

“LET THE ROOF FALL IN”

She had not thought there was so much happiness in the world as to stand here, with his arms about her, and know that his heart was beating as fast as hers, here against her own. It wasn't November at all, and no rain was beginning to come down. It must be spring, with the birds singing, she heard them; it wasn't anything else at all she heard.

Neither Derry nor she heeded the gaping, curious little crowd that gathered, open-eyed and wondering, about them where they stood, and presently began to throw sentences to each other, and exclamations. But the Irish peasant has an extraordinary tact; the people seemed to melt away, to dissolve in the rain and mist which Rosaleen never saw at all, but which was there all the time.

“How did you think of finding me here?”

“How could you leave me?”

But feeling came too quick for query, it was hot in Derry's lips, and in the arms he was holding round her, it was deep in Rosaleen's eyes, and at last he could read what was in them.

“How could you do it?”

“But I was between you and Ranmore.”

“If it was between me and Paradise you'd stood, wouldn't I have given up Paradise?”

And she had never known that he cared for her, only that he had married her out of pity! Now she let happiness surge over her like a warm wind, scented with flowers, a wind that excited her pulses, flushed her eyes and cheeks, took away her breath, intoxicated her.

“It's yourself that was caring for me all the time?”

“But what have you been thinking?”

“I thought . . .”

And then he caught her to him again, and she was too close for thinking.