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"No. I have several aunts, Mrs. Chatworth, and when a woman marries she changes her name, you know."

"Miss Johnston is from the West," volunteered Amy. "She is a bird of passage among us."

"How delightful! Then, of course, you will have a visit from her before she returns?" and Mrs. Chatworth looked to the lady on her right for confirmation, noting with a keen eye every detail of her ultra-fashionable attire.

Miss Johnston turned to her with a slow smile.

"I am very erratic," she said, "quite out of the usual line of relatives, I fear. It wouldn't surprise me at any time if my cousins should disown me."

"How did you get on with your shopping?" asked Amy. "Mrs. Chatworth and I found some bargains, didn't we?"

Mr. Fowler ate hurriedly, and with little apparent zest. When he had finished he leaned back and bantered the women on their worldliness and frivolity. Amy, helped on by Mrs. Chatworth had been describing styles and fabrics with such voracity that she had scarcely touched her food, and Miss Johnston had roused to some apparent degree of interest.

"We are going back to Dutton's," Mrs. Chatworth said to her. "Why can't you go with us and look at those embroidered linens?"

"Thank you," answered Miss Johnston, "I have finished my shopping for today and, besides, I have an appointment."

Mr. Fowler pulled out his watch; she leaned across the table to him. "What time is it, Dick?" she asked.

Amy started.

"We must not keep you here," she said. "Mrs. Chatworth and I will finish our luncheon, but I know you must both be going. Don't let us hinder you."

Fowler turned his watch around so Miss Johnston could see the face, and returned it to his pocket.

"I think you will have to go at once, won't you?" he said. "I don't want to hurry you, but it takes some time to cross the city. You will excuse me, I know," he addressed his wife, "while I put my cousin on her car, but if you will wait here—"

"No, no!" interrupted Amy. "I shall not interfere with your plans. You must see her safely to the train, and then you must go back to your office. We have detained you too long already. I insist."

She smiled sweetly at Miss Johnston. That young lady finished buttoning her gloves. As she pushed back her chair and rose, she said:

"You are very considerate. I really think I could find my way alone, but I suppose your husband will feel better if I am personally conducted out of harm's way. I am very glad to have met you so unexpectedly."

"Altogether charming," murmured Mrs. Chatworth. "Quite as if it had all been planned. I hope I shall have the pleasure of seeing you again!"

"One never can tell," returned Miss Johnston serenely. "But Mrs. Fowler will assure you that I am not to be counted on. Good-bye!"

She walked away. Mr. Fowler lingered for a moment with his hand on the back of his wife's chair.

"Good-bye," she said, without looking around.

"Till dinner-time," he supplemented. Mrs. Chatworth laughed as he followed after Miss Johnston.

"I thought he was actually going to kiss you! He didn't want to go with her, did he? Walter says women are a nuisance in business hours. They look a little alike, a sort of family resemblance in the nose and chin. She's rather odd, don't you think so? Striking, though, and exceedingly stylish."

"Western women always outdo us when they come to the city," said Amy carelessly.

"We must hurry back to the store; we're losing half the afternoon. You haven't eaten anything, though."

"I am ready to go," said Amy.

They had not been long at the crowded counters when Mrs. Chatworth felt a hand laid on her arm.

"I am very sorry, but I can't stay here any longer. I must get home."

She looked up, startled. "Why, what is the matter? Are you ill? You are as white as a ghost!"

"I am not well. My head is splitting. You won't mind my going, will you?" Mrs. Chatworth, however, vigorously

refused to remain behind, and brought her shopping to an abrupt close.

"It was that luncheon upset me," said Amy miserably. "Something—the salad, I think—was wrong."

"You didn't eat enough to hurt a fly," returned Mrs. Chatworth with conviction. "You need a tonic if your stomach is so weak as that."

III.

At the door of her house Amy had difficulty in persuading her friend that she needed no further assistance, that she would not have a doctor, and that she wanted only to lie down in quietness; but at last she reached her room, alone.

She locked the door fiercely, tore off her hat and wraps, and threw herself upon the bed, where her overstrained nerves found relief in tears and bitter sobbing. When the first agony of her weeping had eased itself, she turned and lay staring at the wall, while the tumult of her thoughts slowly cleared. It seemed an endless time before the calm that qualified for intelligent action came upon her.

When it did she rose and went to the mirror, making a long, close inspection of her pale, tear-stained face, with its reddened eyelids and fresh lines of suffering bordered by disheveled locks. Then she set about her afternoon toilet, with all the modest art of which she was mistress. She patiently massaged out the marks of tears from under her eyes, and brought back a natural glow to her cheeks. She waved her hair and piled it lightly in its most becoming manner.

This done she slipped on a wrapper and went down-stairs to find Nora. She made some changes in the order for dinner, and assisted in the preparation of Dick's favorite desert. She looked over the table appointments to make sure that everything should be of the daintiest and most attractive.

After she had gone back up-stairs and put on her prettiest frock, she looked at herself again in the mirror. Her cheeks were smooth and pink, her eyes sparkling, her head proudly poised.

It was only half-past five. She need not expect him till the 6.10 train, for he never came on the 5.45 any more. She picked up a book and curled down on the divan before the window, but her thoughts would not rest on the printed page. What if he should not come on the 6.10? What if he did not come at all? A cold trembling came over her, and she buried her face in the cushions.

A moment later she heard the click of the door, and looked up to see Dick coming into the room. She sprang to her feet and took a step or two toward him. He came quickly up to her, stopped and looked at her uncertainly, without speaking. Her eyes were wide and staring; all at once she turned white and toppled forward. She would have fallen to the floor if he had not caught her. He laid her on the divan and bent over her with his arms still around her.

"Amy, darling, don't! What is the matter?" and as she did not stir, he hugged her closer. "What made you do it? Did you think there was anything wrong? I would have put everything straight in a minute if you had given me a chance. You were a dear, stunning little brick, and the truest little wife in Christendom, but you didn't need to do it, don't you know that? You are not angry at me, are you? Don't feel so badly, it's all right!"

She lay passive, her still, colorless face drooping back against his arm, his eyes closed. He shook her gently in growing alarm.

"Don't do so, Amy! Speak to me! Open your eyes and look at me!"

She obeyed without moving otherwise. She opened eyes on him so full of deep reproach and pain that he cried out hastily:

"But don't look like that!" She closed her eyes again and turned her face away from him, slipping her head from his arm to the pillow.

"Who was she?" she asked.

"It was all perfectly proper," he explained. "She is a very nice young lady, and I never saw her before. She is a sister of one of the men at the office. She lives out of town, and came in today on business. She's never been here much, and he intended to meet her and go round with her, but he was called away suddenly this morning on urgent business, so he asked me to meet her and get her started right, and then see that she had some luncheon and put