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**At the Mouth of the Treacherous Pit**  
 STORY OF LOVE, INTRIGUE AND REVENGE

CHAPTER XX.

"But, Frodsham," cried his mistress, with tears in her eyes, "he would not be detained I am sure. He would be so anxious. He would know my alarm. After promising to return at half-past nine, he would never have stayed out until eleven."

All the nervous forebodings of the past few weeks returned to her, and she trembled like a leaf.

"I will walk just a little way into the park myself," she said.

"But not alone, my lady. I will follow you."

The picturesque mansion, with its long terraces and magnificent gardens, lay bathed in silvery light. In the ivy near one of the towers an owl had made its home; and its hooting was the one sound that broke the silence of the night. The deep shadows cast by the trees and the melancholy cry of the owl made Lady Allamore feel strangely depressed. She dared not walk far; innumerable shadows seemed to fall over her. Once she raised her soft voice and cried, "Karl," but no answer came.

"Sir Karl is nowhere in the park, my lady," said the old servant, at last. "It will be better for you to come back to the Hall; and, if you still feel anxious, I will call some of the men, and they can go in different directions to look for him."

She gasped, at the suggestion; and the butler gave a great sigh of relief when he left her to the care of Mrs. Pickering.

"Persuade her to lie down," he said in a low voice, "she will wear herself out; he may not be home for hours yet. I know what masters are! If every lady made as much fuss if her husband was not home by eleven, I do not know what servants would do."

Dolores followed the housekeeper's advice. She lay down and tried to compose herself, tried to believe that there was nothing wrong; but she sprang up with a sudden cry of alarm when she heard the clock strike one.

"Call Frodsham!" she cried. "He must send all the servants out. Oh, how can they sleep when their master is perhaps in danger? They must not delay any longer."

vions evening, intending to return at half-past nine, but nothing had been heard of him since. The men were all there, including James Ashford, the groom who had driven the Squire home. Dolores, whose wife was sharpened by suspense, felt sure she saw an expression of surprise pass over this man's face.

"James," she cried—"James Ashford, do you know where Sir Karl went?"

The groom's face flushed hotly as he answered—

"No, my lady," but to himself he muttered, "I shall have to tell."

No precise directions could be given to the men. Some went one way and some another. The rumor spread quickly in the house that something was amiss, and one by one the woman-servants came down. Dolores, persuaded by her maid, went up to her own room and lay down.

"It will be all right now," the woman told her. "The men will be sure to come back with good news."

Notwithstanding her distress, she fell asleep; and that one hour sleep made the awakening more terrible still. She dreamed that he came back, that she heard his hurried footsteps up the stairs; that the door opened and he entered, with the same bright, loving look on his handsome face. He went up to her, took her in his arms, and said, "My darling, have I frightened you? I am so sorry. I have been at White Cliff. Your father was not well, and I stayed with him. My sweet Dolores, how pale you are, how you tremble! Let me kiss your tears away." Once more his strong, loving arms enfolded her, and he kissed her as though he would never in life part from her again. He whispered sweetest and most loving words to her; she was his love, his darling. With her arms twined round him, she told him all her fears. He laughed at them. She heard the sound of his laugh so distinctly. "My darling Dolores," he said, "rest assured that while I am on earth, nothing will ever keep me from you."

But, alas, it was only a dream! The face bending over hers faded, the figure clasped in her arms was no longer there. She awoke. There was a cold, gray light in the room, and she was alone. No after-hours—not even when the truth was made known to her—was so terrible as this hour.

"Oh, Karl, Karl, where are you?" she cried; but there was no answer.

CHAPTER XXI.

One by one the men servants returned; but none of them had any news of Sir Karl. No one had either seen or heard anything of him. When the clock struck eight, Lady Allamore came downstairs, looking the ghost of herself. The servants gazed at her in wonder, as at one over whom a great calamity hung. She sent for John Frodsham.

"You have no news for me?" she said.

"No, my lady, no news," and the old man's face was pale and worn. He did not look at her; he shrank from meeting her eyes.

Quick as thought she cried out: "You know something, Frodsham, and you are keeping it from me!"

"I know nothing, my lady," he answered; "but, if I may make a suggestion, it is that your ladyship should send for some friends—some gentleman—the Squire perhaps, or Lord Rhysworth."

"I will send for both," she said. "Give orders, Frodsham, at once!"

John Frodsham did so; and she felt some little relief. But she could not rest. She wandered from room to room, through the grounds and gardens, and along the terraces, always with the vague idea that she would find Sir Karl or hear of him.

Then she became conscious of something that annoyed and perplexed her. Wherever she went in the house she found groups of servants whispering. They broke off abruptly when they saw her; and in each face she perceived a peculiar expression, as though they knew something, but would not, or could not, impart it. She felt as though an atmosphere of mystery surrounded her. Ah, if he would but come—the sight of him would dispel all this! Once she spoke to the woman-servants more sternly than she had ever spoken to them before.

"Is there anything kept from my knowledge," she asked, "that you whisper together and look so strange?"

(To be continued.)

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 By EDGAR A GUEST

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Brothers and sisters and cousins and aunts, uncles and grandfolds, too. Children of this one and children of that, all of the blood of you; this is the family—your's and mine—and bigger it yearly grows; Oh, the pleasures come fast when the family's large, and so do the cares and woes!

When the family's small you may run the years with seldom a touch of grief. Two or three lumps you may keep in fold away from the woe or thief; But so many to love and with many to guard there are some that will go astray. And over and over your tears shall fall when the Shepherd calls one away.

They bring you their joys with their smiling eyes, they lavish their love on you; When the family's large you have much they miss who cherish but one or two. But your faith must wear to the circle's rim for many a blow shall fall. For as often come joys to the larger throng, so often shall sorrow call.

There is always a care when the family's large, there is ever a pressing need. For the strength you have and the faith you hold, and often your heart will bleed. But this is the price you must pay for all the love that has come to you— You must braver be, for you'll suffer more than the smaller families do.



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