

Prologue to Love

By
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THE STORY THUS FAR

Lovely, independent Autumn Dean, returning home to British Columbia from abroad without her father's knowledge, stops at the home of Hector Cardigan, an old family friend. He tells her that she should not have come home, that things have changed. Arriving home at the "Castle of the Norms," she is greeted lovingly by her father, Jarvis Dean, who gives her to understand that she is welcome—for a short visit. Her mother, former belle named Millicent Odell, has been dead for years. Autumn cannot understand her father's attitude, though gives him to understand that she is home for good. She has grown tired of life in England, where she lived with an aunt. Her father gives a welcoming dance at the castle. Autumn meets Florian Parr, dashing, well-educated young man of the countryside. Late in the evening Autumn leaves the dance, rides horseback to the neighboring ranch where she meets Bruce Landor, friend and champion of her childhood days.

CHAPTER II—Continued

It was only when they reached the long avenue of Lombardy poplars leading to the Landor house that their voices ceased. Bruce seemed suddenly to have become preoccupied with something apart and remote as he rode slowly forward, his eyes fixed upon the house that stood among the shadows at the farther end of the avenue. A cool ripple of apprehensiveness passed down over Autumn's body, a feeling ominous and totally strange to her experience. She recalled now that as a girl she had always been afraid of Jane Landor, though she had never known the reason. And now, within a room there beyond that glowing window, lay the helpless form of the woman whose forbidding manner had often caused Autumn to shrink from her. It was not fear that overcame her now, but pity—deep pity for the woman whose staunch fortitude had been reduced to frailty by a life that had beaten her at last.

When Bruce finally dismounted before the doorway and stretched his hand up to her, she laid her own slender one within it and got down. For a moment she clung to his hand and hesitated.

"Wait, Bruce," she whispered, and the thought struck her that she should not have come like this to see Jane Landor.

He smiled down upon her and folded his other hand over hers. "You look—frightened," he said, leaning close to her.

She followed him into the house. The large room was in darkness, but a light from the open doorway of an adjoining room cast a soft glimmer over the old-fashioned furnishings of the place.

Immediately a woman's voice, small and nervous to the point of querulousness, spoke from the inner room.

"Is that you, Bruce?"

"Yes, mother. I've brought a visitor to see you."

There was a moment's silence. Then, "A visitor? Who?"

"I'll let you figure that out for yourself," Bruce said, and led Autumn into the room.

Jane Landor was in a half-sitting position among the pillows, a light attached to the bed above her thin, colorless face. Autumn had expected to find her changed from the woman she remembered, but she was not prepared for what she saw there under the soft light of the bed-lamp. She drew back instinctively before the look from the fierce black eyes that were turned upon her as she stepped through the doorway.

"Come in where I can see you," Jane Landor ordered, and struggled to draw herself up for a closer look at her visitor.

Autumn stepped into the light and stood for a moment smiling down at the frail woman.

"Don't you remember me?" she asked in a soft voice that was none too steady.

Jane Landor's face twisted suddenly as if in spasm. She lifted her thin hands to her wasted cheeks and drew her breath in a quick gasp. "You! You!" she cried. "Millicent Odell! What brings you back here? Take her away, Bruce! Take her away!"

Her voice was a hysterical shriek now. She covered her eyes with her hands as she lay back sobbing among the pillows.

Bruce was beside her instantly, his arms about her shoulders. "Mother—mother, it's Autumn Dean," he tried to reassure her. "Don't you remember Autumn? She has come back."

His face under the light was shocked and bewildered.

"Take her away, I say!" Jane Landor insisted vehemently. "Nothing but death follows in the way of the Odells!"

She clung to Bruce, who tried in vain to soothe her, and Autumn stole in a trembling gaze from the room and out of the house.

CHAPTER III

Breakfast in the Dean household had always been a ritual. In his busiest season Jarvis Dean nevertheless attended his table of a morning with the leisurely grace of a country gentleman. If a man could not begin the day becomingly, the Laird maintained, he had better remain in bed.

He was in good spirits this morning as he sat in his place, his daughter on his right and old Hannah opposite him at the end of the table nearest the kitchen. Hannah Stewart had, since the death of her mistress twenty years before, been accustomed to eating with the family unless there were guests. This arrangement had seemed to Jarvis to be the most sensible one while Autumn was small and had to be at-

tended to, and later Hannah was so much one of the family that it was unthinkable that she should eat alone. Hannah had seen to it that the paper streamers and other decorations had had festooned the dining room for the dance of the night before had been cleared away and the place restored to its wonted homely austerity. She would give her attention to the drawing room and the rest of the house as soon as the meal was over. Here in this room, however, life had returned to its accustomed way.

To Autumn, it seemed that some perverse fate had ordered the quiet scene so that she might find it impossible to seek an answer to the questions that had assailed her mind throughout an almost sleepless night. She had ridden home from the Landor place and had returned to her father's guests with a feeling that some curse had been laid upon her. She had moved about under a black spell that was as unreal to her as a delirious dream. And when it was all over and the last guest had gone, she had hurried to her room and lain awake until dawn.

Her father turned his eyes searchingly upon her as she seated herself at the breakfast table.

"It was a little too much for you, that business last night," he observed.



"You look—frightened," he said, leaning close to her.

served gently. "You look stale this morning."

"I didn't sleep well," Autumn admitted. "I'll be all right when I've had a little rest."

She had permitted her father to know only that she had indulged an impulse last night to get away alone for a ride in the moonlight; it had been impossible to tell him of her frightening visit to the Landors.

"I don't know what's wrong with the women nowadays," Jarvis continued. "In my time a young woman could dance all night and go to work the next day and be none the worse for it. But the women today have gone to pot."

Old Hannah sniffed. "I don't see that your men nowadays show much to brag about."

The Laird smiled. "Aye, they're a feckless lot, and have a mighty high opinion of themselves."

"It's hard to judge the present by the past, Da," Autumn ventured.

"Aye, my girl, there's something in that, too. It's the times that make the difference. It was a hard life we lived when I was a youngster—and it made hard men of us."

And hard women, too, Autumn thought, her mind upon Jane Landor.

"It'd take more than a hard life to make anything of the like of that Parr lad, I'm thinking," Hannah suggested.

"There's no way of telling that," Jarvis countered. "There's good blood in the boy. His father comes of a good line."

"The world's full of fools who can boast of good fathers before them, then," said Hannah stoutly.

"Right enough," declared Jarvis, chuckling to himself. "It takes two to breed even a flock of culls."

"Will you be using the car today, Da?" Autumn asked abruptly.

"No. I'll be down at the pens till supper. Haven't you done enough traveling to be content for a while?"

"I have some things to do in town, she said. "I'll leave right away and be back early."

"There'll be no call for haste," the Laird cautioned her. "You drive that car like something that had better rest its wits."

Autumn smiled at him. "I'd lose them completely, Da, if I had to sit and watch you drive it."

Her father grunted. "There's no taming you, I'm afraid. Well, you didn't get that from me."

"No," observed old Hannah, "that she didn't. She's her own mother over again, and there's little fault to find with her for that."

Silence fell upon Jarvis Dean as Hannah told of how Millicent Dean had ridden to the hounds in the days when the Cornwalls of Ashcroft Manor were still famous disciples of the chase. Autumn listened eagerly and would have ventured a question here and there but that her father's brows grew darker and his countenance clouded the more as the garrulous old housekeeper proceeded.

"That will be enough now," Jarvis interrupted finally, in a voice that quieted Hannah at once and the breakfast was finished almost in silence.

"You'd better be getting away," the Laird advised Autumn as they got up from the table, and Autumn felt that her father had no desire to leave her alone with Hannah. "Get your things together and I'll have the car brought out for you."

And while Autumn was in her room preparing for the trip to town, she could hear her father's voice in stern admonishment to poor old Hannah.

Hector Cardigan possessed a horror of glaring daylight, and the rays of the late morning sun that filtered into his drawing room between the heavy drapes of the windows suggested to Autumn the curious fingers of the present prying into the crypt of the past. She sat in one of Hector's armchairs, a glass of iced tea in her hand, her lids half closed upon that searching beam of light from the window.

"Hector," she said, glancing up at him with sudden directness, "I came to have a talk with you. Do you mind?"

Hector smiled at her. "We used to get on very well with our talks, if I remember."

"I was a child, then, Hector."

"Yes—that's so, that's so. I really hadn't considered that aspect of our—our friendship, may I say?"

"I am no longer a child, Hector."

"Very true, my dear. I recognize the fact—and I am forced to confess that I have never been a spectacular success in conversations with women."

"You don't have to be on this occasion, Hector. I am not here for small talk."

"Hm-m-m—well, of course—"

"I want to ask you some questions."

"I cannot promise—ah, definitely, you know—to answer any question a young woman might put to me. Can I, now?"

Autumn could not tell whether his manner was becoming evasive or merely apologetic.

"You can answer the questions I have in mind, Hector. I am sure of that."

"Well, we shall see, perhaps. What, for example, are you going to ask?"

Autumn drained her glass and set it aside.

"I went over to visit Jane Landor last night," she began.

"I thought you were giving a dance."

"I left it for an hour or so—and rode over to the Landor place. I met Bruce and he took me to the house to see his mother."

"I see. Rather singular conduct—for a hostess, I should say."

"I'll admit it was—for the time being, in any case. I saw Jane Landor."

"You—spoke to her?"

"I'm not sure. Perhaps a word, I forget. It was what she said to me that I have come to ask you about."

Hector moved uneasily. "Poor Jane Landor is not to be held to account for anything she says these days, my dear. I understand she is no longer—coherent."

"I am not going to hold her responsible for what she said, Hector. I want to know the meaning of it, that's all."

"Hm-m. Well, my dear—what did she say?"

"When I stepped into the room with Bruce, she became hysterical. She declared to Bruce that I was Millicent Odell and pleaded with him to put me out."

"Was that all?"

"Not quite. As I turned to leave, I heard her say that death followed in the way of the Odells."

"Anything else?"

"Nothing. I hurried out and rode back home as fast as I could."

For several seconds Hector remained standing with his back to the fireplace, his hands folded behind him, his eyes at gaze across the room.

"Well, now," he said at last, "it was a somewhat curious greeting you received, I confess, and one likely to give you pause, but as I said before, the poor woman—"

"The poor woman, Hector, has lost her sense of time and place, but there is no use in your attempting to convince me that there was nothing significant in what she said."

"Hm-m—well, perhaps you had better ask me your questions, my dear, and I shall consider them."

"What sort of woman was my mother, Hector?" Autumn asked him bluntly.

He looked at her quickly, a star-

ted expression in his eyes. "Your mother? She was the most beautiful woman I have ever known, my dear."

"I have heard that—years ago—from Hannah. Was she in love with my father?"

Hector smiled. "How can one know what is hidden in a woman's heart?"

"I know my father loved her—and loves her still, after twenty years. Did anyone else love her?"

"My dear child, we all loved her," Hector replied with a sigh. He turned slightly away from her then and picked up one of the yellowed dice on the mantelpiece. "She was the only woman I ever loved."

The simplicity of the statement brought a momentary silence to Autumn. She was aware suddenly of an awed thrill, as though some haunting fragrance of the past had for a feet instant possessed the room. But then, as she glanced covertly up at Hector, it seemed to her that she had always known that the elderly soldier had cherished a romantic and hopeless passion for Millicent. Autumn made an effort to regain her composure.

"Did Geoffrey Landor love her?" she pursued.

"I don't see how he could help it, really."

"Please, Hector. I want the truth. You know exactly what I mean. I must know."

Hector Cardigan stepped slowly from his place and seated himself in a large chair opposite Autumn.



"Partly—as far as it goes," Autumn replied.

He spread his feet before him and slowly brought his hands together, the points of his fingers meeting.

"In my time, my dear," he began, "we were accustomed to living our lives in the best way we knew how, without giving much thought to the past. This country was settled by men who had left their pasts behind them in the Old Country, and were eager to begin life anew in this. It is only natural if I should feel a bit embarrassed, perhaps, in the presence of a young woman who demands that I tell her what manner of mother she had. I have not grown used to the ways of young people today. It happens, however, that I can be just as direct in my answer as you were in your question. You say I know exactly what you mean. I do. And I tell you that Millicent Odell, who became Millicent Dean, was a woman of honor and integrity and would have gone to her grave before she would have broken the vows that bound her in marriage to Jarvis Dean."

He paused for a moment and gazed unflinchingly into Autumn's eyes. "Is that an answer to your question, my dear?" he asked finally.

"Partly—as far as it goes," Autumn replied.

"I think it goes quite far enough," Hector said. "I confess I—"

"Let me come to the point at once, Hector," Autumn interrupted. "Behind what Jane Landor said to me last night there exists a life-long hatred—or fear—of mother. A woman doesn't ordinarily hate another woman without reason, and somewhere at the bottom of it all, if you take the trouble to search, you find a man. It isn't reasonable to suppose that father is the man in question. We know him too well for that. What I want to know is whether Geoffrey Landor is the man."

"I think I have answered that, my dear."

"Please, Hector!" Autumn was losing her patience. "Do you think that Geoffrey shot himself because he loved mother too much to live without her?"

"It is too late—too late by many years, my dear, to answer that question. I could believe it. I knew Geoffrey well. He was headstrong. He was—romantic, I should say. But he was hopelessly in debt at the time—and he had been drinking heavily, as I recall, for several days before the tragedy. Given the facts, I should imagine your guess would be as good as mine."

"And your guess, Hector?"

He considered the question a long time before he made his reply. Then he got suddenly to his feet and stepped toward Autumn, his shoulders drawn back and his head erect in soldierly bearing. "I refuse to answer that question, my girl. You should know better than to ask it. There is a point in such matters beyond which a man of honor cannot go. I must ask you to consider the question closed."

(TO BE CONTINUED)

HAPPY BIRTHDAY! Mrs. Roosevelt Becomes 56; Dubbed 'Public Energy No. 1'



Picture Parade

On October 11, Mrs. Franklin Delano Roosevelt marks her fifty-sixth birthday. No longer surprised at her amazing energy, the nation has grown to admire her. Above: She introduces her husband at the New York World's fair grounds.



A favorite with photographers, Mrs. Roosevelt has few inhibitions. At the left she swings mightily to christen the transatlantic Yankee Clipper. At right: She presented diplomas at Arthur Dale W. Va., school, then swung her partner in the dance that followed. More active than any previous President's wife, Mrs. Roosevelt has shattered precedent. U. S. polls have rated her more popular than her husband.



She came to the opening performance of the "Lost Colony" at Manteo, N. C., riding with her party in a CCC truck. At left is the Spanish refugee lad, 12-year-old Lorenzo Murias, for whom she agreed to act as foster parent. He is one of many refugee children living in France, supported partly through private contributions.



An enthusiastic social worker, she takes an active interest in projects to care for all types of unfortunates. Income from much of her writing has gone for this purpose. Above she is shown placing a baby in the new portable incubator she presented to a hospital on behalf of the Washington Variety club.



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Strange Facts

Amused the Ladies
Life Stage Contract
Mongolians Marked

As late as 1921, twelve hundred clergymen, representing fifteen denominations, met in Philadelphia to choose and promote a "moral gown for women." The creation finally selected was somber in color, sacklike in design and reached from the neck to the ground. The ladies were merely amused.

The longest term theatrical contracts made at the present time are those issued by the Comedie Francaise, the French national theater in Paris. An artist who becomes a member of this company is obliged to sign an agreement to remain for twenty years. "The Mongolian spot," is a patch of pigmentation appearing on nearly all children of Mongoloid peoples. It occurs at the lower end of the spine, has a dark blue or mulberry color, is about the size of a silver quarter, and disappears before the fifth year.—Collier's.

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