

The Free Press Short Story

FREE FROM BONDS

ANNA BROWNELL DUANWAY

"I am free," cried Lucia angrily. "I am free."

"You're Aunt Peris's girl," said her father with a tolerant smile. "You've rebelled against the rules and conventions of her time. For fifty years she has lived a life of her own choosing."

Lucia glanced involuntarily at the oil painting above the mantel that represented Aunt Peris in the heyday of her youth. The family had always said that Lucia was like her. It flattered the girl to know that she resembled that famous beauty. Although she lived but a few miles away, as the crowd rises, Lucia had never seen her ancestor. Aunt Peris had voluntarily cut herself away from her family. Her name was rarely mentioned. Now Lucia felt that she knew why. Aunt Peris, too, had desired freedom. She had rebelled against bonds.

"I'm glad I'm like Aunt Peris," declared Lucia defiantly. "I glory in her spirit!"

"Don't say that, Lucia," said her mother anxiously. "Aunt Peris' will was her undoing. No one could ever break it."

Mrs. Bond sighed as her gaze travelled from the portrait to Lucia. It was almost as though Aunt Peris had stepped from the frame. Lucia had the same oval face, the same proud tilt of the head, the same thin, firm lips. "Only life can break a will like that," she continued gently. "Suppose you invite your friends to a house party here, Lucia. We can take them with us to church Sunday morning."

"But it's already arranged," protested Lucia holly. "You're so early American, Mother. Imagine not being allowed to go to a house party!"

"But such a house party, Lucia. Not chaperoned or anything—"

"What I want," broke in Lucia petulantly, "is to live my own life—to do as I like. One would think we were living in the days of Ahasuerus. Modern young people are independent. They can't be bothered with rules and regulations. She was quoting Elaine Summers. "No one is free to live his own life in this age or any other, Lucia." Her father looked up from the paper he was reading. "Those who defy conventions are merely outcasts. Let us say no more about the house party."

Lucia faced her parents, her dark eyes aflame. "I'm nothing but a prisoner," she raged, "shackled to conventions. What is the use of living if I can't have some fun out of life? I want to be free, I tell you, free!"

She flung herself out of the room and rushed up the stairs. Throwing herself on the bed in her own room, she gazed moodily down the road that led to freedom.

Afraid, she reflected, had reached a climax. She had come to an open break with her parents, all because they made such a point of a little thing like a house party. "I don't like the crowd that's going myself," said Lucia to herself, in all fairness. "They do wild things I don't approve of. I'd just as soon not go if it weren't for Edward Gates. But if I don't go, he'll think I am a prude."

Her cheeks flushed at a new thought. Although it lacked but two days until the house party, Edward had not yet asked her to go. It was because her parents were so strict, she reflected stormily. Quite likely he was taking some one else. Undoubtedly Edward thought she was a prig, and she cared so much for his opinion.

"I'll be free," she decided suddenly. "If I have to leave home."

Her thoughts switched to Aunt Peris and the oil painting above the mantel. What manner of woman was the girl now, who had said fifty years ago that she would live her own life? What freedom had she achieved? "I'll go to see her," cried Lucia, with sudden inspiration. "She'll tell me what to do."

Springing up, Lucia flung a few clothes together. She hastily counted the contents of her purse. Almost ten dollars of her allowance still remained. She slipped out quietly, listening at the head of the stairs. A faint rattle of dishes came from the kitchen. Lucia crept down the front steps and out to the garage where she ran out her own little car, her father's gift to her on her twentieth birthday.

"I should leave a note for them," she thought, with ladylike compunction. She scribbled a few words hastily on the back of a letter she found in the mail box. "Do not worry," ran the message. "I'll be all right. Thanks for everything, Lucia."

She found a letter in the box addressed to her, a large square envelope that looked like an invitation. Lucia merely glanced at the typed superscription before tucking the letter in her bag.

Once beyond the city limits, she headed west. The little roadster ate up the miles. It was glorious spinning along in the crisp cold air. "Free," thought Lucia exultantly.

At this pace, she ought to reach Aunt Peris' by nightfall. How surprised Aunt Peris would be! It was a shame the way the family had treated her, barely mentioning her name and not going near her all these years, just because she had

said Aunt Peris in her curious high voice. "She was a lady when I left. You've a Bond all right. You gave me a turn when I first saw you standing there on the step. I thought you were a ghost."

"A ghost?"

"Yes. The ghost of my youth. What did you quarrel with your father for? She fixed Lucia with her dark gaze.

"I didn't say I quarrelled with him."

"You can't deceive me," said Aunt Peris.

"It was about a house party," confessed Lucia. "All the crowd is going. There is one boy especially—she broke off, coloring. "I think I'm old enough to live my own life, Aunt Peris."

"So I once thought," muttered Aunt Peris grimly. She pointed to the motto. "Go back!" she cried sharply. "You can't be free of life. Go back. I say! You'll only inherit the wind!"

She was shaking violently as with a chill. Suddenly she fell back in her chair, her eyes closed, her face like gray parchment. Lucia ran to her, catching her old blue hands. Never in her care-less sheltered life had she been so frightened.

"Just one of my spells," said the old woman, gaspingly. "Get me—my drops."

Lucia bustled about, getting hot water and remedies. She helped Aunt Peris to bed, where she lay white and inert, her breathing still labored. Suddenly the dark eyes opened, following Lucia with a bleeding look.

"I'll stay with you, Aunt Peris," whispered the girl, "until you get better."

"I've been afraid to be alone," murmured the old woman. After that she closed her eyes and seemed to sleep.

Lucia regarded her pityingly. The whole affair seemed strange and unreal, like a nightmare. "It she had died!" shivered Lucia. She sprang up and stood by the bed, her hands on the eaves of the bed, as if she were out telling her parents where she was going. In the light of all that had just passed, the house party seemed inconsequential and her break with them silly and childish. "I'll run down to the station and send a wire," she decided.

As she opened her purse for a pencil with which to jot down the message, her fingers came in contact with the invitation that she had taken from the mail box that morning. She opened it idly and stared at the familiar handwriting. It was not an invitation to a party, but a brief note from Edward.

"I haven't asked you to the house party, Lucia," it ran, "because I didn't think you'd want to go. Somehow, I couldn't think of you in that crowd, for I happen to know some of the boys who are going. It's a cinch I wouldn't want my sister there. Maybe you will go with me somewhere else Saturday evening. Will you? You seem so different from Elaine Summers and the rest of that bunch. They are only copies while you are an original. That is what I like about you, Lucia."

"The motto," muttered Aunt Peris, rousing suddenly. "Don't forget it, Lucia. He that troubleth his own house—shall inherit."

"To see you?"

The words tumbled off into a doting silence. Lucia finished the sentence softly. "I shall inherit the wind." She folded up Edward's letter and tucked it back into her purse. Above Aunt Peris' steady breathing she seemed to hear her own heart singing like a bird set free.

What has a tongue and yet cannot talk? A shoe.

**USEFUL TAPE**

Adhesive tape should be kept in the kitchen drawer. It can be used in a score of ways, for little mending jobs. If a hot water bottle has developed a crack in the rubber, stick a piece of plaster over the crack. Mend rubber sponge bags in the same way, taking care to fix the plaster on the inside of the bag. A bowl or jug which is cracked may be spended with the tape, over which, after it has been severely fixed so that it covers the whole of the crack, a very thin solution of white paint should be brushed.

**AMMONIA AS CLEANER**

One of the most useful cleaning agents is a bowl of lukewarm water with a few drops of ammonia poured into it. Use it for washing mirrors. Then give them a final polish with a soft dry cloth, and they will look many times brighter than before. All glass is much improved by being washed in this way, such as silver wares that have a stain on them from the cut flowers, or cut glass that is always difficult to polish properly. Awkward spots can be cleaned more easily with it, while a soak with ammonia and water is one of the best things for taking out the tea-stain from inside a teapot.

Ammonia polishes windows, cleans the bath, and is invaluable for taking ink-stains off the carpet so long as you catch them wet. Grease retires rapidly before this simple solution. You would be surprised how many different tasks can be lightened by the use of this liquid.

**SLATS DIARY**  
OLIVER M. WARRREN

Monday: I am sorry my name isn't Josef and my slats. Bless you last to be named Joe now to reach the top of the ladder. Joe Madwick & Joe DI Maggio is proof of my position & I bet I split these names correct.

Tuesday: We all at supper tonight down to the restaurant & the waitress slip us a program & send Yule find about everything on the menuoo this evening. So I see send Uncle Hen. Fetch us a clean 1. Ma & Aunt Emmo didn't think Uncle Hen otto send that but Pa seemed to enjoy it & send that are what of to of been send.

Wednesday: Got a good 1 onto Jane. I send I are engaged to a nother girl & Jane send she great I didn't tell her I had been engaged to Jane mney often-times. I send no but I did tell her there was things in my past I were ashamed of but didn't state no partickular. Jane got about 1/2 sore about what I send, but she ask for it.

Thursday: Pa got off 1 in the noose-paper where he works at today that the editor send was good & patted Pa on the sholder becos of. A loaded truck run over a man & Pa writ it up & send the driver didn't know it was loaded.

Friday: Friends, I can't see where I am learning nothing by going to school so often. The facts is that I don't care much whether I learn nothing nor not. The more I learn the less I am sure of. But I suppose I will wait to keep it up till I am 21 yrs. of old age. I will add that seems to be about a 100 yrs. in the fatcher. As Napoleon send they ain't no rest for the weery & etc.

Saturday: Are new nabers next door has got a new table boy son & bot a very high crib to put him into it & his Ma send to Aunt Emmy when Aunt Emmy called on are neu nabers it is high so as they can hear him when he falls out & hit the floor. Aunt Emmy got all het up & exprest her unpleasure riger-essly.



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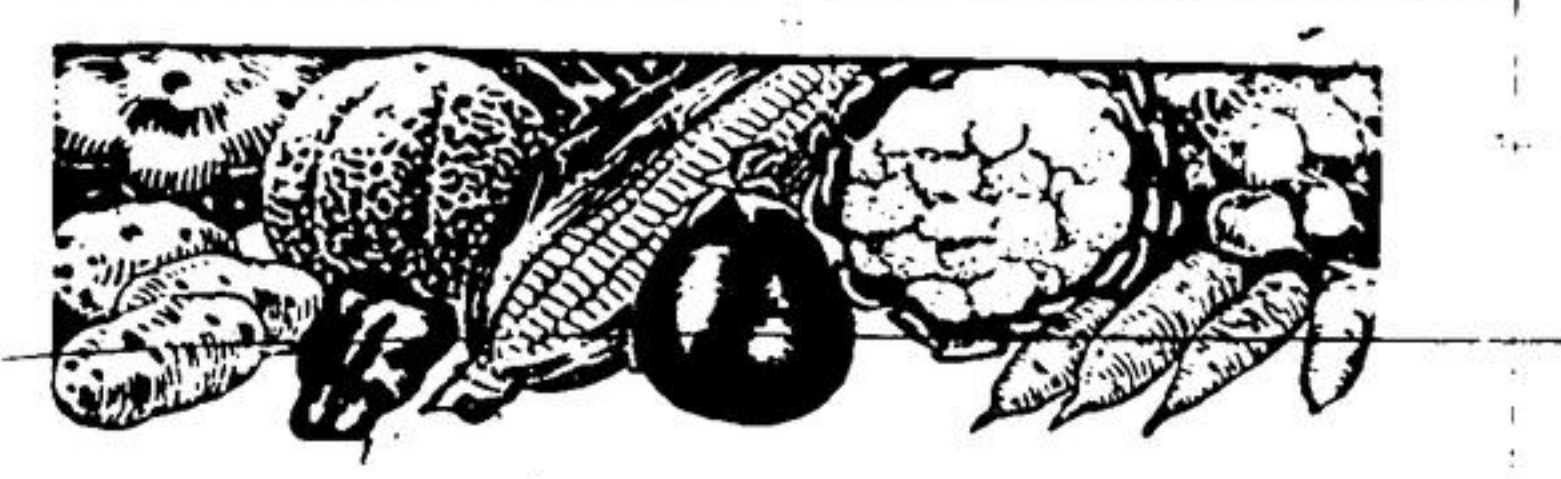
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