



way side by side. Terry thought they were both perfect. Neither showed that petty jealousy women of the world would in like events. Shem greeted greeted Zane as if accustomed to meeting daily.

"Terry Denver will remain with us a month." "Yes." "I am glad, Shem." "It will be better, I think; he may find it lonely, but a month is not long. Zell, will you and Terry Denver come to the cave in the morning? You have never been up the hill yet."

The four talked, sat silent, did everything that four people so placed would do, then the dark began to follow the light and Zane took her departure. "I will go with you, Zane," said Terry, and they said no more until out of hearing, then Zane spoke. "It did not take till eventide to sow the seed, did it, Terry Denver?" "Has it been sown?" "Yes." "I am sorry."

"Why?" "I do not know." "Ah! but you do know." "Well, I will not say." "There, that is better and quite different. I will tell you. You think you love us both. You will need some great stimulus to help you decide, further than that I will not say."

CHAPTER VII. AHS passed uneventfully but for trips to Zell's and then to Zane's. The cave was a source of delight to Zell. She learned to use the paddle and passed hours on the water. Terry watching her from the shore. How pleased he was to see her, if only to paddle Zane knew as much, and more than he did. With her pleasure lay in her ability to her quiet mode of expressing herself. It was like listening to some rare sweet music, pathetic in the extreme. Zell was always serious as a bird. Zane was at times a little sad, but always pleased to talk with Terry about what she knew theoretically and he

knew practically. One day the three were sitting at the foot of the incline. This had become the favorite place for conversation.

"Zell, will you sing for us?" "Why, Zane, I cannot sing. Father Ambrose can, the birds can, but not Zell. Wait though. Sit back near the rock. There, that will do. Now, you must not speak or move, and we will have some singing." She went a short distance from them. Sitting down she clasped her hands around her knee, throw back her head and whistled clear and sweet the oriole's call to its mate, then paused. From away up the mountain an answer came, almost inaudible. Again she whistled the oriole's warbling call. This time the answer was nearer. Terry and Zane looked up, and in the air above them a bright plumaged oriole could be seen circling around and around, lowering at every circle. Lower it came, answering Zell's call as it flew. With fluttering wings it hovered a moment over her, then it lit on her knee, that was caught between her hands. Now Zell broke into a prolonged whistle, a perfect imitation of the oriole's song. Terry had never heard a dnet equal to that one, and tears dimmed the dark eyes of Zane. Full and fuller the bird sang. Clearer and more musical whistled Zell. The bird's throat seemed almost bursting with its load of song. A scream of terror put to flight both bird and music. Zell sprang to her feet, darted to Terry, and clung to him in subject terror, calling to them to save her. Burying her face she pointed backward.

"They looked, and there so near, so dangerously near to where Zell had been, lay a large rattle-snake, its tawny body coiled, its head raised about a foot, swaying from side to side, its eyes, glistening like black diamonds. "Terry, Zane, save me!" "Keep quiet, don't move," he whispered, "and do not cling to me, let me go Zell." "No, no, do not leave me!" In the meantime Zane had caught her fluttering draperies firmly, and noiselessly as the approach of night she crept toward the reptile. With an electric-like movement she seized the swaying snake just behind the jaws, a swift, strong jerk, and the long writhing body swung over her head. She held the neck stiff swinging the body around and around until the motion was very rapid, so rapid that the body remained quite straight. Now against the rock she allowed it to strike with all the strength it had gathered in its rotations. The body hung limply, a slight quiver showed that life was not quite extinguished. Again she swung it, striking it against the rock several times, then dropped it a lifeless, brained mass, on the path.

"Poor thing, it was cruel to kill it," was her only comment. "You are brave, Zane. Come Zell, the danger is dead." "Oh, Terry, I am so afraid of snakes. Throw it into the Tana, do. It is the only living thing I am afraid of. Zane, what can I do for you?" Zane first threw the dead reptile into the water, then came to poor trembling Zell.

"You can teach me to talk to the birds as you do. I do not know why, but the birds seem afraid of me, while snakes seem part of myself. It hurt me to kill it even to save you, Zell." "Were you not afraid to touch it, they are so venomous?" asked Terry. "I don't think so. I have been reading about snakes and learned that to strike the tail proved fatal. I wished to experiment, and was pleased to have the

she waved it aloft above her head. It was a beautiful specimen. Come, Zell, you must not look so white. It was nothing. I know its habits or I would have been more frightened than you were, then it was you and your pretty hair its silver was dimmed at. I was not in danger." Zell continued sobbing like a frightened child. Terry leaned against the rock and watched the two so alike and yet not alike. He thought they both appeared to any reason for appearing. What a command of knowledge Zane has, and she has that ability to put her knowledge into practice we so seldom find. What intensity what independence! Like all these in women. Then what winning dependence, childlike simplicity and alluring coyness Zell has. I like these traits in women equally as well. If Zell were but educated, then could he said. "Why do you say you think the snake

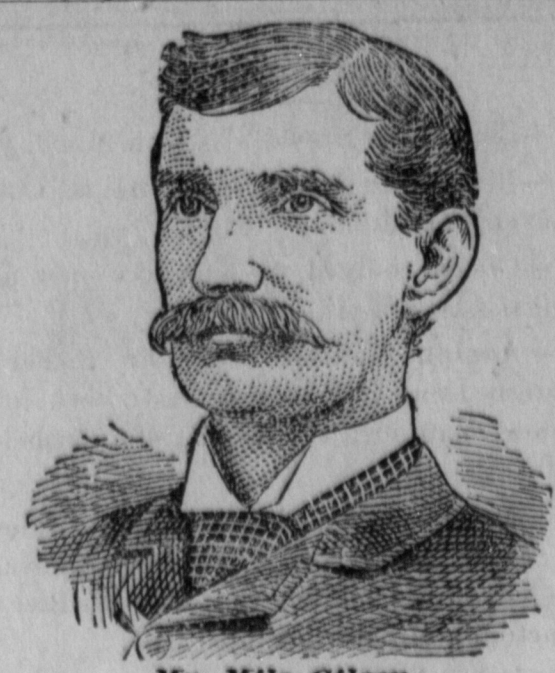
a part of yourself, Zane?" "You so seldom ask questions, Terry Denver, I will answer this one—for experiment. The snake has a kind of power over its prey, but not mesmeric as some affirm. I believe it knows nearly every living creature fears it. This knowledge gives it power. If it did not know we feared it, it would certainly fear us. I have a power over animal life wholly magnetic. I know I have this power; I know I can make things do my will. When I think of this power a dull, surging sensation creeps over me and I crave the pleasure of folding something living in my arms and slowly, slowly as does the snake, crush out the life from its pulsing body. I have read of no other animal other than myself and snakes who thus find pleasure."

She looked into Terry's eyes intently a moment, then smiled. "Do you mean to say you could influence me against my will?" "Yes." "Why do you not do it?" "There is too much of the woman in me." "I do not understand." "I would like to win the man I thought worth winning." He seemed to look into her inmost self, then cruelly indifferent he turned to Zell and asked: "What would Zell do?" "I do not know what you mean by 'win a man.' Will we go home? I want Shem. Oh, Terry! is Zane a cloud grand, like the sun. I feel like a cloud that shuts out her warm light. If the wind would only blow me away then the sun could shine as it would like to." Zell knew not how true she had spoken. She was the cloud, without a doubt, through which the glory of Zane shone but fitfully. Yet clouds are lovely misty necessities. "Little Zane, you are a worshipper of the sun, I believe, and you draw queer comparisons."

Shem met them and Zell told of the snake. "Zane is brave past understanding. She is unique." "Hush, Shem; you are too enthusiastic altogether in your praise of a successful experiment. I am hungry; make haste and serve me." They were soon seated around the table chatting gaily, the incident of the snake quite forgotten. After the sun went down Terry and Zane started for the cave. He looked forward to those long walks with Zane. She was mentally all he wished. While with Zell they could not talk of anything out beyond, or of books. Zane found Terry a severe critic. The moon shone brightly when they gained the platform. Ishmael waited them. He stood with his hands clasped inertly before him, a weary, waiting expression slightly marring the fine face. "Zane, then art late. I feel me strangely weary this night. My power is fiftal, and the past will return."

"I have been selfish leaving thee long alone." She drew a seat to the platform and made him sit down. She patted softly the aged cheeks and stroked the silvered hair until the irritation vanished. Terry sat down near them; he always liked to hear these people talk when they were in earnest conversation or deeply moved, for then they used the reverent "thee" and "thou" that sounded so in harmony with the surroundings and the people themselves. Ishmael continued: "What wilt thou do, Zane, when my spirit leaves this sphere for another? Sit at my feet, while I question thee. Dip deep into the future and tell me what is for thee. Dost thou not love Terry Denver?" "Oh! hush, Shem, talk not so. Love is not for me. To thee I gave myself till thou or I went hence. Let me dip into the future. The future for Ishmael and Zane is short; more, I cannot, will not see. Oh! ye fate, ye powers supreme, wilt thou not give me longer life and love? Ishmael! Ishmael!" She knelt before him and threw her arms around his neck.

"Ishmael, I go hence with all the bitter, searing sorrow of having given my love unsought. Oh, the pain of it! Give me comfort, Ishmael, I, too, am strangely weary this night." The aged man drew Zane to him. He had regained his wonted vigor. Close he held her, playfully he petted her. "Tis the first time since childhood, Zane, that thou hast asked for comfort. I thought thee a complete being, but thou, too, art human. Would that I could spare thee this sorrow. Would that I could give thee eternal youth, that in the distant future some one would find thee my priceless jewel, and set thee a flawless diamond, in that most glorious crown of manhood, his home. Let me cheat old Father Time. I will hide thee, my Zane, hide all thy glowing beauty beneath this flag of age. Now, when Father Time goes by it will only be an aged face he will find to wither with his frowning touch, and thou wilt nestle beneath thy mantle of snow, a homie had waiting to bloom." The old man drew his long white hair and beard over the kneeling, weeping girl completely covering her. Terry arose and hurried from the spot. Down the hill he strode deep in thought. He passed when half way down the incline, to enjoy the soothing presence of night. A slight sound, in the rock he thought arrested his attention. Again he found the time quite distinct as if a bolt had been drawn. Terry, now thoroughly astonished, saw a large portion of what he had supposed solid rock swing back into the mountain, exposing a dimly lit aperture. Two men emerged carrying a canoe. Neither spoke and Terry recognized them as two of the men he had seen in Ishmael's cave. The rock fell to place again and all was dark, but for the light of the moon. He followed the men as they hastened down the hill. Their actions were like those of guided imbeciles, yet every movement brought the stunner result. The two worked as one man. One object seemed in view all else sank into



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