

PRELUDE

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grey eyes, a little tragic figure, ineffably pitiful. Where are you now, little one? I have searched the world for you. I have scanned a million faces. Day and night have I sought, always hoping, always baffled, for, God help me, dear, I love you. Among that mad, lusting horde you were so weak, so helpless, yet so hungry for love.

With the aid of my crutch I unlatch one of the long windows, and step out onto the terrace. From the cavernous dark the snowflakes sting my face. Yet as I stand there, once more I have a sense of another land, of imperious vastitudes, of a silent empire, unfathomably lonely.

Ghosts! They are all around me. The darkness teems with them, Garry, my brother, among them. Then they all fade and give way to one face. . . .

Berna, I love you always. Out of the night I cry to you, Berna, the cry of a broken heart. Is it your little, pitiful ghost that comes down to me? Oh, I am waiting, waiting! Here will I wait, Berna, till we meet once more. For meet we will, beyond the mists, beyond the dreaming, at last, dear love, at last.