

Children of Divorce

By Yves Miroel - translation by Valentine - Paramount Movie

Cast Distribution

Ted Larabee	Gary Cooper
Prince Vico	Einar Hanson
Tom Larabee	Edward Martindel
Kitty Flanders	Clara Bow
Jeanne Waddington	Esther Ralston

CHAPTER I

Jeanne Waddington choked back her tears when, like the previous year, her father accompanied her back to college, where she was, in Paris, completing her education.

She had just spent the last two months on vacation with her parents.....two months in which they had constantly quarreled, not giving a care to the sorrow they were causing her, two months where in the end they had agreed to divorce: for the first time in their lives they had agreed that their marriage was, from now on, no longer possible.

They hadn't hidden their separation from Jeanne. It was total devastation for her, a total heartbreak.

Her father, surely, had promised to visit her each month, but instinctively she knew he wouldn't keep that promise faithfully. Jeanne also knew, on the other hand, that she couldn't count on her mother's tender loving for she was a frivolous thoughtless human being who hadn't really taken great care of her daughter.

Jeanne, only eight years old, had never really felt the true softness of a home. And this reflected into her being a sad soul. Very early on, she had learned to suffer and control whatever sorrow she felt. No matter how young, she understood a lot of things.

Once her father had said goodbye to her at the college, once the school doors were shut behind her, Jeanne went wondering through the school's park to forget her melancholy. She wanted to be alone so none of her school friends, playing freely, would notice her sadness. They were happy souls with parents who cherished them.

A little girl, a year or two younger than herself, caught her attention. The little girl was sitting on the curb and weeping. So hurt was she in her sorrow that she didn't raise her head when Jeanne approached. Jeanne, approaching, couldn't remember her from last year and figured she was "new". Jeanne sat down besides the little girl and softly asked:

- "What is your name?"
- "Kitty Flanders", replied the little girl through her tears.

- "Why are crying?" Because you left your parents, no doubt? No need to be so sad, as the college's rules will allow you not only to see them every week but also to visit them two days per month".
- "No", explained Kitty, crying even louder, "no I won't be able to because they won't be together at home ...My nanny told me they were separating, going to live their own separate ways. Kitty had pronounced a word I had never heard before but which I now retained in my mind...*Divorce*...Apparently it's the reason why I was brought here, in this very big, sad house, where I'm afraid they'll forget all about me!"

Jeanne understood very well the pain Kitty was feeling, as she was feeling it as well. From then on, Kitty was precious to her. Jeanne took Kitty in her arms and consoled her the best way she could and when Kitty had calmed down, Jeanne promised to be her friend and proceeded to tell her own story. Both children were thoroughly relieved that they could confide in each other so.

From that day forward, they were inseparable, and in their sadness, found comfort in the tenderness they felt for one another.

Being the oldest, Jeanne would play mother to Kitty. She had taken Kitty under her wing, and when nighttime came, and Kitty couldn't sleep, Jeanne would jump out of her bed, go and kneel by the small bed, close to Kitty and cradle her softly against her shoulder until Kitty would fall asleep.

On a certain Thursday, when both were playing with dolls in the park, they noticed, sitting on a fenced wall behind which lay a garden of a rich owner, a young boy who was waiving at them.

As he seemed very nice and even a bit melancholic, they both smiled back at him. Seeing them so nice, the young boy jumped quickly over the wall and onto the ground, scaring the young girls. But they were quickly reassured when they saw he wasn't hurt and that no one saw him.

They met quickly and got along famously. Right away, Ted Larrabee, that was his name, started confiding in them. He was also a "child of divorce". His parents had separated two years ago already...His mother had left for better horizons. He was living with his father, who was neglecting him more and more everyday in order to enjoy the pleasures of the opposite sex, which he welcomed into his home and courted under the watchful eye of his son.

Of all this, Ted was complaining bitterly.

- ◆ Oh! he said, with a sad, thoughtful look, "there are decidingly parents who are very selfish....only thinking of themselves, playing, having fun and all the while we are there sad and crying! My father is rich and doesn't work ...I've heard that had he had a serious job, all would have worked better and mother wouldn't have left to rebuild her life elsewhere.... Now I spend 6 months of the year with one and 6 months with the other. Neither here nor there, I don't have a home and my parents just manage, in these conditions, to become strangers to me".

- ◆ “Oh, I know exactly what you mean!”, whispered Jeanne. “When you see them again, you have the feeling, don’t you, of being in their way, being an embarrassment, right ?”
- ◆ “It’s very sad”, continued Ted...”when I’ll be older, I certainly won’t do like father...I will find work...I will build bridges, machines. I want to be an Engineer and a useful man at that! If I marry, my wife and children will be happy. I know far too well how discord in a family can be terrible!”
- ◆ “So do I”, said Jeanne, “when I’ll marry, I’ll dedicate myself only to my husband and children...”

Little Kitty, who had been listening to all this, made the same promise most seriously.

They would have gladly kept on talking together but the vision of the nun walking towards them as she was reading her prayer book made Ted run away. With great agility, he climbed up the wall and disappeared on the other side.

The following Thursday, and several other Thursdays, the two little girls returned to the same place in the garden to play with Ted who never missed a meeting. They never ceased dreaming of building together innocent projects in the future.

Soon, a tender friendship was growing between Ted and Jeanne, who was old enough to see it and whose blond looks and a smile so serious and soft left Ted dreaming for entire days.

Then, the day came, where he made her see that his ideal, later on, would be to find a woman like the one she promises to turn out and to whom he would be proud to dedicate himself body and soul. She was appeased. And deeply, seriously:

- ◆ “we shall see”, she said...”If you become the great worker I wish to see in you....I’m not saying that I wouldn’t accept your offer”.

Her words filled him with joy and gave him the most wonderful hope. Grabbing her by the arms, and looking straight into her eyes, he whispered:

- ◆ “Rest assured, I shall deserve you, my dear fiancé”.

Calling her thus was perhaps a little premature. But Jeanne in return, promised Ted no less than to wait for him until the day he would have a job and could settle and make a home.

Kitty, who hadn’t missed a wink of that conversation felt slightly sad and spiteful, blaming Jeanne for being the chosen one for Ted’s future wife and not her.

She was also full of chagrin that when night came, she cried in her little bed, without telling Jeanne the reason for all her tears. She finally fell asleep, keeping her secret from Jeanne.

The following weeks just made the relationship grow even more tightly between the two future engaged people.

In her child's soul, Kitty was suffering silently. She didn't hold a grudge against Jeanne anymore, as she cherished her so much to hold it against her, but in revenge, she started hating Ted secretly.