

whole truth he pictured the flood, the death of True Blue, and the overwhelming by the waters before his very eyes of Margarita and the Man. Then he arose and with hands braced on the table leaned towards Alix. "I have told you all this so that perhaps you may understand what I am going to tell you now. If the flood had not come — if Margarita and the Man had lived — I would not have come back."

Alix sat very still and studied Gerry's face. He had finished the task he had set himself to do and he was suddenly very tired. His eyes dropped as though from their own weight and then he raised them again to her inscrutable face.

"Well?" he asked after a long pause.

"Well?" replied Alix.

Gerry's stalwart figure drooped. "It is quite just," he said, "after all that, that you should not want me. I have spent the last weeks making myself ready for that. You waited for me; I didn't wait for you. If you do not want me, I will go away."

Alix rose slowly to her feet. She looked very slim and tall in her clinging gown. To Gerry she looked very cold. "Before you go," she said, "there is just one thing. I wish you would kiss me — once."

Gerry's body straightened and stiffened. He stared at her grave face with wondering eyes. Then he felt a strange tingling ripple through his blood and before he knew what he did he had swept her from her feet, crushed her to him, brushed the crown of hair back from her brow and kissed her eyes, her mouth, her throat. He was rough with her. He was bruising her body,