

These words recurred and recurred again. *Did I love Jim?* I did not know. If Arthur had not come should I have known? I stood debating by the window. In that room the window opened to the bank on the gorge and faced the bush. Before I drew the blind, after lighting the lamp, I stood for a moment peering out into the darkness; then a strange incident occurred, and one that changed perhaps the whole current of my life—a man's head bent forward from the shadow, someone kissed me through the glass! I started back, and hastily drew the blind, and turned with burning cheeks to find Jim standing there. The moment before I had almost hoped he was outside the window.

"It must have been Arthur!" I said, giving expression to my readjusted thought, crimsoning in confusion.

"So there *is* a must," remarked Jim, with a half-repressed sneer.

I seemed to wither before the white anger in his face. But before speech came he turned and went, leaving me with a sense of shame. He thought me a coquette, for if I had loved Arthur, why did I seem not to be grieved that Jim loved me?

After that day I saw him sometimes answer Mary Alexander's smile, and talk and walk with her on the lawn as he had talked and walked with me. He was her equal by birth—out there, you know, gentlemen work like common men—and as I watched them I pictured Jim in other scenes, and Mary's soft eyes smiling up at him. Mary was gentler than I, and "the young master" would have his way.

Well—Where was I?

About this time something was troubling the old Dad. He took to roaming less, studied the clouds less, and looked oftener at me. He looked so sadly that I feared I had disappointed him. Once he asked:

"Would you enjoy the life your mother had once?"

"My mother!"

"Of interests in another world—movement, excitement, position!"

"Had my mother that?"

"I spoiled it," he replied. "She came here to build again for you. Don't disappoint her."

I asked him in what way.

"She wants to see you back among the living," was the only answer he gave.

Arthur was away all the autumn. After the incident of the window I would barely speak to him.

"I had been watching you; your eyes were full of thought—I hoped of me," he said.

But before he went he knew differently—and often in the evening when I sat alone, looking from the window into the darkening bush, I saw the misery of his dark eyes when he turned to go.

I was so lonely during those silent evenings that had he appeared to me then, I might have let him stay.

For I was giving up Jim, and putting the thought of him out of my life, and understanding as I did so how he had been its background—the setting against which my life's picture had hung.

Mary Alexander had forgotten me for him, and he for Mary Alexander.

One cold afternoon in the late autumn, when the mist phantoms haunted the hills and blotted out the forest, tired of inaction, tired, too, of the quiet house, I set off at a brisk pace along the mountain path that led to the Retreat. I had not seen Mary for several weeks, and Captain Alexander had that morning spoken uneasily of her.

"She looks moped," he said. "The place doesn't agree with her as well as it did—we shall have to pack off after Arthur to town."

He looked at me quizzically, and, I thought, reproachfully.

Half-way to the Retreat quick footsteps overtook me. Jim came up rather breathlessly. "I saw you from the mill," he remarked, half apologetically.

I turned back; the mill was blotted out.

"When you passed," he explained.

"We can walk on together," I said.

"No," he answered. "I was not going to the Retreat. Alice," he burst out, "you shall listen to me." He put himself in