

Freedom

by

Mazo de la Roche

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Freedom

By MAZO DE LA ROCHE

ILLUSTRATED BY B. J. ROSENMEYER

“It’s a grand thing, freedom,” said Mr. Watlin,—and they all agreed with him, for hadn’t they just had a glorious, rollicking day of it?

The telegram had come while we were at lessons. Angel and I were standing before our governess with our hands behind our backs, when Mary Ellen burst in at the door. I had been stumbling over the names of the Channel Islands, and I stopped with my mouth open, relieved to see Mrs. Handsomebody’s look of indignation raised from my face to that of Mary Ellen.

“Is that the way I have instructed you to enter the room where I sit?” asked Mrs. Handsomebody sternly.

“Lord, no, ma’am,” gasped Mary Ellen; “but it’s a telegram I’ve brung for ye, an’ I thought, as it is likely bad news, ye wouldn’t want to be kept waitin’ while I’d rap at the do-or!” She presented the bit of paper between a wet thumb and forefinger.

“You may take your seats,” said Mrs. Handsomebody coldly to us.

Angel and I slipped into our places at the long book-littered table, one on either side of The Seraph. We were thus placed in order that his small plump person should prove an obstacle to familiar intercourse between Angel and myself during school hours, and as our intercourse usually took the form of punches in the short ribs, or wet paper pellets aimed at an unoffending nose, The Seraph was frequently the recipient of such pleasantries. He bore them with mingled good humour and a stoicism bred of repression at the hands of Mrs. Handsomebody. He had almost forgotten the days when he had been Mother’s baby, and when Father had carried him on his shoulder. Father was in South America now, building a railroad; and Mother had gone so far away that it was only in the quiet night time that she seemed to come close to us again and touch her cheek to ours.

“I’ll bet anything,” whispered Angel over The Seraph’s curls, “that it’s a telegram from Father saying that he’s coming to fetch us! Wouldn’t that be jolly? And she’s waxy about it too—see how white she’s gone!”

Mrs. Handsomebody rose.

“Boys,” she said, in her most frigid manner, “owing to news of a sudden bereavement, I shall not be able to continue your lessons to-day—nor tomorrow. You will, I hope, make the most of the time intervening. You were in a shocking state of unpreparedness both in history and geography this morning. Keep your little brother out of mischief, and *remember*,” raising her long forefinger, “you are not, under any consideration, to leave the premises during my absence. As I have a great responsibility on your account, I wish to be certain that you are not endangering yourselves in the street. When I return we shall undertake some long walks.”

Picking up the telegram from the floor where it had fallen, Mrs. Handsomebody slowly left the room and closed the door behind her.

“She’s always jawing about her responsibility,” muttered Angel resentfully. “Why don’t she let us run about like other boys, ’stead of mewing us up like a parcel of girls? I’ll be shot if I stand it! It’s just all wrong.”

“What *are* the Channel Islands, anyhow?” I asked, to change the subject. “I’d just got to Jersey, Guernsey, when I got stuck.”

“Jersey, Guernsey, Sweater, Sock, and Darn,” replied my elder, emphasizing the last named.

“*Was* the telegram from Father?” interrupted The Seraph. “Is he comin’ home?”

“No, Billy,” replied Angel. “Someone belonging to Mrs. Handsomebody is dead. She’s goin’ to the funeral, I s’pose. Whoever can it be, John? Didn’t know *she* had any people.”

“A whole day away,” I mused. “It has never happened before.”

I looked at Angel, and Angel looked at me—such looks as might be exchanged by lion cubs in captivity. We recalled our old home with its stretch of green lawn, the dogs, the stable with the sharp, sweet smell of hay, and the pigeons, sliding and “rooketty-cooing” on the roof. Here, the windows of our schoolroom looked out on a planked back yard, and our daily walks with Mrs. Handsomebody were dreary outings indeed.

Of a sudden Angel threw his geography into the air. His brown eyes were sparkling.

“We’ll make a day of it, Lieutenant,” he cried, slapping me on the shoulder. He always called me Lieutenant where mischief was a-foot. “Such

a day as *never* was. We'll do every blessed thing we're s'posed not to! Most of all—we'll *run the streets!*"

At that instant, Mary Ellen opened the door and put her rosy face in.

"She do be packin' her bag, byes," she whispered; "she's takin' the elivin o'clock train, an' she won't be back till to-morrow at noon. Now, what d'ye think o' that? She's awful quate, but she's niver spilt a tear fer him that I could spot."

"For who?"

"Why, her brother to be sure. It's him that's dead. It's a attack of ammonia that's carried him off so suddint. Her only brother an'—Yes, ma'am, I'm comin',"—her broad face disappeared—"I was on'y tellin' the young gintlemin to be nice an' quate while I git their dinner ready. Will they be havin' the cold mutton from yisterday, ma'am?" Her voice trailed down the hall.

Presently we heard the front door close. We raced to the top of the stairs.

"Is she gone?" we whispered, peering over the banister into the hall below. But of course she was gone, else Mary Ellen would never dare to stand thus in the open doorway, gaping up and down the street! We slid recklessly down the handrail. It was the first infringement of rules—the wig was on the green! We crowded about Mary Ellen in the doorway, sniffing the air.

"Now, listen here, byes," said Mary Ellen, turning sober all of a sudden and shutting the door, "you come right out to the kitchen wid me. I've got a word to say to ye."

She led the way down the hall and through the dining-room, with its atmosphere of haircloth, into the more friendly kitchen, where even the oppression of Mrs. Handsomebody could not quite subdue the bounding spirits of Mary Ellen.

Angel sallied to the cupboard. "Bother!" he said discontentedly, investigating the cake box, "that same old seedy-cake! Won't you *please* make us a treat to-day, Mary Ellen? Jam tarts or some sticky sort of cake like you see in the pastry shop window."

"That's the very thing I was goin' to speak about, my dear," Mary Ellen replied, "if ye'll jist howld yer horses." Before proceeding she cut us each, herself included, a slice of the seed cake.

“Now, as well ye know, I’ve worked here many a long month, and I’ve had followers a-plinty, yit there’s noan o’ thim I like the same as Mr. Watlin, the butcher’s young man, an’ it makes me blush wid shame whin I think that after all the pippemints, an’ gum drops, an’ jaw-bone breakers he’s give me, not to speak of minstrel shows an’ rides on the tram-cars, an’ I’ve niver given him so much as a cup o’ tay in this kitchen. Not *wan* cup o’ tay, mind ye!”

We shook our heads commiseratingly. Angel flicked his last caraway seed at her.

“Well,” he said, with a wink, “you gave hime something better than tea—I saw you—!”

“Aw, well, my dear,” replied Mary Ellen, without smiling, “a man that do be boardin’ all the time likes a little attintion sometimes—an’ a taste o’ home cookin’. Now, hark to my plan. I mane to have a little feast of oyster stew, an’ cake, an’ coffee, an’ the like this very night for Mr. Watlin an’ me, an’ yersilves. You kin have yours in the dining-room like little gintelmin, an’ him an’ me’ll ate in the kitchen here. Thin, after the supper, ye kin come out an’ hear Mr. Watlin play on the fiddle. It’ll be a rale treat fer ye! The missus’ll niver be the wiser, an’ we’ll all git a taste o’ *freedom*, d’ ye see?”

We were unanimous in our approval.

“But,” said Angel, “there’s just one thing, Mary Ellen: if there’s going to be a party you and Mr. Watlin have got to have yours in the dining-room the same as us. It’ll be ever so much jollier, and more like a real party.”

“Thru fer ye, Master Angel!” cried Mary Ellen heartily: “sure, there’s noan o’ the stiff-neck about ye, and ye’ll git yer fill av oysters an’ cake fer that, mark my words! As fer my Mr. Watlin, there ain’t a claner, smarter feller to be found annywheres.”

Mary Ellen gave us our cold mutton and rice pudding that day in free and easy fashion.



We made a dash for the forbidden street and stood there a moment, silent, dazzled by the vista that opened up before us.

Not a question nor an admonition did she inflict on us, when, the moment that the last mouthful was swallowed, we made a dash for the forbidden street and stood there a moment, silent, dazzled by the vista that opened up before us—what to do with these glorious hours of freedom!

It was one of those late February days when Nature, after weeks of frozen disregard for man, of a sudden smiles, and you see that her face has grown quite young and that she is filled with gracious intent toward you.

Suddenly, obedient to the same impulse, we set off down the road at a trot. We were boys no longer, but mettlesome steeds out for exercise and feeling our oats. All three shied friskly at a lamp-post.

In time we left the decorous street we knew so well and turned to one that was narrow and untidy. Shabby houses and shops were jumbled

promiscuously together, and the pavement was full of holes. From the far end of it came the joyous tones of a hand-organ, vibrating on the early afternoon air. A fishmonger's shop sent forth its robust odor. The scarlet of a lobster caught our eyes as we flew past.

Could it be possible that the player of the organ was our old friend Tony, to whose monkey we had often handed our coppers through the palings?

We were horses no longer! Who had time for such pretense when Tony was grinding out "White Wings" with all his might? Angel and I took to the sidewalk and ran with all speed, leaving the poor little Seraph pumping away in the rear, not quite certain whether he was horse or boy, but determined not to be outdistanced by us.

It was indeed Tony, and his white teeth gleamed when he saw us coming, and his eyebrows went up to his hat brim at sight of us, bareheaded and alone, who always handed our coppers through the palings. And Anita, the monkey, was there, looking rather pale and sickly after the long winter, but full of pluck, grinning as she doffed her gold-braided hat.

Everyone seemed in good humor that day. Windows were pushed up and small change tossed out, or dropped in Anita's cup as she perched, chattering, on the sill. A stout grocer in his white apron gave her a little pink biscuit to nibble.

We three sat on the curb close to the organ, our small heads reeling with the melodies that thundered from it. When Tony moved on, we rose and followed him. At the next corner he rested his organ on its one leg and looked down at us.

"You betta go home," he admonished; "your mama not like."

"We're going to run the streets to-day," I said manfully; "Mrs. Handsomebody is away at a funeral."

"A funer-al," repeated Tony. "She know-about dis?"

"No," I replied; "but Mary Ellen does."

"Oh, all right," said Tony, "but don't you get los'."

We helped him to carry the organ. It was a new one, he said, and very expensive to hire. We asked him endless questions we had always been wanting to ask—about Italy, and his parents, and sisters, and we

told him about Father in South America, and about the party that night for Mr. Watlin.

From street to street we wandered till we were gloriously and irrevocably lost. Angel and I helped to mind the organ and The Seraph even presented himself at doors with Anita's little tin cup in his hand.

So the afternoon sped on. Narrow alleys we played in, and wide streets, and once we passed through a crowded thoroughfare where we had to hug close to the organ.

At last, Tony, looking down at us with a smile, said:

"Jus' one more tune here, then I tak' you home. See? De sun's gettin' low, and dat little one's gettin' tired. I tak' you home in a minute."

This street was a quiet one. At the corner some untidy little girls danced on the pavement, while a group of boys stood by, loafing against the window of a small liquor shop, and occasionally scattering the girls by some threat of hair-pulling or kissing.

Angel strolled along the street to watch the little girls. I did not see what happened, but above the noise of the organ I heard first shouts of derision and anger, and then my brother's voice crying out in pain.

I pushed aside the clinging Seraph and ran to where I saw the two groups melted into one about a pair of combatants. The little girls parted to let me through. I saw then that the contending parties were Angel and a boy whose tousled head was fully six inches above my brother's. He had gripped Angel by the back of the neck with one hand, while with the other he struck blows that sounded horrible to me. Angel was hitting out wildly. When the boy saw me, he hooked his leg behind Angel's and threw him on his back with deadly ease. He turned then to me with a leer.

"Well, pretty," he simpered, "does yer want some, too? I s'y, fellers, 'ere's another hangel comin' fer 'is dose. Put up yer little 'ooks, then; an' I'll give yer two black 'osses an' a red driver! Aw, come on, sissy!"

I tried to remember what Father had said about fighting. "Don't clutch and don't paw. Strike out from the shoulder like a gentleman." So, while the boy was talking, I struck out from the shoulder right on the end of his nose with my shut fist.

Whatever things I may achieve, never, ah, never shall I experience a thrill of triumph equal to that which made my blood dance when I saw a trickle—oh, a goodly rich red trickle!—of blood spurt from the bully's nose.

“Ow! Ow! Wesley! Oo’s got a red driver on ’is own?” shouted his comrades. “Plug aw’y, little ’un!”

He snarled horribly, showing his big front teeth. I could feel his breath hot on my face as he clutched me round the neck. I could see some boys holding Angel back, I could hear The Seraph’s wail of “John! John!” Then, simultaneously there came a blow on my own nose, and a grasping of my collar, and a shaking that freed us of each other.

A minute passed before I could regain possession of myself. The street reeled, the organ seemed to be grinding in my own head, and yet I found that it was not playing at all, for there was Tony with it on his back, looking anxiously into my face, and firing a volley of invective after the big boy, who was retreating with his mates.

I looked up at the owner of the hand which still held my collar. He was a very thin young man with a pale face and quiet gray eyes.

Tony began to offer incoherent explanations.

“But who are they?” demanded the young man; “they don’t seem to belong to this street.”

“No, no, no,” reiterated Tony; “dey are little fr-friends of mine—dey come for a walk with me. Oh, I shall get into some trouble for dis, I tink! It was all those beeg boys dat bully heem, an’ when I would run to help, dere was my Anita lef’ on da organ alone, an’ I mus’ not lose her!”

“It’s all right,” I explained to the young man; “we were just spending the afternoon with Tony, and it wasn’t his fault we got to fighting, and—and did I do very badly, please? Did you notice whether I pawed or not?”

“By George!” said the young man, “you made the claret flow!”

“It took two of them to hold me or I’d have got back at him,” said Angel.

“It took fwee o’ them to hold me,” piped The Seraph, “or I’d have punched evwybody!”

“How did it start?” inquired the young man.

“That biggest one asked me my name,” replied Angel, “and before I thought I’d said ‘Angel,’ and that started them. Of course, my real name is David, but I forgot for the moment.”

“I will tak’ dem home,” interrupted Tony. “Come,” taking The Seraph’s hand, “dere will be no more running da street for you little boys!”

“I’ll walk along, too,” said the young man, “I’ve nothing else to do.”

I strode along at his side, greatly elated. I was as hot as fire, and some of the gamin’s blood was still on my hand. I cherished it secretly.

Although the young man had quiet, even sad, eyes, it turned out that he was wonderfully interesting. He had traveled considerably, and had even visited South America, yet he could not have been an engineer like Father, building railroads, for he looked very poor.

I was sorry when we reached Mrs. Handsomebody’s front door.

“Good-by,” he said, holding out his hand.

But a happy thought struck me. I told him about Mary Ellen’s party. “And,” I hurried on, “there’ll be oysters and coffee and all sorts of good things to eat, and we’d like most awfully to have you join us, if you will. Mary Ellen would be proud to entertain a friend of ours. Wouldn’t she, Angel?”

“Yes, and Tony can come, too!” cried Angel. “We’ll have a regular party!”

“Yes, yes, I will come to da party,” said Tony quickly. “I am vera hongry.”

“Oh, please come!” I pleaded, dragging the young man down the side passage. He suffered himself to be led as far as the back entrance, but, once there, he halted.

“Tony and I shall wait here,” he said, “and you’ll go in and send your Mary Ellen out to inspect us. We shall see what she thinks of such a surprise party before we venture in.”

We three entered breathlessly. Who can describe the babble of our explanations and appeals to Mary Ellen’s hospitality, and her reproaches for the fright we had given her? Howbeit, when the first clamor subsided, we perceived that Mary Ellen’s Mr. Watlin was ensconced behind the stove, looking tremendously dressed up and embarrassed. He now came forward and shook each of us by the hand.

The greetings over, Mary Ellen and he conferred for a moment in the corner, then Mr. Watlin creaked across the kitchen and disappeared through the outer door into the yard, where the young man and Tony and Anita waited.

“Now,” said Mary Ellen sternly, “ye’ve just got to abide by Mr. Watlin’s decision. If he says they’re passable, why, in they come, an’ if he gives ’em their walkin’ ticket, well an’ good, an’ not a squeak out o’ ye. I’ve had about enough o’ yer actions for wan day!”

“But he’s a gentleman, Mary Ellen!” I insisted.

“Ay, an’ the monkey’s a lady, no doubt! I know the kind!” I had never seen Mary Ellen so sour.

But our fears for our friends were set at rest, for at that instant the door opened and Mr. Watlin entered, followed by the young man, and by Tony, with Anita perching on his shoulder.

“Good-evening to ye, Tony,” said Mary Ellen, and then she turned to our new friend.

“I don’t know how you call yourself, sir,” she said, bluntly.

“You may call me Harry, if you will,” he replied, after a slight hesitation.

Mary Ellen, with a keen look at him, said: “Won’t you sit down, sir? The victuals will be on the table in the dining-room directly. Mr. Watlin, would ye mind givin’ me a hand with them dish covers?”

Mr. Watlin assisted Mary Ellen deftly, and with an air of proprietorship. He was a stout young man with a blond pompadour and a smooth-shaven ruddy face. As soon as an opportunity offered I asked him whether he had brought his fiddle. He smiled enigmatically.

“You shall see wot you shall see, and ’ear wot you shall ’ear,” he replied.

In time the great tureen (Mrs. Handsomebody’s silver-plated one) was on the table and the guests were bidden to “sit in.” Mary Ellen, full of dignity, seated herself in Mrs. Handsomebody’s place behind the coffee-urn.

It would be impossible to conceive of seven people with finer appetites, or of a hostess more determined that her guests should do themselves injury from over-eating. The oysters were followed by a Bedfordshire pudding, potatoes, cold ham, celery, several sorts of pastry, oranges and coffee. It was when we reached the lighter portion of the feast that tongues were unloosed, and conviviality bloomed like an exotic flower in Mrs. Handsomebody’s dining-room.

“These ’ere fancies is wot tikes me,” said Mr. Watlin, helping himself to his third lemon turnover. “Sub-stantial food is all right. I shouldn’t care to do

without meat and the like, but it's the fancies that seems to tickle all the w'y down. Sub-stantial foods is like hugs, but fancies might come under the 'ead of kisses—you don't know when you get enough on 'em, hey, Tony? You lika da kiss?"

Tony turned up his palms.

"Oh, no, no, dey are not for a poor fella lak me!"

Joy and sorrer," replied Mr. Watlin solemnly, "comes to 'igh and low alike. There's Mrs. 'Andsomebody—she is at this moment enveloped in sorrer, along of 'er brother's demise—enveloped in sorrer." He repeated the phrase with evident pride. "And 'ow hold a man might 'e 'ave been, Mary Ellen?"



As he played you could hear the tinkle of donkey bells, and the cooing of pigeons; and hear Tony's sisters singing. It was spring in Tuscany.

"Blessed if I know," replied Mary Ellen, "but he was years an' years younger than her. She brought him up, and from what I can find out he turned out pretty bad."

“It’s a very bad fmg to be dead,” interposed The Seraph sententiously; “you can’t eat, you can’t dwink, an’ you just fly wound an’ wound, lookin’ for somefmg to light on!”

“Right-O, young gentleman!” said Mr. Watlin, “and put as couldn’t be better. And the moral is, mike the most of our time wot’s left!”

“Please, *did* you bring your fiddle, Mr. Watlin?” pleaded Angel. “Won’t you play now?”

Mr. Watlin, thus importuned, disappeared for a space into the back hall, whence he finally emerged in his shirt sleeves, carrying the violin under his arm.

“Lydies and gentlemen,” said he, “I ’ope you’ll pardon me appearing before you in my waistcoat. I must not be ’ampered, you see, wen I manipulate the bow. I must ’ave freedom. It’s a grand thing, freedom! Ah!”

Mr. Watlin now, with the violin tucked under his chin, began to play in a very spirited manner. Our pulses beat time to lively polka and schottische.

“I can play da fiddle a little,” said Tony, as our artist paused for a rest.

Mr. Watlin clapped him good-humoredly on the shoulder. “Gow to it then, my boy; give us your little tune! I’m out of form to-night, anyw’y.” He pushed the violin patronizingly into Tony’s brown hands.

The Italian took it, oh, so lovingly, and with an apologetic glance at Mr. Watlin he tuned the string to a different pitch. Anita climbed to the back of his neck.

Then came music, flooding, trickling, laughing, from the bow of Tony! Italy you could see, and little half-naked children playing in the sleepy street! You could hear the tinkle of donkey bells and the cooing of pigeons, you could see Tony’s home, as he was seeing it, and hear his sisters singing. It was spring in Tuscany.

The theme grew sad. It sang of loneliness. A lost child was wandering through the forest, who could not find his mother. It was very dark beneath the fir trees, and the wind made the boy shiver. His cry of—“Mother! Mother!” echoed in my heart and would not be hushed. I hid my face in the hollow of my arm and sobbed once.

The music ceased. Harry had me in his arms.

“What’s wrong, old fellow? Was it something in Tony’s music that hurt?”

I nodded, clinging to him.

“It’s ’igh time ’e was in bed,” said Mr. Watlin, taking the fiddle brusquely from the Italian’s hands. “’E don’t fancy doleful ditties, an’ no more do I, hey, Johnnie?”

Tony only smiled at me. “I tink you like my music,” he said.

Harry now announced rather hurriedly that he must be going, and after he had said good night to everyone and thanked Mary Ellen in a very manly way he still kept my hand in his, and together we passed out of doors.

It was frosty cold. The air came gratefully to my hot cheeks. Harry stared up at the stars in silence for a moment, then he said:

“I want to tell you something, John, before I go. I don’t know just how to make you understand. But I—I’m not the loafer you think I am—”

“Oh, I don’t—”

“No one but a loafer or a sponge would do what I’ve done to-night,” he persisted; “but I came here because I liked you little chaps so well—and—because—I was so infernally hungry. I hadn’t eaten since last night, you know, and when I heard about the oysters and coffee, I just couldn’t refuse, and—I came.”

“Oh, I’m sorry,” I said, “I’m sorry, Harry! I like you awfully!”

I gave him my hand and, hearing the voices of Mr. Watlin and Tony, he hurried to the street.

I stumbled sleepily into the kitchen.

“Och, do go to bed, Masther John!” exclaimed Mary Ellen, “you’re as white as a cloth! Well, if you’re sick to-morrow, ye must jist grin an’ bear it! An’ sure we *have* had a day of it, haven’t we?”

She followed us to the foot of the stairs with a lamp. The shadows of the banisters raced up the wall ahead of us, as she moved away. The Seraph gripped the back of my blouse. We stopped at the door of Mrs. Handsomebody’s bedroom.

“I dare you,” said Angel, “to open it and stick your head in.”

I was too drowsy to be timid. I turned the handle and opened the door far enough to insert my round tow head.

The room was unutterably still. A pale bluish light filtered through the long white curtains. The ghostly bed awaited its occupant. The door of a tall wardrobe stood open—did something stir inside? I withdrew my head and closed the door. Now I remembered that the room had smelled of black kid gloves. I shuddered.

“You were afraid!” jeered Angel.

“Not I. It was nothing to do.”

But when we were safe in bed and Mary Ellen had come and put out our light, I lay a-thinking of the empty room. Strange, when people went away and left you, how Something stayed behind! A shadowy, wistful something, that smelled of kid gloves!

We slept till ten next morning. More blissful still, we ate our bread and strawberry jam and milk from one end of the dining table. We heaped the bread with sugar, and stirred the jam into our milk. After breakfast, we played at knights and robbers in the schoolroom.

Angel and I were in the midst of a terrific fight over a princess whom he was bearing off to his robber cave (The Seraph, draped in a chenille table-cover, impersonating the lady, and shrieking with startling realism), when we were interrupted by the tinkle of the dinner bell.

How the morning had flown! Had she returned then? Was the funeral over? Had she heard our shouts? We descended the stairs with some misgivings and entered the dining-room in single file.

Yes, she was there, standing by the table. After a dry little kiss on each of our foreheads, she motioned us to seat ourselves and took her own accustomed place behind the tea things. It was not to be thought that this was the same room in which we had feasted so uproariously on the night previous.

Yet I stared at Mrs. Handsomebody, and marveled that she should suspect nothing. Did she get no whiff of the furry smell of Anita? Did no faint echo of Tony’s music disturb her thoughts?

At last she raised her eyes.

“I hope you behaved yourselves well, and made profitable use of your time during my absence?”

We made incoherent murmurs of assent.

“Are you through your dinners, then? You may pass out.”

It was not until Angel and I were back in the schoolroom that we discovered the absence of The Seraph.

“I remember now,” reflected Angel, “that as he passed her she stopped him. I didn’t think anything of it. D’you s’pose she’s pumping the kid?”

We were left to our conjectures for fully a quarter of an hour. Then we heard him plodding leisurely up the stairs.

“What’s up? Did you blab? Whatever *did* she say?”

The Seraph raised his large eyes to our inquiring faces with great solemnity.

“She kept me,” he said, “to cuddle me, an’ to give me this—” He showed a white peppermint lozenge between his little teeth.

To *cuddle* him. Was the world coming to an end?

“Yes,” he persisted, “she kept me to *cuddle* me, an’ she was *cwysin’*—so there!”

Mrs. Handsomebody crying!

“It’s about her dead brother, of course,” said Angel. “That’s why she cried.”

“No,” said The Seraph, stoutly. “He was a *man*, an’ she was *cwysin’* about a little *wee* boy like me she used to cuddle long ago!”

THE END

TRANSCRIBER NOTES

Mis-spelled words and printer errors have been corrected. Where multiple spellings occur, majority use has been employed.

Punctuation has been maintained except where obvious printer errors occur.

Illustrations have been relocated due to using a non-page layout.

A cover was created for this ebook which is placed in the public domain.

[The end of *Freedom* by Mazo de la Roche]