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CLARA KIMBALL YOUNG AS "LOLA."

LOLA

BY
OWEN DAVIS
AUTHOR OF "SINNERS," ETC.

ILLUSTRATED WITH SCENES FROM THE PHOTO-PLAY PRODUCED AND COPYRIGHTED BY THE WORLD FILM CORPORATION

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World Film Corporation *Presents*
CLARA KIMBALL YOUNG
in "LOLA" *by* Owen Davis

A SHUBERT FEATURE

PHOTO-PLAY IN FIVE ACTS

CAST OF CHARACTERS

Lola		Clara Kimball Young
Dr. Barnhelm, her father		Alec B. Francis
Dr. Crossett, her friend		Edward M. Kimball
Dick Fenway	} in love with Lola {	James Young
John Dorris		Frank Holland
Mrs. Harlan		Olga Humphreys
Stephen Bradley		Edward Donneley
Julia Bradley		Irene Tams
Marie		Mary Moore
Mrs. Mooney		Julia Stuart
Nellie Mooney		Baby Esmond
Dr. Mortimer		Lionel Belmore
Life-Saver		Cecil Rejan

LOLA

CHAPTER I
FATHER AND DAUGHTER

The old man lay back in his chair asleep. The morning sun beat against the drawn window shades, filling the room with a dim, almost cathedral light. An oil lamp, which had performed its duty faithfully through the night, now seemed to resent its neglect, and spluttered angrily. There was the usual sound of the busy city's street outside the window, for the morning was advancing, but here in the room it was very quiet. A quaint little Dutch clock ticked away regularly, and the tired man's soft breathing came and went, peacefully, for his sleep was untroubled, his heart was full of happiness.

Presently the door opened, and a young girl came into the room, and seeing him, there in the chair, she stopped, afraid for a moment, then stepped forward and bent over him. She smiled as she straightened up, and turning called out softly:

"Miss Lola! Miss Lola!"

"Coming, Maria," the answer came in a clear, fresh young voice; for a moment the sleeper hesitated, about to awake, then thought better of it, and dreamed a dream of the triumph that was to be his.

“Hush!” Maria spoke softly as Lola came into the room, and Lola, following the girl’s pointed finger, smiled lovingly as she crossed and stood beside her father’s chair.

There was a strong contrast between these two girls as they stood there for a moment, side by side, young and good-looking as both undoubtedly were.

Lola was the sleeper’s daughter. Maria, their servant. Maria was strong and rugged; Lola delicate and blond. Maria’s splendid young body had been developed by hard work, while her mind had been stunted by a miserable childhood of neglect and abuse. Lola, since her mother’s death, had been her father’s constant companion, and had seemed to catch from him something of his grave and scholarly outlook upon life, lightened, however, by the impulses of a naturally sweet and sunny disposition, and the brave happiness of youth.

“He hasn’t been to bed at all!” exclaimed Maria, as Lola stooped and put her hand lightly on the sleeper’s arm.

“Father!” she called softly. “Father! It is morning!”

He awoke, startled, for a moment rather bewildered, then added his smile to theirs, and said brightly, “I am very happy, Lola.”

“I’m sure you haven’t any right to be, and, of course, you know that you ought to be scolded?”

“Perhaps so,” he returned, looking with pride at a complicated electric apparatus on the table beside him, “but I have worked it all out! I am sure of it this time!”

“Put that dreadful lamp out, and open the window!” called out Lola to Maria, as she started to pick up from the floor bits of broken glass and pieces of wire.

“I do wish you would use the electric lights, father. That lamp isn’t enough, even if you could be trusted to refill it, which you can’t!”

“You can’t teach an old dog new tricks, my dear,” smiled the Doctor, as he rose, rather stiffly. “The big thoughts won’t come by electric light, at least not to an old fellow who learned to do his thinking under an old-fashioned student’s lamp.”

“Oh, I don’t mind, not really,” answered Lola. “And, besides, the lamp saves money.”

She was turning away when the Doctor’s low chuckle of amusement stopped her. “Are you laughing at me, father?” she questioned, with pretended sternness.

“Just a little perhaps, my dear, because after this you need not think of little savings. You shall give up your school-teaching; you shall have new dresses every day of your life, and hats—— La! Never mind, you shall see.”

“You really think so, father?”

“I know it! After last night I shall never doubt it again. I did not dare to stop until my work was done, and then I sat there, dreaming, until I fell asleep.”

He looked again at his apparatus with such pride and confidence that even Lola, who knew nothing of the details of his experimental work, was thrilled with the hope of his success, and rested her hand tenderly upon his arm as she stood beside him.

They were much alike, these two, as they stood there together, the tall, rather delicate old man, and the fragile, sensitive girl. Dreamers both, one had but to look at them to see that, and they started apart, almost guiltily, as the little clock on the mantel struck eight.

“Eight o’clock! Oh, Maria! Eight o’clock! We must hurry!” Lola called out to Maria, who was busily arranging the breakfast table in the adjoining room.

“Come, father!” she continued. “Run and get yourself ready for breakfast, and the very minute we get through I am going to put you to bed.”

“Not to-day, my dear,” he answered gaily; “this is to be my busy day!”

As he left the room, smiling and happy, Maria looked after him anxiously.

“He’ll be sick if you don’t look out, Miss Lola. He don’t know no more about takin’ care of himself than one of my sister’s babies.”

Lola laughed cheerfully as she looked with approval over the neatly arranged breakfast table.

“I think he is perfectly well, Maria, and quite delighted with himself this morning. He feels sure that he has made a wonderful discovery, something he has been working on for years. I know that he thinks it is going to be a fine thing for all the world and for us, Maria; he says it is going to make us rich.”

“I hope so, I’m sure. There’s lots of little things we’re needing in the kitchen,” said Maria practically. “Anyway, he’s the best doctor in the world, and he ought to have the most money!”

“Don’t get his egg too hard.”

“No, Miss, it will be just like he wants it.”

When the Doctor returned he found everything ready for his breakfast, and he stopped to greet Maria kindly, as he always did, for aside from his habit of rather old-fashioned courtesy she was a great favorite of his.

“Would you like a pan-cake, Doctor?” she inquired anxiously, as she stood beside the table. “There’s a Dutch lady boarding with my brother’s wife. She showed me how to make real German ones.”

“I can’t have you spoiling father,” reproved Lola gently. “Besides German pan-cakes are not supposed to be eaten for breakfast.”

“She knows no more about German food,” said the Doctor, “than an Irishman’s pig! You shall make me one of your pan-cakes to-night.”

Maria smiled gratefully at him, and leaving the apartment ran down stairs to the letter-box in the hall, returning a moment later with the morning mail, which she put beside Lola’s plate.

“Four letters,” said Lola, glancing over them. “One for me, a bill! Two for you, father.” She pushed them across the cloth. “And, Maria! Oh, Maria! This is for you. Oh, Maria! You’re blushing. Who do you suppose it’s from,” she teased, as Maria stepped forward eagerly and took the letter.

“I guess, Miss,” said Maria in confusion, “I guess it’s from a friend of mine.”

Lola looked after her, as she hurried out of the room, the precious letter clutched tightly in her hand.

“Poor girl! That is from her sweetheart, the one she calls Mr. Barnes, and she can’t read it.”

“I thought you were to teach her,” remarked her father, as he helped himself to a second piece of toast.

“I am trying my best,” answered Lola, “but she never had a chance before, that’s what makes it so hard for her now.”

“She has done wonders since you found her, my dear girl. She has caught the spirit of this great New York, and she is growing very fast.”

“Hello!” he exclaimed, as he opened the first of his letters. “From Paul Crossett.”

Lola looked up, surprised and pleased, as her father hastily read the brief note, and continued.

“He is here, at last! Here in New York! And he is coming up this morning.”

“That’s fine!” exclaimed Lola, her face reflecting her father’s pleasure. “I have heard so much about him all my life, and now I am really going to see him.”

“I, myself,” said the Doctor, “have only seen him once in ten years, only twice in twenty. He is a great man now, rich and famous, but he was a scamp when I first knew him.” He laughed softly as his mind travelled back to the time when he and this successful French physician were boys together at the University.

“How was it?” inquired Lola, “that a Frenchman was your chum at Heidelberg?”

“He was,” her father replied, “even as a boy, a cynic, a philosopher, and he amused me. He had a big mind, and a big heart, and I loved him.”

As he spoke he opened the second letter, and after a moment’s reading looked up at Lola, his face reflecting an almost comic dismay. “Listen, Lola! ‘My dear Doctor,’” he read slowly, his voice betraying his surprise and growing distress, “‘I am going to call upon you to-morrow, and ask you to do me a great honor. I love your daughter——’” he stopped helplessly, almost like a child, afraid to continue.

Lola rose from the table, blushing furiously, but with a happy light underlying the guilty look in her eyes.

“Father!”

He looked at her for a moment, and gradually his look softened and the surprise gave way to a humorous tenderness.

“Let’s tear it up,” he suggested, holding the unwelcome paper out before him. “I think that would be the best way out of this.”

“Oh, no, father!” exclaimed Lola, catching his hand anxiously; “do go on, it’s very interesting.”

“Oh,” said the Doctor drily, “then we will proceed. ‘I love your daughter, and I want to ask you to let her become my wife.’”

“And to think,” said Lola, as he paused, “and to think that I didn’t know his handwriting.”

“So! So you know who had the impudence to write this,” assumed her father.

“Well,” replied Lola rather timidly, “I have my suspicions.”

“Oh, this love business,” groaned the Doctor in great disgust; “just as I have everything fixed, this must come! It is Mr. Fenway, I suppose?”

“Father!” cried Lola, indignantly. “Mr. Fenway! The idea!”

The Doctor turned the page quickly and read the signature, then exclaimed to her in wonder, “John Dorris! And I thought he only came here to talk to me! Did you know anything of this?”

“Anything?” replied Lola. “Well, I—I told him to write to you.”

For just a moment he hesitated; they were alone together in the world, these two, and the bond between them had been very close, and now all was to be changed; this stranger, a man, whom a few months before they had never seen, had stepped into their lives, and never again would this man’s child be to him quite what she had been for so many peaceful, happy years.

JAMES YOUNG AS DICK FENWAY.

Something of the bitterness of this thought must have become visible in his face, for Lola stepped to him anxiously, and he, generous and afraid of hurting any living creature as he always was, smiled at her tenderly and put his arm about her as he spoke gravely: “God bless you Lola, and if he is the right man, God bless you both.”

She nestled against him, reassured by his tone, and he continued, “John Dorris, a fine fellow, but I thought for a moment that it must be Dick Fenway.”

“Father,” she protested, “it isn’t at all like you to be so silly! Dick Fenway is nothing but—but a millionaire!”

“Am I supposed to sympathize with him for that?” inquired the Doctor gravely. “But, my dear,” he added, as he saw that she was mutely appealing for his sympathy, “I like your young man best, although he is like the rest of us; he isn’t half good enough for the woman he loves.”

He led her tenderly into the front room, and seating himself in his favorite old chair, drew her down upon one of its sturdy arms, and began to question her about John Dorris. At first she was conscious and embarrassed, but little by little, reassured by his sympathy, she opened her heart to him, and let him see that this new love that had come into her life was not a passing fancy, but a feeling so pure and tender that he sat awed before it, as all good men are awed when for a moment it is permitted them to read the secrets of a woman’s heart. He helped her greatly in that half hour, and as she clung to him, timid, half afraid even of her own happiness, he spoke to her of her mother and of what her love had been to him.

In all the world I think there is no stronger tie, no closer sympathy, than there is between a father and a daughter, and these two felt that then, and gloried in it, never dreaming of that awful thing that was so soon to come between them.

At last he left her, and went to change his clothes, and when Maria entered the room ten minutes later, she still sat there, her lover’s letter in her hand, her mind filled with strange, new thoughts, half happiness, half fear.

Maria went to her, and seeing the look on her face, and the open letter in her hand, said timidly, “That’s a letter from him?”

“Yes,” smiled Lola happily, “from him!”

“So is mine, Miss,” volunteered poor Maria, “but I can’t read it.” Lola turned quickly to her.

“Shall I read it for you?”

“Thank you, Miss, I knew you would, but I’d be ashamed to have him know it. He ain’t like most of the young fellars hanging around. He’s smart! He’s a sailor, on the *Vermont*, and he’s just fine!”

“This is from Boston,” said Lola, as she glanced at the open letter Maria handed to her. “I am glad to read it for you, of

course, but before long I am going to have you so that you will be able to read his letters for yourself.”

“I hope so, Miss Lola, but I’m awful slow. I don’t know what I’d do if it wasn’t for you,” she continued gratefully; “there ain’t anybody else in the world I could bear to see reading his letters. I’d rather just keep them, without ever knowing what he said. It’s a lot just to know that a person wants to write to you.”

“‘Boston, June Third,’ began Lola. ‘Respected Friend: I write you these lines to say that I am well, and I hope you are the same. Boston is a fine City, with lots of people and many buildings. There is water here with ships and things in it, just like New York. I often think of you, and no girl seems like you to me, so no more from,

“‘Yours respectfully,
“‘Wm. Barnes.’”

“Ain’t that a fine letter?” said Maria, with great admiration. “Getting letters like that makes me more ashamed than ever. I’m afraid I’m too ignorant to appreciate all he tells about the countries he visits.”

“It is a very fine letter, I am sure, Maria, and he must be a fine fellow, and very fond of you?”

“Oh, yes, I’m sure he is,” replied Maria happily. “At first I wouldn’t have nothing to do with him, but he kept on coming around,—and now I’m glad he did. After what I saw at home I about made up my mind not to let any man come near me, but—but somehow he’s different. He wouldn’t act like father, or like my sister’s husband, I know; he’s the kind that seems to think a girl ought to be taken care of; that’s nice, when you never had anybody that thought that in all your life, isn’t it?”

“It’s very nice, Maria,” replied Lola, quite touched by the tone of real affection in Maria’s voice. “I am sure that it is the nicest thing in the world.” As she spoke a ring of the bell interrupted them, and Maria, hastily putting the precious letter in her apron pocket, went to the door and admitted a shabby little woman and a delicate child.

“Good morning, Mrs. Mooney,” said Lola, as she caught sight of them. “Good morning, Nellie! Come right in. Tell father, Maria!” she continued, and as Maria left the room she bent over little Nellie and kissed her tenderly, then turned to the anxious mother and did her best to put her at her ease.

“I’m afraid we’re too early, Miss,” began Mrs. Mooney, in that tired, colorless voice that tells its own story of hardship and hopelessness, “but Nellie couldn’t rest at all last night. We don’t want to be bothering your father, though; he’s been kind enough already.”

“He is quite ready for you, I’m sure,” replied Lola, “but I will go to him; he might need me to help him with his things.” As she left the room Nellie looked after her wistfully.

“There’s nobody I ever see like her,” she said, in that tone one often hears in children’s voices when they speak of those whom they have selected for that strange form of hero worship so common to the young. “When he hurts me, and I have to cry, I’ll see her with the tears in her eyes.”

“I know,” replied her mother gratefully; “it was she that first brought the Doctor to see you, and he’ll cure you yet, and if they do that——” She stopped for a moment and clutched at her breast, as though to tear away the dread and anguish that was there. “It’s all right, Nellie—it’s all right, I’m telling you! You’re going to be as good as any of ’em yet!”

LOLA VISITS THE MOONEY FAMILY.

CHAPTER II
A MARRIAGE PROPOSAL

Doctor Martin Barnhelm had for over twenty years practised medicine in New York. Aside from the fact that he was thoroughly qualified for his profession, he had a gentle, kindly manner that made him popular with all his patients. His might have been an unusual success, but of late years he had devoted more and more of his time to research work. He had a growing reputation in the medical world, as an expert in the development of electro-medical apparatus, and

unknown to anyone he was devoting all his energies to the realization of a theory, which to his mind at least promised to be the most important medical discovery since the introduction of antiseptic surgery. In the front room of his apartment he carried on his experiments, and so complete was his devotion to the object of his ambition that he scarcely allowed himself time to earn, by his profession, even the modest sum necessary for the household expenses. Lola saw that his heart was wholly set upon this one idea, and without in the least understanding its purpose, aided him by rigid economy, and had even, against his rather faint protest, begun to add to the family income by teaching in a settlement school.

Although the Doctor had so jealously guarded his time that he had lost most of his wealthy patients, he had never been able to deny his professional aid to those unfortunates from whom no other fee than gratitude could be expected. Nellie Mooney was one of these. She had inherited from a vicious father the tainted blood and the weakened constitution, which, helped on by the bad air and insufficient nourishment of the poor of the crowded tenement district, had resulted in a tubercular disease of the bone of her right arm.

Mrs. Mooney brought the child twice a week for treatment, but of late the disease had been gaining headway, and in spite of the Doctor's best efforts, she was in constant agony. He was treating her now in the little alcove he used as his office, and outside, with the curtains drawn, Lola was doing her best to soothe the almost frantic mother.

The treatment, in spite of all the Doctor's gentleness, was painful in the extreme, and Lola was anxious to spare the poor woman the sight of her daughter's suffering, but at the sound of a stifled cry from behind the curtains, Mrs. Mooney was unable to restrain herself, and rushed toward the next room with a cry of agony.

"Please," said Lola, as she gently stopped her. "They are better without you."

"I'm going to her," exclaimed the mother, quite unable to withstand the thought of her child suffering alone. "You don't know what it is, Miss Lola; I've got to go."

As she spoke she drew the curtain aside, and entered the alcove, and Lola would have followed had not a ring of the bell made her pause and go to the door. It was still early in the forenoon, and as Lola opened the door she fully expected to be greeted by another of the Doctor's patients, but in place of that a young man stood smiling on the threshold.

"John!" she exclaimed happily, then stopped shyly as he stepped eagerly forward and put his arm around her. It was only the night before that he had told her of his love, and she was still afraid of him, but he, manlike, refused to give up an advantage already won, and drew her to him, holding her closely until she, of her own accord, raised her lips to his.

"Did he read my letter?" he asked eagerly and rather nervously.

Now she had him at an advantage, for however great his fear was of her father, she had none at all.

"Oh, yes," she replied, smiling, "and he is perfectly furious."

As she saw his face fall she would have reassured him, but just then a moan of anguish from the alcove made him turn his head inquiringly.

"It is the little Mooney girl," she answered, in reply to his unspoken question. "It is some dreadful disease of the bone, but father hopes to be able to help her."

"Poor little girl," said John, as he offered her a cluster of gorgeous roses that he had brought with him.

Lola took the flowers with a word of thanks, as the Doctor threw open the curtains and entered with his arm about Nellie, and followed by Mrs. Mooney.

"There," he exclaimed, "it is over now. You are a brave girl, Nellie. You must bring her again on Saturday, Mrs. Mooney."

"You are not faint, are you, Nellie?" said Lola, alarmed at the child's paleness.

"Oh, no, Miss," replied Nellie bravely, her eyes fastened with wondering admiration on the beautiful roses.

"Take them," said Lola impulsively, holding them out to her, but she shrank back, afraid.

"Oh, no! Why, you just got them yourself."

"He doesn't mind, do you?" Lola demanded of John, and he answered so pleasantly and cordially that the child was persuaded to accept them, and was taken home by her mother in such a glow of gratitude that for the moment, at least, her pain was forgotten.

American Beauty roses, at a dollar each, on the window-sill of a wretched tenement! An extravagance, no doubt, and yet I wonder if they would have better fulfilled their destiny had they met the usual fate of their fellows and been trampled under foot upon the floor of some crowded ball room.

As Lola closed the door after Nellie and Mrs. Mooney, she turned to see John and her father eyeing one another, with the consciousness of the necessary interview showing in their faces. She laughed happily and, crossing to the Doctor, pointed to John, who stood rather stiffly beside the table.

"There is John, father."

"Humph," said he, coldly, determined at least that the young man's path should not be made too easy, "so I see."

“I—I,” began John, rather lamely, “I—er——”

Lola laughed merrily, and catching one by each hand drew them together, looking up at them, her face so radiant that in a moment their stiffness was forgotten, and they joined in her laugh.

“No use trying to be formal, John, while she is laughing at us.”

“No, sir,” replied John heartily, as he accepted the other’s proffered hand; “all that I am going to say is that I shall do my best to make her happy.”

“You won’t have any great trouble there, my boy. She has always been happy, and always will be if—if you will always love her.”

“I think I may safely promise that,” said John, smiling confidently. “It doesn’t seem to be difficult.”

“You are very happy, you two,” continued the Doctor, glancing from one to the other, “and will you believe an old man when he tells you that it is the only happiness that is real? A happiness so great that even if death comes, the memory is still the dearest feeling in your hearts. I have no sermon for you. God bless you, and help you, so long as you shall live.”

“We are having a little trouble already, Doctor, and I want your help,” said John boldly. “I want you to tell her that she must marry me at once.”

“John,” cried Lola, indignantly, “I haven’t any idea at all of being married for months!”

“Ah!” smiled the Doctor hopefully. “Perhaps, if you quarrel with him about it, we may get rid of him yet. That would be good news for me, yes, and for poor Dick Fenway!”

“Don’t tease,” protested Lola, “and, anyway, Mr. Fenway isn’t poor; he is a millionaire.”

“I suppose,” said John, “that it is rather an obvious thing for me to say, but I don’t like that man. It isn’t that I am jealous. I was once, I will admit, but after last night I am not afraid of him. But he isn’t on the level. I have the right to tell you now, Lola,” he continued, turning to her. “I knew him in Cleveland two years ago. He comes here to your house, and takes you to theatres and concerts.”

Lola looked at him, surprised. “Surely I am not going to make the sudden discovery that I have bound myself to a jealous old Ogre, am I?” she inquired.

“Fenway,” said John bluntly, “has a wife in Cleveland.”

The Doctor’s face grew stern, and Lola looked both shocked and distressed.

“John!” she exclaimed in dismay, for she liked young Fenway, and more than either of the others knew that, if this thing were true, he had done his best to deceive her.

“He married a telephone girl in one of the big hotels,” went on John, anxious to get the unpleasant story over, for he had a man’s feeling of loyalty to his sex, and hated to be placed in the position of a tale bearer.

“He has been trying ever since to get a divorce, but she won’t let him. It isn’t a thing a fellow likes to talk about, but it’s true.”

“Thank you,” said the Doctor gravely; “my home is not large enough to hold that sort of man. I shall tell him so if he calls again.”

“I am sorry, very sorry,” said Lola. “There was something about him I always liked, and it hurts me to think that he tried to deceive me as he did.”

“Bah!” protested the Doctor. “The world is full of men like that, but once you know them, they are harmless. Don’t look sad, my dear; it is so easy to forget all about him.”

It was not so easy, however, for Lola to forget Dick Fenway’s deceit as her father fancied. Only a few weeks before he had told her that he loved her, and when she had gently refused him he had shown such bitter disappointment that she had been quite touched, and had ever since done her best to be kind to him. Now the thought that at the time he had spoken of his love for her he had had a wife filled her with amazement. Lola knew little of the evil of the world, but she felt that here there was something wrong, and it disturbed her. Long after John had gone to his business, and her father had left to meet his old friend, Doctor Crossett, she sat thinking it over, and the more she thought the more distressed she became.

Dick Fenway had been brought to the house by a friend of John’s, and from the first she had been attracted by his gayety and recklessness. He was a great contrast to the men she had known. Careless, rich and happy, and there was something about the young man that had made a strong appeal to the maternal feeling that is in every woman, however young or unworldly she may be. Fenway’s habit of depending upon her for advice, his very confession of careless helplessness, had put him somewhat in the position of a child whom she felt it her duty to help with advice and counsel.

At first, when a little later Maria told her that he was waiting for her in the front room, she decided not to go to him, but, on second thought, she changed her mind, and thinking it best to have the whole matter definitely settled, she entered the room gravely, perhaps a little sadly.

KIND HEARTED DOCTOR BARNHELM ATTENDS THE SICK CHILD OF MRS. MOONEY.

“Good morning, Miss Barnhelm,” said Fenway, as he rose to meet her. “I know it’s too early for a call, but I wanted you to come for a ride in my new car. It’s downstairs.”

“No, thank you, Mr. Fenway.”

“Oh, but you’ve got to try it. She’s a corker. Why, I was thinking of you when I bought it.”

“Were you?” said Lola coldly.

“Yes, honestly. Why, you know, Lola, that——”

“How long is it since you have heard from your wife in Cleveland?” interrupted Lola.

For a moment his surprise silenced him; then he turned upon her angrily.

“Who’s been telling you my business?” he demanded, almost roughly.

“Do you think,” asked Lola gently, “that she would share in your desire for me to try your new car?”

“I didn’t want you to know about her,” he answered, a queer expression of mingled shame and determination on his face. “It happened a long time ago. I was a fool, more even of a fool than usual, when I married her. I haven’t seen her in almost two years, and—and I’m never going to see her again.”

“Father was angry when he heard that you were married,” said Lola, looking at him calmly, and with no expression of anger in her face. “He thought that you had not been quite honest about it.”

“What did you think?” questioned Fenway.

“I was very much surprised and a little hurt. Father is going to ask you not to come here again. That is why I was glad to speak to you before he did.”

“Then you won’t let it quite queer me with you?” exclaimed the young man eagerly. “She’s bound to give me a chance to divorce her, sooner or later. I’m having her watched, every breath she draws. Even if your father won’t let me come here you’ll see me sometimes, won’t you?”

“No, Mr. Fenway, I shan’t see you again. Father is right about that, but I am glad you came here to-day. Surely we have been good friends enough for me to ask you, for your own sake, to be worthy of the better side that I know is in you. This girl is your wife; you yourself say that she has not done anything wrong. Wouldn’t it be better to——”

“Don’t talk about her,” said Dick, savagely.

“I’m afraid that we can’t talk at all, unless we talk about her. A man with as kind a heart as yours couldn’t have meant to wrong her, or me, or any other girl. I hoped that I was enough your friend to be able to ask you to go back to her, if you can, and if you can’t, to tell you that you ought to be honest with the persons who trust you! There! I’ve said it!” And she stood looking at him for a moment. Then, softening, she extended her hand.

“Good-bye!”

He stood looking at her, then stepped forward boldly and took her hand.

“Lola,” and as he spoke there was a tone of passion in his voice that frightened her, “I love you!”

She looked him in the face and answered gently, “I am going to marry John Dorris.”

“Not—not because of this—this damned story you heard about me?”

“No,” replied Lola quietly. “Because I love him.”

He stepped back, dropping her hand, and for the first time since she had known him a look of real sadness came into his

face.

“I—I guess there’s nothing for me to do but go. I have usually had most everything I wanted in this world, but now if I’m going to lose you I’m getting the worst of things, after all.”

“I am sorry,” began Lola, but he shook his head impatiently and crossed to the door. “I haven’t any use for your sympathy. You say you are going to marry John Dorris, but you haven’t done it yet. You say that you are not going to see me again. I don’t believe that, Lola. You don’t love me. I know, but you don’t love him either. You don’t know what love is, and when you learn it won’t be from John Dorris.”

He closed the door behind him, and she heard him running down the stairs as she stood there with a strange dread in her heart.

CHAPTER III
DR. PAUL CROSSETT

From her window, a few hours later, Lola could see her father as he turned in from Eighth Avenue and walked briskly toward the house. With him was a rather short, extremely animated, and perfectly groomed gentleman, whom she at once knew to be Doctor Paul Crossett. Even from that distance she could plainly see that, although she knew him to be a man of her father’s age, he had the look of one much younger.

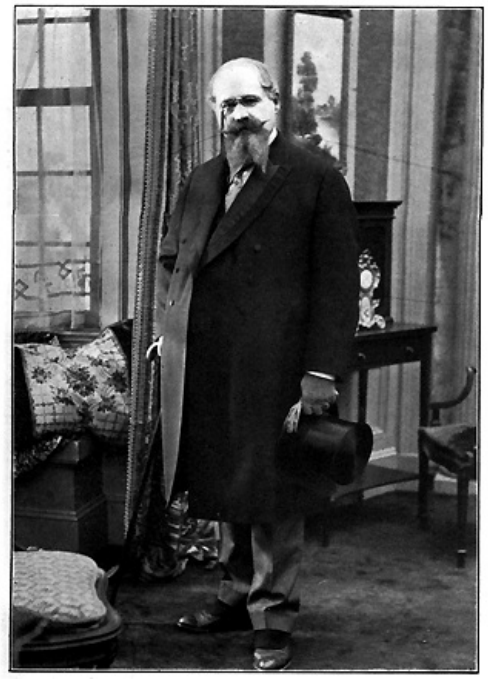
It would be a bold man who would dare to state that married life and the atmosphere of a home do more to bring about grey hairs and wrinkles than the emptiness of a bachelor’s existence, but in this case, at least, the contrast was startling.

Paul Crossett, quite fifty, had, and looked to have, all the enthusiasms of youth. He was a Frenchman, and to a close observer he was perhaps rather freer in gesticulations than our somewhat stiff New Yorkers, but he was far from being the Frenchman of the comic supplement. Indeed, Paul Crossett was a real citizen of the world, quite as much at home in New York, London or Berlin as he was in Paris. He was one of the best known authorities on nervous disorders in the medical world, besides being a surgeon of international reputation. As he entered the room with her father a moment later, Lola advanced to meet him with a smile, but, to her surprise, at the sight of her he stopped, and a look of deep sorrow, almost of fear, came into his face.

“This is Lola, Paul,” said the Doctor proudly.

In a moment the look on Dr. Crossett’s face changed to one of eager welcome, and he stepped forward and took both of her extended hands in his.

“You are as your mother was,” he said gently, then as he stooped to kiss her saying softly, “My age permits,” she saw a tear on his smooth, almost boyish cheek, and with a woman’s quick intuition she understood and loved him for the love he had had for her mother, whom he had not seen since his early manhood, but whom he had never forgotten, and never could forget.



E. M. KIMBALL AS DOCTOR CROSSET.

In that moment grew up between those two an affection and an understanding that under happier circumstances would have lasted all their lives. In the awful time, now so rapidly approaching, he was to be her truest friend. His love and sympathy was to outlast that of lover and father. He gave to her the place in his heart that her mother had always had, the same blind love and devotion, and it was hers until the end.

“I am glad to know you, Doctor Crossett,” said Lola, a little timidly, as he stepped away from her, now smiling merrily.

“So,” he replied heartily, as he looked around the room curiously. “So! this is one of your famous New York apartments?”

“No, Paul,” said Dr. Barnhelm, rather ruefully, “this is a flat.”

“But what is the difference?”

“About a hundred dollars a month.”

“But surely you are not poor, Martin, you, with your mind?”

“My dear Paul, it takes twenty-four hours a day to make a good living here in New York, and I could not spare the time.”

“I see,” exclaimed Dr. Crossett, as his keen eyes fell upon the complicated electrical apparatus on the table. “You had a better use for it.” He crossed and bent over the affair with deep professional interest.

“So? A high frequency, a most peculiar and most powerful interrupter. Not for the X-ray? No, then for what?”

“I am going to tell you all about it. There is no man in America, and only one other in Europe, who could judge of it as you could judge. It is ten years’ work, Paul; it has meant poverty to both of us, but it is a big thing.”

“Tell me,” said Dr. Crossett eagerly.

“Tell him, father,” interrupted Lola, “while I run to the store. I will only be a few moments, and you won’t miss me. When I come back, Doctor Crossett,” she smiled at him frankly, “I am going to make you explain to me all about it. Father never would.”

She left them, in spite of Dr. Crossett’s offers to accompany her, and as the door closed behind her he stood for a moment looking after her, and from her to a framed picture of her mother that hung on the wall.

“Nine years, Martin,” he laid his slender, powerful hand gently on his old friend’s shoulder; “nine years since you wrote me that her mother——”

They stood together for a moment in silence before the Doctor answered: “Yes, Paul, nine years.”

“I was with you in my heart,” the Frenchman continued, “but, tut—tut—! Come, you have discovered—what?”

As he turned away the bell rang, and with a word of excuse Dr. Barnhelm stepped to the door and admitted John Dorris.

“Lola told me to wait for her here,” said the young man cheerfully. “She wouldn’t let me go with her, to tell the truth; I am taking a little holiday, and I don’t quite know what to do with myself.”

The Doctor turned to his friend, smiling.

“Each of us, Doctor Crossett, as we grow older accumulate troubles. Will you let me present my worst, Mr. John Dorris?”

“I am pleased,” said the Frenchman, bowing, “but shall I confess that I do not understand?”

“I am going to marry Lola,” said John frankly, as he stepped forward and offered his hand.

“Ah! Now I do understand,” responded Dr. Crossett. “Then Dr. Barnhelm has my sympathy, and you my approval. You have at least, good taste.”

“Thank you, Doctor—am I in the way?” inquired John, turning to Dr. Barnhelm.

“Not at all. I was about to explain my pet hobby; as you will often have to hear about it, it might be a good thing if you were to listen now. I will spare you the technical description, John; you would not understand, and you, Paul, are of course familiar with this apparatus. This, then, is an instrument by which, if I am right, and I am convinced that there is no doubt of that, I can restore life to a person who has been dead for many hours.”

“Doctor!” cried John, horrified and anxious; and he turned to Dr. Crossett, expecting him to share in his belief that long hours of brooding over his experiments had turned the old man’s brain, but, to his intense surprise, he read nothing but eager interest in the Frenchman’s face, as the latter bent over the instrument and inquired earnestly: “Many hours, Martin?”

“Five,” replied Dr. Barnhelm; “perhaps six, possibly seven!”

“That has not been claimed before?”

“I can do it.”

“You can restore the dead to life?” demanded John with such disbelief and distress in his voice that Dr. Crossett turned to him with a kindly smile and said gently, “You need not look at your future father-in-law in horror, my dear young friend. He is not mad. I have studied these things, as perhaps you know. In Paris I have seen the experiment tried. I have seen the heart action cease and later be resumed. I have seen muscular activity stimulated and the patient, whom

I myself had pronounced dead, rise and walk unaided from the operating room. But"—he stopped and for a moment eyed his old friend keenly—"but only has this been done in my peculiar case, and never more than five minutes after the last flutter of the pulse!"

"My theory is right," replied Dr. Barnhelm with deep conviction. "My instrument is right! As yet I have been unable to demonstrate it upon a human being for want of a subject, but I have succeeded always with the lower animals."

"You claim what, Martin?" continued Dr. Crossett. "That you can restore the heart action to those who die, of what?"

The Doctor smiled slightly as he replied:

"Death is what? When the heart ceases to beat! Life is what? When it beats on, untroubled. I can take the body of a man whose pulse has not fluttered in hours, and I can bring the beating of his heart back! I can bring him back to life!"

He looked almost in triumph into the earnest, sympathetic face of his friend, then turned to John, but his smile left him at what he saw in the young man's eyes.

"Don't say that, Doctor," begged John, earnestly. "I can't believe that it is true, and if it is, it is horrible!"

"I do not claim to *give* life," explained the older man gently, "only to restore it. For how long depends upon the nature of the disease of which the patient dies. Old age must always have its victims. I cannot check decay, nor cancer, nor tuberculosis. There are many cases where, if I were to bring my patient back to life, it would be but to die again, but there are many, many times when I can, and will, restore life to those who die by accident, by drowning, by heart failure, by shock!"

"It is sacrilege!" cried John in horror. "Suppose that a man dies, and his body is brought to you. Do you claim that you will give him back his life?"

"I do," answered the Doctor firmly.

"What of his soul?"

"John," exclaimed the doctor, startled and offended by the question.

"When a man dies," continued John earnestly, "more than the throbbing of his pulse leaves him. The thing we call a soul, whatever it may be, wherever it may be, goes out with his life, out of his body to a life everlasting. In God's name, how dare you talk of bringing that empty shell back into the living world?"

"I have lived for over twenty years in the dissecting room," remarked Dr. Crossett, with rather a contemptuous smile. "I know the human body. They differ very little, each organ has its place, all is complete—I have not found a soul."

"We do not think alike there, Paul," said Dr. Barnhelm gravely. "There is something, a soul, an intelligence, call it what you will, but it is not tangible, and it is divine! I mean no sacrilege. Why, this theory of mine, the truth of which I am prepared to prove, has been my prayer, and now it has been granted. It is for the good of humanity."

"I don't like it," replied John nervously. "You know best, I suppose, and I am going to try to take your word for it, but I don't like it. If you don't mind, I'll go and meet Lola. It may be all right, I suppose it is, if you say so, but it gives me the fidgets."

He left the room as he spoke, and as he closed the door and started down the stairs he heard them laughing together.

"He is not a physician," said Dr. Crossett as soon as John was out of hearing.

"No," replied Dr. Barnhelm. "He is a bank clerk."

"Bank clerk! La! Then why try to make him understand? Come, tell me all about this," and he looked critically at the apparatus before him.

"It is the theory," began the Doctor, "of a tremendously interrupted electrical current applied to the heart. The high frequency in itself is not new."

"No," agreed Dr. Crossett. "Romanoff, Thailer, Woodstock, eh?"

"Yes, but the application is new, and also I have here a Mercury Turbine Interrupter of my own invention. I can get over thirty thousand more interruptions a second than were ever before obtained. With it I have never once failed. It was the great high frequency by which I won my battle. It is ready now to show to the world."

"Ah! Your theory—it is pretty."

"It is true."

"Then," exclaimed Dr. Crossett, "there need be no more of this." He looked contemptuously around the shabby room and out through the window at the noisy, squalid neighborhood.

"To live as New York lives! It is not civilization. It is like the cave man, to live in a hole in a cliff. Bah! To sit on an ugly chair, and to look at nothing, out of dirty windows!"

"New York," laughed Dr. Barnhelm, "is the great market place of the world. You can buy anything here, even beautiful surroundings."

“Then you, Martin, shall buy them. This,” he touched the electrical apparatus almost tenderly, “will bring fame and wealth. Happiness you had before.”

“It has been selfish of me in a way, Paul,” began the Doctor, as though trying to find excuses to satisfy his own conscience, “but Lola has not minded. She is as Helen was. If she is surrounded by love and tenderness, she is content. She does not ask fortune for many of her favors.”

“She does not need them, Martin.”

As Dr. Crossett spoke, from below, through the open window, came the harsh clang of an ambulance bell, and these two surgeons both stopped and listened, their professional instinct unconsciously aroused.

“There is a sound, Martin,” he continued, “that is understood in every country in the world.”

“The ambulance stopped here at this house,” said Dr. Barnhelm, with a trace of nervousness, and he stepped to the window and looked out. “There is a crowd collecting. I wonder——”

DOCTOR BARNHELM PERFECTS HIS MACHINE FOR RESTORING ANIMATION.

The door burst open, and John Dorris entered the room; as they saw his face, they knew at once that the news he brought was bad news, and both being brave men, they turned calmly and steadily to meet it.

“Doctor,” he panted hoarsely, “Lola—Lola!”

“Well, John?”

It was the father who spoke, and his cool, even tone did much to steady the boy.

“She,” he continued brokenly, “she—they—they are bringing her! There was an accident, she—she——” He stopped as Dick Fenway entered, so pale and wild, that Dr. Crossett, to whom he was a stranger, stepped forward, as though to offer to support him, but stopped suddenly as Fenway cried out: “I did it! It was my fault! As she crossed the Avenue I turned my car, thinking she would stop, but she hated me, and she wouldn’t stop, and—and—I killed her.”

There was silence for a moment in the room, broken only by Fenway’s sobs and by a low moan of anguish from the father. Then came a sound of stumbling footsteps, slowly, very slowly advancing up the stairs. The sound of men carrying a heavy burden.

“My friend! Be brave!” and Paul Crossett put his arm about his old friend’s shoulders. “We will fight for her life, you and I together, as life is not often fought for.”

The footsteps had grown nearer, in the room there was silence as the four men waited, in the court-yard below a street organ began to play, and the foolish, empty tune burned itself forever into their memories as they stood there.

The footsteps hesitated for a moment on the landing below, then began again, nearer, louder now, and suddenly a big, red-faced policeman stood in the doorway.

“Here?” he inquired, in that queer, impersonal voice that speaks of long acquaintance with the tragedies of life.

“Yes,” replied John, hoarsely, “here.”

An ambulance surgeon entered in response to the officer’s nod, and following him came another policeman and a white-coated driver; between them on a stretcher they bore a covered form, very quiet, so quiet that not even a movement stirred the blanket that covered it.

As they put their burden down gently on the worn old couch the young surgeon turned to Dr. Barnhelm, who stepped

forward.

“It is no use, sir. You can’t do anything. It was the heart, I think. She was not crushed, but she died instantly. Can any of you give me the facts for my report?”

Maria had entered the adjoining room, attracted by the unusual sounds, and heard what he said, and as she heard she cried out pitifully. The sound seemed to add the finishing touch to the strain they were under, and they turned sharply.

“Go, Maria!” said the Doctor, coldly. “Answer any questions this gentleman asks of you. Compose yourself, please, and go.”

The girl turned without a word, and followed by the surgeon went out into the hall, the driver and one of the policemen joining them, while the other crossed and touched Dick Fenway on the arm.

“You’ll have to come with me, sir,” he said quietly.

Fenway for a moment looked at him bewildered, then stooped and picking up the hat he had dropped on the floor, slowly walked to the door. At the door he stopped and looked back at the covered figure on the couch, shuddered and went out, the officer following.

John closed the door softly behind them and turned back to where the two men stood, Paul Crossett’s hand on the father’s shoulder.

“Can’t—can’t you do anything,” he questioned, “anything at all?”

“Wait!” The word came like a command, sharply, from Dr. Barnhelm’s lips. “Paul! You know what I am going to do?”

Dr. Crossett nodded slightly. The meaning of it came suddenly to John, and he cried out in protest, “Doctor!”

“You see her there! Dead!” The father spoke slowly, calmly. “Well, I can bring her back! She is my daughter.” He turned quietly to John, but with a look in his eyes that few men would have dared oppose.

“Shall I let her die? I—who can save her?”

“No,” the young man spoke humbly, “no. I—I love her too.”

“Go—wait outside. Go—now!” and John went with just one look at the still form on the couch.

“I am ready, Martin,” said Dr. Crossett, when they were alone, and he threw off his coat and stepping to the table starting to connect the batteries and adjust his instrument with the practical hand of an expert. For just one moment the father faltered.

“It is only a theory, Paul. It may fail.”

“We are here,” replied his friend steadily, “to make that theory fact. You must direct me. Call the interruptions as you want them.”

The doctor crossed to the couch, and drawing aside the blanket stood looking down at Lola. In that moment all that this child of his meant to him came into his mind, and the thought gave him strength. The fear and grief died, and in their place came firmness, confidence. He knelt and deftly unfastened her dress and bared her girlish breast, then crossing to the table took in each hand a glass electrode connected by long wires to the powerful machine, and slowly returned to where his daughter lay.

“Now, Paul!”

A touch of Dr. Crossett’s practised hand and the great machine came to life. Back and forth in the coil violet sparks jumped, flashing, sparkling. From the electrodes in his strong hands a million tiny specks of light sprang angrily, and when for a moment he held them close together these specks became a solid bar of violet light, almost a flame. The noise was deafening, the solid crash of the leaping current, as Dr. Crossett gradually moved his index up to its full strength, rang through the little room and echoed back from the walls, the vibrations so close that to any but a practiced ear they sounded like one steady roar.

Once again he paused beside the couch, and an electrode in each hand, the violet light dancing all about him, he raised his eyes in a short prayer. “God help me,” he said, his voice half buried in the riot of sound. “Don’t hold my pride against me. I ask it, not as the inventor, but as the father.”

He did not speak again, nor did the friend who stood watchfully beside the spluttering, crashing machine. Three times he held the electrodes to her body, one over her heart, one against her back, but there was no movement, no sign of life. The leaping sparks seemed to pass through her tender frame, but she lay there still, with that awful stillness of the dead. The man, working over her, the father no longer, but the physician, the inventor, did not hesitate. Again and again she was enfolded in the bright beams of violet light. Again and again he held the leaping current to her heart, and at last, when, for what seemed to be the hundredth time he drew back and looked at her, his whole body suddenly stiffened, a hoarse cry burst from him, and he fell crashing to the floor.

Dr. Crossett shut off the current and sprang to him. He had fainted, and turning from him to Lola, Paul Crossett saw what the father had seen. A soft color slowly stealing back into that white face and a slow, steady rising and falling of her breast as her heart began again to beat.

CHAPTER IV
BROUGHT TO LIFE

On the following day the papers devoted a few lines to the accidental injury of a young girl, “Lola Barnhelm, daughter of Dr. Martin Barnhelm, a physician in good standing in the neighborhood.” The fact that “the automobile by which the young lady was injured belonged to Richard Fenway, the well-known Wall Street broker, son of old Dick Fenway of Cleveland, and a well-known figure in the life of the ‘Broadway crowd,’” seemed to be of more general interest than the account of her injury, but two of the papers noted the fact that “she was at first pronounced dead and later found to be merely suffering from shock.”

What Dr. Barnhelm and Dr. Crossett said to one another no one besides themselves ever knew. To John, after the moment when Dr. Crossett went to him, white-faced, and awed, and told him that Lola was alive, they said nothing.

John was content. He loved her, and she had come back to him! Had she for those few moments been really dead, or had the young ambulance surgeon been mistaken? What did it matter? Late that night they had allowed him to creep softly to her chamber door, and looking in he had seen her sleeping quietly, and they assured him that, aside from a probable nervous shock, she was quite unharmed.

In the days that followed the nervous shock turned out to be more serious than was at first supposed. Physically, Lola seemed to be in good condition, but for the first time in her life she was unjust, irritable, and jealous. Dr. Crossett claimed this to be a fine symptom of returning health.

“Temper,” he remarked cheerfully, “is the copyright trade-mark of the convalescent,” but to John her sudden, unreasonable fits of anger and a feeling that in anyone but Lola he would have described as selfishness amazed and alarmed him.

Dr. Barnhelm, too, seemed changed, but in his case the change was for the better. He was closeted all day, and often almost all night with his machine, and its low throbbing penetrated the whole building and brought indignant protests from the other tenants, protests that were received by the Doctor with a slow smile of contempt and at once forgotten.

From the moment when he was assured of his daughter’s safety, he buried himself in his work, calm and happy, with little thought for anything but this great discovery of his—this wonderful invention that was to do so much for suffering humanity.

Dr. Crossett left them after the first few days to keep some important engagement in the West, but before he left he had insisted upon advancing Dr. Barnhelm a sum of money sufficient for his needs, enough to allow him freedom to complete his experiments and prepare the elaborate models necessary for a demonstration before the Medical Society.

At first Dr. Barnhelm had refused to accept the favor, but Lola, greatly to his surprise, had sided against him, and more to please her than for any other reason he had taken the money on the understanding that it was to be repaid out of the first profits of his invention. At the time there seemed little reason to doubt his ability to repay his friend. Fame and success mean much to a physician’s income, and after the proof he had so lately had how could he consider anything but success possible? He gave up his practice, excepting only a few of his old charity patients, and turning the borrowed money over to Lola, who had for a long time been in the habit of controlling the family purse, he buried himself in his work.

For over two months Dr. Crossett travelled, first to Chicago, then to Denver, and from there to San Francisco. Everywhere he was received with the honors due to a man of his high standing in the medical world, and allowed full opportunity to compare the treatment of nervous disorders with the methods of the best physicians of his own country. He had come as the representative of the French society, of which he was president, and it was his object to gather enough information to aid him in the writing of a book upon this subject. He heard once from Dr. Barnhelm, notifying him of a change in their address from upper Eighth Avenue to an apartment on Riverside Drive. No explanation for the change was offered, the rest of the letter being a long account of the progress of his work and a few words about Lola, that she had quite recovered her health and seemed to be in unusually high spirits.

For some weeks after this he had been travelling almost constantly, but on his return to Chicago he found a short note waiting for him at his hotel. In this note Dr. Barnhelm simply stated that he was in trouble and anxious to see him. That it was nothing that need cause him to cut short his stay in the West, but that the matter was a delicate one, and that he was anxious to see him immediately upon his return.

Dr. Crossett was rather alarmed by the whole tone of his old friend’s letter. Of Lola there was no mention, but he could not free himself of a vague suspicion that she must be the cause of her father’s evidently deeply troubled mind, and he brought his business affairs to an abrupt end and caught the next fast train to New York.

It had been Spring when Dr. Crossett landed in America; it was now Summer, and, as his taxi ran smoothly up Fifth Avenue to the Park, the boarded-up fronts of the houses suggested to him a plan for forcing a brief extension of his vacation and spending a week or two with Lola and her father at some of the famous American watering-places of which he had often heard. His own splendid health and superb vitality he owed, in part, to his habit of allowing himself frequent intervals of mental rest and outdoor exercise, and as he thought of how Lola would be benefited by a change from the hot, stale air of the city to some beautiful seashore or mountain resort, he smiled to himself happily.

The cab stopped, and as he got out and turned to pay the driver he noticed with surprised approval the unbroken row of stately apartment houses facing the green of Riverside Park and the wide expanse of the Hudson. His old friend was

growing wise he thought to himself; here at least were grass, and trees, and fresh air.

Maria admitted him, and showing him through a wide foyer-hall into a pretty and well-furnished parlor, turned to leave him, but he called her back anxiously.

“Miss Lola! Tell me, Maria?”

There was just a trace of hesitation as she answered.

“Very well, I think, sir. I never saw her looking better in my life.”

“Good! Good! Ah! The times, they have changed,” and he looked around the daintily furnished apartment smilingly. “It is not as it was two months ago.”

“No, sir.”

“You also,” as he noticed her neat black dress and white cap and apron; “you are a very pretty girl, Maria.”

“Thank you, sir.”

“Do not thank me,” he replied with a chuckle. “I share in the pleasure it causes you. Now, Maria, don’t blush. I am old enough to be your father, and I like you because you are good to those two who are so dear to me. I am happy to see all these signs of prosperity. The Doctor’s practice must have increased?”

“I don’t think so, sir,” said Maria. “No patients ever come here, leastways none but the poor ones who don’t pay nothin’.”

“So? And yet he has not given the news of his discovery to the world. I do not comprehend.”

Maria hesitated for a moment, then faced him anxiously as though to say something, but after a moment’s pause she recovered herself and said respectfully:

“The Doctor is out, sir. Miss Lola is dressing. She will be here in a moment.”

“I am in no hurry,” he replied, “now that you tell me that all is well here. I am content to share in the happiness of my friend. His daughter well; a fine home; one could not hope for this two months ago! Poverty, death! Pish!” and he snapped his fingers contemptuously. “They are gone! It is indeed the age of miracles.”

“Coming back like she did, sir,” retorted Maria, “after everyone thought she was dead, ain’t a thing that does a body any good! You couldn’t expect her to be quite so happy and so sweet as she used to be, could you, Doctor?”

In the girl’s voice was so much of anxious inquiry, such a tone of real sadness and regret, that he turned to her alarmed, but at that moment Lola came into the room. In the few seconds it took her to cross to him, smiling, both hands extended in greeting, his practiced eye assured him that never in all his experience had he seen a young woman in such superb physical health. She was radiant! The simple little housedress in which he had first seen her had been exchanged for an elaborate afternoon costume. Her skin was clear, he had remembered her as being pale, even in the short time he had seen her before the accident; but now she had a high color and an eager, animated manner that spoke of an abundant reserve of vitality.

“There you are, Doctor,” she cried gaily, as he returned the warm pressure of her hands. “I wonder if you know how glad I am to see you?”

“No, my dear,” he answered, “not unless you are reflecting my own pleasure in seeing you like this. I was worrying about you, way off there in the West. Were you well? Were you happy? Now I have but to look at you.”

“You are a flatterer, Doctor.”

As Lola turned from him smiling, her eyes fell on Maria, who stood watching the Doctor’s face with a curious look of eager curiosity, her look changed, and she spoke sharply, almost cruelly.

“What are you doing here, Maria?”

Maria flushed and tears came to her eyes as she stammered, “I—I——”

“You may go.”

“Yes, Miss.”

Maria left the room and Lola turned to find Dr. Crossett looking at her in wonder. He knew of the real affection that there had been between these two, and his own tender heart told him how Lola’s tone must have hurt the girl who had so much reason to think of her with affection and gratitude. He made no effort to keep a look of reproof out of his eyes, but if Lola saw it there she gave no sign of it, but seated herself on a broad couch and motioned to him airily to seat himself beside her.

“Now, Dr. Crossett,” she began, “I want to talk with you before you see father. He is the dearest man in the world, but he knows nothing at all about business. He wrote to you?”

“Yes, that is why I am here.”

“It is about money; he is very poor.”

“Poor?” Dr. Crossett glanced about the expensively furnished room in surprise, but Lola continued without seeming to notice. “He did not want to write, but I made him. You are his friend. You love him. I am sure that you will be glad to help him.”

“What I have is his,” answered Dr. Crossett. “Surely there is no need to repeat that. If he wanted more, why did he not ask for it when I gave him my check before I left New York?”

“Oh, that money he borrowed from you he was going to use for his experiments; to perfect his machines, and to prepare to demonstrate them, but naturally I could not allow him to do that. If he’s to be a famous man he must, at least, live like a gentleman. I selected this apartment, and insisted upon his moving, and now he is so worried, and nervous, and cross, just because he has no more money.”

“He is my friend,” said the Doctor gravely. “I will gladly supply all he needs, but——”

“But——!” repeated Lola impatiently, and to him for a moment it sounded almost rudely. “Surely you are not going to say that I have been extravagant. Father has hinted it, so has John, and it wouldn’t be fair for you to join them against me. You won’t do that, will you?”

LOLA SHOCKS HER FATHER AND HIS FRIEND BY HER HEARTLESSNESS.

As she looked up at him shyly, yet confidently, it seemed to him that the last twenty years had been a dream, and that he was sitting beside that other young woman, so like her, and any trace of disappointment he had felt at her attitude fell away, and there was nothing but tenderness in his voice as he replied:

“It was more years ago than I can count that your mother came to me and looked up as you are looking now, and begged me not to side against her. She wanted to marry your father; and all were saying ‘no.’ I could not refuse her anything any more than I could you, although it hurt me to help bring about that marriage, for I loved her myself. So you see how helpless I am. I must fight your battles. I have no choice.”

“You’re a dear,” laughed Lola happily, “and if I had been mother—but there—I must not make you vain. I was sure that I could depend upon you. Now, let’s not talk about serious things any more. Come! Let me show you the view of the river from the windows. Isn’t it glorious here! Why, do you know, Doctor dear, that after Eighth Avenue this is like another world? Look!” She had dragged him to the window and with one hand on his shoulder, and her pretty, eager face flushed with an almost passionate enthusiasm, she stood pointing out to where the Drive curved majestically, flanked on one side by its stately buildings, on the other by the always beautiful Hudson and the distant Palisades.

“Look!” she repeated. “I was content once in that shabby, horrid flat. Perfectly content, and patient, and happy. Father said that I was content because I was good, but I know better; it was because I was ignorant; because the thing that was mine was the only thing I knew. He talks of going back! Threatens, because he is afraid, because he never spent money in his life, and is too old to learn now, to return to that squalid, shabby, dirty hole. I want you to talk to him,” and she turned him so that he faced her, and as he felt the nervous grasp on his arm he marvelled at her strength. “I want you to tell him what I have already told him, that, if he goes back there, he will go alone. I am out of it now, and there isn’t power enough in the world to drag me back.”

“My dear,” remonstrated the Doctor gravely, “you and John are to be married; he is young; surely while he is making his way in the world you will be willing to share whatever his fortune may be. Love is as sweet in poverty, Lola, as it is in a home like this.”

“That is a platitude, Doctor, a platitude invented by cowards who weren’t strong enough to win the good things of life, and who, because they couldn’t have them, were fools enough to try to blind themselves with stupid words. I am a woman! A woman’s only chance for all the beautiful things of life rests upon some man. When a man comes to me and says, ‘I want the only things you have, your youth, your love, your beauty,’ haven’t I the right to say, ‘What will you give me for them?’”

The Doctor drew back, deeply shocked. Her words, the deep earnestness of her voice, and the hard, selfish look in her eyes, surprised and hurt him. He was a sentimentalist and to him a woman’s whole existence should be in her love, and in the home her lover could provide for her. Modern as he was in his practice of medicine, advanced as he was in his

psychological studies, at heart he was an old-fashioned man, with all of the old-fashioned man's ideas of love and marriage. For a moment he felt a feeling of repulsion, almost of horror, and he looked coldly at this young girl, who seemed to be so greatly changed by a few short weeks of luxury, but as he looked he thought of the day, only so lately passed, when she had been brought to them, white and lifeless, and as he saw her now, defiant, rebellious, in all the vigor of her splendid health, he smiled at her tenderly. He knew, as few men know, the changes that some great nervous shock so often makes in a person's character, and he resolved to devote himself to this girl until her nervous system fully recovered, to help her with gentle kindness until her old tranquil serenity was fully restored. It came into his mind that of all the many cases of hysteria which he had successfully treated here was one that would challenge his greatest skill, and he was glad of the fortune that had sent him to her, for his experienced eyes saw that she was to need his help, and in the confidence of a man to whom failure seldom came he felt secure in his ability to restore her to her old gentle self. He sat down beside her and talked quietly of her father and of the fame and fortune that was so sure to be his, and as he talked he watched her and saw just a young, happy, innocent girl, serene now, perfectly gentle, perfectly calm, and they laughed and talked merrily together until her father entered the room.

CHAPTER V
A LOVER'S QUARREL

Dr. Crossett looked at his friend anxiously and found, as he was prepared to find, that the Doctor seemed nervous and depressed, but when, after a few moments, Lola left them together, he was hardly prepared for the look of shame and humiliation he saw on his face.

"You sent for me, Martin," he said, trying to show in his voice the deep sympathy and friendship that he really felt.

"Paul," the Doctor answered, after a moment's hesitation, "the money I borrowed from you is gone! Gone! and not for the purpose for which you loaned it."

"I made no condition, Martin. The loan was my own suggestion. I am not a poor man, and all that I have is at your service. It is not worth the tragedy in your face. With the fame that your discovery will bring to you, you can easily repay me. Come!" He put his arm affectionately over Dr. Barnhelm's shoulder. "Let's say no more about it. Just tell me of your work. It must be only a few days now before you demonstrate before the Medical Society."

"To-morrow night," replied the Doctor. "I have remedied the flaws in the construction of my apparatus, and Saturday Karn & Co. promised to deliver the new machine. They sent me a bill for eight hundred dollars. I"—he stopped, his face flushed with shame; then recovered himself with an effort—"I was unable to pay the amount, and they—they refused to give me credit."

"But, Martin," Dr. Crossett spoke gravely, "your life's work was depending upon the delivery of your apparatus in time for demonstration to-morrow. Surely you should have set aside that sum, no matter what else you sacrificed."

"I was selfish enough," replied the Doctor, "to want my mind freed of every care. I allowed Lola to persuade me to place all of the loan in her hands. She knew that this bill was coming. Saturday I—I asked her for the money, and—and she told me that it was gone."

"She had spent it?"

"Yes."

"How?"

The Doctor pointed, with a smile that almost brought the tears to his friend's eyes, to the expensive furniture and rather elaborate window hangings.

"I—I blame myself," he said quickly, as if to prevent any critical mention of his daughter. "She is young, and she doesn't understand. I had grown used to trusting her with everything. Why, Paul! In these past years there have been times when I could not collect enough to pay our rent, little as it was. Not once did I even have to tell her of it. She always seemed to guess it for herself, and she would bring me what I needed, saved from her pitiful little housekeeping allowance, or earned by her teaching. All this selfish greed of pleasure and luxury is new to her. I do not like it. It is not like my girl!"

"Our fault," agreed Dr. Crossett. "We spoke too much of the great success that was coming to you. It turned her head. Come, let us forget it."

"Not yet, Paul; I want you to understand. I could not speak of her, as I am speaking now, to anyone but you. When she first insisted upon taking this apartment I knew that I did wrong not to forbid it, but she was in a peculiar nervous condition—she seemed morbid and unlike herself. I hardly dared to oppose her."

"And the change?" inquired Dr. Crossett. "Has it done her good?"

"I hardly know," the father answered, anxiously. "Her health seems to be satisfactory. In fact, she never, even as a child, seemed to be in such perfect physical condition, and yet——"

He stopped, seemingly unable to finish.

"It is the emotion," exclaimed Dr. Crossett, "the love. Young girls before marriage often have serious nervous disorders.

We must be patient. There is no need to worry. Marriage will restore her old poise. I speak with authority, Martin, for my practice has shown me much of the delicate nature of these nervous disorders; there is nothing here that need alarm you. Come! Tell me. When is this marriage to take place?"

"I cannot tell. It was to have been very soon after her recovery, but she has already postponed it twice. Young Dorris is almost out of patience."

"Almost out of patience!" repeated Dr. Crossett scornfully. "A bad mood in which to begin a lifelong companionship with even the best of women. Come." He put his hand almost playfully on the Doctor's shoulder and shook him gently. "Facts! Always stick to the facts. We know her. She is a good girl. We love her. There is no more to say."

"If it is money she wants," exclaimed Dr. Barnhelm bitterly, "I will make it for her. It isn't that I think anything money can buy too good for her, but for her to be selfish."

"Hush," said Paul very tenderly. "She has no mother; we must remember that. We are men, and we stand helpless before her womanhood, like children in the dark. Now! We will say no more. We will go to the bank to-day, while there is time. We will get that money, and to-morrow night, before the Medical Society, you shall make your name big, famous. Eh?"

"If I do," exclaimed Dr. Barnhelm gratefully, "I shall have you to thank for it."

"She shall thank me, Martin. You will tell her that part of the silks, and ribbons, and laces that you buy for her come from me. Eh? She will love me then. Come."

Dr. Crossett allowed Dr. Barnhelm no time for remonstrance, but insisted so firmly that they should go at once to the bank that he was obliged to agree, and leaving a message for Lola that they would soon return, they descended in the elevator and walked briskly down the Drive, the Frenchman declaring that it was nothing short of a crime to ride on such a day, and he kept up such a flood of cheerful talk and happy reminiscence that, in spite of his deep humiliation, Dr. Barnhelm soon found himself laughing merrily.

In the meantime things were not going smoothly in Lola's sitting room in the apartment. John Dorris had for some hour or more been doing his best to win Lola into a promise of an early marriage, and in spite of his best resolution he found himself rapidly growing impatient.

"It is no use, John!" Lola spoke almost angrily.

"The more we talk of it, the less we seem to agree. I do not care to be married before winter."

"This is the third time you have changed the date," remonstrated John. "I am beginning to think that——"

"Well?" She interrupted sharply and with so much of challenge in her manner that John had to curb his rising indignation as he replied.

"If I am not careful we will quarrel again, and we have done more than enough of that lately."

"I am sure I can't help it, John, if you choose to be cross and unreasonable."

"Has it all been my fault?"

"No, of course not," cried Lola, with one of the sudden changes of mood that had so often puzzled him of late. "I have been perfectly horrid, I know, and I won't be any more. Just forgive me, John—and—and"—she looked up at him sweetly —"and kiss me, if you want to."

John stooped and kissed her, and asked earnestly, "And we shan't postpone the wedding again, shall we?"

"Only a little while, dear."

He turned angrily away, but she caught his arm.

"Now, John! Can't you trust me? Don't you love me enough to give me my way in a little thing like this?"

As he stood rather coldly beside her, she suddenly threw both her arms about his neck and clung to him. Much as he loved her there was something in the utter abandon of her manner that shocked him, and for a moment he tried to draw away, but her delicate-looking arms were strong, and she clung all the tighter, laughing at his half-hearted effort to escape.

"Am I so dreadfully ugly, John, that you can't bear to have me near you?"

"Lola!" he exclaimed passionately, "what are you doing? What is it that has changed you so? If you love me what reason have you for putting me off with one foolish excuse after another? What is it that you want?"

"I know that I ask a great deal, dear," she replied tenderly, "but I want a love great enough for anything."

"My love is great enough, Lola," said John, as he once more tried gently to remove her arms from about his neck. "Please don't try to make it any greater until you are ready to return it."

She looked up again into his face and laughed at the cold expression she saw there, then suddenly drew him close, her arms straining about him, and kissed him, not as a young girl timidly kisses the man she loves, but with the kiss of a passionate woman. He was a man, like other men, and the man in him took fire in a moment, and he returned her kiss

and would have drawn her still closer into his arms, but with a little low laugh she freed herself, and stepping back of the table shook her finger at him playfully.

“Now, John! You mustn’t be silly.”

She laughed lightly, mockingly, as he stood there, already ashamed of the sudden fierce feeling that had mastered him, and full of disgust of himself for the physical passion that had for the first time entered into any of his thoughts toward her.

“It is all right, John,” she continued, feeling that she had him at a disadvantage. “It is all settled. The marriage is postponed, but only for a little, little while. Now run along, and come back late this afternoon to see Dr. Crossett, and if you will promise to be very good you may stay to dinner.”

“I will, Lola, thank you,” replied John, “but—but I wish you would tell me what you are going to do this afternoon?”

“Why, I am going out.”

“Not—Lola! You are not going to that Harlan woman’s house?”

“Why, John! You know that you told me you didn’t like to have me go there?” She looked at him so innocently that he felt himself a brute to continue, but he forced himself to go on.

“The woman is hardly respectable, and the crowd she has hanging around her house are not proper acquaintances for a girl like you. I haven’t got over the shock of seeing you in that woman’s carriage yesterday.”

“Now, please,” cried Lola impatiently, “please don’t begin that all over again. You have been scolding about that all the afternoon.”

“But, if you have known this woman for months, why is it that you have never spoken of her? Would you have spoken of her at all if you had not known that I saw you with her?”

“If she is such a terrible person, how is it that you know her so well?”

“Lola! I am a man. Men are different! Surely you must see that?”

“Why are they different? I am not a child. I am a woman! Why shouldn’t I have a little fun once in a while? Why should men have everything?”

“Do you call it fun to live the life that woman lives? You don’t know what she is; if you did you would rather stay shut up in this room as long as you were alive than call yourself a friend of hers.”

“John! You are absurd.”

“No! I am not absurd. A girl like you, Lola, doesn’t even know what such women as that Mrs. Harlan are. It is your very innocence, dear, that makes you so bold.”

“I’m tired of being a fool.” She spoke with a fierce impatience that frightened him. “She is a woman, isn’t she, made of the same flesh and blood, living in the same world. Why should I avoid her? She is the only person I know who cares for anything but work, and worry, and duty! Life isn’t all drudgery to her; she loves laughter, and happiness, and gayety, and good clothes, and beautiful surroundings! If that is a sin, then I am a sinner, too, and I’m glad of it.”

“You don’t understand, Lola.”

“I want to understand! I must understand! I cannot, will not, go on any longer like an ostrich, my head hidden, pretending not to see the things that are all around me. If you love me you will help me, you will stop this absurd pretence. You will help me to know what this world I live in really is. I am warning you, John, just this once. If you do not listen to what I am saying it will be your own fault; I won’t speak like this again.”

“My dear,” said John in much distress, “I want to help you. Surely you know that. I am going to be your husband, and all our lives I am going to stand between you and everything that is evil. I am going to do all that a man can do to protect you from all the sorrow, and suffering, and sin of the world.”

Lola looked at him, as he stood before her, gravely, his fine young face flushed with embarrassment and earnest with his strong intention to do his best to make her life all innocent happiness. She looked at him, and laughed, laughed so heartily, and with such real merriment, that after a moment’s indignation he was reassured. “Surely,” he thought, “everything is all right now; she is laughing at me because I took her innocent girlish talk too seriously,” and he resolved in future to avoid such discussions; but because he was worried at his discovery of her acquaintance with this really objectionable woman he felt that he must not stop until he had secured an earnest promise that she would avoid her as much as possible, so he continued. “Lola, Mrs. Harlan’s greatest friend, the man who has helped to give her a reputation that a decent woman can hardly envy, is Dick Fenway.”

She interrupted him angrily. “So! That is the explanation? Now, we are getting the real truth. That is why I am to stay shut up here. That is why I am not to go to my friend’s house.”

“Have you seen Dick Fenway there?” He was angry now himself, hurt by her tone, and jealous of the thought of this man, whom he knew to be unworthy of any decent girl’s acquaintance. “Have you seen him there?” he repeated as he turned away scornfully.

“Are you trying to insult me?” she demanded.

“I want an answer.”

“No, I haven’t seen him there.”

“Have you seen him at all since the day he did his best to kill you?”

“No,” she replied coldly. “I have not, and now, if you think that you have hurt me enough, you may go, or are you anxious to accuse me of anything more?”

“Lola,” John began gravely, “I am sorry, but you have not been frank with me. I had a right to ask you that question. I am glad that you could answer it as you did.”

“I hope, John,” she replied, “that before our marriage does take place you will have learned to trust me.”

“Lola,” he cried, remorseful, “I do trust you.”

“No, John.” She avoided him as he tried to put his arm about her. “Please go now. I am not angry, but you have hurt me. I think that you had better go. By to-night we will have forgotten it, or at least we will try to forget.”

“I must be a beast of a fellow,” he said, quite convinced of his own unreasonable temper. “I am always hurting you, and yet I never mean to do it. Forgive me, Lola. I will try to do better after this.”

He tried to kiss her, but she drew herself away, and he had to leave her, although his heart ached and he felt that between them each day that passed was bringing a more complete misunderstanding. He had done his best; once away from the witchery of her presence he was sure of that, but the old confidence, the sweetness of perfect understanding had already gone. His nature was a generous one, and he tried to convince himself that the fault must be his, but how? In what had he failed? He could not answer, but once more he made up his mind to be patient and tender. He knew little of women, but if their natures were more complex, their moods more uncertain, he could only do his best to try to understand. Of one thing alone he was sure, as sure as he was of his own life, her perfect loyalty, her real purity, and, after all, was not that enough? What right had he to ask for more?

As the door of the apartment closed behind him, Lola, without a moment’s hesitation crossed the hall to the telephone, and with a glance over her shoulder, to be sure that she was alone, she took down the receiver and called “2164 Rector.” After a moment she was answered, and she asked quietly, “Is Mr. Fenway there? Yes, Mr. Richard Fenway.”

MRS. HARLAN IS A STATELY CHAPERON FOR LOLA.

She stood there smiling to herself until she heard his voice at the other end of the wire. “Hello,” she said gayly. “This is Lola. I have changed my mind, Dick, about that ride. I am very much bored to-day, and I have decided to go with you, if you are sure you really want me.”

“You know how much I want you,” he answered ardently. “Or, if you don’t know, I’ll tell you. I am all alone here just now, and I’ll never have a better chance.”

“I wouldn’t trouble myself if I were you,” continued Lola, “and perhaps you may have fully as good a chance this afternoon; anyway, I am perfectly sure that Central is laughing at you, and I don’t at all blame her.”

“All right,” he answered. “I’ll call for you in an hour.”

“Oh, no,” she retorted. “You know you must not come here. John and father would have a fit. Meet me at Mrs. Harlan’s at three, just three o’clock exactly, for I will have to be back by seven.”

He started to tell her how delightful he was at the prospect of her company, but as he spoke the door bell rang and she cut him off without warning and turned away as Maria opened the door from her kitchen and started down the hall.

CHAPTER VI
IN THE SWIM

Mrs. Harlan called herself a widow, and if the definition of a widow is “a woman who has lost her husband,” she held good claim to that title. Just how this loss occurred was, however, a matter that was shrouded in mystery. No one of her large and rather gay circle of intimate friends either knew or greatly troubled themselves about the matter. She had been known to speak of “Mr. Harlan” and of “my husband,” but it was quite impossible to gather from her manner whether she mourned his loss or gloried in her freedom.

There are in New York many circles of what is politely called society, and entrance to these circles is more or less easy of access, depending upon just which one of these charmed rings one wishes to enter. Mrs. Harlan’s “set” was one of those to which entrance depended solely upon possession of a decent wardrobe and the desire to have what is rather vaguely called “a good time!” “A good time” is very like “a good dinner,” in that one’s appreciation of it depends largely upon personal taste; “what is one man’s meat may be another’s poison,” and what to some is “a good time,” to others would hardly be dignified by that title.

Mrs. Harlan and her friends, however, were perfectly satisfied with existence, and rushed from theatre to restaurant, and from road house to friendly little games of chance in one another’s apartments with an energy that never seemed to tire.

Without this class Heaven alone knows what would become of the theatre, the gay restaurants, the taxicab owners, and even the automobile manufacturers. They, at least, make work for others, however little real work they do themselves, although even among these persons were a few men who fought hard all day for the money that kept their endless chain of gayety running through the better part of the night.

The man who has learned the difference between gayety and happiness has solved one of the greatest secrets of life; such men are rare; at least they were not numbered among Mrs. Harlan’s friends.

The lady herself was a handsome woman of rather generous proportions, her age, like her husband’s exact fate, being one of the very few subjects on which she preserved a discreet silence. She was by no means a bad woman, according to her lights, but her lights burned dim at times, and she had that smoldering hatred of the orthodox members of respectability that is never absent from the heart of a clever woman who knows that she has forever put herself beyond its pale.

Dick Fenway, very soon after his arrival in New York, became one of the inner circle of Mrs. Harlan’s intimates, both by virtue of his natural gayety and the fact that he was what is known as a good spender, meaning a person who, no matter how great his expenditure may be, is never by any possible chance known to do the slightest good with his money.

At first gossip was inclined to connect his name with that of the fair widow, but if, for a time, there had been anything but friendship between them, it soon burned itself out. Whatever her age, she was at least old enough to have been his mother, and, reckless as he was, he had far too much natural shrewdness to allow himself to become so completely entangled that escape would be impossible.

He made no secret of the fact that he had been unhappily married; in fact he took pains that the ladies of this particular circle should know of it, an unhappy marriage being not only a sure passport to their sympathy, but acting as a sort of insurance against any too ambitious hopes that his friendly attentions might arouse.

From the day, now some months ago, when he met Lola Barnhelm, until some time after her accident, he had dropped out of the sight of his friends, and upon his return he offered no explanation for his absence, other than that he had been having a stupid time and was anxious to make up for it.

Lola had been the first well-bred girl he had ever known, and all that was good in his nature had been stirred by the first meeting with her. Her reproaches for his deceit about his wife had really hurt him, and the shock he had experienced when he believed himself to have been the cause of her death had been the one terrible experience of his shallow life. He had been taken to the police station, and while waiting for his lawyer to arrange for his release on bail had been informed that the girl was not seriously hurt and that there was no charge against him.

His relief from his feeling of horror and remorse was naturally great, but he made up his mind that it was quite hopeless to expect Lola’s forgiveness, and when he met her one day on Broadway, shortly after her recovery, he was about to pass her without any other greeting than a bow, when to his great surprise she stopped him and, without any reference either to the accident or to his deceit about his marriage, chatted with him so gayly and so pleasantly that he took heart and invited her to drop into a restaurant with him for a cup of tea.

From her manner, as she entered the great room filled with laughing, chattering, well-dressed men and women, he could hardly be blamed for not knowing that this was the first time in all her life that she had ever been in such a place.

Neither her father nor John Dorris were rich men; they knew nothing of the life that is reflected in such place; to John a few visits with her, to the theatre, long walks in the Park, or quiet evenings in the apartment won the natural development of their intimacy, and Dr. Barnhelm knew as little as he cared, which was not at all, about the sham glitter and forced gayety of the great eating places that have done so much to destroy the home life of the average New Yorker.

In these surroundings, in an atmosphere of false luxury, of noise, heat, and confusion, against a background of painted women and flushed and loud-voiced men, the real reverence he had always had for her began rapidly to disappear, and he found himself looking upon her simply as a charming and beautiful young girl, who, as a matter of course, was to be pursued as diligently and as relentlessly as circumstances would allow. After all, the respect the world has for us is usually the measure of our own respect for ourselves, and as Lola made no effort to rebuke his rather daring advances, they naturally increased in freedom until in all the great room there was no gayer table than theirs.

Many heads were turned toward them, many questions were asked about who this new beauty could be. Fenway seemed to be known to almost everyone, and several times men came up to the table and spoke to him, but if they had hoped to be introduced to his companion they were disappointed, and they went away muttering angrily.

Lola would drink nothing but tea; in fact she needed nothing stronger; the intoxication of the scenes is as complete sometimes as the intoxication of strong drink, and to this girl, seeing for the first time a glimpse of the thing that to her seemed life, came the birth of a desire that never again left her, the desire to know everything, to experience everything, to live as those persons about her seemed to be living, without thought of anything but the pleasure of the moment, and had she known the price that all who live that life must surely pay, she would still have gone on.

This was the first of several meetings, sometimes alone, sometimes in the company of Mrs. Harlan, to whom he later introduced her. She had frankly told him that first day that her father would never consent to allow him to come to their home, and he had been well content to meet her in places where less restraint was necessary.

To his great surprise, however, he found Lola much better able to protect herself than he had expected. She was what Mrs. Harlan described, after the first time she met her, as “a mighty smooth proposition,” and although he knew himself by this time to be madly in love with her, he could not flatter himself with the hope that she was in the very least inclined to allow him to make a fool of her. Mrs. Harlan in fact did not hesitate to inform him that he was the one who was playing the fool. She rather coarsely described the affair as “a ten to one shot against him.”

“Why don’t you hurry up that divorce and marry the girl?” she demanded of him on the afternoon on which Lola had made the appointment to meet him. “You are crazy about her, and it’s the only way she’ll ever listen to you. If you don’t look out she’ll marry that young bank clerk and leave you flat.”

“I doubt it,” replied Dick, sulkily. “John Dorris is one of those nice boys, like you read about, and the way Lola is coming on lately he wouldn’t have speed enough to keep up with her. She may marry him, I don’t say she won’t, but if she does God help him.”

“That’s all right, too,” replied his friend, “but she’s too smart to make a fool of herself over a married man like you. She’ll let you run her around in your car and buy her a few nice little presents, but just as you think she’s going to fall into your arms, she’s going to step back and give you the laugh. I may be a fool, but that’s the way it looks to me.”

It was about the way it looked to him also, but he did not think it necessary to inform her of the fact, so to change the subject, and to kill time until the three o’clock appointment, he proposed lunching at Rector’s, and she agreeing, they drove there in his car, and he, contrary to his usual custom, drank far more than was good for him.

Lola herself found time hanging heavily on her hands, and wandered aimlessly about the apartment waiting for her father and Dr. Crossett to return. Maria came to her at last, holding in her hand several letters, all but one of which she placed upon the table.

“Is that one for father?” said Lola, seeing her about to leave the room with one letter in her hand.

“No, Miss. It’s for me.” She hesitated for a moment, then went on shyly. “It’s from Mr. Barnes!”

“Oh,” remarked Lola curiously, “I thought he had stopped writing to you.”

“No, Miss.”

“Can you read them yourself now?”

“I try to,” replied Maria; “I manage to spell ’em out somehow.”

“Why don’t you ask me to read them for you?”

Maria did not reply for a moment, and turned once, as if to leave the room, but at last she seemed to make up her mind, and crossing to the couch on which Lola had languidly thrown herself, she said quietly, “I couldn’t ask you while you were sick, and once, after we moved over here, I—I did, and you said you didn’t want to be bothered. After that, some way I—I couldn’t seem to bring myself to ask again. You see, I’m growing awful fond of Mr. Barnes, and—and I guess I’m sort of sensitive about him.”

The poor girl said nothing of the hours she had studied, hopelessly confused, to spell out the crude little letters from the lover who meant so much to her, nor of the real delicacy that prevented her from asking anyone but the mistress she loved so deeply to read what he had written. To her Lola could do no wrong, and no man could hold any place in her heart that she would for a moment try to conceal from this girl who had brought the first glimpse of sunshine into her life.

“Give me your letter,” said Lola indolently. “I can’t remember being cross about it. Really I don’t mind at all. I am rather interested.”

She took the letter that Maria eagerly passed to her, and opening it read slowly, for Mr. Barnes was a better sailor than scholar.

"'August 18. Newport, R. I. Respected friend——'" She looked up, laughing. "I see that he is still properly respectful."

"Yes, Miss," replied Maria, simply. "He loves me!"

Lola looked at her for a moment, then smiled rather bitterly, and continued:

"'I take my pen in hand to let you know that I got a bad fall in the gun turret and broke my left leg——'"

Maria's little cry of fear and sorrow was drowned in Lola's joyous, hearty laughter. Maria looked at her, anger and reproach struggling with her love and respect, and Lola seeing her face, smothered her mirth.

"Really I am sorry," and she started to continue, "'broke my left leg, and I haven't been able to write with it before.' That's what I was laughing at, Maria; it does sound funny, doesn't it?"

"Give me that letter." For the first time in her life Maria spoke to her rudely, no longer the servant, but the offended woman. "Give it to me."

"Really, I beg your pardon, Maria, but it is too absurd. Wait! I will read you the rest of it."

Maria stepped forward and took the letter out of her hand.

"If you please, Miss," she said quietly, "I would rather spell it out myself. You see he didn't write that thinking that anybody was going to laugh at it. He wrote it for an ignorant girl that loves him. I can't read good, but I can understand, and I guess that's all he wants."

CHAPTER VII
DANCE HALL GLITTER

"218 Murray Hill," Lola repeated impatiently into the telephone. "I have been waiting quite five minutes. Hello! Hello! Madam Zelya, please! This is Miss Barnhelm! Hello! Is that you, Madam? Yes, yes, I have just received your note, and I do not think you are quite fair in the matter. Yes, I know that I did promise, but it is quite impossible. What! My father has nothing to do with this matter, absolutely nothing. If you will be patient for two or three days longer the account will be settled. What is that?… Oh! I am sorry that you choose to take that tone. If you call upon my father you will get nothing, either from my father or from me. I will promise to send a check in a day or two; until then please do not annoy me."

With this Lola hung up the receiver, leaving a very angry Hungarian dress-maker to get what satisfaction she might from shrill threats and dire prophecies, and turned away from the telephone in time to meet her father and Dr. Crossett as they entered from the outside hall.

"Who has been annoying you, little girl?" inquired her father, who had heard the end of the conversation.

"Only that stupid hall-boy," answered Lola calmly. "He is always making mistakes. What a time you two have been, to be sure. I thought that you had deserted me for good."

"No chance of that, my dear," said Dr. Crossett. "In fact it was to be sure of having a long talk with you that I hurried your father back."

"I am afraid we must postpone that talk for a little while, Doctor. I am going to my room for a few moments. You will excuse me, won't you?" She smiled sweetly at him and held out her hand, and he bowed over it gallantly as he answered:

"Come back soon. I shall be waiting."

"Oh, I promise you that you shall see quite enough of me, Doctor," she replied; "before you are here a day you will be glad to get me out of your sight. I know I am going to bore you dreadfully, but I have so many things I want to talk over with you, and so many questions I want to ask you, about things that happened long ago before I was here to be a trouble to you."

She went gayly down the long hall, stopping at her door to wave her hand at him as he stood watching her.

"No sign there of nervous troubles," he said as he joined her father in the sitting room. "Her eyes are bright and clear, her voice is steady. She looks happy and well. You, Martin, are the greatest inventor in the world's history."

"Hardly that," said the Doctor with a laugh.

"Ah, yes," insisted the Frenchman. "Men have made fortunes, fame, history by the children of their brain, but what man before, by the power of his mind, has brought back from the dead his own daughter?"

"A curious study," said Dr. Barnhelm thoughtfully as he seated himself in a deep chair by the table and motioned to his friend to sit opposite to him; "remarkably curious, these things we call life, and death, and body, and soul. It is a queer fact, Paul, that no matter how we strive our knowledge stops short at the gates of death. What is beyond?"

"For many years," answered the Doctor, as he lighted a cigarette and sank back in his chair with a sigh of comfort, "that troubled me, but as I grow older I find myself thinking less of death and clinging fast to life. Death! Bah! It does

not frighten me. It may be a vast nothingness, or it may be a step to a higher existence. What does it matter? Our work is here; we have our friends to love, our duty to be done; that is life, and I like it."

"The body dies," went on Dr. Barnhelm, "but the soul, can that ever die? I doubt it! Every man of us who has a soul must doubt it."

"Every man of us," said Paul. "Ah! At least we, all of us, have that in common, I suppose."

"All of us? Do you think so?"

"Naturally, to a greater or less degree. Your soul, my friend, may be big and fine; mine may be mean and small, but if in the human body there is such a thing, surely we all of us must have it."

"Do you know the theory of the 'Sixth Day Men,' Paul?"

"'The Sixth Day Men,'" repeated Paul, "no. It has a most effective title, this theory of yours; tell me of it."

"In the beginning, God created the Heaven and the Earth; for six days he labored, and on the seventh day he rested."

"I heard rumors to that effect," commented Dr. Crossett lightly.

"Days in that time," continued Dr. Barnhelm, not noticing his friend's interruption, "were not of twenty-four hours; they were Alous, cycles of time. During those periods animal life came, evolution went on, bit by bit, with thousands of years between each step of its progress. A man-thing came into the world."

"Before the seventh day," enquired Paul, with interest, for he dearly loved any discussion of this sort, and he knew that any theory considered worthy of attention by his old friend must at least hold points of interest.

"Yes," said Dr. Barnhelm. "Before the seventh day."

"Ah! This is interesting and new to me. Then our old friend Adam was not the first man?"

"Listen, Paul! After the seventh day 'God breathed the breath of life into Adam's nostrils.' He, therefore, was the first 'man,' for he had a God-given soul. In him was more of the divine than we can claim, for we are told that he could 'walk with God.' That was before the fall. Eve's fall, in the Garden of Eden, by this theory, was her guilty love for one of these soulless, earth-born 'men things,' and of them Cain was born. Born without a soul, and, as the Bible tells us, 'Cain went away and found himself a wife.' Where? Where else than from among these Sixth Day people, soulless, all of them, and their descendants could have brought into the world small trace of the divine. Meanwhile sons of Adam were beginning to people the earth, and later these two races mingled. There began a struggle between good and evil in the human heart, a struggle that has never ended. Sometimes will be born a human being in whom occurs a curious 'throw back' of generations to these soulless Sixth Day ancestors. Sometimes the good in us conquers the evil, and sometimes the evil conquers, kills the good, and the God-given soul leaves us and there is nothing left but an animal, a 'man thing,' a straight descendant of one of those Sixth Day horrors, whose blood has contaminated us since the fall of Eve."

"Ah!" Dr. Crossett was bending forward now eagerly. "Your theory has taken me by surprise; it is new to me."

"It is not new to the world, or at least not altogether new; some of the old German thinkers wrote of it. Darwin considered it. Each of us is conscious at times of sudden revolts against virtue, sudden reasonless impulses for evil. It is the struggle of the divided soul."

"But, Martin, if your theory is sound, one or the other of these forces must conquer in the end, the good or the evil."

"Evil never conquers in the end, Paul. Or our world would long ago have become chaos. When, in future generations, the last trace of our Sixth Day ancestors has been driven out, this theory holds that the world will once again be as God meant it to be, and we shall have the real brotherhood of Man." He paused.

"What have you to say? What do you think?"

"I think," replied Dr. Crossett, "that I should like a very large drink of your whiskey."

"You are right, Paul," returned Dr. Barnhelm, rising. "A cigar, a drink, and a game of chess, they are a better prescription for a tired man than a new philosophy."

He rang the bell and asked Maria for whiskey and a syphon, and as she went for it he took from a little wooden box a shabby, worn old set of chessmen.

"A talk over old times will freshen my mind for my ordeal to-morrow, for it is to be an ordeal, Paul. My theory of restoring the muscular activity to the heart after death has occurred is admitted to be practical, in fact successful. Laboratory experiments upon animals are within the experience of most of the big men whom I am to face to-morrow. They are ready to admit my theory, but they must be convinced against their will of my ability to always restore life under all conditions where death has resulted simply from the failure of the heart to perform its functions and where there has been no organic decay. They laugh at my claim that I can succeed in performing this experiment after as great a time as five hours from the moment of the last heart beat, and it seems to be the general opinion that five minutes would be a more conservative and a more exact statement."

"It is a very pleasant thing," commented Paul. "This laughter of fools. In all ages it has been granted to some lucky few, this great distinction, to be laughed at and to be right. You are in good company, Martin. The same sort of persons once laughed at Watts, at Columbus, at Darwin, at Dr. Bell, and at Marconi. Noah was, I believe, the first object of popular

ridicule, but that did not affect the value of the Ark when the flood came. Come, we will forget all of this until the time comes, and I will beat you at a game of chess. Unless my memory plays me tricks, I won the last game, all of twenty years ago, and I can do it again."

Maria entered the room with a tray, on which were a bottle of whiskey, carbonic water and glasses, and put it down on the table as Dr. Barnhelm took out a thick pocketbook from his inside pocket and said, "First, I will put this money away until to-morrow."

He crossed the room to a small safe that was set into the wall and hidden from sight by a picture. "Can you open this thing, Maria?"

"I think so, sir," replied Maria, going to the safe at once and turning the combination. "Miss Lola taught me how, if I can remember."

After a moment's effort the small door of the safe opened, and she said, with evident relief, "There!"

"Good!" exclaimed the Doctor, as he placed the pocketbook in the safe and closed and locked it.

"Thank you, Maria, and, Maria, ask Miss Lola to come to us when she is ready."

"Yes, Doctor," and Maria, after a glance to make sure that all was right with her tray, left them alone together.

"To the old days, Paul," said the Doctor, after filling his own glass and his friend's.

"No," replied Paul, "to now, to to-morrow. May the future be as happy as that old past; and may your daughter, if she lives, be as good a woman as her mother; and if she dies, may she leave as sweet a memory behind her."

They drank in silence, and as they put their glasses down Lola joined them. She had changed to what, to the masculine eye, looked like a very elaborate street costume, and she stood there in the doorway buttoning her gloves as she called out gayly:

"You two look comfortable!"

"Ah, yes," replied Dr. Crossett. "An old friend, a good drink, a pretty woman, what more could be asked? Ah, my dear." He looked at her admiringly. "How chic, how fine we look."

"A new dress, Lola?" inquired her father, looking up from his chessmen absently.

"Oh, dear, no," said Lola, carelessly. "Just an old rag."

"A dainty rag," commented Dr. Crossett.

"I am sure I never saw it before," continued Dr. Barnhelm, looking at her a little anxiously.

"It's just a little thing I had made up. It cost scarcely anything. I am glad if it looks even passable," remarked Lola.

"Passable!" responded Dr. Crossett. "Twenty years ago it would never have passed me, not with its present wearer. Do you know, Lola, what would be the greatest joy that could come to me? To take you to Paris, to show you to my friends, to see you there in the city that of all the world's cities best knows how to value a beautiful woman. There is but one word for you to-day, Lola. You are radiant."

He spoke no more than the truth. She had always been a beautiful girl, but since her recovery she had gained the things she had always needed, color, animation, and as she stood there now, laughing at him, but thrilling at his praise, she made a picture that few men could have looked at unmoved. The rich costume set her off to great advantage and her contemptuous description of it would not have deceived any woman's eye for a moment.

"And if you are not careful you will make me frightfully conceited. Now you two be real good, and don't drink too much of that whiskey before I come back."

"Are you going out?" asked her father as he made the opening move of the game.

"Yes, dear, I have a little appointment at three. It really doesn't matter at all, but I thought that you two would rather be alone."

She bent over her father's chair, and kissed him tenderly, then turned daringly to Dr. Crossett, her hand on his shoulder and, her face very near to his, she said teasingly, "If you were just the very least little bit older I should kiss you, too."

"I am," replied the Doctor promptly, "considerably older than I look."

"You are not to be trusted," she responded gayly. "I am very sure of that! Good-bye, dears. I am going now."

As she turned away, a little hurriedly, for she saw by the clock on the mantel that it was ten minutes of three, John Dorris entered the room; at the sight of him standing there between her and the door for just a fraction of a second a queer, fierce look flashed across her face, such a look as one might see in an angry panther's eyes, but before John could see it, it was gone, and she was smiling at him sweetly.

"How early you are, John," she exclaimed. "It is awfully sweet of you, but I'm afraid it will be very dull unless you are fond of chess."

“You are going out?” questioned John in what seemed to Dr. Crossett as he rose to shake hands with him rather a curt tone.

“Yes,” replied Lola, “I am afraid I must.”

“My dear boy, I am very glad to see you,” said Dr. Crossett to John, of whom he had really grown very fond in those few days following Lola’s accident.

“Thank you, Doctor,” replied John heartily, as he returned the pressure of the Doctor’s hand. “It is very kind of you to say so,” and he turned away, perhaps a little hastily, and followed Lola up to the door. “Shall I go with you, Lola?”

“Oh, dear, no,” replied Lola. “It would bore you dreadfully, and besides I really couldn’t have you, even if you care to come. I am in a great hurry. I promised to be there at three. Sit down and watch the game.” She took him by the arm and led him back to the table. “Father will need your help, I am afraid. See! He is in trouble already. Here——” She stepped to a small table and returned with a box of cigars. “Why don’t you men smoke? Really, you must.” She held the box to each of them in turn, smiling so compellingly that even John was forced to take one, but in spite of her smile he thought he saw in her face a trace of anxious impatience, and to him at least her beautiful new dress was not wholly a pleasure. Little as he knew of the real cost of such a costume, he knew that it was far more expensive than Dr. Barnhelm’s purse could afford, and in some vague manner it associated itself in his mind with Mrs. Harlan and her friends.

“Would you mind telling me where you are going, Lola?” he enquired anxiously.

“Oh, dear, no; why should I?” she answered as she struck a match and held it, first to her father’s, then to Dr. Crossett’s cigar. “I am going to see poor little Nellie Mooney. She isn’t at all well, you know, father, and I really haven’t the heart to disappoint her. There!” She placed the decanter and glasses on the table near to him. “Do see that they are comfortable, John. You may have just as fine a time as you want to, you selfish male things,” she went on as she crossed quickly to the door. “But don’t quite forget me while I am gone.”

She left the room laughing, and as the outside door closed behind her the little clock on the mantel struck three.

The chess game went on deliberately, quietly, and the young man sat there watching it, but at the same time letting his thoughts wander, and suddenly he found himself following in his mind Lola’s progress. He pictured her walking down the Drive with the brisk, swinging stride she had assumed of late; then in his mind he saw her cross Seventy-second Street and take a crowded car; in all the changes of her long, complicated trip to the upper East Side he idly kept pace with her, glancing from time to time at the clock, until he seemed to see her running lightly up the dizzy stairs of a shabby tenement house on a side street and entering a tidy little room on the top floor. He saw the room plainly in his mind, for he had often been there with Lola before they had moved to this new apartment. No, now that he came to think of it, not since Lola’s recovery, but before then they had gone there together almost every day. He liked to think of her there; on her errand of mercy she would stop and buy flowers, he thought. Nellie loved flowers. How her poor, tired little face used to brighten when she would look up from the sofa where she lay all day long and saw Lola coming into the room.

He closed his eyes, and leaning back in his chair saw the picture in his mind. The poor little room, the white-faced, suffering child, smiling happily now, with the flowers pressed against her face, and Lola—Lola bending over her, fresh, beautiful, gentle in her face the look he had seen there once, that wonderful radiance that is seen sometimes in a young girl’s face, the foreshadowing of motherhood.

The blare of music, too near and too loud. The confused babble of rattling dishes, discordant laughter, high-pitched voices, and the clinking of glasses that were filled again and again, but emptied as fast as they were replenished. A great room, the air heavy with many odors and foul with tobacco smoke.

Here at one table an old man, with jewels on his fat fingers, with him a young girl, almost a child, a girl in a shabby dress, with eyes bright with wonder and with fear.

Here and there, in this brilliant throng, could be picked out bold-eyed men, who laughed across the tables at nervous, frightened women, women who laughed back with terror in their hearts. Comedy, farce, tragedy, aching hearts, and aching heads. Empty lives and empty pocketbooks. Bluff and sham. Age and youth. Love and hate. Fear and lust. One could feel them all, but one could only hear the ceaseless, empty laughter rising above the music, above the noise.

If to laugh is to be happy, here was happiness.

CHAPTER VIII
LOLA TELLS FALSEHOODS

“I thought I heard the elevator stop!” John exclaimed nervously as he went to the door and looked anxiously down the hall.

“She knew we were to have dinner at seven,” Dr. Barnhelm said as he stepped to the window and peered out into the gathering darkness.

They had been waiting now for a long time, patiently at first, but as the hours passed, and the lights began to come out along the Drive and in the windows of the apartment opposite, John and Barnhelm began to show the anxiety they had

at first attempted to conceal. The chess game had ended long ago, and they had sat together in the twilight talking, until Maria had brought in the evening papers and switched on the light. John, remembering the coldness Lola had shown to him earlier in the day, was hurt and offended. “Surely,” he thought, “she should have forgiven me before now, but she is staying away purposely to show me that she is still angry.”

Dr. Barnhelm was anxious because he felt a host’s responsibility and knew that Maria and Jane, the cook, were depending upon Lola for final instructions about the rather elaborate dinner he had demanded in honor of his old friend’s arrival. Of the three Dr. Crossett alone was calm and unruffled and rather inclined to be amused by the others’ obvious impatience.

“She was detained, no doubt,” he remarked easily, glancing up from his paper. “Are your subways never blocked? Your cars never stalled? La! a thousand things!”

“Almost five hours,” exclaimed John impatiently. “Even our subway can hardly be accused of that. I think I had better go there, Doctor. I know where Mrs. Mooney lives.”

“It would take you at least an hour,” responded the Doctor, “and if there had been anything unusually wrong with Nellie, Lola would have telephoned.”

“Who is this Nellie Mooney?” inquired Dr. Crossett.

“A poor little girl,” explained Dr. Barnhelm, “the daughter of a hard-working Irish woman. The child has suffered for years with a tubercular disease of the bone of her arm; before we moved I used to see her almost every day, but I had not been able to do much for her.”

“So. She is young?”

“About twelve.”

“These cases are, to me, most interesting. I have had success in their treatment. If this child is dear to you I will see her. I do not mean that I can do more than you have done, but my treatment has often been successful.”

“It would make Lola very happy, Paul,” replied Dr. Barnhelm. “She met the child in the Park over a year ago and brought her to me. Of all her protégées Nellie has always been the one she seemed to care the most about. I have been glad to see that she still thinks of her.”

“And now,” said Dr. Crossett smilingly, “you two are both out of patience because Lola is doing the very thing you wanted her to do.”

“I want her to be charitable,” broke in John. “It was her almost divine pity for this very child that first showed me the sort of girl she was. But she has spent three whole afternoons there this week. Surely that is overdoing it.”

“Ah! The selfishness of the young,” remarked Dr. Crossett, turning the pages of his paper and carelessly looking over the headlines. “Because she loves you, she must love no one else? Is that it? Because she is going to give her whole life to you, she must not take any little minutes for herself?”

“Oh, I know!” John spoke regretfully, uneasily conscious of the jealousy that for some time had been creeping into all his thoughts of her. “I am getting to be a beast. I am sure I don’t know why. I was never jealous before or nervous, never in my life! There must be something wrong with me.”

“There is,” replied the Doctor in his best professional manner. “Will you allow me,” and he took John’s unresisting hand and put his finger to his pulse. “You are suffering from an ailment that requires the most careful nursing. For most ailments we nurse the patient, but this particular disease, commonly called love, must itself be nursed or it will die!”

“You are laughing at me, Doctor, and I don’t at all blame you,” said John as the Doctor dropped his hand and started to resume his reading of the paper. “I can’t think what can have detained Lola, but it is absurd of me to be out of patience with her about it.”

“Doctor.” Maria stood in the doorway, and spoke rather timidly. “Jane says that you won’t have any dinner at all unless you take it now.”

“Ah!” exclaimed Dr. Crossett. “Now matters are growing serious. I find, Martin, that our long walk has given me an appetite.”

“I could keep something hot for Miss Lola,” suggested Maria, who had come to the end of her powers of persuasion with the indignant Jane, and knew that unless dinner could be served at once there was a strong probability of her having to serve it alone, without the help of this haughty stranger who had been engaged by Lola soon after they had given up their old simple manner of living. “It was such a nice dinner, Doctor, but there won’t be anything fit to eat left; it’s been ready over an hour.”

“You are right, Maria, I think,” said Dr. Barnhelm; “perhaps it would——” As he spoke the bell rang.

“There she is now!” exclaimed Maria joyfully. “She never remembers to take her key.”

She left the room hurriedly and went down the hall to the door as John sighed with relief and even Dr. Crossett beamed gratefully as he rose from his chair.

“You see! You two gloomy ones! Everything is all right. At least she has left her little Nellie, and at last we dine.”

As he spoke Maria reëntered the room looking startled, perhaps a little frightened.

“Mrs. Mooney, Doctor,” she announced. “Mrs. Mooney and Nellie!”

Mrs. Mooney and Nellie had followed Maria, and as she saw the three gentlemen, all of them now thoroughly alarmed, Mrs. Mooney hesitated, and put her arm about Nellie, who drew closer to her, awed by the magnificence of the brilliantly lighted room, and vaguely troubled by the unspoken question in the faces turned to her.

“Miss Lola?” inquired Dr. Barnhelm quietly.

“I made bold to come, sir,” she answered, “because the child’s arm is that bad she can’t seem to stand it.”

“Where is my daughter?”

“Your daughter, Doctor? Miss Lola?”

“Why did she not come with you?”

“I—I don’t understand you, sir.”

“She was with you this afternoon.”

“No, sir,” replied Mrs. Mooney in surprise. “I haven’t seen Miss Lola since you folks moved away from Eighth Avenue.”

It was impossible to doubt the truth of the woman’s statement, and as impossible to forget that day after day Lola had left them with the intention of going to her. John and Dr. Barnhelm had often asked her, on her return, how Nellie was getting on, and Lola had answered them, seemingly much grieved over the child’s condition. Dr. Crossett felt some of their amazement, and the three stood there, for a moment unable to speak until another sharp ring at the bell sent Maria hurrying to the door.

No one spoke—what was there to say? They stood there waiting until they heard the door open, and heard Lola’s gay laugh as she brushed past Maria, calling out to them cheerfully as she hurried down the hall:

“Here I am at last. Did you think I was never coming?”

There was something in their manner that made her hesitate as she stepped into the room and, glancing about for an explanation, her eyes fell upon Mrs. Mooney and Nellie. For a moment, as she turned on Mrs. Mooney, a look of such fierce rage and hatred flashed over her face, that the poor woman stepped back in terror, throwing her arms about her child instinctively, as though to shield her from danger.

What was it? Why did this girl who had done so much for them, who had been the good angel of their lives, look at them like that? Mrs. Mooney looked at her in return, and as she looked she saw Lola smiling sweetly, lovingly. No trace of anything on her calm, happy face but tenderness and sympathy, and she was bitterly ashamed of her folly, and humbly grateful as Lola came and put her arms about Nellie in eager welcome.

“Why, Nellie,” she exclaimed, “I am so glad to see you!”

“You—you have not seen her before then?” inquired her father gravely.

“Oh, dear, no,” answered Lola lightly. “Hasn’t she told you that?”

John stepped forward impatiently. There must be some good reason for her deceit of them. Surely she should give it, and as Lola turned to speak to Dr. Crossett, he stepped in front of her. “Lola, why did you——”

“Now, John,” she interrupted him, “please don’t be silly. I see that there is nothing for me to do but confess. I had not meant to tell you until after dinner. I have been very selfish. I have been riding, in an automobile.”

“With whom?”

“With nobody dreadful, I assure you.” She turned to her father, laughing at John’s frowning face. “With the wife of one of your old friends, Mrs. Dr. Rupert.”

“You see,” Dr. Crossett sighed with perfect relief. “Why make mountains out of nothing? Surely we do not begrudge our girl a ride.”

“Of course you don’t. I met her as I went out of the house. I fully meant to call on you, Nellie dear, but Mrs. Rupert wanted me very much, and besides, I knew that she could help me.”

The others were smiling now, quite satisfied, but John’s face had not changed, and as he spoke to her, his voice was hard, suspicious.

“Mrs. Mooney says that you have never been to her house. Not once of all the times you have left me to go there.”

“If you don’t stop interrupting me, John, I will never be able to finish my story. I was just trying to tell you that I had been deceiving you. But now Mrs. Rupert has promised to help me, so I don’t mind telling you all about it.”

She looked at them, her face slightly flushed, a little embarrassed; but calm and earnest. To Dr. Crossett she seemed like a child, about to confess some little fault, a fault it knows to be already forgiven.

“I am not quite the heartless, selfish girl you seem to think me.” There were tears in her eyes now, and her voice trembled. The last trace of displeasure had gone from her father’s face. John alone was still standing out against her.

“I know,” she continued, “that I have been extravagant, and I am going to make up for it. I have been trying to get pupils for a private kindergarten. I have called upon hundreds of wealthy mothers, and, at last, I think that I have the promise of children enough for a start. That is why I wanted to postpone our marriage, John.” She turned to him appealingly: “I could not marry you, dear, before I had earned back the money I had spent so foolishly.”

“My dear.” Her father stepped forward, but John was before him. “Can you forgive me, Lola?” Shame and regret made his voice low and husky.

“My friends!” Dr. Crossett’s cheerful tone broke in upon them. “The man who has a jewel, and does not know its value is an ass. Now that you two can make no more trouble for yourselves, in mercy’s name give me my dinner.”

“I am ashamed, Lola,” said her father remorsefully.

“But you shall not work any more. After to-morrow night there will be no need for it.”

He put his arm about her lovingly, thinking proudly of how much his approaching triumph would allow him to do for her. Dr. Crossett turned from them delighted at her triumph, but as he turned the look of suffering on little Nellie’s face sobered him.

“This child is in pain, Martin!”

He stepped quickly to where she sat, forgotten all this time, and bravely trying to conceal her suffering.

“My dear Nellie.” Dr. Barnhelm went to her remorsefully. “Is it so bad?”

“It is bad enough, sir.” The child’s lip trembled as his kind tone did what the pain could not do, and tears came to her eyes, and she began to sob.

“Them dispensary doctors have made it worse,” said the mother bitterly. “They say it’s no use at all. They—they say her arm’s got to go.”

“When did they tell you this?”

“This afternoon, sir; that’s why I had to come to you. I can’t stand it, Doctor. I’ve stood a lot, but I can’t, can’t let ’em do that to her. She’s all that’s left, and it seems like some one must be able to help her.”

“Paul, will you look at this child? You say that you have worked on these cases. Can’t you and I together help this little girl?”

“Yes, Martin,” Dr. Crossett exclaimed with resolution. “Yes! Come! I will examine her!”

“Let her wait until after dinner,” interrupted Lola impatiently. They all looked at her astounded, the agony in the mother’s voice had moved them deeply. Dr. Crossett’s kind eyes were full of tears. Dr. Barnhelm was more surprised at her tone than indignant at her heartlessness, but he responded rather sharply:

“Lola! The child is suffering.”

“Naturally, I am very sorry for her,” replied Lola, “but you can’t stop all the suffering in the world, and I’m sure Jane will be furious if we keep her waiting much longer.”

“Come, Nellie,” said Dr. Barnhelm, replying to Lola only with a look of reproach. “We will use the library, Paul. You can be making us a cocktail, John; we won’t be long.” He turned kindly to Mrs. Mooney. “It would be better for you to remain here. This gentleman is Dr. Crossett, one of the leading surgeons of Paris. He will do his best to help us.”

“God bless you, sir,” cried the grateful woman to Dr. Crossett, impressed, as all whom he met were, by his air of quiet confidence. “I think you would help her, if you could.”

“I am going to try, very earnestly, very hopefully. She is young; that is in our favor. Very shortly now I shall tell you, quite frankly, just what our chances are.”

He left the room with Dr. Barnhelm and Nellie. John had stepped into the dining-room to mix the cocktail. Mrs. Mooney stood watching Nellie until she had passed out of sight, then turned and crossed to where Lola stood looking indolently out of the window.

“You say you can’t stop all the suffering in the world,” she began, trying hard to control herself. “No, you can’t! That child of mine was born to it. She’s had it every hour of her life. Don’t think I am forgetting what I owe to your father, and to you. But I never thought to hear you speak like that!”

“Why did you come here?” Lola turned on her with a fierceness that made her own seem tame. “How dared you and your sickly child put me in a false position? Do you think that my father has nothing to do but devote his skill to you? For what?” She hissed the question at her, her voice shrill with scorn and contempt. “You won’t pay him. You know that! His time is his wealth, and you rob him of it. Do you know what they call a person who robs another of his wealth? A thief!”

Mrs. Mooney drew back, almost cowering before the flashing brilliancy in Lola’s eyes, heart-sick at the bitter insult of her words. But she was proud, with the decent pride of a woman who has lived a hard life blamelessly, and there was a

trace of Lola's own bitterness in her voice as she answered.

"I've been an honest woman always, but if it would bring health to her I'd be a thief. Maybe it's just as hard for me to take your charity as it is for you to give it. After what you've said I'd rather cut my own arm off than come here, but it ain't my arm that's in danger, it's Nellie's, and she's got to have her chance. God knows best what's come over you, Miss, but your heart ain't the same as it used to be."

She turned and left the room, waiting patiently, humbly in the hall outside the library door, straining her ears to catch a sentence here and there from the murmurs of the doctors' voices, and as she waited she prayed, over and over and over again. "Don't take her from me, God! Don't! Don't! Don't take her! Don't take her!"

They found her there when at last the door opened and the two physicians stepped into the hall with Nellie between them. At the sound of the opening door she turned and looked straight into Dr. Crossett's eyes. Judges on the bench have seen such a look on the face of poor, desperate creatures, waiting for the words that would mean life or death.

From one face to the other her eyes turned, at first not daring to read, not daring to credit what she seemed to see.

"You tell the doctor at the dispensary," Dr. Crossett's voice was husky, but his face beamed with triumph, "that he happens to be a jackass. You tell him that I, Dr. Paul Crossett, will make this child's arm as good as new!"

"Oh, no! I don't ask that, Doctor. Just help her a little."

"I will cure her. I give you my word."

"Is it true?" She turned to Dr. Barnhelm, not daring to believe.

"Yes. It is true."

"Gentlemen!" She was not without dignity as she faced them, her arms about her daughter. "You can't expect a woman like me to know how to thank you. I can't ever pay you, not with money, or with words. All I can ever do is—is to pray for you."

"That," replied Dr. Crossett, with the bow he usually reserved for the greatest ladies of his own brilliant world, "that is not often done. It is enough."

CHAPTER IX
THE DIAMOND NECKLACE

"Will they be much longer?" asked John, stepping into the room with a tray of glasses in one hand and a silver cocktail shaker in the other.

"I am sure I don't know," replied Lola, turning from where she still stood by the window, and moving slowly across the room to him. "I am going to try your cocktail, John."

"You? Why, you never drank one in your life."

"What of it? I am curious." She took one of the empty glasses from the tray and held it out to him coaxingly.

"Your father won't like it," he warned her.

"He won't know it."

"Now, Lola!"

"Don't be an old woman, John! Come!"

He rather reluctantly poured her out a very small drink, as he was far from sure whether or not the Doctor would approve. Lola, up to now, had always shown the most complete distaste for any sort of liquor, a distaste which she really felt; which any healthy young person would feel were it not for the vague general impression that somewhere in the drops of liquor is hidden some hint of romance, some glimpse of mysterious knowledge; the desire of the unknown.

"How very generous," remarked Lola, looking at the few amber drops in the bottom of her glass.

"Quite enough to begin with," replied John, and he watched her curiously as she put the glass to her lips, and laughed heartily as he saw her gasp and the tears come to her eyes.

"Well?" he questioned.

"I don't like it."

"Of course you don't."

"Do you? Does anyone?"

"I think not, Lola. Not at first, anyway. It is the physical excitement, the stimulation."

“I think I understand,” she spoke dreamily, thoughtfully, for she had often wondered lately why so many people seemed to care so much for a thing that had never meant anything at all to her, so little that up to that very moment she had not even been curious. “To change, if only for a moment the deadly monotony of things. To have another emotion, a new sensation. You will have to make me cocktails when we are married, John.”

“Well, I——”

“You must! I want to learn everything. I am tired of being just a girl. Isn’t there anything else in life but to sit here with you and father, and his friends? Are our hearts always going to beat on, one-two, one-two, like the ticking of a clock? You say you love me, but you are as cold as ice!”

She drew close and looked up at him queerly. Her eyes now were not the eyes he knew so well, calm and grave, or smiling; they were deeper, he thought; deeper, more beautiful, but—they seemed to fascinate him; he felt himself grow dizzy; the blood leaped in his veins and pounded in his heart. He put his arms about her and drew her close—close. She smiled now, with a smile he had never seen on her face before. It made her look older, wiser. How beautiful she was. She was a woman, no longer a girl, and all her beauty was his. His!

“You say you love me,” she whispered quickly, with a note in her voice new to him, but strangely thrilling. “If you want to keep my love you must make me mad for you. Are you made of flesh and blood? Come! Kiss me!”

He kissed her. Kissed her with a depth of passion such as he had never dreamed of, and for a moment she returned his kiss, then relaxed and lay half fainting in his arms, then releasing herself with a low laugh she stepped away from him.

“There! That’s different. I do love you, John, more than I thought I did.”

“Lola!” He tried to take her in his arms again, but she laughingly avoided him, going around the table, her eyes still challenging him to follow.

“You are a silly boy, John, but I like you very much to-night.” She bent over the table, tauntingly, alluring. “You are not quite as cold as you look, John. Wouldn’t it be funny if I had to be afraid of you?”

He followed her; she laughed again, and started to run to the door, and as she did so a small, flat leather box fell out of the fancy shopping bag she still held in her hand, and which had come unfastened, as she had drawn herself away from him.

As John stopped and stooped to pick the little box up, her whole manner changed so suddenly that he was startled. The love, the mischief, and the deeper feeling that had done so much to intoxicate him, was wiped out, and in its place there was a look of fear and anger, and as she spoke her voice was harsh and cold.

“Give that to me.”

“Why?” He hesitated, astounded.

“Give it to me.”

“Why not?” He handed it to her, and as she took it from him her face changed again, and she looked relieved and happy.

“What is it, Lola? It looks like a jeweller’s box.”

“Hush! We are not married yet, Mr. John Dorris. You must not pry into the mysteries of a lady’s toilet.”

“Oh!” He laughed happily as she returned the little box to her bag, and made sure that it was fastened. “It is hardly fair for you to blame me for our not having married, Lola, is it? Come, dear; why should you keep putting me off? I have money enough to take care of you, and I’ll be making more right along now. Come, Lola! Can’t it be soon?”

“That is quite enough of such nonsense,” she said airily, still keeping away from him. But he was serious now. He had been deeply stirred, and, like most men who, as a general thing, have their emotions well under control, it was difficult for him to so suddenly regain his composure. “I—I love you, Lola!”

The real earnestness in his tone stopped her. It was as though something deep in her heart answered to the yearning in his voice, and she turned gently to him, a look on her face that he had not seen for weeks. The look of the gentle, timid girl who had learned to come to him for comfort and protection.

“You must love me.” She was pleading now. “I need your love, John. You must keep on loving me, with all your heart.”

“I love you, Lola, with all my soul.”

There was terror in her face now, an instinctive terror that she understood as little as he did.

“Don’t! You frighten me!” She trembled, pale and distressed. “I—I don’t know why, but I am afraid.”

“Lola, what is it?”

She did not answer, but stood there, a queer, thoughtful, puzzled expression on her face; and before he could ask her any more questions they heard Mrs. Mooney and Nellie as they passed down the hall, and a moment after Dr. Crossett and Dr. Barnhelm entered, smiling happily.

“She is going to be all right, that little Nellie,” announced Dr. Crossett gleefully as a boy might have done. “Ah! Sometimes it is a very fine thing to be alive!”

“Doctor,” said Maria, standing in the open door, “Jane says she’d like to have a chance to wash up before breakfast.”

“Come!” The Doctor, who had quite forgotten dinner in his joy over his friend’s confidence in Nellie’s recovery, looked at Maria remorsefully.

“All right, Maria, we are quite ready.”

“We will need more ice in these cocktails,” said John. “Will you help me, Maria?”

They left the room together and Dr. Crossett went to Lola and offered her his arm.

“My arm, Mademoiselle.”

“Please don’t wait for me, Doctor. All I want is a little drop of coffee. I had tea with Mrs. Rupert. You run right along. I will be with you in a few moments.”

“I would wait,” he returned politely, “but, oh, I am so hungry!”

“You poor man. Run!”

“I run!” And he left the room, half dragging Dr. Barnhelm with him.

Lola stood for a moment, until she heard the scraping of the chairs as they seated themselves about the table in the next room, then, with a quick, furtive look over her shoulder, she took the small flat box from her bag and, opening it, held up under the brilliant electric lights a flashing, sparkling chain of gorgeous diamonds. No one saw her, as she stood there, playing lovingly with them, dropping them over her dress, holding them about her throat, her eyes blazing with joy and excitement. Had there been anyone to see, the thought would have come to him that in her face there was a passion of greed scarcely human, and when, for a moment, she thought she heard a step approaching, a look came to her as she hid the jewels in her breast like the look that comes to a wild beast of the jungle, when it is threatened with being robbed of its prey.

After a moment, standing there, tense and watchful, she drew them out again, and held them up, her face all smiles and happiness, her eyes flashing back the brilliancy of the jewels. At last she tired of them and dropped them carelessly on the table, and stood there thinking of where she could conceal them. It would be nice to have them always with her, to feel them about her neck, but she was afraid. The possession of a fortune in diamonds would be a difficult matter to explain. She thought of the wall safe, and at once decided to put them there, so she went to it quickly and worked the combination. As she opened the safe the first thing she saw was the large roll of bills, left there by her father. She held them in her hand for a moment. Dr. Crossett had given her father more money. She was very glad of that. It was so tiresome to be always hearing him complain of poverty. She threw the bills back carelessly, and, taking out a small jewel box of black japaned wood, unlocked it with a tiny key from her bag and, putting her necklace back in its case, locked the box and the safe, turning away quickly as she heard the bell ring and Maria go to the door.

A moment later, as Maria returned down the hall with a card in her hand, Lola met her.

“What is it, Maria?”

“A lady to see your father.”

“A patient?”

“She didn’t say.”

“Let me see that card.” Maria gave it to her, and, after glancing at it, she said quietly, “Show her in here, Maria.”

“She asked especially to see your father.”

“Do as I tell you, Maria.”

“Yes, Miss.”

Maria went obediently to the hall, returning a moment later, followed by a dark, middle-aged woman, showily dressed, and evidently in a very bad temper. The woman bowed coldly, but Lola made no pretence of returning her bow.

“You need not wait, Maria.”

Maria left the room, and Lola stepped to the door of the dining-room, and looked in, smiling at the three men who so eagerly rose to greet her.

“Don’t get up, please. I am not coming just yet, only please don’t drink all the coffee.”

She closed the door, and, turning suddenly on the woman, who stood in the center of the room, she demanded angrily:

“How dare you come here?”

“I came to see your father,” responded Madam Zelya curtly, a trace of foreign accent in her speech, and more than a trace of stubborn anger in her manner.

“I told you, over the telephone, that I would call, or send a check, in a day or two.”

“I cannot wait a day or two! The bill is long past due. My landlord, he vill not vait a day or two. My girls they vill not vait a day or two for their wages. Ze money it must be paid to-night.”

“My dear Madam Zelya! Won’t you be seated?”

“No! I prefer to stand. I vait here until I ged my money. Ef I stand perhaps I’d nod vait so long.”

“Now, Madam, as a favor to me——”

“I trust you too much,” broke in Madam angrily. “Meeses Harlan bring you to me. I gif you credit, you do not pay. Meeses Harlan she half told me that your fadder he ‘es a great doctor. Well, ve shall see if he vill pay.”

“I want you to go,” Lola spoke imperiously. “Go! At once!”

“Six hundred and sefenty-fife dollars ef you please.”

“Wait!” The thought had suddenly flashed into Lola’s mind. There was money there in the safe, a large sum. She had seen several hundred-dollar bills. This woman would not go without money. Unless she went at once, before dinner was over, John and her father would learn about the bill for six hundred and seventy-five dollars. They would not understand; they would make a fuss. Surely anything is better than a fuss.

She did not hesitate once she had made up her mind, but stepped to the safe and turned the combination, opened the door and, taking out the roll of bills, calmly counted out the necessary sum.

“You have a receipted bill?”

“Yes, yes, Miss Barnhelm.”

The woman was all smiles now, bowing respectfully and humbly.

“Take it.” Lola held the money out with one hand, as she took the receipted bill with the other.

“Thank you, Miss Barnhelm. I hope I haf nod offended you. I am a poor woman, and I haf many expenses.”

“I have paid you—now, go.”

“I haf some beautiful new goods, just from Paris. If you will call——”

“In future,” said Lola coldly, “I shall make my purchases from better established places of business. I am not used to being annoyed. Maria!” She stepped to the door and called.

“Ef you would led me try once more I would not trouble you about the bill, Miss Barnhelm. Et es nod from these people who haf money that we want it, it es only from dose that haffen’t it.”

This piece of worldly philosophy, however, made no impression upon Lola, who smiled calmly and haughtily, enjoying the poor woman’s servile repentance, until Maria came in answer to her call.

“The door, Maria.” And Madam Zelya, unable to find any trace of softening in Lola’s face, was forced to follow Maria, her mind divided between grief over the loss of a good customer, and joy over the collection of a bill, that the instinct of her Hungarian Jew ancestors had warned her was to be classed as doubtful.

As they left the room, Lola stepped to the safe, meaning to replace the rest of the money, but as she saw it in her hand, and thought of other little accounts that pressed for settlement, she hesitated. “I don’t see what difference it makes,” she thought. “Dr. Crossett can easily give father more, and they would probably make just as great a row over the loss of the six hundred and seventy-five, as they will now about the whole amount.”

So she put it in her bag, locked the safe and stepped into the dining-room, just as coffee was brought on. She had grown very fond of coffee of late, strong and black, with no cream or sugar. It seemed to tone her up. She was perfectly well, but she had grown to depend upon the pleasant exhilaration. She drank two cups with them. Dr. Crossett thought as he watched her that never in all his experience had he seen a young woman in such splendid physical condition. Her father smiled on her proudly, as she met and routed the Doctor’s affectionate teasing, and as for John, he was already so completely in love that he was quite satisfied just to sit and watch her. She had changed greatly of late, there could be no doubt of that. The girl was gone, but in her place was this brilliant, fascinating woman. John thought himself a very lucky man.

CHAPTER X
MARIA ACCUSED

“This,” said Dr. Crossett to Lola, as they sat together in the window, looking out at the river and the endless procession of automobiles below them, “this is good! It is not Paris, but it is good!”

“The only reason you won’t admit it’s better than Paris,” laughed Lola, “is because you are cross about having had such a dreadfully bad dinner.”

“Oh, no,” he replied politely. “It was a very good dinner. It is true that some hours ago it might have been better, but

our appetites would not have been the same. Any food is good to a hungry man. Your father and I have often dined on bread and cheese, and pilsner, and thought it a feast."

"You were poor there at the University?" she inquired curiously. Somehow she found it difficult to think of him as ever having been poor; he was so completely marked with the stamp of worldly success.

"Very poor," he answered gayly, for it had been a long time ago, and poverty leaves few scars on the heart of a man who has conquered it. "So poor," he continued, "that we owned nothing in all the world, not even a trouble. We lived together four, no, three years, wasn't it, Martin?"

"Three years, Paul."

"What we had we shared," he turned again to Lola. "Books, clothes, money, tobacco, and happiness. I made much money later, because I had nothing better to do. Your father was wiser than I, but now Martin, when money is coming to you, you can do much for this little one."

"You mean his lecture to-morrow night?" asked Lola. "It is very flattering, of course, that the Medical Society should want to listen to him, but he isn't going to be paid for it."

"It will bring fame, Lola, and fame, especially here in your country, means money. Have you much to do before to-morrow night, Martin?"

"More than I like to think of," replied the Doctor. "My mind should be fresh and clear, and how can it be if I must spend all to-morrow running errands?"

"Could I help you?" asked John. "I could find an hour or so in the morning."

"I think not, and yet I am not sure. Would you be willing to call at Karn & Company's, on Thirty-first Street, and pay my bill and see that my apparatus is sent to the Medical Society?"

"Gladly," replied John heartily.

"It would save me half of the morning. Wait; I will give you the money now."

He stepped across the room to the wall safe. Lola, looking up idly at Dr. Crossett, who was standing beside her, saw him as he put out his hand and fumbled helplessly with the combination.

"Lola," he turned to her. "Would you mind opening this thing for me? I never can remember how to do it."

"You had better ask Maria, father. She is the only one who really understands it," answered Lola quietly.

"Very well." He went to the door and called. "Maria! Maria!"

"What a gorgeous night, Doctor," said Lola to Dr. Crossett. "Don't you envy those people out there in their automobiles?"

"Hardly," he replied, "but if you are so anxious as all that for a car, I fancy it won't be long before your father can make you happy."

"Yes, Doctor?" Maria stood in the doorway.

"Will you please open this safe for me, Maria?"

"Yes, Doctor." She went at once to the safe and turned the combination, then stepped back to allow him to approach it.

Lola and Dr. Crossett were laughing now, laughing so merrily that John went over to them to join in their fun.

"What is it, Lola? May I hear the Doctor's story?"

"I was telling her," began Dr. Crossett, "of a queer——"

"Lola!" Dr. Barnhelm interrupted nervously. "It is very strange, but I can't find the money! You have not put it anywhere, have you?"

"No, father. I haven't opened the safe for days. Go on with your story, Doctor." She turned to him expectantly.

"I tell you," repeated her father, "that the money is gone. I have been robbed!"

"Impossible, Martin!" Dr. Crossett crossed the room to him anxiously.

"You saw me put it there yourself! Look!" He pointed to the safe.

"But, since you put it there," exclaimed Dr. Crossett, "we have not left the room, excepting to our dinner. It must be there."

"It is not!" The Doctor spoke impatiently.

"But, Martin, who could rob you? Who, besides ourselves here, knew of the money?"

"What money?" inquired Lola. "Surely you do not mean that you had any large sum there?"

“Eight hundred and fifty dollars,” replied her father bitterly.

“This lock has not been tampered with,” announced Dr. Crossett. “The safe has been opened by someone who knew the combination. Who knew it?”

He turned, facing them all. “You, Lola. Who else?”

Lola’s eyes met his, quite calmly, then turned and rested upon Maria, and stopped there. One by one the others followed her look, until they were all looking at Maria, who grew uneasy under their gaze.

“I knew it, yes!” Maria’s voice was trembling. She had done nothing wrong, she was sure of that, but the look in their eyes troubled her. “Miss Lola taught it to me. I didn’t want to learn it, but she made me. What are you all lookin’ at me that way for? You know I ain’t a thief!”

“Has any stranger been here while we were at dinner?” inquired Dr. Crossett gravely.

“Yes,” cried Maria, eagerly. “There was! A woman; a Dago or something.”

“I saw the woman,” said Lola quietly. “She called to see you, father. She was a collector for some Hospital fund. I did not leave the room while she was here.”

“Miss Lola!” Maria turned to her. “Didn’t you go there for something? Didn’t you put the money somewhere to keep it safe? Didn’t you take it out, meaning to put it back, and forget?”

“No, Maria. I did not.”

“You are all lookin’ at me,” cried poor Maria, “as if you thought I was a thief! Why don’t you search me? Why don’t you search my things? What do you all stand there for, doin’ nothin’, and lookin’ at me like that?”

“Maria!” Dr. Barnhelm spoke gravely, but very kindly. “We, all of us, are very fond of you. From the first you have been more like a friend to us than like a servant.”

“Oh, don’t I know that? Didn’t Miss Lola pick me up out of a tenement, a dirty, ragged, hungry little kid? Ain’t you done for me what my own father and mother never did? Don’t you see that’s the very reason I couldn’t rob you? I couldn’t! I couldn’t!”

“I blame myself,” said Dr. Barnhelm huskily, “for leaving so large a sum of money where a young girl could be tempted by it.”

“I have it,” exclaimed Dr. Crossett. “Suppose that we, all of us, were to leave the room for a few moments, eh?” He turned from one to another, doing his very best to look smiling and unconcerned. “Maria, while we are gone, might hunt about a little, and if she found this money and put it back, no one would ever say a word. All would be as it was before.”

“I never took it!” Maria’s voice was shrill now and in it there was a note of hopelessness.

“Tell them I never took it, Miss Lola! Tell them.”

“I have never known Maria to be dishonest, father.”

“Maria,” Dr. Barnhelm went to her, distressed, appealing. “That money was borrowed by me to pay for the electrical apparatus that is to repay me for all the work of my whole life. You know, Maria, how, day and night, for months and years, I have gone on, changing, adding, destroying, working. I neglected everything and everybody for it. You know how much it means to me!”

For a moment she could not answer, although they all stood there, waiting. At last her voice came slowly through the sobs that shook her from head to foot:

“You’re killing me, that’s what you’re doing, killing me! Tearing my heart out of me. There ain’t a man, nor a woman, in all the world that I love like I love you! I’d rather be dead a million times than do what you think I’ve done. You are all the good I’ve ever known, you folks, but I wish to God I’d never seen you. I wish to God you’d left me where I was.”

“Mon Dieu!” cried Dr. Crossett. “What is a man to think?”

“You all believe I done it,” went on Maria, “don’t you? You’ve all said so, all but just you.” She faced John squarely, but John dropped his head; he could not meet her eye. “You think so, too,” she continued. “You’ve got to think so, because,” she stepped close up to him, “because the awful part of it is that it was just me—or her!” She raised her hand slowly, pointing at Lola.

“Lola,” John turned to her, a queer, hesitating, doubtful tone in his voice. “Maria is such a good girl, I—I——”

“Well?”

“There—there is no chance of—of a mistake is there—you—you did not——”

“No,” replied Lola calmly, “I didn’t.”

“Damn it, Doctor!” John turned to him almost roughly. “Let me pay the eight hundred and fifty, and let’s none of us ever think of this again.”

“You don’t think I done it,” Maria cried out, “you don’t. But you are the only one. Well, Doctor,” she turned to Dr. Crossett desperately, “I’m done. I can’t say anything more. What are you going to do?”

“Unless you restore that money to me at once,” replied the Doctor, sternly, “I must telephone for a police officer.”

“Yes, sir.”

“And I warn you that, if he comes, he will take you away with him.”

“Yes, sir, but it ain’t that I’m thinking of. It ain’t even that the news of me being called a thief has got to go to the man I love. I can’t even think of that right now. It’s that you believe it. I—I won’t try to run away, I’ll be in my room there, when you want me.”

She left them, and went blindly down the hall and threw herself on her bed. No one could see her now; there was no need to fight back the sobs that were stifling her. Somewhere out on the ocean was a man who loved her. What would he think of her now? Under this same roof were the persons who had taught her all that she knew of the good things of life; to them she was a thief—to them—no—not to all of them! Lola! Lola! She sat up suddenly, dry-eyed; her own words came back to her, “It was just me, or her,” and again she said, this time to herself, “That’s the awful—awful part of it.”

In the front room Dr. Barnhelm turned to John.

“Doctor,” he said, “there is what they call a ‘plain-clothes man’ that comes every night to the Athletic Club, as soon as he goes off duty. I could get him here in ten minutes. He might succeed where we have failed, and he would keep quiet about it, if I asked him to.”

“Get him.”

“Shall I get him, Lola?” He turned to her with something like a warning in his voice.

“Why yes, John. I am very fond of Maria, and I want you to make everything as easy for her as you can.”

“I will be back in fifteen minutes.”

He turned and left the room, and the house. He was stunned. Maria did not take that money! He was sure of that. He could not have told why, but he was sure. There could be no doubt. He had seen the truth in her eyes. If she did not take it—who did? To him also came back Maria’s words, “It was just me—or her.” He put that thought out of his mind, or tried to. He must know. If Maria did not do this thing she must not be allowed to suffer for it, of that alone he was sure. They must know! He crossed to Broadway, almost running, and jumped on a downtown car. It was only a few blocks, but he must return as quickly as possible.

“How are you, Dorris? Here’s a seat.”

John looked up at the words and recognized Dr. Rupert.

“Good evening, Doctor. Thank you.” He sat down beside the Doctor, keeping his eyes fixed on the passing street signs, anxious that he should not be taken past his corner.

“It was very kind of your wife, Doctor,” he began pleasantly, more to make conversation than for any other reason, “to do so much to help Miss Barnhelm this afternoon. I hope that she did not tire herself.”

“You haven’t been taking a drop too much, have you, John?” exclaimed Dr. Rupert, smiling broadly.

“Why?”

“My wife sailed for Europe, Tuesday.”

CHAPTER XI
LOLA TRAPPED

“Fifteen minutes he said.” Dr. Crossett glanced up at the clock. “He should be here very soon now.”

“I cannot see what difference a few minutes can possibly make, nor can I see what this ‘plain-clothes man,’ as John calls him, can do when he gets here,” said Lola impatiently.

“The whole thing seems absurd to me. What can one man do more than another?”

“I do not like this affair,” replied Dr. Crossett. “In Paris I had much to do with the medical side of criminal practice. I made a study of convicted felons for many years; of their minds, and their bodies. This girl is not of the type. Lola! you have a woman’s wit. If she did not do it, who did?”

He had been walking restlessly back and forth across the room, but as he asked her this question he stopped in front of her.

“Could it have been anyone beside Maria?”

“She and I were the only ones who knew how to open the safe,” Lola answered in a perfectly matter-of-fact voice. “Even

I did not know that there was any money there, and I would not steal your money, for I know that I would only have to ask you for it, and you would give it to me."

"No one but that poor girl," the Doctor sighed. "I liked her. I am sorry, also I am ashamed. I pride myself upon some knowledge of character, and I have been a fool. In this servant I thought I had found a rare type of loyalty, an inborn refinement and delicacy that sprang from a good heart, making no account of the promptings of inherited vice, and untouched by the degrading environment of her youth. Such natures are met, not often, but I thought that hers was of that description. Well—I have had many such disappointments. We will talk no more about it. Come, Martin!"

He went to Dr. Barnhelm, who was seated at the table in an attitude of utter dejection. "The detective may be able to make her confess; if not, we will go to the bank again to-morrow."

Dr. Barnhelm looked up wearily.

"There seems to be some curious fate hanging over my machine, Paul. I feel to-night that my work has been a failure."

"A failure! You are dreaming, Martin. See what your work has done." Dr. Crossett pointed to Lola indignantly. "She was dead, and you brought her back to life."

"What do you mean?" Lola sprang to her feet, facing them, her eyes blazing and her face livid. "What do you mean?"

"Lola!"

"Hush, Paul! She does not know!"

"What is it that I don't know?" There was an awful terror in her voice and as she faced them, clutching fiercely at her heart, they saw the blood go from her lips, and could hear her teeth chattering together convulsively, so that she could hardly form her words. "What do you mean when you say that I was dead?" She tottered toward them, her arms outstretched. "No! Don't touch me. Why did you say that I was dead? I was hurt, I was unconscious, but I was not dead! Why don't you speak? If I was dead how could I be here? Oh, my God! Why did you say that I was dead?"

"Lola! My dear! You do not understand."

"I want to understand! I must! I must!"

"Quick, Martin," Dr. Crossett spoke sharply, his eyes fastened on her face. "Tell her!"

"My experiments have made it possible for me to—to artificially stimulate the action of the heart. To—practically restore life, within a certain time. You—you have never asked me for the details. There seemed to be no need for you to know."

"The papers said that I was dead! I—I laughed when I read them—was it true?"

"My child!" Dr. Crossett put his hand gently on her arm. "You must control yourself."

"Was it true, father? Was it true?'

"Yes. Help her, Paul. Help her!"

Dr. Crossett caught her in his strong arms and, looking into her eyes, spoke soothingly.

"What of it? It is over. You are well now. You are not marked, not hurt. You are as other women."

She threw him off as easily as though he had been a child.

"Am I! Am I! So, I am not hurt; I am as other women?" Then she laughed.

He had heard laughter of many sorts, this man whose work had for years taken him to asylums, to prisons, to locked rooms in stately palaces, rooms where the windows were barred with iron bars; but he had never heard a laugh like this; it had in it all of mystery of which he had ever known, and something else, some nameless thing that rang in his ears for many years, and that seemed for a moment to stop the beating of his heart.

Her laughter stopped, and she turned wearily to leave the room, and as she did so they heard the outside door open, then close with a crash, and John Dorris stood in the doorway, facing her.

"You—you lied to me!"

Dr. Barnhelm stepped forward angrily.

"John!"

John did not turn his head but kept his eyes on her.

"You told me that you spent the afternoon with Dr. Rupert's wife."

"I did."

"I met Rupert in the car. I told him what you said, and he laughed at me. His wife is on her way to Europe."

“No!” Dr. Crossett cried out in denial.

“Why should Rupert tell me so, if it were not true? That is not all. You did not see his wife, Lola, but he saw you. You were at Churchill’s restaurant for two hours, with Dick Fenway!”

“No, John!” Dr. Barnhelm caught him by the arm. “What are you saying?”

“The truth! I made him swear to it. He sat only a few feet away from her. He described her dress; he spoke of telling his friends who she was, when they remarked upon the splendid jewels she wore about her neck.”

“There! He did lie, or he was mistaken. My daughter wears no jewels—you know that, both of you. Just a few little trinkets that were her mother’s. No jewels; not one!”

“Thank God!” exclaimed Dr. Crossett. “Thank God!”

“I will kill that man! You”—the old man glared at John contemptuously—“you, who say you love her—you should have killed him. She has no jewels—see!”

He put his hand in the safe and drew out Lola’s little black jewel box.

“Here is all she has, all that she ever had. The key, Lola, give me the key.”

“Why?”

“I want them to see your poor little trinkets. By God, no man shall doubt my daughter. Give me the key!”

She looked around for a moment, from one to the other, from John to her father, to Dr. Crossett, to Maria, who had entered the room, and stood looking at her. She was trapped. She knew that there was just one chance, hardly worth the trying.

“I—the key is lost, father.”

Dr. Barnhelm did not hesitate. He threw the delicate wooden box to the floor and dashed his foot down on it. It splintered to pieces.

“There! Look! All of you!”

He pointed to a string of amber, a silver pin, and—

“Look!” John stooped and held up before them the string of flashing diamonds.

“Lola!” There was agony in the Doctor’s voice. “Lola!”

“It—it is not mine.”

“It is the box you dropped in here, after you came back from Dick Fenway. You would not let me see what was in it.” John held up the battered leather box. “See how well it fits these diamonds!”

“Then you did open that safe since the Doctor put the money there!” exclaimed Maria. “I knew you did. You took that money.”

“Well, what if I did?” She was at bay now, against them all, and she was glad of it. “I wanted the money. Could I have asked any of you for it? You are all so good, and so respectable that if I told you I wanted a pair of decent gloves you’d say it was a sin.”

She put out her hand and tore the string of diamonds away from John, and clasped them defiantly about her neck.

“This is mine, and the man who gave it to me will give me as many others as I ask of him.”

“Lola!” John cried out in horror, but she turned on him fiercely, scornfully.

LOLA BEGS DICK FENWAY TO TAKE HER AWAY.

“Why not? What have you to offer me to compare with what he can give me? Am I to go on forever, and ever, and ever, living the same life, thinking the same thoughts—always—always—until I die? If that was to be my life, how dared you bring me back from death, back, with a thousand new feelings, and passions, and desires? It was you who gave them to me.”

She was leaning forward now, across the table, her eyes glaring at her father, who sat huddled in his chair, his face slowly changing from a look of shame and agony to one of horror. “You made me what I am. In your narrow, rusty lives you, none of you,” she turned again to the others, “know that outside your rotten little world there is a life that is all gayety and sunshine. I am going to it. I’m done with you—all of you!”

Before they could stop her, if any there had dared to stop her, she left them. They heard her going down the hall, and heard the door close behind her.

CHAPTER XII
LOLA'S FLIGHT

Dick Fenway’s apartment was a popular place for after-theatre parties, or any other description of informal evening merry-making. It was well within the “lobster belt,” less than five minutes taxi-ride from “anywhere.”

It was, or rather was announced as “strictly a bachelor apartment,” but to a casual observer its “strictness” was largely a matter of the imagination. Mrs. Harlan once remarked that the thing she liked about a classy bachelor apartment was “that they were the only places in New York where they knew how to treat a lady.”

Dick, who had been making a day of it, was entertaining a party, of which, as usual, Mrs. Harlan was the central figure. They had gone in a body to the opening of a new musical comedy, but after the curtain fell on the first act, she had announced it as “the same old thing, only a bit rottener,” and they had adjourned to Dick’s rooms to wind up the evening with a game of roulette, to be followed by a little supper. Mrs. Harlan had the bank and, being some three hundred dollars ahead of the game, was in the best of humor. Dick, as usual, had been losing heavily, but did not seem to be greatly cast down by his ill-fortune; as he expressed it, his “old man was too fat, and it did him good to work.”

Aside from Dick and Mrs. Harlan, the party consisted of Jim Winnett, a broker; Sam Norton, a popular comedian, just at present out of an engagement; Ted Hawley, one of those mysterious gentlemen, of which this section of New York is so full, who manage to live in great comfort on an income of nothing a year, and, by no greater exertion, so far as anyone has been able to discover, than it takes to array themselves in well-tailored garments, and cultivate the pleasant art of hand-shaking. Accompanying these gentlemen were a carefully selected quartette of young ladies, whose physical charms made up for any possible lack of social culture.

Brooks, a man servant of perfect manners and unimpeachable respectability, moved about quietly, supplying cigars for the gentlemen, cigarettes for the ladies, and liquid refreshment for both, with a skill born of long experience, and if he had any personal opinion at all of his master’s guests, it was hidden behind a face of such absolute lack of expression that it is to be greatly doubted whether they looked upon him as a human being, or a bit of rather unusually perfect mechanism, invented for their express convenience.

In most circles of this sort, a close observer will notice that there is usually some one man, who seems to be elected by unanimous vote, to pay all the bills, and in this case Mrs. Harlan was not at all surprised to discover that when Dick grew tired of throwing away his father’s money, and retired rather sulkily to a distant window seat, the game languished, and after a moment’s puny struggle, died of inanition.

“You’re a fine bunch of pikers,” the lady observed, with that nice choice of the vernacular which constituted one of her chief social charms. “There isn’t sporting blood enough in the whole crowd of you to drown a medium-sized flea.”

LOLA ACCEPTS THE CHAPERONAGE OF MRS. HARLAN.

“I’m sick of the game, Madge,” responded Dick moodily, “and I guess I’m off my feed to-night. I feel rotten! You folks

start a poker game, if you want to, I'm going to sit around for a while."

"He's in love, that's the matter with him," said one of the girls. "It's that pretty little blond he's been rushing lately. What's the trouble, Dick, did she pass you up?"

"I don't know what you're talking about," Dick answered, rather a nasty look coming into his eyes. "You're all right, Nellie, but you spend so much of your time talking that you never seem to say anything."

"Better let up on him, folks," Mrs. Harlan observed mildly. "Dick knows what he is about, and it's still pretty good dope to learn to mind your own business."

Conversations started along these lines have, in society of this elevated description, been known to break up the party, occasionally known to have led to the breaking of more tangible things, but a sharp ring at the bell interrupted them, and Brooks left the room quietly to admit the late visitor.

"I wonder who that is?" questioned Mrs. Harlan. "I hope it's Bob Nelson. Bob's not much of a talker, but he's a real sport, and if we don't get some one to throw out a life-line pretty quick, this party is going to turn out punker than the show was."

Brooks entered and, crossing to Fenway, announced in a low voice: "A lady to see you, sir."

"Who is she?"

"She wouldn't give her name, sir; said she wanted to see you, and if you weren't at home she'd wait."

"Do you know her?"

"No, sir, she has never been here before, sir."

"Well, I don't know who she is, and I don't care. I can't be bothered going to the door this time of night. If she wants to see me she'll have to come in here; if she don't like that she can go away. Tell her so."

"Yes, sir."

"This place of mine is getting to be like the corner of Broadway and Forty-second Street," Dick said resentfully, as Brooks went to deliver his message. "I'm about the only one in New York who doesn't feel at home here."

"Well, you are cranky to-night, I must say. That's a fine way to talk to a room full of guests," remonstrated Mrs. Harlan. "How do we know that——"

"The lady, sir." Brooks' announcement interrupted Mrs. Harlan's speech, and they all glanced up as a young woman stood on the threshold and looked about her with wondering, excited eyes. Even to them there was something strangely out of place in this girl's presence here; and as they saw Mrs. Harlan's astonishment, and heard Dick's gasp of surprise, and something very like dismay, they scented something out of the ordinary, and bent forward in eager curiosity.

"Lola!" Dick rose to his feet awkwardly. "Lola!"

"Your man told me that to see you I must come in here, and it was very necessary that I should see you."

"I beg your pardon, I had no idea. I—I—please come into the next room, where we can talk quietly."

"I say, Dick," said Sam Norton thickly, "ain't you going to introduce the lady?" He rose rather unsteadily and started toward Lola.

"You go to hell, Sam!" Dick pushed him away roughly. "Come, Miss Barnhelm, I am sure you will feel more at home in here."

As he spoke he opened the door of the adjoining room and as she entered he turned so fiercely on the others that they lost at once any desire they may have had to satisfy their curiosity.

"You'd better keep away, all of you!" was all he said, but the look on his face warned them that he was in no mood to be trifled with, and as the door closed behind him they did not even laugh.

The room into which he had taken her was furnished as a library, and as Lola looked about her she noticed with keen pleasure the tasteful and expensive furnishings and the atmosphere of luxury. In reality, it was Dick's favorite room, and reflected, as rooms sometimes will, the better side of his nature. It is worthy of remark that of all the noisy party outside, Mrs. Harlan alone had ever put her foot across this threshold, and Mrs. Harlan, no matter what her faults, at least had brains.

As Lola seated herself and looked around curiously, he stood expectantly in front of her, waiting for an explanation of her presence.

"Well, Lola," he said at last, seeing that she made no effort to begin.

"Well?" She looked at him smilingly.

"It's awful good of you to come here, of course, Lola, but I—I—don't you think you had better tell me all about it?"

"There is very little to tell, Dick. They scolded me for being late; that started it, then John found out that I had been at

the restaurant with you; a little later they found that silly diamond thing you gave me. One thing on top of another was a little too much for them. Things began to be very unpleasant, so I came away."

"Came away. I am not sure that I quite understand you. Came away for how long?"

"I am never going back there," she replied, "never in my life."

"And—and you came to me?"

"Yes."

"Lola! Do you know what that means?"

"I—I thought it would mean that you would be glad to see me."

He was far from being a good man. He had done his best to bring this very thing about, but now that it had come some little spark of manhood in him made him hesitate. He did not speak for a moment, and when he did it was in a voice more serious than any of his friends would have recognized.

"I am married, Lola; you know that, but my lawyers are fixing things, and before long I expect to get a divorce. Will you come to me now, and let me take you away from all this mess, and marry me just as soon as things are arranged?"

"Are you sure you want me, Dick?"

The look in his eyes was answer enough as he caught her in his arms, but if she was afraid of him she showed no sign of it. She allowed him to kiss her once on the lips, then she gently freed herself, and stood looking at him laughingly, and she seemed to him so young, so like a pretty, inexperienced child, that he was, for the moment, ashamed to press his advantage over her.

"You did want me after all, didn't you, Dick? I was sure you would, although I was just a little bit nervous, while your man kept me waiting at the door. You are a dear boy, and I am going to learn to be very fond of you, and just as soon as you get that horrid divorce I will marry you, if you still want me."

"And until then, Lola?" He looked at her with a growing passion, as he realized how completely she was putting herself into his power.

"It may be a month or two. I'll hurry things all I can, but until then what are you going to do? Let's have this settled right now. I won't always be in as decent a mood as I seem to be in to-night. What are you going to do until then?"

"I am going to stay with you, Dick." She looked at him, blushing slightly, but without a sign of nervousness. "No, please!" As he stepped toward her to take her in his arms. "I have thought it all out very carefully. If I come to you it must be on my own conditions."

"It shall be, Lola; anything you want you shall have."

"I want you to take me away, to-night, before any of them can find me. I don't want to come back to New York until after we are married. I will go with you anywhere you want to take me, but not alone. You must find some woman who will go with us."

"Mrs. Harlan," he suggested promptly. "She's rather hard up just now, and she'd be glad of a little trip. She could get away to-morrow, I'm sure, if we made a point of it; not to-night; no woman on earth could do that."

"Ask her, and if she will go, ask her if she would be willing to take me to her house to-night. John will come here, I am sure of that, but he would not dare to go there before morning, and if he comes then we can find a way to avoid him. You can take us there in a cab; then go to an hotel for the night."

"Do you think I am afraid of John Dorris?"

"I think you are very foolish if you are not," she answered. "John is a quiet man, but if he were to find us here in this room together, he would kill you!"

Dick was no coward, but the bravest of men scarcely like to hear statements of this sort, and he remembered the look on John's face when he had passed him in the doorway, the day Lola had been brought home so seriously injured, killed, as they all supposed, by his carelessness. So he lost no time in calling Mrs. Harlan into the room, and telling her of their plans. She gladly agreed to go with them on a visit to the various summer resorts, and cheerfully offered to take care of Lola until they were ready to start. She said it was very sensible of them to avoid the chance of any unpleasantness, and that the sooner they got away from Dick's rooms the better. She reminded them that it would be a very easy matter for John, or Dr. Barnhelm, to get Dick's address from the telephone book, but she had no doubt of being able to keep Lola safely in her own apartment, until they were ready to leave the city. She returned to the other room for her wrap, and John went to telephone for his car and to give instructions to Brooks to pack up for a long journey.

LOLA CONFESSES HER LOVE FOR DICK FENWAY.

Left alone to wait for their return, Lola moved curiously about, looking at everything with great interest. How nice it was all going to be, to always be surrounded by beautiful objects. Dick was going to be very good to her, she was sure of that, quite sure of her power over him. He was a good fellow; he had never thrilled her as John had done, for a moment, that very afternoon, but John was a prude; she never would have been able to endure life with him.

How silly of her to have hesitated. She should have left home long ago. She had supposed that it would almost break her heart, but she did not seem to care at all. She must remember that. Nothing ever really mattered, after all, if one had the courage to do as one pleased. Something always happened to make things all right.

She was glad when she came to think of it that Dick was not in a position to marry her at once. She might find that he bored her, or that he was not as kind as she expected, and if so, why then she wouldn't marry him at all.

As she had walked down Broadway, from the subway station, a dozen men had turned and looked after her, rich, well-dressed men, some of them. After all there was no reason why a girl should worry, with the world so full of men, all of them eager to lavish their money on her. One had to be careful, of course, and she meant to be careful. She had no fear of Dick, she could manage him. John was different; if John had been a bad man she would have been afraid of him, afraid of herself, but, thank goodness, Dick was harmless. He was too wise, too experienced; his very look put her on her guard against him. What a fortunate thing it was that men were such obvious creatures, good or bad; how silly to be afraid of either sort; one only had to be a little prudent, a little clever, and perhaps a little pretty. She laughed softly to herself. She was all of these, she knew, and more. She had no fear of the world; she was not afraid; she was eager to match her strength against it. She felt perfectly safe when, a few moments later, they shot out of the side street, in Dick's big car, and turned up Broadway. It was midnight, but the great thoroughfare was thronged with automobiles—thousands of them. What a good time people had, to be sure; what a fool she had been to waste any of her precious youth in the dull life of her old home. She was only just twenty, after all, she thought happily, and she had a lot of time yet in which to be young and gay.

She was seated on the back seat of the car with Dick and Mrs. Harlan. Dick was between them, and as they turned into Broadway he took her hand, and pressed it tenderly. She returned the pressure softly, and looked up at him. As she did so she saw John Dorris. He was on the crowded sidewalk, hurrying down the street as fast as the throng in front of him would allow. For a moment their eyes met. She saw his pale, worried look change to fierce anger as he saw her there with Dick and Mrs. Harlan. He sprang to the curb and called out to her, but the car shot past. He followed desperately. A traffic policeman might stop them at Forty-second Street; that was his only chance. As he ran along, in the street, keeping close to the sidewalk, hundreds of heads turned to look after him. The Broadway crowd is quick to scent trouble, and as they saw the look on his face they turned laughingly, and tried to see what he was going to do.

"Some guy is going to get his, if that feller's legs hold out," remarked a fat man with a wide grin of delight. "I wish he'd manage to pull it off quick, 'cause I'm too damned fat to do a Marathon."

There they were! The long line of cars had stopped in response to the officer's raised hand. He would do it yet! His breath was coming in quick gasps, but he saw them! He saw the big red car in the line with all the others. He could see Fenway standing up, and looking back anxiously. He had good reason to be anxious!

Lola should not do this thing! This man should not be allowed to blast her life! It would be better to get him by the throat, and drag him out of the car, and, no matter what, kill him if necessary. What came after did not count. This girl, the girl he loved, should not give her fresh beauty to this beast, soul and body to his vicious pleasures. He was in time, thank God for that! They saw him now, he could read the look of terror in Dick's face, the queer expression of fascinated interest, almost of delight in Lola's eyes, and he put all his strength into one last effort.

As he sprang forward, his eyes on Dick, he heard a shrill whistle. The long line broke, the car seemed to leap from under his hands, he heard men cry out, angrily; he felt rough hands hurl him back to the sidewalk, and he saw Lola standing up, leaning over the back of the car, looking back, and laughing at him.

CHAPTER XIII
LOLA GOES TO FENWAY'S

It seemed to Dr. Crossett, waiting there in the room, with this silent old man, that John had been gone a very long time. It was almost morning now, five hours, time enough surely for much to have happened. He had insisted, some hours before, on Maria's going to bed, for in spite of her grief she was so tired by the emotions of the evening, that it was impossible for her to keep her eyes open, and he had discovered her, sitting upright in a chair, sound asleep, with the tears rolling down her cheeks.

He had made many efforts to induce Dr. Barnhelm to speak of Lola, and of the events leading up to her sudden desertion of them, but to all his questions, or remarks, the old man refused any answer, other than to look up, almost vacantly, and shake his head.

LOLA IN DICK FENWAY'S ROOMS.

"He is stunned," thought Dr. Crossett. "As yet his brain is too numbed to realize; to-morrow, unless John brings her home, he will be desperate." Would she come home? That was the question. That she had been extravagant, and, through a desire for beautiful clothes, had been, little by little, led into a maze of debts, of which she had been afraid to tell them, and that the sudden temptation, when she had unexpectedly come upon that roll of bank notes, had been too much for her to resist. All this was obvious, and, sad as it was, was not unforgivable. That she had deceived John, however, and, day after day, had lied to him, and gone to the man whom, of all others, she had most reason to avoid, was a treachery hard to excuse, even to this man, who was doing his very best to find excuses.

What was the outcome to be? He could not decide. There had been so much of real hate, and contempt, in her manner to them, that it was out of the question to put it all down to excitement, or girlish anger.

He quite realized that she had "burned her bridges behind her," that her manner of going had left her no possibility of coming back, unless she came humbly, and in repentance.

Try as he might he could not picture that. Humble she might be, and repentant, but not until her spirit was broken by suffering.

He knew much of the world, much of human nature, and he knew that she would have to make her choice at once between evil and good. That alone she could not hope to live, as she had said that she was going to live. The good in her heart might save her even now. She was like a child. When this man offered her money and all the beautiful things she longed for, did she know the price she would be asked to pay? When she found it out would she shut her eyes, and go blindly on, or would the innate delicacy of her nature, the instinctive purity of girlhood, save her, as it has saved thousands before her? This was the only hope. He tried to have confidence; after all, she was her mother's daughter. He cherished that thought. Her child could not sink so low! Great God! She could not do it!

In the stillness of the early morning he heard the clang of the iron doors of the elevator as they were thrown open in the hall outside, and a moment later John came in.

One look at his face was enough to tell him that he brought no good news, but whatever it was he must know it.

"Well, John?" He came forward to meet him. "What have you to tell us?"

John looked quickly at Dr. Barnhelm, and Dr. Crossett understood that what he had to tell would destroy any remaining hope that the old man might have cherished.

"Thank you, John, for doing what you have done."

Dr. Barnhelm spoke quietly, but with a great weariness in his voice. "I know that I am not alone in my sorrow, but I wish to know nothing of what you have discovered; nothing now, or ever, of where she has gone, or of the things that she has done, or will do. I am going to ask you both not to speak of her in my hearing. It must be as though she were dead, until the day she comes back to me."

He rose as he finished, and walked to the door.

"But Doctor, will she ever come back?" John said despondently. "Do you think that we shall ever see her again?"

"I am quite sure of it," Dr. Barnhelm answered. "There can be no question of that; she will come back."

There was no hope or joy in his voice, only absolute conviction, and something a little like fear, at least that was the thought that came to them both, as he quietly left the room.

“He is wrong, Doctor,” John said as the door closed. “I have seen her. She is not coming back.”

“She told you so?” questioned Dr. Crossett eagerly.

“No. I did not speak to her. I saw her going up Broadway in Dick Fenway’s automobile. He was with her. She had gone to him. Is with him now. I tried to stop them, but I failed. They were not alone. They had a Mrs. Harlan with them.”

“A woman! Thank God for that,” exclaimed the Doctor. “We may be in time yet, my boy.”

“You don’t know this woman,” John spoke bitterly. “Her presence wouldn’t protect any girl from such a man as that. She laughs at the things you and I call decency, or virtue. Between Dick Fenway and such a woman, Lola hasn’t a chance; not a hope! They won’t stop, either of them, until they have dragged her down to their own level!”

“I will go to her,” the Doctor spoke eagerly. “She would fear me less than she would you, or her father, because she has wronged me less. I will go there, as soon as it is daylight.”

LOLA IS HAPPY IN DOCTOR FENWAY’S ROOMS.

“Go where? Do you suppose that if I could have found out where they have taken her that I would be here now?” demanded John. “I went to this Mrs. Harlan’s apartment as fast as a taxicab could get me there. Her maid said that Mrs. Harlan had not returned, and was not expected before late in the following day. The hall boys absolutely denied having seen her since noon. What was I to do? While I stood there at the door she may have been standing within six feet of me, laughing at me, as she did once before to-night. How was I to know? I left there, and rode downtown to Fenway’s rooms, on the chance that he had left her. They let me go upstairs to his apartment. At the door a servant tried to stop me, but I threw him aside, and went in. There was a crowd of half-drunken men and girls there. I asked for him, and they told me that they hardly expected him to return as he had gone away with a regular peach! Damn them! They wouldn’t tell me where I could hope to find him, and when I grew excited they laughed at me. By God, Doctor, I’ve been laughed at too often to-night. Someone is going to pay me for it.”

“My dear boy,” said the Doctor gently, “surely we have enough to bear now; bringing another tragedy into our lives is not going to do any good.”

“What’s the use of talking?” John was quite unnerved by all the experiences and shocks of the last few hours. “I came here because it was useless to search any more until daylight. But I am going to find that man. He can’t hide himself from me forever. He may take her away. He probably will, but I’ll go after them. Not to bring her back; I can’t do that. I can’t ever, ever think of her again with anything but pity, but, by God, I can take him out of her life; yes, and I am going to do it!”

“My dear boy!” Dr. Crossett would have given much to be able to comfort him, but as he had said, “it wasn’t any use to talk, suppose we sleep over this. We can’t do anything for several hours yet, and we are both tired out. Come!”

“Sleep! Do you expect me to sleep with the thought of Lola and that mean being together, driving me almost insane? Oh, I was a fool to come here. I should have kept on hunting for them. I must have known you wouldn’t understand. You don’t know what it is to love a girl, and to lose her; to think of her and some other man living, laughing, loving one another, without a thought of you.”

For a moment the Doctor seemed about to reply, but with only a slight hesitation he smiled rather sadly to himself, and spoke gently but with a trace of irony.

“We will grant, John, that I do not understand; that I know nothing of loving a woman whom fate sees fit to separate me from; but I do know this: Always there must be one love stronger than another; as it was with you and Lola, so it always is. One who loves, and gives, one who is loved, and takes; not always selfishly, but always it is so. In your life you may love again, for you are young, but you will never again be able to give to any woman just what you gave to her. It is not any man’s to give more than once. If I were you I should try to be worthy of the love that, on your part at least, was a very sacred thing. Any scandal you bring upon her now, any act of selfish revenge for your very real wrongs, is just going to become the darkest shadow on your memory of her. If I could do it, my boy, I should forget the woman, and

only remember the love you had for her, for in all your life you will never know a finer thing."

"You are a good man, Doctor, and I am ashamed for having spoken as I did," replied John earnestly. "I can't make you any promise, because to me there is only one thing to live for, just now—to find them. What will happen then I don't know, but I must speak to her once more, and to him. I am going home now, to change my clothes, and to write a note to the bank. You must try to get some sleep. I will see you during the day."

"Am I to depend upon that?" inquired the Doctor.

"Yes," John answered. "No matter what happens I will keep you informed."

He went away, down the elevator, and through the deserted streets, to his rooms. He saw no beauty in the dim, misty light of the summer morning, or the faint glow of the first rays of the rising sun. He saw nothing but Lola's face, as she had stood up in Fenway's car, and looked back, and laughed at him.

When Maria came into the front room to put it straight before breakfast she found Dr. Crossett still sitting where John had left him. He looked up and spoke pleasantly to her as she entered, but she thought that he had, as she expressed it to herself, "a queer, far-off look in his eyes, like a person that had been thinking of things that had happened a long time ago."

Lola was sleeping very peacefully in a large and rather ornate brass bed, in one of Mrs. Harlan's guest rooms. As she lay there, dressed in one of that lady's absurdly ample night robes, she was smiling to herself happily—some freak of what we choose to call our sub-conscious mind had flashed across her brain—a dream. There was no hardness in her face now, no look of fear, or glitter of excitement in her eyes. She was dreaming of John, and the day he had brought her a beautiful bunch of roses; little Nellie, poor little girl, was there.

"Take them, dear," she muttered softly. "You don't mind, do you, John?" And John smiled back at her, as they both thrilled at the memory of their first kiss. How good he was, she thought; how gentle and—darkness, absolute darkness, such as the mind cannot picture—a fierce pang shooting through her heart, like a flame—slowly—life coming back, life and thought—and memory—but the pain was there, and a horror, a new burning in her blood, like that awful burning in her heart. What was it—this thing that frightened her—this new, strange nature that forced her to do its will? She must get away, far away from these thoughts; she must run, quick—quick, or it would be too late. She must have help. "Father! Father! Father!"

The sound of her own voice woke her, and she found herself sitting up in bed, her hand clutching at her heart.

"Lola! What in the world is it?" Mrs. Harlan came running into her room. "Good heavens, how you frightened me."

"It was a dream," said Lola, the terror slowly fading out of her face. "A bad dream, and such a queer pain, here." She laid her hand again over her heart.

"You're not used to late suppers, I guess," responded the always practical Mrs. Harlan. "Go back to sleep now, because we've a million things to do if we expect to get that afternoon train for Atlantic City. How much money did Dick give you to do your shopping with?"

"I think he said it was five hundred dollars," said Lola carelessly. "I didn't count it. He said I could get what else I needed as we went along."

"He's a prince," exclaimed Mrs. Harlan heartily. "We can stop in and leave an order with Madam Zelya, to be sent after us."

"We can not," replied Lola. "There's just one thing in the world that's worrying me this morning; that is that I was fool enough to pay her all that money."

CHAPTER XIV
ON THE ROAD

"Dick," said Mrs. Harlan, with extreme politeness, "I am perfectly willing that Lola should have all the best of it. I am used to that. I am quite prepared to admit that she is younger than I am, and better looking, although I still think that she might get along without telling me of it herself. It's none of my business how much money you give her, nor how much she may bully you in private, but, my dear boy, I am just naturally damned if I'll put up with her tantrums any longer."

"But, Madge," pleaded Dick Fenway, rather anxiously, "Lola is—a little nervous!"

"She's all of that," agreed Mrs. Harlan. "We started out to make a jolly party of this and it's winding up like an Irish wake. Look at Bob."

In response to her rather dramatic invitation, Dick turned his head, and did as he was requested. He looked at Bob, and in spite of his disturbed mind he found himself smiling. Bob Nelson, who made up the fourth in their little party, was a stout young fellow in the late twenties, whose sole ambition in life seemed to centre about a desire not to have rows; he sat on the sand a few paces away from them, and was earnestly practicing his favorite amusement, which consisted in fixing his eyes firmly upon nothing whatever, and allowing his mind to "stand without hitching," as he had once

described it, a mental gymnastic only possible of achievement inside of a skull so constituted as to allow the brain an abundance of room.

“Bob,” continued Mrs. Harlan firmly, “is getting good and tired of the way things are going. We don’t mind a little change now and then, but we do object to being politely requested to get out of every hotel between Palm Beach and Quebec. Bob! What is your opinion of the way Lola is going on?”

Bob, evidently anxious to do the subject full justice, gave the matter at least a moment’s calm thought before he replied.

“I—er—yes——” He then, with considerable satisfaction, resumed his former amusement, only slightly troubled by the unusual mental effort.

“There! You see!” exclaimed Mrs. Harlan.

Although somewhat in doubt as to precisely what he was supposed to see, Dick was content to assume that it was not exactly a compliment to Lola.

Lola had been making rows; there was no denying that. She was difficult to please, and absolutely indifferent to the rights of others. She was constantly getting them into disputes with the hotel clerks, the servants, or with the other guests, and on several occasions during their trip they had been politely informed that their rooms were needed for other purposes. All this had been fully as annoying to Dick as it had to either of the others, but during the six weeks they had been together, his love for her had grown into a great passion that made no account of her faults, although it could not blind him to them.

“She’s in a difficult position, Madge,” he explained, anxious to smooth things over, for he knew that Lola would not travel about with him alone, and for the last few days he had seen that Mrs. Harlan was rapidly growing tired of her rôle of chaperone. “She’s had to break off with her people, and she’s new to this sort of thing. It will be all right as soon as that confounded divorce of mine is settled. Once we are married she’ll settle down and have an easy mind.”

“All right,” Mrs. Harlan sighed patiently. “I’m your friend, and I’ll stick as long as I can, but I can’t help saying this, Dick: you’re the bravest man I ever knew. They make an awful fuss about ‘Daniel in the Lions’ Den’ but he wasn’t a marker to you!”

“Oh, come now! Lola isn’t so bad as all that. She’s the best girl in the world, and the gamest little sport. Of course, I’ll admit she is a little bit upset right now, and her temper is a little—little violent.”

“And then some,” agreed Mrs. Harlan coarsely.

“Come on; let’s go back and see if she’s still asleep. If she is the hotel people will probably allow us to stay to lunch. Are you ready, Bob?”

Bob was never what could properly be described as ready, but as it was easier on the whole to move than to dispute the matter, and as he was vaguely impressed with the idea that the word lunch had been mentioned, he rose ponderously to his feet and followed the others back to the hotel. Several groups of summer visitors, noticing the deep abstraction of his manner, were quite impressed. One young lady was heard to remark, that she “would like to know what he was thinking about;” a desire which, had he known of it, he would have been quite unable to gratify.

They found Lola waiting for them on the broad veranda, and as she saw them she came to the head of the steps and stood there smiling down at them. She was all in white, and looked as fresh and as sweet as a flower. No one, to see her, would have believed that only the night before she had left them in a furious burst of temper, vowing that she never wanted to see any of them again as long as she lived.

“I’ve been waiting for you for the longest time,” she cried out gayly. “I was afraid that you had all grown so disgusted with me that you had run away together, and were going to leave me here all by myself.”

“You didn’t answer when I knocked at your door this morning, and I was afraid to wake you. I thought the sleep would do you more good than anything else.”

Dick spoke tenderly, for he was really very fond of her, and anxious that the scene of the night before should be forgotten.

“Aren’t you going to kiss me, Madge?”

As Lola held out her hand pleadingly, and with an air of sweet repentance, Mrs. Harlan, who was kind-hearted enough in her way, completely surrendered, and kissed her warmly, although she had vowed to herself that she would make no more efforts to live at peace with her.

“And you, Bob?” As she stood with her arm about Mrs. Harlan, she held out her left hand to him. “Will you forgive me also? You see that everyone else has; you don’t want to be the hard-hearted one of the crowd, do you?”

“Lola, you’re all right,” said Bob, enormously flattered by all this unusual attention.

“We’re going to cut out rows after this, and have a great time. Let’s go to lunch!”

“Right again, Bob,” cried out Mrs. Harlan. “I always said you had more brains than any of us.”

“Oh, no,” replied Bob modestly, as they started for the dining-room, “I don’t claim to have more than my share of brains, but I’m practical.”

They had arrived here, at Narragansett Pier, only the day before, and Lola, who had been tired out by the long journey from Bar Harbor, had refused to go down stairs to dinner, and had, as she always did of late, taken breakfast in bed; so this was her first sight of the pretty dining-room.

They were given a table by one of the front windows looking out over the water, and as she seated herself and looked around she made up her mind that she was going to like this new place.

The room was crowded, although the season was drawing to a close, and she noted with approval that the guests were of a quieter sort than those to whom they had been accustomed of late.

“It’s a fine assortment of old dopes we’ve fell into this time,” remarked Mrs. Harlan, looking about her scornfully. “Hadn’t you better say grace, Bob, or start a hymn?”

“Good God, Madge!” exclaimed Bob in horror. “It ain’t as bad as that, is it?”

“It’s a good thing for all of us,” said Lola. “It’s a rest to get where you can see decent women and children again. I’m tired of those sporty hotels we’ve been living in lately. I’m going in for the simple life, and besides, these are smart people; you can tell that by looking at them. There isn’t a thing in the world the matter with them, outside of their being respectable.”

“They know enough to get good grub,” Bob asserted with strong approval. “If soup like this goes with being respectable, I believe I’ll get me a pair of spectacles and start in to raise whiskers.”

“Look!” Lola nodded her head in the direction of a table near to them. “Did you ever see a finer looking old man or a prettier child! I wonder if he is her father? No, he’s too old. He is her grandfather; that pretty little woman next to him is his daughter and the little girl’s mother!”

“Thank God for this cocktail!” exclaimed Mrs. Harlan piously, as she raised it to her lips. “It’s all that’s keeping me from a bad attack of the ‘Willies.’ You don’t seriously mean that you like this sort of thing.”

“Of course I do,” replied Lola; “I like it better than any of the places we have been to yet; don’t you, Dick?”

“I like any place where you are happy, Lola,” he replied.

“Quick, Bob, send for another cocktail,” Mrs. Harlan demanded earnestly, “and tell the waiter to hurry up with it, or I’ll be turning virtuous myself.”

There was, in fact, some reason for her surprise. Lola was never in the same mood for any great length of time, but up to now she had been tireless in her search for pleasure and excitement. She could not have told herself just why the atmosphere of this rather aristocratic hotel appealed so strongly to her, but the fact remained that, for the moment at least, she was happier than she had been at any time since their hurried flight from New York.

They had gone first to Atlantic City, where Bob had joined their party, but on the second day after their arrival, one of the private detectives whom Dick had prudently engaged to keep an eye on John Dorris, had telegraphed that John had just taken a train for Atlantic City. How he had discovered their whereabouts they did not know, but long before his train arrived they were on their way to Cape May.

That was the last they heard of John; whether he had continued the search, or given up and returned home, they neither knew nor cared. They travelled on, from one gay summer resort to another, as frantic in their search for amusement as the prospectors who journey up and down the Yukon are in their search for gold.

At first Lola had great trouble in teaching Dick that, in spite of her complete surrender of her life to his care, she had no idea of allowing him any favors beyond those conventionally granted to an accepted lover. On rare occasions she let him kiss her, with a little more warmth than is usually considered quite correct; he was privileged to hold her hand; once or twice perhaps to take her in his arms for a moment; aside from that all that he was expected to do was to provide her with the most costly dresses, and in every way to gratify her extravagant whims and caprices.

This attitude of Lola’s was such a surprise to Mrs. Harlan that the good lady went about in a sort of fog of astonished admiration, and confided to Bob, at intervals of about four hours, that Lola was “about the slickest article she had as yet discovered.”

Dick himself, however, seemed perfectly satisfied after he had been made to clearly understand Lola’s attitude. She had read his nature with true feminine intuition; to him the thing out of his reach was always the thing to be desired, and he made the life of his Cleveland attorney a burden with his daily demands of a speedy settlement of his divorce.

To Lola’s father, sitting alone in New York, quietly waiting her return, to John or to Dr. Crossett, now half way across the Atlantic on his way back to Paris, the knowledge of her attitude might have brought some comfort; to them she seemed lost to all feelings of shame or sense of prudence, and it is possible, had they known how matters stood, that they would have kept on in their search for her.

The real facts were that Dick was to Lola the direct means by which she was to provide herself with the good things of life. He was a rich man. As his wife she could be sure of the things that just now seemed to her to be of all things the most to be desired. He, himself, was a handsome, good-natured, easily managed young fellow. To the physical side of her, which as yet had only been aroused for one moment when she had thrown herself into John’s arms, Dick made absolutely no appeal, and twenty years of purity of thought and action had provided her with a defence against the casual promptings of instinctive desires too strong to be easily broken down. Of late a restless, nervous condition of mind and body might have warned her of a growing longing to solve for herself some of the depths of the world’s knowledge. Her eyes had more than once been held for a moment by the bold, admiring gaze of some one of the strong,

handsome men whom she had met or when she had passed casually on the beaches or on the hotel verandas, but the quick catch of her breath, the sudden leap of her heart at such times had speedily been forgotten; she was not given to self-analysis; her whole existence just now was centered in a daily search for pleasure.

After lunch she and Dick went for a long walk, and Dick took advantage of her present gentle mood to tell her of his hope of a quick settlement of his divorce action and to discuss with her plans for their future. As they strolled along the shore road, Lola noticed, idly, a rather striking couple who seemed to keep at about the same distance ahead of them; father and daughter she thought they must be; a very pretty girl of perhaps eighteen and a man in the late fifties, but so hale and vigorous that at the first glance he suggested no thought of age; indeed, it was not until the couple turned and passed them that Lola, glancing quickly at him, saw on his face that in spite of his youthful step and almost soldierly bearing, he was a man of about her own father's time of life. The thought came to her, as for a moment she met his strong, eager glance of approval, as he saw her fresh young beauty and splendid vitality, that here was a man of real force.

"How queerly he looked to me," she thought, "this old man, with a daughter very little younger than I am myself. Yet when he saw me his eyes seemed to burn into mine. He is in mourning, too, for he wore a band on his arm, and the girl is in black; how queer men are. Are they always the same, boys and men, always like that? A girl has only to look at them, and they can think of nothing but her."

"Father!" The young lady looked almost angrily at him, then turning threw a quick look of scorn over her shoulder toward Lola.

"What a bold-looking girl!"

"Was she, my dear?" remarked her father coldly. "I thought her rather pretty."

"Pretty! She is beautiful. I was looking at her at lunch. I thought she was sweet, although she was with impossible persons, but as she looked at you just now——"

"Well, my dear?"

"She looked like—like an animal."

"A very fine animal, Alice; she is a very beautiful woman, although I fancy you are right about her not being quite—quite the thing. The less notice you take of such people the better, my dear, unless you know something about who and what they are."

"That old boy," remarked Dick to Lola, looking after the couple who had just passed them, "is Howard Bradley, of Detroit, one of the biggest lumbermen in the country, said to be worth eight or ten millions."

"Really?" She looked up with a quick flash of interest.

"Yes, that's his daughter, Alice Bradley; you must have often seen her picture in the Sunday papers. She's a real swell; they are friends of my old man's, although I've never met 'em myself."

"You are a foolish boy, Dick. You must go and introduce yourself at once! It's silly not to make friends of that sort when you can."

"But I can't be bothered."

"Now, Dick, you do as I tell you. I'd like to meet a girl like that myself. You could introduce me easily enough."

"All right, Lola," replied Dick indifferently. "I'm even ready to butt into society if you think it will amuse you, but right now let's go for a swim. Bob and Madge will be waiting for us."

The beach was crowded when they entered the water together a little later, and as Lola was the only one of the four who ever did any real swimming, she left the others without ceremony and struck out for the raft, which, as it was now high tide, was quite a distance from the shore.

"Careful, Lola!" Dick called out to her anxiously, but she only turned her head and laughed at him as she swam easily along with an over-hand stroke that sent her through the water without the slightest apparent effort. In a moment she was past the line of bobbing heads that marked the limit of the average bather's courage and in comparatively clear water; another moment and she was within a few strokes of the raft on which a half dozen men and one woman were standing; one of the men she saw was the gentleman Dick had told her was Howard Bradley; the girl was his daughter.

LOLA’S THOUGHTS REVERT TO THE HANDSOME STRANGER WHOM SHE MET ON THE ATLANTIC CITY BOARDWALK.

“She needn’t think she is the only girl that knows how to swim,” said Lola to herself, as she deliberately guided herself past the raft and out toward the distant shore line; she was quite conscious of the fact that all those on the raft had turned to watch her, and a feeling of bravado urged her to keep on. She felt strong to-day, full of youth and life, and she had no fear of any danger.

“Look, father!” said Alice Bradley, following Lola anxiously with her eyes. “Surely she is going too far out.”

“By Jove,” said Mr. Bradley, “she’s fine. Look at the way she goes through the water.”

“But it isn’t safe; you know it isn’t,” exclaimed his daughter. “Look! Look at her now! Father! Look at her!”

“Wait!” She felt her father’s fingers crush her bare arm as he clutched her in his excitement. “She’s turned over, swimming on her back. It’s all right; I think I—— No, by God! No! Here! Hello! Hello, there, guard!” He pointed with one hand to where Lola floated, and waved the other frantically to a life guard who sat in a boat nearer to Lola than he was, but even at that a good fifty yards away. “Behind you! There! Behind you!”

“He sees her, father. He is going to her,” cried Alice, while the others on the raft screamed out directions and encouragement to the sun-burned young fellow who was making his heavy surf-boat leap through the water. “He will be in time; she is keeping herself afloat!”

She was keeping herself afloat, but that was all. Suddenly a pain had shot through her heart, and she felt herself powerless to move her arms; she sank over, and when she rose to the surface just managed to keep herself above water by floating on her back, and now and then, by the greatest effort, taking a feeble stroke when the numbness that was so rapidly spreading over her body allowed her to do so. She would die unless she managed to keep up until help should come; she knew that! She was fast losing consciousness now; she would die unless she forced herself to live! Unless she drove back, bit by bit, the weakness that was overpowering her. The pain in her heart was not so bad now; she could move her arm a little more; she could move it more if she tried; she must try; she would—there—again—again—what did the pain matter; it was life—life——

“Are you all right now?” She was lying in the bottom of a little surf-boat; a young man was bending over her, speaking to her. She looked up into his face and smiled. How big he was, and how strong, and how naked. Arms, and legs, and breast, and shoulders, firm, solid, sun-burned flesh.

He had one arm about her, holding her up. She nestled close up to him, her head dropping back on his shoulder, her eyes answering the challenge that suddenly flashed into his.

CHAPTER XV
ANOTHER CONQUEST

“I beg your pardon, Mr. Bradley, but I am Dick Fenway.”

Mr. Bradley looked up from his paper and saw Dick standing on the veranda beside him.

“Dick Fenway! My friend Fenway’s boy.”

“Yes, sir.”

“I am glad to know you, very glad!” He shook hands warmly with the young man and turned to where his daughter was standing, looking at them with a smile of interest. “Alice, this is Dick Fenway.”

“It was good of you to come to us like this,” she said pleasantly as she gave him her hand. “Your father has spoken of you so often that we feel quite as though we had always known you.”

“You are awfully good, I am sure,” replied Dick. “I know that father would never forgive me if he heard that I had been at the same hotel with you, without making myself known.”

“Sit down, my boy, and tell us all about yourself.” Mr. Bradley seated himself and pointed to a chair. “How long are you going to stay, and who is that stunning girl I saw you with this afternoon?”

“Miss Barnhelm,” replied Dick, a little embarrassed at the question. “She is travelling with an old friend of mine, Mrs. Harlan. I happened to meet them at Bar Harbor last week, and as it was dead as a doornail down there, I begged them to allow me to come on here with them.”

“She is very pretty and very reckless,” said Alice. “I thought for a moment this afternoon that she would be drowned. Has she quite recovered from her experience?”

“I think so,” answered Dick. “Naturally she’s a little nervous, or was when I saw her last. She is upstairs now with Mrs. Harlan, but they sent down word that they would go for a walk before dinner, so I guess she’s all right.”

“A girl that looks like that ought to know enough to take care of herself,” remarked Mr. Bradley. “Did she think she could swim across the sound?”

“It was her heart,” replied Dick. “She can swim like a fish, but she’s had one or two little heart attacks lately, and she ought to keep quiet. The life-guard that brought her in said she was all right as soon as he got her in his boat, but it was a close call, and the worst of it is that she is very likely to do the same thing to-morrow.”

“She is coming down the veranda now,” said Alice, “and she looks quite as though being half drowned was an every-day experience.”

The two men looked up as Lola came toward them, and both rose as she stopped by Dick’s side.

“Are you ready for that walk, Mr. Fenway?”

“Quite. May I introduce Miss Barnhelm, Miss Bradley, Mr. Bradley.”

Lola greeted them pleasantly, and after a moment’s coldness Alice found herself quite won by her sweetness. She spoke of her adventure of a few hours before in a tone of regret for what she called “making a show of herself,” and her manner was so gentle and so modest that Alice decided that she must be a girl of good family and, in spite of the looks of the woman with whom she was travelling, a very pleasant and desirable acquaintance. “Surely,” she thought, “Mr. Fenway would not introduce her unless she was all right in every way.”

Lola, who was seated next to Dick, took advantage of a moment when Alice turned to answer some remark of her father’s, and whispered to Dick quickly, “There come Bob and Mrs. Harlan; keep them away. I’ll meet you at dinner!”

“But,” Dick protested, “why should I——”

“Do as I tell you!” She spoke so sharply that Dick, who had learned by experience that to oppose her meant a painful scene, rose unwillingly and went to head off his long-suffering friends, making rather a brief excuse for his abrupt departure.

“I thought you had intended to take a walk before dinner, Miss Barnhelm,” said Alice.

“I had,” replied Lola, “but I find myself more tired than I thought I was, and it is so comfortable here.”

“It is,” sighed Alice, “but I must dress. I see that you were wise enough to get ready before you came down. Are you coming, father?”

“Why, no, my dear,” replied her father. “I am going to take advantage of my age, and dine just as I am to-night. I’ll sit here with Miss Barnhelm, if she will allow me; meet me here when you come down.”

“Very well, dear; I won’t be long. Good-bye for the present, Miss Barnhelm.”

She left them together and went up to her room, a little surprised and troubled at the evident interest her father had taken in this stranger. Since her mother’s death she had often felt a fear that he might some day allow himself to become attached to some of the many women who, attracted by his wealth, had done all in their power to fascinate him. He was different from most men of his age. She knew that. He was strong and well, and had much of the ardent spirit of youth still remaining, but so far as she had ever seen, he had shown no desire to respond to any feminine advances, had never in fact shown as much interest in any woman as he had in this girl, not only since he had talked with her, but before. She had not forgotten the glance Lola had given him as they had passed on the shore road, or his admiration for her prowess in the water. She dismissed any fears she had, however. Miss Barnhelm was a lady; that was evident from her manner. She was probably going to marry Dick Fenway; there had been an air of security in her attitude toward him that spoke of a complete understanding. How foolish of her to worry about such an absurd thought.

“Poor father,” she said to herself; “how angry he would be with me if he knew of what I had been thinking.”

Had she been able to see the growing intimacy between Lola and the old man of whom she was so fond, it is probable that her fears would not have been so easily overcome. They were chatting away already quite like old friends. Lola was leading him to tell of some of his adventures in the lumber camps of Northern Michigan, and incidentally gaining a good idea of his vast power in that region and of the great value of his timber lands and pulp mills. She was a good listener, interrupting him only to encourage his confidence and quick to see and appreciate any good points in his somewhat long, drawn-out stories of personal prowess. He looked at her with great approval. “Here was a girl who had real brain,

who knew a man when she saw one, and was not either afraid of or repelled by a few white hairs." Her fresh beauty and something in the bold friendliness of her eyes as she sat looking at him thrilled him as no woman had had the power to thrill him for years. How wonderful it would be, he thought, if—but no; she was young. What chance after all would his millions have with a girl like this? What need she care for wealth with beauty like hers? Dick Fenway was probably the lucky man. Damned young loafer. Good God! How gladly he would give all he had to be that age again! To be thirty and back in the lumber country with his axe, and his youth, and his girl! Strong desires, fought down and smothered out of respect for a dead wife and a living daughter, blazed up again, fired by a spark from this young woman's eye. There was something in her look that seemed to tell him that to her he was not old, not rich, not past all chance of woman's love or hope of romance. She was looking into his eyes as women had looked years ago, and she was finding there what they had found. She was seated very close to him, bending forward, eagerly listening to his story, her hand resting on the arm of his chair touched his; she did not draw it away; how warm it was, how soft. What was this woman? This young girl, who in a few moments had gained the power to stir into life feelings that he thought had been forever buried with the other things that had made life so sweet? What was there in her boldness that charmed without offending him?

The story he was telling ended abruptly in the middle. They sat there in the gathering darkness silently. The little warm hand that lay beside his own slowly turned and closed about his. His heart leaped; he bent toward her, but she sprang up with a low laugh, and before he could speak she was gone.

Alice found him there when she came down a little later.

"How well you look, father dear," she exclaimed. "I am sure that this place is doing you good. You look almost young."

"Why shouldn't I?" he answered gayly. "A man is as old as he feels, and I don't feel like an old man to-night."

As they went in to dinner they met Dick Fenway waiting in the hall.

"I don't seem to be able to find Miss Barnhelm," he announced rather impatiently. "You didn't happen to notice what became of her, did you?"

"She went down the steps, I think," replied Mr. Bradley, "although it had grown so dark that I couldn't be sure of it. Come on, Alice; we are late now."

They went into the dining-room, leaving Dick alone. Mrs. Harlan and Bob found him there, quite out of temper, when they appeared ready dressed for dinner.

"Where the devil can Lola be?" he growled angrily. "It is almost eight o'clock."

"Well, you may do as you please, my dear boy," said Mrs. Harlan firmly, "but I'm not going to wait. How about you, Bob?"

"Well," replied Bob very earnestly, "I would do an awful lot for Lola; she's behaving splendidly, and she's a big credit to the party to-day, but she couldn't expect a fellow to take a chance of missing his dinner."

"You two go on in. I'll find her." Dick turned and left them, going down the steps to the shore road and glancing up and down, in the hope of seeing her. He could make out a couple down by the water, their figures looming dimly through the darkness; lovers probably, he thought; they seemed to be walking very slowly and very near together, but he could see nothing of the solitary form for which he was looking. She was not in her room; he had made sure of that, and as far as he could see in the dim light, this one couple had the shore to themselves. He was conscious of a feeling of envy; if only Lola and he could sometimes do as these two were doing; forget everything but one another; be together like that, alone. He would be content if he was sure of her love; he, who had asked much of women, would be satisfied with so little, but Lola seemed to have no sentiment. Things would be all right, of course, after they were married, but now it was hard. They were coming toward him slowly, those two, and as he stood there waiting he watched them idly.

A man and a girl, of course; no two men or two women ever walked like that. He laughed to himself as he realized the sentimentality of his mood. The man was very tall; even in the darkness one could tell that he was young and strong. The girl was small, delicate; something in her bearing reminded him—— "By God! It is Lola!" He started forward and met them at the foot of the steps just as they came out of the shadow into the light thrown out by the bright illumination of the veranda.

"Lola!" He stood facing her angrily, glancing from her to the young fellow at her side, a sun-burned, wind-tanned young giant in loose flannels. "Where have you been?"

"Why, I took a little walk, Dick," she answered calmly. "I met Mr. Blake, and he was good enough to offer to stroll back with me. Mr. Blake is the life-guard who fished me out of the water this afternoon. This is Mr. Fenway, Mr. Blake."

"Oh!" Dick returned the young man's bow rather curtly. "I am glad of the chance of thanking you again, Blake. I would have looked you up, of course, in the morning. I was in my bathing suit at the time, and when I got dressed you had gone off duty. Here." He had taken out his pocketbook as he spoke, and now drew out a bill and held it out.

"I thank you very much, Mr. Fenway," said the young man with what seemed to Dick to be surprisingly good manners for a fellow of his position, "but I can't take it. Miss Barnhelm had already rewarded me most liberally." He raised his cap politely, and with a brief good night stepped out of the circle of light and was swallowed up in the darkness.

"What the devil are you laughing at, Lola?" demanded Dick angrily. "Do you see anything especially funny?"

"Oh, no, dear; not at all," she answered, "and I think it would be a good thing if we were to go in to dinner."

Once in the dining-room, Lola's high spirits seemed to desert her. She seemed languid and rather moody, and in spite of Bob's really eloquent description of various dishes that he had stamped with the seal of his approval, she refused to do more than nibble at a crust of bread and drink a glass or two of champagne, of which she had grown very fond.

After dinner they went out on the veranda and met Mr. Bradley and Alice, and by them were introduced to many of the guests of the hotel. Lola, who in spite of her present bad temper was looking very well, soon found herself the centre of a lively group. There was no doubt at all of her success; she received the two infallible proofs—admiration from the men, envy from the women. She found herself seated next to the sweet-faced old gentleman whom she had noticed at the lunch table; he had his little granddaughter seated on his knee, and a very small and very aristocratic French poodle perched upon the arm of his chair.

Of all the group these two alone, the child and the dog, refused to devote themselves to Lola; the child, after one long look into her eyes, had thrown her arms about the old man's neck and hidden her face on his shoulder; the dog had bared his little teeth in a snarl at the first touch of her hand.

"Quiet, Tony," reproved Mr. Miller sharply, as he changed the dog to the other arm of his chair. "I can't think why he should act so queerly, Miss Barnhelm, nor you, either, Molly," he said as he stroked the child's head lovingly. "You are both tired out, I think, and you must go to bed."

"Will you come upstairs and hear me say my prayers in a little while, grandfather?" asked little Molly in a low voice. "Nurse and mother are there, but I think God can hear me better when you are with me."

"I will come, of course, Molly." He looked up at Lola with a smile. "This little girl is worried about her father, who is on the ocean, but I have told her that God always considers the prayers of little girls who pray for those they love."

LOLA GOES TO KEEP HER APPOINTMENT AT THE STEEL PIER.

"You believe that?" questioned Lola with something very like a sneer, "or do you think it is the proper thing to tell a child?"

"I believe it," said the old man gently, "or naturally I would not teach it to this little girl. I have told her that God's power is infinite, but that his purpose is not always easy for us to understand. I know, however, that such prayers as hers must do great good to her and to him she prays for. Don't you?"

"No," replied Lola coldly, "I do not." She resented the look of cool inquiry in this man's eye; he was a famous writer, they had told her, an authority on many subjects of which the very names were new to her. Well, he could not study her, or if he tried he would find that she was not the empty-headed creature his rather amused look seemed to say he thought her.

"I know nothing of the kind," she went on calmly, "and I am surprised that a man like you can believe such worn-out old superstitions."

"That need not surprise you, that we believe, this child and I," he said gently. "Belief is so very easy to us. She is very young, and I am very old, and to such belief comes naturally. It is, I think, because the very young are fresh from God's presence and because the very old are drawing nearer to it."

He rose as he spoke and, taking the child's hand, bowed to Lola kindly and went into the hotel, the little dog following them gravely.

"I've had enough of this," declared Lola, rising angrily. "I'm bored to death! You people do as you please; I'm going to bed!"

CHAPTER XVI
A SERIOUS LETTER

"This is my idea of the work I'd like to do for my living," said Mrs. Harlan with a yawn, as she tilted her sun-shade a

little forward and settled herself deeper in the soft sand. “All I need now to be perfectly happy is to have one of you read to me until I fall asleep.”

“Lola looks as though she could sleep without that,” said Bob, glancing at her lazily. “You went to bed early enough last night; couldn’t you get any rest?”

“I do feel a little tired,” answered Lola. “I slept some, of course, but not for hours.”

“That’s queer,” exclaimed Dick. “I knocked on your door when I went upstairs about eleven, and you didn’t answer. If you were awake you must have heard me. You didn’t leave your room again, did you?”

“Why should I?” She sat up rather flushed, and turned to him angrily. “Where would I have gone? What are you talking about? Why do you always say such absurd things?”

“Come now, Lola,” broke in Mrs. Harlan soothingly. “Dick hasn’t said anything dreadful. Don’t be cross, please, and spoil a day like this.”

“No, don’t, for pity sake don’t let’s have any rows,” said Bob earnestly; “nothing in the world so bad for my digestion.”

“Anyone would think you had something to hide, by the way you are jumping on me,” complained Dick resentfully. “I don’t see any crime in asking you if you had stepped out of your room for a minute.”

“I have told you that I did not.”

“You might have run in to see Madge.”

“No! No! No!” She spoke almost in a scream. “How many times do I have to repeat it? No! No! No!”

“Come on, Madge; that’s the three-alarm signal,” exclaimed Bob, as he got to his feet heavily. “Great God, Lola,” he looked down at her, his fat, good-natured face expressing his deep disgust, “why can’t you learn to keep your disposition in the ice chest? You’re all right when you are all right, but you’re a wonder at kicking up a row.”

“I guess Bob’s playing safe,” agreed Mrs. Harlan, as she took his proffered hand and got to her feet. “We’ll leave you two alone, as usual, to fight it out. Come on, Bob; I may not be as great a social light as Lola is getting lately, but I’m perfectly willing to sit in the sand and let you go to sleep.”

Lola made no effort to stop them, and they walked on up the beach in search of peace and quiet, Mrs. Harlan angry and disgusted, Bob deeply discouraged.

“There,” exclaimed Dick. “You’ve driven them away again!”

“What of it?” Lola looked at him coldly. “Go with them if you want to!”

“I don’t, but Bob’s getting tired of this sort of thing, and he’s too good a fellow to be made uncomfortable all the time.”

“He’s a fool—a perfect fool; you know he is, Dick Fenway. The only thing in the world that would really please him would be to eat a good dinner in a deaf and dumb asylum. I’m tired to death of him and of your Mrs. Harlan, too. She’s coarse, and low, and vulgar, and if you had any respect for me at all you wouldn’t force me to be with such a person!”

“But, my dear girl, you know I can’t help it!”

“Well, you ought to help it,” she replied cruelly. “It puts me in a false position, to be seen with a woman of that sort. Everyone notices it. Mr. Bradley practically said as much to me this morning.”

“And took time enough saying it, too,” said Dick resentfully. “I thought the old man had tied himself to your skirts for the day. You kept me waiting a good half hour. What are you trying to jolly him for; we don’t want any of his money.”

She made no reply to this, but threw herself back on the sand and, shading her face with her parasol, deliberately closed her eyes.

“I say, Lola,” Dick remarked after a moment’s pause; “if you don’t care to make any more of an effort than this to be sociable, I think I’ll leave you here while I go back to the hotel; the mail is in by now, and I’m almost sure to get some news from Cleveland.”

“A very good idea,” she answered calmly. “I’ll wait right here until you return. You are so cross to-day that I don’t think you would be very good company.”

He made no reply. “What was the use of starting another battle?” he said to himself bitterly; “all that I can do is to go away and come back when she isn’t so cranky.”

They parted like this, as men and women have parted since first they came into the world. She, perfectly serene, as sure of his return as she was of her own unreasonableness. He, puzzled as to just what his fault had been and not quite sure whether to be angry with her or with himself. A man is always very sorry for the thing he is quite innocent of having done; it is only when he has really been at fault that he remains calmly indifferent.

Lola was very comfortable; it was a warm day, but there was a breeze from the water, and she lay there, every muscle relaxed, shading her face with her parasol, which she had dropped on the sand, looking dreamily out to where a long line of black smoke on the horizon marked the passing of some great steamer.

Somehow the thought of a ship at sea brought Dr. Crossett to her mind. She often thought of him, more often than of her father or of John. The Doctor had loved her; she knew that; not as a father loves, through instinct, or as a lover, from desire, but because he had put her in the place of the one woman who had represented the idea of love in his life. He was a rich man, Dr. Crossett; what fun they could have together in Paris! If anything ever went wrong with her, she was going to him; she had quite made up her mind to that, but, after all, what could go wrong? Dick would always give her what she wanted, and if not Dick, there were plenty of others. The only trouble was that if they had money they were either stupid, like poor Dick or old, like Mr. Bradley; if they were strong and handsome, like that splendid young life-guard, they were hopelessly poor. On the whole, however, she was satisfied with life. She had done well enough so far, and she very strongly intended to do better. She was very tired, very sleepy; the little waves breaking over the smooth sand soothed her; the wind swept softly over her like a caress; she laughed happily to herself as she thought of Dick's anger. How silly he was. What would he do if he knew where she had really been, as he stood outside her door, the night before. How had she dared to do it? She blushed red at the thoughts that came crowding into her head, and thrilling, trembling with a new knowledge of life, she fell asleep.

She stirred uneasily after a time, and sitting up suddenly, conscious as one sometimes is of being the object of another's thoughts, she met the eyes of Mr. Miller, the old gentleman of the night before, fixed earnestly upon her. "How long had he stood there, looking at her?" she thought angrily to herself. "How dared he smile at her like that, as though his wise old eyes could read her mind."

"I beg your pardon, Miss Barnhelm." He spoke in the gentle, kindly voice she had so resented the night before. "I am afraid that I have disturbed you."

"Why were you looking at me?" she demanded bluntly.

"It was very rude, very unfair," he admitted, "but you looked so comfortable and, if I may say so, so absurdly young, that it did not at the time seem a serious offence."

"You were studying me," she exclaimed hotly, "trying to read my mind, as I lay here asleep. Using me for a subject to dissect for one of your stupid books. Well—what have you discovered?"

"Nothing! You are so frank with me that I will be honest in my turn. It is my habit to study those about me. I am sorry; I hope you are fully aware that in my interest there was nothing that could in any way offend you."

"You mean, I suppose, that you would have looked just as closely at a toad or a potato-bug! I am quite aware of that. I am not even angry any more, only curious. What can you tell me about myself?"

"Nothing, my dear young lady, only that you have, in common with the rest of the world, two natures, warring against one another, in your heart. I will confess that in your case I thought I saw a flash of something deeper, more tragic, than one usually finds in the face of a young girl, just a bad dream perhaps, or perhaps a real trouble. If the last, I would gladly do my best to help you."

"Why?"

"Because I have worked very hard for fifty years, and sometimes I am discouraged at the little real good my knowledge has ever done. I have more than my share of money, and time, and influence; any or all of these are at your disposal."

"You were a Professor, they told me, and a writer of books?"

"Yes. I am, if I am anything, a Psychologist."

"My father was that," remarked Lola a trifle bitterly, "although to me it was never anything but a name."

"It is merely a name for a very simple thing: the art of keeping one's eyes open. Psychology is the study of mental phenomena; I believe that is as good a definition as it is possible to give, and it means only the study of our fellow creatures, in the hope that in the end the psychologist may do for the mind what the physician now does for the body."

"And to do this, to learn this new trade of yours, you hesitate no more about robbing me of my mind and dissecting it than a country medical student would hesitate to rob a grave."

"Not any more certainly," he replied, evidently still much amused at her indignation, "but as I have perceived nothing but a well-deserved rebuke, perhaps you will forgive me. I am on duty to-day, as you see; after many years of careful study I am considered worthy of a very sacred trust. I am granted the privilege of playing nurse to a child and a dog."

He pointed along the beach to where his granddaughter was playing with her absurd little poodle, and as his eyes rested upon them his smile lost its queer, impersonal look and became very commonplace indeed, just the smile of a good man, whose heart goes out in thankfulness to God for the joy of seeing a little child of his own blood safe and well.

"You are," said Lola gravely, "the very queerest person I have ever met. If you are anxious to study mental phenomena you might buy yourself a looking-glass. I must confess that I can't understand you at all."

"Since we seem to have met upon a rather unusual attitude of frankness," he responded mildly, "I am going to return the compliment. Our impressions seem to have been identical." He turned as if to leave, but after a slight hesitation he faced her, and said in a more serious tone, "My offer of assistance was sincere; should you be in need of anything that is in my power to grant you, surely my age should make it easy for you to come to me." He bowed rather stiffly, like a man to whom social conventions are a habit rather than a pleasure, and left her there, sitting on the sand, looking after him a little anxiously. "He was a queer old man," she thought; "there could be no doubt of that," and she wondered just what he had meant when he confessed that he could not understand her. She watched him as he joined the child, and until they and the little dog disappeared together around a rocky point she sat there, thinking of the strange look of

speculation she had seen on his face.

“Miss Barnhelm!” She looked up quickly at the sound of the voice and saw the young life-guard standing beside her.

“Why did you follow me?” she demanded angrily. “I might have known I couldn’t trust you.”

“I saw that you were alone,” he stammered, very much upset by her tone. “I—I had to see you.”

“Why?”

“Why!” He looked at her amazed. “Why? Do you think a man can forget—just in a few hours—forget you? I never knew that there were women like you in the world. I—I wouldn’t have dared to raise my eyes to you—but—but you came to me—yourself!”

“The woman tempted me, and I did fall,” she sneered. “I suppose that is what you mean?”

“I mean, Miss Barnhelm, that I love you! I am not fool enough to dream that you could care enough for a man like me to let me make any difference in your life, but I can’t let you go away from me like this!”

“My poor boy,” she spoke kindly, and looked at him with something very like sadness in her eyes, “you are making a mistake. We met yesterday in your boat. We walked together for a moment in the evening; that is all.”

“And—and last night?”

“Was a dream.”

“No!”

“Just a dream, and dreams don’t last. You must go now, quickly, please, because I see Mr. Fenway coming.”

“Go and leave you to him!”

“Yes.”

He did not answer, but he had not the least idea of going; she saw that in the same glance that showed her that Dick had seen them together and had quickened his pace. She must not let these two men meet; there was danger in that; this young man must be made to go, and in less than a minute. She looked up at him, flashing one look straight into his eyes.

“Go now,” she said, almost in a whisper, “and wait for me—to-night.”

“I will.” As he spoke he turned and walked on up the beach. She sighed as her eyes followed his free, powerful movements and noticed his easy, graceful figure and broad shoulders; then she turned to meet Dick.

“That was that Blake, the life-guard,” Dick spluttered, his sallow face whiter than ever now with anger. “You must think I’m a damned fool to stand for a thing like this!”

“I think that you are forgetting, Dick, that you are not speaking to one of your chorus-girl friends.”

“Do you? Well, let me tell you something; even one of what you are pleased to call my chorus-girl friends would have the decency to play the game straight while she played it at all. There’s another name for a woman who takes one man’s money and when his back is turned lets another fellow——”

“You would be wise to stop right there!” She sprang up and faced him, white with rage, and with a look that, angry as he was, he dared not face. “I have taken your money; yes, this is not the first time you have chosen to remind me of it, but it is the very last. You won’t have another chance! I won’t take another dollar from you until we are married; after that, if you ever dare to repeat a thing like that, I will leave you! Now you go, get that divorce you talk so much about before you let me see your face again, and get it soon, if you expect me to wait for you!”

“Lola, forgive me. I—I was wrong, but I am worried sick, or I wouldn’t have made such a fool of myself! Don’t be hard, Lola; I’ve troubles enough without that. I—I’m in a devil of a mess.”

“What mess?” she questioned quickly. “More trouble with your father?”

“Yes, another letter. He’s sore because I’ve been away from New York so long, neglecting my business, he says, and spending too much money. He will come around all right; he always does, but to tell you the truth he refused to send me the check I asked for.”

“He never did that before, did he?”

“No, but it’s sure to be all right. I sent him a ‘day letter,’ and he’ll come around, but it rattled me, and my lawyers wrote that my confounded wife sticks out for fifty thousand!”

“Well?”

“I wired them to offer forty cash. I know the old man will pay that. He’s tired of having her around Cleveland, calling herself Mrs. Fenway. Forty thousand is an awful hold-up, but I can’t wait. The whole thing may be settled to-day.”

“If your father, who has refused you ten thousand, agrees to give you fifty, and if this woman, who has stood out for fifty

thousand, agrees to take forty, if all this happens you will be a free man, but these things have not happened yet, and if they do you will have to prove to me that there will be no more of this talk about the money you have spent on me, and the obligation I am supposed to be under to you, before I will agree to tie myself to you. Favors! Look at me! If I am not worth the few thousand I have cost you, go back to Broadway; you can buy more for your money there!"

"Don't, Lola. Don't talk that way! I never thought a thing like that. I don't deserve to have to hear you say it. When have I denied you anything, when have I asked anything in return, but just that you would care for me? I was wrong to lose my head, of course; you can't help it if that cad of a life-guard has the nerve to hang around you. Can't you let it go at that? Can't you see that I am worried enough, without your turning against me?"

"I see," she answered coldly, "that Bob and Mrs. Harlan are coming, and it is hardly necessary to take them into our confidence. Mrs. Harlan has quite enough knowledge of our affairs; I think it is about time we saw the last of her. If you had less to do with women of that class, you might be able to remember that you can't talk to me as though I were one of them."

Mrs. Harlan, as they all walked back to the hotel together, could not make up her mind as to just how matters stood. Dick was nervous, that was plain enough, but Lola's mood puzzled her; she was very quiet, very thoughtful, and from time to time, when she looked at Dick, she seemed to be trying to make up her mind.

"I don't like it," Mrs. Harlan confided to Bob as they followed the others up the beach. "She's up to something, or I miss my guess. She's dangerous enough when she's in one of her tantrums, but when she's quiet, like she is now—look out. What do you suppose is the matter with her now?"

"I don't know," replied Bob thoughtfully, "unless she's hungry."

This could hardly have been the explanation, however, for she refused to go in to lunch with the others, and sat at the far end of the veranda, still seemingly in deep thought, until, hearing some one approaching, she looked up and saw Mr. Bradley.

Her smile, as she welcomed him, however, had no trace of anything but girlish pleasure, and shrewd as he was, he could not but be flattered by the soft blush on her cheek, and the gladness in her eyes, as she rose to meet him.

"Miss Barnhelm," he began quickly, "I am anxious to speak with you, in confidence, before your friends or my daughter come from the dining-room."

"Yes, Mr. Bradley."

"I have a letter here." As he spoke he drew the letter from his pocket. "I have decided to let you read it, although, as you will see, it is a breach of confidence on my part to do so. It is from Cleveland, from Dick Fenway's father; it may perhaps offend you, but it may be a big help for you to know just how things stand. Here it is."

Lola took the letter calmly enough, and read it through without a word. It was dated from Cleveland two days before, and read as follows:

"My Dear Bradley:

"My son Dick has wired me to address him at the Hotel where you and Alice are staying. I am worried about the boy and want you to do me a favor. He has always been a great trouble to me, as you know, but he is all I have, and I am fool enough to love him. Will you have a talk with him, and tell him for me that he has come to the end of his rope. He has a wife whom I am willing to buy off on one condition. He is to return to New York at once and go to work, and he is to convince you, as my agent, that from now on he gives up, absolutely and forever, any connection or acquaintance with a girl by the name of Lola Barnhelm, with whom he has been travelling for the last six weeks. Tell him that my information as to this young woman is complete. I have had them followed, and am in receipt of a daily report as to their movements. The efforts he has been making to secure a speedy divorce seem to point to an intention on his part to marry this person. If he does, please make it plain to him that he will support her himself, without help from me. Try to make him understand that I am not quite the fool he thinks me. I don't like what I have heard about this Barnhelm girl, and I am serious when I say that if he marries her he will not support her on the money I have earned by hard work. You may be able to make him see his real position. Thank you in advance, old friend, for the help I know you will not refuse me. Give my love to your daughter. What a happy man I would be if my boy had brains enough to love a girl like her, and character enough to be worthy of her love.

"Yours always, "Richard Fenway."

Lola finished the letter and, folding it carefully, handed it back to him.

"Well?" she inquired calmly.

"I—I thought," he answered, very much embarrassed, "that you would want to know how you stood."

"Yes, I am very much obliged, but I am afraid I don't. Are you acting now as Mr. Fenway's agent, or as my friend?"

"As your friend," he replied earnestly.

"Do you believe the insinuations this man has dared to make? That I am not a proper wife for his son?"

"Well, I—I—only want you to know that if you marry the boy, his father will not give him another dollar."

"Do you believe what he believes of me?"

“I think that you are too pretty to——”

“Do you believe these things?”

“What were you doing out of the hotel until three o’clock this morning?”

“I—I——”

“I could not sleep, because I was thinking of you! I was at my window, and I saw you when you returned, and I saw the young fellow who left you at the steps.”

“Oh!” She looked at him for a moment; then a slow smile formed itself on her lips. “Then you, I suppose, do not care to count yourself any longer as my friend?”

“Why not?” He looked at her with a new boldness. “I am a man of the world. Dick can’t do anything more for you, but is there any reason why you and I should not be good friends?”

“I think you are making a mistake,” she answered quietly. “Dick fully intends to marry me. I am not the sort of girl you seem to think.”

“And last night?”

“Was my own affair.”

“Very well,” he rose reluctantly, “I suppose there isn’t anything more to say. So you will marry Dick?”

“Yes.”

“And starve with him?”

“Perhaps.”

“I can’t figure this out.” He looked at her, doing his best to read her real intentions in her face. “You can’t love him, or why this other fellow? I suppose you count on his father’s forgiveness, but that, if it comes at all, won’t come for years. You can’t wait years; don’t you see that? Your youth is your capital; you would be a fool to squander it, and you don’t look to me like a fool.”

“No, I am not a fool,” she said quietly. “I have certain plans, certain intentions, that mean everything to me. Dick, nor his father, nor you can’t come between me and the life I want. You might help me, any one of you, but you can’t hold me back. I should like to tell you just what it is I do want, but not here, not now. Are you afraid to trust yourself alone with me?”

“Are you laughing at me?”

“Perhaps.”

“What is it that you want me to do?”

“Meet me in half an hour on the shore road, just above the place where we met yesterday; do you remember?”

“Yes.”

“Get out of your head, before you meet me, the thought that I am the sort of woman who can be bought by any man. Until last night no man, in all my life, ever had the right to say that he had been anything to me. Do you believe that?”

“Yes. I can’t doubt it, when you look at me as you look now.”

“And you will be there, in half an hour?”

“Yes. Your friends are coming. I will go now; I will be waiting for you.”

He passed Dick, and Bob, and Mrs. Harlan, and as he was about to descend the steps to the road, his daughter’s voice stopped him.

“Father.” Alice stepped out of the house with a letter in her hand. “Look! Here is a letter from Aunt Helen; she is coming on the late train to-night.”

“That’s fine,” he answered heartily. “I am delighted! Good-bye, dear; I’m off for a little walk. I won’t be long.”

“Take care of yourself,” she called after him gayly, “and don’t be late.” She turned away, joining Mr. Miller and Molly, and they all walked along the veranda, followed by the little dog, until they stopped at the group that now were gathered about Lola. Mr. Miller noticed, as he took the chair one of the young men offered him, that Lola was not making more than a half-hearted effort to join in the general conversation, and he was watching the unmistakable signs of repressed emotion on her sensitive face, when she looked up and saw him. He expected to see a blaze of anger in her eyes, but for some reason she seemed anxious to avoid his scrutiny, and bent over, rather obviously to escape his glance, and patted the little dog, who was sitting sedately beside his mistress, only a foot or two away. At the first touch of her hand the tiny creature gave a snarl and, turning, buried his little teeth in her wrist. Molly cried out and sprang forward, but Lola threw her aside and, catching up a tennis racquet from the arm of one of the chairs, struck the dog with all her strength. Molly screamed as she saw the little figure fall back motionless, and all the others rose quickly

and stepped forward with cries of indignation, but Lola did not hear them; again and again she struck, although her first blow had done its work; and as she struck she screamed, like the snarling scream of an angry wolf; for a moment no one moved, but at last Bob threw her aside as he would have thrown a man, and Molly dropped down, sobbing bitterly by the side of her little friend. No one spoke; Lola shuddered and, turning her head, looked about her from one to another. No eyes met hers; they all stood there, sick with horror. After a moment of silence, broken only by the sobbing of the child, she gave a short, contemptuous laugh and, dropping the blood-stained racquet, walked down the veranda to the door.

CHAPTER XVII
FENWAY'S DIVORCE GRANTED

“One moment, Miss Barnhelm!” Lola turned as she was about to enter the hotel, and found herself facing Alice Bradley, who had left the little group about Molly and had followed her.

“Well? What do you want?”

“You brute! You beast!” Alice cried out, tears of pity and anger running down her cheeks. “How could you! You—you are not a woman; you are an animal!”

“If I were you, Miss Bradley, I should be careful what I said. As, perhaps you saw, I am not in a patient mood.” Lola spoke quietly, but if Alice had not been carried away by her indignation she would hardly have dared to face the look in her eyes. “That dog hurt me; look; my wrist is bleeding. It hurt me, I tell you, and I can’t bear pain! I won’t bear it! I had a right to defend myself.”

“Defend yourself,” exclaimed Alice contemptuously, “against a poor, helpless little creature no larger than a kitten! You should be driven away from this hotel; you shall be, if I have anything to say about it! In fact you must leave here at once, or I shall go myself! That is what I am going to tell my father as soon as I see him.”

“And when do you expect to see him?”

“As soon as he returns.”

“Really? Not until then? Do you know that I feel quite sorry for you, Miss Bradley?”

She entered the hotel and went at once to her room, and when Dick knocked at her door a few moments later she refused to open it, telling him to wait for her on the front veranda.

Dick returned reluctantly to his friends; for once he agreed with them. Lola’s brutality was beyond all excuse. He was a kind-hearted fellow, and the sight of the little girl’s sorrow over the death of her favorite had moved him deeply. He found it hard to forgive Lola; he had made excuses for her times enough, but there had been something in the horror of this last scene difficult to forget. He found Bob and Mrs. Harlan waiting on the veranda, and he knew by the way they looked at him that they had made up their minds to some definite action.

“Dick,” said Mrs. Harlan, as soon as he was within hearing, “we’ve had enough, Bob and I; we’re through!”

“Now, Madge——” he began soothingly.

“No, Dick, we like you, but we’ve had enough. We are going to New York to-night. You can’t say we haven’t stood for a lot, but this thing has made me sick. The girl is crazy, or worse, and life’s too short to take a chance on what she’ll do next.”

“You are going to leave me?”

“Yes.”

“How about it, Bob?”

“Well, Dick, I’m no quitter, but for me it’s ‘goodnight, nurse.’”

“It’s no business of mine, I suppose, Dick,” Mrs. Harlan said, after a moment of awkward silence, “but we’ve been rather good friends for a long time. I wish you’d come with us.”

“And leave Lola?”

“Beat her to it; she’ll leave you, if you don’t.”

“I—I love her, Madge.”

“I know—well, good-bye, Dick; I’m going to pack.”

“Good-bye, Madge; I’ll see you again before you go.”

Mrs. Harlan left them quickly; she knew that she was going to cry in another minute. She was quite aware that no woman of her age could afford to be seen in tears, and Bob had a particular hatred for anything of the sort. She went to her room and did her packing, then decided to go and offer to help Bob with his things.

As she went down the hall she noticed that the door of Lola's room was open, and as she glanced in quickly she saw with surprise that Lola's trunks were locked and that the room was empty. She entered quickly and looked about; Lola had gone; she saw that at a glance. Her hand-bag was missing, her toilet articles put away; nothing was in sight but the two locked trunks. She had bolted. "A good thing, too," she thought bitterly to herself, but she knew that she must hurry and let Dick know.

She found the two men where she had left them over an hour before; they were seated silently looking out at the water, and they did not even look up as she stopped beside them.

"Dick," she spoke gently, resting her hand for a moment on his shoulder, "do you know where Lola is?"

"In her room. She told me to wait for her here."

"She's gone, Dick."

"What!"

"Gone! You'd better ask them at the desk, but her trunks are locked; there's no doubt about it; she has gone."

"Where could she go? What are you talking about?"

"Hush," she said quickly. "Here is Miss Bradley. You don't want her to know."

Alice Bradley stopped before them, an open letter in one hand, a bank check in the other. She was very pale and looked frightened.

"Mr. Fenway, they tell me at the office that Miss Barnhelm left the hotel over an hour ago. Do you know where she has gone?"

"Why do you ask?" demanded Mrs. Harlan, with a sudden flash of understanding.

"See!" Alice held out the check and the letter. "My father has left me! This letter was brought by a messenger. He says he was called away on business, and for me to remain here with my aunt, who arrives to-night. That woman has taken him away from me! My father—who has always been so good to me—taken him away from me; do you hear?"

"Telegram for you, Mr. Fenway." A bell-boy came up to Dick, holding out a telegram. "Just came, sir."

"It's all right!" Dick sprang up and, seeing the envelope, tore it open. "She wouldn't leave me without a word! I knew she wouldn't. She has gone, yes, but she's wired me where to join her!" He opened the message and read it at a glance, then without a word, but with a look on his face that brought the tears to soft-hearted Mrs. Harlan's eyes, he handed her the message and turned and left them. She read it aloud. It was from his lawyer in Cleveland, and read, "Divorce arranged. Congratulations."

CHAPTER XVIII
ONCE MORE IN NEW YORK

Dr. Crossett was finding it a difficult matter to keep from falling to sleep. The dinner had been stupid, even for a formal affair of this sort, where one scarcely expects to be entertained. He had worked hard all day at the hospital, and after making a brief speech introducing the guest of honor of the evening, he sat with his chair pushed back from the disordered dinner table and resigned himself to his fate. A man could hardly be talked to death in two hours, he thought, and after all there was hope; perhaps the half hour of informal conversation that always followed the speech-making might be less deadly than usual. What a fool he was to give his time to these riots of platitude; he swore softly to himself as he looked through the haze of tobacco smoke at the faces of many of the foremost medical and psychological authorities of France, and, as he always did upon occasions of this kind, laid elaborate plans for immediately resigning from the society. He had in fact almost finished a mental draft of his letter of resignation, when the sound of a hundred voices blending into a confused babel of conversation warned him that the formal speech-making was over.

"Thank God for that," he exclaimed in English, turning to his right-hand neighbor, an American psychologist named Miller, whom he had met for the first time that evening.

"You were not especially entertained?" questioned that gentleman, with a smile. "And yet we have listened to several rather deep and weighty opinions."

"Weighty, I grant you," replied the Doctor. "Heavy possibly would have been a better word. Why is it that a man, who in himself is both wise and entertaining, always becomes both a pedant and a bore when he makes an after-dinner speech?"

"The effort to dominate too many, and too varied an assortment of minds, no doubt, a species of self-hypnotism; but Professor Carney's remarks on the distinction between insanity and moral depravity were interesting. I have just arrived from America, and it is possible that the ideas he advanced, although fresh to me, may be an old story to you."

"We have worked much together, Carney and I," replied the Doctor. "He knows the subject well enough, although we do not agree in all things. He, for instance, classes many cases as insanity, which to me are plainly a lack of moral, not of mental, strength. He denies the existence of an absolutely unmoral person whose mind is sound and whose power of

reasoning is normal. To him such a case does not exist."

"I wonder what he would have thought of a case I had an opportunity of observing a few weeks ago," remarked Mr. Miller. "There he could find no trace of insanity, no lack of logic, or of reason, but an absolute absence of any moral sense. I think I have never seen a more perfect example of the thing he denies. Here was a young woman, beautiful, delicate of body, refined, of good manners, and moderately educated, to whom no law of man or of society was sacred, who denied the power of God as lightly as she defied the opinion of the world; who knew nothing of shame, of duty, or of kindness, and whose mind was as clear as yours or mine, and whose mental process was absolutely regular."

"Tell me of her," said Dr. Crossett eagerly. "I have several times found cases that at first seemed to be as lacking in moral sense as this one you describe, but always on close study I have found some promptings of the softer impulses. I, for instance, have seen a thief who robbed the poor-box of a church share his booty to feed a hungry child whom he met casually upon the street. I have seen a burly brute, who a few hours before had murdered his wife, weep over the sufferings of an injured dog. Here there was not an absolute lack of the thing we perhaps might call soul, although that examples of total and absolute depravity exist among the sane is a favorite theory of mine. Tell me of this woman!"

"She was a woman, although she looked to be little more than a child," began Mr. Miller. "It was at Narragansett Pier, a summer resort, not far from New York. I had noticed her from the first, my attention being attracted by the curious fact that, in spite of her gracious and happy manner, both my grandchild and her little dog seemed to be overcome by a queer aversion from the moment when they first came near to her."

"Ah! You believe then——"

"Only that instinct warned them that this woman was not a friend. I, myself, in spite of my age, felt a marked attraction, as all men did. The appeal of sex in this woman was overpowering, although I looked in vain for the evidences of a passionate nature; physically she was normal, a slight valvular trouble of the heart I fancy, from what I heard, but nothing more. She had left a good home to travel about with a rather dissipated party, all of whom were of much coarser fibre than herself. I later had a long conversation with the young man, who had spent in a few weeks a small fortune upon her. He loved her in his way. She traded upon his love, but I am convinced that she never rewarded it. I happened to come upon her one day as she lay asleep on the sand; her face was like a mirror, reflecting the thoughts that were running through her mind. At first I saw a fierce sexual passion that frightened me; then as that passed another nature seemed to claim her, and her look became so pure, so innocent, that I found myself instinctively raising my hat and standing bareheaded in the sun. Wave after wave of feeling passed over her sensitive features, good following bad, purity following lust, the innocence of a child following the look seen only on the face of one to whom all innocence is a thing to laugh at. Doctor, I saw on that girl's face what one might almost call a struggle between good impulses, inherited perhaps from a pure mother, nurtured no doubt in an honest home, and the evil of a nature in which, when she was conscious, there was no spark of decency or honor left. It was like looking on at the struggles of a divided soul, and slowly seeing the defeat of the good, the triumph of the evil."

"This is indeed a terrible case," exclaimed Dr. Crossett. "What was the end?"

"What the real end will be one can only guess," replied Mr. Miller. "The end, so far as this episode of her life is concerned, began by a brutal killing of my little granddaughter's dog, quite the most dreadful scene I ever witnessed, and ended by her leaving the hotel in the company of a man, who for her sake forgot the daughter whom he loved with a most unusual affection and, blinded by the power of this creature's animal sex appeal, made himself a laughing stock to his acquaintances and a sorrow to his friends. The father disgraced in his old age, the dupe of this girl who was but little older than the daughter he left ashamed and heart-broken. Two men, one a young life-guard, the other the fellow with whom she left her home, each of them she left with good cause to remember her, and left with a poorer opinion of the world and a bitterness against all women that will in the end help on the evil she created in their hearts. To my little grandchild she brought her first knowledge of the wickedness of the world. To all whom she met she brought a sorrow; upon all whom she left she left a trace of her own unworthiness."

"This is horrible, Mr. Miller," exclaimed Dr. Crossett. "Who was this woman?"

"Her name," replied Mr. Miller, "was Lola Barnhelm! Doctor!" He sprang to his feet as he saw the look on Dr. Crossett's face. "Doctor!"

"All right, sir, I—I beg your pardon."

Dr. Crossett slowly poured himself a glass of brandy from the small decanter on the table and raised it to his lips with a hand that trembled visibly. "I—I am not quite myself to-night, sir," he continued; "I am going to ask you to excuse me. Gentlemen." He rose, a little unsteadily, and stood looking about him at the smiling faces that turned to him. "Gentlemen," he repeated, "I find that I must leave you. Will you pardon my lack of formality and allow me to say good night?"

He left the room, refusing the many anxious offers of company, for he was a rarely popular man, and there was something in the gray pallor of his face that told them that he was suffering, and jumping into a cab he gave the address of his apartment. During his long drive across Paris, for he lived at the further end of the Boulevard St. Germain, he sat motionless, struck dumb with the horror of the thing he had heard.

"Lola! Lola! Her mother." He could see them both until the tears blinded his eyes. "That she should come to this. Lola, to her child, the child that might have been his! Great God!" As he unlocked the door of his private hall his man came out to meet him.

"A letter, Doctor, marked important."

"Very well, Louis; you need not wait."

He went slowly into his study, and was about to drop the letter carelessly on the table as the New York post-mark caught his eye. He looked again; the envelope was addressed in what looked like a child's unformed handwriting. He opened it.

"'My dear doctor,'" he read, "'if you love the doctor like I think you love him, come; he needs you. He is sick, and he looks like he wanted to die. There ain't nobody else. Please come. Excuse spelling and things and come; we need you. Maria.'"

He caught the next steamer from Liverpool.

CHAPTER XIX
WILL POWER

The old man sat in the same shabby chair, in the same little Eighth Avenue apartment where he had lived ten months before. He was dreaming again, although his eyes were open, and his dreams were not the old dreams of happy confidence.

He looked to be a broken man as he sat there, his mind and body both inert, in a half trance, half doze. On the table beside him still stood his electric apparatus, and on the mantel the little Dutch clock still ticked away soberly.

Men are born and die. Hearts are made glad and hearts are broken, fame comes and disgrace, but time goes on, unfaltering. Ten thousand years ago men fought for their brief moment of life, just as they fight to-day, just as they must ten thousand years from now; the joys that mean so much to us, the griefs that seem to fill the universe with sorrow blend in that endless procession of to-morrows into one little grain of the world's experience.

Through the open window the harsh music of a street piano penetrated discordantly, and Maria, who was quietly working about the dining-room, looked up.

"Bother the old thing! They always make him nervous!" She crossed the room and closed the window, moving so as not to disturb the old man. The music came fainter now, and the time changed abruptly to a waltz; the swing of it got into her head, and because she was young, and full of life and joy, she forgot for a moment the silent, grief-stricken figure so near to her, and she waltzed back to the dining-room, humming to herself. It was a fine thing to be alive, she thought, and to be of real use to this lonely man; he had done much for her, but now she felt that she was paying some of her debt to him of gratitude. Without her what would become of him? He was as helpless as a child and without a child's real desire to live. She busily arranged some slices of bread and butter on a plate, and placing it on a tray with a pot of freshly made tea, she put it down on the dining-room table, and stepping into the front room, stood by the Doctor's chair.

"Your tea is ready, Doctor."

"Oh!" He looked up at her, then made an effort, and aroused himself to answer. "Thank you, Maria, but I do not care for any lunch to-day."

"You didn't eat nothin' for your breakfast."

"Oh, yes, I did, Maria." He smiled at her very gently. "I am much stronger and in better health than you will believe. I am not living an active life just now. I do not require the same amount of food as a young thing like you."

"You are sick, Doctor," she spoke anxiously. "You can't live like you have been living for the last six months, doing nothing and eating less. You'll be on your back the first thing I know; then how will I take care of you?"

"You are a good girl, Maria, but I am quite equal to my work. I only wish that I had more to do."

"You can't get patients sittin' here, dreamin' over that darned thing!" She pointed angrily at the electrical machine on the table. "You could have all the patients you could take care of if you'd only try to get 'em. There ain't a better doctor in the world."

"You are a very loyal little thing, Maria."

"No, I ain't. I've done somethin' I hadn't no right to do. I'm going to tell yer because I'm ashamed, but I'm mighty glad I did it just the same."

"What have you done?" He spoke quickly, seeing by her manner that she had something of more than usual importance on her mind.

"I wrote a letter," she answered defiantly, "most three weeks ago, the very first letter I ever wrote in my life."

"To your sweetheart?"

"No, I ain't countin' him. I've been writin' to him a long time; he says one kind of spelling is just as good to him as another, but this letter I wrote to—to—Paris—to Dr. Paul Crossett."

It was out now, and she was afraid to look at him. In spite of the dependence he had grown to have upon her, she was still very much in awe of him, and she dreaded to hear the reproach that she knew would be in his voice.

“Maria!” It was there, he was angry. She knew that he would be, but she also knew that it had been her duty to do what she had done. “You—Maria—you would not tell him——?”

“I told him everything!” She burst out, “I told him you was just killin’ yourself, sittin’ here, an’ thinkin’, an’ breakin’ your heart. All day an’ all night. I told him that the best man I ever knew was just letting himself fade out and die. And I told him that if he was the friend I thought he was he’d come here and do something.”

“Maria!” He spoke sternly now. “You had no right.”

“I know it.”

“I am very angry with you. I—I wish that you had told me of it.”

“You would have stopped me, wouldn’t you?”

“Yes.”

“That’s why I didn’t. I wouldn’t have told you now, only I knew you’d find it out. I’m expecting him every minute.”

“He is coming here.” The Doctor rose to his feet in his excitement.

“Yes. I got a cable from him. It came over a week ago. It most scared me to death when I got it. It’s the first one I ever saw.”

“He is coming?”

“To-day, the cable said.”

“You brought one of the busiest men in Europe away from his work for me. You had no right to do it.”

“Perhaps not.” She stood there, afraid of him, but obstinately glad of the thing she had done. “All I know is mindin’ my own business, and it’s my business to take care of you the best I can. There—there ain’t nobody else to do it now. It’s only what she’d have done herself if she’d been here.”

It was the first time since Lola had left them that she had spoken her name or made any allusion to her, and he shrank away from it now pitifully.

“Please!” He turned away from her, seating himself heavily in his chair.

“It’s only what Miss Lola would have done,” she continued firmly.

“I told you not to speak her name.”

“I know that you did, the very day after she left home. You told me to think of her as if she was dead, but she ain’t dead. She’s out there in the world somewhere, and some day she’s coming back!”

“No! No!”

“Yes, she is, and when she comes she’ll find everything ready for her. She’ll find her room just like it always was, and she’ll find me just like I always was, lovin’ her. I can’t forget what she used to be to me. I don’t care what she’s done!”

She had tried a hundred times in the last months to say this or something like this, but she had never been able to gather enough courage, and now, no matter what came of it, she was going to speak. He tried to stop her, but the great love she had in her heart was stronger than her fear of him, and she went on.

“Sometimes, Doctor, I think, because all day long, every day, I’ve been thinkin’, and sometimes it seems to me that just those last few weeks, before she went away, that she wasn’t well some way, that somehow she couldn’t help doin’ what she did. Maybe there was something that you and me don’t understand, that was too strong for her to fight. Can’t you look at it like that? Can’t you get to think of her like you would of a child that didn’t know no better?”

For a moment the doctor looked up into her flushed, earnest face, then slowly dropped his head on his arms, and leaning forward on the table he began to sob like a child.

“Oh, Doctor! Don’t! Don’t, Doctor!”

She tried to soothe him, as gently as a mother might have done, and with much the same feeling in her heart. She was not afraid of him now, but she longed to comfort him.

“Please, Doctor! Don’t! I won’t say any more. Only don’t do that. Won’t you try not to be so unhappy?”

As she spoke the bell rang, and she straightened up.

“Hush! There’s someone here. Are you all right, Doctor? Shall I let ’em in?”

“Yes, Maria.” He recovered himself quickly, for he was a proud man, and as Maria went slowly to the door he wiped his eyes and straightened himself in his chair.

“Can we be coming in?”

He looked up to see Mrs. Mooney and Nellie in the doorway, smiling at him. Nellie was a different girl now. If Dr. Crossett had done nothing else in his busy life, what he had done for this child would have been a monument to his skill. Her arm was well, there was a soft color on her cheeks, and her face was bright with health and happiness.

“Come in!” He answered heartily, and as he looked at her he exclaimed gladly, “Why, Nellie, how well you are looking. Better every day!”

“She is that, Doctor. Better and happier,” said Mrs. Mooney proudly. “She’s just as good as any of ’em now.”

“Please, Doctor,” said Nellie timidly, as she held out to him a bunch of simple flowers, “will you please take these? I bought them with my first week’s pay, part of it. I’m working now. Will you take them?”

“Thank you, Nellie.” He took them from her with a smile. “They are a very satisfactory payment for anything I ever did for you.”

“She thought you’d know what she was feeling, Doctor,” interrupted Mrs. Mooney. “We can’t ever pay, but we can’t either of us ever forget.”

“You owe far more to Dr. Crossett than you do to me. It was his treatment that gave us our start.”

A shrill whistle from the old-fashioned speaking tube broke in upon her before she could express anymore of her gratitude of which she was so full, and as Maria went to the tube to answer they all turned to watch her.

“Hello! Oh! Oh! Come up!”

Maria turned to them, greatly excited. “It’s him. It’s Dr. Crossett.”

“Dr. Crossett!” Mrs. Mooney’s face beamed with surprise and pleasure. “We can thank him, too, Nellie.”

“You can run along out in the kitchen, both of you; that’s what you can do,” replied Maria firmly. “You can see him afterwards for a minute, but we don’t want you here now.”

“You must not go, Mrs. Mooney,” said Dr. Barnhelm kindly; “the doctor will be glad to see Nellie.”

“Yes, sir. She’ll be showing him how strong she is. Why, it will be hard for him to believe it, sir. She can lift most as much as I can. He’ll be glad to know that he was right. He said she’d be as good as any of ’em.”

She followed Nellie to the kitchen, quite the happiest woman in the world; even there in that room she seemed to have left some trace of her happiness behind her, for as Maria looked at the Doctor’s face she thought she saw a softer, less heart-broken look in his eyes, and she turned away hopefully to open the door for Dr. Crossett. Surely, she thought, there must be a chance of his doing something to help his friend, or would he, too, feel that she had done wrong in sending for him? That thought made her pause, afraid, but the thought went out of her mind at the first sight of his smiling, kindly face.

“Well, Maria?” He took her hand warmly, but there was an anxious question in his tone.

“Here he is, Doctor.” She showed him into the room where Dr. Barnhelm was standing waiting to greet him.

“Martin!”

The two men clasped hands warmly. Dr. Barnhelm was greatly affected, but knowing how gladly his friend had made any sacrifice that had been necessary to hurry to him, he tried to say as little as possible.

“It is all wrong, Paul. You should not have left your work.”

“La! I needed a change; the sea air has made me young again. Now—you?”

“I—I am well.”

“So? You do not look it.” He turned gravely to Maria. “You have done well. He needed me.”

“Yes, sir.” She was content. She knew now how great a liberty she had taken, but he had told her that she had done well, and she was happy. She smiled at him through her tears as she turned to go, but his voice stopped her.

“Maria!”

“Yes, Doctor.”

“There was a sweetheart, eh?”

“Why—yes, sir.”

“Still the faithful sailor?”

“Mr. Barnes, sir.”

“This is for a wedding gift.”

She took a small package from him, and opening it, stood open-mouthed before a pretty little necklace of French beads.

“Oh, Doctor! Oh! I never saw nothing so grand!”

“You are a good girl, Maria, and this Mr. Barnes is a lucky man.”

“Thank you, sir,” and she went quietly out of the room, leaving the two men together.

“Now, Martin!” He turned to Dr. Barnhelm gravely. “Let us have it out.” He seated himself beside him and looked him squarely in the face. “You do not try to live? Eh?”

“At least I have not tried to die.”

“Where is she?”

“I do not know.”

“When I left you, you had not tried to know. Have you seen her?”

“No.”

“Have you made any effort to see her?”

“No.”

“Have you heard of her?”

“Yes.”

“Have you written?”

“Once.”

“And that once? What did you say?”

“I wrote her,” answered Dr. Barnhelm slowly, “that I was coming back here to live, and that if she ever needed a roof to shelter her, that she—she could come.”

“And in that letter,” Dr. Crossett went on relentlessly, “did you say, ‘You are my daughter; I love you’?”

“No.”

“Do you want her to come back?”

“No.”

“Martin! Think of what that means.”

“What else have I done for six months, but think?”

“Very well.” Dr. Crossett gave up in despair. “We will say no more about it. You are a sick man, mind and body; that is all that we must think of now. Do you practice?”

“Yes, not much, just enough to live.”

“And that?” Dr. Crossett pointed to the machine on the table. “What have you done with that?”

“Nothing!”

“And yet you told me once that it was the thing you prayed for.”

“I was a fool!” Dr. Barnhelm spoke with a bitterness that until long afterwards his friend could not understand. “I thought myself something of a philosopher, and yet I did not know that there is no curse so bitter as the curse of a granted prayer. It is always so; a young man prays for fame, and when it comes he finds that it is an empty word. Another prays for money, and when his prayer is granted he finds that his happiness is gone. The woman prays for love; it comes, and she finds the bitterness of it. The mother prays for the life of her child, and the child grows up and breaks her heart.”

“This will not do, Martin.” Paul Crossett rose and put his hands kindly but firmly on the other’s shoulder. “You are worn out; you are not yourself; tell me, do you sleep?”

“Not when I can help it,” answered Dr. Barnhelm, with a shudder.

“You will sleep now, and while you sleep I am going to sit beside you. Come! I will take you to your room; no, I will listen to no refusal. I have crossed the ocean just for this, to take care of you; the least that you can do is to obey my orders. Come!”

“But there is no need for——”

“Come!”

CHAPTER XX
MR. BARNES RETURNS

“Will you have another cup, Mrs. Mooney?”

“No, thank you; I will not, though better tea I never tasted. Well—if you are that set on it, I suppose I might as well.”

Maria poured out Mrs. Mooney’s third cup, and leaving the tea-pot near at hand, left her to sit and sing the praises of the two doctors to Nellie, who from a lifelong experience had developed into a really wonderful listener.

On her way down the hall Maria had to pass the open door of the Doctor’s bedroom, and as she glanced in she saw that he was sleeping peacefully, and that Dr. Crossett still sat quietly beside the bed, looking down earnestly into the pale, tired face of his old friend.

“He’s trying to find out what’s the matter,” she thought gratefully, “and he’ll do it, too, if anybody can; ‘course it’s natural that he’s awful unhappy about Miss Lola, but it looks to me like that ain’t all; somehow he seems to me more like he was afraid of something.”

DOCTOR MORTIMER WARNS LOLA THAT TOO MUCH EXCITEMENT MAY PROVE FATAL TO HER.

As she passed down the hall on her way to the front door, the bell rang, and she, anxious that the sleeper should not be disturbed, opened the door quickly. There in the hall stood a slender young fellow in the dark-blue uniform of the navy. His face, what little of it that was not hidden behind quite the widest smile that mortal countenance ever wore, was tanned to about the shade of a fashionable summer shoe, and above it his yellow hair made a symphony in color very good to look upon. At least this seemed to be Maria’s opinion, for at the first sight of him a look of gladness came into her eyes, the like of which many a man goes through his whole life without ever once seeing.

“Mr. Barnes! Oh, Mr. Barnes!”

“Maria,” he said or rather roared in greeting.

“Hush!” She put her finger quickly to her lips. “He’s asleep; whisper.”

“Maria,” he repeated obediently, in what passed with him as a whisper, but the sound of which rushed whistling down the narrow hall like a deep sea breeze.

“Don’t whisper; talk natural,” she suggested hurriedly. “Here, come into the front room an’ I’ll close the door. I’m awful glad to hear your voice, Mr. Barnes, but I do wish you could keep from lettin’ all the neighbors hear it.”

Once in the room and the door shut, she lost her air of severity, however; he was so tall and strong and had such a way with him that when he opened his arms and smiled so invitingly, she surrendered completely, and allowed him to embrace her with an ardor that completely took her breath away.

“Ha, ha, ha!” he roared gleefully; “maybe this is bad.”

“Mr. Barnes! However did you get here?”

“Five days’ shore leave. The ship’s anchored off Ninety-fifth Street. Say, this ain’t so bad, is it?”

“It’s, it’s mighty nice!” He was so delighted by her admission that he roared again, but her alarmed look sobered him, and lowering his voice as much as possible, he faced her with a look he meant to be one of great severity and determination, a look that he had practiced carefully for the occasion before a little mirror in the ward room of the battleship.

“Ain’t you well, Mr. Barnes?” she enquired anxiously.

“Well,” he responded indignantly, “why shouldn’t I be well? I’m here to get to cases. You’ve been writing me fine letters lately, Maria, easy to read, and the spelling getting more usual every day.”

“Thank you, Mr. Barnes.”

“But letters ain’t no good when folks has really got anything to say. So I’m here to ask when it is going to be?”

“What going to be?”

“You said you was going to marry me, didn’t you?”

“Well—I—yes—I did.”

“Then what’s the use of jiggling?”

“I ain’t jiggling,” she spoke, with great indignation. “I don’t know what jiggling is, but I ain’t doin’ it.”

“I get a month off ther first of May. Let’s call it May the second; will yer, Maria?”

“I—I’d love to do it, Mr. Barnes. I’d love to do it awful well, but—but who’s to take care of him?”

“I know, but, Maria, don’t you think you’d rather take care of me?”

“But him!” Maria was very much in earnest and very anxious for this hero of hers to fully understand. “You know all he’s done for me. If it hadn’t been for him and his, I’d be just nothing at all, instead of bein’ what I am, an’ goin’ to marry a real high-class man like you. I—I’m afraid you’ll have to wait, Mr. Barnes,” she added very regretfully. “I’m awfully sorry, but I couldn’t leave him all alone!”

He looked at her for a moment with as close an approach to a frown as was possible for his face to assume, and something very like a threat of jealousy in his voice.

“Sometimes, Maria, I believe you love that old Doctor of yours more than you do me!”

“I don’t know. Maybe I do, but it ain’t the same. You see, he needs me, because he’s old and sick, and all alone, and you—just look at yourself—red-faced, an’ strong, an’ jolly, an’ handsome. You may want me, Mr. Barnes, but you don’t need nobody.”

Mr. Barnes tried to assume an injured look at this, but only succeeded in grinning cheerfully, so he gave it up, and decided to make the best of things. His life in the Navy had taught him the virtue of loyalty, and in his heart he loved all the better for her devotion.

“Well, Maria, you’re the boss. I ain’t kicking, but it’s tough. Never mind; you get off to-night, and we’ll have a good time, anyhow. I’ll take you to the Hippodrome.”

“Oh! Won’t that be fine? I can get away all right, because Dr. Crossett is here, and they wouldn’t want me around anyway. We’ll have the best time in the world!”

Whatever disappointment the sailor might have felt was overshadowed by her happiness, and he started to describe in advance some of the wonders they were to see that night, when a ring at the bell interrupted them.

“Darn the door,” exclaimed Maria rather emphatically. “You wait here till I see who it is.” As she started toward the hall Barnes tried to kiss her, but she avoided him laughingly, and turned at the door, looking back at him and shaking her head reproachfully.

“You ought to be ashamed, Mr. Barnes. You sailors are awful!”

She left the room, Barnes looking after her, very much flattered. Like other bashful men, the idea that he was looked upon as a dangerous ladies’ man was enough to make him completely happy; had he been called a brave fellow he would have taken it quite as a matter of course.

At the door Maria found John Dorris, and as she admitted him he stopped to ask anxiously,

“How is he to-day?”

Since John’s return from his unsuccessful journey he had done his best to keep in touch with the Doctor, although he had the feeling that his presence was not always quite welcome, or at least that the sight of him did more to remind the Doctor of Lola and to disturb him than it did to bring him any comfort.

“He’s going to be better,” Maria answered. “Dr. Crossett is here!”

“Good!” John was greatly relieved. He knew that to no one in the world would Dr. Barnhelm be so willing to turn for help as to this old friend, and he felt that with all his skill, and with his great love, Dr. Crossett might be able to see a way to ease the old man’s mind and persuade him to give up his growing habit of moody solitude.

“This is—is a friend of mine, sir, Mr. Barnes,” said Maria bashfully, as they entered the front room and saw Barnes standing there.

“No! Not *the* Mr. Barnes,” cried John, greatly pleased.

“Yes.”

“I am glad to know you, Mr. Barnes. Very glad!” John shook hands with him heartily, noting with approval his frank,

open countenance and his honest, homely manner. “I have heard a lot about you, and I like all that I have heard.”

“Thank you, sir.”

“We are all of us very fond of Maria,” continued John. “I wonder if you realize what a lucky fellow you are. There are not many girls like Maria.”

“Thank you, sir,” responded Mr. Barnes heartily. “One of ’em is enough for me.”

Dr. Crossett, followed by Nellie and Mrs. Mooney, whom he had found patiently waiting in the kitchen, came into the room, the Doctor holding Nellie by the hand and looking at her with pride.

“John!” He cried out in surprise and joy, and took his hand as he listened to John’s warm greeting. “I am so glad to see you, my boy, and look, look at little Nellie here. Her arm is well. I have never seen a cure more complete.” His eyes fell upon Barnes, who was shuffling from one foot to another in an agony of embarrassment. “Ah!” The Doctor knew him at once. “Maria! A sailor! Not the famous Mr. Barnes?”

“Yes, sir,” answered Maria proudly.

“I am glad to see you.” The Doctor took his hand as cordially as he would that of an old friend. “You know, Mr. Barnes, I had my doubts about there really being any such person. I feared you were a Mrs. Harris.”

“No, sir; Barnes is my right name.”

Maria had been made very happy by the doctors and John’s kindness to her lover, but she had no idea of allowing him to bore them, and she knew that these two would have many things to say to one another.

“Now, Mr. Barnes, you go along with Nellie and Mrs. Mooney. They are friends of mine. You can come back here for me about half past seven.”

“I’ll be here,” he answered. “Good day, good day, gentlemen.”

“Good day, Doctor. Go on, Nellie!” Mrs. Mooney took her two charges to the door, then turned for a final look at Dr. Crossett. “You see, Doctor,” she nodded proudly toward Nellie, “you had it right. Just as good as any of ’em!”

“Excuse me, Doctor.” Maria followed them to the door. “He shouldn’t have come here at all, but you know what men are.”

When the door closed, and John found himself alone with Dr. Crossett, he turned to him inquiringly.

“Well, Doctor, what do you think?”

“Of him?”

“Yes.”

“Sit down, my boy. I must talk with you.”

After they were seated, the Doctor went on gravely. “He is in a bad state. I do not understand. I came here expecting to find grief. I find instead fear—horror.”

“I have felt that from the first,” responded John. “I have tried to be of help to him, but when I am here he seems to be more nervous than in my absence. He never mentions her name, never asks for her.”

“Tell me of her, John.”

“She went away with that man, Dick Fenway,” John began. “He took her first to Atlantic City with a party of his friends. I followed them; you know that. What I would have done if I had found them I don’t know—killed him perhaps, but I am not sure. Later there was a scandal about them at Narragansett Pier, and she left him.”

“Left him?”

“For another man—a man old enough to be her father and rich enough to grant every wish of her heart. Oh, it’s a hellish thing to talk about, Doctor. I met this Dick Fenway about that time, and upon my word I was almost sorry for the little beast. He loved her in his way; God knows how much of the fault was his; I can’t pretend to say. The whole miserable business sickens me, but every detail, every word of scandal, every report of her growing extravagance and moral degradation stays in my mind!”

“I know.” The Doctor put his hand gently on John’s arm, and after a moment John continued:

“Wherever she goes the papers are full of her exploits. She has been through scandal after scandal, and has come out more daring, more reckless than before. A month ago I saw her. She was crossing Broadway in a great touring car. She saw me and”—John’s voice broke—“and—she laughed.”

“You love her, John?”

“Yes. I am ashamed to say so, but I do.”

“My boy, I loved her mother like that long after my love was hopeless. I knew her well; how this evil ever fell upon a

child of hers I cannot understand.”

They were silent a moment, John thinking of Lola, Dr. Crossett of the mother, who, thank God, was not here to feel the shame of this. Her death had been a hard blow to him, harder even than the marriage that had taken her away from him forever, but to-day he was glad that she was dead. John began again, his sorrow finding the only relief it had known in the sympathy of this good friend.

“If I had ever seen a trace of it in her I could bear it better, but she was so good, so pure, that she used to frighten me. I never saw a look in her face that you would not see on the face of a happy, innocent child, until——”

“Well?”

John hesitated; in his mind there was a thought that he dared not put into words. Even to himself he had not dared to express it, but this man was wise; if there could be any truth in the wild idea that had forced itself into his brain here was a man who would know.

“She was always the same, Doctor, always, until that night, the first time I saw her after—after she was—hurt, the change began then; from that hour——”

“Oh!” He looked up, startled by a moan of terror, of horror, and saw that Maria had entered the room with a tea-tray in her hands. She was standing now, white as a dead woman, her eyes fixed upon the door. He turned to follow her frightened gaze, and as he did so a nameless dread came over him. He saw the door open slowly, very slowly, and a woman’s figure standing quietly on the threshold; he did not need to raise his eyes; he did not need the frightened cry from Maria nor the Doctor’s sharp exclamation; he knew, and knowing he slowly raised his head and looked into her face.

CHAPTER XXI
CONCLUSION

Lola stood there, leaning against the partly-opened door, looking at them, with a smile of curious amusement on her face. Maria, after one long look, sank to her knees and hid her face in her arms. John and the Doctor stood silent, both of them trying to find in this pale, wonderfully gowned, hollow-eyed but beautiful woman some trace of the girl they had loved. It was Lola—and yet——

“Ah!” She spoke quietly, but with a queer monotony of tone that struck unpleasantly on the ear. “All my old friends. I hardly expected this.”

“You have come back.”

“Yes, John, as you so keenly observe, I have come back.”

“To stay?”

“For the present, yes.”

“I knew that you would come.”

“Oh, yes, no doubt. You looked for me to return in rags and repentance. That naturally would be your idea of a proper retribution. Well, I am here, but I came in neither rags nor repentance. I do not even come in fear. I came to claim what is mine by right.” She stepped forward very slowly and sat in the same little chair she had always chosen. John noticed how languid were all her movements; the Doctor saw more, and knew now the reason of her return. He would have spoken, but he heard her father’s step in the hall, and for one of the few times in his life he lost his head. He tried to call out, to warn him, in some way to prepare him for the shock, but he could not; he seemed for a moment to have lost the power of speech, of movement, and before he could recover himself Dr. Barnhelm came into the room.

“I could not sleep, Paul,” he began; “I tried, but——” Then he saw her. She sat in the chair looking at him with no trace of softening on her face, no shame, just a half smile of amusement. Maria rose from her knees and stepped toward him, her arms held out as if to offer him protection. The two men stepped forward, watching his face for the sign of love and forgiveness they both hoped to see there. It did not come. He paused for just a moment, then spoke very quietly, with extreme politeness.

“I had not expected you—quite yet.”

“No?” She seemed quite as calm, quite as formal as he was himself.

“You are to remain with us?” He asked the question as one might ask it of a perfect stranger.

“Yes.”

“Your room is ready, I believe. Maria.”

“Yes, sir.” Maria stepped to his side.

“You will see to everything, Maria.”

“Yes, sir.”

“Martin!” Dr. Crossett could contain himself no longer. “Is this the way you meet, you two?”

“Why not?” Lola looked up at him coldly. “We understand one another quite well, I think.”

“I think so,” replied her father, “but I must be sure. I must speak with you alone.”

“Come, John. Come, Maria.” Dr. Crossett went with them to the door, but the sight of those two, father and daughter, coldly facing one another, was more than he could bear, and he returned to Dr. Barnhelm and, putting both hands on his shoulders, spoke to him with all his tenderness, all his love for them, and for the dead mother to whom this sight would have been so terrible, in his voice.

“Martin, if our old friendship means anything to you, I beg you to remember that she has come back to us, not for blame or reproaches, but for comfort, for love!”

“I must speak to her alone.” Dr. Barnhelm’s voice was so firm, his manner so full of an iron resolution, that Dr. Crossett could say no more. He turned to Lola with a pitiful attempt at his old lightness of manner, and without again looking back he left the room, only pausing to shut the door behind him.

She did not speak, but sat there, never for a moment taking her eyes from his face and waiting; at last he began.

“Why are you here?”

“I am here because they tell me that I am going to die.”

He had not expected this, and for a moment it broke through the stern repose of his manner.

“What?”

“So they say,” she answered calmly, “the best of them. There is something here.” She put her hand to her side.

“Your heart.”

“Did you think,” she said, her whole face lighting up with a flash of merriment, “that it was my soul?” She laughed then, quite with her old hearty laugh, at his cry of horror and at his look of mortal agony as he shrank away from her, his arms thrown up, as if to ward off some deadly peril. “They told me,” she continued, “that it was not a question of months or of years, but of hours, and so I came to you.”

“Why?”

“Because you are the one man in all the world who can help me. You can keep me from death, or if I die you can do the thing you did before!” She made the first movement she had made since she had sunk into her chair as she raised her hand and pointed to the gleaming brass, the bright glass, and the coiled wires of his apparatus, which stood there on the table.

He had known always that this moment was to come to him, had known what his answer was to be, and he shook his head in refusal.

“You must! That you must swear. I cannot die! Not now! You know that! You must not let me die! You owe me that, at least!”

She had lost her composure, her breath came in fitful, uneven gasps, and as she sat there she pressed one hand over her heart.

“Wait!” He spoke quickly. “You must answer me some questions.”

“Well.”

“You, my daughter, your mother’s daughter, left my house with a married man?”

“Yes.”

“You robbed me; you were willing that a good, loyal girl, who worshipped you, should suffer in your place. You broke the heart of a young man who loved you?”

“Yes. I did those things.”

“Do you feel sorrow for them?”

“No.”

“Do you feel shame for what you did then or for all the things you have done since then?”

“No!”

“You did them because they suited your mood? What you wanted you took; the thing you felt that you wanted to do you did?”

“Yes.”

“Without a regret? Without one single backward thought of us?”

“Why should I think of you?” she asked scornfully. “What did you mean in my life, any of you, after I once put you all behind me? Does one think again of the food that nourished him yesterday, or of the sun that kept him warm? I was born into this world like any other thing that breathes, to live if I was strong, to die if I was weak. I did not ask for life, but when it came, why should I not get all of its brightness if I could? Why should I think of anyone’s pleasures or pains but my own? What is the world to me but the place in which I am to live my own life, in my own way, and for my own good?”

“You need not go on,” he said quietly. “You have told me all that I wished to know.”

“But you have not given me the promise I came here to get.” As she spoke she rose unsteadily from her chair, clinging for support to the back of it and looking at him with a fierce questioning in her eyes. “Will you stay by me until my heart fails?”

“I will.”

“Will you do your best to save me?”

“I will.”

“And if you fail?” At her question her voice rose shrilly, almost to a scream. “If I die, as they said that I must—what will you do then? Answer! Answer! Will you bring my life back to me? Will you?”

He would not answer; for a moment she looked at him, her face frozen into lines of awful terror; then screaming, panting, she staggered to the door, and opening it she called wildly:

“John! Doctor! Come! Come!”

They rushed in, Maria following, and would have gone to her, but she waved them back and pointed at her father, her face dreadful with its look of fear and hatred. “Listen! You—you must help me. You must make that man swear what I want him to swear, and you must see that he keeps his word! He must! He won’t if he can help it. I know he won’t. Look at him! Look at his face. What do you read there? Pity? Love? Sympathy? Sympathy for me? Do you? No! Fear! He is afraid that I will make him swear, and I will—I will——!”

She rushed at him, staggered forward as though she would tear the promise from him, but as they cried out and threw themselves between, she stopped suddenly and, throwing up her arms, screamed once and fell at their feet. Dr. Crossett knelt beside her and in a moment looked up gravely.

“No pulse! Her heart does not beat. Quick, Martin!” He left her and sprang to the table, seeking frantically for the electric switch that would start the machine.

“No!” The father’s voice came quietly, but his eyes never left the figure that lay motionless on the floor.

“What!” John cried out in amazement.

“You must!” Paul Crossett put his hand out and shook the old man almost roughly. “You must! She is your daughter!”

“She is not my daughter. My daughter died ten months ago. My daughter’s soul is with her mother’s, as pure and as white as on the day I first held her in my arms. I owe no duty to this creature here. This empty shell from which the soul has been driven out. I am not her father, but if I were, I still would say—in God’s name—let her die!”

He had taken a heavy mallet in his hand, and as he spoke he brought it down with all his strength upon the delicate mechanism in front of him. He struck twice, and there was nothing left but a mass of broken glass and a heap of bent and twisted wires.

THE END

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