

a little shiver of disgust as the shrieks of a young cock proclaimed that Ah Hong had secured his prey. She got up from the hammock and walked to the end of the verandah, where she stood, framed in creepers, an inspiring vision to a footsore wayfarer. This end of the verandah gave on to a garden path between two cape mulberry trees, with a rosella patch and a prickly pear hedge on one side, and a tangle of flowers and shrubs on the other. Susan's eyes wandered over the near distance, along the road which was lost in the gloom of gidya scrub, and then her gaze came back to the sliprails, where she saw a man stopping to put up the lower rail after having passed beneath the top one.

She saw that the man was a tramp—some *sundowner* on his way up to the house to claim the proverbial bush hospitality—a bunk in the men's hut, and night's rations. She observed the tramp more closely as he walked up the rise and noticed that he did not seem the usual sort of *sundowner*. As he came nearer the fence and in a line with the verandah, Susan saw that he was unkempt, unshorn, stained with grime and perspiration, and evidently dog-tired, but that in spite of this the man had the unmistakable look of a gentleman.

There was nothing unusual in the sight of a gentleman sundowner—Susan knew well enough that Oxford and Cambridge men, sons of lords, and even lords themselves, had often enough "humped bluey" in the bush. Romantic chords in her nature stirred at the thought that here might be one of them. Yes, certainly the man was a gentleman. Might he not be a fairy prince? As yet he had not perceived her, and could not be aware that she was watching him. But perhaps he had heard there were ladies in the station. For he stopped by a gum tree that threw its scanty shade upon the baked earth, hunched his shoulders out of his swag, laid the pack on the ground, deliberately undid the straps, and taking out an alpaca coat, put it on over his grey flannel shirt. He rubbed his face and hands too with a handkerchief, which Susan noted was of silk, and smoothed his short beard. Then he put on his swag again, and making for

the garden fence looked over it, sublimely unconscious that he was being observed. There was a certain characteristic simplicity in his actions that only comes from good breeding, and this Susan Galbraith was intuitive enough to perceive.

The sundowner reconnoitring the premises had, however, evidently not expected an immediate encounter with ladies. He stared at sight of Susan framed in the creepers against the dimness of the verandah and took off his shabby felt hat with the unconscious gesture of a man trained to such courtesies. Then he seemed to recollect himself and a shamed flush came on his face. But as Susan returned his salutation, he lifted his head, looking straight at her, and she was struck by the desperately wistful expression of his eyes. Altogether, the man was extraordinarily handsome in a forceful, dare-devil way. It occurred to Susan that he looked bad-tempered, but she thought also that he was the sort of a man with whom a woman might fall wildly in love. Susan had the Australian faculty for leaping to quick conclusions. Her keen eyes took in every salient detail of his appearance and she felt that she would like to talk to him—of course from a condescending height. But though her position on the verandah gave her a considerable elevation, the space between them was too great to allow of much conversation.

"Excuse me," said the tramp; "may I ask if the Boss is at home, and if I could do a job for my night's ration?"

"You had better go round," she answered in her clear, far-carrying voice. "The Chinaman will shew you the way. Mr. Galbraith is not at home, but I am sure that you can have a ration."

The man lifted his hat again, and walked on round the corner of the fence. He limped, but his boots were good, and his moleskins looked like those of a gentleman. Susan waited, pacing the verandah until Ah Hong came to the back door of the house and called to her: "Missee, me no savvy give rations. One white man outside say he want plour and piecee meat."

Susan took down a bunch of big keys from a nail in the passage which ran through the house from the front to the