

coupe drew up to him the odour of sweet peas was wafted across his nostrils and she swept in beside him, jealously guarding her skirts from harmful contacts. Obedient to her imperative gesture, he took his seat beside her, feeling unable to combine into any intelligible sentence his emotions and apprehensions, gazed questioning into her flushed and sparkling countenance. She pressed the sweet peas to her breast, and as the carriage moved off at a rapid pace she looked deep into his eyes and spoke.

"Wasn't she lovely?" she said dreamily. Antony opened his mouth and closed it, opened it again and again closed it. For a moment it seemed to him that his mind was reeling from its foundations; that perhaps, after all, he was the legitimate usher of Emily's wedding and that this lustrous-eyed creature with him was Gertrude. . . . and then a wholesome rage came to his assistance.

"For heaven's sake," he cried, "talk reasonably! where are we going? What town is this? Do you realise the awful situation we are in? I shall go raving mad if this thing keep up much longer."

She laid a small gloved hand on his knee and spoke calmly to the quivering youth.

"Listen," she said, "I do not see that we can do better than go on to the house. It is a very big wedding and we can mix very easily in the crowd if only I can get another dress—or a long coat, somewhere. Perhaps I can. Especially now, when hardly anyone is here yet. Then you can get hold of a carriage and we can drive to the station. We can at least get something to eat, for I know how hungry you are. Nobody knows who half the people are at the wedding—it is the safest place in the world for—"

"For escaping criminals," he concluded bitterly, yet with an unreasonable lightening of heart. "It is true, nobody will know me. And perhaps I can find out where we are."

"And who we are," she reminded him, smiling kindly. He was amazed at the almost maternal gentleness, the sweet poise of her manner. She might have been the very bridesmaid she simulated.

"Did anyone speak to you?" he asked curiously.

"She shook her head. "I was so late. I think I am her friend, and they don't seem to know each other so very well. The first four are friends, but my four, no. Still, I can't very well see them again, for she will ask about me—oh, who can this be?"

They had turned in at a different gate from the one by which they had left and were following a driveway that led along a series of stables and offices. From one of these a housemaid ran out, stopping the carriage with a gesture. At her embarrassed request Antony opened the carriage door.

"I was to ask the first one that came by this way, if you please—you are an usher, aren't you, sir?"—Antony nodded grimly. "To go to the laundry, right here, sir, and pick out the best arches. They're in the tubs. The other gentleman will help to carry them in. Mr. Richard thought the ladies would know best about the arches," she added shyly.

Smiling graciously, Nette stepped lightly from the coupe and as Antony followed her she nodded to the coachman.

"You may go back, now," she said, "we will walk up to the house in a few moments."

He touched his hat and drove on, the housemaid hastening in the same direction, and Nette, followed by her companion, stepped into the laundry. There indeed were the arches, twined with purple and white sweet peas; the dim, damp room reeked and bloomed with them. As they confronted each other uncertainly, a high, excited voice floated towards them, evidently hearing rapidly.

"We must have every carriage guarded and the trains watched, that's all. They must be in the house, and they had no luggage, so how can they change their clothes? That dress will mark the woman absolutely. They will try for a motor, of course."

Steps were at the laundry door. In an agony of terror Antony dragged the girl into a back room, and hardly knowing what he did, beckoned her up a narrow, dingy stair. Like shadows they fled up it, and crouched at its head listening to the tramping feet of what was evidently a group of men; young men from their tone and manner.

"It's perfectly clear," began the unmistakable voice of Williamson, "they are, of course, that same couple that

go off with three big touring cars last season. It's their specialty. The man drives like a demon, and the woman is the coolest little devil that ever walked. They have Amory's car, they got the clothes, and by coming so late they actually put the thing through. I hope no jewelry is gone, but we mustn't alarm the guests at any cost.—Emily



Listening.

would never forgive us. The woman is marked—I know all the bridesmaids now, and I shall make it my business to locate the eighth. Harvey will you stay with the presents? Ritch, like a fool, refused to have a detective."

"What did he look like, Williamson?" someone demanded.

"Kick me, if you want to, Harvey, I couldn't tell to save my life! I was so excited, and he was so decent about it—he's just, like anybody else. And I'm the only one that said a word to him—it's maddening! We'll have to let him go—we can't grab every man we see, and nobody knows who half these people are. But watch the dining room. Amory ought to be here any minute. He's nearly crazy, I suppose."

"Oh, I don't know," drawled a third voice. "If his precious Gertrude is with him, what's a scarf-pin more or less to Amory?"

"Nevertheless, I'm sorry for the man that took that car," said Williamson curtly, and Antony, bit his lip nervously on the stairs as he listened to the low murmur of assent that followed.

"Well, don't let us stay here, all night," Williamson began fussily. "Grab some of these darned wreathes, you fellows, and see if we can't get them up to the house without sitting down in them!"

They bustled out, arguing over the best methods of tracking down their victims, who cowered miserably above them. Fear, insane, reasonless fear, had laid his quivering, livid fingers on their shoulders, and chilled the blood in their veins. To get away—to get away, at any cost.

Antony, stooping over the crouching figure by his side, whispered in her ear:

"I'll step down and look about a bit. There must be some way—I'll get you a coat somewhere and you can slip out. Wait here."

All was empty and silent in the laundry, but as he stopped a moment behind the door before peering out, a hand knocked gently on it and a boy's voice questioned softly:

"Are ye there, then? Are ye, sir?"

Instinctively and before he could catch back the word, Antony whispered hoarsely:

"Yes!"

"I'll be puttin' this in the doorway, then, and Miss Delia Nolan said to me to say for ye to please wait an hour for her, an' she'd surely come. She does be needed in the bedrooms upstairs to watch the ladies' clothes fr fear they'd be stolen, she says. But if ye'll please wait the hour, she'll be with you, with more, perhaps, if she can get it. Trust me for the horses, sir!"

There was a rattle and a thud as of some heavy object being deposited on the floor, in the open door, and the messenger scurried away. Antony looked cautiously around the door, and as he looked his eyes grew large and round, for there before him lay a mammoth tray filled with dainties to wake the appetite

in one far less famished than poor Antony. Two half-emptied bottles reared their grateful promise high in the middle, and the jellied fowl vied with the crusted croquette, the rich pate gleamed among the feathery wheaten rolls, the lobster nestled cooly in his luscious mayonnaise, seeming indeed to blush under the young man's ardent and devouring gaze. Breathlessly he lifted it, eagerly he bore it to that musty upper room, and there, with soft little cries of surprise from her and long-drawn sighs of satisfaction from him, they fell upon it. With every morsel of the food, with every thoughtful of the heartening, still-benched wine, courage, nay, audacity crept softly over their jaded spirits, as the gentle but inevitable tide creeps up the beach.

"To Miss Delia Nolan!" he cried lightly, raising his glass; "long life to her and her coachman."

And "Long life to her and her coachman!" Nette echoed, smiling from the broken chair she sat upon at Antony, who knelt before the tray. Through the chinks of the closed, dusty blinds vivid pencils of light streaked her delicate dress; she gleamed like a modish crocus in the bare lumber room. The rich vivants before her, the dainty opulence of the frozen sweet she held in a tinted flower-shaped glass, the very dusk of the closed chamber, making her youth and loveliness more jewel-like, all enhanced the piquancy of the picture she presented. Antony's resolution flamed high in him, should such pluck, such beauty, such resource, be captured now, after all they had gone through? Never! He swore it.

As he registered this oath she rose lightly from her chair, and still jealously protecting her billowy skirts began to peer about the room. Of a sudden she stopped and stood like a pointer dog, one finger raised to command his attention.

"What is in that basket?" she whispered excitedly.

There was no need to whisper, for not only the laundry, but all the ground about it was absolutely deserted. But secrecy and flight have but one language and must conspire in whispers at the Pole itself. The basket in question, which lay in the darkest corner of the room, was of the description commonly in use among laundresses when they would return the purified objects of their toil. Bending over this, Nette fumbled a moment among its contents, and with a triumphant exclamation held up to Antony's bewildered vision a fresh, creased garment, striped alternately with blue and white.

"And here is the apron! And here is the cap!" she murmured exultantly. "Now I defy that horrid Mr. Williamson to find me! A marked woman, indeed!"

Instantly the feasibility of the plan struck him, and he congratulated her warmly.

"Now all we need is to know where we are," he assured her, "and enough money to get away from it, wherever it is, and we are safe! I will step out and look about a bit while you change your dress; I feel confident that we shall find some means—luck would not have the heart to desert us now!"

He tiptoed, needlessly, it is true, down to the laundry, and in the very act of opening the door stumbled upon a plump old gentleman upon whose doubtlessly paternal arm the frost-like bride had preceded Antony to the altar. Ere the youth had time to catch his breath the portly one addressed him querulously:

"Oh! how d'ye do? No dark in here—senseless place to send a man! No more"



"Not that we mind the loss of the car at all," continued the old gentleman.

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