

It was not generous, but weak women can be very cruel. I felt a little scorn of her as I went back to Jim. I had blundered, true, but I had not meant suffering to others.

"It is just as I thought," I said to Jim, who came out strong and protectingly from among the shadows. "You are bound to Mary—she has misunderstood."

He swore that no power on earth should induce him to let me go.

I knew that it had to be, or Mary would die; but how to bring it to pass? I speak quietly, do I? Well, one's heart only breaks once, you see. After that, there is a long calm.

That night the tempest went over my soul—I never was a girl again. But Jim had kissed me; I had felt his heart throb beneath my cheek, and heard him say: "I love you! You are my world." And there are women who can die quietly, or live in loneliness for long years for the joy of such remembrance.

When the day had dawned I knew what I should do. Once having conquered I could forego; and Jim owed part of the debt, he could but own.

Arthur came in answer to my summons. I saw by his face he had reached the limits of his endurance.

"You sent for me, Alice," he said, a note of meaning on the word "sent" that implied had it not been so he would not have come. His sensitive face showed his conflicting hope and fear. I had always been fond of him, fond enough to be glad that I was about to make him happy.

"Could you marry me if I gave you less than my best love?" I asked.

"*Marry you?*" His voice was a note of incredulity, his beautiful brown eyes lit with sudden joy. I felt my hands close clasped in his.

"My beautiful!" he murmured. Then suddenly he let go my hand, the gladness left his face. "Why do you torture me?" he asked. "What pleasure can it give you to hurt me so?"

"None," I answered.

"Yet you do it?"

"Hurt! Are you the only one? Am I glad? Do men never feel past their own pain?"

He took my hands again. "Darling, can't you see, don't you understand?" How familiar the words sounded! "You *must!*" His voice broke "I had hoped to serve you as a subject serves his queen—and you banished me—all but crushed me. You sent me away, I went; you called me back, I am here. I am weak, I know. But you have called me, and I will never leave you again!"

So I married him secretly; it was the only way. My mother had destined me for Jim. And Jim? He *must* marry Mary Alexander.

"*Till death do us part.*" Arthur's voice was scarce above a whisper, but when I met his eyes I knew come weel, come woe, come any sort of good or ill—I belonged to him. That thought compensated him for all that was not and had not been. I was his. Of what avail my flutterings for freedom? I was his, my brains, my body, my estate, my triumphs, my sins were labelled Mrs. Alexander. Only my thoughts were mine, and the memories of my heart.

Have you ever taken upon yourself the burdens of the weak? Yes. Then you know that there is no burden so heavy as the weight of another soul. Go fast, it cannot keep pace; go slow, it stumbles; aspire for it, it fails; plan, and its execution is lacking. I did not know that then. With the arrogance of youth, and the impulse of an impatient spirit, I wanted to *sweep* unhappiness in joy; I could not wait for development.

I felt so strange that night when I turned homeward. What would my mother say? She had destined me for Jim—subservient to her will. Well, it might comfort her to know that I could take my place—the place that my father had lost to her. But how would she reconcile the fact that "the boy" did not belong to her daughter? I would take them away, this old father and mother of mine: they should go Home and relive what they had most prized. That Arthur was rich occurred to me only then—his life