

### Chapter 3 - Angie's Power (Part 2), January 1923



"I HAVE a daughter," Dr. Chester said sadly, "an invalid. She is very trying, poor child. Her mother is dead many years, and I can do so little for her. She is twenty-three years of age: the accident happened three years ago-a motor accident. Your little Angie is so patient, I have been thinking, wishing that my poor Barbara - "

Mother did not know what to say. She did not like to question the doctor, she was afraid of frightening away his confidence; still she longed to hear the story of the doctor's daughter; she longed to help the motherless girl who fought against her cross. But he went on with the story:

"She was a beautiful girl, clever, charming, and popular. Every day she seems to rebel more bitterly. She has gradually cut off all the friends of her happy days, refusing, time after time, to see them, until at last they gave up calling. She says she does not want them to sit around, pitying her. She longs to dance, to sing, to play golf, but she has to lie there day after day -

"I have been telling her about Angie, trying to interest her. Usually she is abrupt, even rude - only since her misfortune - when I speak about my patients. But, somehow, I have contrived to paint Angie in her own heavenly colours, and Barbara asks about her each day. Have you a picture?"

Mother went, with tears in her eyes, for the latest photo of Angie - the one in which she sits with her dreamy eyes fixed on a beautiful vision no one else can see, and her delicate, little face held to one side, as if she listened to beautiful music no one else can hear.

"We have many photos of her," Mother explained, "We have had her taken at each stage of her childhood; we know that soon.... we shall have only photos... left."

Dr. Chester took the picture. "May I show her this? It is very like the child. My daughter is strong... she will live for years, probably. She has actually asked me to . . . give her something... painless... to end it all. She says it is cruel of me to see her thus... and not do it."

Mother's gasp of horror brought a smile to his lips. "Do not fear," he said, reassuringly.

"Oh, it sounds so pagan! Poor child, she must have been distracted when she asked it."

The doctor's face looked older as he slowly shook his head. "I fear sometimes for her reason... and my own."

"Has she any religion?" Mother inquired timidly.

"Well, she was baptised in the Catholic Church - your Church, I believe: one could not attend Angie without noticing her pictures and beads... and her extraordinary faith. Barbara's mother was a Catholic - at least, had been baptised one; her father was a Catholic, but not her mother. Consequently, she really knew very little about the religion: Barbara knows less... I am nothing. My parents were strict churchgoers - Presbyterians - but I gave it up before I was twenty."

"It is very sad. Religion would help her. If she could but know that suffering is sent by God..."

"I was thinking that, when Angie is well enough, you would perhaps allow her to come to see Barbara - "

"Yes, yes. I shall be delighted for her to go. It will do your poor darling good to see and speak with our angel."

"I think it will. But" - his face flushed - "Barbara is so peculiar; she has grown so bitter she might be... not gentle with the child."

"Oh, Angie will understand. She is a strange, wise child."

"She is." Dr. Chester held out his hand. "Thank you for your sympathy. I have never spoken of Barbara to anyone - not to our nearest relatives or dearest friends - as I have to you. I have told no one my fears concerning her. I have told no one of her threats, her passionate upbraidings. But it has done me good to speak to you; I knew you would understand. My daughter's accident has broken my heart: there is no joy, no hope in life for me."

"In this life, perhaps," Mother said gently, "there may be little joy, little hope for you. But this is only a passing life. There is the next - the eternal."

Dr. Chester shook his head sadly, as one "without hope," and, with an abrupt farewell, left the room.

A week later Dr. Chester called in his ear for Angie. All the family - even Shamie - assembled to see her off, and Teddy and Mick announced to the world in general that they were very fond of motor driving: Mother was so ashamed of them. But a rare smile broke over the doctor's stern, sad face.

"I was a boy myself once, Mrs. Daly," he said. "Another day, boys, I'll take you; to-day, Angie is coming with me to see a poor, sick girl, who has no liking for healthy little boys like you."

Angie looked like the angels we see in pictures. She was dressed in white, with a baby-blue ribbon to match her eyes, and her short, golden curls shone like a halo.

Dear little Angie, go on your errand of mercy! Do all you can, little one, for the sad people of this weary old world; for all too soon your own frail, yet strengthening, presence will be recalled from it.

The doctor did not speak during the drive; he was, perhaps, thinking of the manner in which his daughter would receive the child. They stopped at a large, stone house, surrounded by beautiful gardens and lawns.

Angie was taken through a spacious hall, up a wide, shallow stairway, and through beautiful rooms. She had never been in such a grand house before, but she was not awed by the priceless things about her: she was too young to know their value. Even had she known, Angie would not have lost her serene, simple manner, for all the wealth of world cannot awe the soul that desires only the possessions of Heaven. In a long, bright room, on a couch by the window, lay the invalid girl. Her face had been very beautiful, now its beauty was marred by



a hardness of expression: there was a cruel glitter in the eyes, a bitter compression of the lips.

Dr. Chester had opened the door for the child. "This is Angie," he said, and then withdrew, closing the door behind him.

Angie walked over to the couch. "How do you do?" she said, as politely as Mother could have wished, extended her thin, white hand.

"How do I do! You see how," Miss Chester said bitterly, ignoring the frail little hand. "Did not my father tell you you were to see a poor invalid?"

Angie did not seem to mind this rude reply to her polite inquiry; did not seem to notice the refusal to take her hand: "Dr. Chester said he was bringing me to see his sick daughter," she replied simply.

"And weren't you warned to be very kind and consoling, and to say pretty things to do me good? As if that could do me good. No; nothing can ever do me any good, except death. And I am still strong, so very strong. You are a sickly little thing; your pain will soon be all over --"

Angie smiled. "Yes," she said gently; "won't it be beautiful to be in Heaven? I wish you could come with me. Shall I ask God to let you?"

The gentle answer, the child's sincerity, astonished the girl; her own brutal words made her blush for shame.

"Dear child," she said, almost softly, "my father told me about you: I wanted to see you, really. You are the first person I have ever asked to come and see me. And I have received you so rudely. Forgive me. I have such a dreadful temper since... But you, my father tells me, are in pain for long weeks, and you never scold, or complain, or throw things at people!"

Angie looked shocked. "Do you?" she gasped.

Miss Chester laughed, and her astonished father paused in his hurried pacing of the corridor outside her room. Was it a laugh? Had Barbara actually laughed?

"Oh, yes," cried the unashamed Miss Chester; "I do. It gives me some pleasure - and I get so little - to fling things at my nurses, and even at my father sometimes, Poor man!"

Angie sat up very straight. "That is very wicked," she said. "You must not do it again."

Again Miss Chester laughed. "'Must' to me, you little baby! But, listen, I want to learn your secret. Come, tell me."

"Secret? I have no secret."

"Yes, you have, little Wise Eyes. Tell me how you bear pain, how you can lie still, and never complain."



"Oh, that is easy. I do it for God." Barbara Chester's face grew grave as the child's words rang through her beautiful room.

"I do it for God." I told you Angie was an extraordinary child, and her unusual appearance and manner and words had an extraordinary effect on the rebellious girl. She fixed her dark eyes on Angie's face, appealingly "Tell me," she said. "Child, child, help me; I cannot bear it; I cannot. Each day it seems worse; each day seems longer. I have never pleaded for help before, and now I can ask you - you, a little delicate baby. I scold and storm, order and insult,

but with you I can plead, I can pray you to help me. You have some power...”

"God can help you - only God," said the strange, wise child with the spiritual face. All the consoling things that had been said to her, all the beautiful thoughts of her own pure mind, came now to help Angie comfort the doctor's poor, broken child.

"God sends suffering: it is His gift. We love God, and we must not refuse His gift. If anyone you love sends you a gift, you accept it, even if you don't like it. It's the giver you like." She smiled as she explained her point naively. "Now, Teddy bought Mother a hideous tie. It had purple and green and pink and - oh, it was ugly. Mother loves soft shades. But she wore Teddy's tie all Christmas Day, and he was so pleased. I'm sure it really hurt Mother to wear that tie. But she loved Teddy, you see." Angie laughed merrily. "Do you see what I mean? God has sent you and me a gift - oh! such a nasty old one - but we mustn't mind. He sent it. We must wear it, and pretend it's lovely, for His sake. We mustn't be rude to Him and say we don't like His gift. And then, of course, a gift from God is so very different from people's gifts. Of course, Teddy made a mistake buying that hideous tie, but he thought it was pretty: boys don't understand about colours. He did not know it would not suit Mother. But God knows what is good for us, what stils us, better than we do ourselves.

You and I would not have picked out being sick, and asked for it; but, since it came to us, we can be sure it is best for us, because God never makes mistakes when He sends presents." She laughed again. "So, you see, although it seems a nasty old present, it really isn't. It is the very best for us. God always picks the very best things for us. And isn't this funny? The harder and nastier the gifts are, the better they are! And the better the gift, the greater the love. So God must love us very, very much - you and me - because He sent us this gift of hard suffering. Sometimes when I want to play and cannot, sometimes when the pain is bad, I feel inclined to grumble and fret and cry. And then I say to myself, 'Oh, Angie, God is looking. He sent it.' And then I try to be glad I cannot play, and be glad I have the pain, to please Him. We don't know why God picked us - you and me - to be sick. He might have chosen some other two people. But He did not, and that is what matters. He wanted you to be . . . like that . . . and He wanted me to be very ill sometimes, and to be a little better other times. . . . It doesn't matter what He wants, we must be quite, quite satisfied, because He is God."

"Angie, do you think it pleases God to see me... like this?"

"Oh, no... He is sorry for us when we are in pain or trouble... but He knows it is best for you, and it pleases Him if you try to be patient and to like your suffering. You have to suffer now in order to win your way to Heaven. It is our way - yours and mine - to get to Heaven. It is an easy way, after all."

"Angie," Miss Chester said, and her eyes wore a fixed, far-away expression, "where did you learn all this?"

"Everywhere, from everyone - Mother and Father, the Sisters, Father Breen..."

"It is beautiful; but I could not follow it. I could not love my helplessness."

"You can! You must say a little prayer often - millions of times a day."

"What shall I say?"

"Say, 'Jesus help me!' Will you?'" "I'll try. Will you come and see me again?"

"Yes. I'd love to come."

"Come often, little Angie. Now you are tired. You must have some - what do you have? Do you drink tea?"

"Of course," Angie laughed, "I love it, and Mother lets me have it - with plenty of milk, and not too strong."

So they had tea together. The doctor came in and looked anxiously at his daughter.

"She has done me good, Father," Miss Chester said, almost gaily.

"Don't look alarmed. Angie said I must not throw things at you anymore."

The doctor's eyes were moist as he stroked Angie's short, golden curls.

After that visit Angie and Miss Chester became close friends. I shall tell you, in another chapter, how Angie found something to interest her friend; something to keep her occupied, something to help her to be useful.

Can you guess what it was?