

clenching her little hands in her astrakhan muff. It grows foggy. Outside the house Rhoda stands like a forlorn tree with a big box in her hands. She lights the fire for Maata and the box is opened. 'How could you know—you fairy godmother!' A black astrakhan coat lined with silver brocade sprigged with mignonette. It had little side pockets and a high collar. 'I wanted to give you one that would cover your whole precious body but the pennies would not be found. You can wear this in the house too'. Maata puts it on. 'Yes', very satisfied, 'that is *you*'. She protests. 'No, it is my Xmas present'. She is sweet, sweet to Rhoda. Maisie and Hal arrive, Hal very jolly. She is to go home to dinner. The fog deepens. They go out, arm in arm, coughing, and Rhoda disappears. 'Extraordinary girl.'

CHAPTER XI For three days the fog hung thick. Maata stayed in her room. She would see nobody. A hatred of the place and the people was on her. She told Mally she had a cold. She denied Rhoda. Walked up and down, up and down, staring in front of her. On the afternoon of the third day Mally came. She had a lesson in her room, and all her burdens somehow changed. She sang. Mally. 'No, you need not look at me. Start where you like'. She sings. 'Ah, you're in love. Go on.' She sang, lifting, lifting in song. Her colour came back. She went over to Mally, put her arm round her neck and hugged her, and when she had gone she ran up to the Closes. Janey was in the kitchen making an apple pie. Maata bubbled with joy. She inspected the whole house. Philip's gratitude and admiration wrapped her. They played cribbage again, laughing. They walked home together, arm in arm. 'Hook on, dear girl' said Philip. They lost their way, and she held close to him under cover of laughter and cold. It took them a long time to get home. He left her on the doorstep. She promised faithfully to go again tomorrow at *three*.

CHAPTER XII When Maisie came in next morning to wake Philip she found he was already up and dressed. He was sorting his music. Maisie had a duster in her hand and a blue handkerchief like a turban on her head. She was dusting the drawing room. She was amazed to see Pip dressed, and sat down on the floor to help him. He was rather quiet—very pale—with shaking hands. 'Well, you are queer. What's the matter?' There was nothing. He says 'When Maata comes this afternoon tell her to come straight up to my room. I'm going to work all day—and Pussy—see that nobody else butts in. I want to see her alone.' Maisie makes big eyes of surprise. Then she blushes and says 'Oh all right, I think it's rather mean of you though'. She won't help him any more. All day she watched her brother. He does not eat, he laughs stupidly, his hands shake. He roams up and down his room, up and down. Seven times during the