

tion yet moves the quivering air, but surely there was something else—surely she has heard a cry—a sharp, sudden, piercing cry of mortal pain or fear. Her heart throbs so frantically as she sits up erect in the darkness, that for a moment she can hear nothing else. She listens and waits, her eyes dilated and wild; but no other cry follows—all is profoundly still. The very rain has ceased, and a wan glimmer of moonlight pierces the window curtains, and falls upon her white, terrified face.

She can catch a glimpse of the writhing trees outside, of the black, wind-blown night sky. Has she dreamed that sharp quick, agonized scream? Has she had nightmare and screamed out herself? It had seemed to her to come from across the hall, from Mrs. Windsor's room. Has the sick woman grown worse in the night and called out for help?

Instantly Reine is out of bed, trying to dress herself with trembling fingers and shaking nerves. She trust her feet into little velvet slippers, opens the door without noise, and looks across in terror at that opposite door. Then she tip-toes towards it; it is closed as she has left it; the dull light shines through key-hole and crevice, and—Great heaven? what is that? Who is in the room. For there is a sound—the sound of stealthy footsteps; there is another sound—the sound of a key fitting cautiously in a lock. In a second she knows it all—robbers are at work behind that closed door, murderers it may be; and that shriek—that one wild, horror-stricken shriek, the death-cry, perhaps, of her grandmother?

A panic of mortal terror seized the girl. In a moment it may be that door will open and she will share her grandmother's fate. There is a table close to where she stands; she holds to it with both hands to keep from falling. The floor seems to heave beneath her feet, and without sound or word she sinks upon it, and half-lies, half-crouches, in a heap.

One or two broad rays of moonlight gleam fitfully into the dark hall; but where she has fallen is in deepest gloom. So crouching, she strains every nerve to listen. She feels no sense of faintness; every faculty seems preter-

naturally sharpened. The grating key has evidently not fitted. She hears the sharp, metallic sound of steel instruments at work. Tick, tick, tick, she can hear, too, from the clock down stairs—how weirdly loud is the beating of its brazen pulse; it seems to drown even the horrid click of those tools that are forcing the locks. Then there is an interval—an hour it seems—one minute, perhaps, in reality, and then, oh heaven! the door slowly and softly opens, a white hand stretches forth, and so holds it one listening second. Her dilating eyes are fixed on that hand; surely the gleam of the large, flashing ring it wears is familiar to her. A stealthy step follows, then the thief stands on the threshold and casts one quick glance up and down the hall. She crouches not three feet from where he stands; but he only looks before him, and sees nothing. She sees him, however; the pallid gleam of the moonlight falls full on his face. He crosses the hall noiselessly, turns down the stairs and disappears.

One, two, three, four, five, six; lying there in the chill gallery, Reine counts the sonorous ticking of the noisy Dutch clock; or perhaps it is not the clock so much as the sickening heavy throbs of her own heart. She counts on and on; it seems to her as if it must continue for ever, as if she must sit huddled here in the darkness and cold, and the minutes of this ghastly night go on eternally. Hours seem to pass, and then, all at once, with a mighty rushing sound, the clock strikes three.

She springs to her feet, the spell is broken, and almost screams aloud, so jarring, so discordant seem the strokes to her overstrained nerves. Only three o'clock; just one hour since that cry for help ran through the house, and the hours she has been here are only one hour after all.

She puts her hand to her head in a dazed sort of way. Something must be done, and at once; but what can she do? She looks in awful terror at the half open door of her grandmother's room: If she goes in there, what will she see? Will her eyes rest on some frightful sight on the bed yonder, and be stricken blind with the horror of it for ever? She stands for a while, there slowly,