

"O you coward! You may go to the Devil if you choose, but you can't take me with you."

He smiled, a curious set smile, touched his hat and walked away.

I watched him go up the road around the curve, out of sight. He never once looked back. Somewhere out of the black shadows along the river bank came the cry of a whippoorwill, like the cry of a lost soul.

Wednesday evening when father came in from the mill he said, "Winston McAll's left town; gone West."

"Has he?" I answered indifferently. "I hope he'll have a pleasant trip."

And after that the days dragged into weeks, and the weeks into months, and somehow I lived on, with never a word from Winston. I told myself I would forget him. I hid his picture out of sight, but his face looked at me from a thousand places where we had been together. I told myself fiercely that he never loved me; but deep down in my heart I knew he did. The silence shut over my soul like a thick, black curtain and stifled me. I knew his mother heard from him, but I was too proud to ask any questions.

One Sunday she stopped me after preaching and said, "Dorothy, when are you going to send for Winston?"

"Not yet," I answered.

"Dorothy, wouldn't you send for him if you knew his mother's heart was breakin' to see him?"

"Don't!" I whispered, the hot tears in my eyes. "Your heart isn't the only one that's breaking to see him."

Just a year from that All Day Singing, Bruce Gordon asked to carry me to another at that same place, and I said no. Father grumbled.

"What's the matter with Bruce, Dorothy? You know he's been plum crazy over you for three years. And he's got land and money and learning."

"He hasn't got the one thing he'd have to have before he could marry me."

"What's that?" asked father.

"My heart," I said shortly.

And then, that Sunday after I'd watched everyone driving away over the bridge, I crossed the river and went up on to the bluff.

There wasn't an inch of that bluff Winston and I hadn't scrambled over together. It seemed like every bush and tree and rock spoke to me about him, and I loved what they said, for it brought him nearer. At the top of the bluff I sat down. The green black pines stretched miles away on the hills, and the hills reached out and on into the sky,

That made me so hurt and so angry that before I thought I cried out: and somewhere, off there in the West, was Winston.

What hurt me most was the feeling that my love never had done much for him. It was so powerless to do anything for him now, and yet it was the only thing I could give. My heart was so miserable and rebellious that I lay back in the grass and looked up at the sky and cried out, "O God, if You loved him as much as I do, you'd make him do right!"

But while I lay there with everything else shut out except the great blue above me, I began to feel what a little thing my love was in comparison with God's love. Why, my love was just a bit of a white cloud sailing over the infinite sky. If I, with my little weak human heart, loved Winston and would save him if I could, how much more the great heart of God loved him, and yearned to help him.

Then I began to see that even love couldn't do for Winston what he must do for himself. It was his own fight. And God's love was holding on to him as my love was. And that was all love could do sometimes—just hold on.

Suddenly, in the silence of my own thoughts, I heard Winston's voice calling, "Dorothy! O Dorothy!" It was so loud and clear that I sat upright and listened. It seemed like Winston was in some great danger, and almost before I was conscious of what I was doing I cried aloud:

"O Winston, God and I are holding on! God and I are holding on!"

After that day I never did feel quite the same, for I just knew Winston was coming out all right. That winter I got the school in our district and then life was a heap easier, for I had the little children to love and work for. It seemed like all the love I couldn't give Winston I was giving them, and I began to see how, after all, it's the giving love to some one or something that makes life sweet.

It was the next June that his mother came over to see me. The moment I looked at her I saw she had been crying, and my heart beat so thick and fast I could scarcely breathe.

"O Dorothy," she began and, then she burst out crying again.

"He, he, isn't"—I whispered.

"No. O no! but here's his letter; here's my boy's letter," and she thrust it into my hand.

The paper shook so that for a minute the lines all ran together, and then I began to see.

I never can tell anyone all that letter said. It wouldn't be fair to Winston. But he told her all about what a terrible fight he'd had, and how many times that first year he'd gone down, but how every time he'd pick himself up and struggle on.

"And, O Mother," he wrote, "I've fought my fight and I know I've gained the victory, but I've paid the price, too." And then, on the last page, he wrote: "If Dorothy had married me when I wanted her to, I sure would have wrecked her life and my own, too. I reckon she never will forgive me for disgracing her at that All Day Singing, but Mother, I want you to tell her that one Sunday last August, a year from that very time, was the turning point in my life. God knows what I'd been through the night before, and the next morning, sick and disgusted, I was ready to shoot myself. I got to thinking about you and Dorothy and how you'd both loved me, and I seemed to see Dorothy as she stood that last Sunday singing, so sweet and pure in her white dress and the white ribbon in her hair, and such a great fear came over me that she'd let go her hold and slip away from me for ever that I cried out, "Dorothy, O Dorothy!"

When I got to that I couldn't read another word. And I put my head down in his mother's lap and just cried and cried. And after a long time she said, "Dorothy, when are you going to send for Winston to come home?"

"If you tell him I'm waiting, I reckon I won't have to send for him, I answered.

But it was August before he came—just two years after that evening he walked away. School was dismissed, and I was sitting at the table with head down thinking of Winston. I never did know what made me look up, but there in the door was Winston. For a moment he never moved, and I didn't know but I was dreaming. Then he walked slowly up and stood at the other side of the table, and the clean white soul of the victor looked out of his eyes into mine.

"Presently he spoke, "Dorothy, what have you been doing?"

"Holding on, Winston, and—waiting—for you."

He reached over and took my hands.

"Dorothy," he asked, "will you go to All Day Singing with me next Sunday?"

"I reckon so," I said, "and anywhere else with you, Winston."

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The self-satisfied are seldom of any service.