

'How long I have stayed, and how much I have talked! Did I ever talk so much before?'

"Never, Little Queen!" Miss Hariott answers. "Dear Little Queen, you are not looking well. You are pale and thin as a shadow. What is the trouble?"

"Nothing you can help—nothing I do not deserve. I must go at once, and you must not come with me, nor Candace either. I can go very well alone."

"No doubt; but Candace will accompany you for all that. Come to-morrow little one, and let us talk it out. I wish I could help you. I wish I could make you happy. I am your fairy godmother, you know, and the little princess always goes for help to her *Marraine*."

"Dear *Marraine*, there never was such a fairy godmother. You have helped me. Only to come here and talk nonsense as I have done for the past hour is a help."

"And you will return to-morrow?"

"Do I not always return? Yes, I will come. To-morrow I will be indeed alone."

"When is Monsieur Durand coming back?"

"Never!"

"Indeed? When does Laurence Longworth return?"

"I do not know."

"You do not know? Does he not write to you then?"

"No—why should he? Do not let us talk of him, please. And I wish you would not insist upon sending Candace."

But Miss Hariott does insist, and Candace holds the umbrella, and goes through the rain to the Stone House. Black and rayless, buried in funereal trees, it stands like some goblin castle, so dark a contrast to the little white cottage that even Candace regards it with eyes of distrust and disfavour.

"A mighty dull place for a young lady like you, Miss Reine," she says. "And Mrs. Windsor must be a mighty dull lady to live with. I wish you belonged to Miss Hester and me, Honey."

"I wish I did, Candace. Thank you for coming, and good night."

Candace departs. Catherine answers the knock, takes her young lady's wet outer garments to the kitchen, and Reine, feeling oppressed and wretched, goes upstairs to her own room. How

silent the old house is, such a lonesome, rambling old house for four women to occupy.

She opens her grandmother's door noiselessly: the night light burns dimly, the night drink is on a stand by her bedside. Mrs. Windsor is deeply asleep. She shuts the door and returns to her own room, which is directly opposite. She can hear rain beating against the glass, the wind making a dull, ceaseless surge among the trees, and farther off, mingling with both, the deeper and more awful voice of the ocean.

What a wild night it is! She wonders with a shiver of apprehension if Marie is tossing about in the frail yacht along the coast of Maine. How miserably she will be, and Marie abhors illness, and pain, and annoyance of any kind, and shrinks from the very shadow of life's lightest trouble.

"If I could only help her," Reine thinks, "I would take her share and my own too. But I cannot. I may suffer for her, but she must suffer for herself as well. Oh, if Leonce follows her! and in his face this evening I saw the foreshadowing of some desperate resolve. She will never yield—she is inexorable as fate, and he is passionate and jealous, and reckless. The truth will come out, and all she desires most on earth will be lost for ever. And then—what then?"

She sits down, her head resting wearily against the back of the chair, silent and motionless for a long time. Her head aches; or is it only her heart? A sense of foreboding fills her; but, stranger than all, a sense of fatigue weighs her down. She rises presently as the loud-voiced clock in the hall strikes ten, and slowly and wearily prepares for bed. Her heavy eyelids sway and fall almost immediately, and she is half asleep before her head is well on the pillow. Once she starts awake again at some noise; but it is only Jane and Catherine going up to the bedrooms on the floor above. Then profound stillness falls, and Reine is soundly asleep.

She sleeps long and dreamlessly, but she awakes suddenly, broad awake in an instant, the heart beating fast and hard, and she sits upright in bed. What was that? Was it only the old eight-day clock tolling two? The last wiry vibra-