

"I say," said Fred, "what are you going to do? If I had made such a bungle it would be bad enough, but you, a discreet foggy! How do you mean to get back? You can't stop here."

"I know that well enough," I answered curtly. "But what can have become of the old gentleman? He was precise enough in making his appointment—what's he meant by breaking it? Can you say, Miss Fenchurch? You know him best."

"Perhaps when *you* spoke of the station, *he* understood the other one," suggested Fred quietly. "He may have come by the High Level, you know, behind the organ. Some people do."

"To be sure," cried Charley. "We came from Ludgate Hill. Uncle met Aunt and me there from his office. He said it was about half way between London Bridge and Victoria, and would suit us both. I thought you were going wrong, Mr. Heywood, and I told you so. So it's not my fault, mind. You *would* know better."

It was all clear enough then. Fred had deliberately tricked us, and very likely Charley had helped him. But reproaches were unavailing, and we held a hurried council, and there seemed nothing for it but to walk to Penge, on the chance of a conveyance there. It was a lovely moonlight night, and the distance not far, while the way is smooth enough, and none of us was very tired. Fred was complacently and provokingly resigned; Charley just a little nervous, but more pleased; I felt responsible, but the consciousness of rectitude upheld me; Nell was in high glee, and full of comfort for each of us.

"Harry couldn't help it, could he, Mr. Lockyer? I'm sure *I* never thought of any other station. And, Charley, dear, don't bother about the old people: I'll take you over to Tulse Hill myself the first thing to-morrow, and explain it all. They won't be angry with me, *I know*. Nobody ever is. And now let us enjoy the evening without another thought of them."

So we walked through, past Averley, its dying lights faintly struggling with the moon, and on to Penge, where, as luck would have it, we did find a carriage for hire. It was one of those open vehicles peculiar to the district, and happily to be discovered in no other inhabited clime. The driver was a tipsy yokel; his wheels ungreased, and his harness a fragile intricacy; the horse a raw-boned stumbling quadruped, whom it would be the grossest flattery to style a screw. And yet, to us it was an ethereal chariot, to which the Lord Mayor's veiled its splendors. We four were, you will say, alone, and of conversation there was assuredly scant brilliancy. But beside us sat invisible Hope and Faith and young Ambition, while before, along the Kentish roads, gleamed the glowing future glittering with successes to be won. You and I, Nelly, had then our fortunes to make or mar. These others, who had