

'Don't, Terry!' cried Rose. Then she explained: 'It sounds as if we were just—waiting.'

'They are,' said the old lady the next evening to the young minister's wife, 'just waiting. They must think me an unaccommodating old woman.'

'Now, Aunt Hile,' remonstrated Sally Patton, 'if you would only consent to know Rose.'

'No,' interposed the old lady. 'She can ride by my doors—though I think I've put a stop to that—but she shan't come inside it. I've a few rights left.'

She shook her beautiful thick, white curls as she said this, and struck her cane sharply on the polished floor.

Like an echo the big brass knocker fell. Sally started and leaned forward, looking through the front window.

'It's Rose Carter, Aunt Hile,' she said, with a sort of timid firmness. 'Hortense is out, I think. Shall I go to the door?'

'If you will be so kind, Sally,' assented the old lady, with great composure.

'In here?' asked Sally, brightly.

'Go,' replied the old lady, who was enjoying herself.

She lifted her fine, deliberate voice a trifle, and the fire in her eye sprang high. 'You will please say that Mrs. Hile regrets that infirm health compels her to deny herself to strangers.'

Rose heard. She blushed scarlet—that was the girl in her—but her head went up, and the fire in her hazel eyes leaped too. Between these two fires 'little Sally Patton halted.

To her relief, Rose's humor came to rescue the situation. She smiled, held out her hand, broke into lively words of greeting, and allowed herself to be sent away with a perfect good nature that assumed the old lady's message to be as polite as it sounded.

Within, the old lady harkened irately to the invader's fresh young voice. Twenty years back the house had rung with such voices. She grew suddenly homesick with the worst homesickness there is, for one cannot ever turn and journey back into any past, however dear and passionately longed for.

Therefore Sally, re-entering, did not find the old lady looking as triumphant as she expected. She was rather cross to Sally, who was her relative by marriage and who came in for the privileges of relationship.

'You ought not to be alone here, aunt,' said the little woman, as she rose to go. 'St. John frets over you all the time.'

The old lady frowned. 'I lived here by myself during a civil war,' she said.

'But—' began Sally. She stopped, distressed. It hardly seemed tactful to suggest a burglar or a stroke of paralysis to an old lady just as you were leaving her by her lone self. 'It does make us uneasy,' she concluded lamely.

On her way down the path she saw Rose cantering through the long meadow and watched her wistfully. She was the only married woman in Sally's experience who kept the light-hearted freshness of girlhood. Sally herself could not manage it all, with a trio of little girls to bring up on one hundred pounds a year, and rent free. She was learning to do white embroidery for an exchange, however, and hoped to manage some day.

In the meadow Rose met Terry tragically. 'You'll take my advice next time, madam,' he said.

Rose winked back the tears. 'It does look as if we had it all, Terry boy,' she murmured.

'Let's chuck the whole thing, then,' suggested Terry, cheerfully. 'There are plenty of other good places—without dower rights.'

Rose turned, looked back yearningly. 'I couldn't give it up, Terry,' she admitted. 'I just couldn't.'

'Then,' said Terry, 'you're as bad as I am, and I've no more sympathy to waste on you.'

'I'm not,' retorted Rose, indignantly, 'for I'd love her if she'd let me.' She gathered up her reins.

'Where are you off to?'

'Up the meadow and home by the road. Won't you come, too?'

But affairs of importance, it appeared, detained Terence, and Rose started on her round alone.

Half-way up the meadow the hill rose somewhat steeply and was crowned with a scattering wood of pines. Rose found herself following a narrow path to the hilltop, and, once there, a pale gleaming among the dark branches allured her downward.

Here where the pines grew thickest, and even in March harbored tiny drifts of snow, she came on one of the old family burial grounds once to be found on every plantation in the State. Time has let in the wild

vines and creeping grasses to many. Many more have been obliterated by the ploughshares of new owners. But this enclosure, secreted among the pines, and hedged with long, unpruned box trees, seemed still a place that waited to welcome and enfold the life-weary.

Its wooden gate had crumbled; but its single tall shaft stood upright, as if protecting certain little graves nestled under periwinkle vines a foot deep. One of these was such a mite of a mound in its cradle of worn graystone. Rose had dismounted now and was standing over it.

'It's almost as little as—mine,' she thought. She stooped to remove the dead leaves and twigs with a gentle hand. Her eyes were musing and deep. Just such a tiny, tiny mound she had left behind her in a northern State when she came to Virginia. No one ever understood why she cared so much for that unnamed morsel of a daughter who had lived only long enough to die; but even her two big, beautiful boys could not make her forget, and she always bore in her heart the memory of that wee, unmothered grave. And she had kept it so sweet with baby flowers—violets, little white roses, white daisy stars small as the far-away stars of heaven seem to our gazing eyes. But no one had understood—even Terry had never understood.

The old lady's roses were in full bloom, tall branches of crimson roses, branchy bushes of white roses, brambly bushes of yellow roses, and vines in wild, untethered tangles of roses. Sally exclaimed over them on her way up the walk. 'I see by that basket that you robbed me!' she called.

'I wish you'd come to-morrow, aunt,' said Sally. 'St. John is to have everything real appropriate and pretty. The children will sing, and we are to have a special little ceremony at the soldiers' graves. We want your roses for those—they are finer than anyone else has—they are the loveliest roses I ever saw! St. John says we'd all get too careless if it wasn't for these special days of remembering. He likes to have people make the most of them.'

She picked up her basket from the step and moved away as she spoke.

The old lady leaned back, letting her eyes follow the alert figure flitting about the lawn. Once she had cut her own roses, and wreathed them with her own memories for the graves of her dead; but in recent years all anniversaries had fallen from their old-time importance in her mind. She had stopped observing them as she had stopped going to church every Sunday morning, or planting her early bulbs every autumn—as she had stopped pretty much everything except mere living in its barest simplicity.

'Do come, Auntie!' urged Sally once more across her overflowing basket of beauty. 'Uncle Nelse can drive you.'

The old lady shook her head firmly; but for all that the words put her in the temper to do something she had not done for several years.

'Hortense,' she said that night to the colored woman who attended her, 'ask your father to put the horses in the carriage for me to-morrow afternoon if the weather is fair. I think it will be,' she added anxiously, her heart beginning to be set on that something.

'Baby,' said Rose the next day to her youngest, 'where's brother?'

'Papa took him.'

'Then I'll take you. Tumble in.'

He rolled over the back of the seat into the cart beside her. His heavy brown hair rippled back from an angelic brow, and his heavenly brown eyes questioned her intentions. To the possessor of a serious artistic eye he suggested the cherub out of an Italian altar-piece; but his mother was more frivolous.

'Ludwell Harrison Carter,' she said suddenly, 'you look exactly like a delicious bonbon. I think I'll eat you up.'

She proceeded to devour him with kisses, while he gave chuckling screams of delight. 'Let me drive Chippy,' he gurgled, taking brazen advantage of the situation.

'Oh, you're on my box, baby boy!'

She lifted him back to his seat and removed her box to her lap, while he held the reins along a level stretch of road.

It was a big white box from her old florist, and now we know where the invader was going, and what an inexcusable thing she was going to do. Yet it was nothing in the world but a bit of the sweetish selfishness for the comforting of her own heart, very homesick on this day of all the year, for a tiny