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Sweet Eva!

CHAPTER IV. (Continued.)

Philip frowned in the darkness. "I have invited you to come to the Highway House."

"And I have refused," she retorted lightly. "Very well—two can play at that game," he said with a sudden show of temper. "So we'll call the game off. Good-night, Miss Dennison."

He stalked off with as much dignity as he could summon.

It was preposterous, he told himself angrily. First she called him a snob and then she gave herself airs and refused to make for a man! He stopped dead in the road.

This was hardly the way to do as his parents had begged of him! He thought of his father—that pathetically broken air about him—and he swore softly under his breath.

What a position for a man to be in! Degrading! Impossible!

And Kitty . . . It was the thought of Kitty that drove him back. Kitty cared nothing for him or his unhappiness, and if he could not have the woman he wanted he might just as well have the second best. He hurriedly retraced his steps.

"Miss Dennison."

Eva was half-way up the drive, but she heard his voice, and her heart gave a traitorous little thump.

But she did not turn or slacken her pace.

Philip broke into a run and overtook her. "I'm sorry," he said. "I'm beastly sorry. I'll be delighted to come to-morrow—if you'll have me."

She put her hand in his readily. "Four o'clock, then," she said. "And don't be late. Good-night."

"Good-night—and—Miss Dennison!"

"Yes!"

"They were some steps apart now."

"I hope the old man in the moon grants the wish," said Philip Winterdick.

There was a little silence.

"So do I," said Eva tremulously.

CHAPTER V.

"Tennis again!" said Peter Dennison disgustedly. He had encountered his sister on the stairs the following afternoon, and he paused a step below her and looked at her with down and pretended disapproval.

"Who is coming to-day, then?"

"Eva was intent on fastening the cuff of her white blouse."

"Only Madge and Mr. Foster," she said airily.

"Only three of you!—you can't play three!" he protested.

She raised her eyes for a moment and dropped them again quickly.

"There's Mr. Winterdick, too," she said.

"Winterdick! A little gleam shot into the boy's eyes. "Oh, then, I suppose Miss Arlington will be here as well."

"Indeed she won't, then," said Eva sharply. "She doesn't play, and so I didn't ask her. . . . She hates games."

"She could sit under the trees and amuse me," Peter said. "I like looking at her—she's like a picture."

He seemed conscious all at once of his sister's silence; he tweaked her sleeve.

"What's up, Bonnie?"

"Nothing," she pulled away from him almost angrily. "You men are all the same," she said impatiently. "It's always a pretty face that attracts you—nothing else."

She passed him and went down into the hall.

It was a quarter to four—the others would be here at any moment now, but somehow that little reference to Kitty had taken away her eager anticipation of the game.

What was the use of this afternoon with Philip? He cared nothing for her.

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could have done to have gone home and asked your mother to call here."

He sat up with sudden energy.

"I never asked her to call," he said excitedly. "I swear by all—Miss Dennison. If you don't believe me, I'll bring the matter here and ask her in front of them all. I never said a word to her—she left the house before I did this afternoon, and I was more amazed than you were when I got here and saw her. . . . at least. . . . He foundered helplessly, realizing that he had only made things worse.

Eva laughed, but there was a trace of tears in her voice.

She wondered why it was that the whole thing made her feel so humiliated; she supposed it was because she thought so much of Philip. She looked across to where his mother was sitting with Mrs. Dennison. Eva heard her mother's affected little laugh—the laugh she had only cultivated since they came to Apsley.

"You don't believe me," said Philip darkly.

"Her eyes came back to his flushed face."

"I do—of course, I do, if you say so. Oh!" she broke out impatiently. "I wish we didn't always get on these silly arguments. After all, what does it matter? It's kind of your mother to come. . . . But she raised her chin a dignified inch.

Philip ran his fingers through his hair.

"You women are the rummiest lot, he said with a sort of anger. "First you want a thing, and then you don't."

"First—" He broke off and struck by his sudden silence Eva looked down at him.

His eyes were fixed on two people coming across the grass.

Eva's eyes followed the direction of his, and then she sat quite still, her hands clutching the handle of her racket.

Kitty and Peter!

Sudden anger burned in her heart. This was a put-up thing, of course, she told herself; Philip had let Kitty know that he would be here, and Kitty had come purposely.

She rose stiffly and went to meet them; Philip had risen, too, but he did not come forward.

"Poor dear! how hot you look!" Miss Arlington said commiseratingly as she shook hands with Eva. She looked provokingly dainty and cool herself.

"I hope you don't mind my coming in like this," she said, and she told herself; Philip had let Kitty know that he would be here, and Kitty had come purposely.

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