

"I'll . . . go . . . now," he gasped.

"You must wait till you're a bit steadier. Sit down and have something to smoke. I want to know what you're going to do. . . . At home, I mean."

"I haven't thought."

"Then you ought to think now. If you go back to Margery in your present state . . ."

With flickering eye-lids Norman stared dizzily round the child-unkempt room, frowning in surprise at the ash-strewn grate and littered table, summoning all his wits to explain why Gloria was dressed in a grey-silk tea-gown and lace cap, why the morning sunlight shewed him to be wearing dusty dress-shoes and crumpled shirt.

"What's the time?" he asked sleepily.

"I don't know! It doesn't matter! How did you leave Margery? Can you remember what happened?"

"Yes. . . . At least, I think so. . . . That letter . . . thought about it all the way home. When I found her awake . . . terrified because I was so late. . . , I tackled her . . . anonymous letters. . . . I told her I understood . . . her name . . . and Freddie's . . . She went white as a sheet, I thought I'd killed her. . . . And then . . . then the whole thing came out. . . ." Norman's speech and brain seemed suddenly to clear. "She'd been . . . *bewitched*; it wasn't *Margie* at all; she couldn't put up a fight! All the time, she was praying she might die . . . ; but when he whistled . . . Drugged . . . Her own word. . . . It went on till she had her smash; and then she was free of him . . . saw what she'd done . . . tried to face up to telling me . . . wanted to make sure of me first . . ."

As the halting voice died away, Gloria slipped out of the room and came back with a tumbler of water, to find that her absence had been unmarked:

"And what now?"

"I've not had time to think . . . There was only one thing to be done, as far as I could see; and I went off to do it . . . My God, that's twice he's done me down!"

Leaping up from his chair, Norman stood swaying with the tumbler raised above his head; then subsided and mechanically mopped the spilt water from his clothes.

"Steady!" whispered Gloria.

There was a tinkle of broken glass and a muttered apology as he stood up and swept the forgotten tumbler to the floor. Gloria went with him into the hall and, returning alone to the study window, watched his bent back and indecisive walk unt