

Her voice, and memories of her touch when he had lain sick, acted upon him. "Hold my hands, then. I must hold something. Hold them, hold them! O Ima, I am suffering, suffering!"

"That is why I am come. Your hands burn in mine and tremble."

"Kind Ima!" he said brokenly. "Kind Ima!" and put her hands to his face.

She caught at her breath. There came a sudden lull in the storm as though the wind paused for words she tried to make.

"Some one is running to us," Percival cried, and took his hands from her; stepped where approaching feet sounded and suddenly caught one that ran into his arms.

"Who are you?" Then peered and then cried, "Hunt!"

The figure that he held panted for breath. "I'm going to him — me lord," Hunt said, and laughed with the words.

Percival went back a step and there came to Ima's ears his breathing, heavy as Hunt's that laboured from his run. "What do you mean?"

Again the laugh. "I heard, me lord. Like as I heard that odd bit in the hall at the Manor years back and never forgot it that day to this."

"How did you hear?"

"I come to you. I come to you hiding, knowing you'd be kind as was the only one ever kind to me. Hid in your bedroom back of the screen, you not being there. Saw you come in and heard —"

His sentence was broken in the savage hands with which Percival caught his collar and shook him. "What did you hear? What? What?"

"Leave off of me! You're choking of me."