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MISS NANCY.

OCTOBER was growing old, and Miss Nancy Camp, who sat at the window watching the gray clouds drift across the sky in heavy masses, wished in her secret heart that it was gone.

"Who'd a' thought it would have come out so cold after such a warm spell, Nancy?" said a voice from the little bedroom that had out of the kitchen.

"It's moderating. I reckon it's going to snow," responded Miss Nancy. "It's just like that November when Jim Wilmot went West," continued her sister, musingly.

"Yes," was the low response.

"Twas a real warm Thanksgiving, and then a day or two after it began to snow, and the twenty-eighth—you remember, Nancy—twas the time they had that calibration in the school-house, and you and Jim went away, how it did blow and sheet! And on Sunday it was so druffed that Cousin Anne Camp—she that was a Stovin, you know—couldn't get ter meeting. It was the first time in 'leven years that she'd missed hearing Elder Dickens. She felt real bad about it," added Miss Abby.

Miss Nancy drew her chair nearer to the window and brushed her hand across her eyes. There was no sound from the little bedroom for awhile. The big, old-fashioned clock on the high shelf ticked away the minutes, and Miss Nancy rocked by the window, with her hands folded in her lap.

"There's come one a-comin' across the old bridge," said Miss Nancy, eagerly. "See who it is, Nancy. Likely not it's that schoolteacher that boards down ter Foster's, though it don't sound like their team. She must be a powerful sight of trouble to 'em."

Miss Nancy pressed her face against the pane, thinking, although there was a mist before her eyes that blinded her a little. The wagon came nearer and nearer, until she could see that it had but one occupant—a man of about forty, apparently, with a beard that perhaps added a little to his age.

"Who is it, Nancy?" questioned Miss Abby, truthfully. "It ain't her, is it? My! sounds as if it was comin' in—me."

"I don't know," answered Miss Nancy. Like enough he wants some directions."

"He? Land! it's a man, then! Be sure to tell him us—"

But there came a heavy knock on the door and Miss Abby subsided. Slowly Miss Nancy crossed the room and turned the knob. There was nothing said for a moment. The man looked steadily at the figure before him; at the simple made woolen dress with its pure white collar and cuffs; the slender, blue-veined hands; the face with its firm mouth and faded blue eyes; the hair parted smoothly and with the same little wave in front that he remembered so well, and the high, shell comb that was new to him. He saw the wrinkles, too, but he saw more—the years of toil and trouble that must have wrought them. All this he noted and then held on his hand.

"Nancy! Have you forgotten Jim?" She gave a startled glance into his eyes and a little crimson flush crept into her cheeks. It reminded him that time he had kissed her in the garden at the back of the house.

"Who is it, Nancy?" whispered Miss Abby from the bedroom. "Do tell him ter come in and shut the door, and—I want some more fennel."

"Yes, Abby," answered Miss Nancy, opening her lips with an effort.

Jim Wilmot came in and closed the door softly behind him.

"Is Abby very sick?" he asked.

"She hasn't walked for six years," answered Miss Nancy, mechanically taking some fennel out of a dish on the table and going into the bedroom again.

"Who is it?" whispered Miss Abby again.

"Jim Wilmot," responded her sister. "Jim! Lands o' Goshen! Well, well, Who'd a' thought he'd a' turned up after all these years? Do tell him to come in here 'fore he goes."

Jim Wilmot came in and closed the door softly behind him.

"Is Abby very sick?" he asked.

"She hasn't walked for six years," answered Miss Nancy, mechanically taking some fennel out of a dish on the table and going into the bedroom again.

"Thank you," he said, gladly.

She sent him a little sly glance as he went out of the door.

In a few minutes he was back again, but the talk was a little forced. He told her how rough the life was out West when he first went; how many discouragements, a little prosperity came to him, and then he came on a visit to his folks, who told him that they lived together in the little house, and that Abby was "sickly," though they didn't know she was a regular invalid.

seemed a little wandering, and confused things strangely.

The next day, late in the afternoon, it stopped snowing, but no one went by, and the darkness came on again. Another long night. Miss Nancy left a lamp burning in the kitchen, and then went to bed.

Very early in the morning she was suddenly awoken by a shout and the sound of some one knocking on the side of the house. She hastily dressed, and then entered the sitting room.

"It's me—Atwood—down to the foot of the hill, yer know. Wife was sick and I had ter go for the doctor. Be you snowed in?"

"Yes. Will you git some one to dig us out some time to-day?"

"All right. I'll git Sam, if he'll come. Be back in an hour or two."

Miss Nancy sat down and waited. The wool was almost gone, and she was glad Mr. Atwood had discovered their predicament.

"The clock had just struck six which she heard a shovel strike the house.

"We're here, Nancy—be out in a shake," said Mr. Atwood.

"All right," she answered, and went into the bedroom to tell Abby.

But her sister was sleeping quietly, so she tiptoed back again.

After an hour's hard shoveling the door opened, and in the gray light of the morning she saw Jim Wilmot standing before her. Mr. Atwood, after assuring himself that everything was safe, went around to the drifts by the window, and commenced work again; but Jim did not go.

"Nancy," he said, "I was a fool the other day. I'm going ter sell my farm and come back here. I can't live without you. Nancy, will you marry me?"

"And Abby?" she questioned.

"Abby shall live with us. You shan't be separated."

"But it's so 'bindram' here, Jim, and you'll be homesick after the West again," protested Miss Nancy.

"'Praps so, a little," he admitted.

"But I must have you, Nancy. Will you forget what I said the other day, an' marry me?"

"'Pray you will, Jim," she said, in a whisper, and he kissed her fondly.

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