

"Margery admits it. And I want two minutes' talk with Freddie."

Tired though her brain was, Gloria had never known it to work so quickly. It was but a moment since she had thought of a shooting "accident" as her one chance of escape; in another she could send Norman upstairs to set her free. If ever a man deserved to be killed, it was Freddie. . . .

A single report; turmoil of hurrying feet; ringing of bells and slamming of doors. In less than five minutes it would all be over; her stolid policeman would be marching Norman away. One shot. . . .

Gloria gripped her chair and prayed for courage.

It was no good. She, she of all people was going to save Freddie because she could not bear the noise of a revolver-shot echoing and echoing through the silent house. Blood? There was plenty of that in hospital. And once, in an air-raid, she had seen the wooden shutters of a shop-window splattered with brains. But that noise, which she would never be able to forget! And the eternity of waiting while Norman tiptoed upstairs. That was enough to drive any one mad. . . .

"I'm . . . *thankful* he's not here! And you may be thankful too." . . .

"There's only one way of treating gentry like that."

"But, Norman, you don't want to be tried for *murder*? What good will that do? To Margery, yourself, your child? You must be mad to *dream* of such a thing! If that's a revolver in your pocket, take out the cartridges and give it to me. Then swear to me by the head of your *son* that you won't do anything violent. If you don't do just what I tell you, I shall send for the police. . . . But that won't be necessary, will it? You don't want your son to be brought up without a father because his father . . . has been *hanged* . . . for murder. Norman, please! . . . Unload it first . . . oh, and put it in this drawer, I don't want to touch it; these things frighten me out of my life."

Obediently as though he were hypnotized, Norman emptied the cartridges on to a table and tossed the revolver into a drawer. For a moment he stood as though wondering what to do next, then collapsed over the back of a chair and lay torn with tearless weeping. If she had been frightened before by the blood-lust in his eyes, Gloria was more frightened now by his inarticulate moaning; in an older man she would have looked for a stroke, in a man of any age she expected nothing less than a physical bursting of heart. So even Norman Cartwright sometimes betrayed his emotions!