

"The drunk and impassioned Farnam, his worst suspicions apparently proven, saw a woman whom he thought was Esther, engaged in the domestic task of fixing dinner for the man whom he most hated. Believe me when I say that men have committed murder for less.

"The rest is simple. He crossed the grounds, blinded with the murder lust; he flung open the screen door. The ice-pick was handy on the table. He seized it and struck—struck to kill—thinking that he was killing Esther Devarney."

"And then he saw his mistake. He sobered on the instant. He grabbed the screen door, injured his forehead. He ran from the Lodge. He went home."

Carroll finished speaking. There was an oppressive silence in the room. A silence broken only by the laboured breathing of Mart Farnam. And it was Mart Farnam who spoke; terror of the future in his whining voice—

"I didn't go for to kill her. . . . I didn't go for to kill her. . . ."

Carroll rose. He looked drawn and tired.

"I'd be obliged, Sheriff, if you'd turn Stanford Forrest out. He's suffered a good deal. . . ."