

And that death was very near now to Henry Kempton was plain for all to see. His shadow lay on the sharpened features, the great hopeless eyes saw him, and seeing, gazed back unflinching, no fear, but dreary welcome in their depths.

Violet saw him too, felt at her heart the chill of his presence, and for a moment terror gripped her, her brain reeled. But then, remembering, she rallied, her eyes flung back the phantom's challenge, and with every faculty braced and ready for battle she moved forward.

A nurse seated by the bedside, fanning the still figure, rose at her approach, Violet taking the place she had left.

"You can leave us," she said. "Lie down, if you like. I will call you if necessary."

The woman hesitated, her eyes fixed on Henry's face.

"I think perhaps, your ladyship," she began, "Sir James might not . . . His orders, you know, are very . . ."

"I'm here by Sir James's wish. He's outside; ask him, if you like, but please go," and the nurse, with one last quick glance at Henry's face, went.

"Henry dear, I've come to say something to you."

The closed eyes opened with a startled look. He stirred uneasily.

"What is it?" he murmured.

"I have been talking to Sir James, dear, and he says that you could get well if you tried, but that you won't try. Is that true, Henry?"

"No, no. Oh, Violet, be kind as you always have been and let me die in peace."

"Henry, why won't you fight? Is there something on your mind, dear? If so, won't you tell it to me?"

"There's nothing . . . nothing at all. I . . ."

"Supposing I know what it is, supposing I know all about . . . Ruth? But it makes no difference; it makes no difference. Do you hear, Henry? Oh, my God, what have I done?" For Henry was sitting up, with a scarlet