

soft spring sunlight had faded out. A dull grayness was over everything. It was rapidly clouding up.

Jim hit it up half a dozen more strokes to the minute and Seth Pringle tugged manfully after him.

"Where are you going," I cried. "How can you get away?"

"Don't know," Jim grunted. "But the sporting spirit demands that we do all that we can."

The other boat was coming on swiftly. The shore was far behind us, but a large wooded island lay at our right hand. A point stretched out into the lake and I saw Jim was racing to double it.

"They'll be on us before you get round it," I said. "Oh!"

I almost stood up. There gliding out from behind the trees came a white prow. I watched intently until the whole length was displayed.

"Row for it! Row for it," I cried.

Something familiar in the aspect kept my eyes fixed on the vessel. Surely the shining white paint and glittering brass only meant one thing. The fluttering pennon satisfied me and I leaned forward eagerly.

"Jim, Jim!" I cried. "Don't you see it's the Oriana. Old Mr. Skelmersdale's yacht. He will take us on board. He will save us. He will take us to Rosedale."

Then began a race. The launch came on hand over fist. Jim, however, pulled as I believe he never had pulled in the closest finish at New London. The distance between us and the Oriana lessened. The distance though between the launch and our boat was also momentarily growing less.

The yacht people saw us and discovering that we were making for them stopped.

The launch was catching up but we made good speed too. Half a dozen strokes. We swept up and Jim neatly brought our boat under the Oriana's side.

"Mr. Skelmersdale, Mr. Skelmersdale," I shouted seeing the old gentleman peering over the rail.

"Miss Summers!" he answered in amazement. "Miss Marion!"

"Take us on board and save us," I demanded. "They are after us."

"Of course," he answered.

In a jiffy we found ourselves on the white decks. A bell rang. The engines went ahead at full speed and we surged on. How we dropped the launch. I gazed after our discomfited enemy gloatingly.

"What's all this about?" asked our host with natural curiosity.

"Oh, it's an elopement," I began, then seeing his face I blushed and began again.

"Oh, I'm not eloping. It's they." I indicated Zelia and Seth Pringle, who were staring awkwardly about. "No, it isn't only they. At least there are others. Molly Wilkins has run away with Bur Ogden, and you must take me instantly to Rosedale to stop them."

"Molly Wilkins eloping with Bur Ogden!" said the little old gentleman fairly bounded on the deck. "And I'm her godfather. Here, captain, alter the course at once. We'll make for Rosedale. We ought to be there in half an hour."

"We can do it yet," I said turning thoughtfully to Jim.

VII

Alas! I had spoken too soon. Before the words were out of my mouth I saw that a quick transformation had come over the scene. I have said the clouds were rolling up. All at once they seemed to descend on us. To envelop us. The land was cut off from sight. The shore and the island were completely lost to view.

"The fog," anathematized Mr. Skelmersdale as he hopped from one foot to the other. "Keep on. Never mind."

Though I knew that we were going at a great rate of speed, we seemed to be standing still. With nothing by which to mark our motion we did not appear to be moving. Not a sound but the beat of the engine broke the dead silence. We might have been sailing in the clouds instead of on the surface of the lake.

Bump! I was hurled into Jim's arms. Mr. Skelmersdale was thrown on a deck chair. Zelia and Seth Pringle were cast in a heap against the cabin skylight.

"We're aground," called the captain. He ran forward and looked searchingly ahead. I gathered myself together as well as I could. For some reason I must have been a little bewildered. I remained in Jim's arms a full half minute. Seth Pringle and Zelia picked themselves up.

"Stuck fast," the captain announced from the bow. "Nothing hurt. We've run into a mud bank, though, and a tug will be needed to pull the Oriana off."

I could have cried. I had gone through all with a high spirit, never breaking down for a moment. But to be fastened helplessly in a mud bank, immovable and powerless, was too much. Was all our daring and suffering only to end in this fashion?

"Where are we?" gasped Mr. Skelmersdale.

"As near as I can make out," replied the captain, "we're on Windmill Point."

Mr. Skelmersdale sprang up.

"Yoickier," he called, giving a hunting cry. He was a gamey old gentleman.

"Can we get ashore?" he asked the captain.

"Certainly, sir," the man replied. "If the gentlemen will carry the ladies and wade."

No sooner said than done. Jim was over the side in a minute. Unquestionably I trusted myself to his arms. He gathered me up as he might a child and I rested in his strong hold with surprising contentment. For a time we splashed forward as he felt his way toward firm land. I shut my eyes. I seemed to be dreaming. I believe, though, that then was when I first began to see the truth—that I first found myself awake.

"You've had a pretty hard time of it," said Jim as he toiled on.

"No," I answered almost peacefully. And I hardly know what I meant. "It's been worth it."

Just then his foot struck dry earth and he went on more quickly. As he put me down he looked at me curiously.

"It has," he said emphatically. What he meant I could not quite tell either.

We could see nothing. By calling we all gathered together.

"We never can find the way," I observed, again cast into the depths of despair.

"We must," answered Mr. Skelmersdale, who full of the excitement of the chase was with us in heart and body.

"At least," replied Jim. "We can keep moving. If we hold hands we can't lose one another anyway."

With my right hand in Jim's and my left in Mr. Skelmersdale's, I marched forward. We could not make out a step before us. We reached more open ground.

Once more we found ourselves among trees.

"Do you think we are getting anywhere?" I asked Jim.

"Yes, dear," he said softly.

All had been so astonishing that I did not appear to feel the least surprised at his form of address.

On we staggered and stumbled. "Hurrah!" cried Jim suddenly. A road.

"What's that," I asked in a breath. For an instant with a momentary thinning of the fog I had caught sight of a dark object.

"An automobile," I gasped quickly.

"Right you are," cried Jim. "Standing still. Whose, why and wherefore?"

We drew toward it more carefully.

"Good gracious!" I exclaimed and I almost sat down on the muddy ground.

Could I believe my eyes? All heroines always say that. I looked again. Yes—no—there could be no doubt about it. There sat Molly Wilkins herself.

"Molly," I cried running toward her, and as I reached her grasped her arm.

"Marion!" she exclaimed. "What are you doing here?"

"What are you doing?" I demanded. I can't tell what she could have imagined—seeing us all steal up on her like wraiths out of a mist because I didn't know what to think finding her solemnly established there alone in the automobile in that deserted spot.

"I've come after you," I replied. "You mustn't do it. Are you married?"

"No," she replied. "The automobile broke down, shouldn't you have known that it would do it?"

"Thank goodness," I replied fervently. "Now I can make you listen to reason—"

"But I thought you approved?"

"Approved!" I answered in horror. "approved of your marrying Bur Ogden."

She looked at me in surprise. "Oh," she said as if suddenly understanding something. And then she began to laugh. I looked at her in resentment.

"I don't think, Molly Wilkins," I said, "that it is a very nice way for you to behave about such a serious matter when I have taken so much trouble—gone through so much for your sake!"

"Oh," she exclaimed giggling wildly. "What an object you are. You can't be a bridesmaid that way."

"I wouldn't," I cried hotly. "You will be my bridesmaid," she said confidently. "at my wedding—"

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