

CHAPTER III

JUDY came down the stair.

Always, as now, she laid her hand on the rail with a funny faintness, imagining, living in that adventure; lifted it to the pearls at her neck and smiled a little smile, all to herself.

There were several men in the hall below, standing about the big fire, talking loudly. She saw their faces beneath as she paused far above them, and their gossip came up to her. It was for the most part jargon, but mixed occasionally with names that were known to her. There had been a wind-frost last night, sharp enough to make men chary of risking their best horses, and everybody had left off early.

"Anybody seen Lauder?" Burkinshaw was inquiring, stirring his tea and dropping in lump after lump while his wife's back was turned and he could seize on sugar instead of his allotted globule of saccharin.