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And she herself was even more contemptible. No, she would be alone—utterly alone. Oh, Eustace—poor little Eustace!

It would not have been so bad—she could have borne it—with Malcolm to comfort her. She longed for her husband's strength to lean upon. The remembrance of his nobility, his patient love, overwhelmed her with a sudden flood, and she realized the meaning of the dull pain that had weighted her heart all the weary months of separation. She would write to him—ask his forgiveness—implore him to come back. He had left her a lawyer's address for forwarding letters. He had been relentless—had given no sign. But suppose he had left the country? It was probable, indeed almost certain. He was fond of travel. And there was nothing to keep him at home. No, he had no home.

With a sudden revulsion of feeling she dwelt bitterly on his pride, a pride more repressed but even more stubborn than her own. No, she wouldn't yield! She wouldn't plead with this man, who had ruined her life. He had no affection for her—no interest in his son. She would suffer alone—alone. Raising her eyes to the cloud-strewn heavens, she tried to form a prayer. It was useless. She couldn't pray. There had been a period of her life when religion seemed very real, all-sufficient. But that was past. And what use would it be? Eustace was to die. She must suffer as others had done. The common heritage! Life was a cruel jest. There was no hope anywhere—in heaven or on earth. It was all darkness and misery.

As she gazed with pale, anguished face into the night a sudden light illumined the trees near the house. A momentary glance revealed the cause. Someone had entered the conservatory slightly to the left of, almost beneath, the balcony where she crouched, and had switched on the electric light. Who could it be? What did it mean? She turned slightly and peered between the veranda rails at the conservatory door, plainly visible to her. It was opened almost immediately, and Nurse Vallor's ample form appeared in the entrance. What on earth was she doing there at this time of night? Could it be that Eustace—why someone was coming across the lawn!

Mrs. Quesnay could hear the "subb-subb" of hurried footsteps on the sodden turf. She could detect a dark figure approaching rapidly. Who—ah! Her hands flew to her bosom. A tall figure, a man's, slightly stooping. Very, very familiar. Malcolm—her husband? No, no, it could not be—it was impossible—a trick of her imagination!

As the man drew near he raised his face towards the window of her room. The light from the conservatory fell upon it. There could be no further question as to identity. It was her husband. He looked strangely thinner and older. Perhaps that was a trick of the uncertain light.

"Very late again, nurse. I'm afraid."

Mrs. Quesnay drew back farther into the shadow. His voice—after so long!

"About the usual time I think, sir, or—well, it doesn't signify."

What did this mean? It was evident it was no sudden, unique visit!

"Yes, but it keeps you up. It is not very fair. How is the boy? I hope he has been keeping better?"

The woman crouching above hid her face in her trembling hands. Now he would hear!

"Very much, sir. Quite his old self again."

Nurse Vallor's answer was ready. Her voice well under control. How could she deceive him? What was the reason? Did she wish to spare him? Then perhaps Malcolm really loved the child.

"I'm awfully glad to hear that. And she—is Mrs. Quesnay well?"

Quite. She is out again tonight."

"I see. Not back yet? Then—perhaps—couldn't I have a peep at the boy?"

"I'm afraid not, sir. She may be back any moment, now. I have been listening for the carriage. She has only a little way to come—from Mr. Cordingley's."

"Ah."

Mrs. Quesnay could guess rather than hear that sharp, eloquent indrawing of the breath. Her face, her whole body,

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burned with sudden shame. She shrank back against the cold stone.

"I should have liked—to have seen him to-night." The words seemed to come with difficulty. "It will be my last visit—for a long time. Next week I leave for Australia. I am obliged to go. Doctor's orders, you know, nurse, must be obeyed sometimes."

The man laughed rather mirthlessly, and there was a short pause before his ally spoke. "But I thought—I understood you were better sir."

"Oh, yes, I am. But it was a sharp attack and has left after-effects which necessitate a sea voyage—a change of climate. You will write me to this address, please, nurse, and tell me—everything. For yourself—well, I cannot thank you properly now for all you have done—I shall never be able to do so adequately. I know, though, to a large extent, your faithful heart will reward you. This is a little parting present. I must go. Good-bye, my dear old friend. Kiss him—kiss little Eustace for me. But I suppose he has forgotten his father. He—good-bye."

Mrs. Quesnay heard the sound of his rapidly retreating footsteps, heard the muffled sobs of the tender-hearted old nurse. The conservatory door was closed. The light was gone. She rose

slowly to her feet, and was glad of the support afforded by the balustrade as she strove to control the violent trembling that shook her frame. Pity for the man's evident distress, feelings of regret, humiliation, vague repentance, were scarcely realized ere they vanished before a sense of bitterest desolation. He had gone, leaving her to meet sorrow, bereavement, alone. She could not bear it. It was unjust. He was the boy's father after all, and it was only right that he should suffer! Why should he slip away in blissful ignorance? It was not fair. She could stop him yet. Was there time, if she ran through the shrubbery, to reach the gate first—to intercept him? She would try. She would tell him.

Gathering her cloak about her, she ran swiftly down the short flight of steps, across the sodden lawn, and into the little wilderness of trees and shrubs. It was very dark. Rough, straggling branches caught at her skirt, tore her cloak, and lashed her arms and face; her fragile woollen slippers were soon in shreds, she stumbled and slipped on the uneven ground; but still she hurried on, had almost gained the clearing, when a sudden thought arrested her. What was she doing? What heartless cruelty, what utter selfishness, was she contemplating? However much her husband

might despise her it was evident he loved the child. She could not inflict such suffering upon him. No, ah, no. She must let him go, as Nurse Vallor had done—with no suspicion of the truth. She had driven him away, but kept his son from him; now she must bear the full responsibility. She could not pain him any more. She—she—alas! she loved him—and he was going away.

But not in silence. She could not bear to live without his forgiveness. He would not deny her that before they parted. She must hurry, hurry, or she would be too late. "Malcolm, Malcolm," she cried in her heart, "wait for me! Oh, where is my pride—what am I doing!" Love and fear lent wings to her poor, bruised feet. Panting and trembling she reached the gate. Her husband was not in sight. She was in time. Leaning heavily on the rough wooden rail she fought to recover her fleeting breath, to calm her quivering nerves.

He was a long time coming. They had often stood together at this gate, watched the sunset glories fade, and seen the magic stars gleam suddenly in the pale summer night. It had been a favorite, almost a sacred, spot to them. And now—

How her heart throbbed! What was keeping him? Was he never coming?