

Then, the next day, crash came the dream-ski all about me.

I was riding in the Central Park and he joined me. I saw at once he was changed; and my glad smile died away at his constrained formal greeting.

He struck the blow at once, with scarcely a word of preamble.

"I am leaving for Europe to-morrow, Miss von Dreschler," he said. "I have enjoyed New York immensely."

The chill of dismay was too deadly to be concealed. I gripped the pommel of the saddle with twitching, strenuous fingers.

"You have been called away suddenly?" I asked; my instinct being thus to defend him even against himself.

He paused, as if hesitating to use the excuse I offered.

"No," he answered. "It has been arranged for weeks. These things have to be with us, you know."

In a flash his baseness was laid bare to me; and the first sensation of numbing pain dumbed me. I had not then acquired the art of masking my feelings. But anger came to my relief, as I realized how he had intentionally played with me. I knew what a silly trusting fool I had been; and knew too that had I been a man, I would have struck him first and killed him afterwards for his dastardly