

that Mercedes has told so as to get hold of you, and so as he should n't — so as your husband should n't, Karen. Listen, honey: your husband loves you just for all he's worth. I've seen him. I went up to him. And he told me how you were all the world to him, and how, if only you did n't love this young man and did n't want to be free, he'd do anything to get you back, and how if you'd done the wicked thing he'd been told and then gotten sorry, he'd want you back just the same because you were his dear wife, and the one woman he loved. But he could n't force himself on you if you loved someone else and hated him. So I just told him that I did n't believe you loved Franz; and I got him to hope it, too, and we came down together, Karen, and Mercedes is like a lion at bay downstairs, and she's in front of that door that leads up here and swears it'll kill you to see us; and I'd seen the ladder leaning on the wall and I just nipped out while she was talking, and brought it round to what I calculated would be your window and climbed up, and that's what I've come to tell you, Karen, that he loves you, and that he's downstairs, and that he's waiting to know whether you'll see him."

Mrs. Talcott rose and stood by the bed looking down into Karen's eyes. "Honey, I can bring him up, can't I?" she asked.

Karen's eyes looked up at her with an intensity that had passed beyond joy or appeal. Her life was concentrated in her gaze.

"You would not lie to me?" she said. "It is not pity? He loves me?"

"No, I would n't lie to you, dearie," said Mrs. Talcott, with infinite tenderness; "lies ain't my line. It's not pity. He loves you, Karen."

"Bring him," Karen whispered. "I have always loved him. Don't let me die before he comes."