

to that white face he held, and through the darkness his eyes searched it in an agony of apprehension.

And then he started forward again, and began to descend the fire escape; and now he groped uneasily for foothold as he went. It seemed rickety and unstable, this spidery thing that sprawled against the side of the wall, and it was dark, and without care the foot would slip through the openings between the treads. It had not seemed that way when he had gone up and down when disposing of the valises. Only now it was a priceless burden that he carried—this form that lay close-pressed against his breast, whose touch, alternately now, brought him a sickening sense of dread, and a surging hope that sent the blood leaping like a mill-race through his veins.

He went down, step after step, his mind and brain shrieking at him to hurry because there was not a single second to lose—but it was slow, maddeningly slow. He could not see the treads, not only because it was dark, but because Teresa's form was in his arms. He could only feel with his feet—and now and then his body swayed to preserve his balance.

Was there no end to the thing! It seemed like some bottomless pit of blackness into which he was descending. And it seemed as though this pit held an abominable signification in its blackness and its depth, as though it beckoned him on to engulf them; it seemed—it seemed—— God, if she would only move, if she would not lie so still, so terribly still in his arms!

Another step—another—and then his foot, searching out, found only space beneath it. He must free one arm now, so that he could cling to the bottom tread and lower himself to the ground. It was only a short drop, he knew, for the lower section of the fire escape was one of those that swung on hinges, and