

"She would tell you I have been annoying her—something more than annoying her. Oh, Miss Hariott dear and true friend, I am in trouble. Yes, my heart is almost broken, but I cannot tell you. Where would be the use? You could not help me—no one in the world can. A little while ago, and it would have been different. A few words might have cleared all up. Now it is too late—too late for ever. There are things one may forgive, but never, never forget. No, do not look at me like that. I cannot tell you, indeed, and you could not help me if I did. There are some sorrows no one can help us to bear. We must endure them alone. To-morrow you will know—every one in the town will know what has happened, but to-night I do not want to speak or think of it. Let me sit here and listen to you, and forget for little if I can."

Miss Hariott looks at her, and listens to her in wonder and silence. Her words falter as she speaks them, her eyes are haggard—a white, spent look blanches her face. At last the lady of the house speaks, and the strong, practical common sense that is her leading characteristic marks every word.

"My dear child," she says, briskly, there is an exhausted look in your face that I have seen before, and recognize, and don't like. Have you had tea?"

"Tea?" Reine repeats, faintly; "no."

"I thought not. Dinner?"

"No."

Miss Hariott stares.

"No dinner! Breakfast?"

"Yes—no—I forgot," the girl answers, and puts her hand to her head. "No, I believe I have eaten nothing to-day."

"Gracious powers!" cries Miss Hariott, and sits bolt upright in blank consternation; "no dinner—no—breakfast—no—"

She springs to her feet, opens the door and calls loudly for Candace.

That yellow familiar appears.

"Candace is the tea nearly ready?"

"All ready, missis—table and everything."

"Set the table for two, and, look here, broil some steak—not too rare, mind—just slightly underdone. And make coffee—she prefers coffee. And don't

be five minutes about it. Miss Reine is here, and has had no dinner."

Candace disappears. Miss Hariott returns, draws her chair close, and takes both the girl's hands in her own.

"Dear," she softly says, "are you sure there is nothing I can do for you? I want to do something so much. I am very fond of you, my little one. I suppose I was never meant to be a wife, but I surely must have been meant for a mother. If I had a daughter, I do not know I could be fonder of her than I am of you, and I would wish her to be exactly like you. Reine, if you are unhappy at your grandmother's—and I know you are—leave her, and come and live with me. Nothing would make me so happy. I have a thousand things to be thankful for; but I am a woman alone all the same, and I am lonely often enough. Be my daughter, my sister, anything you please. You know I love you, and I think you are a little—just a little—fond of your old maid friend."

"My friend! my friend!" Reine repeats, and leans forward with filling eyes to kiss her. "What would my life have been here but for you? Do not say any more to me—my heart is so full I cannot bear it. I wish I might come, but I may not; to-morrow you will know why. And when you hear all, do not think too hardly—oh! do not, for indeed I am not guilty! Could I speak and betray my brother? It is all very bitter—bitterer than death; but the very worst of it all has been the thought that you may believe what they say, and think me the despicable and guilty creature that they do."

"Is her mind wandering?" thinks Miss Hariott, in dismay.

But, no; dark, deep trouble looks at her out of those large, melancholy eyes, but not a delirious mind.

"I do not understand," she says, perplexedly. "What do you mean by guilt? What is it they accuse you of, and who are 'they'?"

"Ah! I forgot. You do not know, of course. Madame Windsor and Monsieur Longworth."

"Longworth!" cries the other, indignantly. "Do you mean to say Longworth accuses you, believes you guilty of any wrong?"