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that I do not know of, tell it to me now, and let me share it. Alsie, I must trust you, or die," he added, with such deep emotion that I could not help sharing it.

She looked at him with a new terror in her wild white face.

"Don't be kind to me," she said; "never speak lovingly to me again. I can bear anything but that."

"No man ever loved a woman more than I loved you, Alsie," said my brother. I imagined, when I looked into your eyes, that I knew every thought even in the very depths of your heart."

"So you did," she cried. "I never had a secret from you. Then she stopped abruptly and covered her face with her hands."

"Until now," said John, calmly. "The secret you hide from me has become yours since we were married. To be brief, Alsie—will you tell me, or will you not?"

She could not answer; she fell back when he said those words, as though he had struck her with a sharp sword.

"We will take her to her own room, now," said John, moodily. "Would that I, like her, could neither think nor feel!"

He hovered round her until she opened those beautiful violet eyes; then leaving her with her maid, we went down-stairs again—not in the drawing-room where she had been, but to a little room at the back of the house called the study, but to my knowledge pipes and tobacco were the only things ever studied there.

"Did you ever in all your life, Charlie, hear of such a business as this?" asked my brother, disconsolately. "What can possess Alsie—what has she been doing?"

I could not solve his questions. John did not seem to doubt his wife, after all; he was angry that she had deceived him, but he could not think her capable of other wrong.

"Think of her face, Charlie," he resumed, "as pure, and sweet, and innocent as the face of a little child—it could not hide any crime; she has always been open and truthful. Think how she has suffered. It was only tonight that I noticed how thin and ill she looks, so worn and haggard. My poor darling, what has come to her?"

Long after the chimes had rung out midnight we sat talking; John was almost beside himself with grief.

"I was very angry with her at first, Charlie," he said, after thinking deeply for some time. "I know that she has done wrong. I do not excuse the deceit, but I cannot mistrust her. I meant to send her from me, but I will not; she is my wife, mine for weal or woe, and I will have faith in her. It is possible the secret she dare not tell me is not her own. I will have faith in her. I must know more before I judge her."

I admired his trust and confidence; indeed, I half shared it. Alsie had always been so good and true, I could not, even in the face of this one fault, think evil of her. It was all a mystery, dark and inscrutable.

Poor Alsie was not to be comforted by knowing that her husband had faith in her despite the appearances that were so strong against her. Early in the morning her maid came to summon my brother. She said her mistress was very ill, not in her right mind, and it would be wise to have the doctor fetched at once. When he came, he said it was brain fever, brought on by some long strain upon her mind and increased by some great shock.

"Has Mrs. Temple had trouble of any kind preying upon her?" he asked of my brother.

"Yes," replied John.

The weeks that followed were dreary ones. I dreaded entering the house; there was no corner of it where the sound of poor Alsie's voice did not penetrate—crying, laughing, singing; but never did the least allusion to the lost diamond cross her lips. Even in her delirium she gave no clue to the secret she guarded so well. From the first the doctors had given but little hopes, and now her strength was exhausted, yet the cruel fever burned away fiercely as ever. John rarely left his wife's room; he was like one demented; he could neither eat, sleep, or rest.

"I ought not to have been so cross with her Charlie," he would say to me; "I frightened her. I might have been sure that, no matter what she did, she was not to blame."

So the fight between life and death went on, and no one could say which would win.

I cannot quite recollect now how it was, but there was some dispute or mistake about a tradesman's bill. The servants declared it had been paid, the man said it had not. John was obliged, despite his trouble, to attend to it. My sister-in-law's maid said she remembered seeing the receipt in the mistress's hand.

"I shall have to look amongst poor Alsie's papers, Charlie," said my brother to me, "try to find this bill; I wish you would help me."

We sat down together. My brother looked very pale and agitated when he unlocked the little desk he himself had given her. A much harder heart than his would have been touched. The desk contained nothing but memorials of him; all the letters he had ever written to her folded away so carefully with the dates marked upon them; the pretty valentine he had sent wrapped up in so many papers to keep it from injury; dried flowers that he had worn; a lock of his hair, and some of the orange-blossoms she had worn on her wedding day.

There was no sign of the bill there, and we were at a loss where to look. All at once I remembered the little desk that had belonged to Mrs. Poyntz, that had belonged to Mrs. Poyntz. Thinking it probable that my sister kept business papers there, I mentioned it to John, and he went to her room for it. As I had imagined, it contained bills, receipts, etc., and amongst others we found the missing receipt. In one corner there lay a small parcel neatly tied with red tape.

"What is this?"

He untied it, and while I live I shall never forget his face as he read what seemed to be a small note. He seemed perfectly stunned. He gave me the letter, and I also read it; it was dated two months back, and was from Messrs. Hume & Green, saying that they were about to dissolve partnership, and that all debts due the firm must be paid by the 11th of September, or further proceedings would be taken. Enclosed was a note for the balance of the amount due—one hundred pounds.

"I never heard anything about this, John," I said, in amazement. "Why did Alsie lock it up in her desk. How strange! And why have they not taken steps in the matter?"

"Look," said my brother, and he placed in my hands a receipt for the one hundred pounds, dated September 11th, 18—.

I gazed at it more bewildered than ever. It was correct. Across the receipt stamp was the signature of the firm. I knew it well. No matter how it had been paid, one fact was clear—the debt was cancelled.

"How one earth," I began, but the almost solemn look on John's face checked me.

"Charlie," he said, "I see it all now: Alsie sacrificed her diamond to pay my debt."

I felt that he spoke truly; and a weight of unutterable sorrow was lifted from my heart. He sat for some minutes in stupified silence. I only wondered that he had not thought of it before. I remembered many incidents that convinced me—Alicia had so often expressed her sorrow over the heavy debt incurred for her sake. She had felt so acutely not having brought any money with her marriage; but having been, as she thought, a burden upon John, I knew that the debt had weighed upon her far more than upon my light-hearted, careless brother. I told John what she had said to me about it.

"My poor little wife!" he said; "and I thought all this time that she had forgotten all about it. I shall never forgive myself."

He was not ashamed to lay his head upon the table and weep aloud. He had cause; he had discovered the secret, but the devoted wife who loved him so dearly lay all unconscious that her fair name was cleared and shone more brightly than ever.

She still lay between life and death when John and I went together to the