

"But explain, dearest. How did he act? What was it?"

She was silent, but drew her husband's head down and hid her face in his neck. "There! Never mind, love. You needn't tell me if you don't wish."

"He kissed me and held me in his arms like they were iron bands — and I hated it. He said you had gone away never to come back, and that the whole mountain side knew it; and that he had a right to come and claim my promise to him. Oh, David, David, this is the last. I have kept nothing back from you now, nothing. My heart cried out for you — like I heard you call — and I went — to — to prove to them all that word was a lie. I knew nothing they said here could touch you, but I couldn't bear that the meanest hound living should dare think wrong of you. Seems like I would have done it if I had had to crawl on my knees and swim the ocean."

"My fingers tingle to grasp the throat of that young man. I fought him for you once, and if it hadn't been for a rolling stone under my foot, it would have been death for one of us. As it was, I won — with you to save me — bless you."

"But now, David —"

"Ah, but now — what? Are you happy?"

"That isn't what I mean. You have your future —"

"I have my now. It is all we ever have. The past is gone, and lives only in our memories, and the future exists only in anticipation; but now — now is all we have or can have. Live in it and love in it and be happy."

"But we must be wise. We've got to face it sometime. Let — me help you — now while I have the strength," she pleaded earnestly.

But David only laughed out joyously, and looked at his wife until she turned her face away from him. "Look at me," he cried. "Dear, troubled eyes. Tears? Tears in them? Love, you have kept nothing back this time, and now it is my turn, but I shall keep something back from you. I'm not going to reprove your idolatry by turning iconoclast and throwing your miserable old idol down from his pedestal all at once. I tell you what it is, though, if I could feel that I was worthy of your smallest finger — that I deserved only one of those big tears — there — there — there! Listen, dearest, I'll come to the point.