

*Sharing Dad With
Judy*

Madge Macbeth

fadedpage.com

*** A Distributed Proofreaders Canada eBook ***

This eBook is made available at no cost and with very few restrictions. These restrictions apply only if (1) you make a change in the eBook (other than alteration for different display devices), or (2) you are making commercial use of the eBook. If either of these conditions applies, please contact a <https://www.fadedpage.com> administrator before proceeding. Thousands more FREE eBooks are available at <https://www.fadedpage.com>.

This work is in the Canadian public domain, but may be under copyright in some countries. If you live outside Canada, check your country's copyright laws. IF THE BOOK IS UNDER COPYRIGHT IN YOUR COUNTRY, DO NOT DOWNLOAD OR REDISTRIBUTE THIS FILE.

Title: Sharing Dad with Judy

Date of first publication: 1919

Author: Madge Macbeth (1878-1965)

Date first posted: Dec. 7, 2023

Date last updated: Dec. 7, 2023

Faded Page eBook #20231208

This eBook was produced by: Mardi Desjardins, John Routh & the online Distributed Proofreaders Canada team at <https://www.pgdpCanada.net>

This file was produced from images generously made available by Internet Archive/Canadian Libraries.

Sharing Dad With Judy

By Madge Macbeth

ILLUSTRATED BY MARY ESSEX

Nan—an important young lady.

Dad—her father.

Judy—her new step-mother; the modern twentieth century step-mother, very unlike Snow White's. But this Nan did not know at first, hence a story.



an's opinion of step-mothers was definite and disagreeable. It coincided exactly with that of Grimm and Hans Andersen from whose portrayals it had been formed. To Nan a step-mother was a step-mother just as black was black and wrong was wrong; a fascinating monster of deceit who could cheat an enthralled father into thinking her a model parent, all the while she was inflicting the subtlest cruelties upon his children.

“Like Snow White's,” thought Nan, bitterly.

The child sat in starched uncomfortableness on the top step of the verandah. Her heart seethed with hot rebellion and with self-pity. She was actually too miserable to cry although it seemed impossible to put her finger on the spot where something hurt.

To escape unhappiness for ten years is more than most of us expect, but Nan did not realize this. She thought that Life's entire course should run as smoothly in the future as the past, with a background of sleepy old Bayfield, with Granny, with puppies and kittens and a few children, and with occasional visits from Dad. Nan's mother had died when she was born and her father, filled with a sudden loathing of the place where Hope and Happiness lay buried under a bed of lilies-of-the-valley, went back to the city and feverish business activity, which he said, provided him with a fair

substitute for the waters of Lethe. Granny was both father and mother to Nan, who was seldom conscious of her loss.

But a week ago, something had happened. Granny had received a long letter from Dad. It had made her very thoughtful and a little tearful.

Simultaneously, Nan felt herself an object of unwonted interest in the straggling little village; glances of well-intentioned commiseration followed her and frequently her sensitive ears caught the words, "Poor child!" as she passed. She spoke to Granny.

"Your father has married—again, my dear." The old lady spoke bravely. "This is quite as it should be, for he must have been very lonely all these years. I have had you, and you have had me, but he has had no one. I am very glad, and know you are."

"He has had me," protested Nan.

Granny nodded. She could not explain that Lawrence Johnson had always looked upon his child as the too-extravagant price he paid for her mother's life and that his visits to Bayfield were prompted by duty rather than love.

"I am going away for a little holiday," she continued, "for you are big enough to look after yourself and Dad will not require two women to look after him."

Nan wriggled out of her grandmother's embrace. She felt more indignation than sorrow at the thought of the old lady's departure for youth accommodates itself to vacancies in the home with unflattering ease. But this summary eviction, the first act of a cruel and heartless step-mother, was intolerable! No wonder Granny wiped her eyes as she read the letter, and no wonder people said, "Poor child!" It would probably be her turn next.

Amy Meade supplied her with further information. Amy was a ferret-like child who possessed unerring judgment in picking out the gossipy gems from her elders' conversations. These she polished and set in a fashion delightfully original.

"I know something about you," she challenged with a triumphant superiority which galled. "You've got a step-mother!" The tone was such as might have been used had she said, "You've got a jail-bird in the family."

“As if I didn’t know,” Nan flung at her, angrily. “She’s *my* step-mother, you see.”

Nan took no joy in her possession. On the contrary. But she did not intend to be looked upon with mawkish pity. Rather she chose to be regarded with respectful awe, as a Christian martyr, one who bears the blows of Life without flinching and with uncomplaining fortitude.

“That’s nothing to brag about,” taunted Amy, “even if she *has* got the money. She’s snippy and citified and ‘she has different ideas,’” the quotation was one of the neighborly speculations. “You’ll see how long it’ll be before you go away to your grandmother. ‘It always complicates matters when there is a child,’” she ended borrowing one of Mrs. Henderson’s lugubrious prognostications.

Neither of them understood this, but Nan felt that every awful fate, including sudden death, hung over her. She resolved not to wear the woman’s gifts, eat her food, sleep with her door unlocked and never, never to allow the fiend to comb her hair!

Pride and a sort of fatalism prevented her from appealing to Granny. Were they not both powerless?

So Granny had left and Nan was left, to greet her father and his bride. She wished she could think with passionate tenderness of her father, but as hers was a nature which loves most fondly that upon which it can demonstrate its affection, the nearest approach she could make, was a feeling of fierce jealousy new-born with loss. “My own dear lost Dad,” she murmured repeatedly.

A horn sounded and Nan drew herself up stiffly, her eyes fastened upon the distant gateway. The sharp coughing of a motor climbing the steep hill which curved suddenly into the grounds was no louder than the beating of her heart. She felt that suffocation would kill her before the car drew up at the steps.

Hello, little girl,” called her father. “Here we are—dusty and thirsty. How are you? You look very sweet and clean.”

Nan went slowly down and lifted a cool cheek to her father. With a child’s keen intuition she saw that he was nervous, that he hoped this first meeting would be pleasant and that his anxiety was not for her—no! but for

his bride. Nan hugged herself and felt very wicked and powerful and triumphant. There was grim satisfaction in having the upper hand, even for a moment.

“Come, dear, and welcome—er—Judy,” her father continued. “You two must love each other heaps.”

The child turned insolent eyes toward the woman who had climbed out of the car. Neither so young, nor beautiful, nor dashing as she had expected. Furthermore, she was not at all nervous.

Nan extended three limp fingers.

Judy hesitated the fraction of a second before taking them and Johnson watched uneasily while pretending to fuss with bags and parcels. If Nan expected her indifference to be met by any sign of conciliation or affection, she was disappointed. Her face flamed under the keen scrutiny of her father’s wife who smiled as she said:

“I am so glad to have a grown up daughter to help me make things comfortable for Dad. We are going to have lots of fun spoiling him, aren’t we, Nan?”

Nan set her teeth and made no reply. But Judy had not waited for one. She admired the view, and sniffed happily among the lilacs and said she was vulgarly hungry. Then she passed into the house and Nan heard her father say—“always undemonstrative child—shy—day or two to wear off.”

A great hot choking lump rose in her throat and she knew it would be impossible for her to swallow any food. So she swallowed her scruples and told a deliberate lie, to the effect that she had eaten her tea early in the afternoon and was not hungry. They did not urge her and presently she had to run far into the garden to escape the sounds of their happy laughter.

Determined to hate her step-mother, to find corroboration of her definitely-formed opinion, Nan, during the days which followed, twisted every word and deed until they seemed to prove the truth of her contentions. Take for example the matter of a peace offering. She had expected some costly trinket or dresses, at least, which could be exhibited to the village. But Judy brought her nothing! And she was rich, too! Nan was too young for deep self-analysis, and yet away down inside her she knew that had her father’s wife come laden with conciliatory gifts they would have been accepted with more contempt than gratitude. At the same time, it was easy to construe this oversight into an act of stinginess which made hatred justifiable.

Nan did not know, of course, that her father had touched upon this very matter, and had suggested that friendly overtures might be more effective when supported by material assistance. But Judy with her keener insight had protested with an earnestness almost pathetic.

“But, Lawrence, dear,” she cried, “I want to win the child’s love, not buy it. Presents can come later.”

So could kisses, apparently, and many other things. She never placed herself in a position which gave Nan the chance for a rebuff; she never asked for companionship nor forced her own company. She demanded no obedience and gave no favors. She was wholly hateful—hateful!

There were, however, a few compensations. Nan’s importance in the community increased. It gave her immense satisfaction to realize that when she passed down the quiet, straggly street every neighbor made a point of being on the verandah or in the yard and none ever failed to make solicitous enquiries of her.

“Well, Nan,” they would say, “and how’s everything at your house?”

And she, taking refuge behind a delightfully mysterious borrowed phrase, would call:

“Oh, thank you, as well as can be expected.”

Receiving many more invitations now than in Granny’s day, the child took a wicked, melancholy pleasure in refusing them, for she loved to catch the expressions which said plainer than words, “Poor child, who but a step-mother could be responsible for such curtailment of innocent pleasure!” And as there was no tale of ill-treatment and unhappiness to tell, she naturally told none, thereby earning for herself the reputation of being a “loyal little soul, if there ever was one.”

She displayed quite suddenly a passionate fondness for her oldest clothes, parading about the village in dresses dragged from bundles in the attic. At home, however, she never appeared in these. One day, her father catching her in the grotesque masquerade, gave her a severe scolding. But Judy interceded.

“It is evident, dear,” she said, smiling, “that you do not understand the feminine heart, does he, Nan? We have our peacock moods, but we have others, when an old and faded frock is irresistible. Nan has a cupboard full

of pretty dresses, and when she likes, no doubt she will become a peacock again and dazzle us. In the meantime, you must not be annoyed because she proves constant to the older ones. You will see me in many of mine.”

As soon as their backs were turned, Nan stamped her foot with fury. She was robbed even of the satisfaction of feeling neglected; she was made to look ridiculous in the eyes of her father. Probably in some diabolically clever way, Judy would acquaint the whole village of the fact that like all imposters, her step-child had been imposing on no one but herself!

But the bitterest dose of all was the time when Judy actually shielded her from her own father. Such a thing was past human endurance—from a step-mother.

“You are starving me, good wife,” laughed Johnson across the table heaped with good things. “How can I exist without any of those toothsome cookies which lend appetizing variety to angel cake, devil cake and all the intermediate stages of spiritual bakings?”

Judy blushed with pleasure. “Baby,” she said. “One can’t entertain neighbors and make cookies at the same time. The operation is delicate. However, I promise them for to-night, no matter what happens.”

“Good!”

Dad smacked his lips like a greedy boy and commanded Nan to watch the preparations even if she could not render First Aid: “You must learn the trick, too, daughter,” he said, “for I can keep two chefs busy where it comes to Judy’s cookies.”

He had gone to town and Nan into the kitchen. But she sat in a far corner and neither watched nor helped. She pretended to be absorbed in a book, Judy sang happily and ignored her.

The oven was full and savoury odors hung about the room. The cookies were just beginning to brown and the critical moment approached when they must be snatched like a brand from the burning. Then the telephone rang. Judy frowned.

“Nan,” she asked, “would you rather answer the phone—it may be your Dad—or watch the cookies?”

Nan chose the latter exultantly. She listened to Judy’s hurried admonitions—“If I am more than two minutes, turn off the gas and open the

door”—and watched her run from the kitchen. Then turning on the cock to its fullest extent, she went back to her corner and the book.

Presently the character of the odors changed. A rift of smoke crept out of the oven door. It became denser. Nan turned off the gas and opened the door, just as Judy returned.

“I am afraid I waited too long,” said the child, looking at a mass of charred dough frizzling in the pan.

Judy did not speak for a moment. Then she said very gently. “Yes, dear, I am afraid you have.”

“But aren’t you going to make some more?” asked Nan rather alarmed at seeing her put the things away. The intention behind her act had been to annoy Judy, not to deprive Dad.

“No, not to-day. Dad will have to do without his cookies. I never double my work if I can help it.”

Nan spent a miserable afternoon, anticipating a scene at the tea table. But there was none as far as she was concerned. Dad asked for his cookies and Judy said, “I had an accident, Lawrence. They were burned. We will have some another time.”

Dad was awfully disappointed and a little annoyed. He began to tease Judy about the sin of absent-mindedness. And when his words grew more caustic than he, perhaps, realized, she flushed painfully, but offered no explanation or excuse. Nan gulped her food in silence, her eyes on her plate. Judy had stood between her and a merited scolding, she had laid an obligation upon her; worse, she was in possession of knowledge which gave her the whip hand. Could anybody be more hateful? And yet because it gave her keen satisfaction to know that Dad was mildly annoyed with Judy, Nan strangled the impulse to confess. Anyway, it was not really *all* her fault!

As usual, she was invited to drive with them after tea, and as usual she refused on the plea of spending the evening with Amy. They could pick her up on their way home. She saw them start off in the smart little motor which by the way, belonged to Judy, she saw them stop and discuss some sort of attachment to prevent the gate from swinging to, and then in a sunlit whirl of dust they disappeared down the horse-shoe hill and out of view.

Nan followed slowly along the flower-bordered drive. At the gate she also paused. A soft breeze swayed it gently. Suppose the wind should blow hard enough to close it? Shutting her eyes to the probable damage this would inflict on the occupants of the car, or her father, at least, she forced herself to consider only the damage to the gate and motor. Owing to the sharp turn of the hill, it would be impossible for Judy to see her danger until too late to prevent a collision. The car would be smashed, the gate smashed, and perhaps Dad would not trust her to drive again. Oh, it would be humiliating!

She pushed the gate ever so lightly with her foot. The breeze finished what she had begun. The two springs clicked and the entrance to the drive was closed. "It was *really* the wind," said Nan as she ran quickly out of the back garden and into the road.

She had thought that her hate would have kept her from being frightened, but she was mistaken, so she sang loudly, shrilly. Hate, she observed was a peculiar thing. It never came to one when one needed it most. It had not drowned, stark dead, a teeny-weeny feeling of remorse over the matter of the cookies. It was not at all satisfactory in keeping her mind from the recollection of that closed gate. But, of course, this sentimentalism displayed weakness. It was right to hate all step-mothers. "Look at Snow White's," thought Nan in the midst of her song.

The horn of a motor sounded. She climbed up the side of the road and waited for it to pass. But it stopped and her father called:

"Why, little daughter, you can't be wandering about the roads at night. I thought you were going to see Amy. Here, hop in!"

Nan demurred but her father was insistent. She climbed into the front seat and muttered a sullen good evening to Mrs. Cowan who sat in the back with Judy. She felt limp and very sick. Everything was wrong—her father at the wheel, she beside him, the gate—the future yawned grim and terrible.

It was easy to guess what had happened. They had evidently met Mrs. Cowan and had invited her, on the spot, to drive. Judy, of course, was to blame. Her father would never have bothered, Nan knew. He wanted Judy all to himself.

It was easy to guess what would happen, when Dad, tearing up the steep incline, would crash into that locked gate, and she, Nan, would be the victim

of her own handiwork. Shivering with fear she crouched lower in her seat and was glad, for once, to be ignored.

She tried to think of some way to give them a hint without committing herself. There was none. Better far to be injured, to be killed than to live forever, a despicable creature in Dad's eyes, in Granny's—even Judy's! She clenched her hands and her teeth, and resolved not to speak.

Twilight deepened and the trees blurred against the purple sky. Nan's faint hope that they might reach home before dark was lost in the coming night. It was quite dark when they turned back and only a matter of seconds, seemingly, before they stopped at Mrs. Cowan's gate. A few big drops of rain fell.

"Let's get home before the storm, Lawrence," said Judy. "Nan has no coat and must not get wet."

So they flew through the quiet village and commenced to climb the steep hill which would end in Death.

The curve—she could see it dimly by the glare of the lamps—only a few yards more and then—

They were turning—only a second—

"Stop!" shrieked the child. "The gate——"

Something struck her across the head. Something beat the breath from her body. There was a frightful noise, and there were hot lashes over her arms. Then silence.

The voice was Granny's. Nan recognized it before she tried to peep through the wad of bandages which covered her face. With consciousness came vivid remembrance. She had no need to ask why Granny was there, or the nurse.

She lay very still and presently Granny left the room. Then in trying to move, something horrible stabbed her and she cried out. The big breath sent another torturing knife into her side. Immediately, the nurse bent over her. "You must not move," she said.

"Are—they—was anybody—killed?" Nan gasped.

"No, no, dearie. Don't worry. Your father was cut a little, but your step-mother was hardly injured at all."

Nan began to cry softly. Each sob cost her supreme torture but she could not stop. The nurse unable to soothe her said she would send Granny but Nan cried the harder.

I don't want Granny," she managed to say. "I want my—mother. Tell her I want her to come here—alone."

Judy received the message in silence. Then after a moment she questioned: "Are you sure she said exactly that?" The nurse was quite sure.

Judy smiled perhaps a little tremulously, but still one could recognize a smile. She took something from her bureau drawer and went softly into Nan's room.

"You sent for me, Nan?"

"Judy," whispered the child, extending painfully stiff arms, "I have to tell you something. Come close and listen—maybe I will die before you forgive me——"

"Hush," said Judy very tenderly. "You are not going to die. You will be well before you know it and we are going to be very happy—especially you and I, sharing Dad."

But Nan refused to spare herself. Her aching little body pillowed against the woman's heart and enwrapped more comfortably by love than by bandages, she poured out her miserable confession, her genuine contrition.

"And the gate—" she moaned as she tried to take a breath.

"I guessed," said Judy. "And about the cookies; but I understood, dear little girl."

"How?" the child demanded.

A shadow which Nan did not see, passed across Judy's face.

"Because," she answered, "I had a step-mother, too. I did not love her—indeed, I learned to hate her for she was pretty much the kind of step-mother that Snow White had. Have you read about her?"

Nan moved her head a little and there was a long silence broken only by the child's painful breathing. Judy held her close. Then her arms loosened and stole around her neck.

"What are you putting on me?" asked Nan from behind her gauze and cotton.

“A little gold locket. Inside there is a picture of my mother—my own mother, you understand. It was taken away from me for punishment by—er—the other one, you know. For years I hated her too much to ask for it, and she hated me too much to give it to me. Somehow, I thought I would like you to have it, and to wear it whenever you feel you—love me.”

“Judy,” whispered the little girl, “I will wear it all my life. I never hated you, Judy, I only tried to. It was because I couldn’t that made me do those awful things. Could you find a place where there isn’t any bandage and kiss me, Judy?”

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.

Because of copyright considerations, the illustrations by Mary Essex (1891—?) have been omitted from this etext.

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

[The end of *Sharing Dad with Judy* by Madge Macbeth]