

and be a man, brown and strong and fine. But for me—why the woods scare me—and I wouldn't wear anything but a French heel for the world!" She thrust before him her small perfectly clad foot. "Look—could that climb a mountain, or ride a broncho? I'd make a fine range rider's wife! O, while you were away some fellow'd come riding over the mountains and I'd flirt with him—" she turned to him with her arch humor. "Kid, I'd go wild. I'm just contrary Nel—and I *couldn't* leave San Francisco!"

"Suppose you loved me?" he answered, and it drove the laughter from her eyes—"suppose you did?"

"I'd climb all the mountains—I'd ride all the dark nights. I'd work my fingers worse than this—" she looked at their scars. "O, love—that would be the greatest thing!"

He watched her steadily as she sat on the balcony rail, a heap of color in the sun, laughing her confused failure to meet his eyes, looking off to the last mist in the harbor way. "There's one thing I've not told you, Nel. I'm going to stick to that job down there—there's something big to hammer out. The boys are to get me into the union, and I'll stay." To her wondering, he went on: "Chum, here's where we made our fight—and lost. And now we'll stay—the city needs its men and women. Yes—" he retorted to her evasion, "you've got to stand by me in the big fight—Nel, you understand?"

Her blue eyes were big with comprehension, growing to an exquisite tenderness. "Just to try and love you sometime?" she whispered, her eyes still wide on him.