RHODA'S SECRET

A Story of Love and Intrigue

By Sylvia Chester mmmmm

SYNOPSIS.

CHAPTER 1.—Rhoda Dering, daughter of the black sheep of a good English family, goes to England to be her cousin's governess.

II.

Mary is expected to marry Adrian, the heir of Wering, but she is in love with Jack Maitland. Miss Millicent Wering is going to leave her money to Mary. III.

Mary and Rhoda become good friends. Rhoda is forbidden to men-tion her father. IV.

Millicent takes a great fancy to Rhoda and takes her to London, where they meet Adrian. Millicent makes a new will in favor of Rhoda.

Millicent is very ill. Adrian comes and he and Rhoda become engaged.

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Vi. Millicent wants them to be married immediately, before she dies. Just before the ceremony, Lefroy informs Adrian that Rhoda lived with her father for two years after she left the content.

CHAPTER VL

CHAPTER VI.

"Well, Molly?"

"Well, Jack?"

"Are things any better now?"

Molly shook her pretty head.

"Rather worse. Mother and Rheda never spack to each other, Aunt

Millicent is very, very III, and Rhods
is looking more unhappy than ever.

Jack, if I were engaged to you, and
all the aunts in the world were III, I
should not look like that!"

"If you were engaged? You are
engaged to me, you faithless young
person!"

engaged to me, you faithless young person!"
"I mean properly, legally engaged," said Molly. "I don't call it a proper engagement when one's mother doesn't countenance it. I wonder how long it will be before we shall convince her, Jack!"
"Oh, it will be all right!" and the young man cheerfully. "She smiled, at me last night. Molly—actually smiled. Isn't that a triumph!"
"Poor Aunt Millicent!" said Molly. "I am afraid she is going to die. De you know that she wants Rhoda and Adrian to be married by special Booke in her room, Jack!"
"The she! Do they agree to that!"
"don't know. Mother said some-thire to father showt this more

"Does she! Do they agree to that!"
"I don't know. Mother said some-thing to father about it this morning; and I overheard her. Theremother is calling me!"
Molly ran away along the terrace, turning with a bright smile to het lever at the corner.
"I was talking to Jack, mother,' she said, with a half pleading, half andacious look at Mrs. Dering, "Jack here again!" exclaimed Mrs. Dering.

Dering.

Tes: but he is not coming to hancheon." said Molly hurriedly. Pilet you want me, mother?"

"I want you to take this telegram down to the post office. It is from your aunt to Adrian; I do not wish the servants to see it!"

Molly took the telegram. It ran-prom Millient Dering to Adrian Dering: Bring down the license with you.

read it and looked at her

ther. 'Is Rhoda really going to be mar-

"Is Rhoda really going to be married by special litenses"

"Yes—at once!" replied Mrs. Derfrag briefs, "Go with the telegram
and lose no time, Molly!"

Molly hastoned away on her eryand. She was coming out of the
post office and turned up the village
road when she caught sight of a girl
standing at the corper of the footpath, evidently at a loss is to which
road to take. She was a stranger,
and Molly crossed the road to speak
to her.

"Have you lost your way?" she
said pleasantly.

"Have you lost your way?" she said pleasantly.
The girl's heavy face brightened.
"I want to go to Dering," she said.
"It's a house near this village."
"Those are the woods of Dering!" said Molly, with a smile. "I am go, ing there if you will half the control of the said of the said

returned. "Can I do anything for yon?"

"Miss Rhoda Dering lives with you, then?" said the girl in a hestating tone. "Would you take her a letter from me, miss?"

"Cortainly! Give me the letter. Do you know Miss Rhods."

"I lived with her in a somewhat solide are the letter of the letter of the letter. The letter of the letter of the letter of the letter. The letter of the lett

ant any answer!".

Molly took the note. She was a titerpuzzled, but concluded that the ri had been a servant in the con-

tall figure of Adrian Dering.
"Who are you, sir!" said Adrian,

"Do you know your way to the station!" she asked, as the girl timed away.
"Oh, yes, miss, it's straight on! Thank you for taking the note."
Molly took the note back with her. They were at luncheon when she returned.
It "Here is a mysterious missive for you, Rhoda!" she said, producing the crumpled envelope. "It does not require any answer."
Rhoda took the note. She glanced at the writing and put it down by her plate.
"Open it, open it!" cried Mrs. Derlary, Rhoda. Where did you get it it.
"A stranger in the village—a

from Molly?"

"A stranger in the village—a rather hugolfrom stupid damsel, with a neary face. She lived with parts she said. Rhoda!"

Yes: twas a servant I knew there!" said Rhoda calmly. She opened he note with stendy fingers. It was short.

te was short.

Dere Miss Dering,—The French
gentleman is in London, and he is
going to see you. He does not mean
you any good, and I rite to warn you.

Your Respectful servant.

SARAH MOUNT.

SARAH MOUNT.

Rhoda crumpied the hote and put it into her pocket.

In the procket.

In the procket.

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Late in the evening she called Rhoda to her.

"I shall not live through another, and how her so was to want you promised. Let me see you and Adrian married; let the in this room to-niorrow morning."

And Rhoda promised.

No time was allowed her for thought that night. She spent it in

And Rhc-la promised.

No time was allowed her for thought that night. She spent it in constant attendance on her aunt. When morning came, Miss Dering was somewhat better. She insisted on being dressed and wheeled into her sitting room, which Molly had adorned with flowers for the marrings ceremony. Then Miss Dering sent Rhoda naws.

"Go and change you' dress and go out into the fresh air," she said, "there is plenty of time yet. You shall be fetched when the hour comes."

Rhoda obeyed. She went down

"there is pienty or time yet. Tour shall be feethed when the hour comes."

Rhoda obeyed. She went down the terrace and across the lawn into the lines walk. It was a lovely, fresh. Spring morning; the limes were budding, and the sun shone brightly upon the opening leaves. Rhoda sauntered slowly up and down the quite walk. The house was hidden by a great group of beeches, and the place was very still and solitary. The further arms of the walk joined the great group of the walk joined the great arms of the walk joined and reached this end just as a man came the avenue. It was M. Lefroy bethe walk just as a man came the avenue. "This is unexpected good fortune, mademoiselle," he said. "I was going to see you, and behold, here you are!" Rhoda bored. M. Lefroy left the

ing to see you, and behold, here you are!"
Rhoda bowed, M. Letroy left the avenue and turned by her side into the lime walk. They walked a few yards in slience; then Rhoda stopped. "You say you were coming to see me, Monaleur Lefroy. May I know why you wish to see me?"
"Ah, Mademolselle Dering," he said, bowing again, "you know why I long to see you always—because I love you!"
Rhoda's cheeks flushed.
"I beg of you to be silent!" she said coldly. "I have no desire to quarre! with you, Monsleur Lefroy, but I will not hear such words from you!"

quarrel with you, Monsiour Lefroy, but I will not hear such words from you!

"Ah, you prefer to hear them from Monsieur Dering, the helr of the family estates?" returned the Frenchman, deahing a look of hate at Rhoda. "But I have come to tell you this cannot be: I have come from Monsie Carlo to tell you the cannot be: I have come from Monsie Carlo to tell you the company of the word of the word of the company of the company of the word of the wor

iail figure of Adrian Dering.

"Who are you att?" said Adrian, in a low harsh tone.

The Drenchman recovered his calmess in a moment; he took off his hat.

"Mademoissile will kindly introduce me," he said blandly; "I am an old friend of hers."

"Any friend of my future wife's is welcoment Dering, "scurned Adrian. Rhoda, is this a friend of yours?"

"Then I have the honor of addressing Monsleur Adrian Dering, mademoissile middle and turned Adrian Pring, mademoissile mode, who stood apart, one what to say."

"Do not speak, Rhoda." Adrian broke in. "Sir, I heard you addressing this lady in language I cannot allow. I wish to hear nothing from you!"

He crossed to Rhola and took het hand.

"Go back to the house, Rhoda," he said quickly, "and leave us alone."

"You had better hear me," said the Frenchman slowly. "If Mademoissile Rhoda is your fancee, you should know it wo hars. You think she spent them in the convent. It is untrue; she spent them with her father in his gambling asloon."

Adrian did not release Rhoda's hand. Not a muscle of his face moved; he turned pale, but that was the only sign that the Frenchman's words were a surprise to him.
"I am in Miss Dering's confidence," he said calmly: "she has told me all I whin to know about her life, hence, sir!" he went on an kernel her sille.

"If you are satisfied, monsieur," he said.

a word more!

M. Lefroy took of his hat with a smile.

Sanile.

M. Lefroy took of his hat with a smile.

M. Lefroy tuned airly a word!"

Adrian let go Rhoda's hand and made a step toward him.

M. Lefroy turned airly away.

"I have the honor to bid you both 'Good morning." he sald, and disperared in the avenue.

Adrian walked back to where Rhoda stood.

"Tell me what that man meant," he said sternly.

"He told you plainly. I did not spend the last two years of my life in the convent; i spent them with my father; I shared my father's life. Sho raised her oyes allowed the service her. He looked down at her allently. All the hope and the happluses had died out of his face; he looked ten years older.

"I deceived you of set purpose," Rhoda went on slowly. "My father knew that they would never receive me here if they were told the truth."

"To me, nothing. He was my father's confederate; he paid my servant to support him in faise accusations against me. The servant is faithful to me, though he does not know it; but that will not prevent people from believing him faise accusations against me. The servant is faithful to me, though he does not know it; but that will not prevent people from believing him faise accusations against me. The servant is faithful to me, though he does not know it; but that will not prevent people from believing him faise accusations against me. The servant is faithful to me, though he does not know it; but that will not prevent people from believing him. "The Kalsehoods of a man like the convent two years ago," Rhoda answered: "I went to my father. He was kind to me, and I was very happy, Then I learned what his life was, and I did not leave him. That is all I have to tell you."

Adrian did not answer; he stood looking at her silently. Rhoda

you."

Adrian did not answer; he stood looking at her silently. Rhoda could not meet that look. As they stood there beside each other, each watting for calmess to speak, Money came tripping into the lime walk.

"Come, dear people" she cried.

"The rector has come, and we are all

auy." Adrian advanced a step towards

Adrian advanced a step towards her. Go back to the house, dear child," he said, "we will be there in a moment."

Molly ran away, and Adrian turned back to Rhoda.
"Come!" he said sternly.
Rhoda looked at him.
"I cannot!" she said.
"You must!" he returned firmly.
"Nothing shall be altered now. You have deceved us; but it is gow too late to go back. Come, they are waiting!"
"I cannot!" cried Rhoda, shrink-

hopeless submission to his will.

The little sitting room looked very gay with flowers. The curtains were all drawn back, and Miss Dering lay on a sofa by the window, her rich draperles arranged around her. Bhe was looking at the door eagerly when Adrian entered leading Rhoda. The rector stopped forward; but Miss Dering's faint voice stopped him. "One moment," she said. "Rhoda come and kiss me first."

Rhoda with a deathly pale face, kneit down by the sofa. Miss Dering put one arm gently round her. "I want to tell you all what this dear girl has been to me," she said, laying her other hand upon Rhoda's bent head. "I was a vain, selds better life she has taught me how to dear the said has a better life she has taught me how to dear the said of the said

to die." She paused.

A low sob from Rhoda broke the stillness.

The rector gently drew Rhoda sale and the sa

CHAPTER VII.

M. Lefroy turned back from Dering in some discomiture. No suspicion had occurred to him that Adrian learned the truth for the first time that morning. His mind was full of dark schemes against Rhoda's peace as he strode down the avenue. He stopped at the gate to speak to the rosy; cheeked woman who had admitted him.

He walked on through the gate and along the high road.

He had nearly renched the village and was within sight of the houses, when a man, who had nearly renched the village and was within sight of the houses, when a man, who had nearly renched the village and was within sight of the houses, when a man, who had nearly renched the village and was within sight of the houses, when a man, who had nearly renching him, for so forward from the side of the road. M. Lefroy stepped back.

"Yes, I am here!" the other said fierely. His face was pale and worn with hard traveling, his clothes were travel stained. "I have followed on your track. At last I have found you. What, are doing here?" "What are you doing here?" the Frenchman asked blandly. "Have you come to pay a visit to your dear relations, mon ami?" I do not eavy you your welcome." "You have come to say on my daughter!" Atthur Dering returned, his chest heaving with passion. "You have come to say on my daughter!" Atthur Dering returned, his tone and with all the harped he felt in his face, "you thought to hide your little plot from me! But if ound you out! I will tell you the story of your daughter!" I came to do that! "Ah," he went on, altering his tone and with all the harped he felt in his face, "you thought to hide your little plot from me! But if sour daughter! He harped he was a short, sharp struggle, and the Freachman, agile as he was all short, sharp struggle, and the Freachman, use he was a thrown to the road, stabbed in the breast.

as; you have lived a ite all these months! Oh, your aust should have knöwn!"

"I am going away," said Rhoda, in a low tone. "I am giving up everythig; you shall never hear of me again! I know now how wrong I have been; but I have done Molly no harm, aunt—I have not indeed!"
Her voice died away as she caught sight of Advian.
"Adrian." 'Adrian. "Adrian." 'Arisen' the said compatically: "I know all—all." he said emphatically: "I know all—all." he said emphatically: "I know all—all." he said emphatically: "I know all—all." he said of her in the said of the said of the said that he said the said of the said that he said that he said. "He has been hurt. He sends you this note."

Rhoda took it. The news seemed sancely to after her, but her whole frame trembled and er note. "Oh, take me to him!" she said, trining to Adrian instituctively, "I will take you at once," he answered gravely. "Auxt, you and uncle George must come; he is dying."

Without waiting to hear his aunt's. reply, he hurried Rhoda away.

dying."
Without waiting to bear his aunt's,
reply, he hurried Rhoda away.
The carriage he had ordered was
waiting at the door, and he placed
her lut Nether look nor word was
exchanged between them, but he
seated himself silently at her side.
In perfect silence they reached the
in.

inn.
"Go up," he said; "I will wait."
The doctor met Rhoda at the

chamber door.

"You are too late,' he said gravely, "He died as your carriage drove When Mr. and Mrs. Dering arrived, they found Rhoda kneeling by her dead father's side. She looked

came running up. Mr. Derlag fell back upon the road, stabbed in the treats trought it upon himself."

M. Lefroy cried, bending over him is glanced at the face of the fallen man and read death there; and, before a hand could stop him be leaped the low hedge and rushed swittly away.

One or two pursuers followed, but the Freinham was a swift runner, and they soon gave up the chase. M. Lefroy got safely to the railway station and thence to London. Before the police could get upon his track, he was lost in the great city. Mr. Dering was carriet to the lan. No lone know him. He had left them a handsome gay young man; this worn, haggard, shabby stranger had no point of likeness to that gallaris soldier they had known years before the police could get the woond. The doctor came to him attracts, he was lost in the great city. The cortor came to him attracts of the county of the c

"I cannot withhold from you the fact that your state is very critical," and the doctor stravely.

Mr. Dering reflected for a moment "You are known at Dering, of course?" he said, then, in a wooder "tully clear voice.

"I have just come from there," replied the doctor.

"You are new stine my time, but possible to prove the price of the provided the doctor.

"You are new stine my time, but possible to prove the provided the doctor.

"You are new stine my time, but possible to prove the provided the fact of the provided the morting."

"They are in steat trouble," the doctor promised. He had thin brother and his wife that I wish speak to them, Doctor."

The doctor promised. He had the shown of his patient recalled him.

"Let, me write a line for you to give to my daughter; she must bear words.

"Let, me write a line for you to give to my daughter; she must bear the news from me."

They propoed him up, and he slowly and painfully wrote a few words.

"Olive it to her yourself," he said for Mr. Adrian brothen he he words.

"Olive it to her yourself," he said for Mr. Adrian Doring and told him briefly what had happened. Adrian took the note.

"They shall go down at once," he said. "Go back and do all you can for him, Doctor. Tell him his daughter shall come instantly."

Adrian went slowly up to Rhoda's room and knocked. He heard voices within and he entered. Rhoda was standing facing her aunt, who was talking in a hard bitter tone to her. "You have hiddee all this from us; you have lived a lite all this from us; you have lived a lite all the from us; you have lived a lite all the from us; you have lived a lite all the from us; you have lived a lite all the from us; you have hidde a lit his from us; you have lived a lite all the from us; you have lived a lite all the from us; you have lived a lite all the from us; you have lived a lite all the from us; you have lived a lite all the from us; you have lived a lite all the from us; you have lived a lite all the from us; you have lived a lite all the from us; you have lived

sure it will not be too much for you?"

"I shall be glad to see him," said Rhoda.

"Then he shall come up his moment," said Molly eagerly.

She ran away, and Rhoda waited, thinking with a tender little smile, of Molly's happiness. After a little while she heard her footsteps along the passage and also another firms heavier aten, which set her pulses beating rapidly. It was Adrian hall since the day her father than the heavier aten, which set of the model of the heavier at the heavi

"Where is my ring?" he asked.
Rhoda's lips quivered so that she
could scarcely speak.
"I do not know—Mrs. Dering has
it."

"I do not know—airs. Dering ass it."
"You must wear it again, Rhoda."
"Ah, no, Adrian! Do not speak like that to me. We must put the past quite away. i shall soon leave Dering, and you will forget me." "Yes, we must put the past away; but not all the past. Rhoda, noth-ing has altered our relations to each other; you are still my promised wife!"

rived, they found Rhoda kneeling by her dead father's side. She looked wildly up at them.

"He is dead," she said—"dead, and without a word to me!"

"Come home, dear," said Mrs. Dering, all her auger gone.

"Ho dector drew Mrs. Dering, aside.

"You' must let her alone for the present," he said gravely. "The shock has been too much for her. If Miss Moily could come down.—"I will glo back to her and bring her at once," said Mrs. Dering.

Adrian was waiting down stairs when his aunt came down.—"I am going to fetch Molly." she said. "Rhoda looks as if the shock has been very hard for keep my behald underly. "Will fetch Molly." and attract her brain. I an alarmed about her. "Will fetch Molly." and the went out and then came back. "Be kind to her, Aunt Agnes," be said carnestly.

"Have i not sent for Molly." Mrs.

"Have i not me sent with her." said Adrian."

Letter with her with her was a sent with her." said adrian. "I believe in you still," he said. "I have been very hard for keep my benefit in you, but I cannot look into you must not speak of one you must not speak of one you must not speak of one you must not speak of you mu present." he said gravely. "The shock has been too much for her. If Miss Molly could come down..."
"I will go back to her and brins her at once," said Mrs. Dering.
Adrian was waiting down stairs when his aunt came down..."
I' am going to fetch Molly," she said. "Rhoda looks as if the shock has turned her brain. I am alarmed about her."
"Stay with her," said Adrian quickly, "I will fetch Molly."
He went out and then came back."
He wind took art, Aunt Agnes."
He went out and then came back. "The kind to her."
Let us pur duty to keep your stay to heart of the will be seen to make the compared to the her. "Let us pur duty to keep your stay. The said of without you!" He put his arrad to her."
Molly came, and persuaded Rhoda to go back to Derins.
"I must return to-morrow," she said.
"Yes, dear, you shall return to-morrow," returned Molly; "only the said."
"The BIND.

He bestiated a momen, well to well and took her hands in his.

Holleve in you still," he said. "I botte in you still," he said. "I be some you face, Rhoda, without knowing you mat not speak of our being aparted; it is your duty to keep your face, Rhoda, without knowing aparted; it is your duty to keep your face, Rhoda, without knowing aparted; it is your duty to keep your face, Rhoda, without knowing aparted; it is your duty to keep your face, Rhoda, without knowing aparted; it is your duty to keep your face, Rhoda, without knowing aparted; it is your duty to keep your face, Rhoda, without knowing aparted; it is your duty to keep your face, Rhoda, without knowing aparted; it is your duty to keep your face, Rhoda, without knowing aparted; it is your duty to keep your face, Rhoda, without knowing you face, Rhoda, without your face, Rhoda, without your face, Rhoda, with you face, Rhoda, without your face, Rhoda, without your face,

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