

John Craig stood looking across his fields. It was two years now since he and Miriam Wells had had their last fight. Only one of many since they had become engaged it had been the bitterest of all and had left them shaken and resentful of each other. He had left the city and returned to the land he loved while she had gone on working in the office where they had first met. Recently he had seen the announcement of her engagement in the city papers. He didn't know the man but the resentful feeling returned again. That she could be so callous and suspicious, that she could so underestimate loyalty and integrity in one of her own race. John shrugged his broad shoulders and turned toward the house. He had lived alone since returning from the city and had tried himself to the exclusion of all else in rebuilding the run down farm. It had somehow helped soften the pain and had helped him to see things in a clearer light. He guessed he had been as much to blame. From his

27
subconscious memory he received once more
the bitter words poured out by himself and
Miriam on that memorable night. Prominent
in government circles then he had an office
in one of the finest buildings in the city.
His work necessitated a private secretary and
all unwittingly Elyse Dupon was the storm centre
around which Miriam Wells built her
resentments.

They were walking in one of the cities
parks and in an unguarded moment he
had said to Miriam. "Elyse told me today
that she thinks it might be possible to interest
Cryler Brothers in that road contract."

"Why must you always call that - the girl
by her christian name. None of the other men
call their secretaries by their christian names."
Miriam's voice was reluctant and in her eyes
was a glint of steel as she looked at her companion.
"Puzzled by her tone he had answered
I suppose it is because we've worked so much
together and anyway I'd rather call anyone
by their christian name than dwell on formality
all your life. But Miriam you aren't going to
be that way about all my friends are you?"

"Oh! She's a friend now is she. I thought she

27
"was just your secretary!"

"He is, but she is my friend as well. One cannot work for five years with a person who is as loyal and dependable as Elynse without treating them as a friend as well as an employee. He has kept all my work of a confidential nature with the utmost integrity and I don't see what you are getting so hot and bothered about."

"Oh, you don't, well take a good look at that precious secretary of yours and you'll understand soon enough. Besides I hate having my friends make sly remarks about secretaries knowing more than a man's fiancée."

"Miriam you are just being absolutely foolish. I've never given Elynse a thought as any other than a good friend and most efficient civil servant. Besides she probably has some special guy of her own."

"Yes she has." It's you and you are dope enough not to see it. Either you get rid of her as your secretary or you get rid of me!"

At the vicious anger in her voice John had stopped and stood looking at her. It was as if he saw a stranger for the first time. He heard in her voice the edge and

4 meanness that had always appalled him when a child. His mother had talked to his father in just that way and his father had fought back; more bitterly each time until he had walked out and away from it all. John's one idea from that time had been that he would never have that unpleasant bickering in his own home, if ever he had one. ~~Quinn's words~~ had been as a plunge into cold water. As they walked the last few steps to the park gates he kept silent, but as they turned to go down their street he turned to the girl at his side.

"Don't you think you've said enough for one night? I don't think you realize just what you are doing. If I did think any more of Elvise than just a friend, I'm sure she doesn't care two hoots about me. For one thing she would never have said the things about you if which you've accused her. For another thing you've evidently given me just one choice. It's made it, now. I am not going to get rid of Elvise Dupuis as my secretary."

John was used to seeing people angry at times but never for a long time had he

seen such temper as now flared in the eyes of the girl at his side. Even now two years after he could feel the scorn in her voice and the jealous hatred that burned the soul of the woman he had hoped to marry. When her fury had passed all bounds he had seized her arm and pulled her near to him. They had stood trembling a moment so and then she had struck him across the mouth with all the force of her free hand. He had let her go then, smothering a burning desire to use his man's strength to humble and hurt her. He had turned and ~~left~~ ^{was} too angry in his own heart to care whether she had gone home or not. From that evening the only news John had of Miriam had come through mutual acquaintances in the city from the field.

As he ^{turned} ~~walked~~ home, John was aware of a change in himself. Perhaps it was the two years of active work on the farm. He felt more sure of himself and more conscious that his work was of more benefit to mankind than the drab routine of the office. He felt rather surprised too that Miriam's engagement left

6/
him unmoved. He concluded that Miriam could not have been as necessary to him as she once seemed. Wondering idly why she should have been so jealous of the girl who ^{had been} his a secretary he caught himself thinking about Elyse Dupois. She was still in the same office he knew, each Christmas there had been a card from her and he reflected that she would be a fine friend for some lucky man.

(As he reached the house he heard the phone ^{was} ringing as he reached the house. The ring sounded shrill through the screened window and John recognized it as his call. When he answered he recognized the voice of the minister of his church.

"Hello, John, I called to find out if you were coming into town tonight, are you?"

"I wasn't thinking of it Pastor but I can, what's on your mind?"

"I'd rather not say over the phone John, that party line of yours has fourteen phones hasn't it?"

"Yes, but you won't have heard what happened to Mr. Eargle the other day. Dick Phelps was talking to me on this line and he said he was out of butter and did I have some. I said no but perhaps Mr. Eargle had some, Dick said

he didn't think she'd have any and just then
 this lady's voice came on the line.

'Indeed I have'. Before she could say another
 word Dick snapped right back,

"Well, Mr. Tangle suppose you put some on
 your end of the line and slide off it." "The
 way she slammed up that phone Parson -
 say what was that - she must have been on
 that line again! I guess you're right. I'll drop
 round to see you if I'm in town tonight. If not
 I'll be in tomorrow night for sure. -