

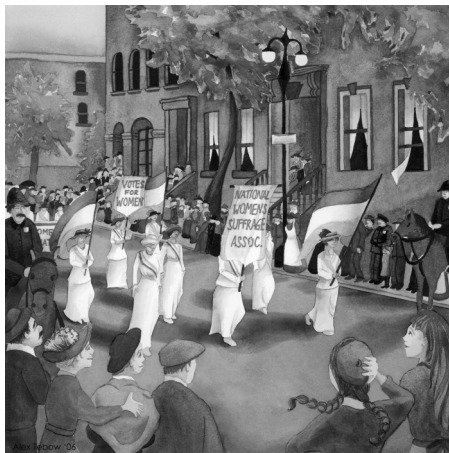


# THE SECRET LIFE

by Elizabeth McDavid Jones

## Chapter 6

# The Suffrage Problem



*The story so far: While working as a shoeshine boy, Susan overheard the landlord, Lester, talking with other men about crushing the suffrage movement to get voting rights for women.*

On her way home, Susan couldn't get the men's scornful laughter out of her head. Why should women wanting to vote make people act so hateful? On 30th Street, a newsboy was crying out headlines.

"Read all about it! An army of women to march on Saturday!"

Susan bought a newspaper and scanned the article about the rally. More than five thousand women were expected to show up for the parade down Fifth Avenue.

As she read the editorial, she grew angrier with every line. The writer called suffragists "dangerous" and said females were not as smart as males.

It was Lester Barrow's attitude all over again: If women vote, terrible things will happen. The editorial writer, Lester, Mum's boss—they all seemed afraid of suffrage. Why?

Susan's curiosity was aroused. She looked at the picture of the speaker for the rally, Alice Paul. What could this woman have to say that stirred everybody up?

There was one way to find out. Susan determined to go to the suffrage rally herself and take Russell and Helen with her.

At dinner, Mum told the girls she was taking off work on Saturday to visit Dad's elderly aunt who lived on Long Island. Aunt Blanche was ailing, Mum said, and had asked her to come. "I'll be leaving on the 6 a.m. train and I'm not sure what time I'll be returning. You'll need to watch Lucy for me, Susan. Bea has to work."

"But I can't!" Susan said. "I've made plans for the day."

"Then you'll have to change them." Mum's face was flushed with anger.

Susan asked to be excused and left the table. Mum was going to be really angry tomorrow when she found out Susan had left Lucy with Russell's mother for the day. Because nothing was going to stop Susan from going to that suffrage rally.

Mum and Bea were gone when the girls got up Saturday morning. Soon Susan, Russell, and Helen were on

the trolley lurching and bumping along Fifth Avenue. There was so much to see. Uptown was a different world from Chelsea. Here streets were lined with dignified brownstones and elegant stores, fancy restaurants and office buildings. Men in suits strolled arm in arm with women in feathered hats and fur-trimmed jackets.

Once off the trolley, Susan, Russell, and Helen hurried to find a spot on the sidewalk amid the crowd gathered to watch the parade. Mounted policemen were trying to keep the crowd in order. Soon the bands struck up and the marchers came, hundreds of women in

yellow sashes, striding confidently, their yellow banners floating in the wind. Susan thought it was a thrilling sight. Men were marching too. There were bands and floats, drums beating, trumpets tooting.

Susan felt her heart thrill again when Alice Paul began to speak in a strong, vibrant voice.

"Our movement isn't just about the rights of women," Alice Paul said. "It's about the rights of individuals to participate in the freedoms of our country, a country founded on principles of fairness and justice, that denies fairness and justice to those of its citizens who happen to be female.

"Our country tells us that females are not entitled to be treated as our brothers, fathers, or husbands are. It is a cruel thing indeed to rob an individual of her right to rely on herself. And that is exactly what those who oppose votes for women are doing."

She went on to talk about the way women, for more than sixty years, had worked quietly and ineffectively, asking for consideration as full citizens of this country.

"It is high time that we cease to politely ask for the vote. From this day forward, we will demand it!"

Susan's heart swelled. She had never heard a woman speak like this. Susan was so caught up in Alice Paul's speech that it took her a few minutes to notice what was happening in the crowd. Spectators near the platform were getting rowdy. Then someone threw a tomato, which set off a barrage of rotten fruit, vegetables, and eggs being thrown at the suffragists. Lester's "ruckus" had begun.

The rowdiness quickly spread through the crowd. People started pushing, and banners were ripped off the stage and torn from women's hands. The police didn't make a move to stop the rowdiness. In fact, they seemed to spur the crowd on. Soon the front of the crowd had become a brawl. The police got out their clubs, but they seemed more eager to club the suffragists than anybody else.

The pandemonium spread. The crowd surged forward, and the three children were swept along with it. Two men beside Helen started slugging each other, and one of them fell against Helen.

Susan watched, horrified, as Helen stumbled, then went down under the feet of the crowd.

Next Week, Chapter 7  
**Caught in the Riot**