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lawed?" he went on, in a half-bantering tone that exasperated me.

"No," I returned, sharply, and, turning, began to retrace my steps to the house.

The next instant he had taken me by the arm and turned me about.

"See here, Peggie," he said, in a very different tone, "don't you know you can't do that? What's the use of publishing all that miserable business, as you must do to some extent, if you go back there into Might's? Anyway, this arrangement has neither been of your nor of my seeking. We have been thrown into it, and must abide by it, however disagreeable it may be; and, so far as I can see, no wrong for either of us in it, either."

"But I promised—"

"I know all that you promised. All the same, as I said before, neither you nor I planned for this. It is an accident, and neither of us can be blamed for it."

Feeling that there was some reason in what he said, swayed also by his masterfulness, I began to walk slowly on again, and so we went silently through the gate.

In spite of myself, a sense of satisfaction came to me as we came out on the road, yet I felt as though such a feeling were treason. "Ye'll remember he's the son o' the man that killed yer father!" my mother had said, and I was remembering, yet what could I do? I could not now prevent Dick Carmichael from walking home with me, but I could at least fight against being pleased over the accident. So I resolved to be very stiff and dignified indeed, and to let Dick know that I by no means approved of the way in which things had fallen.

Thus we walked silently for quite a way, I at one side of the road, he at the other, then he said suddenly:

"Peggie, I'm not going to bear with this any longer!"

"With what?"

"This dreadful secret that I have been carrying about with me all these years, ever since the night of—the fire. Peggie, I can't think father ever set fire to that barn! To me he seems the soul of honor! Surely it was someone else you saw that night!"

"No," I said, slowly, for I could not lie, and why should I try to screen Henry Carmichael, of all men? "No, Dick, it was your father that I saw. I was not mistaken."

Dick was silent for a moment, then he said, in a low, worried tone, "And I—I heard him come in! . . . And after a moment he said to me, 'Come, Dick, Mallory's barn is on fire!' . . . And I, too, with you, heard him threaten to be even with your father. . . . Oh, Peggie Peggie"—and there was something akin to agony in his voice—"suspicion is enough to kill a man! It has been wearing my heart out by inches all these years. I can't believe, and yet I'm compelled to believe. A thousand times it has been on my tongue to ask my father why he was abroad that night; how it was that he, in the depths of the night, was the first to see that Mallory's barn was afire, and yet I have shrunk from even hinting to him that I had suspicion of his motives. But, Peggie, it must be done. To-morrow or, at least, very soon, I shall ask him!"

"Yes, that will be the better way," I whispered, in a voice scarcely audible, for I was trembling from head to foot.

For an instant Dick strode on, forgetting me, then waited until I came up, and resumed his walk along the farther side of the road, with the width of the wagon way between us.

"Whether that thing be—be true or not," he said, "it will be the hardest crack my father ever got—my mentioning it to him." If it is not true, then he will know that the son who should have trusted him and whom he has loved—for he does love me, Peggie—has been a miserable, suspicious cur, unworthy of him or his affection. If it be true—with a sort of savagery—"then, let him

enjoy the hell he has made for himself!"

Through sheer nervousness, I broke down utterly, and the sobs which I had been choking back shook me.

He stopped for an instant and looked at me, then came over to me and took my arm.

"Why, Peggie," he said, in that low, caressing tone so, so like that in which his father had spoken to me that day so long ago, when, as a little child, he had held me in his arms in the sheep-house, "why, Peggie, what a brute I am to have made you cry! Oh, girl, girl, I forgot myself! I am a great, careless, clumsy brute—but I'm not much used to girls, Peggie."

There was genuine distress in his voice, and I hurriedly wiped away the tears.

"It's all right," I said, "I'm just—just nervous, or something. There, come on!"

And again we walked silently under the calm, clear sky, with the trees on either side of the road murmuring a lullaby, sweet enough and low enough to soothe a fevered spirit.

And now we had come opposite to the little garden, and the spot where had been the old house, and beyond the meadow field lay, all brown with the upturned sod, beneath the steady light of the moon.

"Do you remember the old call, Peg?" he said, dropping into the old name of my childhood. "I wonder if I could do it now." And he immediately began to whistle softly the song-sparrow's call, the three quavering notes, and a long, wild trill.

With the warble, the memories of the old days came trooping up so keenly that it seemed but yesterday since we had roamed the familiar fields together; and when he began to talk of the pranks we played, I forgot that it was my duty to be angry, and only knew that I was very contented to be walking again with Dick, and living over again the sweet days of long ago.

As we approached the woods surrounding the clearing, the mud on the road grew deeper, and tiny pools began to show all silver in the moonlight.

"We will cross the fields the rest of the way," Dick said, presently, "it will be drier that way."

And so I let him help me over the fence, and even take my arm to steady me as we walked over the uneven surface of the field.

Beyond the next fence there was a strip of plowed land, which I had quite forgotten. Above it a dense, white mist was arising, yet lying low and heavy, so that the whole expanse looked like a ghostly, glittering lake, with a soft spray dashing silently up against the clumps of trees which arose like islands from the calm, white surface.

"Oh!" I said, "this will be dreadful walking! We must go back." But Dick said no; that I should get my feet wet if we went back over the wet bush road.

"I'll carry you, Sis," he said, "as I used to—over the swampy places, do you remember?" And without a word I let him take me in his strong arms and stride into the receding mist, carrying me.

Very strange and unreal it all seemed, we two, plunging into the midst of that silent lake, which gave way in a little circle about us, then stretched off, dense and white, to the black woods beyond. Yet I had no sensation save that which a little child feels in being carried over a difficult way. I was in a sort of dreamland; and it was so pleasant to be with Dick again, and to know that he was not vexed with me, but that we were still the good old friends.

And yet, as he talked, in his deep, low voice, it seemed, too, as though it were not he, but Henry Carmichael, who was carrying me so carefully in his arms. Again I heard the voice, that other voice so strangely like, ask playfully, "Do you hate me now?" and that other childish one find the ready answer, "No."

When the weird lake was passed,