

Stairs of Sand

By Anna M. Regan

CHAPTER TWENTY

When Sara came to her senses again it was to the dull boom of waves thundering against the rocks far below. For a few minutes she was conscious of nothing else save that rhythmic crash as the breakers flung themselves against the face of the rock, and the bounding white with which they fell away again, only to gather themselves together for a fresh onslaught.

She opened her eyes slowly. At first it seemed very dark, as though a thick fog encompassed her, making indistinct shadows of her surroundings. But gradually this cleared, and she was able to see that she was lying on a shelf of rock which jutted out from the side of the mountain with here and there tufts of long grass growing, or a stunted shrub, green against the red. How did she come to be lying here—here with the cliff sloping back above her? The last thing she remembered was climbing on top, watching the fishing boats as they tracked homeward. How did she come to be here? All at once recollection returned, accompanied by a flash of silver hair, terror—recollection of the ground suddenly giving way beneath her feet, of clutching wildly at nothing, of space, and then the horrible sensation of falling—headlong. A frightened cry broke from her lips, and in a flash she found a voice.

"You're quite safe, don't worry. There was something vaguely familiar about the voice, although she couldn't place it.

"Oh, where am I?" she asked, feeling but terrified hands as though to ward off something that

steadily, reassuring hands, these and the same voice as before said quietly, "You're on a good wide ledge of rock. Don't be afraid. You can't possibly fall off, because I'm on the outer edge, between you and the cliff."

This time the voice was kind, and like a child, she looked in the direction from which it came as though to satisfy herself that the statement it made was true. Against the pale glimmer of the sea a man's figure showed clearly. He was seated beside her on the ledge his back to the cliff, his feet braced against a jagged bit of upstanding rock, and her eyes found themselves looking straight into a pair of blue eyes.

"The man noted the frozen look in her eyes and she frowned a little, puzzled, when it came.

"The man noted the frozen look in her eyes and she frowned a little, puzzled, when it came.

"The man noted the frozen look in her eyes and she frowned a little, puzzled, when it came.

each other in swift zigzag flight, swooping and sweeping, this way and that, sometimes striking at each other playfully with wings and talons, sometimes almost grappling in mid-air, while their harsh calls floated faint and thin down to the water. Thank heavens, this wasn't their home, for if it was they'd fight for possession of it and would bid their moment. Now I'll help you up," he said, getting to his feet as he spoke.

"Give me your hands—no, wait! In the action to the word. You'll be quite safe. I won't let you fall. I want to see if you can stand on your feet."

"Obeying his hands, and rather nervously, she scrambled up. It was obvious that he braced and steadied her, and she might feel she had received a casual harm as a consequence of her fall.

"Good!" exclaimed the man in tones of satisfaction. "You know you're a pretty young woman on the whole. All it has just come to me where I've seen you before."

Sara's eyes flashed up into his. "You do remember seeing me here?"

"He smiled. "Every time I've seen you it has been a surprise. You're a very young woman, aren't you?"

"I don't know you, but the first time I saw you was here. You've been here before?"

"I've never been here before. I was here when you were here. You've been here before?"

asked, reflecting with some fear that climbing down again was probably the only way out of their present predicament.

"No. These sandstone cliffs aren't so very difficult to maneuver, you know—they're often fairly soft in places, with shrubs and grass growing on them and bits of rock sticking out to give you something to hang onto."

"Still, it was very brave of you," she said.

"Well, that's a question, he said gravely.

"But, after all, it was your fault that I fell," he added.

"Mine?" he regarded her attentively. "How do you mean that?"

"Why—well, with a little smile, "I stepped forward to try and see whether it was a man or woman in your boat, it looked so pretty, crossing the patch of sunlight. And the edge of the cliff suddenly seemed to give way."

"Well, thank God, you weren't seriously hurt!" he said. "Though you'll probably be stiff and sore tomorrow," he continued more lightly.

"I'm afraid I'll be stiff and sore tomorrow," he said.

"Your Aunt, here in town?"

"Yes, she lives in the white house on top of the hill as you leave the village," Sara told him.

"I'm very much afraid she'll have some little trouble to worry in on this occasion," he observed. "Because you don't get back to her till tomorrow morning."

"Tomorrow morning?" she looked at him in amazement. "What do you mean?"

"You'll probably be here in time for breakfast," he said calmly.

"But I'm not going to stay here all night. If you could climb up with me, we can surely both climb down again. I'm rather good at climbing. I was trained near mountains."

"Even if we did climb down it would be no earthly good. The tide covers the bottom of the cliffs and will be raising for the next hour."

"I suppose we shall have to wait until it goes down," allowed Sara, resignedly.

"Until tomorrow morning," he repeated. Then, in response to her look of inquiry, he went on to explain. "If you see, by the time the tide goes out far enough for us to walk back along the shore, it will be too dark to attempt to climb down. So we may as well resign ourselves."

"Oh, how I wish I could phone her!" she exclaimed impulsively.

"The man beside her laughed, and after a moment's hesitation Sara laughed too.

"That was rather silly of me, wasn't it?" she said, laughing still which edges this shelf we're on. And here you stayed. I pulled in as quick as I could touch the boat, and then I climbed up the cliff, and found you here."

"Was it—very difficult?" she

night in front of us, without blankets or warm coats or the prospect of even a decent dinner to keep our spirits up.

"And—and there's really nothing we can do?" she said desperately. Her lips quivered a little. She was still feeling sore and shaken from her fall. The realization of the long, uncomfortable hours stretching ahead came upon her with sudden overwhelmingness. And all at once she was conscious of fear—fear of this steep cliff side on which they were trapped and fear of the sea which thundered below.

As though he understood her companion took her hands and held them firmly in his own more.

"No," he said gravely. "There's nothing we can do but just wait till morning. Don't be frightened, though there's no need. We shall be comfortable, but you're as safe as you would be inside of your own home."

"Are you sure—sure?" asked Sara nervously.

"Quite sure. And as to the prospect of a night with the wind blowing—perhaps it will help some if we remember that we came to town together, six weeks ago."

Sara smiled, some of her poison coming back to her. He had talked to her so often with that precise object in view.

"I never even thought of you," she said. "It was just—I don't know—suddenly one felt so alone and insecure, perched up here."

"I know," he answered sympathetically. "But remember, you're not alone. By the way, we don't even know each other's names. Shall we swap?"

She nodded. Since that last July night two months before, at odd and unexpected intervals, she had been conscious of an underlying curiosity as to the name of the unknown man who was a fellow traveler on that fever-to-be-remembered trip.

"Yes," said Sara. "Do let us."

Then, to cover a queer, absurd little thrill of anticipation, which all at once beset her, she added lightly, "You first."

"You'll play fair afterwards?" he asked. "Not spirit yourself away without telling me?"

She shook her head. "There's not much chance of my doing that here, is there?" she observed, glancing at him around expressively.

He laughed.

"No, I suppose there isn't. I needn't have been afraid of it on this occasion."

"Well," she asked, looking up at him.

"My name's Davis," he said.

"James Davis, of the Boston Post?"

"James Davis," she breathed.

"James Davis, Nell Cramer's friend?"

"Nell Cramer's friend, yes. Good old Nell! But tell me, where did you meet him?"

"My name is Sara Layton, from just outside New York. Nell Cramer married my sister Hedda about three months ago and they went to California immediately after they were married."

"It's the very same Nell. He wrote me the usual type of letters about—never was another such a girl—about your sister but now I'm surprised he didn't gush more. I received a description of a resort he helped map out in the desert lately and it sounded ideal. People have sought health in the desert for years but had to forego every comfort, so Nell and his experts want to build comfortable places at intervals with all the comforts of home."

"Hedda sent me a leaflet describing one such place," Sara said. "She said Nell hoped I'd run across you while in this part of the country."

"Evidently Fate took a hand in it," he smiled. "Good old Nell! Why we grew up together, played together. Although not of the same religion we were always close friends."

"Nell hasn't really any religion, has he?" Sara asked.

"I have noticed you worshipping at the little Catholic Chapel," he told her. "I wondered."

"I am not of that religion," she told him. "But I get so much comfort there where every one is so truly devout; I often go there. My youngest sister married a Catholic and goes with him."

"Our religion is so consoling," Davis told her.

A fugitive thought flashed through Sara's mind, as to the odd way in which fate links you up with others—fashioning a link here and a link there, and then quite suddenly you find yourself one of the little group of people who have all been gradually connected up and drawn into the same circle.

"You're vacationing here. I assume?" Sara asked.

"Yes," he returned. "I have a three months' leave of absence from my desk to write a novel. I've been collecting data on it for a long time. They tell us to write about something we know a lot about. I'm writing about newspapers and their responsibilities. I've been in the game for ten years."

"You will be here till the first of November?" she inquired.

"Yes, and maybe longer," he returned. "Do you stay on for the win-

ter, perhaps?"

"No, I've been intending to go home early next month. I've an old grandmother and an invalid father to help look after. They're with Lois and Billy now."

The daylight was fading now. Already the sun had dipped below the distant rim of the sea, and the dusk was deepening rapidly. From below still came the boom of the waves, and now and again a little chill whiff of air drifted by, cool with the breath of the coming night.

"Luckily," said Davis, "I didn't eat all the sandwiches I took out this afternoon, so we can't quite starve. And there's still some coffee in the thermos flask." He dived into his pockets and deposited the flask to gether with the packet containing the remaining sandwiches on the ground, and proceeded to pull off his coat.

"It will be too late for you," he observed, looking at Sara's watchful proportions. "But it's none the worse for that from the point of view of keeping you warm."

"I'm not going to take your coat," she objected quickly.

"Oh, yes, you are."

"No, no, really," she insisted. "You'd be frozen without it."

He laughed a little.

"Not I. Men's clothing is so much more common sense than women's."

"I do think that is so," admitted Sara.

"You see, I'm wearing flannel and a warm sweater on top of that. So no more nonsense about this coat. Come, put it on."

He spoke masterfully, and she somewhat surprised at her own meekness, permitted him to help her into it.

"And what comes next on the program?" she asked, a faint trace of teasing in her voice.

"We'll sit down, trying to imagine this rock is a comfortable divan, you know you've got to think hard enough on the suggestion principle. Then we consume the remainder of the sandwiches and coffee, savouring the repast with pleasant conversation, and after that—"

"I don't think we've much choice of amusement. An early to bed seems indicated."

Sara touched and agreed.

"By the way," she asked, as they settled themselves and shared the sandwiches. "What will have happened to your boat? I didn't think of that place before."

"Quite a waste of time, if you had it has come to an untimely end between sea and cliff long ago."

"I feel horribly to blame."

"You needn't. That's a small price to put against this adventure."

"I'm truly sorry to be such a nuisance—giving you so much trouble." He looked down at her.

"Do you really think you've given me trouble? You were never more mistaken in your life. I mean precisely what I say. It's a charming adventure—such a one as doesn't often fall to my lot. Then, too, there's to be a detailed account of

the moment I get back to the in the morning and I'll send it to him, special."

It was getting too dark to see change of expression in his face, his voice carried convincing earnestness.

"Now I'm going to tick you up the night," he said. "See, here hollow. In the earth, and it's too. Using your imagination it can be constructed into being a pile of earth. If you'll try it, I think you may just endureable."

She obeyed mechanically. As while he drew his coat more closely around her, making her as comfortable as circumstances permitted, when this was accomplished she settled herself beside her and a few minutes they talked about their old town and some of the old places in its environs.

With the turn of the tide a fresh gust of wind came down the cliff, and gradually the conversation grew more and more intermittent, with long gaps between only by the rhythmic murmur of receding sea.

Through the dusk Sara could discern the outline of Davis tall and sure the tip of his cigarette, his day star hanging in space, alternating glowing and fading. Then thoughts returned to the boat, her dear ones there, unaware of her position. That was her last, her last thought, and then, tired with the day's doings, she fell asleep.

(Continued Next Week)

BURKE & McHUGH
CARTING CO.
Light Auto Cars for
General Delivery
111 Ontario St. Main 3280

Established 1890
WHEELER
Manufacturers of
**Boilers, Tanks, Smoke
Stacks, Breachings,**
Iron and Acetylene Welding
and Cutting
175 MILL STREET

E. H. Knapp & Son
ROOFING
HEATING—VENTILATING
SHEET METAL
381 South Ave. Stone 157
Main 404
35c TAXI
SERVICE

WHITMORE, RAUBER & VICINUS
GENERAL CONTRACTORS
51 GRIFFITH STREET

Dealers in Builders' Supplies
Sand and Gravel
MAIN 180

Prescriptions Stationery
Medicine
South Ave. Pharmacy
Or. R. Croft, Licensed Pharmacist
Teal's Ice Cream—Soda and Confections
504 SOUTH AVE. ROCHESTER, N. Y. MONROE 3235

Wm. H. Rossenbach
Funeral Director
445 MAIN ST. W.
PHONE GEN. 1488

WILLIAM J. MEYER CO., Inc.
Roofing and Sheet Metal Contractors
103 Griffith Street Stone 133

JOS. J. BUCKLEY
FUNERAL DIRECTOR
796 DEWEY AVE. Phone—GLENWOOD 4906

Fresh Home Meats
ANDREWS MARKET
73 FRONT ST.

ANDY'S GARAGE — 209 Clinton Ave. No.
Official Hydraulic Brake Service General Repairing
ALL NIGHT SERVICE—STONE 900
Any Car Washed, \$1.00 Greasing \$1.00 Storage

MAIN 2816 Evenings by Appointment
BEAUTY CULTURIST
EYES—EYEBROW SHOPPE
Manicuring, 50c Shampooing, 50c Hair Cutting, 50c up
Facials, 1.00 up
Permanent Waving \$5 and \$8
LILLIAN PARADIS, Beautician 380 CHEFFORD AVENUE
At Clinton Ave. North ROCHESTER, N. Y.

De VISSEER BROS.
HARDWARE
"DUCO PAINTS"
Flower City Pk. Cor. Dewey
Rochester, N. Y.
GLEN 384-344

Fill Your Bin now with
D. & H. ANTHRACITE—It's Clean
EDELMAN COAL COMPANY
Phones: MAIN 3301—MAIN 3302—MAIN 420
OFFICES:
451 South St. 384 Orchard St.

E. H. Kirby & Son Market
Meats—Fish
1356 Dewey Ave. Glen. 21-29

DO YOU SLEEP WELL?
Have your old Mattress, Bedspreads and Pillows RENOVATED or RE-MADE by Rochester's Most Reliable Experts.
We Repair Mattresses and Bedspreads at a Great Saving.
24 Hours' Service, by request. We Call and Deliver Anywhere.
Our Special Kopak Silk Floss Mattress, \$12.95
GENESEE BEDDING CO.
388 SOUTH AVENUE MAIN 3774

the outstanding lamp offering for a Merry Christmas gift!

Pottery Table Lamp
Complete with parchment shade
\$3.69

Say "Merry Christmas" to some one (or to your own home) with this exquisitely designed pottery table lamp... the nicest lamp that we have seen offered at anything like this low price. The base may be had in soft tones of rust, red, green, two-tone combination or yellow, with just a touch of contrasting decoration. Both the color of the base and the figured design are exactly repeated in the matching shade of paper parchment.

A Pair of Lamps is smart decorating
LAMP SHOP, FOURTH FLOOR
SIBLEY, LINDSAY & CURR CO.



RAY W. SHERMAN, Chiropractor
OFFICE HOURS—2 to 4 and 6 to 8 P. M.
Saturday and Sunday by Appointment
685 MAIN ST. W., Cor. Willowbank Pl. PHONE—GENESEE 708

W. WOJTCZAK BAKERY
Baked Goods with Home-Like Flavor
Baked in Clean, Sanitary, Modern Ovens Everyknead Up-to-Date
Weddings, Receptions, Parties, etc. Supplies
Deliveries to All Parts of City
690 HUDSON AVE. STONE 6492

THOMAS E. MOONEY'S
SONS, Inc.
Henry D. Halloran, Pres.
FUNERAL DIRECTORS
No Charge for use of Chapels
New Location
Main 127 105 Plymouth Ave. 6

Established 1872
L. W. Maier's Sons
UNDEERTAKERS
870 Clinton Ave. North
Phone, Stone 609