

"Not now at any rate."

"But sometimes . . . eh? When I look like a juggler? You remember!"

"Yes. I've seen you so. And you looked horribly beautiful. All the same, I like best for you to be as you are now. You were meant to be all freshness."

"Yet one has to grow old and even middle-aged. And thirty is a good way towards it? she questioned wistfully.

"My love. You needn't be anxious! There is more youth in you—more real youth, than in a girl of seventeen."

"I believe that is true. Yet, somehow I know it here with you now," she agreed simply, all her face bright. "How old are you Lawrence?"

"Twenty-eight."

"So much younger than I! And yes: you look it. Alas!"

"Do you mind?"

"Not really. I don't think so at least."

"You shouldn't," he assured her. "There was a time when I *was* too young for you . . . heaps too young. But I have made up since then. Soon I shall be far older than you, though I hope not too old. Compare the shape of our heads! I am of an older race. What you have come through would have made tatters of me long ago. Physically I might have held out. (I have a toughness of fiber—I found that out when I was ill.) But not a bit of freshness would have been left. If I had spent myself as you have, I could never have laughed as you laughed a moment ago. I'm a frail sort of being beside you, Joanna!"

"You do make me sound a tough, old thing!" she protested.

"Not tough,—sturdy!" he corrected her. ". . . like one of those sapling firs up there that shoot up all the stronger for being buffeted about by the wind."

Later they climbed the gray dyke and went swinging in true lover's rhythm down the hilly road toward the village where Carl would be waiting. As they came near it, they passed with their happiness between the new-scythed shocks of wheat that bent in their places meekly as if praying.

"Happy?" asked Lawrence breaking a long unconscious silence.

Joanna laughed quietly in response. "I haven't thought," she admitted.