

ing fast. He knew not how it was that people so readily believed him in the wrong. In Wick, too, he had been troubled with Sandy Beg, and a kind of nameless dread possessed him about the man; he could not get rid of it, even after he had heard that Sandy had sailed in a whaling ship for the Arctic Seas.

Thus things went on until the end of July. John was engaged now until the steamer stopped running in September, and the little sum of ready money necessary for the winter's comfort was assured. Christine sat singing and knitting, or singing and braiding straw, and Dame Alison went up and down her cottage with a glad heart. They knew little of John's anxieties. Christine had listened sympathizingly to his trouble about Margaret, and said, "Thou wait an' trust, John dear, an' at the end a' things will be well." Even Ragon's ill-will and Peter's ill words had not greatly frightened them—"The wrath o' man shall praise Him," read old Alison, with just a touch of spiritual satisfaction, "an' the rest o' the wrath he will restrain."

It was a Saturday night in the beginning of August, and John was at home until the following Monday. He dressed himself and went out towards Brogar, and Christine watched him far over the western moor, and blessed him as he went. He had not seen Margaret for many days, but he had a feeling to-night that she would be able to keep her tryst. And there, standing amid the rushes on the lakeside, he found her. They had so much to say to each other that Margaret forgot her father's return, and delayed so long that she thought it best to go straight home, instead of walking down the beach to meet him.

He generally left Stromness about half-past eight, and his supper was laid for nine o'clock. But this night nine passed, and he did not come; and though the delay could be accounted for in various ways, she had a dim but anxious forecasting of calamity in her heart. The atmosphere of the little parlour grew sorrowful and heavy, the lamp did not seem to light it, her father's chair had a deserted, lonely aspect, the house was strangely silent; in fifteen minutes she had forgotten how happy she had been, and wandered to and from the door like some soul in an uneasy dream.

All at once she heard the far-away shouting of angry and alarmed voices, and to her sensitive ears her lover's and her father's names were mingled. It was her nature to act slowly; for a few moments she could not decide what was to be done. The first thought was the servants. There were only two, Hacon Plett and Gerda Vedder. Gerda had gone to bed, Hacon was not on the place. As she gathered her energies together she began to walk rapid over the springy heath towards the white sands of the beach. Her father, if he was coming, would come that way. She was angry with herself for the *if*. Of course he was coming. What was there to prevent it? She told herself, Nothing, and the next moment looked up and saw two men coming towards her, and in their arms a figure which she knew instinctly was her father's.