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1

The Shadow of Change

'Harvest is ended and summer is gone,' quoted Anne Shirley, gazing across the shorn fields dreamily. She and Diana Barry had been picking apples in the Green Gables orchard, but were now resting from their labours in a sunny corner, where airy fleets of thistle-down drifted by on the wings of a wind that was still summer-sweet with the incense of ferns in the Haunted Wood.

But everything in the landscape around them spoke of autumn. The sea was roaring hollowly in the distance, the fields were bare and sere, scarfed with golden-rod, the brook valley below Green Gables overflowed with asters of ethereal purple, and the Lake of Shining Waters was blue – blue – blue; not the changeful blue of spring, nor the pale azure of summer, but a clear, steadfast serene blue, as if the water were past all moods and tenses of emotion and had settled down to a tranquillity unbroken by fickle dreams.

'It has been a nice summer,' said Diana, twisting the new ring on her left hand with a smile. 'And Miss Lavendar's

wedding seemed to come as a sort of crown to it. I suppose Mr and Mrs Irving are on the Pacific coast now.'

'It seems to me they have been gone long enough to go round the world,' sighed Anne. 'I can't believe it is only a week since they were married. Everything has changed. Miss Lavendar and Mr and Mrs Allan gone – how lonely the manse looks with the shutters all closed! I went past it last night, and it made me feel as if everybody in it had died.'

'We'll never get another minister as nice as Mr Allan,' said Diana, with gloomy conviction. 'I suppose we'll have all kinds of supplies this winter, and half the Sundays no preaching at all. And you and Gilbert gone – it will be awfully dull.'

'Fred will be here,' insinuated Anne slyly.

'When is Mrs Lynde going to move up?' asked Diana, as if she had not heard Anne's remark.

'Tomorrow. I'm glad she's coming – but it will be another change. Marilla and I cleared everything out of the spare room yesterday. Do you know, I hated to do it. Of course, it was silly – but it did seem as if we were committing sacrilege. That old spare room has always seemed like a shrine to me. When I was a child I thought it the most wonderful apartment in the world. You remember what a consuming desire I had to sleep in a spare-room bed – but not the Green Gables spare room. Oh, no, never there! It would have been too terrible – I

couldn't have slept a wink from awe. I never *walked* through that room when Marilla sent me in on an errand – no, indeed, I tiptoed through it and held my breath, as if I were in church, and felt relieved when I got out of it. The pictures of George Whitefield and the Duke of Wellington hung there, one on each side of the mirror, and frowned so sternly at me all the time I was in, especially if I dared peep in the mirror, which was the only one in the house that didn't twist my face a little. I always wondered how Marilla dared house-clean that room. And now it's not only cleaned – but stripped bare. George Whitefield and the Duke have been relegated to the upstairs hall. "So passes the glory of this world,"' concluded Anne, with a laugh in which there was a little note of regret. 'It is never pleasant to have our old shrines desecrated, even when we have outgrown them.'

'I'll be lonesome when you go,' moaned Diana for the hundredth time. 'And to think you go next week!'

'But we're together still,' said Anne cheerily. 'We mustn't let next week rob us of this week's joy. I hate the thought of going myself – home and I are such good friends. Talk of being lonesome! It's I who should groan. *You'll* be here with any number of your old friends – *and* Fred! While I shall be alone among strangers, not knowing a soul!'

'*Except* Gilbert – *and* Charlie Sloane,' said Diana, imitating Anne's italics and slyness.

'Charlie Sloane will be a great comfort, of course,'

agreed Anne sarcastically; whereupon both those irresponsible damsels laughed. Diana knew exactly what Anne thought of Charlie Sloane; but, despite sundry confidential talks, she did not know just what Anne thought of Gilbert Blythe. To be sure, Anne herself did not know that.

'The boys may be boarding at the other end of Kingsport, for all I know,' Anne went on. 'I am glad I'm going to Redmond, and I am sure I shall like it after a while. But for the first few weeks I know I won't. I shan't even have the comfort of looking forward to the week-end visit home, as I had when I went to Queen's. Christmas will seem like a thousand years away.'

'Everything is changing – or going to change,' said Diana sadly. 'I have a feeling that things will never be the same again, Anne.'

'We have come to a parting of the ways, I suppose,' said Anne thoughtfully. 'We had to come to it. Do you think, Diana, that being grown up is really as nice as we used to imagine it would be when we were children?'

'I don't know – there are *some* nice things about it,' answered Diana, again caressing her ring with that little smile which always had the effect of making Anne feel suddenly left out and inexperienced. 'But there are so many puzzling things too. Sometimes I feel as if being grown up just frightened me – and then I would give anything to be a little girl again.'

'I suppose we'll get used to being grown up in time,' said

Anne cheerfully. 'There won't be so many unexpected things about it by and by – though, after all, I fancy it's the unexpected things that give spice to life. We're eighteen, Diana. In two more years we'll be twenty. When I was ten I thought twenty was a green old age. In no time you'll be a staid, middle-aged matron, and I shall be nice, old maid Aunt Anne, coming to visit you in vacations. You'll always keep a corner for me, won't you, Di darling? Not the spare room, of course – old maids can't aspire to spare rooms, and I shall be as 'umble as Uriah Heep, and quite content with a little over-the-porch or off-the-parlour cubby hole.'

'What nonsense you do talk, Anne,' laughed Diana. 'You'll marry somebody splendid and handsome and rich – and no spare room in Avonlea will be half gorgeous enough for you – and you'll turn up your nose at all the friends of your youth.'

'That would be a pity; my nose is quite nice, but I fear turning it up would spoil it,' said Anne, patting that shapely organ. 'I haven't so many good features that I could afford to spoil those I have; so, even if I should marry the King of the Cannibal Islands, I promise you I won't turn up my nose at *you*, Diana.'

With another gay laugh the girls separated, Diana to return to Orchard Slope, Anne to walk to the post-office. She found a letter awaiting her there, and when Gilbert Blythe overtook her on the bridge over the Lake of Shining Waters she was sparkling with the excitement of it.

'Priscilla Grant is going to Redmond too,' she exclaimed. 'Isn't that splendid? I hoped she would, but she didn't think her father would consent. He has, however, and we're to board together. I feel that I can face an army with banners – or all the professors of Redmond in one fell phalanx – with a chum like Priscilla by my side.'

'I think we'll like Kingsport,' said Gilbert. 'It's a nice old burg, they tell me, and has the finest natural park in the world. I've heard that the scenery in it is magnificent.'

'I wonder if it will be – can be – any more beautiful than this,' murmured Anne, looking around her with the loving, enraptured eyes of those to whom 'home' must always be the loveliest spot in the world, no matter what fairer lands may lie under alien stars.

They were leaning on the bridge of the old pond, drinking deep of the enchantment of the dusk, just at the spot where Anne had climbed from her sinking dory on the day Elaine floated down to Camelot. The fine, empurpling dye of sunset still stained the western skies, but the moon was rising and the water lay like a great silver dream in her light. Remembrance wove a sweet and subtle spell over the two young creatures.

'You are very quiet, Anne,' said Gilbert at last.

'I'm afraid to speak or move for fear all this wonderful beauty will vanish just like a broken silence,' breathed Anne.

Gilbert suddenly laid his hand over the slender white

one lying on the rail of the bridge. His hazel eyes deepened into darkness, his still boyish lips opened to say something of the dream and hope that thrilled his soul. But Anne snatched her hand away and turned quickly. The spell of the dusk was broken for her.

'I must go home,' she exclaimed, with a rather overdone carelessness. 'Marilla had a headache this afternoon, and I'm sure the twins will be in some dreadful mischief by this time. I really shouldn't have stayed away so long.'

She chattered ceaselessly and inconsequentially until they reached the Green Gables lane. Poor Gilbert hardly had a chance to get a word in edgewise. Anne felt rather relieved when they parted. There had been a new, secret self-consciousness in her heart with regard to Gilbert, ever since that fleeting moment of revelation in the garden of Echo Lodge. Something alien had intruded into the old, perfect, school-day comradeship – something that threatened to mar it.

'I never felt glad to see Gilbert go before,' she thought, half resentfully, half sorrowfully, as she walked alone up the lane. 'Our friendship will be spoiled if he goes on with this nonsense. It mustn't be spoiled – I won't let it. Oh, *why* can't boys be just sensible!'

Anne had an uneasy doubt that it was not strictly 'sensible' that she should still feel on her hand the warm pressure of Gilbert's, as distinctly as she had felt it for the swift second his had rested there; and still less sensible

that the sensation was far from being an unpleasant one – very different from that which had attended a similar demonstration on Charlie Sloane's part, when she had been sitting out a dance with him at a White Sands party three nights before. Anne shivered over the disagreeable recollection. But all problems connected with infatuated swains vanished from her mind when she entered the homely, unsentimental atmosphere of the Green Gables kitchen where an eight-year-old boy was crying grievously on the sofa.

'What is the matter, Davy?' asked Anne, taking him up in her arms. 'Where are Marilla and Dora?'

'Marilla's putting Dora to bed,' sobbed Davy, 'and I'm crying 'cause Dora fell down the outside cellar steps, heels over head, and scraped all the skin off her nose, and –'

'Oh, well, don't cry about it, dear. Of course, you are sorry for her, but crying won't help her any. She'll be all right tomorrow. Crying never helps anyone, Davy-boy, and –'

'I ain't crying 'cause Dora fell down cellar,' said Davy, cutting short Anne's well-meant preachment with increasing bitterness. 'I'm crying 'cause I wasn't there to see her fall. I'm always missing some fun or other, seems to me.'

'Oh, Davy!' Anne choked back an unholy shriek of laughter. 'Would you call it fun to see poor little Dora fall down the steps and get hurt?'

'She wasn't *much* hurt,' said Davy defiantly. 'Course, if

she'd been killed I'd have been real sorry, Anne. But the Keiths ain't so easy killed. They're like the Blewetts, I guess. Herb Blewett fell off the hayloft last Wednesday, and rolled right down through the turnip-chute into the box stall, where they had a fearful wild, cross horse, and rolled right under his heels. And still he got out alive, with only three bones broke. Mrs Lynde says there are some folks you can't kill with a meat axe. Is Mrs Lynde coming here tomorrow, Anne?'

'Yes, Davy, and I hope you'll be always very nice and good to her.'

'I'll be nice and good. But will she ever put me to bed at nights, Anne?'

'Perhaps. Why?'

''Cause,' said Davy very decidedly, 'if she does I won't say my prayers before her, like I do before you, Anne.'

'Why not?'

''Cause I don't think it would be nice to talk to God before strangers, Anne. Dora can say hers to Mrs Lynde if she likes, but *I* won't. I'll wait till she's gone and then say 'em. Won't that be all right, Anne?'

'Yes, if you are sure you won't forget to say them, Davy-boy.'

'Oh, I won't forget, you bet. I think saying my prayers is great fun. But it won't be as good fun saying them alone as saying them to you. I wish you'd stay home, Anne. I don't see what you want to go away and leave us for.'

'I don't exactly *want* to, Davy, but I feel I ought to go.'

'If you don't want to go you needn't. You're grown up. When *I'm* grown up I'm not going to do one single thing I don't want to do, Anne.'

'All your life, Davy, you'll find yourself doing things you don't want to do.'

'I won't,' said Davy flatly. 'Catch me! I have to do things I don't want to now, 'cause you and Marilla'll send me to bed if I don't. But when I grow up you can't do that, and there'll be nobody to tell me not to do things. Won't I have the time! Say, Anne, Milty Boulter says his mother says you're going to college to see if you can catch a man. Are you, Anne? I want to know.'

For a second Anne burned with resentment. Then she laughed, reminding herself that Mrs Boulter's crude vulgarity of thought and speech could not harm her.

'No, Davy, I'm not. I'm going to study and grow and learn about many things.'

'What things?'

'Shoes and ships and sealing wax
And cabbages and kings,'

quoted Anne.

'But if you *did* want to catch a man how would you go about it? I want to know,' persisted Davy, for whom the subject evidently possessed a certain fascination.

'You'd better ask Mrs Boulter,' said Anne thoughtlessly. 'I think it's likely she knows more about the process than I do.'

'I will, the next time I see her,' said Davy gravely.

'Davy! If you do!' cried Anne, realizing her mistake.

'But you just told me to,' protested Davy, aggrieved.

'It's time you went to bed,' decreed Anne, by way of getting out of the scrape.

After Davy had gone to bed Anne wandered down to Victoria Island and sat there alone, curtained with fine-spun, moonlit gloom, while the water laughed around her in a duet of brook and wind. Anne had always loved that brook. Many a dream had she spun over its sparkling waters in days gone by. She forgot love-lorn youths, and the cayenne speeches of malicious neighbours, and all the problems of her girlish existence. In imagination she sailed over storied seas that wash the distant shining shores of 'faery lands forlorn', where lost Atlantis and Elysium lie, with the evening star for pilot, to the land of Heart's Desire. And she was richer in those dreams than in realities; for things seen pass away, but the things that are unseen are eternal.

2

Garlands of Autumn

The following week sped swiftly, crowded with innumerable 'last things', as Anne called them. Good-bye calls had to be made and received, being pleasant or otherwise, according to whether callers and called-upon were heartily in sympathy with Anne's hopes, or thought she was too much puffed-up over going to college and that it was their duty to 'take her down a peg or two'.

The A.V.I.S. gave a farewell party in honour of Anne and Gilbert one evening at the home of Josie Pye, choosing that place, partly because Mr Pye's house was large and convenient, partly because it was strongly suspected that the Pye girls would have nothing to do with the affair if their offer of the house for the party was not accepted. It was a very pleasant little time, for the Pye girls were gracious, and said and did nothing to mar the harmony of the occasion – which was not according to their wont. Josie was unusually amiable – so much so that she even remarked condescendingly to Anne: