

Slowly the procession wound along the *plage*, and back upon Chris's memory flashed the day when she and Cinders had waited at the garden gate to see the soldiers pass. She saw again the handsome face of the young officer marching behind his men, the sudden animation leaping into it at sight of her, the eagerness with which he turned to greet her, his momentary hesitation at her request, his smiling surrender. What would have happened, she asked herself, if he had managed to resist her that day? Had that been the beginning of his downfall? Might he otherwise have passed on unscathed?

A sudden sense of coldness assailed her. The street below was empty. She stood alone. She leaned her head against the window-frame. How grey it was!

"Sit down!" said Max practically.

She started. "Oh, Max!" she said weakly.

"Here you are," he said, and guided her down into a chair. "That's the way. Now lean back and shut your eyes."

She obeyed him, without question, as she always did. A vague sense of consolation began to steal through her. His hand, holding hers, dispelled the loneliness.

After a while she opened her eyes and found him watching her. "Oh, Max," she said, "I'm so glad you are here."

"It seems as well," he rejoined, rather grimly. "Don't you think it's time you began to behave rationally?"

"Have I been very silly?" she asked.

"Very, I should say." He sat down on the arm of her chair, and drew her head to lean against him, a very rare demonstration with him.

She relaxed with a sigh. "I can't help it," she said wistfully. "I used to think life was just splendid—it was good to be alive. And now—I sometimes wish I'd never been born."

"Which is a mistake," said Max. "There's no time for that sort of thing. Besides, it's futile."