

## SISTERS THREE

Continued from Friday.

Chapter XXXIV.

For one tense moment Gipsy stood quite still, frozen with horror; but the following moment all her self-possession and presence of mind had returned to her.

She realised in that moment just what had happened.

Morwenna Gull's excited and morbid brain had been unhinged by the words she had heard from Jim and by what she had learned of the plan to remove her and her father from the immediate neighborhood of Gaston's Keep.

She knew also where Gaston Lebreton was. Doubtless she had seen him take his boat round the Reef, and had guessed that he went to bathe—as the rain ceased and the sun began to shine—in that favourite creek of his where the afternoon sun shone warm and full.

She had fled upwards to the down land, knowing how often he left his boat there, safe in the narrow cove, and took the upward path to warm himself after his dip.

And she had come hither, full of wild thoughts—how wild and fierce Gipsy had yet to learn—and here she was, crouching over the edge of the cleft, poised in her hand a great stone to launch upon the head of the man whose whistle could be heard coming up from the creek below.

Let but such a weight fall upon a man's head or strike him anywhere and he must fall headlong into the gulch beneath, for the path was unprotected and the drop sheer.

Gipsy's brain reeled, but her eyes were wary. There was yet a few seconds of time in which to act, for Gaston was still too far down for the threatened attack to be made.

Morwenna apparently realised this for she put down the great stone out of her hands, stepped back a few paces, and seemed to be arranging something in her dress.

Now was Gipsy's chance. She gave imperative signs to Keeper; dog and girl started at the same instant. The next moment Morwenna had measured her length upon the short turf at the edge of the gap. The dog was standing over her as though to guard her from rolling over, and Gipsy had seized the great stone in her hands and was sending it rolling down the steep slope, where it bounded harmlessly for a time and then came to a standstill among the boulders from which it had been torn.

"You wicked, you murderous slut!" she cried. "I saw the thing you meant to do! How could you? How could you?"

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In a crevice, Gaston's stalwart figure towered above her, and the daylight as he came about her.

"Take care, Gaston! Take care! She is mad!"

Indeed it looked like it. For the wild girl with streaming black hair had leaped aside and dodged between the boulders, without his master's word. He had balked her for half a minute—time in which to let Gaston push Gipsy into a place of security where he could guard her—but now she was bearing down upon them, her eyes blazing, her lips drawn back like those—as Gipsy remembered—of the mad wolf which she had seen once as though about to spring at her throat.

But this human assailant was in some aspects almost more dreadful than the beast escaped from the menagerie, for Morwenna cried aloud:

"You shan't have her! You shan't have her! I will kill her first, as I would have killed you but a moment ago if she and her dog had not balked me! Stand aside, Gaston Lebreton, or you shall die together! Live together you shall not! I will take care of that—I, Morwenna, the witch's daughter, the weaver of spells!"

"Morwenna, drop that knife!" Cold, clear, quite calm, Gaston's words came, and though Gipsy could not see his face, she was certain that his dark, unwavering glance was fixed full upon the crimson, distorted countenance of the wild fisher-girl.

Who held aloft in her threatening hand the shining blade, which looked every instant as though it would descend in a wicked, jabbing stroke against Gaston's unprotected body. The girl gasped in her anxiety and fear; but she saw that beneath Gaston's steady gaze the wild eyes of Morwenna wavered for an instant—just for an instant; but that was enough. In that moment Gaston took the wrist of his ward and gripped the wrist of the other hand gripped the knife just below the blade. Even so the breathless struggle, for the girl's fingers clutched his arm like a vice. But the man's strength prevailed. The knife went flying through the air down to the bottom of the ravine. They heard the sullen splash as it reached the water, and Morwenna, uttering a cry of baffled rage, fell upon Gaston like a wild cat.

Gaston's dog had been a silent watcher of the scene; now he became an active participant in it.

"No teeth," shouted Gaston in time. But the weight of the huge hound upon her back frightened the mad girl, took her off her balance, and for the second time prostrated her upon the ground.

"Guard her!" said Gaston, briefly to his great hound, Woten; and the huge beast laid a firm paw upon the girl's body, so that she knew it to be useless to try to rise.

A flood of words poured from her lips. Gipsy did not understand one-third. It seemed less the English language, and it sounded as though she was invoking upon Gaston's head every plague and blight her distorted mind could think of.

Gaston looked at her with an odd sort of expression upon his face, vigilant, stern, yet not without some latent sense of a certain grim humor in the scene.

Once he turned his eyes upon Gipsy with a question in them.

"Will you go? The fun of the fair is over. Do you care about the anticlimax?" he seemed to say. Her eyes gave answer—"I'll see it out!" He smiled and nodded. Then he turned his attention once more to Morwenna, who had moved into a sitting posture, but was not suffering by the dog to do more. She seemed to have noted the glances passing between Gaston and Gipsy, and her railings rose higher and higher; she shook her arms with violent menacing ges-



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