland from the business. Meanwhile Durland crossed and recrossed his short thin legs to express his impatience or disapproval. Nothing interested him less than the Cummings family history; and his elimination from the old company was a closed incident.

“Bob Cummings’s wife is certainly a pretty woman,” continued Ethel. “She’s very popular, too. You see her name nearly every day in the society column. Bob was always so quiet; I wonder how he likes being dragged about so much.”

“I shall always think,” remarked Mrs. Durland expansively, “that if the Cummings hadn’t moved away when they did Bob and Grace might—well, I always thought he liked you particularly, Grace, and you were fond of him. Of course, he’s five years older, but when you were still in high school and he was in Yale he always came to see you and took you places when he was home. But when they moved away everything changed.”

“Oh, that didn’t amount to anything, mother,” Grace replied carelessly. “He was always shy as a boy and I suppose he still is. After they moved away he didn’t know the girls out there so he hung on to me for a while. He just used me to cover up his diffidence among strange young people at country club dances, and other places where he didn’t know many people. When he got acquainted out there he didn’t need me any more.”

“It would be like Hetty Cummings to tell him he’d better cut his West End friends,” said Mrs. Durland tartly. “Even back in

Rangerton she was always setting up to be better than most folks. It must have been in their minds when they moved away that they were going to force your father out of the business and burn all the old bridges.”

“The canal bridge,” remarked Grace with a little laugh which the others ignored.

“Now, Allie,” said Durland in mild protest, “they didn’t force me out. It was losing my stock in the company that put me out.”

“It was merciless,” said Ethel, her voice rising, “Cummings took advantage of you. He always knew you were not a business man. Everything he’s got came through your genius.”

“I guess he thought my genius was worn out,—and he may be right about it,” said Durland.

“Don’t be so foolish, daddy,” said Grace gently. “Any day you may have an inspiration that will be worth a lot of money.”

“It’s always possible, of course,” said Mrs. Durland with a little sigh susceptible of the interpretation that she had no great confidence in her husband’s further inspirations. “Ethel,” she continued, “tell Grace about your work.”

“Yes, please do, sis,” said Grace.

“Well, I’ve just begun,” Ethel replied primly. “I don’t know much about it myself. I’m in the Gregg and Burley company; they’re one of the biggest insurance agencies in town. Mr. Burley’s been ever so nice to me. His little girl’s in my Sunday-school class. Mrs. Burley asked me to a birthday party they had for Louise last summer, so I really feel that I know the family.

I'm handling the telephone calls and doing other little things till I get the run of the office. I've started at eighteen a week but Mr. Burley says they'll raise me just as soon as I'm worth more. There are six other girls in the office and one who's been there ten years get fifty a week and I don't see how they ever could get along without her. She knows more about the details of the business than the members of the firm."

"That sounds good," said Grace warmly. "I suppose there are women in business here who make large salaries, far more than high school teachers or teachers in colleges."

"I never thought my girls would have to battle for their bread," said Mrs. Durland. "I've always clung to the old-fashioned idea that girls should stay with their mothers till they married. Of course thousands of splendid girls are at work in every kind of business, but it's hard for me to get used to it."

"I don't see why women shouldn't work if they need to or want to," said Grace, "I think that's one of the things that's settled; women can do anything they please these days."

"I can't bring myself to see it," Mrs. Durland replied, "I remember that it seemed queer when my father employed a woman stenographer in his office."

"Well, times have changed, mother," Grace remarked. "I have an idea that I can sell things; I read an article in a magazine about the psychology of salesmanship, and I have a strong hunch that that would be a good field for me. The big stores must be taking on more help at this season. I think I'll see what the chances are."

“Grace, surely you’re not in earnest!” cried Mrs. Durland. “Of course we will need your help, but it would be a lot better, considering your education, for you to take up teaching or go into an office as Ethel’s doing. It’s so much more in keeping with your bringing up. It would break my heart to see you behind a counter!”

Durland shifted uncomfortably in his chair as the matter was discussed. For years he had lived his own life, his thoughts centered constantly upon mechanical projects. He was now confronted by the fact that as the result of his intense preoccupation with tools, metals and wood and his inattention and incapacity in business he was hardly a factor in family affairs. He listened almost as though he were a stranger in a strange house, his guilt heavy upon him. He started when Grace addressed him directly.

“Well, daddy, don’t you think I’m right about trying my arts of persuasion as a saleslady? I’ve always loved that word! I think it would be fascinating.”

“You make it sound interesting,” said Durland cautiously, after a timid glance at his wife. “I want you to know it hurts me to think that you girls have got to go to work. But as long as it can’t be helped I want you to do the best you can for yourselves. You ought to be sure you get into something where you’ll have a chance to forward yourself.”

“Yes, daddy,” said Grace kindly. “I want to make my time count. If I’m going to be a business woman I mean to play the game for all I’m worth.”



“I simply couldn’t be reconciled to having you in a store,” said Mrs. Durland. “An office would be much more dignified.”

“I guess Grace can take care of herself,” Durland ventured.

“Of course!” replied Mrs. Durland quickly, “we can trust our girls anywhere. I was only thinking of the annoyances. I’ve seen girls humiliated by floor-walkers—right before customers, and it always makes me boil. And I’m ashamed to say there are women who are perfectly hateful to the clerks who wait on them.”

“Well, who’s afraid!” said Grace cheerfully. “School teachers have a hard time too, with principals and supervisors pecking at them all the time. Now that I’m going out into the world I’m not going to ask any special favors because I’m a woman. The day for that’s all passed.”

“And it’s a pity it’s so!” declared Mrs. Durland.

“Oh, mother, I’m for taking the world as I find it!” She glanced laughingly at her father who smiled at her approvingly. In his undemonstrative way he was relieved that Grace was meeting family misfortunes so bravely. His courage was strengthened by her very presence in the house. Prematurely aged as he was, he rejoiced in her youth, her radiant vitality, her good humor and high spirits. He followed her with admiring eyes as she moved about the room. She bent for a moment over the book he had been reading, asked questions about it, drawing him out as to its nature and merits. He was as happy as a boy when a sympathetic grown-up manifests an intelligent interest in his toys.

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