

face. 'Look here,' said she; 'do you know what you're doing? I ain't engaged to him. Jim Parsons is an awful flirt. He's going off to be gone quite awhile. Maybe when he comes back he'll come to see you again. I've bid him good-by, and we ain't engaged. It would be a good deal safer for you if you let him go. There, I like him well enough, but I'm going to tell you the truth about it, anyhow. It would be a good deal safer for you if he didn't come to see me again before he goes. You know what I mean.'

Emmy threw her head back; her voice rang out sharply. 'What do you suppose I care about that?' said she. 'Do you suppose I am comin' here because I want to marry him? Do you suppose, if he wants you and you want him, I'd lift my finger to get him back? Get him back - there ain't any gettin' him back; he ain't never said he thought of marryin' me. Marry n! What's marryin'? It ain't marry n; it's life and death that's to be thought of! What difference do you suppose it makes to me who he marries, if he ain't drowned in that awful sea to-night? Why don't you go if you care anythin' about him? What are you stoppin' for? He'll be gone before you get there.'

'You are the strangest girl I ever saw,' said Flora.

She went out into the entry and put on her hat and jacket. Emmy opened the outer door and stood waiting. 'I don't imagine it'll do any good,' Flora said when she came out.

The two girls hurried across to the bluff. Emmy kept looking at Flora. 'Tuck up your hair a little under your hat; it's comin' down,' she said once as they ran along.

When they reached the bluff Emmy turned towards her own house.

'You're going home?' said Flora.

Emmy nodded.

'Well, I'll do the best I can. If I get him, I'll come up the other steps and go by your house. You watch.'

Flora sank from sight directly, going down some steps over the face of the bluff, and Emmy went home. It was time to get supper, but she stole upstairs to her own room and sat down at the window that overlooked the sea. The breakers gleamed out in the dusk like white fire. It was not long before two figures, a man and a woman, passed below her window. The woman uplifted her face and looked at the house.

Mrs. Sands called at the foot of the stairs: 'Emmy, where be you? Supper's all ready.'

'I'm comin',' answered Emmy. She went down into the lamp-light room, and her father and mother looked at her, then at each other. She appeared almost pretty. There was quite a red flush on her fallow cheeks, and her eyes shone like blue stars.

After supper Isaac Sands went down to the store again. Emmy and her mother sat by the kitchen fire and sewed. The gale increased; they could hear the breakers on this side of the house with all the windows closed. 'I rather guess Jim Parsons will wish he'd staid on shore,' remarked Mrs. Sands. 'Well, if folks will be so headstrong and fo'hardy, they've got to take the consequences. There was a grim satisfaction in her tone.

Emmy said nothing.

When Isaac came home he was dripping with rain. 'It's an awful night,' he burst forth when he opened the door. 'Guess it's lucky Jim Parsons didn't go out.'

'Didn't he go?' asked Mrs. Sands.

'No. Young Blake was down to Cap-on's; he said Jim backed out. The Marsh girl come down an' talked to him, an' I guess she persuaded him not to go. Guess it would have been his last cruise if he had.'

'Served him right if it had been,' said Mrs. Sands severely.

Emmy lighted her lamp and went to bed.

That night the gale was terrific; the rain, driven before it, rattled upon the windows like bullets. The house rocked like a tree. Nobody could sleep much. In the morning it rained still, the spray from the ocean dashed over the footpath on the bluff, the front windows were obscured by a salt mist. Jim Parsons with all his recklessness could not put to sea that day. It was three days before he could go. Then the sun shone, the sea was calmer, although still laboring with the old swell of the storm, and he went out in the afternoon, steering down the coast to Rockland.

The day after he went Emmy met Flora Marsh on the bluff. She was going by with only a greeting, but Flora stopped her.

'He did stay; you knew, didn't you?' said she.

Emmy nodded. 'Yes; I saw you go by with him.'

Flora stood before her as if wanting to say something. She blushed and looked confused. Emmy made a motion to pass her.

'I guess he'd run considerable risk if he had gone that night,' Flora remarked flusteringly.

He'd been lost if he had,' returned Emmy. Then she passed on. Flora stood aside for her. Suddenly Emmy turned. 'You didn't say anything to him about me, did you?' said she.

'No, I didn't.'

'You won't, will you?'

'No, I won't.'

Then the two girls went their ways. It was not long before the news of Flora Marsh's engagement to Jim Parsons was all over the village.

Emmy's father and mother heard it, but they said nothing about it to her; they wondered if she knew. It was said that the couple were to be married when Jim returned from his cruise.

If Emmy knew it, it did not apparently affect her at all. She kept faithfully on in her homely little course. She was interested in all that she had been; there was no indication that any sharp, unsatisfied, new taste had dulled the old ones. Her mother felt quite easy about her, although her pride and indignation rallied whenever she thought of Jim Parsons. When he returned from his cruise, and the wedding was appointed the week after, she was unable not to speak of it to Emmy. The day but one before the wedding she began suddenly in a harsh voice, 'I s'pose you've heard the news.'

'Yes, I heard it,' replied Emmy.

'Well, I hope he'll stick to his wife.'

'I don't see why he shouldn't.'

'Don't see why he shouldn't after the way he treated you?'

Emmy faced her mother. 'Mother, once for all, he didn't treat me bad. I guess I know more about it than you do. There ain't any reason for you to say such things about him.'

'Well if you want to stick up for him, you can. I'm sure it ain't nothin' to me who he marries, if it ain't to you. If you don't feel bad, I'm sure I don't.'

'I don't.'

'Well, I'm glad of it,' said her mother. It was just after dinner. Emmy went to the door to shake the tablecloth and saw her aunts driving into the yard. They had come to make a visit; they were going to spend the night, and drive home the next morning.

The aunts had not been seated very long before the subject of the wedding was opened. Flora Marsh had been to their town to buy her wedding clothes, the dressmaker there had made her dress, and they had seen it. They knew all about the matter, how it was to be only a family wedding, and how Jim and Flora were going to Boston. Emmy sat and

listened quite calmly. Once, when she had gone out of the room for a minute, Mrs. Elkins turned to her sister.

'I forget he used to go with her once,' she whispered. 'She don't mind hearin' it, does she?'

'Land, no,' replied Mrs. Sands. 'She didn't care nothin' about him. Emmy ain't one of the kind to set her heart much on any feller. I'm thankful enough she didn't have him. He ain't got no stability, on' never will have. Howpuld'n't have made no kind of a husband for her.'

The morning of the wedding the Sands family arose early. The aunts wished to start for home in good season. The sun was only a little way above the horizon

when Emmy opened her window and looked out. It was a beautiful morning. Over in the east the sun stood; behind him lay what looked like a golden and glory. The sea was calm, the rippling in the forward path of the sun shone like sapphires and rubies and emeralds.

Emmy's small, plain face looked upon it all from her window. Her cheeks were dull and blue with the chilly air; there was no reflection of the splendid morning in her face. But beneath it, in the heart of this simple, humble young woman of the seaboard, with a monotone of life behind her and one stretching before, was love of the kind, in the world of eternity, that is better than marriage.

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