

given long ago between Stuart and herself—the one by which she had saved him. Whatever its meaning now might be, it was a human message. Was it possible that any one else knew it? Or was he, as she believed, the only one? If it were Stuart, he must at that moment be between herself and her island; and either knew of her presence on the water, or was pleading for a reply from any fastness in which she might have found refuge. There was no prescience of anything like this in his letter or in her own thoughts; and Marie, controlling her feelings as best she could, was wildly bewildered at the situation.

Alone on the lake, surrounded by enemies at three o'clock in the morning, her father almost dying, her brothers dead, out for a spin when she ought to be sleeping, just to help her to fight the terrible battle of life, what did she want with Stuart? or any man? She was a MacAlpine, every inch of her, and for the present no Stuart at all.

Again the loon piped his note. But it was nearer; Marie almost thought she could see a boat in the distance. Whatever it was she must face it. No help was near. Involuntarily her right hand slipped beneath her bosom. Yes, her pistol was there, a dainty little gun that had shot off the head of many a grouse, and had often struck the bull's eye of a target. She knew how to protect herself; and if the worst came to the worst, before any scoundrel could touch her body, a bullet would enter her heart.