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Half an hour later Oliver and Burton were walking out together, and Burton had sent a message to his sister that he would not be home that night.

Lethington went back to the grind of his daily duties in a far from pleasant frame of mind. He had made a mess of it, he told himself, disgustedly, and a warm irritation came over him as he remembered the taunt the spoiled boy had flung at him, a thing he would never have expected of Ted.

Although a little older than most of those who flocked to the Burton house, Lethington had been a frequent visitor there, and had begun to look on these as the sweetest hours that he spent, and to build dream castles in which Leila always moved beside him like a radiant presence. He had watched her unfolding like a flower, passing from childhood to the delicate bloom of early womanhood, and awoke one day to the knowledge that for him she was The One Woman. Then the crash had come, he had gone away with his father, and the dream castles had fallen into dusty ruins. He would not, he could not ask her to marry him now. Now that he had come back, quite penniless, to work out his own way to success, he still went quite frequently to see her, but it was with a difference. He was no longer an eager suitor, meeting her on her own ground and well ahead of all rivals; he was a friend, a brother, a kind adviser—for the Burton home was shadowed by its own bereavement now—and he put the old visions behind him, telling himself sternly that he was getting too old a fellow for a girl like Leila, and was a pauper beside, who should be glad of the sweetness of her friendship, without reaching out for more.

There were those, to be sure, who said that any girl should be glad to get a man like Tom Lethington, rich or poor, and there were others who snappily retorted that Tom Lethington's virtues were only exceeded by his pride, and that if Leila Burton expected to marry him now she would have to do the proposing herself. Meanwhile, quite oblivious of the gossips, Lethington told himself that he was her friend, only her friend. That was why he had tried to check the headstrong folly of this brother of hers, whom she idolized. Nevertheless, that grating insult still rankled.

He came out of a brown study to note that a carriage was drawing close to the curb beside him, and a girl dressed in black, with auburn hair and a face of the bright freshness of dawn, was holding out her hand to him.

"Good-morning, Mr. Lethington. I was beginning to fear I was going to be overlooked entirely. A penny for your thoughts."

"Not worth it!" Lethington held the firm little hand for a moment. "What good fairy brought you here? You don't often favor this part of town."

"I came to capture your sister and take her home with me for a week's visit, but she is quite sure your Lordship cannot spare her. Who would have thought you such a domestic tyrant?"

She smiled at him challengingly, but there was a half quiver behind the smile, an abstracted sadness that he had noticed several times of late, and had laid wrathfully at the door of that graceless brother.

"I wish Nina would desert me now and then," he said, quickly. "She is a dear little housekeeper, but I fear she is overdoing it. I shall have to use my elder-brotherly authority."

She remembered his old reputation of being the most obliging and generous of brothers, making Nina Lethington envious of all her friends, whose own brothers, good enough in their way, were still too occupied with horses and sports and other girls to bestow more than the most casual attentions on their sisters. It reminded her of something very close to her own heart, and with a quick resolution she made place for him beside her.

"Won't you drive on with me? There is something I want to ask of you. I know you are busy, but we can drive toward your office."

Lethington stepped in, and the carriage with its daintily stepping horses turned and went smoothly down the

street. It was the old feeling of ease, the natural, unostentatious luxury which had always seemed his own by right, but which was now denied him. He had no complaints to make, but he made a silent promise to his own ambition that in ten years he would have horses of his own again, and then, perhaps—but that would take a long time, and meanwhile some man worthier to claim this prize would win her away from him.

It was several minutes before Leila spoke, and then the words came slowly. - "You have been such a good friend, Mr. Lethington, that I think you will understand why I speak to you about a matter which one usually prefers to keep very closely within one's own family. It is about my brother."

She paused, coloring, and looked at him. Lethington felt it would be false kindness to attempt to palliate the truth.

"Yes, I know," he said, and a little sigh struggled in her throat at this confirmation of her fears, making him suddenly desire to thrash the headstrong boy who was causing them.

"You know then, you understand!" she said, quickly. "Everybody knows, perhaps, and that makes it so hard to shield him. Mr. Lethington, something is wrong with Ted, and it must be stopped. I have done my best to influence him, and have failed. He needs a man's strength now. You know what a dear fellow he was before this Mr. Oliver came. It frightens me to see the difference, to think what he is getting to be. He is home so seldom now, sometimes he is hard and flippant and reckless, and again he is haggard and silent, and all the while it is money, money, as fast as he can get it. He isn't vicious, he is not lost—there is hope yet to make a splendid man of Ted, but it must be done soon. You know him, Mr. Lethington. He likes you, he respects you. Will you save Ted for me?"

It was an eager, impassioned plea that she made to him, her fear and excitement carrying her far beyond what she had meant to say, and she looked half frightened when she stopped. It gave him an odd stricture about the throat, and the knowledge that she scarcely knew what she was asking him did not make it easier. A few seconds of silence followed, while the carriage drew up before the office building where Lethington was trying to build a new structure over the ruins of his fortune. He held out his hand to her.

"I am wholly at your service. So far as it is in the power of one man to influence another, I will work to save Ted for you."

She could not realize the sacrifice it meant, the time it would take from the work which meant so much to him, the difficulties in the way, now that he was no longer able to cope financially with the men Ted knew, or to be at the places where Ted was likely to be found. She only knew that he seemed a monument of strength to her, a sure refuge in every trouble, but to himself he seemed a very human man, very far from the success he craved and very close to the black shadow of discouragement, a man whose pulses jumped rebelliously at the warm touch of her fingers.

As he left her he wondered how he was to accomplish the task he had undertaken, and all day long the problem came between him and his work, but there was a persistent ray of sunshine through the cloud. Leila had asked him to do this, of all her friends, because there was none other to whom she could tell this intimate thing. She had turned to him for help, and she should not find him wanting.

When he went home, late that afternoon, to the tiny, cramped apartment which had succeeded the spacious home he and Nina had always known, it struck him with sudden alarm that his sister was looking white and tired. She was so much younger than he—scarcely twenty—that it was hard for him to realize that "Babe" had grown to womanhood.

"Well, little girl," he said, affectionately, "do you know what I am going to do with you? I am going to pack you off for a vacation. I met Miss Burton this morning, and she says she wants you, for a while. If you don't