

Betty shook her head.

'No,' she said. 'But I was thinkin'—it seemed most as if—most as if—'

'What?' said Cassius, wild to hear her say it.

'Most as if we had bought those things,' ended Betty lamely.

'Why, so we did!' cried Cassius, laughing happily, and Betty thought, a little heartlessly. She was silent on the homeward drive, and Cassius went back to the subject of new colts and rye and hen-houses.

'Mother and I are goin' to get things all settled for 'em,' he said, as he left her at the gate. 'I'll come over for you in a day or two to take a look at the house. Will you?'

Betty nodded.

'Some afternoon,' she promised.

At odd hours Cassius worked rapturously away on the house at Bitley's corner, laying carpets, unpacking furniture, hanging curtains, as if the world had to be made in six days. Mrs. Holmes came over and advised, but she and Cassius did not arrange the furniture. That was Betty's share.

Betty came at his bidding one golden afternoon, when by his own confession Cassius was too busy to accompany her. So he waited in the meadow until the little figure in its blue sunbonnet had toiled along the road to the Bitley house and disappeared within doors. Cassius never could quite remember how he spent those hours, but they passed some way, and he forced himself to stay away until, when the shadows slanted, he saw her appear on the porch ready to go home. Then he raced along the road, hailed her merrily, and bade her go back and show him what she had done.

The doors and windows of the little house stood open to the sweet droning airs of late afternoon. The blossoming bushes in the garden sent sweets to all the rooms as Cassius and Betty walked through them. Betty had acquired a certainly little housewifely air that was almost possession, as she showed this arrangement and that makeshift with an adorable pride in her handiwork.

'I put the dining-room table here, and drew the curtain away back,' said little Betty, 'so they can look over the garden at meal time. Will they care to look over the garden, Cassius?'

'Yes—they'll care,' announced Cassius soberly.

'Are they a family?' asked Betty curiously. 'Are they old people?'

'There are only two of them,' said Cassius, 'an' they ain't old.'

'I thought they weren't,' said Betty. 'I saved the splint-bottomed settee for the porch. You can see the moon come out o' your cornfield from there. Will they care about settin' there to watch it?'

'Oh, yes—yes,' said Cassius, 'they'll care.'

Betty sighed.

'I don't believe I'll ever want to come here after they get settled,' she said.

'Oh, pshaw!' said Cassius, 'we'll be here often.'

Betty said nothing, but her heart ached as it had ached that day in town. Oh, she thought, miserably, Cassius didn't see—he didn't see!

They went out the kitchen door, and Cassius locked it and gave her the key.

'Have your mother come over an' look at it, if she will,' he said. 'I won't go up home with you—I'll hev to go for the cows to-night. Tim's gone to town. Much obliged, Betty. Good-night.'

Betty went down the road alone, carrying her sunbonnet, her hand on the key in her apron pocket. Her throat ached, and something stirred and beat in her heart, and would not be quieted. For the first time in her life she felt unwilling to go home. She stopped at the top of the hill and looked back on the Bitley cottage, moving the key in her pocket. The simple joy of settling the tiny rooms would have been enough to teach her the ways of some of the rest of the world, of whose sweetness she had never dreamed. But the fact that they had chosen the things together—she and Cassius—and that she had arranged them for him, and that they had gone over the house together, made the lesson tenfold plainer and sweeter. For the first time these simple human joys that are in the

world allured and possessed her, and she sped down the hill toward home, a blinding mist of tears in her eyes.

'I've got to do it,' she said over and over. 'Some things are wrong an' some are right—I do' know. I'll tell mother, an' then I've got to do it. Only—seems as though Cass don't love me any more. Maybe he's tired waitin'.'

The front hall door stood open, and Betty went in and straight through to the kitchen to find her mother. Her head was erect, and there was a light in her face and a new light in her eyes. In the passage she heard voices, coming from the kitchen—her mother's voice was raised in earnest talk with a neighbor. Betty stopped, spellbound, at her words:

'Yes,' her mother was saying, 'Betty, she's a dutiful daughter. An' I don't see but she's just as good a girl as them six Stanford girls. Yet every one of 'em is married off. I do' know—Betty don't seem to take to the idea o' marryin'. I get afraid that I'll hev to die some time an' leave her alone.'

The shrill tones of Mis' Slocum, from the mill, were raised in reply, but Betty did not hear. With a bewildering gladness of understanding breaking upon her, she turned and sped out of the house, and across the fields, still warm in the late night, down to the stile by the lane.

Cassius was coming—she knew that he would be on his way home, and she could hear the tinkle of the Jersey's bell. Betty let down the bars and stood there, all the meadows and all the world swimming in the gold light of the evening sun. It shone upon her happy face when Cassius came up the lane between the wild rose hedges and saw her waiting for him. With glad heart and quickened step he came to her.

Then she knew that he was not 'tired waitin'.'

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