

flower garden when he was a boy, but busy as she was, the lily bed was one spot outside the house she never neglected. It was always trim.

He wished he had clippers and a rake so he could clean out the weeds and briars. He felt guilty about leaving them again.

As he got into his car, he thought of the Burgess homestead at the edge of the village. The Burgesses had come to town with his own people, and he seemed to remember his mother saying they had brought tiger lilies from the same ancient garden in the Massachusetts town whence both families had come. He would see if there still were any at the Burgess place that was still fresh in his memories.

A MILE DOWN the hill road, he stopped his car beside a garden gate.

This was the Burgess place. As a little boy he had been there many times, and remembered the caraway-seed cookies that were always on hand. He hadn't tasted a caraway cooky for years!

Beyond the gate a young woman was pushing a small cart filled with garden tools. "Pardon me, do you mind my looking at your garden? My name is Daniel Converse."

"Not at all," she said. "Converse is an old name around here. Do you belong, perhaps?"

"Yes, I grew up at the old Converse place on the hill. Just came from there. My ancestors and the Burgesses were neighbors for almost two centuries. They came here together the same year—1787. So I'm an old-timer. I used to stop here when I was a boy on the way from Sunday School."

"Oh," she said. "Perhaps I should introduce myself. I'm Sally Barrett. Father bought this place from the Burgess heirs 18 years ago. He was the cashier at the Otter River Bank."

"That was after I left Vermont. This is the first time I've been back since."

"You must have been far away not to have returned before this."

"I was," he said, and told her briefly where he had been. "But I haven't explained why I stopped. I wanted to see if the tiger lilies Mrs. Burgess had when I was a boy were still thriving."

"Come in and see."

He stepped through the turnstile gate, and there the flowers were, their striped reddish-gold like an evening sunset. Just as his mother had kept her own bed of them; neat and clean and loved. He looked a long time.

"My father and mother liked old-fashioned flowers, too," she said. "So that is mostly what we have, as you see. Lupin and hollyhocks and Canterbury bells and lilacs. The lilacs were so bountiful this year, so fragrant. You should have been here when they were at their peak."

"I wish I had," he replied. "But any time is a good time to be in an old garden like this."

"I love it, too."

"Do you go to the city when the Summer is over? Is this your Summer home?" he asked.

"It is all the home I have. I taught school for a number of years. And, then, when Mother died, I came back here to keep house for Father. Now that he is gone, it's too much for a woman alone to keep up. So there's nothing to do but put the place on the market and go back to teaching."

"I'm sorry," he said. "If the new owner neglected your tiger lilies, I doubt if I'd ever want to come back here again. Your lily bed is about all that's left as I remember it. I wouldn't like to come back to a place that had cut all ties with the past."

"You can imagine how I feel," she said. "But my folks came here to Vermont, where everything was different from what they had known before. What they did, I can do."

He looked at this trim young woman with new interest. "A chip off the old block," he said to himself. He admired grit. And she was easy on the eyes.

"I wish I could help you. Maybe I will hear of someone in my company who is looking for a Summer home in New England. I'll tell him to see yours without fail."

"Thank you. You are very kind."

"I suppose I should know how much you are asking?"

"Father said I should get not less than 15. We have central heat, you know, and it's comfortable either as a Summer home or for year-round living. Maybe you'd like to look inside?"

"Indeed I would." They went inside, the kitchen first. It was as he had expected. Spic and span, everything burnished and clean, just as he remembered his mother's milk pans and sweet-smelling churn.

Then through the other rooms. Some fine old pieces. A clock with century-old wooden works ticking sturdily in a corner, a flax wheel—each piece spelled home to him.

"Maybe, before you go, I could offer you some lemonade?"

"I should like nothing better. Offer accepted!"

When the tinkling glasses were brought, there was something else—caraway-seed cookies!

"What! Where on earth did these come from? My favorite food. I haven't had one since I was a boy."

"I made them," she said calmly. "I found the recipe in Mrs. Burgess' handwriting on a kitchen shelf."

Soon they said good-bye. "I hate to go, but my leave runs out tomorrow night, so I'll stop at the inn and be pushing along in the morning. It's been wonderful knowing you and your garden. Nothing would please me

more than to find you a good buyer."

"Nothing would please me more than to sell it to someone who sees in it what you see," she replied.

AS HE DROVE AWAY from the village inn next morning on his way back to the city, he kept asking himself: why should I try to find a strange buyer for Sally? (He had not called her that, but that was the way he thought of her.) Someone else might not care for the tiger lilies. Too old fashioned. Might dig them up. Now that I'm settled in one place, why shouldn't I have a Summer home? I can afford it. And in 15 years or so, I could retire there.

He turned his car around. The dew was still on the grass when he pulled up at the turnstile gate again. Sally was outdoors, looking at the tiger lilies. She turned around and her heart missed a beat.

"You know, I should take some snapshots to show to a possible buyer. I could send some which you or your real estate agent could use, too. Do you mind? I'm fair with a camera."

So they took pictures of everything, herself included. And she dressed in her gardening clothes!

Then the morning sun reached over the roof to the tiger lilies. They sat for a little while on the big white wooden chairs on the back terrace, close together.

"You said fifteen thousand for the place. I should know what, if anything, goes with the house. They're sure to ask. There's a lot of wood in the shed, I noticed."

"That would be included."

"And the garden tools?"

"I'd have no use for them. They would go, too."

"Any furniture?"

"There are a few pieces too large for me to keep in a small apartment. I'll be glad to talk with the buyer about them."

"So that's all?"

"What else is there?"

He got up, walked slowly around the garden, stopping here and there. There were, of course, other things than those mentioned—peace, beauty, the perfume of blossoms, and the laughter of a little brook. There was a tiny wren house, too, in the slim young butternut tree. That had not been mentioned.

He returned and sat down beside her. "The wren house, too?"

She nodded.

"Well, it's a good buy any way you look at it. I think I have a prospect already. But before telling you who he is, I'd like to know one thing more. I'm sure it would clinch the bargain with the buyer I have in mind."

She looked at him questioningly.

He put his hand over hers. "Tell me, would you go with the house?"

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