

# THE HEART OF THE UNTAMED

by L. E. Granlie

## Part I

*It was the hour of dawn. Over the far eastern horizon, a glorious aurora of flaming sunlight radiated from the very heart of a crimson sphere. Golden pools of light poured upon the world below and seemed to absorb the darkness of the spring night by the very glory of their warmth. The iridescent rays that penetrated the damp soil in the fields awakened the sprouting plants under the dead grass on the hillsides. Even the dingy farm houses that mournfully broke the wide sweep of the fields were for the moment transformed by the magic of the dawn of new life.*

*At least so it seemed to Jay as she awoke to the dance of sunlight on the faded wall paper of her room, confused and bewildered until she remembered her fantastic homecoming from college the day before. It seemed like it was only yesterday that she had left the childhood school house -- a strange, solitary little figure lost in the wild rush of the college students. Now, she had come home after a strenuous winter in the city. She had been glad to leave it all behind.*

*She had not even waited to speak to Bruce, who had insisted on seeing her, even after she had broken her engagement with him. She had boarded the train alone with only her baggage for company, which she had impolitely deserted on reaching the station, and had walked the remaining four miles to the little farm that had been home to her all the nineteen years of her life.*

*All winter, she had been homesick and eager to be with her father again. He had been her sole protector since her mother had died six years before, and she loved him with all the undivided love of an only child for her only parent.*

*After all, her homecoming had not been as joyous as she had anticipated. She was shocked at the change in her father. He was stooped and rheumatic, with a look of suffering in his eyes even when they brightened at the sight of her.*

*"Jay!", he had cried. "Jay ...".*

*Then a moment later, the deep lines of pain had come back into his haggard face. He had had a paralytic stroke, she learned, while completing the spring seeding and through all this there had been the worry about the mortgage and threatened foreclosure on the farm. Somehow he had managed to save the butter and egg money for Jay's expenses at the school, but he had written nothing to her of his illness.*

*She heard him now stirring in the kitchen below and the strong odor of coffee came up to her. It was comforting and reassuring, and filled her with the optimism of the new day. As she dressed, she found herself thinking of countless things. There was her father's illness. Then, too, there was the mortgage that demanded payment. Surely there could be no possibility of foreclosure. After all these years of hard back-breaking work with every hour of the day spent in plowing, planting, harvesting and fighting insects and drought -- why, it would be too cruel!*

*Her father loved the land. He loved his work in every season of the year, through the wind, rain, snow and sunshine. Every weather-*

*beaten board and beam in the houses he had built were a part of him. He had made their home the very best place in all the world and they would never give it up. Not if Jay could help it. She would do anything -- she would go back to her job in the city, back to Bruce who was the only friend she had there, and surely he would help her pay that mortgage.*

*Somehow it hurt her to think of Bruce Turner. He was so detached from all this, so gay and romantic looking, and he had swept her, breathless and tingling, into her first epoch of romance. Perhaps he had sensed that behind her wall of reserve she was lonely and homesick, and pity had prompted him to seek her company. They had shared such happy evenings together.*

*Bruce had a way of looking at her that made her suddenly conscious for the first time of the freckles on her nose, and fervently thankful that her long dark hair curled naturally. Sometimes she had dared in a timid way to imagine that she was his wife.*

*Then one day, Bruce had nonchalantly revealed to her that he was married -- and then laughed at her shocked face.*

*"Not that it matters to us," he had said. "She won't have me -- my wife won't. We had a tiff and she walked off. Gone to her folks, I guess. Haven't heard from her since."*

*He had spoken easily, cheerfully as usual, but Jay had seen a momentary seriousness in his expression that left her cold. She resolved to forget it all. She would speak of Bruce to no one, not even her father.*

*Downstairs she found her father in the kitchen over his traditional morning coffee. He did not speak to her, but there was an understanding silence between them. Jay brushed her hair in the cracked mirror over the sink, took the empty water pail from its stand and went out to the pump. Down at the barn, energetic chickens cackled and fussed over their breakfast. Prince and Duke, the old work horses, stood patiently at the gate of the pasture, waiting to be watered. Over it all hung the morning air, sweet with the smell of spring.*

*In the distance, a windmill poked its lazy head above the hills and was being slowly coaxed into motion by the breeze. Jay was puzzled. That was the windmill on the Sage forty that bordered their land on the west, and it had not been in use since old Grandfather Sage had died and left the place deserted. Surely no one was living there now. She asked her father about it when she returned to the house with the brimming water pail.*

*"They say old man Sage had a granddaughter, Lizbeth, what's living there now," she heard in the slow voice that was her father's. "She moved in there last month with her little girl -- she's a widow, I take it. Whatever possessed her t'come out there t'live, I don't claim t' know. The old Sage shack is no place fit for a lone woman t' live in."*

*Quick sympathy and concern shone in Jay's eyes. "Oh, but father, she must be lonely over in that awful house all by herself!" she cried. "Why, it's all full of mice and rat holes and dust. We've got to do something about it."*

*He father chuckled. "Well, I reckon that's up t' you, Jay. She wouldn't want no old man like me around. You go down there and get acquainted .. why not, when the chores is done."*

*That was her father all over again, Jay decided. Blunt and eccentric as usual, but with the same kind generosity and thoughtfulness of others that characterized him. As she went about getting breakfast after he had gone down to the barn to milk, she wondered if his bluntness was not in some measure responsible for the attitude of their neighbors. Years before, veiled rumors had been to the effect that her mother, Ingeborg's, death had been brought on by over-work and negligence on the part of her father. Johann Fredericsen was a hard, unrelenting man, they said, and had been too harsh with his wife. Conscious of these rumors, her father had grown bitter and taciturn. He had not yet learned to accept the unjust accusations of gossiping neighbors with the amused tolerance by which they must be regarded. Even now, he mourned for his wife while he devoted his tender care to provide for his motherless child. Jay's memory of her mother was vague, beyond the mound that lay in the community graveyard across their pasture. She did not miss her mother, but jealously centered her love around her father who was, in her eyes, a great hero.*

*Jay packed eggs over the low kitchen range and heated fresh milk for breakfast. After breakfast, there were sitting hens to feed and tiny calves turned out to pasture. Her father fed and curried Prince and Duke in the old lean-to back of the straw shed, as had been his custom ever since Jay could remember. He was greatly attached to his horses, especially Prince who had been her mother's favorite. Jay noticed how*

*dilapidated the lean-to had grown. The great supporting beams were rotting where they reached the ground. She must remember to call her father's attention to that.*

*All morning Jay worked. She swept, dusted and tidied up the house, which had been rather neglected during her absence. There were soft piles of feathery dust under the old sofa in the sitting room. A grey film hiding in every fold of the window curtains showed evidence of the masculine helplessness in the intricacies of homemaking. At least satisfied with the improvement she had made, Jay went out to the garden to finished planting late radishes in the warm noonday sun. She removed her shoes as she worked and dug her bare feet deep into the soft soil.*

*It was late afternoon before Jay set out for the old Sage farm. She walked slowly, partly because the loose earth in the fields provided poor footing and partly because she wore high-heeled slippers which after great deliberation she had decided to wear. There was no telling what sort of a woman Elizabeth Sage would be and she wished to make a good impression.*

*Jay's heart failed her as she neared the Sage house. A fat and evil-looking dog glowered at her from the door step. She detected an anxious face peering at her through the mosquito netting that covered the window. Flies darkened the doorway and buzzed angrily at her. Then the door opened and she was timidly greeted by Elizabeth Sage.*

*"I'm Jay ... Jay Fredericsen," she introduced herself, and was admitted into the house.*

*Elizabeth was small in stature and had soft blonde hair that Jay decided was permanently waved. She had a pleasant smile but there were blue lines under her eyes that made her appear wan and tired.*

*"This is my daughter, Kathleen," she laughed, bringing to view a shy little maid who resembled her mother. "Come out, Katie dear, and speak to Miss Fredericsen."*

*Whereat the child retired completely behind her mother's apron, and in laughing at her modesty, they grew congenial and friendly. At first, they spoke of commonplace things. Jay learned that Elizabeth was accustomed to city life and found it difficult to adjust herself to the farm. There was a certain air of frailness and helplessness about her and the pale organdy dress she wore that made her seem distinctly out of place in her crude surroundings. She made brave sport of her attempts at housekeeping and gratefully accepted Jay's advice. Not by one word of implication did she suggest that purpose had prompted her retreat to the farm. And Jay instinctively sensing that it was an unwelcome subject, did not push it.*

*In the course of the conversation, Jay was surprised that Elizabeth had graced the same business college that she had attended. That proved a delightful source of conversation to them both. Then it was that Elizabeth first spoke of her husband.*

*"It was Bud ... that is, my husband," she said, "who first suggested before we were married that I study the course. We had designs on operating law offices and naturally I was to be his secretary. But after*

*we were married, he devoted himself to architecture and, of course, dispensed my services to them."*

*Her tone was strangely impersonal as she mentioned her husband and she changed the subject immediately by proposing that they have tea.*

*Elizabeth graciously served weak tea and delicious chocolate wafers, followed by the explanation that her parents sent her monthly supplies from their summer resort. Baby Kathleen drank malted milk over an enormous bib, "originally a bath towel ...", and regarded Jay with grave contemplation.*

*The evening shadows were long on the land before Jay took her leave of Elizabeth and the intimacies of the deep friendship that had sprung up between them. Her thoughts were all of her new friend as she went homeward. Mingled with her friendly understanding and sympathy, there was a strange curiosity about Elizabeth Sage. She was not after all, a widow as they had supposed. And it had been apparent to Jay all afternoon that Elizabeth was expecting a child. What had inspired her in that condition to the perilous undertaking to live alone in that place? She longed to have Elizabeth's full confidence that she might comfort her, although she had sensed that her new acquaintance was proud and independent. After all her concern, might not the afternoon's friendship prove shallow and changeable in time, as such affection usually did and leave her as lonely as ever before? All her life she had been a solitary child, passing through childhood alone, and now but for the confidence she had shared that day with Elizabeth Sage, she was entering womanhood in the same solitude.*



*As she came within sight of the vague outlines of her home, Jay's weary feet found a supporting stone on the summit of the hill and she sank gratefully down on it. Mechanically she removed her shoes and shook out the soil that had gathered in them. Far overhead, a million stars shone bright and clear against the purple background of the sky, and Jay, watching from where she sat, rested her chin in her hand and wondered what lay beyond the glory up there. All around her was silence, peace, and beauty. Down at the house she could discern her father's stooped figure out on the porch, a silhouette distinct against the glow of the lamp light through the open kitchen door. He seemed a part of the night, that world apart that was theirs alone -- hers and her father's to worship and understand. No one else could understand it as they did. Back in the city, gay crowds would be dancing now in noisy, smoke-filled dance halls, indifferent and unmoved by the majesty of the night about them.*

*Then suddenly in the stillness of the night, Jay heard the faint call of a coyote. Infinitely remote at first, it seemed to come from the very limits of the earth and pulsated to a long, drawn quivering sob. As she listened, her whole heart went out in answer to that from the lone shaggy creature of the wilderness that alone knew the utter loneliness in the solitary existence of the hunted. The low, whining accents filled her with a strange fear akin to a foreboding of sad things to come, and a hungry yearning for something she had been denied. It was the same feeling of inexplicable loneliness that throbbed in the heart of the untamed.*

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## *Part II*

*Jay was hanging the weekly wash out in the July sunshine when Elizabeth and Kathleen walked over the hill. With a dripping sock in her hand, she waved an answer to Elizabeth's eager "halloo." Then with the last clothes in place, she ran to meet them.*

*"I almost gave up on looking for you," she smiled. "But I'm glad you gave me time to get the clothes on the line."*

*Elizabeth laughed, "Oh, we took our time. Katie and I aren't used to long walks, you know." She hesitated and then asked, "How's your father today?"*

*"Pretty much the same," Jay replied with ill-concealed apprehension in her eyes. "He's in bed now. Like he has been almost all summer. That terrible rheumatism makes his heart so weak!"*

*"He should try not to worry so much" suggested Elizabeth, thoughtful and sympathetic.*

*"That's just it. He's discouraged ... but sometimes, I don't see how he can be otherwise. If they dare to foreclose, I'll ... I don't know what I'll do."*

*"Oh, Jay dear, I don't know much about these things, but I know they won't be that mean. Just try to believe that and you'll feel happier. You always work so hard. I don't see how you have the strength to carry on so."*

*"I have to," explained Jay. "I confess. I often hate it, but it keeps me from growing discontented. I used to long for a more modern home*

*with rich and fashionable surroundings. I guess every girl does, but now that we are in danger of losing all this, I value it more than I ever did. Now that father is sick, it is all so perplexing. I shall really be at a loss if he isn't well by harvest time."*

*Due to the heat of the afternoon, Jay led her visitors to a shady seat on the north side of the house. There, the two friends sat and talked while Kathleen, lovely in sun-basked pajamas, amused herself by chasing the chickens that had wandered up from the barn. As they watched the child, Elizabeth spoke, breaking the reticence of a subject she had avoided all summer.*

*"I ... I think I ought to tell you, Jay," she hesitated. "I'm expecting a baby in September."*

*"Oh," Jay was breathless, though she had known it long before. "I'm so glad for you, dear! Does he ... does, Bud, know?"*

*Elizabeth bit her lip and looked away. There was a faint, uncomfortable flush on her face.*

*"I haven't told him," she said evenly. "He doesn't deserve to know."*

*Jay looked at her, kind concern in her face. "You quarreled?"*

*"Yes, Bud was beastly. It was all his fault really. I won't go back to him whatever happens." Elizabeth's chin was set in proud lines.*

*"But, what will you do when the time comes, Elizabeth, dear? Go back to your father?"*

*"I can't do that. I thought you would help me."*

*"Of course," Jay said and was silent.*

*"There, I ought not to have spoken of these things," Elizabeth laughed, shortly and apologetically. "All married people quarrel, it seems."*

*Jay silently agreed. She thought of Bruce and his wife.*

*"You won't worry on my account?" Elizabeth continued, laying a friendly hand on Jay's lap. "I'm not worth worrying about."*

*"I'll do anything for you," Jay promised. "We'll manage, and you won't have to go back to your husband if I can help it!"*

*It was early when Elizabeth became ill. Jay was helping her father, who was able now to make precarious attempts to start cutting his already over-ripe fields -- though she knew it was only the forced energy of nervous anxiety that kept him out of bed, to adjust the sickle on the binder. It was there that Kathleen found Jay, with her fearful message that "Momma" was sick and wanted her.*

*Although her morning chores still waited for attention, Jay hurried back with Kathleen to find Elizabeth pale, drawn, and slumped on the couch.*

*"It's just a dizzy attack," she whispered hoarsely ... "Such a queer feeling that I'm afraid."*

*"We'll stop that in a minute," assured strong, capable Jay as she swung a filled tea kettle over the fire. Inwardly, she was despairing. Never before in her young life had she been called upon in such a case. What did they --- the doctors and nurses -- do in an emergency like this? Spurred on by the trusting appeal in Elizabeth's eyes, she prayed that she might do the right things for her.*

*By noon, Elizabeth was resting easier amid the numerous hot towels and cold applications that Jay had tucked around her. It was warm and stuffy in the shack. She opened the door in complete disregard of the flies that swarmed in, and was rewarded by the cool, satisfying breeze that swept over Elizabeth's bed. Toward evening, her patient slept.*

*Jay gave Kathleen a hurried supper, after which she washed her and made her ready for bed. She loved to feel the soft, youthful skin of the child under the touch of her hand. It was so unbelievably smooth and delicate that she longed to kiss and cuddle her, even through the gentle soap suds that she wiped away. How she ached to have a child of her own to love! A girl like Kathleen, only she wanted hers to have dark hair. Kathleen was a good, obedient child with large dark eyes that, even while they were serious, had quizzical expression in them that seemed strangely familiar to Jay.*

*It was almost dark before she dared to leave the Sage shack and return home. She walked swiftly, wondering how her father had managed during her absence. Where the road passed through the flax fields, she stopped short. There were tracks of an automobile that had come and gone that day. For a moment she stared, transfixed by the great fear that quickened her heart. Who could have traveled that seldom used road? Deep in her heart, she knew.*

*Her father was not in the house, though she searched and called for him. Out by the gate, the unused binder still stood, reels swaying in the wind. A dull thumping sound inside the barn sent her flying in that direction. It proved to be Prince and Duke chomping on their empty*

manger. Where could he be? Then suddenly, an alarming thought turned her toward the pasture alley, over the green slope marked by the feet of horses and cattle, and toward the graveyard that lay beyond the pasture fence. She gave a gasp of relief. There on a fallen post, sat her father. He did not see her until she was very near him. Then he turned and gazed with a look of deep despair that told her what she had feared was a reality.

"They foreclosed!", she cried as if he had already told her. Clumsily she dropped to her knees where she sat, mute and dumbfounded. Words failed them. There was a tragic understanding silence between them.

How long they sat there, Jay did not know. Stars came out, followed by a luminous moon. She was conscious only of the fact that she was there by the side of the man she loved better than anyone else on earth, and all that mattered was that their home, the world that was theirs alone, had been wrestled away from them.

Then through the deepening shadows of the twilight, there came a faint cry of a coyote. Far in the distance, the plaintive echoes born on the night air, throbbed and died at last in a quavering sob. Like the low moaning of the wind, it wafted to where they sat and seemed to ease the agony of their souls. It was as if a spirit had called to them from the world that was no longer theirs, a world that knew no sorrow like this -- like no pain, heartache or tribulation.

### *Part III*

*The first pale light of dawn the next day found Jay and her father at their accustomed place. After careful contemplation through the long wakeful hours of the night, Jay had decided upon the one course to pursue. They had no refuge to turn to, no other shelter than this in which to live. In the short time granted by their merciless creditors, she would go back to Bruce, and armed with all the courage and optimism of youth, ask his aid. She would plead, promise and sacrifice anything to help her father. Surely Bruce would not fail her. Had he not promised that there would be a job waiting for her in his office? She would work and slave for him without wages if need be, for many years until she had repaid the loan she would ask of him in this critical period. Aside from the pain of the dull resignation she saw in her father's manner, she felt a queer thrill at the thought of returning to Bruce. She would go tomorrow; there was no time to loose, but today she had Elizabeth to think of.*

*After a last comforting word to her father, beaten and pitiful in the grief that had come to him in his old age, she turned blindly down the road to the Sage forty. Dark, sullen clouds that promised a storm were slowly gathering in the sky, but she ran on unheeding.*

*It was well she arrived when she did. She saw at a glance that Elizabeth was worse, and she reproached herself for not coming sooner. Feverish and suffering, Elizabeth looked up at her and asked, "Has the doctor come yet?"*



"No, but I'll send for him." Jay started up wildly, but was stopped by Elizabeth's weak voice.

"I already have sent for him," she explained. "The Crandall boy rode past this morning to fix the fence corner, and I had strength enough to call him and tell him I needed the doctor. He should be here now. Oh Jay, it is so awful!"

She sank back groaning, her face sharp with an attack of pain. At last, after what seemed ages to Jay, Elizabeth sank into a daze and talked fitfully in her sleep about Bud. Jay knew that she should persuade Elizabeth to send for her baby's father at all cost. If only she knew his whole name and address, the doctor could send a telegram. At least, bending over Elizabeth, she heard her patient whisper a name that brought her to her feet in amazement, wondering if she really heard it right.

"Elizabeth," she cried and shook her gently. "Wake up dear. You spoke of your husband. You want him, don't you? I'll send for him if you tell me his full name -- not just 'Bud.'"

Her friend looked up at her, awed for a while. Then she spoke, "It's Bruce Turner," she answered simply.

That afternoon was a veritable nightmare to Jay. Shocked by the significance of Elizabeth's revelation, she could only stare in a stunned silence at the figure on the bed. Bruce Turner. Why, oh why, hadn't she known it sooner? Why hadn't she guessed it? She had a wild impulse to turn and flee, but before she could shake off the lethargy that paralyzed

her, a low cry arose from the bed. One look at Elizabeth told her that the time had come.

The long, difficult hours of the afternoon followed. Jay worked as one inspired, battling with unseen forces that threatened her friend's life. What did it matter that she was Bruce's wife? All through the pain and torture, she stood by Elizabeth, praying as she worked, that the doctor would come soon. She was only dimly conscious of the fact that Kathleen had come in, and that it was storming outside. When the doctor did arrive, she could scarcely see him through a mist of thankful tears. Elizabeth was safe; even when the doctor sought to commend and assure her that she had saved Bruce Turner's wife, it did not amaze her. She was too dazed and weary to think or realize the full significance of it.

Automatically she sat down upon the receding cushions of the couch, reached down and took the tiny babe in her arms and held her tenderly, jealously. She heard the furious wind screaming around the shack, but above that, a pitiless, intermittent drumming in her ears shouted at her that this was Bruce Turner's child. Surely, she could do no more for the man she loved. Nor would there be reward other than this brief moment of felicity that she was allowed to hold his baby to her breast. Looking down at her, she knew that it was merely another of life's little ironies and that Bruce Turner had gone out of her life forever.

At dusk, a heavy straggling rain succeeded the wind. Fiercely, it hammered down through the cold dismal night as if bent on extinguishing the last prospect of warmth and cheer. Moon and stars were blotted out by the driving rain.

*Jay struggled home through stodgy pools of mud that clung heavily to her shoes and made a vicious sucking sound in the ruts of the road. She was glad at last to pull herself very drenched and shivering, into the shelter of the kitchen. The house was dark and uncomfortably cold, and smelled of wet wood. Jay lit the smoky kerosene lamp and stirred the grey ashes in the range with the last chips from the wood box.*

*Over the growing fire, she heated a pan of water and gratefully drank the steaming liquid with the great gulps that warmed her through and through. She opened the oven door, shook off her wet sticky shoes, and thrust her feet into the delightful warmth of the oven until they ceased to ache. This done, she wound the old alarm clock that stood above the stove, mentally noted that it was almost a quarter to eleven. This had been the hardest day she had known, and she glowed at the thought of going to bed. Tomorrow, she would find some way to cope with the fateful circumstances that had arisen so unprecedented in her life to threaten her. She picked up the lamp and was passing through the front room to the stairway, when she stopped.*

*What on earth --- ?*

*Her father's bed stood there empty and untouched since she had made it up that morning. The window above it was open at the bottom, and rain drifted in through the curtains and settled in a grey mist upon the white sheets. Quickly, Jay set down the lamp and closed the window. With a chill in her heart, she knew instantly that something had happened to her father. The thought struck her that perhaps his milking tasks had been prolonged for some reason and that he was still at the*

*barn. Or what was more probable still, he had been stricken with another paralytic attack and was unable to reach the house.*

*Back in the kitchen, she flung on old coat about her shoulders. She opened the door in defiance of the strong blast of insistent rain that swept in and almost drove her back from her purpose. Down the path in the direction of the barn, she stumbled, rain blinding her vision. She paused where she knew the building to be, and wiped her eyes. For a moment, she was bewildered. She knew well every detail of the barn, and was utterly unprepared for the sight that lay before her in the ghostly light that still lingered. Stretched before her was havoc and devastation wrought by the violent wind of the afternoon. Jagged heaps of splintered nail-marked boards and broken beams that had once been the lean-to, told Jay what had happened. The lean-to had been torn down and totally demolished in the storm. Fearfully, she examined the ruins for some evidence of her father.*

*Presently, through the obstruction she came upon the huge, inert form of a horse. She recognized the bloody wounded horse flesh as that of Prince, pinned down by the corner studding that had broken his neck. Certain now of grim tragedy, she cried out her father's name, frantically searching, digging through the wreckage, turning over loose boards and lumber. Nothing remained of the lean-to as it had been, save for a part of the manger where a halter had been cut and gave proof that Duke has escaped death.*

*It seemed to Jay that she worked for hours, hands bruised by nails and slivers, before she found the remainder of the halter knotted about a beam. She pulled at it, tracing it with her hands until she found her*

*father there. He lay partly concealed behind the manger, cold and lifeless as he met her touch. She knelt beside him in a frenzied effort to raise his head, call to him, pleading. It was all over. There was no answer.*

*Somehow the bitter truth and realization of how he had died surged upon her. She arose at length to the full height of her womanly figure and stood there above him, unseeing, unfeeling in her stony grief.*

*Slowly, the bitter, long-suppressed tears came to relieve her agony, and fell gently upon her breasts, mingling with the autumn rain.*

## Conclusion

*After all these years, it was still a significance to Jay Fredericsen that sunlight glanced through the window of the car in which she was completing her homecoming journey. It was a sort of welcome, the only welcome home that she would have now that her father was no longer living. It was heartening after all these years in an office, bleak and dusty in the confines of the city, to see again the glowing sunset across the sky above the rolling hills.*

*She drove slowly, her long, low glistening automobile with its rich upholstery, droning smoothly over the familiar land through which she passed. Through the lowered windshield, swept the scented wind, softly stirring her dark marcelled hair, playing with the large luxurious fur coat that draped about her shoulders. Her rather aged face, powdered with a few pale freckles, stared with earnest grey eyes hopefully into the distance. She was childishly eager and impatient to reach the place that was still home to her, yet a sense of nervous indecision tinged her eagerness to see it after all the years of her absence in which she had worked to buy it back. It was now legally in her possession again. She had been triumphantly successful in her business, and had learned to adjust herself to the routine of city life. But in social affairs -- ah, that was different. She was as poised, as well-groomed, and as rich and fashionably clad as her associates, but she was bored by society. Some strange element had set her apart from them. It was that same element that had promoted her to return home. She would not attempt to analyze it. She knew that it was a longing for a world apart that was a wild and unconquered as the wind, as free as the wild eagle that soared*

*through the sky, and as untamed as the heart of the shaggy coyote that cried out his defiance of civilization.*

*Almost fearfully, Jay turned her automobile up the driveway through the field. She held her breath until she reached the top of the last promontory slope, and stopped. Stretched before her in the pale rays of the dying sun was her home, forlorn and desolate, as she had left it, and as it was even more so now. She had known that it would be thus; she had not wanted it otherwise. It was home to her and that was all that mattered. Even as she watched, the sun sank behind the hills, and the least lingering rays grew fainter and slowly died away, leaving the gloomy weather-beaten walls of the house and its empty windows a cold grey.*

*Presently, Jay released the brakes and glided onward down the slope, up the incline of the pasture alley with its sagging fences, and over the dewy pastures where long somber shadows drifted over the grave yard. She knew not what strange impulse or sentiment brought her there. She knew only that she wanted to stand again by her father's grave, alone in the dusk, and that she had desired and dreamed of that moment through all the weary years in the city.*

*By the mound that rose above the others, she paused. Wild grapevines and ivy had almost hidden the little cross that she had place there. She knelt beside it, heedless of the dead leaves that fastened and clung to the heavy fur of her coat and to her silk crepe scarf that had fallen to the ground.*

*Stars came out at last and pulsated in the blue mists of the night. A silvery shadow grew out from the cross and stretched over the mound. Sometime after that, the moon shone out of the eastern sky and painted a golden edging on the leaves of the grapevine and ivy. Still, Jay sat there. She felt that she waited for something -- some fulfillment -- as though some beloved voice out of the dim past would call to her.*

*Then suddenly, she heard it. Faintly out of the distance, there came the call of a coyote. Borne on the night air, the low whining accents of that old familiar cry echoed in the solemn stillness of the night. Clear and distant at first, the long drawn wail arose, trembled and sobbed as a soul in sorrow, then slowly died in a lonely quivering sigh.*

*Jay bowed her head and a feeling of supreme joy and peace enveloped her. It seemed as if a spirit had guarded her secret self; she alone knew that her father had wanted to die that night, that he had died by his own hand even before the storm had come. She alone knew that it was better so, that all was well at least. She was stirred by a feeling more sublime than she had ever known, something above the limits of the earth. It was that same feeling that had brought her home to the dawning of fulfillment -- that same inexpressible feeling that throbbed in the heart of the untamed.*

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**THE END**