

" 'And serves the jade right, too,' were the next words I heard. 'She might have known what it was to rouse the anger of that devil incarnate.'

" 'Where are we to find this fellow he wants?' said the second voice.

" 'At Minton, on the coast, half a mile from here. His name's Dick Grove. I know him.'

" I started in alarm, as well I might, for the name was mine.

" 'How do you know he'll agree?'

" 'If he doesn't, said the first, with an oath that made my blood run chill, 'a little cold steel will settle the business. But the terms are easier than that; he's to be well paid for holding his tongue, and as he's a poor devil, he'll do anything for money. Oh, he'll agree; there's no trouble about that.'

" The increasing noise of the storm now drowned their voices altogether. I stood for a moment rooted to the ground with terror. That some terrible crime had been, or was to be perpetrated, in which, by some means, I was to be implicated, I plainly saw; and my only idea now was to escape. I started forward, but, as my unlucky fate would have it, I stumbled in the darkness and fell heavily to the ground with a violence that shook the old house.

" I heard, as I lay half stunned, an ejaculation of alarm from the inner room and quick footsteps approaching where I lay. All was now up with me, so I scrambled to my feet just as two men, wearing black crape masks over their faces, entered. Each carried pistols, and one held a dark-lantern, the light of which flashed in my face.

" 'Who are you, sir?' fiercely exclaimed one; and I saw him draw a sword that made my blood curdle.