

THE STRAW

with a woman's illogical impulse, her instinctive siding with a man in danger.

"Oh, you'll be caught," she whispered.

"I'm going; I'm going. You've routed me," said Gay.

He turned; she would probably faint if he stayed to parley. Ye gods, what a villain she took him for!—turned back blindly into the room where the rushing night-air blew in. Perhaps she would think he had just made his way into the house. Anyhow, she saw him go empty-handed.

He listened a minute, lingering unaccountably, delaying his jump. Possibly because he heard a rustle on the stairs, and it made him curious. Possibly because the sight of her had knocked him stupid. Was she actually plucky enough—was she venturing down—alone—to find out if he had gone? Well, she shouldn't think he was tricking her. He set his knee on the window-ledge to spring out and follow the others whom he could just distinguish staggering along, weak with laughter, dragging the picture with them into the spinney.

And then he was arrested, thrilled by the touch of slight fingers on his arm; he heard a girl's voice, low and breathless, too eagerly