

"what place is there in the cold whiteness of her heart for mortal man." He let his arm drop from her shoulder; his face clouded, his mouth drew into hard lines. A sudden, cruel desire to hurt her took possession of him—if only to hear her cry out. To shock her into horror of her fellows if she had no sympathy for their sins. He sat down in his chair by the fire, and in the slow drawl Caroline now understood signified anger, mocked bitterly, but with a half veiled observance of her.

"You are right to have no impulses; involuntary acts are sometimes generous—and as often mean—for we are still elementary. But because our artistic sense is partially developed we suffer at ugliness—er—because of the ugliness. Well-proportioned temperaments give a sense of security, hence our appreciation of *good* folk! Self at bottom, you see! We are not lost in any beautiful moral sympathy."

She had flushed and grown pale.

"The savage is disconcerting," she affirmed. "But have you any particular objection to a sane mind?" She turned her eyes fall upon him.

He laughed.

"I am not mad, most noble Festus," he quoted. "Caroline, I believe you would be sane if this were the Judgment Day!"

"This is the judgment day of yesterday," she answered apathetically.

A spasm contracted his face. If he could have caught that moment to look at Caroline the expression of the beautiful eyes bent upon him would have banished from his heart for ever all thought of coldness.

"He is suffering," she thought, "it is more than weariness; it is pain. Yet how can I help him; he does not understand me enough for confidence. If he loved me he would understand. Her voice dropped into his thoughts.

"I like the title of your new book—'A Man at Bay'—it suggests warfare."

He looked steadily away for a few moments.

"Are you ravished of fights?"

"Of a fighter."

"Not his coat?"

"Why will you impute to me this smallness?" She asked, so softly that he looked up. She certainly was not small.

He knew he was angry, because her largeness dwarfed him in his own eyes. Because he feared that one day her truth would force him to unmask. He stood up and put his arm about her.

"Why? To hear your defence, *wahine*. Come, do not let us quarrel any more. I have hurt and vexed you?" He passed his hand once or twice over her hair. "Don't you know that there is something in you 'white women' that we men are sure to smudge? That when we meet with strength greater than our own, our brutal instinct is to oppose it? The Lord knows why—I don't! For strange paradox, we despise a weak woman as thoroughly as we know that salvation comes to us from a strong one."

She moved from the shelter of his arm, and bending down over a bowl of violets, said in an impersonal tone, although the slender fingers straying among the flowers trembled:

"Then you do not think 'we needs must love the highest when we see it?'"

He turned from her and looked out into the dark garden, where the room with its softly-glowing lamps and fire was reflected, and the shadow of Caroline bending over the flowers. Her gown was of soft woollen stuff, finished at the waist and wrists with ribbon of violet velvet. The white shadow was typical of the part she played in his consciousness, as vague and unreal to him. His gaze was on it when he answered:

"One lifts his eyes perhaps to 'the highest' with reverent wonder; sometimes a man wishes he was there—but if he is not there? What then, *wahine*?"

"You ask a woman."

The shadow of her bent lower. He made an impatient movement as though her attitude worried him, and he wanted her to look up.

"Ah, there you women err—you raise the barrier of sex too high between us. For, after all, it is Adam on one side and his