

her eyes, and led her out into the sunshine. Then he went back into the sitting-room, and flung a single lighted match upon the floor. Blue threads of fire flickered across the carpet, and tiny flames, scarcely visible in the bright light, leaped up and danced round the legs of chairs and tables. He stood by the door and waited till half the room was a pool of fire. Then he rejoined Joan Endermine.

"Now, dear," he said, gently, "if you will take my arm, and trust yourself to me—"

She looked up at him and smiled. "I will trust myself to you—always, Ralph."

"Even when you cannot see where you are going?"

"Yes, even then," she answered. And they walked down the narrow green lane that ran straight from the house to the landing-stage.

In the sunlight the scorched and blackened island lay on either side like a hideous waste laid bare by a torrent of molten lava. Behind them the smoke was already rising from the house in a stream that the wind swept eastwards. Before them lay the blue and sparkling ocean—a clean and wholesome contrast to the foul blot that lay upon its surface. Beyond the horizon—Lowick wondered what they might find there, as day after day that horizon fled before them into the east. It might be happiness; it might be death. But whether it were happiness or death, it would bring them peace.

A mile from land Lowick took the bandage from Joan Endermine's eyes, and she gazed back at the island for more than a minute without speaking. Then she placed her hand on Lowick's shoulder, and looked ahead at the sparkling sea.

"You must teach me to handle the boat," she said, "so that I can look after it while you sleep."

He laughed. "You aren't a bit afraid now, are you?" he queried.

"Not while I am with you," she replied.

"I think it is a good boat," he said, "and unless we get very bad weather—"

"A dead calm would be worse than a storm," she answered.

He glanced back over his shoulder, and saw a thin, black object, that moved steadily behind them as though it were being towed by the boat. Ripples parted from it on either side.

"What is that, Ralph?" she asked, following his glance with her own eyes.

"A shark, dear. If he's hungry, he's wasting his time."

The girl did not answer, but she pressed her lips more tightly together and shivered.

"I hope the wind will hold," she said, after a pause.

"We are going to have more of it, Joan. It will be all the better if it freshens a bit. We're rather under-cannvassed at present. We can do with a good strong breeze."

Joan made no reply. She looked back at the dorsal fin of the shark. That tiny object moving relentlessly after them made a deeper impression upon her mind than the thought of what wind and wave could do to them. For two minutes she did not speak; then she placed one of her hands upon the tiller.

"Teach me to sail the boat," she said, gently. "I must learn to do that—at once."

Colonel Endermine sat before the fire in his study, his feet on the fender, and an old briarwood pipe in his mouth. A morning paper lay upon his knees, but though he had only read part of it, and the paper contained columns of news of the most vital importance to every Englishman, it was disregarded for the present, and several minutes had elapsed since the Colonel had ceased to read.

In another chair, a little further away from the fire, sat Mrs. Endermine, close to a table on which rested her work-box. She was embroidering a stole for the vicar of the parish, and she seemed to take but little interest in her work, for every now and then

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