

"Has Raney come back yet?" George asked me. "I was told he'd gone for a walk—like a wise man."

"He was sitting outside her door, as I came down," I answered.

Grumbling inarticulately, Bertrand went back to his book. George looked at me long enough to see that I was too tired to talk, then began a fresh letter. I prowled in front of the bookcases, trying to find something that I had the mental energy to read. It was shortly after four when O'Rane hurried silently into the room and telephoned for the doctor.

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Thirty hours—the fag-end of a broken night, a day and another night—passed before O'Rane appeared. The painful silence of the house was violated only by guardedly light steps and hushed voices. Bertrand and George took their meals at the club; I stayed behind, neglecting my work and subsisting on tinned tongue, stale bread and cold water, to run errands, answer telephone calls and carry up trays of food to Lady Loring. At first I believed that poor Sonia was trying to hypnotise herself and intensify her own tortures, but in time a new gravity settled on the faces of the doctor and nurse.

I had never before been in a house where a confinement was taking place; I do not wish to repeat the experience. Whenever I carried up a meal, Lady Loring or the trained nurse would say vaguely, "I'm afraid she's having a bad time," but for the rest I was left to myself in the great silent library with my senses strained to catch any sound from the familiar white bedroom where I had spent so many days with Sonia, trying to distract her thoughts. O'Rane, from the moment when he telephoned for the doctor, had been with her. There was some ineffectual attempt to banish him from the room, but Lady Loring afterwards let him stay and admitted that his personality was keeping Sonia from the surrender which she sometimes seemed ready to make.