

EVERYBODY IS DIFFERENT

The Fourth of a New Series of "Anne" Stories
 By L. M. Montgomery, Author of "Anne of Green Gables"

"I'm so different," sighed Hazel. It was really dreadful, she felt, to be so different from other people, and yet rather wonderful, too, as if you were a being strayed from another star. Hazel would not have been one of the common herd for anything. . . no matter what she suffered by reason of her indifferentness.

"Everybody is different," said Anne Shirley amiably.

"You are smiling," Hazel clasped a pair of very white, very dimpled hands and gazed adoringly at Anne. "You have such a fascinating smile, Miss Shirley. . . such a haunting smile, I knew the moment I first saw you you would understand everything. Sometimes I think I must be psychic, Miss Shirley. I always know so instinctively the moment I meet anyone whether I'm going to like them or not. I felt at once that you were sympathetic. . . that you would understand. It's so sweet to be understood. Nobody understands me, Miss Shirley. . . nobody. But when I saw you some inner voice whispered to me, 'She will understand. With her you can be your real self.' Oh, Miss Shirley, let's be real. . . let's always be real! Oh, Miss Shirley, do you love me the leastest, teeniest bit?"

"I think you're a dear," said Anne, laughing a little and ruffling Hazel's golden curls with her slender fingers. It was quite easy to be fond of Hazel.

Hazel Marr had a notorious "crush" on Miss Shirley. She was "an October blonde," as she liked to describe herself, with hair of golden bronze and brown eyes, and so gossip averred, had never been much good in the world since she had found out she was pretty. But Hazel was popular, especially among the boys who found her eyes and curls a quite irresistible combination.

Hazel caught Anne's hand and pressed her lips to it reverently.

"I hate all the people you have loved before me, Miss Shirley. I hate all the other people you love now. I want to possess you exclusively, Miss Shirley."

"Aren't you a bit unreasonable honey? You love other people besides me. How about Terry, for example?"

"Oh, Miss Shirley, it's that I came up this evening to talk to you about. I can't endure it any longer. . . I cannot, Miss Shirley. I must talk to someone about it. . . someone who understands. The night before last I went out and walked round and round the pond nearly all night. . . well, till twelve anyhow. I've suffered everything. . . everything!"

Hazel looked as tragic as a round pink-and-white face, long-lashed eyes and a halo of curls would let her.

"Why, Hazel dear! I thought you and Terry were so happy. . . that everything was settled."

Anne could not be blamed for thinking so. During the past three weeks Hazel had raved to her about Terry Garland. . . for Hazel's attitude was, what was the use of having a beau if you couldn't talk to someone about him?

"Everybody thinks that," retorted Hazel with great bitterness. "Oh, Miss Shirley, life seems so full of perplexing problems. I feel sometimes as if I wanted to lie down somewhere. . . anywhere. . . and fold my hands and never think again!"

is a self-revelation. And yet I cannot write out what burns in my soul. It. . . it stifles me!"

Hazel clutched dramatically at her throat. "Of course I'd like to see it if you wanted me to. But what is this trouble between you and Terry?"

"Oh, Terry! Miss Shirley, will you believe me when I tell you that Terry seems like a stranger to me? A stranger! Someone I'd never seen before," added Hazel so that there might be no mistake.

"But, Hazel, I thought you loved him. You said. . ."

"Oh, I know. I thought I loved him, too. But now I know it was all a terrible mistake. Oh, Miss Shirley, you can't dream how different my life is. . . how impossible."

"But what—"

"Oh, Miss Shirley, I'm sure I don't love him enough to marry him. I realize that now. I was just moonlighted into thinking I loved him. If it hadn't been for the moon I'm sure I'd have asked for time to think it over. But I was swept off my feet by the moonlight. I see that now. . . when it's too late. Oh, I'll run away. . . I'll do something desperate."

"But, Hazel dear, if you feel that you've made a mistake, why not just tell him."

"Oh, Miss Shirley, I couldn't. It would kill him. He simply adores me. There isn't any way out of it, really. And Terry's beginning to talk of getting married. Think of it. . . a child like me! I'm only eighteen. All the friends I've told about my engagement as a secret are congratulating me. . . and it's such a farce. They think Terry is a great catch because he comes into ten thousand dollars when he's twenty-five. His grandmother left it to him. As if I cared about his money! Oh, it's such a sordid world, isn't it, Miss Shirley?"

"I suppose some. . . in some respects. But, Hazel, if you feel like this about Terry. . . we all make mistakes. . . it's hard to know our own minds sometimes. . ."

"Oh, isn't it! I knew you'd understand. I did think I cared for him, Miss Shirley. The first time I saw him I just sat and gazed at him the whole evening. Waves went over when I met his eyes. He was so handsome. . . though even then I did think his hair was too curly and his eyelashes too white. That should have warned me. But I always put my soul into everything, you know. . . I'm so intense. I felt little shivers of ecstasy whenever he came near me. And now I feel nothing. . . nothing! Oh, I've grown old these past few weeks, Miss Shirley. . . old! I've hardly eaten anything since I got engaged. Mother could tell you. I'm sure I don't love him enough to marry him."

"Then you shouldn't."

"Even that moonlight night he proposed to me I was thinking of what dress I'd wear to Joan Pringle's masquerade. I thought it would be lovely to go as Queen of the May in pale green, with a saash of darker green and clusters of pale pink roses in my hair. And a Maypole decked with tiny roses—and hung with pink and green ribbons. Wouldn't it have been fetching? And then Joan's uncle died and she couldn't have the party after all, so all my planning went for nothing. But the point is. . . I

ragged. I might as well do them while I'm talking. Isn't it just lovely to exchange confidences like this? It's so seldom one gets the opportunity. . . the world intrudes itself so. Well, what was I talking of. . . oh, yes, Terry. What am I to do, Miss Shirley? I want your advice. I feel like a trapped creature."

"But, Hazel, it's so very simple."

"Oh, it isn't simple at all, Miss Shirley. It's dreadfully complicated. Momma is outrageously pleased, but Aunt Jean isn't. She doesn't like Terry and everyone says she has such good judgment. I don't want to marry anybody. I'm ambitious. . . want a career. I've always felt I'd love to be a nurse. It's such a romantic profession, don't you think? Smoothing fevered brows and all that. . . and some hand some millionaire patient falling in love with you and carrying you off to spend a honeymoon in a villa on the Riviera, racing the morning sun and the blue Mediterranean I've seen myself in it. Foolish dreams, perhaps, but oh, so sweet. I can't give them up for the prosaic reality of marrying Terry Garland and settling down in Summerville."

Hazel shivered at the very idea, and acru-tinized a half-moon critically.

"I suppose," began Anne.

"We haven't anything in common, you know, Miss Shirley. He doesn't care for poetry or romance and they're my very life. Sometimes I think I must be a re-incarnation of Cleopatra. . . or would it be Helen of Troy? . . . one of those gorgeous, seductive creatures anyhow. Have such wonderful thoughts and feelings. . . I don't know where I get them that isn't the explanation. And Terry really ad matter-of-fact. He can't be re-incarnation of anybody. What he said when I told him of Vera Fry's quill pen proves that, doesn't it?"

"But I've never heard of Vera Fry's quill pen," said Anne, patiently.

"Oh, haven't you? I thought I'd told you. I've told you so much. Vera's fianc gave her a quill pen he'd made out of feather he'd picked up that had fallen from a crow's wing. He said to her 'Let your spirit soar to heaven with it whenever you use it, like the bird who once bore it! Wasn't that just wonderful? But Terry said the pen would wear out very soon, especially if Vera wrote as much as she talked and anyway he didn't think crows ever soared to heaven. He just missed the meaning of the whole thing completely. . . its very essence.'

"What was it's meaning?"

"Oh, why. . . why. . . soaring, you know. . . getting away from the clouds of earth. Did you notice Vera's ring? . . . sapphire. I think a sapphire is too far for an engagement ring. I'd rather have your dear romantic little hoop of pearl Terry wanted to give me a ring right away. . . but I said not yet awhile. . . it would seem like a fetter. . . so irrevocable, you know. I wouldn't have left like that if I really loved him, would I?"

"No, I'm afraid not, but . . ."

"It's been so wonderful to tell somebody what I really feel like. Oh, Miss Shirley, if I could only find myself free again. . . free to seek the deeper meaning of life Terry wouldn't understand what I mean

I have confided in you. . . touched your soul in a thousand ways, as Shakespeare says."

"I think it was Pauline Johnson," said Anne gently.

"Well, I knew it was somebody. . . somebody who had lived. I think I shall sleep tonight. . . I haven't hardly slept since I found myself engaged to Terry, without the least notion how it had come about."

Hazel stuffed out her hair and put on her hat. She looked so distractingly pretty in it that Anne kissed her impulsively.

"You are the prettiest thing, darling," she said admiringly.

Hazel stood very still. Then she lifted her eyes and stared clear through the ceiling of the room, clear through the attic above it, and sought the stars.

"I shall never, never forget this wonderful moment, Miss Shirley," she murmured rapturously. "I feel that my beauty. . . if I have any. . . has received its consecration. Oh, Miss Shirley, you don't know how really terrible it is to have a little reputation for beauty and to be always afraid that when people meet you they will not think you as pretty as you were reported to be. Sometimes I just die of mortification because I fancy I can see they are disappointed. Perhaps it's only my imagination. . . I'm so imaginative. . . too much so for my own good I fear. I imagined I was in love with Terry, you see."

Perhaps it was because Anne had a rather poor opinion of the said Terry that she found it rather hard to believe anyone could imagine herself in love with him. Anne thought Hazel would be throwing herself away on Terry, in spite of the ten thousand he was "coming into." Anne considered Terry to be a good-looking, rather weak youth who would fall in love with the first pretty girl who made eyes at him and would, with equal facility, fall in love with the next one if Number One turned him down or left him alone too long. Anne had seen something of Terry that Spring. Hazel had insisted on her playing gooseberry quite often and she was destined to see more of him for Hazel went to Kingsport to visit friends and during her absence Terry rather attached himself to Anne, taking her out for occasional rides and walking home with her from places. They called each other "Anne" and "Terry," for they were about the same age, though Anne felt quite motherly towards him. Terry felt flattered that "the clever Miss Shirley" seemed to like his companionship and he became so sentimental the night of May Connelly's party, in a moonlight garden where the shadows of the acacias blew crazily about, that Anne amiably reminded him of the absent Hazel.

"Oh, Hazel!" said Terry. "That child!"

"You're engaged to that 'child,' aren't you?" said Anne severely.

"Not really engaged. . . nothing but some boy-and-girl nonsense. I. . . I guess I was just swept off my feet by the moonlight."

Anne did a bit of rapid thinking. If Terry really cared so little for Hazel as this the child would be far better freed from him. Perhaps this was a Heaven-sent opportunity to extricate them both from the ally tangle they had got themselves into and from which neither of them, taking things with all the deadly seriousness of youth, knew how to escape.

"Of course," went on Terry, misinterpreting her silence. "I'm in a bit of a predicament I'll own. I'm. . . I'm afraid Hazel took me a little too seriously. . . and I don't just know the best way to open her eyes to her mistake."

Impulsive Anne decided to take a hand at once and assumed her most maternal look.

"Terry, you are both a couple of foolish children playing at being grown up. Hazel doesn't really care anything more for you than you do for her. The moonlight apparently affected you both. She wants to be free but is afraid to tell you so for fear of hurting your feelings. She's just a bewildered romantic little girl and you're a boy in love with love and some day you're both going to have a good laugh at yourselves."

"I think I've put that very neatly," thought Anne complacently.)

Terry drew a long breath.

"You've taken a weight off my mind, Anne. Hazel's a sweet little kid of course. . . I hated to think of hurting her. . . but I've realized my. . . our. . . mistake for some time. When one meets a woman

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curious tricks sometimes. . ."

"I really don't think I ever want to get married at all, Miss Shirley. Do you happen to have an orangewood stick handy? Thanks. My half moons are really getting

pour out my
 "Except in
 you let me
 know it to you some day, Miss Shirley? It

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