

I never did want you back. Go to him — or any one for all I care. Oh, I'm not the fool you think me. I can see through all this."

"You must be mad," Joan said almost inaudibly.

"Mad," he exclaimed with increasing rage. "That's just what I'm not. Mad because I don't want you? No, mad if I did want you. Go back to him and hear from him again the whole story of what passed between us. He has told you already, I'll be bound. You've heard the details. Oh yes, you can believe them, I did plan to kill him. He's quite right. And I'll plan it again — all over again — and do it this time and hang for it gladly."

Joan stepped back. She shuddered.

"I don't understand one single word of what you're saying, except that you don't want me," she said, almost in a whisper. "That, of course, I can understand. And I'll go at once. But this much I must claim to say, in justice to myself — I would never have troubled you if I had not learnt from Keturah that — that I should be welcome. But she was evidently mistaken."

"Yes, she was mistaken," he said in biting accents.

He closed the door, leaving her standing outside.

She passed instantly out of the enclosure and did not pause a single moment until she was out on the open moor. Then she sat down, and tried to think; for she was half stunned and stupefied. So this was her homecoming. She had made an entire mistake in allowing herself to suppose or to be persuaded for a moment that he wanted her. She might have known that a man of his nature would never forgive her for her desertion of him, and that his resentment and jealousy, once roused, would never be lulled. But far worse than all this was what he had said about having planned to kill Beau-desart. Oh, it simply couldn't be true. He must have just imagined it. He must be under the fearful