

Let The Wind Blow

by

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Jean Hansen laid down the magazine she was reading, and, for a moment, real fear surrounded her. If she continued to live in two worlds, one real and one in memory, would she eventually become like the people in the article she had just read? Dramatically written by a doctor it described the symptoms of people lost in their unreal worlds. Jean was frightened because she lived alone, and for four years had held on to a memory so beautiful and absorbing it had at times become almost reality for her. Although she lived many miles from the sea, there were times when the wind with its haunting whisperings brought her summer at the seaside vividly to mind. It was late winter now, and the wind, prophetic of spring had been rising since night fall. Jean gripped the arms of her chair and listened. The swish of eddying dry leaves driven by the night wind, the scrape of bare boughs against the shutters were easily transformed into sighing, mysterious sounds straight from a distant sea. In spite of her fears created by what she had just read, Jean felt she was losing ground in her real world. She dreamed effortlessly backwards into memory.

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She brought a blanket and laid it across her mother's chair.

"You may need this when the sun leaves the porch," she said. "I'm going for a walk on the beach. I won't be gone long."

"I'm very comfortable, Jean," her mother replied. "I don't want to move a muscle—just lie here wrapped in sunshine and sea air."

Mrs. Hansen had not been well since her husband's death the year Jean graduated from High School. Jean's college days had been difficult with an ailing mother, a house to keep, and campus activities. She left school before graduation in order to give all her time to her mother. She applied her academic mind to the tasks of house-keeping, gardening, and the care of her mother. She was a quick learner, and as her mother's strength failed, she assumed all the responsibilities of the home. She pitted her frail strength against the tasks that had to be done. Her hands with their long pointed nails became those of a working girl with short, blunt nails and rough, reddened skin. As she did the combined work of both her father and mother inside and outside the house. Her pretty clothes remained in her closet while blue jeans, slacks, and shorts took their place. The fragile look of the college girl gave way to the well-tanned sturdiness of a maid-of-all-work, gardener, and handy-man. The dark brown of her skin hid the shadows of anxiety beneath her eyes and intensified their hazel color until they became deep wells of understanding. When her mother slept and could not see her tears, Jean shed many of them—a combination of grief over her mother, her separation from her former gay life, her fear of loneliness to come, and her fast-slipping youth. After tears had relieved her tenseness, she straightened her stooping shoulders remembering her father's stern admonition, "Jeanie,



shoulders back, stomach in", and courageously faced her demanding world again.

As the summer became unbearably warm, the doctor suggested the seashore as a respite from the heat for both Jean and her mother.

"There's healing in sea breezes, sun, and water," he said. "Especially for one who must watch and wait. Your mother will benefit by the change. Life can be pretty dull for an invalid even with a nurse like you." He took Jean's brown rough hands in his. When she started to pull them away, he said, "I like working hands. They're needed in this world where there is much work to be done."

They took a cottage by the sea for the month of August—a month to remember. She wore a vibrant blue swim suit that morning when she stepped off the porch to take her first walk on the beach. She knew the color complemented her deep brown skin. Feeling her mother's eyes appraising her scanty attire, she tugged at the bottom of the legs.

"When I get a good sun tan farther up on my legs, this suit won't seem so short," she said. She tied a scarf over her long brown hair and straightened her shoulders against the wind as she went out into the bright sunshine. As the tide ebbed, Jean stopped often to examine the sea life left stranded on the sand. A wave broke at her feet and left behind a dead fish. She turned it over with the toe of her sandal to look at its strange form.

"Interested in fish?" a voice said behind her. She turned and looked into a man's blue eyes, the color of which she was never to forget. Their blueness was accentuated by his sun-bleached hair and dark brown skin. Jean's eyes followed the brown of his body down to the white line which showed at his waist line.

"I never saw a fish like this before," Jean answered, "It looks more like a bird than a fish."

"It's a sea robin," the man said picking it up and holding it by its wing-like fins. "Say, how about you holding it while I get a picture of it? I've caught many of them, but I always throw them back as they are not good to eat."

Jean took the fish and held it out away from her. "Mind if I take off your scarf so the wind will blow your hair? I don't often get a model with long hair." Without waiting for an answer he untied the knot under her chin. The wind swept her hair into a cloud behind her.

"Just as I thought," he said "Your hair is the color of seaweed. I'll call my picture, 'Wind, Fish, and Girl'."

Jean thrilled by his masterful way secretly admired the tall stranger as he focused his camera upon her. The shutter clicked, and he took the fish from her hands and threw it back into the waves.

"You haven't been here long, have you?" he asked. He put the camera back in its case and hung it around his neck.

"How do you know or do you keep track of everyone who comes to this beach?"

"I can tell by the white streaks on your shoulders. You'll have to do away with straps if you want a good sun-tan."

"You men don't have to worry about straps," she bantered. She was startled by her audacity and started to leave.

"That was the last exposure on my film. I'll bring you a print of your picture if you will tell me where you are staying." He stood in front of her as if to detain her a moment longer.

That could be several days," Jean replied still feeling adventure-some. This isn't a town of quick services you know. I beachcomb at every



in-coming tide. I'm looking for something which I have never found."

"Old bottles, fishermen's floats, shells?" he inquired.

"All those, and more, too, the treasures of the sea. You never know what the sea might wash up."

"Or when a girl with hair like yours might decide to become a mermaid and live in the sea. Well, I'll watch for you tomorrow and try to dissuade you if the desire overtakes you. By the way, my name is David Williams," he said as he stepped aside to let her pass.

"And mine is Jean Hansen," she called back cupping her hands to carry her voice against the wind.

"Something nice must have happened to you today, Jeanie," her mother said intuitively as Jean started to read to her at bedtime. "There is a glow about <sup>you</sup> I haven't seen for some time."

Sun, wind, and sea air are a combination hard to beat," Jean answered. "And blue eyes in a brown face," she added to herself.

David met her almost at her own doorstep the next morning. The waves were rough and cresting high on the beach. They held hands against their onslaught as they walked along the hard-packed sand. When the tide ebbed, they rested on the pale yellow sand and examined their treasures.

David held a strand of seaweed against her hair. "There I told you, they are the same color. And your eyes are green today like the depths out there." He found a long piece of sea grass and tied shells along it making a necklace which he fastened around Jean's neck.

"Now I must leave you," Jean said solemnly. "With hair the color of seaweed and eyes the color of the green sea away out there and a necklace of shells, I can't stay away too long from my sisters in the sea."

"The sea is full of sirens. There is only one on shore. Promise you won't leave before I do." Jean felt a shadow over her happiness, a chill through the warmth of the sun, a murmur in the wind that hadn't been there before David's low-voiced words.

"You're not going soon?" she asked. She wrapped a beach towel around her and turned her back to the wind.

"I was, but I've changed my mind," David was looking out to sea. "I'm like that little boat out there without a sail. It seems to have no destination, and neither do I. Not right now, any way."

"Let's not think about tomorrow or the next day," Jean said so softly that David leaned near to hear.

"Tomorrow never comes, you know," he answered. When he helped her to her feet, he held her hands for a moment over his heart. "I promise never to forget this day," he said.

"Yesterday, today, tomorrow, all became the same. Jean was glad there was no calendar in the cottage to remind her of the passing of time. There was the same lovely blue sky arching over them and meeting the sea in the far horizon. The same sea breeze blowing—sometimes gentle and fragrant with all the scents of the sea,—sometimes strong and forceful and muttering of big blows to come. The same warm, comforting sand whether that of the sheltering sand dunes on the windiest days or that of the beach on the days when the little waves lapped around their feet. The same invigorating water as they splashed along the shore or swam in the still waters of the cove. And hours and hours of conversation as they talked of many things—drama, art, music, and books.

They picnicked at noon either on the beach or out at sea in David's boat while their fishing lines idled in the water offering unattended bait to the wary fish. In the evenings David talked with her mother while



Jean cooked their meal. Sometimes they built a fire on the beach in front of the cottage and cooked their food bringing Mrs. Hansen samples of their cooking. Then they walked along the beach in moonlight so vibrant they could almost read each other's thoughts. And always when he left her, David said, "Promise me you will never forget tonight." And always Jean's reply, "I promise, David."

In the tiny cabin of his boat one day David searched for and found a volume of modern verse. He gave it to Jean to read. As she read it that night in bed, a piece of note-paper fell out of the book. "Room 121" was all that was written on it. She replaced it in the book, but said nothing about it when she returned the book to David.

Sometimes David talked about his boyhood, his exciting college days, and his start in the business world. That there had been some sobering effect upon his life Jean was well aware. But whether it was family, friends, or business, Jean never tried to find out. She felt that David had turned to music, art, and literature for strength of character. She knew that some men broke when some powerful influence came into their lives but others went on to higher levels. "No tomorrows?" She asked herself, "But does it matter? Today is good enough for me."

"Let's build a sand castle," she said one day when she and David were resting on the beach. "It must have a high tower in which a princess is locked up." As she embedded rocks and shells to strengthen the crumbling tower, David made a ladder of twigs and sea grass. He leaned it against the tower. "That's for her rescuer," he said.

"She could let down her long black hair for her lover to climb up," Jean said.

"Perhaps, her hair wouldn't be long enough, and maybe it wouldn't be black but just the color of seaweed," David mused.



"Mr. David Williams, Special Delivery letter for Mr. David Williams," a stentorian voice boomed out along the beach. The boy from the Post Office was waving an envelope above his head. Quickly David arose and went to meet the boy. Jean watched as he signed for the letter, then opened it and read it with his back toward her. When he returned, she could see the crumpled letter in his beach coat pocket.

"It was something I was expecting," he said. But he was quiet and withdrawn for the rest of the day. When the sun began to drop behind the dark pines on shore, Jean felt a sudden chill which she tried to think was due to the time of day. She knew David was watching her as he sat silent and unsmiling, trickling sand between his fingers. When he pulled up the collar of his beach coat around his neck as if he, too, felt the chill, she knew her lack of warmth came from some inner feeling of apprehension.

They left the beach earlier than usual. David went to his boat to change. Jean was shivering when she entered the cottage. She helped her mother in from the porch and saw that she was comfortable in her big chair. Then she stayed a long time in the warm shower until she felt the warmth coming back to her body.

When David came dressed in slacks and a sweater, he brought in a load of drift-wood. "I'll build a fire in the fire-place," he said. "The wind has shifted and is bringing in a lot of cold air."

"The barometer has been falling all day," Mrs. Hansen said. "We will have a change in our beautiful weather." David brought a shawl and put it around her shoulders.

They cooked their supper over the fire. The wind swooped down the chimney scattering ashes over their dangling weiners. David let his

weiner burn black and did not seem to notice. Jean took it off for him and carried it away to the kitchen. "I'll cook one for you," she said. When she gave it to him, done to a turn and bursting with goodness, he said, "Here is a mermaid who can cook." But Jean felt that his remark was only a cover-up for some emotion he was feeling.

After her mother was settled in bed for the night, David and Jean walked along the beach in the strengthening wind. The moon was waning, a sad caricature of itself, woeful and prophetic. "We've seen the moon in all its phases," David said. "How sad to see it wane."

"Would it be better to have it disappear behind a curtain of clouds when it is its brightest instead of growing old night after night, more like the happy ending of a stage play?" Jean asked.

"But that isn't life, Jeanie," David said. "Happiness can't remain at high peak all the time. Everything tapers off to get ready for the next resurgence when the time is right again."

When they returned to the cottage, David took her in his arms kissing her until her lips felt bruised. "Promise me that you will never forget tonight," he said. When he heard her soft, "I promise, David," he gave her a gentle push through the door and was gone.

Jean cried herself to sleep that night. She knew that David loved her, but there was a crushing loneliness that had no explanation. When she found his note under her door the next morning, she knew the loneliness had been a premonition.

"I have to get my boat out of here before the small craft warnings go up," the note said. "I have no future as I see it now or I would ask you to wait for me. Hereafter, I will live in two worlds, one that is real



and duty bound, the other in memory, my two weeks with you. All our yesterdays I promise never to forget."

Soon after that Mrs. Hansen asked to go home. She seemed to realize that the beach was too lonely for both of them without David. They left as soon as the storm blew itself out. Jean eased the aching of her heart with the work of getting them settled at home again. Autumn came early. Flocks of birds rode the wind currents down from the north. The juniper tree was covered with cedar wax-wings one day. They were quiet birds. Only the whirl of wings announced their coming and going. They stayed until every juniper berry was eaten. Mrs. Hansen watched them from her window. "It's the time of year for change," she said. "The changing seasons have so much meaning." She was gone, too, before the first snow came.

Jean was sad but not unhappy as she took up her life alone in the house that was full of memories. The tears that fell from her eyes were comforting ones as she went from room to room and gave vent to the emotions which had been storing up so long. And although David had never been in her home, she brought him in with her thoughts and found poignant comfort in so doing. Gradually she began lapsing into the world that was only memory and finding it more to her liking than the real world around her.

The postman's ring never failed to bring a resurgence of hope. There were cards occasionally from David each one with a different postmark carrying no message of consequence but ending always with, "Remember your promise—don't forget." Aching with resentment at the paucity of the message on one card, Jean tossed it into the fireplace. As the flames

started to blacken the edges, she pulled it out and smothered the flame against the hearth. She wrapped the burned card in tissue paper and placed it in the box with the others she had received.

The postman's ring one morning was persistent. "A package for you. Sign here," the man said when Jean went to the door. Jean recognized David's hand-writing. Her hand was trembling as she signed for the package. She tore off the wrappings and opened a box decorated with a sea motif. Encased in cotton was a pair of delicate ear-rings, miniature shells set in a filigree of silver. "Wear these and remember," the card said. Jean sobbed as she studied the exquisite shells. They had been sent from a gift shop in a hotel in New York.

"I'll call that hotel. Maybe David is there and I can thank him," Jean said half aloud. She put in the call and waited scarcely breathing until the operator reported, "Mr. David Williams checked out of the hotel this morning." Bitterly she berated herself for not finding out more about David when they were together. There were times now when she felt bold enough to confront him and demand an explanation for his strange behavior. But there was no address, no way to send a message.

Sometimes Jean was so low-spirited she told herself, "I'll marry the first man who asks me. Then I'll really forget." But this did not last long for she knew she could never forget. More and more she lapsed into the world the world that was only a memory. She found it much more to her liking than the real world around her.

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The magazine fell from her hand and aroused Jean from her reverie.



The under-lying fear caused by the article she had read returned to plague <sup>her</sup> I must do something about this before it is too late, she thought. "I'll begin to look for a job of some kind tomorrow," she told herself before she went to sleep.

There was a definite change in the weather the next morning. Jean remembered what her mother had said about the changing seasons. She decided to go down town and apply for the position of receptionist in Doctor Anderson's office. He had been her doctor since childhood and had been friend as well as physician all during her mother's long illness and death. He had told her some time ago his girl would be leaving in the spring to be married.

A cardinal was singing in the juniper tree as Jean started down town. The snow had melted making little rivulets down every slope. Crocuses were opening in every yard, blue, purple, white, yellow drifts of them bordered by snow in some places. The faces of people along the street showed an easing of winter tension. Coats swung open and scarfs were tucked in to pockets. A child carrying her boots was spring itself as she skipped along the side-walk. "Spring is here," she sang. But the wind that tunneled through the driveways between the houses still had the haunting sound of the sea for Jean. She found her feet lagging as she neared the doctor's office. She forced herself to open his door and to ask to speak with him.

"The job is yours, Jean, if you want it," he said. "I think it would be fine for you to have a new interest."

Meeting the patients as they came and went was a good outlet for Jean. Her days were busy and full of interest. She found many old friends

and acquaintances among the doctor's patients. Ed Archer stopped in one day to have a prescription filled for his mother. Jean was warmed by his greeting, "Why, Jean Hansen, I haven't seen you since High School days. Where have you been keeping yourself since those care-free days?"

Jean told him a little about herself, and listened while he ran down the years of his life.

"It's been a happy-go-lucky sort of existence. Just what the class predicted for me," he said ruefully. "I'm still hunting for the girl who will straighten me out. Say, how come you've never married? You had everything, looks, charm, position, and for my part you still have them."

The patients in the waiting-room had one by one laid down their reading material and were becoming interested in the little real life drama going on at the desk. Jean straightened the papers on her desk before she replied, "There are reasons for everything you know. I'll get your prescription for you." She disappeared behind the doctor's door. When she returned with the bottle of medicine, Ed held on to her hand as she handed it to him.

"Say Jean, can you square dance?" he asked. "I'd like to take you to one tomorrow night."

"I don't know how, but perhaps I could learn," Jean answered.

"You just bet you could. I'll come for you at eight o'clock. I have to run now as Mom's not feeling well. See you tomorrow night." Ed bounced through the door with all the energy of his High School days. There was an almost audible sigh of release of tension as the patients went back to their reading.

Jean was exhausted but charmed by her first evening of square-



dancing. Ed was enthusiastic over her ability to learn. "You're the best pardner I've ever had and just the one I've been looking for," he said. "I can take you dancing some place every week."

"Oh no," Jean laughed. I couldn't stand up to a pace like that."

"Just soak your feet in Epsom Salts, and they'll be O.K. in the morning and feady for another round next week." Jean envied him his buoyancy as she heard him run down the walk, slam the door of his car, and screech off into the night after he had left her at her door.

When the rhythmic calls of the dance had left her head, she heard again the lap of sea waves on the shore. She knew then that her evening with Ed had only been a brief respite from her other world.

As spring turned into summer, she went with Ed to every square dance for miles around. She liked the gay crowds, the happy care-free people on the dance floor, the stimulating, rhythmic music, the bright colors of the dance costumes. Best of all, she liked the challenging attention she must give in order to perform the intricacies of the calls. This was a real world that sometimes left her so exhausted from the strenuous exercise she dropped off to sleep without listening for the wind.

When summer came and the anniversary of her days with David, she retreated more and more into memory. She went with Ed one Saturday night to a dance held in a open pavilion in the park. The moon was at its fullest. While the other couples strolled out between dances to enjoy the moonlight, she sat with Ed in the brightly lighted pavilion tapping her foot to the rhythms that were past and in anticipation of those to come. Ed talked about the moon, but not romantically.

"I'd take off on a space ship tomorrow if I qualified and there was one ready for me," he said. Jean was glad that was what the moon meant to him. She knew he liked her very much and might in time propose to her. She kept up the cool barrier she had placed around herself. She hoped she could keep their relationship just the way it was. The diversion of their fun times together kept her from spending too much time in her unreal world.

Sometimes after a night of dancing when she was too excited and restless to go right off to sleep, she asked herself why she held onto a memory. Why was it so persistent, returning at times so unexpected and refusing to be downed?

"Swing your partners, promenade all,"—

"Promise you will never forget,"—That promise had worked too well. She couldn't forget. The squeak of fiddles, the thump of guitars, the scrape of feet across a dance floor, the swish of ruffled skirts.

"You never missed a call, Jean. You're the best dancer on the floor."

"Hair the color of seaweed, eyes as green as the sea."

Sundays were the hardest days for Jean. With no patients to distract her she allowed her senses to take over the past. She could hear the boom of the big combers as they broke upon the beach, the grinding sound of sand as they receded leaving their foam behind. The whine of the wind as it lifted the tar paper on the roof of the cottage turning it into a symphony of strange music. She could feel the salt spray as she and David walked along the beach, taste its flavor. She saw the clouds in their slow-motion tumbling as they met to form storm clouds, the leaping



flames of their beach fires. She smelled the burning driftwood, the fragrance of broiling sausages and ateaks, the coffee boiling gypsy fashion over the coals. The darkness lowering around them until they were the only two people in the world.

One Sunday night when her images were especially vivid, she heard a phone ringing somewhere. But there was no phone in the cottage. There were several rings before Jean went to answer the phone ringing in her own house.

Ed's resounding voice was on the line. "Now don't say it's too hot for square dancing until you hear all I have to tell you about this dance. There will be a new caller, a famous one from the West. We'll learn some new squares. Everybody will be there. It's the extra one of the season. The chance of a life-time."

Jean heard him through, then answered, "I can't decide tonight. Perhaps the weather will change."

Ed seemed satisfied with her answer, but the tapping of his pencil on the telephone was as emphatic as his parting words, "the chance of a life-time. I'll call you tomorrow night."

There were not many patients in the doctor's office the next day. Jean took her account book into the laboratory where Dr. Anderson was examing slides. She was so quiet that the doctor took off his glasses and came over to where she was sitting.

"What's the matter, Jean? Can't you make up your mind about Ed Archer? He's been gone on you for some time." His tone was so kind Jean felt the tears start in her eyes, and she could no longer see the loops of the letters she was filling in her note-book.

"He just doesn't have 'it', whatever that is. I have a good time with him, but,"—She slid off the stool and started for the door.

Dr. Anderson reached for a tissue from the box on the wall.

"Come on, Jean, and cry on my shoulder. You need someone for a confidant."

The smell of his starched white coat was comforting to Jean. She dabbed at her eyes with the tissue. Dr. Anderson took it from her and threw it in the waste-paper basket. "Now finish what you started to say," he said.

"I'm always happiest when Ed bounds, he never walks you know, down the steps after he leaves me at my door. I never invite him in. I suppose I should do something for him once in a while."

"Perhaps, there is some one else in your life or has been, Jean," Dr. Anderson said.

"How did you know?" asked Jean.

"Oh, I've seen that far-away look in your eyes many times. I know the signs and have had too many confessions from my patients. Priests, ministers, doctors, we all get them."

Jean felt her confessing becoming easier. "There are days when the sound of the wind really gets me. Then I become so reminiscent and unhappy with just remembering. And you can't get away from the wind, at least I can't on certain days."

"There must be a reason why the wind affects you, Jean. Would you care to tell me about it? After all, I'm old enough to be your father."

Jean thought of the fear implanted in her mind by the article she had read. "Perhaps, I should tell you about it for I spend so much



time thinking about the past I'm becoming afraid I will soon be living in an unreal world altogether. And when that time comes, I can almost hear the clang of the iron doors that will close behind me." She shuddered and reached for another tissue.

"Dr. Anderson patted her on the shoulder reassuringly. "Lots of people live in two worlds at the same time. I've helped many of them, and I'm sure I can help you."

The bell in the outer office rang. Jean gave a startled little cry. "Oh, I can't go out there looking like this."

The doctor gave her a gentle push toward the rear door. "Time out for make-up repairs. I'll take care of the patient," he said.

When Dr. Anderson stopped by her desk late that evening, Jean said shyly, "I'll tell you all about David any time you can listen."

"No time like the present," he said putting down his bag and pulling up a chair.

Jean was surprised at the ease with which her story came. It was almost as if she were reading from a book. She had lived with it so long in her subconscious that it flowed along taking on new depth and meaning in its audible form.

Dr. Anderson lighted a cigarette and watched the smoke as it was wafted under the shade of the lamp, on the desk. "Mysterious thing, smoke," he said when Jean finished. "Well, I can put an end to that mystery if not to yours." He snuffed out the cigarette twisting it thoughtfully between his fingers. "And you haven't heard from David all this time?"

he asked.

"Only a card now and then, each with a different post mark, and once a small package."

"Any message of any kind that would tell you what he was doing or anything about him?"

"No, only a reference to some of the things we did together and always ending with, 'Remember your promise'."

"I'm no magician to work a charm which would unite you and David nor a prophet to foretell that some day you will be together again. But, as we say in my profession, 'Where there's life, there's hope.' Your happy ending may just be around the corner. In the meantime, have fun, go places, dance while the piper plays. Give old Ed a break. You don't have to marry him." Dr. Anderson picked up his bag, kissed her on the forehead and left.

Jean sat alone in the empty office. She thought of the dramas in real life acted out in that waiting-room. Her sensitive nature had been aware of the fears and tensions of patients as they waited to see the doctor. The nervous fumbling with cigarettes, the frequent trips to the water-cooler, the turning of magazine pages with unseeing eyes. And often the ~~traces~~ of relief at the doctor's cheery, "You're going to <sup>be</sup> all right." She went to the window and looked down on the people hurrying along the street. Each person, no doubt, had his problems and was meeting them in his own way, depending upon his strength of character, some weak and cowardly, others strong with well-springs of hidden courage.

As she left the building, Jean remembered the stores were open that night. I'll buy a new dress, she thought, something bright and gay



to wear to the dance with Ed. Something so different that it would help to put David out of her mind for the evening.

The clerk listened attentively as Jean described the kind of dress she wanted. She narrowed her eyes to take in the coloring of her customer, then nodded her head and disappeared behind a curtained doorway. She returned with a dress billowing over her arm. "This dress was made for you. Just came in today. Have you ever been to the ocean? If you have, you will know these are the ocean colors." She hung the dress on a rack and held out the folds of the full skirt..

Jean held her purse close to her to still the beating of her heart as she saw the cool blues and greens of the sea spread out before. "Oh no, I couldn't wear those colors," she almost gasped.

"Why not?" the sales-woman said. "They would make your eyes green." She held the dress up to Jean's face. But I've got the same thing in red. Wouldn't be as good for you. I'll show it to you."

She brought the dress and slipped it over Jean's head. "I'll take it," Jean said.

"You'll be the best-dressed gypsy at the dance," the woman said as she handed Jean her package.

The hemming of the dress took up her whole evening. Four yards around, four years of life. Two weeks could be a life-time, four years just an interlude. Or was it just the other way around?

"I bought a new dress yesterday," she told Dr. Anderson the next day when she went in to hand him a patient's card. "Bright red

like nothing I have ever had before."

"Did it lift your spirits, Jean?" the doctor asked.

"A little ,perhaps," Jean answered. "At least, the hemming of it kept me busy all evening. And", giving his hand a little squeeze of understanding, "there was no wind."

When she returned home that evening the sight of the red dress thrown over a chair where she had left it the night before was not as reassuring as she had thought it would be. Its color was bold and harsh, a defiant red and not at all suited to her personality. She remembered the sea blues and greens of the other dress, and desire like the rush of the sea came over her. She listened for the wind and found it at her window-sill. Soon it filled every room in the house, haunting and wistful flowing down the corridors of her mind with an overpowering effect. She thought of ships at sea blown off course by winds of great force and others safe in harbors with little waves lapping rhythmically at their hulls; small craft warnings flying on tall standards announcing rough weather ahead; the bright beam of the light-house flashing its message; the on shore winds against which she and David braced themselves as they walked along the beach leaving their foot-prints in the sand which the in-coming tide erased behind them. "Foot-prints in the sand like the lives of most people after they are gone. Promise you won't forget." If he could only know how well she had remembered.

She turned on lights in every room only to turn them off



again. Bright lights or none at all, it was all the same.

She put a scarf around her, and leaving a light on in the hall, she went out to sit on the porch steps. The wind blew the ends of her scarf until they fluttered like great white moths about her shoulders.

A car stopped in front of the house next door. A group of noisy teenagers burst out all four doors of the car and raced each other to the house. Soon there was a blare of music filling the night air with a cacophony of sounds. Their voices could be heard over the beat of their music as they called to one another. Jean envied them their care-free life enjoying the present moment without much thought of the past or future.

Another car came slowly down the street. It went by her gate, turned around, and came back again on the other side of the street. Someone hunting a number, Jean thought. The car stopped opposite her house, and a man got out and came across the street. He could see Jean in the light from her hall. As he came up the walk, she knew it was David. The music that had been loud and discordant came to a merciful stop. The wind lulled to a whisper. All the voices of the summer night stopped as if on cue. Jean heard only the thumping of her heart and the sound of David's foot-steps as he came nearer and nearer.

"David," she cried and went down the steps to meet him.

"Jean," David said and held out his arms to her.

"It's been so long," they both said together.

"Come up on the porch, David. No logs along the beach or mats on the sand. A porch swing will have to take their place," Jean said and led the way up the steps.

When they were settled in the swing, David kissed her long

and lingeringly before he started to talk.

"I know you have remembered, Jean," he said in a voice filled with emotion, "or you wouldn't have greeted me the way you did. You would have had every reason to send me on my way with a hello and good-by."

Jean moved closer to him. "David tell me why it has been four long years without any definite word from you," she said.

"I came to you just as soon as I honorably could, Jean," David began. When he could control his voice, he continued. "I was a married man four years ago when we were together and had no right to fall in love with you. But from the first time I saw you on the beach, I knew all my principles were taking leave fast. Those days with you were out of another world. I've relived them many times, every one of them."

"I have, too, David," Jean said. "I have never forgotten a one of them." With David's arms around her she was secure in the reality of what so lately had been only a memory.

"I was running away from a hard situation that day I tied up my boat on your beach. Ruth was going down hill fast mentally. There was nothing I could do to please her. God knows I tried. "David reached for his handkerchief and wiped his eyes. "I had just put her in a private institution and was taking a fishing trip to try to <sup>o-</sup>strighten out the chaos of my life. I intended staying only a day or two at each beach along the coast. Then I met you. I stayed on from day to day, just drifting, enjoying every minute we were together lacking enough will power to pull away and leave you. The Special Delivery letter I got the last day we were together and the storm warnings combined to make me pull up anchor and get away. I went back to my realistic



world, and for the last four years I have worked so hard to meet the big expenses I have had that my only happiness has been in remembering you."

Jean waited quietly for the rest of the story. In spite of the strain in David's voice she felt the softness of the night around her. It seemed as if all time had stopped until their past could catch up with them.

"When Ruth's death came, I was shattered by it. Life had dealt so harshly with her. I was remorseful because I had had those two weeks of happiness with you while she was living out her days in a sanatorium. To make it worse she completely rejected me when I returned to make the changes the doctor in his Special Delivery letter had suggested. From that time on I was a stranger to her. I paid her bills, wrote her letters that were never noticed, visited her without any communication between us, and leaned heavily on the doctor's strength who was old beyond his years in his struggle to right the wrongs of mental illness. I withstood the temptation to write and tell you of the tragedy that shrouded me. I knew you, too, had the sadness of your mother's illness. I did not want to add to it. I believe what is to be will be. If we both held true to a memory and a promise never to forget, there would come a time when we would be together again.

Jean pulled David's face down to hers. "It's been a long, hard trail, David," she said. "Now we must forget the things we don't want to remember. I promise to begin with new memories. Do you promise, David?"

"I promise, Jeanie," David answered. The music began again next

door. Some older hands had taken over the records. Mendelssohn's "Midsummer's Night's Dream" floated through the open windows.

"You know what we're hearing, David," Jean asked putting one end of her scarf around David's shoulders.

"I do, Jeanie," David said. "Let's listen for the wedding music."

The jangle of the telephone broke into their spell. "I'll have to answer. I'll be gone only a minute." Jean slipped out of David's arms.

Before she returned to the porch, she put the red dress on a hanger and hung it in a closet. She held the billowing folds down until she could shut the door of the closet securely. "There'll be one less gypsy at the dance tomorrow night," she said softly.