

## Her Hidden Destiny

She was very pale, there was no tinge of color in her cheeks, and her eyes had lost much of their vivid hue; there were dark circles around her eyes, and her eyes themselves had the brightness of recently shed tears; but the hard rigid hopelessness had faded from her face, and there were a softness in her eyes and a tremulous sweetness about her lips that were new and strange there.

"Barbara!" Lady Rose exclaimed delightedly, and held out two eager hands to her as she came in.

Barbara came and knelt down by the sofa.

"You are better?" she said gently; and there was a tone in her voice which was full of sweetness and sadness.

"You are really better, I hope?"

"Oh, yes; really better," Barbara said, "I am so sorry and ashamed of—"

"Hush! It was no wonder you gave away. Pray think no more of that. You are languid still, I fear."

"I have no more to say at all," Lady Rose said, with a weak little laugh. "Parker had to dress me by degrees and almost to carry me here. But you, dear—you must be terribly weary. Have you been resting?"

"—at least, I have not been lying."

"Why have you not? I kept you selfishly from your rest last night. You are as pale as I am today, Barbara."

"Am I?" Barbara asked softly.

"And yet you look so sweet that I am sorry Edward Keith is not here to see you and kiss you—as I am going to kiss you now."

She drew Barbara's face to hers, and kissed her warmly. Barbara returned the kiss a little shyly, while she shivered slightly at the sound of her lover's name.

"Will you not go and lie down now, dear?" Lady Rose said, wondering at the quiet gentleness of the girl's manner and the wistful sadness of her eyes.

"I am not tired," Barbara answered. "Uncle Norman has been so good, so kind, that he has refreshed and inspired me more than any lying down or sleep could have done."

"He loves you, Barbara."

"I never thought how well he loved me—I never knew it until today," the young girl returned, with a sudden caught breath which was almost a sob.

"It is no wonder," Lady Rose said, smiling. "None of us could have told how strong and true and tender you are but for what has happened! I think, but for you, I should have died yesterday. It seemed two or three times that life was drifting away from me, and only your gentle hands and tender voice kept me here at all."

"We will not talk of it, dear," urged Barbara, gently, her lips quivering as she spoke.

"Let me talk of it," earnestly pleaded her ladyship. "It seems to help me to shake off the terror of it. Barbara, how did you bear it so calmly? When everything came in and told us, it seemed to me that in a moment I saw it all, and that made me faint—and I have no very clear knowledge of what happened after that, but I think that when I was lying down, and I felt your presence, and it seemed to bring me back to life."

"Why distress yourself by recalling it?" Barbara said gently. "You may perhaps make yourself ill again."

"Oh, no, there is no fear. If I talk of it, it may cease to haunt me," returned Lady Rose shudderingly, closing her eyes for a moment. "It is so terrible to remember that while we were dancing, the poor man was lying out in the cold night, dying. If we had known!"

"If we had known!" Barbara echoed, a whisper; then to herself she added, "And I knew!"

"I wonder who could have done it!" continued Lady Rose, holding Barbara's hand tightly. "I have some vague idea of hearing some one say that it was not suicide, but a murder. Poor Mr. Bryant! He was so gay and genial that I can hardly imagine he had an enemy. It seems most dreadful to think that, with scores of people so near, he should have died there alone and unaided."

"They say that death was instantaneous and painless," said Barbara. "No one could have done anything for him." She had sunk down in a sitting position beside the sofa, and with great somber eyes looking into the fire, one hand was clasped by Lady Rose, the other lay on the black bearskin thrown down before the fire.

"It must have been a terrible journey for you yesterday, my poor Barbara!" remarked Lady Rose, after a pause.

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pause. "I hardly remember much of it. You had all the misery to bear alone."

"Mr. Sinclair was with us, you know; he was very kind and thoughtful," Barbara answered, recalling with a slight shiver the swift rush of the train through the falling snow, the dimly lighted carriage, Lady Rose lying livid and deathlike against the dark-blue cushions, moaning faintly at intervals. Mr. Sinclair's grave, compassionate face, and that other terrible object which was so often before her eyes—the terrible remembrance never left her, her awful fear she could not dispel.

"Yes, he was very kind, I think," Lady Rose said musingly. "I always rather liked him. He is terribly in love with you, Barbara," she added lightly.

"In love with me?" Barbara echoed, raising her eyes in amazement almost too great for words.

"Of course he is. Oh, you may look surprised, dear! But, after all, you remember that you are very beautiful; and Mr. Sinclair is but a man, and a young one. And a gentleman—as he is by birth—might see no great inequality between you."

"Inequality between us?" Barbara exclaimed with a strange little laugh. "He might not see it if, as you say, he loves me; and yet I see a great inequality between us."

"Of course—and so there is. He is your uncle's secretary, and even if he were not, you are going to be Lady Keith very soon."

It seemed to Barbara as if she could not much longer bear the strain upon her nerves without breaking down. She was weak and worn from want of rest and the excitement and agitation she had undergone, she must endeavor to win Lady Rose from the subject on which she was dwelling; yet she was too confused herself to suggest another topic.

There was a short silence, then Lady Rose said abruptly—

"The inquest is to be held today, Parker tells me."

"Yes?" responded Barbara.

"Do you know, Barbara, I think I shall never be able to live at Darley again."

"Oh, yes, you will! The horror is fresh now, and it seems impossible; but the feeling will pass. Shall I read to you, Lady Rose? It may divert your thoughts."

"I could not think of letting you weary yourself, dear; besides, it would be useless. Nothing seems to divert my thoughts. Is that three o'clock?" she asked.

"Yes," Barbara answered faintly, thinking that Lord Keith was on his way from Darley now.

"The inquest must be over now. Oh, Barbara, I wonder what the verdict is? I hope they have found it to be suicide. It seems a shade better than murder."

A shudder ran through Barbara's slender drooping figure, and she raised her hand and pressed it to her burning eyes for a moment, then she rose abruptly.

"Don't you think some tea would be refreshing?" she said, speaking with an affectionate gaiety. "It is rather early, is it not? But I suppose there is no law against having afternoon tea at three o'clock?"

"I don't think there is," Lady Rose answered laughing. "Let us have some by all means, Barbara. I am sure it will brighten us up; and I should like to see a little more color in your cheeks before Lord Keith comes. He will never forgive me for tiring you so, Barbara," she added regretfully, as she noticed the languor of the girl's movements and saw that she pressed her hand to her side for a moment as if she were in pain.

"The fire blazed up cheerfully, and presently lights were brought. Outside the snow still fell. Lady Rose talked a little, and Barbara answered; but the girl's thoughts were far away; and presently silence fell upon them.

The girl's thoughts had fled from Elsdale to Darley, and they were traveling swiftly through the falling snow with Edward Keith, back to Stourton. She knew at what hour the train must reach the station, and how long it would be bringing Lord Keith to Elsdale, and as the minutes passed by, a great restlessness grew upon her, her heart began to throb fast, her pulses beat heavily, a great fear, a great yearning crept into the beautiful and eyes. She loosened the laces at her throat; it seemed as if something there were choking her.

Lady Rose watched her, wondering a little, yet with a touch of sympathy, to put her thoughts into words. Suddenly a thought struck her, which she immediately gave expression to.

"Your maid has been telling Parker such a lot about your beautiful trousseau, Barbara; that I have been tormented with curiosity to see some of the triumphs which Worth has had made for his favorite client; I thought perhaps you would let me have a private view of some of them."

"Yes, of course," Barbara answered eagerly. "That is quite a happy thought. Are you well enough to cross the landing to my rooms, or shall we have the things brought here?"

"No, only a small landing—which is fortunate, as some of our staircases are rather trying for invalids."

"Oh, I am not an invalid now!" Lady Rose answered as she rose, and leaning on Barbara's arm, passed out of the room.

As they crossed the landing, there reached them from below the sound of the great hall door of the castle opening to admit a visitor. Lady Rose felt the arm on which she leaned tremble, and Barbara's lips were colorless as they entered the room where a few householders she had fought a fight and conquered.

At the same moment Lord Keith entered the great hall below, and the iron-clamped door closed after him with a heavy clank.

Hortense, looking a little startled at the entrance of her young mistress, Lady Rose, hastened to push a fauteuil toward the latter and to make respectful and eager inquiries about her health, and Barbara's eyes were too dim just then and her senses too confused to notice anything strange in the woman's manner. But when she gave her orders to bring some of her trousseau garments to show Lady Rose she added that perhaps her ladyship could tell them to whom the embroidered shawl which they had brought from Darley belonged; and Barbara did not notice, in their examination of the dainty triumphs of millinery which the maid displayed, that Hortense ignored her request, which Barbara did not repeat.

It would have been very difficult for her to grant it indeed, since the shawl as well as the soiled, mud-stained gown which Barbara had worn as Lillian Vavasour, was in the hands of the police individual who had been so attentive to Mlle. Hortense on the previous night.

CHAPTER XXVII.

Lord Keith's short journey from Arlington had been slightly lengthened by the heavy fall of snow which had made locomotion somewhat difficult, and it was quite dark when the brougham stopped at the castle, the windows of which were nearly all illuminated. The brightly lighted hall almost dazzled the young man as he entered and threw around him the traveling coat. He looked rather worn and haggard in the brilliant light, the servant thought, who came forward to meet him and take his coat, answering his hasty inquiries. The maid who in the library, the man said, and had begged that his lordship would go there to him as soon as he arrived; Lady Rose was somewhat better, but she had not left her own apartments. Miss Hatton was with her, he believed. Would his lordship take any refreshment before he went to the earl?

There was a look of some relief on Lord Keith's face as he went to the library. Anxious as he was to see Barbara, he was not sorry for a respite before being admitted to her presence; he was himself angry and distressed, and he was glad to communicate his tidings to Lord Elsdale before acquainting Barbara with them.

The earl was alone in the library; he was sitting in his arm-chair before the blazing hearth, his head leaning on his hand, in an attitude of dejection. He roused himself as Lord Keith entered, and his face brightened a little. He held out his thin trembling hand to the young man in silence, and the new-comer, that his face was somewhat changed; it looked older and wan and troubled.

"You are not ill, I hope?" the young man said anxiously.

"No, not ill—only a little upset by all this sad business," the earl replied.

"Sit down, Keith. You have but just come."

"Yes. The train was rather late, owing to the weather. You had my telegram, of course?"

"Yes," answered the earl, and a short silence followed.

"The inquest is adjourned until the morning," Lord Keith said, looking into the red glow of the fire rather thoughtfully. "I hardly know whether I am most annoyed or distressed about it. Derrington insists that Barbara ought to be present."

"Barbara?" the earl uttered in a tone of intense surprise and annoyance, as he dropped the hand which shaded his face and looked at Lord Keith.

"Yes—Barbara," the young man said moodily. "Some of the servants have been chattering, and they seem to make out that Barbara saw Bryant on that night either just before he went out or met him in the grounds. Indeed, I hardly had patience to heed what they said."

The earl made no remark; he had leaned his head upon his hand again, and his face was very pale.

After a brief pause Lord Keith resumed:

"For my own part, I do not think Barbara saw him at all after the play was over," he said. "She was tired, and after one walk with me, seemed quite done up, and said she would rest. I left her, and half an hour later she appeared in the bathroom, looking quite well again, and she danced during the rest of the evening as if she did not know what she was doing. In that hour that she was out of the house, she had changed her gown for full ball attire."

"I don't quite understand," said Lord Elsdale, "but you imagine that my adopted daughter knew anything of the murder?"

"They can hardly be insane enough for that," the young man answered with a short laugh. "No, the theory is, I suppose, that she may have seen someone if she was in the grounds, or heard voices, or—"

He rose impatiently and walked a few steps, then came back to the fire. "I can hardly conceive what the police have entered the head of the coroner, or those of the police. It would hardly surprise me if next they suspected Barbara of committing the murder."

Lord Elsdale smiled slightly.

"You are young and impetuous, my dear Edward," he said quietly. "Of course, they are perfectly right to make the investigation as searching as possible. I am sorry for my poor little girl," he added. "She will find it a terrible ordeal, I fear, especially just now."

To be Continued.

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## ODD INCIDENTS AS FIRE RAGED

Some Peculiar Things That Men Noticed in Streets of San Francisco.

Los Angeles, Cal., April 24. — Among the refugees from San Francisco who arrived in Los Angeles today were several New York persons, among them A. Delrymple and C. R. McWilliam.

Mr. Delrymple said: "There was little panic or fright shown by the crowds of people in the streets after the shock."

The first serious incident I recall was a man, with blood streaming from cuts on head and body, carrying a dead woman in his arms. He placed the body on the floor of the court and then told me he had been the janitor of the building, next to the Crocker-Woolworth Bank. The first he knew of the catastrophe he found himself in the basement of the three-story building, his dead wife beside him, and all the belongings they had in their room scattered about them, and the cook stove. The building had simply split in two, and had thrown him and his wife down the three stories into the cellar.

There were other sights which I did not think funny at the time, but which appear ridiculous now. During those hours we forgot that there was anything funny in the world. I saw one big fat man, with a nightgown over his round form, calmly walking on Upper Market street, carrying a huge birdcage in his arms, and the cage was absolutely empty—not a bird in it. The man was as self-possessed as if he were completely dressed, and seemed to enjoy looking at the wrecked buildings.

Another man was leading a huge Newfoundland dog and carrying a kitten in his arms; he kept talking to the kitten. On Fell street I noticed an old lady, scantly dressed, pushing a sewing machine up the hill. She would progress a little, and then become exhausted and rest to her task she went again. That sewing machine was her world.

When I got to the park there was a man toiling in carrying a large carved wooden Japanese statue. That was all he had, and he laid it carefully down on the grass as if it had been his wife or child.

"It seemed as if every person was carrying a photograph of the big trumpet tucked under the arm. I never saw so many photographs in my life. Didn't know that there were that many people who had taken two bicycles, and placing them side by side, he placed a large wooden box on the mattress they had a sewing machine and an oil painting. They were pushing toward the park.

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"There were two men who had taken two bicycles, and placing them side by side, he placed a large wooden box on the mattress they had a sewing machine and an oil painting. They were pushing toward the park."

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