

Prologue to Love

By
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CHAPTER XII—Continued

Florian shot Autumn a quick look from beneath lowered brows. "It's Bruce Landor, of course," he said, with a sharp inflection bitten with hopelessness.

Autumn avoided his eyes, her gaze upon the window where, the curtains drawn back, the redolent, play air of the mountains drifted gently inward.

"I knew it," he said disconsolately. "I've known it for weeks. That's why you're going away. You're running away from him."

Autumn got up and stood by the window, looking out across the hills where evening was already settling down. She had been standing there a long time, neither of them speaking, when Florian got impatiently out of his chair.

"Let's eat!" he said suddenly. "You're probably starved."

She looked at him and smiled dimly. "I could do with a little something," she agreed. "What is there? I'll get it ready."

"You'll do nothing of the sort," he retorted. "You'll sit down and have another drink while I fry the bacon and eggs."

Fifteen minutes later, they were seated amicably across from each other at the little table before the fireplace, feasting on bacon and eggs, bread and butter and marmalade, and the really excellent coffee Florian had made. Florian, remarking with a derisive smile that they might as well have it as romantic as possible, had made a fire in the fireplace and had moved the prosaic lamp to a secluded alcove.

Their talk was desultory and was concerned chiefly with the Parris, since Autumn was reluctant to speak of her impending journey. Linda, he told her, had found herself a new passion, the object of which was a bemedaled war veteran who had come to the Okanagan and bought himself a fruit ranch.

"Just a matter of changing from sheep to fruit for Lin," he remarked. "It's great to have an easy conscience."

And so they talked in quiet amiability, while the firelight flickered pleasantly on the ruddy pine beams of the ceiling and coquetted with the shadows that lurked about the furnishings.

Ever since Autumn had left that morning, an inexplicable sadness had lain upon Jarvis Dean, a heaviness of heart that was more than mere regret at her going. She would be back again tomorrow, he told himself, and they would still have a few brief days together before she left the Castle for good. It would be for good this time, and when he joined her in England in the fall, that would be his own farewell to this land in which he had known the heights and depths of all passions. Searching his heart for the cause of his melancholy, he came with acute anguish upon the truth. Jarvis Dean had reached an end—an end of everything that had really mattered in life. An abyss of nothingness yawned before him.

Without these stark hills and unguessable valleys that had witnessed with silent compassion the drama of his life, he would be as a player upon a stage without an audience.

Frequently during the day, his eyes had roved hungrily over the noble prospect that had been his for more than a quarter of a century. By toil of mind and body and soul he had made it his own, and his being, in turn, had been delivered over in its entirety to the magnitude of this earth.

All that he had known of joy and sorrow, hatred and love, the saga of his failure and triumph, was written across the bright tablet of this land, inscrutable to all but himself; when he left it his epitaph would be given there.

The sun marked noon, and the less explicit hours of the west. Toward the latter end of the day Jarvis went on foot to the temporary camp where his young Irish herder, Clancy Shane, was tending the few hundred sheep he had brought down from the range to be sold. It had been a matter of great pride to the boy that he had brought the band down single-handed and Jarvis had expressed his dry pleasure by raising the lad's salary.

In a wooded hollow before he reached the rise from which the flock could be seen, Jarvis halted abruptly to listen. An unwanted clamor of excited barking was coming from the direction of the flock, mingled with the mad bleat of sheep. In alarm, Jarvis scrambled up through the woods to the crest, where a furious spectacle met his eyes.

The low, red sun shone obliquely across a turbulent, livid sea of gray bodies, a sea which, while Jarvis stared at it aghast, seemed to become a vortex spinning closer and closer to the brink of a deep arroyo, a sandy cleft in the ground that had been washed deeper by freshets of the last spring. The dog, in a frenzy, was striving to head the crazed flock away from the danger. Suddenly the Irish lad leaped into the maelstrom and began beating his way toward the churning center. Jarvis shouted a hoarse warning and began to run.

Before he reached the arroyo, however, the outer fringe of the band had run off tangent-wise and were plunging headlong into the gapping earth. Instantly the whirlpool broke, the main body of it following the mad course of the first few into the arroyo. When Jarvis came at last and looked over the edge of the cleft, he found the pit filling with writhing, kicking, screaming bodies. A few had escaped and were struggling up the steep bank, bleating dementedly, their oblique, crazy eyes aglare.

In the thick of the struggle, flailing out with both arms and sobbing frantically, Clancy Shane bobbed about, with hideous ludicrousness, like a cork. Jarvis yelled to him and plunged down the embankment, hurling out of his way the few half-stunned animals that rushed up at him. With all the strength of his powerful frame he fought his way to the boy, lifted him bodily above the descending stream of gray forms, and flung him free.

As he did so, a dozen grizzled shapes came down upon him and Jarvis fell back among them.

Bruce Landor was driving home from town. On a sharp decline in the road where it approached the Dean place, his gaze was arrested by a wild figure that rushed frenziedly toward him, apparently from nowhere. Bruce drew to the side of the road and stopped his car. The madman was young Clancy Shane.

The boy collapsed against the running board, his breath a raucous wheeze. Bruce leaped from his car and lifted him to a sitting position.

"What's wrong, Clancy?" he demanded.

The boy flung out an arm toward the pasture. "Over yonder!" he gasped. "The master—in the gully! Go quick!"

With only a swift glance of horror into the blood-stained face of the youth, Bruce sped away. The sight that met his eyes in the arroyo froze his veins. There was a scattering of sheep, running and bleating idiotically still, with the dog valiantly struggling to bring them together. But across the gap in the earth there had risen a solid isthmus of dead or dying bodies. Of Jarvis Dean himself there was no sign. Bruce stood in stony horror. The sheep lay in the arroyo, ten deep.

Two men came running from the direction of the Dean place.

A strange quiet seemed to have fallen upon that land, when—it seemed to Bruce an eternity later—the western sky drew down an emerald curtain upon the glory that had been there. Three men stood back from their work, their bodies wet, and lowered their heads. The battered, still form of Jarvis Dean lay where they had placed it on the ground at their feet. Clancy Shane had told them the brief and tragic story of what had occurred. An eagle had flown down on the flock and terrorized a few stragglers that had wandered a short distance from the others. They had raced back and spread the contagion of fear in the flock. The rest of the story they could read for themselves in the havoc that had been wrought during the brief moments of the hopeless struggle.

Hannah, in the kitchen of the Castle, lifted her tear-drenched face from her hands. "You will have to go and fetch her, Bruce," she sobbed. "She is stopping the night with the Parris at their lodge. You know the place?"

Bruce looked down at her. "Yes—I know where it is," he replied.

"Will you go, then?" His lips tightened. "I'll go," he said.

In a few moments he was on his way, the dusk thickening about him as he sped along the winding trail that led southward into the mountains. Two hours later he climbed up out of the troublous dark heat of the valley into the sheer, cool starlight of the hills. Now the road became narrow and capricious, and the black spires of the dense pines made a cathedral ominously against the sky. How like Autumn, Bruce thought with frowning admiration, to have driven over this road alone! One false swerve of the wheel and she would have been at the mercy of this solitary wilderness until someone found her and brought her out. He strove to keep his mind on the deviousness of the way so that he might be possessed of a measure of composure for the difficult task that lay before him. He was glad, with a self-effacing bleakness, that his friends were with her—Linda Parr and Florian. They would be able to offer her comfort, as he himself was not qualified to do.

He had telephoned to Hector Carigan from the Dean place. It had seemed proper that Hector should be the first to be informed of the tragedy—and, if possible, to break the news to Autumn. Bruce would have given much to have had the old friend of the family with him on this sorry mission, but Hector had not been at home and Hannah had urged that the tragic news should be carried to Autumn without delay.

The road began to steepen treacherously as Bruce approached the comparatively open shelf on the mountain where the Parr Lodge stood. From somewhere in the

shrouded darkness far above him came the sinister, feral wail of a cougar, a trailing sound of wounded malevolence. Closer at hand an owl hooted as though in mockery of that other more menacing cry of the wild.

A gleam of light through the dark web of the pines, and Bruce was driving in at the open gateway to the lodge. He turned his car about, deferring for a painful moment the duty that was before him, and formulating in his mind, with all the gentleness he could muster, the dolorous words that he must speak. As he got down from his car he could hear a door opening in the lodge behind him. A moment later he was face to face with Florian Parr.

Even at that instant, when his distress of mind was uppermost, Bruce detected embarrassment in Florian's manner.

"Hello, Florian," he said as he extended his hand.

Florian took the proffered hand in a brief clasp, then seemed to draw back hesitantly. "Bruce!" he exclaimed softly. "You're the last person I expected to see here tonight."

Bruce glanced toward the house. "I've come with some pretty bad



"Lin isn't here," Florian said heavily.

news, Florian," he said in a low tone. "Autumn's father was killed this evening."

Florian fell back a step. "Killed? Good God! How?"

"He was over visiting the flock young Shane brought out to be sold. The boy says an eagle frightened the sheep and they got to milling. Shane tried to break up the jam and they got into a ditch on top of him. Jarvis jumped in and saved the boy—but he never got out of it himself."

Florian ran his hand across his brow, speechless from shock. Bruce saw him glance abstractedly toward the house.

"My God!" he groaned at last. "This will just about kill Autumn!"

"You'd better go in and fetch Lin," Bruce said tersely. "She'll be the best one to break the news to her."

But Florian was regarding him in blank consternation. Bruce, puzzled, began to feel an impatience at his singular attitude.

"There's no sense in delaying it, Florian," he said harshly. "She has to be told. And Lin is the one to talk to her."

As he spoke he glanced toward the house. It came to him that there was something strange about the place. It seemed deserted, somehow, and although the windows were open no voices came out to them from within.

"Lin isn't here," Florian said heavily. "Autumn and I are alone."

Bruce stared at Florian through the gloom with eyes that seemed to go dim and lifeless with the dull flush that had suffused his whole being after that first sharp stab of incredulity.

"Oh!" he said then, in a voice that had died before the sound issued. "Oh—I see!"

Florian's face was turned toward him in the darkness. For a moment he did not reply. "You don't see at all, you damn fool!" he broke forth at last. "Lin couldn't get here. We were just getting ready to leave when we heard your car coming up the hill. If you think—"

"Shut up!" Bruce rasped. "You don't have to apologize to me. Go in and tell her. She's needed at home—tonight. I'll drive ahead. I don't think I can be of any more use."

car following behind him, it seemed to Bruce that the stars rocketed through a delirious sky, and that the night with its burden of madness would descend and annihilate him.

CHAPTER XIII

Strange, Autumn thought with the objective detachment that emotional exhaustion brings, how this gold and white drawing room that had been Millicent's preserved its aloof and reticent singularity, impervious to any unwonted experience of the other quarters of the house. She sat huddled listlessly in a deep chair, part of her consciousness attending Hannah, who was bidding a smothered good-by at the front door, to Snyder, the lawyer, the other part aimlessly adrift on that curiously attenuated sunlight that filled the room. Sunlight—no shadows here, in the room that had been peculiarly Millicent's! How oddly ironically Even now, when the rest of the house seemed to mourn in sympathy with the Laird's deserted study upstairs, where Saint Pat alone kept his dumb, broken-hearted vigil, this room was a mystically serene denial of death. Or, rather, it was an affirmation of life beyond temporal things.

Autumn pressed her fingers against her eyes at the feeling of light-headedness that was coming over her. The ordeal of listening to Snyder read her father's will had undone her completely. And that extraordinary codicil, that footnote that he had written into it to Bruce Landor only a short time since—

But here came Hannah, with a steaming pot of tea! Snyder had refused tea—had helped himself generously to the Laird's choice brandy, instead. Funny how resentful one could become, in times of emotional upheaval, over a small and irrelevant thing!

She glanced at the tiny watch that hung on a cord about her neck. Hector Cardigan would be here again soon. He had been coming faithfully every day, and now she felt that without him she would be utterly lost.

A shadow, unobtrusive, gentle, fell across the threshold, and Hector entered through the French windows from the lawn. Autumn rose and drew another chair close to her own beside the low table on which Hannah, with a silence that marked her own personal grief and not the decorum of a servant in the house of bereavement, had placed the tea things. With pale humor, Autumn had noted how Hannah had taken the loss of her master unto herself, after a due observance of the amenities in consoling the master's daughter.

Hannah withdrew noiselessly, and Hector seated himself beside Autumn.

"One sugar. I believe, Hector!" she said, with an effort at briskness. "And lemon?"

"Quite so," Hector returned. Her very hands, she thought as she poured the tea with an uncontrollable tremble, seemed to have lost their character. They looked weak and purposeless.

Setting her cup on the table beside her, she leaned back in her chair and closed her eyes. "I'm adrift, Hector," she murmured. "Absolutely adrift."

"Now, now, my dear," Hector stammered. "Life must go on, child. Even after—after terrible things happen to us."

"Life must go on? Why?" She opened her eyes and gazed at him, as though in genuine wonderment.

Hector shifted uneasily. He looked worn and shaken, she thought with idle compassion. His friendship for Jarvis had been a long and tried one; he was the only living being who had witnessed the extraordinary drama of that ill-starred soul from beginning to end. Perhaps it was unfair to inflict upon poor Hector the irony of the epilogue.

"That is an absurd question, Autumn," Hector said gruffly. "The daughter of the Laird will go on. You are shocked and exhausted, my dear."

"I have not been the daughter of the Laird for a long time," Autumn interrupted in a pensive voice. "I know now that father died twenty years ago. The ghost of him came back now and then—and on one of those visits he wrote a note in his will to Bruce Landor."

Hector started. "A note?" Autumn rose slowly and went to the desk at the farther end of the room where Snyder had sat with her and Hannah a half hour ago. When she returned she held an envelope in her hand. She removed from it a narrow sheet of paper.

"Father must have written this on the bottom of his will immediately after Bruce came to visit him one day, at father's request. Snyder could make neither head nor tail of it, of course. We shall have to give it to Bruce."

Hector took the paper from her hand. He read, in the Laird's bold, impatient hand: "To Bruce Landor, the admission that I may have been wrong in many things. At this moment's writing I seem to see a light. But it flickers and goes out, leaving an old man in darkness. I cannot help it if I blunder through the night that envelops me. Life has played me false, making of me that which I would not be."

For some seconds Hector sat looking attentively at the writing. Then his eyes lifted and Autumn was surprised at the solemn radiance of his face. It was a look of relief, almost of happiness.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

I RESOLVE

Made your resolutions for 1940? Here's a few you can make and break without much trouble—just for the sake of resolution-ing!



"Candy? No, thanks, won't touch the stuff in 1940. Oh, well, I guess just one piece won't hurt."



"Going to (puff!) take this (puff!) stomach off me this (puff!) year if it kills me. Gotta (puff!) do this every (puff!) day."



"Lemme see . . . if I save 10 cents every day in 1940, that makes . . . m-m-m . . . thirty-five dollars and 50 cents a year. Not so much, is it? Suppose it's worthwhile?"



"I feel everyone should do her best to improve her mind in 1940 with good reading material. Let's see . . . what did that say? Kinda dry book. Guess I'll go to a show."



"Gotta quit smoking this year . . . yeah, right now. I'll just toss these stogies in the wastebasket. Er . . . maybe I'll want to fish out a last smoke after dinner tonight."

Pope Gregory Responsible For January 1 Celebration

Pope Gregory, in 1582, instituted the Gregorian calendar and thus placed New Year's day on January 1. During the Middle Ages Europe had observed it on March 25. All countries did not adopt the 12-month system at once, but the Christian world accepted it generally in 1752 when the British parliament finally established New Year's day. Ancient Persians and Egyptians celebrated on September 22.

Coat and Dress Styled With Youthful 'Swing' Silhouette

By CHERIE NICHOLAS



adopt an interesting tuck technique. Here again a generously full hemline swings into sprightly grace. A chubby mouton bolero complemented with a green feather-trimmed pill-box hat made of matching mouton sounds an ultra chic note.

THE "swing" technique persists in costume styling throughout the later showings of winter coat and dress collections. The fact that fullness has become an important factor in the new silhouette is no barrier to a slenderizing outcome. Thanks to the cunning craft and consummate art of modern designers the problem has been so victoriously met that whether you be sylphlike or more or less rotund in figure you will find that the smart, new fashions that are saying it with a "swing" are actually very flattering.

The exceedingly good-looking tunic dress to the left in the picture demonstrates what happens when a distinguished designer such as Molyneux of Paris takes the swing idea and multiplies it by two. This very pleasing dress with its double swing silhouette is of stiff black faille (a high fashion fabric this season). Its tunic and skirt zip up the front. A gold clip finishes its heart shaped neckline. Here is a grand example of a basic black dress that invites stunning jewelry ensembles or dashes of color which this season's accessories exploit.

Speaking of the new fullness in skirts, a topic of utmost significance in current styles, the question has often been brought up as to its positioning, whether it should be at the back or sides or brought to the front. The answer is no matter where the fullness, just so there is fullness somewhere. So far as the sports swaggar coat is concerned the news is definitely that of back flares contrived via pleats or gores or circular cut.

Dress coats are made with fitted waists and skirts that often flare all-around. So widespread is the favor for flares even the newest fur coats are made with fitted waists and full skirts.

(Released by Western Newspaper Union.)

Flattery of Lace



Fashion is placing increasing emphasis on the flattery of lace for the mature woman. The exquisite black laces that seem this season more beautiful than ever before have a gracious dignity about them that tunes perfectly to womanly charm. With the low neckline of the dress pictured a string of pearls is most enhancing. Long velvet gloves repeat the color accent of the velvet flowers worn by this lovely lady. The dress is a rayon Chantilly. The dress comes in black, royal blue, wine and grape.

Fur Ensemble Now Is Important News

You have seen a fur-clad trapper with his bushy fur hat, fur gloves and fur jacket. Add a big muff to these items and you have somewhat of a picture of the first impression ladies of fashion make in their dramatic fur ensembles.

The importance of fur millinery cannot be overemphasized. Whatever you do, be sure that you keep in mind that your fur coat or jacket or cape must be matched with a spectacular hat of the same fur.

As to muffs this season, they are huge or of novel design. You can even get fur trimmed gloves.

With cloth suits and coats the smartest thing is an "as costly as thy purse can buy" neckpiece the long fur stole being especially chic, and don't forget that a matching fur muff is inevitable this season.

Style and Comfort In New Stockings

The long-hoped-for has happened, in that silk stockings that are woollined are announced for winter wear. They might properly be classed as a necessary luxury in that being up to date, they are selling only in the higher-class shops. In appearance they look as if they might be a fine silk service type but the wearer knows of the warmth and glow that the wool lining imparts.

Velvet Trimmed Fedora

A black felt fedora with an underbrim faced with velvet and a black velvet snood is a new creation shown by Reboux to accompany dressy street costumes.

Snakeskin Accessories

Snakeskin, dyed a brilliant electric blue, is used to make an unusual bolero and beret worn as accessories to a rich chocolate-colored crepe frock.