

"I will tell to the world the whole story of the shameful past—how you, a child, scarce sixteen, ran away to Scotland with a yeoman's son—a thief, Miss Lyndith, caught in the very act—a fellow drowned, as he deserved to be, in his flight to America. The world shall know this charming story, though the honor of all the Lyndiths that ever lived go with it. You are very young, Olivia; you are very handsome—you are proud, and came of a proud race—how will it be with you then?"

All her high courage—only a frantic woman's courage at best—had given way under the lash of his scorpion tongue, under his resolute man's strength. She had covered her face with both hands—dry, hysterical sobs shook her. The excitement of the night, the cold, the desolation, were telling on her, as such things tell on her sex. Duke Mason's fists clenched—the desire to go and punch Mr. Lyndith's head was growing too great for human strength to bear.

"I am sorry to distress you, Olivia," her uncle said, after a very brief pause; "but, my poor, impulsive, headstrong child, it is for your own good. You must obey your dead father. You must marry the man he chose for you—you must submit to the inevitable. Let the disgraceful past be blotted out, become the wife of an honorable gentleman, and behave like a rational being. You can't suppose I want to drag the story of that dead boor's villainy, and your folly—to call it by no harsher term—before the light? I am your best friend, Olivia, though you may not think so. I don't want to ill-treat the little one, to visit the sins of her parents on her. She has been well treated and cared for since her birth, on my honor she has, and I will give her to you, to do with as you please, as soon as we return to town. I promise you this if you will promise to marry Sir Vane Charteris. There are eight minutes still before the train comes, I give you five of them to decide. Robert Lisle lies at the bottom of the Atlantic, and you must marry some time. Try and consider that, Olivia."

He turned and left her. Her hands dropped from before her face; she walked over to one of the windows, and looked out. There was a whole world of despair in the large, melancholy eyes; her arms hung listlessly by her side; she stood there alone, a very figure of desolation.

The brilliant midnight moon shone down with its ivory light; the dark, sandy waste glimmered in its beams. The wind of the cold March morning sighed eerily around the lonely building—without the dreariness, suiting the utter misery within. She sighed a long, shuddering, heart-sick sigh.