How Shall We Say Good-Bye?

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By Richard Trump

Graduation . . . When Seniors Go Their Ways

Fred and Katherine knew, as they wandered down the hawthorne-bordered path to her dormitory, that this was the last time. It was June, when the seniors stare into the face of the future and go their individual ways.

"How shall we say good-bye?" asked Fred laughingly—"a kiss?" She did not answer, and he added, "or just a laugh?" Fred looked at her. "What are you smiling about? Maybe I should have said we'd say good-bye with tears?"

"You seem to have answered your own question," she said. "How?"
"A laugh."
"Oh, I see."
They came to the creek and leaned against the rails of the foot-bridge. “I think good-byes are kind of silly anyway,” he continued; “you know, the way people make such a fuss over parting. Why not say good-bye as if you’d see each other again tomorrow? A lot more pleasant!”

“We won’t see each other tomorrow, though, Fred.”

“But that’s no reason why a good-bye shouldn’t be as pleasant as possible—without all the sob stuff.”

“I didn’t ask for tears; I agreed that we’d say good-bye with a laugh.”

They turned on the bridge and looked down at the stream. Katherine picked a sliver of bark from the larch railing and tossed it into the water; she watched it float under the bridge. Fred repeated what she had done, and then they both dropped a piece of bark at the same time. The chips hit the water only a few inches apart and disappeared under the bridge.

“Let’s see where they go,” Fred suggested, and they moved to the other railing. The chips bobbed in the eddies, drifting nearer together, then farther apart—back and forth. Then they disappeared in the darkness.

“How far is it to Montana,” asked Katherine, “out where you’re going?”

“About fifteen hundred.”

“You’re starting first thing in the morning?”

“As soon as we can get the old jitney loaded. Jim starts work at the experiment station on the twenty-first, and I begin on the surveying crew the next week. Jim’s aching to get started.”

“You’re sort of anxious yourself, I think. You’ll like being a full-fledged forester, won’t you, Fred?”

“You bet I will,” he laughed. “Almost as much as you’ll like being a full-fledged school teacher—only I’m not full-fledged yet, Kay.”

“Not after four years’ study, and your summer work? Trying to be modest again!”
“No, really. You can’t call yourself a forester till you’ve been on a look-out station about a year, and chased smoke signals, and got scorched in a fire, and been on a logging crew for a while, and all that. I’ve got a lot to learn before I’ll be supervising a national forest.”

OTHER couples crossed the bridge occasionally; Fred and Katherine moved to a less conspicuous place.

“I suppose I’ve got something to learn, too,” said Katherine, “how to make the boys behave, how to get along with the president of the school board, and such things.”

“Glad I’m not headed for a teaching job. Trees act natural, but every human being acts the way it wants to. Give me the trees!”

“I guess there are a few men who can do it.”

“What, teach?”

“Yes.”

“A few women, too, you should add.”

“Yes, yes,” she said, pushing him to the edge of the bridge; “but I thought we were going to say good-bye with a laugh.”

“That was your idea! Mine was to make good-byes as pleasant as possible.”

“Then let’s not say good-bye yet; suspense will improve it.”

“Practical!” he accused.

THEY were quiet for a while, listening to the music that came from up at the Union. The orchestra swung into an old tune, and Katherine looked up at Fred.

“Do you like that?” she asked.

“Yeh, sort of.”

“You don’t even know what it is, do you?”

“Sure. It was popular when I was still in high school. Something about souvenirs—‘I count them all apart, and as the tear-drops start,’ and—and—”

“And as the tear-drops start, I find a broken heart among my souvenirs,” volunteered Katherine.

“Thanks. Do you like it, Kay?”
“Sort of.”
There was another silence. The orchestra stopped, and couples came out for the intermission.
“You know, we should have met sooner,” Fred began. “We’ve had a swell time the last six months.”
“Perhaps it’s better we didn’t. Sometimes people get too fond of each other; then they can’t laugh their good-byes.”
“I suppose it is best we didn’t get too fond of each other.”
“Yes, I suppose it’s best.”
“I’ll miss you, though, Kay—no fooling. Out there with the trees it’ll be lonely sometimes.”
“I know, Fred. One can be lonely sometimes even when there’s no excuse for it.”
“Jim and I were talking about it last night. He thought maybe we’d better pack you and Dorothy up with the luggage and take you along.”
“Dot said she’s trying to get a job at Missoula. They’re engaged, aren’t they?”
“Yeh. She took dietetics, didn’t she? What kind of job does a dietitian have?”
“Oh, planning meals in a hotel or hospital. Most of them take orders from a husband, though.”
“I shouldn’t think a girl would need four years’ training to learn that. Seriously though, Kay—I’d never take a girl out on a job like mine. Wouldn’t be fair.”
“No,” she replied with a faint smile, “it wouldn’t be fair.”
“Gosh, when I was out to summer camp I got acquainted with a young fellow who worked on a tract up in Oregon that belonged to a pulp company. He’d married about a year before and brought his wife out there. They lived in a cabin way up above the lake. Neighbors don’t bother you there! No place for a girl, though.”
“No, it isn’t.”

This ranger—Nelson was his name—took a bunch of us on one of his timber-cruising jaunts. We met him at the cabin and started down toward the lake. And every once in a while, when we’d come to a knoll or a burned-over place where the
view was clear, he'd look back up to the cabin and wave. His wife was still standing in the doorway watching. Gee, I'll bet she got lonely waiting for him to come back.”

“Yes, I'll bet she did.”

“He said she went out cruising with him sometimes; she had hiking boots and snow-shoes and all that. It'd be a pretty tough grind for a girl, though.”

“I suppose it would.”

“When we got back from the cruise, there she was waiting for him. She had some of the best biscuits for us! Nelson had fixed her a little oven over the heating stove. They burned wood, of course—I always like the smell of wood smoke; and he had a big pile of wood all split up for her at the side of the cabin.”

“She must have been awfully lonely.”

“Yeh, it's no place for a girl. Nelson fixed things as nice for her as he could, of course; it was a good cabin, and she had put up some curtains of some plaid-like stuff. And she hung pine cones on a pair of antlers they had above the door. It looked nice.”

“You seem to know quite a bit about the place.”

“Well, I was up there a couple of times; and I couldn't help noticing things because I kept saying to myself that a fellow ought not bring a girl out to a place like that to live.”

“I think he was awfully thoughtless,” Katherine agreed.

AFTER a while they started again toward the dormitory. “We can have a more pleasant good-bye before the horde comes,” Fred suggested.

“You can laugh longer,” said Katherine.

“Shall I begin now?”

“No,” she said, pinching his arm, “that wouldn't be fair!”

They walked on in silence. Fred pulled a maple leaf from an overhanging branch and handed it to Katherine. “A souvenir,” he said.

When they were at the door, Katherine said, “Why did you ask me how we should say good-bye?”

Instead of answering, he kissed her.
And that night, as Fred walked home, he wondered whether it was just his imagination or whether he had really seen tears in Katherine's eyes.

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Did You Hear?

By Catherine W. Birmingham

Again I saw the words, "Let us take our love to God. How well He knows that love must carry burdens if it would run to bathe in pools and lift its eyes to stars."

Strange, courageous words sung from a soul's infinitude. Strange: I had forgotten courage, I had forgotten love since last I had seen the lines, last I had read them, hoping that you would turn to me and take my hand.

Again I read the lines and gazed at you in thoughtful wonder.

You sat in silence—cold. But did you hear?

Or did the rain too loudly beat upon the eaves?