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### MOONSTONE BULLETIN No. 1

and at the same time give us the dimensions of your rooms and passageways. Our engineering department will advise you how to proceed, and at no cost to you.

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388 Carlaw Avenue, Toronto

## Nobody Here! Guess I'll help Myself!



"Eh, what's that?" demanded Mr. Pridham.

"There's no sign of the weapon, sir, but she was lying so close to the canal it might have been thrown in there. They're dragging it now, sir."

"Dragging it, are they? Might have had the decency to come to me about it considering it's nearly mine. I must look into this."

Mr. Pridham rose, leaving his breakfast untasted, and went to the door, telling Hoskins to order the car round at once.

"Why don't you walk there?" said his wife, who approved of no one's initiative but her own.

"Because I'm going to the Urban Council first," he replied briefly, and departed.

Hoskins re-appeared in another minute, looking exceedingly perturbed.

"If you please, ma'am," he said, "Mrs. Marsh wishes to speak to you."

"Presently," answered Mrs. Pridham. "I can't attend to housekeeping now."

"She says it's very pressing, ma'am, or she wouldn't disturb you. She thinks you ought to know at once."

The two girls, Fenella and Theo, stole a look at one another. Fenella was wrestling with an inclination to faint again.

"Very well," Mrs. Pridham said, and the housekeeper came in, apologetic but important.

Her glance fell on Fenella, and she said, dramatically—"I think it would be as well for me to speak to you alone, ma'am."

"WHAT is it all about?" demanded Mrs. Pridham irritably. "I haven't finished my breakfast, Marsh."

"I'm sorry, ma'am, but—it's awkward before the young ladies."

"Well come in here then." And Mrs. Pridham crossed to a conservatory, which opened out from the breakfast-room.

The housekeeper followed and Fenella put her hands up to her face to still the trembling of her lips. "Theo," she whispered. "I wonder what!"

The murmur of voices in the next room went on for some moments and then Mrs. Pridham returned, flustered, indignant, hectoring.

"I have just heard something very unpleasant," she said. "It appears, Miss Leach, that you went downstairs last night and were overheard speaking to some man in the hall, and that you let him out at the side-door, and locked it after him. What does this mean?"

Fenella's courage had returned. The instinctive sense of Laurie's danger was a powerful stimulant to her.

"Who says this of me, Mrs. Pridham?" she asked quietly, though the heavy throbs of her heart made her mouth dry and her voice difficult to control.

"Mavis, the kitchen-maid, heard a noise and went down the back stairs to see what it was. She thought the house might be on fire. She saw you pass across the inner hall and she watched. She says she distinctly heard a man whispering and she saw two figures in the moonlight cross the little passage to the side door. Then she crept nearer and saw you lock it and go upstairs. And now Jessie says that Theo was in your room this morning instead of her own and that you both seemed very queer and you fainted when she spoke of the murder."

"What is all this, mother?" Agnes entering had heard the last sentence and, seeing that her mother's wrath was directed against Fenella, moved towards her.

Mrs. Pridham waved the interruption aside.

"Did you or did you not go downstairs, Miss Leach?" she said.

Fenella was silent for a moment, thinking deeply. Agnes slipped her hand inside Fenella's arm and pressed it reassuringly.

"Yes," answered Fenella, "I did, Mrs. Pridham."

"You confess it! And you admitted a man by the side door?"

"No."

"No? I should advise you strongly to speak the truth, Miss Leach."

Again Agnes pressed her arm kindly. "Fenella will speak the truth, of

course, mother," she said gently. "We can trust her to do that."

"What did you go down for?" asked Mrs. Pridham insistently.

"What did Mavis go down for?" broke in Theo. "Fenella probably heard the same noise and went down for the same reason."

"That will do, Theo. I will deal with you afterwards," Mrs. Pridham said, as Theo rebelliously tossed her head.

"I would rather not explain, Mrs. Pridham," said Fenella. "I went down for no harm and if it annoys you, I'm sorry."

"Annoys me! Good gracious," Mrs. Pridham said, "you speak as if it was a trivial incident. Don't you understand what the servants are all saying and thinking?"

"No. Please tell me."

"You heard what Hoskins said about this murder—and you think it of no consequence—that at the very time it must have been committed, or soon after, you were having a clandestine interview with some man in the hall?"

"I have not said that that was true."

"No, but you have not denied it. Why, it is all over the village by this time. Mrs. Marsh said that the baker's boy heard every word that was said while he was waiting for orders."

The telephone bell rang sharply in the hall at this moment and Mrs. Pridham clasped her hands in angry despair. "Go and see what it is, Theo," she commanded, and as soon as Theo obeyed, she turned to Fenella. "I must insist on a full explanation from you at once. We do not want to be mixed up in any scandal and it seems to me that your conduct has been unpardonable, whatever your motives may have been. I am reluctant to believe the worst of you—"

She broke off; for Theo had entered hurriedly and had run to Fenella, round whom she put her arms.

"Don't be frightened, Fen," she said. "It will all come right, I am sure, but—someone is coming here to—see you."

"To see me?" Fenella's lips formed rather than said the words.

"My poor dear," said Theo, disregarding her mother's imperious demand for an explanation, "the telephone message was from father. He told me that they are sending someone here, and he said we were to keep you here—not to let you go out of our sight."

A DEAD silence reigned in the room, while Fenella stood staring rigidly into space. Even Mrs. Pridham's volubility was stopped for the time being.

She was the first to recover her voice. "Good heavens!" she said. "what does it all mean? Did you know this poor girl—this Liz Bainton?"

"No—I never heard of her." Fenella spoke in a level toneless voice.

"Who was it you met in the hall? If you don't tell us we can't possibly help you, and I'm not sure we ought to help you."

"Mother, don't—please don't!" pleaded Theo. "Fenella is quite innocent. Whatever she did, it was nothing wrong; I can swear to that."

"Why were you with her last night?" asked Mrs. Pridham.

"I was nervous—that was all. I stayed talking to her till rather late and fumbled going back to my room, so I asked her to let me stop. What can we do about this man coming, mother? Can't father stop him—can't he protect Fen in some way?"

"Of course not. Don't be so childish, Theo. Your father as a magistrate cannot possibly impede the law in any way. If Miss Leach does strange and underhand things which she refuses to explain, she must expect trouble. She has brought it on herself."

"If I were you, Fen," Agnes said gently, "I should tell everything—the whole truth. No good ever comes from hiding it."

"She will have to tell it sooner or later," Mrs. Pridham continued with acerbity, "and, whatever her reason is, it won't do her any good to have concealed it."

Fenella smiled faintly. Even in the plight she found herself,