

The
Candlestick
Makers

LUCILLE BORDEN



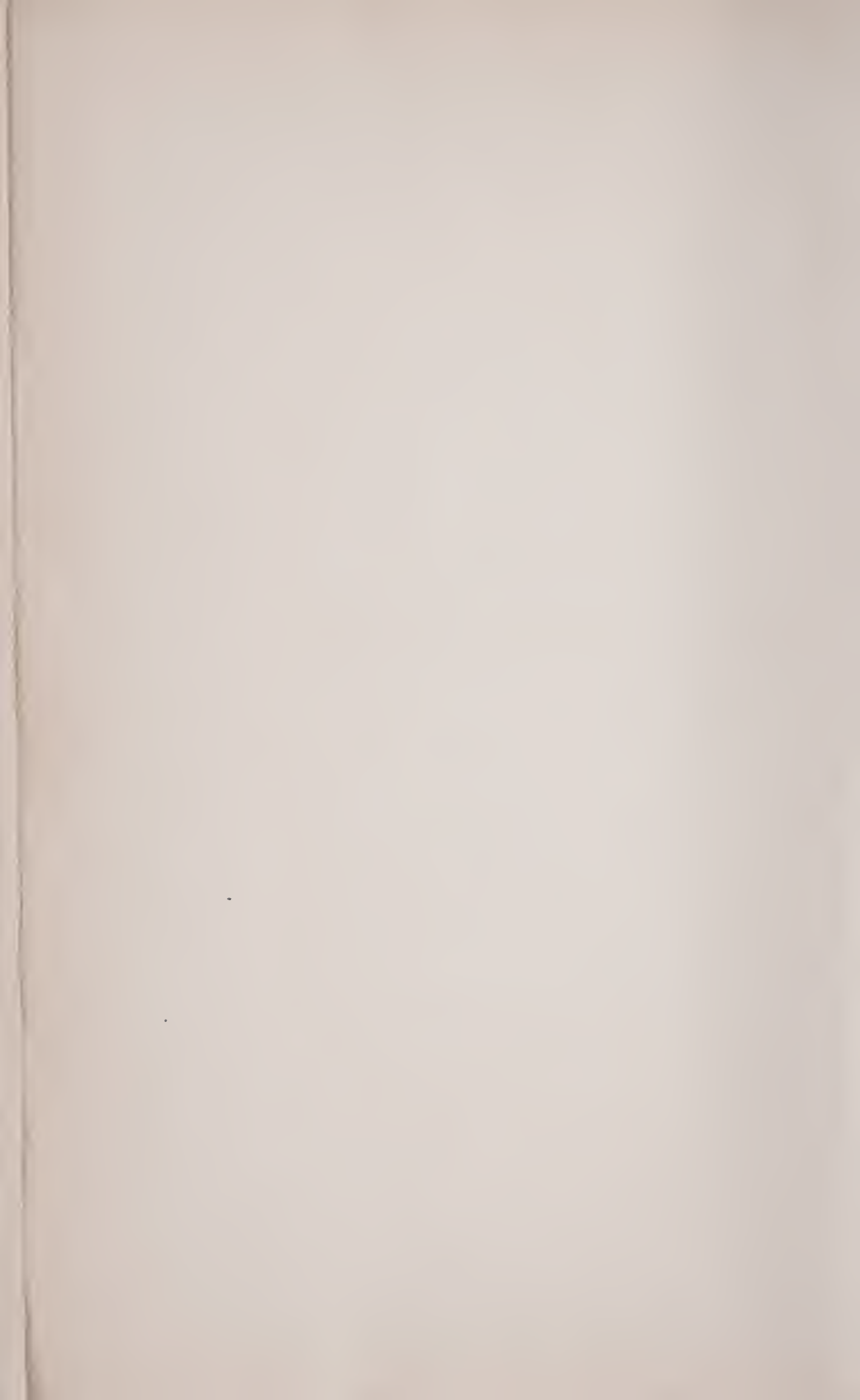
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THE CANDLESTICK MAKERS



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MELBOURNE

THE MACMILLAN CO. OF CANADA, LTD.
TORONTO

THE CANDLESTICK MAKERS

BY

LUCILLE BORDEN

AUTHOR OF "THE GATES OF OLIVET"

New York

THE MACMILLAN COMPANY

1923

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Set up and electrotyped. Published October, 1923.

FERRIS PRINTING COMPANY
NEW YORK CITY

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OCT -3 1923

To
MY MOTHER AND FATHER,
EMILY CARLIN PAPIN AND THÉOPHILE PAPIN

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PRELUDE

IT was all strange; strange fragrances, strangely small flowers everywhere. They were mignon roses though Joan did not know the name, and forget-me-nots. A strange woman in a stiff white dress and cap seemed to have taken Mummie's place. It was strangest of all without Mummie. Whatever happened before she was always there, everywhere, all over the house. One needed her. Presto! She was with you. But now? Then Daddy came. He found the child huddled in a corner of the drawing-room between the window and piano, not tempted to cry, but staring wonder-eyed at the strangeness all about.

"Oh!" She flew at him and he lifted her high while she looked down into his face, searchingly. Then——

"Softly, Joan. Daddy's got something to show you."

"Where?"

"In Mummie's room."

"Shall I see *her*?"

"Yes."

“Shut eyes?”

“Shut eyes. Hold on tight. Look when I tell you.”

Clinging to his neck, heart throbbing in the tense small body, lashes curling on pale cheeks, she was carried in triumph up the stairs, across the door-sill into Mummie’s room. Still Daddy held her.

Even here, the perfume of roses.

“Now! Look!”

Another rose. A bud in silky petals. A tiny living creature fast asleep.

“It’s, your brother, Joan.”

Without warning, without stirring, he woke and looked straight up into the marvelling face that watched in wonderment.

“Oh!” cried Joan, “his eyes are like stars!”

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CHAPTER I

WHY NOT?

UNCEASING rain against the windows, and fires dancing high on the hearth. Candles, lighted at mid-day, flickered odd shadows to paneled gothic walls. Orchids and hyacinths out of silver beds, lent exotic color to the room. Matsuo's silent step seemed furtive as he passed between the table and ancient Spanish screen that stood in front of the pantry door.

"So that's why I asked you to come today. Well?" Hildegarde Crighton's voice, like the action of her fragile hands, was quick, excited. "Come, sacrifice an afternoon's auction for humanity's sake."

"Humanity?"

"You'll see. You *would* be a skeptic, Faith. You've not heard her. Wait till you have. What about it, everybody?"

Halfway down the table, Diana Travers laughed nervously. Since her engagement had set her free from an overstrict surveillance everything she

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might elect to do of her own will had assumed the proportions of a thrilling adventure.

"You'll come, Di?" urged her hostess.

"Anywhere. Some lark. Bear us up, Hazel."

Directly across from her, Faith Desmond tried to catch Diana's eyes, but the young girl kept them turned away, recklessness hidden under drooping fringes.

"Why not?"

The huskiness of a voice that answered to the name of Hazel was unnatural. Somehow it made one think of East River when the fog is thickest.

"I believe in an open mind. Of course I'll come."

Softly the Japanese butler glided towards the screen. In the pantry Hana stood mixing the salad. The sleeves of her native kimono were rolled well above the young elbows. Her cheeks were flushed with anxiety to make the work confided to her by Matsuo as perfect as he himself would want it.

"Everybody going after lunch hear Missus Arachne lecture at Town Hall? I go too."

"No, no, Matsuo. Not there this day. That lecture is not for us."

The dark cheeks took on a crimson hue, deep with a deeper apprehension. But when he took the bowl of salad out of her hands he only glanced at her and made no answer.

The lines about his mouth, determined lines they were indeed, boded ill for plea or argument on the

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part of his childish wife. Back, across the dining room an unnatural silence had swept.

"Angels passing?" asked Hildegarde.

"No." Faith spoke under her breath. "Matsuo."

"Nonsense. They never pay attention to the things we talk about. This one has been over from Japan only a few weeks. Suppose we discussed the entire lecture, he would be none the wiser. Very little English, I believe. Anyway it's over his head, and if it weren't it wouldn't interest him—if he listened. But they never listen."

"Hilda, suppose someone interfered with the meeting? It *has* been done, you know. We'd have missed a perfectly good afternoon's bridge, and I need a new hat."

"I thought you read the papers, Olga. That question has been settled once for all. There have been meetings from one end of town to the other, only they've not been advertised, publicly, I mean. The mails are full of them. I get notices every few days. This one came a week ago. It's all right."

"Might as well do that as anything. How soon do you let us smoke at your parties, Hilda?" asked Kahleen Van Dysart, pulling out a cigarette case and handing it to Diana.

"Would Van want you to go, Kathie?"

"Van doesn't mind. If I thought he would I wouldn't tell him!"

"Van, like all the others, must be trained," drawled Hazel Trent through a cloud of smoke.

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“We are in a later era, dear Faith, in which ‘everything that is, is right.’ Remember that.”

“And after all, she might as well hear what’s to hear. Same with Di. Because she’s been wrapped in cotton-wool for, how many years, sweet infant, eighteen? Nineteen?——”

“Eighteen last week,” laughed Diana, switching the golden head from an animated conversation with the neighbour on her right.

“Well, eighteen years,—is no reason why she should continue wrapped. We can’t all live shut up in cages. The world moves along. Let’s move with it. Only, let’s learn everything learnable.”

Hildegarde from her place at the head of the table, looked at the clock.

“If we are going, we’d better not loiter. Meeting’s at three. We’ll have our coffee in the conservatory. Michael’s in the library with a priest. Such queer people come to see Michael. This one is from China or India or some such place. Looks like a thirteenth century picture, brown habit, cord tied around his waist and all that. I don’t think *he’d* approve of our lecture.”

“One instance of the mediaeval mind,” suggested Hazel as they started towards the conservatory. “They’d turn in their graves, some of them, if they could look in on our world today.”

“They probably would. But they’ve been out of their graves long since.”

“*Don’t*, Faith. You give me the shivers.”

WHY NOT?

“It isn’t half as shivery as what you are going to listen to this afternoon,” Faith answered. “Their being in another world listening to us and seeing what we do, is perfectly natural and normal. The other, is unnatural and abnormal.

Matsuo had disappeared to get the tray of coffee things.

“You hear? Missus Trent, she go, Missus Van Dysart an’ all. Our Missus Crighton, she takes them. I go as soon as ladies have left. You get Sadie up out of the kitchen to wash dishes instead of me.”

Seriously Hana looked at him above the tray on which she carefully placed the last frail cup.

“Missus Desmond going?”

“Like’s not. She didn’t say.”

The young woman suppressed a groan as he left the pantry. She would not call Sadie, at least, not yet. When Matsuo returned she asked, “Well? Missus Desmond going?”

“I tell you she didn’t say. What do we care if she go? Our Missus goes. That’s enough for us.”

“But Master will be angry.”

“What we care? G’bye.”

“Wait, Matsuo.” She put a brown, appealing hand on his sleeve.

“Our Christian church say,—*no*.”

“This free America say,—*yes*. I would be American. Free lecture everywhere. Free news everywhere. Free country. Do as you please. Learn

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everything in America. I will learn everything—learnable.”

“That has been said before, my husband. But it do no good. Learn what is good in our free America. There is much good. But this is not good. It is not for us.”

“You know nothing of what is good for Matsuo. I go get cups. Then, I go to lecture.”

Out in the conservatory, neither flowers, nor lights, nor heavy glass could shut away the ominous, unending sound of the storm. The risen wind moaned above the futile argument as if some lost prophetic soul sat weeping at its outcome.

“But why shouldn’t Diana go? After all, she is engaged. The engagement’s announced, so everybody knows she’s free to do as she likes.”

“Is anybody free to do that, Olga?”

“Oh Faith, you Puritan! I tell you the child knows nothing of life. Absolutely nothing! She’s not like the rest of the girls of today. All her life she’s been shut away between the corner house on Park Avenue and 40th Street in winter, and Litchfield, Connecticut, in summer. A nun in a monastery couldn’t have been better incarcerated. Could she, Diana? Why not let her have a glimpse out into the world now? There isn’t any harm in it.”

“Isn’t there?”

“If there were, why should girls and boys be allowed at these meetings?”

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“There’s every reason why they should not be at them. And it is *not* allowed.”

“But they do go. And how can anyone tell they are boys and girls, when women of seventy look seventeen, and boys of twenty have the expression of octogenarians?”

“Perhaps that’s your answer, Hazel. Boys who did not go about listening to this sort of thing, would not look like octogenarians.”

“And perhaps if the women of seventy looked less like seventeen, they would have more influence on the girls of seventeen.”

“Bosh! Learn all you can. Be as young as you can, all your life. Never say die. By the way, Hilda, what’s the opinion of the eminent and learned architect on the subject?”

“Oh, Michael’s all right. Why should he bother? We are of today, Michael and I. I do as I please, Michael as he pleases. At present sticks and stones are uppermost, and churches. He’s about to architect one for the padre in the library.”

“Hilda!” Faith’s eyes were shining. “Why didn’t you tell us before? A church! What church? He’s *made*. And Michael not yet thirty. Why, he’s only a boy! Glorious!”

“Mercy, Faith. One would think Michael in leading strings. He *has* graduated from altar candlesticks, you know, though I thought he never would.”

As Hildegarde spoke, the eight years’ priority

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over her husband, skillfully disguised under modern methods of rejuvenation, caused a flush to rise to the tips of her jewelled ears.

Then she added hastily, to cover her discomfiture, "Shall we go?"

"Go? Of course. I thought it was decided."

"Come along then, the car's waiting." Hildegard, hatted through the luncheon, drew on a pair of long gloves.

"Sorry, old dear. I can't join you."

As she spoke, Faith's frank eyes travelled from Kathleen van Dysart's face to Diana's, both guileless, both pathetically young. Pity that one hour, two hours, might be enough to change the youthful charm of that look for the rest of both their lives. She thought of the humanless masks that looked out at her from the flotsam of Fifth Avenue's streaming hordes. The shock of hideous disfigurement to youth's fresh beauty under the painted, pallid paste, was always the same. They must not be of the masks, these two. Her own life was so replete with joy that where she loved, she longed to share. If they only knew!

"Why not, Faith?"

"Joan. The baby. Two good reasons," she laughed.

"Nonsense, old girl. The faithful Rhea would consider you an intruder. Come now. 'Fess the truth. It's because you don't approve. Expand, expand your life with the rest of the universe," urged Olga.

WHY NOT?

“Has delving into this sort of thing expanded anyone? I wonder. Somehow it seems to me to have lessened the power of the soul to expand. One is happier being ignorant of lots of things, you know.”

“But, Faith,” Kathleen asked, “if I, the individual I, want to know, why shouldn’t I?”

“You said you wouldn’t tell Van, Kathie. If you can’t tell him, isn’t that enough?”

Under lids that flickered, Hazel Trent looked at Faith and laughed. It was not a pleasant sound.

“Your very morals are mid-Victorian. You are born out of your epoch, an extinct species. Change your mind, be a sport.”

Not waiting for Faith to disprove the Victorian fling, Kathleen turned.

“Do you want to know what I think of Faith?” she asked. “She’s a better sport than any of us. It’s harder not to go than to go. I told Van to stop for me and I’d call him up to tell him where. But I’m hanged if I’d let him find me at Town Hall this afternoon.”

“Why, Kathie dear, I thought you said Van wouldn’t care.”

“I said it, but he *would* care. Any decent man would care. It took Faith’s courage to make me acknowledge it.”

Meanwhile Matsuo had gathered up the empty cups inaudibly, not losing a word of what was said. He hesitated at the screen listening to hear what might follow Kathleen van Dysart’s speech.

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“You’ve spoiled my party, Faith,” said Hilda, trying grimly to conceal her white fury. I thought it would be a lark as well as useful. We all go to see doubtful plays. This can’t do us any more harm, can it? Or a lurid movie? It’s all in the way you look at it. If we go simply for amusement it’s no better nor worse than going to a matinee. But I’ll tell you this, Faith. It’s got an advantage over the matinee. If you want to use what you learn, it might be a pretty good thing. There.”

“I thought so,” Faith answered quietly, “but I would not have gone anyway. I’ll just get your man to call a taxi.”

It was Winters who eventually called the taxi. Matsuo was in the room beyond the pantry reaching for his coat.

“Here your cups. I go now. Back in time for tea things.”

But Hana held him.

“You go today, you come back in time for tea, changed. You not come back the same to Hana.”

“It can do no harm, an’——” he quoted impressively, “it might be a pretty good thing.”

Then Hana’s hand flew to her mouth. It was all she could do to keep from screaming aloud.

“Not for us! Not for us!” as with pleading, swimming eyes she looked into his that were small, hard, defiant. Then she went on;

“I don’t want to know such things. I don’t want

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my husband to know. I don't want to go where they talk like that. We said—that time—you took me from Japan, when we make enough, we go home, get forgiven,—an' live so happy. This Miss Arachne, she make trouble for Hana and Matsuo. She would ruin the home, an' spoil the lives. She makes quarrel those who never quarrel before, those who love. *Don't, Matsuo. Stay with Hana.*" Again the hand to her mouth as the hard look she dreaded gathered in his face. He made no answer, got his hat, put it on, started down the stairs. Dumb with the pain in her heart she stood looking at him. Then, halfway he turned, came back, laughed and said, "I tell you all about it," and was gone.

Automatically she started to wash the dishes. The delicate, slim hands were unfitted for such work. She held them out and looked at them, then dumbly began again. She would not call Sadie. She could bear no one near her now but Matsuo, Matsuo who had dragged her into this—hideousness—who had so altered. Could he have been acting a part when he took her—that time—from the flowering arbors of Kobe? She lifted a plate in her hand, stopped a moment, set it down and tiptoed over to the pantry door. Perhaps they had not gone. She might hear more about this thing that had come between her and Matsuo. She slipped out into the space between the screen and door.

"Don't bother about the taxi. We'll drop you on our way down."

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"I'm not going in your direction, Hilda. Better tell Winters."

"Oh, very well. It's early enough. We'll wait till it comes."

As Hildegarde touched the bell, Hazel spoke up again:

"Faith's not only a Puritan, but priest-ridden. I suppose she would not dare tell her—what you call 'em—her confessor, about this little spree of ours. So she won't join it."

"Who's mid-Victorian now, Hazel? You know better than to have said that. It shows ignorance far more dense than what you call the dark ages."

"Well, suppose it does? You've evaded a direct question. You said Joan and Mickey, but you knew they were not the reason."

Even the calculating eyes before her, quailed a little at the limpidity of Faith's. If one single thing characterized Joan's mother, it was mental clarity. Perhaps Hana had divined this in holding her up as a pattern to herself as well as to Matsuo.

"It's not because I want to be a kill-joy at your party, Hilda, or disagreeable. Hazel has asked me a question straight out. There's one I must ask each one of you. Would any of you go to a Fagan school for stealing? They do exist, you know, right here in town."

"Good Lord! Now she's back in her slums!" exclaimed Olga Clavering.

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“We’ve stood by you to the limit in those, you know. What have they got to do with it?”

“Just that. It’s quite the same thing, but worse. A stolen purse can be replaced. Not a stolen soul. Do you want me to be clearer? There’s more to be said. A great deal more. And I’m keeping you from the lecture.

“Shoot,” said Hazel, “the lecture doesn’t begin till three.”

“It’s the key to every crime. Think it over.”

It was Diana who stared now. Then she broke out;

“Faith! You exaggerate. What on earth do you mean? Murder, and things like that? They don’t go with decent society.”

“Don’t they? I’m not so sure. You’ve been sheltered, Di. Nobody told you that what we know as decent society is sometimes pretty rotten. My answer is the only answer. That’s why I don’t want you to go. If Larry doesn’t mind, after you and he are married, it’s none of my affair. It’s really none of it now. But—you’re a dear, and it hurts me to think what it might do to you. Why should you, conservative and quiet as you’ve always been—mix up in this sordid type of thing?”

“You speak as if you knew just what might be said. Why shouldn’t we know, too?”

“That’s just it. I don’t know and I don’t want to know. I don’t want to drag my eyes and ears and brain through the mire that’s to be flung about this

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afternoon. There are certain stains that won't wash off, Di."

"How can you judge, if you don't know?" asked Olga.

"Do you ever look through your mail?"

"Occasionally."

"Have you ever read the propaganda that filters through in spite of so-called censorship? The paper is usually yellow, like the doctrine."

"Oh, I've got a secretary who looks through my mail. No, I never noticed the things."

"Probably your secretary has a clean soul and won't let them pass. The notices in themselves are a crime, a breaking of our laws. The mails are not supposed to carry that sort of literature, but it gets by. If you've read any part of it you know what to expect of Arachne's lectures. I've been infuriated enough to report it, but decided to throw it in the waste basket instead."

Diana Travers gave no sign of the indecision that swayed her. She was young, weak, curious. Faith was right. Faith always was right, but the other women had a good time out of life, and were not troubled by any of the things that stood in Faith's way. True, Olga was soon to become a widow-de-grâce by reason of utter incompatibility, and as far as Diana knew, Hazel Trent had either disposed of her husband, or been disposed of by him, several years back. As to Trent, people laughed at the thought of his having been at all. Where had he

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gone? Nobody knew. Rather pitiful, that part. Kathleen van Dysart had only been married a few weeks, and Faith but five years. As to their hostess, everyone knew that for some incomprehensible reason Michael Crichton had fallen in love with her, though marriage more incongruous had never taken place. Michael, lovable, fanciful, talented, imaginative, honest, generous; Hildegarde calculating, selfish, narrow, hard, and more or less the fashion by reason of these things, and Michael. She got what she wanted. Now Diana, guarded carefully, circumscribed, was marrying Lawrence Minton to gain her freedom. Behind Diana lay generations of conservative, wholesome ancestry, backbone of the elder American civilization. Ancestors, tradition, apparently meant nothing to her. She was of today, demanding liberties. So she hung back, mind wandering curiously, especially from the path Faith would have chosen for her.

“Not coming with me, Di? Joan asked me to bring you home.”

“No. I’ve decided to go with Hildegarde.”

“Not even for Joan?”

“Not—today—anyway.”

Hana, behind the screen, had seen the red color that crept into Diana’s face when Mrs. Desmond spoke to her, and noticed too that the young girl avoided even a glance in the direction of the clear eyes.

The dining room was empty in a few minutes and

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Hana gone back to her task. When all had been arranged, she looked for her umbrella, to find it gone. Matsuo had taken it, of course. The rain still fell in torrents, but discomfort of body mattered very little. She put on her hat and coat, and slipped down the Avenue to Saint Patrick's Cathedral. She was glad of the merciful darkness in the Lady Chapel. There she could weep out her soul and no one be any the wiser. And tears would be her prayer. Our Lady would know, for she, too, had wept, in silence. Hana was sure of being heard, and she could rest here, before taking up her burden. God! What a burden! Perhaps she stayed an hour—it may have been longer. Nothing mattered except the blessed peace that somehow wrapped her round. At last in the darkness she felt for a taper and lighted a blue glass vigil lamp before the altar.

“Oh, Lady Mary! For little Matsuo,” she whispered.

CHAPTER II

“THEY ALL JUMPED OUT——”

IN spite of the rain Michael had accompanied the Franciscan friar back to his monastery. It was a great thing for so young a man to have been given the building of a church as important as the one contemplated by the Order. No one understood this better than the architect himself. A small council of Friars Minor had gone over his plans, suggesting minor details here and there, but in the main, altering nothing.

After seeing the father safely in at the door, Michael had gone out of his way to dream at the lot on which the church was to be built. Storm or no storm, it was all the same to him. To his imaginative mind his creation stood, complete. Vaulted galleries and colonettes, gracious arches and reach of nave, light ethereal filtering such color as was born and lives at Chartres, sunshine like a celestial arrow touching the traceried altar—the golden, precious Door——

Lost to his surroundings, oblivious of the down-pour pelting against his coat and the umbrella he had closed at the monastery door and forgotten to open, ankle-deep in mud, he rambled about, vision-

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ing his dream consummated. He wondered if he might suggest the elimination of pews. They were so ugly and cluttered out proportions——

When at length he reached his library it was long past tea-time. The fire was dying, the room deserted. He often wished he might find Hildegarde at home when he got in. Especially on a day like this. He didn't like to think of her out in the storm. Of course she was never exposed to the elements. There was her motor, and other people's motors. But she might catch cold. She wasn't too strong. She had been a miracle of fragility as a girl. Besides, there was so much to tell. His first church. She used to make fun of the candlesticks that were his hobby. From childhood he had had a strange gift for adapting, designing, creating candlesticks for the sacred places. And sanctuary lamps—he loved the sanctuary lamps. He always said it was because of the joyous flames that danced their prayer to Heaven. People spoke of the solemnity of funeral lights. Not at all. Why should they be solemn? Hadn't a soul been released to Paradise? Hadn't God caught it up in an ecstasy of joy to sing and laugh and play throughout the aisles of Eternity? What was there sad about that? Michael would like to know.

It had been these very lights that had brought him to the notice of the Friars Minor. But it was his personality that had done the rest. Too much a dreamer to make a brilliant record at college, he

“THEY ALL JUMPED OUT——”

had somehow managed to pull through between his castles in the air, and his castles on paper, fair gift for mathematics and genius for modelling. After leaving the Beaux Arts, he had done what he could under no less guide than Ralph Adams Cram. Now, as Faith said, he was made.

That he would go on and up there was little doubt. His house he had built during the year of his engagement to Hildegarde von Engel. It was a large house, and, like his soul, filled with dreams. In every room, on every side, at the very turn of the staircase—dreams. Now, out of the cold and chill of the afternoon, the dream slept. Perhaps that was one reason that the house seemed so empty.

After all Hilda was young and loved life. How could he, confiding, honest, guess that she had the better of him by eight years? In its peculiar way her artistry was as exact as his skill. How should he know? She had never told him. It wasn't disloyal of him to wish she might carry her fevered search for excitement into other channels. Since the great war the younger generation had been filling its time with things worth while. That she belonged to it he never doubted. New schools of music had taken on. Great artists from abroad were playing, or leading symphonies. Hildegarde had inherited a love of music, but lesser loves had drowned it. There were exhibitions at the galleries, books, clever new plays, interesting people, a thousand diversions other than the ones she sought. His own work, a

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study of it that would have brought them close together. After all, it *was* his work, and he loved it. But she sought no common interest. What Michael liked held no allure for her, though had she but known, there was material in it to thrill to the fibre of her spirit. If she had a spirit, if she could thrill at all.

Useless faddisms were a different matter. Literally "blown about by every wind of doctrine" she would follow a new preacher from General Sherman's statue to Washington Square, provided his ministrations did not lead outside a certain customary ken. Joseph Newton has characterized it as "Parlor Magi knocking at the door of dead paganism, and modern theosophies asking for new faiths." So Hildegarde ran her gamut, out of which Billy Sunday alone was excluded by reason of his roughness. She had a year of Brahminism on the heels of a season of Buddhism, then a period of the Science that is neither Christian nor scientific. For a brief epoch she flared ancient truths camouflaged into a thing called "New Thought" for lack of better title, to her personal gallery, and joined classes in "Concentration and Prosperity." This era over, she wafted her pretty self through a few weeks of Communitarianism. Now her shallow brain had seized with avidity upon the Grant heresy. She could not understand that Truth could not be Truth if it lied. Nor did the heretic explain how our divine Master could

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possibly be what the fallacists call “a good man, but not divine, not God.” He Who is, had declared Himself God. If Hildegarde’s conscience needed opening to reckless pursuit of her own will, these delusive doctrines flung it wide indeed.

Michael felt she would go any length out of curiosity, for it had gradually seeped in upon him, that behind that classic brow lay scant mentality. Subconsciously he had known it from the start, but had refused to think. He loved her, and loving her, had to put all criticism out of his mind. He had been warned before they married, but to his youthful inexperience this fragile Hildegarde was his entire world. Given responsibility she would grow up. But would she? Could she without foundation? At seventy would she not be as irresponsible as today? Would not uncontrolled, uncontrollable innate selfishness exact its due? On this phase of her character Michael never touched.

He took the tongs and lifted a dying log to the back of the fireplace, then pulled up his chair to watch the fresh one catch. When it did, it vied with the wax candles in their silver sconces and the silver on the table where the lamp had died out and the tea grown cold.

Candle light was Michael’s fancy. Hildegarde would have preferred electricity. Somewhere chimes rang out a quarter before six o’clock. Michael touched a bell.

“You rang, sir?”

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"Did I? Oh, yes, I believe I did. Are you usually about at this time?"

"No, sir. But today I am, sir."

"Where is Matsuo?"

"He went out immediately after madam's luncheon, sir. He has not come back. Shall I relight the kettle?"

"Yes. Has Mrs. Crighton come in?"

"I believe not, sir."

"Very well. That will do. Oh, Winters——"

"Yes, sir."

"When Matsuo comes, send him to me."

"Yes, sir."

Behind the man the door closed noiselessly. Hildgarde might have gone somewhere for tea after a matinee. Again he found himself wishing she were not out on so inclement a night. He poured the boiling water into the cold tea after a while, and absently drank it. Then he sat musing on his work.

A sudden tap at the door. He turned quickly thinking it might be his wife. But it was only the Japanese.

"You send for me, sir?"

"I needed you early this afternoon. The shipment of bulbs had arrived from Tokio. They were to be assorted as you know and repacked at once. Where were you?"

A sullen expression came into the man's face as he answered:

"I had to go hear a lecture."

“THEY ALL JUMPED OUT——”

“*A lecture?* The bulbs were to be shipped to Richmond at once. I had fully explained this. It was important to catch the first train out.”

Michael detected no impertinence in Matsuo’s tone as he answered;

“The lecture was important, sir. I had to go.”

“Where was this lecture?”

“Town Hall, sir.”

Then Michael seemed to remember. Vaguely it came to him at first. Then with all the vivid force of sickening recollection the truth broke. He took one incredulous look at the man before him. He recalled having passed Hana in the hall, and that she was crying. Wondering, he had looked back at her, but she’d fled to the fastnesses below. A chill, unquestionable conviction came upon him that this man must have been present at a certain lecture to be given at Town Hall. Hildegarde had hinted her intention of going, one morning over her heavy accumulation of mail. Madame Arachne. Revolting. The man waited. But Michael did not dare speak—yet.

“You may go.”

Something in his master’s tone caused Matsuo to stop and glance swiftly at him before leaving the room. Then the door closed.

Michael, no longer able to sit still, began to pace the floor. Hildegarde. This Japanese servant. Monstrous! And probably the whole gamut of humankind at their backs. “The butcher, the baker,

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the candlestick maker——” The candlestick maker! Hildegarde! His wife!

He could not believe her serious when she tentatively mentioned that the meeting was to take place. It was unbelievable to him she should even take time to read the notice that had slithered its ochered way through the post. Doctrine, an exotic horror not to be tolerated by a decent white man. Surely even Hilda's curiosity could never carry her so far. He remembered how she had laughed a trilling gamut and said she thought he was up to date, but here was a new thing she would have to learn for herself. He had answered that it was no new thing but old as the ages and corrupt as sin. Then he'd dropped the subject in the hope she might forget it. Not she. He had discounted her love for sensationalism.

“But why? Why don't you want me to go?”

“Drop it, Hilda. It's not—fit. I don't think I would like to have you even seen there.”

“That's a silly reason. If I *am* there, why not be seen there?”

“Don't *be* there.”

“But if Arachne's object is a good one? She wants to save the world from the diseased and crippled. Surely that would be a kindness to the poor creatures that come into the world handicapped?”

“Who makes them?”

“God, of course.”

“Can't you leave it to Him, then, sweetheart? Did you ever hear that He said, ‘Not a sparrow falleth?’

“THEY ALL JUMPED OUT——”

Oh, my dear, my dear, if you only stopped to think how much beauty there is in the tiniest of God's creations, whether we see it to be perfect or imperfect, there need never be the sort of thing this radical is trying to do.”

“Oh, very well.”

She had wisdom enough to let the subject drop. Now it was evident to Michael she had intended to go whatever he said. But it never entered his head that she would manoeuvre in such a way as to have her going appear a spontaneous lark conceived by the women at her luncheon. Olga Clavering or Hazel Trent would have been capable of it. Hildegard knew that if she could have gotten Faith to sponsor such a move, Michael would have little to say. And that Faith would not, was what had irritated her to the point of rudeness. She often wondered wherein lay Faith's power with Michael. Pretty, yes. No more pretty than Hilda, though. Not sufficient beauty there to stir the depths in a man of his calibre. What then? She could not realize the vapidness of her own judgment, nor that externals meant nothing to her husband. Faith had always seemed to Michael like the pool of Bethsaida, refreshing, cooling, healing. There was utter tranquillity in the depths of her clear eyes, peace in the touch of her hand, surety in her judgment. He was not the only man who looked to Faith as an enduring standard where all else might fail. That her spirit was as regal as the crown of heavy braids

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that bound her patrician head, was the impression gained of her by almost every man who crossed her path. To no one was it more evident than to her own husband.

She had never known the time when she'd not loved Jack Desmond. Love had come to her in childhood and grown with her youth. Then came a day when he was ordered to the Adirondacks, banished for an indefinite period. She was told to wait. Not Faith. She loved him. After their quiet wedding they went into wooded exile together. Jack had pleaded with her against his own burning love not to come. But what was self-will in Hildegarde Crighton, in Faith was determination to do the right thing. If she loved Jack, Jack loved her, too. If he were to be cured, she would help with the cure. If he were to be ill and die, he would need her more than ever to help him through. The hands he loved must be the hands to hold his to the last. So argued Faith.

And back in New York everyone had talked about it, for everyone knew Jack and grieved at the illness that had come upon him. And because of what his wife had done, not a man of all Jack's friends but would have staked his soul on her.

Today Hilda had tried to use her, and failed. Not only she would not consent to go, but she had taken Kathleen with her and had tried to take Diana. That Diana had not gone was due to her own artful management. But she felt in her soul that if harm

“THEY ALL JUMPED OUT—”

came of it, Michael would blame her. Nor would it make matters better that Olga and Hazel had backed her up. Michael was absurd to care what happened to the lives of outsiders. But he'd always had a sort of “brother's keeper” idea. And it had grown with the years. “Not only the institution, but the individual boy or girl,” had been his cry. The simple goodness of his own heart reached to humanity through the doctrine of love of man through love of God. It was beyond Hilda, but there it was just the same. That a principle in this case was involved, made no matter. Nor did she reflect that her present action like a rock flung to a sleeping pool would never cease its circling till the widening rings touched the shores of Eternity. She simply could not see.

Faith understood, Kathleen had an inkling. Diana's curiosity was of the quality of Hildegarde's. More character, weaker will, more sense of right and wrong. Led far afield she might become a menace to others as well as to herself. Guided, directed, her light would shine. Unready, young, unformed, she was about to be married to a man she hardly knew. With Diana, the first step in the long run would count for evil or good. Today she had taken that step, her hand in Hildegarde's.

Outside the storm still battered its vengeful way. It seemed a sentient thing, knowing. The sleet crashed wildly against closed windows.

Caught by the wind, the front door slammed close

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against the self-contained Winter's apologetic jump.

"Has Mr. Crighton come in?"

"Yes, madam. He is in the library."

Hilda thought it wiser to hurry to her room and change before the inevitable encounter. Within a few minutes a softly-glowing feminine creature floated through the library door on waves of trailing orchid chiffon. Green eyes looked out at Michael under burnished titian hair.

"My poor Michael lad! Have you waited for your tea? No? I'm glad you didn't. I've had mine at the Ritz. Thought you'd be puttering about with the priest, so it wouldn't matter if I were late. Then I drove some of the girls home. Ugh!" she shivered, "it's a dreadful night to be out. Let me sit close to you, by the fire."

She perched on the arm of his chair trailing her chiffons about her.

"Too lazy to talk, Michael? Tell me, what luck today?"

But his earlier enthusiasm had died down with the flames. He hardly dared approach the subject he must approach, afraid of what she might say, might deny. The issue could not be evaded. But let it go a little while. Later would do. Not now. Not yet.

"We started to work at once on plans for the church."

"What's it to be called?"

“THEY ALL JUMPED OUT——”

“Saint Edwards.”

“Good chance, isn't it?”

“A great chance. I would have stayed later at the office but there was a shipment of Japanese bulbs to rearrange and express to Richmond. I'd promised Major Lee not to delay his garden-making. Matsuo was to have had them ready for me to label and address. But he failed me, and it's Saturday. The garden will be delayed two days.”

As yet he made no comment on the whereabouts of the Japanese. He merely stated a regrettable fact. That his wife's eyelids flickered a trifle he could not see, for his were fixed on the embers.

She had seen Matsuo. At the back of the room. That other men were there, others whose presence mattered more, she had not cared. After all, she did not know them. But this was a servant out of her own house. She had known about the bulbs. Thought of them and Michael's eagerness to get them off had flashed to her at sight of the man's face. She had had the grace to be a little frightened.

“So he d-didn't show up?”

“No.”

“After all, it's only two days. Winters could have packed them, couldn't he?”

“No. Unfortunately, Winters having been educated solely for the purpose of serving as a footman in England, by chance war-scraped to America, is not up on Japanese bulbs, their handling or ship-

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ment. Matsuo is a gardener by profession. Chance made him our butler."

"Why, Michael, I've never seen you like this before. You must be all tired out." She brushed her lips across his forehead and to save his soul he could not keep from shuddering.

"I don't know that I've ever been like this before."

He got up and went to the other side of the mantelpiece, where he stood outside the lure of the fragrance and chiffons.

"I am sorry. Winters could have waited on us. I hope my party had nothing to do with it."

She felt herself saying the wrong thing, knew she was leading to rocks better avoided, but the current of overwrought nerves got the better of her.

"No. The luncheon had nothing to do with it. He tells me he went to a lecture."

"A lecture! My word!" Her laugh was high-pitched now, and she pulled her draperies closer.

"The lecture was at Town Hall."

"Extraordinary!"

"Not so extraordinary. It's open to all classes and conditions, the butcher, the baker, even the household of the candlestick maker, Hildegarde."

"Why do you look at me like that?"

"I can't help—wondering."

"Michael! How dare you?"

Furious, white flame seemed to sear her face and wither the carmine of her lips.

“THEY ALL JUMPED OUT——”

Michael's anger was of a different sort. Outraged that she had so flagrantly disregarded his wishes, he could yet speak with a certain calmness, ignoring the question she had flung at him.

“Who came to your party?”

“Hazel Trent, Olga Clavering, Diana Travers, Kathleen van Dysart, and Faith Desmond.”

A hardly perceptible smile flickered on her lips as she said the last name. She *had* surprised him there.

“Did Faith go with you afterwards?”

“She would have come but she had an engagement. So did Kathie, with Bob. Faith said she didn't know we expected to go to a matinee afterwards or any other thing, so she let her nurse go out. She would have come. The others all did, all but Kathleen.”

It was not the first time Michael had found the truth hidden under a half truth where Hildegarde was concerned. Against his will he had learned the cost of her half-truths, and that they were more dangerous than an outright lie. Inevitably they had contained for her an element of escape from consequence as well as responsibility.

“Anyone else at the lecture you knew?”

“Oh, yes. Ever and ever so many. None of *your* acquaintance, Michael, so that bit doesn't really matter.”

“I suppose the thing in itself, countenancing the thing, means nothing to you?”

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“Nothing at all. And you shan’t speak to me in such a tone.”

“No? I’m sorry. I’m afraid it may be the first result of Arachne’s influence.”

“Then you’ll jolly well see it won’t be the last.”

She flung out of the room, regardless now of chiffons or effect. The frenzy of rage and over-excitement reduced her to what she really was, an angry woman, not over-young. And this time Michael saw it. And the seeing was not pleasant. The fire with dying effort leaped high, shadows lengthened, candles flared, lighting up the bigness of the vaulted room, lighting up the void in Michael’s heart, lighting up the emptiness and silence of all his house.

CHAPTER III

HANA

FROM the servant's stairway she had seen him come in, had listened to the master's message transmitted by Winters, had heard the snarl with which Matsuo accepted it. That he could have presented himself in the library feeling as he did, sent her heart cold. If he had only explained to her about the bulbs she might have done his work, but he jealously guarded his knowledge. All that she knew about bulbs had been the glowing flowers in her father's gardens. Matsuo had taken her from these gardens, somehow another Matsuo.

Still she watched him when he came out from the library, listened to the intake of his breath, caught a glimpse of his face and angry eyes. She waited.

It had been his custom always to come first and speak to her if he had been out alone. After all, though his wooing had been a strange one, still he *had* wooed her, and they had been married less than a year. He did not come. An hour passed and he did not come. He was angry with her because she had tried to prevent his going where he did, of course that must be it. Soon it would be time to help him in the pantry. She wished she might see

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him before that. It would make everything easier. It made such an uncomfortable feeling in her breast if all were not well with them while they worked together, as if she were suffocated and could not go on. No matter what had happened at luncheon-time and after, she, Hana, "Flower," would smile at him, not think of the hurt, try to make him forget the bitterness.

Down in the servant's hall a bell tinkled. She knew the sound. It was from madam's room. Probably Madam was waiting to be dressed.

After a while, Lizette, madam's maid, came to the top of the stairs and whispered down;

"'Ana will you please tell your 'usban' madame will dine in her appartement. Get me ready the tray."

"Very well. I go find him."

In pattering sandals she slipped out and along the hall to the small room adjoining the conservatory where bulbs and packages of seed were kept. She had often likened the bulbs to cocoons that would one day lift radiant wings in the gardens of this strange country.

Matsuo had evidently finished his task and was preparing to carry the hateful boxes back to the library. What had changed him? Up to today the bulbs had seemed a link with Japan. He did love Japan. And now? Realizing how eagerly the master had waited to label and address them, and get them unharmed to their destiny, Matsuo loitered.

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Hatred had been born into his heart this night. Every nerve on edge, himself at highest tension, he started and almost dropped the box at Hana's timid touch upon his arm. She had done the wrong thing, but smiled bravely and even cheerfully up at him.

"Missus must have a headache. She dine in her rooms. You fix the tray. Lizette takes it. I wait."

"I have work to do. I first do the work. I take these boxes in an' wait for them if I wait all night. Then I, Matsuo, messenger boy, must take them to express. Fix the tray yourself."

Hana dropped back, staring. Never before had he spoken like that. Never before. And he had not looked at her, not once. He, her husband. In spite of his attitude her soul yearned to him. Unless he were suffering he could not speak so to anyone, much less to her, his Hana.

In this way her gentle nature made excuses for him.

"I thought, perhaps, Matsuo, when you came home, you would come to Hana."

"Why should I come to Hana?"

"As you have always done, Matsuo mine." Then shyly:

"Tell me. Did you go to the Town Hall?"

"You think I lie, that I say I go and did not go?" he flared.

"But no. No lie. I thought you might tell Hana."

"Well, I did go. What about it?"

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The soft eyes drooped and the docile young lips quivered.

“I wanted you not to go, my Matsuo. But you did go, and it would make Hana happy to know she was wrong. If good did come to you, if what you did hear was beautiful, Hana was wrong. It may be perhaps she thought wrong things an’ Missus Arachne did not mean to teach what Hana thought.”

The man’s eyes closed to slanting slits as he turned on her. “She taught what Hana thought and taught it right. How you know what your father was, an’ your gran’father, an’ his father? An’ your mother’s people. How you know?”

Her hand flew to her lips. He could barely catch the whisper;

“Our ancestors, Matsuo! But how? What?——” Her eyes flared in turn. “What devil is this Missus Arachne that she make you speak to Hana so, of her father an’ her mother, an’ her ancestors?”

The flint had caught. The man laughed. Then as he came close his lips contracted. She thought at one moment he was going to strike, and shrunk back, folding the little kimono tightly over the treasure resting in secret against her heart.

“I tell you this. Till we know just what they were, how they live, their hist’ry, all that went before, we stay as we are, each alone. Now you understand’.”

Again the trembling hand to her lips, again a step

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backwards and a folding closer of the violet folds above the brighter obi.

“We hear about people in this house. Missus Desmon’ knew Mista Desmon’ sick man when she married with him. But it makes no difference to Missus Desmon’. She marry him, anyway. Children strong an’ well.”

Again the grating laugh.

“Uh! They whisper the baby not well at all. *I* know. We do as I say. We live as we are. These people nothing to us.”

“All our dreams—home—Japan—our own little garden—an’ our own little children—jus’ dreams—Matsuo?”

Her face had grown pallid, though he did not see because he would not look.

“If you like, yes. Dreams are dead things. Not real.”

“Our Christian faith means nothing? The great commandment says ‘Thou shalt not kill.’ ”

“Missus Arachne great American. She teach American doctrine everywhere. She knows it all.”

Sickening sense of a soul in the losing swept over Hana as she watched him. If the religion that meant so much to her meant nothing to Matsuo, there was one more appeal;

“Our code, Japanese code, does forbid the thing she preaches.”

“Interferes with private right. A code of ignorance. You b’lieve what I say or——”

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Frightened Hana thought to see murder in his face when with a smothered exclamation he rushed out. She saw that he carried both boxes, one on top of the other. Had he carried but one he would have returned to the conservatory. Evidently he dreaded a renewal of the argument. But he need not have been afraid. She had dropped like a leaf to the floor.

As he passed through the dining room on his way to the library he noticed that Winters had set the table for two. He was filling the glasses when Matsuo threw him a surly order:

“Tray for Missus Crighton upstairs. Lizette takes it. You fix it.”

There was an oppressive silence in the library. Even Matsuo's entrance was a relief. He set the first box on the floor and Michael pointed to a place for the second. Turning, he started to leave the room when Michael stopped him.

“Winters will attend to the getting off of these tonight! He can do it as soon as the boxes are addressed. I want a word with you.”

Fury raged in the servant's breast, anger with himself that he had admitted the demon of violence, anger with Hana because of her meekness and moral strength, above all, vehement, voiceless rage against the woman who had dared speak as Arachne had spoken at Town Hall this afternoon. She had set his soul on edge with life as he had conceived it, and overthrown natural acceptance of human

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existence as it had been intended from the beginning.

Had he but known, ancient atavism held him where one had stood before, looking on the fruit of the knowledge of evil, and the fruit was bitter.

And he was enraged at his master's wife, this idle woman who had first incited his curiosity by her careless conversation in his presence. Plainly she had regarded him as a piece of household furniture with no intelligence to understand. But so regarding him she had put in his mind the key to possible escape from the consequences of his hasty marriage. Fairness to Hana never entered his head. He had eaten of the forbidden fruit and the demon had entered into his soul.

What right had she to hold her head so high, this woman with the burnished hair? But Hilda's head might have drooped ever so little, had she realized that the very butler in her house looked upon her as an instrument to his own undoing.

"Have you certain stated days for going out?"

The master was speaking. He must answer.

"Yes, sir."

"Was today one of them?"

"No."

"Have you an excuse?"

"I wish to live as Americans live, independent. I will learn all America can teach. Americans are free. If I live in America I should be free to do as Americans do."

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“Others have made the same mistake,” observed Michael dryly. “Our best servants are as independent of spirit as their masters, but like their masters they observe the fitness of things and suit their free time to their work. It is as essential that I keep my word, as that you do your duty. I had hoped to get this special work done easily, on time, and with no inconvenience to anyone. Because we have missed the earlier train I must send another man out in the storm to prevent a further delay of two days.”

“I take them.”

“I cannot trust you.”

Matsuo had not yet discovered that his master was of finer fibre than he could realize. Nor had he known Michael's entire viewpoint concerning life and living, to be diametrically opposed to that of Mrs. Crighton, therefore the horror in the voice that spoke could not reach him—nor the sense of disgust that she and this man held knowledge learned in common, at the same time, from the same source, of the most revolting evil of life.

“As to the cause of your failure to carry out my wishes I will not speak.”

No answer. Nor did Michael expect one. He had fallen into a train of thought that beset him against his will. Could he, in conscience, keep this man in his house? Could he allow him to serve him, to serve Hildegarde? Hana came to his mind, the gentle creature he had passed in the hall. She was little more than a child, and she had been cry-

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ing. If the man left she would have to go. Where? Then he realized the Japanese was speaking.

“What was it? What did you say?”

“I said, if you think best, I go. You do not trust.”

“No. Not any more.”

“Mr. Crighton would be surprised if he knew how Matsuo is trusted.”

“That may be. What of your wife? What will she do if I let you go?”

“Hana can go where she like. She will do as she please,” said the man, furious at answering as he did, driven against his volition to say a thing that in his subconsciousness he did not feel. Arachne had succeeded in poisoning his tongue if not his heart.

“Very well, then. You may wait on the table tonight, but tomorrow you will go. Send Winters to me.”

The night passed, somehow. Michael forgot to go to bed. When the fire died down he absently raked the embers together and put on a fresh log. He even went ahead with his plans for Saint Edward's, and found himself in the old way designing candlesticks for the altar and playing around his thought of them. Then, like a drum-beat, “The butcher, the baker, the candlestick maker——” No, not that. Anything but that.

Faith had not gone with the rest. How could Faith go? She was of too fine a fibre to allow such things to disturb her tranquil, valiant soul. They

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were plotting murder, those others. She had taken Kathleen van Dysart with her, little Kathleen, married to Bob, one of the best in the world. Hard on Bob if Kathleen were to drag about town like the rest. Why couldn't Hildegard have been as fine as they? But he shook this thought away. Hilda was as she was, without stability, without stamina. But she was his wife, and he loved her. God knew why. They had told him she had a headache, so absently, he went up to her room and knocked, knocked to no purpose. He waited and after a while Lizette came to tell him her mistress was sleeping quietly and perhaps Monsieur had better not disturb her. *Was she sleeping?* At any rate back he went to the library. Towards one o'clock he thought he heard a slight stirring in the hall, followed by the sound of a door closing softly. To make sure, he went out to see. Everything was quiet, deadly quiet.

At dawn he concluded it must be bed-time, so he brushed the ashes on the hearth apart and went up to his room where he fell into a deep sleep. About ten he came down to his coffee. It was rather a surprise to find Matsuo waiting at the table, a curiously transformed Matsuo, ashy, wan. The arrogant assurance of last night had disappeared.

"Please, sir, Hana has gone."

Michael looked at him inquiringly.

"Yes? I supposed she would. But isn't it a little early? Did she get her check?"

"Mista Crighton," the man's voice shook, not

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with fury now, but with anxiety, "she did not sleep here, last night. I think—I feel—she has gone to stay."

"You mean something has happened to her? She could not have left the house in the storm. Perhaps for some reason best known to herself she may have slept in the housekeeper's quarters. Have you asked there?"

"Hana has gone."

"Is there any reason why?"

"Not why she should go away. Las' night I was angry. I left her in the little room behin' the conservatory. I told her fix the tray for Missus Crighton. But she—she—cried, so I told Winters to fix it. She never came where I was, after."

"Did you look to see if she could have fallen asleep in the little room?"

"I looked. I looked everywhere. No Hana. Hana has gone."

"Did she take her things?"

"No, sir. Nothing. I am afraid for Hana. She is young. The storm was strong. Las' night very bad. Got me nervous. I spoke terribly cross to Hana. She not used to that. I never before was cross with her. She is but sixteen years. What will I do? Oh, what will Matsuo do?"

"If you were angry and spoke crossly she may have gone away to frighten you."

"She had no place to go. My Hana would not do that. She will not come back. I must find her."

THE CANDLESTICK MAKERS

We have no frien's here. Sir, Mista Crighton, if I go she could not find me, ever. I would not know where to stay. This house the only place she knows. If she should be foun'——," his voice rose almost to hysteria, "I beg you—let me stay."

In spite of all that had happened, in spite of Michael's outraged sense of decency, the man's evident sincerity, his agony, appealed to the kindness in his master's heart.

"You may stay, then. Keep away from the sort of thing that got you into trouble last night. These things are not for you, nor for any self-respecting person, man or woman."

"Sir, some day Matsuo explains—everything. There is excuse, but not for how Matsuo did act. There is no excuse for that. Now—may we call the police to look for Hana?"

"Come to the library. I will call them from there."

The man trembled violently as he followed Michael into the library. With difficulty he lifted the receiver from its stand and handed it to him. Then Winters came to the door.

"I beg your pardon, sir," he said to Michael who stood waiting with the receiver at his ear, utterly oblivious of the voice that iterated and re-iterated "Number, please."

"When I went to shake out the rug at the front door, I found this just inside where it must have been dropped."

HANA

Winters handed Michael what he had found. It was a baby's shoe, and finely stitched inside, a name was worked, "Matsuoito."

CHAPTER IV

DIANA QUESTIONS

SPRING, and Diana's wedding eve. Faith had been out of town the greater part of the time since the day of Hildegarde's luncheon and had not seen her. But Diana had seized upon her new-found liberty with a defiance belonging to the time. Romance she laughed at, it was a Mother Goose myth, though whatever it was, the mothers had known it. What had they gotten out of it? More than poor Diana could ever conceive, unless by merciful Providence she might some day find herself so transformed as to appreciate its usefulness if not its special charm.

Now she wanted excitement, to know. Life is a game. Let's play it. Fair and square, but play it. Out of the face that laughed indifference to the more serious side of the sport, looked Puritan eyes deep and blue. At times they were perplexed, at other times sore puzzled, smiling when her lips laughed, but never laughing with them. Until that day they had been innocent eyes, and the expression of the mouth had been the expression of a child's mouth. That, too, had changed. Her face held neither the chill calculation of Hildegarde's, the insolence

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of Olga's, nor the devil-may-care challenge of Hazel Trent's, but something sweet had gone out of it.

All these things Faith Desmond read when Diana walked unannounced into her boudoir the afternoon before her wedding.

“Di! This *is* surprising—and enchanting——”

“A dozen people are waiting for me. I smashed every engagement when I heard you were back. I had to see you.”

She dropped into a chair beside Faith's writing table. Early yellow primroses were blooming there in an opalescent vase. Diana bent above them for a moment.

“Um-m. Lovely. A tear bottle? Not appropriate for spring flowers. Where on earth did you get it? Genuine, too, peeling off. Hot, isn't it?”

She slipped out of the grey cape that covered her dress. There was a bunch of orchids at her breast.

“Is it? I hadn't noticed.”

But Faith had seen the color that crept up to Diana's face and knew it was not the cool spring day that put it there.

The young girl glanced nervously about. Faith's room did suit her, she thought. Her own must be quite different, more modern, with painted furniture and coloured glass. Here were gay English chintzes bright with tropical birds and a blue run-

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ning through the flowered motif that blended with the tinting of the walls. An old clock, silver candlesticks, mellowed portraits in oval frames, mahogany polished by time into the soft patine that only years and care can give, the room was somehow a well-bred masterpiece. Then Diana's eyes fell on a photograph that stood facing her.

"That's a good picture of Joan."

"Do you like it?"

"Yes. She's another you."

"Jack thinks so. But she's the creator of her own inheritance," Faith laughed.

"How?"

"A baby tank. Steel and fire. She forces her way ahead and gets what she wants with a trust that's sublime."

"Some will. But you have that, too. So has Jack. She's an original little soul. I hope she'll come in while you are here.

"Curiously enough, with all the child's force of will she is as tender as a sensitive plant. She will need a cross, poor lamb, to make it all even some day."

"I've never seen your boy, Faith."

"Mickey."

"For Michael Crichton?"

"Yes."

"He's rather worth naming a boy for."

"Yes. You knew Mickey came to us, lame, didn't you, Di?"

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"I did know." Indeed, Hildegarde had told her, illustrating. It had not been a kind telling. She had dwelt at length on what Jack had been when Faith married him.

"There's a surgeon in Saint Louis, a man with an international reputation, war and all that; Doctor Bland, Victor Bland. He's coming."

"Like Lorenz?"

"No, the knife. Marvellously skillful with his hands, too. But you did not come for all this. Tell me about yourself."

She was entirely aware that the girl had not thrown over last-moment engagements for the mere pleasure of hearing about her children.

"Perhaps I can help in some way. Tell me, dear, if you think I can."

Diana patted Faith's hand where it lay.

"Understanding person." She stopped an instant to collect herself, then——

"You remember that day at Hilda's."

There was no need to ask. She stated a staring fact that not one of them would ever be able to forget.

"Of course."

"You knew I went—with them—after you and Kathie left us?"

"I supposed you had. I've been away, you see, and know nothing about it."

"Something happened that night as a result of it I believe, though no one has suggested it. A

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tragic something happened. I thought perhaps since you were so opposed to my going, you might explain what you meant by opposing us."

"I don't know at all what you mean, dear."

"Did anyone tell you that that Jap, Hilda's butler, was there?"

"At the lecture?"

Diana nodded.

"No. It's rather horrible. Hildegarde would not have told me that."

"Of course she was miffed about it, and all. I tell you, *I* was shocked. If we could have gone, just ourselves, or just women, it wouldn't have seemed so appalling. But it was open to anyone. All kinds of people. You felt as if you had some hideous secret in common with them."

"I know. That was one of my reasons for not going, though I had other stronger reasons. Was that your tragedy?"

"No. It seems that man's wife was a maid in the house. She didn't want him to go. And when he came back she had disappeared. They never found her afterwards."

"Poor soul, poor little soul."

"Yes. I've never come close to real sorrow before, tragedy like this. I think of it every time I pass Hilda's house, and I've wondered about something you said that day."

"Have you been there since?"

"Oh, dear, yes, often."

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"It must be hard for you if you feel that way about it."

"I try to forget it. But at Arachne's it comes before me, like a ghost."

"Why did you go back after the first experience? I should think that would have been enough."

"Oh, that part was all right after the first time. One must grow used to things and not do them halfway even if they shock at first. That doesn't worry me any more. Besides, the others bear me up. Hilda, Olga and Hazel have been with me to every lecture since. The thing that haunts me is that, after the woman disappeared, they found a baby's shoe at the front door. She must have dropped it in her flight. Why did she run away?"

"The man was at that lecture. Well? It could only mean one thing. She was afraid."

"I suppose that was it. Where can she have gone?"

"Who knows? It is one of the consequences of that ghastly day."

There was silence for an instant in the pretty room. Then Diana braced herself for the question she wanted to ask.

"There was something you said I did not understand, quite. You spoke of a Fagin school. You said it was worse than that."

With an inward prayer for help, Faith answered. Now it was clear why the girl had come. She had heard one side of the argument, craftily, insidiously

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put. Eternal questioning! She wanted to know the other.

"It is stealing, just as murder is stealing."

"Stealing what? Murder is taking human life."

"You have answered yourself, dear. That's it. Taking what does not belong to you, but to God."

"But if there *is* no life?"

"No? How much do you believe of your religion?"

"What's that got to do with it?"

"Everything. That is, of course, if your religion means anything to you, if you are sincere in it."

"I am sincere in it."

"Not Hilda's kind?"

"Hilda's a religious will-o'-the-wisp, and the other two old dears are pagans. That's why they are what they are. No. I really mean it. In earnest, Faith."

Then Faith smiled at her and asked her the first question in the little catechism even Joan knew by heart:

"Who made you?"

"God."

"Why did God make you?"

"I'm sure I don't know. To live along, I suppose, like anyone else."

"And then?"

"I suppose like every one else I'll die."

"And then?"

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“My word, Faith! What are you driving at? Whoever knows, what then?”

“The answer is in the simplest book in the world, the true answer to all this: ‘God made me to know Him, love Him, serve Him in this world, and to be happy with Him forever in the next.’ Forever, Di.”

“Yes? Sounds nebulous. What about it?”

“Want me to explain?”

“Fire away.”

Here was reflection of Olga Clavering, in mental as well as verbal process, thought Faith, and a clear case for counteraction.

“God made me, not man. God willed me into the world. Man did not interfere because man had not the right. Do you see that much?”

“I see what you mean.”

“He made me to know Him. That means the joy of knowing Him now. No one who does not know Him—a little even—can be entirely happy. Man has not the right to deprive another of that happiness. If you can once bring yourself to understand that knowledge of God is life’s greatest happiness, for even ordinary joys are in Him, of Him, it will make all the difference.”

“I don’t follow. How can one know God? He is a Being far away, at a great distance, not reachable.”

“He is all about you, not far away. He is so close that when you come to die and see Him face

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to face, you'll be surprised to find how near He has been all the time. You don't even have to stretch out your hand. He is in your heart."

"Even to acknowledge that, doesn't make you *know* Him."

"Concede that He is. Then rely on Him in simple faith. Rely on Him. Trust Him. Then you will grow quickly to know Him, and knowing Him you can't help loving Him. Love of God is loving every one. Oh, don't laugh. It comes, if you only love enough. Such love makes all the gladness of existence. You want to know everything, Diana, your heart is athirst for knowledge. Look into these things a bit. You'll find it worth while."

"All my life I was choked out of knowing. It wasn't ladylike to know."

"True, old dear. I've watched and felt sorry. But you know there were *two* trees in the garden of Eden."

"You think there was a time that I chose the tree of the knowledge of evil?"

"I know you found evil where you walked. Whether you chose it for yourself or not, I must not say. There are such things as the 'occasions of sin.' "

"Walking even through wrong places is not sin, is it?"

"No. But what about putting yourself deliberately in the way of temptation? People, places, things, can all be 'occasions.' Playing with fire is

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apt to result in disaster. A moth has no will of its own."

"Go on. I want your point of view. I have my own," Diana added.

Faith laughed. Diana could not see that Faith was studying the combat between modern pagan philosophy and the girl's New England inheritance fighting in that tender thing called conscience. Diana's very presence on this day was proof of it.

"You've been given your chance for happiness, here and hereafter. Have you the right to deprive another of it, should God elect to bring another soul through you, into the world? Who are you, dear heart, to put your fears, your prejudices, against the omnipotent God Who creates the worlds?"

"I've not the right if your—theories—are true."

"They are not theories, but self-evident facts. None of us have the right. Not if we are Christians. Were you ever taught the story of the fall of the angels?"

"Of course."

"We are born to fill the places of those angels, and atone to Infinite Goodness for their sin of pride. Have you the right to deprive a soul of this?"

"Why, no. I don't suppose so, if it's true."

"It is the faith taught by the Church to which our Lord Jesus Christ, the divine Master said: 'Thou art Peter, and on this rock I will build My church.' Simple enough isn't it? Plain enough?"

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And that church founded by God, forbids the practise of such doctrine as you have heard, the practises advocated by Arachne and her materialistic followers. You see, Di, it's all there."

"But what about the awful poverty in the cities, cripples, children born blind, deaf, dumb? Is that right?"

"Are their souls blind, deaf, dumb? They may have souls straighter than our own. Do you suppose Helen Kellar an isolated case? Not at all. Through the God-given genius that inspired her teacher, she's been light, inspiration, hope, to hundreds like herself."

"Do you mind if I speak of something personal—about you and Jack?"

"Of course not."

"Hazel said that if you two had known beforehand about Mickey's lameness, you would have thought again."

"What nonsense you are repeating, child. What has our little boy's lameness to do with his soul, his heart, his mind, whatever gifts or talents he may eventually show? Nothing. We are doing all in our power to cure him. God gives the great physicians and surgeons of His world, talent, light, genius. Even should they fail, we should have Mickey, the blessed lamb with his chance for happiness here and hereafter."

"Don't mind my asking, if he did not get well, if you lost him through having brought him into the

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world like that, you'd be sorry. Honestly, wouldn't you, Faith?"

"Diana, darling, sorry? The most any of us can expect of life is perhaps seventy—or eighty years. Then the real life. Eternity, forever. Which would be better? To have had Mickey the few short years of life? Or to have sent a singing, joyous, radiant little boy into the joys of Paradise, to wait for us, pray for us, help us in all our difficulties while we live, to be with us constantly 'behind the veil,' to meet us when we are called Home, and dwell with us in the delight of Heaven forever? Oh, blind Diana, not to see which is the better!"

Silence, for a while. This point Diana had not considered. Then Faith said:

"Milton's lameness was his blindness. But what of his poesy? He left the world a greater gift perhaps than if he had been distracted by the outer world."

"I suppose you are right, there," Diana said weakly, "but what of over-population in the cities?"

"Not a sparrow falleth. He said that, too. And where the cities are overpopulated, there are whole stretches of country, waiting for the crowded districts to empty into them. Perhaps we will not live to see, but it's not impossible that the eventual glory of our countrylands will be born of the overcrowded tenements. And this reminds me, Di. You were too young to have done any war work outside of your school. It has seemed so illogical that women,

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full of patriotism then, should now, at the call of this—Arachne—and her kind, have turned traitor to the country you professed to love.”

At this attack Diana flushed and bridled up. Bred in the bone American, one great regret had been that she was born too late for the service she would have zealously given.

“If this—practise—grows, where will the countries find their sons at the next call?”

“There will be no next call?”

“I hope not, at least in our generation and the next. Naturally I think of my children. But if there should be a next call and they were grown, I would be ashamed of them did they not do their part. I am afraid, though, Arachne to the contrary, there will always be war. We loathe the idea, hate it, do all in our power to prevent it. If war comes—when war comes—are we to present to the enemy an armed body of superannuated men and women? Or throw our unguarded ports wide open, crying, ‘Come, take possession of America! We have no sons to defend us!’ ”

“If there should be difficulties between the nations, arbitration, not fighting, will settle the matter.”

“So the doctrinaires back up their arguments with pacifism! My darling Di, if the world is deprived of its sons, who will there be left to arbitrate?”

“The older brains of experienced men will provide proper mediation between the countries.”

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“While the full-grown, red-blooded powerful youth of the enemy is inventing with its fertile young mind a new and diabolical poison gas. Oh, no, Diana, the world needs children. We are not ready to make a free gift of our fields to the first enemy airplane! Fields! Deprive us of our children, and who will work them? When food grows scarce and prices far beyond the purses of the poor, go to the farms and ask where are the laborers. After the war one saw pitiful women, children, bending over crops and gathering, because there were no men. What had become of the men? Killed, or in the big cities, or unborn. Why were there no young boys to take their places? The birth-rate was low. Why it had fallen there’s not much need to ask. The state existed, as Jack and I saw with our own eyes. Perhaps doing men’s work unfitted the women for their own, we can’t judge. But we do know that neither farm nor hillside is too remote to be flooded with whatever river of yellowed literature it pleases its perpetrators to send forth. Oh, we are in an enviable position today, with prohibition that forces home-made poison and equally obnoxious drugs on weak bodies, and uncensored mails that vitiate still weaker characters! God give our American men and women light and common sense to see before it is too late!”

“Do you feel it as much as all that? Why do you? Tell me. I really want to know.”

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“So much that I wish I had a dozen sons to give our country.”

“Would you make them all farmers and foresters, Faith? Or put them in the post offices as censors?” There was wicked irony in Diana’s face as she spoke.

“I would have them good men, and courageous, brave enough to stand for what is right, independent of political opinion and public sentiment. I would have them powers. Perhaps,” she laughed, “if there were a dozen they might make some impression!”

“How could they be powers if they were farmers?”

“Child, study your history if you would know the origin of many great Americans. Of course some of my dozen would live in the country. America needs good men in every branch of industry. We need miners, foresters, scientists, honest legal minds, and we do want artists and music makers and poets. That’s where the oldsters were far ahead of us.”

“And what of criminals? Do we need them, too? We seem to have good breeding grounds in the overcrowded districts.”

“And we will have still more in the sparsely settled ones if such theories as Arachne advocates gain ground!”

“You ought to have been a lawyer.”

“Thank you, dear, but I leave that to Jack. It’s his metier.”

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“I was thinking of your slums. One day some of us went sight-seeing. I felt like sending a bell-ringer through the streets to cry a protest. See this, and talk of souls and things of the spirit!”

“Did you get close enough to them to look into their eyes?”

“No, thank you. The sight of them was enough.”

“I thought so. Some day you will understand that not all martyrs gained their Heaven in the time of Nero. These poor people have their crosses, and their crosses lift many of them to One Who was raised higher on a cross than any man. They have souls, and they have intelligences. Oh, my dear, my dear, your Arachnes will all have a great surprise when they come to die. Have you ever stopped to reflect why life is at all? No wonder your materialists are ignorant, believing the soul that animates our lives through a few fleeting years and lifts it up above the commonplace, is to be crushed like a brainless flower that has lived its day!”

“I can't agree when it comes to the question of poverty. Why should poverty be? Indeed, that was the basis of some of Arachnes' strongest arguments.”

“Of course it was. It could not have been otherwise. Do you think such minds could begin to grasp a thing like ‘Blessed are the poor in spirit?’ or the teachings of a Saint Francis of Assisi? Or the voluntary poverty practised by hundreds of thousands

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of men and women vowed to the service of the King Who was born in a stable? Could such hedonists possibly conceive the beauty of 'The sweet Lady Poverty?' Fear of poverty is the curse of the world today, yet great masterpieces are rarely born in palaces. It takes stress, necessity, to bring out the best and the worst. Whichever it is depends on the character of the individual. And"—she laughed—"most of the profiteers *began* humbly. They've not ended humbly!"

Diana's answering laugh was mirthless. Faith who had never studied the questions involved, had her Arachne at every point. She would like to have called her a visionary, but there was logic in each word. She looked at the lacy wreath of diamonds that encircled her wrist, Larry's wedding gift, then got up.

"Wait a minute," Faith said. "There's just one thing more, not an answer to economic question this time. We will leave all that out of it. Diana"—she took the girl's cold hands in hers and looked down deep into the eyes that were inclined to turn away—"you couldn't understand if I told you each one of us is the temple of the Holy Ghost—so I won't appeal to you on that score, but—look at it as a matter of self-respect alone. Somehow one never questions the attitude of life-long friends, though one may not always approve. But you are young, the women you play about with are not old friends of yours, and there is no reason why you

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should follow their lead. Drop all these things, Di. You owe self-respect to you, to Larry. Leave things that are abnormal, unhealthy, out of your life altogether. The reason I didn't go with the rest that day was simple enough. Jack and I have been happily married for years. I did not go because I respect him too much, myself too much to be put in a position of hearing things not fit. Beyond her economic theories, and material illusions, I know nothing of the actual thing Arachne teaches and I want to know nothing. Sophistry to the contrary, there is such a thing as keeping your mind and heart entirely clean. One thing that hurts frightfully is, that public school children have been seen at these meetings. Perhaps they go out of curiosity, or bravado as you went. But once they hear what is taught, they learn to avoid the consequences of wrong-doing."

Diana gasped. The doctrine had not dawned upon her in this light. She withdrew her hands from Faith's and gathered her cape about her.

"The future of our country lies with our youth, you see," Faith went on, determined that the younger woman should hear to the end.

"We can't, intelligent women, condemn our glorious America to disaster and our boys and girls to hell here and hereafter because of a lying evil that is being spread broadcast under the sheep's clothing of economic necessity."

Diana trembled as she turned to say good-bye,

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and there were tears in her eyes. She felt that Faith knew better than anyone how it was with her and Larry. They might have been different if she had been more like Faith, or Lawrence Minton had been stronger.

“Di—dear Di”—Faith’s voice was appealing now, and her eyes full of tender compassion—“it’s not too late. It takes courage, I know, but if you are not happy—about—tomorrow—it’s been done before——”

Then Diana wrenched her hands away and without another word, fled into the springtime.

CHAPTER V

JOAN MEETS JUDY

“MUMMIE, will Uncle Michael be there?”

“Yes, Joan.”

“I like Uncle Michael.”

The child skipped ahead a few steps, came back, looked up at her mother like an inquisitive bird and remarked:

“I don’t like Aunt Hilda—for she doesn’t like me! For she doesn’t like me!” making a song of it to Faith’s amused distress.

“Darling, don’t say it, don’t sing it, don’t think it. You know Aunt Hilda always lets you play with the puppies——”

“Say them, Mummie, say them quickly, then I’ll forget the song.”

“Pavlova, Mordkin, Sacha-Guitry, Gambarelli.”

“Say it again, Mummie, say it again.”

Laughingly Faith repeated the list.

“And there’s a Judy, a Judy I do not know. Will Judy be there?”

“Judy’s always there. He never goes out.”

“Why don’t I know him, Mummie?”

“He was living in the country the last time I

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heard of him. But now he has come to town to stay."

"Why?"

"Uncle Michael sold the place in the country."

"Why?"

"Aunt Hildegarde was tired of it."

"Why was she tired of it?"

"Too far from town."

"Where was it?"

"At Roslyn, sweetheart, on Long Island."

"Oh!" For a brief moment the child seemed to reflect, then:

"Why doesn't Judy ever go out?"

"He is so bright, somebody might steal him."

"Where does he play?"

"In the conservatory. He plays all the time."

"Then he's like me, too young to go to school."

Faith laughed again.

"He's too old to go to school. But he loves to play."

"Is it bad to be bright?"

"It's good to be bright, if you hide your light under a bushel so the thieves won't find you, my lamb."

"Mummie, you do say such funny things! What light? What bushel? What thieves?"

"When you are as old as Judy you'll know."

"Lights and bushels and thieves, and Judy and Pavlova, and oh, such a *funny* house. Will we be there long?"

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There was a queer catch in her mother's voice as she answered: "Not today, dear. Here we are."

She held tightly to Joan's hand as the little thing tried to skip up the marble steps. She was so small to be left alone. And who could tell for how long?

"Mummie, Aunt Hilda doesn't like little girls. Had I better hide?"

"Oh, darling, no. Aunt Hilda is going to love Joan. Besides, there's Judy."

"*And Mordkin, and Pavlova, and those other queer ones. Will I like them?*"

"Everybody loves them."

"I wish everybody loved Joan. Uncle Michael does, and Daddy, and you, and Mickey—but Aunt Hilda——" A look of doubt crossed the little face, but vanished at the opening of the front door.

It was a different Matsuo from the one Faith had watched through the luncheon three years ago. Grey-faced, grey-haired, he stood aside to let them pass ahead.

Not to everyone who came through that door was the grey head inclined as it bent to Faith Desmond and all that were hers.

"Is Mrs. Crighton at home, Matsuo?"

"Yes, madam. In the library."

Joan's low, clear tone dropped to a stage whisper as they followed the man up the stairs.

"I've only seen them in dolls. This one 'pears to be alive, Mummie. Is it a man?"

"Hush, dear, yes."

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"It walks 'xactly like a man." Joan studied his movements as he went before them.

"Hush, dear, he will hear you."

"Hears like a man," murmured Joan to herself, "sees like a man, walks and bows like a man." She cocked her head on one side and gurgled a little teasing laugh; "must *be* a man.'

Older people had been known to shrink from the tragedy of the eyes in which a certain haunting wonder, shadowed fear rather than remorse, veiled all expression in Matsuo's face. But now the strange fires faded away as they always did when Faith came. As to Joan, he fascinated her. He was like a doll she had loved, like curious little figures of men on a screen, and fantastic folk that marched in endless procession around her father's lamp.

In days that were to come she would never weary watching him, talking to him, playing where he might be at work. And he would grow to be to Joan what all her world grew to be, with one exception, a friend who would brave everything for her.

About Hildegarde she felt differently. Aunt Hilda had a way of looking over your head and all about you, and anywhere but at you. She would comment on your clothes and on what mothers ought to buy for children. Once she had started to prophesy what one might do when one grew up. It had something to do with eyes, and "making them take notice." Mummie had changed the subject and looked

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displeased. However, Aunt Hilda was the only one who was not delighted to see her. Maybe she was ill. Sometimes when Daddy was ill he would tell Joan to run away, his head ached. He always explained. Daddy never failed to tell her why she must play in another room. Perhaps Aunt Hilda's head ached. But Aunt Hilda never explained.

Daddy loved Joan. Indeed he did! Had she only been old enough to understand, it was because Daddy loved her he was going to leave her here. That, like the thieves, and the light, and the bushel, she would know when she grew older. Mickey had come into the world handicapped. But Joan could not know that. Nor could she dream that because she might become handicapped, too, she must be kept away from possible danger.

During her short span of remembrance, Aunt Hilda had always fluttered in and fluttered out. She never seemed to come quietly or go calmly. Always in motion, always excited, whether alone, or with others who flurried and shrilled as she did, she was either noisily in the doldrums or wildly gay.

Usually when she came, it would be to dine, and past Joan's bed-time. But even through her sleep the child would sense a restless presence and speak of it in the morning. It was the same, year in, year out. Just now it happened to be the Lenten season, and Hildegarde and her following complained long and loudly of the dullness.

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But it only made a difference to Faith and those of her friends who felt as she did. The opera went on, the play went on, dinners and lunches went on. Large dances were replaced by small ones, small ones were commuted to auction for larger stakes than earlier in the season. One must have one's thrill.

"We must be diverted. Lent is dreary. We might grow depressed."

To watch one hour, to suffer slight sacrifice for forty days in union with One Who had accepted life and given it to let them live mattered not at all.

Kathleen Van Dysart and Bob had been spending the winter in Rome where they expected to remain until well into May. The intimacy that had once existed between Kathleen and Hildegarde had died a natural death. Kathleen had developed a quaintness of mind and manner incompatible with the high spirits of the other women. Her children kept her out of things by reason of her curious solicitude for them. She had even dragged them abroad, "though how old Bob endured it is hard to understand. So much better have left them at home in charge of some competent person." No one knew better than Michael what Van Dysart's feeling was in the matter; that had Kathleen not elected to take them, their father would have remained rooted in New York to work on in partnership with Michael Crighton.

From the library rose the odor of burning cy-

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press, as Matsuo announced, "Mrs. Desmond, Miss Joan Desmond."

Joan found this very odd.

"Mummie, they know who we are. They do know who we are," she persisted, much to the amusement of Hildegarde, who hovered up from the tea table glad of any diversion. Her flame of auburn hair above sea-green billowing chiffon was more expressive of winter than of budding Spring.

Someone else rose, too, with both hands stretched to catch the lithesome child who laughed with him, and swung her high before he set her down. This someone had watched her in her sleep where his watching had never disturbed, and at her play, and through her little years, and envied Faith and Jack the having of her.

"Michael's got a playmate his own age at last. What's the playmate got to say about staying with him?"

"Don't—yet, Hilda. She doesn't know."

"My word! How did you keep it? Why did you keep it?"

"Jack and I thought it better to let her come to tea first, learn to know things about your house, gradually. She might be frightened if we broke it suddenly. You see, she's never been inside the house before."

"Um." Hilda's expression was dubious. "She might be many things, but not frightened. Not Joan! Michael adores her, you know."

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It was on the tip of Faith's tongue to say that was why she and Jack had consented to allow the child to stay with them. Certainly not on Hildegard's account, whose dislike of children was only too apparent, and with reason. Had the Van Dy-sarts been at home, there would have been no question as to Joan's temporary habitat, while Faith accepted exile for the sake of her husband and Mickey. But Michael had pleaded for her, lonely Michael who loved children and would have had his house filled with them.

"Yes, I know. She loves him too," Faith had answered.

Meanwhile the child, let down, had made the dip essential to her code, and laughed into the twinkling kindly eyes above her. She waited for him to speak. This uncle always spoke. He was, somehow, a *very* pleasant person.

"Do you like birds?" he asked, with the eagerness of a boy her own age.

"Yes. I like birds. I like everything alive."

"Do you like tea?"

What a funny question. She laughed aloud. Who wouldn't like tea?

"Yes. I like birds and tea."

"Well, if you like birds, *and* tea,—we'll have both. How is that?"

Joan giggled. By this time she was sitting as sedately as a little girl could sit whose legs were too short to do anything but stick straight out in front

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of her on the e-nor-mous chair into which the twinkly uncle had lifted her.

“Will we have the birds with our tea?”

“No. Cakes are for tea. Birds are for playing with.”

She giggled again at her little joke, giggled politely, for though a very atom, she had a great sense of decorum, albeit that decorum were accompanied by an irresistible squirm of delight.

She did love Uncle Michael. She would always love him. She could trust him. She would believe what he said were the whole world to contradict him. Had there been a doubt in her mind about Aunt Hilda's welcome, and there was a decided doubt about it, Aunt Hilda's husband had quickly dispelled it. Aunt Hilda's *husband?* *Could* he be? Why was he? Daddy was Mummie's husband and they thought and acted alike. Even Joan's short years could perceive there was nothing much alike in the attitude of Uncle Michael and Aunt Hildgarde. Then she forgot all about it. Under black curling lashes that fringed the deep blue of her eyes she studied him gravely, while he fetched a little table from a nest of lacquered tables, and put it within reach of her hand. He joked with her about waiting on the princess, and joked again when he brought out of nowhere a tiny napkin bought just for her, and set a cup brimful of milk beside her. Then with a nod from Faith, he put some bread and butter sandwiches on a small plate, sandwiches that

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must have been cut by fairy hands, so paper-thin they were. Then he added a ginger cake with a nut in the middle of it, smiling at her pleasure when he set it on the little table.

His own tea was brought by Matsuo, then he drew his chair closer to the fire.

"This is what I like," he said, "I wish you could have tea with us here every day."

"Would Mummie let me?"

"We might ask her."

"Oh, let us ask her?"

"We will," said Uncle Michael, greatly relieved for the ease with which the thing that had been quite settled before, was proceeding.

"May she have tea with us every day, mother of Joan?"

"Would she like to?"

"Yes, Mummie, I'd love to."

"We'll ask Daddy. How would that be?"

"Oh, yes. You see," she said, turning to her host, "Daddy never says no to anything I want. He will let me come. Where is Judy?"

"Judy? You know about Judy?"

"Yes. So bright the thieves might get him."

"True. He lives around the corner."

"Oh!" It was an exclamation of disappointment. She thought him to be in the house. She had not known what a conservatory was when her mother mentioned one. Now she felt it must be outside the building.

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“Corner of the room.”

“Oh!” Then they laughed together.

“Have you ever seen a rainbow bird?”

“I’ve got a flannel one. But he’s almost all red.”

“But this bird, my bird, is green and grey and blue, and—he’s alive.”

“Oh!” The eyes opened wide.

“He is a gifted bird, what you might call an educated bird. Perhaps if you ask him, he might even say a word or two.”

“Oh!” Forgotten, the milk. The ginger cake hung suspended like a moon in its first quarter, one bite gone out of it. What there was left she carefully deposited beside the cup, worked her way down out of the chair, and came close beside him, one small hand on his knee.

“Speak to Joan?”

“Why not? He is perfectly conversant with two languages.”

“Two?”

“He speaks English and Portuguese.”

“I know English. But Port—Port—igeese—no. I’m afraid I could not speak to him in that.”

Here the funny uncle laughed out loud.

“Faith, why have you neglected your daughter’s education? She does not speak Portuguese.”

“I’m afraid that was an oversight. Suppose we let Judy teach her?”

Hildegarde’s shrill laugh somehow stirred the peace of the room into disquiet.

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"Jack would be pleased to find Joan flinging the lingo of a Portuguese sailor to the four winds. It's a queer thing, but that wretched bird always speaks Portuguese when I am in the room. Never a thing can I understand. But since his English is more or less odd, it's just as well perhaps we don't know what he is saying in his native tongue. I've an idea it's not fit."

"We'll make him turn about, old lady, and speak only English when you are there. Perhaps Joan will use her influence."

"If she doesn't, no one can."

"Did you say around the corner?"

The child who understood none of the undercurrent running deep, looked up at Michael with dancing eyes that asked to be shown at once this remarkable Judy who had it in his power to teach a language with an unfamiliar name. Funny thing about Uncle Michael, you always knew that under his joking and twinkling, you could rely on his word. He had never broken a promise. He had never told her a thing in her short life that was not true. About Aunt Hildegarde she frequently had misgivings. She never seemed to laugh with one, but at one. Her mouth laughed; but her eyes had forgotten how to smile, if indeed they ever had known. It was disquieting.

"Come and see. Right, Faith?"

"Of course. I told her all about them, the puppies, too."

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“Pavlova, an’ Mordkin, an’—Sash—Sash——”

“Sascha-Guitry?”

“Yes, an’ Gambles.”

“Right. I believe Gambles is a better name than Gambarelli. Ask Aunt Hilda to change the name.

“*You* ask.” The child clung to his hand.

“Gambles for Gambarelli, Hilda?”

“Whatever you like. The idea was a toe-spin. The creature has a habit of twirling around. Reminded me of the dancer at the Capital. Hence the name. She will probably call it what she likes anyway, so what’s the difference? That’s one beauty of having only dogs to bother about. One can’t change the name of humans so easily, can one?”

But Michael was beyond reach of her voice and Faith did not heed what she said.

Half walking, half skipping, Joan clung to this delightful fairy uncle who could produce under his own roof rare things that really belonged in parks or at the zoo. A Judy! What was a Judy?

“Where *is* Judy?”

“In his palace just beyond there, see? He lives under the palm trees.”

“Palm trees? A little boy?”

“No, child. Judy’s a bird.”

“Oh! I thought—you were fooling all the time. I thought there was a boy. I did think the bird was some other one.”

“Are you disappointed, lambkin?”

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The child's face was more serious than it had been.

"I like to play with children—sometimes. Mickey is lame, you know. I thought there might be a lively boy. Somewhere there might be one who would jump with me."

"I see." Michael was not laughing now. Then he brightened up.

"Judy will play with you, sweetheart, and watch to see if you can jump as high as he can fly."

"But there *is* a little boy? There *must* be a little boy in all this great big house. I've been so sure of it, Uncle Michael."

Michael answered, hardly aware of what he said, out of the dream that for years had glinted at him through the loneliness of his childless house.

"Raphael is off at school. He only comes home for rare holidays. But here we are, and here's Judy."

Struggling against real disappointment, for a boy away at school was as useful as no playmate at all, Joan looked at the bird. Against the dark of the trees his pink stand streaked like dawn, the bird looked at Joan. It even appraised her, sidling back and forth, clucking all the time, clucking incoherently.

The child was so small. Her frock was pink like Judy's stand, and not unlike another tropical bird, she stood poised, watching with eager eyes. Remembering her manners, always to be polite, she

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made her little dip and bobbed the sleek black head. This was the captivation, the utter and eternal subjugation of Judy. He fluttered along to the end of the pink bar, wings atwitter, eyes alert. His clucking had turned to delightful gurglings that bespoke joyousness and surprise. He cocked the bright green head. Then Joan cried:

“He’s laughing! He laughs with me!”

She reached up her arms to take him, a thing no one in all the house save Michael, had ever dared to do. And Judy responded. Carefully, balancing his body lightly in order not to hurt the slender arm held out to welcome him, he fluttered down from the perch and rested on it to Joan’s breathless satisfaction. Then, as if to crown the wonder of this moment, he looked straight into her eyes, and said distinctly, coherently, slowly:

“A thousand greetings.”

“Oh, dear bird! Dear bird!” She held his head close to her own, rubbing her cheek against his pretty feathers, Judy fluttering the while to keep his weight from hurting her. Then he lighted on Michael’s outstretched hand, made a few incoherent remarks, and flew back to the small pink arm, trusting.

They played a great game then, the bird flying from one to the other till at last Joan fell a giggling, exhausted heap on the floor.

“I thought Judy was a girl’s name, too, Uncle Michael. How is that?”

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“Once upon a time we had two,” began Michael. “One was Punch, one Judy. Judy died. We really couldn’t help it,” seeing the distressed look in the child’s face, “It happens to birds just as it does to human beings. Punch took the loss so much to heart we were afraid we were going to lose him. Can you imagine it? He would not eat. We’d call him, ‘Punch—Punch, come and dine.’ But he would not stir. One day Matsuo, he is the Jap you saw, came along with the bowl that had belonged to Judy and said, ‘Judy eats.’ And this remarkable bird ate everything in the bowl and would only answer to the name of Judy after that. If we called him Punch he’d sulk for hours.”

“Dear Judy. Dear, dear bird. Make him speak Port-u-guese, Uncle Michael.”

“English Judy. English Judy,” he gurgled, who had once been Punch.

“I never heard him say that before.” And Michael noticed then, a thing that afterwards became a curious fact and noteworthy, that never as long as the child remained with the Crightons, did Judy address her in anything but English, clearly enunciated. There was to come a day, when—but Hildegarde was another story with Judy, not of the same race as Michael and the child Joan.

“And where are Pavlova an’ Mordkin, an’ Sashes Guitar an’ Gambles, please?”

Michael touched a button in the wall. With the

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swiftness and precision of a Jack-in-the-box, Matsuo appeared.

“Get Miss Joan’s hat and coat, Matsuo. We are going out.”

In less than a minute he was back with them.

With the confidence of one to whom he belonged the child slipped her hand in Michael’s, and together they went down steps that led from the conservatory into a small walled garden. A wild rush. Four little dogs fairly hurled themselves at their master; a Pekinese, a toy fox terrier, a Boston bull, and Gambarelli, the tiny white French poodle.

“Which is which? Oh, which is which?” shouted Joan, not waiting for an answer, but jumping up and down and racing around with the puppies in sheer starved rapture. Michael stood watching her, and caught her up when at last she ran to him.

“Oh, Uncle Michael, if I could come and play here every day it would be such fun! Do ask Mummie and Daddy to let me come? I could play with Judy and the puppies, and they could play together, too. I’d not spoil their fun, indeed I wouldn’t. Whose are they, the puppies? The boy’s? Raph-Raph-Raphy’s?”

“They’re Aunt Hilda’s.”

“*She* wouldn’t play with them. Why does she have them? Is it just to look at? Oh! The little boy is her’s, too. She must have them for him?”

“Yes. For the little boy,” answered poor Michael.

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Joan picked Gambarelli up in her arms. She examined her face minutely. Then she set her down, and proceeded to do the same with each of the four puppies.

"The trouble with puppies, even the nicest of them," she said, "is that their eyes are not like stars."

"Why, not like stars?"

"Baby's eyes. That's why puppies never can quite take their place."

"Puppies don't, you funny child."

"Aunt Hilda has all these. But Raphy's never home, and there's no little girl, like Joan." The Pekinese at that moment was prancing at her feet. She stooped and lifted the golden creature in her arms and held him close. She looked into the round staring eyes, and gave him to Michael.

"Eye-stars are lights. These see, Uncle Michael, but they don't give light, do they? They are just puppies, an' all the pretending in the world won't make them into babies. When I grow up I will fill my house with babies, star-eyed ones. Girls *and* boys will fill Joan's house. Why is there no little girl in your house, Uncle Michael?"

Desperate Michael cried:

"But there is!"

"Your little girl?"

"Well, no. She's a neighbour's little girl and she comes in to play with Raphael."

"What's her name?"

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“Romilda.”

“Where is she now?”

“Um-m, she’s off at school too.”

“Everybody’s off at school but Joan. Are the puppies lonely when the children are off at school?”

“Very lonely.”

“And Judy?”

“And Judy.”

“Oh.” She stood silent, revolving in her mind. Then, “Mummie has Daddy, an’ Daddy has Mummie, an’ Mummie an’ Daddy have Mickey, an’ Mickey has Mummie an’ Daddy,—an’ I *think* Uncle Michael, while Raphy an’ Romilda are off at school, I might come an’ stay here.”

Apparently this Uncle Michael, this child Michael, had she really understood the thing she felt, should not live in so large a house, a house so perfectly adapted to hordes of children, without at least one small girl to help him endure it.

“How old is Raphy?”

“He’s eight.” Heaven help him for sending him off to school at so early an age, thought Michael. But what could he do? He had dreamed the children into his life so long a time, had watched them grow through the years, Raphael, his son, and the playmate who came from the big red house close by. They had become as tangible as the stone and mortar of the churches he built. He was their architect.

“Is he far away?”

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“At Canterbury.”

“Where is Canterbury?”

“In Connecticut.”

“Does he like Canterbury?”

“He loves it.”

“Oh. Who tucks him in?”

“Um-m.” Michael had heard vaguely of such institutions as House-mothers, so he ventured:

“The House-Mother.”

“Out of Alice-in-Wonderland?”

“Out of Wonderland.”

“Well, I suppose she’d do it better than Aunt Hilda,—at least as *well*. Where is Romilda? How old is Romilda? Did the people name her for Aunt Hilda? It’s something like, but different.

“She’s down in Philadelphia at Eden Hall, a Sacred Heart convent.”

“Oh, then it’s the best school in all the world. Mummie went to the Sacred Heart convent. Whatever Mummie does is the best.”

“Yes, darling, always remember that. Whatever your Mummie does is the best, and the convents are the best schools the whole world has to give any girl, little or big.”

“Mummie’s school was far away.”

“That convent of the Sacred Heart is in England, and it’s called Roehampton. I know it well—just across the road from Ranelagh.”

“Eden Hall is a pretty name. Why is Romilda so far away?”

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"Because she's a very little girl, and they don't take the very little ones at Manhattanville. It's a college, you see."

"Oh, for grown-up girls?"

"Just that, for grown-up girls."

"Is Romilda eight, too?"

"Eight, too."

"Just as old as Raphy. Is she a twin?"

"She would have to be his sister to be Raphy's twin."

"Am I Mickey's twin?"

"You and Mickey are not just as old as."

"Oh, no. I'm years older than Mickey. Old enough to stay away by myself. Uncle Michael, did you say you would like to have me stay till Raphy an' Romilda come home?"

"More than anything."

"I just knew you would. But I'm puzzled about Aunt Hilda. Would she want me? She doesn't like little girls, you know."

"She wants you. I heard her say so."

"Oh, that would be nice, to hear her say so."

But though eventually Joan came and stayed and Hildegarde did what might have been expected of her, Joan never heard her say so. Michael forgot to tell her and after the first few weeks Joan gave up hoping that she might.

But tonight there was her mother to take counsel with. Would she give her consent?

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"Mummie, *you* couldn't spare me, or Daddy, could you? It's a *sweet* bird."

"Darling," Faith's arms were about her, holding her to hide the tears that forced themselves against a stronger will, to steady a voice inclined to quiver.

"Poor Daddy's sick and Mummie believes the mountains would make him well. Mickey needs the change. How would you *really* like to pay Uncle Michael—and," weakly, "Aunt Hildegarde," and—full strength ahead now, "Judy—a little visit, while we are off finding health for the boys?"

"Boys? Daddy?" Again the little giggle. Then the child took on another expression. Brought face to face with the possibility of staying, Joan looked, not at her mother nor Michael, but focussed her clear eyes on the vision in green behind the tea things.

"Who will hear my prayers? Who will tuck me in? Who will dress me? Who will give me my bath? Have you a House-mother here, Aunt Hilda?"

Hildegarde, who through her green eyes had been observing her, much as she would have looked at a strange young animal in the zoo, answered:

"Not precisely. How'd you like your own nurse?"

"Rhea? I'd love Rhea. She can't hear my prayers or tuck me in, though."

"Perhaps Aunt Hilda would," suggested Faith.

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Once let Hilda learn what it really meant. Once let her learn.

"Mummie, I'll let Rhea do it," said Joan, melting into the arms that held her, though a sense of duty towards her hostess prompted her to add:

"Poor Aunt Hilda doesn't know how. You see the House-mother 'tends to tucking in Raphy. You never sent Joan off to school while she was little, so that's how you know so well what to do, Mummie."

"What have you been telling her, Michael?"

If the words had been steel someone might have been hurt.

"About Raphael at Canterbury, and our small neighbor, Romilda, with the nuns at Eden Hall. We will often speak to Joan about our son and the child who comes to play with him. Since we see them rarely, it keeps them near to talk about them. It will be great fun for Joan to get the news of them."

"What nonsense are you putting in her head."

"Why not? Why not share what I have? Not everyone appreciates it. And it's quite worth while. Isn't it, Faith? Back me up, oh, source of wisdom."

For all that Hilda was his wife, Faith knew Michael's soul the better of the two, and laughed her answer:

"Dream on in peace, Michael. You're as old as Joan and will never be older or wiser than she. You and I can never change the Michael that is, for the Michael that ought to be, Hilda mine."

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"Sometimes he carries his absurdities too far. One day he will be burnt."

"Then Joan will put out the flames," Michael volunteered. "Will you, lambkin?"

"With a wet blanket I'll put them out."

But it was twelve years before she understood why they laughed.

CHAPTER VI

JOAN IN RESIDENCE

“**S**UCH a bore. Why under Heaven must this creature, Rhea, get the flu after the child is established here? Any one of our own maids could look out for her, Michael. Why have her under my heels? Tell me that.”

“She’s no trouble. Take her out to the conservatory and let her play with Judy.”

“And all these notes to be answered? Mercy! Why can’t she go alone?”

“She could, if she were ours. But somehow I feel a sort of trust for her. She’s so tiny a thing and might get hurt.”

Hilda lifted her hands in despair. “Now if that Japanese woman hadn’t disappeared we need not have bothered about having the nurse at all. Besides, she makes me uncomfortable. How do we know she doesn’t repeat everything that happens in the house?”

“Why shouldn’t she, old girl? Nothing happens not repeatable.”

“Then perhaps she invents. Frankly, she gets on my nerves.”

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“Don’t let her. She’s all right. It’s really better the child should have someone of her own nearby. It makes less responsibility for you, sweetheart. It does, you know. Did I hear you say Mrs. Clavering was coming to lunch?”

“She was. I can call her off if you say so. I’ve been keen to see her. She telephoned. She ran into Diana, yesterday.”

Hildegarde watched to see how he would take this item of information. Diana had been the talk of the town for a brief space.

“She saw Diana Minton? Why, I thought——”

“Yes, I know you did. So did I. But she’s here. Peculiarly is Diana here. Thought I’d get the details.”

“Have Mrs. Clavering if you like. I don’t want to interfere, dear. But please, I beg of you, don’t talk about it before Joan.”

“What could she understand, a child of seven? Whatever we say’d be above her head.”

“She’s bright. She has imagination and a terrific memory. I confess her memory frightens even old Michael. One never can tell how much such children keep in their restless heads.”

“Oh, very well. Home for lunch?”

She asked indifferently, aware that no power could drag him to face Olga Clavering if he could avoid it.

“No. Not today.”

There were times when the man almost regretted

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having been allowed to keep Joan through her familie's exile. Not for the precious moments when he and she could play together like the children both were, nor for the joy she found in Judy and the four little dogs, but for the enforced times with Hildegarde. Once, at the end of a long day, he had seen traces of tears. What had happened, the loyal little creature never told, nor would he ask Hildegarde. And again, he had had to be out of town from Monday to the following Thursday. When he got back, Hilda had looked up from her chaise-longue and said: "'Lo, Michael. Home so soon?" But Joan had run to him and held him, asking through serious eyes, not dancing as was their wont: "Uncle Michael, when will my Daddy come home? I think I'm afraid." He had lifted her high and made her smile, and taken her out to Judy's perch where she usually forgot her troubles. Not even then would she speak of what she might have heard concerning her father, and his illness, the thing that evidently frightened her. But now Hilda spoke:

"Here's a letter for Joan. Thought you'd better see first."

"Hello!" exclaimed Michael. "From Jack. The very thing to break the ice. You read it to her after I leave. The very thing to help you through. Helping things have a way of dropping out of nowhere when you need them, haven't they?"

"Foolish person. Give me the letter. May use up five minutes. Anything is better than having her

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stare at me with those round eyes, or having her ask me questions a Solomon couldn't answer. G'bye, old dear."

As Michael started to go he saw Matsuo standing in the hall.

"Call Katie to take Miss Joan to madam's morning room. It's pleasanter there than in the library."

"Yes, sir. Please, sir."

"What is it?"

"Being in and out of the dining-room, if madam would permit, I could watch that the little lady comes to no hurt, sir. She is happy with Judy, and if permitted I could bring in one or two dogs."

"Good idea. I will tell Mrs. Crighton. Call Katie now."

Hildegarde dropped the telephone receiver in haste as Michael came back unexpectedly to the morning room.

"When you've read the letter, let Joan go to the conservatory with Matsuo. That will keep her amused and out of your way, sweetheart. She can have the dogs in there. Matsuo will see that they don't escape through the house."

"Happy thought." He started to the door and hesitated. He did not like to speak of these things to Hilda. She somehow wouldn't understand. But—there was Joan to be thought of since she was in his house.

"Hilda, I believe if you saw more of her—she *would* win you a bit. Why not try?"

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"A child? Michael! Don't you know me better than that?"

"No. I don't believe I do," he sighed, then closed the door behind him. A faint lilting song drifted down the banisters and a small bobbed head peeped over them.

"Take me with you."

"Can't today, lamb. But what do you think? Aunt Hilda has news for you. Great news. Guess."

"A letter from Mummie!" The eyes danced as she flew down to him.

"Warm. Guess again."

"Not—from—my—*Daddy*?"

"Righto, honey. Hot."

"Why, he hasn't written me a letter for ever and ever. Is he getting well?"

"I think he must be."

"Everything happens at once. Isn't it lovely? Daddy getting well, Raphy and Romilda coming home. Maybe Daddy an' Mummie an' Mickey coming home. What a splendid day! Like a birthday."

"Raphy coming home? Who told you that, wisp?"

"Rhea. She knows everything. She told me how all little boys and girls come home from school in June, and it's pretty near the end of May."

"Oh, yes, so they do. So they do. We will see what we can do about it. Now Uncle Michael must

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run along. Wish me luck. There's a wonderful work ahead."

"New Candlestick?"

"A very important candlestick. What would you say to a new altar in the Lady Chapel at the Cathedral?"

"No!"

"And a great high grille of iron lace to separate the chapel from the rest of the church? And a beautiful wide gate to enter by?"

"No!"

"And windows like the Cathedral at Chartres with glass the color of rubies and sapphires and emeralds?"

"No! I don't know what it all means, but it seems to me those are the busiest candlesticks I ever heard about."

"Say a little prayer then, for Uncle Michael, that his work may be fit for the Best."

"Who to?"

"Why, who but a carpenter saint, blessed child. His name is Joseph. He was the greatest candlestickmaker of all."

"Why?"

She was on the floor now, looking up at this quizzical uncle who had an odd way of putting things into one's head where they somehow stayed.

"He is inspiration. Without inspiration no work is any good at all."

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“Is the carpenter saint’s in-spir—inspir——”
“—ation.”

“—ation, just for carpentering candlesticks?”

“I’m thinking it’s for carpentering lives, Joan—
through the great light bearer.”

“What’s that?”

“Mother Church.”

He stooped and kissed her, turned once, waved his hand and was gone.

Still the child sat, thinking. Little Gambles, released from the walled garden, danced up to her and ran away, then rushed back, watching to see what she would do. She teased her a moment, then took her up, and walked with the puppy in her arms as far as the door of the morning room.

Carpentering life, he had said. Carpentering Daddy’s life perhaps. Daddy’s life needed carpentering, for it had been broken. And Mickey’s life needed carpentering. The carpenter-saint, Saint Joseph. She knew all about him. There was a little doll of him on her altar at home, the tiny altar Uncle Michael had given her. It was in front of it Mummie heard her say her prayers. If Saint Joseph helped Uncle Michael do the beautiful things in the Lady Chapel, it would be work done for the Boy Christ that angels sing to, at Christmas time. Joan must pray hard, for this candlestick must be a cradle, golden and beautiful, set in carvings of marble, such as Uncle Michael knew so well to make. A Christmas cradle for Some One—the carpenter-saint’s

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foster Son. If Joan can think of Him in the warm golden cradle, she need not cry alone in her bed on Christmas Eve—at thought of the cold manger—and the straw—and only the breath of an ass and an ox to keep Him warm. Oh, Joan must pray with all her heart for the new candlestick Uncle Michael was going to build.

Filled with these thoughts the child turned the knob of the morning room door gently. Aunt Hilda would be angry if there were any noise. And she would be angry, too, if Gambles were allowed in the room. So she set the little dog down on the floor outside, leaned down and whispered in her ear:

“Go wait for me with Judy. Joan won’t be long.”

The French poodle trotted off obediently in the direction of the conservatory.

Aunt Hildegarde was talking to some one on the telephone, so Joan waited, quiet as a mouse, behind the half-open door.

“Yes. Come to lunch. No, don’t tell me now. It’s too long, and I want to hear every detail. Screamingly funny you should run into her. The child? Lord, yes. Can’t shake her. Oh, no. She never understands. Her head is full of Michael’s nonsense, fairy tales, and foolishness. She won’t even hear us. Sometimes I think she’s not human. Half-past one, then? So long.”

Joan stood rooted. She had a feeling she ought not to have heard what Aunt Hildegarde had said,

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but she really did not know what it meant. There had been no way for her *not* to hear. Uncle Michael had never told her a fairy story in all her life. He had too many real things to talk about, the fancies that dwell in every creature in God's world. So she gave a discreet small cough, then made her presence visible, asking:

"Did you have a letter for me, Aunt Hilda?"

"Good gracious, child, when did you come in?"

"Just a minute ago."

"Did you hear what I said?"

"I did hear. But it didn't have sense to me. Uncle Michael never told me a fairy story in all my life, though," she must adhere strictly to the truth, "about the sweet spirits that live in the house and all around, the angels, and the dear ones that have died and see the face of God, he does tell me, of course. They are realer than you and me. But never stories. Those are not true things." *That* bridge safely over!

"Then come to me and listen. There's a letter from your father."

"For *me*? Addressed to Joan?"

"Yes. For you. See? Here it is, Miss Joan Desmond." The child gasped with the wonder of it. Other letters had come, sent in care of the grown-ups, but this was her own, her very own. Had Hildegard been Michael, Joan would not have seated herself on the stiff chair beside the desk by choice. But there was something about Aunt Hil-

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degarde that precluded familiarity, such familiarity as snuggling up and trying to decipher the letter in her hand. Then there were her clothes. They always looked as if a touch might wither them, so fragile their fabric, so dainty their construction. Indeed, Aunt Hilda herself looked as frail as they. In spite of her fragility, Hildegarde had a strange effect on Joan. In her presence she felt as if a band tightened, a steel band, all about her heart, or as if an iron weight pressed on her breast. Somehow the child wanted to shrink into the smallest space possible.

Even with the letter before her, Joan remembered how for the first night or two of her visit, Hildegarde had gone in to her room at bedtime and given her a perfunctory kiss. Good mornings were left exclusively to Uncle Michael, as Aunt Hilda was never to be seen till noon. But Joan had recoiled involuntarily from the indifferent caress and now it was never offered. Once in a burst of confidence she had whispered into the spot where by right, Judy's ear should have been, "I'd rather a bee would sting me." Judy had laughed loud and long, so long that Joan was afraid Aunt Hilda might hear and come and ask what it was all about. In honor she would have had to tell.

Thinking over all these things, she watched the cool white hands play with the little jeweled dagger that was to open Daddy's letter. Out from the envelope fell a four-leaved clover, still green.

JOAN IN RESIDENCE

“Odd idea. You could probably find hundreds of them in the park.”

Never a word spoke the child, but she slipped down from the high stiff chair, took the leaf tenderly into her small hand, and kissed it, then climbed back.

“Why on earth did you do that?”

“It’s Daddy’s leaf. Will you please read me his letter, Aunt Hilda? I’m sorry not to read writing. Uncle Michael says some day I will. Then I can read all the letters Daddy writes.”

“Uncanny creature,” thought Hildegarde, “I believe she knows how all this bores me.”

It never occurred to her that the instinct of a girl-child is sometimes second only to that of the angels. But had she known, she would not have cared. And that was largely the pity of it.

“ ‘Tucson, Arizona. May 15, 19—

“ ‘MY DARLING:

“ ‘If anyone had told me two months ago that I would be writing you today, writing out of doors, without a hat, without a coat, old Billy Bobtail my new horse, sailing around the corral, waiting to take me for a canter, I should have called him no true prophet. But the thing is true, my precious, true. Your Daddy is so well that soon we will be together, you and I. How is *that?*’ ”

Had Michael read instead of Hildegarde there would have issued a great shout of joy, a dance around the room, and Judy and all the little dogs

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would have been brought in to hear the good news.

Instead of that, two great tears came to the blue eyes, and fell to bathe the clover leaf held tenderly against the trembling lips.

“Good Lord, the child’s crying. What on earth for?”

“Guess it’s because I’m glad,” Joan managed to articulate, trying to smile and succeeding a little. Then:

“More, please.”

“It’s a quaint way of showing delight. Let me see. Where was I? Oh, yes. ‘Mummie and I have decided under doctor’s orders to move farther away, in fact as far out as we can go without actually popping into the Pacific. And we will take you with us.’ ”

“Oh!” Self-restraint—fear of disarranging Hilda swept away, Joan was out of her chair, eagerly leaning over the letter, crying, “More! More!”

“Let’s see. Here it is. Sound’s attractive. ‘There’s a heavenly spot called Carmel, with little cottages and a beach. Cottages like doll houses, and a beach that stretches miles along the coast! The wee house we have taken is just made for Mummie, Joan, Mickey and Daddy. We’ll have two live Japanese dolls to take care of us, and Rhea. Out to the front one looks across a changing sea and dreams into Hawaii and Japan. On a still night,

JOAN IN RESIDENCE

they tell us one can almost hear the ukuleles. But those who tell the story know mind-messengers as we do, and that there's nothing beautiful in the whole of God's great world they cannot bring at will.

" 'We'll take our car and wander up and down the coast. Oh, there's so much, dear little heart. One day we'll go as far as Monte Maddalena and find Aunt Damaris. She's not Aunt Damaris now, for they call her Mother Mary of Gethsemane, and she prays behind enclosures for just such little girls as mine, that they may be happy and good and grow up to be splendid "Valiant women." But she's there and you may hear her voice, and the cliff is there, and the swooping sea gulls, and the joyous bells that ring out their "Come, and praise Him," all the way to Carmel.

" 'Mummie, Mickey and I start on Tuesday. When we are quite settled we will send for you and Rhea. God keep you safe, my treasure. All our love to Aunt Hildegarde, Uncle Michael, and Joan. DADDY.' "

Light, joy in the child's face. And Hildegarde saw it. Perhaps for the first time in the span of selfish years, she realized what it might have been to have possessed such love as this.

"Are you very happy, Joan?"

"So happy I can hardly wait. When will two weeks be? Do you think it will take more than two weeks?"

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“Hardly. Tell me something, Joan.” For the first time, she took the slender little figure in her two hands and held her so that she could look into her face. Joan stiffened involuntarily.

“What is this you feel for them that makes you happy at the thought of being with them?”

“Mummie? And Daddy? And Mickey?”

“Yes, yes.”

“Oh, just being with.” And to the utter surprise of both, Joan burst into a storm of tears. And to the greater amazement of Hildegarde, she found it entirely natural to hold the little sobbing thing in her arms till the tempest had passed. And to the consternation of her, she felt in her own breast a stirring of something painfully sweet, something she did not in the least understand.

“It’s just because I’m—g-glad,” apologized Joan. Then, over the dark head, Hildegarde smiled. If Michael had seen her then, it might have made a difference. But Michael was not there, and when Hilda smiled that smile again, it was too late to make any difference at all.

She waited patiently till all sign of disturbance had subsided. Then, sunshine. Came a dimple that had never been seen save by those whom Joan admitted to the inner sanctum of her young life.

“I think it will be hard for me to wait till Uncle Michael comes home.”

“Will it?”

JOAN IN RESIDENCE

“Oh, Aunt Hilda—if it wouldn’t be any trouble, could Rhea take me where he is? I want to show him the letter. He’ll be s’prised.”

Eagerly she asked it, the light still in her face. Through Hildegarde’s sheet armor plate, the sunshine struck.

“I’m afraid there might be people with him. He might not be free enough to talk to you about it—but—how would you like to call him up?”

“Oh, the *telephone*? Oh, not on the telephone? Really?”

Hilda nodded. She had had no idea any child could be so congenial.

“Yes. Wait.” She took the receiver into her own hand.

“Stuyvesant, 5896. Yes. This is Mrs. Crighton. Yes.”

The child’s cheeks were aflame, her eyes dancing, and the four-leaved clover perished in the hot small hand, the while an eager heart beat high.

“It’s all right, Michael. Surprised?”

She laughed, then said:

“You’ll be more surprised when I tell you it’s Joan. I’m afraid if she doesn’t talk to you she’ll appear at your diggings and I know you won’t stand for that. Wait, here she is.”

Joan had never seen so marvellous a telephone. She thought they were all black. This one was blue with little roses on it. But of course Aunt Hilda must have things quite different.

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"Uncle Michael?" quavered a small voice.

A pause. Michael at the other end waited to see what the child would do. Had he had any misgivings as to her state of mind, a funny, gurgly, happy sound reassured him.

"Daddy wrote to me. He sent me a letter."

Hildegarde could almost see her husband's feigned astonishment as the deep, strong voice carried to where she sat.

"No!"

"Yes, he did. He did." The head nodded itself emphatically and the rippling laugh carried even to the gargoyles that had gazed down on the candlestick maker for many a long day.

"He is well. Daddy says he is all well, and his horse is Billy Bobtail." An excited giggle. An evident answer.

"Oh, no. He was sailing around the cor—cor——" she turned to Hilda.

"What was he sailing around, Aunt Hilda?"

"The corral, you funny imp."

"Corral, Uncle Michael. I don't know what it means. My beads are coral. An' it's about Joan and a doll's house, an' one hears across to—ukuleles. Rhea will come, an' you will tell us how to get there, won't you, Uncle Michael? We just might lose ourselves. An' it's ten days, nearly two weeks, and p'r'aps a car will take us coasting, and dear old priests will come to us for tea."

Hilda burst out laughing.

JOAN IN RESIDENCE

"Where on earth did you get that? It's not in the letter."

"Oh, just because. I like 'em. And they get the candlesticks. Uncle Michael might not understand about the Aunt Mary little girls may hear an' not see." Then she turned back to the telephone to a Michael who thought the connection had been broken off.

"Now I'm going to tell Judy an' the puppies."

"And you will tell me the rest when I get home?"

"Yes. Good-bye." She hung the blue receiver carefully back on its garlanded hook. She would not have been so careful with the black one in Uncle Michael's library.

"Now, Judy."

"Judy, dogs, anything." The moment of grace had passed. Olga was coming. Olga would tell her the gossip, this Olga who must be kept more or less under restraint till the child could be gotten out of the way. Two whole weeks till freedom! Well, thank Heaven, two weeks was not so very far away.

It was the Japanese who witnessed the child's rapturous description of glories to come, told to the sympathetic Judy. Matsuo listened with the absorption of one to whom the narrator had become as light to his eyes. Somewhere perhaps, was another child, younger than she, to whom just "being with," might have meant as much, a child whose

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baby shoe was worn indeed, though not by pattering feet. Matsuo knew.

Often when setting the table for Hildegarde and her friends, another day came before him, and one he loved in the pantry, pleading. Today, which of the women was it to be?

Behind the impenetrable mask, Matsuo was aware of much that would have startled even Michael. Had Michael but been cognizant of it it was Matsuo's business to know people. He would have preferred to close the door in Mrs. Clavering's face than to announce her.

Half-friendship, half-deceit, half-truth, half-womanhood. He knew the type that makes two-thirds the trouble in any world. Somehow he sensed it had been the unwholesome influence of this woman and the Mrs. Trent from whom she was inseparable, that had brought about his own loss. It took all his sang-froid to admit her.

Before she greeted Hildegarde, Olga turned to see that the man had left the room.

"Why do you keep him?" she asked, taking in as she spoke the symphony in brown and gold. Hilda cared a great deal for what Olga might think of what she wore. Even her gowns were gossip.

"Michael."

"Um. It rather amazes me how much you take from Michael."

Hildegarde shrugged her shoulders.

JOAN IN RESIDENCE

"After all, what would you have me do?"

"Let the man go."

"What reason?"

"Every reason. If your friends are afraid for their lives when he opens the door, isn't that enough?"

"Why are you afraid? What does he do?"

"His eyes. They were like slits of burning coal today. He knows more than you think he does. And there's always—Arachne—and the thing that happened after. I tell you he holds us responsible."

"Nonsense," but Hilda's hand trembled as she fingered the jewelled dagger on her desk. "That was long ago. He's forgotten."

"Other people have not conveniently butterfly minds like your own, my darling. What was the creature's name? The one that went."

"Hana. That's it. The papers were full up I remember. Well, if he were mine I for one wouldn't have him about." She took a cigarette from the crystal box nearby and sank her velveteed self into a chaise-longue.

"Michael seemed to think it was more or less our fault the thing happened," said Hilda holding out a match to Olga, then lighting her own cigarette. "Most men would let it go at the Jap's own indiscreet being where he had no right to be. But Michael's not like most men. He's quixotic. If we were to blame, we pay the penalty in keeping the creature about."

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"I should think he'd be as obnoxious to Michael as to you."

"Oh, poor old Michael hated it more than I at first. But then there was the affair of the woman. The only thing the papers got was that a servant in our house, the butler's wife, went away and could not be found. Of course the silly detectives tried to make it appear that she was a thief. They never got at the truth. Michael discharged the man that very night. He'd neglected some work he ought to have done, and was impertinent about it. Whatever he said to Michael, it must have been pretty serious for him to have been discharged. That night his wife ran away. I never told you what happened. Michael made it emphatic we were not to speak about it, but it's so long ago it doesn't matter now. She dropped a baby's shoe at the front door in her flight——"

"Oh—he——! I begin to see. Arachne's lecture——"

"Just so. I think the girl was about fifteen. They marry early in Japan. Well, her husband had remorse when he found out, begged to be kept on, said Hana was too young to know where to look for him if she wanted to come back, and all that. So he's been kept on probation. But she's never showed up."

"Um. Rather a patristic thing all round. Eh, what?"

"Rather. He's on my nerves, though. Blames

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me. I can see that. But he's too clever to do anything that might lead to Michael's sending him away."

Silently the door swung open. Hard topaz glinting through closed lids.

"Luncheon is served."

Joan being nowhere visible, Hildegarde walked over to the conservatory, followed by curious Olga, when suddenly from under the palm trees arose a volley of violence shouted in an unknown tongue. Joan scurried out into the dining room as fast as her small feet would carry her. At sight of Mrs. Clavering's red-lipped whitened face, she stopped, uncertain.

"It's all right, Joan. This is Mrs. Clavering, a—friend of your mother's. What's the row?"

"Oh, Judy! How could he? He never did before." There were startled tears in her eyes and her heart beat fast. Then she remembered to dip her little dip to the guest, though she was curiously unlike any friend of her mother's she had ever seen.

"He always swears at me in Portuguese. Those who know have said it was that. But never since Joan came. I don't understand it," puzzled Hildegarde.

"Thee and me, too much for the bird," drawled Olga. "What started the uncanny creature?"

"I don't know. I reely *don't* know. I let the puppies home when Matsu' said lunch. Judy'd been

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reading my letter. I'd just said, when Raphy came home I'd be gone to Carmel. The door opened, an' he dropped the letter he'd been reading, and I saw his eyes turn pinker than ever before, an' you came in an' he yelled."

"Draw the glass doors closed, Matsuo." Then as they sat down Hilda turned to Mrs. Clavering:

"I never could endure that sinister chuckling. He does it when I'm about, and usually when he's angry. I always upset him. But then, I hate him."

"They know, children, birds and beasts. By the way, how long?"

"Soon."

"What's up? Thought its people were away."

Joan tried to hide the burning cheeks in close attention to the lace pattern of the tablecloth. Why wasn't the grown-up code the same as for children?

"Joining them. Be careful. It's rather bright. Freer after, with the coffee. Dyin' to hear about Diana."

"Oh, that! She looked forty."

"Why?"

"Make-up."

"Need it?"

"Apparently. Too thin. Henna'd her hair."

"That's the last thing she needed to touch. Spun gold."

"Experiment probably."

"Did you speak to her?"

"Yes. Tried to avoid me."

JOAN IN RESIDENCE

“Wonder why they separated after the first year, she and Larry?”

“Never knew. I saw her twice. First time seemed recklessly happy. It was just after she left him. I ran into her on the avenue. She'd just begun the make-up, looked fairly pretty. Not that she needed it, not as I need it, and Hazel. We do. Not you, Hilda. Don't ever. Ruins the skin.”

“What did you talk about?”

“Nothings. Plays, clothes. Started on the opera, but she stopped that.”

“Wouldn't think she had so much feeling. Lawrence Minton adored the opera. But I don't think she understood it any more than she understood him.”

“I don't know. I asked her to dine, but she said, no, thanks. Gave no reason. That night Hazel saw her at a cabaret with Kendall Ashton.”

“Well, what of that?”

“Nothing, except that Larry had always hated him. Several nights later Hazel saw them again. Pretty much the same she said, Diana looking lovely and reckless. Then she went abroad.”

“Around the world, *I* heard.”

“Yes. I didn't see her for two years, anyway, till last week.”

“Where?”

“She was coming out of Best's. She got into a car.”

“Her car, d'you suppose?”

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"Suppose so. Wasn't a taxi. There was a child in it."

"That's curious."

"Funny-looking child. I asked her if it was hers."

"Nerve, old sport."

"She looked at me, 'pon my soul she looked at me as if *I* were a joke, and said, 'yes, and no. So long, Olga.' Then she laughed, and I somehow didn't like the sound of it."

They had forgotten Joan as completely as if she were not at the table. In the slight silence that followed, reminded by mention of a child, that the boy she longed to know might soon come home, she said in her most polite conversational way:

"Raphy is coming home too late for me to see him."

"Bless me! So there *you* are! Who's Raphy?"

"Why, didn't you know? Raphy is Aunt Hilda's little boy."

"What's in her head now?"

"Oh, it's Michael's——"

"Pardon, madam, the telephone——"

"I am at lunch, Matsuo."

"Shall I answer it, madam?"

"Call Lizette."

"Yes, madam."

She thought it curious she had not heard the telephone bell ring. Michael had had one installed in the conservatory because people invariably rang him

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up while he was at the table, and some of them could not be put off. Lizette must have been close by, for Matsuo returned to the dining-room before Hilda had had time to answer Mrs. Clavering's question. All unconscious, Joan prattled on:

"I have Mickey to play with, but Raphy must play alone because Romilda's school closes later than his. Romilda is his little neighbour. She is at Eden Hall. But you know, Aunt Hilda, it won't be so bad since Judy came home from the country. He'll have my sweet puppies. But don't you think it's a pity there aren't any other children?"

"I might as well tell you now as later. It's all nonsense—a play of——"

Crash! Down behind her chair, Matsuo, perfection of butlers, the silent one, the well-trained one, dropped a priceless bowl of fruit. Could concentrated fury kill, he would have fallen lifeless where he stood.

"Serve the coffee in the library," Mrs. Crighton said, rising, quite forgetting Joan, who had done her childish best to entertain the guest and help the party along. It was always a party at home, even if there were only one guest. Now, she stood aside unheeded while the man held the door open. Mrs. Clavering passed on ahead. Matsuo, a moment alone with Mrs. Crighton, murmured:

"I am sorry, madam. It was an accident."

He spoke to ears deafened with rage. An accident? Matsuo? She saw perfectly through the

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false telephone message. There had been no message. Joan! She was not to be disillusioned. Even the servants appeared to have received orders. Why? Because of Faith's child. What had she, Hilda, Michael's wife, done, that all the world should have leagued against her?

What had she done? throbbed the thing that had been conscience. Had she not emptied Michael's house of the joy of life? Had she not driven one poor stranger in her land to an unknown fate, because of her selfish whim? Had she not taken on her restless, worldly shoulders a responsibility whose right belonged to no less a One than God? Why should Michael not have raised what happiness he could so innocently, so whimsically, out of the shipwreck she would have made of his life? Why should he not have used what Jack Desmond called a "mind-messenger" to evoke the playmate she, his wife, had denied him? Not only that. She had taken all he had to give, all, grasping at it. And, doing so, refused to share his thoughts, his amusements, to take any interest in his candlestick-making. She even denied him her own companionship in the things that mattered, giving it instead to people like this very Olga Clavering and her unhealthy kind.

At least, the child was going. And Michael must discharge this man. It was intolerable he should remain.

Olga's question as to who Raphy might be was never answered, for the very good reason that Hil-

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degarde was afraid. Perhaps not so much afraid of what Michael might do, as of the Oriental mind that seemed to seep through every obstacle and reach her innermost consciousness.

Tree of the knowledge of evil was deep-rooted in her soul, and Paradise choked out.

CHAPTER VII

A RIDDLE

IT was late that evening before Michael came in. Work on the Lady Chapel was almost finished. He had stayed to watch the installation of the vast lacy grille that extended across the width of the nave and threw the whiteness of walls and pillasters into delicate relief. Even he who had conceived the thought of this grille, marvelled at its finished beauty. His own conception? Michael had smiled. When he said, "Master, make me an instrument to Thy will," he knew that whatever the achievement, it would be the Master's work, not his. There was no false vanity about Michael. If the Master had given him light, strength, will and the inspiration necessary, he thanked Him, that was all. But Michael loved his work, and rejoiced in the doing of it.

Only had he a son to follow and continue! Hildegarde, she who should have stood at his side, her hand in his to do the Creator's will, had elected instead to stand in his way. If the son her husband longed for had been, she might have advanced other than she had, into a Hildegarde softened and melted by motherhood. *Would* she? She refused to

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belong even to the army of childless mothers to whom God's poor are child. Why bother with the lonely? Why bother with children at all?

In the tempestuous springtime of his marriage, if Michael had only realized that he was taking unto himself incarnate egoism, he might have drawn back or at least made clear to Hildegarde that such was not his way, his Christian way. He had not known, nor did he yet realize; he was to learn it all—learn it this night. Unfortunately he had forgotten they were dining out.

“Madam is dressing. She left word the car would be here at eight.”

It was now a quarter before the hour. He would have to hurry, but what of Joan, eager to speak to him?

“Miss Joan?”

“She had to be put to bed, sir. She was very excited all afternoon, a little feverish. She had not left the conservatory at all.”

“So no one took her out?”

“Her nurse is ill, sir.”

“There were no orders for anyone else?”

“None, sir. I was to watch her from time to time. She played with the bird. It was Katie put her to bed.”

Reversing the usual order, Hildegarde came down first.

“Awfully sorry, dear,” said Michael as he stooped to kiss her. “I had forgotten all about the

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Stanleys. But I'm glad you wore that dress. It's beautiful enough to make me forget the iron grille that kept me so late."

Tired Michael, rushed to death, weary body and soul, seeking to please her. But Hilda might have been a discontented sphinx for all the expression in her face. He would have had to seek far to give her any pleasure tonight.

"It's all annoying. I loathe the dress, but it was less trouble to put it on once Lizette had laid it out than to tell her to throw it in the fire."

The pearls that swung to her breast, a single perfect string, the jewelled wreath that crowned her head, were Michael's gifts. Everything she had, Michael had given her. But it would not have been Hildegarde to think of this.

It might have been balm to his tired spirit to tell her of his success in finding some ravishing pieces of marble for the altar from the discarded ambones of an ancient church in the demolishing, to describe the sable laciness that blended so completely with the amber, blue and ruby of the resplendant windows and developed the loveliness of the Lady Chapel in all completeness.

The high grille with its imposing gates made of Mary's shrine an intimate and blessed place where one might shut oneself away from all the world and find peace, close to the Mother of the Holy of Holies.

He would have loved to tell Hilda all this,

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and to have Hilda understand. But—what was the use?

Frigid, silent, her cloak drawn as far as possible from him, she sat in the corner of the car. Futile, hopeless, useless, soulless!

While Michael in his own unconscious way was daily filling his mind with treasure, he gave his industry in all unselfishness for whosoever's life or vision might touch his work. To the depth of his understanding he had caught each phase of the talents God had given him. In mediæval research he had found not only marble and stone and bronze, pigment and plaster, but had absorbed in vibrant volume the sober melody of plain chant and steeped his artistry in Gregorian harmonies that spell prayer to a listening world.

He longed to tell Hildegarde his dream that some day this very chapel's aisle would vibrate to the uplifting sweetness of a thousand voices blended in sacred unison. So might he have shared the filling of his life with her. So might he have led her into the holy joy of it.

Not Hilda. Headstrong, uncontrolled of heart, ungovernable of brain she would be to Michael only what pleased her vapid self. And he was beginning to see she knew how much she hurt him. Had she not known, it would not have mattered—much. But with the passion of a small nature she did know, and it pleased her to know. That in his selfless love he had given all he had and would have given

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more; had borne her taunts and narrowness in silence with resignation, determined to endure to the end, now weighed nothing against the fact that he kept Matsuo on. And this, the only request he made. The man's presence in the house was a humiliation to her. True, before today she had thought nothing of it, but with the assistance of Olga Clavering Hildegarde had discovered how greatly it mattered.

It never entered her calculation that the presence of the Japanese in the house had been part of Michael's patient cross. Nor did she reflect that it was because she herself had acted in direct opposition to his wish, Hana and the unborn child had drifted out—where? If, since today Matsuo's presence had become obnoxious to her, it had all along been trebly hateful to Michael. But he had taken on himself atonement for her fault and had not complained.

Some of this crept into his mind as they drove along in silence, but he brushed these thoughts aside. Hildegarde *could* not have realized, so he justified her wrongdoing, knowing perfectly well in his subconscious mind it was but justification.

When he held out his hand to help her from the car she drew away, and still silent, walked before him up the stairs into the brilliantly lighted drawing-room.

A moment after greeting his hostess, Michael to

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his intense pleasure looked into the surprising eyes of Kathleen Van Dysart.

"I thought you were in Rome," he said.

"We were. Didn't you get Van's cable?"

"No! When did you land?"

"Yesterday. We cabled before we even secured our passage."

"I hope I'm near you at all events. Let me see, perhaps I take you out."

He opened the little envelope. Mrs. Stanley, his hostess.

"We'll manage somehow perhaps afterwards," then, "I must speak a welcome to Van."

But he found himself next to Kathleen on his other side, and his weariness fell away. Seeing his hostess engrossed with the man on her left Michael turned to her.

"I thought you were to be in Rome until Easter."

"Rent. Taxes," Kathleen laughed.

"I see. Sorry to come away?"

"Frightfully, though we stayed till Bob finished his study of the last San Clemente excavations."

"Good. We'll need them, I know. Rome much changed?"

"Dreadfully. The worst of it is they won't let you forget it has changed. But one has to close one's eyes to the obvious. Underneath it is always—*Citta Eterna*."

"Italians always *have* had a way of covering masterpieces with paint," murmured Michael.

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"That's just it. Trams and dust and hundreds of motor cars on streets too narrow for them, thousands of tourists——"

"Millions of profiteers——"

"Yes, and the people who made our Rome dearly beloved on the outside, have died or gone away, and madness has taken hold of our generation and the next, but *inside*, Eternal it always will be. Oh, Michael, if I could only tell you a little of how much I love it, it might ease the pain of having had to leave it!"

"You never do—really. It's in the blood once one has lived there. How does Bob feel about it?"

"He says if we don't go back to live he will take us all there to die," Kathleen laughed.

"Cheerful beggar. But I've so much the same feeling about it that literally I have to keep Rome out of my head."

"Bob insists that to die in Rome is far more interesting than to live anywhere else. But really we've only come to settle our affairs, and hope to go back next winter. To tell you the truth we've entered Babs at the Trinita and have got an archæologic English tutor for Robbie."

"They're not old enough for all that?"

"No. They're only babies. But I want to keep Robbie out of doors, and the tutor's a dear and can wander with him over each of the seven hills. He can learn so much from the ground up that way, things not in books. And he can breathe the air.

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There's a mine of wonder-lore in breathing Roman air."

"Early Christian courage?"

"Just that."

"And what is your ambition for Robbie after the palaces of the Cæsars and the Mammertine?"

"Downside."

"Then?"

"Silly Michael! Our only ambition for him then is candlestick making with you."

"That's a pretty compliment, Kathleen. I won't forget it. I believe if you and Bob will take me on I'd like to enlist as the boy's tutor now. I've always had a haunting love for catacombs and ruins."

"Withal a house on Fifth Avenue and an official studio on Stuyvesant Square?"

"Um! 'From our dead selves to higher things.' There's always hope."

"Turn to your hostess. It's time," smiled Kathleen.

"Yes. Just a minute. I say, do something for me?"

"Anything. What is it?"

"When I come back, just remind me. Say, 'I've got an English tutor for Robbie.' Will you do that?"

"I will, indeed."

Then she turned to her other neighbour with a question about the Russian players. She had seen

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some of them in Paris and wondered how they would succeed in America.

"Tell me, Mr. Crighton," it was the deep voice of his hostess penetrating to the far end of the room, "how is your altar coming on? I hear it is the most beautiful one in the United States."

"That's a tremendous exaggeration. It is finished, but it's only a chapel altar. One can't compare it with the larger altars in cathedrals and churches. I myself think the finest piece of church architecture in New York is your own reredos at Saint Thomases, even if you do borrow our saints," he laughed with the twinkle in his eyes that Joan loved. In his simplicity he never dreamed that his hostess who had bid her lion to dine was now about to put him through his tricks.

"Do we? Well, I suppose saints belong to the world, don't they? Tell me all about your windows. They say they are as beautiful as the windows of Chartres, and that the grille with the great gates was your own idea."

"The windows were done in our own country. At least the war brought out the unexpected possibilities of the United States."

"Who was the genius that made the glass, though?"

"It is Irish glass. I think they come as closely to the colorings in the French cathedrals as any in the world. Yes, the workmen are in America. You know some of the finest English porcelains are made

A RIDDLE

with English clay, by English labor just outside of Philadelphia. We are a wonderful people, Mrs. Stanley!"

"Yes, I believe so. I came across some ancient Italian Renaissance chairs mellowing into antiquity just outside of Boston."

Through the general laugh that followed, Michael heard a gentle voice beside him, murmuring:

"We've got an English tutor in Rome for Robbie."

"No! Why English?" as the conversation swung to his left, on whether or not it were proper to inject a touch of Romanism into a conception otherwise wholly Gothic.

"Why not?"

"Why not, indeed? All this to help me out of a difficulty. I've been keenly interested in all you tell me about Robbie because I've got to get my boy out of the country. I must get him so far away that he can only be reached by letters, cables or radio. How would it do if I sent him to join you in Rome next winter? Or would you enter him at Downside?"

Kathleen, bewildered, looked into her neighbour's eyes and seeing him calm and apparently sane, asked:

"H—how old is he?"

"Eight," Michael answered unflinchingly.

"W-why do you send him away?"

"For fear Joan Desmond will discover the truth."

"My dear friend, am I mad? Or you? Put your

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cards on the table. Faces up, please. Why Joan?"

"Didn't you know she had been with us all winter?"

"Yes, but what has that to do with your s-son?"

"Well, really," he looked bewildered, "I don't quite know, except that the boy, Raphael, imaginary you know, but quite real, oh, quite real, has made a dream playmate for Joan. She doesn't know he's only a fancy of my own. Unless I send him out of the country she's going to demand his bodily presence, and," he added helplessly, "I don't know what to do about it." Kathleen broke into a silvery laugh.

"Michael, Michael, how like you! What does Hilda say? Tell me how it happened."

He launched into the story of Joan's coming, and how, when he found the dogs and bird would not quite satisfy her play days, it occurred to him to let her into his secret. In his mind he had builded a son, Raphael, who was going to be the most wonderful of architects when grown, but who for the present was away at school. He must remain where he was until well into June.

"Sometimes I've been worried at the child's implicit belief in what I tell her. And sometimes—it's not all smooth sailing."

Inadvertently Kathleen's eyes wandered to Hildegard's face, colder, icier, than she had ever seen it.

"Some day you will have to tell the child the truth.

A RIDDLE

If you don't, she'll find it out for herself, and it's going to hurt."

"I've thought of that. But by that time, Prince Charming will have come. She will not have to wait long, little Joan. And as far as the fairy story goes, all children love fairy tales—this one is a little more real, that's all. So where's the harm?"

"No harm, Michael, but some danger. How do you know Joan won't make a Prince Charming out of the ideal you've set up?"

"Brava! Why not, indeed? Perfect ideals sometimes save people from accepting anything less. Besides," here he fell into the little confidential way he kept for those who knew him best and loved him for it, "I think in my heart I've grown too fond of the boy to let him go. I've—I've a whole drawer full of drawings of what he would have been."

It was in her to say "poor Michael," but he would not have liked it.

"Men don't play with dolls, even imaginary ones," she said instead.

The whimsical look that was never far away danced into Michael's eyes.

"Picture painters, sculptors, writers, music makers and candlestick makers play with illusions, don't they? We're not a bit practical people, you know, Kathie. The illusions of the man in the street and the man on Wall street, are lost along with his first glimpse behind the scenes of how motion pictures are made. That was an awful blow to me when I

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found it out. They'd been magic before. We, Pantaloon and Columbine, joy makers for the world, cherish our fantasies till old age breaks us along with them."

A voice on his left broke into his thought:

"Did I hear you speak of lost illusions?"

"Yes, dear lady, of those chimeras a material world might classify as profitless hallucinations."

"What do you believe of them?"

"One of the greatest charms in life."

"But they disappear with childhood."

"Do they? I wonder. Perhaps they do. Some childhood, but not all."

"The age of visionaries is past, Mr. Crighton. Life is a practical thing."

"What a pity!" Michael was hardly conscious that he spoke aloud.

"What a pity the beautiful things of life, dreams, traditions, adventure, illusory germs of fairy-tale-dom must be pushed aside for what? Unlovely naked facts of an existence ponderous, weighty, material. Not much more!"

"But you will admit that without these things there could be no progress?"

"I will only admit that there can be no progress without imagination. It is not when a man sits down and admits a fact, that the world progresses. It is when he lets his mind venture out of the circumscribed area of what is, to what might be, that progress springs ahead. I've watched to see the thing

A RIDDLE

people do with their illusions. Some men burn theirs. That's when the will wars against the spirit. You and I call it conscience. Some women lose theirs, and when they do, the angels weep. And some men and women, the ones who have learned that 'Unless ye become as little children ye cannot enter into the kingdom of Heaven,' keep theirs to the end. They are the lucky ones, the ones about whom people say, so-and-so has never lost his youth. It depends, I think, on how one lives and what intensity one carries into the living."

"Is there such a thing as intensity in life, any more?"

The question came from the man on Mrs. Stanley's left. Once he had been Hazel Trent's husband."

"What about the war, Trent?" Michael knew the man so well he did not hesitate to ask the question. Somewhere, in what had been a life, a Distinguished Service Cross had been tossed into the discard.

"Oh, that! That's different. It was all in every man's day's work."

"Every man's intense day's work, old man. There were no illusions about the country's patriotism. Fact, I grant you. But what made it a fact? Idealism. America was to stand for the best. Nothing less would satisfy."

"It's all over and done with now, though."

"Is it? There's been a child born out of the

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fancies and dreams we've all had since the war, Trent."

"What dreams?"

"Dreams of what might be done to make our country what it should be now that the war's well over."

"What child?"

"Hope. A good thing, believe me."

"I suppose you're right, Crighton, though even hope, once dead, can't be reborn."

"The Phœnix died, and its ashes were cold and white. Yet in five hundred years it rose out of dead ashes into its Heliopolis young and beautiful. Only one must have patience."

"It's all right for you, Michael, all you have to do is to dream a thing, then go ahead and make it. We're not all built that way."

"Utter nonsense, man. It takes more than mere imagination to create a monument. Today one is inclined to forget there's another Power. Without the Hand that builded man, man's hand could never build. Nor without the Mind that first created hope. I like to think that life's discouragements are not sufficiently forceful to kill the fantasies that keep man's mind afloat above the sordid stream that somehow threatens us today—everywhere."

"The things that interest you do, Michael," said Kathleen.

"They help." He looked to where Hilda glittered and shone at her end of the table."

A RIDDLE

Mrs. Stanley rose.

As Kathleen passed him on her way to the drawing-room, Michael stopped her.

“I say, Kathie, unless Hilda should bring up the subject of—Raphael, I wouldn't speak of him. But—she just may, you know.”

CHAPTER VIII

NO ANCHOR?

“**I**CILY regular, splendidly null,” Hildegarde floated back to the car. Michael essayed to break the silence that fell again as soon as the door was closed and they started towards Fifth Avenue.

“Rather nice to see Kathleen and old Bob again. Bob’s amusing over his financial difficulties. Did you talk to him at all?”

“Yes, a little.”

“Tough, having to leave Rome when they’d just gotten their bearings.”

“Think so?”

“Rather. It would be hard to uproot us at this season there. May is divinely lovely in Rome.”

“Too hot. They’d been there all winter, anyway. Must have been bored to death. Why not have moved on?”

“Why not have stayed? It appears the children adored it.”

“They have to drag their anchors about with them wherever they go. Might as well come home.”

Michael thought a moment before he spoke. For the life of him he could not help saying:

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“But we would have had no anchors.”

“No, thank God for that.”

What was the use? The perversion of Hilda's mind rushed around itself, a tiny maelstrom. When had she not managed to twist her half-truths in such a way as to form complete self-justification? Now she thanked God for the very thing she had contrived to preclude Providence from bringing about. What was the exact phrase? “Whited sepulchres, beautiful without, but within full of dead men's bones and all corruption.” It was not the first time the hideous picture had come to Michael's mind only to be driven away with the violence of his loyalty. It was Hildegarde who had spoken, his Hilda. He must not forget that.

Once in the house where the light fell full on her face, he saw a change in it, an expression new to her. In no way did it alter the icy regularity of it. It simply made him want to look away.

“Please dismiss Matsuo for the night. There's something I've got to speak to you about.”

He did as she asked, then followed to the library where she had, consciously or unconsciously placed herself under a portrait that had been done of her the year of her marriage.

It was much the same Hildegarde, but younger, and touched with the genius of an artist who had drawn a soul in place of an ego, and painted into eyes and mouth a wistful sweetness that had never been. If Michael in blind simplicity had thought

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them to be his wife, he was neither blind enough, nor simple enough tonight to hold them among the illusions that had survived.

“What is it, dear? Sit down. Let me get you a cigarette.”

“I’m not smoking.”

“Won’t whatever it is keep till morning? You must be very tired.”

“When are you ever in when I come down? You are always gone.”

“That’s so.”

He lighted a cigarette for himself, then said:

“Sit down, then, while I smoke mine, dear.” But with her back to the mantelpiece she stood facing him.

“You must discharge Matsuo, tomorrow.”

“Don’t let’s go into that again. You know my reasons for keeping him.”

“My reasons for sending him away are better.”

“You know—I feel that we were responsible _____”

“Oh, that! That’s finished. I refuse to have him about. Twice today he forgot himself. It was at lunch and Olga was there. Olga talks. The story is probably all over town by now.”

“Why, dear, of course I’ll speak to him. He will not do whatever he did again. What was it?”

“He put that child at the table with us to begin with. Her nurse being ill, some one had to look

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after her. A servant would have done. But in his Oriental mind I appear to have been the one who should do it. Such a person hasn't the right even to think.

"Then the child began an idiotic chatter about our imaginary son. Naturally Olga asked who in blazes she was talking about. The Jap pretended some one called me on the telephone, though he knows I never speak to anyone at lunch time or dinner."

"Then?"

"He dropped a Ming bowl filled with fruit on the floor. It crashed and made a mess. I won't stand for it. The child is going. That's one blessing. And I tell you I won't stand for your tales about an imaginary son. I've stood just about enough."

Michael smoked on without a word. Had Hildergarde known where to stop, something might have been done. But her kind never does know. The concentrated fury that had been smouldering for years at her empty breast, burst into flame, gathering heat as it rose.

"Steady, old girl," said Michael once, trying to stem the blazing stream. "Let it all wait till tomorrow. I'll not go out till you are ready even if you don't come down till night. We can lunch quietly somewhere, anywhere you say, and talk it all over afterwards."

The more self-control Michael exerted, the more

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infuriated she became. There was venom in her expression when she answered:

"No! Here and now you are to make your choice. If the man stays, I go. You will stop this affair of Raphael or I shall shout it from the housetops."

"Would that help?"

"It would put a stop to all this nonsense."

"Would you shout the reason why?"

"What do you mean?"

"Please sit down." He pulled a comfortable chair forward. "I really can't talk to you while you stand there. That's better, Hilda."

"Thank you," she snapped, every nerve and muscle taut. She was determined to have it out if it took all night.

"We'll begin with Matsuo. No one can do a wrong thing and get away with it, eventually," said Michael. "It only happens that his punishment came early in the day."

"There's another point of view. It's not like you not to be just. There was no *crime* in his going to a lecture about which he had heard us speak. There was distinct disobedience in his leaving the house that day. There was disrespect in following where I took my guests. But though he should have been discharged then and there I see no reason why high Heaven should punish him."

"Logical from your standpoint. The thing goes deeper than you know, far deeper than I know.

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I'm trying to be fair. He had not the right to leave the house, I grant you. We were not responsible for that. But we were responsible in that through our carelessness, our heedlessness, our want of consideration, he learned the existence of the most degrading practice ever perpetrated by man or devil. I've questioned him, and have learned a great deal. The printed notices that found their way into our house were left about for those who ran, to read. I've destroyed them myself when I've found them. His curiosity was excited by what he heard that day at your luncheon. He frankly admitted he was not free to tell me why he followed you, but said that some day, perhaps, he would make it clear. That is why I say there is something about it we don't see. His wife pleaded with him not to go. She had every reason for his not going. She knew him. But because of you, because I somehow could not bear to have him in the house with you—afterwards—I discharged him. As you know, it's an old story, he pleaded to stay. There were reasons I preferred not to tell you at the time, reasons I had for keeping him on. I may as well tell you now. The little wife, Hana, was only fifteen years old, and might come back like a frightened child to find him. What you did not know was that with the Japanese, a final code is suicide. I wanted to avoid that."

"Meanwhile exposing your wife to the constant humiliation of his presence."

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"It has not worried you before today, Hilda. Why? Did you think of humiliation when you deliberately put yourself in the place of the man in the street? Matsuo was not the only one who saw you at Arachne's.

"The world was not only free to go, but encouraged to go—and learn. Time was when the woman would have been arrested or deported. Our censorship"—he laughed—"would be a joke if it were not one of America's tragedies. It unfortunately does not extend to the elimination of moral degradation. We in America today, kill our delicate and infirm, our own mothers sometimes, by depriving them of wine. Our divine Jesus Christ performed a miracle that the people might have it. We kill the body with our so-called reform. But we see fit to murder body and soul broadcast, closing puritanical, hypocritical eyes to *real* crime. Heaven help us in the future if it goes on."

Hildegarde was silent for a moment, but not impressed. She was gathering argument on her own side, and had probably not even heard what Michael had said.

"Hana is probably dead or in Japan. Your reasons for keeping him are utterly futile. I've endured him too long. I won't have him in the house another day."

"Still it's taken you till today to decide."

"That's my affair."

"Wait, dear, let me think things out a bit."

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Too strong of character to be unyielding, he was entirely fair and just, Hildegarde to the contrary. It had been far worse for him than for her, to endure the sight of the Japanese about her after what had happened. Today she had been humiliated by his imperfect service. The man had put himself in the place of master. That was not fair to Hildegarde. Why had he done it? To save the child, to save Joan from an awakening that would have distressed her. Only that? To save Michael, too. But the hurt had been to Hilda. How make it easier for her without compromising with conscience? Then the answer came.

“I see my way now, dear old lady. We’ll get someone in his place here. You need not see him again. After all, he’s really not a butler. He knows everything there is to know about gardens and planting. I will take him down to the studio instead of the men I have who know nothing about bulbs. He need never come to the house when you are about and when he does come, it will only be to the conservatory. How would that be?”

Tired to death, he was still able to smile as he asked the question. Hilda did not see the smile. She only heard him say he would discharge Mutsuo.

“That’s settled then. What about the child. I won’t have her about either.”

“I’m afraid you will have to bear with her one more week. Then I send her out to Faith and Jack.”

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Why tell Hildegarde how empty the house would seem to him after the child had gone? What would be the use. And yet?

"I'll sing a song of gratitude the day she leaves," said Hilda as she rose and started to the door.

"Just so that you do sing, Hilda!"

"At all events, her going will put an end to that creature of your imagination. We will bury *that*."

"No. We will not bury that."

"Sorry. But I'm just as tired of Raphael as I am of Joan and the Jap. I won't keep up the pretense and neither will you. That's the end of that."

"Wait."

He knocked the ashes into the empty grate, then, quite unconscious of the expression in his eyes, looked at Hildegarde. He saw her distinctly, clearly for what she was, and the look was not pleasant. She saw it too, and seeing it, recoiled, ever so little, and pulled her wrap tight about her shoulders.

"I've listened to you, and yielded where I could. Now you must listen to me. I should have preferred not to discuss this thing tonight. But you've made further silence impossible.

"Whatever ambition I may have had, whatever longing for a son to carry on, to be a companion for us both, you have prevented. The joy of watching the growth of soul and mind and heart and body of my son, you have killed. One son? I've dreamed of

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filling this emptiness with sons and daughters, living and learning, given a chance for everything that's good and happy in this life, and eternal happiness when this life is ended. To what purpose? You, and those others who mean more to you than your own, Olga Clavering, Hazel Trent, poor Diana, lost through you all, and others of your kind, have assumed to put aside God's ordinance and take up the rotten doctrine of a time-serving publicity agent, who hides the evil she spreads, under the name of 'public benefit.'

"This child of my imagination was not born for the amusement of Faith's little girl, nor for anything or anyone but my own depleted heart. Raphael first saw light in this very room, the night you came home from that despicable performance at Town Hall. God knows to how many you have lent your presence since. The boy was born then, and has lived to gladden me every time I have come home to find no other companion to welcome me, unless you count in the bird and dogs. You are more competent than anyone to tell how often that has been."

"Michael!"

"Look."

Out from a drawer in his desk, he pulled a large portfolio worn with handling. He opened it.

She did not touch the first drawing he held out to her. It was only a baby's face, and hazy, with all the depth of the picture gathered into the eyes, big

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like her own, shaped like them, gazing straight out now at the mother they might have had.

Then, one of a child perhaps three years old, with fair curls clustered tight to the head, not unlike Carl Muller's Christ-child. There were several pictures of a boy of about five, but in these the eyes had perceptibly changed. The shape of the face was Hildegarde's, the eyes still hers, but they had Michael's greater strength. He must have studied her very closely to bring her back, like this, in miniature. The drawings were not unlike some that had been done of her many years ago in Germany. But for all she knew they had never been brought to America.

At the last, he held out two. These were done in color, finished to the smallest detail with the minute exactitude of a Vibert. He might have been a boy of seven or eight, and the look of Hildegarde outgrown. Frank and sweet, he had an expression all his own, and was not even like Michael, yet still Raphael, child of the earlier drawings, grown older, developed in his own way.

"Changed. A great deal changed."

"Yes. Because we were not fit to have him even resemble us." Then:

"One of them is for Joan. The other, I keep."

She stood looking down at them and did not speak.

"You said we had no anchors. This—has been my anchor oftener than you know. He stays while

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I stay. You see, I have no other son. That's all. Going? Good night,—dear."

Was her hand only tired? Or did it travel over the boy's face, ever so little.

But the lips that echoed his good night were frozen, and she did not turn to look at him when she left the room.

CHAPTER IX

ONE GOES HOME

“**H**OW long will the whizz-car take, Uncle Michael?”

“About five days, altogether, I should say.”

“You comin’?”

“Not this time, lambkin. Rhea will go with Joan. First you stop at Chicago, then you get another train that will take you far away across the desert to Daddy and Mummie and Mickey. How will *that be?*”

“I want *you*, but,” with a little sigh, “I s’pose you’ve got to be home for Raphy’s holidays. I know he couldn’t get along without you. Of course, an’ Aunt Hilda. Only, she couldn’t possibly play with him.”

“I’ll tell you what we’ll do,” ejaculated Michael, as if it were the moment’s inspiration. “Raphy and I will write to you. Then it will be almost as if he played with you.”

“Oh, that will be fun! Rhea, did you hear? Raphy will write me a letter, an’ another, an’ another.”

“Ycs, Miss Joan. That will be very nice. It will

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help your own education to have a nicely educated little boy like that write to you.

“Well, I don’t know about ed—ed——”

“Education.” Rhea did not lose the value of a single syllable. Preciseness in speech was her conception of genteel elegance.

“Yes, that part. But I know I’ll love hearing from him.”

So with visions of Mummie and Daddy before her, and an idea that little lame Mickey would share the joy of reading letters from a far-off boy, Joan fared gaily with Michael and her nurse to the train. It was only when the train started away, and Michal’s brave smile dimmed a little, that a spasm of grief caught at the child’s heart, and she cried into Rhea’s precise shoulder. That Hilda with a game of auction going in full swing at the house when they left it, forgot to say goodbye, never entered into her thoughts. But the long journey with its excitement sped rapidly enough. Joan was tucked up in a doll’s house each night. That was a delight in itself, but to feel the vibration of the train speeding on its way, dreams keeping pace, to waken each morning to the thrill of watching one’s bed disappear by magic into the seats that made a playroom through the whole day was an experience for a life-time.

Then there were men with black faces, called porters, who brought one’s meals, and did vanishing tricks with tables in the wall. Little did

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Aunt Hilda know what she was missing, thought Joan.

It was a wonderful journey indeed, and had it not been for those who waited she might have been sorry to think it would ever come to an end.

The very desert was a sandy world, peopled with fairy-dog prairie-dogs that lived in tiny mound houses, and came out and looked and laughed and pirouetted when the whizz-car flashed by. And one saw still white things not stones, that lay along the desert track. Sometimes they had teeth, and sometimes long rows of ribs, but Rhea could not tell her what they were, and she did not like to ask the other travellers.

At last, they came to a land where great hills, higher than any she had seen in her short span, touched silvery tops to blue skies, and other hills that laved their feet in bluer, restful seas.

An onrush! Oh, to be caught in the arms of a strangely strong brown father!

"Where's Mummie? Where's Mickey?" gurgling with delight, looking eagerly for the others.

"Wait. You'll see. Why, who on earth can this be?"

"Mickey! Mickey! Oh, where, where are *they?*"

He knew what she meant. Her heart had never allowed her to believe the crutches other

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than as essential a part of her brother as feet and hands.

"All gone, Joan. All thrown away. Look. Another s'prise!"

She saw her mother through a mist. This was a funny thing, to cry because your heart was bursting with happiness. But Joan cried her gladness over the father who had gone away pallid, and reappeared bronzed, over Mickey who had gone away halting, and now was whole, over her mother, from whom she had been separated, to whom she was reunited. And the beauty of it all was that everybody understood, nobody teased, and when the tears turned to laughter Joan found that Mummie was doing something extraordinary indeed. What on earth could it be? She was holding something. What? Two little ponies, holding their heads, and in one hand she had a crop and Mickey had one in his, Mickey, who had never walked.

No need to wait for the little riding habit laid out in the flower-decked room at Carmel. She was up and off, gasping with delight, gasping with surprise at Mickey's skill and fearlessness, gasping with the gloried happiness that is childhood's right and somehow Joan's chief prerogative.

So, entered she boldly, head high, joyous, eager, into a new phase of her life. And at the same time so entered she on a strange phase of existence for so young a child; the spirit-presence, so to speak, of Raphael. Raphael, phantom, Raphael, reality,

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Raphael an ideal with whom to climb to girlhood, maidenhood, young womanhood. Woven out of the disenchantment of a lonely man, Raphael was to reawaken for Joan an adventure with each day and tinge the years that were ahead with fancies fine and true and pure, all sheathed in chivalry.

In an era of disbelief, of iconoclasm, disingenuousness masking as frankness, dishonesty as breadth of perspective, Michael had seen ahead that unless Joan were shielded by ideals of the highest, there might be danger. What the playmate Raphael must eventually be to her, so must her true love be, no less. Not all the spurious wooing in the world should have power to hurt her, because of Raphael. She was to be taught to distinguish the tinkle of "sounding brass."

Michael himself probably could not realize the value of his gift to the sensitive child in the imaginary boy. But neither did he appreciate the full extent of her confidence in him. If he had he might have lifted the anchor gently before it should be ruthlessly torn from the sea of Joan's life, dragging with it sands and unsightly weeds. But, whether she was to love him more or hate him for what he should do, did not matter in face of the truth. She was to be clad in armor invincible, no shaft aimed lower than the height of Michael's aspiration for the son that should have been his could ever touch her.

The cloud of dust raised by the car that sped

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swiftly on before them was gathered into banks of fog that blew from the sea like thistledown.

"They're forts, Mickey, strong forts. We have to beat them down."

"What's forts?" shouted the boy as she rode on ahead.

"Armed castles. See? Here's one." She rode through the mist-bank like a mermaid diving through a wave.

The castle that was theirs nestled green and white before them, crowned and wreathed with roses whiter than the mists through which they'd come.

Mummie and Daddy stood at the gate signalling Mickey to keep the secret he fairly yearned to tell. Once lifted to the ground he danced around her with excitement.

She thought it was because of her coming, that he danced to show how the lameness had all gone away, so she laughed and danced about with him, and could hardly contain herself for delight when he led the way to the room made ready for her, roses of its own peeping from a miniature balcony that overlooked the sea. But when the little boy in his impetuosity almost jumped over the railing, Faith took a hand.

"Steady, my son," then smiling mysteriously, "I don't believe you can keep it from her any longer."

"What is it? Oh, *what* is it?"

She tiptoed up behind her father, following his eyes out to a green plot where pine and palm trees

THE CANDLESTICK MAKERS

met, and saw beyond, a narrow strip of beach not a hundred yards away, where waves lapped and gurgled to the sands.

“Ours, too?”

He nodded, then lifting her high in his arms, showered her the great surprise.

“Why, Daddy, how is it that if it’s our little beach there are children playing on it?”

“Perhaps they’ve come to play with you. Why, what are they doing? It looks to me like a fire.”

“It’s a fire. It’s a fire,” Micked shouted. “It’s a brush-wood fire. I know what it is. They’re waving at us. They want us to come.”

Joan, from her father’s shoulder, looked down at Faith.

“Ch-children—for me to play with?”

So her little heaven-on-earth began. And, like generous Joan, she would not keep it for herself. Uncle Michael must be told. And then—lonely Raphy in the big house. Raphy would soon come home from Canterbury and have Judy and the dogs, it is true. But they were not human creatures able to play games and do the wonderful things that are done by those who, when they come to earth as babies, carry in their eyes the very stars from Heaven out of which God dropped them.

“Mummie, I want to write a letter.”

“Righto, sweetheart. To whom?”

“Uncle Michael.”

ONE GOES HOME

"Come along then. Get your pen. Here's the paper."

"I like my name on the top. Looks important."

"Very important. But not half as important to you as your handwriting will seem to him, my lamb."

"Mean it, Mummie?"

"Mummie always means everything. Now what are we going to say?"

"I'll say. You watch. An' you help the spelling. An' hold my hand.

CARMEL, June 1st, 19—

DEAR UNCLE MICHAEL:

There are three children to play with on the beach, Alix Kent, Claire Kent, an' Donald Kaye. Donald Kaye comes all the way across the sea from London town. He is like Raphy, as I like him best. But Raphy is better than anybody, and he is ours. So sometimes I will not play with Donald Kaye. It might hurt Raphy if he knew. We cook marshmallows on the beach. I burn mine. Mummie says I will never be a cook. But it is fun. I have a blue room. Roses peep in at me from the window. They grow on a little porch. Mummie says I may put the leaves of one in this letter. Give Raphy half. Give Raphy all of them. I have a pony. So has Mickey. But Mickey has a cold an' can't ride this week. I can ride, and so can Mickey, even if Mickey is only five. He can walk alone. Those sticks he threw away. We ride up to a big white house on the hill. Claire and Alix live there. I love it. Some day I will draw a picture of it for you. An' will draw one of this house for Raphy. The big house has a name, Monte Madalena. Mummie is spelling for me an' holding my hand with the pen in it. I like this house. It is very small.

THE CANDLESTICK MAKERS

Claire's Mummie looks like the queen in Grimm's fairy tales, with the crown of gold hair on her head. But my Mummie looks like the Queen of Heaven. (Oh, Michael, Michael, how one must live one's life, to come within a thousand miles of children's thoughts who love one——!)

Alix an' Claire's daddy is game. Like you, but not *more* game. You would be more game, Uncle Michael, if it wasn't for the candlesticks. He is Mr. David Kent. He walks an' rides all over the hills an' the fairy queen goes with him. They have an Aunt. She does live most queer. Some day they will show her to me. I will not see her, but I will hear her speak. It is a convent. She sits behind a wall an' Joan is to listen. She is a nun. That's all. Good-bye.

From

JOAN DESMOND."

"Joan, darling."

"Yes, Mummie?"

The child looked up with a sigh of contentment as she took the carefully written letter in her hand to admire it, then stared dubiously at the inkspots on her fingers.

"Would you mind if I added something on the blank sheet you left at the back?"

"I think I'd like it. I couldn't think of enough to say to fill the paper. Will that fill it up?"

"Yes. That will fill it up. Run along now, quietly, so as not to disturb Mickey. I want him to sleep the cold away."

"Kiss me before I go. There! 'Bye, Mummie."

"Good-bye, honey," smiled Faith, watching her to the door.

ONE GOES HOME

Michael dear, Jack's letter goes along with this one. But I had to add a word on my own. The great experiment of leaving Joan with you was more successful than I had dreamed anything could be. She's not as frail as she was and has imbibed a large share of your resourceful imagination, and a decided talent for drawing anything and everything she sees. It's rather wonderful for seven years. Mickey is coughing more than I like. But it's only a cold and we will have him out in a day or two. I think we will stay well into October. You'll have to do something drastic about your Raphael. Joan is determined to go to New Milford to see him if he's back at Canterbury when we get home. It must be left to your inventive genius to dispose of him, for he is a very real person.

I overheard Joan tell Donald Kaye that Canterbury is a far better school than Downside, because if it hadn't been, Raphael Crighton would have been sent to Downside. I wondered if it wouldn't be rather a good idea? You could send him over with Donald in September. The boy's parents are in India till then, and consented to let the Kents have him through the summer.

Sometimes I've wondered, and worried a little, whether we are wrong or right in keeping up the happy little fiction of Raphael? I know how great a niche the boy fills in your life—and he does make our little girl somehow—happy.

Jack's grateful love and mine, for all you and Hilda have done for her, and us. God bless you always.

FAITH.

NEW YORK, June 15th, 19—

MY JOAN:

It was a great disappointment when Raphy found you had gone. In fact, if it had not been for a diverting Judy, I believe he would have demanded the first train out to Carmel. When I told him about the beach, the brush-fires and the other children, I caught sight of a red cheek turned

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away from me. Then facing about like the soldier he is, he said, "It's all right, sir. Didn't mean to funk."

"What's the trouble, old man?"

"Oh, nothing much. I thought Joan would be here when I got home, and some of the fellow's mothers were going to do things for us. My own class promised to show up. They felt sorry about Mickey having to be away, lame and all that. It would have livened up the house, having them. But we'll get them over anyway, sir. Won't we? And what's to do about it but be a sport?"

When I told him Mickey was well, and that you had sent him the white rose and spoken of him, he loved it all. I don't know how I'm going to tell you the rest, lambkin. It might be harder if I did not know you had found play-mates at Carmel, much harder. But if only the easy things in life mattered, nothing would be very real. So we're going to be what Raphy said, good sports. I've got to send him away, quite far.

In the first place I had a letter from Mr. Hume, telling me the drawing master was having trouble with my boy, not that he would not draw, but that he refused to draw the models given him.

Told to do a horse, he will sketch in a horse, any horse, then build all about it a *remarkable* mediæval stable. And he will put all the work not in the horse, but in the stable. Given a bird to do, suggest the bird, drinking from a fountain sculpted after the manner of Alma Tadema. The ocean, a wave or two, and riding atop, a ship from the Spanish Armada. It tends to candlestick-making, you see, so I can't complain. I asked the boy to bring me his drawing book. Had he felt in the least guilty, he would have hesitated. Instead, he rushed off to get it. Imagine my surprise to find it full of the very things that fill my own life. All night long I tried to work some plan. Yesterday morning we had it out.

"Would you like a career, my son?"

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"What's a career?"

"A swift or certain course of life that should lead to the fulfilment of one's ambition," I said.

"I know ambition. Mr. Hume has told us about ambitions, real ones and false. Is a career a real one, Dad?"

"Yours would be."

"If you say so, I'll take it on," said he.

"Even if it meant going away from home?"

"I am away from home at Canterbury."

"Away from America for a while?"

"Anywhere, Dad, if you say so."

"I'd thought of Downside. England seems somehow closer than Italy. But Rome is where you must learn the things I want you to use as a foundation. What about Rome, son?"

"If you say Rome, Dad, Rome it is."

I won't go into the look in his eyes, the brave tremble of his voice. It was all Raphael—your Raphael and mine, soldier in heart and artist in soul——

The Van Dysarts sail the first of the month, and Raphy goes with them. I hate to tell you this, for it may mean years till you two meet. Romilda will miss her playmate too. But she has found so much to divert her at Eden Hall that she may spend her vacation with some of the little girls of her own class. I've thought perhaps that when the years that separate you and Raphy have drifted by, and you find each other, you'll be grown up, ready for whatever of joy or disappointment that may come.

There's so much, on the way to grown-ups. Happiness, sorrow, joy, renunciation, great peace, and sometimes great sacrifice. But, because of the very age that brings these things we can enjoy them the better, bear them in patience, or just laugh with them. Laughing is best of all.

He promises to write you from Rome. And you must write to him. Aunt Kathleen will see that all the letters reach him. Send them in her care. Judy pines for you

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and would wilt, were it not for the hope of seeing you again when you come home. We all send you our love, and look forward to the time when we shall have you with us every single day.

UNCLE MICHAEL.

SEA ROSES, June, 19—

DARLING POOR UNCLE MICHAEL:

The letter was all for Raphy, but not from Raphy. An' you didn't say much about what he said. Love from
JOAN.

NEW YORK, June, 19—

DEAR JOAN:

Dad tells me he told you. He asked me if I had any regrets. Just one, I told him, just Joan. That's you. He is a strange Dad. Being a boy I would never cry, even if I could. Dad said, "Cry, old man, if you like. A human being without tears is a human being without a heart, and a human being without a heart is a very terrible human being indeed." Then he went on: "So, my son, while you laugh your joyous life along, keep a tear or two in readiness for its tendernesses, if not for its griefs. So, laughing, the tears will never be bitter ones, but a comfort perhaps to those for whom you shed them."

He *is* a queer Dad. I tell you because you are a girl and it may help. And he insists on sending you a drawing he made of me. I wanted to save it for your Christmas, but now, since I'm going away, I think I'd rather you had it. Do you know what he has done for me? You. From memory he has painted you, with Judy in your arms. I won't write again before I sail away. But I will send you ship letters and write often from Rome. Joan—good-bye.
RAPHY.

ONE GOES HOME

RADIO

To White Star S.S. *Olympic*. RAPHAEL CRIGHTON. Care
VAN DYSART:

I made all the surprises except the pillow. Mummie made
that. Come home soon, JOAN.

NEW YORK, July 22nd, 19—

DEAR JACK:

I am frankly worried about Faith's line to Hilda, the news of Mickey's illness. It came fully two weeks ago. I've not heard from any of you since. I thought from the earlier letters it was a passing cold or a touch of flu and that the boy would be well in a few days. Let me know how he is if it's only a word. Is there anything I can send from here? Any person I can send? I will go myself if you need me, old fellow. I would do anything in human power for you or yours. It would be little enough in comparison to what you are to me, one and all.

MICHAEL.

TELEGRAM

CARMEL, July 27th, 19—

Our boy died at sunrise. There is nothing you can do, but we are grateful for every word you say. Faith will write in a few days. JOHN DESMOND.

FEAST OF THE ASSUMPTION, August 15th, 19—

DEAR MICHAEL:

You see the day? I could not write before. Somehow she seems to have lifted him up with her, out of life that kept him back from Heaven. Lifting him to her own Son, she takes him where we hope some day to be. Sooner or later, Michael, sooner or later. But the last, our Mickey, is first of us, to come into his own. How well she knows how to carry him, how to raise him, Mickey, our baby. And she, Mary our Lady, mother of her little Christ-Child Son!

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It was only a cold at first. We thought little of it. Then, torrential out-of-season rains began, and we could not seem to keep him warm. When the rains were over, his strength appeared somehow to have gone with them. We know now it was only what had always been. You see, we'd thought him cured. The lameness *was* cured, but not the illness that had caused it. When it broke out again, it could not be stopped. I won't tell you how sweet he was. Just a little, tired child.

We let him make his first Communion, Michael. I had thought it better to hold him back till he would be seven, but Joan had talked to him so much, had shared the coming of our Lord to her as clearly as she could. You know she always shares whatever she has, so the boy knew. Twice he had said, once to Jack, once to me, "He comes to Joan. Why won't He come to Mickey?" We couldn't stand it at the end. We had the priest come. He asked the child a few questions, then said: "Oh, my dear young people, the boy *knows!*" He was just over five. If we could all have so alive a faith as Mickey had, if we could have his little, child-like reverence, if we could make our thanksgiving as he made his, I believe God could hardly wait to come to us. He came, a Viaticum, the night before.

The child fell asleep about an hour after. I watched him. Jack too watched him, my poor Jack who felt it was all on account of him. Jack didn't know what I knew then. I told him later, but the Christ-Child Who came that night to our little son, loved him too dearly to keep him out of his playground any longer. Earth's all very beautiful for most of us, but for His elect He spreads the fields of Paradise.

Once Mickey woke, and when he saw us watching him, he laughed. "I'm not alone. I haven't been alone since *He* came. Didn't you know he stayed to play with me?"

The greater change came during the night, but he lingered on till dawn. Then he opened his eyes and asked for

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Joan. Jack brought her in. She didn't know, poor child. How could she?

I've never seen a sun so golden as the sun that rose that day. Our boy smiled and held out his fragile arms to the sea, then said, "Lift me up, Daddy! Look! It's Joan's day!"

But his head drooped, and he fell asleep on Jack's shoulder.

The Father Who loved him even more than Jack or I, had raised him to a morning that should never know an end.

Think, Michael. Only the brief space of five short years. Eternity of happiness beyond conception! Oh, Michael, wasn't it worth while? If in the lonelier years that lie before us the thought may come that we need not have suffered so, how the glow of his last sunlight will shine to the very caverns of our souls, and show us what it is to Mickey to have lived!

God bless you, Michael. May we find you at home when we go back. For we will need you, then.

FAITH.

CHAPTER X

DIANA

NEW YORK'S long, hot summer had come to an end at last. Streets began to look a little less like avenues of the dead. Boarded windows, fenced-in doors were opened to the light, and about the houses were evidences of active getting into order.

East of Park Avenue among the smaller residences in the Sixties, was one that had been neither fenced in nor boarded up. Day in, day out, its windows had framed a face, watching not so much the casual cart or motor, but the relentless passing of endless days.

Had it not been for the dark shadows about the eyes and under them, for the mouth grown hard in spite of itself, it was a young face and beautiful. But it was wan with a pallor that had never known the heat and deadly monotony of an August and September in town.

Dry, dull, unprofitable, this strange summer with its rare whiffs of salty breeze to freshen a few moments of it, and give one courage to live through another day. Dry, dull, unprofitable, all the weary

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years. What was Diana going to do about it? The little drooping trees in front of her house were the only bit of green she'd had to look at since the spring. Even the park seemed too far away, though when the child waked and cried she tried to exert herself to walk to it, then let the other woman go instead.

The tinkling bell had sounded often enough in the rooms through early summer.

"No. Missus Minton is not at home."

"No. She will not be at home this month."

"No. Not next month."

"No. She didn't say where she was going."

"No. No address."

After a while the bell stopped ringing. Even the postman's call was rare, and when he did come, the letters found themselves for the most part in the wastebasket, unread.

Only one thing Diana cared to do, but so great was her anxiety and worriment that even that had now somehow lost its zest. The child. She could play with her by the hour. She had fitted up a room as one might equip a doll's house, with little chairs, a tiny table, and toys. But the curious child did not care in the least for the toys. One day in a desperate effort to amuse her, Diana had brought in a box of colored plastic. From that moment there had been no trouble. Hour after hour the little thing would sit contentedly fashioning such flowers as she knew, men and women like distorted pigmies, animals

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whose prototypes were yet undreamed of, and show them in her little hand for approval.

Other days, she would lie fretful, feverish, inert. It was then that Diana would sit at the window, thinking, thinking, trying to find a way out. Nothing.

One afternoon came a knock at her door.

"Yes?" listlessly.

"The evening paper."

"Thank you, Hana."

"Will I turn on the light, Missus Minton? It is almost too dark to see."

"So. Not yet. Passiflore. How is she?"

"Sleeping now. I b'lieve we don't need the doctor."

"This time maybe not. But there will be other times."

"I thought a way."

"What way, Hana? I've thought till my brain aches, but I can see no way."

"Perhaps Bellevue would *send* doctor. Then we needn't take her there."

"There must be other ways."

"Yes, Missus Minton."

"Give me the paper, Hana."

As she took it, her hand touched the little brown hand that gave it to her, and held it for an instant. By reason of their peculiar position together in this house, the common interest that bound them, they had grown to be more like companions than mistress and maid.

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"Something more, Missus Minton?"

"Nothing more. I will try to get a breath of air later, but will stop in to see Passiflore before I go."

"If she wake up, I tell her. It makes her better every time."

Hana left the room quietly, closing the door behind her.

What was it about this woman that made her different from others in her station? It had often puzzled Diana. Whatever Hana did, was done with a perfection nothing short of art. If a duty were to be done, it was performed without question. Menial work was elevated to higher levels because of the spirit the Japanese woman carried into its achievement.

Through it all she held herself like a princess in miniature, this Hana, the wife of Matsuo, she who had washed dishes in the pantry that fearful day, and fled from the house at night.

Diana glanced at the first page. Mr. and Mrs. Michael Crichton had returned to town. A cynical smile curved the lips that had grown hard. Hildegard had returned to town; she who had gone gayly, unscathed down curiosity's hill, leaving Diana a wreck behind her. Carefree Hilda, irresponsible. Happy?

And Michael, the great architect. Perhaps of all the world that had been Diana's, he was the only one to whom she would have dared appeal.

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But Passiflore's father lived in his house. She did not intend to risk parting with this child, Diana, who had no child. Why not?

Restless, she got up and went into the room adjoining the one like a doll's house, at risk of disturbing the child who lay there ill.

Passiflore was not asleep, but she seemed to be in pain, dark cheeks aflush, tears in her eyes.

"My back hurts. I can't lie on it."

"Poor baby. Perhaps if I rubbed it?" No hardness about the mouth now.

"Mother tried. And mother hurt."

"Perhaps something's wrong. Let me see, darling."

She slipped the little nightgown down——

When she kissed the burning forehead, her lips were chill. Did Hana know? *Could* Hana know? If she did, what would happen? The Japanese were a strange people. Ordinary suffering, privation, physical ill, they bore like stoics. But—this? What was their belief in a future world? Hana was a Catholic, and Catholics did not allow the way out permitted the Japanese. But Hana was Oriental. What of racial code in a case like this? What about human weakness? Was it possible that Arachne's philosophy might be right?

But Hana must know. Surely she was not blind to a thing as manifest as this? And it explained Passiflore. It made clear the reason why she had never care for active games most children love,

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and accounted for her strained little manner of looking up when one stopped to watch the growth of things she made from clay. It quite solved the child's endless weariness. Philosophy? Sophistry? Could either help?

"You did ring?"

The child's mother had come to the door so noiselessly that Diana had heard no step.

She sat rigid, mechanically holding the hand that had been flung from under the covers, hand burning up with fever.

And Hana saw. Diana knew that she saw, knew that she knew.

What the mother had known, she had never told. If she told, what might not the Lady Diana do?

"So you know now, Missus Minton."

Diana nodded acquiescence.

"I did not tell for fear you would send us away."

"Why do you say that?"

"Some women would. Some men, too. My baby not like other children. Put her out of sight."

Tenderly she bent over the little suffering thing, lifted her in her arms and made as if to carry her off at once. With the fatalism of her race, she accepted what seemed inevitable, and asked no questions.

"Wait, why did you say what you did?" Diana asked as if she had not heard her the first time.

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“Why not? Most people believe only in perfect bodies for children.”

“And you, Hana?”

“I believe in perfect soul. Body not count so much with Hana.”

“Put her down, please. There, that’s right. Now tell me what you mean.”

“My Passiflore’s soul is straight an’ white. What does it matter if her back is crooked? Some day it will be buried in the ground. Nobody will see. Not even Hana. Nobody will remember the crooked body. But Passiflore’s soul will be alive and—*happy*. It flies to its God, to live always. A beautiful soul and a beautiful mind has my baby, Missus Minton Passiflore’s hands. Are *they* crooked?”

Diana took a slender hand in hers once more, looking at it this time. Long fingers, brown, slight, obedient to what Hana said was a beautiful mind. Quaint fashioner of quainter creatures. Who could tell what it might achieve—if it lived?

“Never again suggest my not wanting her, please. I want her more than anything I’ve ever had in all my life.”

Without turning, hardly seeing where she went, Diana made her blinded way to her own room, found a hat and put it on, walked swiftly to the deserted avenue, crossed to the park side, then went north.

What was she going to do? Between taxes and

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depreciated securities her exchequer was none too high. The reckless years behind her! One more thing she must put back, drive it to the space of lost remembrance or she would go mad. The reckless years! God! Had she known Him it might have been easier. Given time, she might save up enough to take the child to a great specialist in Boston.

But was there time? Were it simply a case of the charity that had caused her on an impulse to take Hana and the baby home, it would have been simple enough. But love had stepped in—that made the difference. Public charity was all very well where one did not love. With her soul, such as it was, Diana had learned to love this crippled child.

Who was there to help? No one, unless—it might be Michael Crighton? Then between the shadows she saw him coming towards her. Other nights she would have averted her head and allowed him to pass by, not seeing. It was years since they had met. He came closer, glanced once her way, did not recognize her, and went on.

She knew she had changed. For the matter of that all her world had changed. Why not she along with them? Michael must not go. It might be her only chance. She turned quickly, and spoke:
“Michael!”

He hesitated, stopped, then looked at her. Then with all his old cordiality, greeted her, though he had been among the men who knew.

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"Diana! I supposed you were away with the rest of New York. We only got home today ourselves."

"I know. I saw it in the paper. I had been thinking of you. Perhaps that's why I found you."

"Subconsciousness is a wonderful machine. What are you doing in town so early?"

"I've not been away."

"All summer—here?"

"All summer."

"Then you're one of the wise ones. After all, there are so many places for daytime country, Long Island and the rest. And you can sleep at peace in your own house when night comes."

"I did none of the things one should do, or used to do."

Dim lights above them had shown him the pallor of her face, and the rings about her eyes, and the deadness of the hair that used to remind him of the hair of Fra Angelico's angels. It must have been the interminable summer in town. Why had she stopped him? After years. There must be some reason——

"I need advice. There's no one else I could speak to. I've been wondering what I could do. Wondering till my head has driven me almost mad."

"Let me help. Come. I'll walk your way if I may."

"Please do. I only go out at night. It's been

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so hot. And I usually come here, to be near the trees. I don't meet anyone I know. But you are different. How much patience have you got, Michael? It's a long story."

"All the patience you want me to have," he laughed.

"You'll need every bit. But you will be interested. It concerns you in a way."

"Tell me, then."

He could perfectly well understand her not wanting to see Hildegarde. Diana's story was fairly well known by her own set, and Hilda's original part in it was better forgotten.

"You knew I had practically adopted a child?"

"Vaguely. I heard something about a child."

"Did you ever hear whose child it was?"

Curiously he looked at her. What difference could it make to any one whose child she had adopted?

"No."

"What I tell you, I tell you alone, Michael."

"I understand."

"Hana, the Japanese woman, Matsuo's wife, had a child."

"*That* child. It lived?"

"Why not that child? I had none of my own, and it lived."

There was a defiance in her tone that uncannily reminded him of Hilda. They walked on in silence. Michael began confusedly to connect things in his

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mind, that for years had been more obscure than the semi-darkness around them.

"Tell me all about it."

"It goes back years."

"I've wondered—for years."

She clasped her hands nervously together, then unclasped them. It would have been a relief to speak to anyone. But to tell Michael, the one man who might be of assistance was like the mercy of Providence.

"You knew it didn't last long—Larry and I. Less than a year."

"Yes. I knew."

"We won't go into why I married him. That's over and done with."

"Just this one question. Did anyone try to prevent it?"

"Faith tried. She knew I didn't love him, as I should, I suppose. But"—he heard the defiance in her voice again—"I didn't love Bruce, either. Not even Bruce, though they all thought I did."

"You were so young. You are still, Diana. How could you know?"

"I didn't care. Love, real love, meant nothing to me. I'd never been free. I wanted my fling, got the chance, and took it."

"The eternal search for happiness, Di. You fared forth to find it like many another child. Only you didn't know what it really was, and lost your way."

"I didn't know the landmarks. I made a mistake,

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then kept on making mistakes, always seeking always finding the wrong people, always being mistaken in myself. And I went ahead, frivolling like mad. One night I had been at a particularly stupid dance. They'd all grown stupid by then, every one. I refused to stay with the rest and started home alone. I slipped away so that no one would come with me. The party had been down at Greenwich Village. You see I had fallen on strange ways. Well, coming up, the taxi turned into Thirty-first street. It was a few minutes before two I saw by the Pennsylvania clock. A stream of people that looked like working people turned in at a gate half-way down the block towards Sixth Avenue. I wondered what it could be at that hour. There were lights streaming down a flight of steps and I heard an organ. Then I knew it must be a church. What kind of a church it was I didn't know and cared less. I was sick at heart and tired of everything. So I stopped the taxi and got out. It was the church of Saint Francis of Assisi, he who was good to animals and birds, and the poor rich and the rich poor and every one. Luckily my evening wrap was black. I pulled a scarf over my head like the simplest of the women and sat behind a pillar. It was somehow restful. The music played, and the people all sang together. Then a preacher got up in the pulpit. And he preached about love. Wasn't that a queer thing for me to fall into that night of all nights? What he said was different from anything

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I had ever listened to. Indeed, it was the strangest sermon I ever heard. Nobody noticed me, for he *held* them. He held those working men and women as Saint Paul must have held his hearers, as Christ must have held His multitudes. Shall I tell you what he said? Are you bored?"

"Tell me. I'm not bored."

"This is the way he began. I have never forgotten. It seemed so sublimely beautiful:

"'If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.' "

"There's no lesson in all the gospel so divine, Diana."

"I don't know your gospel, so I'm no judge. But what I do know is that nothing ever impressed me as much as what he said, the simple friar in the brown robe, who spoke with the light of Heaven shining in his face. I was so ashamed after he got through. I had not been patient. I had not been kind. Oh, Michael, if I had been kind or patient, I would never have let Larry go! Listen. I bought a Bible the next day. And this I learned by heart: 'Beareth all things.' I had borne nothing. 'Believeth all things.' I had lost whatever faith I had. 'Hopeth all things.' In my despair I had set up the golden calf and worshipped it. 'Endureth all things.' I had endured nothing."

When he finished with that, he said, that charity is simply love, and that love is all the doctrine of

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Christ. He said that until you have suffered for love, you have not known what love is. Until you have sacrificed for love, it has been only half a thing. Unless, like Saint Francis, you are willing to sink yourself into such an abyss of divine love that your soul gives itself out in love to all created beings, you have not known the first meaning of life. He said that even through utmost agony of suffering, where there is love, is joy, and the peace no one can take away. It made a great impression, you see. I believe it is the only sermon I ever heard all the way through. Long ago I ought to have learned the difference between pleasure and happiness. But I had deserted God, and taken up with gods. I was brought up Puritan of Puritans. You know what that means. Then I threw myself at Larry's world. What could anyone expect? Tired? There's a great deal more. I'm making my confession, Michael."

"I'm not tired, I'm deeply interested. Go on."

"Your house gave me joy as well as—knowledge of the fruit of the tree of evil. I try only to remember the joy.

"The day after the sermon I went back to the monastery adjoining the church. I asked to see one of the friars. Whether the one who came was old or young, I could not tell. He was tall and thin and straight, and had white hair. I told him about the sermon, and said that if charity is another word for love I would like to try my hand. Would he

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tell me what to do? I thought, perhaps, to do a charity might wash some of the evil out of my heart. He wrote an address on a slip of paper and gave it to me, saying to go to some nuns who lived there and that they would have work for me.

“It was to a tumble-down row of houses. Outside they were nothing, but inside they had been transformed into some kind of a convent. The nuns wore white, all white from their veils to their shoes. I think it must have been the Mother Superior who spoke to me. She told me they had been praying for someone who might help them out in a case that had come to them. A Japanese woman, with a baby, had drifted to their doors. They thought she might make a good servant for anyone willing to take the child as well. She would not be separated from it. Would I see her? I said yes, and the nun sent for her.

“When she saw me she started out of the room like a frightened thing. She had seen me—that day. But they made her stay. Then left us alone. She told me a strange story, and I asked to see the baby. Oh, she was a little doll, a Japanese toy, so tiny, so sweet! I wish you could have seen her, Michael.”

“I wish I could, indeed.”

“So, charity, being kind, love being sacrifice, joy being in giving, I took them home. Only, I found that the charity and joy, were to me, not to them. I could not live without them, because I love them so.”

DIANA

“What did Hana call the child?”

“She would not name her. She had expected a boy, so had marked what she'd made, ‘Matsuoito.’ So I, I named her Passiflore, because she was like a flower born of suffering. Until to-night I did not realize how great the suffering. She's been ill. I did not dream what it was. I hate to say it. I hate to think it. It's the shock of finding out. She's deformed—a hunchback, my pretty Japanese doll. Hana knew. Hana knew all the time. That is the wonderful thing to me. And there is something so marvellous in her faith that she doesn't mind. *She doesn't mind!*”

“Now. The husband, the man you had. If he knows, being what he is, feeling as he does, there might be tragedy.”

“It would not do to let him know. Certainly not now.”

Save for the muffled whir of an occasional car, the avenue was deserted. For a while their steps were the only sound along the way. The story as she told it was running through his brain together with realization of the necessity for silence.

She thought he was working out a plan, so walked on patiently beside him. At last he spoke:

“We must get the best possible advice.”

She knew it would be like this. Her burden had become Michael's burden. So would he have assumed the affliction of an entire world, could he, by so doing, have given peace.

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What was it the friar had quoted? "Charity is kind." That meant Michael.

"You see, I love the little thing," she explained simply.

"We usually do love those for whom we make sacrifices."

"Hana said the body would not live after, but the soul would, so the body doesn't matter so much."

"It doesn't in one way, but she's not altogether right. The body does matter. It is the temple of the soul, likeness of the Holy Spirit. It was intended to be beautiful for that, if for no other reason."

"Oh, I remember. Faith said it, years ago, and she said I couldn't understand. I don't. How can my Passiflore be beautiful if she's all crippled up?"

Michael smiled as he answered:

"'Mens sana in corpore sano.' We'll keep that crippled temple healthy, first and foremost, with a sound mind to dwell in it. If human power can effect a cure we will have the little temple itself made straight. In any case, I promise you you will live to see beauty shining out of that child's face. No one can be truly good in mind, and healthy of body without becoming that which for want of a better word, we call beautiful."

"Philosophy of light-maker, and shoe-maker. Is that it?"

"Hans Sachs and Michael Angelo? Between the Cathedral dome and the foot of man, lies the great-

DIANA

est human philosophy? It takes a good woman to grasp the—simple immensity of the problem.”

She turned away. He must not see how crimson a tide swept across her face. He went on:

“Did you ever stop to think what comfort there is in the words: ‘Whatsoever ye do to the least of these, ye do also unto Me?’ I know that in the charity that is love, there’s contact with Divinity Itself. And only good can touch Divinity.”

“What about the sinner? He may have a moment of impulsive charity, but can *he* touch Divinity?”

“The Pharisee sat at table with Him, but it was the greatest sinner in Jerusalem who washed His feet. I’ve never known any one in whom there was not more good than bad. It is the good that reaches out of darkness, to light. Oh, there are wicked people, I grant you. But take a heart, clean, not drugged. Its natural impulse is to reach up to God.”

“How?”

“Divine love. The mantle of charity, if you will, or the love of God’s creatures be they men or children. It’s all in that. No one can love truly, and be all bad.”

Diana’s answering silence was vibrant with thought. If to *do* for the little ones, were contact with the Divine, *what would be the contact that forbade their existence?*

Seven years ago Faith had told her one should permit them life simply because God willed it.

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What to those who had refused this greatest blessing in God's gift? With His sacred lips He had said, "Suffer the little ones to come unto Me, and forbid them not."

"Forbid them not?" Though blind, crippled, poor, without mentality—forbid them not. Why? That they might come unto Him, seeing with glorified vision, being, in glorified existence, rich in the possession of Paradise, and knowing with the intuition of the archangels! Forbid them not.

Faith had talked of the little catechism. She had said, God made one to know Him, love Him, serve Him in this world, and be happy with Him forever in the next. The next? To forbid them existence meant then to keep them away from Him forever in the next.

A sickening sensation of loss filled her whole being for an instant. It seemed as if the ground broke into a great chasm before her. On one side what she was; on the other what she should have been. Was there here a chance of getting back at Hildegarde for the agony she must needs endure? She only had to tell Michael what manner of thing Hildegarde had made of her through the conscienceless revelations of Arachne and Arachne's followers.

"Charity," he had said, "is a touch of the Divine." Would it have been—charity—to tell him?

Diana need not have worried about it, though charity prevailed and she did not tell. Michael!

DIANA

knew, and knowing, felt that what she did for Hana's child entitled her to be called good.

Quaintly visionary candlestick maker! There was One Who watched his silent martyrdom. But He Who watched knew, too, that through it all, Michael had a speaking knowledge of the stars!

"Faith! By George! Faith. I knew we'd find a way."

"Tell me."

"Did you know they had bought the house at Carmel? They were to have come home about now——"

"What do you mean, Michael? Where is Carmel? What could any of it have to do with Passiflore, or me?"

"Carmel, in California, by the sea. Jack and Faith have a cottage there. You wouldn't mind being with them, Diana?"

"Foolish man! You can't make plans for other people like that. They might mind having me with them. Indeed, they might. Though Faith is the only woman I would go to."

It passed through Michael's mind that regeneration and humility like this were closely allied, but he spoke out of his active train of thought:

"I wonder if they would do it? I could have Bland on from St. Louis. He's a genius in cases of this kind. Then—you will want to go away——"

"Oh, I do. I do. And now with all the town coming home——"

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"I'll wire Bland tonight."

"So sure of him?"

"So sure, that it's a promise he'll come. I knew him once to be off to Colorado for a holiday, all in and tired out. While he was on his way to the train a poor man in whom he had been interested was taken ill. They caught the surgeon at Eads Bridge. He got off the train, went to the hospital where the man had been taken, performed a life-saving operation and only continued his journey next day. Incidentally he lost his suit-case. We can count on Bland."

Diana thought quickly. There were some shares of stock she had kept since her girlhood and some Liberty bonds. These might cover the expense. She could dispose of them and then manage, somehow, any way. Passiflore needed the best. She was so absorbed in ways and means that she hardly realized Michael was speaking.

"It must be understood this is my personal responsibility. If the child were well and normal I would have to tell the father. You realize that if he were anything but what he is I would have in conscience, to tell him. But I have given you my word. Since the harm came through—my house, it is I who will take care of her, of course."

"As you will."

Of what use to struggle since Michael would have his own way in the end? And Passiflore would get the better care. Passiflore was all that counted.

DIANA

“When I get his answer I will call you up.”

“I’m not in the book. You’d better write it down.”

They stopped while he felt in his pocket for a pencil.

“Plaza 00269. I am always at home.”

“Some time tomorrow. I am practically certain to find him in St. Louis now. If he’s away, his office will reach him wherever he’s gone.”

She held out her hand then. “There’s a bus coming. I’ll take that. It’s so late. No, don’t come with me. I’d rather not. I can’t thank you.”

The bus stopped and he helped her on.

“God bless you, Michael.” She was crying, but only the conductor was there to see.

Diana!

CHAPTER XI

THE SCIENTIST

“CURIOUS character she must be.”

The great surgeon stood in the drawing-room of Diana's house wondering at its incongruities. It was simple enough. A long, rather narrow room, exquisitely furnished, framed a priceless gothic tapestry, one of the four or five in all America that glint with golden threads. Gems from the hands of long dead genius were scattered here and there, and in their midst, on a low table, an irrelevant collection of odds and ends made out of common plastic, blue, red, green. A small crystal vase set in the centre held what was evidently the gem of the collection, the one thing that had been carefully modeled in plaster. He had just taken it into his hand to examine it when a swift step behind him made him turn.

“I was certain you'd come.”

“I had to. Crighton's message said, imperative.”

“It was good of you not to lose any time.”

“Oh, I was coming to New York anyway on another case.”

He said it as if to cross half a continent for the

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sake of a sick foreign child were no greater effort than to walk into his own garden.

"I see you've been diagnosing me," Diana said, as she saw the little plaster flower in his hand, and that his eyes were still puzzled.

"Oh, yes," he laughed. "One could hardly help it. Could one?" as he looked around the room and returned to the discrepant table.

"Hardly. These things are the work of a child, your patient."

"I see. But why *this* flower? There's no mistaking it, the spear, the nails, the sponge, the delicate tracery of the crown. Why should so young a child make a minute study of the passion flower? The cats and jumble animals, I can understand."

"Her name is Passiflore. No. She is not able to come down. We will go up to her now, if you please."

She led him up the winding stair, where Hana knelt beside a bed, crooning a Japanese lullaby. Her voice could neither silence nor drown the little moans of anguish.

The doctor lifted the child in his arms——

It might have been an hour later that Diana who had walked her room without ceasing, ventured to the door and stopped to 'listen. She heard the two voices, the doctor's quick, incisive, Hana's gentle, quiet. Then she turned the knob and went in. The man was standing at the head of the bed, a long, cool hand on the child's forehead. Passi-

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flore's eyes, big with the fever that had passed, smiled at Diana.

"He did take all the pain away."

"Then will Passiflore sleep now?"

She turned her head on the pillow and closed her eyes. In less than a second she had fallen asleep. Doctor Bland lifted the baby's hand and looked at it.

"No wonder," he said, pointing to the long slender fingers and the artistry of them. Then he said in a low voice to Hana:

"I will explain everything to Mrs. Minton as you asked me. It will be all right. Keep up your patient courage. I need say nothing to you about faith, you've proved that." He smiled as he said it.

"No, I have my faith. It is what holds Hana up when all things fail. I can be brave, doctor. And Missus Minton is most brave."

Back in the small drawing-room the surgeon did not hesitate to speak.

"The thing in this case is congenital. Sometimes it takes longer to develop, again a shorter time. Evidently it has been visible for perhaps three years. The mother has known it, has suspected what it is, but has been afraid to speak. You understand."

Diana nodded. She did, indeed, understand.

"There is no cure. The little girl may live for years, many years. Or she might drift out in comparatively short space. It depends on many things.

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Her heart is weakened just now, but can be built up. I find no other organic trouble. The unfortunate part is that she's beginning to be old enough to realize she is not like other children. I have found in my experience that mental depression in cases of this sort becomes responsible for one or two conditions; morbid sensitiveness, timidity, shrinking from the sight and sound of her own kind, dread of publicity. The second condition is almost worse, for it begins with jealousy of those who are entirely normal, and out of this jealousy comes hatred and all the viciousness that those so afflicted are credited with having."

"I'd thought of this, and I was afraid of it."

"There's a remedy, not for her illness, but for the mental state that rises out of it. We will speak of that later. There is one other thing, worse than those I have mentioned, that must be avoided at all hazards."

"What is that, doctor?"

"Melancholia. The suicidal tendency is stronger with the Japanese than any other race."

"Whatever you say to do, will be done."

"Would you consent to have the mother leave you? I understand you rather depend on her. Could you do without her?"

"Even that. But it's not only because I need her that I keep her. I could always get a maid. I have reasons I prefer not to go into."

"It is on the child's account I speak."

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"I don't understand. Do you mean that Hana must be separated from Passiflore? Are we to send Passiflore to a hospital?"

"Not at all. The mother would have to take the child to another climate. You probably would not find it hard to get someone in her place."

"Why, we'd go together. How could there be any other arrangement?"

"I thought so."

He had diagnosed Diana correctly. Not for their artistic value did she disfigure her drawing-room with the inconsistent collection of little plastic models. It pleased the child to see them there. Consequently, there they should remain. There was a certain lovable simplicity about this woman, and her next question bore it out.

"What do you want us to do?"

It was evident that if the love she had for the incongruous child could be served at all, it was to be through blind obedience.

"She must be kept out of doors in the sunshine. She must play from morning to night and sleep in the sunshine when she is not playing. The sun is God's remedy for many ills, hers most of all. So we will kill whatever germs there might be of depression or melancholia."

"She could do the plastic toys out of doors then, if we find an out-of-doors?"

"Not till we've built her up, physically and mentally with healthful exercise and rest."

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“Not before? She won’t be happy. I may as well tell you that.”

“Not before. If we hold her toys out as a reward for getting well, it will be an inducement to help along her own cure.”

“What about diet?”

“I’ve told the mother. She will show you the list. We will not need another nurse, just the mother—and you?”

Diana nodded. The eyes that were lifted to his were full of tears.

“We both love her.”

“That’s half the battle. I can trust you to take better care of her than, than the best trained nurse in the world.”

“There is definitely no cure?”

“I’m afraid not. But that’s no reason why we should not build up a happy life in this frail child. Indeed, there is no reason why it should not be as happy as the lives of many who are physically perfect. A warped mind is not necessarily part of a crippled body.”

“No.”

“Then there’s the future. We can’t neglect that, can we?”

“What future?”

“Do you think that the phrase, ‘Nothing defiled can enter Heaven’ applies to the body or to the spirit?”

“You, a modern scientist, ask me that?”

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“So I am, a modern-day scientist, emerged out of the abyssmal ignorance of pseudo-scientists who pretend to believe that God is neither Origin nor End. Not even the Evolutionists stop to think that evolution never started whirling of itself. It’s simply silly. We know that the glorified body shall rise again, even such a body as your Passiflore’s, more beautiful than the angels. So, what matter its condition now, if the soul is straight, the soul that shall beautify that little, lovable face.”

“You really believe all this?”

“Assuredly. Don’t you?”

“I never thought much about any of these things.”

The doctor rose. There were other cases to be seen while he was in New York.

“Knocking about the world, studying human nature along with the human frame, we surgeons discover for ourselves a great deal that is not written in books. Some of the strange things we learn are not easy for a casual mind to accept.”

“What are some of them?”

“One is the essence of happiness in this life. Oh, not mere joyousness; happiness, I mean, deep rooted and glorified.”

“What is the essence of all this?”

“The cross. I said it wasn’t easy to understand.”

“Suffering?”

“Suffering, sorrow, it’s very much the same. One is of the body, the other of the spirit, the soul.”

“One must endure before one sees?”

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“One must. He did first, did He not? Why should He if it were not to show us the way? Did you ever hear a famous Dominican, Dom Bede Jarrett, speak on the seven words of Jesus from the cross?”

“No.” Her path had lain in other fields.

“In speaking of the repentant thief, he said ‘it is only when one is lifted up with Christ, close beside Him, raised on the very cross, that one can be with Him in Paradise. Why? Because Jesus, God, *is* Paradise.’ ”

“It is extraordinary. But—is it the law?”

“I believe it to be the law of life. Have you ever known a person who has never suffered to understand the fullness of joy?”

“I don’t believe I know anyone who has not had cause to suffer whether he or she has taken it as suffering or not.”

“It *must* be taken, accepted as suffering. You see, however irresponsible one may have been, when sorrow comes, one must begin to think, and thinking makes of a man a responsible being, and honest responsibility must gain merit before Heaven. It seems to me that those who attain highest happiness are those who must at one time or another have been crucified in their hearts. So, dear lady, do they find their ‘day in Paradise’ through the cross.”

“I’ve suffered, but not in any such spirit. No joy could come of it. I’ve gone through more than any human being knows. Only now, when I thought

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perhaps to ease my heart a little in the joy of having Passiflore and doing everything for her, I must suffer again through her pain.”

She did not complain. She made the assertion of the thing as it was, patiently.

“If you love her you *must* suffer for her. I think such unselfish suffering is bound to bring peace to your soul—eventually, when the first agony is over.”

She did not answer but stood waiting, though for what she did not know. Then he went on:

“Do you know the Creed?”

She shook her head. Whatever she may have remembered of prayer was nebulous.

“He was crucified, died, and was buried. Then the glorious rest of it, ‘And the third day He rose again from the dead.’ And the Apostles died to prove it. Men do not die for an untruth. Please always think of that. I really must be off. Good-bye.”

Before she realized what had happened, he had taken her hand in his for a moment, was down the steps and away.

Diana lifted her eyes a moment, saying: “Teach me, Lord, for I really don’t know.” It was the closest approach to a prayer she had made for many a long day, but it savored of the prayer of the Publican—“Lord, be merciful.”—Somehow then, peace came.

Michael called up at three. “That you, Diana?”

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"Yes, yes. Doctor Bland came. Did he see you afterwards?"

"I saw him. I'd like to speak to Faith, with your permission, of course, before I go to you. I want to tell her everything. Perhaps it's a great deal to ask, but I have a good reason."

"Why not? She and Jack have had their share of suffering. I can go to them, they'd understand. But—anyone else—I'd be afraid."

"I know. That's all right. No one else need know. It's no one else's affair. When can I see you? I'll try to get in touch with the Desmonds now."

"Five?"

"Right. Five."

Then Diana did something she had never done in her whole life. She sought out Hana and said:

"Hana, I want you to pray for something. I want you to pray right away."

"I will say my beads for what you want." From the sleeve of her kimono Hana drew out a little rosary.

"What do you do when you say your beads?"

The Japanese woman made the sign of the cross. "I believe in God," she began—"And the third day He rose again from the dead——"

"Oh, Hana! Hana!"

As the clock struck five, Michael rang the bell.

"It's all settled," he said as he took Diana's hand, "settled successfully."

THE CANDLESTICK MAKERS

If her hand trembled later on when they were seated at the tea-table and she poured the tea, he never noticed it, so absorbed he was in his great scheme.

"You've relieved Jack and Faith of a great worry."

"I? How?"

"I told you they had bought the place near Santa Barbara, but coming away, they left only a caretaker, a casual of whom they knew little. You know their hearts were in that little house after Mickey—went out of it."

"I know."

"He loved the place and Joan was happy there."

"They named him for you, didn't they?"

"Yes; I was his godfather, but I never got to know him as I do Joan. He was never here for long."

"Did they bring him home?"

"No. His grave is one of the links binding them to Carmel. They buried him in the little churchyard there."

"And now?"

"They want to give you the house for the winter with Passiflore and her mother."

"But, Michael." Her eyes were distended with distressed surprise. "I could never accept it. I could not think of letting them do such a thing."

"Why not? If it is what the child needs, and if

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it could make the mother who has endured more than her share, any happier, why not?"

"Perhaps they'd let me lease the place?"

"No. I know them too well for that. Why not see Faith and talk it over?"

"Would she want to see me?"

This time there were no concealing shadows to hide the flush nor did she trouble to turn her head away. Michael's heart went out to her in pity.

"Faith would love to see you." A faint tinkle sounded through the house, and Michael's eyes danced. "I believe that must be Faith herself. She said she would follow me as quickly as she could."

CHAPTER XII

THE SHINING KNIGHT

GOLDEN sands caught between gleaming sapphire sea and emerald grassy bed. Brown hands busy with the golden sands, moulding, shaping, finishing, now and again dipping crystal water from a deep depression and pouring it out through little brown-cupped palms.

“Is it finished yet, Passy?”

The eyes fixed on the miracle that grew beneath them, smiled.

“You like it?”

“Oh, how shall I tell you what I think. Your hands——”

“I am pleased, too. It is not finished—quite. Wait.”

Deftly she worked in a curve of a little wave beneath the fling of her miniature mermaid’s arm, then she fell back.

“Finished now.”

Joan stooped to see what last touch had been given; only a small passion flower tossing on a diminutive sea.

“It *was* the signature. I thought so. I do love

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it, so does Auntie Di. Let me call her to see it. She's reading aloud to mother over there by the big boulder.

But the girl with the pale oval face held her back.

"Not yet. The sun will set before long. We will wait. It will be fine to-night, see the clouds. They will be pink in half an hour. When all the beach is bathed with rose, then you may call them both."

"Why must it go? Oh, Passiflore, can't you save it?"

The blue-black head bent over its masterpiece.

"It's carved in shifting sands. Like my world, Joan, to be blotted out when the tide rises."

"No, no. We'll fix a way. Can't we pour plaster or something, melted wax, over it?"

"Not plaster, not wax, can keep the little sand girl safe from sweeping tides."

"Ways might be found stronger than your tides."

"Is anything stronger?"

The brown hand was lifted now to shade clear eyes that looked out across endless expanse. Myriad waves lay between a sheltered land she knew of, but had never seen, and Passiflore.

"Love is. Love is the strongest thing in life. Love is stronger and more powerful than all the tides. Love enough and what you do will live. *I know.*

"Is that why your pictures live, Joan? Did love do that for you?"

THE CANDLESTICK MAKERS

The rose-color that Passiflore waited for had not yet bathed the beach, still some of the sunset light had crept to Joan's cheeks.

"Love, 'strong enough to move mountains' must help any work. Yes, it was love in the pictures, but love will do more than that when it has grown as I shall grow."

Gentle breezes carried the enthusiastic words to Faith and Diana where they dreamed out to sea from their sheltered spot.

"What's the child talking about, Faith?"

"Her little philosophies. She's been so much with Michael she's absorbed his quaintness and tenderness. She's far more his echo than a composite of Jack or me."

"Yet, she's very much herself, Faith."

"She's that too, but you and I both see Michael's influence in what she thinks and how she expresses it."

"He undoubtedly was responsible for what she said a moment ago."

"That is what worries me. Jack knows it and it worries him, too. But Michael's Raphael seems as vital to him now as his candlesticks. I don't believe I'd dare interfere."

Diana said nothing, but wondered whether with an ideal as much alive as Michael's boy was to Joan, would her own life have foundered and gone derelict? She believed not, but then one never could tell.

"You have so much, you and Jack in each other.

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You've Joan besides, and Mickey. You've never felt that you've lost Mickey, have you?"

"Not that he's gone. He seems closer at Sea-Roses, though he's with us wherever we are. When Jack says 'Let's go back' I feel that it is not so much Arizona driving, as Carmel calling."

"You Catholics never lose your own who die. It's only that you can't see them, isn't that it? And at the same time they are in the happiness of Heaven. They are with God, doing whatever work God has for them to do, and yet are near you too, *and you are certain of it*. To me that is the most beautiful of all."

"Oh, the joy of that certainty! With God, in Him, by Him, through Him, of Him. Spirit enmeshed in utter joy and still so close to us that if my eyes were not blinded by their material selves they would see—I could put out my hand and touch him."

"Beside you?"

"Beside Jack and Joan and me, beside everyone who needs him, beside those who pray to 'the saints' not ever having heard his name. In their gift of impenetrability they can be with us everywhere. And it's all real, Diana."

"Of course, a rank pagan like myself can't see how he can be with you and in Heaven, too. Your faith must be strong to accept it."

"Why? It's all the same in the 'Communion of Saints.' It's all one, earth, Heaven, the Universe. The only difference lies in that our bodies are

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shackled by God's greatest and most beautiful gift, life. And according to our use of life we shall be with Him or not when life is over."

"How close are *they* to God?"

"How can one find words to express eternal things? But I believe the glorified soul is immersed in God, caught up in the joy of Him. But this is one of the mysteries, for none of us really know what Heaven is."

"You take so much on faith."

"Of course we do, my precious Di, of course we do. A man-made thing is easily analyzed. A divine creed is full of the mystery of God. Our religion is full of mystery, given to us directly from God. One doesn't tear the fruit from the tree—now."

"I did, you know, once. It made a difference, Faith."

She spoke quietly, but Faith knew all about it now. Diana's way had been dark, so dark, and it was she herself who had put out the light. But what she did not know was, what God knew about it, and that youth, ignorance, the folly of both had carried her away. Nor did she realize that that same God Who had ploughed the ground, was planting the seed that should germinate to life and love, and radiance.

"Is there a coming back, I wonder?"

Faith's eyes lingered a moment on the little drooping figure bent above the sands.

"What have you done for Passiflore?"

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“Only what I would have done for my—child— if I had had one.”

“Why would you have done it for your own. Di?”

“For love of her. What else is there?”

“You’ve answered your own question. It is all of life’s philosophy. Listen——” she held up her hand. Joan’s voice, low and clear, reached them.

“But will you do it, Passy? I want it so, I do. Uncle Michael has kept us apart all our lives, so many years. It’s ten years since I first knew him.”

“Knew him?”

“It’s the same thing. I’ve not actually seen him, but that hasn’t mattered. There’ve been the stories about him, letters from him, the pictures Uncle Michael did of him, and the ones I make out of my imagination. We’ve never actually been in the same place at the same time, but our spirits must have met or how could I know him so well?”

“Mr. Crighton didn’t mean to keep you apart, Joan. It must have just happened.”

“Oh, I know that. If my darling Mickey had lived he’d have been away at school, too, just the same as Raphy. Maybe he’d have had to be away in Rome or Paris. Passy——”

“Yes?”

“I’ve found out something nobody knows.”

At this Diana put her hands over her ears. “I can’t listen to that, Faith, can I?”

“She’s my child. I must know.”

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The young voice went on:

"Aunt Hildegarde doesn't love her own son. I'm sure that's the reason Uncle Michael sends him so far away."

"How do you know?"

"It wasn't in her to like us as children. She hated children. She doesn't like me, not a bit. When I'm there, she's as cross as a cross-patch, and while she doesn't actually say anything, I can see her boiling inside when anybody mentions Raphy. Poor Uncle Michael! It makes him frightfully sad. Yet, he sticks to her."

"I love your Uncle Michael."

"Yes. Everybody does, except Aunt Hildegarde."

The brown hand flew up to cover Joan's mouth.

"You must not say such things."

"But Passy, I *know* it," she rejoined with emphasis. "Aunt Hilda only loves herself. I had to be there a great deal. I found out that Uncle Michael would have died of loneliness if I had not gone to him. You have no idea how big that house is, and how empty. I used to see a lot of people who came when he was away or shut up in his library. Some of them laughed when she said, 'poor Michael.' I could have killed them all. There were two especially who always told her how beautiful she was. And she adored that. They were as old as the hills and were called Olga and Hazel. They often told her she was abused. Once

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the Hazel harridan said, 'Why don't you do as I did. Leave him.' Now what did she mean by that? How could Aunt Hilda? Wasn't she married to him? I didn't like that at all. It sounded uncanny."

"Were you happy there?"

"I would rather have been with Mummie and Daddy, but since I couldn't, I would rather have been with Uncle Michael than anybody. I could put up with her for the sake of being with him. After a while I learned not to talk when she was about. Then I adore Judy, the parrot, you know. And the little dogs were dears. Judy's outlived them all. They died one after the other. Uncle Michael just has a Dingle Bey now. She doesn't like Dingle because I got him for Uncle Michael. I know she doesn't abuse him, though, because if she did, Judy would fly at her. Judy does dislike poor Aunt Hilda. Some day he'll kill her!" Joan laughed and went on: "He does hate her that much. Once he flew at her eyes and almost put them out. But I pretended to cry and he behaved. It was awful. Ugh!"

"Faith, tell me if all that is true."

"About Hilda?"

"Yes."

"I've always thought so. Michael begged so hard for Joan that we felt if her presence could in any way make him happier we'd let her go. And you know Michael did great things for Joan.

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Think what it is for her now, what it will mean for her later, to have studied under him. After all he's the greatest architect of his day in America. I know. But I know better what it is to have him for a friend."

"What a fool Hildegarde has been! What an arrant, hopeless——"

Faith's hand reached out to stop her. "That's all right, old girl, but don't say it. Maybe she's always been handicapped. We can't tell. The question is, Joan. She's old enough now to be hurt. Oh, no, I don't mean her feelings. We've all got to go through that and are the stronger for it. But my little girl's soul mustn't be bruised. Underneath all Hilda's indifference she has rather a healthy fear of Michael's principle."

"Where would she be if it were not for Michael?"

"Oh, Hilda would have found a place. She would, you know. But I have an uneasy feeling that unless something unforeseen happens some day she's going to tell Joan the truth. Her dread of what Michael might do is the only thing that holds her back. But"—she laughed as she said it—"I am as afraid to tell as Hilda."

"You? Afraid of Michael?"

"Not Michael. It's being an extraordinary influence for Joan. I'm actually superstitious about breaking into it!"

"Superstitious or not, you'd break in if you believed you had to, Faith."

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Voices again drifted to them, Joan's voice urging.

"Do, Passy. I never wanted anything so much in all my life."

"Mustn't want things too much. It hurts when we can't get them, but if you tell me why you love him so, this boy you have never seen, I will try to do it. I cannot understand such love."

"I'll make you understand," cried Joan. "Who do you love best in all the world?"

"My little mother.' The brown hands gently caressed the tiny figure in the sands as if it had been image of the gentle soul who gave her life, and giving life, had given too the chance to become what she was destined in God's will to be; light in a future of which none of them dreamed.

"Anyone else?"

"You."

"Oh, Passiflore, that's sweet. Doesn't some one come before me?"

"I love the lady Diana, I love her," tremulously now, "and would die for her."

"Anyone else?"

"Your dear mother."

"That all?"

"The doctor. The big kind one that laughs with me, and has long arms and legs and comes to see me at least once in every year."

"Doctor Bland, the surgeon one?"

The little artist nodded her head, and added with a smile:

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"One I keep to the last, I love. One that belongs to you."

"Who? Who?"

"Mr. Crighton."

"I was waiting for that. *Now* do you know what love is?"

"My love, yes. Not yours. Mine is different. I know them all. I see them when I can. They are kind to me. But it is not, none of it is, the love you have in your heart for Raphael whom you have not seen."

"I've not seen him, waking. But I've seen him in dreams and in my thoughts that are like living dreams, and so I know him well."

"How?"

"At first he was just the little boy I played with in Uncle Michael's house. He seemed to make the rooms less empty. Then, he wrote to me, and I answered his letters. And now—he comes all shining, like Sir Galahad, and he's strong, and fair and good. Oh, I do know him. He writes and tells me all about the things he sees and does in Rome. He tells me about his ambitions when he'll be grown up. There's something I want to ask you that may explain it better. Is it because of Aunt Diana you want to make your sculpting perfect?"

"No. I want to do my best for her, of course. She has done everything for me. But I just *must* model. If I could not, I would die. The thought of things I must make pushes my hands to the work.

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My brain dreams day and night of what I want to do. Oh, so much, so much!"

"Then that's the difference. You do it for the work's sake while I do it for Raphael. When I was little I tried to make the things Uncle Michael told me Raphy did, even the candlesticks. I'd invent funny gargoyles and Uncle Michael would laugh at them and send them on for Raphy to copy. Then I'd copy the portraits Uncle Michael did of him. That's how I learned resemblances."

"You get them well, Joan."

"Yes, I know, first off, but it was because I wanted Raphy to say so. I want to do the most beautiful things he has ever seen. Perhaps there's jealousy in it. I never want to hear him say, 'There's Jane, a girl of your own age, and she draws better than you do, Joan.' Ha! No, sir!"

"Oh, Joan, what a silly thing to feel. Does he have it, too, such jealousy? If some one does better than I, how can it touch what I do if it's the best I can? If their work is better, it makes me want to go ahead and do as well."

"That's exactly like Raphy. There's no jealousy in him, not a mean thing. Like his father, he will be great, and——" she added quite seriously. "I will paint pictures for his churches."

"You will have to get the technique of much besides portrait painting, then."

"I will do anything he wants. If I can help his work by study, I'll study. You'll see."

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“You are so pretty, Joan, and so straight. Some one will fall in love with you and want to marry you. You may fall in love with that some one. What will you do about Raphael then?”

“Passiflore,” Joan spoke with all the romantic conviction of her sixteen years, “no one can ever be to me as my shining knight. Others can do wrong. He can do no wrong. Others are hard and selfish. It would kill me to marry anyone not kind and thoughtful. He is patience and unselfishness itself. He is like Uncle Michael, but he is all himself, too, in some ways not like anyone else. There are many not true to their ideals. He is all true and does what he knows is right. He is high-strung and has a temper. Not as bad as mine, though, but he controls his, and that makes him all the finer. Oh, Raphael will be a great man!

“See, Passy, how he gave up his home and friends and me, because his father thought it best he should go away to Rome and study there. See how dearly he loved the art that was in him to do all this. I tell you he is a valiant spirit with high aims. There *never* could be two in one’s life like that. *And I will have nothing less.* So you see, while I live, I couldn’t possibly be in love with anyone else. And of course if a girl’s not in love how could she marry? Why should she? No reason at all.”

“But, Joan, suppose *he* should?”

“Should what, Passy?”

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"Fall in love with some one where he is. It's possible, you know."

"Yes. It's possible. I had even thought of it. But if such a thing should happen I will never marry. I'll go on with my work as you do, for its own sake, and because Uncle Michael would want me to. For me, it must be the best, the highest, *only*. *Only*, I said. No one but Raphael comes up to my standard. So that's all there is about *that*," she finished.

"Di, did you hear?"

"I did, indeed. Michael's fantasy bears fruit. That's love. What are you going to do about it?"

"Consult Jack. Michael is a child in so many ways himself. These are the dreams of a child. He's passed them on to Joan, sixteen and full of romance."

"She doesn't belong to the epoch then, Faith."

"No, thank God. She believes in love and the holiness and beauty of it."

"That's the way it was with you and Jack, wasn't it?"

Faith, knowing the heights and depths, the joy and the sacrifice, answered:

"Yes, that's how it is with Jack and me. Look, Diana, they're beckoning; let's go."

The color for which Passiflore had waited was sweeping across the beach at last and to the stretch of green beyond, turning the sea that had been sapphire into a purple flood. Light that seemed liv-

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ing bathed the little carven figure that tossed on sandy spindrift.

“Diana, Diana, see what your child has done!”

That Passiflore had conceived and executed it appeared hardly possible. On sands that would shift before dark perhaps, lay a miniature masterpiece.

“You like it?” Head cocked on one side the young sculptress asked.

“It’s a work of genius, my little beloved. I knew you were an artist, but I didn’t know you had—this—in you. If we could only make it last! See, Faith, the passion-flower, her signature. You are destined to great future, Passy, not things that must be carried away by the tide. This poor mermaid is like a moth living only an hour to be destroyed at sunset.”

“But, Lady Diana, she *will* have lived her hour,” said Passiflore.”

CHAPTER XIII

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FICKLE New York was drifting with the crowd. Its epochs might have been counted by the fashion of its restaurants. Old Delmonico's in the 80's, Martin's close on its heels, and Sherrys in the 90's and 1900's, old Sherry's of pre-war days, the most beautiful in the whole world. But its traditional perfection was too fine a thing for the post-war influx to understand or appreciate, so it withdrew in proper dignity, and made place for the new generation. Came the Plaza, the Ritz, a galaxy of so-called Clubs, many closed in short order for violation of the Volstead Act, a new Sherry's, the Ambassador, the Roosevelt, and Pierre's. Pierre held to what he could of the old regime. It was he who for many years had helped keep the Sherry's of the nineties the conservative delight it had been. So, at Pierre's a table for seven had been arranged in a corner of the room farthest from the music. The solemn strains of Erik Satie's "Socrates" made satiric accompaniment to Lawrence Minton's party as it filed in.

"Nice of you, Larry, to include me, but aren't I

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out of the line of march with the Vans?" whispered Hazel Trent, unchanged, save for a certain fixed rigidity in her inexpressive face. It suggested applied art.

"Are you? Perhaps we can compare notes," answered her host. Even in this latter day of incivility Hazel realized that with this resurrected Lawrence at least, a certain decorum must be observed. So she asked:

"See much of them over there?"

"Van, Mrs. Trent would like to know if I saw much of you—over there?"

"Mrs. Trent perhaps doesn't know that we—found ourselves—as it were, and found ourselves together." Robert Van Dysart had often wondered at the incongruousness of the elements that made up a certain smart coterie of which Larry Minton, he and Kathleen were integral part. Hazel answered:

"My dear man, I know nothing. No sphinx could have been more dumb than your Kathleen once you and she shook the dust of little old America from your shoes. Can we smoke now, sir host?"

"Whenever you like." Lawrence took a case from his pocket and handed it across the table. Olga Clavering drew a long sigh through a pink quartz-crystal toy, then asked:

"Just what did you do?"

"Two whole years in Italy for one thing."

"Hot?"

"Not at all. We spent the winters in Rome,

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the springs in Venice, the summers and autumns on the lakes and in the hill towns."

"Larry with you?"

"Sometimes."

"I say, Larry, why not Paris? Far more congenial, eh?"

"Think so?" He lighted his own cigarette, then went on:

"Had enough of Paris after the profiteers took hold. It was crowded with every nationality under the sun except the French. By the way, I did hear that you and Mrs. Trent were there so I dropped in at the Meurice one day only to learn you had flown."

"When?"

"Can't exactly remember. Maybe three springs ago. I'd gotten so stale I hardly knew one year from the next, till Kathleen and old Bob here shook me up and out. Never been back since."

"We did go over about then, just to London and Paris. Been too busy hunting over here since. The whole foreign and domestic world has emptied itself into New York. Why waste time and money travelling. The people are the thing. Sticks and stones are good enough for archæologists."

"And architects?" It was Van Dysart who asked the question.

"The Michael Crichtons of the world, perhaps."

Silence. But Kathleen looked at Larry, and he

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understood. A few moments passed, then Larry said:

"I did notice something had emptied itself into New York. It's quite crowded on its own, isn't it? Hard to find space on the Avenue to walk about."

"Why walk? Much too much proletariat to walk."

"And still you say you like it. I should think a little quietude would be a relief."

"Can't live without crowds. That's where we're different. It's the people who make a place." With the didacticism of a pedagogue Hazel proclaimed her viewpoint.

Donald Kaye, who had been quietly discussing certain features of modern American architecture with his next door neighbour, entered for the first time into the general conversation.

"Why necessarily people?" For a moment Olga was interested out of her ordinary phlegmaticism. Most boys of twenty-three or four cared a great deal for people en masse. Why was this one different? And why had Larry Minton annexed him? True, his manner was impeccable, his eyes intelligent, his bearing charming. But he *was* young. Perhaps he flew, or mediumized, or something. It must be something with a swing, and up to date. Auction, dancing, mah-jong, were understood. Everybody did them. Unless there were something exceptionally thrilling about a youth, why produce him?

"Oh, nothing much. Except that sometimes if a

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place is attractive in itself, one can appreciate it better empty," said Kaye.

"Was this the vision that tempted Larry to desert an overpopulated Paris?" Hazel raised incredulous eyes. Kathleen laughed. It was all new and amusing to her, the modern angle a novel thing after years in an older world.

"Ask him to tell you about it," she suggested to the man on her right, Tuck Magargle by name. He had been annexed by the two merry widows as escort in waiting to those cabarets East of Fifth Avenue, called smart for want of a better adjective. Olga Clavering had asked Larry to invite him, but at first glance Larry had set the man down for what he was, a climber and parasite, not of Lawrence Minton's world. If such old acquaintances as the women who sponsored him saw fit to push him ahead, it was their own affair. He was somehow sorry he had invited them. On an impulse he had yielded to the call of the old life. They had all been young together, when differences of taste and character had not been so marked. Tonight the line of demarcation was rather painful than otherwise. Hazel Trent had sounded the note when she spoke of being out of the line of march with Kathleen and Bob. Magargle's oleous voice roused him.

"Tell us why, Mr. Minton. We are all curious."

Lazily Larry raised his glass to his lips. Then:

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“One can’t remain a fox-trotting hound all one’s life. I had really gotten bored, but kept on trotting because I didn’t know what else to do.” Olga drew a long puff and drawled:

“What stopped you?”

“Kaye here. He foxes and trots. He’s young, does everything a young man should. He flies, too. You might like to fly with him some day. He’s Beaux-Arts and that sort of thing. One day at the Salon he fell across the Vans. It seems he’d met them years ago when he was a child. He remembered Kathie. They asked what he was doing, he said painting. Where was he painting? In his studio. Could they come to it? So they bought one of his pictures. That night we were trotting at Ciro’s. He told me about it. Did I know them? I did. Where were they stopping? At the Vendôme. That was the best news since I left America. I left the trottery then and there and never went back. It—nauseated me.”

Magargle, seeped from New York’s back-wash to a fringed position by reason of war stocks, aplomb and purse, whispered into Hazel’s ear:

“Does anybody know what became of the fair Diana?”

“Nobody cared. You can see that much for yourself. He’s wandered about the globe without turning a hair where she was concerned.”

“Every reason why his hair should have turned white, I understand,” he gurgled with amused unc-

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tiousness. To those of delicate sensibilities his manner was particularly obnoxious, but Hazel had no sensibilities to be disturbed, accepting him for what he was and laughing at it.

"No love on either side. She probably showed it from the start. She never could dissemble. Too young when it happened."

"Um!" he grunted. Smooth self-consciousness wrote itself large on his well-fed countenance. Lawrence Minton, by no means the unobservant worldling from under whose roof Diana had taken her departure several years ago, read the man for the acquisitive opportunist he was of the type developed the decade following the war. About him were all the signs of vast prosperity. Larry never doubted that the conversation carried *soto voce* might be about him. It was fortunate though for those who whispered he did not suspect it was about Diana.

"How *could* Di care?" Magargle inquired.

"Never knew you knew her. Call her Di? Must have known her pretty well."

"Why, we all called her that. I was one of her very closest friends," he lied, smugly it is true, but lied all the same. Then he went on: "She had a deuced queer way of chucking a man."

"Chucked you? How?"

"I had taken her to a dance in the Village, some dance, believe me," he shook with appreciation, "nothin' to shock her, not in the least; she wasn't shockable. But she disappeared in the middle of

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it, completely disappeared. How she got home, or who got her there, I never knew.”

“Maybe she was tired and didn’t want to break up the party.”

“I called at her house next day. Was told she’d gone away. I’ve never seen her again, and never saw anyone who had seen her since.”

“Strange,” said Hazel. “I think I’d keep quiet about it to Minton. Don’t suppose it would make any particular difference. He was always our sort, but”—she looked at Larry who, as far as externals went, might still be what she said—“I think you’d better be careful. One never knows. And he’s got the devil of a temper.”

Mrs. Trent, herself none too fastidious, was rather revolted at the attitude this man assumed towards Diana. She had condescended in admitting him to the circle into which she had drifted from the one to which she properly belonged. She would like to have told him straight how his fatuousness disgusted her, that his familiarity with Diana’s name sickened her. Whatever Di may or may not have done she had never made a friend of Tuck Magargle; that Hazel would have sworn on oath. She shrank within herself at sight of his puffy white hand. But there was Olga, the inseparable, to be considered, and Olga had need of what that profitable hand could do. Where there was time to be killed, a restless world to be enjoyed, pleasure to be picked up how and where it might

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be, what odds his vulgar complacency? As to Olga she objected to nothing, provided it or he could be made useful. She was speaking to Larry now.

"You didn't say what you did after Paris."

"Oh, the Vans were going to Rome. I say," with greater evidence of interest than he had yet shown, "have you ever seen the young Vans?"

"No. Don't believe I have. How many are there?"

"Three, and they took me on. They and Bob and Kathie took me on. It *was* sport. Rome and the lakes drove all the Paris mist out of my middle-aged eyes."

"What lakes?"

"Maggiore first. Too many tourists there, and on Como. We ran up to Garda till they had dispersed. Then we went back. D'you know Riva?"

"No. No Italian lakes for me, if you please. Give me the French sea coasts."

"No," mused Larry, "I don't believe you *would* like Riva, Olga."

"But he's not telling you half," broke in Kathleen, "he thought we were getting too much of him, so he went off on his own. And the thing that happened was that he missed us. Didn't you miss us, Larry?"

"Couldn't get along without you. Missed the young Vans, frightfully. First young Vans of any description I had ever known. So I left the lonely

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villa I'd taken at Cernobbio, with several weeks' rent paid in advance, and joined them."

"He motored us through the hill towns. Oh, it was Heaven, wasn't it, Bob? And then we took him with us to Egypt."

"The Valley of Kings and Tut-anhk-Amen, I suppose! Oh, Larry! And you once a live human being!"

"Depends on the way you look at it, Mrs. Trent, on what you call life."

"I like to think of life as a whizz through a maze of jazz," observed Mrs. Clavering.

"Rot, Olga. Even you'd get tired of it. How many years have we been at it? Let's see," counted Hazel, "I can go back um—um—counting from Hilda Crighton's wedding three months after mine."

Kathleen gasped, but Hazel went on:

"It's not modern not to talk of these things. I'd started my divorce from Bingo—my word! It's ten years!"

"You've not been back to America since, Larry?" asked Olga.

"No."

Kathleen, seeing danger in the monosyllabic answer, asked a question that had been on the tip of her tongue ever since the dinner began:

"Has anyone seen the Desmonds?"

"They're just back from California. Lost a child out there."

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"Oh, poor Faith, poor Jack. Not Joan?" It was a distressed Kathleen who asked.

"No. The boy, Mickey. He inherited consumption from his father."

Silence. It was broken by Olga.

"Joan's being heard of."

"Why, she's nothing but a child."

"Seventeen."

"What's she like?" asked Larry, who, since his adoption by the Van Dysart children, found children of all ages interesting and amusing.

"Pretty. Paints." This from Mrs. Clavering.

"I say! Isn't that going it pretty strong for seventeen?" asked Tuck Magargle.

"Idiot," remarked Hazel, "she paints pictures, canvases, what you please. She's being talked about, does things well, shows promise and all that. She's got a picture in the Academy!"

"Whew! Tell me who she is," asked young Kaye. "Seventeen and in the Academy? That's very wonderful."

"She's one of the persons you are to see, my son," said Lawrence, whose intention had been to introduce young Kaye to the Crightons at his first opportunity. To bring him to Michael was his reason for coming to New York, and Larry wanted the pleasure of doing it himself.

"That's corking. When will I see her?"

"As soon as I can arrange it. You have letters,

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but I don't intend to leave you to the mercy of letters alone."

"You see," Van Dysart explained to Hazel, "Kaye has really come over here to take up some work for Michael. Only Minton knows what it is, but all their interests are along the same channel."

"So that's it. Is Larry interested, too?"

"I believe so. He's wonderful, is Larry."

"Kathleen! Are you quite mad? Larry Minton is just what he was yesterday; aren't you, Larry?"

"I suppose I am, Olga, what I was, yesterday. It depends rather on what one was, yesterday."

"If you remember, he said his trotting days were over," added Van.

"You loved the opera. Do you still?" Olga asked.

"Some opera. Even that's changed. I don't care for the modern school."

Kaye, eager to hear what he could about Joan, broke into the conversation.

"Tell me about the girl who paints. What does she do? Landscapes or what?"

"Portraits."

"I seemed to be only beginning at seventeen. Isn't she rather unusual?"

"Not when you consider that Crighton has had her in hand since she was four or five years old. She has practically lived in his house off and on.

"Arrived at seventeen! Incredible, incredible," he said to himself.

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"It's rather a curious story." Kathleen was speaking directly to Kaye, and at the sound of her voice he looked up.

"I'm awfully curious about her. Are the Crigh-ton's any relation?"

"No. The John Desmonds had two children, Joan, and Mickey, named for Michael Crichton, his godfather. Jack was frightfully ill, consumption. The boy had it, too, so Joan was kept away from them. The Crichtons had no children of their own, and as Michael adores Joan he persuaded the Desmonds to leave her with them when they went to Arizona and later to California. The first time she stayed with them it was for four months. Then she was sent out to join her parents at Carmel and was perfectly happy there. The boy died. His death saddened the little thing, besides, her father had to go back to Arizona for a time, so she came again to the Crichtons. After that she stayed with them part of every year, though the greater part was spent at Carmel. Joan was a lonely child, and Michael Crichton conceived the fantastic idea of letting her into a dream of his, that he had a son, Raphael, that the boy was off at school, and that it was a great kindness for Joan to come and fill his place. The curious part of it all is that the boy had become quite real to Michael, and he made him real to Joan. He drew pictures of what he should have been, and sent them to Joan from time to time as coming from Raphael himself.

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I believe they keep up an imaginary correspondence."

"*Keep* up? Surely not now?"

"She has never been told the truth."

"Incredible! Incredible!" Over and over the word reiterated itself in his brain.

"It is. We tell Michael, we *all* tell Michael he is making the mistake of a lifetime. But he thinks it a sort of game and not only there will be no disillusionment when she finds out, but will laugh with them over the imaginings. I know Joan, and I know he is wrong. Michael knows her and thinks he is right.

"She *can't* go on believing in an imaginary boy. Boy? He'd be a man almost."

"The circumstances of her life have made it easy enough and simple, too. Crighton has made an ideal of this son, so lovable that I, too, am half in love with him," laughed Kathleen.

"But, great heavens, it will spoil her for anything less!" Donald exclaimed.

"That's the point. Michael refuses to see it. He says it will give her the highest standard, and that she'll never be deceived into loving any one less worthy than the perfect type builded by him in her heart!"

"I don't get it."

"My dear, no convent could guard its bairns more strictly than do the combined forces of the Desmonds and Crightons hold Joan," volunteered Mrs. Trent.

AFTERMATH

“But what about Mrs. Crighton? You haven’t mentioned her. Is she in sympathy with this—whim—of her husband’s?” asked Magargle.

“Only direct threat on the part of the powerful ruler of her house has kept her silent,” said Olga. “That’s another story that has its interest, believe me, but some day our gentle Hilda is going to break out, and when she does, there’ll be the deuce to pay. By the way, I saw her yesterday. Forgot to mention it.”

“Any news?”

“Some. She said Faith was beginning to think about sending Joan abroad to study. But that’s as much as she knew. She only told me by way of letting off steam. She didn’t use the words, but I saw that if she had to continue Michael’s fictions every time Joan showed up, she’d lose her mind. She did say her nerves were on edge.”

“Oh, was that all?”

“I say,” said Larry, “if we don’t make a start we’ll miss the curtain.”

“What play?”

“‘Sweet Nell of Old Drury,’ with every Barrymore descendant that is on the stage today.”

“Why, man, it opens tonight, and you’ve had this up your sleeve all the time and didn’t tell?”

“I wanted you to enjoy all my party from beginning to end. I may tell you now it’s my *début* and farewell, for I sail as soon as I’ve turned young Kaye over to the house of Crighton. Ready? Righto! Let’s go.”

CHAPTER XIV

MATSUO TAKES ACTION

IMPERTURBABLE, expressionless as always, Matsuo stood before his master.

"I now leave Mr. Crighton's service."

"Isn't this rather sudden?"

"Time has come for Matsuo to return to Japan."

"Was there a fixed time? I need you. I am satisfied with you. No one understands the garden end of my work as you do. I've never been in the habit of asking my employees to stay when they want to go. Just now what I have for you to do is important. I kept you on when you asked to stay. What will you do about it?"

"I will get you a Japanese boy. He knows as I know. He is just come to New York. He is the same as Matsuo."

"Does he speak English?"

"He speaks better English than I when I came."

"Does he understand the work in detail as you do?"

"Just as I do. He learned where I learned."

"When do you propose to go?"

"This is Monday. I must start to California

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Wednesday. The Wednesday after, I sail. I have the passage."

"Then you will finish what you have begun. You have today and tomorrow, and the work in the conservatory at my house is waiting. The last bulbs are ready for packing. I may be obliged to send you out to Roslyn with some of them. And—by the way—if you must go, you must; that is your own affair, but I shall be sorry to lose you."

"I thank you, Mr. Crighton."

He hesitated a moment, then said:

"Some day Mr. Crighton will understand much about Matsuo that he has not known. Much there is to be explained. But I cannot tell what it is."

"Whenever you are ready to tell, then you will speak," said Michael kindly. "I believe you will do what seems best to you. Oh"—as the man started out—"it will not be necessary to disturb Miss Joan. She will be painting in the conservatory and wants to finish what she is doing before she sails on Saturday. She can't finish if she should be interrupted. Go to the conservatory enclosure through the pantry."

"Very well, Mr. Crighton."

When he had gone, Michael wondered how much the man felt at going, or did he feel at all. The circumstances of his service had been more than unusual. All the years—and he could leave like this, scarcely a word, barely a notice. He would have gone at once without finishing what he had

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had started, had Michael allowed it. Curious that he should have applied for work as butler. Apparently whatever he undertook he did well, but had never been butler before. He had a fair knowledge of English when he entered the Crighton's service, and had seemed to improve it each day. He lost no opportunity to study the language, the customs of the country, the country itself. In Michael's house Hana had appeared out of place, the few glimpses he had had of her showed this. But with Diana she had found a niche better adapted to her personality. There she directed the household, looked after Diana's personal needs and took care of Passiflore. As far as they were concerned, Matsuo's going solved a problem. Michael had dreaded Diana's return to town with the Japanese woman and child. Now with Matsuo on his way to Japan, Diana and the others in Italy taking Joan with them, he felt less apprehension.

One phase of the man's search for his wife had been incomprehensible. Why had he conducted it so secretly?

The first wild newspaper reports had been hushed by magic, and Matsuo had never consented to the help Michael had urged. But Michael did not know that the marriage too was shrouded in mystery and that this had been one cause of Hana's grief.

Then his thoughts passed to Hildegarde and her indifference to everything that took place under her roof, indifference to his interests, to his wishes.

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Above all she seemed indifferent to the young girl who lived with them and worked at her painting and drawing a few months out of every year. But here Michael was mistaken. There was no indifference in Hilda's heart to Joan, or Faith or anything that was Faith's.

Some mischievous spirit urged her, ever and always to prick and sting, and hurt Joan where she could, provided always that Michael was out of earshot. Clear-sighted Joan bore with it. Sometimes she understood, sometimes she did not, but she knew Hildegarde. Under bitterest onslaught she kept silent out of loyalty to Michael, and love for Raphael. Everything would have been all right if she had told her mother whose loyalty to Michael was strong as her own. To Faith belonged the rare talent of mending without doing additional hurt. But Joan was afraid her mother might keep her away from Hilda's house, so she never told.

On this same Monday, Hilda, after an unusual run of poor cards at bridge the night before, woke with a frightful headache. Everything irritated her; Joan had elected to do a picture of Judy in color, to be finished before she sailed on Saturday, and Michael had warned her that the loathsome Japanese would be about the conservatory during the greater part of the day, she had better keep to the other part of the house. With all this, Hazel Trent, her new acquisition, Tuck Magargle, and that enchanting English boy, Donald Kaye were

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coming to lunch and an afternoon's auction. She expected to make up her losses of the night before. But Joan always brought her bad luck, it was nothing short of devilish that she must be here now. Nor had she the slightest wish to bring Joan and young Kaye together. True, the girl was just seventeen, and ignorant of the world and its ways. But Kaye, too, was young, not over twenty-four.

A knock at the door, and her maid with a breakfast tray. A note in Michael's handwriting lay beside the coffee pot.

"Had expected to be in Roslyn for the day. I find that unexpected circumstances will keep me in town. If you are going to be at home I will lunch with you and Joan. Michael."

"My God!" she almost shrieked aloud, "something's got to be done."

How go about it? Her only hope lay in Joan. Perhaps she could be induced to take Michael away somewhere, anywhere, but get him away before the others came. At any rate there would be no harm trying.

Leaving the tray untouched, she rang for the maid to bring her a trailing thing of blue and mauve easy to get into. There was no time to be lost. Joan would have arrived, of course, Joan who was apt to come perching on the doorstep at dawn.

Meanwhile, down in the conservatory, Judy, grown loquacious with age, was literally filled with

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conversation. Apparently he wanted to make up for lost time, giving Joan all the gossip of the months she'd been in California. And wildly circling both, went Dingle Bey, barking, snapping, wagging his tail frantic with delight in Joan, Judy, the whole of life.

"Judy, darling! I've come home. Oh, it's only for a day or two, but here I am. And I'm going to do your picture. What do you think of that?"

"Raphy." Sagacious bird!

"Yes, yes. Raphy is in Rome, where I am going to be. If he likes this portrait very much I will give it to him, then copy it for myself. I can't be separated from you two whole years without your picture at least, dear old bird."

Suddenly, without preamble, deep guttural sounds issued from Judy's throat, and he launched forth in Portuguese. It was just as well Joan's education in language was limited.

"Why, what's wrong, dear? You never spoke like that to *me* before. Have I hurt your feelings? Tell me."

But the parrot's answer was to fly back to his perch out of Joan's reach, stretch his neck as far as he could in the direction of the door and hiss as he had heard the sailors of Provincetown do, many and many a time.

"Stop it!" Hilda, imperious, furious, stood in the doorway.

"Oh, Aunt Hilda." Joan was on her feet in an

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instant and went to greet her. It was the first time she had seen her since arriving the day before, for Michael alone had met them at the train and planned what promised a happy time with Judy, the easel, and Raphy's unseen presence.

"Oh! You here, Joan? I didn't know. How-de-do?" Joan kissed the proffered cheek with what grace she could.

"What on earth have you been doing to my bird to put him in such a beastly temper? So early in the morning, too."

"Why, Aunt Hildegarde, we were just as happy as possible. I had only been here a few minutes. I was detained at home and couldn't come as early as I wanted. It's not early, indeed no. It's nearly eleven. He *never* spoke Portuguese to me before in all his life."

"Perhaps his affections have changed since you went away. Affections sometimes do, even those of a parrot."

Joan walked over to the perch, and held out her hand for Judy, and he promptly stepped into it.

"Not for me. Look."

Hildegarde burst into a peal of metallic laughter, quite as disconcerting as Judy's sudden outbreak. Then again, curiously he began to growl and mutter.

"See for yourself," said Hilda, "something undoubtedly went wrong before I came in." She seated herself on a marble bench, drawing her dra-

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peries about her as was her way. Under the great acacia plant she herself was not unlike a brilliant tropical bird.

“What was it?” She spoke sharply enough.

“Why, nothing, Aunt Hilda. We’d been playing together and Dingle was rushing about barking and laughing at us with his mouth wide open—why, where *is* Dingle?”

Slowly out from his retreat in the corner came the little dog. He circled around outside Hilda’s reach, then stood in front of Joan, wagging his tail and looking up into her face. He then sidled as far away from the creature on the bench as possible, and gathered his tiny body close to Joan. His reproachful look in Hildegarde’s direction seemed to express that no fault was to be found with his playmate.

“I suppose he ran away and hid when Judy began to swear,” said Joan.

“And *why* should Judy swear?”

It took all the strength of the young girl’s character to keep from telling the truth. Joan would like to have said that the bird only forgot his manners when Hildegarde came within his ken, to have asked her please to go away and let her begin her work. But—she was Raphael’s mother.

“I ask you what were you talking about?”

“Raphy.” Joan smiled then. “I was telling Judy that soon I would be in Rome where Raphy is, and that if he really wants the portrait I’m to

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do of Judy, he shall have it and I'll copy myself another."

"Oh, my God! Am I to endure this fiction to the end?"

Down crashed the box of precious bulbs from the Orient. They scattered out from the enclosure where Matsuo had been packing them and rolled to Hildegarde's feet.

White and shaking in her rage she rose.

"You—you——" She pointed an outstretched hand towards Matsuo.

"What are you doing in my presence? Sweep up the bulbs and get out of my house. I will not have you here, in spite of any one. Go."

Joan, horror-struck at the look in Hildegarde's face, had sunk to her knees, holding the little frightened dog tight to her breast. For an instant she thought Hilda would strike the man. But Matsuo was bowing an apology.

"I beg Mrs. Crighton's pardon. The master sent me to the enclosure to finish some work. Madam is not often down at this hour. Perhaps some sound startled me as I lifted the box. It dropped, and the bulbs spilled. I will now return to the enclosure and finish what I had begun."

"I'll see you in Hades before you stay another moment. *Get out now.*"

Ominous, portentous, snarling sound somewhere out of mid-air. Had the woman been wise she herself would have left the room, and at once.

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But her temper, never certain, was now at white heat. Joan had read her correctly. She was angry enough to have struck Matsuo. Her worst passions aroused, she stood glaring at him, while one by one he picked up the precious things that had scattered to the four corners of the conservatory.

"Aunt Hilda," pleaded Joan, forgetting her fear in anxiety for Matsuo. "Please don't scold him. He is going away, too, all the way to Japan. Uncle Michael wanted him to finish the packing he had begun, and there was not space enough at the office. He told me all about it when he said I was to come today for Judy's portrait. It was all my fault. Really it was."

The propitiating smile would have won any heart but Hilda's.

"Your fault? Certainly it was your fault, with your eternal prattle of fable and fiction." No use trying to stop her now. The thing had been on the tip of her tongue for years. There was just one chance that Joan might not understand. Or something might intervene. Things did, sometimes. Then Hildegarde took a step closer to Joan and the girl unconsciously shrank back.

"I'm sick of all this nonsense. I'm sick of pretense and lies, and imaginations that fill the house with ghosts that stalk about it night and day. Now I am going to tell you the truth and you can take it or leave it as you choose. There never was a Raphael. My husband invented him simply to

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amuse you. There never has been any child of ours in this house or any other for the simple reason that I won't have one. Is that clear? No one thought you could have been such a little idiot as to believe——”

A wail from Joan stopped her. The girl threw her arms across her face as if Hildegarde's blow had fallen indeed, not on Matsuo, but on her. It was then that Dingle Bey, tail between his legs, slunk from the room and creeping, crawling, found his way to the master's library where he cowered, shaking, against the door.

For at Joan's cry, Judy, with one diabolical shriek had flown at Hilda's eyes. So raging had she been, so mad with fury, she had forgotten the bird's presence, and the rumbling of the storm.

Quick as with a flash of revealing light she remembered the stories that had followed the parrot from Provincetown; how he had blinded, almost killed the man responsible for the death of his mate, and how to save its life the bird had been smuggled out of Cape Cod.

She had been cruel to Matsuo, he who had it in his power to help her now. But why should he? Joan! That was it. The bird loved Joan. She would give her own life if need be.

“Help me—Joan—help!” gasped Hilda.

“Judy! Let go. Joan says let go!”

But the frantic bird had been waiting longer than any of them dreamed to get his claws where

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they were. Now he was not to be dispoiled of his prey. With all his power he held on, biting at Hilda's eyes, her hands, her arms, and lastly at her throat, till she fell weak and cowering on the floor. Matsuo had rushed out through the dining room. Hildegarde saw her last hope go with him. But he was back in a moment, something that glittered in his hand.

Joan had not waited. Caution to the winds she had flung herself down beside Hildegarde in a frenzied effort to wrest the bird away, when an authoritative voice called, "Get back!" and she obeyed. It was all over in a moment. There was a flash when an arm shot out, the parrot's grip relaxed, the brilliant head turned once to where Joan sat on the floor, petrified with fear. Then, splendid plumage crumpling like a bundle of limp rags, Judy lay still.

Joan crept over to see if Hildegarde were stirring. Then she gasped:

"Uncle Michael. Get Uncle Michael."

But Michael had let himself into the house, gone to the library, and found the little dog cringing at the door. Dingle Bey clambered to his master's knee and whimpered.

"Why, Dingle, old fellow, what's the trouble? You look as if some one had struck you." At that moment Michael saw Matsuo's face, not expressionless this time.

"What is it?"

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“Come, sir—to the conservatory. Mrs. Crighton is hurt. The bird——”

“Judy?”

“Flew at her——”

Michael was out of the room and in the conservatory before the man finished his sentence. The jewelled dagger Hilda used as a paper cutter lay on the floor beside her, red and wet.

Michael lifted his wife tenderly in his arms.

And Joan stood staring, staring at him as if he were a stranger.

CHAPTER XV

MARCH OF THE UNBORN

HOW long a time it was, or how short, Joan did not know. She moved over after a while, hardly conscious of what she did, to where Judy lay all crumpled on the floor. She lifted the spread of resplendant wing, and held it to her breast. They had been friends and playmates twelve years out of the short span of her life, playmates when there were no other playmates. Uncle Michael had invented Raphael to *amuse* her!

Judy had been a friend closer than most, for Judy's friendship was based on love and companionship. Judy had nothing to gain, nothing to lose. Friends sometimes misunderstood. Not Judy. Why had he done what he did?

"Oh, Judy, Judy, I see now. I do, indeed." Judy had done this thing for the same reason that Matsuo once long ago had dropped a bowl of fruit shattering behind Aunt Hilda's chair, for the same reason that had sent the bulbs flying in every direction today. It had all been to keep her from telling about Raphy. Better, far better to have let her out with it in the first place.

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So, with her heart aching, hurting more than anything had ached or hurt before, she stared dry-eyed.

When Aunt Hilda woke in her room she was going to be very angry with Judy. She would have him flung to the dust bin or burned up. And he, the one who had been Uncle Michael, would do nothing to prevent it. Of course Judy ought not to have been so wild. But he was only a bird, and Aunt Hildegarde was a human being who should never have lost her temper as she did. It was the first time the child had ever seen any one in the thrall of uncontrolled rage, and the very thought of of it terrified her. But there was a horror, a dismay, greater even than that, a thing she tried with all her young might to put away until she should be more fit to face and endure it. Raphael had never been born. He had never lived. He had never gone away to school, nor to Rome. She was not to see him in Rome. Raphael, her shining knight, had never loved her.

The man who had been Uncle Michael had lied to her. Not once, but all her life. Only he? Every one she knew. The Trent woman. She remembered her sardonic smile when Hildegarde referred to "Michael's little obsession." She had asked what obsession was, and they laughed at her. Then she had looked it up in the dictionary: "Being vexed or besieged by some foreign personality." The definition had no sense. It had meant nothing to

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her, then. But she had been the dupe of it all. She remembered with loathing that the one they called Olga would deliberately set herself to get Joan to speak of him, and she did speak, with bated breath, rising color, a heart that beat, of a myth, a phantom, a creature that was nothing.

Then, her lips paled. Her mother, her father, what had they done about it? In minutest detail it came back to her. Nothing that in any way affected the Raphael she had thought to know, was forgotten.

"It's queer of Uncle Michael."

"What, darling?"

"Not ever to have Raphy home. I can understand Aunt Hildegarde because she doesn't love children. But Uncle Michael says his house is big and empty, and so it is. Yet he never has Raphy come home."

"Perhaps it's a vagary of his, dear," Mummie had explained. "Artists are imaginative, full of dreams. Let him be as he is. Some day you will understand."

That was it, the day had come, now she understood. Mummie had not exactly told a lie, but wasn't it "aiding and abetting?" She had gotten around the truth somehow and had stood up for Uncle Michael. What had Daddy said, when the last pictures came?

"Whimsey old Michael. He's done it well."

"Uncle Michael didn't take the photographs,

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Daddy. Surely he did not. He's not even got a camera."

"He drew the pictures, child."

"No, Daddy. They are photographs. Don't you see?"

Daddy hadn't laughed. He had taken her eager little face between his two hands, such wasted, slender hands:

"Maybe it was a whimsey of his to keep the drawings and have them copied by a photographer for my little girl. He's a fanciful Uncle Michael and we love him for it, sometimes we feel sorry for him for it, Mummie and I."

"What's whimsey, Daddy? Is it a bad thing?"

"Only a perplexing thing at times," he had answered.

She had not liked to ask him any more questions, poor Daddy who was so often tired. But when she could be alone she had gotten down the big dictionary again and looked up all the words, "vagary," "perplexing," and found their explanation as puzzling as the words themselves. Till now she had not thought of these puzzling things, nor that she had asked about them. But it all came back. Her mother and father had let him who had been Uncle Michael play his little pretense without spoiling it. But they had never actually told her the thing was true. Back and back she went over the years. Oh, why had no one told her the truth when she began to grow out of childish games?

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Who had written the letters, Raphy's letters, her most cherished possessions?

Then she made up her mind. She would slip out of this house where she had been so foolishly, blindly, childishly happy, and never as long as she lived would she return to it. It would not be safe to leave Judy behind. They would do anything Aunt Hilda asked now. So she lifted the fallen mass of plumage in her arms and slipped out through the wide doors into the dining room, where the table was set for seven people, on through the broad hallway to the front door. She rather wondered that no one was about, to see her go, not even the man who had replaced Matsuo. She did not guess that Hildegarde was ill, indeed so ill that all the household had been thrown out of routine. Those who were not actively engaged under doctor's orders were gathered in the servant's hall discussing the possibilities of what might happen next. As Joan closed the door behind her, the clock struck the half hour. Eyes unseeing, barely conscious of what she did, or where she was going, bareheaded, the dead parrot in her arms, she started down the steps straight into a youth who was flying up two at a time.

"Oh!" from both at once. Then the boy took off his hat, and the sun shone full on his fair hair.

"I *am* sorry. Oughtn't to have been rushing up like that. Didn't notice any one was coming down.

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Hope I didn't hurt you?" he inquired anxiously. But Joan had eyes only for Judy.

"No. It's my parrot. He is dead. I am taking him to bury him. You could not hurt him now," she said piteously with a premonitory trembling of the lips. "No one could hurt him now."

Then to her own distress, Joan began to cry. And the more she tried to stop it, the more it became impossible. She could neither stem the tears nor bring Judy back to life, so she buried her face in the blue and green of his feathers and tried to stifle her sobs on the mangled breast.

"Oh, I say, is there anything I can do? I'm most awfully sorry. Let me ring a bell and call a maid or something."

"Oh, no, *please*. The threat to call a maid was the one suggestion sufficiently potent to startle the tears away.

"You see they don't know I'm taking Judy. I'd rather they wouldn't till he is safely buried. Then they can't get at him. They will never know where he is buried. Even Aunt Hildegarde wouldn't want him dug up."

"If—if I can do anything, I'm Donald Kaye. I like b-birds and beautiful things. I might perhaps m-make it a box, or something."

"Oh, thank you. You are very good. But I couldn't possibly let any one do anything for him but me. Besides, there isn't time. We are sailing

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Saturday. I've got to do everything at once." She raised her eyes, and he saw the blue stars reflected in a sea of tears. She even smiled a little when she said:

"I do appreciate your offer to make a box."

Uncertain what to do next he glanced up and down the Avenue.

"If there were time, before the others came, I'd like to carry her—him—the bird—I think you said it's name is Judy?"

"Him. But I don't think you'll get your lunch, because Aunt Hildegarde had a fight with him, and he had to be stabbed with her paper cutter to get him away from her, and though the table is beautifully set with flowers and things I'm almost quite sure there won't be any party. But you'd better go on in, anyway, and see Un——" her lips tightened, "Mr. Crighton."

"Are you going to carry—Judy—like that? And you know you haven't got any hat on."

"Oh!" she put her free hand up to her head. "So I haven't."

Where was her hat? Back where she had flung it, joyously, so joyously, on a tree in the conservatory. And never as long as she lived would she put her foot in the house again. Once more, tragedy.

"Why a hat? Nothing matters, nothing matters any more."

Without further good-bye, without even a

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thought of him to whom she had told her trouble, she walked down the steps onto the pavement and down the Avenue while the few people who passed her stared and turned to watch. She was only conscious of the pain in her breast.

“What an extraordinary——” At that instant a taxi drove up depositing Olga Clavering, Hazel Trent, and Tuck Magargle who stopped to pay the fare. Following the line of young Kaye’s spellbound eyes, Olga caught a glimpse of Joan as she turned Eastwards.

“Well,” she laughed. “Trust Hildegarde for finding a way of losing the child for the day. I thought she would. But how peculiarly she looked!”

“Yes. That’s because she hasn’t on a hat.”

“Why not, per Dio?”

“She didn’t tell me, but I gathered she’d forgotten to put it on and when I reminded her she said it didn’t matter.”

“Something is decidedly wrong. Joan Desmond may be a dreamer but she has some sense.”

“Joan Desmond? Is that Joan Desmond? And I didn’t know her.”

“Who did you think it was?”

“I don’t believe I stopped to think at all. Wish I’d known. The girl that paints portraits. I played with her years ago, way out at Carmel. She was too young to remember me. But I can’t forget how wild with joy she was to find children to play with, when she came.”

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"Evidently the same. They have a place at Carmel. Why do you suppose no one comes to the door? Did you ring?"

"Oh, no. I believe I forgot to ring. She said there might be no luncheon. Something about her parrot, killed, after deadly combat. I didn't quite get it all."

Mrs. Trent looked at Mrs. Clavering and they both laughed.

"It would take more than combat or the death of that parrot to keep Hilda from a game of bridge."

The door opened and the man came outside.

"Mr. Crighton is very sorry. There has been an accident. Mrs. Crighton is in a dangerous condition; in fact she is still unconscious. Mr. Crighton regrets, but there can be no luncheon today."

For once in her life Hazel asked in a voice whose concern was not altogether insincere:

"I hope it is only slight, that there is no real danger?"

"We can't tell yet, madam. There is to be a consultation at four o'clock."

Donald Kaye wrote a few words on his card, handing it to the man. "Please give this to Mr. Crighton. I will hold myself in readiness for any service."

"Thank you, sir. I will give it to him at once."

The three who had come together, stopped a down-going taxi and drove off to lunch at Sherry's, but Kaye walked alone to his hotel, thinking of the

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girl with the parrot, and of much concerning life and death, and the way of doing both.

Up in Hildegarde's room, darkness and silence. Part of the time Michael sat looking at the face on the pillow, poor mutilated face that had been too vain, poor bandaged eyes that had seen too much. Then he would pace the floor while the doctor watched. The unnatural flush that had suffused her cheeks gradually faded, leaving a dark spot close to the right temple. The marks about her throat were black. An hour passed. Two hours.

"Why doesn't the nurse come?"

"I did not send for one."

"But she's so ill, doctor. Let me telephone for one."

"Yes. She is very ill. But unless you wish to have a nurse in the house, it will not be necessary. I will stay while she needs me."

"You don't mean——?"

"Only a short time left, Mr. Crighton."

"God!" The cry was wrung from the soul, not of the man Michael, who knew Hilda for what she had been, but from the very heart of the boy who at twenty-one had married her.

Whether this, or another cause roused her, she stirred slightly and felt for his hand.

"She's awake, doctor; don't you think she might like a minister? Hadn't you better call up St. Giles' rectory? That is her church."

"No, please, Michael." The voice was feeble,

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but the words distinct. The doctor bent over her. His voice was more cheerful than it had been.

"Better, far better than I had hoped. If you wish I'll stay in the next room. I'll telephone a nurse, one who will come at once."

"I'd feel safer if you would," said poor Michael. Then he turned to Hilda.

"That's good, old lady. Couldn't sleep all day, could you?"

She lifted a frail hand and stroked his cheek.

"Tears, Michael? Mustn't cry," the while tears from her own hurt eyes fell fast beneath the bandages. Came a whisper so faint he had to bend to hear it.

"How long?"

"Sweetheart, I can't hear you."

Weakly the hand went up to her throat.

"It hurts," she said, then, a little louder: "How long do they give me?"

"The doctor is telephoning now for a nurse to come and take care of you till you are all well. We'll get you up in no time."

"Don't be silly, Michael. I know."

"A tussle with a bird isn't going to put you out like that, dearest."

"That wouldn't. Though I'd be a sight for the rest of my life. I should hate that. It's another thing. Look." Feebly she lifted the sheet from her left arm. "I can't move it. But don't worry."

Again silence, this time for fully fifteen minutes.

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She might have been asleep. He could not tell. He noticed how dark the marks along the temples had grown.

“Judy.”

“Joan has Judy.”

“I don’t want him killed. He was not to blame.”

“No, dear. That’s all right. Whatever you want. But I couldn’t have him around now, you know.”

“I made him angry. He couldn’t help himself. I could have helped myself. It’s always been like that. I blamed every one, everything, but me. I never was willing to do that. I knew all the time I was wrong, but I just let loose. Give Judy to Joan to keep?”

“Yes, sweetheart.”

Helpful to everyone who had ever asked his help, he was powerless in face of Hildegarde’s great journey. She must go alone. And no one better than Michael knew how unprepared she was.

Nothing packed, nothing ready, hands useless, heart empty of innocence or charitableness, shallow soul, fruitless mind, a life of selfishness. Hildegarde’s equipment with which to stand before the throne of the most high Judge was pitifully inadequate. And because Michael loved her and she was his, he would have gladly died to spare her what she must pass through. That part was inevitable. One might shirk it for a few short hours, delay it perhaps while the doctor’s skill holds good, but

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the fact stands—death is, and the Judge is the all-knowing God.

If, for a while, Michael's love for Hilda had been shocked into a sort of coma, not through his fault, never through Michael's fault, the deathly lethargy had passed. His love was alive, awake, alert as it had never been before. His young heart yearned for the young wife, Hilda, in whom his youth had trusted.

Through his brain shot a thought that sent the perspiration in cold drops to his forehead. What of the souls to whom Hildegarde had denied existence? What of them? Would their shadows greet her with reproach for their extinction? Out of depression the answer came. Not even the shadows. Only the emptiness.

Had she ever been sorry? Was it in her to regret—anything? Michael prayed as he had never prayed before. But the burden of his prayer was echo of an Agony long ago:

“Father, forgive her. She knew not what she did.”

A slight stir, then the doctor's voice:

“The nurse is here. Shall she remain with Mrs. Crighton, or would you rather be alone?”

It took a moment for Michael to collect himself, his soul was steeped in the earnestness with which he prayed.

“No, not yet. I think she is asleep and I would rather be alone.”

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It did not take a second glance for the quick-sighted doctor to perceive that the face on the pillow, to a certain extent, had relaxed.

“Yes, she is sleeping. It is the one thing that can help. And she will be stronger when she wakes. If you see any change, call me.”

“You think there might be hope? After this sleep?”

“Not for long now, Mr. Crighton. Perhaps a few hours, perhaps less.”

“I thought the deep sleep would help,” said poor Michael, and turned away to watch and listen while he could.

“It will help, indeed it will, and she’ll be stronger and quite lucid when she wakens. And, Mr. Crighton——” the kindly man hesitated. No matter what the circumstances it was always just as hard. “If you have anything you want to do, or say, use what time there is. No,” in answer to the stricken, questioning eyes, “it can’t hurt her.”

Then the doctor went out into Hilda’s morning room where the nurse sat waiting to be called.

“Then I must speak quickly, Michael, mustn’t I?”

“Oh, beloved, I didn’t know——”

“I heard. It’s better I should have heard. Come close, give me your hand, your strong, helpful hand. It may hold me back a little while, perhaps. I’ve got so much to say.” Then she seemed to rest and gather strength before going on.

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"I might have been asleep. I don't know. Waking, sleeping, all mixed up. But I dreamed—oh, Michael, the procession passed right by my bed."

"Procession, sweetheart?"

"Yes. Little children knocking at the door of women—like me. I saw their eager faces, smiling, anxious, alive with love. Their hands, such tiny hands, were full of something. I couldn't see at first what it was. They pressed it to their breasts to keep it hidden like a birthday surprise, or Christmas. There was mischievousness in some of their faces. Michael, are you listening?"

"Yes, oh, yes, beloved." She must not hear him cry. But the one good hand that crept back to his cheek, felt the falling tears.

"Strange how a dream can hold so many things in a single instant. It's as if Eternity were a flash of vision and Time the thing that blinds one."

"Hilda! Where did you learn that?"

"The children. They made things quite clear. Things I might have known before if I had only let them in. These were what they carried so tight to their breasts. They came one by one, and yet it happened all at the same time, and each one showed me a glimpse of Truth. They showed me strange things, very strange things."

"Dear heart, I know. But rest a little. Your hand is feverish, and—I'm afraid for you."

"No, Michael. There'll be a long rest. There's so little time left and I must tell you. Their small

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bodies were not what we call perfect, nor were their minds all that you and I would want the minds of our own to be. But there was clarity because of the spirit that lives and is whole. I learned that. One, limping, lamed, came smiling at the thing in his hand."

"What was it, Hilda?"

"Mother-love. The poorer they are in body the richer they are in mother-love. That's why mothers care most for the afflicted ones. You've no idea, old Michael, how strong that love can be. As they passed, they opened their hands, all of them, and showed me what they held. The ones whose minds were not to be strong carried the most exquisite tenderness close to their hearts. The well ones helped the others, but not one was conscious of being less desirable than the most perfect ones. Each carried love and I saw how love is everything. And talents! Such talents, Michael. I saw a little hunch-back girl, not white—I couldn't make her out. But she was happy in sculpting people who were straight. I saw the music-makers. They showed me how they made their music. And a group of dancers like the wood nymphs of our playdays. But something happened."

"What, dear love?"

"They came trooping eagerly—joyously. But the look in their eyes changed, first to surprise, then fear, then—and that was worst of all, disappointment. Their little hands fell open and the beau-

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tiful gifts of love and hope and faith, and all the talents in the world dropped at their feet, the feet had been so sure before, now timorous and halting. The birthday surprises were broken, Michael. I saw how gifts that would have meant everything to future generations were all lost."

She lay still for a time. He thought she slept but she was gathering strength to tell the rest while there was time.

"Listen, Michael, darling. I've got to tell you—because the day may come when you can prevent other people from being what I've been. The little faces that had smiled at me were struck with desolation. Heaven had been opened to them through the will of God. Man's will opposed to His had forever shut them out from Heaven.

"Oh, my dear one, it was I and all the men and women, who, feeling as I felt, doing as I did, because we refused to let them pass, have been barred out from an earthly Paradise by a flaming sword of our own making."

She turned and buried her poor face in an enfolding arm. As best he could, he comforted her. Regret had come too late.

After awhile she spoke again.

"God is giving me strength to tell this to help the others. I wish I could live to make it up to Joan, your Joan. She was in the dream, too, not as she is but—how can I explain—as a beginning, a foundation, a long line before her all working to the

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end of the reason for her existence. Our own Raphael——”

“Oh, Hilda, my poor love, *don't!*”

“He was real, Michael. He came almost to my arms. Almost. But like the others who had beaten at frozen hearts till their poor hands bled, he faded into nothingness. At the end I've been let see all you saw in the beginning. Not only have I kept our own house empty, but I've emptied generations and generations.”

“Oh, Hilda, darling, stop! It's all in God's keeping. Don't think of it any more. Perhaps it was to have been just as it is.”

“If that were true, I'd not have seen. While I can't undo the harm I've done, my suffering now may be of some atonement and maybe help the others. Diana! I don't know why she's so much in my mind, but she may learn through me what she might never have learned unless I had died—knowing and telling. I was responsible for the bitter wrong done her. She who preaches is responsible for all who listen and do. I just wanted to know, Michael, at first. It all seemed a lark, not serious. I was so heedless in those days. Now I know it was vital. I was shown the way to avoid responsibility and I've always shirked responsibility.”

“Don't worry any more, now *please*, Hilda. God knows all that and God forgives everything if we are sorry.”

“Would he forgive *me?*”

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“With His sacred Heart, he forgives us when we want to be forgiven.”

“There are some things I can’t forget. Do you remember how once, in a temper, I flung out at you the thing Arachne told us about your baptismal ceremony? Do you remember?”

Poor Michael had tried to forget it was Hilda who repeated the falsehood that had frozen his blood in his veins. Besides the thing itself, it had hurt him that a statement so outrageous, so unintelligent, could have touched Hilda’s understanding of his belief. He remembered well the words Hilda repeated, that still rang in his ears:

“It was held that the child was conceived in sin and that an unclean spirit had possession of it. This spirit can be removed only by baptism, and the Roman Catholic baptismal service even yet contains these words: ‘Go out of him, thou unclean spirit, and give place unto the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete.’ ”

“Do you, Michael, do you remember?” Hildegarde repeated.

“Yes, yes, dearest. I tried to tell you then, about the doctrine of original sin, and how through the disobedience of our first parents we inherit the ‘original sin’ in which we are born, and only baptism can take it away.”

“I wouldn’t listen then. Tell me now, for there’s something I want very much.”

“Every child is born in ‘the state of original sin,’

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the sin we inherit directly from Adam and Eve who disobeyed the command of God. This disobedience is the sin in which we are born. Baptism takes it away. I repeat, 'disobedience' for the interpretation of the woman who lectured is a very different one. Whether the baptism be of water, of desire, or of blood, according to circumstance, the sin is taken away. The Church commands the devil, the 'unclean spirit' the evil one, all names for the devil, to depart from the soul of the person to be baptized, because as long as a soul is in the state of sin, it cannot be in the state of grace. And unless a soul is in the state of grace it cannot see, or dwell with God."

"Oh, Michael, what a difference! What misconception of the truth."

"Listen, darling. There is something I must tell you about Arachne."

"*You?* What could you know about such a woman?"

"Yes, I, sweetheart. She may not be to blame, no entirely ignorant person is. All the arguments in her lectures, in her books, are born of just such blindness as the thing we have been discussing. We are going to forgive her along with the rest, because perhaps she doesn't know. You see, you and I can't judge. God alone knows the accountableness of each one, how capable, or incapable each person is, to grasp the truth. Some are unfortunate enough to be caught in the toils of untruth from the youth

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and never see the way out. Who knows? Perhaps after all the years, if she were to find out what the thing really is, she might retract."

"Could she undo the harm?"

"We'll leave that to God, sweetheart. There's something tremendously noble in retracting a wrong one has done."

"And we must forgive her for all the wrong things that led—to my being—hurt like this now?"

"Oh, my precious love, we must forgive everything, everyone."

"Even the wrong to you? To Diana? To the little Japanese woman?"

"Everything. I couldn't tell you about Diana and the Japanese woman and the child before. She took them both and cared for them, and is completely transformed in doing it."

Then Hildegarde turned a cheek that suddenly became suffused with color to Michael, kneeling, watching her.

"Wait. The girl is a cripple, a hunchback. I dreamed her with the rest."

"Yes, dear. I know."

"Diana will live to look back in happiness for all she has done. Did you know I'd been frightfully jealous of Joan?"

"Hush, hush. There was never reason for jealousy of anyone."

"But I must tell you why. I resented Faith's child taking the place of the children I was too self-

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ish to have. Will you forgive me that and ask Faith to forgive?"

"There's nothing to forgive. You see, beloved, I love you."

"The thing I said I wanted so very much—will you baptize me, Michael?"

His heart throbbing with the wonder, the unexpected joy of what she asked, he answered:

"Let me send for a priest, he will baptize you."

"Then call the doctor and tell him to send."

A look passed between the two men, but the doctor called up the Cathedral rectory. Then he said that to the nurse which sent her hurrying to put all in readiness.

"Darling, do you believe in the regeneration of suffering?"

"I do believe in it."

"Then do you think perhaps all the terrible things that have happened to me may have been for *my* regeneration?"

"Perhaps God wills it for the regeneration of many. No one who knows how heroically you've taken up your cross could help being better for it, my poor love," answered Michael whose heart was wrung with anguish.

"Then it's like laying down one's life for one's friend to tell God one is willing? Even glad?"

"Just that, my Hilda."

"Give me your crucifix, Michael. Thank you. My cross is so little, so little. He floods it with light

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to make it easier. I'd like to kiss the crucifix." He held it to her lips.

"Swiftly now, best Beloved." He saw there would be no time for the priest to get there, but the nurse had every thing ready.

"Hildegarde, I baptize thee——"

"Mary Hildegarde." Clearly and distinctly she spoke the names.

"Mary Hildegarde, I baptize thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son. and of the Holy Ghost. Amen."

On the saving waters of regeneration Hilda's fragile bark went floating out to eternity.

CHAPTER XVI

“WITH A WET BLANKET I’LL PUT IT OUT”

“**A**LL the way across you scarcely spoke a word. And now, in Rome, after two days, silence. Next week I go away to the Academy and you to Via Margutta. There will be no opportunity for long talks. Tell me, Joan, what is hurting you so. If you do not speak of it to some one you will quietly blow up.”

Joan smiled, but did not laugh. Her vivacity had departed along with the color in her face. An older expression had come into the eyes and her hands were idle.

She felt not so much that they had lost their inspiration, as that their inspiration had never even been. She held them up to where the sunshine showed red through their pale fragility.

“Via Margutta and nothing to paint for,” she said.

“Why, Joan, where is your ring?”

“I don’t know. I left it behind with the rest of the things—he—gave me.”

“It was a beautiful one.”

“It was a child’s ring.”

“He had it designed for you?”

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“It reminded me of things I want to forget. Passy.

“Yes?”

“I could tell you, only you, everything. It would ease my heart to get it out. But what other good would it do? The thing’s over, finished.”

“Do you remember once, at Carmel, I was blue and sad? That day you told me of your love. Forgive me for remembering. But that day Passiflore was sad because so beautiful a thing would never come into her life. You have had it, Joan, a thing never to forget.”

“How can you say that, when it was artificial, a counterfeit?”

The dark head went down between the arms folded on the balcony railing, but Joan did not cry.

“I told you I loved *you*, Joan. What good would my love be if it could not help you when you are down and blue?”

Then Joan Desmond clenched her fists and beat them against the stone.

“I hardly know myself, Passy. It’s a lump here, right in my breast, cold as if there were no feeling there at all. I’ve been thinking, all the way over, and since we came, that I’m too young to have my whole life crushed out like this.”

“It’s because you care too intensely for everything.”

“Perhaps so. It was bad enough to lose—what I lost—but to find I cannot trust even the best in

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the world, I believe that's what kills all feeling in my heart. You say I haven't spoken. I've felt too numb even to think."

It was Passiflore's eyes that filled with tears.

"Don't tell me if you don't want to. It's all right. I just thought it might melt the numbness."

"I will tell you, then. But only for you. Perhaps it would be better."

"I had planned what I was going to say to—him. They were hurtful things. I thought I'd get a chance to say what I had to tell him, then walk away, out of his life, forever. You see, he had built up before my eyes *an ideal that never even existed*. He had planned my career for me with no regard to the me I might have been if I had been left to myself. And I'm not even a blood relation!"

She opened her eyes to their fullest extent as she made this last astonishing assertion. The argument was irrefutable to her, but Passiflore found it unconvincing.

"The career was a good career, Joan."

"But I did it *all* for Raphael. All! I was to have helped him in his work. I had not intended to go to the house again, never again. But Mummie said I must when she found Aunt Hilda had died. I really didn't want to. But I did go with Mummie. It was all strange. I felt that I was at another funeral, Raphael's funeral. When we got there Mummie went off somewhere and told me to wait in the drawing-room downstairs. I was afraid—

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he—would come in. But he didn’t. After a while Lizette, you know, her maid, came and said I was expected in the library. He, you know, was standing near the door. He was waiting for me. I never never saw him look like that. He seemed somehow down. I was frightened. Of course I couldn’t say the things I’d planned to say, when after all his wife had died, and in his own house, too, and especially after Mummie told me it turned out he cared dreadfully. So I just went in. He took my face in his hands the way Daddy does and looked through me into China. Then he said: ‘I’m afraid you’ll have to forgive Uncle Michael a great deal.’ ”

“What did you do?”

“What *could* I? I said, ‘yes.’ ”

“Was that all?”

“I was embarrassed for the first time in my life because everything was turning out so differently from the way I had expected. But the next thing he said put me on my feet. ‘We outgrow everything, Joan, even sorrow. You are going to outgrow the awful recollection of these days, for you’re young, dear, so very young.’ ”

“*Then* I said one of the things I had intended to say: ‘I’m not coming back.’ My voice went so small and queer that I cleared my throat and said it over, and added the last thing in the world I wanted to tell him.”

“What was that?”

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“‘At least until I can come home with someone else as perfect in every way as——’ Something in his eyes stopped me and I couldn’t go on and I couldn’t finish. He said, ‘Come.’ Then he walked ahead of me up to—her room—and straight in. You could have heard my heart, it beat so. My mother was kneeling by the bed and got up when we came. I looked, and, what do you think, Passy? She—Aunt Hildegarde—was lying there like a little girl smiling in her sleep. Her lovely hair was parted and fell in waves about her temples, but there was a thin white gauze like a bandage over her poor eyes. I lost all the hard feeling I might have had. Mummie and I said a Hail Mary for her. She died a Catholic. It was all so strange—as if somebody had taken her place. This one was meek.”

“Did you see—him—again?”

“No. I slipped out. I think he was crying. Mummie said at first he had expected to come to the ship, but when all these things happened of course he couldn’t.”

“I don’t suppose he could. What did you do with Judy?”

“I buried him myself. I could only find a grapefruit box, but I scraped the pictures off and painted it in a sort of sombre Batik. Then I wrapped Judy up in an old Carmen fancy dress of Mummie’s. It was the nearest thing we could find to Portuguese, being Spanish. I made a sort of reverential burial service because I couldn’t bear to put him in the

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earth like a heathen without a word. And so that’s all.”

“But when you go home everything will be just as it was except for Mrs. Crighton and Judy. You’ll be so happy to *get* home after two years that you will go on just as you always did.”

“No, Passy. I don’t think I will ever go back. There is still something I cannot tell. Perhaps I will later if things turn out as I think they will.”

So the two talked on, in their balustraded eyrie hung out over Rome from the smallest house along the piazzetta of the Trinita.

Back in the long ago, Faith and Jack had known it well, stucco mellowed into dull yellow, creeping vines that framed windows, two on Via Sistina, two on Via Gregoriana, the small house being somehow divided between both streets. The casual eye saw only the picturesque old-worldliness of it, and the witchery of Rome in the charm of it, but Faith and Jack had made it livable.

Wreathed in wistaria, sequestered behind climbing roses, the balcony suspended like a lark’s nest over Piazza di Spagna, bathed itself day and night in the glories of the Citta Eterna.

Passy, one day to carve her passion-flower on Rome’s marble, raised her eyes to Mary Immaculate, Mary of the uplifted hands, Mary of supernal Conception, pleading for the unbelievers of the world.

Beyond the Piazza stretched Via de’ Condotti,

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artery to the Corso beyond. Over and above all—the Dome——

“When shall we go?”

“I must go at once.”

“Why at once, Joan?”

“I feel the need. There was something I did not tell you, remember. There is only a short time left in which to do the things I *must* do. In fact, Passy, I doubt if there will be time for anything except Saint Peter’s.”

“You frighten me. What is it all about? Does Lady Diana know?”

“No one knows. Don’t be frightened. There’s nothing really frightening.” Then, with the sententiousness, impressiveness of her seventeen short years, Joan continued; “Each of us is born to a certain destiny. Who knows, if out of what I’ve suffered I may not have found mine?”

She’d hardly finished speaking, making due effect on her audience, when Diana stepped out onto the balcony.

“A letter for Joan and a posy for Passiflore. Catch! Fancy a country where the postman carries flowers with the daily mail.”

Fascinated by the scene before her she looked out over the rainbow roofs to the great Duomo, and Passy buried her face in the dewy blossoms. She looked up at Diana with dancing eyes.

“It’s getting into my blood, Lady Diana. When do we go to Saint Peter’s?”

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“How tired are my lambkins? You’ve both had enough to do the last few days to exhaust you.”

“Not tired at all,” they chorused.

“What about twilight, just for an hour to say how-do-you-do?”

“I’d love it. And you, Joan?”

Passiflore was never quite certain of Joan now. She looked at her anxiously.

“I will be ready when you are, Aunt Di. Perhaps I’ll have to answer this letter, but I’ll be ready just the same. You see, I must lose no time in seeing the things that must be seen.” She stepped back through the open door into the drawing room and up to her own domain. Diana turned a surprised face to Passiflore.

“What on earth does she mean?”

“I don’t know. She said the same thing to me before you came out.”

“Poor little soul. What an ordeal she’s going through! We can only wait and see.”

“Yes. Wait and see.” Passiflore always found it strange that a person straight and strong should have a sorrow.

Meanwhile Joan, wondering, had taken her letter to the desk Diana had fitted out for her. She knew the writing well. What could he have to say to her?

NEW YORK, November, 19—

LITTLE JOAN:

Three whole weeks since you sailed away! I could not

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write easily before. But you understand, you always did. I've been like an old man foundering in the dark. But there were many things to lighten the darkness—at the end.

Some day I will explain a great deal. Now I've got to tell you how sorry I am, how sincerely, profoundly grieved for the thing I never dreamed had gone so deep. He was real to me, real as any plan conceived but not yet set to paper. I'd grown used to living with this dream as with reality and I made the dream reality to you. I don't know how I can explain it any better than this or make my position clear.

I was only just of age when your Aunt Hilda and I were married. I had already begun the candlestick making. Our house was the first ambitious work I did. And in building it I dreamed into the big rooms laughter and youth and life for years ahead. I wanted it to be for Aunt Hilda and me, and—them—for always, if possible.

But the house stayed empty, quite empty. One night, Aunt Hildegarde being out, I sat in the library alone, thinking. It was a few nights before Christmas, and the blazing log fire, the candle light, reminded me of the old jingle about " 'Twas the night before Christmas and all through the house," and the rest of it. Suddenly out of the cheerful fireplace hopped a boy. Such a *boy*, Joan! You have the pictures I made of him and you have other pictures hidden in your heart. Oh, my dear, old Michael knows! It seemed to me that night, since there was no one else, since there might never be anyone else, why not build him up, an entity? After all, great happinesses often are only in the mind, and one can carve one's mind to suit one's end, provided the carving be beautiful. And things to be truly beautiful must be ideally good, my Joan.

I told Aunt Hilda about the boy that hopped out of the fireplace in my dream. She did not see him as I saw him. She had so many other interests, she really did not need him as I needed and wanted him. She was more sensible and practical than Michael, and the impalpable had no appeal

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then, but at the end, she understood the intangible far better than I. The unreal became real to her and all dim things were made clear.

I called him Raphael because I wanted him to be an artist, and since we were dreaming, we might dream into him the talent as well as the name of the greatest artist of them all.

One night when he and I were quite alone, each on his own side of the blazing logs, he told me he wanted a playmate.

“A brother?” He shook his head.

“A sister?” He shook it again and said:

“A neighbour. A little girl that will come in when I want her and not be around when I don’t.”

“Isn’t that a bit selfish, old lad?” I asked.

“Sometimes I want you to myself, father.” That settled it.

“What will we call her?”

“Why, Romilda, of course.”

“I may be stupid, son, but—Romilda?”

“Romilda of Rome,” he answered. Then I saw. Stupid me, not to have known that Raphael wanted what would be of his own time.

“What’s she to be like?” I asked him.

“A lilting voice, dancing feet, grey eyes, wide like a kitten’s with the surprise of the world and fringy black lashes. She’s to have skin like a rose-petal, and—yes, freckles on her inquisitive small nose. Her upper lip is to be short and impertinent and she’s to have clouds of ash-gold hair. That’s how I want Romilda.”

But not even Uncle Michael’s imagination could ever make her come alive. We’ve mentioned her, you and I, but she never really came. And after a while we forgot her. Perhaps some day you and I may find her, or she will come back from her Eden Hall. Perhaps she entered at Kenwood, who knows? At all events she never came to play. I asked the boy about it, and he said:

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"She's not real. We must wait. So we waited. And you came, child. You made my son more real to me than I had made him to myself. At first, it was only our game, our play. Then, dawned on me the impractical idea, the thought that surged and made me feel at least I had found something more worth while than all the candlesticks; if I could, by evoking the phantasy of the utmost conception of perfect boyhood, youth, manhood, you would grow up with an ideal in your life that nothing else would satisfy. But that's where Uncle Michael made his mistake. The intangible became tangible—the shadow, reality. Curiously the truth only came home to me during the few moments we had together, the day after the—tragedy.

If I had only realized before, I would have told you it was the dream foolishness of a lonely man.

That very night Raphael left my house and my life as he left yours. Perhaps it may be an atonement that being without him—now—is my punishment. And perhaps, too, I'm sorry that the boy of twenty-one those aeons past, built him a house so big—I have Dingle Bey——

Your mother tells me she writes by every ship, and in her last letter your father was a little better. He looks forward to the day when he can ride again. It seems that Billy Bobtail, while still in the flesh, has found his happy hunting grounds close to the paddock and is replaced by a younger and stronger, Vivien by name.

At the last writing your dear father was sitting out in the sunshine, making a sketch of him. Tell Aunt Diana that the Van Dysarts sailed for Paris via Cherbourg just before you reached Italy. Our little group of candlestick-makers is establishing a foothold in France, and Uncle Bob will be in charge there. By reason of the aloneness of things I had half made up my mind to follow, when the decision came from headquarters that Boston was to have its long-needed Cathedral, and personal feelings had to be sacrificed. The thing is to be done, I am to do it, and it's to be old

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Roman. The initial plans are to germinate this very night. I say “thank God.” It will fill the time—and for Him. Some day you will find out that even daily work done for the King, touches closer to romance than the greatest adventure! Between ourselves I think because it’s the *most* stupendous adventure in a workaday world. Remember this when shadows gather. Some day write, and tell me I am forgiven?

UNCLE MICHAEL.

It might possibly have been reawakened association, homesickness, self-pity, the apparent futility of things in general, but whatever it might or might not be, the floods of Joan’s heart were loosed and she cried as she had never thought to cry again.

The onrush of tears, sudden, violent, cleared the mental atmosphere. Feeling better, she lifted her head, wiped her eyes, read and re-read the letter that explained much and told little.

Why should he have insinuated that she had been in love with love? That had not been the case at all. She had been in love with Raphael Crighton. How could anyone of intelligence love an abstract thing? What was it Mummie had called it long ago? “Michael’s vagaries.” Now she knew what it meant; whim, fancy, humour, freak. Freak! She had been in love with what the dictionary called a freak. Raphy!

“I will answer him now, at once,” she said to herself, “before I feel it less.” So taking a sheet from the brown leather case Aunt Diana had found at Casciani’s across the way, she began:

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“ROMA, November—, 19—

“Dear Mr. Crichton——” No. That would not do. It looked foolish and resentful, not dignified. Above all she must hold her dignity. She tore up that sheet and started another:

“Michael Crichton, Esq.

“Dear Sir——” No, not that, either. It looked too much as if it should have been followed up with, “enclosed please find fifty cents for a tube of azure paint.” Once he had instructed her to do that very thing when a sky needed toning up.

As “Uncle Michael” he no longer existed. Could she say, Michael? Her experience had placed her among the Olympians. But he might misunderstand and call it youthful impertinence. Youth, she had put far behind her. It would never do to be misconstrued on that score. “I won’t begin it at all,” she thought, “even he will appreciate the loftiness of that.”

ROMA, November, 19—

Your letter just received. I confess to being rather at a loss how to reply. I felt the day I saw you it was not the time to say what was to be said. There are occasions when even a person who had made a mistake in the placing of her affection, knows how to be discreet. You speak of a time when I will be older. That time will never be. I am as old as anyone could be. My experiences have made me old before my time. I am now not three years older than Passiflore as I was at first, but five and twenty years older. She is a mere child. One who has loved as I have loved is old enough to cope with any question of life. Therefore

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your mentioning that in the future you will explain things not clear now is futile. You are free to tell me everything now. And there are things that you must be told, too. If I were what I only seem to be, a mere girl, I might appear impertinent. Please consider me a woman of no age in particular speaking to you on your own plane.

To think of one falling in love with love, is absurd. Raphael was your son and I fell in love with him. As to marriage, I never got so far as to consider it. I loved him. He loved me. We were congenial. I never got any further than to think of the day I should say to him, “Here is a masterpiece I have done for the Metropolitan Museum. You are its inspiration. See what you have been in my life! And he was to stand, amazed. I tell you all this quite frankly though it is humiliating. But I have been humiliated before the world. I know now what Mrs. Clavering thought, and Mrs. Trent. And I know now why Matsuo always dropped the fruit or smashed a plate when I mentioned Raphael. I was brought up to regard TRUTH as a code. Truth was part of you, just as your hands or your feet or your breath are part of you. And I have been dealt an untruth, nay, I have been fed with one. It has been all around me. Were I the child some people think I am, I would have been shocked. I am not shocked. I am beyond shocking. But I am bitterly disappointed in some people. Also, I have been a fool. This, too, is humiliating. But that is all over now. Perhaps, were I not following the idea of right and wrong to which I have been brought up, I too might fall into untruth because those whom I respected did not uphold it. But this I will say once and forever, then, forever after hold my peace:

Raphael was to me as a Sir Galahad. You may take him out of my life, but you cannot wrench him from my heart and memory. I must place a memorial upon his grave. This memorial will be to hold inviolate the things I learned through him. Other girls will come into my life who have

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their loves. I will have had mine, therefore am I on their plane, yet higher. My Raphael could do no wrong. Why should I, whom he loved, do less than he? Or—should you not grasp what I mean, if I were not his other self, I was his other self that would have been, if he had been what he was not, but will always be to me. I hope I have made it clear.

And this, too, will I say, once and forever: if I go back to America, I don't say that I will—it is likely I will not—but if I should, it will not be till I can go with one at my side who will be to me in the life to come what Raphael has been in my broken past. Yes. You may even tell my mother when you write.

While I am and always will be deeply devoted to my mother, and while I do her the justice to concede that neither she nor Daddy were in collusion with the thing that killed my youth, still they knew I had been duped, and I thought of it every time I looked at them. Therefore I am greatly relieved to be away for the present. It is not unlikely that Aunt Diana knows, too, but she, beautiful as she is, is also the victim of disappointed love.

So I don't feel the same about having her around, or Passiflore. Passiflore is a vent. Aunt Diana a sympathetik adviser.

Thanking you for your kind letter, and hoping we may perhaps meet in a future that is certain to be uncertain whatever way one looks at it,

Yours sincerely,

JOAN DESMOND.

P. S.—We are about to get our first view of Saint Peter's.

“Bless the child for that P. S.,” said Michael as he folded the letter away.

CHAPTER XVII

A FIRST IMPRESSION

“**R**EADY, lamb? It’s getting late. Finished your letter?”

With a tragic look Joan answered, “It is finished indeed!” Then after seeing with satisfaction that Passiflore, if not Diana, was duly impressed, she asked: “How are we going to get there?”

“I thought we’d look for a cabby at the foot of the steps.”

“Can Passiflore make them?”

“I must see the flowers. I can walk anywhere to see such flowers,” urged Passy, whose very soul was athrill with the color and line of Rome at every turn.

“Well, I’ll help you if you get panicky,” Joan declared as they started along the Pincio. Then down the wide sweep of stair they went, lingering to catch the effect of the coloured mass below, and once looking back at the outline of the Trinita where it was caught in silhouette against the twilight sky.

Among the fiacres waiting beside Bernini’s barge they found one whose driver was jovial and anxious to please. He had a fat little mare whose

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gait by day proved somehow to be so slow, by night so swift, that they gave her the name of Incubo, name that supplanted her own to the end of her days.

On down the enchanting maze of Via dei Condotti's shops, past the Corso and della Scroffa into Via Ripetta.

"Ponte Umberto, Signora?"

"Oh, no, no," cried Passiflore. "Drive on to Sant' Angelo. I must see my angels *now*."

The man shrugged his shoulders good-naturedly, only catching the name of the bridge, and drove them the length of the rounding street till they came to the bridge's entrance.

"Lady Diana! Lady Diana! How the wind must have blown while he worked!"

"Saint Peter and Saint Paul seem to guard the entrance to the great Christian world," Diana said.

"Yes, oh, yes, but the angels are every one a Victory," Joan cried.

Victory? thought Diana, as she looked up at each while they drove slowly across, Passiflore's hand held tightly in her own. Bernini had indeed flung the angel's draperies to a kindly wind, but were the emblems in their hands signs of victory? One carried a crown of thorns, and one three cruel nails. One held a sponge that had been steeped in gall and one a cross on which the King had died. Victory?

Then, all brilliant with the dying sun, the Dome! Joan was right. The spear, the crown of thorns,

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the nails, the very cross on which He Who made the dome had died, were symbols of the greatest triumph that had ever been. What wonder that the tear-stained faces of the angels were yet alight with ecstasy? What wonder that their garments floated victorious? Christ the Man, tortured and dying, Christ, God, risen over death, divine!

Out ahead, Castel Sant' Angelo. Diana was never to forget that drive across the bridge with Hadrian's huge mausoleum looming at the end beyond the memorial chapels of the pilgrims.

It brought it back—her youth—her year with Larry. Not the Rome in which she and Joan and Passiflore were to joy and suffer, not the Rome through which she drove this twilight. But a paper Rome, a painted Rome, Rome revealed behind a silk curtain of yellowed gold, Rome of a crystal voice that sang a last cadenza from the roof of a pictured Castel. How he had sung that night, Caruso, the unforgettable! How Larry had likened her to Jeritza!—

“Was Mario a reality, Larry? I always think he must have been just a poet's creation.”

“Of course he was real, the tenor of his day.”

“Could he have sung as Caruso sings?”

“No human voice ever sang as Caruso sings. Perhaps—in Heaven we may hear its like. Not till then.”

“Why, Larry! Are you really serious enough to feel it? There are tears in your eyes!”

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“Rot! I’ve got a cold in my head.”

“That’s a relief. I didn’t think you’d be stirred to tears. And she had laughed. Laughed! Today she knew Larry had cried, and she wished

Some day she would slip away from everyone, everything, go alone to the Castel and climb as Tosca had climbed to the roof. Perhaps she could reconstruct the scene, recall the lilting voice. Perhaps she could rebuild other scenes—other memories——

Into Borgo Nuovo, and out onto the vast Piazza where a fragment of the True Cross crowns the obelisk. Across their cheeks wafted cool spray from the fountains, fountains of which Cardinal Wiseman said, “They stand like symbols of the inexhaustible streams of sacramental grace, ever flowing into the Church of God.”

“My head’s like a turntable,” laughed Joan, “I keep it going round and round, so afraid I’ll miss something.”

“There’s so much, so much!” exclaimed Passiflore.

“Steady, honeys. We’ve been in Rome two days. We hope to stay at least two years. Whenever the studio work is done you shall be free to see whatever you want. And there will be all the regular holidays.”

“I know,” Passiflore answered, “but it’s the dream of my life come true. The days will be too short.

A FIRST IMPRESSION

I want to see it all at once. And I do want to keep on dreaming.”

“We all want to keep dreaming, Passy,” Diana said, but little Joan, who had dreamed the most, was still.

Then Bernini’s colonnades, the great exalting sweep of them, and the steps to the Portico.

“Hold your breath and pray, children. In that corner over there, Saint Francis must have sat and begged the time he came to Rome to see the Pope.”

“Joan, you and I must hold our breath and pray at every step we take, for here is where the martyrs walked,” said Passiflore.

Diana, pray. Who knows if the love you’ve given to God’s “least of these,” may not be returned to you the promised hundredfold, here where behind the veil of ages Paradise itself is hidden?

The driver stopped before Saint Peter’s and waited for them to get down, then “Dio Mio!” he cried, and made horns in the direction of Passy whom he saw for the first time. “Will it be worth the while of Incubo and me, to risk the driving of a *gobba*?”

But whether or no the original nightmare understood, has never been revealed. That she bobbed her head emphatically, the driver could have sworn. As was proved by subsequent events it was quite worth the while of both man and mare. Besides, one could always make the horns.

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"I must see it all, everything thoroughly tonight, Aunt Di."

"Why everything at once, gourmande? It will take months to see all of Saint Peter's. We've only an hour now. But we'll come again tomorrow if you wish."

"There may be no tomorrow."

Diana laughed at the sententiousness with which Joan spoke, and answered, "Then we will let tomorrow take care of itself. See what's to see, now. Look!" as they passed under the leathern curtain to the vastest temple in all the world.

"Oh, Lady Diana—could it have been less?" breathed Passiflore. Her hands, unconsciously clasped together on her breast, were eloquent of an awakening to this heart of the Christian world.

But Joan hurried ahead across the polished marbles to the spot where Saint Peter's vigil lights flickered out of golden garlands through the centuries. There she knelt down, her forehead pressed against the railing that surrounds his tomb.

"Oh, Father Fisherman," she cried within herself, "show me the way, for I am little and young, and unless God takes me by the hand, I will be all alone."

CHAPTER XVIII

JOAN'S PLAN

“AUNT DI, lend me Hana this afternoon?”

A Diana hesitated. Under her drooping hat, Joan's face seemed more delicate than before she sailed. There were lines and shadows that had no rightful place about her eyes and mouth. The blue of the eyes themselves had taken on a deeper tone. The older woman was seized with a sudden access of responsibility, for Joan was growing up, rapidly, as a flower develops over night.

“I thought we had decided to take Passiflore to the Academy. She starts Monday, you know.”

“I know. I'd not forgotten, but perhaps there would be time after I get back. I ought not to be gone long, and it's serious,” she pleaded; “my whole stay in Rome may depend on it, perhaps all my future depends on it, Aunt Di. I want to go *now*. Please, everything will be all right if only you'll lend me Hana?”

Diana, whose checkered career had given her clear insight into values serio-comic as well as serio-tragic, understood Joan, and that an imaginary hurt could cut deep as a bayonet. She knew the healing power

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of time on wounds. If the child were to be cured she must be humoured. The woman who had suffered knew sympathy and how to cure.

"Take her then, dear, and welcome. Passy and I will run out to the Academy together and make what final arrangements are to be made. Stay as long as you like, then tomorrow we'll go to Via Margutta about the painting. How will that be?"

"Oh, wonderful, you darling Aunt Diana! How can I thank you for being so good to me?"

"By drying those foolish tears and getting just as much fun out of your little secret as you can. Then come home and tell Aunt Di all about it." But as she turned back into the house the smile faded. "Poor little soul," she thought, "intense nature, hard battle, fighting bravely, and God knows to what end!"

Out towards Villa Lante Incubo had come to a dead stop.

"Will I wait outside in the cab, Miss Joan?" Hana asked.

"Oh, no. We'll leave him here, you and I. He doesn't seem inclined to come much, does he? And we'll walk right into the Villa. There'll be a chapel. You can pray in it. Pray for me. I'm going to need it, Hana."

She led the way, high purpose in her heart, and the Japanese woman followed, looking now to the right, now to the left, wondering what the place might be, but with her native patience waiting till

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Joan might see fit to enlighten her. How could Miss Joan know about a place so remote in this strange Rome? Why did she bring only Hana? Whom did she intend to see alone while Hana prayed? The while Joan marched on as if she were quite at home and the place as familiar as the Piazza on which stood the little yellow house they knew as home.

They came at last to the porte cochère and wide stone staircase to the door. The clang of the bell had not died out when the door was opened by a nun in the habit of the Sacred Heart. She held out both her hands, saying to Joan, "You are one of our children, I know. From what house?"

"From Manhattanville, mother. I want to see Reverend Mother General."

"Of course you do. All our children must see her, and she wants to know them all. Come with me. And"—she looked at Hana with a smile, "Will you come, too?"

Hana, shrinking, timid, unaccustomed to the black habit, looked to Joan to make her answer:

"This is Hana, Mother. She lives with us and takes care of her little girl and me. I think if she could go to the chapel she'd like it. I could find her there later. What I have to say to Reverend Mother is very private."

Mother Fielding, who had for years been secretary to the Superior General, had not dealt as long as she had with the young without knowing why

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Joan had come. But this little American looked so extremely young, and sad, too. The ones who came to see Reverend Mother on such private business were not generally sad.

“I’m glad you came today. Usually one has to make an appointment. There are so many people to see, so much to be done. But some one failed who was to have been here at this hour. Reverend Mother will be quite free. I know how she will love to see you.” She called a sister who stood beside the door and put Hana in her care, telling her to show her everything, the house, the chapel, wherever she wanted to go, then led Joan down a corridor and into Reverend Mother Fraser’s private drawing-room.

With her eyes always open to whatever there might be of charm, Joan was at once aware that the carved crucifix on the wall was the work of a master and the Spanish paintings must have been heirlooms in the Order. Simple as simplicity itself, austere, the room held a dignity somehow reposeful and particularly so to the young girl whose heart was in a turmoil.

So absorbed she was in the things about her that she did not hear Reverend Mother’s footstep, and only turned at the welcome in her voice.

“Mother Fielding tells me you are from Manhattanville. You must tell me all about it.” The feeling of being alone, little, and very unexpectedly shy, that had assailed her at the tomb of Saint

JOAN'S PLAN

Peter, and returned inopportunately while she waited, fell from her at the first sound of the Superior General's voice.

"I'm Joan Desmond, Reverend Mother. I was only a special pupil at Manhattanville. I never really went to any school. We had to be away so much for my father's health—and my little brother's, that I never stayed anywhere long enough to go to school. I studied the languages at Manhattanville and made my first Communion—but I did love it. There's never been any other school."

"The Sacred Heart will always claim you then, child."

"I hope so. That's why I came. I want the Sacred Heart to claim me in more ways than one."

How young she looked!

"Come and sit by the window and let us talk."

She led the girl to a chair where she watched the expression that played in the mobile face. When Joan pulled off her gloves, the Superior noticed the slender length of her fingers and unmistakable signs of talent in the expressive hand.

"Who has taught you what you know of other things, Joan?"

"My mother, when I've been with her, and a sort of uncle who is no relation at all, but a friend of Daddy's. He knows everything."

"So? Tell me."

"His name is Michael Crichton." She did not see the little start of surprise.

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"The great architect?"

"Yes, Reverend Mother."

"You have had unusual privileges for so young a girl. How did you happen to study with him?"

Joan had been growing more and more nervous as the conversation went ahead. She had not come here with any idea of discussing Michael or the past. In her inexperience she thought to leave these essential topics outside the sequestered walls. Clasp- ing her hands together she made her impulsive plea:

"Oh, Reverend Mother, please. I don't want to talk about any of these things. I came to ask you to take me in and let me stay."

"But daughter, this is not the school. The school is at the Trinita de Monti. This house is the no- vitiate."

"I *know*. I *know*," reiterated Joan, "that's why I came. That's how I ask you to take me in." She had grown pale in her eagerness, and earnest.

"But child, you are very young, surely not yet eighteen?"

"I'll be eighteen this month, but I am old in ex- perience of life. And I do know what I want. I do want to come in. Oh, I do want to come in."

The lips trembled and the eyes were full of unshed tears. The wise superior-general read in the sensitive face the same story she had read in other and older faces. They are wise in heart lore, these women who dwell in the inner temple. She took the cold hand in her own.

JOAN'S PLAN

"There's a nice spot out under the ilexes hidden away from the rest of the garden. It will be shady now. How would you like to come there with me and tell me just what you want me to know about it all?"

"I'd love it," said Joan simply.

So they found the sequestered place within sound of a fountain's splash. Fragrance of orange blossoms and full-blown roses mingled with the pungent smell of burning leaves. Somewhere was incense. Above, the whole arch of God's monastery roof, Italy's sky spread like the Father's love over worldling and religious, sheltering saint and sinner. It was somehow easier for Joan to tell her story out beneath it.

"They were able to keep it from you till you were grown?"

The girl bowed her head for her heart was very full.

"There is no question as to the wisdom of it. Like a great many things that in themselves are harmless a little indiscretion or a great indiscretion, a little unwisdom may do just the wrong this dream has done you, Joan. It might wound a soul almost to death. *Almost*. But we all make mistakes. I can easily see how in loneliness as you describe a man or woman might rear just such a creature of imagination to play a living part. But I don't see how you could go on believing when you had no visible evidence of his existence?"

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"I never doubted anybody. He was supposed to be away at school, and I did have his pictures, letters from him, too, or so I thought them. He was Raphael. I always call him that, or Raphy because he's as much part of my life as Mummie or Daddy, and I can't forget all at once. At last, when I was nearly seventeen, they said he had to come to Rome, to get him away from *me*, I suppose. I should have insisted on being taken to his school that last year just to see him, and they knew it."

"What gave you such insight into his character as you describe it? The whole thing is so impersonal that I don't understand that part."

"I said there were letters, too, Reverend Mother."

"Who could have written them?"

"The one who was Uncle Michael, Raphy's father. There could have been no one else to write them."

"What an imagination! No wonder——"

"You see I built up everything on his reality, on his goodness, and I would have only the best. That was why I wanted to draw as well as Raphy, to paint as well, to study and work to keep up with him so that some day I could help him. And that wasn't all. He was so everything I could hope for in a man that if it should ever have been question of my marrying, he would have made it impossible for me to care for any one less perfect. Of course,

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I'll never marry. I'd always be comparing them if I did."

"Oh, my dear little girl, no men or women are perfect. Give me a child without a temper and I'll show you one without much character. The thing is to realize one's imperfections and root them out. I think you have, in yourself, the utmost essential for happiness."

"What is that?"

"Capacity for strong, tenacious love. In God's own time you may learn what His will has been through all your difficulty. Do you remember the line, 'patient endurance attaineth to all things'? A little more patience, a little finer endurance, and you will find the way."

In her heart the wise religious pitied Michael and fully appreciated the ill-advised, impulsive thing he had done. She did not dare tell Joan it might prove the bulwark Michael had hoped.

"There will never be any one else. I'm finished with the world. I want to stay here, in the novitiate. If I use my talent for the Order, how can it be wasted?" There was tragedy in her tone.

"You were only a special pupil you say, dear. Did you know the children at the convent?"

"Oh, no, I only went occasionally for private lessons."

"Have you known a great many young people, dear?"

"Not many. Mickey, my little brother, you

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know, died. He was named for—him. While they were away, Daddy and Mummie and Mickey, I lived at the Crighton's house. I had a parot and the dogs to play with, but the dogs all died and I gave—him another one. I told you about Judy. Then there is Passiflore."

"Passiflore?"

"A Japanese girl, Hana's little girl. She's only very young, and sculps. She lives with us and her mother takes care of us both. I never understood much about them, but Passy is perfectly remarkable. She's a hunchback and is starting to-day at the Academy. She has sculpted since she was a baby."

An amused smile played about the Mother General's lips. It was not often she came upon one as youthfully refreshing as Joan, nor one who spoke as freely.

"Tell me about Passiflore."

"She began by doing toys and flowers in plastic. Then once when Aunt Diana, who's really not my aunt any more than—he—is my uncle, came to visit us at Carmel Passiflore began to model in the sand. Her modelling was so extraordinary that artists urged Aunt Di to bring her over here. She will be great, really great. I can draw and paint, but have no longer any ambition to be great. But some day all the world will know about Passiflore. She's a genius."

"You must bring her to see me."

JOAN'S PLAN

"I'd love to—only——" Her eyes were dancing now, dancing a question all their own.

"Only what, child?"

"Perhaps when she comes to see me here——?"

"I see. You must have your verdict now."

"Yes, please. Oh, yes."

"You will not be hurt?"

"I promise."

"Then, you must wait. You are too young. Oh, I know what is in your mind, what has happened to the impulsive heart our Lord loves for its very impulsiveness. That heart is full of the things dearest to Him, affection, the desire to serve. It's gone through sufferings, too, but in spite of the suffering it is still untried and must have more time."

"More time to suffer?"

"More time to know itself."

"But Reverend Mother, love is life, and love is over, finished. What else is there?"

"Who gave you everything?"

"Why, God, of course."

"Would you give Him a heart that is finished, a heart that a creature had emptied of love? And not even a living creature! Would that be generous, Joan? When one gives oneself to the service of the Master, one does it wholeheartedly."

"Isn't it the life of sacrifice that counts? The work?"

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“If the convent is only a refuge from pain and disappointment, where does the sacrifice come in?”

“I don’t understand.”

“Love is the basis of sacrifice. If we love God so deeply, so entirely that we gladly give up every one and everything to serve Him, to draw other souls to the glory of knowing Him, then do we surrender ourselves and all we might have been to His service without thought of self. Never a religious who gives herself to God because of disappointed love! That’s an old fable, argument of the ignorant. God attunes the souls He calls, to the highest note of all, Himself. Nothing less can satisfy them.”

“Is that why nuns are always so happy? I don’t believe I’ve ever seen a sad one.”

“Isn’t that a good reason, little Joan?”

“It seems to me it must be. But I didn’t know. I thought I could work so hard here I’d forget. You see, I had written the one I called Uncle Michael, to say I would never go home again, unless, of course, I could go with such a one as Raphael would have been. As there could never be any one like him, I can never go back. I can’t stay here alone. When Passy shall have finished her studies, Aunt Di will probably settle her in Paris or London, or even New York. So as I will not marry, I thought of the convent.”

Reverend Mother Fraser had a fellow feeling

JOAN'S PLAN

with the splash of the rippling fountain. It was like the care-free laughter of nuns at recreation time, laughter of the children of God.

"It takes a great deal to make a vocation."

"It really seems it does. I never gave it much thought before. The thought of marriage and Raphy never entered my head, either. We were just us, Raphy and Joan, like Mickey, my little brother, and Joan. But I know that if he had been himself I couldn't have married any one else."

How little thought this child had given to the great gift into which she would have rushed blindfolded! In spite of the world in which she had evidently been brought up she had remained as untouched by it as a child of six.

"Religious vocations show themselves in so many ways," Mother Fraser said. "I remember one religious who came many years ago to make her profession, the year I made my own. She told me she had felt the call distinctly at the age of four. Think of the blessed certainty of a life that never had to question."

"Didn't any other love come to her? Did she enter too young to know what it was all about?"

"She waited till she was nearly ten years older than you are now. She had seen the world, good and bad. She had her chances like every one else. She loved life and the good things life had to give, and life loved her, too. But through it all she never once lost sense of the sacred, beating Heart of her

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Lord. He came first. The rest never counted till she made it count for Him."

"I think it strange."

"You should be the last to think it strange, for after all, your little love was a phantom. Her great Love was Reality—indeed, sometimes I feel that the passing of this short life is very like the passing of a phantom itself, except that it's a time of proving ourselves, a time of trial, and therefore very real."

"It must be peaceful in the convent," said Joan wistfully.

"It *is* peace. But it would not be peace if she who entered had not a true vocation. One who entered without that would neither make nor keep the peace," laughed the Superior.

"Is there ever suffering in a convent? Do you feel things as we do, death, and all that?"

"If there were no suffering we would not need to take that last earthly breath, the passage into Paradise. Yes, there's suffering. If we would follow our Master we must bear His cross, joyfully. Some day you will learn the meaning of joy in suffering, but you must have lived in the real sense of the word, first. Our Lord became human, assumed human nature to show us the way, because we are human. The great thing for you must be, to find the path, the greatest way of grace. And, having found it, live up to it. As you say, 'play the game.'"

JOAN'S PLAN

Joan laughed at that. It was a quick transition. But the Superior's sense of humor was alive and she laughed with Joan. The child appealed to her. It was evident Joan had no vocation to the religious life, but she was the sort needed by the world and in the world, never more than now.

"There's a great deal more to say, but I am afraid there's some one waiting for me. We will talk another time if you will come. But always remember this: a convent is a little world, filled with all kinds of people. If one has everything life and the world can give, it takes courage to turn away from it to the four walls of any cloister. The heart remains as other hearts, with its days of depression, its days of ill health, its failures, successes and happiness. But one is given grace to take each as God's gift, cheerfully, and thank Him. Once a dear religious said to me, 'When I entered the novitiate I thought I was doing a tremendous thing for God. Now I know He was doing everything for me.'" She rose, and Joan got up, feeling as if a load had fallen from her shoulders.

"I didn't think there was so much to it. If I had I wouldn't have thought of it. Reverend Mother"—a blush suffused her face—"you must think me very ignorant and silly?"

"I think you anything but either. Come to see me again. Some day, I hope not for a long time, but some day you will come to show me a ring on

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this left hand, and not the ring of a religious," she smiled.

"Perhaps," answered Joan dubiously, then: "What would you advise me to do now?"

"Your mother's idea in sending you over was to study and paint, and find the best here in the heart of the world, wasn't that it?"

"Altogether."

"Make it worth *her* sacrifice. She has had to give you up for your own good, has she not? If children only knew how to make the sacrifices of parents easier they wouldn't really be children!" she laughed.

"I think Passiflore understands all about sacrifice. Aunt Diana, who is not a real widow, but somehow apart, has rather adopted her. She would die for Aunt Diana, but instead she intends to make herself the greatest sculptress in the world."

"That is the spirit, magnificent! Joan, I have an idea."

"Yes, Reverend Mother?"

"If the little crippled girl is going to be the greatest sculptress for her adopted mother, why not do as well as she? Why not try to make yourself the greatest among the young American painters in Rome? Then, give the glory to your own mother."

"Do you think I might? I don't know anything about the other artists."

"I think you could try. Don't bother about the others. Do your *best*."

JOAN'S PLAN

"Would that be a vocation?"

"A very decided vocation if your motive be a high one. Half the world loses merit for marvelous achievement because it forgets to keep the motive on a high plane."

"Could such a vocation, such ambition, fill my life so full that I'd be content to wait, years and years if necessary, for a real—Raphael to come?"

"So much that you'll be quite content to wait God's own good time in patience."

"Well, if anything can teach me patience, that thing will be a miracle!"

"Then work, child. Work at your painting with all your heart and soul. And come to me when you can, and when you can, bring Passiflore."

CHAPTER XIX

IN VIA MARGUTTA

EVENING shadows along the mellowed façade of Villa Medici touched to treetops overhanging the great basin of the Pincio's fountain, touched with long reach the yellowed parapet all down its length, even to the gardens below.

Incubo and his driver had stopped at the entrance of Via Sistina and refused to move another step, so Hana had gone to the little house alone, while Joan dismissed the fiacre and walked on past the Trinita steps to think out her problems. She lingered where the soothing melody of dripping waters had given inspiration to many an artist through divers centuries.

Down under the parapet, hidden, sequestered where gardens spread their maze, lay Via Margutta. It was a place wherein to dream one's dreams, then bring them flaming into life. The girl's heart throbbed at thought of it. Not only for this winter and next spring nor for a fleeting year. She was to become part of it, to be one with it, grow with its growth, infuse herself into the very magic of it.

Perhaps Faith had known that the antidote pre-

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scribed would heal the ill to Joan's heart. But Michael Crichton, who had found on the Pincio both beginning and fulfillment, had been certain. He had made his way step by step from the secluded street to Villa Medici, thence to the heights. So it comforted him way back in his America to feel that through his suggestion Joan would have her chance. It might even be his reparation.

Then came the day when with Diana she took her way to the studio and opened up her drawing books for the Maestro. If he were surprised he gave no sign. Nor did he address Joan directly. He spoke only to Diana.

"Signora, the young lady, your daughter, may I ask where she has made her studies?"

"The Signorina Desmond is not my daughter, but she is with me here to continue the studies begun in New York with Mr. Michael Crichton."

"Not so! The great architect? Um—that would account for the composition. Not so! Meraviglioso!"

Diana laughed. She was delighted with his quick appreciation of Joan.

"For the present we will call her my daughter by adoption."

"The Signora's daughter by adoption will go far. Tell me a truth. I apologize not that I ask. It is but necessary to know. Is it possible that the Maestro himself could have assisted—how shall I say? Touched, that is it, touched up the drawings?"

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And the two canvases—this illusive light—is hardly the work of an amateur.”

Joan could no longer contain herself. It might not have been the time to speak, she had not been spoken to—but to have her work accredited to any one not herself, was a little too much.

“I did this one in California, where there was no maestro, and this, and this and this. The study of the parrot was done from memory at odd moments. I would not show my work as mine, if it had been—tampered with!”

“Joan, darling!”

“Bene, bene, the signorina has pride in her drawing and painting, along with temperament. So! It is good. Tell me Signora,” still ignoring Joan, “how long has the signorina studied?”

“I began when I was about four and a half, Aunt Di, as you know, and now I am nearly eighteen.”

“It is the hand on the bow that makes the violin to sing when the hand grows older. We will do what we can. There must be faults of technique, of attack. But it is always so with the young. And inspiration must be inculcated.”

Again that ominous flush across the girl’s earnest face.

“I do not believe in the inculcation of inspiration.”

“No? Why come to the fount of inspiration to the artist, if not to draw from it?”

“Inspiration is born, not made, never enforced.

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It floods your being and forces your hand, your mind, to work."

"Joan! Joan!"

"Bene, bene, sempre bene." The little grey-haired man with his piercing eyes, hooked nose, large, benevolent mouth and lofty forehead, nodded with the expression of a malicious genius. Then for the first time he took cognizance of Joan, as a personality.

"We shall see, signorina. In a year, in less than a year, you shall tell me whether inspiration is a thing dependent on externals or if it rises out of desert sands to the oasis of achievement. There are among us those who believe irrigation necessary. Ma, pazienza—it will be seen."

"May I leave her now, signor?"

"Ma si! The sun will set at five." Somehow Diana gathered the impression that the maestro like a humanized Chanteclair, claimed jurisdiction, not only in the studio, but over the very orbs of heaven.

"The sun will set about five. The classes disperse if so they will, to continue late, after the pranzo. The signora will call for the Signorina Desmond?"

"Yes. I will come for her."

"It's all right, Aunt Di. I know the way."

"I think the walk with you will do me good. Then you can tell me all about it. Wait for me."

A look of understanding, between the maestro of many young people, and Diana. And Joan was left to begin her career.

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“I will place you alongside the Signorina Graziella. She will impart to you the customs of our studios and students. A long time has she studied with Tacconata. This is your easel. Here, the canvas. I see you have brought everything else you need. Ah! You arrive at the moment of repose. I will return in half an hour.”

A tap of the bell and rest time. Swiftly the model disappeared behind the great screen. Twenty pairs of eyes focussed themselves on this foreign acquisition to Via Margutta. Five minutes passed, then again the bell and work was resumed.

If Joan had been in any doubt as to inspiration, or its source, she might have questioned her own statement to the maestro. However, she did make a characteristically flying start to such effect that when Tacconata came at last to where she sat, he registered a greater wonder than was his wont.

“For so young an artist, the attack upon the canvas is remarkable, and sure.”

“I learned in doing portraits to get my resemblance with the first sitting,” she said.

“How is it that the great Crighton gives lessons? And lessons to the young? I thought it only such poor beggars as Julien of Paris, and Tacconata of Rome, who led others to creation when they would far rather create canvases of their own.”

“Oh, he didn’t exactly teach me—not that way. I lived there. And it began as a sort of play. And

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I had ambition——” She bit her lip. That story was her own.

“A play! Dio mio! Should I then change my tactics to play my pupils into such an attack upon the canvas as this? Ecco—you have not met the Signorina Graziella. Signorina Joan—did I understand the name to be Desmond?”

“I’m Joan Desmond,” she answered, looking at Graziella and holding out her hand, which the other took with a quick smile.

“I have not been able to take my eyes from your work. You go about it as *she* does, she who understands.”

“She who understands?” puzzled the little American.

“Signorina da Paolo. She is not here today. You will know her and she will be greatly interested in your work. She is assistant to the maestro.”

“Why did you call her ‘she who understands?’ ”

“I will tell you,” said Graziello, lowering her voice so that the maestro who had passed on might not hear.

“Because when our pictures are like photographs, dull, cold, unmeaning, along comes Signorina da Paolo and makes them living.”

“But is it not for the master to show where a picture is wanting and teach the pupil her mistake?”

“Not our maestro. Tacconata has a great reputation, he is indeed master of technique. He leads in drawing and manner of applying color. In other

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words he is a teacher. But expression of self, individuality, he leaves to the pupil. Some of us believe, and mind, I adore him, that he can show the way to great things, perhaps do them, but not develop the best in his pupils. That they must do themselves. He encourages—temperament. He may make you angry about your work. His theory is that feeling makes better pictures. If you are angry, you put in more strength.”

“That’s funny. Perhaps that’s why he irritated me about my pictures being touched up.”

“Precisely. Of course the old paint better than the young, because, with temperament and experience combined, they do great work. Naturally. They have lived more, suffered more.”

“Why suffer to paint well?”

“To live is to suffer, signora. It is with painting as it is with music. One who has neither lived nor suffered will never make anything out of either. That’s why my work is like putty. I have neither suffered nor lived. Perhaps if my mother would beat me, or my father throw me into the Tiber, I might paint after I was fished out.”

She raised her eyes hopelessly to heaven.

“Why do you keep it up, then?”

“Taconata.”

“Does he make you keep at it?”

“Why, no. But,” queried the Italian spirit, “do you not consider him fascinating?”

“No! He’s an old man. Do you?”

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“But he’s extraordinary—wonderful!” went on Graziella, who always became the intimate friend of the most casual acquaintance, even to confiding the inmost secrets of a heart that by that very reason was open to the world.

“Marvellously fascinating. Not everybody knows, but”—and here she lowered her voice to a whisper—“his name is not Tacconata at all.”

“What *is* his name?”

“Ah, that would be telling. It is a story—but a story! He does conduct the studio and gives us lessons and presents enormous sums to keep the studio going, and to everything relating to the art of today in Italy for two reasons.”

“Yes? What are they?”

“First of all, love of the art itself. Oh, yes. His very soul sings it. In it he is most sincere. Then, love for Signorina da Paolo. He spoke to you about being a poor artist. He could not—luxuriate—in so great generosity if he were but a poor artist.”

Joan laughed. It was her first encounter with the type of mind she was to meet often before her return to the direct Anglo-Saxonism of America.

“I thought it terribly funny when he spoke of Julien as being a poor artist.”

“Ah, yes, yes. This much can I tell you. He is of the south. Those who knew him in his youth, affirm he is a duke, of long lineage and enormous

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wealth. That is, when his father or brother dies. I do not regard mere details. He is able to live where and how he pleases. We, of Margutta are a fad with him, a fad that links him to his two loves. You see, the poverty of Rome after the war was so great that the studio would have died had not he come to the rescue. He had loved it from his youth and could not in all reason let it perish. It appears he had frequently proposed marriage to her—the one who understands. But she would not listen.”

“Why not? Was she in love with somebody else? Tell me.”

“All Rome knew her romance. She was in love with one killed in the war, and he with her, most desperately. His family were bitterly opposed to the marriage. I understand they were violent about it. No, nothing against her, just a family feud. We have them. It was like the Montagues and Capulets, but she was going to marry him in spite of them, even to the trousseau. A week before the wedding was to have been came to the call to arms. She never saw him again. It was the punishment of his family that neither did they ever see him again. Killed? Oh, yes. At first they thought she would lose her mind. You see all Rome knows all Rome and we speak of everything.”

“Then it is like every other city in the world,” mused Joan, “for in my world everybody knew what came to me.”

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“So? You, too? You have suffered? Love? And so young. Oh! Some day you will tell me. Well, it appears that in the great youth of Signorina da Paolo, for in Italy we are old maids unless we have a family and are quite settled at twenty, she would spend months at Capri where the palazzo of her family was noted for its hospitality. But when war came, the palazzo with all her fortune was swept into the coffers of the army. Voluntarily did she impoverish herself for her country, all honor to her!” Joan bowed her head. She felt she would love this woman who had lived and understood. Graziella continued: “Speak of patriots in red Garibaldi shirts and the black of Mussolini! Here was one in silk and silver who sacrificed all, all for Italy and freedom. And do you think those who had accepted her hospitality cared? Not they. His family? They laughed. ‘She’s but joined the army of martyrs,’ they said, ‘and thereby saves her soul. What is it to us?’ ”

As she listened to the recital, Joan’s face was alight with its romance.

“What a heroine! How does the maestro come in?”

“She was alone, bereft, beautiful, the daughter of his friend. And seeing her quite free he proposed marriage. You see he had always loved her, but thought himself too old. Then, there was Raffaello.”

“W-who did you say?”

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“Raphaello. Her love whom she adored was Raphaello.”

“Yes, yes?”

“He was indeed *cavaliere senza paura, senza rimpovero.*”

“But how did you know all this? It is most sacred and sweet.”

“Ma certes it’s sacred and sweet and a secret. All Rome knows it.”

“He was killed. How pitiful, but glorious too to die for his country.”

“He was killed.”

“Then?”

“Then, after a long while during which no one knew where she was or what she did, she came back. Most of her friends thought she’d been in a place for the insane. But that was not true.”

“Then?”

“She had to eat, poor dear. How to do it? She could dance like a nymph in the wood, she could sing like a seraph. The Costanzi offered her a great sum if she would but dance once at each opera. It would have been a good *avviso* for the Costanzi. She *can* dance. The temptation was great. She loathed the idea, but had to have money. Then came Toccanata with his inspiration. He would reopen the Via. He would call the students to him whether six came or sixty. And he must have an assistant?”

“But could she paint?”

“Yes! That is what she does best of all. But

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in Rome unless an artist is pushed she makes but little. I doubt if she eats much, the slender Signorina, but it appears she had to earn money for a cause unknown. There is no one to question her reasons for what she does. She *has* to have money. So, she became the assistant here and puts the heart she broke into the work of each one of us. You, I think will need her little, for I can see you paint as she paints, with soul, and as Graziella will never learn to paint."

"Perhaps if you paid more attention to the technique of the maestro you would learn the foundation, then, later on when I-love comes, you would put in the feeling."

"*Love?* But I thought you knew. I do love, and it is because of my love I cannot paint."

"How is that?"

"Because when he comes to me with what he has to teach I cannot put my mind on my work. I cannot hear his words. I can only fasten my eyes on his face. My heart beats so that I am quite deaf."

"Not the maestro?"

"*Per che no?* Certes. The maestro."

"But," asked bewildered Joan, "he loves the signorina, who understands."

"Certes. And he loves me, too. But as a child he loves me. I am older than you. I am nineteen. It is not with the great passion he loves me. That is how he loves *her*."

"What are you going to do about it, then?"

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“Oh, la! la! Some day she will lose her heart to some one else. They all do it. Then, then I catch my Tacconata on the rebound.”

Joan laughed, with tears falling down her cheeks, while Graziella looked at her in amazement. What was there drôle about that? She could not see. When Joan could speak she asked:

“Tell me what is she like, dark or fair?”

“Ash gold. She has the blood of Florence mingled with Rome. Her eyes are grey like the eyes of a kitten, and her little impudent nose has sometimes freckles on it. The short upper lip Tacconata considers impertinent, and she has clouds of ash-gold hair. The round, grey eyes are fringed with twilight. So you can very well see that with her hands that paint, her lovely voice, her dancing feet, her great understanding she is a woman who could win the love of any man were she not loyal as the saint she is, to the dead. Because of that, Graziella is content to wait.”

“You are right. What is her first name?”

“Her name? Why, I thought I told you. Her name's Romilda,” said Graziella.

CHAPTER XX

“ONE WHOSE HAIR WAS BOUND WITH JEWELS”

THE great bell clanged through the corridors of the Trinita when Diana pulled the bell-cord. Joan had grown familiar with the mysterious neighbour across the piazzetta and Hana and Passiflore. Why not she as well? Always questioning, always wondering, Diana asked what could be the substance of this creed that held its faithful bound to its teaching, to each other, and to the feet of God, changelessly.

Apart from outer influence that had directed life and living, she was determined to find out. Two hours were to be spent before she would have to call at the studio for Joan. The child herself could have told her what she wanted to know, at least in part. There were certain things she could neither speak of to Joan nor Hana, but here was her neighbour, and here she would attempt to solve her difficulty.

“I am Diana Travers,” she said to the old nun who opened the door, “and I live at that little yellow house across the piazzetta.” She pointed to it, but the discreet religious smilingly shook her head.

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She would only look out to the world from an upper window, where often at dawn she raised her heart with the sun's rays where they touched the Dome——

“Not even there?” asked Diana.

“No. It's not against the rule, but some of us, having little opportunity to mortify the senses in our convent here, rather like to keep our ‘sister eyes’ in cloister!”

“It would be hard for me. I want to see everything in Rome.”

“And so you should. You are young and Rome is full of things worth seeing. I only answer for myself, signorina. Won't you come in?”

Diana followed with some trepidation. The place held mystery to her unfamiliar vision. Once inside, the feeling vanished at sight of groups of happy children, friends and parents gathered together talking animatedly and laughing as if everything that happened were a huge and delightful jest. Everywhere were the ribbons of honor. Some of the children carried little round muffs that appeared to be made of the same material as their uniforms. Some of them sat sedately with feet firmly planted on red velvet footstools. In manner and attitude they might have been out of a generation or two ago, but the voices, the dancing eyes, belied the sedate deportment.

“You are wondering about the muffs,” laughed a voice beside her.

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"Oh, how do you do? Yes, the muffs and quaint footstools. I *was* curious."

"The floors are cold, but it's early for the muffs, though they carry them when they please. There's so little coal since the war, and our Roman winters are frigid. That's why," she laughingly explained, then sat down waiting for her guest to say how, if in any way, the Trinita could serve her.

"Please don't think me presuming or pushing to come without any particular reason. I'm not even a Catholic, just a neighbour."

"That is every reason for coming, is it not? We can't go to you, you see. You are English? American? The accent is English."

"I am from New York." Then impulsively Diana broke out with the real reason for her visit. "I've been brought close to Catholics of late. I never felt free to ask them questions, why they are different, somehow, from us. Why you believe the same doctrine from one end of the world to the other while we never seem to know what we believe, and no two of us could give the same answer. Surely, if faith is a God-given thing, not man-made, it must be the same everywhere and at all times. I've been puzzling about it and I thought perhaps you might help clear up some of the doubts."

"Our Superior is not here today, she had to go to the mother-house for a meeting of Provincials. Mother Celestino who opened the door came to me

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because she thought perhaps you would rather see an English-speaking nun. I am Mother Fitzgerald."

"That was good of her. She must have seen that my Italian is hardly for polite conversation, though I understand it. I wonder if some one here might give me an hour a day? She could teach me Italian and tell me something of your religious philosophy, that is, as much as a stupid soul like mine could take in," she laughed.

"Then I can assure you you will take in a great deal," the religious answered, an amused look in her eyes. "Knowledge of one's own limitations is sometimes the key to great learning."

"If you come to know me you will find out that humility is not my strongest point. But seriously tell me, what about theology? Do you teach it?"

"Knowledge of God and the relation of the soul to Him is our *metier*."

"I hoped so. I thought it might be."

"Why do you want to study theology?"

"I am nothing. Oh, I was an Episcopalian. I'm nothing now."

"Yet you know the soul needs God."

"That I learned through suffering."

"I have known many people who have suffered, yet they are without faith. You are not like them."

"I have always—felt—God. That's why. How, I don't know. There isn't a soul in the world to

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whom I could speak as I am speaking to you, but I am suffocated by the need of knowing, and I can talk to you as I could not even talk to a priest, though I have only just met you. I've—made mistakes."

The quick compassion in the other woman's face refuted any doubt she might have had about speaking so freely.

"I've made worse than mistakes. Shut away in your convent, with only the highest motives for living and doing, you might not understand how anyone in the world could go through the school of forgetfulness—and graduate." She stopped there, wondering if she had shocked Mother Fitzgerald. The nun sat silent, waiting for her to go on.

"There is something behind your eyes you are not saying, Mother."

"I was only thinking of a line of Oxenham's, 'the things that seemed not good, yet turned to good.'"

"I'm afraid the things that seemed not good in my case were too bad ever to turn to good."

Mother Fitzgerald shook her head as she answered:

"The hand that stoned Saint Stephen was the hand of Saul. Saul was not a good man. But Saul's hand became the hand of Saint Paul."

"You mean that?"

"Of course, of course. The mouth that uttered the words, 'I know Him not,' when the cock crowed

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thrice, was the mouth that pleaded, 'Crucify me head downwards, for I am not worthy to be crucified as He was crucified.' "

"But, Mother." Diana trembled as she said it, "In my search for forgetfulness, I led souls astray. Oh, I *know* I did."

"There was a woman whose hair was bound with jewels and whose eyes smiled souls to their destruction—perhaps. We do not know. Yet, they were the eyes whose tears bathed the feet of our Lord, and whose unjeweled hair wiped them. All these, 'things that turned to good!'"

"It was centuries ago."

"Would it not have been futile for our Master to have died to save only His contemporaries? Time is all one with God. The mistakes of yesterday are the mistakes of today. It's all the same. And His mercy is the same."

"You mean forgiveness?"

"Just that."

"And a chance to begin again?"

"The chance to be reborn."

"What about those who have known? *I* never knew, but there have always been bad people in every church. Some of them know. What about bad Catholics?"

"Infinite mercy just the same for all who humbly acknowledge their fault and ask forgiveness."

"God gives even *them* the chance to come back? Suppose their fault had been not only sins of weak-

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ness, of the flesh, of the thousand and one things by which men and women offend God, but suppose they had added to everything the sin of the fallen angels, what then?"

"Infinite mercy, pardon,—and the opportunity to become great saints."

"Even such pride of intellect as sent the angels hurling down to hell?"

"Even that. When He said to forgive seventy times seven He meant everything. You see in His mercy He did not let them die in their sin. Sometimes the justice of God calls sinners to an accounting at the moment of their sin, but as there is no limitation to the breadth of God's understanding of human frailty, neither is there a limit to His mercy and forgiveness."

"I used to think the doctrine of the Church narrow because it seems somehow so bound up in dogma. I believe now it must be the broadest system in all the world.

"It's entirely logical and simple. Love God, love your neighbour as yourself. Those who sin either fail to love God or their fellow man. It all analyzes to that. There are many outside the Church who can never be made to understand the immense simplicity of it. Nor will those who oppose her understand her doctrine, that the mercy of God is infinite."

"It seems easy enough for us Protestants, or unbelievers, to be forgiven when we come into the

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Church, but what do fallen-away Catholics have to do?"

"Just *mea-culpa*. They do not always find it easy to say. One look at the crucifix should make it easier."

"You mean, Confession?"

"Yes. I mean sorrow for the sin, confession to a duly authorized priest, along with the firm intention to sin no more, and satisfaction, that is, doing the penance the priest may give."

"What is that?"

"A few prayers, usually Our Fathers, Hail Marys, Glorias, sometimes perhaps, a litany. There is a priest here in Rome who gives his penitents a chapter of the Bible to read."

"But, Catholics are not allowed to read the Bible!"

Mother Fitzgerald laughed at the ancient fallacy. It was brought to her notice at least once in every year.

"The Bible is one of the few obligatory studies in our convents and colleges the whole world over. In my experience I have learned that we are far more familiar with it than those outside the Church. The notion that we do not read it is one of the many misconceptions passed from one ignorant person to the next, though I really believe the world is growing more enlightened with regard to us. It's only a question of time."

"It is all very comforting," Diana said. "Who

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knows but that in my case God has used the 'things that seemed not good,' to make my soul so utterly weary that now I turn to Him for rest?"

"Not unlikely. The Shepherd has His own way with the sheep and lambs—some by pleasant paths, some by the thorny route. It's according to the strength of each. But——" Diana noticed that her eyes were Irish and had a way of dancing when she spoke.

"Whether it's by the cross or by pleasant ways He is at the top of the road. He *is* Paradise. Those who turn their back on Him lose Heaven."

"I think the doctrine of mercy is the most wonderful thing of all."

"Why not? It's only the natural law that we must suffer here or hereafter for wrong-doing. But suffering is sometimes a joy. The thief on the cross suffered physically, but in his repentance his spirit was lifted then and there to Paradise. What did the physical suffering mean to him? It was forgotten in the joy of reigning with the Master. In all the gospels there is never one instance of His refusing pardon to a sinner who asked for it. And there are many instances of His giving pardon where the sinner did not ask. The Pharisees criticized Him for His attitude, but the Pharisees were mostly hypocrites. He compared them to 'whited sepulchres, beautiful without, but inside, full of dead men's bones and all rottenness.' "

"Today though, Mother, people avoid the sinner

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as they would the plague, even when the sinner is sincerely repentant and wants to get back."

"Not He. Not the Church, nor those who follow Him in the way. I so often think, given any of us, different temptations, opportunities, would *we* have resisted? One can't tell. Only by keeping close to Him we get the strength and grace we need to hold ourselves ready for the End. *That* comes to us all."

"That is what frightens me. I know if I live five years or fifty, I will die. My life has been such a wreck."

"That lies between you and God, my dear, dear friend."

"Oh, but I *must* tell you. You must let me tell you quickly and not stop me. I refused to bring children into the world. I know now what it meant and some of the things it led to. I can only blame myself for my agony of loneliness to-day. If we had had children they would have kept us together—my husband and me. And if I had done no other good in life I would at least have had their innocent selves to plead for me. I had accepted no responsibilities, not even Larry. I might have been so good to him that he would not have minded all the rest. But I refused even to make a home for him. I was divorced, lived recklessly, blindly, most unhappily, though I laughed through everything till I learned how to weep. Then chance threw a poor woman and her child my way. I had never given one thought

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to the poor, to anyone, really. I love the child. They are both with me now. Hana takes care of the house and of us, bless her. The child is—a genius.”

“Chance?” The nun’s eyes were dancing more than ever.

“I thought it was chance, but—do you know, I rather—believe it was God.”

CHAPTER XXI

A CABLEGRAM

“**W**HAT is it, Passy? Why are you waiting down here? You look so—grave and somehow happy.”

“Come upstairs to your room. I was afraid you’d slip by me and I had to tell you first.” The girl’s face was illuminated and the hand clutching Joan’s and holding it while they climbed the stairs had a strained intensity. Even Passiflore’s step, so often dragging, was light and she drew her along. When they reached the landing she closed the door softly behind them so that not even her vigilant mother would hear.

“It’s the greatest secret I have ever had.”

Joan’s eyes grew larger and she waited, breathless.

“My work was chosen, out of two hundred it was first.”

“For what, Passy? Quick, for what?”

“To be sent to Paris, at once.”

“Oh, my dear, my dear!” She caught Passiflore tightly to her in a gigantic hug, then;

“I thought it was for Aunt Diana’s Christmas? Tell me.”

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“Hush, they might hear. Come away from the door—over there by the window.”

Passiflore knelt on the little window-seat and Joan, joyous, perched beside her, wondering.

“Ardinelli came from Florence unexpectedly. It appears it's the way he always does come. At the Academy they said it would not be till after the New Year.”

“Yes, yes. Go on. It's too good to be true!”

“First he set aside five of the models. Even to be one of the five was like being in Heaven.”

“I should think so.”

“Then he set aside the work of four. I was sorry for the boy whose little Bacchante he rejected. And yet, he will work again, and all five will receive honorable mention. That is something.”

“I hope I may do as well.”

“After that, the professori gathered together and put another one aside.”

“Your heart must have stopped beating.”

“I was saying Aves. I closed my eyes, so great was the intensity with which I prayed. There was a moment of suspense that ran through all the room. I felt, but did not see it. Then, a shout—‘Passiflore!’ they called my name. I opened my eyes. Ardinelli stood beside the judge's table, and on it was one model only, my head of Lady Diana.” Again the swift and loving arms were about her and Joan was weeping for joy.

“Passy, Passy, darling. Six weeks, and this!

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Aunt Diana knew when she said you were a genius."

"I had confidence in God. That was my only genius," answered the little hunchback, with eyes shining.

"Tell me more."

"The next part is even more wonderful. Ardinelli usually goes to Paris for the Spring exhibition, but it appears that on account of the many important people there now, a special exhibition is to be held. He starts to-morrow and takes my work with him. Then, it will be shown again in April."

"Was that why he came before they expected him?"

"That was the reason."

"Was your work completely finished?"

"All but the signature. Joan——" A blush spread over her face as she told how the great Ardinelli had said:

"And now, Signorina, as there is no time to be lost, will you please write in your signature?" and how, with the professori looking on, the great man standing by, she had modeled the passion-flower and caught it in the silken folds at Diana's breast, and said, 'that is my signature, signore.' Then Joan, he—kissed me on both cheeks! He was so pleased.

"The accolade!" Joan cried, "Oh, this will be the most beautiful thing you could have given Aunt Di for Christmas after all."

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"Yes. None of them could believe until I proved it, that I had done the head from memory without taking any measures. Ardinelli said that was another reason for accepting it as first. He seemed to think it unusual, but I have never taken many measures. The Lady Diana is printed in my heart."

"I don't believe she ever had a photograph."

"Only this one I carry here," said Passiflore, the hand that knew Diana's face so well resting on her breast.

"No one else could have done it," said Joan, shaking her head with emphasis.

"You could. You paint without a model, often and often."

"That's because my work isn't orthodox, though I must say Tacconata is far fairer than they say Julien is, because he lets us use our imagination as much as we like. The others only 'paint what they see.' I prefer to paint the pictures in my soul, just as you did Aunt Di, from the love in your heart. It's the creative thing that is the most beautiful. I really like to have some kind of a model, then I work around it and in the end it might not have been, just as well. You should see Graziella work!" Joan laughed, it was a huge joke. "She has a tiny camera, and when no one is looking she takes the model's picture. Then she enlarges it and traces the enlargement on canvas. There's not a trick she does not use. Some day Tacconata is going to find out."

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“What does he think?”

“He is puzzled. Often I have heard him say to Graziella: ‘You have the skill of a photographer, but no soul.’ Little he dreams how right he is!”

“The rage just now at the Academy is ‘Cubism.’ I hate it. We are supposed to model not as the object is, but as we think it should be. It sometimes leads to frightful atrocities. If the professori allow them to slip through by favoritism—it *does* happen—or because they, themselves are of the more modern school, Ardinelli throws them out.”

“What are you going to do now, Passy?”

“I will make the Lady Diana a tiny head like the first. With it I will give her a letter Ardinelli promises me, with a critique of my work.”

“She will die with pride and joy.”

“She’ll rejoice and live! Oh, if what I succeed in doing might only repay her for all she has been to us!”

“And what she has done for me, too, Passy. No one realizes but you and Hana. What would have become of me? After—that—happened I could never have stayed at home and faced the people who knew what a silly I was. Have you noticed something about Aunt Diana since we came to Rome? Changing, I mean, softer in a way, and happier.”

“Yes, I have noticed it. It is the peace of the Eternal City. She tells me often there is something in breathing the air of the martyrs.”

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At that moment the door opened and Diana herself looked in.

“My conspirators! What is it all about?”

“You,” answered Joan, as Diana came to the window, “but you are not to know one thing about it yet.”

Diana did not smile then, as she might have done, but put her arm around Joan, whom she had grown to love as much as Passiflore.

“I came up to your room, dear, because I had to see you. There is news from America. Wait here, Passy. I must speak to Joan alone, and we will go down to the balcony.”

While the two young girls had been discussing the great secret that was not to be divulged till Christmas, night had fallen, and a fragrant darkness gathered about the little balcony where Diana’s hard task lay. She had never encountered a difficulty such as this, all the more so that Christmas was only a few weeks off and impulsive Joan already steeped in preparations for it.

She held in her hand the message that had come late that afternoon.

“A cablegram! How fine that is, Aunt Di! It always brings them so close, right up to today, doesn’t it?”

“Yes, darling. It does bring them close, indeed it does.”

“Is it from Mummie? from Daddy?”

“From your mother, precious.”

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“Let me see it in my hands.”

But she caught the glint of tears in Diana's eyes, and they frightened her.

“Oh, Aunt Di! What is it? You are not laughing with me now.”

“No, darling. Aunt Di is not laughing now. Be comforted though, for your mother will come to you after the New Year.”

“This one is for me and is not open.” Then, “Did you get one too?”

“Yes, darling.”

“Then tell me. I can't—see—to read—mine——”

“The message just said—‘Jack, in greatest peace, last night,’ in greatest peace, Joan—my poor little girl.”

CHAPTER XXII

ARA COELI

FOR seven days the broad staircase up the Quirinale's hill had been thronged with people hastening to hear the children preach their Christmas sermons to the Santo Bambino.

Out of its venerable shrine the little image of the Child of Bethlehem miraculously saved from shipwreck about the seventeenth century on its way from Jerusalem, was placed in the manger prepared for it. Indeed, there are those who say that part of the manger itself had held the Infant Christ. No one is left to tell whether or not the ancient olive-wood from which the Bambino is carved were the tree under which the Christ-made Man had agonized. Certain it is that from Olivet it came and with it, sweet tradition of power to heal and comfort. So, all who are in Rome must venerate the Child at Ara Coeli and follow with other pilgrims up the wide stair sanctified through centuries, by the passing of children's feet.

Intermingling with the throng of Roman citizens came fair-haired Florentines and auburn-tressed Venetians, men and women from the North and

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sunbrowned peasants out of Sicily. Children, children everywhere!

Students flocked from each of the ecclesiastical colleges. Under their flat priestly hats, the faces laughing, earnest as the case might be, appeared absurdly young. Some of the *forestieri* mistook the German boys in scarlet for cardinals and asked how it could be that princes of the Church would wander about with such informality, even at Christmas time!

Alert, heads up, not losing sight or consciousness of a single part of the festa came American students, whose red sashes, white Roman collar, and sombre black robes relieved by a line of blue, made up the sacred colors they had come to carry with devoted dignity, even to the throne of Peter.

Trinitarians, like other knights of the Holy Grail, came robed in white, great cross of red and blue emblazoned on the breast, and picturesque Dominicans whose black cloaks only partly hid the fleecy garment underneath. Canadians in black, walked sombrely, soberly, but sparkling eyes belied the gloomy import of their dress. Sons of Poland wore the emerald sash that somehow seemed out of harmony when one caught sight of Ireland's students, beltless, in red and black, where they mingled with Rumanian boys in soutanes of deep sea-blue that were touched with yellow. Vatican purple was everywhere to be seen, and the Scotch lads from Via Quattro Fontana whose habit differed from that of the Vatican only in its black *soprano*, and crimson

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sash. Belgian, Bohemian, Armenian, English, French, Spanish, Propaganda, all gathered together for the wonder-feast of the children. Here, there, everywhere, sons of Saint Francis, he who had brought to the hearts of men this very tender custom of venerating the crib of Bethlehem. All three branches of the Order of Assisi were represented, Friars Minor, Capuchins, and Conventualists, brown-habited, black-robed, picturesque.

“Get the colour of the ensemble, Joan. It is sublime.”

“I’ve been watching. Passy, I wonder why some of the women are crying. It’s not a time for tears.”

“Some people *will* cry, no matter when. But let’s ask the old priest behind Lady Diana. Really, some of the women coming out of the church look as if they had been at a funeral instead of a feast.”

Looking up at the kindly priest, Joan asked:

“Father, why are so many of the women crying? It’s *Christmas* time and people shouldn’t be sad.”

“It is the day of the afflicted children. They keep the best day out of the eight for them, the crippled and disabled. That’s why, *figlia mia*. If you want good places you had better hurry in. “These dear boys,” he laughed as he indicated the mass of students constantly on the increase, “are apt to fill the church.”

Diana turned and asked, “*Could* you be our guide, Father? I’m rather appalled at the crowd. It doesn’t matter so much for some of us, but—see——”

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He followed the direction of her eyes to Passiflore standing patiently. The wait had been long and she was ready to drop with fatigue. Hana had a supporting arm about her, but Passy could not endure it much longer.

“Ohe, but that makes it simple,” said the priest. “It is for all such as she. Come. I will lead the way with the little girl.”

So taking Passy by the hand, he went ahead while the crowd fell back, some with murmurs of pity, while others made horns behind her back, and Joan, who saw, could have murdered them.

Close up to the pulpit was an open space and there, at a word from the priest, some altar boys brought chairs for Diana and Passiflore. Hana and Joan stood behind them.

The children who were to preach were gathering beside the pulpit. Those who had made their sermons stood or sat on the floor, listening to the others. The Bambino, covered with silks and gleaming with precious stones lay in the manger. A hush fell, then a childish treble——

“I was a lamb in Isreal. Like a lamb born blind, I could not see the light.”

(“Look, Passy. His eyes—I don’t believe he is six years old——”)

“One night the flock made stirring, uneasily. I had no father, no mother. I was just a little lonely, sightless thing. I pressed my sides close to the sheep for warmth. I was so useless. Why was I born?”

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Not one in all the flock seemed to care. I kept up with them, being afraid to go alone. But I was a trouble to the shepherd for it was hard to follow. Sometimes he had to go after me and bring me back.

There came this wonder-night when the stirring was so great that I somehow managed to keep close. The hills were endless and I did not know where we were going. Then about me did I hear sweet singing, voices from above, they were. They sang melodiously, 'Glory to God on high, and peace on earth to men of good will.' I thought they sang to the lambs too, and the sheep. Peace! We came to where there was shelter. Though I cannot see I always know where there is shelter. Being little I crept through past the rams and greater sheep and came to a place where straw had fallen on the ground. I know a manger. This one was sweet-smelling and so low that my head touched its rim. Then, something reached from out the manger and rested on my head. It was the little hand of a Child. Into my heart came happiness and the peace the voices sang of and into my life came love.

And so do peace and love dwell where He is, and with my blind eyes do I see the Light. The light was that I, even I because He loves me, shall remain hidden away from all that is ugly and unhappy in this life. "Oh, Bambino mio," the child reached out his hand to where he had been told the image lay, "I thank Him Whose likeness thou art, for

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giving me life, and the love of Him, even blindness. When He calls me He will open my eyes for the first time to the glory of His face.”

A rough man with a sheep-skin thrown about his brawny shoulders went quickly forward to lift the child down from the pulpit and pressed him to his breast. “Padre mio, thy tears are falling on my face like rain.”

“They are tears of thankfulness, piccolo, piccolo mio.”

“I had to hobble on my crutches to get to Bethlehem,” announced a small girl who followed in the place of the shepherd’s boy. “Thou knowest, Oh, Bambino who knows everything, that to my mother I was born all lame and crooked.” Passiflore looked around at her mother with a smile, and took her hand and held it. “I knew,” went on the child, “Who was to be born on Christmas night. I would have crawled to reach the baby King if I could have reached Him in no other way. The ground was rough and there were stones. I sometimes stumbled on the stones. Not everybody I met was kind and I was often without food or drink. A woman passed me on the way and when I asked her for a piece of bread she said, ‘If I had my way there would be no children like you born in all the world.’ It hurt my heart to hear her say those words, for the King that was born in Bethlehem gave me life for a present. I had never deserved it. I cried, and when I did, a resplendant one appeared at my side, though

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I did not see him come. He cheered me with words out of the land of Afterwards. I have food that thou knowest not of. Take ye and eat.' The food was sweet and filled me with strength. So on I went and came at last to a tiny cave all hidden in the hillside. The resplendant one led me in. And on a manger—just like that one," she pointed to the crib, "lay One. Oh, no, He did not sleep. He looked at me, and the light of His eyes did speak. He wanted my body to be just as it is for a short time, while life lasts, that when the real Life wakes in Paradise, my soul shall be like the resplendant, who led me in. I wait, Bambino! I thank Thee for my crooked bones. I thank Thee for that I was let to live and know Thee, Giver of all good gifts, Hope of all whom Thou dost bring through the passage-way of this short world, to Thee, beyond." She had hardly disappeared when Hana, distressed stooped down.

"Oh, Lady Diana, they are never going to allow *this* one in the pulpit! It would be too cruel."

"Why not, if it makes him happy? His parents are with him you see."

"But he looks as if he had no mind with which to speak at all!"

"Hush. Wait. They know."

They knew indeed! Warped in mind even as in body, the boy of ten had looked forward to this moment from the year before, as he had looked forward to it since the earliest day he had been taken to

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the Ara Coelia to listen to the other children. They had been afraid at first to let him speak. But he had begged so earnestly that the priests advised the parents to consent. And the child never forgot. There, in the crib, lay an image of Him Who would one day raise him whole and strong in mind to the joy of which Saint Paul had said, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive the joys my Father hath prepared for those who love Him." And that was all he knew about it, and for him, everything.

"There shall be born to Israel One. Bambino mio! Bambino mio! Gasparo sees thee. Gasparo loves thee. Padre in Cielo blessed be Thy name!"

Gasparo's moment had come, and gone. Kindly hands lifted him down, and at once he began to live again for the following year, at once to compose the sermon.

So, the procession continued. One had been a star at the coming of its God, many were shepherd's children, and some had followed in the train of the three wise men. But all had taken part in the blessed Night, just as each one would take part in the dawn of eternal Day. And every single one gave thanks. And closest to their hearts parents held the broken ones, and lifted grateful voices to their Lord Who gave.

Hidden behind a veritable phalanx of students, stood a man, evidently a stranger, listening intently marvelling at what he saw and heard. "Who teaches

the little beggars?" he asked the scholastic nearest whom he stood.

"No one teaches them the sermons. Nuns or priests train them when they recite verses. But the sermons have to be original."

"How on earth do they know what to say? It might not be entirely orthodox, might it?"

"No danger. They drink in their religion as they take their daily bread. The faith of a Catholic is just a part of his every-day life."

"It ought to be. I've only been one myself a short time. But it seems to me a remarkable thing that children as afflicted as these should seem resigned, even happy!"

"It's the duty of Mother Church to hold up hearts, sir. I know a great many of the parents. You see we go among the poor to help where we can. The mothers and fathers tell their children the great truths as they themselves have had them from their parents. If they can read, they read them Bible stories and legends of the church. If not, the priests and nuns do it. But even the poorest and least educated of them know their Latin, and most of them have the Scriptures at their finger-tips."

"Look!" exclaimed the man. "Who is that boy? I'm sure I have seen him before, though I only came last night."

"I can't tell you, but his face is familiar to me, too. He might be one of the acolytes from Saint Peter's. We get to know them by sight."

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“Isn't he older than the other children?”

“He looks about twelve. Maybe the fathers have arranged something a little different——”

“Passy—his eyes—the voice—who can he be?”

“Hush, Joan, it's like a wood-wind thing——”

“From the ends of the earth, closed out. Oh, I do not speak to the Bambino lying there, little image carved out of an olive tree. It is the heart of the Universe I want to reach to, and touch. For I stand before you—the Unborn.”

The throng gasped. As steel to magnet it drew closer.

“The Father wills. He wills, Who called light to being, Who formed the earth and sent it whirling into space, Who hung the sun in the firmament and flung the flame of it out to the heavens, Who suspended the moon by night, radiant and cold, Who swung to the firmament planets and myriad stars, He wills.

“Out of nothing but His breath He made the immortal soul of man to which the earth, the moon, the stars, the sky, the sun, and all the Universe are nothing. The soul of one alone among these afflicted children, is worth them all.

“The soul of man, immortal, glorious, shall live on and on, even as He, unending. The sun shall cease to give its light, the stars shall fall from heaven, the very powers of the earth shall be moved. But the soul of man shall live. He wills.

“From the dust of the earth He fashions about

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a soul the human frame. Why? He knows why, for He is God. What man could do what He has done even to the least degree? Little, impotent, having what he has from God alone, receiving such need of grace and power as God sees fit to give, man questions. *Man*, today a breath, tomorrow naked spirit on trial before its Judge,—*questions!*

“I am the Unborn. In omnipotent Mind I am given gifts past the puny conception of any created being. In omnipotent Mind I should have breathed sweet air, and rested on my mother’s bosom, should have been given opportunity to earn my bread and hers, the joy of service, plentitude of love. Then when the years of my appointed time were done, straight to the bosom of Eternal Love should I have had the right to go! In His appointed time should I have fulfilled my destiny. I am the Unborn. You, who should have conceived me, have denied me. Little child, like other human children, you have refused me life and light and air and food and happiness.

“Think you not, Oh, ye who have rejected me, that He Who would not let a sparrow fall, would have considered all my need? He gave *you* life, but you have denied me right to live. He gave you raiment. You would not clothe me. He gave you music and singing and books and learning and every good there is. All these, even these, you have kept from me.

“You have denied me the right to serve my coun-

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try, to till the soil, had there been need, to scatter gifts and graces through the land. You have robbed your nation, you who boast your love of it. You have perjured your loyalty. Loyalty is not consonant with robbery of human-kind, and that is what you, who have denied life to those whom the Father would have sent, are doing every day. Oh, you who listen, heed me. Christmas is the children's time. It is for them I plead!"

As the vibrant voice spoke on, one could have heard the heart-beats. Closer the people pressed to the low rostrum, though the clear tones reached to the uttermost ends of the church. Once or twice a man groaned—a woman beat her breast——

"Take heed, for it is the Father Who wills. What are all your arguments in face of the Almighty One, ye atoms of earth? You think because He stays His hand He cannot smite? What are the reasons you put forth for flinging back into His face His mightiest gift? Cowardice, human respect, penury, miserliness, irresponsibility, craven fear, indolence. These you would dare weigh in the balance with immeasurable good one human soul can bring into God's world. What wonder that the very angels weep at man's interpretation of *living!*

"Look not to self. The self that looks to itself is immeasurably small. Look to the Light of the world. Look to Him Who balances sun and stars and moon. Look to Him Who sent the erring angels hurling down to hell. Look to Him Who

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holds His hand for the very love that gave His only Son, pierced with nails, crowned with thorns, for the saving of man. In His will preserve inviolate, His temples of the most Holy Ghost." He paused. A ray of light from an upper window centered on his face.

"And yet, Joan, it looks as if the sunbeam caught the light from *him*, doesn't it?"

"Yes, yes. I see. Look, Passy!"

The crowd was drawing back to let a woman through. She seemed to have come a long way, for there was dust on her sandalled feet and the folds of her pale-blue shawl hung close. But when she caught sight of the boy, her face brightened and all trace of weariness fell away.

"My son," she cried, "where have you been? Your father and I have sought you all the way from the campagna to the hill."

Then into the boy's face flamed a radiance so sparkling that those who stood close by were startled. He put his arm about his mother as he stepped down from the rostrum and looking up at her with ineffable sweetness, said:

"I thought you knew, Oh, Mother mine. I had to come about the business of the Infinite."

Forgetful of the crowd, of Passiflore, Joan, Hana, Diana followed blindly in the direction the child and his mother had taken.

The multitudes closed in as if the two had never been and the preaching was over for the day. Be-

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yond the main altar was an outer door. They might have passed through that, but as she crossed the railing, a little girl caught at her skirt. She recognized her as a gamine who played about Castel Sant' Angelo the while her mother sold flowers to the passers-by.

"Signora, mia bella signora."

"Listen, piccola, tell me, where did he go?"

"The Boy and His Mother?"

"Yes."

The child nodded, her great eyes shining.

"I saw where He went."

"By which door?" Diana eagerly asked.

"It's no use looking for Him outside the Church, Signora, for you won't find Him. He went in there." She waved a careless little hand in the direction of the sanctuary.

But the space inside the altar-railing was quite empty, save for an old Franciscan monk who knelt in puzzled prayer before the tabernacle whose golden door had somehow been left open.

He rose, genuflected, and closed it.

ARA COELI!

CHAPTER XXIII

ATOP SANT' ANGELO

DIANA had sent the two young girls and Hana off to Frascati for the day. The studio of Via Margutta as well as the Academy, were to be closed during an entire week, and Diana longed to be alone, more than ever after yesterday. Since then her soul in an unaccountable way seemed fortified against the iron that might have seared it only a few short weeks ago. She smiled to herself as she thought that in this Rome, city of martyrs, one form of baptism only, had passed her by. Strong desire to be baptised she had; the blood of her heart's agony had swept her being, indellible mark of true repentance. The third, that of the cleansing waters, would follow. To this she had made up her mind, but not yet, not quite yet.

At the Ara Coeli yesterday she had caught sight of a man in the crowd who reminded her of Larry. Whoever it was, his head had been turned in another direction, and she'd only seen him for an instant before the swaying mass of people came between them. But the impression had been vivid and had roused in her a wish that she might some

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day say she was sorry; *then*, only then, come "and offer her gift." Unless she did, he might never bring himself to speak to her, not if he knew everything. She remembered how instinctively he loved the finenesses of life, things in the long run that counted most. Where she had fluttered on the surface, he had dived in deep. But he had cared too much for himself to be concerned whether she fluttered over surfaces or not, and when they finally disagreed, had made everything easy. Poor Larry, she could not get him out of her mind. This would never do. If she were to go out she would be distracted by other things, so slipping quickly into her things, hardly noticing where she went, she turned to the left on Via Gregoriana, then down Tritone Nuovo, past the Corso and into Via della Scroffa where her way lay clear. Almost unconsciously she crossed over Ponte Umberto and following the path beneath heavy-hanging branches of the trees that rim the Tiber's tawny breast, reached at last Sant' Angelo.

No spot in all of Rome held greater charm for her than this. She had visited and revisited it with Joan, with Passiflore, and had led Hana through its enchanted corridors.

The guards, seeing that the castel had a magic fascination for this fair American, withdrew their rigid rules and allowed her to roam at will.

It seemed to her that if one could follow intelligently the history of Sant' Angelo's stronghold,

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from its inception as far back as a century and a half after the birth of our Lord, through the vicissitudes of hundreds of years during which Popes, martyrs, saints, and those who were not martyrs, Popes or saints had witnessed triumph and defeat, one's faith would be firmly, inalterably fixed.

Some of the guides told the truth, and some such falsehoods about the Church and Papacy as would have shaken the castle's very foundations were they exact. But Diana's clear-sighted eyes were too clever to be deceived and she could laugh at their stupid, sensational stories and refute them.

Down past length of straggling street across the vastness of wide open court, rested the timeless masterpiece of Michael Angelo, the Dome—— As she stood looking out from over machiolated walls to the colossal silhouette against the sky, came the thought of Peter for whom the greatest church in all the world was named. With that name flashed memory of a wonder-child she had known in the doubting long ago.

The child's mother, very martyr of an invalid, had been of the Church of England and had taught her little daughter all she knew of faith. Diana had been among those who ridiculed the child for her seriousness. "Why, Millicent, you are only ten years old. How can you know what you want to be?"

"I know from my mother's Bible and the history she taught me."

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“How could you learn what Catholics believe from the lessons she taught?”

“In my mother’s Bible I read that Jesus Christ, Who was true God and true Man, said to His Apostle, Simon Bar Jona, ‘Thou art Peter and upon this Rock I will build My Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.’ The Catholic Church has Peter. We have not got him. We are not founded on the Rock. She is.”

“Is that your whole reason, astonishing Millicent?”

“I learned, too, that our church was established in the sixteenth century by King Henry the Eighth who wanted a divorce from his wife and wouldn’t submit to the Pope. I learned in my history that he had six wives and most of them he murdered. Ugh! Imagine the founder of a church being a man like that! Even my sweet mother couldn’t understand how such a thing could be.

“The Catholic Church has as its Founder, Jesus Christ. In the first century He Himself, God, second Person of the Blessed Trinity, founded it.

“You may laugh at me if you please, but I know the difference between divine origin, and human origin, and I will be of the Church that was founded by God.”

In those far-away days Diana had laughed. She would not have laughed to-day. There were centuries of tragedy in what the child said.

“Anything else?” she’d asked.

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“In our churches I get tired in ten minutes. But where the Real Presence makes Himself felt in the little house on the altar I could stay all day and all night.”

Sight of the Dome brought it back. And it was a child who had said these things. Always a child! Yet, throughout the years, lying dormant in Diana's mind, were these truths that child had spoken.

What a help, this Dome, what consolation to those beneath its shelter! And its shelter covers the world—— Only such faith could have sustained Hana in her agony, brought about because of loyalty to a salient principle of morality inculcated by the Faith of Peter. Mother Fitzgerald at the Trinitá had said: “Patient endurance attaineth to all things!”

To what had Hana's patient endurance attained? Passiflore. Passiflore undesired of her father, Passiflore to whom the extremists would not have allowed life, Passiflore, both hands filled with the high gifts of Heaven!

Had Faith been consoled for the loss of Mickey? of Jack?

“The Communion of saints,” was the answer. Faith felt their presence in the night and throughout the drifting day. For the present she was separated from them only by the frail invisibility that divides material things from the immaterial. But there was no question that they would meet again. Even while Jack lived, he and Mickey's mother had been more

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than compensated for the boy's affliction. No matter whether the lameness were a menace or not, they know him straight, perfect, eternally beautiful in the possession of everlasting joy.

If Diana had only known in time! If Larry could have realized the truth! Poor Larry, with his merry laugh and dancing feet, his gaiety, his loveliness, his utter inconsequence, or so it had seemed then. The many years! She knew he had not married, but that was all she knew. Sometimes people spoke of having met him here or there, always abroad. She supposed he might have gone back to America, but if so, she had not heard. She wondered, as she often did, if he had changed. The years had changed *her*. Was he still lovable? Still inconsequential? She had only realized his loveliness afterwards. But his friends felt it. Why not she? Evening shadows drifting across the roof aroused her, and the chill that fell with sundown. A slight wind blowing, wrapped the grey of her chiffon veil across her eyes. She put up her hand to draw it back, then stood transfixed. Larry? Larry!

It was almost as if an apparition out of all the dream-days came to seek her. She tried to move, but could not, so she stood still. He walked across the roof and came to her, but did not even touch her hand.

"I went to your house, but no one answered the bell. Then I came here. I don't know why, for I

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had no way of knowing where you were. I saw you at the Ara Coeli yesterday. You were not alone but even if you had been I would not have dared speak to you. But today—I *had* to come. Won't you—speak to me?"

She swayed, and he might have caught her, but steadied herself and answered as if they had parted only the day before:

"Of course. But they will give the signal in a few moments and we'll have to go. There," as a deep-toned bell rang out across the twilight, "if you don't feel like walking back just yet I know a quiet place by the river, only a step or two away. Will you come?"

He felt like telling her he would follow to the ends of the earth, but without answering went down the twisting stair beside her. It seemed to him as if in a dream he and Diana had changed places with the two who sang their parts on a mimic Saint' Angelo roof those forgotten years ago. The lilt of their voices that would never die, the lights, color, fragrance, all gathered about them, came after them. It was only when they reached the secluded embankment and Diana turned that he fully saw what the years had done to her, God, through the years.

"This little place is somehow Franciscan. I like to come here and be in retreat from the world. The oars that dip, and dip, are an accompaniment to one's thoughts—or prayers. See, here is an old

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stone bench. Passiflore discovered it one evening when we stayed late at the Castel and were too tired even to drive home."

She talked on, not saying much, but her heart kept at its beating, swiftly with every word she uttered. Then, as she sat down and pulled her wrap about her, "I didn't even know where you were."

"I've never not known where *you* were."

"You mean—you've known—*all* the time?"

"Yes."

"Oh!" If by putting her hand on her heart she might only quiet it!

"Everywhere?"

"Everywhere."

"Why?"

"Why not?"

How much else did he know? Oh God! What else did he know?

"Still, you were not in America."

"No. I was not in America."

"How did you know I was in Rome?"

"I knew all about the little house on the Pincio."

"Did you come to America—after?"

"Yes. About the time you came over here."

"Oh! Joan said I was narrowing my Rome by spending part of every day at Castel Saint' Angelo, that I ought not to 'limit my observations,' " she said irrelevantly and laughed for the first time.

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Then, "Did you know she came with me? Is with me here?"

"Yes. I knew all that."

A sweetness he had never expected to see, rose in Diana's face as she said:

"I couldn't tell Joan I was waiting for you there, for I didn't really know it myself."

"Diana, you're flirting," laughed Larry.

"Oh, don't, please. Good as it is to laugh we *can't* laugh till we shall have talked things over and over. I've forgotten how to flirt. And you are really a stranger, the you that's you, I mean. And besides, it isn't done."

"*You're* not a stranger. I've never let you be:"

"Then you knew about—Passiflore?"

"All about Passiflore. More than you dream I know."

"Tell me."

"There was a private exhibition of especially good work in Paris last week. I saw the head she did of you. It was that brought me on. I—bought it," he added with an unLarrylike touch of diffidence. Then, "I had to see for myself. There were things in the face that didn't used to be there. They brought me to Rome."

And this was Lawrence Minton! Incredible. The man she had married only for her freedom, divorced for her freedom, and had never since had a moment's freedom from her conscience. How

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little she had understood when she took him on as a sort of sporting proposition, married him not really knowing him, and then had not gone on playing the game. Why not? Among all her friends Faith was the only one who kept the rules. She had deliberately sought Faith out, questioned her and gone away unheeding, though she had known Faith was right.

She raised her eyes and studied Larry for the first time, to see what changes time had drawn. He had been only a play-boy of society as society before the war had been, or so had Diana thought him.

There had been high-lights in the brown eyes then. Now there were depths. The hair that had been dark and sleek was grey about the temples. This hurt somehow. She had not been there to see the change in the course of its coming. The lines about the mouth, too, were different.

“Do you know, I can’t make it out in the least. You look something like Michael Desmond. How do you account for it?”

“Atavism, and perhaps association. We are first cousins you know. And I’ve joined the candlestick-makers.”

“I didn’t know. How long ago?”

“Ages. Bobby Van Dysart did it. That’s why I’ve lived over here.”

“I thought you were only amusing yourself in Paris.”

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"I did rather, at first. But I went into the war with the French."

"You did?" She had not known, for she would not ask, and no one had told her.

"Was that what made the difference?"

"It began the difference. I studied afterwards. There was a youngster, half English, half American, Donald Kaye. We studied together with Bob Van Dysart in the background reporting to Michael. Michael got us both. Kaye is to be stationed here at the head of Crichton's office. He's a fine sort. I was pretty much an oldster to begin, but I couldn't go back to America. Kaye's young with the world before him. His earnest way of looking at life stirred me. I saw things differently—after——"

"I know. Pretty much everybody did. Those who didn't, weren't worth while." Then the question burning on her lips:

"Why couldn't you go back to America?"

"I'd rather you didn't ask."

"Do you mind anything *I* ask? I, Diana?"

"Yes."

"Then, if it matters, why couldn't you go back?"

"Are you serious?"

"Never more serious in my life."

"Well, then," a shade of defiance in the voice, "because of you."

The color on her averted cheek might have been reflected from the fast-fading day.

"You mean you—cared?"

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"Yes."

"I wonder if anything could have kept us together? I was so utterly inexperienced, young even for my eighteen years when—it happened."

"Yes."

"Don't be so patient. It never was like you to be patient when things hurt."

There was no bitterness in his smile as he answered:

"Call it resigned, then, shall we?"

"Oh, don't." A queer pang shot through her heart, for she knew that while she had filled the void of silent hours with Passiflore and lately Joan, Larry had had no one. Through the day, perhaps, his work and interest in it, but at night empty rooms, the silence that she dreaded.

Little by little the time went on while they talked in a desultory way, now of this person, then of that place, skirting personalities that sent the blood throbbing to Larry's temples, the chill to Diana's heart.

Neither of them noticed that the sun had disappeared, that dripping oars were silent the while the oarsmen had gone home, and he and she were alone together in an emptied world. Lights flickered from steady barges, while here and there beside the river path shone lamps, and flickering torches on the angel's bridge. The very ilexes above their heads were breathless.

Diana rose and went a few steps forward, rest-

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ing her elbows on the marble balustrade that ran the river's length. In the sunshine of earlier day the Tiber flowed drear, turbid. Now by the miracle of night it sparkled crystal clear.

"Diana." Lawrence, too, had risen and stood beside her. "Will you answer a question?"

"Yes." She looked straight into his eyes now.

"Wasn't it a pity?"

"The question comes late."

"Even so, I do ask it. Don't you think it was a pity?"

Silence for longer than either of them realized, then Diana answered:

"If I told you how it is with me I might lose what strength I have. You are Larry Minton, and I am I; entities quite as apart as the hemispheres in which we've lived. Do you want me to go on?"

"Go on."

"I know now what I did not know then; that in spite of your worldiness, your—difference from what you are now, the spark was there. You cared for better things than I did. You knew the value of all that makes for beauty and worth in the world. Oh, Larry, I mean it was the people who did the things I thought were the things to do that counted with me, while with you it was the things themselves, the music, the pictures, all for their own sakes. With me, if they appeared to be the fashion, popular and all that, they meant something. I hadn't much of an idea above that, and the effect

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I myself might have on people. All vanity, worldliness, all of it. You were worldly, too, but in the right way. Your worldliness was tempered with better things. I was curious, vain as I was young, and they flattered me, those others, Hazel, Olga. Then, they taught me how children were a burden—oh, yes, you asked me to speak out. Families were unfashionable, responsibility. You know all that, and how it led to divorce. It led to other things of which you have never known. I was free, free with a weapon in my hands.

“That’s what they did for me.

“I wearied of everything, and went my way like a demented creature, seeking excitement from one end of the city to the other.

“I even grew ashamed to face Hildegarde’s coterie. They set me as free as the courts had set me from you. Indeed, I was severely left to my own devices. I can’t see how you could possibly have kept track of me, then.”

“Even then, Di.”

“Oh, *don’t!*”

She shrank from the little name as if he had struck her. Then asked:

“How did you?”

“I never asked. It came to me through different channels. People were coming and going. Whether in trench or forest, it came to me. I always knew.”

This time the silence was tinged with a signifi-

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cance neither could mistake. Diana's lips were white when she spoke again.

"What became of Bruce Daingerfield, Larry?"

"He died. At Verdun."

"How?"

"He fought a duel and was shot."

"Why?"

"I believe he had talked indiscreetly."

"Who killed him?"

"The doctors said it was his heart. The wound was only a flesh wound. But his heart was in bad condition. It was that, at the end."

"His heart, Heaven help him, was always—bad."

"We're going to forget him."

"There would be a great deal else to forget."

"Even that."

The risen moon's light shone full on her face now, pallid and tired. She had suffered enough. And yet it seemed to her that her real suffering had only begun. Whatever hope she might have had of building up, of living again, had died. But Larry knew she had suffered enough.

"Diana."

"Yes?"

"You've told your story—all I shall ever ask to hear. And it was all the story I knew. You've never asked one word of mine."

"I had to tell. You are here. That's all I wanted in the world. Just to see you, if only once. There is nothing to ask."

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“Do you mean that?”

“Long ago I learned never to say what I do not mean.”

“Do I—count in your life—at all? Is that what you mean?”

“Yes. You count.”

The moon-glow on the Dome beyond the Tiber touched his heart with radiance.

“Suppose, Diana, suppose some one in every way worth while, some one who could make you far happier than I could have done, came and asked you to marry him, and you loved him. Would you?”

“If he were in every way worth while he wouldn't ask me.”

Wondering, Larry questioned: “Why not?”

“Because I am married.”

So. It had all been a mistake, the hope, the light, the counting as she had said he counted.

“I don't understand you.”

Then she smiled. The shining of her eyes was more than the brightness of stars to him, eyes illumined by tears into something deeper than tenderness.

“The law of man may have separated me from my husband, but He Who holds and breaks men's laws holds me married to my—husband, Lawrence.”

“You, too, Diana?”

“I, too, Larry.”

“You would never have married—after——?”

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“Oh, I might have done anything before I knew the truth. But now I know that marriage is sacred. Even the words ‘What God has joined together, let not man put asunder,’ would show us if our sense of responsibility did not. So you see, no one could be as you suggested in every way worth while, and ask me to marry him. Isn’t it absurd on the face of it that a mere scribbled scrap of paper could have power to undo *God’s* sacrament?”

“It hardly seems possible for you to mean it.”

“I told you I had learned to mean what I say. It is just another case of the impotent, puny hand of God’s creatures—and He could wipe us out of existence in a moment—lifted against the great Creator. Either He must look on us who break these basic laws as ignorant, irresponsible children, or as bad, presumptuous men and women, filled with the sins of arrogance and pride.”

“Then you don’t believe divorce is really divorce? Not under *any* circumstances, Di?” The little name came easily now.

“Oh, I know perfectly well there are certain cases where separation *must* be, call it what you will when it is utterly impossible for two people to exist under the same roof. How can they live together when they’ve made so terrible a mistake that to go through with it would drive them mad? Then, of course, property reasons step in which might make legal divorce necessary. But there is no such thing as re-marriage. Neither man nor woman who has been

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married in the sight of God with the *sacrament* of marriage can ever undo it or have it undone. They may live apart, but they are married in the sight of Heaven for time and eternity."

"Outside the Catholic Church it is not like that."

"No, because they don't know. God never holds responsible those who don't know. The thing is," she laughed, glad that she could, "to find out."

"Yes, it's the only way."

She looked at him curiously.

"How do you know so much about it all, Larry? *Why* do you?"

"Oh, I had good reasons."

"You seem to have developed into a very wonderful person."

"Don't say that, dear. Oh, don't say that. We've all got to wake up to life's true meaning, one day or another."

"I'm sure of it. Oh, I've been made to think, and since I came to Rome with Hana and Passiflore, and Joan, all so firm in their belief, and getting so much out of what they believe, I've said I was going to learn. Every day I've slipped away to see my neighbour, across the piazzetta from our house."

"Who?"

"The Trinitá de Monti."

"What have they told you about the sacrament of marriage?"

"They told me that since you and I were married

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in our church, by our own minister, both of us baptised Christians, that no human power can ever undo that marriage."

"*They* told you that? They told you we were still married, you and I?"

"Yes, Larry."

"God bless them for telling you!"

There was silence for a while, then:

"Would you, could you, be willing to give me another chance, Di?"

"Oh, if you only knew how I'd give my life to make up for the years apart!"

"There are several things I must tell you. What would you say if I told you I had become a Catholic?"

"I would answer it is what I am going to be. I had made up my mind some time ago."

Her hand moved to him as a bird might flutter to its mate. Against his heart he held it while he spoke:

"You said I'd changed, but you've got to know all the truth. I went through Purgatory before I came into the Church. I'd not been a saint, Di."

"I didn't suppose you had, Larry."

Content to sit there with him while the river flowed at their feet, content to let the hours and days and weeks if need be, pass, just so that he was her own again, at last.

"There was a man who looked out for us—at Verdun. After I fought—Bruce—and was kept

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out of the way till the doctor discovered it was his heart and not——”

“I know. Go on.”

“His name was Cabanel, the Abbé Cabanel.”

“I heard him in New York, and saw him often. I believe the men must have followed him blindfolded. *We* did, the workers.”

“I followed him open-eyed. I learned what a rotter, a quitter, I’d been.”

“Don’t call yourself names. I was the quitter. I didn’t realize the first meaning of the vows we’d made. I had that as an excuse. But I was so great a fool that I don’t believe if I *had* realized, they could have held me.”

“Poor heart! We both flung back into God’s face the beautiful thing He had given us, so we were both to blame, I most of all. You were so young.”

For a few moments she said nothing, then asked:

“What happened after Abbé Cabanel came?”

“When Daingerfield died, Cabanel was with him. He got him safe, thank God. It was the eleventh hour, but his soul was safe.”

“I said you’d changed. I didn’t know *any* man could be as big as that.”

“Cabanel had given me peace. He was the only one who ever knew *why* we fought. I had received so much, and here was this poor beggar on the edge of eternity—afraid. So—well, it happened.”

“Did you see him again?”

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"He asked for me. I went. Said he'd not beg forgiveness and didn't blame me. But for the sake of America—we two—so far away, would I take his hand?"

"You did, didn't you?"

"Oh, yes. Everything was right with him. Cabanel saw to that. He had lost his fear at the end. Somehow peace came to him. That's all." He gently loosened her hand from his and walked to the balustrade, wiping cold drops of perspiration from his forehead. Only for Diana, only for her would he have lived over that hideous time.

She sat quietly waiting and when he came back, asked:

"When did you become a Catholic?"

"He baptised me early one morning before the artillery shot away the greater part of the church. Lucky he did it then, there was nothing left of the Baptistry."

"Then you were a Catholic before the Vans found you in Paris?"

"Long before."

"Larry, if we had had—it—long ago, as Faith had it, you would have been spared all the tragedy. Either I would have given you up—as she had courage to suggest—or I would have learned to realize what marriage meant."

"Who knows? It all might have been intended for some great good. 'The things that seemed not good, yet turned to good!'"

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“Larry!” Does distance separate after all? Or time? What was he saying?

“Perhaps the loneliness of the childless years was a way of leading you and me to the knowledge and happiness of Him, and poor lost Bruce to Heaven. We can’t tell. Some day we will know, not ‘through a glass darkly’ as now, ‘but face to face.’”

“When I—come to the Dome—Larry, will you be the one to see me through?”

He had not taken her hand again. It was enough that she stood there beside him, that the thrill of his heart spoke to hers, that for the moment in the sight of the angels there were only they two, he and she, alone.

“If I do that, will you see *me* through?”

“Through what, Larry?”

“The rest of life, Diana.”

The years that had been lost! The precious, precious years!

“Oh, my love! My love!”

* * * * *

The little twinkling lights along the Tiber danced for joy. A breeze sprung out of Paradise to where they walked beneath the ilexes, while down through the gloried night swayed a lark, singing to enraptured measure and all the way to the Pician hill, Larry held tightly to his breast the hand that never while he lived was to be wrested from his tender keeping.

CHAPTER XXIV

TIME TELLS ITS STORY

A STONISHING days, alive with witchery! Came New Year's morning, and Hana, in Diana's room, putting final touches to a simple toilet that itself seemed mirror of Diana's luminous happiness.

"If I were younger, Hana, it should have been white. My very soul seems bathed in crystal waters."

"It will be whiter still—soon, Lady Diana."

"I know. Have you told the children?"

"Not yet. They were to meet us at the Trinitá. They think it is just for the New Year's Mass."

"We won't keep them waiting, then. I am ready."

Timidly Hana asked:

"Will—he—come for you, dear Lady?"

"No. He will wait in the chapel, too. I don't want any one but you, till afterwards."

They walked across the piazzetta, silent in the early morning, save for the splash of water in the fountain basin and birds that sang their glorias. Up steps carpeted with a joy Diana had not dreamed

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existed this side of Heaven they went, and through the open door where a smiling portress expectantly waited. Down the long corridor that had echoed many years to the gentle sound of consecrated feet, then up the winding stair——

Chapel of Mater Admirabilis!

“Myriam—I baptise thee in the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.”

Mater, another Myriam, rosy-pink and golden, jewelled with miracles, pensive eyes resting on a new chapter in Diana’s book of life, bore witness to the spotless soul renewed to baptismal innocence, white as the crystal waters of which she had spoken, effulgent in the sight of God.

Afterwards, at the merry breakfast in the little house to which Larry came for the first time, Larry who had “seen her through,” Passiflore emerging from her timidity like a shy bird, said:

“I never understood, but every night and morning I have prayed that this would happen. That you would be baptised, and—he—would come.”

Diana had cried a little, laughing through her tears, gone to Passiflore and hugged her.

There came another morning, eve of the Epiphany, when all the schools reopened, and Joan fared forth early to be first at Via Margutta. But as she started out the door she saw Incubo doggedly making his way up Via Sistina, a new little American cabin trunk on the front seat beside the driver, and

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Aunt Diana, always glowing now, talking volubly to—some one. Who could it be?

“Oh, Mummie! Mummie!”

Forgotten the Via today, forgotten the portrait just begun, forgotten everything but the sweet some one who had kept her coming a surprise. She looked so young in the hat with the long widow's veil.

Joan welcomed her with a gladness that showed she'd forgotten why she longed to come away from everything and every one suggesting Uncle Michael and the lost love.

Dawn of Epiphany! Witchery, witchery still, never to be let go from one's memory.

“Where shall it be, dear heart?” Larry had asked.

“There's only one place, for you and me, that is.”

“The Dome, Diana?”

“Of course, the Dome.”

“Some quiet altar where we may be quite alone with the priest who marries us?”

“The quietest spot. The one that means the most.”

“Where the Fisherman sleeps, sweetheart?”

“Where the Fisherman wakes, Larry.”

But at the last they felt that selfishness to be put aside at all, must be put aside at once, and that they really wanted those who loved Diana dearest after Larry. Hana, Passiflore, Joan, and Faith who knelt apart, but not alone, gathered together where the

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golden flickering lights above Saint Peter—living—mark the heart and centre of the Christian world.

“I, Myriam Diana, take thee, Lawrence, to have and to hold . . . till death do us part.”

“I, Lawrence, take thee, Myriam Diana. . . .”

The glory in her face! The tremor of her lips!
The light in Larry’s eyes!

Whispering silence, echoing rhythmic chant above and beyond the ninety golden lamps and more—the Presence——

Then there had been the joyous rush across the vast Piazza where fountain spray resolved itself into twin bridal veils, and laughed sparkling drops like fairied diamonds across the golden setting of Diana’s hair. And the tiny trattoria whose cheerful proprietor was thrown into an ecstasy of excitement at the coming of a bridal party, and who, amid bows and compliments and delighted excuses sent his little boy poste haste around the corner to fetch creamy butter, fresh from the churn, for the wedding breakfast!

Witching wonderful weeks!

They did good work just then, those weeks. It was well Joan should have them to remember, for a time was coming in which it would take all Passiflore’s persuasion to keep the active mind and sensitive heart from dwelling too much on personal grievance within.

Larry and Diana had not gone too far away.

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They felt that the peace of the Umbrian hills held a great part of earth's close approach to Paradise. While they lived at Assizi, Faith was left guardian of the little house.

There had come a letter from Michael she had not dared show Joan. For about a fortnight it lay hidden in her desk. Fancying whatever resentment Joan cherished at an earlier period had softened, she had spoken freely of Michael's kindness in the dreadful days when Jack was ill; of his tender sympathy in her hour of greater agony, when Jack was taken from her, and had been surprised, grieved not only to see that the girl's attitude with regard to Michael remained unchanged, but that it had hardened her.

When his name was mentioned, she would say nothing. She might hold her mother's hand a little closer, might stoop to kiss the hair that suddenly had grown to burnished silver, but she never spoke of him.

"Never at all, Passiflore?"

"No. Not any more."

"Don't you believe anything could soften her?"

"Not yet. At first I used to try. I would say, 'Mr. Crighton must be lonely.' She did not answer, not even to change the subject. It was as if I had not spoken. She would either look away, start to paint, to read, anything. The hurt was too deep, Mrs. Desmond. You see it was all her life. What if it is more than hurt?"

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"How, dear? How could it have been more than hurt?"

"If you will forgive me—shock. Oh, she is quite all right in every way. But the complete change came so suddenly, the horror when Judy attacked Mrs. Crighton, the fearful struggle, the death so unlike the only other death she had seen, Mickey's. She told me, once, at first when she said she would never speak of it again, that it was very much worse than if Raphael had died, for he had never been allowed to be born."

"*She* thought of *that*? Joan!"

"She must have had to think of it, dear Mrs. Crighton. It *was*."

"No wonder. It is curious I should turn to you in this trouble, Passiflore, but you know her better than any of us. I have had a letter from him. Read it, then tell me what I ought to do. You see, my little girl is of today. She drives through where I would not have dared set foot. Even far away in this ancient Rome she has become modern of moderns. I don't know what to do with my one child. I miss—her father. He would have told me. He *could* tell me, always."

Yet even in this predicament Faith had courage and could smile, for she knew Joan's heart even though coping with it just at present was a problem.

Passiflore held the letter in her hand, not opening it. She was thinking of Joan.

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“If she had not had her work to occupy her thoughts she might have thrown herself away, rushed off into frivolous ways, but her painting has held her safe, and her work has been all the better for her troubles, and even her sorrows—for she *has* had them. Oh, dear Mrs. Desmond, a cross is not all bad, indeed, it is not. Joan is sensitive, hides what she feels, but I am sensitive, too, so I understand her.” A queer little smile twisted the calm lips as she continued:

“They cross the street when they see me coming. They make horns behind my back, sometimes to my face. I see it all. I know, but I have a remedy.”

“What remedy, dear lamb?”

“The passion-flower. Always I have that. If the hurt comes when I am good, I see my flower, my own flower with the nails, the cross, the thorny crown all drooping for my Master, and I know then what He had to suffer—what humiliation! I see His broken body, too. While mine may be bent and crooked, it is whole. His was broken. I still have His gift of life. At least those who mock me have not killed me as they killed Him for me. It might have been much worse for me than it is. I might have died before I came to know Him, intimately I mean. It might have been much, much worse. That’s when I’m good. But when I’m bad, tired and bad as I often am, the passion-flower is emblem of what I’ve done. It holds up my pride. All Rome knows what I’ve done.”

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"I should hope so. Not only Rome, but all the continent and across to America, they know."

"Yes. They may point their fingers at me, but it is at Passiflore the artist, Passiflore the sculptress, Passiflore whose name one day will astonish the world. Then I think how ignorant they are and how they would stare if they knew at whom they make the horns. Afterwards, when the wickedness is past, I go quickly to Don Raimund at San' Andrea's to confession, for it is a most monstrously bad Passiflore who has such thoughts as this."

"Not bad, Passy. Just a little human like the rest of us. I would rather Joan consoled herself with pride in her work, than that she carried the hurt in her heart, alone. I don't like the way she takes it at all, but I don't know how to cure her."

"It's a contradiction in Joan. She has gained confidence in herself while she has lost faith in others. While the experience has done wonders with her painting, it doesn't seem to have helped the real girl." Passy clasped her hands as she spoke, and the letter fell on the floor. "I forgot about it," she laughed as Faith stooped and gave it to her. Then she took it from its envelope.

"NEW YORK.

"FAITH DEAR:

"Your letter was charity as well as joy. It brought you closer to my range of vision. If you could see the empty house, listen with me to its silence, you might begin to understand what a Roman stamp and your handwriting mean.

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Sometimes I believe I'm growing savage. All my world is overseas and I am left to go on and on, building one thing after another for other people, and for myself the vapidness of drear middle age. And I'm becoming waspish in doing it. There's always the hope of making England at least, or the new studio in Paris. Our happy Benedik, Lawrence Minton, is to take it over when he and the Lady Diana, God bless her, see fit to leave their second honeymooning at Assizzi. I want him to stay away as long as he likes, steep his soul and hers in the glories that are Umbria's.

"If I thought there were the slightest possibility of your meeting me either in France or England I would throw everything to the winds and go over, but I know that for the present at least you are fixed in Italy, and I could not take so long a holiday, yet. This brings me to the point. Young Kaye is ready to take over our interests in Rome. I have tried him from time to time by sending him to Paris and he has proved himself there, as here. So he is to have charge in Italy. He tells me he knew you when he was a boy, one California season, but too long ago for remembrance. When he came to New York, you and Jack were in the West. He came the week poor Hilda died. He is quite a remarkable young person, full of talent and charm. He made his way in the war when he was not more than a boy, for England needed all her sons and he managed about his age! He has very close friends in Rome, people with whom he was associated then, and others. He has studied there and knows Via Margutta like a book, as well as Villa Medici.

"Now to come to the *raison d'être* of this letter. I want him to know Joan. Dear Faith, don't say I have meddled enough. Perhaps this is my reparation. If, in my foolish yearning for a son I created a visionary creature to fill the emptiness I could have modeled him on no better prototype than this very Donald Kaye. If I have a regret, it is that I did not let well enough alone, and time take care of itself.

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It was certain to bring these two together sooner or later, and it had far better have been—later,—now.

“No son of my own could have been more to me. I am sorry to say the Olga person, Mrs. Trent, and that bounder Magargle are sailing on the same ship. What they are going to do in Italy is a mystery, though I believe their idea is, a little Rome, a little Florence, a little Venice, then much time in Monte Carlo and a winter in Paris. The man appears willing to play courier-banker for the sake of someone to go about with, who can introduce him. What an existence!

“I like better to think of the little house on the Pincio, of you, of my Joan, the Japanese and her child. Whenever they come to my mind I am forced to wonder what has become of——

“Do you think I had better go on, Mrs. Desmond, dear? It seems to be about my father.”

Faith nodded, so she continued:

“What has become of Matsuo? He disappeared as mysteriously as he came. I never told you that my poor Hilda knew his secret. He asked to be allowed to tell it. He begged her forgiveness for whatever he had done to displease her, but she died before she could tell me anything about it, and when I sent for him afterwards he had disappeared. I sometimes think if there had not been so much mystery there need have been no tragedy.

“I am constantly reading of Passiflore’s success. The group she sent to London was a triumph. I have something I want her to do for me, but will write her in person.

“Oh, Mrs. Desmond, could there be better news than that in any letter?”

Faith smiled at the happy face looking up, then

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Passiflore went on: "Tell her it is too important to send the message through any one else, even you."

"Oh!" The girl's eyes grew big and black as they did when she was deeply moved. "What is it? What do you think it can be?"

"Wait and see," said Faith, evidently in on the secret. Then: "Finish the letter, Passy."

"The building of Modern Arts goes apace. When it is done, I will rest. Rest means just one thing, Rome, where you are, where Passiflore is, where Joan is, and, please God, our reconciliation. Pray for me, all you who are in the eternal city where alone one seems to touch high Heaven.

"MICHAEL."

Silence, a musing Passiflore, and Faith who watched eagerly for her answer. Then at last the question: "What do you think about it?"

"I'd not tell her."

"Why not?"

"It's a little bit hard to explain. The letter would have been all right in 1903."

"Why, Passy, do you mean our day is passed?" laughed the older woman.

"Well," Passiflore laughed back, "it *was* in another generation that our elders—and wisers, managed, or tried to manage our hearts, wasn't it? If this Donald Kaye is to care, let it alone." The small pale face grew tense as she looked out across the eternal hills.

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"What work do you suppose he has for me to do? It sounds interesting."

"Anything you do is interesting, child. It is curious that you, born and brought up in America, should have the vivid imagination of the Oriental so strongly developed."

"Ancestors, I suppose.—Mrs. Desmond?"

"Yes, Passiflore?"

"I never get you alone. You said I was to call you Aunt Faith. Did you mean it?"

"I meant it."

"I don't believe I can do the work for Mr. Crighton."

"No? He will be disappointed."

"He must not be. There is something I want to tell you. Mother and Joan know it, but up in the room Joan and I call our private studio, I've started something not even the Academy is to know about. I don't want any one to see it. Even Joan must not look."

"How can you work together, then?"

"We don't work together very often. There are so few few holidays, but when we do she has promised to keep to her window and I to mine."

"Life work, Passiflore?"

"Life work."

"All planned out?"

"Not quite. I have the theme, but something is lacking. I don't worry about that, though. It will take a long time."

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"You are young to do a life work."

"I know. We *might* call it an ante-room, a sort of vestibule. But when we unveil it, you shall say whether it's to have been life work or not. Aunt Faith——"

Faith stooped and kissed the smooth forehead.

"You knew my father? Did you?"

Memory flashed like a depressing shadow. All the horrors that had overshadowed her immediate circle seemed to have centered about the long ago of Passiflore's father, time in which he had played so inexplicable a part.

"I have often seen him."

"He was a servant in Mrs. Crighton's house," said Passiflore, unabashed, "just as my mother was. I never speak of him before her, because all she has ever told me is that he *was* employed by Mr. Crighton, that his name is Matsuo, and that I must pray for him. It is the letter that makes me ask. I never had courage to speak about it to the Lady Diana. If she wanted me to know she would have told me. But I have thought and wondered till my head ached. You see, he *is* my father. But nothing ever comes of such thinking, such wondering."

How tell the girl it was because she was afraid of Matsuo, Hana had fled and hidden away all the years? How could any one tell her that she, the unwelcome child, might be in danger of losing what life she had? Life was dear to her,

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maimed as she was, and of inestimable value to herself, her mother, Japan—the whole world. Faith had to make some answer, those questioning eyes demanded it.

“I only know they separated shortly before you were born. What he had been in Japan, who your mother really was, what happened before they came to this country I never knew. But this I can tell you, you can see it for yourself: whatever your mother may have been in the Crichton’s house, *that* she certainly was *not* in Japan. The same I believe of your father. Whatever strange circumstance placed them in such a position in America no one can tell but your mother. She has never spoken to any of us of her life before.”

“Not even to me. I don’t dare ask her, any more than I dared ask Lady Diana. It’s natural for a daughter to want to know.” The face grew wistful as she went on:

“I’ve dreamed dreams of my father, back in Japan. He seemed sad, so sad, always seeking my mother and me, always crying, with his arms outstretched. He was not at all what he appeared to be to you, and the others—in my dreams.”

Quiet sandals made no sound as Hana came in. She had not meant to listen, but Passiflore’s gentle voice carried and the last sentence was clearly audible to any one in the drawing room.

“I could not help to hear,” she said. “May I come out?”

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“Of course, Hana, come out and help us watch the sunset.” Passiflore caught her mother’s hand and drew her down.

“Sit with Aunt Faith and me. Oh, she said I was to call her that. I love to have you with me, little mother. All day long I am away, and at night the time is nothing. We *have* loved the holiday. But holidays come to an end, don’t they?”

“Holidays end, and”—and here she bent over the young head that meant all the world to her—“silences must sometimes end. There is much to be told after years of silence. May I speak now, Mrs. Desmond? Hana may lose courage again if she does not speak now. She has tried before——”

“Would you not rather I’d go? Don’t you want to tell Passiflore alone?”

“No. I want to tell you. I always wanted to tell you. It is hard—to talk about my—Matsuo. Passy was so little. I did not want to hurt her. I would not hurt her now, but she is old enough to be less hurt by truth than by the wild imagery of the mind. I ask your advice to this, Mrs. Desmond.” The little right hand, more than ever like the carved hand of an ivory geisha rested on her heart as though the pain, old as it had grown, were a physical thing.

Hana had changed little. The tinge of her skin was perhaps more transparent, shadows under the softly slanting eyes a little darker, and the mouth had taken on a sweetness of expression indescrib-

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able. But in her heart there was always an ache for what had been, if Matsuo had only understood. Curiously, the return of Lawrence Minton and the Lady Diana to each other had struck a chord of hope that Hana believed dead. But how? Where? God alone knew.

"I heard what you said, my blossom," Hana went on to Mrs. Desmond's brief answer, "tell her everything." "I heard what you asked. No, your father was not in Japan what he seemed in America to be, though there is much in all of this that even Hana does not know, cannot understand. Other things there are I want to tell you now. Passiflore has thought her mother always—like this, working to live, did you not, my heart?"

The tender eyes, looking into hers, denied the truth of Hana's question. "I do not study the face, the form, the characteristics, the expression, the—what shall I call it, oh, my mother? The—*fibre*—not to see when one has been born into another sphere of life. No. I have never thought what you naturally would think I did, sweet mother."

"I ask God to bless you for saying what you do, Passiflore. Now will I tell you the story that has been burning at my heart all the long years."

Dipping sunlight barely touching her face, she folded the ivory hands in the broad, flowing sleeves of her kimono, and began:

"Long, very long ago in Yokohama lived a mag-

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nate, high among the nobles and of great respectfulness. Yoshira Namuto was he called. His palace was fine, here you would call it a house, so much finer are the houses. But there it was a palace and most beautiful, but finer were his gardens. From every quarter of Japan came those who would see his gardens." A moment lost in memory she yielded reverence to a past that for her would always be a sacred thing.

"Great potentates of the land would come, and great was the entertainment at Yoshira's house.

"He had a daughter, young, full of life, and full of something greater which you know as love of life. To her there was significance in every sign of nature's own. Stars were not stars to her, they were the brightness of destiny, and when the moon rose young, it spoke of worlds beyond the world of Yokohama. Ah, me! Ah! me——! One night was a new moon born. Word came to Yoshira Namuto that next young moon there would journey to his honourable gate another noblemen of vast consequence and many years, who, on a previous visit had taken note of the child daughter and would have her to be his wife. See, Mrs. Desmond, he was a widower with sons and daughters grown, and was not pleasing to the eye, nor was his personality desirable.

"That very night, one month before the visit was to be, did the head gardener die. Great was the anger of my father. Frantically did he send to

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the government school of graduate gardeners to replace the man who had made the palace gardens blossom like an Eden."

"Did one come, oh, mother, did one come?"

"One came, knowing flowers as if he himself had been born in the heart of a crysanthemum.

"With her ladies was the magnate's daughter permitted to walk. A spacious corner there was where wistaria and iris watched the lily pond like sentinals. There did she spend whole hours, each long day, far into evening. Most circumscribed are the lines set about maidens in Japan, such maidens as are daughters of the great. This daughter was no exception. She was not painful to look upon. Some there had been to call her morning star, and tempt her by whatever way they could to marriage. They thought to gain her favour and would plead with Namuto, for they knew not of the thing that was to happen. Nor was it easy to woo one so closely guarded. Once the father's promise had been given to the venerable man of rank no youth was let come near. The daughter's will was not the will of her father, nor submissive as should be the will of a Japanese maiden in Japan. She *would* not marry with the ancient one. But how not do so?

"A certain day, she walked beside the pond, and there did she see the newly come gardener from the honourable government. She noticed a strange thing. He had not the coarse hands of other gar-

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deners, nor the thatched and uncouth hair. His hair—it shone like the day. His face was young, and no one else did see what she saw. A week passed by. The ladies who walked with the daughter were not every minute watching, there were times when the young and beautiful gardener from the most august government would look across the lily pond, and smile.”

Out of the voluminous sleeve came a tiny square of cambric, and with it Hana wiped her eyes.

“Three weeks, two weeks, one week. Another, and the new moon would be made unsacred by the coming of the unwelcome one. Another day she walked beside the iris, then sat her down to embroider. Into her embroidery she wept. Then did the head gardener direct his men to work upon the curtain of wistaria that hung above her head. One of them lost his balance and fell. To save him the head gardener ran around the pond and came close, and when the ladies looked to see the hurt of the man who fell, did he whisper in the daughter’s ear. Almost did she faint away, for *he* was no born gardener. Then did she smile and bow her head. He knew. When came the noontime, all but two ladies were sent away to match embroidery silks and find patterns for the work of the nobleman’s daughter, and with the two only did she go to walk. By twilight the others had not returned, so intricate were the patterns to be, so many-colored the silks to match. And by twilight

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she was still walking, and the ladies were tired to death. Soon she caught sight of *him*. His dress was different, all ready for what might come. She walked closer to the pond than ever before. There beyond her reach did she see floating a lily that she wanted for her own. 'Get me a rod and stick,' did she say. They turned, all weary to find the rod and stick and while they were gone she tried to reach the flower for herself and went too close. She fell in. Quick like lightning did he come. Higher than his knees did he walk into the water. The ladies were still at a little distance. 'Heart of my heart, listen. Tonight, when the starlight touches the wistaria, can you come?' "

"Oh, what, my mother, what did she answer?"

"She did not even know his name. 'Tonight will I come—anywhere,' " said Hana simply, then continued her story:

"The ladies were shocked to find her all wet. They took her home and wrapped her in soft cloths. She made complaining of her head and wished but to be left alone to sleep her fright away. Her honourable father would send for a physician, but of this she would not hear. 'I want but to be let alone and sleep, my father,' did she say. 'Tomorrow will I sleep quite late. When they ring my little bell and they come with my tea, then will I tell if still the need be for the illustrious physician.' He was content and thought her decision wise. And then, when all Japan lay fast asleep, in dark kimono

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cloak did she slip out to the shadow. Beside the iris pool he waited who was called gardener and wrapped her in still darker cloth and fled with her to where there lay a ship that was to sail at dawn. Oh, my Passiflore, my blossom, can you forgive?"

"What is to forgive, my mother? It is to you to forgive the brokenness of the passion flower."

"I knew so little, baby of my heart, so little. He somehow changed before that new-born moon grew older. At the first he was all love. But in my heart I knew he was afraid of something. And I learned that the fear was, the news would reach Japan he had married me. So he kept me hidden, and made me put away even the few beautiful clothes I had brought with me, the clothes of a great man's daughter. And for some reason I do not know even to this day, there was to be no child. And you were coming. And I dared not tell him. And I grew to be afraid, too, I had never been afraid of anything but marriage with the ancient one. I grew to be afraid of my husband, Matsuo. When he went to work for Mr. Crighton, that, too, something I do not understand—it appears he knew before we left Japan that he was to come to America and go to work for Mr. Crighton—I was afraid to be left alone, so I worked, too. I pretended to want to work, but what I wanted was to be near him whom I feared. It was my one link with Japan. I was so alone. My hands grew rough—— I loved your father more than I feared

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him. Then came the day that wrecked Hana's life."

Faith put out a hand and rested it for a moment on Hana's shoulder. She knew only too well the day to which she referred.

"I so often wondered where you went, what you did."

"It was strange what happened after. Matsuo never felt, as I had felt the realness of the priest's religion that had found us on that ship."

"Had there been a priest on the ship?"

"In a brown habit there was a priest. About his waist there was a cord. They called him a Franciscan friar. He had been in Japan where the mission was. He saw I was young and Matsuo, too. He told us what he could in so short time and made the marriage on the ship. He gave me a book in Japanese, with all about the Faith. It comforted my heart, and he gave me, too, a Bible, that I wore out with reading. Not so Matsuo. When we got to shore he gave it all up and forever. He would not obey the Church. His fear frightened me. Oh, that night!

"Through one street then another did I walk despairing. Close beside the East River did I walk. I carried you next to my heart, poor blossom, but no one knew. Matsuo had grown violent, inflamed by words he heard that day I begged him not to hear Arachne. He could have killed poor Hana. I believe he could. There was a bridge beside East

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River and a big place filled with coal. Blind did I run to it for fear thought of Church and duty would hold me back. I *wanted* to die. I think I must have had a crazy forgetfulness of WHAT lies beyond! The river of sadness was black and murky. Bits of refuse did float on the sad bosom of the river. I stood looking, trying to make my mind forget. Some one touched me. I shrunk away. A voice said—in Japanese: ‘You are sorrowful, poor thing. Come with us and let us comfort and take care of you.’ ”

“Was it an angel, mother mine?”

“God only knew. I was sick at heart and did not care. There were two of them. I did not even look into their faces. A grey dress did they wear, and over the grey dress a grey cloak, and on their breast the sign of the cross, all ivory and white. They led me on and she who spoke my tongue did hold my poor hand all the way. The iron trains above our heads made thunder sounds, and that is all I remember of that sorrowful walk.

“We reached a door and went up poor broken steps into a shabby house. But inside was peace and a little chapel. ‘I will kneel beside you,’ said the one who spoke my tongue. ‘It is Benediction. After, we will talk.’ I saw them floating in like some sweet dream of the home of blessed souls. They were all robed in white from head to foot. I learned about that afterwards. White is the color of the Blessed Sacrament. But on the street they

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wear grey dresses, and black veils. Black is for penance. Saint Francis of Assisi did give the black veil to the first Franciscian women, Saint Clare, and her sister Agnes. The grey is for incense, their life to rise like a prayer as incense rises. The grey and black they wear on the street and when they go outside their convent, because the white does soil too soon. Franciscan Missionaries of Mary, they call them, but they are really angels.”

“Oh, mother mine, my heart is suffocating. Tell me more.” Passiflore had gotten up and knelt before her mother, clasping her close.

“Many homes have they in Japan, and wherever there are souls and bodies to be helped and cared for.”

“I know them well,” Faith said. “The five tumble-down little houses in New York are being replaced by a fine new convent and settlement. The Mother house is here in Rome you know, on Via Juisti.”

“I did not know,” said Hana, “but she who spoke my tongue had been in Kobe as well as Yokohama, and she did know my father. She saved my life and my mind. It was in that little house the Lady Diana found Passiflore and me.”

“God showed her the way.”

“God always shows the way,” echoed Passiflore, with shining eyes. Faith noticed that they’d become strangely brilliant as if through her mother’s story some inspiration had reached her. They sat silent

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for a while, each musing in her own way. At last Passiflore asked:

“Does it hurt to think of my father?”

“Hana may be a little mad, my Passy, for Matsuo hurt me with a deadly hurt. Yet—there’s never-ending pain for loving him. And pain that he does not know of you and of what you do for the whole world.”

“For God Who gave me life,” corrected Passy, “for the work I want to do for Him as long as I shall live. Mother mine, who *was* my father, really?”

“Much mystery there was about him. Who he was, what he was, I cannot tell you. Hana does not know. His mind was a deep well. Everything went into it. And to himself did he hold what he knew. If he had not held it so close some one might have shown him he did not know what he did acquire, with correctness. While we worked at the house of Mr. Crighton, Matsuo would disappear at night. Always was I to keep the secret of his going. Always was I not to be surprised that he would go. Sometimes I think Hana was but a cloak for whatever real things he did. Sometimes I think Hana held him back from what he would have done. Had I taken my place openly as an honourable wife, then should I have known. But even on the ship when the priest did the marriage ceremony, Matsuo told me, ‘silence.’ I had to change my name. Tzuru was my name. Hana was

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my mother. She died when I was born. So I did take what was my mother's. I know, as we all do, Matsuo stayed in America long, trying to find me. But it was he taught me how to hide. Then he went away. Where, I do not know."

"How was he so good a gardener? Was he always a gardener?"

"What he really was, that I did not know. He was no gardener. But he loved doing well what it came to him to do. And he did learn more quickly than any one in all this world. He was an artist. I think from him it is you get the artist's soul. But it is Hana, Tzuru, who has given Passiflore the Christian spirit."

"She has given her child this night a gift greater than she will ever realize. Light, mother mine, light!"

CHAPTER XXV

A COMING

FOR the third time the model had failed to appear. As far as Joan was concerned it did not matter. The other members of the class might follow line for line, shade for shade, color for color, but not she. Her imagination, faring far, found inspiration in the liberty of her own free spirit. Romilda da Paolo had tried month after month, year after year, to infuse just such independence into the students, and had failed. Joan's untrammelled soul itself was to be found in her painting. The very freedom of it had begun to frighten her mother. Where was Joan drifting? Why? Then came a letter from Diana.

PARIS, 19—

* * * Never mind her, Faith. It is not so much Joan as the times. Here in Paris we see far more of it than I saw in Rome. Larry says it's because in France, youth has had less freedom in the past than youth of other countries. I don't say it's all good. Some of it is frightfully bad. But I'm trying to get their vision, see through their eyes, and realize that good or bad, they are going ahead, accomplishing, trying out what you and I would never have

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dared try at all. Just now it's a melting pot but they don't know it. They'd be horrified if we suggested that their cubism is not a *fait accompli*. Joan's originality is rather the originality of some of the old masters touched by modern spirit. Give her rein—but stand by. Her love of you will do the rest. Nowadays the trouble is that parents *don't* stand by. Either they criticize to the point of madness or ignore altogether. To uphold your own when one is not quite certain of the artistic orthodoxy of one's own is the hardest part. But you will always take the unselfish way. Don't think I say one thing and do another, Faith. Each day at the Madeleine I pray that, should it please the Bon Dieu to send Larry and me a child of our own, he or she may want to do the things we think best.

We ourselves shall need light—and entire forgetfulness of self. The generation before ours, overexacting, our own too lax, both have been forms of selfishness. I would ask for the future, a greater breadth of vision and an understanding less trammled than that of the past generation, with reverence and respect that the young of today have not known.

Poor leader of the blind, what have I done to deserve either from the future! But with all my soul I'm trying now so that if ever the time should come, they will feel as I pray they may.

I want you to know, too, that Larry and I are forgetting the lost years in the glory of these. If I sometimes am tempted to anathematize the criminal doctrine that stole our happiness away so long, Larry bids me think again, and thinking, see that God may have permitted it in us that in our hurt many another poor fly may keep clear of the spider's web.

Love aplenty to you all, and my heart to Passiflore,
DIANA.

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In the studio of Via Margutta, Joan was questioning destiny.

“What’s the use of anything?”

“Everything.”

“How?”

“Unwavering faith, hope, love. They spell idealism and reality, dreams and truth; they are life, Joan.”

“What have they done for you, Romilda? You work day in, day out, till you are ready to drop. You try to put vision into these dull heads that can’t see beyond a model or outside these four walls. Where does it get you?”

“Say rather it gets me a living. And an independent living, Joan.”

“Is a living worth it?”

“Mine is—to me.”

Joan painted on in silence and wondered just what Romilda meant. She stayed at the studio only because of Romilda. For some unexplainable reason Signorina da Palo refused to come to the house. Graziella told a strange story of romance, and that Romilda would not enter any house other than her own, to which she invited no one. It appeared she lived somewhere about Via Quatro Fontana. Joan knew nothing more. Even Faith had begged her to come for Joan’s sake. The reply was invariably the same:

“Thank you very much, but it is not possible.” They had to be content with this. The mystery

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appealed to the romantic girl, but besides that, she learned certain touches from Romilda that not even Tacconata could have taught her.

After a while, Joan looked up from her canvas and said:

“All Italian girls consider themselves old maids if they are not married at twenty. Oh, I don’t mean girls like you. You have made a career. But what has life brought me? A certain amount of happiness, yes. That’s because I was born joyful. Even my poor little romance couldn’t crush all the joy out of me.”

“You’ve achieved, Joan.”

“Perhaps, but I would give it all to make my dream reality. What is in store for me? Just this——” Her brush snapped through a branch and bent a tree to the wind.

There was bitterness in Romilda’s tone as she asked:

“Like me?”

“You have had reality, not emptiness.”

“God knows whether I have or not!”

The younger girl looked up surprised at the intensity of the other’s voice. If the stories current about her in Rome were true, she had that to take hold of and remember.

“I was taught to look too high, higher than I ever could have reached. I might just as well give up.”

“You’re not to be a little prig, Joan. Be satis-

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fied with less. Look to the best, of course, but not to the impossible. It's surprising to find any one with a high standard today. Indeed, when love comes, one generally marries for the love itself if one be a woman."

"Would *you* marry for that? Suppose he wasn't everything you'd want him to be?"

A curious expression came into the eyes that looked down on her.

"I'm afraid I might."

"But how is any man going to find you out? You are unapproachable."

"Am I? Perhaps I am not destined for the life most women lead. Perhaps I've had my hour—and lost it."

"Well, I seem to have lost mine without ever having had it, but I've come to this conclusion; to see and share life at all and perhaps marry I might just as well strike out for myself. I've had enough of other people leading me. Mother keeps me too secluded. I have no chance with her at all. I realize now that I don't know the first thing about love, real love that sympathises and sacrifices. I thought I did, but now I know that Uncle Michael neatly prevented it." Another ruthless dash of the brush in which she lifted a wood-nymph to a very ecstasy of motion. Romilda laughed at Joan's skill and took the brush out of her hand.

"Now you must listen to me for a bit. What *is* life?"

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"Tell, oh, Mentor, for I don't want to learn anything about anything."

"I believe it means doing the thing at hand to the best of one's ability, living each moment as it comes."

"One can't sit and wait for moments."

"Oh, dear heart, one does not sit long. They come trooping, full of happiness and sorrow, joy and disappointment, crowns and crosses."

"Why the crosses?"

"To keep us human. It's a great chance to follow—One."

"I've had mine. Death is one."

"There are far heavier crosses than that."

"I've had disillusionment. I'd call that one."

"Oh, my darling, put aside the things of a child. Begin to live, *real* life. Then come and tell me what it has meant to you."

"Perhaps real life will turn out only like Santa Claus and fairies."

"Ah! but you believed in fairies and Santa Claus. They made you happy while you were little and had certain substance in feeding your imagination with beautiful things that live even yet. But now you must take another step."

"I believe in ghosts."

"So do I," Romilda laughed. "But tell me just why you cared for them all."

"My beloved Daddy and Mummie had such fun filling my life with every blessed thing that could

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amuse or interest me that it was several kinds of happiness.”

“What did it do to you?”

“It made my world enchanted—look at my canvases—if they’d not filled my head with visions could I have seen this?”

“Of course not. The imagination did not die, did it?”

“No, no. It lives and helps me through.”

“Oh, Joan, Joan, what have you to complain of, you who have been gifted of the gods?”

Joan whirled around, facing Romilda.

“Just what do you mean? What are you telling me?”

“I’m trying to show you that you’ve been blind and selfish and hurtful. Don’t frown and draw away like that, my blessed sensitive plant. There’s no one else to tell you the truth, so Romilda is going to. I can see the heart of this man you call Uncle Michael, his great artist-soul, his master-mind leading you through idealism to the realities of deep beauty. You were too young then to understand, but I who never knew him, never even saw him, can show you a little of his worth.

“Hands full of gifts and no son to give them to, life full of talent that must die with his last breath, hours and hours alone when he need not have been alone, so what wonder he created out of his imagination the child he should have had, just as you imagined Santa Claus and fairies? When you, a

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lonely little girl came to his lonelier house he let you play his game. He shared his secret as he shared many other things with you. And he saw you enjoyed it, loved it, so he played it harder and harder. He almost fooled himself, *almost*. It was a beautiful bubble while it lasted, wasn't it? But it broke, and you wouldn't play the game any longer. You were angry because it *was* a bubble, not remembering its glorious colours, nor the patience that had made it. He was trying to please you and you hurt him."

"He hadn't the right to play children's games. He was a grown man. He knew he was wrong."

"Did he? I think not. Only when you showed him. I fancy he must be one of those men blessed with eternal boyishness and they are the most lovable of all. He has given you a tremendous scope, Joan, in fostering that creative faculty of yours. He has helped lift your work far above that of an artist who 'paints what he sees.' "

"You're good to care enough to bother about telling me. Perhaps some day I may feel as you want me to, but till something proves the contrary, I'll hardly believe it. Sorry, but it can't be helped."

Then Romilda saw in the girl's face the very expression that had frightened Faith into writing as she had to Diana; rebellion. Joan was in earnest when she asked what was the use of anything.

As to her work, the maestro smiled on it. That was all that seemed left for him to do. Her portrait

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of Passiflore had travelled from Rome to Paris, from Paris to London where for the present it hung in the same gallery with Passiflore's symbolic "Cross."

She and Passiflore worked as much in their own studio at the top of the house on the hill as at the Academy and Via Margutta, but really Joan stayed on to be near Romilda.

They sometimes walked as far as the Trinitá together, but not beyond. To-night Joan waited till the class had covered their canvases, then walked with the older woman up the road to Villa Medici, where they stopped to watch the sunset. Joan never wearied of this enchanted spot. Oblivious now to all else, she stood looking out at the play of light across Saint Peter's dome, and listening to the splashing fountain, somehow balm to her uneasy spirit. There were footsteps ringing quickly from the direction of the Villa and an eager cry—"Donald!"

Joan had never heard that tone before. Then Romilda's earnest questioning:

"When? Where? How? Why?" and a laugh with every question.

"Yesterday. The Minerva. Train from Paris after crossing on the Majestic. A candlestick shop!"

"To stop? Forever?"

"If I make good."

"It's all of four years."

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"All of four years. Glad to see me?"

"So glad!"

Joan had walked off a short distance and stood facing the parapet. Then Donald saw her.

"Why, isn't that Miss Desmond? It's the girl of the parrot! I *knew* it must be. Is she with you?"

"Yes, we work together. Come."

"Don't you remember," he asked as he held out his hand—"years ago—for a moment—on the steps—you stood there with *Judy*? I'd just come to New York," he explained as if all the years that had ever been could wipe out a single detail of that detested time. Did she remember? There had been the tragic loss of faith in Michael, the hideousness of Hildegarde's passing, all the things she wanted to forget. And this man was curiously an image of Raphael, the Raphael of her dreams.

"I remember. How do you do." Primly she held out her hand. Primly she dropped it. There was no word of the Michael who meant so much to him, who had been so much to her. And the pity of it was that Donald knew why. And she was certain Michael had told him.

"Give her my letter at once," he had said, "I don't know what effect it may have, but at any rate it will bring you together. I don't want her to meet you through the people you are crossing with. Oh, yes, she knows them, has always known them. But she is very different. So are you."

So he was and the difference had endeared him

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to Michael. Donald knew his world, none better. But the unworldliness of his nature was stronger than his worldly wisdom and the two made up the man. Joan blushed rosy red at sight of Michael's handwriting.

"Shall I read it now?" she asked, as he gave it to her.

"Why not? It's short. I saw him write it."

Oh, Michael, Michael, where was your guardian angel when you wrote that harmless letter?

MY JOAN:

Donald Kaye sails tomorrow and goes at once to Rome. After you, he comes closer to my heart than anyone. I want you to be friends. It's my atonement.

UNCLE MICHAEL.

A smile Romilda hated to see, touched Joan's lips, but the girl's eyes were not smiling. She folded the note once, then tore it into little bits and dropped it over the wall. She stopped to watch them drift to the winding road below, then turned:

"It was very good of you to give it to me at once. We must be friends, not only because of—this letter—but because you are a friend of the Signorina da Paolo's."

Was it the changing light or did she see a flash of inquiry in his eyes when she said Romilda's name? Why did Romilda suddenly look away?

Joan remembered it afterwards. Then she went on:

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"We will meet often, I'm sure. You'll be at Via Margutta sometimes?"

"Part of my work will take me there. Then, I've got to see old Tacconata," he laughed.

"Yes. And you must come to see my mother."

Late that night, long after the household had gone to bed, Passiflore thought she heard someone sobbing. Taking a lighted taper she followed the sound to Joan's room.

"It's Passy. I was afraid to knock. I might have waked the others. What is it, my Joan?"

Joan, buried in the pillows, tried to stifle the sobs that tore her breast. Passiflore climbed up, took a handkerchief out of the sleeve of her trailing kimono and leaning as far over as she could, tried to stem the tide of tears.

"Passy! It hurts."

"What hurts, precious one? Are you ill?"

"Oh, Passy, Passy, it's a dreadful thing to stop being a little girl all at once and say goodbye to your youth."

"It may be that," said Passiflore, sitting bolt upright now, "it may be. But I've never been a little girl. I've always been grown up. And I've known sorrow, Joan, more than you will ever know. So I can comfort you as no one else could."

Then Joan sat up and the long black braids fell about her and the tears stopped falling.

"I'm glad you came. I've got to tell someone. I

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grew up to-day, Passy. I see what a silly I've been, what a child till this very day. You know I grew up hurt. Donald came to-day straight out of the time of my disillusionment, Donald—whom I might have grown to like——

“But he brought a letter from—you know—Uncle Michael, and he said that this was his atonement. His atonement! How can a note of introduction atone for my senseless vision of years? I tore it up.”

“Oh, Joan, not before him?”

“I tore it up before him—politely. And I graciously invited him to come and see Mummie. But all the time I was thinking and making up my mind. Those other girls at the Via, Graziella and her hopeless love for the maestro, Ginelda and a girl named Rose Darst from Boston and several others and girls of old Roman families that we know—I am not like them.”

“No. You are much sweeter than any of them.”

“Well. I'm going to be like them. They go to tea at the Russie with beautiful young officers. I will go to tea at the Russie with beautiful young officers. They trail through the gardens on festa days with men I've met and Mummie won't let me dance with. Well, I can trail through gardens too, and dance better than the Roman girls. Mother will have to let me. They catch happiness while they are young. Why not I——?”

“Joan, you're all wrong. We have our blessed

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work. It's everything to us, everything. Why, don't you know they are looking for the very thing we've got? Happiness. And they can't find it their way. God has put the destiny they try to find into your two hands and mine. His Will! They are shallow who seek to find the end of the rainbow where they chase butterflies. Look up, Joan, and see the truth God Himself shows you and me."

"I've thought all that out, too, but it's my human self that's gone rebellious. I'm tired to death of being an artist and not just a girl. To-day Graziella said her youth was gone. She's twenty. I will be twenty in a few weeks."

"And yet, she does the things you have not done but want to do?"

"I know. But there's Tacconata. She really likes him. Now I'm going to tell you something, Passy. I'm going to win this Donald Kaye, though I know I shall hate him. Then when he asks me to marry him I shall refuse him. That's what I think of—Uncle Michael's—atonement."

"You will hurt yourself more than you are hurt now, Joan."

"I have reached the depths. Nothing can hurt me more."

"And then, dear—after you have refused him, and bruised him and wounded your Uncle Michael—what then?"

"I shall find happiness. Those old and rather ugly friends of Aunt Hildegarde's, Mrs. Clavering

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and Mrs. Trent are always laughing, even if they are ugly and old. They'll show me about. *I* know." The lovely head with its long black braids rose defiantly.

"Joan—poor heart, *that's* the devil," said Passiflore.

CHAPTER XXVI

AN ENCOUNTER

CURIOSUS fatality! Singular transformation! Donald Kaye in Tacconata's place, the maestro mysteriously absent from Rome and Romilda da Paolo's face become inscrutable.

As far as Joan was concerned the moments were either a flicker of time, or an eternity. Passionately she shrank from Donald's approach. Passionately she told herself she hated him. Did he linger at her canvas longer than at Graziella's, her indifference to his criticism was so marked that he was forced to go on to the next. Were he to remain an instant longer at some other easel than her own, Joan would be in agony till he went ahead. Persuading herself she despised him, she was acutely conscious of his every motion, his very turn of the head, the glance of his eyes, the tone of his voice. And because she held this deadly hatred of him in her heart, the whole world stood still when class was over and the palette and brushes put aside for the night. Still, alert, lonely, vibrating, would Joan's very being alternate, till morning dawned and Via Margutta awoke.

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Since Kaye had taken possession of the studio, she and Romilda rarely walked together up the Pincio. Most of the time Joan made the stretch of hill alone. Donald waited for Romilda, carried her belongings and talked to her the whole long way, when he was not listening. Romilda appeared to chatter away as she never did to anyone else. It was like the outpouring of a stream that had been for centuries choked into silence. Oh, Joan knew, for she had seen. Why was it? Why?

Sometimes she would slip ahead to avoid being witness of their interest, sometimes she would drop back. Then, again, she would select the longer road past the guarding sphinxes at the gates, into Piazza del Popolo and up the long track of Via Babuino to the Piazza di Spagna and its wide stairway to the Trinita.

The thing she called her hatred of him grew stronger than human endurance. Romilda had carried with her to the studio an armful of golden ginestra and a spray of it had found its way to the old tweed coat. Before the hour of closing, Joan rose, covered her canvas, made no excuse for leaving and started out by way of the slope behind the Russie.

“What’s your hurry, Joan?”

It was Graziella’s voice, the least welcome on earth in her present mood.

“Wait! I’ve got a piece of news for you.”

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Joan waited till the other, heavier, shorter of breath, could join her. "How did you get away?"

"I just came tumbling after you. Signor Kaye only laughed."

Silence. With no visible sign of interest in her face, she listened for Graziella's news.

"Think of it! To-morrow Tacconata comes back!"

Gardens, twin churches of Santa Maria Miracoli and Santa Maria Monte Santo, the whole of Piazza del Popolo seemed to swirl, indiscriminate mass before Joan's eyes.

"Well, what then?"

"Something's happened where he lives. At Porto Fino. Somebody died. Perhaps the old duke. But he's coming back. He! Tacconata! Magnifico!"

"How do you know all this?"

"I heard Signorina da Poalo and the Kaye speaking of it and listened. The Kaye said, 'It was about time. It's growing unbearable.' And the Signorina answered, 'I know, Donald.' That was how she said it, Donald, as if they had been promessi—'I know, Donald, but I would have seen you through, you know that.'"

Joan walked steadily on, lips set, eyes ominously fixed, gazing straight ahead at the turmoil. When she spoke her voice was oddly metallic.

"And then?"

"'No wonder they say you understand. You are a very miracle of understanding,' he said. Her

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answer was, 'Well, what is there to think? Doesn't love make every woman understand everything?' Now, who do you suppose she loves to make her speak like that?"

"Why, the Kaye, as you call him, I suppose. Otherwise why mention anything so irrelevant as love?"

"Oh, gran' Dio, grant it may be so. Once the Signorina da Paolo turns her eyes definitely to another my Tacconata may give up the chase. Do you think so?"

"Likely. The rebound."

Coming around the corner from the Corso at that moment, apparently heading for Hotel Russie, three figures flamboyant in colorings borrowed from the far East, caught the eyes of the two girls who by this time had reached the guardian sphinxes.

"Aie, Americans! The women have captured the colors of a bizarre Persia," Graziella exclaimed.

"I know them." Joan's voice was impenetrable. "I will speak to them. They are—friends. Addio till to-morrow."

Her chance had come. And taken in conjunction with the information Graziella had but this moment imparted, it would appear as if the final diagnosis of Passiflore the night before had been painfully correct. Well, the chance was bound to come sooner or later. If it had not done so of itself, Joan would have created it *tant pis*. Why become perturbed over anyone she distinctly hated?

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He was to go out of her life to-morrow. Well, then, here would be more life. She was thoroughly weary of the one she had lived.

She caught up with the bizarre-looking women as they entered the hotel.

“How do you do, Mrs. Trent.”

Neither Hazel Trent’s eyes nor Olga’s, were too heavy with kohl to recognize from beneath its darkening weight, Faith Desmond’s child, grown up. And never more keenly had Joan appreciated the visible contrast between them and her newly awakened self. The flame of her frock against the fawn-grey of old Rome, flame-flowers of the wreath that bound her drooping hat, deep blue eyes whose only shadows were cast by the becoming brim, she felt, Joan-like without vanity or egotism, there was not one in all Rome to be compared to her.

“La child! Who would have believed it? What have you done to yourself? We expected to find you something of a mouse and you turn out a bird of Paradise!”

Joan was able to laugh, then answered:

“What nonsense. Why should I do anything to myself? Perhaps it’s the pleasure of seeing a little bit of old New York in Rome after all the years. And you wouldn’t have spoken if I hadn’t made myself known, would you?”

Was this the child who had stared owl-eyed at Hildegarde’s table, who had considered birds and dogs and cats as intelligent as human beings and

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had ended by falling in love with a myth? Impossible. She stood, a vision of rare loveliness, holding out a cool, slim hand to each in turn. Then she raised inquiring eyes, for Tuck Magargle stood staring as a frog that had caught the glint of particularly delectable iridescence.

“Jove! This is never the girl of the parti-colored parrot?”

She concealed a shudder at sight of the cushioned hand stretched out, the fatuous smile.

“The little girl in love with the fable! Ha! Well over that, Miss Desmond, any one can see! Ha!”

Still playing the game, Joan answered cheerfully:

“One doesn’t live in a human world, a Romanly human world and play with shadows, does one?”

“Who could have believed it? What a joke on Hilda!” Olga shrieked to Hazel.

“Don’t. You make me creep, but the girl’s lovely.” She turned to Joan.

“We’ll have to show you off. When can you dine with us?”

“When you like.”

“What about Caesari’s to-morrow night? We’ll go for the sunset and stay for moonrise. Donald Kaye will be glad of a holiday from his quixotic job and Berinari will make a sixth. Know Berinari?”

Joan, recognizing the name as one of the chief reasons for her mother’s refusal to allow her to ac-

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cept invitations to the Russie tea-dances, answered nevertheless:

"Everyone knows Count Berinari. But why poor Kaye?"

"Why not?" Up went Mrs. Clavering's closely clipped eyebrows.

"He sees me day in, day out, on his 'quixotic job' at the studio. It would bore him to death to have to dine with me."

"Dear no, child. Besides he's quite a personage, a sort of lion in his way. He took on the studio as a jest I believe. The eminent Tacconata is an old friend of his. Killed two birds by amusing himself and doing a favor to the maestro. Berinari has a name, but he's only a *mondain*. Donald is *somebody*. So we'll have both. How's your mother? We called when we came, but missed her."

"Very well, thank you. You'll see her to-morrow night when you come for me. I'm on your way to Caesari's, you know. *Arrivederla!*"

With a laugh and a friendly flick of the wrist she was gone.

"Jove!" exclaimed Tuck Magargle.

CHAPTER XXVII

THE MYSTERY OF QUATRO FONTANA

WHETHER Faith would or would not give consent to her plan of campaign never entered Joan's head. Her mother's confidence had never been shaken, so why should it now? In fact, Faith, seeing modern tendencies, rather wondered that Joan had not rebelled before. The smarter set of young Romans among whom the girl found her friends was given over to an after-war gaiety of which Faith had small conception. Rome amused itself. It was simply that. And from time immemorial when Rome set about amusing itself, traditional skyrocketes flew.

But here was where Michael's whimsey had metamorphosed itself into practical philosophy. Joan's dreams had held her, her dreams and her work. When she casually told her mother how she had run into the trio, the last on earth to whom Faith would have confided her, that they had invited her to dine at Caesari's and that she had accepted, her mother never thought of forbidding her to go, or suggesting that she reconsider. Donald Kaye would be there and he was Michael's friend, that was enough. So,

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when Joan started off next morning for the studio, Faith watched her with a song in her heart, glad that she was to have the pleasure of a party that night.

Tacconata was back in his place. A black band encircled his left arm, otherwise everything seemed much as usual except to Joan, whose quick ears caught in the tone of his voice a hint of detachment. When he came to her canvas he stood for a long time, watching the play of her brush, noting the lightness of touch, the subtlety that would one day be the hall-mark of her work.

"Well done, little American! Tacconata can at least feel that he has given to the world one completed masterpiece."

"What do you mean, Maestro?"

"What you must know, piccola. I have nothing more to teach you. For more than a year I have had nothing to teach you. Indeed, I doubt if Tacconata ever had. You take a peasant girl, a simple Suchari out of the fields with a bunch of poppies in her hand. What do you make of her? An enchantress, weird or mystical, luring human creatures to her own sweet will."

"I'm glad you said that, Maestro. It would always be a sweet will. I want *goodness* in my work." Joan spoke earnestly. She never tried to deceive this kindly maestro, however wicked the spirit that moved her to act in these painful days toward the rest of her small world.

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“And so you have. And so you are. But not another among you can paint what she does not see, what lies clearer to the artist than all the realism in the world.”

“Romilda can.”

“Romilda mia.” It was a caress rather than an assent. An adoring breath. Then he sighed. Joan knew he knew. The adoration, the caress were hopeless. His patient waiting had come to nothing.

Very much later—perhaps a whole month later, she got the entire story from Graziella, Graziella who had bided her time.

“The shadows had grown,” she told Joan. “It was nearly dark. I remained late to clean my brushes. They had forgotten me, or perhaps the Signorina knew that I was there and preferred to have me so, though she pretended she did *not* know. The model was there, too, but she had fallen asleep behind her screen and Tacconata, so kind always, did not disturb her. I heard him say to the Signorina, ‘You knew it had come?’

“‘I knew the old Duke had died,’ she said.

“‘My playtime—here—is an at end. You knew that?’

“‘I knew that sooner or later it would be so.’”

“‘And what is it to be for us, carina mia?’”

“‘What you make of it, Maestro.’”

“‘There is no reason why I should wait. There is the Palazzo, empty. And it must be filled. It

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cannot always echo to emptiness any more than my life can always echo to loneliness.'

" 'It is to you fill your life, Maestro.'

"She seemed to be proposing to him, didn't she?"

Graziella shrugged her shoulders.

"Perhaps. I thought—but as it turned out I was entirely wrong."

"What did Tacconata say?"

"Ugh! I never dreamed I should see him abject, but abject he certainly became. Joan, he went on his knees!"

"How awful. Would she stand for it?"

"She tried not to. But he refused to get up till she was almost rude. Cielo! Had he but said those words of love to me!"

"You say you love him, yet you don't mind all this? What are you made of, Graziella?"

"Oh, la! Why should I care? Everybody knows the Signorina is in love with the Kaye and he with her. That's what counts with me. I get my Tacconata on the rebound. It's quite understandable."

"Well, it certainly is not American. If you love, you love. If you hate, you hate. And you don't stand for poachers."

Again a shrug of the Italian shoulders and a lazy smile. No wonder it was impossible to infuse soul into the painting of this daughter of the South.

"Me? I loved to listen to his words—so like music they were. What he said was this: 'Patience,

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amore mia, just listen, then tell me what I am to do."

"Still on his silly knees?"

"Still at her feet. New Duca degli Fosse e Montagne! Tacconata? Pooh! There's little I don't know about the Maestro. And for that matter, about the Signorina, though every one suspects a mystery."

"Mystery probably adds to her interest. What next?"

"I remember every word. He told her he had waited patiently all the years, that he had always loved her, would wait no longer, had never loved anyone else."

"They all say that. And then?"

"As to being duchesa, she knew all that beforehand. She knew he'd kept the Via Margutta studio going just as a child loves to play with a favorite toy. And I believe she knew he did it to keep her going, too."

"As poor as that?"

"Desperately, since the war."

"Well, if it's true about Donald Kaye, she won't have to suffer poverty very long."

"No. That's true. Not long now."

"Was that the end of it all?"

"La, no! She said, 'If you don't get up, Maestro, I shall laugh.' Laugh! How could she? It cut him rather, so he got up. Then she said: 'That's better. I can't be serious when people kneel to me.' Bitterly

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he said: 'People?' And she answered with an Americanism she took from you——"

"She does not even leave me my Americanisms, does she?"

"Well, she *did* say, 'It *has* been done' and laughed again. Then she said in earnest: 'If I loved you, and I have never loved you, I could not marry you. Oh, don't mistake. You have been the kindest, best, most devoted friend in all the world. No. I don't even except Donald.'"

"Generous of her," mused Joan.

"He flared up at that, but she said: 'You've got to trust me. I am free to give my friendship where and how I please. You are the closest, but I cannot marry you. Forgive me if I hurt you. Some day you will be glad I spoke so frankly. For a long time I have hoped you would let this question between us drop. Now I see I'll have to leave the studio. It would neither be fair to you nor to me if I stayed.'"

"What on earth happened then, Graziella?"

"He answered not one word, but took up his hat and started out. I tried to make myself small against the wall. I hoped in the dusk he would not see me. But how could *I*?"

Joan laughed then. Graziella would have had difficulty in making herself invisible anywhere.

"I stood so, rigid, rivetted to the wall."

"It's rather a wonder he didn't kill you."

"Yes, isn't it? But he just stopped, looked at me

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and asked, 'You heard?' I said that I had. 'What do you think of it?' he continued. Oh, I thought of La Gioconda, of Rigoletto, of Mona Lisa, of all the sinister operas where they give you a cup of tea with one hand and stab you with the other, but as I loved him, and if I died it would be because I loved him, I answered what I really thought: 'If the signorina da Paolo does not love you, you would never have been happy with her.' Of course, I know now he only asked me these questions because she was there and heard everything. All he said then was, 'Child, I suppose you are right. Buona notte!' "

Then came the night at Caesari's. Joan would rather have driven out in the car with Berinari, known as Riccardo among his intimates, than with Donald Kaye. But it was Donald who saw to it that she was left neither to the mercies of Berinari nor Magargle, both of whom had manœuvered in vain for the place Kaye had taken—Joan herself would have shrunk from the long drive with Tuck Magargle. It would have been too much to ask of her she thought, so, seated beside Hazel Trent and Donald in front beside the chauffeur, she drove in state to independence.

"I can't believe my eyes when I look at you, child. You were an odd mouse. We have been wasting our sympathy grieving that Faith's daughter was growing up away from the fads and frivols of our

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world. We thought your mother had immured you in the dustbin of ages with goggles on your nose and all the history of early Rome at your finger tips."

"As bad as that?" asked Joan.

"Quite." Not able to stop smoking even in the open, Hazel ordered the car stopped while she lighted a fresh cigarette.

"What about the natural evolution of youth, Mrs. Trent, don't you think she had too good a beginning not to keep going ahead?" asked Donald.

"Oh, you mean the painting and all that. I suppose so. How on earth do you do it, child? Successes in Paris, London exhibitions and all that."

"Born in one. No credit to me; I love it. Besides, Passiflore is much more of an artist. And we live together."

"Oh, yes. Diana's hunchback."

Joan felt her face burn in the dark.

"Passiflore's my friend, Mrs. Trent. No one ever thinks of her affliction when they know her for what she is."

"But, child, she's Japanese."

"Well, aren't we Americans? Isn't this Italy? Count Berinari's an Italian. Where's the difference?"

"But her mother and father were——"

"Please don't say it. Her mother was the daughter of a nobleman. Mystery, yes. But don't you

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think, Mr. Kaye, that mystery enchances the interest of—every person?”

Joan, little Joan, trying to be grown up and worldly and satirical.

Donald saw only a girl who stood on the front steps of a house in New York, a girl without a hat carrying a dead parrot in her arms.

“No, I can’t say that I do. Do you?”

“I’ve always thought so,” she answered and Donald had not the remotest idea at what she was driving. Then he changed the subject.

“Did you know our studio trembles? Did you know it might fall any day?”

Joan left the answer to Mrs. Trent for her heart beat to suffocation.

“Then back to your candlesticks, eh, Donald? Like it?”

“Whether I like it or not, Larry needs me in Paris for a few weeks.”

“I thought Bobby Van Dysart was there.”

“He is. But I have to take them the result of my work here.”

“Soon?”

“Whenever they send for me. I don’t believe right away, but I can’t tell.”

Joan’s breath came more freely. At the table she was next to Berinari, and expected to find the man whom all Rome knew, whom Hazel called a *mondain*, vastly interesting. But outside, beyond ruined arches, purple shadows drifted over

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spectral aqueducts, flocks of sheep like other floating clouds, moved tranquilly across campagna stretches. Somewhere, a shepherd called and sheep-dogs answered. The artist in her wandered while she tried politely to fix her attention. The man she hated faced her across the table. But—out to her right the Roman night in all its glory——

Berinari, accustomed to adulation all his life, finding his young neighbour dreamy and distraught, laid her dreaminess and distraction to his own fascination. Towards the end of the dinner, Olga drawled through smoky spirals:

“He tells us he is leaving for Paris because *Larry* wants him!”

Hazel laughed; “Come now, Donald, ’fess up. Is it only Larry?” Then Joan awakened, fully aroused. With a little worldly air she said: “Why not Larry? If there hadn’t been candlestick-makers centuries ago we shouldn’t have been dining at Caesari’s tonight, should we? Progress, dear lady. We must go on. He takes his Roman acquisition to the other candlestick-makers in Paris.”

Her coming to his defence much as Faith would have done, rather surprised Kaye, while it amused the older women. Berinari, seeing in Joan an associate of his own gay world, decided to enlighten her, though it was Tuck Magargle who opened the way.

“Mysterious Quatro Fontana, my boy! Paris? You can’t escape so easily.”

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What were they all talking about? Again the stifling sensation that had overcome her at first mention of Donald's going away. The coffee cups were being removed and liquors brought. Why need she stay? The air was heavy——

"I'm going to watch the moon rise if you don't mind, Mrs. Trent. Just from the arch over there. No, please don't come with me, anybody. The smoke's a bit stuffy." Berinari threw his cigarette away and got up.

"Oh, let her have her own way, Riccardo. She's a really great artist and takes more interest in the moon than chartreuse even if she *is* an American," said Hazel. Berinari only smiled and lifted the azure of his military cloak about his shoulders. He was remarkably good-looking and quite aware of it.

"I think I would like to show her our moon from Caesari's."

Joan smiled up at him. "Very well then, you may if you like. But as it is exclusively *my* moon and knows me nobody need show it to me." But he was already threading his way between the tables. Others of the diners wondered who Riccardo Berinari had in tow to-night. She was unlike the type he usually affected. Kaye who saw, did not like it, but for the present he could do nothing, so held his soul in patience.

"Here, Miss Desmond. Look, I'll spread my cloak outside the glare, within sound of the music, in sight of—*our* moon. What better?"

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“Better than listening to gossip about people who mean nothing to one. I always did hate gossip.”

“Have you no curiosity, you American women, Signorina?”

“Not unless we happen to be particularly interested.”

Her face was turned away. Her eyes followed the night. The man could not place her, could not understand what she was doing with these others if she were not one of them. They had told him she was the artist whose work had been the talk of Rome last winter, that she still painted at Tacconata's studio. But yet, he did not understand. Vivid coloring framed against the arch, long jade earrings matching the jade about her neck and the ribbon twisted in the jet black of her hair, filmy black dress to bring out with clearer effect the brilliance of her color—she was refreshment indeed, to his wearied eyes. Why did she so hate Kaye? Anyone could see she did. Yet she came to his defence. Why? Intrigante! Easy enough to see why she shrank from that boulder Magargle. Finer fibre than the rest, she must be. They did not shrink from him. How could he tell that the little worldly expression in Joan's face was an artist's mask to hide the innocent childishness of eyes now turned away from him?

“You mean it's nothing to you that they tease Kaye?”

“No. Why should it be?”

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"Yet you defended him."

"I always defend the one that's down."

"Magargle's given to gossip and that sort of thing."

"Is he?"

"He's afraid of being left out in the cold if he doesn't seem to know what everybody else is talking about. Whether he does or not."

"Oh!"

"Jealous of adventure! He doesn't like to have people think he's not in the know."

"I don't see what that has to do with what he said to—Mr. Kaye."

"Everything. You see he came over with Kaye and the others. Of course, Kaye, being an old habitu  of Rome, goes off on his own, picks up his old adventures—and Tuck wants to be let in. That's the trouble."

Passiflore's words came to Joan—"That, that's the devil."

Then she thought, "Well, what if it is? I could not hate him more than I do. Why shouldn't I know what everyone else knows. Why should I take his side if he doesn't deserve to have me take it? I'm ignorant as it is. Why not find out the truth?"

Turmoil stirring her breast, she said quietly:

"Tell me. I might as well know as the rest. What is it?"

"You really want me to?"

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"Yes. I somehow can't bear to listen to Magargle's voice. *You* tell me."

So he told her.

"Sunset after sunset, Signorina, one who never glances to the right or left as she walks up Quatro Fontana, will be seen talking with animation to him alone. Why, anyone standing at a nearby window can see the eyes raised to his flash and grow soft by turn. I have seen her quite alone, but Kaye is never far behind, laden with flowers. Invariably flowers. Naturally Rome talks. I have seen them from Magargle's rooms in the *Italie*, opposite. I've never seen her face, but there is something familiar about the figure as she walks."

"Romilda da Paolo!" The name burst from Joan's lips against her will.

"*She!* What wonder!" Berinari exclaimed. "How could I have been so stupid?"

"You know her?"

"For years I have not seen her. All Rome *did* know her. Before the war she was the—how do you say—the toast of the town. She was to have married my cousin, del Monte. Oh, he fought every one of us in his day. We were all at her feet. I can say this. I am a Roman and sometimes speak the truth. Del Monte was worth every man of us. Having once loved him, few women could have dreamed of anyone else. Kaye! Inconceivable."

"Let's go back to the others," said Joan, sick at heart. "After all, it doesn't concern us."

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Strange child, strange young heart. She might hate Donald as she professed, but in his life and Joan's, Berinari, stranger, in one moment's gossip played his part and playing it had hurt her. For many years after, the memory of Caesari's, the arched windows, the white moving flocks, fleecy clouds flying before a waning moon would touch the wound and make it ache anew.

On the way home she was silent. Had she been older, more worldly-wise, she might have hidden her pain under an assumed gaiety. Not Joan. This, this was the end. She would never return to Via Margutta. The studio might open, might continue, might close, might burn up, fly up, blow up. It would not matter. She had her own studio with Passy. She need never see Romilda again. And as to Donald Kaye! Another brilliant stroke of Michael Crichton's. Why would he always mix up in the tangle of her life? Without him it would not have been a tangle.

All the while, Donald Kaye sat and wondered why the joyous little creature with her new assumption of womanhood should in so short a time have changed into a shrinking, pathetic child who only asked to be taken home. Whatever it was, it had evidently begun with the foolish badinage that culminated in her flight to outer air. What had Berinari told her?

"What's come over you, child?" asked Hazel.

Faith's child was a puzzle, indeed.

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"I'm tired and not accustomed to late hours." Joan managed to smile.

"Don't mind if I don't talk. One likes to be still on such a night as this. One might disturb the stars, you know."

"What an extraordinary idea!" exclaimed Mag-argle, who had managed to put himself in the returning car with Joan and began to think he'd made a mistake.

"Not so extraordinary when you stop to realize how hideous the things that crawl the earth can be, in comparison to the beauty of the sky," she flashed back.

"She certainly is tired. You'll feel better tomorrow, Joan. I'll give a party at the Grand hotel next week and you'll come. There'll be no distracting sky—no temptation to carry pictures away in your mind to paint. Eh? What about it?"

"It's awfully kind of you, but I shall be busy with my work from now on, no playtime. But thanks just the same. Here we are. No, please don't help me, anybody. Some one is waiting up, you see, there's a light. It's Hana. Goodnight, everybody."

As she gave her hand to Hazel, the other woman exclaimed:

"Hana! Isn't that the name of the Japanese woman who disapp——"

"No!" cried Joan. "It's nobody you ever heard of before—any of you in all your lives!"

She flew to the door where Hana stood in the

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glare of the hall lights and pulled it tightly closed behind her.

“Oh, Hana! Hana!”

* * * * *

“It must be nerves. How extraordinary.”

“Temperament Tuck. She was like that as a child. Leaving us here, Donald? Why not let us jog you along to your dug-out?”

“Not to-night. I think I’ll walk. And—by the way, I start for Paris to-morrow. Tell the other car goodnight—and goodbye.”

CHAPTER XXVIII

HANA WATCHES

“LITTLE child! Little child!”

“Put me to bed, Hana. Then let me talk to you. I’m so tired. It’s such an ugly world. There’s nothing in it, nothing at all.”

“Little Joan, poor my Joan,” crooned Hana the while she brushed and smoothed the girl’s hair, petting her as if she were Passiflore, kneeling beside her when she sobbed her prayers.

“That he dared tell me such things! Such dreadful things that hurt me—because I loved Romilda—though I’ve always despised Kaye. And now? Why is it this must come to me? And through Uncle Michael again. I’m only twenty, Hana. Other girls don’t have to suffer so. Why must I?”

All the while Joan rambled on, Hana murmured soothing, endearing words, now Japanese, now English. And all the while she was thinking what she did not even murmur. Donald Kaye seemed to Hana a second incarnation of Michael Crighton, and both had touched the mountain-peaks of the gods. Hana had lived enough not to be mistaken in persons who meant much to her. Donald meant

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very much, enough for her to see that had Raphael been, he would have been no less than Donald. Donald was so much Michael that he might have been Michael's son, the point of view, manner of speech alike. And the paramount thing, love for Joan, that was the same, too, though in different measure. To Michael she was the daughter of his house, to Kaye, love of his heart.

Hana had seen it in his eyes, caught it in the cadence of his voice, known that he felt Joan's presence in a room, though she made no sound. Oh, that he might not fail her! Michael was kind and understanding to all who came his way. Would not Donald grow to be like him in that? They *were* so alike. The older man had taken his life into his hands and moulded it to the will of One Whose will is everything.

Would the younger do the same?

Student of history, the world, its people, Michael Crichton's interests were keener, more alive, more virile by far, now that he had passed beyond the middle milestone, than when he stood knocking at Hildegarde's heart, as Donald stood beating at Joan's.

For he was beating at it with all the love in his own. There could be no mistake about it, gossip to the contrary. Why was it the child must suffer so through every stage of her young life? How could she *not* know? Passiflore, Hana's passion-flower, would never read tenderness, sweetness,

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sheltering devotion such as Joan could read if she would only look. Would she not? Oh, did Hana but know! Did she but know!

And now, with the pitiful story Joan sobbed out to her from between the pillows, came wonder that such gossip could be repeated, but never a misgiving. Who was it denied the beauty of this Donald's soul? A satellite hanger-on of the very group who had condemned Hana to life-long exile from her own, he and another of the same fibre. One was unctuous, fatuous, having a mind as lethargic as his torpid body; the other, serpentine, insinuating, artful, sycophantic, now luring to confidence, then turning that confidence to his own intent. Donald's ingenuousness alone, against these two as weapon! But his honesty, his frankness were the stronger metal. Through unerring instinct Hana knew it.

"A grave mistake was made, little child. The thing, it is not true."

"He saw them. Day after day, night after night he says he saw them. Rather he did not so much say it as lead me to believe it was so. Mother wouldn't stand for his telling me such things if she knew. It would hurt her that anyone—dared."

"It would do no good to tell your mother. She could not undo that he told such lies. It would pain her heart. And she could not do what Hana is going to do. Now you must sleep."

"Sleep? I will never sleep again."

"Joan *must* sleep. Hana knows women and she

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knows men. She knows the good, and she knows the bad. Those people did not tell the truth. It is easy for them. They have nothing to lose. A good name is easily lost. They have not a good name. They can lie and laugh when the lie has wounded a heart to death. But the time comes, sooner or later, when payment must be made. Early or late, he pays, who has lied. Now listen, my Joan. This do I promise. And I keep my word. Hana is going to learn all the truth. By midnight to-morrow, Hana is going to bring all the truth to Joan. And I promise more. I *promise* that they lied. Now sleep."

And Joan slept, slept while Hana softly sang to her as she had sung to Passiflore long ago in the torrid summer—— It came back to her now, the restless child, the noises in the street, Diana waiting in the darkness, a little clay kitten in her hand, her heart listening with every beat for the doctor's step——

Faith found Joan next morning waking with tears in her eyes as if she had been crying in her sleep.

"What is it, sweetheart? Mother hoped you had had a happy time."

"I did, Mother. Oh, I did, but perhaps I cried about something different. Maybe I thought I was homesick about not going back to Via Margutta."

"Not going back to the studio? Why, dear?"

"Well, I thought it all out last night after I came home. I'll go to fetch my things to-day. Tacconata is leaving, Romilda is going, Kaye said he was

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obliged to report in Paris to Aunt Diana's Larry. I believe they will close it altogether. I'll join Passy, upstairs. Of course, I'll have to swear not to look at what she's doing."

"Brava! I'll be glad to have you both at home. Why not run up and tell her before you go to get your things?"

"I will, Mummie, I will."

Back to Via Margutta, only to find it deserted as she had thought it might be, a desultory student or two, weeping over its emptiness. Then a feverish day that somehow seemed never to end. But at last, twilight.

"Can Mrs. Desmond spare Hana to-night. It may be very late."

"You are free to come and go, as I, Hana. What about your dinner? Must you go at once?"

"I would like to go now. There is a long walk to take. Dinner is not as necessary as the walk."

She smiled at Joan, who stood looking out of the window, white-faced, her heart in her throat.

"What about Incubo? I'll send for him. If you have a long walk to take, better drive."

"No Incubo, please. I would be quite alone. I would watch the stars come over Rome, one by one," laughed Hana. "Perhaps Hana would even drop her pennies in Trevil's waters by moonlight."

Passiflore, who came in at that moment, ques-

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tioned the curious whim of her mother to go out alone for so long a time.

“Mother, darling, if you wait till later we can all go together.”

“Tomorrow, if you like, my flower,” said her mother, stooping down to kiss her. “To-night I go alone. There are things we like to see—alone.”

To hide the kimono she always wore she had covered herself with a large, black shawl like those the Venetian women wear and held it well up about her face.

She walked the length of Via Sistina to where Piazza Barberini divides it from Via Quattro Fontana, and a little further on. It would never do to be seen by eyes that might perchance be watching from behind the closely curtained windows of the Italia, so she clung to the wall and in the deeper shadows.

If it were true that Donald Kaye would follow shortly,—the man had said *every* night, she must not be seen, yet. There were gardens across the way. She would wait just inside the iron gate. The rhododendrons at that spot were high above her head.

Once safely screened from any keen-eyed passerby, she began to look about for the house Berinari had described so accurately to Joan. A light that flashed just then through the darkness was like a signal. There could be no mistake. Signorina da Paola with her own hands placed a lamp carefully

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in the window of a room on the second floor. Hana had seen her too often with Joan not to recognize her at once. What could the signal mean? Hana told herself again the story was but fabrication—yet her heart sank a little.

Of course Kaye would not come. He *could* not. Why should she receive this young Englishman when the artist who had sacrificed himself for years in the pursuit of her was not allowed to cross her threshold. Then—a ringing step along the pavement as Hana caught sight of a grey tweed coat, sensed the fragrance of a cigarette, watched the flick of it, still lighted, into the street—saw the red roses——

She stood and tried with all her might not to think and standing there she kept her faith in both, Romilda and Donald. The beat of her heart was no swifter than it had been a moment before, nor was the light of her eyes less bright. Faith in both, faith in both. Five minutes passed, and ten. Then fifteen minutes more dragged by. Half an hour and yet she stood, immobile, her eyes fixed on the changeless window. There had been no sign of anyone, no shadow, but she knew that Donald Kaye was where the lanterns shone and that where Donald was, all must be well.

But the Japanese woman was not the only one who watched. The thickly curtained windows of the Italia hid more than shadows.

“Paris to-day! Ha! Rot!”

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"There's a midnight train."

"So there is. D'you think he'll take it?"

"Who knows? Who cares? Romilda! The frozen one! Who could have believed it? Who would have believed it?"

"I say, Riccardo, what think friend Romilda might be toddling off to Paris tonight. What?"

Serpentine face grown sinister within the hour, Berinari rose, caught the cerulean blue of his cloak about him, picked up a hat, fallen among the decanters that made the chief ornament of Mag-argle's centre table and started for the door.

"Arrivederla Signore Tuck."

"Hel-lo! Not going so soon? What's the hurry?"

"I have the good fortune, the misfortune, call it what you will, to be dining with the duchesa della Roveri to-night. Otherwise I should stay and enjoy the comedy across the way." A gesture of self-justification, a shrug, a coil of the snake-like hands. "We've seen what we have seen. As to waiting for Kaye to emerge, why should one? He is neither as young nor as beautiful as the signorina. Were *she* to come out, that would be another story. A domani, amico mio."

"Oh, I say, don't forget there are to be high jinks at the Clavering's to-morrow."

"La bella Olga! Ugh! But the—jinks? That's another story. To-morrow."

With a flourish of the hat he was gone.

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Still Hana watched. She missed no detail of the clink of spur along the stones, fling of blue cape about impatient shoulders, arrogant boot, tapping restlessly at the step across the way, eager scanning of the second story window that kept its secret as did the very sphinxes beside the Pincio gates. With eyes that shone in the gathering dark like the eyes of a cat, he made a guess as to the lamp above his head. One could always apologize for a mistake. Sinuously Berinari glided up the inner stair where Donald had preceded him.

Then, and only then, did Hana move. She darted swiftly across the street, into the vestibule which, like the vestibules of countless other Roman houses, lay open to the passer-by, then, up the time-worn steps. At the top of the second flight she flattened herself against the wall. She had been there hardly a moment when the door opened.

“Berinari! What are *you* doing here?”

“Why not, Signorina mia, old friend and love of my lost youth, why not? Only yesterday I learned that you were back in Rome and living here. I’ve been home myself so short a time. Will you not let me in, amica mia?”

“I receive no one. It is well known. You must go.”

“No one? But, Signorina Romilda, surely you mistake. I thought as I glanced up, with my poor heart hammering across the wasted years, I saw the shadow of a new-found friend thrown for an instant

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on the window-shade. If one, why not another? So old and close a friend as I!"

"I see no one. You may not stay." The voice had grown dangerously cold.

"But there was no one to tell me you did not receive, no maid——"

"Forgive me, mistress, that I return so late from your errand." Then as though Romilda were still invisible, Hana spoke to the amazed man:

"The Signorina da Paolo is not at home."

Bare-headed as she had come, the black shawl fallen on the stone floor outside, she slipped between Berinari and the open door and stood in the ante-room facing him, Signorina da Paolo behind her.

Surprised out of his *sang-froid* he stepped back as she advanced forcing him out into the hall. Then with an expression of utmost candor, Hana said, "I will tell the Signorina one called, an officer who would honourably have forced his way against her orders. Good night, signor." She closed the door in his face.

Romilda turned to look at her.

"What are you? An angel?"

Hana laughed. "You look at my kimono and ask if I am an angel. The sleeves perhaps."

"You are Joan's Hana."

"Yes, Signorina."

"How came you here?"

"There had been a mistake. The child was heart-

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broken and sick. This man—who went away—did tell her that which broke her heart.”

“And you came to find out how much truth there was in it?”

“Hana came to prove it was a lie. Miss Joan is not like other girls. It is a rare and sensitive heart. And she thought she hated. But I knew it was different. When this—man—told her what he did, she thought the anger was with Signorina da Paolo—but the anger is with the pain, here.” She laid her hand on her breast.

“You may be Joan’s Hana, but you appear like an angel from Heaven. I know Count Berinari of old. Had you not come, there would have been a scandal all over Rome to-morrow. How did you do it?”

“It is simple. To prove to *her* that Mr. Kaye would not come, I watched. Another too, he watched. Across the street, from the Italia. I cannot say the name of him who is so hideous that lives there. The Count Berinari must have watched from that hideous one’s rooms. Well,—byemby I did see what I came to prove I would not see. Still—do I know it is some mistake. The one came I did not want to see. And he carried—flowers it hurt my little one to hear about. Still did I watch, sure I could tell her that which would stop her crying.”

“Did *Joan* cry about it?” asked Romilda, amazed.

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"I tell you," answered Hana simply, "it was her heart that broke."

"Go on."

"I saw Mr. Kaye. Then I saw shadows on the curtains across the way, and I said, watch, Hana, there will be more. And he came, that other. Signorina knows the rest. That is all."

"That is not all. Please follow me."

Romilda led the way through a bare room, with its four walls unadorned, into a second that might have been the cell of an anchorite, then through it to a third lighted like the others with oil lamps. Apparently everything she could have saved out of the wreckage of her property had been gathered together for the comfort of its occupant. Who? Certainly not for Romilda herself. The bare little enclosure through which they had passed, with its one chair and dressing table, an eremitic bed and crucifix, was hers. For whom then?

Hana's eyes followed the Signorina's to the heavily carved bedstead with its four posts and canopy. Beside it, on a small table, stood a great vase of red roses whose perfume shed its fragrance throughout the whole apartment. Long, rigid, emaciated, stretched a figure on the bed, and beside it clasping in his strong right hand what appeared to be the bony fingers of a skeleton, knelt Donald Kaye. He turned as they came in and rose astounded at sight of Hana.

"It's all right, Donald. I'm glad she came. Only

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for Joan would I have broken the secrecy of years. Only for her—and you. Listen. She must be told. For me it will not matter soon. For him—he is beyond caring, my Raffaello. Come closer, Hana. Look.”

Gently she turned down the sheet that had swathed itself like a pall about the figure that lay there all unconscious.

What Hana saw was a mass of snow-white hair, and under it, parchment-brown, a face. Face? There was skin drawn tightly across a skull, a haggard jaw hanging loose and senseless, eyes, that once had been the most brilliant eyes in Italy, sightless, hollow, death in the depths of them.

Romilda drew the sheet up to the mouth, then covered her face with her hands. “Tell her, Donald.”

Fearful lest even through gathering shadows he, who had been a man might hear and be hurt by what he heard, Donald led Hana to the window on the other side of the room while Romilda took his place.

“It’s not a long story, but it’s like the Middle Ages, and fully explains what you came to prove. Part of it Joan knows, for all Rome knew the beginning, but the end has been the Signorina’s secret. There had been a life-long feud between the families del Monte and da Paolo. The Signorina Romilda was the most popular and sought after of the Roman girls of her day. She loved del Monte despite the

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family differences. He idolized her, though every mother of Rome, Florence, Milan, Venice, wanted him for her daughter. He would have no one but Romilda, and their marriage was made impossible. But they became engaged in spite of everything, every one. She was only seventeen. Then—Saravejo. Oh, Raphaello was a man! There may be Berinaris but thank God for the del Montes who outnumber them! Like the rest of the world he thought the war would be over in a few months, and Italy, not moving swiftly enough, he came to England and joined my own British flying corps. I went in from my first year at Oxford. As to the Signorina she simply left home and her family, came to England, took an intensive training, and was sent to the front with the Red Cross. When he fell—the wings of his machine were riddled like a honey-comb and collapsed, the miracle happened, she was there, and on duty. It was his spine. When he came out of his first hours of unconsciousness his mind was clear, and he asked for the truth. They said he could not live through the night, so he asked Romilda to marry him. Why not? What were family or feud in a war-flayed world with Raphaello dying? If by acceding to his wish she could give him one blessed moment of peace, why not? She would have given her life for him. The chaplain came—it was I who explained things. He married them.

“I stood by, with a Canadian nurse, afterwards

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killed in the shelling of her base hospital. And Raffaello did not die. Oh, Italy buried him all right and officially. To all intents and purposes he fell to his death. I won't go into his return to unconsciousness, nor the paralysis that gradually crept up. After a while his wife got leave, and took him to a hospital on Lake Garda. Though she knew he would never fight again nor be able to join the Italian forces after the country came in, she hoped against hope for his recovery. Then, the armistice. She left him, came to Rome, found not only that her personal fortune had been dissipated but also, that of the del Monte millions not a sou remained. So she went back to Garda and established her husband with the family of a peasant.

“Though Tacconata never knew that Raffaello lived, nor that he and Romilda were married, he made it possible for her to earn sufficient to support them both, and finally to bring the poor broken body back to Rome.”

“I do not see why it had to be kept so secret? They had nothing to lose.”

“If you knew the Romans and their pride you would understand. Would you have Signora del Monte pull down the sheet to a scoffing city as she pulled it down for you? As the sickness crept up, one by one the use of his senses left him, his sight first, then his hearing. It is because he loved red roses more than all the flowers in his garden that I

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bring them. There may be sense of smell left. We don't even know that."

And the man in the blue cloak had said Donald brought red roses to Romilda every day! Cruel!

"Who else knows?"

"An old Franciscan friar from Collegio San Antonio on Via Merulana comes every day, and the doctor, and charwoman of the house. That's all."

"His family still lives in Rome?"

"Some of them. Yes."

"Would she not tell them?"

"Why should she? They think him dead. They scattered his fortune, sold his home, and gambled away what it brought. They did their best to break his heart before the airplane broke his body. What were they to him?"

"Donald!" A frightened voice called to him.

"What is it, Romilda?"

"Come quickly. Listen."

It was Kaye of the British flying corps that bent and put his ear to the heart of a brother officer who had loved him, then looked into the eyes that had trusted him.

Gently he pulled up the sheet—higher than before, while she who had been the toast of Rome, knelt, sobbing, by the bed.

CHAPTER XXIX

HANA IS WATCHED

THE Japanese woman stayed on past midnight. Romilda needed her. Kaye, who went himself to find the doctor and Franciscan priest, asked her as a favor to do this, and she took her instructions from him without question.

Everything had to be gone into, there was no time to lose. What did it matter where the shadow that had been Del Monte, lay? He belonged to no one but Romilda, so eventually in a quiet corner of San Lorenzo, where descendants of the da Paolo slept, he was buried. No one entered there but Romilda, and no one questioned the red roses that as time went on seemed gifted with eternal life and a beauty as glorious as that of Raphaello's brave immortal spirit.

After the priest and doctor had done their work and the kindly charwoman had been roused, there was no longer need for Hana to remain, so, drawing the black-fringed shawl well up over her head, she startled home, glad of the full moon that lighted her steps along the way.

She passed unnoticed through the deserted streets,

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and, as she walked, her steps grew slower. Never had she been alone in the beauty of a Roman night and it bewitched her. All the perfumes of the enchanted city effused themselves through the air. She lifted her face to the sky, breathing deep. Quaint childish face raised to the silver light, quaint incongruous figure whose mantling shawl revealed beneath the heavy fringe, white-stockinged sandalled feet, pattering short steps, stopping a few moments at a time, then going on, then loitering.

To prolong the adventure she would go round by way of Via Veneto. Save for the moonbeams, Quatro Fontana had been quite dark. Not so Via Veneto. Emptying out into the moonlight were Romans who had dined late, dancing afterwards, forestieri lured from their hotels into its magic mystery and venturesome souls who had fared forth earlier to the Coliseum and enraptured with the night's enchanting power had wandered back on foot.

It might have been her imagination, or that as she passed the flight of stairs across from Queen Margarita's palace, she heard an exclamation. Whatever it was, she started, then laughed at herself. If imagination, what did it matter? If not, a wanderer in the populated district was nothing to be afraid of. Tonight's experience she put away. Time enough tomorrow to think back on its tragedy and recite it to Joan.

Suddenly, though she perceived no one, she knew

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there were footsteps behind her, timing themselves with her own. She glanced back nervously, saw nothing but deep shadows cast by the walls.

In Via Porta Pinciana she lost the crowd that had flocked into the more fashionable street. Though she could not see the tall, slight figure that somehow emerged phantom-like from the stones, she knew she was being followed.

Fleet pattered the sandalled feet, tight the shawl updrawn to shield her face. As far as she knew, she was the last person in Rome to attract unwelcome attention, but night gives birth to unreason, and when the steps became as persistent as they were now distinctly audible, Hana was frightened to the verge of panic. Faster—faster.

Thank God, Via Sistina! Here she felt at home and somehow better protected. Only a short distance to be made. She would have taken a cab if one had drawn up to the curb, but all the cabs that passed had fares, and unluckier drivers had gone home to bed. Onward she fled past closely barred windows that by day were bright with silver treasure, and now gloomed as the prison-house of death. Past convent doors barred against the night's invaders, past the corner of Rome's perennial lame beggar, still the regular tread of footsteps closer now, behind her. She must cross the street, though the steps came steadily on, and not another creature was in sight. Thinking to throw whoever it might be, off his guard, she continued straight ahead to the

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Trinitá stoop, only to find the gate swung across the bottom step. Knowing she would have to cross the piazzetta in the full flood of glistening moonlight, that there was no escape, she felt in the point of her sleeve for the key. As she did so, the shawl slipped from her head and fell to the paving stones.

Terrified, she let it lie there and started to run, but the man behind her picked up the shawl and reached her in a single stride.

“Your shawl, Signora. Hana!”

Had the voice rung out to her from Palestine, she would have known.

“It was you—Matsuo.”

“You knew?”

“I felt I was being followed.”

“Where are you going now?”

“Home.”

“Home?”

“Here, in this house.” Her head drooped, numbly. This little house, sheltering all she had in the world, suddenly seemed unreal, her life unreal, Passiflore unreal—all a dream that was passing——

Passiflore! He must not know. He must never, never know.

“What do you do in this house?”

“I am a servant there.”

“My God! My God! Tzuru!”

Fear left her at his cry. She looked quietly at him with an expression he had never seen.

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“Why do you cry out? Did you not take me from my home to make a servant of me? Why should Hana not have remained what Matsuo made of her?”

“Hana! Hana!”

“What is there more to say? You see me as I am. My life is *my* life. Your life is *your* life, Matsuo. Good-night. Good-bye.”

She took the shawl from his hand.

“Can you not stay and talk, even a moment? Just one moment? You will go and I may not see you again.”

She must be on her guard. She had heard that tone before—long before, while she was still in Japan. Perhaps she could serve her own purpose better by listening to what he might have to say.

“Not here.” She went on to the top of the Piazza di Spagna steps. Jasmine and orange blossoms—up from the kiosks below.

“I will listen for a short while. Long ago should Hana have been in her home.”

She spoke all the more calmly that her heart was in a tumult for anxiety that she might betray the sleeping treasure so near—so near.

“Why did you go, Hana?”

“That is not for us to discuss. Why did you come?”

“The whole night would not be long enough to tell. The story goes far back. But it brings me here to Rome.”

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"The time is short. I must go home. Tell what you care to say, quickly. I will listen."

She leaned her back against the railing that touched her shoulders, so small she was, so like a little child. But the man who stood before her was like a prisoner before his judge.

"I was not a gardener when I worked in your father's garden."

"Tzuru knew that. Why, then?"

"I had been trained in the school of gardening given to the secret service officers of the Japanese government, an occupation that gives many openings to where a man might learn—what was to learn. You will remember I obtained for your honourable father another gardener to take my place. He should have taken it, anyway, for my time was up and I was ready to go where it had long been decided I should go. But I had grown to love you. I took you with me."

"You *loved* me."

"Not like that, oh, Hana. Do not say it like that. I loved you truly, but there is one law for him who would do such service as I would do. He may not marry. There must be no woman in his life to hear what might be heard, to carry what might be carried."

"Was that why at the first you did not wish to marry me?"

He bowed his head. "You see, I was not a Christian then."

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“Nor after, Matsuo.”

“Only in name, but that was because I did not understand. I became a Christian only to win you.”

“Go on.” Grimly she said it.

“Rumor that an evil, ancient as the hills, was coming to our nation, reached Japan. Through America it was to come. Whatever the code of morals in our country, we hold the marriage law sacred. Through the marriage law our country abounds in sons. The crime that is the ruin of any nation was not to be allowed to poison Japan.”

“The crime you would have had me do, Matsuo.”

He raised his clenched fists up to heaven, then beat them against his forehead, his breast.

“I know. I know, may our God forgive me,” he cried. “Listen a little longer. My orders had come to find out what I could. If the evil is as the government believes, stop it, at any price. Do not allow it to touch our shores. I had married you for love, but I became terrified at thought if there were a child, the government would discover. My treachery would be all the greater since you were the daughter of a great noble. What would they do to me? To you?”

Hana, shuddering within her soul, she who had never known cowardice, found peace at sight of the dome bathed in calm night, peace that in this moment did indeed “pass understanding.”

Matsuo’s anguished voice went on:

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“All to no good, the pain, the despair. Through what crooked way I know not, through what deception, what cheating, what lies—but they got their thing through—these demons of iniquity—in spite of us—and now, even our Japan, has learned to fling God’s greatest blessing back into His face.”

Silence. Then——

“You went away—and going, dropped a baby’s shoe in your flight. I knew then. I was discharged. But my country would not allow me to leave. So I got Mr. Crighton to keep me in his house. Mrs. Crighton hated me. How could she help it? So he made use of me in his office.”

“I know all that, Matsuo. No matter how. I know all that.”

“It was with the hope of finding you I lived. But when hope died, I answered the call to return to Japan. Even there I sought, thinking you might have gone back to your people. That is all—till now.”

“When did you come to Rome?”

“This morning. It was fate that sent you out tonight.”

“How long do you stay?”

“I have work to do.”

“Work?”

If the finger of scorn could have printed its contemptuousness on a face as pure and guileless as that of Matsuo’s wife, it would have drawn deep indeed. Then she asked:

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“And where are you—gardening—or acting as house servant——?”

“That apprenticeship is over. I am at the Legation.”

“Why did you come?”

“I came to discover for our country a person whom you may help me find. There are few Japanese in Italy, fewest in Rome. And it is a Japanese I am come to seek, an artist, a sculptor whose works are in the exhibitions everywhere but in Japan.

Hana's heart-throbs sounded in her breast like the melancholy drum-beat at the mouth of San Lorenzo.

“Yes.”

“The name is Passiflore. Beyond the name and that he is Japanese we know nothing else. The work comes to the exhibitions like magic. For years no man in all Japan has done anything like it. It has the spirit of the Orient. But he is ours, and we must have him. France, England, America, Italy, have his work, yet they have not the right. In Tokio, the Brahmin temple needs this Passiflore.”

“What makes you think—he—is in Rome?”

“I learned it in Paris. There, it appears he will not come. No one has ever seen him. But the sculpture comes from Rome. They told me that much.”

Silence fell while the woman's mind worked

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swiftly. Other women had endured, including Hana. A little longer—it would not be much longer at best, and the anguish of keeping Passy hidden would be over. The Lady Diana's sorrow had come to an end. Faith Desmond, whose martyred soul would one day reach its recompense, was still enduring. And Romilda del Monte—— Here faintness came upon her and she needed all her self-control. Again she visioned another thatch of snow-white hair, another pair of sunken eyes than Matsuo's, another parchment face—— Romilda may have endured, but to what purpose?

Passiflore! Japan needed her, the Japan from which she had endured so long an exile. Had Hana the right to hold her back? At least there was this to weigh in the balance against the fact that Passy was a woman and a cripple, that Japan recognized her as a man!

Matsuo was speaking. She had not heard, so he repeated his question:

“Hana, how long have *you* been in Rome?”

“Four years now.”

“Always—a servant?”

“Yes. But different from the others.”

“How different?”

“I keep house for my mistress. I am companion to those—young—who live there, too.” A motion of the hand towards the little house.

“You do not regret?”

Passiflore! Passiflore!

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"No, Hana does not regret."

"Nothing?"

"Nothing."

"In the years, the many years, you did not think to—marry—again? Ever?"

"I am a Catholic. Married. Under God only death would leave me free had I the wish to marry."

She did not ask if the vow he had taken on so lightly for her sake made any difference in his life. What came must come of him. Passiflore! Passiflore! He must never know."

"Catholic. Of the Dome. Even as Matsuo is Catholic—and of the Dome."

"It was not so in years past, Matsuo."

Again the man beat his breast and anguish showed in his face.

"Not then. But our Christian God has ways of leading even a pagan up through Calvary to understanding. I learned that Calvary stands for every age, all nations, each lonely, suffering soul."

Was this the man she had known? A suspicion perhaps unworthy, nevertheless a suspicion, flashed across her mind. He was still in the secret service. What was he trying to get from her? He would have tricked her once—long ago. How could she tell if he were indeed regenerate?

"You are still in the service of our country. The one at the head, is he the same?"

"Not the same. When I returned into Japan with the hope of finding you—I made confession.

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I told all the story and was willing to be punished or resign. Forturo, the new chief, understood. He gave the others to understand. He is a man of great kindness. And all, they helped me seek you. Hana, *can* you not believe? *Will* you not believe?"

Tears in the eyes of Matsuo? It could not be possible. Yet, how could Hana know that the hollow eyes had shed their tears by night through the long years? Tenderness stirred in her breast. His tears were like warm sunshine on the coldness of her heart. She wondered why he asked nothing about the child. He had told her he knew about the little shoe, but let the subject rest.

"Suppose, Matsuo, since now they know, suppose there *had* been a child, what then?"

"At night and through the empty days Matsuo has cried aloud to Heaven for that child."

"But suppose—she had been a woman-child, what then?"

"Flower to your life and mine, oh, Hana. A girl-child would be as the sweetest blossom of our garden, companion to you, comfort to Matsuo in the old age that has come upon him long before his time, for grieving, Hana—all because of grief."

"Suppose that girl-child, for what Hana had suffered through Matsuo, suppose, she were not like to other children. Suppose the God Who loves her had seen fit to send her, crippled in body, bent, and so distorted that other children, and men and

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women, too, would turn in horror from the sight of her. Suppose all that?"

"Even that. The girl-child would have had a soul."

"Suppose the soul that houses the girl-child's mind and heart, and is unlike other children's souls, were not what we would have it, you and I, what then?"

He turned her round, and seized her by the wrists until he hurt her. With blinding tears streaming from his eyes, utterance difficult, breast that labored, he sobbed aloud:

"Were she crippled and hopeless in body and mind—were she to be helpless and a burden all her life long—were she even such as I have seen, a breathing body only, with neither sense nor feeling, still she would be God's and ours, with the right to our care and to our love. Oh, Hana, were she all these dreadful things she'd have the right no human being could take from her, of lifting a glorified new-born soul to Heaven, when her Maker in greater wisdom than we can understand, shall call her back to Paradise. That is how it is with the heart of Matsuo."

Then Hana smiled, while down the ivory of her cheeks fell tears that answered in their gentle way to his.

"There was a girl-child, Matsuo, and a cripple. She came with a tiny broken body and a back that's hunched and bent. But"—her voice grew strong, and her face illumined in its triumph—"the girl-

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child has a mind and spirit beautiful as an Arch-angel's—and hands that—why, Matsuo, look! look! I'm laughing now, and so will you, oh, love of my youth, and so will you! Our girl-child's Passiflore!"

CHAPTER XXX

GROTTA FERRATA

WHEN at last Hana turned the key in the door, the silvered sky was changing to miraculous grey-blue, then on to yellow-gold and day. The time that had been night, drifting up to dawn, had witnessed Hana and Matsuo talking wearilessly.

Joan, frenzied, pallid, clung to her.

“Little child, little child, everything is right.” But Joan had watched the long hours through sick at heart. She cried as she said:

“I’ve been listening for you—all night.”

“Foolish one, I promised it would be all right. Why did you listen?”

“I was afraid something terrible might have happened. Things do happen.”

“They do,” laughed Hana under her breath.

“Something *has* happened! I knew it! Why, Hana—you look somehow—glorified!”

“I will tell you. Wait. Don’t move. Here at the top of the stairs I will tell you.” She flew to Joan’s room, where she gathered into her arms a great silk comforter and pillows, then back, and like a flash to the balcony, a surprised Joan in her

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wake, who suddenly found herself all wrapped up and on the chaise-longue, Hana beside her. Without hesitation, without omitting a single detail, Hana told the story from beginning to end.

“That’s all.” She bowed low with outstretched hands, for all the world like a tiny Madame Butterfly on a paper fan.

“Oh, I do thank God. I do thank Him. What shall we do to thank Him, Hana?”

“We will try to do His will to thank Him. That is the best way. My Joan——”

“Yes, Hana?”

“What will Passiflore say?”

“Oh, poor Passy. I forgot. She was worried to death when ten o’clock came last night. I sent her to bed, said I would wait up for you, that if you were late I’d see you and explain. Passy went off at five o’clock to Grotta Ferrata. Mother arranged last night about getting Incubo early when Passy told her plans. It’s a little mixed I know, but simple enough when you understand,” she answered Hana’s look of utter bewilderment. “Why should Passiflore drive out to Grotta Ferrata in the little coupé alone at that hour?”

“It seems they were digging for water in the grounds of the White Nuns novitiate and came across a fountain that had been buried for centuries.”

“The White Nuns? My Franciscan Missionaries of Mary?”

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“Yes, your own, Hana. Of course, it happened weeks ago, but they had to tell on account of some law about archæology. The Academy people have been waiting for the fountain to be entirely uncovered, then more weeks for an opportunity to see it in the right light. The idea, Passy explained, was to catch the bas-reliefs as the sun touched them hour by hour, and the Director wanted her there to explain them to the other students. She’s the only one at the Academy besides the Director who knows their value of light and shade. He couldn’t be there for the whole day. They offered to take her out in the car, but she wanted to be alone and promised to come back with them.

“Where will she get her lunch?”

“The students were going to take theirs, and I wanted to put up Passy’s, but she wouldn’t let me. She said there was a house at the Grotta she had wanted to see for a long time, that while the others had their lunch the nuns would show it to her, and she could have her lunch in the convent, later.”

“But she does not know them!”

“I couldn’t say, Hana darling. She never spoke of them to me. When four o’clock came and I begged her to let me do what I could, she said no, it was all arranged. She would probably have from twelve to two free.

“Twelve to two. I wonder if it could be done,” Hana mused.

“What be done, Hana?”

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"I told him—Matsuo—we would go to the Academy at one o'clock when my Passiflore is not at work. He has waited so long——"

"Why not drive out to Grotta Ferrata? Incubo isn't back, so you'd have to get another cab, but I know Mummie would be happy to send you. Let me fix it?"

"No, child. Hana is going to tuck Joan up in her little bed. There has been too much anxiety and excitement. Besides Signora del Monte may need you."

Joan knew Romilda would not need her, but she blushed at the thought of what Hana really meant. Donald was coming and she must have her beauty sleep before she saw him. But Joan was not ready yet to see him; it was too soon after the horrors she had endured. So while she protested feebly against being carried off to bed at dawn, Hana had her way, and, when Joan awoke, well past noon, the sun was streaming through open windows, and a radiant Faith stood beside her. Meanwhile a little victoria with a strange driver went jogging into the picturesque hamlet of Grotta Ferrata.

"I do not know just what direction to take, Matsuo. Perhaps that peasant——" A suchari, atop a wine cart, waved greeting to the quaint couple in the fiacre. Matsuo held out his hand to stop him.

"Can you direct us to the convent of White Nuns?"

"White Nuns?"

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“The Franciscan Missionaries of Mary they are called.”

“Aiei! The Franciscan Missionaries.” The man beamed with pleasure. Evidently their good work was not unknown among the peasants. “At the foot of the first hill, turn to the right. Climb to the top of the second one. There you will find the gracious convent. Mille grazie, signora, signore.” He smiled again and cried, “Arrivederla! Arrivederla!” and waved his hat in expression of gratitude for the coppers Matsuo tossed him. He kept it up until they were out of sight. When they turned around the hill and drove between giant trees that led up to the glistening monastery, there rose to the heart of Matsuo an overwhelming sense of the providence of God. There came to him at the same time light that if one wait patiently the Master, the kind Master will show, even in “this place we call life,” the working of His divine hand. But of the action of Matsuo’s mind, Hana suspected nothing, knew nothing. It remained for time to reveal it.

For her, she was glad in her simple way to see the novitiate of the Order that had saved her before the birth of Passiflore. Indeed, it was to these same Franciscan Missionaries Passy owed her life, her talent, her power to be guiding star for generations to come. Hana shuddered at the thought of possibilities that would have withheld Passiflore’s genius from a world that needed it,

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Passiflore's soul from eternal happiness. To these same White Nuns she owed the joy Passy had been in her depleted life, to whom Matsuo would owe eternal gratitude.

As they drew up before the gates Hana looked shyly at her husband.

"They are kind people. They are the kindest in the world, though I do not know the ones who live in this house." He smiled, but the smile was enigmatic and he did not answer.

"It is the polite thing to ask first for the Superior, is it not?"

"We will, my Hana. Some one should prepare Passiflore. It would not do for me to come upon her unannounced. You and I have lived through a lifetime in the last few hours. Passiflore does not even realize her father lives. I would not have her frightened."

"Some gentle thing has touched you, Matsuo, that you give consideration to the girl-child of our house," said his wife timidly.

"Some gentle thing!" Matsuo echoed. He studied Hana's face while they waited at the door. What had kept her so young? Most Japanese women would have shrivelled like storm-beaten trees had they so suffered. Not Hana. Passiflore might have kept the flame of youth alive in her mother, or the joy of Matsuo's return might have transformed her back to the flowering time of life, for she had blossomed to new freshness overnight.

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What wonder that the man marvelled, and marveling, thanked God.

A figure clad in spotlessness from the top of her graceful coif to the tip of her monastic shoes appeared in the open door, with a smile of welcome.

"You must be Passiflore's parents, are you not?"

Hana laughed. "How did you know, Mother?"

"I think you must be from the same country," the portress laughed back. "Passiflore is spending the day here."

"Yes. We know. We will wait for her if it takes all afternoon. She must not be told we are here, just yet. The drive took less time than we thought. Perhaps we might see the Mother Superior?"

"Yes, indeed; she will be delighted. Come with me to her parlor. You will not have to wait long."

She led them down the length of corridor to a room whose French windows opened out to the garden beyond.

"It is pleasanter here than at Via Juisti. We get so little sun there. Here it floods everything."

"Via Juisti I do not know," said Hana, "nor any of the White Nun's houses outside of New York."

"No?" Mother Sanctuario opened her eyes to their widest. "That is odd, because Passiflore is with us constantly. She has often begged Reverend Mother to bring her to us here, but the hours are not convenient on account of her work. It is dif-

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ferent today, for the Academy students all came out to see the new excavation. It is quite a distance off, down the hill. Would you like to see it?"

"Another time we will come to see it," Matsuo said. "Now, we will wait for the Reverend Mother. We might come unexpectedly on Passiflore if we were to go out, and that would not be wise."

"I understand, indeed I do. Now I will go for Mother Superior."

While they waited, Hana walked to the open windows, exclaiming at sight of the pergola laden with flowering vines and the shady terrace beyond. Matsuo glanced at the books that lay on a table. There was the life of the foundress, Helene Chappotin de Neuville, better known as Mother Mary of the Passion; several volumes relating to martyrs of the Order who had gained their crown in China; an account of eight leper colonies entirely in charge of these selfless, courageous women, and lastly a stray volume out of a set that seemed to Matsuo most incongruous. Yet he took it up with a smile of recognition. He had found it before——

"What is the book, Matsuo? You seem to know it."

"There are those who would call it coincidence. Yes, I know the book."

"What is it called?"

"‘The Ten Great Religions.’ It is an iniquitous book."

"Why iniquitous, Matsuo?"

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"Untrue. Unfair." He was about to explain why he had found it so, when the Mother Superior came in, both hands outstretched in welcome.

"Can it be Matsuo Haionaka, *here?*"

"Yes, Mother Agnelle. It is Matsuo."

"In Rome! You are greatly changed."

"I have suffered. But it was Reverend Mother herself who told me, 'Joy cometh in the morning.' Joy came—at last."

"Perhaps it was you who brought it," she said to Hana.

"My husband tells me so." Hana spoke with pride. She had come into her own.

"Hana has grown young while I grew old, but now I think old age will pass and I will find at least a pleasant sunset," said Matsuo.

Mother Agnelle laughed as she answered:

"Let us hope the twilight will be a long one," then added: "Come out to the terrace. You must both be famished after your long drive."

Protesting at the trouble they were giving these daughters of Assizi's saint, they followed through the pergola to find a little table all set out, waiting for them.

"I will sit beside you and serve you," said the Superior, "and we can talk comfortably. There is so much to ask, so much to say. Tell me," she continued as she poured into their glasses a clear

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wine made from the grapes whose vines wreathed the terrace, "does your wife realize that you are an old friend of our house?"

Hana stared as Matsuo answered:

"I had started to tell her——"

"And I came in?"

"Yes. I had picked up the book—the very book that brought me back to the Church. Is it the same one?"

"Not the same volume. I keep it for its fallacies," she laughed. "Like you, it has led others to the truth. A sort of 'Mammon of Iniquity!'"

"You knew my Matsuo?" asked Hana, wondering. "And he read a book you gave him, and it brought him back?"

"God has strange ways of leading souls to Himself. This book is crammed with false philosophy. Yet, it has been your husband's lode-star. When he first came to our convent in Tokio where I was stationed, it was on a mission of charity for the Japanese government, with regard to the lepers. At that time, you will remember, Matsuo, your faith was hardly bone of your bone. Had he not come to us in the name of duty we would have been taboo. Is it not so?"

"It is truth, Mother. I had been what I was only in name, for Hana. In the years she was lost to me, the religion meant nothing, except that Hana had loved it, and what she had loved, I respected. One day while I waited in the convent infirmary to

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see my man, I picked up this book. What I read made me very angry. It placed the Catholics with the Hindoos, saying that they sacrifice themselves rather for the sake of the sacrifice than for the sake of humanity. It had it in black and white, that they suffer self-immolation for the pain rather than for a cause. It is the Hindoo who makes a fetish of self-martyrdom, not the Catholic. It made me very angry, Hana. I remembered so much that had been in America, Pere Marquette and the early Jesuit martyrs. They gave their lives to make America. How can Americans be but what *true* Americans are, since their country is baptised in the blood of saints? I am ignorant of much concerning the Church, but this I would give my life for, that her martyrs shed their blood to save humanity, body and soul. You, Reverend Mother, your White Franciscans, risk your lives every hour to help the lepers, and that is not pleasant. And you have saved thousands of girl babies that are daily thrown away in China. We know how dangerous a work that is. Through this book that tells untruth I learned that wherever is suffering humanity, there stands the Catholic Church. Those who represent her are ready and glad to die if need be, if dying they may make humanity less suffering."

. "My Matsuo," there were tears in Hana's eyes, "this book did make you angry enough to study to prove it wrong?"

"Yes."

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“You did at first resent the wrong because it was Hana’s religion it attacked?”

“Yes.”

“I know now what Lady Diana meant when she would speak of ‘things that seemed not good, yet turned to good.’ The book is one, is it not so, Mother Agnelle?”

“Perhaps that is why I keep it. An evil more subtle would do harm. Veneer of learning covering obvious falsity is its own boomerang.”

“It disproves itself?”

“Yes, stirs men to thinking. Once a man begins to think in all sincerity, he has found the entering wedge to truth, as you did, Matsuo.”

They sat watching the play of light down the hill and across the valley, the collation being finished and Mother Sanctuario having quietly removed the plates. Then the superior spoke of Passiflore and the great work she had been called upon to do for the Academy.

“She has been called to do still greater by the Japanese government,” Matsuo said.

“Tell me.”

A strange expression came into Mother Agnelle’s face as he went on. All that the girl had said of her father was that she had not known him. And while she was in Japan, the question of his faith was the only one he had broached to her. That he had a wife somewhere in the world, she knew—but that was all, so Matsuo made his confession.

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It did not take long, but he spared himself nothing and while he stripped the soul that had been his to the depths, the wise nun read still deeper. She knew he might be called upon to make so great a sacrifice that it would place his living spirit among those who had agonized as martyrs for the cause of the Church. She knew, none better, that his sin might have damned that spirit had it not been for Hana's prayers. But she knew, too, the renunciation that such a man might make; he had the power to lift his soul to the very heights of Heaven.

It was decided that Mother Agnelle should prepare Passiflore to meet her father. While the class packed up its drawing books and pencils and prepared to return to Rome by the same big diligence that had brought it out, the superior walked back up the hillside with the crippled girl along the vine-embowered way to the pergola. Hana and Matsuo had gone inside where they waited, breathless.

And all the while Mother Agnelle talked and explained Passiflore answered never a word. The superior thought she might not realize the seriousness of all she was being told, or realizing, she might have been indifferent, or else it had been a shock, and the shock had left her cold. When at last they reached the door Passiflore said:

"Please let me rest a few moments on the terrace before I go in. The walk up the hill has made me very tired. I would like to be alone to rest."

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The Superior stooped and kissed her. Passiflore's forehead had grown icy cold, and there were drops of perspiration clinging to it. Mother Agnelle went on to the chapel while Passiflore, who after a second or two of prayer thought she had her forces under perfect control, entered through the wide French doors to where her parents waited.

Without a word she put her arms about her mother and held her close. Then she said: "I'm glad it was here you found me, Mother of mine," clinging to her and not turning to Matsuo. Then Hana ventured:

"Your father has come back to us, heart of my heart. Will you not greet him?"

"My father?" She drew herself up to her pitiful height, heeding neither the man's outstretched hand nor the tears that coursed down his haggard cheeks.

Passiflore's eyes had grown merciless and the ivory of her skin had turned a chalky white.

"If you are my father, why did you not come before? My mother has been lonely."

She did not look at him when she spoke, but out to the sky where storm-clouds seemed gathering above the hilltops. If within his soul Matsuo answered, his lips were silent. The pitiless young eyes looked at him then, and the girl spoke directly to him.

"My mother was afraid. It is a dreadful thing to frighten any one. She was afraid, oh, not for

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herself, but for me. I had not been wanted. Even had I been like other girls, straight and beautiful, I would neither have been wanted nor welcome."

"Passy! Passy!"

Heedless, toneless, the accusing voice went on:

"But I am not straight. I am as you see me. Are you shocked? Did mother tell you? Perhaps if I had been wanted and welcome and she had not been afraid, I would not have come to her like this. People who are strangers and who do not know, should be prepared before they are allowed to look at me, otherwise they will be horrified when they see me."

"My darling! My blossom! What is it that has come to you?"

Then two red spots appeared on the white cheeks, and Passiflore beat with her two hands on the breast that was not like the breast of other girls. Matsuo's spirit opened to the lash.

"Mother of mine, do you think because I bore silently and did not speak, I did not feel? Do you suppose, the nights I have been late in coming home, it was because I strained my eyes into the dusk on work that should have been done only by sunlight? It was because I waited for the streets to empty before venturing out where people might see the kind of creature I am. Have I not shaded my eyes through the years to keep myself from seeing the look of terror on Italian faces as I passed them by? I know when they make horns behind my back,

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and some of them do it before my face. Sometimes they laugh.”

“Oh, Passy! Passy! Stop—I beg you!”

“Do you not think it hurt to send my sculptured children nameless into the world? Had I been like other girls I would have carried them myself in triumph to London, Paris, the whole world over. Instead of that I hide, hide shame-faced in my corner here for fear that if they saw what manner of thing had done the work, the work itself would be discredited.”

“My love, my little love, you hurt me.”

“I must say it out, sweet mother of my heart. It is not all bitter, but I think the pain will be less intense if I can only tell it—once. You see, I know, Oh, my mother, that you would have suffered more, if Passiflore, such as she is, had not come. For this, and for other reasons, many other reasons, I do thank God I was allowed to live. There have been times when I would have sung aloud for thankfulness, and I have lifted up my voice, then—hush, for all that voice could do was to croak like some poor robin left shelterless in the rain. I would have danced like Joan and the others, but could only totter clumsily on unbalanced feet. Do you think that when I longed to run and play like other children and they fled from me in panic, I did not suffer?”

She went on as if no power could stem the stream, nothing but the flood of tears that mercifully came

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at last, and finally, wearily sobbed itself out on the breast of the mother who had borne her. It was as though the pent-up emotion of years, the subconsciousness that had held her father responsible for what she was, the silent endurance of a lifetime, had broken through all bounds at being brought face to face with Matsuo.

When finally she quieted down, Hana murmured in her ear what comfort she could give.

“Listen to mother, my blossom, my beautiful one. In sorrow, in love, in longing, has your father come back to us. Last night I told him everything and knowing, he loves you tenderly. Let me tell you something of which you have never thought. Your father feels as I do, that had Passiflore been—different—Hana would have long ago lost her to the great world beyond. In the world of art to which my Passy would have gone, there is no place for Hana. Oh, yes, my blossom. You may shake your head, but mothers know!”

“Did my mother know it was so great suffering for Passiflore?”

“Never, dear heart.”

“I am glad. I suppose it had to come out at last. I did not even tell Joan nor Lady Diana. I said it was not all bitter. Now I will tell you why. One comforted me.”

Matsuo drew nearer. One had comforted him, too.

“He was straight, but they dressed Him like a

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fool and mocked Him through the streets. When I would see the cringing people stare and lift their fingers at me, I thought of that and I was not alone. He walked with me through the crowded streets. They mocked us both, though *He* was King! At least no one I loved had robed me in the garment of a fool. And He loved them all, they were His own. When they shrank from me in horror He showed me that they shrink from Him, too. All who do any sin or wrong today, shrink from Him, their King, their Creator. All who say He is not God, shrink from Him. And today there are many, but there is a world to come in which all who have rejected Him will learn the truth. God pity them! Oh, in my sorrow I learned so much, so much. The garments that His mother had woven with such love and tenderness were filthy with the mud they threw at Him, and drenched with blood. At least my dress was clean, and no one I loved had beaten me out of the semblance of a human being. His face, the face that had smiled up at her from the crib of Bethlehem, was bruised and blackened and swollen. There was 'no comeliness in Him.' Yet He bore in silence. So I, the least of His little ones, bore in silence. The world was unfair and unjust to Him. It has been fair and just to me. He had been sent to Caiphas and Pilate. The judges who had judged *my* little work, were kind. His work was the work of God. How did the people pay Him? Pitilessly. He made the

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things a carpenter makes, chairs, and tables, and wheels perhaps for the simple carts of the Nazarites. They beat Him down and paid Him in pennies, and did not even save the work He did. But the Carpenter of Nazareth put it into my poor hands to make such carvings as have given me a name before His world, and I am well paid. Oh, He has been with me all along. And so, I thank Him for His gifts, and for letting me suffer even a little with Him. You see, Mother of my heart, I *am* comforted.'

"Can you forgive—*me*?"

Hana could only wonder at his humility, Matsuo, whose pride had well-nigh broken both of them.

"He forgave. Why should I not forgive?" This time she looked steadily into her father's face, then went to him with outstretched hand.

"He forgave because of love, my child."

"You are my father. Love does not come easily to Passiflore. But this do I feel. He loves you, and I will try to be like Him, in His own good time."

She was not to be forced into saying what she did not mean, this child of his, Matsuo saw it clearly. He would have to wait in patience. Well, then, he would wait. Suddenly Passiflore asked a question:

"Why did you come to Rome?"

When she learned the true reason and that the Japanese government had sent him out for no other object than to find her, she could hardly believe it. He spoke then of the work she had done for

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other countries, other places. At last he told her about the statue for the Brahmin temple in Tokio.

“You will come? You will accept?” It was an entreaty rather than a question.

“What does my mother say?”

“I would love to go back,” Hana answered wistfully. Neither Passiflore nor Matsuo could tell that her heart was beating with the thrill of it when in her face they only read the quiescence they both knew so well.

“To stay in Japan, always, mother mine?”

“There are still my father’s gardens. There is all Japan, and the blessed Faith that might be taught as well as lived. I would go back—if you would come.”

Then the girl turned to Matsuo.

“My father”—the man’s heart leaped as day to sunshine—“you made a promise to the Government you would find Passiflore. Passiflore found, you assured the Government the required work would be done?”

“I did make the promise.”

“Suppose Passiflore were to do other work for Japan, far greater than merely a bronze or marble Sakya-Muni, would the Government be content to accept that and leave the carving for the Temple to some one else?”

“Another would have to be found if that is Passiflore’s wish. I would not force my daughter. I would not be bound to keep the promise.”

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“And suppose you were to take Passiflore with you to Japan, not as an artist. Suppose you were to take her merely as your daughter, such as she is, deformed, and show her to your people there, your Government, what then?”

“As crown of my heart and of my life, as pride of my old age, would I take her. So only would I take my child, my daughter with me to the ends of the earth.”

Out came the laughing sun to chase the storm-clouds back beyond the hills while they drove the long and happy way across from Grotta Ferrata to Ponte Squarciarelli, down past the sparkling waters of Tre Fontana and majestic San Paolo and to Rome!

Welcome to a newer, fuller life, Hana. Welcome, Matsuo, made man in baptism of the cross, welcome, a thousand times welcome, Passiflore, whom faith courageous brought into the world, proof indomitable that man, small, arrogant, opinionated, stands little chance against the might and the mercy of omnipotent God!

CHAPTER XXXI

THE MASTERPIECE

“L ONELY, Joan?”

“Never with you. What makes you ask?”

“I was afraid you might miss Via Margutta and Romilda and the others.”

“I wouldn’t take Romilda away from her work at Santo Spirito for anything. The sick ones need her frightfully now, especially the children. She seems to be a second Saint Frances of Rome—so charitable, Mummie.”

“She’s a great soul.”

“Why do you suppose she gave away her things?”

“You mean that beautiful room of del Monte’s?”

“Yes, that and the rest. There wasn’t much more. Surely she’s not going to spend her whole life nursing the poor? She ought to have kept something for herself I think, when she is tired of it all.”

“Not Romilda. She told me—after she and I were left alone that dreadful day we took del Monte out to San Lorenzo.”

“It was only last Saturday, mother. It seems a century.”

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"Yes, doesn't it? There were no new plans to be made, she said. She had always expected to give what she had to the Celio, the Blue Nuns. She wanted to fit out a room for poor gentle people there. She preferred to live with them and go out to her nursing at Santo Spirito. No, she would not paint again. She wanted to get away from everything connected with the past few years and start all over."

"I wish she could have gone to America with Donald."

"Perhaps Donald is why she did not go."

"Oh, Mummie, it was all so unfair, that bit! And I was in it, too!"

"Never mind, darling." Faith laughed at the discomfiture in Joan's face. "The one who made the trouble is having his punishment."

"Berinari?"

"Yes. He's gone to Monte Carlo with the radicals!"

"*Not* the Olga trio?"

"The same!"

"Oh, Mummie! how funny! Perhaps he'll marry one of them."

"Just Nemesis. Patienza! Whatever happens is certain to reach us sooner or later."

"Sieves, Mummie. Four sieves. The news of what they're doing will leak through. Will they make a fortune, do you think? People do sometimes, don't they?"

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“Well, my lamb, they’ll have to make it or run away. None of the three we know can afford to lose anything and as to Count Berinari, who can tell?”

“Well, I know that while they last they’ll make things hum. Mummie——”

“What is it, dear?”

“I’ve been something of an idiot.”

“Don’t call yourself names. Why?”

“Why should I have gone to Aunt Di for comfort, and Romilda, when all the time you’d have been the one to help me most?”

“Perhaps mothers seem too old and far away. Perhaps we care so intensely we are apt to be critical, don’t put ourselves in the daughter’s place. Oh, there are a thousand reasons. One thinks there’s more sympathy outside, when our poor hearts are fairly aching with fellow-feeling.”

“My mother will never be old. I ought to have realized that. At the time I felt so ashamed. I wanted to get away from every one that knew.”

“That’s why I let you go. I knew so well. And still, Joan, the thing that happened was to have been. Before I came away, Uncle Michael told me all about his hope of what the dream might be to you. And it *has* been what he wanted, a safeguard. But neither he nor I ever thought you’d suffer as you did.”

“Romilda says it’s my artistic temperament.”

At that Faith laughed out.

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“What is there funny in that, Mummie mine?”

“Proof of what I just said. Romilda *could* tell you it’s the artistic temperament, which it is. Mothers can’t say that, however they may know it.” Then Joan laughed with her and answered:

“Analyst! Hereafter I shall put all my heart’s burdens on you and refuse to carry them myself. By the way, Mummie, when’s Uncle Michael coming?”

“The last letter said about the middle of May. It will have given Donald a chance to do what was to be done in New York. You knew Uncle Michael had put the great lanterns in the Saint Louis Cathedral, didn’t you?”

“Yes, I knew he had them to do. Will he have quite finished there?”

“Quite. He would not come till they were in place.”

“I’ve been wondering something.”

“Tell mother. You said you would if it were a trouble.”

“Well, it’s not exactly a trouble, but frightfully personal. You won’t mind?”

“I won’t mind anything you ask, child.”

“It’s about Uncle Michael. I know he—loved you long ago—before Daddy——”

“What makes you think that?” Joan could not tell whether the red line of the sun touched her mother’s cheeks just then, or something from within.

“I used to hear them at Aunt Hilda’s long ago.

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I asked Aunt Diana if it were true and she said it was."

"So long ago, beloved, so long that Uncle Michael has quite forgotten."

"But he is young. And you—are young."

Faith rose suddenly and stood with her back to Joan, one hand resting on the balcony now bathed in April sunset, the other held tightly to the heart that would never cease to ache for him who had been everything.

"Mother is married to your father."

"But, Mummie—Daddy is dead!"

"Is he? I wonder."

"Why, mother!" Joan pulled herself up out of the long chair and went to stand where she could see her mother's face.

"I was afraid you might. Other people do."

"Sometimes they do."

"Not—Mummie?"

"No. Not I."

"You don't love Uncle Michael, then?"

"No more than he loves me, which is not at all."

"Not at all? He sends you his dear love in every letter."

"So do Bobby Van Alstyne and Larry Minton, and your Aunt Diana and Kathleen. It's all the same."

"Just like that?"

"Just like that."

The girl exhaled a deep breath.

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“Oh, I *am* relieved,” she said. “I’ve been afraid of it.”

Then Faith turned, put her two hands on Joan’s shoulders and looked straight into her eyes.

“Listen, child of mine. Often people marry again. Sometimes because they are lonely, sometimes—I hate to say it, but it is true of the world, because of what they will gain—and sometimes, because they fall in love. Oh, there are many reasons why they do. But you see it’s quite different with Mummie. I’ve kept your father in my heart, a living personality. I know he’s waiting for me—just as I know he helps me. Why, Joan dear, I never do a thing of any consequence without saying to myself, ‘What would *you* do about it, Jack?’ I put myself in his place and try to see it from his point of view. Loving him as I always will, knowing it is only my blind open eyes that keep me from seeing him and God and all that is Heaven, it would be desecration to put any other man in his place.”

For a long time, Joan sat thinking of what she said, then asked:

“But what about Uncle Michael? Surely he will marry again.”

“Why not? He should. Men like Uncle Michael need some one to take care of them, to fill their lives. I hope he *will* marry again, but not your mother.”

“Your name ought to have been Faithful, Mummie, instead of just Faith.”

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“Perhaps if I had been born in New England instead of New York, it would have been,” retorted her mother.

“Do you think Romilda would marry again?”

“It seems to me she should.”

“But she loved del Monte.”

“She did, indeed.”

“Is there any difference?”

“Every difference. They never knew the joyousness of companionship or comradeship. Their poor little marriage was, after all, hardly a marriage. It was a living martyrdom for Romilda and for him—oblivion.”

“I suppose she just went through the ceremony to give him a sort of peace when she thought he was going to die right away.”

“Just that. She did not even dare use his name till after his death, for fear his family might destroy whatever peace she had been able to build up about them at sacrifice of herself.”

“Poor thing. Oh!” as Hana appeared with the radiant smile that had become part of her. “What is it, Hana?”

“Two things. This telegram”—she handed it to Faith—“and Passy sends a message.”

“The telegram may wait. The message, Hana?”

“Say that tomorrow morning at ten o’clock Passiflore will hold a private view for those most dear to her.”

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"It's finished?" asked Joan excitedly.

"Joan, Joan, you knew it all the time! You've worked beside her every day, how could you keep the secret?" asked her mother.

"No. I've not seen it. I promised Passiflore I would not look, and I didn't. Oh, it wasn't hard. The more she sculpted, the more I painted. I've got a surprise, too. My picture is done and I will show it when Passy shows her masterpiece. There! Now what's the telegram?"

"Epidemic of flu broken out among children at the Celio. Unless wanted on private cases will remain here. Keep Joan away from crowds. ROMILDA."

"Mummie, I'll take her place at the Santo Spirito. Maybe they'll give me a course in nursing. May I?"

"You shall stay at home and take care of your mother, precious. A summer epidemic of any kind in Rome is no joke. I hope it will all be over by the time Michael gets here."

"The middle of May! When will that be?"

"In three weeks, foolish child."

"Oh, it will all be over by that time. Hana, will your husband be at Passy's private view?"

"Yes. He is free to come and go as he chooses from the legation."

"You've not made any plans yet?"

"Not yet. It is Passiflore who makes the plans now," laughed Hana.

"But you do expect to go to Japan?"

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“Oh, yes. But Passy is the one to say when we shall go and she is not yet ready.”

“Then come and sit with us and watch the stars come out.”

“I have watched the stars at night for many years,” said Hana, “but they will be brighter at ten o’clock tomorrow morning than before.” She laughed again. Life for Hana had become a most delicious joke.

Passiflore had arranged the chairs like the orchestra circle of a theatre. Though only four were essential, she had drawn them up in a semi-circle about the shrouded figures on the dais.

“It seems more important,” she said, as they took their places.

“Before I uncover it,” she went on, “I want to tell a story, make a speech. I will never make a speech in public. But this is not public and Passiflore has much that she would say.”

She had placed an ancient faldstool on the dais and sat on it, raised above their level.

“Into my heart long ago was born a strange love. It took it some time to grow, for it was love of a thing I did not know. Now every form of love calls our best service into being. How to serve *my* love? One day my mother all unconsciously opened up the way, and showed me how, and where to serve it, but not when.

“I studied every way, every path, and I can say

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that as I studied with all my heart and will, God led me. At last I saw. I wanted to serve my love with the best that is in me.

“Out beyond the great Pacific ocean lies a land that has given three of us who are here this morning, to the world of life, Japan. It is Japan who is my love and her would I serve.”

There was a little gasp. Matsuo's hand groped for Hana's, and held it while Passiflore continued:

“God gave His instrument a gift. Passiflore has had success, not of herself, but with His gift. And now she wants to use it for her love. In the Japan that gave us to the world are many children. Along the path God's gift has made beautiful for Passiflore, there would she lead them. That's all my speech, beloveds. Now, Joan, one, two, three!”

Joan lifted the wet sheet that covered what Passiflore had wrought.

The strength of it! The master-hand!

Life-size, ankles bound by chains to the gods of ancient superstition, rose the figure of young Japan, the glory of freedom in his face. Another figure stooped over him and with her two hands broke the chains apart. Passiflore's perfection of detail in the modelling of the White Franciscan's habit was unsurpassed. There was the coif, the knotted cord, the great round beads, the cross, the image of our Lord——

No one could have dreamed it was a woman's

THE MASTERPIECE

work, far less the work of such a one as Passiflore. The very touch showed inspiration.

“Look, Matsuo mine. See her signature, her passion-flower!”

She had twined it about the foot of the crucifix. Matsuo bent his head.

“I’d seen the passion-flower when the sheet fell,” he said. Then Passiflore knew he had recognized the face beneath the coif.

They looked at it in silence, while Passy watched each one in turn.

“You like it? You like it?”

For answer Hana rose and kissed her.

“What have you called it?” asked her father.

“I’d never thought to name it.”

“Then I will name it.”

“Do, oh, my father. Do!”

“The sacrifice of atonement.”

“But my father, it is no sacrifice for Passiflore?”

“It is Matsuo’s sacrifice. Let it be called so.”

Only then Hana read in the group what her husband had seen at first.

“Passy, Passy, you would do this thing for the Japan you have never known?”

“For the Japanese. For our people I would go, mother mine.”

“Mummie,” whispered Joan, “my finished picture must wait; I can’t show it now.” They slipped quietly out of the room, leaving the three alone.

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Then for the first time Passiflore knelt before her father, head bowed on outstretched hands.

“Not to me, my daughter. Submission is to a higher Power. Go pray to that Power now and beg that Matsuo may never fail It.” So she found Joan with her mother on the balcony, and together they crossed to the Trinitá, climbed the stairs to Mater’s chapel, and poured out all their prayer of thanksgiving and petition at her feet.

Towards noon when it was time for Matsuo to report at his legation, Hana accompanied him as far as the door. He turned to her with unusual diffidence.

“When we shall have gone back to our country, Passiflore’s new love, and when we shall have built the house that is to be ours as long as the highest Power shall decree—need that house be always silent, always empty save for you and me, my Hana?”

Then with the radiant look that had become so much a part of her, Hana answered:

“Why should it be, Matsuo mine? Why should it be? We’re going *home*, and Hana is not yet thirty-six years old!”

CHAPTER XXXII

THE WEAVING

SHIPS and cargoes sailed back and forth while life went on and living, and life that is not living. Death came, and dying, and death that is never dying, while the sun rose and set, the moon increased and waned, and days and weeks drifted through their destiny into Eternity.

Then dawned the fifteenth day of May.

“Mummie, will he find me changed?”

“Who, sweetheart?”

“Uncle Michael.”

Faith wondered if Joan were so unspoiled as not to realize what the years had done to her.

“I think he will. You’ve grown up.”

“Some people grow up without changing. I don’t feel a bit grown up. Never less so than this morning. I’m so excited waiting I can hardly stand it. Do I look much older?”

“Let me see. Stand over there with your face to the light.” It amused Faith to see Joan’s utter unconsciousness of her loveliness.

“No. Not much older, only developed as flowers

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develop. Trees need time to make them symmetrical, don't they? Time never stands still."

"Do you wish it would, ever?"

"Not I," answered Faith. "Time is full of surprises and life fairly saturated with adventure."

"But there's an end, Mummie, and that's sad."

"Is it? With Daddy and Mickey at the top of the road? Not sad, Joan. The only sadness I know is the sadness that would keep me away from them then——"

"What's that? What could ever keep you away from them?"

"Not to do what is right."

"In plain English, sin, is that it, angel Mummie?" laughed Joan.

"Yes, why are you laughing? It's serious."

"It might be serious if I didn't know you so well—but I can't imagine you anything but what you are, and if you were, you'd be funny!"

"Don't be silly, Joan. None of us are safe until we're tucked away out of harm at last. Keep at your painting. It's an outlet and a safeguard. Now that the Salon has taken your 'Campagna,' what are you going to do?"

"A portrait."

"Whose?"

"Romilda's. I want her in uniform with one or two of the Celio children."

"Can she give you the time?"

"Not Romilda. I'm going to prove Tacconata's

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theory of painting what I see in my mind, not what I see with my eyes. That picture of the campagna was an experience."

"I know, dear heart. It was experience that made the great masters. So whatever the adventure of your life, use it."

"Is it experience that makes our Italy so beautiful?"

"Certainly, the experience of centuries. Perhaps when America has lived as long, she'll be as beautiful."

"Some people think she is now, Mummie."

"Fresh, not mellowed. She needs age—to have lived—and more."

"I believe that when she shall have had *her* Michael Angelos, *her* Raphaels—oh, I can say it now, I'm quite immune—even her Passiflores, Europe will pale before her. She will have had to suffer more, I think."

"So she will. But she needs fewer politicians and more——"

"Candlestick-makers," put in Joan.

"Just that. More soul, less reform. One does not reform by removing temptation. One first teaches the meaning of strong character to resist. Education is reality; how to study, how to think. The basis of good taste is upheld by the fine arts. There must be more attention given there. A nation must be shown how to produce, so that the country as well as the individual will reap the re-

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ward of production. Give us a greater number of idealists, fewer materialists, and with the physical beauty with which God has endowed her, America will stand far and away first among the nations of the world."

"Hear! Hear!" cried Joan and clapped her hands. Then sound of the bell echoed through the house. Joan stood rooted to the floor of the balcony, but her mother followed Hana's successor, a little Italian maid whom she had trained, to the door.

"Why, Donald—where is Michael?"

"Flu. Isn't it beastly? We'd hardly landed. He positively refused to stay in Naples, so I managed to get him here. I left him in bed at the Bristol, and ran down to let you know we'd come and ask what to do about a nurse. The doctor at the hotel is with him, but tells me there's not a nurse to be had in all Rome. I'm rather up against it, as the chief's about delirious."

"Come upstairs. We'll call the Celio. They usually have some one. Joan's on the balcony——" But Joan, who had hung for a brief moment over the banister, was already at the telephone.

"San Stephano, 463. Yes. Yes—hurry, please."

"*Con chi parlo? Pronto. Pronto.*" A wait, interminable.

"Oh, heavens, give me San Stephano, 463."

Excited talking back and forth, endless delay, and at last the convent.

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"I want Signora del Monte, Romilda del Monte, at once, please. It is most important."

"This is Romilda. Who wants me?"

"Oh, I didn't know your voice. This is Joan. What are we going to do? Donald is here, and Uncle Michael's at the Bristol with the flu and no nurse, and the doctor says he's delirious and has to have a nurse, and there isn't one to be had, so Donald says. Can you send a Blue Nun?"

"I'm afraid not. The hospital's full up. Hold the line. I don't dare let you off for fear of not getting you quickly. I'll see at once."

"Righto. Waiting!"

But some one cut into the line, and Romilda had an exasperating time to get Joan back.

"Not a nun or a nurse free to go. But if one is really needed, I will come. Ask your mother."

"Thank God you can make it. Don't bother about Mummie. I heard her talking to Donald. No, I've not seen him. I've heard him. Incubo will fetch you at once. He's at the door. Get your things ready. I'll drive out for you."

It was a bewildered Donald Kaye who found himself seated in the small victoria, an erstwhile frigid Joan beside him, urging the driver to go faster and faster, while Faith stood gasping in the doorway of her house.

When the original nightmare, dragging an excited driver and two young people to all appearances out of their minds, turned out of Via Georgiana on

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one wheel, into and around the corner of Capo le Cave, Faith went inside, put on her hat and walked to Piazza Barberini.

At the Bristol she found Michael as ill as Donald had said and the doctor frantic because the sick man could not be left alone, and there was apparently no hope of getting a nurse. When Faith told him what had been done, he wrung her hand in gratitude.

“I know Signora del Monte well. She is one of the most reliable nurses at Santo Spirito, where I am consulting physician. We lost her when the epidemic broke out, but unless we had lost her there we might not have found her at the Celio, so it turns out well for the friend of Mrs. Desmond. Is it not so?”

Meanwhile the few square inches of carriage on its way at top speed to San Stephano Rotondo, became to Donald and Joan the core and centre of the Universe. By the time they had reached the Foro Romano, Incubo perforce was obliged to stop and get her breath. She was no longer as young as when she first entered the service of the yellowing house on the Pincio.

Suddenly after a volume of nervous chatter Joan realized she had come to the end of all she had to say. Donald, stifling a mad impulse to burst into uncontrollable laughter, finally spoke:

“It’s awfully good of you to take so much trouble.”

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"It's for him, Uncle Michael. I don't know if you know or not, but I've treated him outrageously. Must make some kind of amends, now."

"He doesn't feel that."

"I do. And I've not been so awfully nice to you, either. Please forgive me." It was the Joan he had known, speaking seriously. All nervous desire to laugh left him.

"There was a great deal about it that was stupid," said Donald.

"There was far more that was noble."

"I know. You would see that. She really was, Romilda, magnificent. She had adored Raphaello. I was in it from the start. I've never seen greater disinterestedness."

Up started Incubo, breathing easily now, but with accustomed gait. No amount of coaxing could force her to increase her speed. Whether or no a psychological process had taken place between the mind of beast and man is uncertain, but somehow with Incubo's leisurely procedure, the exaggerated need of haste had passed. Joan and Donald smiled at each other and down at Incubo, then Joan asked:

"How were you so much—in it?"

"At Oxford. He was among the Romans who came. That was why he went in with the British when he did. He was in love with her even then. No other man had any chance. If you had known him as he was you would have seen why."

"What was the trouble with their families?"

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“An ancient feud. Those things do exist, I believe, even today—in Italy. The del Monte’s had no hearts. They loved themselves and their own will. Raphaello was different. He only loved Romilda.”

Now they were jogging past the Coliseum.

“Have you ever thought of the stories *they* could tell? The bricks, and stones?”

“Indeed, I have. Rome’s always been the same, hasn’t it? What a chance they had!”

“Who had? When?”

“The early Christians. I always think of them when I pass the Coliseum. *There* was love, sacrifice, devotion. Romans may be the same, but today is pretty tame.”

“It really isn’t, you know.” Tame? Nothing could be tame, thought Donald, not with Joan at his side.

“Oh, but it is, all unadventuresome.”

“I wonder. Here’s Crighton, come to do a great work, carrying out of ancient Rome a gift to new America. He’s stricken powerless at the outset. Then you, you whose life has been quicksilver, inspiration and achievement, with a spirit that has dreamed its way through an uplifting philosophy to reality! What do you do for him? You rush off to find help for him, and the help you find is a woman made of the same stuff as the early Christian martyrs. Oh, no! Life’s not unadventuresome.”

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“You’ve left yourself out of the story.” There was a teasing look in Joan’s eyes as she said it.

“Have I? Let me tell you where I come in.” Then Joan in a panic went back to her argument for fear of what his “coming in” might mean.

“P’raps not as much unadventuresome as made to order. I’ve been thinking of Graziella’s affair, and Tacconata, and how she got to be a duchess just because she knew if she waited long enough she would catch him on the rebound. Ugh! It hurts.”

Slowly into Via Claudia and close to Monte Celio and San Stephano Rotondo, too close for Donald and Joan who would not have cared had Incubo come again to a dead halt.

“It *would* hurt. But you—are of different fibre. I hope I am, too. Our Rome is full of Graziellas, you know.”

When all too soon they drew up at the door of the hospital, Romilda, uniform covered over with an all-enveloping blue cape, was waiting. Before Donald had time to jump down from the hesitating cab, she had run out to meet them. Then through intricate and winding ways known only to the driver, they made their way back, Joan chattering all the time. If Romilda smiled within herself, knowing how it was with these two, they never even suspected.

“What a varied existence you are leading, Donald,” she said when Joan stopped to breathe. “It’s

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not what you expected to find when you came back to Rome at first, is it?"

"Joan has been trying to persuade me life has no adventure in comparison with the thrill of early Christian days."

"Only watch the weaving, Joan, watch carefully and you'll see for yourself."

"The weaving?"

"Warp and woof; life in the making, in the living, the eternal fitting in of experience. Oh, when you begin to see the working of the Infinite, even an ordinary every-day existence becomes so full of charm one wonders why one never saw before."

Romilda's eyes seemed to catch fire at the thought, and beneath the covering cloak she clasped her two hands over a heart that had known heights and depths.

"How *can* you see it?"

"Go back over the years. It grows very clear if you can remember."

Donald held his peace. They were perilously near the shoal. Had it been anyone but Romilda, he would have steered both to another channel, but Romilda knew. That made a difference.

"I chased a will-o'-the-wisp. What then?" Joan asked.

"Where did it lead?"

"Into impossibility."

"What happened?"

"Why, you know what happened."

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"I'm showing you the warp. We're just following the thread."

"Disillusion then, and heartbreak."

"Rebellion?"

"Not at first. There was just emptiness at first."

"Then entered the seven devils."

"I see what you mean. Rebellion did come then."

"Rebellion and your first glimpse of the duskier side of human existence."

"I wouldn't have seen it if I hadn't been desperate."

"Certainly not, and that was what caused the reaction. But out of it all came understanding—and vision. One of the 'things that seemed not good, yet turned to good.' "

"Mother would have said that. All the unhappiness died, every bit. Uncle Michael knew what the weaving meant. All I want now is for him to get well so that I can tell him something."

"If I am to nurse him I'll have a hand in getting him well."

"I think I'd like him to know the will-o'-the-wisp he raised up for me out of dreams was part of his candlestick-making."

"Will I tell him that?"

"Yes. He will understand. He's like you in that. He understands everything."

But there was someone else who knew the story and who understood. If Donald's gaze were fixed intently on the changing guard at the Quirinal gate

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just that moment, it was because he could have told Joan why she blushed. He could have told her too, that his own heart beat in time with hers and that Michael's dream had come true at last.

"Long ago," Romilda went on, "I learned to watch the weaving. It made everything easier. It's rather beautiful to realize as you go along doing what seem to be ordinary things, that all the while God's hand is guiding. To see His love at every step, to watch His very fatherliness, to bear one's little portion of His cross, knowing that He bore it first for us, being able to thank Him for suffering as well as for happiness, to visualize the unfolding of His plan as one's own life goes on, oh, that's the adventure that sweeps you ahead full of hope and fuller still of confidence. You'll see. Just wait—and watch."

"I've begun to see already," said Joan, but Donald answered the look in Romilda's eyes rather than her words:

"It began the day I stood on Michael Crichton's steps, and you stood with the dead parrot in your arms."

Then Romilda cried:

"Please, children, please—here we are. You shall finish the discussion afterwards—alone!"

Faith was waiting for them in the hall. "Thank God you've come. He seems to wander at times. The doctor is with him now. You had better come up at once."

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"May I go, Mummie?"

"Whatever the nurse says. It's Romilda's case now, precious."

"I think she might. He would want to know she had been among the first. Only for a moment, though, dear."

"I'll be good."

But it was hard to be good when she saw him lying helpless, Uncle Michael, the embodiment of strength. She wanted to throw herself on her knees beside him, tell him she was sorry for the years of misunderstanding, sorry for the curt, cruel letters she had written at first, and then for no letters at all, though he had written faithfully. She wanted to thank him for the dreams he'd put into her life, for the care he had had of her childish heart. She wanted to tell him he had been right, after all, that now she knew—but she could only look down with streaming eyes and a choking throb in her throat.

Finally she asked the doctor.

"May I hold his hand?"

The doctor nodded. She knelt and took his hand in hers, the hand that after all had done so much to make her what she was. Then Michael opened his eyes.

"Joan, thank God!" And Joan in her eager way, forgetting all the bitterness that had been, held his dear hand close to her cheek and said:

"You'll get well now, Uncle Michael, you *must*

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get well, for Donald and I have brought her to take care of you."

"Brought who?"

"Why, Romilda, of course."

"Nonsense, dear, you know she never was."

"Oh, but she is. Here," and she pulled Romilda closer so that Michael could see for himself. The veil of unreality that had bothered him, fell once more about him.

"I suppose Raphael insisted on your coming. I've noticed that sooner or later, if one is only patient, dreams do come true. But there's one thing needed. They've got to be dreamed in the crucible that's a—the crucible that's a—I can't find the word——"

"Don't bother to look for it, Mr. Crighton. You mean chalice."

Joan had risen and was crying on her mother's shoulder, but Romilda, whose place was with the sick, had knelt beside him.

"Of course I do. All dreams come true if only —they—are—dreamed in the—crucible that's—a—chalice——" echoed Michael.

Then he fell into a sound and dreamless sleep.

CHAPTER XXXIII

WHEN ALL THE CANDLES ARE LIGHTED

“TOKIO, All Saints Day, 19—

“JOAN MY JOAN:

“What do you think? Oh, what do you think? The Lady Diana has come! I can hardly believe it even yet. She is here, and Sir Lawrence and a very little Larry and a tiny one too little for a name, called Mary, just that, Mary. Why have they come? That’s the most wonderful part of all. Let me tell you in my own way, for there is so much—so much. I’m certain some of our letters have been lost, for in your last one you refer to things of which I’ve never heard and ask me questions about much of which I had already written. Pray God this one will reach you, though truly you are never far away. You see, I carry you in my heart, such a happy, happy heart.

“Happy as mine, Donald?”

“Happy indeed if it’s half as happy as ours, Joan.”

“Shall I read on?”

“All of it. It’s Passiflore’s self.”

“Our rule of holy poverty will *never* allow me enough paper to tell you all there is. I know what I’ll do. I will make an act of humility and ask the treasurer for more. They never refuse me anything, the angels! I’d like to begin with the coming of Lady Diana, but must go further back, all the way to my *prise d’habit*, for I *have* the dear habit, all white, from head to foot, for the Beloved. You’d

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not know Passy now, so I send you a little picture taken by one of the children. I call it the carpenter-shop. *You* know for what. Studio is too grand a name for Mother Veronica's workroom. I'm teaching the little Japanese how to carpenter sculptings for the houses of the Master.

"Oh, Donald, see them, hundreds of little children, hundreds! See Passy in the White Nun's habit. What a lode-star to her own race she is being!

"In this one school we have five hundred children and teach them everything that would be useful in their lives; reading, writing, history, our Christian catechism, and the rest. Where we find special talents we cultivate them. The little ones must have the best, for they are the future of our race. Designing and sculpting are my part of the work. How they love it! We teach fine arts and applied arts, every branch of music, and countless practical subjects, sewing, embroidering, lace-making, book-binding, even boot-making! The children must all eventually help support themselves. Where they have no special talents we teach them trades, just as we do in our houses abroad.

"Donald, think of it! This very Passy who writes was one of the unwanted children, one of the unbidden!"

"Thank God for such women as her mother, sweetheart. What else does she say?"

"If I had consented to do the Sakya-Muni, my work would have ended there. Now I am training these hundreds to achieve what I hope will be greater work than Passy could have done. They will keep it up through future generations—so it will be endless and increased a hundredfold.

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We do everything for love. You know about our leper colonies? We have entire charge of them in Japan, Madagascar, Molokai, China—wherever the afflicted ones may be. I think because the service is one of love, they are happiest with us. The rest of the world flies, terrified, from them. Our seraphic Saint Francis took them to his heart. Can we do less? Some day I'll tell you about our Indian Missions. *That's* worth telling. But too long now. We try to instill in the hearts of our children the great lessons of love for God, love for each other. Oh, my Joan, if this first principle of the Church could sink as deeply into the soul of the world as we try to implant it in the hearts of our little ones, there would be far less 'war and rumors of war.'

"The message of 'peace on earth, good will to men,' would be a living, vibrant thing if only love were fully understood!

"When Lady Diana saw how happy my life has become, she cried for joy. She knew how I had been downed by the intolerant world, hiding my poor self in the daytime, how I never dared romp or play or sing because other children, sometimes grown-up children, mocked and made fun of me, and ran away for fear of me.

"Here inside my cloister walls I am as free as an eagle. My fields and flowers welcome me, and I laugh and romp and run about with these sweet little souls who feel that because I play with them, I am one of them. So many of us sing the praises of our Lord together that the harshness of my tone is lost in the volume of sound rising up to Heaven. Indeed, I sometimes think the lowly notes must filter through God's incensed air in such a way that when they touch high Paradise they are made clear. Perhaps because we know they are not beautiful, our very will to praise God makes them beautiful. Who can tell?

"For a long time there had been great stirring in an open field belonging to our convent. Workmen came and went and dug an enormous foundation, and walls rose up, and

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the sound of hammers sang the whole week through. I asked Mother Superior what it was, and she told me to have patience, I would see. So I asked no one else; and, indeed, I doubt if any one else knew. Then a week ago, she sent for me.

“ ‘Some one has come to see you,’ she said. I supposed it was my mother, for she and father had been in Kobe since the *prise d’habit*. But she said no, it was not my mother. ‘Perhaps it’s the architect of the new building,’ she laughed. Then I thought probably they wanted me to model a motif for the decoration. She led me to the long drawing-room. I looked about and could hardly believe my eyes. There, just as I had seen her so often before in Rome, holding out her arms to me, was Lady Diana. When I could speak at last, I said: ‘Mother told me it might be the architect for the new building, but I see now she was only teasing.’

“ ‘She wasn’t teasing, Passy.’

“ ‘No? Where is he, then?’

“ ‘Waiting for me to see you alone!’

“ ‘Not—Sir Lawrence?’

“ ‘She laughed, with tears in her eyes. ‘It’s my act of thanksgiving,’ said Lady Diana. I suppose I looked so bewildered that she had to explain.

“ ‘In Paris, out in the Bois, we have our little château, such a lovely one. And our children will grow up there, with everything Larry and I can possibly give them. But Passy darling, God has given us so much more than we had ever dreamed of having, in each other and in them, and in you, too oh my darling, and your beautiful vocation that I sought for a way of saying “thank you.” I prayed for light to see what would be most acceptable to Him. Then I saw. In Passiflore’s name, close to the convent where she lives and works, I will build a house for the care, education, and happiness of Japan’s afflicted children. It is to be big enough to shelter hundreds of them. No matter how imperfect the little bodies or minds, they are to be cared for and taught

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to be useful where it is possible, but happy, in every case. They will be in charge of your own White Nuns, dear heart, and it is to be called for *you* "Veronica's House." Oh, it's a great many things, my darling. It is reparation, atonement, gratitude, consecration. God understands all the things it is, and He will bless it, that I know.'

"The next day she brought the little ones, Larry and Mary, and I played with them for hours, and our children danced with joy to see them. Sir Lawrence consults me about the new building, and I am to do a Saint Michael the Archangel for it! And my babies carry the clay and think they are helping me. Some of them begged to do the clouds about Saint Michael's feet. I let them do it, the lambs, then when they are sound asleep I do their work all over, and they are none the wiser.

"A little later they will go to Kobe to my mother and father. Mother wants to show Lady Diana the gardens. You know my grandfather lived long enough to forgive her and take her to his heart. He did not forgive my father—but father knows as well as mother and I, that God understands. If one has an unforgiving nature and not the grace to conquer it, he can't be all to blame, can he? There are a great many things to be explained in Heaven.

"They told me the news in detail about your Uncle Michael and our sweet Signora del Monte. The spring of both their lives had been so steeped in tears, and all the while our Master had been leading them out of the Valley of the Shadow into summer sunshine. The description of their quiet wedding on the feast of the Assumption thrilled my very soul. Wasn't it good of the Trinitá to let them be married in Mater's chapel? I cried for joy. But I believe our Master will never do less for those of His children who wait in perfect submission His divine decree. It came to you, my Joan, to your Donald, too, and—in another way, to me.

"Tell me about yourselves, all there is to tell. Meanwhile the blue arch of Heaven is the roof that shelters all of us,

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you and yours, mine and me, so there can be no distances that separate in any way at all. God keep you safe and bless you. My dearest love to both.

“PASSIFLORE.”

Enthroned on the half-buried marble bench that had passed out of the possession of Sardinian kings to be chair of state for later Lancelotti, Joan read and re-read the letter. And while she read, Donald lay at her feet watching the play of soft grasses that made a carpet all about them, watching the fling of spindrift out of the Aldobrandini cascades to the ilexes above and the tall poplars far below the terraced fountain, watching her face set like a jewel in the glory of rainbow light.

“What will you tell her about us, sweetheart?”

“About us, Donald?”

“Yes.”

While they spoke, the sparkling waters at their side sang a merry cadence, and a thrush-song sweet and vibrant rose to answer the crystal fountain as it went leaping down the hill-side.

“I’ll tell her that her happiness is ours, too.”

“You’ve got a joyous soul.”

“Haven’t I reason to have?”

“Really? I’ve a mighty prototype to live up to, you know.” He looked up at her with the whimsical light she loved so dearly dancing in his eyes.

“Uncle Michael, you mean, Donald?”

“Not exactly. Closely related to him——”

“Oh, that! He never was. You are.”

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“His ghost has kept close to my heels—often and often.”

“Silly goose! Haven’t you learned yet that all the dreams of my life were only shadowings of you, just shadowings, Donald?”

“All the same, I’d like to lay the ghost. Joan, let’s bury him.”

A handful of tiny twigs, a leaf for a boat, for a shroud a rose.

Down the waterfall it sprang and scattered, while Donald and Joan watched breathless to the end.

“Like a Viking to the sea, so goes Raphael!”

“Viking to the sea,” echoed Donald. Then a laughing Joan clung to his arm, and looking up asked him:

“What other news will I give Passiflore?”

“You’ll tell her that the little yellow house is our very own? That candlestick-making goes on in her corner of the studio while Joan paints a portrait of the candlestick maker, from hers?”

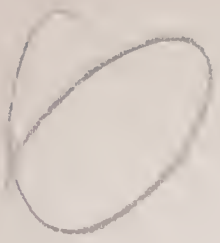
“I’ll tell her all about it. What else?”

“That even old Rome has become a magic city because of the new love that dwells on the Pincian Hill?”

“I will tell her that too, Donald, my Donald.”

“Why, Joan, dear, what is it? What else is there to tell? Is there some secret I haven’t guessed?”

“Oh, Beloved, Beloved, a secret that sends my heart dancing with the fountains! Donald, Donald, *his eyes will shine like stars!*”



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