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«But — neither of us knew that the other . . . » began Grant . . .

«I know you didn't, poor lambs», she broke in. «Well, now I have two brothers! Let's pour ourselves a loving cup to celebrate!»

This time the two men were sitting on the sofa, close together and blissfully happy, while Barbara lolled in the big armchair.

«I must say», she murmured, «It's a novel experience for me to be the odd man out!»

M. M. W.

“The Crash”

by Paul Peters

Crash!

With a start I jumped up from my desk where I had been writing, and ran into the lane. Across the lane I saw a small sportscar lying on its side in the ditch. I jumped into the ditch and pulled the semi-conscious figure of the driver out of the seat. It was just as well that I arrived as quickly as I did at the scene of the accident, for the ditch was half-filled with water.

I struggled up the bank, and carrying the driver in my arms, I hurried back into the house and laid him down on the bench. He was very dazed and moaned slightly. Then I pulled off the leather cap and the goggles . . . and almost let out a cry, for the face I saw before me was that of Ricky Benson. In that spit second memories flooded back.

Ricky and I had grown up in the same neighbourhood, and whilst we were never close friends we had been in the same Scout troop. I was a year or so older but very shy and whilst I longed to have him as a friend, was always too timid to speak to him except when we were in a group. Then one summer just before we left school we went to camp together. For the first few days the weather had been perfect and we had all slept out under the trees, but on the last night it had rained and we erected our little bivouac tents and the Scout master had allocated the two of us to one of these tents. We had undressed in silence, crept inside and as the rain had made the night somewhat chilly, Ricky had suggested that we make up one bed with our groundsheets on top of one another and the blankets over us. We said goodnight and within a few minutes Ricky was fast asleep but I could not sleep — my mind was in a torment, happy to be alone with him and yet still unable to tell him all the things I wanted to say. After a time he turned over and his arm went over my body. I drew closer, scarcely daring to breathe, until we lay quite close together, and the warmth of his body sent a wonderful feeling of ecstasy through me. Slowly I allowed my hand to slide under his pyjama jacket and rub up and down on his smooth skin and his firm muscles.

Then I felt his hand respond, and without a word being exchanged we allowed each other's hand to explore all the surface of our bodies. The passions, thus aroused had to reach their climax and then we slept.

Next morning I wanted to say so much, but when Ricky just smiled at me and said «Well, I slept really well» — there was nothing to say

except «So did I». Camp broke up later in the day, we returned home and a few weeks later we left school and he left the district . . .

Suddenly I was aroused from my day-dreaming by a groan, and I dashed to the telephone and called both the doctor and the garage from the village nearby. When I returned Ricky had come to and lay there blinking and obviously trying to find out where he was. I looked at him closely and then he recognised me, smiled slowly and said:

«Alfred! What has happened, and where am I? What are you doing here».

«It is a long story, but that can wait. You had a car accident and I have sent for the doctor — he will be here soon. Let me get you to bed, and for the time being remain quiet.»

I carried him into the bedroom and quickly undressed him, drying his body and noting with satisfaction that he appeared to have no serious injuries. Then I laid him gently into the bed and covered him. Hardly had I finished when the doctor's car pulled up outside. The doctor spent half an hour examining him carefully and then rose with a smile:

«Nothing to worry about. A bit shaken but no bones broken, and a few days rest will see him fit and well again.»

Afer he had gone I came back into the room and was greeted by a pleasant smile:

«Well, Alfred, we meet again. I have often thought of you and wondered where you were, because I took a great liking to you when we were youngsters, but was too shy to tell you how I felt. Perhaps we can get to know each other better now . . . «that is, if I may stay here until I am well.»

«Ricky! You say *you* were shy? I thought I was the shy one, and I was always scared to ask you to be my friend. As for staying here, you are welcome to stay as long as you like. I run this little farm by myself and it is your home for as long as you wish.»

We talked a little, then I let him rest whilst I went on with my work and prepared a light meal. By evening he was sitting up and quite cheerful, and after everything was done in and around the house I undressed and climbed into the big bed beside him. As I made myself comfortable, he caught my hand:

«Ricky, do you remember a certain rainy night at our last Scout camp? Tell me, were you asleep all night, or did you wake up when . . . er . . . well, at any time?»

«Alfred! That is just what I have been wondering!

I thought you were asleep when I put my arm around your shoulder and drew you closer. Next morning I just did not know how to ask you whether you remembered anything».

«Ricky, I was awake all the time, and I have never forgotten that night . . . it was all so sudden and so wonderful.»

Once again I felt that warmth of a pulsating heart next to mine, of a body pressed close, but this time there was no doubt, no hesitation, no need to think of anything but the joy of the moment.

The full cycle had been completed and the old grandfather clock ticked peacefully away in the hall.

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