

worn and sallow and thin, with the sharp edges of nerves that were always strung up to too high a pitch—the nerves of one who scarcely ever knew a whole night of undisturbed rest. They had told upon her, those years of anxiety and service; they had shorn away her youth also. Only once—and that for how short a time!—had life ever seemed desirable in her eyes. A brief and splendid dream had been hers, spreading like a golden sunrise over her whole horizon. But the dream had faded, the sunrise had been extinguished in heavy clouds that had never again parted. She knew life now for a grey, grey dreariness on which no light could ever shine again. She was tired—tired to the soul of her; and she was only twenty-five.

“Maud!” Bunny’s voice, half irritable, half eager, broke in upon her. “See that fellow down there trying to make his nag go into the sea? It’s going to be a big job. Let’s go down and see it done!”

Bunny’s long chair was in a corner of the room. It was no light task to get it in and out of the house; but Maud was used to the management of it. The weight of it went in with the other burdens of life. She was used also to lifting Bunny’s poor little wasted body, and no wish of his that she could gratify was ever left neglected. Moreover, the offensive clamour of the gramophone overhead added to her alacrity to obey his behests. And the day was bright and warm, with a south wind blowing over a sparkling sea.

It would do Bunny good to go out, especially if he desired to go. It was not always that he would consent to do so after a sleepless night. But there was an extraordinary vitality in the meagre frame, a fevered, driving force that never seemed to be wholly exhausted. There were times when inaction was absolute torture to him, and Maud was ready to go until she dropped if only she could in some measure alleviate that chafing restlessness. She counted it luck indeed if these moods of fret and turmoil raged during the day. She was better able to cope with them then, and it gave the night a better chance. Poor lad! He could fight his own way through the days, but the long-drawn-out misery of nights of incessant pain broke him down—how completely only Maud ever knew.

So, gladly she wheeled him forth on that afternoon of late October, down the hill to the sun-bathed shore.