

CHAPTER VIII THE DETECTIVE'S DAUGHTER

"I'm pretty sure, Gran'pa Jim," said Mary Louise that evening, "that I've trailed the traitor to his lair, and he's none other than--Jake Kasker!"

This was the first time she had mentioned her suspicion of Kasker to him, and her statement was received by the colonel with moderate surprise, followed by a doubtful smile.

"I know Jake," he remarked, "and while he is uneducated and his mind is unformed concerning most things outside the clothing business, I should hesitate to accuse him of downright disloyalty."

"He's a German, and sympathizes with the Kaiser," asserted Mary Louise.

"Did he say that?"

"Well, not in so many words."

"A German-American is not usually pro-German," the colonel declared, "for Germans who come to America come to escape the militarism and paternalism of the Junkers, which is proof in itself that they disapprove of what we term kaiserism. I know that Kasker talks foolishly against the war and resents the drafting of his son, but I think he is a good American at heart. He has bought Liberty Bonds more liberally than some who proclaim their patriotism from the housetops. I don't fear these outspoken objectors, my dear, as much as those who work slyly in the dark--such as the writers of those disgraceful circulars."

"I practically accused Kasker of sending out those circulars," said Mary Louise, "and his defense was very lame and unconvincing. Listen, Grand'pa, to what he said. I took the speech down in shorthand, and that worried him, I'm sure."

The colonel listened and shook his head gravely.

"Yes, Jake Kasker talks too much," he confessed, "and much that he says is disloyal to our government and calculated to do much harm, especially if widely circulated. This is no time to criticise the men who are working hard to win the war; we should render them faithful support. The task before us is difficult and it will require a united country to defeat our enemies. I must talk to Jake Kasker."

"Won't it be better to let the authorities deal with him?" suggested the girl.

"They're certain to get him, in time, if he goes on this way. I believe I frightened him a bit this afternoon, but he's too dull to take warning. Anyhow, I shall relate the whole interview to Chief Farnum to-morrow morning."

This she did, but the Chief gave her little satisfaction.

"No one pays any attention to Kasker," he said.

"He's a German, and a traitor!" she insisted. "A woman's intuition is seldom at fault, and I'm convinced he's responsible for this latest and most dreadful circular," and she laid it before him.

"A girl's intuition is not as mature as a woman's intuition," the Chief answered in an impatient tone. "You force me to say, my dear young lady, that you are dabbling in affairs that do not concern you. I've plenty of those circulars on file and I'm attending to my duty and keeping an eye open for the rascal who wrote them. But there is no proof that Kasker is the man. The federal officers are also investigating the case, and I imagine they will not require your assistance."

Mary Louise flushed but stood her ground.

"Isn't it the duty of every patriotic person to denounce a traitor?" she inquired.

"Yes, if there is proof. I think you are wrong about Kasker, but if you are able to bring me proof, I'll arrest him and turn him over to the federal agents for prosecution. But, for heaven's sake, don't bother me with mere suspicions."

Mary Louise did not accept this rebuke graciously. She went away with the feeling that Chief Farnum was, for some reason, condoning a crime, and she was firmly resolved to obtain the required proof if it could be secured without subjecting herself to the annoyance of such rebuffs as the one she had just endured.

"We ought not to permit such a snake in the grass to exist in dear old Dorfield," she told her girl associates. "Let us all try to discover absolute proof of Kasker's treachery."

The other Liberty Girls were as indignant as Mary Louise, but were too intent on their present duties to pay much attention to Jake Kasker. For the Liberty Girls' Shop was now open to the public, and men, women and children crowded in to see what the girls had to offer. Sales were so brisk during the first week that the stock became depleted and once more they made a house to house canvass to obtain a new supply of material.

This kept all six of the girls busily occupied. Irene each morning rode down to the shop in the Hathaway automobile--wheel-chair and all--and acted as cashier, so as to relieve the others of this duty. She could accomplish this work very nicely and became the Liberty Girls' treasurer and financial adviser. Each day she deposited in the bank the money received, and the amounts were so liberal that enthusiasm was easily maintained.

"The soldier boys have reason to rejoice," said Irene complacently, "for we shall soon be able to provide them with numerous comforts and luxuries--all of which they are surely entitled to."

So the new enterprise was progressing finely when, one evening, on reaching home from a busy day at the shop, Mary Louise found a letter that greatly pleased her. It was from an old and valued girl friend in Washington and after rambling along pleasantly on a variety of subjects the writer concluded as follows:

"But we can talk all this over at our leisure, my dear, for I'm going to accept one of your many pressing invitations (the first one, of course) and make you another little visit. I love Dorfield, and I love you, and the dear Colonel, and Irene and Alora, and I long to see all of you again. Moreover, Daddy is being sent abroad on a secret mission, and I should be lonely without him. So expect me at any time. In my usual erratic fashion I may follow on the heels of this letter, or I may lag behind it for a few days, but whenever I turn up at the Hathaway gate, I'll demand a kiss and a welcome for "JOSIE O'GORMAN."

Now, this girl was in many ways so entirely unlike Mary Louise that one might wonder what link of sympathy drew them together, unless it was "the law of opposites." However, there was one quality in both their natures that might warrant the warm friendship existing between the two girls. Mary Louise was sweet and winning, with a charming, well-bred manner and a ready sympathy for all who were in trouble. She was attractive in person, particular as to dress, generous and considerate to a fault. The girl had been carefully reared and had well repaid the training of the gallant old colonel, her grandfather, who had surrounded her with competent instructors. Yet Mary Louise had a passion for mysteries and was never quite so happy as when engaged in studying a baffling personality or striving to explain a seeming enigma. Gran'pa Jim, who was usually her confidant when she "scented a mystery," often accused her of allowing her imagination to influence her judgment, but on several occasions the girl had triumphantly proven her intuitions to be correct. You must not think, from this statement, that Mary Louise was prone to suspect everyone she met; it was only on rare occasions she instinctively felt there was more beneath the surface of an occurrence than appeared to the casual observer, and then, if a wrong might be righted or a misunderstanding removed--but only in such event--she eagerly essayed to discover the truth. It was in this manner that she had once been of great service to her friend Alora Jones, and to others as well. It was this natural quality, combined with sincere loyalty, which made her long to discover and bring to justice the author of the pro-German circulars.

Josie O'Gorman was small and "pudgy"--her own expression--red-haired and freckled-faced and snub-nosed. Her eyes redeemed much of this personal

handicap, for they were big and blue as turquoises and as merry and innocent in expression as the eyes of a child. Also, the good humor which usually pervaded her sunny features led people to ignore their plainness. In dress, Josie was somewhat eccentric in her selections and careless in methods of wearing her clothes, but this might be excused by her engrossing interest in people, rather than in apparel.

The girl was the daughter--the only child, indeed--of John O'Gorman, an old and trusted lieutenant of the government's secret-service. From Josie's childhood, the clever detective had trained her in all the subtle art of his craft, and allowing for her youth, which meant a limited experience of human nature and the intricacies of crime, Josie O'Gorman was now considered by her father to be more expert than the average professional detective. While the astute secret-service agent was more than proud of his daughter's talent, he would not allow her to undertake the investigation of crime as a profession until she was older and more mature. Sometimes, however, he permitted and even encouraged her to "practise" on minor or unimportant cases of a private nature, in which the United States government was not interested.

Josie's talent drew Mary Louise to her magnetically. The detective's daughter was likewise a delightful companion. She was so well versed in all matters of national import, as well as in the foibles and peculiarities of the human race, that even conservative, old Colonel Hathaway admired the girl and enjoyed her society. Josie had visited Mary Louise more than once and was assured a warm welcome whenever she came to Dorfield. Most of the Liberty Girls knew Josie O'Gorman, and when they heard she was coming they straightway insisted she be made a member of their band.

"She'll just have to be one of us," said Mary Louise, "for I'm so busy with our wonderful Shop that I can't entertain Josie properly unless she takes a hand in our game, which I believe she will be glad to do."

And Josie was glad, and proclaimed herself a Liberty Girl the first hour of her arrival, the moment she learned what the patriotic band had already accomplished and was determined to accomplish further.

"It's just play, you know, and play of the right sort--loyal and helpful to those who deserve the best we can give them, our brave soldiers and sailors. Count me in, girls, and you'll find me at the Liberty Shop early and late, where I promise to sell anything from an old hoopskirt to a decayed piano at the highest market price. We've had some 'rummage sales' in Washington, you know, but nothing to compare with this thorough and businesslike undertaking of yours. But I won't

wear your uniform; I can't afford to allow the glorious red-white-and-blue to look dowdy, as it would on my unseemly form."