

The Golden Girl  
By H.L. Dowless

The winking twinkling of multicolored lights cast a brilliant cascade of intense colored designs upon the plain white walls of a certain cabin's interior. Inside this humble dwelling were only two rooms; one large, in order that a few guests might be entertained, and one small, so that a single occupant might have a tidy place to retire after the daily labors.

On the western wall opposite the door, rested a mahogany Grandfather clock that dutifully announced the measurement of time with an outstanding consistency. The clock's endless TICK TOCK seemed to thunder as forcefully as any shotgun blast on this Christmas fortnight, for in the dead silence a vivid imagination harbored only the small elf and the tiny baby reindeer, allowing them to play about the few furnishings of this humble abode.

In the corner, formed when the western wall met the northern, stood a bright green fir tree. Tall and erect it stood, for it was chosen among thousands to show one's love for that most gentle babe of Bethlehem. Throughout its entire stand, not even one time did a single needle wilt or droop. It was almost as if the lifeblood that had sustained it rejoiced in its final destination. About the tree's foot was spread a snow white cloth of pure cotton, sprinkled with the dust of ruby, emerald, and glittering sapphire. On the outstretched limbs of the fir rested lengthy strings of winking lights joyfully singing the good news message in their own voice of winks in time to well known songs of the season.

Against the southern wall was carefully placed a withered couch that seemingly had seen more than its share of visitors. The intent was to replace it, but its owner had long since abandoned the possibility of accomplishing such a demanding task. On this couch, with its tattered covering of cloth and its well worn cloth buttons, sat a young lady who was the sole survivor of a terrible disaster that had cruelly removed the only ones from her life who truly offered genuine love in a world of hate. Her heart was pure, in the traditional sense of the word, and her mind firmly fixed on God – like desires. In this respect she was enjoined with all that is positive, therefore in a world of forlorn negative darkness, she was doomed to walk alone on the dusty roads of life.

During her life in this warm cozy shelter of love offered by her parents, her cheeks were rosy, her body full of vibrant energy, and her golden locks appeared to be encased in an aura of moonlight, as though a halo had been placed upon her head by the holy angels in heaven above. In those days, when the cold world pushed her aside in rejection, some cruel ones even violently attempting to shatter her qualities of passionate beauty, she would race into this shelter of love spread before her by those who had given her life.

Unfortunately, those days had forever passed and now fate itself had delivered a horrible blow in a single attempt to crush her vitality. Those once rosy cheeks were now pale as hazed moonbeams; her bouncing hair of flaxen had wilted upon her head, and her once glittering eyes of sapphire had dulled into a pasty near blue film. The ability to sleep had long since fled from her grasp, and as she sat gazing blankly at the floor in front of this Christmas fir, the small energized girl that she once was again sat in the midst of the cabin floor, cuddling a doll clothed in a long satin dress. The small girl would gingerly nudge the doll's mouth with her tender hands, then quickly snap her radiant smiling face in the direction of her parents for their approval.

Today as every day that small girl had remained in her company, allowing her to find relief from personal stress through the power of fantasy. As that small girl played with numerous dolls on the floor of the cabin, during those times of trouble *she* would sit upon the floor, conversing with the girl in child like phrases, becoming totally absorbed in a delightful world of time lost to eternity. Inert dolls constructed of wood and plastic would suddenly breathe and assume a fleshly consistency. The world inside of the cabin would provide new hiding places for a disobedient child to hide, and the tree provided new situations in which a reigning mother could exercise discipline and authority.

In this world Carol would reign supreme, dominant over all situations, and would likewise find love and respect in return. As she rolled about upon the red carpeted cabin floor, lovingly taunting her imaginary child, she would lose all sense of time and space. Hours would seem only as minutes, even days would whisk into the somber blackness of midnight. Tonight as always, the play that had inspired such overwhelming joy would suddenly deliver a blow of jolting depression and she would awaken only to find her room empty, her playmates only inert plastic images. All of life's blood now drained, she would fade off somewhere into the night, enveloped in heaving surges of self sympathetic tears. Tomorrow would bring a new day that was only destined to end like the one before it., but somewhere in the darkest recesses of her mental voice, a gentle whisper reassured her that a new time would one day arrive, and all would be eternally well for her in the end.

An orange sun seared away the thick blanket of mist that had enveloped the countryside during the coolness of night fall. Soon the orange transformed into the yellow brilliance of a fully arrived day. Though the young lady was supported by a grand bank account left in the wake of her father's demise, she used it only to complete necessary repairs in her house that she could not make her self.

In the quest for food, she had acquired an extreme resourcefulness. Directly behind her cabin, in the woods was a well beaten trail that shone brilliantly in the rust colored clay of the foothills. The trail wound through small bushes and towering grasses for a few feet ahead, then disappeared into the timber stand behind. The trail meandered between towering oaks and birch trees, many times frequented by leaping bunnies and bounding deer filled with strength acquired from a life deep in the bush. These beasts traveled the trail because for them it was ready made, and led to areas that spawned green grass to quench their burning appetites.

Frequently these animals traveled behind Carol who arose early in the eve of the morning while the gray mist still hung in the air, so that she might follow the trail to the rippling creek that gave life to the rainbow trout that she found so much to her liking. In the center of the creek was a funnel shape trap woven from the springy vines and limbs of the elm trees that stood nearby. Every morning it was as though the angels themselves had supplied her with all the food that she needed the night before, for the traps were always teeming with twisting rainbow sided fish.

Upon removal of the traps, the young lady would slide round twigs of oak across the opening in a manner that would weave the mouth shut, then place them back into the creek. With this task complete, she would gather small dry twigs to construct a fire, and with the aide of twig skewers, the fish were in the flame fresh from the traps.

This was the way that she loved to live; to breath the fresh morning air, savor the new sunshine, to eat the fruits that mother earth provided, living life stress free and easy. As she finished her meal, releasing all of those fish unused, she would ease back upon a grassy knoll overlooking the crystal water where it suddenly transformed into thrashing foam upon obscure rocks below. In her mind's eye she would once again transform the world about her into a scene where a spring girl with dancing locks of golden hair would leap with joy at the sight of her new conquest.

"Mother, mother," the small girl would yell in her direction. "Look, I caught a fish!"

"Oh, John, look, she did catch one! I've never seen her this happy before in my entire life!," said a voice from behind coming from an unseen person.

The small girl would tug on an old cane pole, many times banking a fish that seemed half her own size. Her method of banking fish was truly unique, for she would lift to set the hook, then walk backward with the pole in hand until the struggling trout leaped furiously onto the grass before her small feet.

"Mother, mother, come quick, I've caught another one! Mama, Daddy, come here and look at what I've done!"

Over and over the small piercing voice would rehear itself in fading tones, until only the monotonous chirping of the insects could be heard throughout the contours of the timber stand.

Once again Carol was alone, deserted by the comforting ghost of her now dead past. With every visit

that the ghost made, ecstatic excitement consumed Carol; but this time as with every past visit, its exit produced a backlash of tears, as did every reason for living that she had so desperately attempted to cling on to.

To prevent her depression from causing herself to regurgitate the contents of her morning meal, Carol arose from her place of rest and proceeded to walk the foot worn trail back toward the cabin door. As she walked along the beaten trail, her mind drifted back to a young boy whom she once knew back in school, who had taken an interest in her company, graciously offering courtship on numerous occasions. The boy was nearing manhood, as evident by the progressive muscular swelling of his chest, and the presence of fine hair inside the crevice of his chest. His voice had already deepened into a distinctly manly tone, but it was only at that time that she had come to notice his body justifying the deep pitch of his voice tone. She could recall how when she spoke in phrases concealing loving overtones, that she would begin to recognize him as being more than *just a boy* but as an object that was destined to develop her into more than *just a girl*.

She recalled being afraid of that thought but remembered how intensely she desired the development..., that reason to become more than just a child. She had long since recognized that all people who call themselves *women*, and were universally recognized as such, only acquired such recognition in the presence of a man, upon whom they had laid a solid claim. More and more she had come to desire this object in her life, and from within the midst of that desire arose a form of attachment that had expressed itself in numerous passionate hugs and kisses, of which she generously gave on a single motivating whim.

Even in the midst of that surging joy lurked a horror with devastating potential. Though she had refused to admit to the fact over and over again, the closer that she became in mind, the farther that he had departed from the grasp of her aching heart. She lunged forth in desperation, tenaciously attempting to seize upon her last chance for acquiring womanhood. Suddenly as the hurt from that tragedy was dying, she awoke one dark dreary rainy morning only to find herself alone, and she had remained alone from that moment forward ...to brave the savage elements of life all on her own. Many times the endless loneliness proved overwhelming, and she concluded that she could no longer live in the company of such hopelessness. She deeply longed for the company of one who really cared, and her mouth parched for the taste of manly lips.

Ahead the trail meandered around the bulk of a massive tulip poplar tree that had long since been gutted by fire, and as a result, was hollow. The prospective volume of its hollowed area was enough to house four men comfortably; and on many occasions she had envisioned herself as the sole occupant therein, dwelling in complete harmony with nature. She envisioned as she awoke, that scores of cotton tailed bunnies and small fluffy fawns would be there to accompany her on the bank of the frothy gurgling stream as she made her morning bid for bath and refreshment.

The young lady paused before that massive popular, caressing its coarse texture worn ragged by centuries of pelting moisture pellets. The pasty leathery composition of the towering tree's bark caused her to be reminded of flesh, blackened in places and wrinkled by the weight of the ages. Suddenly in the wake of it all, she came to acknowledge that the tree was not an inanimate object at her disposal, but a living, breathing, organism of life. She became humbled as a small child does on the eve of a new discovery in the new surrounding environment. In its side the great tree possessed a massive gap that had been formed by the actions of past woods fire, and the years.

"This is now the door of my new house," she said out loud to herself.

Usually the tree was void of any surrounding elements, both organic and inorganic, but on this day a truly unique phenomenon had made itself known only to Carol. Within the trees' inside interior, the floor dropped approximately two feet below that of the ground level as a direct result of the huge expanding roots decaying in their uppermost extremities. By some inexplicable means during the course of the past month this area had become flooded, and now a small cesspool filled the cavity to the lower edge of the side gap. The sap from within the veins of the tree, which continuously raises upon

the trees' interior in droplet-like tears, had combined with the crystal clear water inside, producing a sweet aroma highly pleasurable to the sense of smell. The mist of a medicine-like aroma was so intense that its effect was that of *intoxication*, and the young lady gazed forth into the crystal clearness of the pool as though she were hypnotized by the power of some enchanting spirit within.

There, as she gazed forth into the smooth crystal clear surface of the cesspool, her mind once again began to race. She envisioned a small house sitting snugly in the distant richness of a hardwood timber stand, where peace and eternal tranquility could be found to abide within. No longer would she be forced to flee from daily existence, but she could live and enjoy conquest over all unmerciful confrontations. She saw a boundless meadow full of lush grass and forever shaded by the arms of towering sycamore and wild pear. Upon a small knoll in the meadow's midst sat the young golden girl that she once was, dressed elegantly in an ankle length cotton gown of pink muslin. In the child's arms was a small male doll, upon which she tossed her unrestrained love and affection.

"Now mommy says you are going to grow up and become a great man someday. Yes, how would you like that? Well I think that it would be great! Then, oh then, I could be ever so proud of you, Michael. Why don't you smile for me, Michael? Now that's right!"

The golden girl attempted to stretch the contours of the doll's mouth with her tender right index finger.

"You're being bad, Michael. Mommy says smile! NOW!"

The girl raised the doll high above her head, then dashed its head to bits upon a granite slab nearby. She did not mean to destroy the doll, only to punish it. As she gazed down upon the shattered fragments of the doll's head, she began to long for the comfort of its completeness, and company. Helplessly she gazed down on the injured doll, covering her face with both hands as torrents of tears obliterated the world surrounding her.

"I broke Michael's head! I killed him! Oh what will I do now? Help me, help me, somebody!"

The small child uncovered her face, turning in the direction of Carol. Suddenly her tears dried and she sat staring into the face of Carol as if she were fully aware of her presence.

"Can you help me? Mommy? Momma! Please come here, I love you Mamma! Will you bring Michael back to life?"

Carol gasped for air in utter shock, muttering aloud to herself with trembling lips.

"This is not real, this cannot be happening, but it is! I see it before me now!"

"Mommy, please come here. I love you! Mommy!," cried the golden girl.

Carol muttered again to herself.

"Oh how can this be? How could it be possible for a vision to become living flesh and blood?"

"I love you," cried the golden girl, as Carol attempted to analyze the distorted information that she perceived!

"I am coming sweetheart," said Carol aloud, without realizing it.

The young ladies bare feet came to rest in the lushness of the meadow. She paused, gasping for breath as her tender feet tingled with the freshness of new life that the meadow now hauntingly afforded her. No longer did her limbs tire with the weight of stress. No longer did she worry about the way that she would find her daily bread. She now, at least, had discovered peace, perfect peace with herself and total harmony with her environment. High energy now coursed through her veins as though she had consumed some new form of drug that truly resurrected the lost souls of the eternally damned.

There sat the young girl, her voice was clearly audible, and the light rustle of her cotton gown created a clear impression upon her ear. Her golden hair radiantly danced about in bursts of gentle breeze that only shaded meadows afford. The clearness of her flesh glistened in the gleaming sunlight; surely this child was no mere figment of any vision!

"What is your name, child,?" inquired Carol, attempting to induce the child to speak by offering a soothing smile.

"My name is Carol."

"My name is Carol too, but friends call me Goldie. They call me that because my hair is so blond that

it turns into golden strands in the sunlight, they say."

"That's nice, you have beautiful hair, Goldie. Have you heard the story of Goldilocks and the three bears/,"asked Carol in a loving tone of voice.

"Oh yes, bunches of times! I guess that's where they got my name."

"Where are your parents?," asked Carol.

"They're over there," said the child, pointing toward the hill in the near distance.

Carol turned in the direction of the hill, squinting to allow her eyes to adjust to the distance. The hill crest was shaded by huge drooping oaks that had given shade for hundreds of years. The birds zipped to and fro as though they had found true paradise.

"Where are they, honey? I don't see them."

"They're over there,"said Carol, once again pointing toward the hill crest.

Once again a quick glance in that direction revealed only the singing dance of the song birds amid the boughs of huge drooping sycamores and oaks. Two by two they appeared to sit, filling the air to overflowing with the song of their courtship.

"Here honey, let's take your doll to Daddy. Maybe he can fix it. I am no good at repairs."

"Won't you please try? I can't take it to Daddy,"replied the child.

"Why not? I am sure that he will not mind the trouble of helping you."

"No," replied the child with a harsh scornful angry face. "No! No! No!"

"O.K. Then, we will not take the doll, but I would like to have the pleasure of meeting your Daddy."

"Only if you promise not to mention the doll," snapped the child with a slightly relaxing face.

" Sure, just take me to him. I just want to meet him."

The child seized Carol's left hand, guiding her down a trail of bent grasses where heavy feet had trodden earlier. As they traveled, the child sang a happy ditty to the tune of *Pop Goes The Weasel*.

"My father went into the wood to hunt,  
Thought he had a bear,

But oh....it was a beaver!"

"Where on earth did you learn that silly song?," laughed Carol.

"Oh, I like making up rhymes. I got an A in poetry the other week. Ain't I good?," asked the small child.

"Why yes, and a bit unusual I might add as well," laughed Carol.

By now they had reached the hill crest that which was delightfully shaded by numerous oaks and sycamore trees. So sparsely positioned were they that the shaded area from one intersected the other along the area's' edge. A chilly breeze hissed through the leaves in such a manner that it finally filtered through to cool the inhabitants below. The songbirds chirped joyful melodious hymns to the tune of their quest for mates with obscure words that tend to soothe the human mind, inducing sleep and overall relaxation.

"Where are your parents?," inquired Carol to the child.

"Oh, there is a pool on the other side of the hill, that's where they are."

"They sure are awfully quiet if they are down there," said Carol in a muffled tone of voice.

"Oh they are down there all right. Come follow me, I'll show you!"

The hillside below jutted out into a granite overhang that tended to stick out like some sort of huge fingernail. From above one could only view the surrounding area at that point, but indeed a new world did lie below. Centuries of sand and leaves accumulated, cushioning any penetration of sound vibrations, and in this manner, the voices of the child's parents remained obscured from the ear. A foot worn trail led the couple around the overhang, so that they entered into a depression in which the basin was filled with murky water. Upon flat rocks that aligned the water's edge next to the overhang, sat the two parents of the child.

Her father was a man chiseled stern in appearance, his face hardened by years of toil and strife. So heavy were the years' weight upon his face, that his very skin was ruddy with sun and stress, and it

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