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freeze a fellow," he declared, in an aggrieved tone. "Don't you ever intend to be all friendly with me Miss Loraine? Have I done anything to offend you?"

She was about to answer him, when a name, carelessly mentioned by someone on the other side of the table, deprived her of the power of speech, and drained the color from her face.

"I heard a curious thing about Vivian West the other day. The woman who was down here in the summer as Lady Gildare's nurse turns out to be his mother. History does not record who the father was."

"By Jove! Sir Henry cried, looking up. 'Is this a fact? I always thought the fellow had no breeding."

"What a come-down for him!" another exclaimed.

"He has found his level now," the first speaker said. "Poor West! he was a nice fellow, and had decided talent. He was one of the lights that flare up and go out. Just season everyone was raving about him; he could have married any girl he chose to ask. In a month or so there will hardly be a soul who will remember his name."

The man who was talking was one of those blundering people who are always finding themselves in unpleasant predicaments.

It now suddenly flashed upon him that his host's sister-in-law, was sitting opposite to him, had been engaged to Vivian West. He stopped with a jerk, grew red and uncomfortable, and would have plunged into another topic had not Sir Henry insisted upon keeping to the one under discussion.

"He has married, or is going to marry, the girl poor Metherell was engaged to. There was some intrigue going on the whole time, any fool can see that."

"He was so handsome," the lady on Sir Henry's right sighed.

"A good-looking adventurer. Well—with a laugh—he was clever enough to take us all in."

Lady Ayerest had no idea what was taking place at the other end of the long table; but, happening to catch a glimpse of Shirley's ashen face, she gave the signal to rise.

The movement, the effort of walking steadily and naturally from the room, brought a little colour to the girl's cheeks.

"What was the matter?" Madge inquired, as they reached the hall.

"The heat," Shirley said, shortly. "or, perhaps, the horror of having to spend a couple of hours in Captain Kemp's society."

When Shirley slept that night she dreamed of Dorrien; when she awoke she thought of him.

It was awful to think of any man dying like that, and yet how could she help him?

Long before it was light, Shirley lay tossing to and fro, striving to think of some plan by which she might at least carry Dorrien a few necessities. At length she saw her way to doing this.

She would drive to Metherell Court, to inquire after Sir Martin, and return by the road skirting the wood.

It would be possible to smuggle some things into the cart, and, with this end in view, she took one of the blankets from her bed, and neatly rolled it in a rug.

She got downstairs when only the servants were about, and filled a flask with brandy.

At breakfast, she boldly stated her intention of driving over to Coddington, if she might have a trap.

"On a day like this?" Madge exclaimed. "It is raining."

"I don't mind that," Shirley declared, eagerly. "Can I have something to drive?"

"If you really want to go; but I think it very foolish."

Two or three of the men begged to be allowed to accompany her, and one of the girls said she would like to go, too.

"I'm like you," she said. "I don't mind the rain in the least. I always think it does your complexion good."

Shirley felt almost despairing.

The men she could put off, but Lily Harding was not so easily got rid of.

She seemed determined to go, and was blissfully unconscious that her society was not desired.

But at the eleventh hour, when Shirley

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was becoming desolate, and was revolving in her mind the advisability of partly taking her into her confidence, Miss Harding changed her mind, because she found the wind was in the east.

"Nothing makes one so hideous as an east wind," she said; and stayed at home. As it cut Shirley's eyes, and pierced her through, she blessed it, and thanked it, and felt it had indeed, been a friend in need.

Arriving at Metherell Court, she heard that Sir Martin lay in much the same condition as he had been in during the past six weeks.

Though every moment, that morning, appeared precious to her, she felt it was impossible to go away without seeing the man who had always been kind to her.

Every corner of the now silent and gloomy house seemed fraught with memories.

To stand in the great hall, or to peep into the rooms, was like stepping back into the past.

Voices that were silent spoke to her; faces that had passed away came and smiled at her.

She thought of the gay party that had assembled there for the celebration of Gilbert's coming-of-age.

She saw herself running down the wide, shallow stairs, up which she was now slowly and sorrowfully passing, and a wonder crossed her mind at the careless happiness of those bygone days.

She reached the closed door of Sir Martin's room; a nurse opened it, and she crept to the bedside and tenderly kissed the poor drawn face upon the pillow.

The fingers of the nerveless hand faintly pressed here, and the haggard eyes looked yearningly into hers with that desperate question in them which she could not understand, and which made her heart bleed with pity.

She stayed some little time with him, talking of things she fancied might please and interest him.

When at last she rose to go, he struggled to utter one word, again and again, while Shirley strove with all her might to understand, the tears running down her cheeks, because of those that were drenching his.

"It is always the same thing," the nurse said. "It is something or someone he wants."

"Oh, if I could only understand!" Shirley cried, and then—was it that the articulation was a little clearer, or was it that her straining brain suddenly grasped the desire he so frantically tried to express? "Vivian," she said, and such a look passed over the worn features that she knew she was right.

"It is Vivian West whom you want?"

The lips moved.

"I will send to him."

When she had gone, Sir Martin Metherell sank into a deep quiet sleep.

There was a smile on his face and an expression of peace which made the nurse pause to look at him, and think what a handsome man he must have been.

To write to Vivian West, under the circumstances, seemed to Shirley an almost impossible thing for her to do.

Yet, it had to be done, or she must ask someone else to do it.

The only person she could think of was Madge; yet, if Madge consented to write, she would speak of it to Sir Henry, and she—Shirley—would probably have to endure the torture of having it discussed, or hearing Vivian's name lightly mentioned, or, worse still, in tones of contempt.

Then, too, how was she to find him?—he was in London, that was all she knew.

She had reached the wood before she had arrived at any answer to this problem.

Fastening the horse securely to a tree, she drew from the cart such things as she had been able to collect at Royal Heath and purchase in Coddington.

Her arms were full, and more than once she had to rest before reaching the cave.

As she stood at the opening, and laid her burden down, a sudden fear assailed her that the man might have perished in the night.

She called softly to him there was no answer.

She timidly took a few steps into the darkness, and, crouching down, stretched out her hand.

It touched a head.

He was lying where she had left him.

She had brought matches and a candle with her.

With trembling fingers she lighted it, and fixed it on a large, flat stone.

As she did so Dorrien moved, then started up, his wild eyes peering at her.

"You!" he cried, hoarsely. "Have you brought anyone with you? Have you set that cat on my track? All night I heard her creeping about, searching for me. She will never rest until she has revenged herself. If she found me lying here, helpless, she would torture me. Ah! what is that? Save me! Don't let her come!"

He pointed, with a shaking finger, at his own shadow.

Shirley saw that he was delirious, and endeavored to soothe him, though his ravings filled her with terror.

"I have told no one," she declared. "I have come here quite secretly. I have brought you food, and these things to keep you warm."

She did what she could for him, feeding him like a child.

After a while he grew calmer.

She remained with him as long as she dared; then, having placed within his reach the things she had brought, she knelt beside him and uttered a short prayer.

It was a strange scene—the man lying stretched on his bed of leaves and ferns, his eyes staring up at the shadowy roof of the cave, the girl with her clasped hands and beautiful, tender face, praying for the soul of one who was steeped to the lips in sin.

As Shirley left the cave and walked quickly away, a man, who had been hiding behind a tree, came from his place of concealment and stealthily followed her,

never making his presence known until she had reached the road and was looking in some consternation, at a riding horse tethered beside her own.

Then he came juncly forward and lifted his hat.

"Good afternoon, Miss Loraine."

The voice was the last on earth that Shirley wished to hear, and the owner of it quite the last person she wished to meet.

"Captain Kemp!" she said, in a tone of annoyance. "I had no idea you were here."

"Apparently not," he said with an unpleasant laugh. "May I ask who the friend is you were so romantically visiting just now?"

She saw at once that he had been watching her.

"You have been playing the spy," she said, with a curl of the lip. "A very manly action."

"There was nothing unmanly," he hastily declared. "I saw you go into the wood. I followed you. What I saw was such a surprise to me, that, on the spur of the moment, I—er—hid. Of course, if you want to keep it dark you can trust me. You know I am only your slave. You know—he came a step nearer to her—"that I love you."

"Please do not speak of it!" she cried, imploringly. "I do not love you—I am quite sure you are aware of that. But, if you will not mention what you have seen to-day, I shall be very grateful to you."

"That is a cold word," he said, "when I want so much more."

"You want," she said, "what I cannot give."

"You can give me yourself."

Her face flushed hotly with disgust.

"I do not even like you," she said. "I am sorry, but it is better to tell you the truth."

He laughed.

"You don't know your own mind. You are only a girl. Just think of what I can give you—any amount of pretty things to wear, and a home to be proud of."

She thought of the new red brick erection, with the patent window-fasteners, and shuddered.

No, thank you, she said.

His face turned a deeper red at that faint disdair of her tone, but he kept his temper under control.

"Both Sir Henry and Lady Ayerest are in favour of me," he argued.

"That does not raise you in my estimation."

She crossed the road, and began to unfasten her horse, which was becoming impatient.

He followed, and offered his services, which she gravely declined.

"Thank you; I can manage quite well myself."

"You are very independent."

She did not consider that this remark required an answer.

Her chief desire now was to escape from him as quickly as possible.

He watched her swiftly-moving hands with an ill-tempered sneer.

Then, as she lightly sprang into the cart, he took hold of the reins, and looked up at her.

"You treat me as if you hated me," he said, angrily; "yet you expect me to obey your slightest word. You have behaved to me always in an abominable manner. What right have you to expect anything from me?"

"I expect nothing," she replied coldly. "I have just asked me to keep a secret for you."

"I imagined you had sufficient gentlemanly feeling for that."

"How do I know that it isn't my duty to tell your sister of what you are doing? Don't you think it looks uncommonly queer—a young lady comes out on the sly and carries things to a man hiding in the woods? It is a common tramp why this secrecy? Why not tell the police, and have him removed to the workhouse?"

Shirley was well aware that her conduct would shock and horrify all those amongst whom she lived; she did not feel at all comfortable about it herself.

She was helping a suspected murderer to hide from the police.

Her warm, impulsive nature had been touched by the man's miserable condition.

Viewing her behavior in a purely common-place light, it was preposterous.

She felt certain that no one would understand the feelings which had prompted her to do what she had done.

An expression of perplexity crossed her face, and the thought in her mind escaped her lips.

"Oh! if there were only someone to advise me."

"Cannot I?" he said, eagerly, his bad temper vanishing. "There is nothing I

would not do for you. I swear there is nothing I would not do to help you!"

She hesitated, and he went on, quickly—"You think I'm the sort of fellow who can't be serious about anything, but there you're mistaken. I am in love with you, and there isn't a thing I wouldn't do for you. If you will try me, you'll see."

He was very much in earnest; perhaps he had never been so much so before.

He felt that, to gain her trust and confidence, to share a secret with her, would be taking a very long step towards gaining her.

Hitherto she had kept him outside the pale of her slightest friendship; she had never accepted the smallest service at his hands.

Probably it was the difficulty of obtaining what he desired which made it appear so necessary to his happiness.

During the brief minute that Shirley sat in the dogcart and reflectively and perplexedly scanned her companion's gravely pleading countenance, she managed to take a survey of all her friends and admirers, trying to find amongst them one to be trusted, competent to give advice, and near enough to help her.

For, if anything was to be done, it must be done at once.

In that moment of doubt, Captain Kemp appeared the only person possessing these three advantages.

She was suddenly afraid of what she had done.

She was weak enough to hope that Madge would never hear of her escapade; for, if Madge knew, Mrs. Loraine would know, and that would mean an inexhaustable subject for discussion and lecturing.

"You really mean," she said, questioningly, "that I may trust you just as a friend, nothing more? I mean—growing rather red and confused—"I mean that, if I trust you, you won't expect anything but—well, thanks for anything you may have done?"

"I will expect nothing," he declared, emphatically, knowing it to be a lie.

But Shirley took him at his word, and, dismounting from her elevated position recounted as briefly as possible, her adventure of the day before.

He listened in intense surprise.

Never for one instant had he imagined the person whom Shirley had so mysteriously visited to be any other but some sick beggar, who had worked on the girl's feelings, with a pitiful tale of want.

But for that gaunt, ragged spectacle he had caught sight of to be Dorrien—Dorrien, who belonged to the same club as himself, and who, before his disappearance had moved in the same circle of friends!

It did not seem possible.

It could not be possible.

Shirley, however, swept his doubts aside. It was Captain Dorrien.

It was no one else.

He was in the last stage of starvation and wretchedness, she told him, with a pathetic quiver in her voice.

He had declared he was innocent of Gilbert Metherell's death; but he was hiding, she was not quite sure from whom.

In his raving it seemed to be from a woman.

He had implored her to tell no one of his whereabouts.

He had begged to be allowed to die in peace.

"The man must have gone out of his mind," Captain said, with conviction. "But one thing is quite clear. Our duty—he took special pleasure in saying 'our'; it seemed to bring him so much nearer to her—'our duty is to have him instantly removed to the hospital. Well, if we allowed him to remain there in that helpless condition, and the truth leaked out, we should probably be charged with manslaughter, and also with harboring a felon. Besides, it is better for the poor fellow to be taken care of. You drive home, say nothing about our meeting. I'll arrange everything and keep your name out of it."

Shirley did as she was bid, feeling greatly relieved in her mind, and nearer to liking Captain Kemp than she had ever been in the whole course of her acquaintance with him.

Then other thoughts—thoughts in which Vivian West played a prominent part—filled her mind, and obscured all else.

Sometimes darkest doubt wrung her heart with cruel anguish.

If Dorrien was not guilty, then who was? There was no third person.

And Cora—Vivian loved Cora, he had loved her always—even Shirley believed that now.

She thought at first they were a couple of lovers who were staying in the house, and was about to make some excuse and retire, when Madge's voice arrested her.

"Is that you, Shirley? Come and warm yourself, you must be frozen. They are all playing tennis in the covered courts. I have just come back."

She spoke in a breathless way, as if she had been walking quickly.

Her fur cloak was lying across the back of a chair.

The tall, dark figure against the firelight was Lord Carsborough.

"How did you find Sir Martin?" he inquired.

She preferred to believe it than to think he could be so faithless; and yet that love, which had sprung to life for him, when they had first known one another, rose up now and fiercely and unreasoningly defended him.

But always and through all, like the ceaseless wash of the waves upon the shore came that unanswerable question—

"Who is the guilty man?"

It was about the middle of the afternoon when she drew rein at Royal Heath. She drove straight to the stables, and entered the house by one of the side doors.

Two people started apart as she came into the hall.

"I hear there is positively no hope. It is a ghastly way to die."

"It is awful," Shirley said.

She sat down within the cheerful glow of the blazing log, conscious for the first time that she was cold and tired, and faint with hunger.

"What made you stay so long?" Madge asked, still in that slightly unsteady way which Shirley was to weary to notice. "I began to fear that the horse had run away with you."

"You have not forgotten," Lord Carsborough said, addressing his hostess, "of that morning your horse made a bolt with you."

Madge bent down to caress one of the dogs, before answering.

"One seldom forgets that sort of experience. Are you really very pale, Shirley, or is it this light which makes you look so?"

"I haven't a notion of how I look, the girl answered, 'but I'm dead tired.'"

She felt her eyes closing, and a curious numbness creeping over her.

Someone spoke—they seemed a long, long way off, and she could not answer them.

Then suddenly, she became aware of strong smelling-salts under her nose and a voice suggesting water.

She sat up, a little bewildered.

Madge was kneeling beside her, looking anxious and frightened.

"Shirley dear," she cried, "don't look like that—your all right. Snell this, it will revive you—you are tired."

Shirley sat up, gently pushing aside the hand holding the glass bottle.

"I don't want it," she said; "I am quite well—only tired."

"Are you certain that is all?" Madge asked, in a curious anxious way. "You are telling me the truth? There is nothing else—no other reason?"

There was an expression of guilty dread on Lady Ayerest's beautiful face as she waited for her sister's answer.

A great sigh of relief escaped her when it came—

"That is all."

Was it not all? Was she not tired—tired of all things?

Lord Carsborough came back with a glass of wine and some biscuits.

"Eat these," he said, in his quiet, masterful way, as he placed the salver on a table beside her. "I do not believe you have had a mouthful of food since you left this morning. You don't look like it."

Shirley nibbled the biscuits and drank the wine, and began to feel a delicious sense of languor stealing over her.