

Nan suddenly threw her arms around his neck and held him convulsively.

"My darling, you can't leave me! I'm pleading for life! Had I been the shallow, soulless creature which you believe surely I might have been content with my gilded toys. But I was not. I was just a woman with a heart that could break. Suppose I have committed a crime? I dared it for love — a love so great, so wonderful, that I, who am weak and timid, afraid to be alone in the dark, faced death and hell for you."

"No, dear, I offered you my life and love, at least without the stain of crime. I offered to go with you to the ends of the earth. You didn't do this thing for love."

He slowly drew the rounded arms from his neck, and looked long and tenderly into the depths of her eyes.

The pleading voice ceased. The woman saw and understood. She had at last passed out of his world. Only the memory of a girl he had once loved and idealized remained, and that memory was now unapproachable. The living woman was no longer the figure in the mental picture. The struggle was over.

He extended his hand, clasped hers, bowed and kissed it, turned and walked quickly toward the door.

With a half smothered cry she followed.

"Jim!"

He paused and turned again, facing her with a look of infinite sadness.

"Remember," she said brokenly, "I never expect to see you again — we can not meet after this. I am looking into your dear face now with the anguish of a broken heart strangling me. You can not leave like this, we have been too much to each other."

He took her in his arms and held her close.