

but my heart would have broken all the same. It aches so now for her. But go on, how did she find it out? Who could have strength to tell her?"

There was a pause, and each could hear the beating of the other's heart. The November wind had risen within the last half hour, and now howled dismally past the window, seeming to Rosamond like the wail that young girl must have uttered when she first learned how her trust had been betrayed. The clock struck four! Rosamond counted each stroke, and thought, 'One hour more and he will be here.' Marie counted each stroke, and thought, 'One hour more, and I must be gone.'

'Rosamond,' she began again, 'what I now have to confess is an act of which I have repented bitterly, and never more than since I sat within this room. But it was premeditated, and believe me, Rosamond, it was not done for any malice I bore to that young girl, for I pitied her so much—oh, so much,' and her hand wandered caressingly over the bright hair lying on her lap.

'We went out one afternoon—two ladies, a gentleman, and myself—in a small sail-boat upon the lake. I planned the excursion and thought I should enjoy it, but we had not been out long when my old affection of the heart began to trouble me. I grew faint, and begged of them to put me on the land. They complied with my request, and set me down upon a point higher up than from which we had embarked, and near to a dilapidated cabin where lived a weird old hag, who earned a scanty livelihood by fortune-telling. I told her I was sick, and sat down by her door where I could watch the movements of the party. Suddenly a terrific thunder-storm arose, the wind blew a hurricane, and though the boat rode the billows bravely for a time, it capsized at length, and its precious freight disappeared beneath the foaming wave. For a moment horror chilled my blood; then, swift as the lightning which leaped from the cloud overhanging the graves of my late companions, a maddening thought flashed upon my mind.'

'But the girl—hasten to the part,' said Rosamond, lifting up her head, while Miss Porter went back to her chair.

'I shall come to her soon enough,' returned Miss Porter, continuing her story. 'No living being, save the old woman at my side knew of my escape, and I could bribe her easily. Fortunately I carried the most of my money about my person, and I said to her, "There are reasons why, for a time at least, I wish to be considered dead. Here are twenty dollars now, and the same shall

be paid you every month that you are silent. No human creature must know that I am living." I saw by the kindling of her eye at the sight of the gold that I was safe, and when the night shadows were falling I stole from her cabin, and taking a circuitous route to avoid observation, I reached the midway station in time for the evening train.

'Tree days later in a distant city I read of the sad catastrophe—read that all had been found but one, a Miss Porter, from Florida, and as I read I thought "he will see that, too!" He did not see it. Before going to Cartersville I sent to Sunnyside a girl who was under peculiar obligations to me, and one whom I could trust. She was employed at last about the person of that young girl, who had lived at Sunnyside since she was a child, a friendless orphan.'

There was a quick, gasping moan as if the soul were parting from the body and Rosamond fell upon face which the pillows concealed from view, while Miss Porter hurriedly proceeded:

'That is but little more to tell. I wrote to the girl who took her own letters from the office. I told her all, and from her heard that the bridal day was fixed. The obstacle was removed—not insanity, but a living wife. Need I say more?"

She paused, but from the bed where the crushed, motionless figure lay, there came no sound, and she said again. 'Speak Rosamond. Curse me, if you will, for saving you from an unlawful marriage.'

Still there was no sound, save the low sighing of the wind, which seemed to have taken a fresh note of sadness as if bewailing the unutterable desolation of the young girl, who lay so still and lifeless that Marie Porter's heart quickened with fear, and drawing near, she touched the little hand resting on the pillow. It was cold—rigid—as was also the face which she turned to the light.

'It is death!' she cried, and a wild shriek rang through the house, bringing at once the servants, headed by Mrs. Peters.

'What is it?' cried the latter, as she saw the helpless figure and beautiful upturned face.

'It's death, madam—death, and it's coming on me, too,' answered Miss Porter, clasping her hands over her heart, which throbbed as it never had done before, and which at last prostrated her upon the lounge.

But no one heeded her, save the girl Maria. The rest gave their attention to Rosamond, who lay so long in the death-like stupor