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"I don't see why."

"No Well that's where I'm older than you, much older. I'm ready to go on to something different. Being some use in the world."

They stood beneath the big elm and gazed back at the old red school.

"I like it here," Paula nodded towards the school. "But when I've finished with it, I'll be ready to do some kind of a job." She hesitated. "I'm going to be a doctor . . . or a scientist."

"Paula!" Esther's voice was envious. But it wasn't a bit of use hoping. It would have to be something that didn't take too many brains, something that called for patience, and enthusiasm and hard work

"I don't know what I'll be," she said breathlessly, "but I'll be something . . ."

Interval was over and the bell rang persistently as they walked slowly back to the classroom.

TWENTY-FIVE years ago. All that was twenty-five years ago.

Esther stood at the sink and swished the hot water over the greasy plates, then she put them carefully on the tin tray so they wouldn't mark the bench, and Mary, her daughter, dried them.

"I wonder what Paula'll be like." Esther spoke slowly. "She was smart and rather pretty and small and very clever Fancy her a doctor."

Mary looked round the scullery that was a lean-to off the kitchen.

"She'll think this place pretty awful. But it'll be interesting, meeting her. And she'll like hearing about John going to varsity . . . Or perhaps she won't be interested in children. In your children."

Esther turned and looked at Mary.

"I don't see why not." For a moment she gazed at the girl and wondered as the thought struck her whether Mary "Do you ever feel you're useless . . . or want to do something else? You see," she added hurriedly, "when I was your age I was at school and I remember suddenly feeling as though I was wasting time. I persuaded Mum and Dad to let me leave. I wanted to get a job and be some use in the world."

"And what happened?"

"I left. I went on to a farm to help a woman who had ten children and a sick husband. I went feeling noble and self-sacrificing . . ."

"Well . . . weren't you?"

"I was just a little drudge and all my ideas of doing good works were so much stuff and nonsense. I realised this and left . . . in the same way that I'd left school. I packed my suitcase and walked to the station . . . only to find I'd missed the train for that day." She smiled. "I walked on down the road and went into the first farm house and asked them if they needed help. It sounds foolish now."

"In a way. But it was sort of adventure."

Esther glanced again at Mary, at her face, quiet, with an intense look about it that told so much. She'd have to see that Mary got away from home while she was young, while stupid stories like her own still sounded adventuresome.

"That's where I met your father. He was a share-milker. We were married the following year and I wasn't nineteen."

There was a bitterness in her voice. That she, going forth on a crusade to

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