

He took one of her hands and looked earnestly into her face. 'And have you come back heart free?' His voice trembled with emotion.

'No, I have not.'

He dropped her hand and was turning away, when she caught his withered arm and raised it to her lips. 'If you had not been so ill one right you would have remembered how a certain young lady was carried away by her emotions and—'

'Oh, my God, it was true, then?'

In a moment she was lifted off her feet and her face covered with kisses. She twined her arms round his neck, weeping and laughing as his protestations of love fell on her ears.

'Naera, darling, you brought me back to life. An angel from another world seemed to raise me from some dark, deep abyss; a creature of life and light seemed to take me in her arms and soar away into space. But it was *your* touch and *your* voice telling me that Naera loved me. Oh, the soothing joy of it! But when my mind became quite clear you had gone away and your manner afterwards led me to think that my bright dream was merely the phantasy of a fevered brain.'

'I was ashamed to look you in the face. I did not know whether you heard me or not. The uncertainty placed me in an embarrassing position. But do you know, I was never sure I loved you till that Sunday evening—you remember,' and she blushing hid her face on his shoulder.

'That stolen kiss, Naera, lay heavy on my mind. When I was on the blazing roof I felt glad I had written you the letter that morning.'

She freed herself from his embrace and looked at him with mock severity. 'It was the greatest disappointment I ever had in my life. It was positively stupid of you to send an apology when I was nursing my new-found happiness and thank-