

He paused, and saw her face was full of colour and her eyes had a glow. Every nerve in her was pulsing hard.

"Tell me," she said presently, "whom do you mean by the bird of red plumage? Is it a mere figure of speech? Or has it a real meaning?"

"It has a real meaning."

He rose to his feet, bent over her and spoke hotly. "Junia, the end of my waiting has come. I want you as I never wanted anything in my life. I must know the truth. I love you, Junia. I have loved you from the first moment I saw you, and nothing is worth while with you not in it. Let us work together. It is a big, big game I'm playing."

"Yes, it's a big game you're playing," she said with emotion. "It is a big, big game, and, all things considered, you should win it, but I doubt you will. I feel there are matters bigger than the game, or than you, or me, or anyone else. And I do not believe in your bird of red plumage; I don't believe it exists. It may have done so, but it doesn't now."

She also got to her feet, and Tarboe was so near her she could feel his hot breath on her cheek.

"No, it doesn't exist now," she repeated, "and the pursuer is not pursued. You have more imagination than belongs to a mere man of business—you're an inexperienced poet."

He caught her hand and drew it to his breast. "The only poetry I know is the sound of your voice in the wind, the laughter of your lips in the sun, the delight of your body in the heavenly flowers. Yes, I've drunk you in the wild woods; I've trailed you on the river; I've heard you in the grinding storm—always the same, the soul of all beautiful things. Junia, you shall not