

THE WONDER WOMAN

"I am very sure I shall never ask for that, Wanza. Joey brought me a letter. She is not coming back this year."

"Not coming back?"

"She may never come again to Hidden Lake, Wanza. We may never see her again."

"But I don't understand, David Dale!—oh, I thought some day you would marry—you and she."

Her voice was uneven and very low.

"Child," I said gravely, "it is not to be. She cares for me only as a friend. And I—"

"You love her—you know you do!"

She spoke passionately.

"Wanza," I said thoughtfully, "it has been a long winter, hasn't it?"

"Pretty long," she answered, surprised.

"You have learned much this winter."

"Yes, Mr. Dale."

"And I have learned, too—without knowing it. I have learned very gradually that I do not love Judith Batterly—so gradually, indeed, that I did not realize until to-day the extent of my knowledge. She told me in her letter it was so—then I knew."

She sat very still, her head thrown back, her eyes on the sky. The stirring leaves made