

heralded by a humble army of paper-boys and milk-men. The policeman whom she had watched overnight, or a substitute no less impassive, stood motionless at the corner of the road; and, as her eyes turned in search of the restless prowler of the night before, she started back and watched from behind the curtain the figure of a man crossing the road to the door below her. Though his head was bent, she could never mistake the carriage of his body; and, as he paused to address the girl on the steps, Gloria caught sight of his haggard face and blue, unshaven chin.

Hurrying downstairs, she reached the hall as the door closed behind Norman's back.

"Oh, here's her ladyship!" exclaimed the maid in breathless surprise.

"Norman! What are you doing at *this* unearthly hour?"

"I must apologize for coming like this . . ."

As the three voices met in high, simultaneous conflict, Gloria beckoned him to the study and closed the door behind him:

"You must excuse my appearance. I wasn't expecting any one so early. I find the morning's such a wonderful opportunity for getting through odd jobs . . . before the letters . . . and when no one thinks of telephoning."

"I came to see Freddie," Norman interrupted.

The rasping menace in his voice told her more than an hour's questioning would have elicited.

"But he's gone, I'm afraid," she answered with a speed that amazed her. "He has a board-meeting in Birmingham this morning and he went off last night by car, as soon as you'd all gone."

"When will he be back?"

"He couldn't say for certain."

Thrown out of his stride by the announcement that Freddie was no longer in the house, Norman stood dazed and helpless.

"Gone? . . ." he muttered.

"Sit down and tell me what's happened," Gloria counseled as soon as she was satisfied that her story would rest unchallenged.

"I came to have a settlement with him," said Norman between his teeth. "That letter . . . It was true, Gloria."

His restless eyes met hers for a moment before sweeping the room in a wild, dumb invitation of denial. Spared the necessity of expressing surprise or horror, Gloria buried her face in her hands and waited for him to tell her more.

"It can't be true, Norman," she whispered, as the silence lengthened.