

That morning she went about as usual helping her mother; she was always very quiet. When her father came home at noon he had the news that Jim Parsons was going to stay in town a week. Whether Emmy watched or not, her father and mother watched every day for her recreant lover to come, but he did not. He was seen walking and riding with the other girl. Isaac kept a sharp watch upon him, then came home and reported to his wife. They said little about it to Emmy. Emmy, meek and small and quiet, had little dignity about her, but there was a certain reserve which produced the same effect. Her parents were somewhat shy of imposing upon it.

In the meantime Jim Parsons, a young fellow with eyes as blue and bold as the sea, with a rough, hard grace in his sinewy figure, and a rude, merry way, had troubled himself about Emmy more than people knew. Once or twice he had met her on the bluff, his brown face had blushed darkly, and he had stammered forth some greeting. But Emmy had looked quite soberly and calmly at him and returned his greeting, and he had said to himself that she did not care. If he had been charged with offense he would have believed in his own freedom from guilt; left to himself he was not quite sure, and disliked to meet Emmy on the bluff. He was a strange person to have thought twice of Emmy Sands, but she had had her attraction for him, and she had it now. Many a night Jim Parsons was upon the verge of forsaking his new love and returning to his old, but the beauty and the imperious ways of the new one held him. If Flora Marsh had not been in the village within sight and hearing, Emmy would at any time have regained her lover. Simple and uncritical as she was, she had an intuition of the fact herself.

'It's because Flora came in his way, and she's pretty; if he were only away from her he wouldn't think so much more of her,' she used to think to herself when she sat sewing so busily and nobody could tell that she was thinking at all. Emmy had even discovered how Jim's first delirium came about. When he came in from his cruise Flora and some other girls had been down at the landing. There had been joking, and she had as good as asked him in her way, whose prettiness disguised his boldness, to take her to ride. Thus it had gone on.

Jim was to leave on a Thursday, sailing over to Rockland for some stores and a part of his crew, then off the next morning on his fishing cruise. The night before Emmy said to herself, 'This is the last night she'll have him.'

On Thursday all the sky was red at sunset, the northeast wind blew, and the sea looked hazy flat beneath it; outside the surf it had a metallic calmness. Gulls were flying over a long rock that jutted out into the water a little distance down the coast. Isaac Sands, out early bringing a pail of water over the bluff from a neighbor's well, stopped and looked out to sea.

'Guess we're goin' to have a gale,' he remarked when he entered the house. Emmy, helping her mother get breakfast, thought to herself that Jim was going out that afternoon. All that morning she watched the sky. There was a strange, wild glow in it, and the wind increased. There were patches of ghastly green light, like rafts on the sea. At noon when Isaac came home to dinner he had the weather gossip from the store where he had been.

They say down to Capen's, he reported, 'that there's goin' to be the biggest storm of the season. Old Cap'n Lawrence says he ain't never seen it look much worse in this part of the world. If he was in the West Indies, he says, he'd be sure there'd be a hurricane. They say

Jim Parsons's goin' over to Rockland this afternoon anyhow, an' they think he's crazy to do it. He ain't got no sense to start out a day like this, nor his crew neither. They're all young fellers as careless as he is. Three on 'em's over to Rockland anyhow. I guess if the rest had any folks here there'd be a time about their startin'.'

'Well, I don't want nobody to get drowned,' said Mrs. Sands, 'but I must say I wouldn't care if Jim Parsons got pretty well scared.'

'I guess there ain't much scare in him; he's a crazy-headed young feller,' responded Isaac, grimly.

Emmy said nothing. She did not eat much dinner. Afterward she watched the sky again. Her mother kept watching her with a severe and impatient air. 'Emmy Sands, what ails you this afternoon?' she said once, harshly.

'Nothin',' replied Emmy. Then she soiled faster.

About five o'clock her father came in. 'Jim Parsons ain't gone yet, an' if he goes to-night he an' his crew will go to the bottom before they ever get to Rockland,' said he. 'T ain't far there, but it's one of the roughest little cruises on the coast. He'd ought to have gone in the day time if he was goin' at all. He's gone to carry that Marsh girl out to ride, and he ain't got home yet. It'll be dark as a pocket before he gets started. Old Cap'n Lawrence says he's been out in about as rough water as anybody, but he'd be hanged if he'd sail that boat over to Rockland to-night. An' there won't none of them other fellers say nothin'; they're hangin' round waitin' an' they look as uneasy as fish out of water, but they ain't goin' to hang back. Young Blake, he's the oldest on 'em, an' he ain't over twenty-five. I guess if they had any folks here they wouldn't start out; but they ain't.'

'If Jim Parsons don't know better than to start out to-night he'd ought to be taken up,' said Mrs. Sands. 'If he wants to get drowned himself I dunno as anybody'd care very much, but when it comes to drownin' other folks it's a different thing.'

'They're all a crazy set,' said Isaac. He was not working that afternoon, he was too nervous with the approaching storm. He went back and forth between the house and the store on ostensible errands but in reality for the gratification of his restless spirit. Pretty soon he rose again. 'Well, I s'pose I've got to go down to Capen's again,' said he. 'I forgot to ask him if he wanted any of them turnips.'

After her father had gone Emmy went too, slipping out the front way; her mother was in the kitchen. She pulled her hat down over her ears to keep it on, and went down the little footpath over the crest of the bluff. She had not put on any shawl or sack; her meager little figure, wavering in the blast, stood out darkly against the wild sky. Everything on the bluff looked gigantic in the wind, which seemed to widen and lengthen everything. The fringe of coarse grass on the edge of the bluff looked like a weedy forest. Emmy passed by the row of summer cottages all shut up and deserted now; and the great festoons of spider's webs on the piazza, oscillating in the wind, held spiders which looked like tropical ones. Emmy went on. There were some sails in the harbor. There was one in the west which she eyed intently. Anchored opposite it lay a dory; there were some men on the beach near it. Jim was not among them. Emmy, awing in the wind, stood on the bluff behind them and made sure of that. She turned and ran back along the bluff. She passed her own house and went on to the store. The rough weather had driven the row of lounging men inside. There was scarcely a clear space between the visitors perched upon boxes and barrels

and propped against counters and walls. Emmy's father was sitting on a barrel. She pushed up to him. 'Is he goin' to night, father?' she whispered.

He stared at her. 'What?' 'Is he goin' to-night?' 'Yes.' 'Who goin'—Jim?' 'Yes.' 'Course he's goin.' He's just come in and gone up-stairs to pack his things.'

Nobody had overheard Emmy's and her father's whispered conversation, but one of the men took it up. It was the topic of the day, coming uppermost in intervals like waves.

'I wouldn't give that for his chances,' he exclaimed. 'That boat will go to the bottom with all on board afore they heave in sight of Rockland.'

Then a chorus arose like the crying of a flock of ominous birds.

Emmy hurried out of the store without another word. Her father called after her but she did not hear him. She ran along the bluff again. The sun was low in a red glare of sky and ragged violet and orange clouds. The sky and clouds appeared as close to the sea as the coast; it was as if the sun was passing to some infernal shore. Emmy went nearly to her own house, then she struck across lots to the highway. She hurried down the road until she came to the house where Flora Marsh lived. It was a fine house for this little coast village. It had green blinds, and a bay window at one side. Emmy knocked at the front door and Flora opened it.

'Why, hullo, Emmy,' said she. Then she stood staring at her. There was a soft pink glow all over Flora's delicate blonde face that showed she had just been out in the wind. She was prettily dressed.

'Can't you stop his goin'?' Emmy said in a quick, dry voice.

'What?'

'Can't you stop his goin'?' 'I don't know what you mean, Emmy Sands. Flora's manner was at once pert and confused.

'Can't you stop Jim Parsons's goin' out to-night?'

'Stop his goin'?' 'Yes; can't you? They say it's awful dangerous. There's a terrible gale comin'. He'll be drowned.'

'Oh, I guess there won't be much of a gale. He says it's safe enough.'

'It ain't. They all say it ain't. He's terrible careless. He'll be drowned. Can't you stop him?'

Flora looked at her; her sweet, full brows contracted. The wind blew so that the girls could hardly stand against it; their very words seemed to be tossed about passing from one to the other. 'Come in a minute,' said Flora; 'we can't talk here.'

'There ain't any time to lose.'

'It won't take any longer in the house than it will here. Somebody'll hear us if we talk here, we have to holler so.'

Emmy followed Flora into the house, into the parlor. Flora shut the door. 'I wish you'd tell me now what you mean—want you want me to do?' said she.

'Stop his goin' out to-night.'

'How can I stop him, I'd like to know?'

'Go down to the shore where his dory is, and when he comes ask him not to go.'

Flora hesitated. She fingered a tidy on the back of a chair. 'To tell the truth,' said she, 'I've told him once I didn't think he ought to go; but it didn't do any good. You can't keep him back an inch if you tell him it ain't safe. He ain't afraid of anything. If I ask him to stay because it's dangerous to go it'll just make him all the fiercer for going.'

'I know that. Don't ask him not to go because it's dangerous.'

'How shall I ask him then, I'd like to know?'

'Tell him you want him to come up and see you to-night.'

Flora looked at Emmy. She drew a long breath. 'I don't know what to make of you, Emmy Sands.'

'He'll be gone if you don't go quick,' Emmy almost gasped.

'Emmy Sands, how you act! I ain't engaged to him. I can't make him stay any more'n you can.'

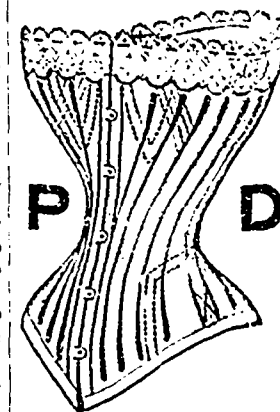
'Yes, you can, he likes you. Oh, go quick.'

'Why don't you go yourself and ask him not to go?'

'I ain't no reason to.'

There came an odd look into Flora's

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