



An Agreement Is Made

AT NOON TOM RAN TO BECKY AND SAID SOFTLY IN HER EAR:

“Start to go home with the others, and then return here. I will do the same.”

Soon both had returned. Now they were alone in the school. They sat together, and Tom put his hand on Becky’s, guiding it. They made a picture of another house.

Then they talked. Tom was filled with happiness.

He said, “Becky, were you ever engaged?”

“What does that mean?”

“Did you ever promise to marry any boy?”

“No.”

“Would you like to be engaged?”

“What do you do?”

“You tell a boy that you will marry him. Then you kiss. That is all. It is easy.”

“Why do you kiss?”

“They always do that. Do you remember what I was writing?”

“Yes.”

“What was it? Shall I tell you?”

“Yes—but not now. Tomorrow.”

“No. Now. I will say it quietly, Becky. Close to your ear.” He put his arm around her and said the words quietly. “Now you tell me.”

She made him turn his face away. Then she came near. Her breath moved his hair as she said, “I—love—you!”

Then she jumped away from him and ran around the seats, with Tom running after her. He caught her in a corner, with her hands over her face. But her hands dropped. Tom kissed her and said, “Now it is all finished, Becky. And always after this you can’t love any boy except me or marry any boy except me.”

“And you can’t marry any girl but me.”

“Certainly. That is part of it. And we will walk to school together. Because we are engaged.”

“It is nice. I never heard of it before.”

“Oh, it is fine. Me and Amy Lawrence—”

The big eyes told him that he had said the wrong thing.

“Oh, Tom! I am not the first that you were engaged to!” She began to weep.

“I do not love her now. I do not love any girl except you.”

More weeping.

Tom took from his pocket the thing he valued most. It was a ball-shaped object, of no worth, but as bright as gold.

“Becky, take this.”

She hit it from his hand to the floor.

Then, filled with anger, Tom marched out of the school and over the hills and far away. He would return no more that day.

Becky had not really wanted him to go, and when he did not return within a few moments, she called, “Tom! Come back!” Then she wept again.