

RAMSHACKLE  
HOUSE

HULBERT FOOTNER

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# RAMSHACKLE HOUSE

BY

HULBERT FOOTNER

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RAMSHACKLE HOUSE. I

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# RAMSHACKLE HOUSE

## CHAPTER I

### THE CANOEIST

Broome's Point proper is a crescent-shaped spit of sand separating the mouth of the Pocomico River from the waters of Chesapeake Bay. The end of the spit is decorated with one of those odd structures that our lighthouse service is so partial to, an octagonal house mounted on spreading, spindly piles, the whole looking uncommonly like a spider. The Broome estate comprises all the high ground back of the spit for upwards of four miles up the bay shore and a mile along the river. The mansion stands proudly on a bold bluff overlooking the river mouth. It is one of those square packing-boxes with a "cupalaw" so popular with the builders of the sixties. It has never been painted since the first time and its once white face is streaked with rust from the gutters like the marks left by tears on dirty cheeks. One of the snugest anchorages on the coast is under the bank upon which it stands. The river mouth itself forms a great basin three miles across in which all the navies of the world might ride. One shore of it is as wild and deserted as the other. A mile or so up the river lies Absolom's Island with its oystering village, connected with the hinterland by a causeway.

On Decoration Day there was a battle-ship lying in the river. As Pen Broome flew in and out of the big house upon her interminable chores she had a distant view of the holiday crowds on the green common of the Island. Black and white splotches represented the game of ball that was going on between the island boys and the sailors and black dots stood for the automobiles of week-end trippers from the great world. Later Pen knew there had been a church supper under the big linden trees alongside the parsonage, and at night a dance up the county. Ordinarily Pen was not given to resenting her lot; she was too busy. She had no personal interest in sailors nor in the island boys, and very little in the county people, her own sort. But to-day the spectacle of holiday-making brought an unbearable gnawing to her breast. She was twenty-four.

Pen was no tame and pathetic figure. She was the sort of youngster that is made savage by pain. Consequently next morning there was thunder in the air at Broome's Point. Pen's storms were rare and rather terrible. They cleared the air wonderfully. Perhaps it would have been better for that slack household if they had broken oftener. Black Aunt Maria Garner seeing her mistress' face, rolled the whites of her eyes apprehensively, and propelled her unwieldy bulk about the kitchen with a surprising celerity. She said cooingly:

"Honey, Ah'm gwine beat yo' up nice li'l cheese soufflé fo' yo' lunch!"

"Go along with you, Aunt Maria!" cried Pen with an exasperated laugh. "I'm not going to be taken in with your cheese soufflés! If you want to please me get your work done! Look at this kitchen!"

"Deed honey, Ah done come at sun-up this mawnin'. Deed I doggone swear did I!"

"What good is your coming at sun-up or sun-down if you only rock your fat body on a chair and smoke that filthy pipe!"

"Miss Penny, honey, I got the mos' awfulles' misehy...."

"That's enough of your misery. When I came in that door you started to move as spry as a kitten after its tail!"

At this moment the head of Theodo', Aunt Maria's sixth or thereabouts, appeared outside the kitchen window. Aunt Maria unseen by Pen silently and frantically waved him back, but his momentum was too great. He came on in with his foolish, engaging grin.

Pen whirled around.

"What are you doing in the house at this hour?" she demanded.

Theodo's face turned ashy, but he still grinned. "Ah ... Ah jes' come fo' watah," he stammered.

"And left your horses standing in the field!" stormed Pen. "You don't want water. It's only because you can't keep your trifling mind on your work for more than half an hour at a time. To-morrow is the first of June and you haven't got your ploughing done! And everybody else's corn is six inches high! Go back to your horses and let me hear no more of water!"

Theodo' slunk out.

But the storm did not really break until Pen, going to make her butter, found the broken paddle of her churn still unattended. She marched back through the kitchen, through the big pantry into the dining-room bearing the broken paddle like Nemesis. Aunt Maria's vast body heaved in silent chuckles.

"Boss gwine catch it now fo' sho'," she murmured, and waddling silently through the pantry, put her ear to the crack of the dining-room door.

She was not disappointed. Within the dining-room lightning played about the startled head of the elder Pendleton Broome. And indeed young Pen was sorely tried. Her father was an amiable incompetent who frittered away his time on a dozen unprofitable hobbies while his estate fell into ruin about him. Not his fault entirely of course, for it was a hopeless job to keep up twenty-five hundred acres without any money. And not an acre of it salable. To get the smallest things done about the place required an expenditure of energy from Pen sufficient to have won campaigns. For weeks her father had been promising to mend her churn. Even with a whole churn she made butter under the greatest difficulties, because by the time he had got round to repairing the ice house it was too late to put up ice. She reminded him of that now ... and of other things.

Pendleton Broome essayed to pull the rags of his dignity about him ... without much success. He was one of these half-hearted little corpulent men, partly bald, an odd and pathetic figure in his old clothes with an air of breeding still upon him. Often when she was abusing him the tears would suddenly spring into Pen's eyes.

"But my dear, I can't keep my mind on butter!" he protested.

"If I didn't keep my mind on butter we'd all starve!" stormed Pen.

"I intended to mend the churn," he explained, "but in Friday's *Sun*-paper, as you know, another correspondent undertook to refute the arguments in my letter on the Mendelian theory. And in answering him I clean forgot about the churn!"

"The Mendelian theory!" cried Pen. "Will that feed us?" Her voice went off into wild inextinguishable laughter. The little man stared at her with an affronted air. Pen suddenly turned and flew out through the hall and across the porch. Her storms generally ended in this way, in tears. Nobody ever saw her cry though.

Running like a sand-piper she skimmed across the weedy lawn, threaded the bordering shrubbery and ducked through a gap in the palings. She ran along the edge of a little field behind the empty and ruinous tenant cottage, and into the woods by a faint path worn by her own feet and no other's. Two hundred yards within the woods she came out in a little clearing upon a bench of land overlooking a pond densely hemmed round by the woods, like a deep green bowl with brown water in the bottom. Here she cast herself down.

The clearing contained, a strange sight in those rude surroundings, a little Doric temple dating from the eighteenth century. It was just a circle of plain columns holding up a little flattish dome, the marble all silvery with lichen, and wistfully beautiful against the greenery. Within the columns open to the winds was a raised grave of the period built of brick and topped with a marble slab carved with the Broome arms and with an inscription setting forth the virtues of a Pendleton Broome who died in 1720 at the age of twenty-three.

This spot no doubt because of its disquieting beauty had long ago acquired a bad name in the neighborhood. It had been avoided by so many generations as to have become almost completely forgotten. Those of the natives who knew of it would not have ventured near under any circumstances. Pen herself had stumbled on the place by

accident years before and had made it her own. With her own childish hands she had cleared out the undergrowth, and from time to time had planted ferns, "ivory", violets and the moccasin flower until in the spring it was like a flower-bedecked chancel with her young kinsman lying in state in the center of it.

Pen looked upon the long dead youth as the brother she had never had in the flesh. Once she had looked up to him as her big brother, but lately he had become most lovably her junior, for he remained imperishably twenty-three. Not especially imaginative she nevertheless pictured him vividly in a plum-colored velvet suit with a flare to the skirt of his coat, Mechlin lace at his wrists and throat, sword at side and tricorne hat, his chestnut curls tied with a black moire ribbon. The Broomes were a bright-haired, blue-eyed race; Pen had brought black hair into the family from her mother's side. She pictured the earlier Pen mixing with the wits of his day with a bit of a swagger. According to family tradition he had died in London, and his body was shipped home to his inconsolable parents preserved in a cask of brandy. The stones of his little temple must have been brought from England too, in the tobacco ships. How dearly that Pen must have been loved, this Pen thought, and loved him the better for it.

She cast herself down beside his grave and unpacked her heart. The real source of her pain had nothing to do with broken butter paddles of course.

"Turkeys and chickens and ducks! Ducks and turkeys and chickens! Making butter three times a week and canning all summer! Is that all there is to live for as long as I live? ... Ah my dear, my dear, if I had you really! Someone young to be with! ... But I'm shriveling up alone!"

But the place quieted her as it always did. She became silent. Bye and bye she turned her head sideways on her arm and looked down at the brown pond almost dusty in the sunshine and thought of nothing at all. Her face smoothed out. Pen's cheeks were not smooth like a doll's but had faint hollows of emotion that strangely stirred a man's breast. Nor was she of brittle build like a city maiden. Lying prone on the earth like that, in her full soft curves she symbolized the morning of earth.

This place was on the other side of the point. Across the pond from where Pen lay, only a few hundred yards away, was the bay with its steamships passing up and down, but all hidden from her by the intervening greenery. A winding creeklet flowed in with the flood and out with the ebb. At low tide it lost itself in the sand of the beach outside. Nobody but Pen ever came near the spot. Year after year a white heron nested under a tangle of vines that hung in the water, and in the spring the great shad came flopping clumsily through three inches of water to spawn inside. Pen saw the white heron with a cautious preliminary look around, enter the thicket that concealed her nest, and watched lazily for her to reappear. With every breath the girl was unconsciously drawing comfort from the earth upon which she lay.

Finally she sat up with a sigh and patted her hair into place. Her "sensible" look returned; a wry smile appeared about her lips. "You fool!" she said to herself. "Wasting the best hours of the day! When you get back even if the paddle is mended it will be too hot to churn! And by night the cream will be too sour!"

She arose with a shake of her skirts and walked sedately and somewhat self-consciously back to the house, though there was none to see her. As soon as she came out from the woods the blue expanse of the river mouth was spread before her with the gray battle-ship lying out in mid-stream and off to the right Absalom's Island with its row of white cottages. She ducked through the fence and picked her way around the tangled shrubs. When she came out from under the mimosa tree she was greatly astonished to see a strange man sitting on the porch beside her father. Another step and she saw that he was young; one more step showed him to be uncommonly good-looking. Pen stopped dead in her tracks. Sternly repressing the impulse to run, she stiffened her back and putting on a haughty expression, marched on to meet the enemy.

The hardest thing she had to do was to mount the porch. For the steps had rotted away and Pen's father had put down a little box and a big box to climb up on "until he got around to fixing the steps." The boxes had been there for two years now. Somebody had gone through the top of the little box and an old piece of board had been laid across it.

The young man was a tall fellow; bright-haired, ruddy and smiling, with beautiful white teeth. He was wearing white flannel trousers of fine quality rather soiled and a snowy shirt cut off at the elbows and open to reveal a smooth brown throat. Pen was taken by surprise. Something about him, the strong bare neck like a column, the

laughing eyes that had yet a sort of hunger in them too, turned her suddenly giddy. She was furious at her own weakness—and at him for being the cause of it. If in that moment he had said: "Come!" and had walked off with a curt jerk of the head, she would have had to follow. It was the secret consciousness of this that appalled her.

Fortunately for her he was civilized. He merely smiled as a gentleman may in frank admiration—but not too frank. He was clearly what Pen called a gentleman. The thought was balm to her soul. For if he had not been she knew it would have been just the same with her. The first gentleman she had seen in so many months! It was comforting to be assured that they still walked the earth.

As in a dream she heard her father saying: "Mr. Donald Counsell ... my daughter. Her name is Pendleton Broome the same as my own. It is a family custom."

She heard the young man apologizing for his appearance. "I never expected to..."

Pen caught him up sharply. "Find white people here? You wouldn't. From the look of the place."

Both men were disconcerted by her brusqueness. Pen was horribly ashamed of herself. "I will not blush! ... I will not blush!" she said to herself, glaring out across the river. After the first glance she never looked at the young man again, but was nevertheless tinglingly conscious of his aspect; the fine lines of his body, his fair tanned skin, and always of those merry, speaking, wistful eyes. "What has happened to me? ... What has happened to me?" a little voice within her seemed to be wailing.

The young man tried to smooth things over. "What a heavenly spot! As I have already told your father, I'm loafing down the Bay in a canoe."

"What do you do when the wind blows?" asked the elder Pendleton.

"Oh, go ashore and sit and smoke by my fire."

"Don't you get lonely?"

A shadow crossed the young man's open countenance. "No, I'm fed up with people," he said shortly. "... That is, city people," he added with a glance through his lashes at Pen.

A sudden flame of jealousy burned Pen's breast. "There have been many women in his life!" And immediately: "Oh, what a fool I am!" she promptly added.

Pendleton glanced admonishingly at his daughter. Where was the courtesy to strangers for which the Broomes were famous? The glance was wasted upon Pen. An awkward silence resulted.

Finally the young man said politely: "I came to see if I could get some butter and eggs."

"Certainly," said Pen stiffly. "Eggs are twenty cents a dozen, butter forty cents the pound."

She bit her tongue as soon as it was out, but could not have helped herself. Some power stronger than her will forced her to put her worst foot foremost. Pendleton père was frankly shocked, but the young man was not put out at all. He grinned at her delightfully and murmured too low for her father to hear:

"Cheap at half the price!"

It did not help Pen any. "He's laughing at me!" she said to herself in a rage. "Thinks he can have me at his own price! ... He'll see!"

Pendleton coughed behind his hand as a direct reminder to Pen of the time-honored hospitality of their house. Pen didn't get it. The effort to master her inexplicable emotions made her look almost stupid. In the end Pendleton himself was obliged to say:

"You will have dinner with us?"

Counsell's face lighted up. "You are very kind, but..." He looked at Pen again.

"We'll be very pleased to have you," Pen said as primly as a school-marm, and despising herself for it. Why couldn't she be natural?

"Well, thanks, I will," Counsell said heartily. "After three days in camp a square meal will be a god-send! I may say I'm no great shakes of a cook."

Pen's breast warmed at the thought of feeding the youth. "Dinner" had the effect of recalling her scattered faculties. Her mind flew to the question: What is there? ... The ham-bone? ... Impossible! ... Stuffed eggs ... lettuce ... radishes ... strawberries. There is that bottle of my three year old grape wine... Not enough for a hungry man. He's so vigorous! ... If I could put it off until half-past one I might get the boys to catch me some soft crabs ... No, the tide is too high! ... I have it! The cheese soufflé!"

Excusing herself she went into the house to get her preparations under way. In the hall she came to a dead stop with her arms hanging limply, and looked into the future with a sort of horror. Her thought was: "I'm a goner! ... I have lost myself ... lost ...!" She pulled herself together with a jerk and flew into the kitchen, where for the next half hour things hummed. Aunt Maria Garner loved to cook for company.

Later, Pen having changed her dress, was setting the table. Through the open window she could hear her father retailing the Broome family history in the slightly throaty voice of self-importance. Pen knew his tale by heart.

"... Settled here since 1710 ... 2500 acres ... the estate runs four miles up the Bay shore.... The first house built here was a fine Colonial mansion with a pillared portico. Burned by the British on their expedition against Washington in the 1812 affair. A comfortable farmhouse with great chimneys arose out of its ruins. The present structure was erected in 1869. This was the style then, a great square block with a cupola. Considered magnificent in its day. Very fine rooms. You'll see them presently. It contains the oldest bath-room in Southern Maryland. Unfortunately out of order at present.

"This house was built by my father on his return from Peru. He was a man of resource. When everybody hereabouts was ruined by the war he emigrated to South America. Got in with the right people in Peru and made a great fortune in a year or two. Invested it in Peruvian bonds. He returned and laid out the old family place on a princely scale, princely. Laid out twenty miles of roads through the woods for his guests to take horse exercise. At one time he had five hundred employees on the place white and black. How well I remember as a child when the family departed for Newport where my father had another place, they would all be lined up to say good-by in a double row extending far beyond the gate. We would walk between and my father would shake hands with each one and say a few kind words. There was scarcely a dry eye among them!"

Pen, listening to this innocent tale, felt her cheeks burn.

Pendleton concluded with a sigh: "Unfortunately there was a revolution in Peru. The dastardly cutthroats who seized the reins of government repudiated the obligations of their country."

"In other words the bonds were N.G.," murmured Counsell.

"Exactly. My father's fortune was swept away overnight. Since then it has been a struggle. Too much land and too little money. But I look for better times ... better times."

Counsell asked a question.

"The railway," Pendleton answered with an air. "The Broome's Point railway. It will terminate in that gully down to the right there. It was first projected forty years ago, the right of way all graded and the trestles built ready for the rails. Unfortunately there was chicanery somewhere; construction was held up. Since then the enterprise has been revived from time to time, but something has always happened. But it will, it must come some day. I am bringing influence to bear. I have made liberal offers of land to the promoters. That is the finest harbor on the coast that lies before you. Baltimore is jealous. Powerful interests were brought to bear against the project the last time it was started. Trumped-up charges laid against the promoter."



"What happened to him?" asked Counsell.

"Well, he's in jail at present," said Pendleton ruefully. "But he will come out with flying colors. He enjoys my entire confidence. He explained everything to me. The railway must come before long. My place is all laid out in town lots."

Pen gritted her teeth. She could picture the worldly-wise young man laughing at her foolish little father from behind his grave face.

She called them into lunch. She was painfully conscious of the discrepancies of her house, but as a matter of fact Counsell was astonished when he entered. Pen had full control within the house and the squalor was left out of doors. The furniture, what there was left of it, dated from the same ugly period as the house, but there were certain touches; the lofty rooms were cool, inviting, full of charm. Poor as the Broomes were one could never mistake it for other than a lady's house. Particularly the dining-room with its velvety smooth walnut table, the hand-made mats, the dull old silver, the flowers, the delicious looking food.

"Oh! but I'm hungry!" Counsell said involuntarily, showing all his white teeth.

Glancing at Pen he found her eyes obstinately hidden, but she betrayed a dimple.

Not until she heard Counsell pick up his knife and fork did she venture to look at him. She had been waiting for the moment when his attention would be distracted by food. The smooth turn of his ruddy cheek and his long, curved lashes hurt her with delight. There was something affectingly boyish about him for all his strength and his assured air. Pen yearned to mother that shining head against her breast. She never looked at him but the once, yet she was aware of every mouthful he took, and every mouthful gave her satisfaction.

Pendleton Broome opened his eyes rather at the spread. The glance of reproof that he sent across to Pen suggested that while hospitality was the first law of the Broomes, still there should be reason in all things. From that moment with true male consistency he began to cool towards their young guest.

Nevertheless, charmed to have a sophisticated listener, he aired all his quaint and impractical theories. He dabbled in chemistry amongst other things, and had a great store of pseudo-scientific patter. Counsell listened politely and made the suitable rejoinders, but never lost an opportunity of trying to draw Pen into the talk. Pen, resisting his efforts, was nevertheless secretly delighted with his adroitness. It made her realize how she had been hungering for the graces of intercourse.

Once Counsell asked her directly: "Do you know New York?"

"I went to school there." She named a famous finishing school.

Counsell could not but look his surprise.

"I had a legacy," said Pen demurely. Her father frowned.

"Then you know people in New York?" Counsell said eagerly.

She shook her head. "I have not kept up with the girls."

"She deliberately dropped them!" her father put in with an aggrieved air. "It is the infernal Broome pride. She was most popular in school."

Pen laughed lightly. "Northerners are different," she said. "They don't make a merit of their departed glories."

It was her way of letting Counsell know, without being disloyal to her father, that she did not share in her elder's delusions. The young man looked at her in a new way. It was the first inkling of her real nature that she had given him. Pen felt his look through and through her.

Pendleton took advantage of the pause to secure the floor again, and held it for some time. But he had to eat too,

and as soon as he stopped talking to chew, Counsell turned to Pen.

"Isn't it rather lonely here?"

"Mercy, no!" laughed Pen. "Far too much to do!"

"I suppose there are lots of agreeable people in the neighborhood?"

"Up the county, oh yes," said Pen.

"And you have all sorts of jolly parties?"

"They do," said Pen briefly.

"Not you?"

Pen explained. "The road from here up the Neck that connects us with the world has become impassable for motors, even if we had one. Even a buggy can scarcely get through now. By road it's twelve miles to the nearest white man's house. Excepting the squatters. Our only way of communication is by motor-boat with the Island. Our friends do not live on the Island. And we've no way of getting up the county."

"Have you no white neighbors at all?" he asked aghast.

"Old Mr. Weems Locket who keeps the lighthouse."

"No white woman near?"

Pen shrugged. "No special hardship in that. I like men just as well as women."

"Nobody but the light-keeper?"

"Oh yes, in bad weather the bug-eyes and the pungy-boats lie under our bank and the skippers come ashore to call on father and use the telephone."

"In winter it must be hard."

"Oh things are never really as bad as they seem to one who doesn't know them."

Just the same his sympathetic voice drew something out of her. For the first time she gave him her eyes freely. Wonderful dark, glowing eyes that won something of him that he never got back again. Her laughing, somber glance said as plainly as if the words had been spoken: "The winter here is Hell!" His eyes laughed back in hers, surrendering, and for an instant they were one.

This brief interchange was terribly sweet to Pen; so sweet that it scared her. For some time afterwards she was quite stiff with him, and his eyes reproached her.

When they left the table and went out on the porch Counsell made a deliberate move to separate her from her prosy father. With all his politeness the young man had a resolute air.

"I think this is simply the finest site for a house that I have ever seen," he said to Pen. "Let's walk out and look over the edge of the bank."

Pen's heart leaped—then sank again, remembering the morning's work still undone, and the afternoon's work all to do. Pendleton looked injured, but as no one paid the slightest attention to him he made believe to recollect something important that he had to do, and went into the house. Pen pleaded with her sterner self: "Just for a few minutes!" Meanwhile she was being firmly urged towards the boxes. Before she was aware of having given in, she found herself well on the way.

They strolled across the neglected lawn, matted with horse-mint, too spicy a vegetable to the taste of the stock

that wandered over the place. The drive once paved with shell, made a wide circular sweep in front of the house, but the shell had disappeared under the horse-mint too. Part of the old bed enclosed within the drive Pen had dug up and put in a few dahlias. These she had essayed to protect from the horses and cows and sheep by a miscellaneous barricade of boxes and boards. She blushed for it now. She couldn't explain to him that she had an instinct for flowers that had to find some outlet.

The earthen bank was sixty feet high. In the days of the place's glory an ingenious gardener had planted honeysuckle at the base to keep it from washing and now the tangled vines swept all the way up to their feet in a bottle green wave flecked with the foam of its pale blossoms. The scent of it was dangerously enervating to youth.

"The whole world down here is full of honeysuckle," murmured Don. "In the evening you can smell it far out in the Bay."

An ineffably lovely panorama was spread before them, which the light haze customary to that soft land, endowed with a curiously moving quality. For awhile in silence their eyes ranged back and forth from Absolom's Island on the one side out over the intenser blue of the Bay. At their feet rode a battered old schooner with a deckload of cord wood. Down at the left the octagonal lighthouse on its spindly legs was just within range of their vision.

"My camp is down there," said Don. "On the other side of the old wharf. The curve in the beach hides it."

They sat down with their feet hanging over the edge. Pen's conscience was protesting more faintly now. She had recovered from her surprise attack and had her forces pretty well in hand. She found she was all right if she avoided looking at him. There was something leaping out of his eyes that simply confounded her. They talked about anything and nothing. He wanted to make her talk, whereas she desired to hear him. So they fenced. The little undertones of bitterness, of self-mockery, in Pen's laughter struck powerfully on the man's imagination. It appeared that this girl most decidedly had a flavor of her own.

He was reluctant to talk about himself and Pen could not ask questions. Consequently her hungry ears were obliged to pounce on the implications of his talk for information. He was of the great world it appeared. He knew everybody. He was not a mere philistine. He knew books, pictures, music; all that Pen thirsted for; and the people who made such things were among his friends. "Though I'm only a common stockbroker," he put in with a laugh. This pleased Pen. She thought: "I wouldn't want an artist for a lover"—and blushed for the thought. He was exactly what she wished him to be. It seemed to her magical that such a one should have been brought into her life if only for an hour or two. Only for an hour or two! She kept telling herself that firmly. "He'll be gone to-morrow and I wishing he had never come!" That was the explanation of the bitterness.

She did ask him one question. "How on earth did you come to stray down here?"

He said: "I read somewhere, years ago, what a lovely and little known country there was on the western shore of Chesapeake Bay ... I keep a canoe and a little tent handy in a club-house in New York. Whenever the world is too much with me I just paddle off for a few days."

Pen's few minutes lengthened out into an hour and she had simply not the strength to send him away. In the end her father was seen approaching, his discolored straw hat placed just so, a jute bag over his arm.

"I'm going over to the Island to get the mail," he said to Counsell in an offhand tone. "Like to come along? It's considered very picturesque."

Counsell looked at Pen in indecision. He most assuredly did not want to go, but perhaps the best way to make headway with the girl was to be agreeable to the old man. You couldn't always tell.

"Won't you come too?" he asked.

Pen shook her head. "I've a hundred things to do."

"Couldn't I help?" he asked eagerly.

Pen laughed clearly. "Heavens! what do you know about turkey chicks? Or making butter and cleaning house?"

He still hesitated.

Pen arose briskly. "Run along," she commanded. "When you come back perhaps you'll stay to supper." She had not intended to ask him. It was surprised out of her. It surprised her father too. "Was that necessary?" his elevated eyebrows asked. He did not like this young man as well as he had in the beginning.

Counsell blushed red with pleasure. "That is kind," he said.

"Then mind you're back in time," said Pen, leaving them. "You never can tell about the engine in our boat."

She flew about her work. The butter got itself made, and the eggs collected. Sundry small chicks were treated for the gaps, and the far wandering turkeys rounded up. Preparations were set on foot for a real Southern Maryland supper; soft crabs, fried chicken, hot biscuits, strawberry shortcake. If Pen had had her way she would have stuffed her young man like a Strasbourg goose.

All afternoon she was filled with an excitement that was neither wholly pleasurable nor painful. Her heart would keep rising in her throat, and stern discipline was required to put it down. Finally she red up the house. She lingered in the guest-room her hand caressing the white spread, while she debated whether she might ask him to spend the night. She foresaw her father's look of disapproval but that did not influence her much. But she decided against it with a firm shake of the head. "Only prolong the agony," she said to herself, with her little smile of self-mockery.

In the midst of her activities she often found time to run out on the porch where she could observe the progress of the *Pee Bee*, that slab-sided little marine monster that ploughed through the water so fiercely at the rate of five miles an hour. It would take them fifty minutes to go and come if they did not loiter, but her father would be sure to want to show Counsell the Island, and incidentally show off Counsell to the Islanders; he would get into talk with men at the store. Sure enough it was four o'clock before they started home. Half way over the *Pee Bee* suddenly stopped. Pen could see her father crouching over the engine in the way she knew so well. Counsell was perched up on the bow looking towards Broome Point. So much the better for him if he knew nothing about engines. Time passed and they did not budge. "How bored he must be!" Pen thought anxiously. "It will sicken him of us!"

At last the *Pee Bee* began to move ahead by fits and starts, Pendleton darting to and fro between wheel and engine. How familiar Pen was with the little comedy that was taking place on board! Pendleton would never let anybody else steer! When the *Pee Bee* finally passed under the bank Pen could still follow her progress by the noise she made. She arranged matters so that supper should come on the table at the moment the disgruntled men crossed the porch.

She had put on the black net evening dress that had been made over three times. A red peony in her corsage freshened it up a good deal, but in the end Pen threw it away. "Too coquettish!" she said, jeering at her reflection in the mirror. She had no idea how lovely she looked with her perfect neck and arms, her fine capable hands a little roughened by work, her eyes big with feeling yet determinedly reticent, and those soft, red, bitter lips.

Her heart sank fathoms deep when Pendleton came in alone.

"Where's Mr. Counsell?" she asked very offhand.

"Stopped in his tent to tidy up a bit," said Pendleton ... "Was it necessary..." he began reprovingly.

"You'd better do the same," said Pen coolly.

Pendleton dropped the bag of mail in the hall and went upstairs registering disapproval in every step. Pen rushed the supper out into the oven again. Her heart was singing.

Though it was still bright out-of-doors the dining-table was lighted by a red-shaded swinging lamp. To be sure the shade was only of paper, but it made none the less a cheerful glow. When Counsell came into the room his good manners failed him; he stopped short and stared at Pen in silence. Pen could not look at him. She said to herself:

"He's amused at my silliness; dressing up in these old rags!"

At the table they gave Pendleton full sway and it improved his humor. Counsell had discovered that it pleased Pen best to have him encourage her father. Counsell's conversation with her was limited to compliments on the wonderful eats. Pen received it with her little twisted smile. That was the way she was. She knew he meant it, but it hurt—how it hurt! Because it signified nothing. Nothing would come of it. A long course of self-discipline had taught Pen never to build on the prospect of happiness, that thereby she might be saved a crushing disappointment when happiness failed to materialize.

At the conclusion of the meal Counsell got his reward when it appeared that Pendleton, owing to the time he had wasted on the river, still had his chores to do about the place. He departed for the barn. Aunt Maria Garner waddled back and forth, clearing the table and rolling her eyes at the guest. She was not a well-trained servant.

"Shall we go outside?" suggested Counsell.

"Mosquitoes!" said Pen smiling.

She led the way into the great dim drawing-rooms on the other side of the hall. The only illumination was given by a piano lamp with a yellow paper shade standing beside an old ebony upright.

"You play?" asked Counsell.

"Not for you," said Pen promptly. "You know too much."

"Anyway, I'd rather have you talk to me," he said. "We haven't started to get acquainted yet."

Pen's inner voice cried: "What's the use? What's the use?"

Her little painful smile tantalized him. He said involuntarily: "You mock at everything I say."

"Not at you," said Pen. "At myself!"

"I don't understand you," he complained.

"And you have known so many girls!" said Pen, drawing down the corners of her lips.

"Yes," he said. "But never one like you. In town they seem to be cut out pretty much to a pattern. Some well cut, some badly. But all the same pattern."

Pen thought: "He's a good-natured sort. He thinks I expect to hear this sort of thing."

There they sat side by side on the big sofa in the seductive half light of the great room—but something was the matter. They made no progress. Perhaps having desired this moment so much, the realization of it frightened them. With too much feeling they were dumb; and they did not know each other well enough to be comfortably silent together. So each made various attempts to start something which only resulted in utter banality. They found themselves talking as primly as a couple in an old-fashioned romance. The sources of laughter were frozen up. And the more self-conscious they became, the stiffer grew their tongues.

It was chiefly Pen's fault. She got the notion in her head that he merely desired to repay her hospitality with a little gallantry, and she blighted his warm overtures as with a frost. It was due to her fatal instinct to guard against a pain which might be more than she could bear.

However the young man was determined; moreover he had a reputation to keep up. More experienced than Pen he had learned how a little naturalness clears the air, and he was resolved to speak his mind no matter how hard she made it for him. In the end he blurted it out awkwardly:

"Why shouldn't I tell you? ... a fellow like me ... knocking about ... making a joke of everything ... you get the notion girls are charming useless creatures you've got to put up with because they're so charming ... And lots of them

are useless without even being charming ... Makes a man cynical ... And then to meet one more charming than any and *useful!* ... Oh, I express myself rottenly! ... Well, it gives you a jolt. You've got to rearrange all your ideas..."

This was simply more than Pen could bear. She insisted to herself that it was simply gallantry on his part. Gallantry is part of the Maryland tradition. She laughed in a way that dried him up, and made him turn a dull red.

"Thanks for useful," she said.

The sullen, hurt glance he bent on her seemed to say: "You're charming but you're very prickly!"

That put the finish to their conversation. To the outward view they presented the spectacle of two normal young people slightly bored with each other and exchanging perfunctory remarks, but in reality each was suffering keenly. They couldn't make it go. Pendleton returned to the dining-room where they could hear him rattling the newspaper, and they were even ready to wish that he would come in and separate them in their unhappiness. Finally Counsell got the idea that Pen wished to be rid of him. After all he'd been hanging about the place all day. He rose to go.

Pen's heart said: "This is the end!" But her face only showed a polite and wistful blank. She said quietly:

"You'll be moving on to-morrow, I suppose."

"I suppose so," he said sullenly.

Pen greatly wished to say: "Well don't forget us," or something of the sort, light and friendly, but she could not get the words out.

And of course he took her silence to mean it was all one to her whether he went or stayed.

But he could not go like that. He hung indecisively at the door of the room. Finally he blurted out like a boy:

"I say, what's the matter?"

"Why, nothing!" answered Pen with a startled look.

"This afternoon we were like pals.... What have I done to offend you?"

"Nothing whatever," said Pen.

"Oh," he said sorely, "then it's just that you don't fancy my style much anyhow."

"Oh, I wouldn't say that!" said Pen with a teasing smile. Heaven knows what it cost her.

"I quite understand," he said with a man's absurd injured vanity.

"You understand nothing!" murmured Pen.

He moved to the front door, and failed to hear her. For a moment or two they looked unhappily out at the night. The moon had risen behind the house and was casting long shadows athwart the lawn. Beyond the edge of the bank there was a mystical sea of subdued radiance.

"Well ... good-night ... good-by," he mumbled. "Thank you so much for your kindness ... good-by."

"My kindness!" Pen's heart cried. "Good-by," she said aloud, without a suspicion of a shake or a tremor. "Father is in the dining-room."

"Please say good-night to him for me," he said hurriedly ... "Good-by." He held out his hand.

"Good-by," said Pen, letting her cold fingers lie within his for a moment without any response to his pressure.

He went slowly across the front porch and stepped down. She closed the door. She stood there, her arms

hanging. Her thoughts were like a dialogue back and forth within her.

"He didn't want to go. Why did you send him? ... But what did he want to stay for? Just a summer night's flirtation. That would have finished me. It's better this way ... Maybe he meant it ... No! That sort of happiness is not for me! Might as well get used to it soon as late! ... I'm not going to run upstairs and cry, either! There are the chickens to fasten up, the yeast to make and the milk to set out!" Her arms went up above her head and fell again. "Oh God! but life is dreary!"

From the dining-room her father called her in a strange, agitated voice that sent the blood flying from her heart:

"Pen! Pen! Come here, quickly!"

## CHAPTER II

### THE STORY IN THE *SUN*-PAPER

When Pen ran into the dining-room she found the little man seated at the table, his reading glasses on his nose and the newspaper spread before him. The face that he raised to her was pale and moist with excitement; his hands gripping the edge of the paper made it rattle with their trembling. Nevertheless in her first glance Pen was assured that no disaster threatened their house. There was even a sort of pleasure mixed with his horror. Her first reaction was to chagrin at having been frightened for nothing.

"What's the matter?" she asked sharply.

"Look! Look!" he said, pointing to the paper.

With her own swift, swimming motion she moved behind him, and looked down over his shoulder. She read staring headlines:

#### WEALTHY NEW YORK STOCKBROKER FOUND MURDERED

She was freshly annoyed by what seemed to be such ridiculous excitement. "What's that got to do with you?" she demanded.

"Read! Read!" he said hoarsely.

She impatiently read what was under the headlines:

"Collis Dongan of the old New York family, wealthy clubman and member of the Stock Exchange, was found dead in his apartment last night. Mr. Dongan, a widower without children resided at the exclusive Hotel Warrington. The body was found by his valet George Canfield who had been away on a vacation granted him by his master over the holiday. The revolver with which the deed was done was found lying near, and at first it was supposed to be a case of suicide. But Doctor Raymond Morsell the hotel physician who was quickly summoned by the frightened servant, instantly pronounced that the wound could not have been self-inflicted. The bullet had entered the base of the skull. The body was found lying in Mr. Dongan's living-room. It was fully clothed. There were no signs of any struggle. Every indication pointed to the fact that he had been shot down from behind without warning. Apparently he had been dead three days. His blood was matted and dried in the rug on which he lay."

Pen looked up in disgust. "What do you want me to read this horrible stuff for?" she asked. "It's like all the other cases."

"Read on!" said her father.

"After having summoned the doctor, the valet's next thought was to notify the dead man's partner Donald Counsell who occupied an apartment on the same floor in another part of the hotel..."

Pen read this name without any sensation beyond a sudden quickening of interest. She needed no further urging to read on.

"... but Counsell was not found in the hotel. Developments followed fast after that. The valet, Canfield, remembered that when he left his master on Friday night Counsell was with him, and the two men were quarrelling, apparently over business matters. He heard Counsell, who is a young man, violently abusing his senior. Dongan was not seen alive after that. Various persons living in the hotel testified to having heard a muffled sound which might have been a shot at 11.15 Friday night. At 11.20 the night clerk saw Counsell leaving the hotel, clearly in a state of agitation.

"The dead man's brother, Richard H. Dongan, vice-president of the Barrow Trust Company, was notified, and at his suggestion a hasty search of the books of Dongan and Counsell was conducted for the purpose of establishing a possible motive for the crime. The firm was found to be heavily involved owing to certain speculations of the junior partner on the exchange. By the break in Union Central last week Counsell stood to lose seventy-five thousand dollars, which apparently he had no means of raising. It is supposed that he appealed to his partner for help, and upon being indignantly refused, shot the elder man. The case against Counsell was made complete when Thomas Dittmars, bookkeeper to Dongan and Counsell, reluctantly identified the revolver as one belonging to Counsell, and pointed out Counsell's initials scratched on the butt. The bookkeeper knew the weapon because more than once it had been loaned to him when he had a large amount of Liberty bonds to deliver for the firm. Dittmars knew nothing of the transactions in Union Central because they were entered in the firm's private ledger to which only the partners had access. No trace of Counsell has been discovered since he left the hotel."

Thus far the summary of facts which heads all newspaper stories. Several columns of comment and hypothesis followed:

"On the face of it it is one of the most dastardly crimes in recent years. Dongan befriended the young man upon his graduation from college and admitted him to a partnership in his business only to be swindled and finally to be shot down by his protégé."

Pen for the moment disregarded what followed. She had to stop and think, she would have said, but as a matter of fact she was incapable of thinking. She was conscious only of a dull horror that numbed her faculties. She had not yet taken it in. Outwardly she was quite composed. With the palm of her hand she thoughtfully polished a dull spot on the velvety surface of the table.

Pendleton fairly babbled in his excitement. "When I first read the story he was in the drawing-room with you. I didn't know what to do! I didn't know what to do!"

Pen was sharply recalled to the necessity for action. "Well, what are you going to do?" she asked quietly.

"My duty," said the little man swelling a little.

"Inform against him?"

"Inform? What a word to use!" said Pendleton with asperity. "I mean to give him up to justice as he richly deserves."

"But he didn't do it," said Pen with an odd, detached air. The words came out of her involuntarily.

Pendleton stared. "How do you know?"

"By instinct," she said simply.

"Fiddlesticks!" said Pendleton. "You read the paper, didn't you?"

Pen merely smiled the smile that women use when they decline to argue with a man. It is very exasperating to a



man.

"You have seen the man once and exchanged a few pleasantries with him!" he cried. "Do you presume to decide from that whether or not he is capable of murder?"

"I suppose he could shoot a man—with sufficient provocation," she said coolly. "Any man could I suppose ... But not like that. Not in the back!"

Pendleton flung up his hands. "Isn't that like a woman! Just because he has fine eyes I suppose, and a taking smile!"

It never reached Pen who was busy with her own thoughts. She knew in her heart without reason, without arguments that the charge was false, but she was searching for reasons that would convince a man. Her instinct led her unerringly to the weak spots of the case against Counsell.

"Why should he leave his pistol behind to convict him?" she asked. "Why should he introduce himself to us under his right name?"

Pendleton waved this impatiently aside. "Oh, they always make some slips. That's how they're caught. From the first I felt there was something funny about him."

"It was you who first asked him to stay," said Pen indignantly.

"Yes. But I didn't expect the house to be turned upside down to entertain him," he retorted. "Something funny about him, skulking down the Bay like that. You remember how he said he preferred to be alone."

"There's nothing criminal in that!"

"I don't know. Very strange he should slink out of the house without saying good-night to me. Perhaps he saw me reading the paper."

Pen all but wrung her hands. This was men's boasted logic. How could an intelligent person cope with it?

The little man got up with an important air.

"Don't act in haste, Dad," Pen pleaded earnestly. "Something tells me you will regret it. At least sleep on it!"

"He will be gone in the morning," Pendleton said. A look of dismay appeared in his face. "Good Heavens! If he suspects anything he will push off at once!"

"Would you be sorry?" Pen asked astonished.

Pendleton was momentarily disconcerted. "Well no ... of course not. But I must do my duty just the same ... This is an important case. I must act with prudence. The eyes of the world will be upon us now."

"Oh, the newspapers!" cried Pen. "They poison our lives!"

Pendleton was already at the door of the room. "Are you going to take him single-handed?" queried Pen.

He hesitated, puffing a little bit to conceal his discomposure. "The negroes..." he hazarded.

"Ellick and Theodo'!" said Pen with curling lip.

Pendleton rubbed his bald crown. "You're right," he said. "Worse than useless. I'll go to the lighthouse for Weems Locket and his assistant."

"You'll have to pass the tent on the beach."

"I'll row around in my skiff," said Pendleton craftily.

"With muffled oars?" she asked scornfully.

"Why yes," he said innocently. He was impervious to her scorn.

"Dad, you *must* listen to me!" she cried.

"This is man's work," he said, swelling up. "You must leave it to me."

A sick horror overcame her, that men were so insensible to the truth. What could one do with them? It was evident from the whole tone of the story she had read that men had already made up their minds as to Counsell's guilt. Let one of them raise the cry and all were ready to give tongue as thoughtlessly as a pack of hounds. It was not the desire for justice that moved them but a sort of blood lust. They would try him with all their solemn farcical forms of justice, but none the less he would be railroaded to a shameful death!

"Dad! You mustn't. You don't know what you're doing!" she murmured, swaying.

He stared his displeasure. "Pendleton, is it possible that you ... that this young man..."

She contrived some sort of a laugh. "What nonsense!"

He turned out of the door saying: "I must act at once."

Pen gasped: "Dad!" and keeled over on a chair. The swoon was perfectly genuine, but she lost consciousness only for the space of a breath, and thereafter her wits worked with the swiftness of desperation. He was deaf to truth, to reason, to sense, very well then, she must use a woman's weapons against him. It was Pendleton's transports of distress that gave her her cue.

"Penny, Penny, my child!" he was crying wildly.

Pen's mother had died a young woman of a heart attack, and the fear that Pen might have inherited her weakness was ever present in the good, absurd little man's breast. It was Pen's final weapon. Be it said to her credit she had never used it before. She put her hand to her breast without speaking.

"Oh, my child! Look at me! Speak to me!" he implored.

"Help me to my room!" she whispered.

He made a manful attempt to pick her up in his arms, but she was as big as he. He could not lift her.

"What shall I do!" he wailed, wringing his hands.

"I can walk," she said. "If you will help me."

"But the stairs!"

"Let me lie down in the drawing-room until I feel better."

He helped her across the hall and Pen sank down on the old linen-covered sofa with the broken springs. She was still pressing her hand to her breast in that mute gesture that drove him to distraction. In truth she was pale enough, but it was not from heart disease.

He made her as comfortable as he could; he brought her a glass of water. He scampered back into the hall to call up the doctor. After agitated appeals to other subscribers to get off the line he finally got Doctor Hance on Absolom's Island. But evidently the doctor declined to make the long drive around the head of the creeks and down the impassable Neck road. Pendleton must come for him in his boat he said. In vain the distracted father pleaded that he could not leave his child; the doctor was firm.

Finally Pendleton said: "Very well, I'll come at once. Wait for me on the steamboat dock."

Pen's breast became easier. This plan suited her very well.

Crying that he was going to get Aunt Maria Garner, he ran out of the house. The negro cabin was some three hundred yards behind the big house.

Pen used the interim to get her thoughts in some kind of order. She began to be conscious of a sort of exaltation. Her thoughts ran: "He's in trouble! I shall not lose him now! ... Every man's hand is raised against him. He has no one but me to depend on. He's mine!" There was a terrible joy in the thought of standing side by side with him against the whole world. Her breast burned with a fire of resolution. She even had a fleeting regret that he was not guilty; if he had been it would have required her to give so much more. "I love him! I love him!" she said to herself now without shame.

Pendleton returned with Aunt Maria. Pen was aware of Ellick's and Theodo's black faces peering in at the windows. This interfered with her plans.

"Send them away," she murmured. "There is nothing they can do."

Aunt Maria went out on the porch and shooed her sons home.

Coming back the big negress picked Pen up without more ado and carried her up the stairs. Aunt Maria had been the first person in the world to receive Pen into her arms, and appeared to be unconscious of any increase in her darling's weight. Pendleton fluttered about her like a hen crying at every step:

"Be careful! Oh, be careful!"

Aunt Maria laid Pen down on her bed.

In the midst of his passionate solicitude, a queer little suspicion flickered up in Pendleton's eyes. "While I am gone for the doctor don't let her exert herself in the slightest," he commanded.

Aunt Maria reassured him and he hastened out of the house.

The instant the front door closed behind him Pen sat up in bed, and felt of her hair. Aunt Maria took it as a matter of course. Unlettered though she might be, she had a fully-developed set of instincts; she knew that all sorts of expedients were required to manage those unreasonable creatures, men, and she awaited the explanation with an air of being surprised at nothing and ready for anything.

"I've got to go out," said Pen, exchanging her evening slippers for a pair of rubber-soled sneakers.

Aunt Maria looked rather dubious.

Pen saw that she would win her more securely by appealing to her sense of romance. She began: "That young man who had lunch and dinner with us..."

Aunt Maria's broad face softened and her eyes rolled zestfully.

"There is a story in the paper accusing him of murder!"

It was not what Aunt Maria expected. Her chin dropped, and her eyes almost started from her head. "Bless God!" she murmured.

"Father means to give him up. So I'm going down to warn him."

In Aunt Maria fear overcame romance. "Honey ... honey!" she stammered. "Doan yo' go down there! Doan yo' take no chances! If he's a bad man he'll hurt yo'!"

"A bad man!" cried Pen with shining eyes. "Aunt Maria where were your eyes!"

The old negress was awed by that light in her child's eyes. "Well ... well..." she murmured, "he sho was a pretty

young man!"

Seizing a sweater to cover her bare arms and neck, Pen ran out of the room and down the stairs. Aunt Maria sat down muttering and shaking her head.

Softly closing the big door behind her, Pen sped over the weedy drive. The main gate to the grounds was in the side fence near the edge of the bank. Half of it hung askew on one hinge and the other half lay rotting on the earth. Outside the gate there was a grassy road which made a right-angled turn there. In one direction it ran back between the fields and on up the Neck; in the other it went straight ahead along the edge of the bank and presently descended to the old steamboat wharf on the property. So swift had Pen been that her father was still in sight, his lantern jogging agitatedly down the road in front of her. He always carried a lantern irrespective of the moon. She slackened her pace.

The road ran gently down a natural fault in the high bank. The earth was powdered with silver dust; a mocking-bird sang its casual and thrilling song nearby, and farther off whip-poor-wills. The bushes that rose between the road and the edge of the bank were festooned with the vines of the wild grape. It was the moment of its flowering and in this place its strange, poignant fragrance drowned the honeysuckle. In after life Pen never smelled that scent without living this night over. She was quite collected now. Terror, anxiety, shame and such feelings had been burned up by her great determination.

The road ended before the dilapidated wharf where no steamer had tied up for many years past. Pendleton's skiff was drawn up on the sand alongside, and the *Pee Bee* anchored a hundred feet out in the stream. Pen hung back in the shadows until her father should get away. Off to the left where the white beach curved beautifully out to the point she saw Counsell's little tent pitched in the sand with a fire burning before it, and the dark canoe drawn up. Off the end of the point the spidery lighthouse fixed her with the baleful glare of its red eye.

Pendleton pushed off to his motor-boat with an amount of caution absurd under the circumstances, for as soon as he turned over the engine she exploded like a gun. This time there was no hesitation in the *Pee Bee*; she moved off at once with her usual violence, shattering the night. Pen, watching the tent saw Counsell come out and look in the direction of the sound. But presently he went back again.

As soon as it was safe to do so, she picked her way out over the broken floor of the wharf. The piles were gnawed and broken, and the pushing of the ice during many seasons had given the whole structure a rakish cant towards the Bay. Pen dropped over the side into an inch or two of water and gingerly picked her way towards the tent.

It was a little lean-to tent open to the fire in front, but with a mosquito curtain hanging down. He heard her splashing towards him and came out. He must have been sitting there looking at the fire and smoking. His pipe was still between his teeth. He stared at her as at a ghost without making a sound. His body had a tense look. She could not read his face because the moon was behind him. Its light was strong in her face.

"It is I, Miss Broome," she said in her direct way.

He seemed to come to life. "You!" he cried in a voice of delight. He laughed shakily. "I thought ... how foolish of me ... I was thinking of you ... I thought..." He seemed unable to go on.

"I came through the water to avoid making tracks in the sand."

"I understand!" he said eagerly. "I'll carry you ashore."

Pen stamped her foot in the water. "You don't understand! Stay where you are and I'll tell you!"

"There's nothing wrong is there?" he asked anxiously. "I heard the motor-boat start off."

"Wrong enough," said Pen simply. Since nothing was to be gained by beating around the bush, she blurted out the truth. "Collis Dongan has been found shot dead in his rooms, and you are accused of having done it."

"What!" he cried with so perfect an expression of astonishment that Pen's breast was warmed and comforted.

No guilty man could possibly have simulated that look. She had not doubted him, nevertheless it was sweet to be reassured. The tears sprang to her eyes; she hung her head to hide them. He did not notice them. He was dazed.

"Collis Dongan dead!" he muttered. "When ... How?"

She told the main facts of the story slowly, distinctly as to a stupid person.

"Good God! how terrible!" he muttered. "How quick can I get back to New York? It was suicide of course. He had cause enough."

"What cause?" Pen asked quickly.

"He had swindled and betrayed me," Counsell said bitterly. "And I found him out ... But he's dead! I'm sorry now for the things I said to him!" His thoughts flew off at a tangent. "But how is it you came to tell me ... and like this?" He was looking at her submerged feet.

"My father feels it his duty to give you up," said Pen. "I gained a little time by making believe to be ill. He will be here later with other men."

"Well, that's all right," said Counsell. "It's all got to be sifted to the bottom of course. They can't have any case against me."

"They have a complete case against you," said Pen. "And don't you see, they think you ran away." She gave him the points of the evidence against him.

"That's bad," he said gravely. "My revolver, eh? I had lost it! ... But you didn't believe it!" he cried warmly.

"I'm not a man," said Pen simply.

"Anyhow, it doesn't alter things," he said. "I've got to go back. They couldn't send an innocent man to the chair."

Pen clasped her hands in a sort of despair. Another obstinate man to be argued with! "They could! They could!" she cried. "You don't understand. I couldn't bring the paper to you because it would have been missed. But you must read it later. Then you'll see. My father is just like other men. They all seem to act in a herd. They have made up their minds that you did it. They are determined you sha'n't escape. Your trial would be a mockery."

He was impressed by her earnestness. "Just the same ... I couldn't run," he said slowly.

"You mustn't do anything on impulse," Pen urged. "You must read the newspaper and find out where you stand. You must give yourself up if you so decide, but not allow yourself to be caught."

He seemed to be convinced, but he did not take the matter seriously enough to suit Pen. He seemed to be thinking more of her than of his own situation. He took a step nearer to her.

"How fine of you to come to warn me!" he said warmly.

Pen retreated into deeper water. "*Please!*" she said sharply. "There is not an instant to lose!"

"But if I've got to go ... I must thank you," he said.

It was not part of Pen's plan to let him go, but not wishing to provoke another argument, she let the words pass for the moment.

"Anyhow, come out of the water," he pleaded. "Your feet must be chilled through."

He put down a paddle at the edge of the water and Pen stepped out on it. He looked at her longingly.

"Hurry! Hurry!" Pen said.

With a sigh he commenced to pull up the pegs that fastened down his tent.

It was soon bundled into the canoe together with his grub-box, his valise, and the odds and ends of his baggage.

"Get in," he said. "I'll paddle you back to the wharf."

Pen sat down in the bottom of the canoe while he perched on the stern seat wielding the paddle with the easy grace of long custom. She watched him through her lashes. The moon was behind him, silhouetting his strong frame and making a sort of aureole about his bare head.

The tide was high and the water had risen to within three feet of the floor of the wharf. Pen climbed out upon it.

"Well, is this good-by?" he said dolefully,

"No," said Pen breathlessly. Her instinct told her there was another struggle of wills ahead. "You're not going. I'm going to keep you here."

"What!" he cried. "Oh, if you knew how you tempted me!"

"Tempt you!" she said crossly. "This is no time for sentiment!"

"I couldn't let you," he said firmly.

"Where could you go?" she demanded.

"I'll manage to keep out of sight."

"There is no place you could go!" she insisted. "The *Sun*-paper is read on the remotest creeks. Do you realize what a hue and cry will be raised in the morning? Fifty boats will be out searching the river, the bay, the creeks. How could you hope to escape? Where would you get food and fresh water?"

"I'll find a way," he said stubbornly. "I'm going back to New York."

"Stay here!" she pleaded.

"I couldn't! What would you think of a man who unloaded all his troubles on a woman like that?"

"What would I think of him?" Pen was on her knees at the edge of the wharf reaching down for his things. The moonlight was in her face. She suddenly smiled at him in an oddly tender, an indulgent sort of way. "Don't be silly!" she said brusquely. "Hand me up that valise."

The advantage was all with her now. His man's pride was hardly strong enough to tear him away from her. He passed up the valise.

"I'll find some way to square the account," he grumbled.

Pen smiled still.

"What will we do with the canoe?" he asked, when their cargo was unloaded on the wharf.

"Sink it in deep water at the end of the wharf," she said.

"Good! I'll empty my clothes out and fill the valise with stones."

"Such a good valise," objected the prudent Pen. "Couldn't you just load the stones in the canoe?"

"No. She'd roll them out and come to the top. I can tie the valise to a thwart."

How Pen loved to have him talk to her offhand as to another man!

While he was attending to the canoe Pen busied herself dividing his belongings into two equal lots to carry up the hill. Her eyes ever glancing in the direction of the Island finally saw a tiny red and a green eye turn on them from afar.

"They've started back," she said quietly. "We'll have to carry everything in one trip."

"Oh, throw everything overboard that will sink."

"You'll need it."

"What are you going to do with me?"

"Hide you in the woods."

Presently the put-put of the noisy little boat came to them across the water.

"No time to lose!"

When Counsell came to her he coolly appropriated half her load. They wasted a good minute quarreling over it. Pen was not accustomed to having her will opposed by a man. Her undisputed sway at Broome's Point had made her a little too autocratic perhaps. A hot little flame of anger shot up in her breast. When she became angry Counsell laughed delightedly. This was outrageous. Nevertheless she liked it. She found a curious pleasure in giving in to him, and meekly accepted what he said she might carry. "What is happening to me?" she asked herself for the dozenth time that day.

They plodded up the hill under their loads, Pen in advance. Their shadows marched before them. The whole earth was held in a spell of moonlight and the perfume of the wild grape. It sharpened their senses intolerably. Life seemed almost too much to be borne. Neither could speak. Once Counsell bending under the weight of his pack, mutely put his hand forward and groped for hers.

"Don't! Don't!" she said painfully.

"Oh, Pen!" he murmured.

As they progressed along the top of the bank the motor-boat was completing her journey below them. They could glimpse the boat through the interstices of the bushes, but those in the boat could not have seen them.

"We must hurry," said Pen. "They must see already that your tent is gone."

Reaching the tenant cottage outside the grounds Pen said: "We could save time by cutting across here, but we'd leave a wide open track through the wet weeds. We'll have to go around."

They followed the road to the broken gate, and making the turn, kept along outside the fence until they got well in the rear of the cottage. Here the faintly marked path worn by Pen crossed the road, and they turned into it. The motor-boat had come to her moorings. Breaking into a sort of staggering run under their burdens they were soon received into the woods.

"I must get back to the house before they do," Pen panted.

The glade with its tiny temple presented a scene of unearthly beauty. A shaft of moonlight was silvering the pale dome. The deep bowl below the bank was full to the brim of moonlight.

A gasp of astonishment escaped Counsell. "What's this?"

"Afraid of ghosts?" asked Pen.

"Try me!" he laughed.

They cast their burdens on the ground. There was no time for lengthy explanations or leave-takings.

"Listen!" said Pen. "Pitch your tent among the bushes at the back of the tomb."

"I'll rig it from the branches," he said. "Won't drive stakes."

"Good! Keep back from the edge of the bank during the day. A small boat might come into the pond, looking for you. But no native will come near this spot. It's not safe to build a fire. What have you to eat?"

"Plenty of bread, cooked meat, eggs."

"When I come again I'll bring more. And a little oil stove. The water in the pond is not fit to drink, but you'll find a spring at the foot of the bank. Watch well before you show yourself in the open."

"When will you come again?" he asked urgently.

"When it is safe ... To-morrow night I think."

"The time will pass slowly until then," he said simply. He picked up her hand and pressed it hard to his cheek.

Pen snatched away her hand and fled—fled from she knew not what. Trying to fly from the shattering commotion in her breast perhaps, which of course she carried with her.

As she ducked through her own particular gap in the fence she could quite clearly hear the two men, coming up the road from the beach talking together in tones of chagrin. She sped to the house and upstairs to her room. Aunt Maria was asleep in a chair. Pen awakened her with a violent shake, and commenced to undress.

"Quick! my night-dress!" she cried. "Throw these wet things into a closet. Remember to say you put me to bed as soon as Dad went out and we both fell asleep!"

"Bless God, honey! Bless God!" repeated Aunt Maria. Nevertheless she bestirred herself.

When the two men knocked on the door a sleepy voice bade them enter. All was peace within the room. Aunt Maria struggled to her feet assiduously knuckling her eyes; Pen lay in bed with the bedclothes to her chin, her eyes languorous as if but just opened.

"You see," said Doctor Hance. "It is just as I told you. Everything is all right."

Pendleton's feelings were mixed. He was relieved, and as soon as he was relieved he remembered his suspicions. In order to divert attention from Aunt Maria whose delineation of sleepiness was rather melodramatic, Pen smiled at her father and murmured that she felt better.

He looked at her queerly. He could no longer contain his chagrin. "He's gone!" he said.

Pen, aware that the doctor was keenly observing her, made her eyes wide. "Gone?" she echoed. "Where?"

"Pushed off in his canoe somewhere."

"We'll get him in the morning," the doctor added, watching her still. "He can't get far."

Pen made her face an indifferent blank.

Pendleton was sent out of the room while the doctor made his examination. Hance was a frowsy old man with a rough tongue and a compassionate irascible eye. Everybody quarreled with him and depended on him as on a tower. He had no illusions left about mankind, but he gave all his strength to tending them. Pen dreaded being left alone with him. However he said no more about the escaped canoeist. From the character of his grunts as he sounded her she knew she had not deceived him at all. When the door closed behind him she flew to it to hear what he would say to her father.

Pendleton was just outside the door. "Well?" he asked anxiously.



"She's all right," was the gruff reply. "A bit of a shock maybe. No organic trouble."

"Hum," said Pendleton, and his thoughts immediately flew off to the other matter. "That engine of mine makes such a confounded racket! He must have heard me start off and guessed that I was on to him and had gone for help."

"I suppose so," said Dr. Hance with a grim chuckle.

They passed downstairs.

Pen thought with a thankful heart: "He's not going to give me away! Blessed old man!"

## CHAPTER III

### AN IRRUPTION FROM THE WORLD

At all times Pen was an early riser but next morning she was up with the sun. While she was dressing, her collie Dougall set up a great barking in the back yard. At night he was kept fastened in his kennel there to keep watch that no fox or 'possum came after the poultry. Pen knew that it could not be one of those marauders now because it was broad day and there was no alarm amongst the chickens. So she paid no attention. Doug, like the best of dogs, sometimes raised a false alarm.

Night was too far away to wait for. Secure in the feeling of their solitude Pen planned to carry Don Counsell what he needed and get back to the house before anyone stirred. Her father arose like clockwork at six and Aunt Maria turned up in the kitchen yawning about that hour, or later. It was a queer thing to visit a man at five o'clock in the morning—but for humanity's sake! He would be asleep in his tent and would never know she had been there until he awoke and found what she had left. Pen's heart gave a queer little jump at the thought of being able to look at him sleeping without any necessity of veiling her eyes.

She billowed softly down the great stairway—it was a treat to stand at the bottom and see Pen come down with her toes pointing—and scampered into the pantry. From a high shelf she got down an old primus stove which had not been used in a long time, and cleaned it and filled it with oil. Then she made up a basket of bread, butter, cream, eggs, strawberries, etc., and started out of the house.

Some instinct of caution impelled her to put her things down on a chest in the hall, while she gave a preliminary peep out of doors. She was greatly taken aback to discover another young gentleman of the world sitting on the porch playing with one of her innumerable kittens. He sprang up, and snatching off his cap, bade her good morning.

Pen could only stare and stammer. "Why ... who ... how." Finally she managed to blurt out: "Where did you come from?"

His air was ingratiating—a shade too ingratiating perhaps. "Rowed over from the Island," he explained. "I arrived there about three and had a snooze on the seat of my car. As soon as it began to get light I hunted about until I found a skiff with oars in it, and came on over. I suppose there'll be a row when the owner finds it gone, but I'll square myself with him later. I knew your house by the cupola."

Pen lacked a key to all this. She looked her further questions.

"I'm on the ——— newspaper," he went on cheerfully. "Claude Banner is my name. Last night somebody telephoned from the Island that Don Counsell had been here all day yesterday, so I got a car at once and started. Lost my way a couple of times. I aimed to come here direct by road, but the hills in the woods were washed so badly I had to turn around and go to the Island."

"Mr. Counsell has gone," said Pen. "You have had your journey for nothing."

"Not at all!" he said with his assured and agreeable smile. "It's your story that I came after."

Pen looked at him with a kind of horror. This possibility had not occurred to her. She withdrew into herself. "I have no story to tell," she said coldly.

He was not at all abashed. "My paper was the only one got the tip last night, and I've got to get my story over the phone in time for the evening edition. You have a phone here I see. The wires were the first things I looked for. It'll be a rare scoop. There'll be a mob down later."

Pen shivered inwardly and looked down. She was much confused, things were so different from what one imagined. Only last night she had said to herself: "If I could get hold of the men who write for newspapers I'd make them be fair to Don." (She already called him Don in her thoughts.) Well, here was her chance, but the brash young Danner antagonized her so she could scarcely be civil to him. She struggled with her feelings.

"You'll have to excuse me. I don't consider that the public has any interest in me ... or any right to intrude upon my privacy! I hate to read that sort of story in the newspapers ... But of course that's not your fault ... I'm willing to answer any proper questions, but I must not be quoted. There must be no descriptions of me or of my home!"

The young man's face fell. "But I've got to tell my story," he protested. "It'll be the scoop of the year. If I don't tell all about you the others will. I can appreciate your feelings, but the others are hard-boiled guys I assure you. But you'll like what I write about you when you see it. Everybody does."

Pen smiled wryly. "I don't know ... You'll have breakfast with us?"

"Oh no!" he said.

"You must. There's no place else for you to go. And you've been up all night."

He saw that she did not like him, and he appreciated her invincible hospitality. "Say, I wish I wasn't here on a story!" he said impulsively.

"So do I," said Pen. "I must ask you to wait here until I get things started in the house."

"But my story?"

"I'll be back shortly."

Pen went in and put away the things in her basket with a heavy heart. No chance now of seeing Don until night. All day he would be watching for her. In the course of time Aunt Maria turned up and breakfast was set in train.

The "interview" that followed was hardly a success. So few of Danner's questions came under the head of what Pen called "proper" questions. And the way he kept sizing her up out of the corners of his eyes made her stiffer and stiffer. She wished not to be stiff; she wished to win Danner to Don's side. But she soon discovered that it was hopeless; that the young reporter's sole business was to cater to the public taste. The sly look that appeared in Danner's eyes when she casually expressed a doubt of Don's guilt soon put her off that line. Meanwhile she was suffering horribly at the thought of having their poverty exposed in the newspapers. Obviously Banner missed nothing; the rotting porch, the patched screens, that ridiculous barricade around her sprouting dahlias.

Pendleton Broome presently came downstairs and Danner got along much better with him. The reporter knew just how to set up the little man in his own esteem. Pendleton admired the newspapers and his greatest pleasure was to see his name in print. So far he had only won to the correspondence columns. Pendleton encouraged, adopted a throaty voice and a magisterial air that caused poor Pen to squirm afresh, thinking of the fun the clever young man could have with her father.

During breakfast Pen was obliged to hear the story of the previous day's happenings told and retold with much irrelevant detail. Danner exerted himself to please her; he was not a bad sort of fellow; but Pen thinking of the other breakfasting on cold victuals and water, resented every swallow of hot coffee that he took.

"When I first read the story in the paper," thus Pendleton, "the fellow was still in the house. He was talking to my daughter in the drawing-room—a very gentlemanly, attractive sort of fellow you understand..."

"So I understand," said Danner, glancing sidelong at Pen.

"But there was something in his eye...!"

Pen could not stand for this. "Why, father," she protested with as good-natured and offhand a smile as she could muster, "be fair! You never discovered that 'something' until you read the paper."

"You are wrong, my dear. From the first I was aware of a curious prejudice against him. But of course I could not let it show while he was our guest."

Pen smiling at whatever cost, let it go.

"Where was I?" asked Pendleton.

Danner prompted: "He was in the drawing-room."

"Oh yes! For the moment I was at a loss. Frightfully awkward situation. By the time I had resolved on a course of action he had left the house *without bidding me good-night!*"

"Without bidding you good-night!" echoed Danner.

"Without bidding me good-night!"

Danner turned to Pen. "Why do you suppose he didn't say good-night to your father?"

"I don't know," said Pen carelessly. "I suppose he forgot."

"Perhaps he had a glimpse of the newspaper?"

"He couldn't see my father from where he was."

"Did he seem agitated?"

"Not in the least."

"What did you do then?" Danner asked Pendleton.

"My first plan was to get the lighthouse keeper to help me apprehend the fellow. But as I was setting out from the house my daughter had a sudden attack..."

Danner had the grace not to look at Pen, but she was aware of his sharp spring to attention.

"And as I was obliged to go to the Island for the doctor I decided to let him help me. But when we got back the fellow had struck his tent and pushed off."

"That taken in connection with his failure to bid you good-night..." suggested Danner.

"Exactly!" said Pendleton.

Pen felt she would scream if she were obliged to listen to any more of this. Making believe to discover an errand in the kitchen, she left the room.

When she came back Danner asked with hypocritical solicitude: "Are you quite well again this morning?"

"Perfectly," said Pen.

Useless to expect anything from Danner. Though he was clearly sensible to Pen's charm, the story was everything to him, and his nostrils were quivering now on the scent of a story much more dramatic than he had expected.

Pendleton went on: "Doctor Hance is coming back in a motor-boat this morning, and we will search the bay shore.... We have an idea of the direction he took," he added mysteriously.

"Wish you luck," said Danner. "We had a message from New York last night that a reward of five thousand dollars had been offered for Counsell's capture."

He looked at Pen as he said it. She kept her eyes down, and rested her hands on the edge of the table that they might not shake.

"What!" cried Pendleton. "Well! ... that lets me out then. No business for a gentleman, of course."

Pen's sore heart warmed gratefully towards her father.

"Who offers the reward?" Pen asked quietly. (Poor Pen! She suspected that her parade of indifference would never deceive the sharp-eyed reporter. What she ought to have shown was a frank, natural interest in the matter. But that was beyond her powers of dissimulation.)

"Ernest Riever, the well-known millionaire," said Danner. "An intimate friend of the murdered man, I believe."

When they finished breakfast several motor-boats were seen coming across from the Island. Danner made haste to get his story over the phone. This was an ordeal for Pen. The connection was bad, and Danner had to shout his "human interest" stuff at the top of his lungs. Pen went to her room and shut the door, and buried her head in the pillows. Still she could hear the horrible sentences that outraged every feeling of privacy she had. After that she gave up all pretense of trying to be agreeable to Danner.

The first comers from the Island were volunteer searchers. News of the reward had been telephoned down from Baltimore. They came to Broome's Point with the instinct of picking up the trail where it started, forgetting that water holds no tracks. One spot around the shores was as good as another to begin the search. Dr. Hance was not among them. Possibly the reward had put him off too. Others who had not the initiative to institute a search, merely came to hang around and stare and ask foolish questions. A little later Captain Spinney brought over a whole party of reporters from Washington, Baltimore and Philadelphia. These gentlemen undertook to interview Pen in a body. She liked them less than young Danner. She referred them to her father, and fled to her room.

Pendleton, enthroned on the porch, the center of interest for the crowd, was in his element. He graciously accepted the reporters' excellent cigars, and little by little, without realizing it, embroidered on his tale. In an expansive moment he asked them to lunch en masse, and then in terror went to Pen to tell her what he had done.

She merely nodded. "There's enough for one meal. But we'll run short at supper."

She gave the necessary orders for the meal, but declined to appear herself. Not until she knew the men were all gathered around the table did she venture to come down the back stairs and see to some of the things that had been left undone that distracted morning. Then she shut herself up again.

During the afternoon an automobile with a broken spring managed to win through by the road. It brought a load of New York reporters. These in asking their way had spread the news along the Neck, and the poor whites who lived there hidden in the woods began to straggle in in ox-carts, to share in the excitement.

Reporters made themselves at home all over the lower floor of the big house, even in the kitchen where they chaffed Aunt Maria and questioned her adroitly. This was a source of great uneasiness to Pen. She was divided between anxiety and indignation. There was something old English in Pen. Thus to have her castle invaded was the greatest outrage she could conceive of. But what could she do? She experienced a sickening loss of identity.

She could not stay in her room all the time. Whenever she went downstairs it was to be waylaid by one or half a dozen inquisitors who according to their natures tried to cajole her or to entrap her into answering their questions.

Meanwhile the natives pressed their faces against the windows and stared in. Finally Pen sought her father.

"How long have I got to submit to this?" she demanded.

"To what, my dear?" he asked, sparring for time.

"To having my house overrun by strangers!"

"Patience, my child. They're not doing any real harm."

"But our house, *our* house? Have we no rights in it?"

"I know, I know. But what can I do?"

"Request them to leave. They can at least wait outside the fence."

"But my dear!" said Pendleton aghast. "We've got to stand in well with the Press. Suppose they were to give the impression in their stories that we were concealing this fellow!" This was accompanied by his furtive glance of suspicion.

Pen thought in dismay: "One of them has put that idea into his head!" She said no more, but marched indignantly back to her room.

Worse trials were in store for her. About five, from her window she saw a new party of men come in by the drive. Even at the distance she could see that they differed subtly from the reporters, stupider looking men who carried themselves with the arrogance of conscious rectitude. After awhile Aunt Maria came to the door of her room, the whites of her eyes showing.

"Miss Penny, honey," she gasped. "Yo' Paw say, please to come downstairs."

"What's the matter, Aunt Maria?"

"Detecatifs, honey!" said Aunt Maria in an awe-struck whisper. "Detecatifs fum Noo Yawk!"

Without bestirring herself at all, Pen changed her dress and went slowly downstairs. As soon as she entered the drawing-room she regretted her dilatoriness, for they already had Aunt Maria on the carpet, and the old negress was sweating in agitation. Pen instantly conceived a violent dislike of her inquisitor. He was a bull-necked, ageing man with pendulous cheeks and dull, irascible blue eyes. He lolled in a chair by the window, with an arm over the back, and his fingers interlaced. He nodded to Pen and curtly requested her to be seated.

Pen flared up inwardly. ("Asking me to sit down in my own house!") In order to show that she was still mistress there, she moved calmly about the room, setting things in order. They had presumed to shove her center table over to the fireplace to give themselves room. She shoved it back. The chief with an annoyed glance resumed his questioning of the scared negress.

The room was full of people. There were four lesser officers grouped around the chief's chair. The reporters were gathered in a group under the arch that led to the back drawing-room. Pen soon learned that there was an excellent working agreement between these two parties, the reporters dependent on the detectives for news, and the detectives dependent on the reporters for public recognition of their efforts. Over by the other front window sat Pendleton, leaning back in an old swivel chair, trying to appear at his ease.

Aunt Maria was saying: "Soon as Mist' Pendleton go out Ah undress Miss Penny and put her in baid. She done drap right off lak a kitten."

"Then what did you do?" the man asked in the rasping voice inquisitors affect.

"Me? Ah didn't do nuffin, suh. Ah jes sot."

"Did you go to sleep too?"

"Ah reckon Ah did."

"How long did you sleep?"

"Deed I caint tell. I aint know nuffin else till Miss Penny wake me up again."

"So she woke you up?"

Aunt Maria perceived that she had made a slip. "Yessuh! Yessuh!" she stammered. "Miss Penny done want a drink of watah."

"How did she wake you?"

Again Aunt Maria's tongue slipped. "She done shook mah ahm."

"So she was out of bed?"

"No suh! No suh!" cried Aunt Maria in a panic. "I misrecollect that. She jes hollered at me."

It would have been patent to a child that Aunt Maria was lying. The scene was intolerable to Pen's pride.

"Aunt Maria, tell the truth," she said sharply.

The poor old negress turned a face of complete dismay to her mistress. What was she to make of this? In her confusion she was unable to get anything else out.

To Pen the chief detective said harshly: "Please be silent, Miss. You will have a chance to tell your story in a minute."

Pen's eyes blazed. "You are not to suppose that you are entrapping me or my servant!" she said hotly. "I have no objection to your knowing that I went down to the beach last night and warned Mr. Counsell that he was liable to arrest!"

It had the effect of a bombshell there in the room. For a second all the men stared at Pen open-mouthed. Then of one accord the reporters made a rush out into the hall where the telephone was. He who first laid hand on it was allowed to get his call in first. Pen was too angry now to be terrified by further publicity. Their precipitancy merely disgusted her. Was there no such thing as human dignity?

Pendleton Broome's swivel chair had come forward with a snap. He looked clownish. He was the only one really surprised by Pen's disclosure. What astonished the others was that she should have admitted it. For a fleeting instant Pen felt sorry for the little man, but she had too much on her mind for the feeling to linger. The detective was not surprised, but he had counted on dragging out the admission, and it annoyed him excessively to have it flung in his face. He affected to be consulting with his subordinates while he recovered himself.

"You had better question me," Pen said. "Aunt Maria knows nothing more."

"Allow me to be the judge of that," he said sarcastically.

Pen shrugged. He went on questioning the negress, but she was reduced to a gibbering state. In the end he had to let her go. Aunt Maria hung in the hall, just around the corner of the door, listening with stretched ears. The reporters straggled back into the room.

Pen and the detective faced each other. The man cleared his throat and settled his collar, gave attention to his finger nails, and glanced carelessly out of the window—all time-honored devices to break up the composure of one's opponent. Pen merely looked at him. Suddenly he rasped at her:

"So you assisted this murderer to escape?"

"Don't speak to me like that," said Pen quietly, with heightened color. "He is not yet proved a murderer." Meanwhile her inner voice was saying despairingly: "You should not antagonize him! You should not antagonize him!" But it was impossible for her to act otherwise towards this great, stupid bully.

He smiled disagreeably; nevertheless he modified his tone. "What did you do it for?" he asked.

"He had had dinner and supper with us," said Pen. "I differed with my father as to its being our duty to inform against him."

"Where did he go from here?"

"I don't know."

"What! It was a bright moonlight night. Didn't you have interest enough to watch which way he went after having warned him?"

"He paddled straight out from the shore. I didn't wait. The motor-boat was coming back."

"Why didn't they see your tracks in the sand?"

"I walked at the edge of the water."

"What did you want to deceive your father for?"

"I beg your pardon," said Pen with her chin up. "That is between my father and me."

The detective abandoned this line of questioning. "Didn't Counsell tell you where he was going?" he demanded.

"No."

"Didn't you talk down on the beach?"

"Certainly."

"What about?"

"I had to tell him what was in the newspaper."

"Didn't he know already?"

"He did not."

The detective looked around at his subordinates with a leer, and they all laughed. Instead of disconcerting Pen it had the effect of stiffening her. She looked at one after another so steadily that their eyes suddenly found business elsewhere.

The chief said suddenly with the air of one springing a disagreeable surprise: "Had you ever seen Counsell before yesterday?"

"Never," said Pen.

"Are you sure of that?"

Pen merely looked at him.

"Answer my question, please!"

"I have already answered it."

"Do you expect me to believe that you undertook to save a total stranger from the law?"

"I have stated the facts."

The detective sprang to his feet and shook a violent forefinger at Pen—the old trick of the inquisitor. "You have seen this man before!"

"Don't shout at me," said Pen coolly. "I am not a criminal."

"As to that we'll see," he said ominously. "Did you ever hear of accessory after the fact?"

"Well, if I am a criminal," said Pen, "I don't have to testify against myself."

"Don't argue with me if you please," he said. "Just answer my questions."

"Answer me a question if you please," said Pen clearly.

He stared. He was not accustomed to having the tables turned like this.

Before he could explode Pen asked her question: "You are from New York, aren't you?"

"What of it?"

"What are your rights in Maryland?"

His face turned ugly. "You'll see!" He addressed one of his men. "Keesing, you have heard this young woman's admissions. There's a justice of the peace over on the Island. Go to him and make the necessary affidavit to secure a warrant for her arrest."

The man left the room. Pen believed this to be a bluff, and scornfully smiled. Her father was impressed though. He wilted down in his chair, and put out an imploring hand towards his daughter. He was incapable of speaking.

"Do you want anything else of me?" Pen coolly asked her questioner.

Seeing that his threat had failed of effect, the detective judged it prudent not to prolong this scene. "That is all for the present," he said loftily. "You will please not leave the house."

"Thank you," said Pen, "but until I am arrested I shall do just what I am accustomed to do."

She left the room with her head up and went on up the stairs. She was not at all pleased with herself though. That inner voice said remorselessly: "You have only angered him without doing Don any good." To be sure, she had seen sympathy in the eyes of some of the reporters, but they could not say anything of course that might endanger their working agreement with the detectives. At the thought of danger to herself Pen smiled. She was in the frame of mind that welcomes persecution. But her heart was full of terror for Don. She had not foreseen that the place would be overrun like this. He was so near! And the detective's order to remain in the house suggested that they suspected he might still be on the place.

On her knees at her front window she watched the men leave the house in a body. Some shrubbery cut off her view of the gate, and she could not tell which way they turned after passing through it. Fortunately but an hour or two of daylight remained.

## CHAPTER IV

### BESIDE THE LITTLE TEMPLE



When Pen was sure that the house was emptied of strangers she went downstairs to see about the belated supper. She was mad with anxiety to know what was happening outside, but whatever comes, people must eat. Everything in the kitchen was at sixes and sevens of course, and Aunt Maria nowhere to be seen.

The old negress presently waddled in panting. She was both terrified and delighted by the gale of excitement that had suddenly blown upon the settled peace of Broome's Point. In order to divert her mistress' wrath, she made haste to give Pen the latest news from out-of-doors. It appeared that the detectives and the reporters had jointly hired the empty tenant cottage outside the gate, and were busy establishing themselves there. They had sent over to the island for supplies, and for all the cots and bedding available. They had hired a white woman from up the Neck to cook for them.

"Huh!" said Aunt Maria scornfully. "All Mis' Hat Dawkins evah cook is fat back and cawn pone!"

Pen breathed more freely.

Pen and her father supped alone together. The events of half a lifetime seemed to have occurred since the last time they had sat down without guests, That was breakfast the day before. By now every vestige of Pendleton's self-important air was gone. The situation had become too big for him. He was too much overcome even to blame Pen for anything that had happened. As always when things became difficult he depended like a child on Pen's superior strength. He had to blame something so he railed ceaselessly against the evil chance that had brought Counsell to their door.

Pen, busy with her own thoughts let him run on. Her brain was clicking like a well-oiled piece of machinery. Like a brave fighter she had to count up all the chances against her. How was she going to get out of the house that night, and how reach Don when their enemies were camped squarely beside her path? How could she guide him to a safer hiding-place, and yet leave the way open to carry him what he needed from time to time? How could she get him away from that dangerous neighborhood altogether? But perhaps after all Broome's Point was the safest place in the world for him. But if he stayed near what prodigies of courage, of astuteness, of resourcefulness would be demanded from her! Not for an instant would she be able to relax. Nerved as she was it was a prospect to make her tremble.

Pen enjoyed one great advantage in knowing every foot of ground around the place. The daily hunt for her vagrant turkeys, as well as the search every Spring for their nests, had taught her that. She knew she could find her way on the darkest night, but she was a good deal troubled by the natives wandering around the place. A party of them had built a fire over in the northeast corner of the grounds as if they intended to bivouac there. The darker the night the better for her. She watched the sky anxiously. It was quite heavily overcast, but with the moon at the full there would be a good deal of diffused light just the same.

Another danger was that her dog Dougall might betray her. She got around that by instructing Thedo' to shut him up in the barn. She had a convenient reason for doing so in that Doug had not been at all hospitable to the strangers during the day. "He might hurt somebody," Pen said.

The hours after supper were very hard for Pen to put in. Her plans were complete now, but she needed darkness and quiet to put them into motion. Somebody had brought their mail over from the Island, and Pendleton was absorbed in the latest accounts of the Counsell case. There was nothing about Broome's Point as yet save the bare announcement that Counsell had turned up there in a canoe. Pen was obliged to read the paper too, though it nauseated her. This day's story contained nothing of especial significance. There was an interview with Ernest Riever the millionaire who had put up the reward for Counsell's capture. Pen determined to ask Don about him.

Towards dark one of the detectives without so much as by your leave, came and took up his station in a chair on the front porch. Pen hearing him slapping at the mosquitoes out there, smiled dryly to herself. She went out into the dark kitchen and found as she expected, that there was another man on the kitchen porch. This relieved her mind. Much better to know where the watchers were than to have them concealed about the grounds. Pen had her own way of getting out of the house.

She could not get her father started to bed until she first made believe to go herself. She lay down on the outside of her bed fully clothed. When, after an age-long wait, she heard the sound of his snores from across the hall, she

rose again and flitted noiselessly downstairs. For the past hour she had heard no sound from outside. She was accustomed to moving around the house in the dark, and she already had everything she wanted to carry with her placed handy to her hand. Wrapping each article separately in newspaper she put them all in a jute bag. Then satisfying herself that the watchers were still on the front and the back porch, she made her way down cellar. There was a possibility that there might be other men stationed out in the grounds, but she had to chance that.

On the north side of the house under the kitchen the cellar communicated with the outside by half a dozen steps and inclined doors in the old style. The milk was brought in this way and the doors were always open. A clump of bushes outside accounted for the fact that the opening had not yet been discovered. This was the blind side of the house.

For a moment Pen lingered behind the bushes listening, then came out. All along the northern side of the grounds ran a wind-break of arbor-vitæ. There was a gap in it, torn by the winter gales. Pen made for that. She neither ran nor crouched. While she wanted to escape observation, if she were seen, she wished to know of it. The fatal thing would be to unwittingly lead someone to Don's hiding-place.

She passed through the gap and hid herself on the other side to make sure she was not followed. Nobody came through.

She then had to make a long detour around the house grounds, across the old paddock and the stable yard in the rear, across the road which led up the Neck and thence via a small triangular field into the woods. Within shadow of the woods she waited again to make sure she was not followed across the field. Nothing stirred behind her. She could see pretty well.

There was no path through this part of the woods, and it was a matter of infinite difficulty to make her way through the underbrush and the thorny creepers without betraying herself. She forced patience on herself and proceeded foot by foot. The distance was not far and she laid a true course. She came out on her own path in the woods. Her heart began to beat in her throat. A hundred paces further lay the little temple.

He heard her coming and appeared ducking under his mosquito curtain. His arms went out to her involuntarily. Pen fearful of some outburst made a warning sound:

"Shh!"

That unthinking gesture of his melted her completely. How natural to have flung herself into his arms. All her carefully built-up strength seemed to run away like water. She fought against it desperately. Not for an instant could she afford to relax. She must think and be strong for both of them. She turned aside from his begging arms.

"I was delayed," she whispered faintly. "Much has happened."

"What does it matter?" he said warmly. "You're here! This is the longest day I've ever lived through. You told me you wouldn't be here till night, but I couldn't help expecting you. Every time a leaf stirred I thought it was you!" He sought to draw her to him.

"You mustn't!" whispered Pen sharply. "We're surrounded by danger. We must plan. This place is no longer safe. You must listen to me. Listen carefully."

His arms dropped to his sides. Pen hurriedly began to tell her story.

He interrupted her. "Come inside. The mosquitoes are too bad."

She hung back a little. Could she withstand him in the close intimacy of his little tent? She must! Steeling her breast she followed him in.

They sat side by side on the ground, nursing their knees and looking out through the mosquito curtain at the little temple outlined against the pale sky. Their shoulders pressed warmly together. That contact deprived Pen of the power of thinking, and she moved away a little. That hurt him; she knew it by the hang of his head. But she went doggedly ahead with her story.

When she came to the end Don said bitterly: "Well I've had plenty of time to-day to think things over. There's only one course open to me. I've got to give myself up."

Pen had expected this. "Wait!" she said urgently. "We must talk things over. You must read the papers I brought you before you make up your mind. You don't know yet what you're up against. I don't understand what makes the newspapers so bitter. Everybody who reads the stories is roused to a sort of craze to hunt you down. What sort of a trial would you get? Why they were even ready to arrest me because I took your part!"

Don was wildly indignant. "You have to go through such things while I sit here in safety!" he cried.

"That was nothing," said Pen. "He didn't mean it really."

"I can't stand it!" cried Don. "You don't know what I'm going through. Sitting here idle thinking about these things. I'd go out of my mind!"

"I do know what you're going through," murmured Pen.

"Suppose I did get away," he went on. "Would my life be worth saving with this accusation hanging over me? What sort of a life would I lead?"

"But the truth must come to light!" insisted Pen. "We will bring it to light."

"How can I fight for myself tied hand and foot like this?"

"You could use me," she murmured.

"That's just it!" he said bitterly. "I couldn't!"

"You haven't much of an opinion of women, have you?"

"You don't understand me. I don't doubt but you're a whole lot cleverer than I. But I have my pride. What would you think of a man who..." He ended with a shrug.

"We just argue round in a circle," said Pen dejectedly.

"So it seems."

"It's a waste of time," she said more firmly. "Let us talk things over first and find out where we're at. Your first thought was that it was a case of suicide."

"I've changed my mind," he said. "Dongan hadn't the nerve. He was the sort of man to cling to life. Besides the loss of seventy-five thousand wasn't a knock-out blow to him. He could have raised the money."

"Then it was murder," said Pen. "That agrees with the doctor's evidence. Who do you think killed him?"

"I swear I don't know," said Don helplessly. "I've been beating my brains all day without being able to hit out an idea. His life was as open as daylight."

"You knew him well?"

"About as well as one man can know another. We came of the same lot you see; old New York families that had been acquainted for three or four generations. Lord! we were too close for my comfort sometimes. He was one of these men with no reticence. His confidences were embarrassing. He was alone in the world, and he had a horror of his own company, see? Very often I was hard put to it to get away about my own concerns."

"But you were much attached to him?"

"Frankly, no!" said Don. "He was the sort of man you just take as a matter of course. Perfectly well-meaning, but a bit of a bore. No salt in him. I would never have gone in with him if I'd realized."

"The newspaper said he was your benefactor."

"Not exactly," said Don dryly. "When I came out of college I was at a loose end. I'm the last of my lot, you know. Not a near relation in the world. It's true Dongan offered me a partnership, but it was not altogether philanthropy. I had twenty-five thousand to put in. He had his seat on 'change and he needed the capital."

"You said he swindled you."

"It was his first crooked deal I'm sure. Even now I can't understand it. He must have been possessed!"

"How did it come out?"

"Friday night we had dinner together. Lord! it seems like a year ago instead of five days ... And now the earth is over him!" Don shuddered.

"You mustn't think of that," said Pen quickly.

"You're right! ... He had something on his mind. Said he wanted to talk to me. So I went up to his rooms afterward. There he blurted out that he was long on Union Central. The stock had broken thirteen points that day. He was seventy-five thousand in the hole. Hadn't a sou, he said. Evidently he'd been bucking the market for some time. Well, that was bad enough, but he actually had the cheek to suggest that I take the debt on my shoulders. I was young, he said, I could live it down, whereas it would ruin him. In the end it came out that he had already entered the transactions in my name in our private ledger, knowing that I never looked in the book. That made me see red. Such treachery! I blew up. I withdrew from the firm on the spot. Told him he could have my twenty-five thousand until he was on his feet, and he could borrow the rest from his wealthy friends."

"What did you do next?" asked Pen.

"I was so blazing mad I scarcely knew what I was doing. My one idea was to get shut of the whole boiling. Rotten game the Street; I was fed up with it anyhow. This only capped the climax. I longed for something clean like paddling a canoe in open water. My canoe was up at a boat-house on Spuyten Duyvil creek. I flung a few things into a valise and went right up there and got it. I paddled right through the rest of the night; down to Perth Amboy and up the Raritan river. By morning I was cooled off. You see I'd no reason to worry about the firm. Dongan had plenty of wealthy friends. If he'd lived he could have raised the money."

"How did your revolver get away from you?"

"Oh! ... I don't know. While I was packing I noticed it wasn't there, but I was too much excited to think about it."

"Had Mr. Dongan any enemies?"

"No. How should he have? A man like that. Never did a positive act in his life, either good or bad."

"A love-affair maybe?"

Don shook his head with a smile. "Not Dongan's line at all. He had no luck with the sex."

"Who were his friends?"

"He had no really intimate friends. Nobody who cared about him particularly. Plenty of associates of course. There was Ernest Riever."

"I was going to ask you about him."

"You know him?"

"Only as a name."

"Son of Scott Riever the steel magnate. Scott Riever's one of the richest men in the country. Ernest is rich in his own right, too. He just fluffs around. Has a big place up in Westchester county where he raises peaches and so on. It's his hobby."

"What sort of man is he?"

"A queer Dick!" said Don deliberating. "A queer Dick! ... Hard to describe offhand."

"He has offered five thousand dollars reward for your capture," said Pen.

Don was electrified. "What!" he cried. "The devil you say! ... Riever has come out against me! ... By God, that's funny!"

"Does that make things clear to you?" Pen asked eagerly.

"Wait a minute! ... Let me think! ... It's damn funny! ... Riever! ... My God!"

"Tell me," pleaded Pen. "Begin at the beginning. Do you know Riever well?"

"Sure! It was I who introduced him to Dongan. He's the same age as me. We were class-mates in college. We passed as pals. But it was a queer sort of friendship. I never could make him out. I couldn't keep my end up with his gilded set. I went in for athletics. But he used to come around me all the time. Flattered me and so on. Yet he didn't seem to like me either. I'd catch him looking at me in no friendly way. He'd let out sneering remarks."

"Is he a little man, ill-favored?" asked Pen.

"Why yes. How did you know?"

Pen smiled to herself. "Nothing. Go on. You were popular in college?"

"So they said," Don said offhand. "College popularity doesn't saw much wood in later life."

"But you were prominent?"

"Oh yes. Captain of the crew in my senior year."

"I see. Go on about Riever."

"Well, after we got out of college there was a sort of mix-up. Nasty mess. Riever had married upon graduation. Her name was Nell Proctor, daughter of the coal trust. I don't believe he cared anything about her, nor she about him. It was just the union of two powerful families that both sides were trying to bring about.

"Meanwhile I'd gone into the brokerage business. Riever would always be asking me up to his place and I went of course. I didn't like him any better than before, but I had to cultivate my graft. I don't suppose Riever's stock operations meant much in his life, but he was far and away the biggest customer Dongan and Counsell had. We got business merely through being associated with him.

"I didn't mention, did I, that Riever had a rotten streak in him, particularly where women were concerned. As time went on I noticed the fair Nell growing ever paler and more tight-lipped and I guessed that an explosion was coming. Then Riever stopped asking me up there any more. I wondered. He still came around the office and gave us his orders. There was a lot of talk around town, and finally a fellow told me they were saying that Nell Riever had done me the honor ... well you know."

Pen's breast grew tight.

"I laughed at the story. Why we'd scarcely ever exchanged a word in private. She wasn't my sort at all. Riever's attitude towards me hadn't changed in the least.

"Soon there was a complete bust-up of the Riever establishment. Nell sued him for divorce. She had cause

enough God knows. His affairs were notorious. He set up a countersuit and produced a letter in court that Nell had written to some unnamed man. Ernest had intercepted it. Well this letter was published and I knew by internal evidence that it was ... well you know ... it had been written to me. A man hates to tell these things about himself! Poor girl! Just a foolish impulse no doubt, that she regretted as soon as she had given away to it! Anyhow the letter was thrown out and she got her divorce with thumping alimony."

Poor Pen was thinking to herself: "I wish I hadn't had to hear about this woman. I shall remember her!"

Don went on: "My name had not been mentioned openly, and Riever still came around the office. He still made out to treat me as an intimate friend, but that was just to put off the gossips. I began to be aware of a change. Once or twice I caught his eyes fixed on me with an expression that was simply poisonous!"

A sharp exclamation escaped from Pen.

"Made me damned uncomfortable," said Don. "Not that I was afraid of him, poor little runt! But one hates to know that there are ugly feelings like that around. He got in the way of giving Dongan his orders. He and Dongan became quite thick."

"Did this have any effect on Mr. Dongan's attitude towards you?" asked Pen.

"Yes," said Don, "now that you speak of it; Dongan had been acting queerly towards me for some time past. Relations were a little strained. But I never gave it much thought."

"Would Mr. Dongan have consulted Mr. Riever about his speculations?" asked Pen.

"Sure! Any tip that Riever let drop would be received as gospel."

"How about that stock you spoke of?"

"Union Central?"

"Do you suppose Mr. Riever advised Mr. Dongan to buy it?"

"Scarcely. Scott Riever's on the Board of Union Central. He'd have inside information if anybody had."

"But suppose Mr. Riever purposely advised him wrong."

"Why should he?"

"To get at you through him."

"Good God!" said Don.

There was a silence while each was thinking hard.

"Wait a minute," said Don. "There's a flaw in your reasoning. How could Riever have known that Dongan was trying to put it off on me?"

Pen shrugged. "Who knows what may have passed between the two men? A suggestion may have been dropped."

"I have it!" cried Don. "Riever could easily tell Dongan to put the orders through in my name so that it would not be guessed that the tip came from him. Everybody knew Riever and I were at outs, you see."

"Well there you are," said Pen.

There was another silence.

"You know what I am thinking," said Pen at last.

"My God, yes!" said Don. "Me too! ... But it's incredible!"

"Somebody shot Collis Dongan," said Pen simply. "*Somebody who hated you.* For look how cleverly the crime has been fastened on you. That is no accidental train of circumstances. Your revolver! And somebody keeps sending stuff to the newspapers that is cunningly designed to poison the public mind against you!"

"But how could Riever get away with it?" asked Don in a maze. "He's too public a character. Like some sort of potentate you know. He never goes out alone. Even if he did shake his body-guard, every newsboy on the street would recognize him."

"I don't suppose he did it himself," said Pen. "But with his money he could easily get it done, couldn't he? One reads of such things."

"But if I was his mark, why didn't he take a shot direct at me?" said Don.

"That wouldn't satisfy a man like that," said Pen. "Instant death is painless."

"But what do you know about Riever?" asked Don.

"My intuition tells me," she said simply. "For years he has been jealous of you; jealous of everything you were that he was not. It was like a corroding ulcer in his breast. That letter of course brought it to a head.... Don't you see? to drag you down, to disgrace you so completely, to bring you to such an unspeakable death, that is the only thing that would give him satisfaction."

"Good God! I can't grasp such fiendish villainy!" cried Don.

"I can," said Pen quietly. "... I guess my soul is older than yours."

"Suppose we're right," said Don. "What good? There is not a scintilla of evidence!"

"He showed his hand once," said Pen. "In offering that reward. Your going away on a trip was the one thing he couldn't have foreseen. It has upset all his calculations."

"The reward aroused my suspicions," said Don. "But it's not evidence."

"We'll get evidence."

"We're up against it all right," said Don harshly. "What is known as the Riever group in New York controls a billion dollars, I guess."

"Then you're satisfied that I was right, aren't you?" asked Pen.

"How do you mean?"

"If you gave yourself up you'd be playing directly into Riever's hands."

Don dropped his head between his hands. "You're right!" he groaned. "But good God! how am I going to stand it!"

Poor Pen! Her breast yearned over him; her arms ached to enfold him. But she could only sit there like a wooden woman, staring at the ground. There was nothing she could have said which would not have been a mockery.

He said at last: "I ought to be in New York."

"It would be impossible to make the trip just now," Pen said quickly. "If you only had somebody there to act for you."

"I have friends, plenty of them," he said gloomily. "But whom could I trust in an affair of this sort? It's not their

loyalty I doubt, but their good sense ... Anyhow how could I get my side of the case before them?"

"Couldn't I carry messages to your friends?" asked Pen diffidently. "Perhaps I could find someone competent to act for you ... Perhaps I could get acquainted with Riever. If I could see him I'd *know*. A woman might discover his weak spot ..."

"I wouldn't let you have anything to do with Riever," he said quickly. "He's a swine!"

Pen was charmed by his proprietary air.

"Besides all that would take money," Don went on dejectedly. "I have only a few dollars. A check would be fatal."

"Perhaps I could find the money," murmured Pen.

"I couldn't let you do that," he said painfully. "Please don't speak of it."

"But if it is necessary!" she persisted. "This is no time for the silly little conventions of life. We must speak of it again... What time is it?"

He flashed a pocket light on his watch. "Two o'clock."

Pen rose. "We must hurry," she said. "It gets light at four and we've a long way to go."

"Where are we going?" he asked.

"To the main woods, up the Neck. The detectives and the reporters are housed within a quarter of a mile of this spot. If they look around at all in the morning they can't help but discover the path that leads here. Strangers wouldn't be kept off by the bad reputation of the place."

"How can we get away without passing them?" Don asked. "Give me some idea of the lie of the land."

"The woods are full of old roads," said Pen. "Since I was a child I have been exploring them. Some were laid out by my grandfather for the gentry to drive over. Others have been cut for the purpose of taking out logs. Across the pond there's a road comes down to the shore. We must make our way to that."

Again they went through the business of packing up. In a few minutes they were ready to start. With Don's flashlight Pen searched all about the clearing to make sure that no evidence of his sojourn had been left there. Don made a bundle of his tent and tied it on his back. He took his grub-basket in his hand, and stuck his hatchet in his belt. Pen stuffed his bundle of clothes into the grass bag with the things she had brought. They started down to the water's edge.

Don's spirits instantly began to rise. "I feel like a human being again," he said. "Instead of a caged rat."

From the spring Pen struck into the underbrush, using Don's flashlight to pick her way slowly and cautiously through the tangle. A few yards back from the water's edge it was more open.

"We'll leave a wide open track behind us here," she said, "but I don't suppose those New York detectives are very good woodsmen."

"Why couldn't we wade around the edge of the pond?" he asked.

"The bottom is soft. We'd sink to the knees."

Finally they struck into the old road where the going was easy. They could walk abreast.

"When Dad sells wood they haul the logs down here to the water's edge and float them out to the bay at high tide," said Pen.



She warned him to avoid the paler spots in the road. These were patches of sand. "Doesn't matter so much if they find my tracks," she said, "anybody around here would tell them that I am always wandering."

It was a hot still night with distant lightning. Something seemed to press down upon them from above. The woody smell compounded of leaf mold and pine needles was extraordinarily pungent. The silence under the trees was absolute. Not a leaf rustled, not a bird cheeped, not an insect strummed. Only when they paused to rest could they hear little stealthy stirrings in the mold.

"Mink or weasel," said Pen.

Though they had now put their enemies far behind them, out of respect for the great silence they still talked in murmurs. The wild creatures were less sensitive. Once they heard quite close the sharp bark of a fox, and again from farther away a wild laugh came ringing.

"What's that?" asked Don startled.

"Loon," said Pen. "There's another pond in that direction."

Little by little they became one with the night and the wildness; their worldly concerns slipped off; their breasts were light. It was enough merely to smell and to hear; to stretch their muscles.

"Why do people live in houses?" said Don.

"Poor things! They know no better," said Pen.

More than once the road forked but Pen always made her choice unhesitatingly.

"How can you be so sure in the dark?" he asked.

"I just have a general notion," she laughed. "We couldn't go far wrong. The Bay is on one side of us, the fields on the other."

After a long walk they came suddenly to the edge of the woods. A rail fence divided woodland and clearing. There was a barred opening into the field. Pen dropped her bag on the other side and vaulted over like a boy. Don more heavily encumbered had to climb over. On the other side some dim shapes rose awkwardly in the grass and trotted away.

"My sheep," said Pen. "I know where we are. I mended that fence myself to keep them from straying."

At one step they had entered the civilized world again. Up the river the steamboat blew for a wharf, and they could hear from far-off the barking of a dog, and all those vague little sounds that rise from a peopled land at night. The field was populous with crickets and the wide space was made lovely by myriad fire-flies floating about like vagrant stars. The field was a broad one, and the going rough underfoot. Young pine trees were springing up everywhere.

"Hanged if I know where I am," said Don.

"We're facing north now," said Pen. "That pale glow in the clouds is the reflection of the lights of Washington, seventy miles from here."

"Fancy the Nation's capital ... and this!" said Don.

"That bunchy black shadow away off to the left is the grove of tall trees that surrounds our house. We have circled round it you see. The long line on the right is the main woods which fills the whole Neck for miles above. All our fields lie on this side. The woods are gradually taking them back."

"If you put me in those woods will I ever see you again?" he asked apprehensively.

"Oh, it's not much more than a mile from the house. That's nothing."

They came to another fence with a barred opening, and climbing over found themselves in a road.

"What road is this?" asked Don.

"There's only the one road," Pen said. "It runs back from the house between the fields and on through the woods up the Neck." She hesitated painfully. "What time is it?"

The question brought back everything painful that they had put out of mind for awhile. Their hearts went down together. He threw the light on his watch.

"Half-past three," he said.

"Ah!" said Pen with a catch in her breath, "I dare not go any farther with you. It will be light in half an hour. Do you think you could carry everything the rest of the way?"

"Sure, as far as that goes. But ... but must you go?"

"I must! ... Listen! You are to keep along the road until it enters the woods. It dips into a hollow there and fords a small stream. You are to turn to the left there—to the left, remember, and ascend the stream, walking in the water. It has a firm sandy bottom, at least for a certain distance. As soon as you are out of sight of the road, better stop on the bank until it is light, so you won't mire yourself or step in a hole."

He put out his hand to her. "When will I see you again?"

"You are not listening! ... You must keep on up the stream until you come to a clearing on the right-hand side. Up at the top of the rise there used to be a negro cabin. But it burned down. Only the chimney is standing. Don't pitch your tent in the clearing. It would be too conspicuous. Conceal it in the brush across the stream. I can reach you there direct from the fields. If I can't find you I'll whistle like a whip-poor-will. And you answer."

"When will you come?"

"To-morrow night. Unless I am prevented."

"Oh! ... if you are prevented...!"

Pen laughed shakily. "Not much danger! They'll have to be very clever to keep me in!"

He clung to her hand. "Well ... I'm not going to complain," he muttered.

Pen clasped his hand in both of hers. "Oh, I know how hard it is! How hard!" she cried. "Try to be patient. It may not be for long!"

"It can not be for long," he muttered. "A man has his limits!"

"The search may drift away from Broome's Point," she said eagerly. "Anything may happen.... To-morrow night when I come I'll bring you some books."

"Books!" he exclaimed scornfully.

"Well, anyway at night we can wander around where we please."

"If you work all day you've got to have your sleep at night," he said doggedly.

"Sleep!" said Pen. "I've got all the rest of my life to sleep in!"

He was still clinging to her hand. "It's so hard to let you go," he murmured. "Could you ... Oh, I know I haven't any right to ask it ... in my position ..."

Pen hated his humility. She stamped her foot. "Any right! What's your position got to do with it?"

His head went up with a jerk. "Pen!" he cried.

Pen was plain panic-stricken. "Good-night!" she said, jerking her hand free. "The sky is getting light behind you!"

She all but ran down the road. Once she looked behind her. He was still standing there. If he had called her she would have had to go back, let the dawn break if it would. But he heavily shouldered his pack, and turned in the other direction.

At the breakfast table next morning Pen suddenly interrupted her father's endless, querulous complaints by saying: "Well, how about me?"

He stared. "Hey?" he said blankly.

"Do you suppose I'm enjoying the present situation? Stared at, spied upon, my house overrun with riff-raff! It's intolerable!"

"Of course! ... Of course!" he stammered. "That's just what's troubling me."

"I want to go away until it blows over," said Pen.

Pendleton looked scared. "But ... but would they allow you to?"

"Pooh!" said Pen. "That threat of arrest was just a bluff."

"Where would you go?"

"Oh ... anywhere."

"I haven't the money," he said plaintively.

"I'd pay my own."

That old look of suspicion flickered up in his eyes. "Where would you get it?"

"Well ... I could sell my sheep."

"Sell your sheep!" he echoed. "Why ... preposterous! Why the sheep are the best part of our capital!"

"My capital," corrected Pen.

"Certainly," he said stiffly. "But I'm your father I suppose. I have a right to prevent you doing anything so foolhardy. Just to gratify a momentary impulse. I forbid you to think of such a thing! Never speak of it again!"

"Oh, all right," said Pen, dropping the matter so quickly that a more perspicacious man might have guessed she had not dropped it at all. As a matter of fact as soon as breakfast was over she took the *Sun*-paper to her room and looked up the quotations for sheep and lambs on the Baltimore market. Prices were low, but there was no help for it. She fell to studying ways and means.

Later she was moving about the house setting things to rights and always planning, planning, when she heard a musical deep-toned ship's whistle from the river—the whistle of a stranger in those waters. She ran to the front windows and beheld a big yacht coming in from the bay. She was as slim and sheer as a pickerel with a piratical rake to her masts and funnel. The morning sun showed up her mahogany upper-works as red as blood, and dazzlingly picked out her polished brasses. A beauty! An anchor was let go with a mighty rattling of chain, and the yacht slowly came about in the stream.

Pen knew by intuition that her coming had something to do with the matter that filled all their minds, but pride forbade her running out of the house to find out. With a great effort of will she kept on about her work, possessing her soul in what patience she could.

Bye and bye there was a rat-tat-tat on the seldom-used knocker on the front door. Opening it, Pen beheld a ship's officer in natty blue uniform and gold braid. He took off his cap and offered her a note.

It was addressed to herself. It was written on thick creamy paper embossed with a crest and the legend: "*Yacht Alexandra*." It was brief.

"Mr. Ernest Riever presents his compliments to Miss Pendleton Broome, and begs to know if it will be convenient for her to receive him this morning."

Pen's brain whirled. She lowered her eyes and gave herself five seconds to regain her balance. Finally the suspicion of a dimple appeared at the corner of her lips. She looked up.

"Please tell Mr. Riever that I shall be happy to see him at any time."

She went slowly upstairs to change her dress.

The sheep were saved!

## CHAPTER V

### ON BOARD THE ALEXANDRA

Under the awning on the after deck of the *Alexandra*, Pen was reclining in a luxurious basket chair with her feet crossed on a rest in front of her. Her brow was clear, her lips smiling. To have seen her then, one would never have guessed that she had anything more on her mind than the deliciousness of luxury which she was experiencing for the first time in her life. As a matter of fact being a human, pretty girl she took to it like a cat to cream, but just the same there was a lot hidden behind her seeming open smile. She knew that she looked all right. Poor as they were, in Aunt Maria Pen possessed a laundress, one of a fast-disappearing race, and there was a bloom upon her simple gingham dress that matched the flower-like freshness of herself. It was mid-morning but Pen's undone chores troubled her not a bit.

The *Alexandra* had been lying inside Broome's Point for two days. On the first day Riever had lunched with the Broomes; yesterday he had returned their hospitality. Of the two Pen's food was undoubtedly better, being fresher than the millionaire's, but she had tasted with delight all the expensive things she had read about which never came to Southern Maryland: Caviare, *petite marmite*, *paté de fois gras*, hothouse grapes, marrons, etc. This morning Riever had insisted on having the Broomes to breakfast on the yacht.

A few feet from Pen the owner of it all was sitting on the wide divan that encircled the stern rail. Pendleton Broome sat beside him, and on the deck between the two men stood a little table bearing coffee cups and a box of such cigars as the elder man had never whiffed before even in dreams. Pendleton was holding forth to Riever in his usual style, while the millionaire listening politely, glanced at Pen out of the corners of his eyes.

The coming of Riever had changed the situation not a little. Riever moved like an unacknowledged monarch. The tale of his wealth compelled men's homage. In his presence all voices were prone to become silky and backs to bend. Riever like many another monarch despised this homage while he insisted on it. His more intimate creatures therefore were careful to cultivate an offhand, man-to-man air towards their master while they utterly subordinated their souls to his. This just suited him.

Well, Riever being what he was, he had only to drop a suggestion to Delehanty the chief detective to have all

surveillance removed from over Pen's actions. She was now free to come and go as she chose. Of course nothing further had been said of the proposed warrant for her arrest. Delehanty had become as obsequious towards her as he had previously been arrogant.

A curious relation existed between Pen and the millionaire. From the first he had been most courteous, but in the beginning it had been dictated merely by motives of policy. He could see a little further than the clumsy Delehanty, that was all. Pen recognized in him an adversary infinitely more dangerous. But he had changed. The second time she saw him she became aware that she had a power over him. In short he was powerfully attracted. Pen marveled at it. *Riever*, who presumably had only to pick and choose from among the beauties of the world! But though she could not understand how it had come about, she rejoiced in her power, and had no scruples whatever against using it.

To anyone else beside Pen the explanation would have been obvious enough. It is all very well to buy yourself royally through a world of salable women, but it lays you open to a dangerous weakness. When you meet a woman who is obviously not for sale, you are apt to fall down before her most ignominiously. That was what had happened to Riever. Just because he was so rich Pen had instinctively adopted an independent air towards him that piqued him intolerably. *Really* independent. Then there was that highly individual charm of hers. And her independence was not indifference. With all his experience Riever had never met a woman like Pen. Or perhaps it would be more correct to say that a woman of Pen's spirit and transparent honesty had never before taken an interest in the ugly little man.

When she was with Riever it need hardly be said that Pen was not nearly so honest as she seemed. In fact she concealed herself behind her apparent frankness. That is the great advantage of having a naturally honest look. It enables you to lie so well when you have a real need of lying. Since Riever had arrived the two had been almost constantly together, and a sort of subtle duel going on between them. Pen's object was to encourage him without giving of herself. He was the first man she had ever set out to encourage. It was a sufficiently intoxicating experience for the man. Pen's blandishments were very different from the sort that Riever had been accustomed to.

As for Pen's father he had swallowed the lure of luxury, hook, bait and sinker. At this moment buttoned up to the neck in his old Prince Albert he seemed to be perspiring satisfaction. He had come into the sort of life that he regarded as his own. To see him stretch his arm over the stern rail and flick the ash off the expensive cigar with his little finger was a treat. Pendleton Broome was the sort of man who will always be flattered because he asked for it so plainly. It was Riever's cue to encourage him to the utmost. After his first meeting with the millionaire Pendleton had said to Pen:

"I find I have not rusted out in my solitude. I can still keep my end up with men of the world. Riever listens to me with the most respectful attention."

Pen had smiled to herself without answering.

More had passed between the two men than Pen was as yet aware of. She knew that Riever had promised to look into the matter of the Broome's Point railway, thus raising her father's hopes to the skies, but she did not know that Riever had actually purchased half a dozen lots adjacent to the proposed terminal and that the inside pocket of the old Prince Albert was at this moment crackling with greenbacks.

Pendleton was saying self-importantly: "The original grade of the railway issues from the gully yonder. The plan was to build a long dock straight out to deep water. But there's a shoal off the gully. My plan would be to have the tracks turn along the shore to a point below the house where they could build all the docks they wanted right into deep water."

Riever gave him only as much attention as was needed to keep him going. "But that would ruin the outlook from your house," he suggested idly.

"Oh, I shall not remain here after the railway comes," said Pendleton loftily. "I'd take an apartment in New York, and perhaps a house in Newport."

"Newport is not what it was," remarked Riever.

"Ah, the vulgar have taken possession I suppose," said Pendleton. "My father had a place there. My childish recollections of it are most pleasant."

"People are scattered all over the map nowadays," said Riever.

"That I presume is due to the introduction of the automobile," said Pendleton. He launched into a discussion of automobiles of which he knew nothing.

Riever listening gravely, sent a quizzical glance in Pen's direction. But Pen was not to be tempted into making common cause with him against her father. She looked blandly ahead of her.

Pendleton himself delivered them from boredom. He had observed Riever's interest in his daughter and was not without his hopes in that direction too. By and by he rose saying with a self-conscious air:

"... Er ... I have some important letters to get off this afternoon. If you'd be good enough to put me ashore, Riever. You needn't hurry, daughter."

Under other circumstances Pen would have been deeply affronted by his transparent ruse. But as has been said, in this affair she had no conscience. She allowed it to be seen that she had no intention of moving.

Riever made haste to summon the boat. Pendleton went down the ladder in his absurd three seasons' straw hat, bobbing his head and waving his hand airily. Towards the sailors his air of mingled condescension and goodfellowship was delicious.

Pen glanced at Riever through her lashes as he returned to her. The little man held himself stiffly in his blue yachting togs and walked with a suggestion of a strut. The greatest tailor in the world could not endow his meager frame with beauty or grace, but it was not to be denied that his wonderfully made clothes lent him a certain distinction.

He patted the cushions of that wonderful divan that encircled the stern. "Wouldn't you be more comfortable here?"

"Impossible!" drawled Pen.

"A cigarette?"

"Never learned how," she said. "I'll make my first trials in private."

"I'll send you a box."

He sat down and feasted his eyes on her openly.

He was no beauty. His face was a little reddened and roughened with incipient erysipelas. Don had said that he and Riever were of the same age, but the millionaire might have been of any age between twenty-five and forty-five; there was no look of youth about him. He was redeemed from insignificance by his assured habit of command. Yet his assurance did not go very deep. Pen had discovered that he might quite easily be put out of countenance, only nobody ever tried it. When he chose as at present, he could be most agreeable, but there was always a pained roll to his eyes, such as may be seen in the eyes of a bad-tempered horse, a look that boded no good to his underlings.

A curious thing was that in their endless conversations Don Counsell was never referred to but in the most casual manner. Each had a secret to guard here. Pen kept her secret better than the man did. Riever wished it to be supposed that he had just happened in at Broome's Point on his yacht. That his coming at this time had only the slightest connection with the pursuit of Don Counsell, Pen knew better of course. On every hand she gathered evidence that Riever was the head and front of the pursuit. Riever was the secret source of the hideous clamor raised against the man Pen knew to be innocent. Twenty times a day Riever gave himself away to her love-sharpened eyes—but it was not evidence!

Meanwhile they fenced with each other.

"You should not encourage Dad in his delusions," said Pen.

"You mean about the railway?" said Riever. "I could put it through with a nod of my head if I chose."

"But you won't," she said.

"How do you know I won't?"

"You are so clearly only humoring him."

"Good Heavens!" he said in mock dismay. "Do you undertake to read men?"

"I don't undertake it," said Pen. "You can't help seeing what you see."

"I could put it through," he said again, "if there was sufficient incentive."

"Of course," said Pen. And let the matter drop.

He was trying to make her beg for the railway. What most fascinated and provoked him in her was his inability to make her ask him for anything, or take anything from him. Everybody else in the world asked him for things one way or another.

He presently went on: "That's the trouble with life to a man like me: I have no particular incentive to do anything."

Pen refused to recognize his money. "Why haven't you the same incentive as other men?" she demanded to know.

"What are men's principal incentives?" he parried.

"Well, love, ambition, the desire to excel other men, I suppose."

"Yes, one could go far for love," he said with a sidelong look.

Pen without looking at him was aware of the look. She thought: "Men are funny! He's trying to make me philander with him in a crude way, and if I did he'd weary of me immediately!"

It was Riever's desire to shine in her eyes that frequently betrayed him. She was not impressed by his wealth; very well, he had to find some way of making himself out a remarkable figure. He presently said with a casual air:

"How about hate as an incentive?"

Pen pricked up her ears. She answered as casually as he: "I always thought of hate as destroying a man instead of nerving him to do things."

"Not at all," he said. "Hate will carry a man as far as love—or farther." His feelings got the better of him. He forgot his casual air. "There's more in hate than love!" he went on with glittering eyes. "Men get tired of loving, but never of hating. There's more pleasure in hate because you never can entirely possess your lover, but you can destroy your enemy! ... Do I horrify you?" he asked with a sudden harsh laugh.

"Not in the least," said Pen coolly. "Nothing of that sort horrifies me, though I might have to make believe to be horrified."

"Not with me," he said, showing his yellow teeth.

"It is comfortable not to have to make pretenses," Pen said. That was as near as she could come to philandering.

"I believe you'd make a good hater," he hazarded.

"Maybe," said Pen. "I've never had the experience like you."

An instinct of caution occurred to him. "Oh, you mustn't take me too literally," he said laughing. "I haven't anybody to hate at present. But I have the capacity."

It was too late. His glittering eyes had reminded Pen of Don's phrase: a poisonous look. It was precious evidence to her heart, but unfortunately not the sort of evidence she could take into court.

She was reluctant to drop the subject of hatred. "The Borgias were good haters," she hazarded. "I lately read a story which told how Alexander Borgia caused a bed to be made for his enemies. It was so arranged that when a body warmed it it killed like a hammer-stroke."

"A fanciful tale," said Riever. "All the killing poisons I ever heard of have to be introduced into the stomach, the blood or the lungs."

He spoke as one who knows, and Pen, wondering, pursued the subject with further questions. It was like tapping a hidden spring in the man. With a curious relish he described the action of various poisons on the human system.

"Cyanide is the neatest," he said. "There's your hammer-stroke."

Pen thought: "Has he tried that too? ... Collis Dongan was shot!"

She betrayed nothing in her face, but Riever suddenly, with an uneasy glance, was impelled to explain how he came by so much knowledge. "You see my hobby is raising fruit," he said. "My peaches have scores of enemies; suckers, chewers, fungi and bacilli. I have to study to keep ahead of them."

But he had been talking of the human system!

She couldn't appear to pin him down of course. She had to let him range where he would, contenting herself with giving the talk a little push this way or that when the opportunity offered. She encouraged him to talk of his childhood and youth, to which he was nothing loath. He unconsciously drew her a picture of a willful, jealous, destructive boy, a little monument of selfishness. There was a bad crack in his nature. He hated beauty, moral and physical, but particularly physical beauty. Pen marked the pained sneer with which his eyes followed the stalwart young steward who carried away the cups. Riever had to have handsome servants to maintain his position, but their comeliness was a perpetual reproach to him. No wonder he had hated Don Counsell from the first, Pen thought. She guessed darkly that Riever was the kind that pursues beautiful women only to hurt them.

He had been telling her with a laugh of the torments to which new boys were subjected in the fashionable school he had attended. One poor little wretch it appeared had been driven by his persecutors to the point of attempting suicide.

"Weren't you sorry then?" asked Pen.

"No!" he said. "I had to go through the mill when I came. It wasn't my fault that this kid had a soft streak in him. Besides conscience is only another name for weak-mindedness. I made up my mind early that I'd never be sorry for anything I did. A strong man laughs at conscience."

Pen thought: "Funny kind of strength!"

This was all very well but what good did it do her? They might talk for a month of mornings without her getting any further. And she had not a day to spare. How was she to get facts? The obvious thing would be to bribe his servants, to have his effects searched and so on. This was impossible for Pen. She was ready to despair of ever bridging the chasm between surmise and fact.

The motor-boat which had taken Pendleton ashore, had proceeded on to the Island for the mail. It was now to be seen returning. This was Riever's own private mail service. On the day of his coming, deciding that the regular mail was too slow, he had instituted a double automobile service between Absolom's Island and Baltimore. Twice a day



by this means he received his letters and the New York papers, particularly the papers. Pen had already marked with what a curious eagerness he awaited the New York papers.

When the mail-bag was brought to him now he said after a momentary hesitation:

"Put it in the saloon."

Pen noted the eager roll of his eyes towards the bag. There was something in there that he desired to see even more than he wished to cultivate her company. With the idea of seeing the thing through, she said carelessly:

"May I see a New York paper?"

"Certainly," he said, and had the bag brought back. It was emptied out on the seat beside him. He handed Pen a paper.

She opened it and feigned to read. At first he made believe to ignore the balance of the contents of the bag, and sat there as if awaiting her pleasure. But he was uneasy. His feet moved; his hands twitched. Finally as Pen showed no signs of losing interest in her sheet, he picked up another paper and opened it with hands that trembled a little.

Pen found that she could not watch him from where she sat. He held his paper up between them. She lowered hers and rose. He was all attention.

"This hasn't got what I want?" she said. "May I see another?"

Without waiting for him to hand it to her she picked up another paper and seated herself on the divan with only the mail matter between them. From this point of vantage she could watch him very well without appearing to.

He glanced over his sheet and she over hers. "Glancing," however, does not convey the strained intentness with which he was searching the news columns. Pen observed at once that it was not the Counsell case that interested him. That still occupied the most prominent position on the first page but his eyes merely skated over it. It was something else he was looking for. He turned the page and his intent eyes traveled it column by column.

On the third page they came to a stop. Pen saw his grasp tighten on the paper until the edges of his thumb nails turned white. A little knot of muscle stood out on his jaw. Unfortunately Pen could not see his eyes, but from the extraordinary tenseness of his attitude she guessed the look in them. Whatever it was he read it was brief. He relaxed; a long breath escaped him. He let the paper fall and turned to Pen. There was a new brightness in his face. Certain lines of anxiety were smoothed out. Cynical satisfaction was writ large there. He all but laughed in his relief. He made no further pretense of reading the paper, but lit a fresh cigar and cocking it up between his lips puffed away like a man well pleased with the world.

As well as she could Pen had marked in her mind the spot on the third page where his glance had rested. It was the New York *Courier* he was reading. She had to be careful not to betray her hand. She made believe to go on searching through the paper she had. Finally she let it fall.

"It's not here either," she said.

"What's that?" asked Riever comfortably.

"One of the New York papers has a fashion department they call 'A Daily Hint from Paris'. But I don't know which one it is."

"Can't say that I ever noticed it myself," said Riever grinning. "But try the *Courier*."

This was more than she had dared hope for. She took the paper from him in a hand that she forced to be steady. For awhile she turned the pages in the haphazard way that one searches through a strange newspaper. Riever meanwhile was sitting beside her regarding his cigar with half closed eyes, and making a little humming sound between his teeth. Clearly he was intent upon thoughts that were miles away from her.

Pen ventured to let her gaze rest on the third page. The make-up of that page, news and advertisements, was such that she had little difficulty in picking out what she was looking for. There was but the one short item of news near the bottom of the page in the middle column. This is what Pen read:

#### EAST-SIDE GANGSTER MISSING

"A girl who gave her name as Blanche Paglar of — Elizabeth St., became hysterical at police headquarters this morning upon being informed by the police that there was no clue to the disappearance of Henry, alias Spike Talley, 24, same address. The girl had previously reported that Talley had been missing since the night of May 27th. She received scant sympathy from the police who told her that if the young man had met with foul play it was probably in the pursuit of his own nefarious occupations. Spike Talley was a leading member of the notorious Chick Murphy gang, and is suspected of complicity in half a dozen crimes of violence."

Pen turned a little giddy. Her heart pounded so that she thought Riever must hear it. Dared she credit what this story implied? Had she come upon the key to the whole mystery? Had she? Had she? She leaned back in the divan and held the paper up in front of her so that he could not see her face.

When her breast quieted down she sternly reminded herself that this was but slim evidence on which to build a case. She might be mistaken altogether. She might be merely reading into the item what she desired to find there. She determined to put it to the test. But she had to wait awhile before she dared trust her voice.

It was Riever who said at last coaxingly: "Put down the paper."

Pen did so. Her face was perfectly composed now. Her voice even as she said: "Here's a curious little story."

"What's that?" said Riever.

"A girl goes to the police for help in finding her lover. They laugh at her because he was a gangster."

For an instant Riever looked at her like an animal at bay, his teeth showing, his eyes senseless with terror. It was gone in a snap of the fingers, but it was enough.

"I guess that's common enough," he said with a laugh.

"What a situation for a story," said Pen.

"Oh yes, if you like that sort of story," he said, flicking the ash off his cigar.

Pen said to herself with a swelling breast: "I have made a beginning!" No need for her to secure the paper. Those names and that address were etched on her brain.

Riever's start of terror had been due to a reflex action of which he was scarcely conscious. He did not suspect that he had betrayed himself. He must have argued that it was impossible that Pen should connect him with that item in the paper. Her speaking of it could only have been a coincidence. So his satisfaction was undisturbed. They talked on about all sorts of things. But Pen was wild to get into action now.

Her opportunity came when one of Riever's men came to ask if he had any orders for the boat. It was returning to the Island to get the regular mail which arrived about noon.

Pen said to Riever: "This would be a good chance for me to get my shopping done. If I might..."

"Certainly," said Riever. "If you must. May I come too?"

This was awkward. It could not be evaded though. "It's your boat," said Pen, smiling.

"Yours for this trip."

"Charmed to have you," said Pen. "... But you can't look over my shoulder when I'm making my poor little

purchases."

"I'll wait in the boat for you."

The slim mahogany tender which lay alongside had cost as much as many a well-to-do man's cruiser. Nothing like her had ever cleaved the waters of the Pocomico. She had the speed of a railway train. Pen was handed in to a little sheltered nook in the stern. Riever sank down beside her and they were off with a leap, throwing a wall of water back from either side of the bow.

But Pen was oblivious to their passage. Her glance was far withdrawn.

"What are you thinking about?" asked Riever.

"My shopping," she answered instantly. "It's quite a problem. There's so little to choose from in the Island stores."

"Wouldn't you like to go up to Baltimore for a day?" he asked.

This was what Pen had been angling for. "I might like it," she said, "but..." she finished with a shrug.

"Well, there are the cars running up and down empty every day. Why not go up Monday morning?"

"Monday is wash-day," said Pen.

"Tuesday, then."

Pen considered. "All right," she said. "I would like to go on Tuesday."

"That's settled then."

Pen saw from his look that he meant to come with her. That was to be expected. She must adjust her plans accordingly.

In three minutes they were at the wharf in front of the store. It was like magic. The *Pee Bee* took a good twenty minutes to do it. Pen stepped out, a sailor was sent up to the Post-office, and Riever remained in the boat, a target for curious stares. He hated to be stared at, and he presently gave the word for the tender to wait out in the stream.

The store was a rambling structure added to from time to time as business increased. The clerks were engaged in a continual marathon from one distant shelf to another. The three young men contended for the privilege of waiting on Pen, who was a prime favorite even with the touchy Island people who by turns resented and laughed at her father. Pen was entirely unaffected and friendly, quite unconscious of her own reserve. In short she kept alive a fine old tradition of gentility. She was "Pen" to the three youths and they were "George" and "Stanley" and "Roy" to her, yet a gulf separated them.

In order to keep up her role of shopper Pen was obliged to purchase a chip basket which she did not want, and a number of articles which she could use of course, but which she had not intended to get that morning. Her purpose in coming to the Island was to send off a letter. She could not write it in the post-office because the sailor from the *Alexandra* was waiting there, so she bought paper and envelope in the store and wrote it on the counter.

She had been revolving the opening sentences on her way over. So concentrated was she upon her task that the bustle, the running to and fro in the store disturbed her not a whit. Through the open door she could see the mahogany tender floating out in the creek with Riever sitting in his place smoking one of the endless succession of cigars, and she knew she was safe from interruption in that direction.

"Dear Blanche Paglar:

"I read in the New York *Courier* this morning of your search for Spike Talley. Perhaps I can give you a clue. I cannot hold out any hope to you that he is still alive, but anyway I suppose it would be a relief to you to learn the truth. But I don't want to deceive you. I am sure of nothing yet. I have only a suspicion. I thought if we could put what little I know with what you know we might clear up the whole thing."

Having written this much Pen paused and reread it with a frown. It sounded too cut and dried. She wished to win this unknown girl's heart. It was nothing to Pen at that moment that Blanche had loved a gangster and was perhaps herself a criminal. All Pen considered was that Blanche had lost her lover, and that Pen's own lover was in terrible danger. That made them sisters. She continued, from the heart:

"I am a girl like yourself. I understand much that was not written in the paper. Like yourself I love somebody who is threatened by a worse fate than that which I suppose may have overtaken your friend. And at the hands of the same man. We ought to be friends. We ought to help one another."

Pen's eyelids prickled as she wrote this. She forced down the emotion, and continued more soberly:

"I dare not write all I suspect to one who is still a stranger to me. Will you meet me in Baltimore on Tuesday at noon? I shall be waiting for you in front of the notion counter in Douglas' department store. Anybody will direct you to it. I don't know what you look like of course, but you may recognize me by a blue silk turban stitched with red. My hair and eyes are dark. You may take a good look at me before you make yourself known, and decide if I look like a person who can be trusted. Don't speak to me if I am not alone. Even if I am alone I may be watched, and it would be better for you to greet me like an old friend. I will enclose a post-office order for fifteen dollars to pay your fare to Baltimore and back."

Pen was afraid to put her name to this. She hated anonymity, and realized that it would raise a justifiable suspicion in the other girl's breast, but within the past few days the newspapers had made the name of Pendleton Broome almost as famous as that of Donald Counsell. How could she take the risk? Suppose her letter ended in the newspapers? She turned hot and cold at the thought. Even the post-mark Absolom's Island would give too much away. But she had to take that chance. She couldn't put down a false name either. She finally signed her letter: "Your Would-be Friend."

When she finally held her letter enclosed, and addressed in her hand, her heart failed her for a moment. "It will only arouse her suspicions," she thought. "She'll never come!" Pen steeled her resolution. "In that case I'll go to her!"

Pen got a blank check from one of the clerks, filled it out and cashed it. There went her chance of the new hat she needed so badly. Leaving her purchases in the store for the moment she went on up the road to the post-office. The store looked out over the waters of Back Creek. You went up a little rise and found yourself looking out over the river from the other side of the Island. The post-office stood on the corner where the road turned up-stream. It was only a couple of hundred yards from the store but outside the range of Riever's vision from the tender.

The mail bus had just arrived and a certain proportion of the Islanders were hanging about outside the little building, waiting for the distribution. During this interval the door was always locked but Pen enjoyed privileges there. She knocked, and the post-master, Sammy Cupples, seeing who it was, made haste to open.

She made out her application for the money-order at the little desk in the corner, and Sammy paused long enough in the work of distribution to issue it, so that it might get in that day's mail. The bus went back immediately. It would reach Baltimore some time before night, and the letter would be delivered in New York the first thing Monday morning. When it dropped into the mail-bag a tight hand was laid on Pen's heart for a moment and she

would have given anything to have it back. But the die was cast.

Pen returned to the store. One of the youths carried her basket out on the wharf. The tender swept around in a graceful circle and came alongside. Riever stood up to hand Pen in. The Island boy's eyes goggled a little at the famous man. Riever looked his worst when he showed his yellow teeth in a lovely smile. Pen shuddered at him inwardly, thinking: "You would not be smiling if you knew what I had just done!"

As soon as the man came with the mail they sped back to Broome's Point.

## CHAPTER VI

### MOONLIGHT

It was night and Pen with her indomitable carriage was trudging along the road that led straight back between the fields. Under her arm was the inevitable grass bag. Chin up and back very straight there was always a sort of challenge in Pen's gait. As a child she had been just the same, one of those adorable little fighters who conceal a heart as tender as love itself. There was a photograph of her at the age of three with a look wistful, proud, and astonished at meanness. She still had that look.

A fantastic tangle of wild grape, trumpet vine, elder bush and sassafras completely hid the rail fences and hemmed her in on either hand, and an occasional pointed cedar or seedling cherry rose against the night sky. The middle of the road and the screen of leafage on one side were drenched with moonlight. The moon dangled in the sky like a hanging lamp: one could see into the depths beyond her.

Pen walked along with her face up to the moon in an attitude of surrender. Her face was haggard with emotion. All day she was obliged to wear a mask, to weigh every word she uttered. What a relief it was at last to let go, to let the moon have its way with her, to bathe in her silver stream. Relief in a sense but hardly pleasure, for when she let go she was so defenseless, so quivering that the stream of beauty hurt her. It enervated her so, she was terrified lest she might not be able to gird herself up again.

For she knew her respite was only momentary. She longed for and dreaded what awaited her at the end of her walk. She couldn't give herself up to Don as she could to the moon. She had to put on another mask for him. A mask of cheer. He was her charge that she had to watch over and care for and beguile into contentment. The fact that he hotly resented being a charge on her did not make her task any easier. They had been getting on each other's nerves a good deal.

Ever and anon as she walked, she glanced over her shoulder uneasily aware that a man could follow her quite close under the dark side of the green tangle, without her being aware.

At the corner of the last field on the left she vaulted over the low bars. Inside a figure rose into the moonlight and a voice whispered her name:

"Pen!"

She was horribly startled. "Drop down again!" she whispered sharply. "Don't come after me until I am half way across the field."

He obeyed sullenly. Pen walked on across the field with a sore heart. She had made him angry now. All day she lived for the moment of meeting and now it was spoiled.

She headed diagonally across the field to that point in the woods which was nearest his camp. She could walk but slowly because the ground was so rough, old corn land that had been allowed to go to grass with the hills unharrowed. She would not look back until she was nearly across. A man's figure was rising over the swell of the

field behind her. Anxiety attacked her. Suppose it was not Don but somebody who had followed her down the road. What would Don do? She dreaded to hear the sounds of a struggle. Don could take care of himself of course, but it would be the end of their secret. So well had that secret been kept that not one of all the searchers at Broome's Point now suspected that Don was still on the estate.

Pen waited alongside the fence that bounded the far side of the field. It was Don, so her anxiety was relieved on that score. But he did not come to her. A few yards away he leaned back with his elbows on the top rail of the fence and gazed out across the moonlit field, making a perfect silhouette of masculine soreness.

"I brought you some supper," ventured Pen.

"Thanks," he said ungraciously.

"Won't you eat?"

"Not hungry, thanks."

"What's the matter?" she asked with a touch of defiance. She could not be meek, even with him.

"You spoke to me like a dog!" he burst out. "Down Fido!"

"I'm sorry," she murmured. "But you startled me so. You see I was thinking maybe someone was following me in the road."

"I just went a little way to meet you," he grumbled. "Nice welcome I got!"

Having said she was sorry, Pen could not humble herself further. She remained silent.

"I suppose you're thinking I'm a thankless beast," he went on presently.

"No," said Pen.

"Well I am!" he said. "I appreciate what you do for me. Good God, that's just the trouble. You heap favors on me! You've got me on the rack!"

They had been over this so often!

"Well, I'm sick of it, too," Pen burst out as bitterly as he. "You're always trying to make out that I do things for you just to make you feel inferior! I hate to be benevolent. I never am. But what else could I do under the circumstances? Or you? Why can't you take it for granted?"

"You mean you'd do as much for anybody?"

"Certainly."

This of course in his perfect inconsistency, hurt him worse than what had gone before. He dug his chin into his breast and relapsed into silence.

Pen yearned over him. She loved him so for his male roughness, his wrongheadedness, his school-boy pride. He was so absolutely different from herself, both weaker and stronger. It was circumstances which had given her the advantage over him; he was in a false position. She exulted in it a little however she might protest to the contrary. It is sweet to have the ascendancy, even in love. And she could dimly foresee other circumstances in which she would be most terribly at his mercy.

She made overtures. "I'm hungry," she said.

But the storm was still brewing in his breast. "A couple more days of this and I'll go clean off my head!" he said savagely.

"How about me?" said Pen.

"You don't have to squat under the bushes all day."

"I have other troubles."

"I have things to bear that you don't know anything about. I have never spoken of it."

Instantly Pen, who had been feeling so pleasantly sure of herself, turned hot with jealousy. There was some other woman out in the world. Of course there would be! He was tormented because he couldn't communicate with her. Because he couldn't assure her of his innocence. How could she find out about her for sure?

"If you'd tell me what it is," she said, schooling her voice, "perhaps I could help."

"Not in this matter," he said with a bitter little laugh.

Then she was miserably sure. Nevertheless she persisted, as the nightingale is supposed to press her breast against a thorn. "I've often wondered why you don't allow me to write to some of your best friends. Those you can trust I mean. The letters could be worded in such a way that they'd mean nothing if they fell into the wrong hands."

"I've no one to write to," he said.

Pen thought: "Of course he wouldn't trust another woman to write to her," and was exquisitely unhappy.

"Any news?" Don asked gloomily.

"No," said Pen. She had previously determined not to raise his hopes by telling him about Blanche Paglar until something had come of it.

There was a long silence between them, and Pen became wretcheder and wretcheder. When she could stand it no longer she put the bag down beside the fence and said in an offhand tone:

"Well ... I must be getting back ... I'll come again to-morrow night."

She started to walk away with her sedate air, but a little quicker perhaps than would suggest perfect calmness.

Before she had taken three steps he came after her. Pen broke into a run. He overtook her. Ah! if he had only taken her in his arms! But he only circled about her, spreading out his arms to bar her way.

"Pen, *Pen*, don't leave me!" he said imploringly. "That would be the last straw! ... Don't leave me to brood over my own hatefulness."

The pain in his voice arrested her. She forgot her own pain. As in a flash she had a clairvoyant glimpse of what he must be going through day after day, the resolute young man compelled to skulk in the woods, while his name was bandied about with the stigma of murder upon it.

"I'm a fool!" she said with a shaky little laugh. "To get sore ... I won't go."

"Oh, Pen, you're so good to me!" he groaned. "I'm a stubborn brute, Pen, I can't thank you properly. But Pen, I feel as if you were heaping a load on me that I'd never be able to struggle from under! But I ought not to feel that way, Pen."

Ever since he had got hold of that little name he could scarcely address five words to her without using it, and every time he spoke it he caressed it. Pen was reassured.

"Don't worry about how you ought to feel," she murmured. "Much better for us to quarrel than to make pretenses to each other. Besides a lot of that talk about doing things for people and earning their gratitude is false. A person has really no right to put another person under a debt of gratitude."

"The truth is, I'm afraid of you," he grumbled.

It was delicious to her to have him softened and faltering like this. "I'm afraid of you, too," she confessed. "How silly we both are!"

For a moment or two they were wildly and unreasonably happy, standing there in the bland moonlight close together but not touching. His face was in the shadow but Pen could feel his eyes stabbing her out of the dark. Her own went down. They were like reeds shaken in the same gust. In that moment Pen knew that whatever bonds might be upon him out in the world, he was hers. Still he did not speak; he did not draw her to him. In the end she had to wrench herself away from the magnetic attraction of his body, or else she must have flung herself into his arms.

"Let's walk," she said hurriedly. "We're safe enough in this out-of-the-way corner. You must need exercise. We'll circle round the field. Over in the corner there's a path leading down to an arm of Back creek where Dad keeps his boat in the winter."

Don came down to earth with a sigh. He had a curious way, when his thoughts annoyed him, of shaking his head like a dog, to clear it. Without saying anything he tied the jute bag to an overhanging branch out of reach of four-footed prowlers, and came along with Pen.

They kept to the fence line, silent for the most part. Their breasts were oppressed by moonlight, that high, pure medium which nevertheless stirs us so poignantly. The moon herself is all very well in her way, a lovely lamp in the dark, but one can stare at the moon all night without being transported. One must turn one's back on the moon to experience her magic. It is the strange light she casts on the face of our mother Earth, and Earth's smile under moonlight, soft, subtle and infinitely suggestive, that thrill us, that disquiet us, that unlock our spirits. On the one hand as they walked the field lay spread with a bloomy, gossamer coverlet of moonlight; on the other hand the swelling tree masses rose in rich velvety blackness under a lazulite sky.

Their two shadows soberly preceded them, always with a narrow space of moonlight between. Pen resented that little gap. She had forgotten about the supposed other woman, or if she remembered she no longer cared. She lived in the moment only; there was no more past, no future. She was in the grip of sensations that scarcely permitted her to breathe. Yet she had to conceal from him those sighs with which she sought to relieve her breast. Sometimes she fell behind a step just for the satisfaction of looking at him without his knowing, at the way his hair curled at the nape of his neck, at his flat, straight back, at the curious grace of his level walk. He was wearing an old pair of trousers and a shirt of khaki that she had brought him as being less conspicuous in the woods than his own white clothes. The thin garments betrayed his beauty to her.

The moon was high in the sky and their shadows were short at their feet. Pen beheld a curious thing. The dewy grass refracting the strong moonlight made a silvery nimbus around the heads of the two of them.

"Look!" she said with her shaky little laugh. "We've been canonized."

"Not me," he said. "They just let me walk under your halo."

Having circled round two sides of the field, they climbed over another pole gate and were swallowed up in the woods. Instantly the silence wrapped them as in a cloak, and the heavy air became charged with a curious significance. High over head they glimpsed the moon pacing with them over the tree-tops. She splashed the trunks fantastically, and occasionally lay down a bar of silver on the path, but for the most part the underworld was black, black, black; a crouching blackness that held its breath as if in preparation for a spring. The path was well-beaten but narrow. They had to walk in single file, Pen ahead.

"I'm glad you're here," murmured Pen.

"It's a fearsome sort of place," he said. "It was not like this the other night we walked through the woods."

"These woods have not been cut out," said Pen. "The old presences have never been disturbed."

Finally the path with a sharp turn brought them abruptly out under the open sky again. It was as if something had been lifted off their heads. They had come to a low bank at the head of a straight, narrow arm of water thrust



into the heart of the pines. A great bird arose from below them and passed away like a shadow with a soft swishing of wings. The path ended in a shaky little wharf with a single plank laid upon it. They stepped gingerly out upon it hand in hand, and stood looking down the reach. The South wind passed high above their heads and the surface of the water was perfectly unruffled.

At the moment the moon was looking down the straight arm so squarely one might have said she had cleft the opening herself with her silver blade of light. Down at the end of the narrow arm they had the sense of a wider body of water running at right angles, a pearly, fairy-like strait. On the point which separated the two bodies of water stood a little white house gleaming wanly in the moonlight. In a window of the house, a curious note in that dreamy world of opal and pearl, shone an insistent yellow light.

"Surely real people can't live there," murmured Don.

"The worst kind, unfortunately," said Pen. "That's where the oystermen go to get drunk."

They retraced their steps up the bank. When they trod firm earth again, Pen repossessed herself of her hand.

"Where now?" asked Don.

"There's no place to go but back."

"Not yet," he pleaded. "Let's stay here awhile. There's plenty of time. There are no mosquitoes to-night."

An old skiff had been dragged up on top of the bank and turned over.

"Sit here," he urged.

Blaming herself for her weakness, she sat upon it with her hands in her lap. The moonlight was strong upon her. There was a wall of undergrowth at her back. Her face and hands stood out against it sharply. Don dropped to the ground at her feet.

"It's damp there," she objected.

"Can't see you when I sit beside you," he said. "I can from here. With only your face and hands showing out of your black dress you look like a spirit."

"A lost spirit!" she said with her little laugh.

"Oh Pen!" he said in distress. "Why should you be unhappy?"

"I hate the moon!" she said. "It makes a fool of me!"

His touch of sympathy unnerved her. That and the glamorous destructive light that would not let her breast be. The last of her defenses collapsed. In spite of herself the tears welled up in her eyes and brimmed over. She lowered her head to hide them, but he caught the sparkle of the drops as they fell. It electrified him. He scrambled to his knees.

"Pen! Pen!" he whispered brokenly.

She covered her face with her hands. He dragged them down, and crushed them under his own hands on her knees.

"Pen!" he gasped. "It breaks my heart to see you! What is the matter?"

She strained away from him. "Nothing!" she said crossly. "I'm not the sort that cries!"

"But you're crying now. I see your tears!"

"It's nothing. I'm just nervous. Don't notice me."

"Oh Pen, I love you so!" he groaned. "It kills me to see your tears!"

She looked at him with a kind of horror.

He dropped his head in her lap. "There it's out!" he groaned. "All evening I've been fighting against it. Every night I've been with you. I swore I wouldn't tell you. But here I am ... just like a baby. God knows I'll regret it tomorrow!"

"But why?" she gasped.

"Because it drives me wild to think of bringing unhappiness into your life. I'd sooner jump off the wharf yonder. It's unmanly to tell you now!"

"Blessed unmanliness!" whispered Pen, brooding over him.

Presently she jerked her head up as if she needed more air, more light. The moon shone in her wet face. It was transfigured.

He was still humbled over her knees. "This isn't the way I wanted to come to the woman I love," he said bitterly. "I've nothing to offer you ... less than nothing ..."

"Do you want to buy me or to love me," she murmured with soft reproach.

He scarcely heard her. "It is impossible for you to respect a man who is as dependent on you as a baby!"

Pen put her cheek in his hair. "Foolish one! What has respect to do with it?"

"You can only be sorry for me!"

Her hands turned over and found his face. "Foolish! Foolish! Foolish!" she murmured. "You must have got your idea of loving out of books! ... How selfish you are!"

He raised his head, struck by the word.

Her voice deepened. "Don't you understand how sweet it has been for me to work for you; to lie for you; to steal food out of the house? Why do you begrudge it to me? ... Oh, sometimes I could almost wish you *had* committed a murder so I could go with you and be disgraced with you!"

"Pen! ... Pen!" he cried amazed and full of delight. Then added quaintly in a voice of reproof: "You're talking wildly!"

Pen laughed deep in her throat. She slipped off the boat to the ground beside him, where she could wreath her arms about him, and hide her face on his shoulder.

"You're only a man," she murmured laughing and passionate. "What do you know about love? ... Ah, but only let me love you and I will be content!"

"You'll see whether I can love or not," he said, piqued.

"Keep telling me," she murmured. "My ears are starving for it!"

"I can't tell you to order," he grumbled, manlike. "It must come of itself."

But she knew from the timbre of his voice, from his arms, from the adoring droop of his head, and was content.

He held her a little away from him that he might see her better. Pen yielded up her soul to him through her eyes.

"Good God! how beautiful you are!" he whispered sharply.

Their lips came together. They achieved forgetfulness.

Even lovers must come back to earth. Pen drew away from him. "The dawn will surprise us," she murmured.

He consulted his watch. "Only half-past two."

"We must go."

"Oh, no! no!"

"Well, we must begin to go," she amended. "I can't leave you quickly."

She sat on the ground as Diana must have sat, her legs folded against her, her waist curving to preserve her equilibrium, both round arms up and her fingers busy with her hair.

"How beautiful you are so," he murmured. "Don't move!"

She laughed. "Help me up," she commanded, extending him her hands.

As he pulled her to her feet he was for enfolding her again, but she put her hands up between them. "Not now! I want to get away from you a little."

"Pen!" he cried reproachfully.

She laughed. "Dearest! I just mean you have numbed me ... I must get away from you in order to realize you."

"You soon have enough of me," he grumbled.

"Somebody must be the first to stop."

"But you do love me, don't you?"

"Not always in the same way."

"You do! You do! I know it now!"

"Then why worry? ... Come, it's a long way back. We can talk as we go."

"But wait a minute, Pen. No, I won't touch you if you don't want me to ... I want to tell you something. Oh, if I could only tell you right! ... What this wonderful thing means to me!"

"Sh! Dearest! It can't be told. It simply can't!"

"But I must try."

"You're not sorry then that you told me?"

"No, by God! I don't deserve this ... but I'm not sorry. That was just childish pride ... If you really are the better man of the two I might as well make up my mind to it!"

Pen laughed. "But I'm not! ... Oh, my tongue is quicker than yours. I can tangle you all up in words. But you have a simplicity! I sit at your feet!"

"Pen!"

"Come on, I shouldn't have told you that! ... Come on, I feel as light as air, now!" She whirled around and gave his elbows a little squeeze. "Isn't it blessed to be relieved of that horrible constraint that lay on us." She was off ahead again. "I can say whatever I like to you now without thinking ... I expect I'll shock you sometimes. I'm no lady!"

"I guess I can stand it," he said grinning.

Pen had a hundred questions to ask as they went. The most trifling details of his childhood were important to her.

"Have you any photographs of yourself as a child?" she asked eagerly. "How I should love them!"

"All ages," he said lightly. Suddenly his voice became embittered. "I suppose they're in the hands of the police."

"We'll get them back!" said Pen confidently.

He stopped in the path. "Good God, Pen! *What is before us?* I had forgotten it!"

"You are going to clear yourself."

"But if I shouldn't be able to?"

"Whatever happens to you, I share it," she said quickly.

"But I've got to take care of you!"

Ignoring this, she resumed her questions. Gradually she drew him back into a lighter mood.

"Haven't you any brothers and sisters, Don?"

"No, I was an only child."

"I, too. It's unnatural. I mean to have four."

He pulled her to him. "Oh, my Pen!" he said a little hoarsely. "My heart almost stops beating at the thought!"

She freed herself. "Bear!" she said. "I didn't invite you to assist me in bringing up my family!"

"You've got to have some assistance," he said wickedly.

She changed the subject. "I suppose you've been in love dozens of times," she said.

"Not like this. Flirtations."

"Oh, the last time is always the only time," she said mockingly.

"Well, how about yourself?" he parried.

"Not a flirtation!" said Pen ruefully. "Not the least little bit of a one. Only dreams."

"The men were afraid of you," said Don sagely. "It takes courage to make up to a girl like you."

"Conceit!" said Pen ... "Tell me about your flirtations."

"I forget," he said warily.

"Well, the first one. You couldn't forget that."

"No, I don't mean to tell you," he said coolly. He groped for his words. "You're the only woman who ever mattered a damn to me. If you don't know that now, you will know it ... And it isn't that I want to make myself out any better than I am. Pretty poor average sort ... But I won't tell you. I have a feeling that you're the sort to bedevil me into telling you things with a laugh, and then store them up and brood over them and magnify them."

Pen sent him a curious glance through her lashes. "Good gracious! You're cleverer than I thought!" she said in a

tone divided between mockery and pique.

By the time they got out of the woods the moon had traveled a good bit towards the West. Now it almost hung over the taller splotch of black that marked the trees surrounding the big house.

Don said: "Every night as soon as it grows dark I come out of my hole and lean on the fence and watch the house and wonder what you are doing inside. Why is it I never see a light in any of the windows facing this way?"

"It just happens that none of those rooms are used," Pen said. "In the main house the back drawing-room and the guest room have windows facing this way, and in the kitchen wing there is the back kitchen and two servants' rooms upstairs.... After this every night I'll put a light in one of the servants' rooms to tell you all is well. And when it goes out you'll know I'm starting. And if it goes out and comes on again you'll know I'm prevented from coming."

"That would be bad news," he said.

"We might get up a regular code of signals," Pen went on. "Suppose there was danger, and I couldn't come to warn you. Suppose I wanted to tell you to change your camp."

"We'd have to fix on some spot beforehand so you would know where to find me."

"That's the difficulty. I don't know any place safer than this. What place would be safe if they took it into their heads to search the woods? ... There is a safe place though, that I have thought of."

"Where's that?"

"In the house itself."

"What!" he exclaimed.

"If I could once get you inside we could snap our fingers at them."

"How about the servants?"

"I wouldn't tell them. Aunt Maria never goes upstairs. I tend to the upstairs myself. The third floor of the house is never visited at all."

"Oh Pen, I couldn't!"

"Why not?" she demanded.

"To hide behind your skirts like that!"

"I thought you were going to drop that nonsense."

"It dies hard!" he groaned.

"Well, if you're so reluctant to come to my house where I could see you as much as I wanted," she said sorely, "I won't ask you unless I am forced to ... But if it should be necessary ... Listen! ... I'll put a light in each of the rooms over the kitchen. If you see two lights shining this way you are to hide all your things as well as you can, and come to the house."

"Where would I meet you?"

"I won't meet you outside. It would double the risk for the two of us to try to get into the house together. Listen! Make your way over the fields without going near the road. Give the negro cabin a wide berth. When you are abreast of the big house strike for the evergreen hedge that bounds that side of the grounds. You'll find a gap in it, broken by the wind. You know how the porch runs around three sides of the main building. At the end of the porch on that side there's a rough clump of mock orange bushes. Behind the bushes you'll find a way into the cellar. That's how I go and come. I'll be waiting for you in the cellar. Or if I'm not there wait till I come."

"Oh Pen, I hate skulking!"

"I love it!" said Pen. "If I know I'm in the right. It's an adventure!"

They came to the tree where they had left the grass bag hanging.

"Well..." began Pen.

Don swung her around inside his arm. "Oh my Pen, how can I let you go to-night?" he groaned.

"Ah, don't kiss me any more," she pleaded. "I don't want to be drowned again. I want to know I'm loving you."

"But I must before I lose you!"

She laid restraining hands on his arms. "Listen, dear," she murmured. "There's something I want to tell you. From the very bottom of my heart it comes. I love you so much you can make me your slave if you want. But you should have pity on me. You should help me to keep myself separate. For both our sakes. If sometimes I seem perverse and tricky to you it is only because of the desperate need I have to keep something of myself back. If I become swallowed up in you as most women do in their men you'll tire of me. I'll lose my flavor for you. Let me give myself to you a mouthful at a time. Don't swallow me whole!"

He but dimly understood her. "I'll try!" he said between a laugh and a groan. "You funny darling child! ... But how can I keep from kissing you?"

"I don't want you always to keep from it," Pen said.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE TRIP TO TOWN

On Tuesday morning Pen, dressed for town, was breakfasting with her father in the high-ceilinged, shabby dining-room.

The elder Pendleton pushed his plate from him and with an ostentatiously careless air, took a packet of crisp bills from his breast pocket and commenced to count them. It was hard to get any change out of Pen, but this time she laid down her fork and frankly stared.

"Where did you get it?" she demanded.

Pendleton exulted in the effect he was creating. He had rehearsed an answer to the inevitable question. "I didn't steal it, my dear."

Pen refused to be diverted. "Where did you get it?"

"I sold some lots."

"To Mr. Riever?"

"None other."

"Oh, how could you?" she cried involuntarily.

"And why not, I should like to know?" he demanded, up in arms immediately. Clearly his conscience was bad, though he appeared to have reason on his side.

Pen was helplessly silent.

"I consider it an excellent stroke of business every way," Pendleton went on, puffing a little. "It secures his interest in the railway."

"He has no interest in the railway."

"Then why should he buy the lots?"

"He's buying you."

Pendleton gave the bills a flirt. "Well, I didn't sell myself too cheap," he said with maddening complacency.

Pen fumed in silence.

Pendleton began to count off some of the bills. "I want you to take some of this," he said.

"What for?" said Pen.

"To replenish your wardrobe."

"Not a cent!" said Pen indignantly. Reflecting that she was betraying too much heat she added: "I have plenty of clothes for down here."

"Your summer dresses that you make yourself are very pretty, very pretty," said Pendleton mollifyingly. "But I'm sure you must be in want of the expensive little appurtenances of a lady's wardrobe; shoes, silk stocking, hats, parasols."

"What would I be doing with a parasol at Broome's Point?" demanded Pen with a snort of scorn.

"A smart yachting suit would be nice," he said suggestively.

But Pen looked at him so dangerously he made haste to add: "But of course you know best. You know best!"

"Put the money up," said Pen brusquely.

"But my dear...!"

"I refuse to dress myself at Mr. Riever's expense. The idea is revolting."

"You will have to have money in town to-day."

"I have a little. Enough to buy a pair of white shoes, and materials to retrim my last summer's hat. That will have to do."

"I don't see why you have to go against your obvious interests," he complained.

Pen looked at him levelly. "Let's be frank with each other, Dad. If you have any notion of Mr. Riever and I making a match of it, I beg that you will put it out of your head. The idea is preposterous!"

It made him writhe to have his secret wish dragged out into the crude light like this, nevertheless he was bound to fight for it still. "Why is it preposterous?" he demanded bridling. "He wouldn't be stooping to you?"

"Perhaps I consider that I'd be stooping!" said Pen with her chin up.

He ignored it. "It's only an accident that we are poor. Remember your grandfather had his place at Newport when his grandfather was still swinging a pick!"

"That's only an accident, too," said Pen. "You miss the point. The question is not altogether whether he wants

me, but whether I want him."

Pendleton refused to take her seriously. "Oh, the fatal Broome pride!" he murmured.

"He's a divorced man," said Pen wickedly. Her father held strong views on the subject.

"We must not judge," said Pendleton blandly. "Circumstances alter cases. He may have been more sinned against than sinning."

Pen smiled wryly. She did not particularly blame her father. It was at poor human nature that she was smiling.

Encouraged by her silence he went on loftily: "Pride is an excellent thing in its way. But it becomes suicidal when you allow it to blind you to..."

Pen bluntly interrupted him. "I wouldn't marry Mr. Riever if he was the last man on earth!"

She saw, however, that Pendleton was entirely unconvinced.

Presently she said: "I suppose it is useless to ask you to return that money?"

By the way his hand closed over it, by the look of irresponsible cupidity that appeared in his eyes, she saw that it was indeed useless.

"Then it ought to be used for necessary repairs to the place," she went on. "If we're going to continue to live here, the house must be painted, the roof and the porches mended. Modern implements ought to be got for the farm."

"I will consider all that," he said loftily.

"Better let me take it to town and deposit it," said Pen. "It will make too much talk if you put it in the Island bank."

He shook his head obstinately. "It will improve our credit locally."

Pen shrugged and let the matter drop. After all she was not implicated. Men must be left to follow their own blind ways, she told herself.

At eight o'clock an automobile was at the door. Riever's people having had the worst places in the road mended at his expense, had brought this car down the Neck for his use around the Point. The millionaire resented having to put foot to the common earth any more than he could help—or perhaps it would be more correct to say that his entourage resented it. Riever, like all potentates, was largely at the mercy of his entourage. The *Alexandra* was crowded with "friends," secretaries, servants and persons of undefined status whose sole object in life lay in maintaining Riever's unacknowledged state. Three-quarters of Pen was appalled at the existence of such a situation in a democratic country, but the remaining quarter of her found it undeniably pleasant to share in his state. Everything about Riever moved with so beautiful a precision.

For instance, she was carried down to the old steamboat wharf which had likewise been mended. As the automobile turned in front of the wharf the speed-boat drew alongside with Riever in it. They leaped to the Island. As they stepped out of the boat, before them was the car to take them to town, waiting with its engine running. Pen saw at once that it was not one of the ordinary cars used to carry Riever's mail back and forth, but a vehicle imported for this occasion. It was an astonishing car of foreign make, long and rakish in line with an immense aluminum engine hood and a smart, diminutive, coupé body. In other words, it represented unimagined power to carry around two little plutocrats; the last word in luxury. The driver rode outside.

It was Pen's first ride in a superlative car. The springs were miraculous. One was but faintly aware of wheels underneath. The body swam along as smoothly as a high-bred lady, only curtseying slowly now and then to a rut. It was all slightly unreal to Pen. As they whirled through the village she had glimpses of the staring Islanders. It was only too clear what they were thinking. When an Island boy and his girl went to town together they generally came home married.



It was a clear fresh morning. Pen would have loved to lean back in her cushioned corner and give herself up to the flying panorama through the windows. Nowadays there are few roads left like that in our country. The prospect was of a peaceful, long-settled land with nothing garish nor raw; not a factory, not a railway, not a rich man's house the whole way. But miles of pine woods, many old farms, a sleepy village now and then, glimpses of the blue Bay from high land; a rickety bridge over an arm of the Bay.

Unfortunately Riever wanted to talk. It wore Pen out to talk to him because she couldn't be frank. Real frankness was unknown to Riever, though he could be amusing. His eyes never lost their watchfulness, nor his lips their superficial smile. This morning he was not amusing. For several days Pen had been aware that his temper was suffering as a result of the continued non-success of his efforts to run down Counsell. To Pen's secret dismay he commenced to talk about it now, watching her keenly meanwhile.

"What do you think of the situation at the Point?" he asked.

"How do you mean?" asked Pen.

"Counsell appears to have given us the slip."

Pen said to herself: "I must be bold. Half measures will never deceive him." She said to him calmly: "I hope he has."

Riever bit his lip. "I wish I knew what it was about murder that appeals to women's imaginations," he sneered.

"About murder, nothing," said Pen coolly. "Not to this woman. But no true woman could help sympathizing with a man hunted by a pack."

"Even if he was guilty of a foul crime?"

Pen was not to be betrayed into declaring her belief in Don's innocence. "Even if he was guilty," she said.

"Then what about justice?"

"Well, I fancy a woman's idea of justice differs from a man's. To kill for killing gets us nowhere."

"I thought you thought him innocent," said Riever subtly.

"How can one tell?" said Pen. "The newspapers are so contradictory."

"I haven't noticed it," said Riever. "If there's any evidence in his favor it hasn't been brought to my attention."

Pen seeing that she had made a slip, adroitly shifted to new ground. "That's just it," she said. "The newspapers are so clearly prejudiced, you can't help but feel there is another side to the story."

"How do you suppose he made his getaway?" asked Riever, still watching her. "Every yard of the shore has been searched, every native questioned."

"Perhaps he paddled across the Bay," said Pen. "There are convenient railways over on the Eastern shore."

"But we had our men there next day," said Riever. "And the canoe was not found. No, somebody must be hiding him."

"Very likely," said Pen calmly.

"But there's the reward I offered," said Riever, "You'd think that would be tempting."

"Oh, money isn't everything to everybody," said Pen.

"You think maybe some maiden's fancy has been caught by his good looks?" he sneered.

Pen looked at him full. "Oh, do you think he's good-looking?" she said with a little air of surprise.

He was disconcerted. "I? No! But I'm no judge. At college they seemed to think him a regular Phoebus Apollo, men and women alike."

Pen carried the war straight into the enemy's camp. "You did not like him at college, did you?"

"He was nothing to me one way or another," Riever said carelessly. "I scarcely ever saw him."

"Liar!" thought Pen. She said: "I cannot quite understand your attitude. Why are you so bent on running him down. Is there an old score to settle between you two?"

In the smooth mask of his face, Riever's eyes were not pleasant to see. "No indeed!" he said with a laugh. "I am not revengeful. But Dongan was my friend. I owe it to his memory."

"I appreciate that," said Pen. "Still, to give up everything, and come down here yourself. To direct the hunt personally."

"Delehanty is in charge, not I," said Riever quickly.

Pen let it go at that.

"As for coming down here," Riever went on, "that was just an impulse. I was so shocked at the moment I could think of nothing else ... Perhaps it was foolish. But I can't say I regret it because it has made me acquainted with you."

"You are polite," said Pen.

"It's more than that," said Riever.

After awhile he said: "You will not be sorry to see us go, I'm afraid."

A glad cry leaped to Pen's lips: "You are going!" But she caught it in time. "I sha'n't be sorry to see the last of Delehanty and his crew," she said calmly.

"And the rest of us?" he asked.

"It will be hard to settle down into the old dull routine when you are gone," she said.

"I might come back," he suggested.

"Father and I would always be happy to see you," said Pen demurely.

Meanwhile they were bowling along the State road at better than forty miles an hour, but so smoothly that Pen had no sense of great speed except when she happened to catch a glimpse of some astonished face in the road. They had a highly accomplished chauffeur at the wheel and the heavy car held her speed up hill and down as steadily as a locomotive. Woods, fields and villages were thrust behind them with no sense of effort.

As they drew near to Baltimore Pen began to wonder how she was going to get rid of Riever. He saved her the trouble by saying:

"I have to go to the Hotel Bellevue for a conference. You'll keep the car of course, and load your purchases right into it. So much easier."

Pen would have liked to dispense with the car as well as its owner, but did not see how that was to be accomplished plausibly. At any rate she reflected, the chauffeur could not follow her into the stores. The main thing was to be rid of Riever. But she rejoiced too soon.

He said: "I'm taking it for granted you'll lunch with me at the Bellevue. We breakfasted so early I ordered lunch

for twelve-thirty."

This was awkward. "Oh, I'm sorry!" said Pen. "It will be impossible!"

This man was not accustomed to be denied what he wanted. The spoiled child leaped out of his eyes. "Why?" he demanded.

"So much to do," said Pen. "This is a leisurely town. Not like New York. It takes time to be waited on."

"But you've all afternoon."

Pen was patient, for her. "But think how seldom I get to town. I couldn't take an hour or two off for lunch."

"Make it half an hour then."

"Please excuse me to-day."

"Oh, very well," he said in a pet. "Pick me up at the Bellevue whenever you are through."

He was in a hateful temper the rest of the way. When he thought Pen was not looking at him his eyes darted sidelong jealous glances at her. Clearly his suspicions were aroused, and he was meditating some sort of mischief. It was a catastrophe. But Pen did not see how she could have acted differently.

It lacked a few minutes of eleven when they reached town. Riever got out at the hotel, and Pen went on about her shopping with an anxious breast. What would he do?

She was soon informed on that score. As she proceeded from store to store she kept her eyes open about her and became aware finally of a man that turned up wherever she went. He was a burly individual dressed in clothes too warm for the season, and with an expression of unconsciousness that was almost comical in its transparency. Spy was writ large on him. Pen was a little appalled by this evidence of her adversary's power. He seemed to be able to summon his creatures out of the air. She reflected, however, that it would be easy enough for Riever to send a man from his mail car down to the shopping district to pick up the imported car. There was no other car like it.

Pen made several attempts to lose her follower in the crowds, but without avail. He looked like a fool, nevertheless he always succeeded in nosing her out like a too faithful dog.

At noon she took up her stand in front of the notion counter at Douglas' with a fast beating heart. Outside the store she had sought to dismiss her car, saying she didn't know how long she'd be, but the chauffeur had replied that he'd find a place to park nearby and would wait as long as she liked. Had he too, been instructed not to lose her? Inside the store she would not look, but she was horribly conscious that the burly spy was somewhere across the aisle pretending to examine silver articles. Watched or not, she had to keep her appointment. If the girl obeyed instructions all might yet be well. There would be nothing strange in her meeting a girl friend in a department store. But probably she would not look like a friend. Nevertheless, Pen's great fear was that the girl would not come at all. She already felt flat and despairing in prospect.

Pen could not appear to be looking for anybody. With sightless eyes she inspected the stock of notions. There were scores of little baskets displaying pins, hair-pins, fasteners, tapes, hair-nets, all the multitudinous contrivances with which women keep themselves together. It is the busiest counter in a department store. Perspiring women elbowed her on either hand. An exasperated voice said at her shoulder:

"If you don't want anything here would you kindly give me room!"

Pen in a daze, gave way. She was saying to herself: "She'll never come. It was a wild scheme. You're only wasting your time..."

Suddenly a high-pitched, metallic voice beside her exclaimed: "Well of all people! How are you?"

Pen jumped as if the last thing in the world she expected was to be addressed. Half a dozen women turned

around. Pen seemed to shrivel under their glances. But the other girl carried it off well. She was talking continually. Pen got a flash of hard, bright black eyes and a brilliant tight smile. It disconcerted her. She had expected—well, some sort of a pathetic figure. These eyes expressed an infinite sophistication that seemed to open a gulf between them.

Pen's lapse was but momentary. Out of the tail of her eye she saw a burly figure pushing across the aisle, and the emergency nerved her. With an automatic reflection of the other girl's manner she began to talk back:

"Upon my word! Who would ever have expected to find you here?" Without changing her smile she murmured: "We're watched. He's coming this way."

The other girl's eyes signaled: "I get you!" She said loudly: "How are all the folks?"

"Much the same as usual," said Pen.

The burly one brushed by, his foolish eyes looking everywhere but at them, his mouth pursed up to whistle.

When he had gone by, "Bull," murmured the black-eyed girl out of the corner of her mouth. "Pure-bred Jersey." Aloud she said vivaciously: "You must tell me all about everybody. Let's get out of this jam."

With a hand under Pen's elbow, she steered her out of the press. Crossing the aisle they struck into a side aisle, deserted for the moment. Here the man could not come close enough to overhear their talk without giving himself away completely. They could see him loitering in the main aisle uncertain what to do.

The black-eyed girl was an admirable actress. She kept up a running fire of questions: "How's Alfred? And the old man? And Maud?"

Pen's spirits rose fast. It was dangerous, and it was fun. A genuine smile replaced the mechanical one. She rattled off some kind of answers, surprised at her own talkativeness.

Meanwhile the two were busily sizing each other up, Pen with shy glances, the other with bold ones. Pen saw a little creature beautifully formed, very pretty too, with petulant, doll-like features, frankly made up. The idea of the make-up was not to imitate nature, but to create an original artistic effect. She was smartly dressed in a plain black silk slip confined by a beaded girdle, impudent little close-fitting hat, expensive gray slippers and stockings. She carried an exotic little beaded bag. She might have been anything or anybody almost. It is so hard to tell nowadays. Certainly she did not smack of the underworld as Pen imagined it. But Pen perhaps was not much of a judge.

On the other hand Pen could hardly have been mistaken for anything but what she was. There was a sort of open reticence in her, a high unaffectedness that was in her blood and could not be hidden nor imitated. With all her assurance the other girl resented it a little. Without changing her outward manner the black-eyed one said:

"Well, what's the big idea, Miss? I don't get you at all. Are you a bull yourself?"

"No," said Pen smiling.

"Well, if you are you're a new type. I know them all. What did you get me down among the orioles for? Nobody down here's got anything on me."

"I want to be your friend," said Pen.

The other pulled down the corners of her lips mockingly. "Old stuff, sister. Every con game that ever was started opened with that. Can the friendship. You'll need it next winter. Give it to me straight. What's the likes of you doing, trailed by a bull?"

"It's a long story," said Pen.

"Well, my hearing's good."

"If we could get away somewhere..."

"Nothing doing! No back alley work for me. This is a first-rate public situation. Speak your piece."

"I can't," said Pen helplessly. "There must be confidence between us first. You must know that it is something I can't blurt out in a place like this."

The black eyes bored her through and through. Curiosity and suspicion were struggling there. It was strongly in Pen's favor, however, that she was being tracked by a detective. "Do you live in this town?" the girl demanded.

"No," said Pen. "I came here to meet you."

"Are you alone?"

"Yes."

"Well, I warn you I'm not. If anything is to be tried on, I got a husky friend with me."

Pen, glancing around guardedly, had no great difficulty in picking him out—a nonchalant youth leaning against a bargain counter. He was very well dressed in sporting style, topped with an exaggerated flat tweed cap. His cheeks were as smooth and pink as a girl's, but the glance of his blue eyes was disillusioned.

"He may look like a boy soprano," said the girl dryly, "but I assure you he sings double-bass. It's Babe Riordan, side partner of Spike's, that I brought along. Understand wherever I go the Babe goes too."

"All right," said Pen.

"Well, what do you propose?"

"I'd rather leave it to you," said Pen.

Another lightning-like dart of the black eyes. "Oh! ... Well, a room in a hotel's the safest place. The leading hotel here is the Bellevue...."

"Oh, not there," said Pen.

"Why not?"

"He ... the man I want to tell you about is there."

The girl took three steps to a counter where there was a salesgirl disengaged. "What's the biggest hotel here next to the Bellevue?" she asked.

"The Southland."

"Thanks." She returned to Pen. "Make it the Southland in half an hour."

"But the detective," said Pen.

"Pooh! He's just out of the egg," said the other with a scornful glance. "He's still got his pin feathers stickin' on him. Listen. Babe and I will take a room at the hotel and you come call on us, see? That bird couldn't follow you up, could he?"

"No, but he might hear me ask for you at the desk."

"Don't ask. Listen. Babe will be watching for you in the lobby. He'll be sitting there reading a paper. You stroll by him and if everything's all right he'll flash a card under the paper with the room number on it, see? You get the number in your head and come right up in the elevator."

Pen could not but admire the little creature's strategy.

But the black eyes narrowed suspiciously again. "Mind, if there's any funny work about this, if there's anybody near you when you come by Babe you don't get the room number, see?"

Pen nodded.

The little one lifted her voice blithely: "Well ta-ta old girl. Call me up some time and we'll make a date to lunch together. Remember me to the folks."

She pattered coolly away in the direction of the burly loiterer, and brushed by him with a negligent hand at her black hair. Pen turned in the other direction. The detective came after her. As she was about to leave the store she saw her opportunity. An elevator door was just about to close. She slipped inside and was carried aloft. Her follower had to wait for the next car. She crossed the building on an upper floor, came down in a car on the other side, and got out of the store without seeing the man again.

Half an hour later she was knocking at the door of room 1214 in the Southland Hotel. The door was opened by one who remained invisible. Pen walked in with her heart in her mouth. Blanche was behind the door. She was smoking a cigarette. At the sight of Pen's face she laughed.

"For Mike's sake don't look so scared, sister. Any bull would arrest you on suspish with that face. Where is he?"

"I shook him off in the store," said Pen.

"Good work!" Blanche seemed disposed to be friendlier, but was still wary. She said offhand: "Just to be fair and aboveboard I ought to tell you I carry a gun, sister." She held up the little beaded bag. It had no draw-string, and she carried it clutched about the neck. When she relaxed her grasp it opened wide revealing a wicked little automatic among her make-up.

Pen shrank back, and Blanche laughed again. "You are a tender sprout!"

"Is that boy coming up here?" asked Pen anxiously.

"Sure!"

"Couldn't I talk to you without him?"

"Nothing doing! It 'ud hurt his feelings."

"I've got things to tell you I couldn't say before a man!"

Blanche frowned. "Say, you talk like a fillum!" She studied Pen afresh. "You don't look dangerous but ... Say, you got to give me some line on your game or nothin' doin'!"

"You've got to trust me," said Pen earnestly, "or we've had all our trouble for nothing."

"Trusting's not what I'm good at, sister," said Blanche with a vigorous gesture. "You give me some line on your game first. Who the Hell are you?"

"Well I'm going to trust you," said Pen. She spread out her arms. "I'm Pendleton Broome."

For once the little creature was shaken out of her uncanny self-possession. She whistled like a boy. Her eyes glistened with excitement. "The Don Counsell case!" she exclaimed. "You're in that! ... Good God! has it got anything to do with me ... with Spike?"

"I think it has," said Pen. "That's for you to say when I've told you all I know."

"Well, shoot! ... shoot!" said Blanche excitedly.

They heard steps coming along the corridor.

Blanche laid a hand on Pen's arm. "Maybe it would be just as well if we saved Babe's tender ears...."

Babe himself opened the door and walked in.

Pen observed at close range that his years probably numbered a few more than the eighteen she had at first given him. He was a graceful youth and a comely one, but his blue eyes were as hard as china. Both Blanche and the Babe had the look of unnatural high school children. Like actors they carefully cultivated and played up this infantile effect. The hard eyes of the young-old pair afflicted Pen with a kind of despair. How could she hope to win such eyes?

The young man pulled off his cap and bobbed his head in Pen's direction. There was something about her that made him distrust his manners. His disillusioned eyes suggested that he could be masterful enough with his own kind of girl.

"Our friend here says her tale ain't fit for men's ears," said Blanche flippantly.

The young man scowled without looking at Pen. "What does she take us for, a pair of suckers?"

"Oh, I'm not afraid of her," said Blanche. "I know who she is."

"Who is she?" he asked, as if Pen were not present.

"Tell you later when I've heard the whole story."

He hesitated, scowling.

"Toddle along!" said Blanche.

"You're foolish," he muttered.

The black eyes flashed on him. "That's for me to say!"

Pen thought with rising hope: "She's beginning to accept me."

"Wait a minute," said Blanche. "I'll satisfy you." To Pen she said suddenly: "Put up your hands!"

"What for?" stammered Pen.

They jeered at her innocence. "Put up your hands!" repeated Blanche.

Pen obeyed, and Blanche with flying, practiced hands felt of her all over, while the young man stood by. Blanche nodded reassuringly to the Babe.

"I'll wait outside," he said surlily.

"Oh, if she wants to mix it up I'll oblige her," said Blanche in her flip way. "Though she is bigger than me."

"I'll wait outside," he repeated.

"Yes," said Blanche sarcastically, "and have the maid report you to the office as a suspicious character. Go down and read your paper. I'll send a boy for you."

He went.

Blanche turned mockingly to Pen. "Now, darling!"

Pen felt dimly that her flippant mockery concealed a sort of despair. She could admire the little creature's

gameness and hardihood, but could not possibly meet her on that ground. It rendered her helpless. Meanwhile Blanche took a fresh cigarette, and called Pen's attention to the packet with a jerk of her head. Pen shook her head.

"Well, don't stand there like a wax-work in a store-window," said Blanche. "Disjoint yourself."

Pen sat in an armchair with her back to one of the windows. She groped within herself for something to go on with. But she felt empty. Blanche moved restlessly around the room; plumped herself on the edge of the bed, and jumped up again. She glanced at Pen with increasing irritation. Apparently a silence drove her wild.

"You're so different from what I expected," Pen murmured at last, "I scarcely know how to begin."

"What did you expect?" queried Blanche. "A singing canary?"

"I don't know ... I got the idea from the newspaper that you were in trouble."

Blanche stared, then laughed metallically. "Not me!" she said coolly. "I wasn't born yesterday."

Pen perceived the nature of the misunderstanding, and blushed. "I mean, I thought you'd lost somebody ... that you cared for."

Blanche bared her teeth suddenly like a hurt animal. "Keep off that!" she said sharply.

"But that's why I wrote to you."

"Say!" cried Blanche, ugly and callous, "if it's only sob-stuff you're after, you come to the wrong shop, see? I don't deal in it! Me, I'm water-tight and nickel-plated!"

"Why can't you be natural with me?" murmured Pen.

"I am natural. If I wanted to work you for anything, I could turn the wringer till the tub overflowed. I'm famous for it. Real tears without the aid of the glycerine bottle. But you said you wanted to be on the level."

"Do I look soft?" challenged Pen.

"Don't ask me," said Blanche, refusing to look at her. "I don't get you at all. You're completely outside my experience."

Pen tried another line. "Have you been reading the newspapers about the Counsell case?"

"Off and on. I've had troubles of my own."

"Well," Pen said low-voiced—it cost her an effort to get it out, "Don Counsell is to me what I suppose Henry Talley was to you."

If Blanche was softened she showed it in a sort of back-handed way. "You mean Spike," she said. "That's all he answered to."

Pen's instinct began to show her the way. "How did he get that name?" she asked casually.

Blanche fell into her little trap. She was standing at the other window idly twisting the cord of the blind between thumb and forefinger. Her back was to Pen. Her voice came muffled and jerky.

"Because he was so tall. And slender. But not a gowk neither. A peach of a figure. Thoroughbred. Stripped he weighed 155, and not an ounce to spare. A runner, a swimmer, a boxer; anything that needed speed and wind. And a dancer. The best dancer at Steck's pavilion. Everything he did, he did out o' sight! Class, too. He could pass anywhere as a college boy or a Wall Street broker."

She suddenly whirled around. "He was a gunman!" she cried defiantly. "Make what you like of it! He never asked for the good opinion of the likes of you, and neither do I! He was the coolest head of the lot. He went to his



mark like a bulldog, and nothing could shake him off. What have you got to do with the likes of us? What do I care what you think? Both him and me had to fight our way since we were kids. We weren't going to take scraps from the tables of the rich. We were out to get the best there was for ourselves. We were outsiders. Well, the insiders were our enemies, and we went after them!"

She turned back to the window and began to sob in a hard, dry way that scared Pen. The hurrying, toneless voice went on. "To everybody else he was cool and smooth as hard enamel. Not to me. He was human to me. Lighthearted as a boy when there was no business on hand. You were sure of having a good time with Spike. Make you die laughing with his wild, comical ways. He was a man. He was real. There was a fire in him ... Oh God!"

She turned and flung herself face down across the bed, her arms hanging down the other side. "He's gone! He's gone!" she moaned. "And I'm left! ... Oh God, I can't bear it!"

Pen went and sat on the bed, and put a hand on the other girl's shoulder. Blanche flung it off roughly. Rolling over, she sat up with her tormented face not a foot away from Pen's. Pen did not shrink.

"You talk about loving a man! I know how your kind loves. Cool and dainty! What do you know about loving, brought up good with a home and a family and all? Everything provided for you. I never had nothing! Till I got him. He was the first who ever belonged to me.... I had to fight every inch of my way and be on guard every minute. He had to, too, just the same. But we could let down with each other! It eased us!"

She flung herself down in another wild burst of weeping.

Pen let it wear itself out. "I am just the same as you underneath," she murmured.

Blanche quieted down. In her abrupt way she got to her feet and went to the bureau. Emptying out the little beaded bag, she commenced to rub fresh color into her cheeks, making strange faces into the glass meanwhile. But the tears flowed faster than she could repair the damage.

"Oh damn!" she cried, throwing down the rouge pad.

She drifted around the room with her lithe, abrupt movements like a diminutive tigress, the baby face all woebegone and hollowed. "Why couldn't you leave me alone?" she said crossly. "What'd you want to get me going for! Now you know what's inside I hope you're satisfied!"

Notwithstanding the querulous tone Pen saw that she had been accepted as a fellow-woman. There was no more strangeness between them.

"What do you want of me?" Blanche went on. "What good am I to anybody now? For two cents I'd fling myself out of the window and end it."

"I thought you'd want to know what happened to Spike Talley," said Pen.

It had an electrical effect on Blanche. She ran to Pen. "Do you know? Do you know? Do you know?" she demanded, moving her little clenched fists up and down.

"I have only a suspicion. We must follow it out together."

"Well, open it! open it!"

Her tigerish look gave Pen a fresh fear. "You must promise me something!"

"Oh, my God! What?"

"Not to try to take the law into your own hands."

"What are you trying to protect the man for?"

"I'm not trying to protect him. I want to bring him into the prisoner's dock."

"Well, I promise," said Blanche unwillingly. "Who was it?"

"Do you know who Spike Talley was working for when he disappeared?"

"No!" cried Blanche. "Don't torment me with any more questions. Who was it?"

"I suspect it was Ernest Riever."

The great name pulled Blanche up short. She stared at Pen with wide troubled eyes. "What for?" she whispered hoarsely.

"Would you mind very much," Pen faltered, "if I said I suspected that it was Spike Talley who shot Collis Dongan?"

Blanche smiled scornfully. "Not at all," she said coolly. "If it was his job." Her eyes widened again. "I begin to get you," she said slowly. "You mean Riever hired Spike ... and when the job was done ... croaked him?"

Pen nodded.

"Maybe so," said Blanche somberly. "What do you know?"

Pen told her. "You see it's next to nothing," she said agitatedly. "They wouldn't call it evidence.... Just the same *I know!* ... What can you add to it?" she implored, clasping her hands.

Blanche stood with withdrawn gaze like a little statue of abstraction. "Not much ... right off the bat," she murmured. "But it's a working theory. Things can be found out ... Funny it never struck me that Dongan was killed the night Spike disappeared.... I knew Spike was on a job, too.... But everybody said Counsell did that.... I can tell you one thing. It was a rich man Spike was working for. One of the richest. He said as much."

"That's something," said Pen.

"I knew it was dangerous work, too. Because I heard the price. It scared me. And I'm not easy scared. But I couldn't let on.... We were going to marry on it and go out to California and live like other people. Raise things..."

The tears began to flow again, but Blanche shook her head savagely. "I'm not going to cry again! I'm not going to cry any more till I see this through!"

"Can you think of anything else?" begged Pen.

"Wait a minute.... It was part of Spike's job to dress up every evening, big white shirt front and all, he was crazy about it, he could get away with it too ... and have dinner at some swell joint ..."

"Could it have been the Hotel Warrington?"

"That as well as another.... Wait a minute.... He brought me a menu card to show me. The top was torn off with the name of the hotel. But I have the rest of it home. Easy enough to find out if that's one of the Warrington cards."

"Yes, yes!" said Pen. "Anything else? Oh, think!"

"Wait a minute! ... There was something else.... Only a little thing ... More than once Spike mentioned that his boss had elegant whiskey. Said it stood in a cut glass bottle on a table, and every time he went there his boss would say: 'Help yourself.' That seemed to strike Spike. So friendly from a man like that..."

"Riever is an expert on poisons," said Pen aghast.

Blanche's little face was like a mask of pain, the lips drawn taut over the exposed teeth. "I get you!" she murmured hoarsely. "The last time Spike helped himself..."

The two girls stared at each other.

Something seemed to click inside Blanche, and instantly she was her ordinary wary, hard, self-possessed little self again. She moved towards the telephone.

"I'll send for the Babe," she said. "You can count on him the same as me. He looked up to Spike. He's got a good head on him too, for a kid. We'll go over everything together, and then the kid and I'll fluff back. In N'Yawk there's a dozen young fellows'll help. All pals of Spike's. I'll organize them."

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE RETURN

It was five o'clock and the stores were closing as Pen sought for the big car. She picked it out from afar, parked in the double rank that lined the Lexington street hill. For five hours it had completely passed out of her mind, and she was terrified now of facing the justly indignant chauffeur. To be sure she had told him she didn't know how long she would be, but five hours!

But it proved to be nothing in his life. That was how he spent the greater part of his days, waiting. It was easier to wait than to drive. He opened the door for her with a perfectly good-humored face, and Pen much relieved, asked him to drive to the Bellevue.

She expected another ordeal here. What sort of report would Riever's agent have made to his master? Riever was on the lookout for her. Without appearing to, Pen studied his face. Little was to be read there, though. The malicious smile told her nothing, for she had learned that it was merely a trick of his ugly features. Often when his smile was most devilish he was really trying to ingratiate himself.

When he got in, seeing Pen's meager bundles, he said: "Is that all you got all day?"

Pen suspected a thrust, though it was a natural enough remark. "I ordered most of the things sent by mail," she said. "It is quicker."

Before they had gone far Pen discovered that his humor had changed since morning. In a clumsy sort of way he was trying to express contrition for his ill-temper. He was not the sort of man who could bring out a frank apology. Pen wondered. The detective could not have given a disturbing report of her. Perhaps in order to conceal the fact that she had given him the slip, he had made up a harmless account of her day.

At any rate Riever was softened. He was less glib. He looked at Pen in a new way. He asked her little questions about her day, apparently not with any idea of entrapping her, but because he wanted to share in her concerns. Pen was much confused by this new aspect of his. It raised unanswerable questions. Was it possible that the horrible creature was really touched? How could he have a heart? Suppose instead of fighting her he came crawling to her feet? How would she meet that situation? It was horrible! horrible! Yet she was thrilled with a sense of power too. She could not have any compunctions against making Riever suffer. If only she were able to handle him! She foresaw breathless danger.

Meanwhile there they were cooped up together in the luxurious little cab. Had it been little Blanche Paglar sitting there beside Riever, her flesh would have been quivering with hatred. Pen was not of so simple a constitution. Her flesh took no alarm from his proximity. She could look at him coolly and speculatively. Her strongest feeling was one of contempt, seeing him begin to turn a little abject. He had terrible power, she never forgot that, but it was not in himself. There were moments when she found herself detached and a little sorry for him.

But while she was considering him thus dispassionately (they had got out in the country by this time) he pulled a little case out of his side pocket and snapping it open revealed a slender bracelet of platinum and diamonds

exquisitely wrought.

"Will you accept it?" he murmured.

Pen started as if she had been stung, and a surprising feeling of rage welled up in her. She could scarcely speak for it.

"I couldn't possibly! I couldn't possibly!" she murmured.

"It wasn't very expensive," he murmured deprecatingly. "I purposely picked out something inexpensive."

Inexpensive! Pen stared at him. The thing had obviously cost thousands. But she saw that he was sincere in it.

"It attracted me," he went on. "It's so hard to find anything that looks as if any thought or care had gone into it. That's why I got it."

"You had no right to suppose that I would accept it," said Pen sorely.

"I didn't suppose it. I just took a chance."

Pen was reminded that she *must* keep on terms with him. "I'm sorry," she said more mildly. "I couldn't possibly."

"Is it because you detest me so?" he asked with ugly, curling lip.

Pen was startled. Her anger had betrayed her. She put her wits to work to repair the damage. "Not at all!" she said coolly. "It's because you're so rich. It sickens me the way people fawn on you, all expecting something. That's why I can't take it."

"You could take it ... without being like other people," he said.

A struggle was going on inside Pen. Not that she wanted the glittering bracelet. It was horrible to her. But her cooler self was saying: "You ought to take it to put his mind at ease. You can return it later. It is merely silly to be high-minded in dealing with a man like this!" But at the suggestion of taking it her fingers automatically closed until the nails were digging into her palms. It was useless to think of it. She knew that her fingers would break sooner than open to receive the little box.

"I'm sorry," she said. "Please put it away."

He snapped the box shut and dropped it in his pocket again. For a good while he looked out of the window without saying anything. Pen could not read his thoughts. She said to herself: "Oh well, it's got to be understood that he can't give me things!"

They dined in Annapolis. Evidently it had been ordered ahead by telephone. They were received by an expectant waiter, there were roses on the table, and the best that the little town afforded was ready and hot. Pen being a woman, could not but be pleased by such attentions, though a mocking little voice inside her whispered: "This is how silly women are snared!" She enjoyed the food thoroughly, and was charming to Riever, all the while a little dialogue went on within. One voice was saying accusingly: "Sitting here smiling and encouraging your lover's deadly enemy!" the other replying: "How else can I save my lover?"

It was eight o'clock and beginning to grow dark when they came out of the hotel. Pen shivered with repulsion at the thought of being cooped up with Riever for the sixty-mile drive through the night. She said offhand:

"Do you ever drive?"

"Oh yes," he said unsuspectingly.

"Let's put the chauffeur inside and ride out in the air. The moon will be up directly."

Riever scowled, and a hateful answer leaped to his lips. But he bit it back. "All right," he mumbled.

And so they rode.

He proved to be a skillful chauffeur. There was something quite impressive in the nonchalant way he spun the wheel with one hand on a curve. He had a bland disregard for speed laws having learned that few constables had the temerity to stop so princely an equipage. They went through Camp Parole at forty miles an hour, but fortunately without hitting any of the dark-skinned inhabitants of that humble suburb. At the green light which marks the W. B. & A. station they turned sharply and streaked away to the South to the throaty growl of an open exhaust.

Their conversation was fitful as needs be on the front seat of a speeding car. But they were entirely friendly. The episode of the bracelet had been forgotten. Both pairs of eyes were hypnotized by the strong path of light on the yellow road before them. The bordering leafage was shown up in a queer chemical green like stage scenery. The moon came up, but what's moonlight to automobilists? The reticent moon disdains to compete with headlights.

When they were within a few miles of Absolom's Island, Riever glancing at the clock under the cowl, said:

"We've come too fast. I didn't order the boat until 9.45."

He took his foot off the accelerator and the big car loafed along. Relieved of the strain, their eyes were free to wander around. All Riever's glances were for Pen's profile. He said abruptly:

"You're a funny one! One would think you blamed me for having a lot of money."

"Not blame you," said Pen. "Though I think it's unjust somehow. But you didn't make conditions."

"Why is it unjust?"

"Oh, don't ask me to argue it with you. I've never thought such things out. It's just a feeling I have."

"If somebody offered you a fortune would you turn it down?"

"Depends upon the condition attached," said Pen calmly.

"If there were no conditions."

"No, I wouldn't turn it down."

"Good!" he said. "All they say against money may be true, but just the same when people make out to despise it they're lying."

"No doubt," said Pen.

"I like to talk to you," he said. "You're real."

"Thanks," said Pen dryly.

"What do you think about me, really?" he blurted out.

"I don't know," said Pen.

"Well, it's true nobody really knows anybody else," he said.... "I wish I could get myself over to you. Since I've known you I've realized more than ever what a lot there is missing in my life. Nobody knows me.... There's a sort of wall cuts me off from everybody."

It was very confusing to Pen's ideas to discover that a man could be a black villain and sentimental too. "Oh, I wish he wouldn't!" she thought uncomfortably. Aloud she said rather sharply:

"Well, it's your own fault, isn't it?"

He chuckled. "I love the way you come back at me," he said. "... I suppose it is my own fault. I ought to climb over the wall. But it's difficult. They put me behind it young."

After awhile he said: "It's a great thought, isn't it, to think of having somebody you could be absolutely honest with?"

"Of course," said Pen. She was reminded of Blanche and Spike.

As Riever talked on she began to see how he reconciled villainy and sentiment in his mind.

"Of course it would have to be a person with a strong mind. For when I say honesty I don't mean all this sickening cant about goodness and unselfishness and meekness that the church hands out. Nobody takes that seriously any more. Man is by nature a rapacious animal. Out for what he can get. Well, his highest function must be to realize his nature. Therefore I say that the highest type of man is the man who gets what he wants regardless."

Pen thought wonderingly: "He actually looks upon himself as a romantic figure!"

As she made no answer he asked somewhat uneasily: "That's right, isn't it?"

"Not for me," said Pen. "Man may be a rapacious animal, but he is also capable of controlling his rapacity. And it seems to me it's only by controlling it that he can be even decently happy. I've read somewhere that beasts of prey always come to a violent end."

Riever smiled in a superior sort of way. "You're stronger than most women," he said with a sneer. "But you can't let go of your religious tags. I suppose it's too much to expect."

Pen only smiled.

"Now I suppose I've offended you," he said presently.

"Not in the least!" said Pen.

"No, you don't give a damn one way or the other," he said sorely.

Pen laughed. "Nothing I say pleases you!"

"You please me," he muttered, "but..." The end of his sentence trailed off unintelligibly.

What a queer mixture he was, Pen mused. Arrogance and self-distrust. Attempting to strut before her and collapsing at the lift of an eyebrow. She failed to take into account the terrible way in which her clear nature struck into the dark recesses of the ugly little man's being. He could assert himself strongly enough against anybody but her. And the more he was obliged to cringe to her, the more he desired her.

As they bowled over the causeway to the Island Riever said: "I haven't given up hope of you, though. You have a natural hatred of sham. I'll teach you to face the truth yet!"

Pen smiled on.

At the steamboat wharf at the other end of the Island the speed boat was waiting, her starboard light a startling gleam of emerald in a dusky gray world, her white-clad crew sitting quietly in the moonlight. Pen and her packages were handed aboard and they flew for Broome's Point.

Out on the water the moon indifferently resumed her sway. The whole earth was hers to tread on. The front of the island with its odd row of semi-detached, whitewashed shacks looked like something as foreign as Algiers. In the bow wave that rolled away from the speed boat there was a dull phosphorescent glow like saturated moonlight, and looking over through the shadow of the boat one could see fishes dart away like little balls of pale moonlight. Pen's face was as beautiful and passionless as the moon's.

In the sheltered nook astern the face of Riever the would-be strong man, the Devil's advocate, broke up like any calfish boy's. He fumbled clumsily for her hand.

"Don't!" whispered Pen sharply. "They'll see!"

"What of it?" he mumbled.

"I won't have it!" said Pen.

His eyebrows went up in a stare of indignant amazement. Nobody had ever spoken to him like that. But as it had absolutely no effect, they gradually came down again into the likeness of a sulky schoolboy's.

"Aw, Pen!"

She struggled hard with her repulsion. "Well ... well ... I hate to be touched!"

"One would think there was something the matter with me!" he muttered.

"This is simply weak of you," Pen said cunningly.

He looked away grinding his teeth.

Fortunately, as it was but three minutes to the Point, the scene could not be prolonged.

As they drew close to the old wharf they made out that there were a number of men upon it with lanterns and flash lights.

"What's going on there?" Riever asked his steersman.

"Couldn't say, sir. Everything was quiet when we started over."

They heard a hail from the wharf: "On board the *Alexandra*!"

And the answer: "Hello!"

"Give us some light here, please!"

The yacht's big search-light was thrown dazzlingly on the end of the wharf showing up all the figures in sharp silhouette.

The speed-boat approached unnoticed from the other side. The instant she drew alongside Riever sprang out and ran across. Pen guessed what was happening, and her heart seemed to stop and sink like a stone. But she followed Riever with a composed face.

All the men were looking over the other side, their heads down to keep the blinding glare out of their eyes. One had a rope with a grappling iron on the end of it. He was fishing for something while they all watched. The burly figure of Delehanty was conspicuous.

"What's wrong here?" demanded Riever.

"Don't know as there's anything wrong, sir. One of the men swimming here, said he dived into something suspicious. We're trying to locate it."

As he spoke the man with the rope said: "I've got it!" And started to haul in.

The green water surged up a little and the curved stem of the canoe rose out of it. The valise appeared, tied to a thwart.

Delehanty's harsh voice cried: "Counsell's canoe, by God! He never went away from here!"

Of one accord all the men turned and looked at Pen. She bore it unflinchingly. She disdained to turn away. Riever's face working uncontrollably with rage, looked truly devilish. Conscious that he was betraying himself, he turned his back sharply to the light.

When she had given them their fill of looking, Pen turned and commenced to walk slowly away.

"One moment, Miss!" said Delehanty.

Pen half turned. "I'm going home," she said in a composed voice. "If I'm wanted you'll find me there."

She walked on, taking care not to hurry herself. But her heart was beating with a bird's wings.

"No, you don't!" cried Delehanty, and started after her.

Riever with an odd, tense spring, caught his arm. There was a whispered colloquy, and as a result Delehanty stayed, and Riever went after Pen. The little man, tense with passion, had for the first time a sort of dignity. He was rather a terrible figure. Pen, hearing his cat-like steps behind her, was sorely afraid. He overtook her alongside the automobile that was waiting in the road.

"Will you get in?" he asked in a queer, thick voice.

Pen reflected that she would be safer in the car with the chauffeur than walking up the hill alone. She got in without speaking.

During the short ride up to the house they exchanged no word. Pen was pressed into her corner, Riever into his. He sat as still as an animal, his back slightly hunched, his hands on his thighs. Ugly-looking hands he had that the moonlight could not dignify: too small for a man, furtive-looking, hands acquainted with evil. Pen shuddered at them. When they passed between the broken gates and rounded the shrubbery, Pen saw with dismay that all the windows of the big house were dark. Her father had gone to bed.

When the car stopped she jumped out, avoiding Riever's offered assistance. Riever said to the chauffeur:

"You needn't wait. I'll walk back."

Pen was horribly afraid. Her instinct was to dart through the door, slam it in his face, and turn the key. But flight was too abject. If she yielded him ascendancy like that, she could never get it back again. She said to herself while her teeth chattered: "I'm not afraid of him! I'm not afraid of him! If I stand my ground I have nothing to fear!"

The car went back. Riever stepped up on the porch by the two boxes, his head sunk. Pen stood there.

"You tricked me!" he said with a violent gesture, but taking care not to raise his voice. "You said he'd gone from here! He's been here ever since! You're hiding him now! What did you go to town for to-day? What was in those packages you made me bring home in my car, a disguise for him?"

Pen was not dismayed by this. On the contrary as soon as he began to speak the man lost his curious, animal, impressiveness. Seeing him beside himself, Pen began to feel strong again.

"I left the packages in the boat," she said scornfully. "No doubt by this time Delehanty has examined them."

"What is this man to you?" demanded Riever.

"I've already told you. No more than any poor hunted creature."

"If you lied once you can lie again!"

Pen shrugged.

"Swear that he's not your lover!" he cried.



"To you?" cried Pen indignantly.

"Then he is your lover! You're keeping him close, I daresay. You don't shiver when he touches you!"

A great anger came to Pen's assistance. "You fool!" she cried. "Your disgusting money has turned your head! Who do you think you are to speak this way to me? I owe you nothing. Neither oaths nor explanations. Nothing!"

Riever could not stand up under it. His chin sunk, his body twisted. As a matter of fact he simply could not face the thought that the man he hated so had won the woman he desired. He snatched at any hope.

"Well ... if you're not hiding him, where is he?" he mumbled.

"I don't know. Far away, I hope."

"How could he have got away?"

"He walked up the Neck road while you were searching the shores."

"Oh God, if I could believe you!" groaned Riever.

"Well, I can't help you," said Pen. She saw that with every word she was regaining the upper hand, and her heart was strong.

A cajoling note crept into Riever's voice. "Well, you couldn't do him any further good by lying. If he's anywhere near we're bound to get him in the morning. Within an hour Delehanty 'll send a party by boat up to the head of Back Creek. They'll form a line across the Neck. At dawn we stretch another line across this end and close up. He can't escape between them."

Pen's heart contracted painfully, but she gave no outward sign. "What are you telling me this for?" she asked.

"You can't do him any further good. Leave him to his fate. Tell me where he is so I'll know you're on the square with me."

"It's nothing to me whether you think I'm on the square or not."

Riever raised his clenched hands in a gesture of impotent rage. "I've got to know!..."

"I wouldn't tell you if I knew," said Pen. "I wouldn't betray any man. Not you if you were in his place."

With a painful struggle for self-command he took still another tone. "Well, that's all right. I'll say no more about him.... But give me a pledge!"

"Why should I?" she said coldly.

Again the shaking gesture. "I can't stand this!"

"I'm afraid you'll have to!"

His voice became more abject. "Wait a minute! You don't understand. All I want is a word. You see how I am suffering. A word from you will end it!"

Pen was too startled to be angry any more. A terribly dangerous situation faced her, and she needed all her wits with which to meet it.

He took heart from her silence, her apparent uncertainty. "I'm asking you to marry me," he said with a touch of his old arrogance. "Do you get it? Mrs. Ernest Riever. Think what it means.... What do you say?"

"I won't answer you now," she murmured.

"You've got to answer me!" he said violently. "I've got to know how you stand towards me!"

She was silent.

"Look at it as a young fellow would look at a chance to advance himself," he rushed on. It was one kind of love-making. "Look what I have to offer you. A place in the sun! A place every living woman would envy you! Isn't that sweet to you? And by God! you'd grace it too, with your beauty and your high ways. You weren't shaped to wear print dresses, Pen. Think, think what you'd be. A sort of queen. A queen without any responsibilities. Carried about like a queen wherever you wanted to go, with an army to wait on you. Your slightest wish granted!"

"I don't want to be a queen," murmured Pen a little dizzied by this rush of words.

"Well then, anything you wanted.... Do you want to do good? You can have whatever sums you want to lay out in good works. Absolutely without limit. You can make a name as a philanthropist such as nobody ever had before. You couldn't refuse such a chance—you couldn't! ... What do you say?"

"I will not answer you now," repeated Pen. There was nothing else she could say.

He stared at her as if unable to credit that she should not jump at such a chance. "You've got to give me an answer!" he said showing his teeth. "I'm going to find out how you stand towards this murderer."

"Be careful!" cried Pen.

That cry of hers answered him really, but he would not face it. He became abject again. "Well, I'll say no more about him.... Suppose you have a sort of fancy for him. All right. I'll give you a chance to save him.... Marry me at once. Come away on the *Alexandra* with me, and I'll call off the chase. I'll withdraw the reward. With me out of it the case against Counsell would collapse like a pricked balloon. I couldn't offer fairer than that, could I? Come back with me now. The yacht has steam up. Will you? Will you?"

Pen was shaken. "Would you really take me on such terms?" she murmured.

"Oh God! I'd take you on any terms!" he groaned.

The thought flew into Pen's brain: "You couldn't trust him!" She energetically shook her head. "I won't be rushed into anything."

"Then I won't ask for a positive answer to-night," he stuttered. "But just a sign. Just a sign to show me I'm not hateful to you! .... Kiss me, Pen!"

She hesitated.

"Kiss me, Pen ... and I'll hold Delehanty back..."

She yielded. That is to say she yielded with her mind. But the flesh rebelled. He gathered her in his arms taut as a bow-string. As his face approached hers she snapped. With a wild, blind reaction she tore herself free. No man could have held her. The open door was behind her. She darted through and slammed it shut. He put his shoulder against it, but she was at least as strong as he. She got the key turned.

He beat on the door with the sides of his fists, cursing horribly, but as always, oddly careful not to make too much noise.

Pen, nauseated with disgust, thought: "To be married to such a maniac!"

Like a maniac he fell suddenly silent. She pictured him listening. Presently his voice came softly as if he had his lips to the crack of the door, wheedling, crafty, threatening; infinitely more disgusting than his rage.

"Are you there? ... Listen, I'll give you another chance. Open the door!"

A silence.

"If you don't he goes to the chair! ... By God! I'll spend every cent I possess to send him to the chair. Do you get that? Better open the door!"

A silence.

"It'll be too late when he's strapped in the chair with the black cap on and the electrode at the back of his handsome white neck... You'll remember it was really you put him there... Twelve hundred volts they give them. You can smell them burning ... Well, how about it?"

"Go away!" said Pen.

"Oh, all right! All right!" he cried violently.

She heard him leap down by the boxes. Looking through the narrow pane beside the door, she saw him run along the drive brandishing his clenched fists over his head.

Pen went up-stairs. A sudden weakness overcame her, and she could scarcely drag one foot after the other. As she reached the upper landing a door opened and her father came out, carrying a candle. She had to assume some semblance of self-possession.

"What's the matter?" he asked.

"Nothing, Dad."

"I thought I heard a little commotion down-stairs. It wakened me."

"Only the closing of the front door. You must have been dreaming."

"Who brought you home?"

"Mr. Riever."

A note of pleased excitement crept into Pendleton's voice. "You have been with him all day?"

"Most all day."

He paddled close to her, the candle shaking a little in his agitation. He was wearing an old-fashioned night-shirt slit at the sides, and revealing an unexpectedly plump calf. "Oh, Pen, it's all right between you two, isn't it?" he said. "It means so much to me!"

Pen was too weary to get angry all over again. She merely smiled faintly at the irony of life.

He had put off his grand airs with his clothes. He was as simple now as his old-fashioned shirt. "Pen dear, think what it means to me! A frustrated old man! I'm a failure. I can't do anything for you. And I see this chance for you to establish yourself! Don't let any romantic youthful folly stand in the way, daughter. There's nothing in it. I know. Safety is everything!"

"Dad, you must leave this to me," Pen muttered painfully.

"I will! I will!" he said brightly. "I have every confidence in you. If you think of the matter at all there can be but the one answer!"

"Go to bed, dear," said Pen, kissing him.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE NIGHT LONG

One of Delehanty's first measures was to have the big house watched. Even before Riever could have got back to the beach, Pen from her front window saw the little group come in by the drive, separate and lose themselves in the darkness. One came to the house. Pendleton let him in. By Mr. Delehanty's orders he was to keep watch inside the house all night. He was to remain in the hall of the second floor. Pendleton's outraged protests were in vain. The man brought a chair up from the dining-room, and planted it outside Pen's door. It was Keesing. Pen already had him down in her black books, a gaunt, red-haired young man, curiously eager to do spy work.

Pen locked her door, and paced up and down her room, raging. Her weariness was forgotten. Trapped! trapped! trapped! she felt with every footfall. To be sure the flat roof of the porch ran around outside her windows. It would be no great matter to slide down one of the porch posts to the ground. But they were certainly watching her windows from the outside, counting on being able to humiliate her no doubt.

Within the space of half an hour she nearly went out of her mind. Then there was a diversion. Once more the rat-tat-tat of the big knocker reverberated through the lofty halls, and Pendleton had to paddle down-stairs again. Pen listening with all her ears made out the rumble of Delehanty's voice. Some one else was speaking too.

Finally Delehanty raised his voice: "Keesing!"

"Yes sir?"

The detective clattered down the uncarpeted stairs, and Pen opened her door a crack. She heard her father coming up, and from a certain lightness in his step guessed that he was bringing what he considered to be good news.

Seeing her at her door he broke out: "It's all right, my dear. It's Mr. Riever and Mr. Delehanty. There's been a misunderstanding it seems. No intention of annoying us. They apologized most handsomely. The man is to be taken away. All the men are to be taken away."

Pen smiled scornfully. "Do they expect me to be taken in so easily?" she thought.

Pendleton went on: "Mr. Riever said if it would not be presuming too much, could he speak to you for a minute? Wants to apologize to you personally. Better go down, dear. God knows, this is no time for formality!"

It was on Pen's lips to refuse scornfully, but curiosity was strong within her. If she expected to get the better of these men she must know what they were up to. Perhaps they intended to arrest her. But in that case they would hardly have got up this comedy of sending the men up and taking them away again. Virtually she had been under arrest while Keesing sat at her door.

Declining the offer of her father's candle, Pen went down.

Riever alone was framed in the opening of the front door, the moonlight behind him. When Pen got close enough she saw Delehanty and Keesing waiting in the grass below the porch. Pen stopped a little more than arm's length from Riever. She couldn't see his face well.

"You needn't be afraid," he said in a voice smooth, yet a little truculent, too, a sort of hang-dog voice. "I just wanted to tell you that when I found Delehanty had had the house surrounded, and put a man inside I was sore. I made him call them off. I didn't want you to think I had a hand in it."

Pen was a little disconcerted, this was such a violent change from half an hour before. It was highly characteristic though of Riever to ignore everything that had gone before, characteristic of the spoiled child of any age.

"Much obliged," she said, trying to keep the note of irony out of her voice.

If he heard irony he did not betray it. "Well ... that's all I wanted to say. That I was sorry you were annoyed ... Will you shake hands on it?"

"Surely!" said Pen. She offered her hand with a mental reservation: "If you're deceiving me as I suspect, this doesn't count!"

She thought he would never have done fondling her hand. She ground her teeth and endured it.

"Well ... good-night," he said at last.

"Good-night," said Pen.

When he had taken two steps he stopped. "I said all his men," he said with a sly note creeping into his voice. "Watch and make sure."

Pen waited in the doorway. Riever stepping off the porch, spoke to Delehanty. Delehanty put a hand to his lips and blew a shrill whistle. Out of various shrubby corners of the grounds figures emerged and approached their chief. Like a scene in a melodrama Pen thought with curling lip. There were six of them. That was the number she had seen enter the grounds.

"Good-night," said Riever in a purring voice.

"Good-night, Miss," fawned Delehanty.

"Good-night, Miss," said Keesing, taking his tone from his betters.

"Good-night," said Pen clearly.

They all moved off in a body towards the gates.

Pen smiling scornfully, turned back up-stairs. "What sort of an imbecile do they take me for? ... Presently they'll come sneaking back... Expect me to lead them to him, do they?" Suddenly the quality of her smile changed. "Well why not do it? ... It's the best idea I've had yet..." She went into her room in a study.

The big house was laid out on the simplest of plans. As you entered the front door the two drawing-rooms were on the left of the central hall, and an immense dining-room on the right, with a pantry behind it as big as the living-room in many a cottage. In the rear extension were the kitchen and various offices. The second floor was divided into four great chambers of equal size and a smaller room over the entrance where Pen kept her sewing-machine. Her father slept in the room over the dining-room. It had a door into the room behind it, which was his study, workshop and general receptacle. Pen had the other front room and it also communicated with the room behind it, which was called the guest chamber. The door between the two rooms was always supposed to be locked.

The second floor of the rear extension was on a lower level. That is to say you started down the big stairway and reached the rear rooms from the turn. The extension contained the famous bathroom long out of repair, various cupboards and store-rooms, and the two servants' rooms which looked to the rear. In the main block of the house there was a third story with four more big bedrooms, and above that again was the "cupalaw."

Pendleton had gone back to bed. Pen got two lamps and flitted into the rear extension. Her father, accustomed to her peregrinations over the house at all hours, paid no attention, even if he heard. The two servants' rooms were not used, but each contained various articles of furniture. Pen lit her lamps and placed them far enough back from the windows so that the lamps themselves could not have been seen by anybody who might chance to look up from the yard below. Anyone who was not familiar with the house would naturally suppose that the two lighted windows were in the same room.

Pen calculated. "I told him to pack up his things and hide them before starting. That will take him say half an hour. It will take him twenty minutes to cross the fields. He can't get here in much less than an hour. I'll start in half an hour."

Returning to her own room, she dropped to her knees at one of the front windows, and peered over the sill. She strained her eyes to watch that part of the grounds that was within range. But the very mysteriousness of moonlight balked her. The moon was in the South throwing long shadows directly athwart the lawn. The trees and shrubs of the overgrown place offered scores of hiding-places. More than once she thought she saw dark spots that did not belong there, and shadows seemed to move. She could not be sure. For that matter she knew that men could come along the beach below and scramble up the honeysuckle vines. In this way they could surround the house without crossing the open space in front. She was morally certain the detectives had returned, but she could not spot them.

At the end of half an hour she dressed herself in her black dress and put on stout shoes. With a wildly beating heart she stole down stairs, and let herself softly out on the porch, leaving the door open. Here, for the benefit of anybody who might be watching her, she gave an imitation of one terrified and undecided; walking unevenly up and down, coming to the edge and peering out, running back in the house in a sudden panic, timorously venturing forth again. Finally she took to the shrubbery.

She ran to the gates, scuttling like a rabbit from clump to clump, her head continually over her shoulder. She wished to be followed, but she must not of course appear to wish to be followed. She wished to find out too, if she were followed, but she must at all costs keep her pursuers from guessing that she was on to them. It was very complicated.

At the gates she hesitated, turning her head this way and that. The question was which way should she lead them. Eventually she meant to take them to the little temple above the pond, but in the meantime she had half an hour to kill. From one of the ground floor windows of the cottage a beam of light was streaming out. Crouching over she ran across the intervening grass and peered over the sill. Surely if anybody were watching her this would seem like a natural act.

Riever and Delehanty were within the room. Delehanty had fallen asleep on a couch. Riever was pacing up and down. There was no strut in him now, he was not on parade. He moved with his more natural cat-like tread, but it was a cat with a load on his back. When he turned at the far end of the room and Pen saw his face, the features were composed enough, but in his eyes showed a wild, animal-like torment. But her soft heart was hard against him. Whatever he might be suffering it was only a tithe of what he owed. The swiftest of glances was sufficient for her. She dropped to the ground like a leaf, and creeping around the corner of the house, made for the road in front.

Running by fits and starts she went down the hill to the beach. She lingered in the shadow of a bush looking out. Nothing human stirred. There was a breeze from the Southeast and from the other side of the point came a murmur of waves on the beach. But within the scimitar curve of white sand the water was like a mirror. Three hundred yards offshore the *Alexandra* floated, huge and ghostly in the moonlight, all dark except for her riding-light. Out in the bay the red light on Poplar point flashed intermittently. Out of the vast, gray stillness that recurring spark had a dreadful significance—like blood.

Pen retraced her steps more slowly up the hill. If anyone had followed her so far, he would have to let her pass him now. He would be hidden somewhere alongside the road. The thought made her heart flutter. Though she had deliberately provoked it, there was a terrible excitement in being hunted. As she walked she kept her head fixed straight ahead, but her darting eyes searched among the bushes on her left. On the other side was a cut-bank which afforded no cover.

And then she saw one of them. There could be no mistaking it. In the darkest shadow under the branches, the suggestion of a crouching human figure still as death. She could even tell that he was holding his head down to keep his white face from betraying him. He was less than ten feet from her. It was terribly hard to keep her muscles in order as she passed, and *just after* she passed. But satisfaction was mixed with her terror. Her ruse had not failed.

Leaving the gates on her left she kept on around the turn of the road. Here she sought to play with them further by running again, running as hard as she could alongside the fence that bounded the vegetable garden. Looking over her shoulder she had glimpses of two pursuers, bent double in the road, and darting from shadow to shadow. She took them a quarter of a mile down the road and brought them back to the point where her own path struck off behind the cottage into the woods.

At this point she hesitated for a long time looking all around her like a person wishing to make finally sure that

she was not followed. As long as she stood still nothing stirred of course. Suddenly she put her head down and ran like a deer for the woods. As soon as she was within cover she stopped and looked back. Her pursuers were startled into showing themselves openly on the path. Three of them. Pen ran on to the little temple and flung herself down to recover her breath and await developments. She sat within the little circle of pillars with an arm flung across the cool gravestone and her cheek pillowed on it. It was quite dark there.

But nothing happened. Nobody came plunging after her into the little opening. Not a sound was to be heard. The excitement of being chased died down, and a chill of apprehension struck to Pen's breast. What were they up to? They couldn't possibly see what she was doing in the little temple. Why didn't they find out then? The suspense became unbearable. Each minute was an age. She could have screamed aloud.

Then she heard a twig snap—not in the direction of the path by which she had come, but on the other side of the clearing. It instantly became clear to her what was happening, and her breast quieted down. She heard other whispers of sounds, the brush of leaves against a passing body, a released pebble rolling down the bank. Naturally if they thought Don was in there with her they had to take their precautions. They had sent for help maybe. Certainly they were now surrounding the place.

Then absolute silence fell again, and moment by moment her breast became tighter. It was worse now because she could feel the presences around her. Why didn't they do something? Suddenly a wicked little thought occurred to her. She smiled and at the same time shook with fear. She commenced to murmur half-audibly to herself. It was only a nursery rhyme, but she meant it to sound like conversation.

It worked. A dazzling white beam suddenly flashed in her face. Pen screamed and scrambled to her feet. She did not have to act that. But oh! it was a relief to have it over with. As she stood up other lights were thrown on her. She could see nothing for the shifting, blinding circles. Some were held on her, others ran all over the place like quicksilver, like scrambling little devils of light nosing in the corners. One even ran around under the dome as if it expected to find Don clinging there like a bat.

From behind one of the glares came Delehanty's growling voice: "Where is he?"

"Who?" said Pen. She was cool enough now.

"You know who I mean!" He checked on oath.

"I am alone here," said Pen.

"What did you come here for?"

"To pray," she said demurely.

"Hah!" He was hard put to it to control himself. "What place is this?"

"The tomb of my ancestors."

Somebody threw a line on the grave stone. The beautifully carved Gothic script was sharply outlined. A voice began to read:

"Here lies the body of Pendleton Broome, beloved son of Pendleton Broome and Mary Camalier. Who departed this life..."

"Shut up!" growled Delehanty. To Pen he said: "Look here, I want a straight answer. What are you doing here?"

"I always come here when I wish to be alone," said Pen with delicate emphasis.

"Hah! ... Mitchell!" He conferred with one of his men.

Pen still blinded by their lights could not see what was going on. A man edged around behind her. Delehanty who had put away his light was busy with something in his hands.

"Now!" he said abruptly.

Pen's arms were suddenly pinned to her sides. As she opened her mouth to protest Delehanty pressed his twisted handkerchief between her teeth. Pen struggled furiously, but it was pulled tight and knotted behind her head.

Delehanty growled to his men: "Get back in your places. She's evidently got a date with him here. He'll be here yet. If you let him slip through your fingers, by Gad! I'll have you all broken."

Pen hearing this, ceased to struggle, and smiled behind the gag. "Well ... let them!" she thought. "It's all to the good!"

Delehanty said to her: "March! young lady!"

Pen, just to keep up appearances, moaned behind the gag, and hung back.

Delehanty pushed her ahead of him in the path. "Get along back to the house with you!" he commanded.

Pen made no further objections.

He accompanied her back to the house. Reaching the porch he took off the gag.

"Thank you," said Pen demurely.

"Get inside," he said. "You won't be feeling so flip in the morning."

He strode back towards the gates. But there was no certainty in his carriage. He suspected he had been fooled. Pen all but laughed aloud.

Pen scampered across the porch, and into the house, closing and locking the door behind her. All her being hung on the agonizing question: was he there? She ran back through the hall into the kitchen. In the dark depths of the house her hands served her for eyes. She knew it so well. Her hand went unerringly to the knob of the door that gave on the cellar stairs. She ran down. At the foot of the stairs an agony of apprehension constricted her throat. She could not speak aloud.

"Don!" she gasped.

From out of the dark came the answering whisper: "Pen!"

In the ecstasy of relief that flooded her Pen lost her grip on reality for a moment. Her knees gave under her. She sank down in a heap on the earthen floor.

Don sought all around for her in the dark. "Pen! Pen!" he whispered urgently.

He stumbled against her. He gathered her up and held her against him. She clung around his neck in a sort of desperation. But the warmth of him, the ripple of muscle under his cotton shirt, the strong rise of his breast against hers all seemed to pour a new life into her. He was very real!

"Oh, my darling!" she whispered ... "Oh Heavens, what a day!"

"Something has happened?" he said.

In her relief she felt a little light-headed. "A few things!" she giggled.

"Tell me."

"I will. Let's get out of this hole."

"Is it safe?"



"My dear! ... Did you think I was going to store you among the potatoes?"

"I'll carry you up."

"No, I'm all right again. I must lead you."

She pulled him after her towards the stairs. She made no allowance for his unfamiliarity with the place, and he fell over the bottom step with a clatter. Don went rigid. Pen laughed as women do in the dark.

"Clumsy!" she whispered.

In the kitchen he asked for water. She led him to the pail, and held the dipper to his lips. They both drank like hard driven horses, and sighed with refreshment. Then she led him up the back stairs. At the top she left him for a moment while she blew out the lamps in the back rooms. When they got to the main upper hall, through the transom over Pendleton's door they heard a sound like a saw being drawn very slowly through rotten wood. It started Pen off again. She hastily pulled Don into her room, and closing her door, smothered her laughter in his neck. It started him going. They quivered and rocked with suppressed laughter. They finally sank down on a sofa weak, but immensely refreshed. There is nothing like laughter.

"What room is this?" whispered Don.

"My room."

"Oh, Pen!" he murmured on a deep note.

"Don't you like being here?"

He drew her hard against his side. "Oh Pen! ... I can't tell you how it makes me feel!"

"What more natural refuge could you have, dear?"

"But where are you going to keep me, Pen?" he asked.

"Right here."

He drew away from her. "Oh no, I couldn't let you."

She became angry immediately. "Why not? Is it because of the danger to my reputation? ... How perfectly silly under the circumstances!"

"It isn't only that," he muttered sullenly. "It's the same old thing. Hiding behind your skirts. I can't bear it. Why, suppose I were found here?"

All at once they seemed completely divided. "Oh, you make me so angry!" she said helplessly. "Thinking about what people would say? You think more of what people say than you do of me! What have you and I got to do with what people say?"

"You're not quite fair to me," he said.

The note of quiet stubbornness terrified her. Here was a force she could not gauge. "Oh, we must not quarrel!" she murmured with a catch in her breath ... "Oh, Don, I love you so!"

"Oh my Pen!" he murmured gathering her in his arms again.

There was a blessed peaceful interlude.

After awhile she murmured in a small voice: "Then you will stay here until we can think up something else?"

But the quiet stubbornness was unaltered. "I won't promise anything. I must be free to decide."

"But Don! After all the trouble I have had to get you here! You're in my castle, and I must know where I have you. Mustn't you let me decide for the time being?"

"That's just the rub," he said ruefully. "You're so bossy, Pen. If you had me here right under your thumb I wouldn't be able to call my soul my own."

Pen refused to see any humor in the situation. "Would it matter for a little while?"

"You wouldn't want a tame man!"

The ever-present fear leaped to her lips. "You're thinking of giving yourself up!"

"No," he said soberly. "I've changed my mind about that. Since I've been reading the papers. I'll keep them on the look until I see a chance to make a good fight."

Pen kissed him passionately. "Ah, that's a load off my breast!" she cried. "That's what kept me awake nights!"

"But I must be allowed to play my own hand," he insisted.

"All right, stubborn! ... Now listen, while I tell you everything that happened to-day."

On the sofa near the front windows, with her lips close to his ear she told him the story of Blanche Paglar. How sweet it was to feel in the pressure of his hand on hers how his excitement and his hope grew with the tale.

He would not let himself hope too far. When she had come to the end, he said cautiously: "Well, that's a beginning. But it's a wild scheme, Pen. You mustn't bank too much on it. Suppose you're right about Riever—it begins to look as if you were right.—No jury would take the testimony of a lot of gangsters against that of the famous millionaire. And all old Riever's powerful friends would rally round him. We're not out of the woods yet."

"I don't care so much about convicting Riever so long as we raise a sufficient doubt to make a jury afraid to convict you!"

"But it would be a point of honor with that gang to convict me, see? ... What happened after you got home?"

She told him that part somewhat toned down. She suppressed the fact of Riever's proposal.

Don said wisely: "I believe Riever's falling in love with you!"

Pen smiled and kissed him.

He laughed at her tale of how she had led the detectives into the woods, and left them there watching.

"But wait a minute," he said. "After awhile it will begin to percolate into their thick heads that they've been sold. They'll begin to put two and two together. They'll realize that you drew them away from the house on purpose ... Take it from me we'll have a visit from them before morning. You'd better let me go while the going's good!"

Pen clung to him. "No! No! Can't you stay with me an hour without beginning to fidget? ... They're going to comb the woods at dawn. Where could you go?"

"But they'll search the house first."

"No matter. I'm on my own ground here. I'm prepared for them.... Wait a minute!"

Leaving him, she unlocked the door into the back room, and disappeared for a few minutes. She returned through the other door.

"Where've you been?" he asked.

"Preparing a line of retreat," she said smiling.

"What time is it, Pen?"

"Not midnight yet. Things have been moving fast."

"You must be worn out, dear. Lie down and sleep. I'll keep watch."

"Silly! Do you think I could sleep with you in the room?"

"Then I'll go in the next room."

"No! What's an hour or two's sleep? ... Come and sit down again."

On the sofa near the windows she leaned back against him, her head in the hollow of his shoulder. He sunk his cheek in her hair.

"Pen, it's just a week to-day since we met. Isn't that strange?"

"What's time got to do with it? I knew the very first moment."

"I, too."

"Story-teller! The first look you gave me was not that kind at all?"

"What kind was it?"

"Oh, a kind of ... kind of sprightly look. Observe little bright-eyes!"

"Pen!"

She laughed delightedly.

"Well, it happened so soon afterwards it doesn't count."

"I wonder how it is to a man," she murmured dreamily. "With me ... well it was like hating you, you upset me so!"

"You made me a little sore, too. You were so bossy!"

"You always say that!"

It was his turn to chuckle in his throat.

"Dearest, I have a confession to make to you," she whispered. "Do you know, when I first read that story in the newspapers I was glad."

"Glad?"

"Yes, of course I knew that it wasn't true.... And I knew that I shouldn't lose you."

"Pen! ... You wouldn't have lost me anyway. I was thinking about it when you came down to the tent splashing through the water. I wasn't going."

"Oh Don how sweet that is to my ears! ... Sometimes I have felt that circumstances forced me on you."

"Nothing in it! You'd already got your hooks into me."

"What an expression!"

"You made goodness seem so charming!"

"I, good? ... If you knew!"

"I do know. I know exactly what I mean. There's so much disgusting hypocrisy in the world a fellow gets to think that the bad people are the only honest ones. You taught me better."

Pen turned and clung to him. A tear or two rolled down her cheeks. "Oh, my dear! ... It isn't true! ... But it comforts me so!"

Enfolded in happiness and delicious peace, they became sleepy in spite of themselves. Notwithstanding his sleepy protests, she drew herself away from him.

"Stretch out," she whispered. "I will sit on the stool beside you where I can look at you. I love so to look at you!"

"Pen! ... No! You sleep! ... I'll keep watch!"

But he sunk lower and lower. Soon he was gone. Pen sitting beside him could gaze her fill. The moon was coming in the front windows now. The direct rays did not fall on him, but there was light enough for her to see. All relaxed and helpless like that he seemed to belong to her more completely than he ever did awake—and stubborn. She could scarcely bear to look at him.

In the end she slept too with her cheek on his breast.

She was awakened, she knew not how long afterwards, by a sound. Even in the instant of waking she recognized the sound. It was the stealthy creak of the tin roof outside her window. At the touch of her hand on his cheek Don awoke all of a piece. He slipped noiselessly to the floor. They crept to the middle of the room.

With her lips at his ear she breathed: "There's a man on the porch roof."

"Did he look in?"

"I don't think so. He couldn't have seen you through the screen."

"If he tries to come in...?"

"Slip through the door behind you."

Don made to creep away from her. She laid a hand on his arm. "Wait!"

There was no further sound from the man outside.

"He's not coming in," Pen whispered. "He's out there to cut off your escape."

A tremendous rat-tat-tat resounded through the empty halls.

"I shouldn't have slept!" murmured Don.

"It's all right!" whispered Pen. "I intended you should stay here."

"I feel trapped within walls!"

"You are safest here!"

The knocking was imperiously repeated. Outside Pen's door they heard her father's agitated voice.

"Pen, are you there?"

"Yes, Dad," she said coolly.

"Stay where you are, my dear. I'll go down."

For the third time that night the worthy little man pattered down stairs in his bare feet.

Pen opened her door an inch. She heard her father's prudent inquiry through the closed door, and a gruff voice outside reply:

"Open the door!"

Pendleton remonstrated, and the voice, Delehanty's, was brutally raised:

"Open the door or I'll smash it in!"

She heard the key squeak in the lock. Pendleton's remonstrances were drowned in the sounds made by the entrance of a number of men. Pendleton's voice was raised in agonized tones. Delehanty said:

"We're going to search the house!"

Pen had the sense that her little father was trying to bar them out by main strength. Signing to Don to remain where he was, she hastened to the head of the stairs. She called down:

"Let them in, father. We have nothing to hide."

Returning to her room she locked the door. Her father came up stairs accompanied by a pair of shod feet. His voice at Pen's door was utterly bewildered.

"They insist on searching the house ... searching the house! At this hour!"

"Well, that's all right," said Pen.

"They say if you'll stay quietly in your room they'll leave that until last. There's a man out here on guard. Better dress, dear."

"I shall be all right," said Pen.

She turned and kissed Don with a smile on her lips. Her eyes shone with the light of battle.

He looked more dubious. "Is your way of retreat still open?" he whispered.

She nodded.

"Well then...?"

"Wait till they come up stairs."

She listened with her ear at the crack of the door. Vague sounds arose from below. She was tormented by her inability to hear exactly. Finally she motioned to Don to stand back out of any possible range of vision, and opening the door, she put her head around it.

Instantly a flash-light was thrown on her and a voice said:

"You can't come out, Miss."

"I don't want to come out," said Pen coolly. "I want to hear what's going on in my house."

Now her ear practised in that house, could follow their movements very well. They were in the cellar. They took no precautions for silence. They came stamping up the cellar stairs, and were to be heard in the kitchen and the outer kitchen. They spread through the main rooms of the house. Pen smiled to herself, hearing them move heavy objects of furniture, looking for hiding-places in the walls. Finally they started up the main stairway, but were

diverted into the rear extension. Doors were opened and shut, furniture pulled about. As they started to move back towards the front, Pen closed her door.

"They're coming!" she breathed in Don's ear. "Now's the time!"

She took him to the door leading to the rear room. "Lock this door behind you and put the key in your pocket." She pointed to an open window in the corner of the room facing the rear. "There's your way out. The ironing-board is on the floor under the window. Stretch it across catty-cornered to the sash of the bathroom window. I pulled down the top sash ready for you. As you go, turn and close this window behind you. When you get in the bath-room pull the board after you. Don't touch that window. It squeaks. Wait in the bath-room with the door open. If you hear anybody coming that way slip down the back stairs and into the cellar. While you're in the bathroom watch this window. When they're through with this room I'll raise the window and leave it up. That's your signal to come back."

There was a peremptory knock on the door of Pen's room. The lovers pressed hands and parted. Slipping through the door, Don closed it noiselessly and turned the key.

"What is it?" Pen asked.

The voice of Delehanty brusquely replied: "Open the door, please."

Pen wanted all the time she could gain. "Is my father there?" she asked as if in doubt.

"Yes, my dear," said Pendleton quaveringly. "Please open."

"One moment!"

She turned down the covers of her bed, and rumbled them. Her ears were strained for sounds from the back, but she heard nothing. So much the better!

"You've had plenty of time to dress!" said Delehanty harshly.

She opened the door. There was a small crowd in the hall. One carried a brilliant acetylene lantern which filled the place with a strong white light and threw grotesque shadows upwards. All the detectives had their hats on; some were short, some tall. It was like a caricature in violent chiaroscuro. As for Pendleton, he had his pants pulled over his night-shirt and his bare feet looked piteous. A picture of ineffectiveness, he was still carrying a lighted candle in all that glare.

Without so much as by your leave Delehanty strode into the room with three of his men at his heels. The chief was chewing an extinct cigar which smelled vilely. Pen choked with rage. She bit her lips to keep back an outburst. Her father went to her, and squeezed her hand imploringly. The three men spread around the room like well-trained dogs. One could imagine them sniffing. They were armed with electric torches with which to illumine dark corners. Delehanty went direct to the door into the rear room and rattled it.

"What's behind here?" he demanded.

"Another bed room," said Pen. "The guest-room."

"Guest-room?" sneered Delehanty. "Where's the key?"

"The door has been locked for many years. I couldn't tell you."

"Well what's the door from that room into the hall doing locked?"

"Because I keep certain things of value in there. I don't want the servants to go in."

Pen's father must have wondered at this answer. But perhaps he was too confused to take in what she was saying. At any rate he kept quiet.

"Is that key lost too?" sneered Delehanty.

"No," said Pen calmly. "It's among the other keys on the rack in my sewing-room. My father will get it for you."

Pendleton trotted obediently away with his candle.

When he came back with it Delehanty's sleuths had completed their search of Pen's room. The whole party passed around through the hall to the door of the guest-room. The men showed excitement. They thought they had their man. Delehanty flung the door open and stepped back. He ordered his men to cast the light of their electric torches inside. This was to draw the fire of the supposed occupant. Pen's lip curled. Finally the men ventured across the threshold.

The acetylene lantern filled the great bare chamber with light. It was meagerly furnished, a gigantic bedroom set of the carved walnut period, the bed with an old-fashioned mosquito bar, an air-tight stove, an humble little rocking-chair. The great expanse of white wall was guiltless of paper or tint, and showed long fine cracks running in every direction like the map of a complicated river system. The floor was covered with matting.

Delehanty sniffed. "The air is fresh. There's been a window open in here."

Pen's heart contracted. "The room is aired every day," she said quickly.

Delehanty went to the window in the corner. The two windows at the side of the room were shuttered on the outside. He cast his light along the sill.

"There's no dust here," he said accusingly.

"There's no dust anywhere in my house," said Pen.

Delehanty commanded the window to be opened. The acetylene light was held outside. This was the crucial moment. Pen held her breath.

"What is there?" asked Delehanty.

"Eighteen or twenty foot drop, sir."

"Any gutter pipe or lightning rod?"

"No, sir."

"Close the window."

Pen breathed again.

The bare room offered but few places of concealment, under the bed, within the washstand, a shallow clothes closet in the wall. They even looked in the bureau drawers. Finally Delehanty with a grunt, moved towards the door. Pen's heart swelled big with triumph.

She glanced at Delehanty's cigar. "Would you mind leaving the window open?" she said cuttingly.

At a nod from the chief, one of the men flung up the sash. Pen felt a little quiver of inward laughter. There was something humorous in making the enemy transmit one's signals. All left the room and Pen locked the door. She handed the key to her father.

"Please put it where you got it."

Delehanty fixed her with an irascible, suspicious eye. "You come along with us the rest of the way, Miss. I want no trickery!"

Pen shrugged.

The search went on, that queer crew straggling through the rooms accompanied by their grotesque up-flung shadows. Through Pen's sewing-room and into Pendleton's bed-room. From thence they passed into the extraordinary room behind where he kept all his "Collections." He never threw anything away. Everything under the sun was to be found there. All around the walls were rickety, home-made tables heaped with his impedimenta.

All this occupied the searchers quite a while. They threw his stuff about regardless of his protests.

Finally there was the third story which Pen had long ago given up to dust and spiders and last of all the "cupalaw" into which Keesing to Pen's amusement, ascended with drawn revolver.

In the end Delehanty stamped down-stairs in a villainous temper, his soft-footed sleuths at his heels.

At the front door Pendleton attempted to recover his dignity. "Now I trust you'll favor me with some explanation," he began.

"Ah! ask your daughter for the explanation!" snarled the detective. "Take my advice, and keep her home nights!"

They all went. Pendleton turned to Pen aghast.

"What did he mean by that?"

But Pen's heart was dancing. An irresponsible gale of laughter caught her up. She had a wicked impulse to see her father's bare feet twinkle. She caught his wrists (he still had the candle) and attempted to whirl him around.

"Oh joy! Oh joy! Oh joy!" she cried. "They're gone!"

"*Pen!* Have you gone crazy," he protested.

"Yes, it's the heat!"

"Be quiet! What did the man mean?"

"How do I know? A man will say anything when he's sore ... Come on back to bed."

She pulled him wildly to the foot of the stairs, Pendleton leaning back, and his bare feet slapping the floor absurdly. Pen laughed so she had to sit on the bottom step to recover.

"Your levity is very ill-timed!" he said severely.

That only made her laugh the more. "Come on! Come on!" she said, dragging him up-stairs.

At the door of his room she kissed him, and gave him a push inside. She flew across to her own room and let herself in.

"Don! Don!" she just breathed, holding out her hands.

There was no answer.

She flew to the door between the two rooms. It yielded to her hand. The key was in it. So he had come back. The window in the corner was still open. It was very dark in the back room. She felt all around for him, softly whispering his name. Her breast contracted with apprehension. She ran back into the front room to make a light.

As soon as the candle flame grew up she saw a piece of paper pinned to the wooden mantel. It looked like the fly leaf torn out of a book. There was a pencil scrawl upon it.

"Dearest: Writing in the dark. That was too near a thing. Can't let you take such risks. I'm off on my own. Don't



worry. Love.

"D."

## CHAPTER X

### DAYS OF SUSPENSE

Pen lay on her bed wide-eyed and dry-eyed until near dawn. It did not lessen her misery any that a good part of it was anger at having her will balked. She accused Don by turn of callousness, of ingratitude, of folly; she tried to tell herself that he was not worth saving, but without abating any of her torments of anxiety as to his fate. It was worse than anxiety; she had a horrible, dull certainty that he would be taken as soon as it became light. Like a wilful child intent only upon having his own way, he had run blindly out into their trap.

After the briefest period of unconsciousness she was awakened by a stir outside the house. Looking out of the window she saw that the sun was but just up, the great square shadow of the house reached almost to the edge of the bank. Nevertheless early as it was, the house grounds were full of people, and more were arriving through the gates. These were Islanders, fisher-folk, or men from the farms in earth-colored garments. Under the bank she could hear the put-put of arriving motor-boats. Among the people the gross figure of Delehanty was conspicuous, moving about, picking out men here and there.

Well, if he was still looking for men Don was not yet caught, nevertheless, Pen's heart sickened at the sight. It was clear enough what was happening. During the last few days popular interest in the chase had fallen off, but the news of the finding of the canoe had revived it. The blood lust was aroused again. When she got down to the kitchen Pen learned from the excited negroes that Riever had increased the reward to ten thousand dollars. That was what had brought the crowd.

Like a woman who had died and whose body was condemned to drag on, Pen started things going in the kitchen and set the table for breakfast. When her father came into the dining-room even he who noticed so little, was struck by the contrast of her present look with the laughing mænad who had thrust him into his room the night before.

"What's the matter?" he asked sharply.

Pen shrugged. She had to make some excuse. "Last night was too much for me," she muttered.

"I thought so!" he said severely. "I told you you were acting wildly ... Riever had nothing to do with that affair," he added irrelevantly.

"What difference does it make?"

Pendleton had already been out of doors, and he could talk about nothing but the latest developments of the case. In his new interest, his resentment against Delehanty had cooled. Pen could not gather from his talk what they were saying about her. No doubt they spared his feelings—or mocked him without his being aware of it. With the curious blindness that was characteristic of him, he had not yet connected the finding of the canoe with his daughter.

"How strange that Counsell should have come back here after having paddled away!" he said. "And yet, how natural! It was the last thing anyone would suppose that he would do!"

Pen let him run on, half attending.

Worse was in store for her. Her father said:

"Of course Riever has been entirely discreet in making his new announcement. He had it written out and sent it

over to the Island last night to be posted up outside the store. His offer reads: 'Ten thousand dollars for the apprehension of Donald Counsell.' But everybody understands that it means dead or alive. Many of the men are armed."

Pen thought she had experienced the extremity of torment. But this was saving for her. She half rose from her chair with a face of horror, and dropped back again.

"But this is murder!" she gasped.

"Eh?" said little Pendleton blinking.

"Cold-blooded murder! ... Cynical murder! ... To set an armed mob after a defenseless man ... with the promise of reward!"

"But he's desperate. If he's cornered he'll fight..."

"He is unarmed!" said Pen.

Her father's jaw dropped. "How do you know?"

She saw that she had betrayed herself, but she was beyond caring. Pushing her chair back she went to the mantel and resting her arms upon it dropped her head on them. "Oh God! what sort of a world is it where such things are possible!" she cried.

"Pen, what am I to think from this?" he stammered aghast.

She could not be still in her agony. She paced up and down stretching up her arms for the ease to her breast which was not to be had. "Whatever you like!" she said.

"You have been seeing him? You know where he is?"

"I don't know now."

"My God!"

Pen hurried from the room, leaving him in a state of collapse.

She still went about her daily tasks like a piece of mechanism. She had to keep in some sort of motion. She experienced strange lapses, discovered herself offering whole corn in her hand to the newly-hatched chicks; came to to find herself in places without any notion of what she had come for. Her father kept out of her way.

It took a long time to organize the searchers. Delehanty was not taking any chance of failure. He was in no particular hurry since he had already sent a large party by boat to the head of the creek to cut off any escape up the Neck. Finally about ten o'clock the rest were ready. They set off in three parties, the first making its way along the river shore to comb the woods on the Absalom's Island side; the second setting off towards the lighthouse to surround the pond in the woods; the third and largest party heading straight back by the Neck road. Their instructions were to deploy along the edge of the woods, and wait until they got in touch with the parties on either flank. Two lads who brought motor-cycles over from the Island were delegated to act as messengers between Delehanty and the searchers.

When they had gone an ominous Sabbath quiet descended on Broome's Point, which was harder to bear than the confusion. Delehanty went off to the cottage. There was no one to be seen but a few of the yellow-faced squatters' women from up the Neck who peered from under their sun-bonnets with shy, half-human eyes, and a group of old men standing by the porch discussing bygone murders with zest.

Later, Pen came upon her father in the back kitchen, or dairy, evidently seeking to waylay her. He seemed not greatly affected by the scene in the dining-room, only for a hang-dog air, and a difficulty in meeting her glance. As a matter of fact Pen's tragic eyes intimidated him. For himself, he had been absorbed in trifles for so long that he could

not feel anything very deeply.

He said: "I suppose you've forgotten that we were to lunch on the yacht to-day."

Pen stared at him. *Still* he had not understood!

"I suppose you don't want to go," he said quickly.

"No," said Pen.

"What will Mr. Riever think," he said plaintively.

"I don't care."

The gathering storm on her brows warned him not to go any further. But he still hung around like a child.

To get rid of him Pen said: "Why don't you go?"

He brightened. "Well, I wasn't sure if it was proper..."

"Oh go ahead! Tell him I'm sick. Tell him anything you like."

"Well I will if you think it's all right. I want to talk business with him anyway."

He donned the old frock coat and the comical, flat straw hat and set off as blithely as a child with a penny in its hand. Pen's glance after him was bitter. Nevertheless she was thankful to be rid of him.

There came a time when Pen could no longer keep up even the pretense of doing her chores. Always with her mind's eyes she was following the searchers. They had come to the edge of the woods. They were spreading out. They were waiting until the parties on either side came up. Now they had climbed the fence and were advancing slowly with their guns held ready; ignorant, passionate men with their guns cocked! She went to her room and paced up and down with her clenched hands pressed to her breast. She could not stay there either. She came down on the porch where she could hear better and paced endlessly up and down, careless of who might be a witness to her agitation. All her faculties were concentrated on hearing. She was listening for shots.

Time passed and there was no news. She sent Ellick, the more intelligent of Aunt Maria's sons down to the beach to pick up what he could. One or two negroes had come over in the boats. This was regarded as a white man's business and they were not allowed to take part in it. Nothing transpired until mid-afternoon when Ellick came back to say that the motorcycle boys had brought in Counsell's camping outfit which had been found in the woods. Of Counsell himself there was no word.

A wild hope arose in Pen's breast. Suppose after all he had succeeded in getting away up the Neck before the line was drawn across it!

Her hope soon sickened though. What good if he had escaped for the moment? There was but the one road eighty miles long, by which he could reach cities and crowds and safety. And by this time everybody along that road was on the *qui vive* to catch him, their mouths watering at the ten thousand dollar reward. What chance had he of succor? Where could he get food? Or on that sandy peninsula, water?

She tormented her brain with futile calculations. Could he or could he not have made it? Delehanty had dispatched the party up the creek immediately after searching the house. Pen had heard the boats set off. By that time Don had had half an hour's start. A man walks perhaps four miles an hour, the boats averaged seven. It was four miles to the head of the creek, and but a step from the landing to the Neck road. Still Don ought to have got there first. But he might have turned aside to get something from his hidden store in the woods! Pen's brain whirled dizzily.

At other times she pictured him crouching white-faced in the bush, listening to the relentless slow approach of the searchers, and knowing that the other side was watched too. Then the dash for freedom, the shots ... That picture

came back again and again. She could not shut it out. How gladly she would have heard the news that he had been brought in—unhurt.

At five o'clock she beheld her father turning in at the gate accompanied by Riever. At the sight of the latter Pen saw red. Hideous little creature lurching on his fine yacht while his dollars sent men into the woods to murder! And now to come strutting ashore for an afternoon stroll with his expensive cigar cocked between his lips! How dared he present himself to her! Her impulse was to project herself down off the porch and tell him! But a last strand of prudence held. She went to her room instead.

There she struggled with her feelings. Five o'clock! Faint though it might be, there was a real chance that Don had escaped. She must therefore go on fighting for him. And in order to fight for him effectually she must maintain some sort of relations with his loathsome enemy.

There was a knock on her door, and her father said timidly: "Mr. Riever is down stairs, my dear."

Pen answered composedly: "Very well. I'll be down directly."

Pendleton was delighted. "Thank you, daughter," he purred.

It induced a fresh access of anger in Pen. He had nothing to thank her for!

Pendleton pattered happily down-stairs. Pen washed and dressed, never ceasing to admonish herself, and in the end achieved a fair measure of self-command, though her nerves were in bad shape.

Riever was waiting with a certain air of bravado. Only an involuntary roll to his eyes betrayed the dark passions that ate him. She greeted him calmly. He looked secretly relieved.

"I scarcely expected to see you," he said smoothly. "I just came to enquire how you are."

"I'm all right," said Pen.

"And to express my indignation at what happened last night. Delephanty certainly goes beyond all bounds! When I get back to New York I shall talk to the Commissioner about it!"

"Oh, the man must do his work," said Pen. "Surely, he doesn't expect me to be taken in by this palaver!" she thought.

"He's supposed to exercise some discretion ... You're really all right again?"

"Quite all right."

"I'm so glad!"

It came to her that he didn't expect her to be taken in. He was satisfied if she would only appear to be taken in. For different reasons he was just as anxious to maintain relations as she was. He just wanted everything unpleasant covered up. That was the spoiled child of it. Pen thought: "I believe he'd actually marry me without inquiring into my feelings." Well, it made it easier for her.

Pendleton made some transparent excuse to leave the room. Riever's shifty eyes gave a roll of terror, thinking that perhaps Pen might now insist on dragging the truth into the light.

Pen however only said: "I'm surprised to see you on foot this afternoon."

His face turned smug again. "I like walking," he said. "It's my ridiculous people that insist on having me carried every step."

"Do you walk much in New York?" asked Pen.

He was flattered by her interest. "Yes, very much," he said.

"But I forget, you don't live in the city, do you?"

"Sometimes."

"Have you a home there, too?"

"Well, not exactly a home, but a very pleasant little lodging."

"Ah, an apartment."

"No, I detest apartments. One always feels as if the hall servants were spying on your comings and goings."

"You stay at your club then?"

"No, clubs are all very well in their way, but I'm not a clubby person. I like to spread about among my own things. In a club too, the servants are always under your feet. In New York I like to get away from servants altogether. I am not so dependent on them as you seem to think."

Pen's heart began to beat a little thickly. "And have you such a place?" she asked with interest. Apparently they were back just where they had been before the violent scene of the previous night.

"Yes."

"Do tell me about it."

"It's a quaint little house in an unfashionable neighborhood. It stands in the name of my valet. The beauty of it is none of my neighbors know me and I can go and come as I please. It's a *petit maison* in the French style, a little *entresol* below, overhead three tall windows lighting the *salon*, then a receding attic, and that's all. I don't suppose there's another house like it in town."

"And the inside?" said Pen.

"A *salle a manger* on the ground floor looking out on a little formal garden at the back. On the main floor the *salon* in front and a bedroom in the rear. In the attic, servants rooms. Just a little house for one.... Or two," he added with a sidelong glance.

"How interesting!" said Pen. "I'd like to see it."

"I hope you will some day."

"In what part of the town is it?" asked Pen casually.

"On Thirty-Ninth Street east of Lexington."

Pen lowered her eyes to hide the glint of satisfaction in them. "This will help Blanche," she thought. "I'll write it to-night."

Presently he rose to go. "Tell me you will," he said.

"Will what?" murmured Pen.

"Come to see my little house some day?"

"Nothing is impossible," said Pen turning away her head. If he chose to read coquetry in the action, that was his look-out.

He held her hand loverly-wise for a long moment, Pen steeling herself not to shudder. Then he left the room.

Pen began to laugh but there was no sound of mirth in it. She began to laugh and she could not stop again. The

tears ran down her face and her whole body was shaken with tearing sobs. She ran to her room. She was horribly unstrung. It was long before she could get hold of herself again.

The collapse eased the strain on her nerves. She came down-stairs and was able to resume her usual round of tasks. Time was passing, and still no bad news had been received. Hope grew stronger. Finally word was brought down the road that the search party had joined forces with the line of guards drawn across the Neck, and Don Counsell had not been taken. Pen was able to face the night unafraid.

She presently learned that Delehanty had formed his men into several camps for the night. The automobile was kept busy running up the road with supplies for them. At the same time he was preparing to have the road well patrolled along its whole course through the woods. After dark a fugitive could not travel any distance except by the road.

The night came on muggy and still and Pen was attacked by a fresh anxiety. For clouds of mosquitoes arose. She pictured Don fainting with hunger and thirst, and unable even to make a smudge for fear of betraying himself, vainly attempting to protect himself from the insects.

She had a wild hope that he might be driven back to her. When the house had been searched they had found the open cellar door, and in the morning Delehanty had sent a man to shut the doors and screw them down. Before she went to bed Pen took lantern and screw driver and satisfying herself that she was not watched at the moment, knelt behind the bushes and opened the doors. She also left the way open for Don to return to her room by the route that he knew of.

She went to bed praying that she might awaken to find him kneeling on the floor beside her. She did sleep for awhile, for Nature must have her due, but when she awoke she was still alone.

When she came down-stairs in the morning she heard a new sound that froze her soul, the deep bay of hounds. Theodo' came into the kitchen, his eyes rolling wildly in an ashy face, to say that a couple of "man-huntin' dawgs" had been brought over from the Eastern shore to be put on Counsell's tracks. These mythical creatures filled the negro with an extremity of terror. Nothing would tempt him out of doors again. Meanwhile Pen's collie, Doug, locked up in the barn, hearing these trespassers on his preserve, and he unable to get at them, went frantic with rage.

The bloodhounds were taken to the spot in the woods where Don's cache had been discovered, and were given the scent from Don's clothes. They picked up his tracks without difficulty and came back over the fields, giving tongue straight to the cellar door. Delehanty finding it unlocked again, searched the house once more. The dogs were led around the house. Pen observing from within, saw that they picked up the trail again outside the kitchen window. So Don had gone out that way. However they were soon confused amidst the maze of tracks that tramped down the house grounds in every direction. Again and again their guardians led them over the ground with no better success.

Meanwhile, Delehanty having made a new disposition of his forces, the search in the woods was resumed. He had more men at his disposal on this day, and a second line of guards was drawn across the Neck higher up. Additional detectives arrived from New York and Baltimore, and these were dispatched by horse and motor to search every cabin within miles. At the same time motor-boats were patrolling all the adjacent shores, so that if the fugitive was forced out on the beach at any point he would instantly be sighted.

Notwithstanding these measures the second day passed like the first with neither sight nor sound of the fugitive. It was believed that he was still in the neighborhood, because the bloodhounds, though they were led far and wide through the woods and up the road, had discovered no tracks leading away from Broome's Point.

When the morning of the third day broke Pen had reached the point of desperation again. Not for a moment all night had she closed her eyes. She was now convinced that Don was lying exhausted and starving in some hidden spot in the woods. Probably no longer even able to give himself up. For she was sure he would not willingly perish without a fight to clear his name. When she first came out of the house the sight of a pair of buzzards circling high against the blue, turned her faint and sick.

To spend another day of inaction was unthinkable. Madness lay that way. There was no longer any question of helping him to escape. If he was anywhere near he must be found, whatever might come of it. In her extremity Pen

went to Delehanty to tell him she was going to take part in the search.

The detective was considerably taken aback. He pushed out his lower lip and glowered at Pen. "What's the idea?" he demanded.

"I want him found."

"It isn't so long ago since you wanted to lose him."

Pen shrugged.

"Have you any information?" he demanded.

"No. But I know these woods."

"We all know them now," said Delehanty dryly. He considered for a moment. "Come back in half an hour and I'll talk to you," he said brusquely.

Pen supposed that he wanted to consult with Riever. She was in no humor to wait.

"You forget I don't have to have your permission to search my own place," she said. "I offer to work with you. If you don't want me to I'll go ahead alone." She turned to leave.

"Hold on a minute!" said the detective, "you satisfy me that you're on the square with me, and I'll work with you fast enough."

Pen was able to tell him the truth—without telling him the whole truth. "It's very simple," she said. "I don't want him to starve on the place, that's all."

"Humph! You've lost touch with him, eh?" said Delehanty.

Pen was silent. It was of little moment to her what they *thought* so they did not know anything.

"What's your plan?" asked Delehanty.

"For one thing," said Pen, "the fields have never been searched. I see you send your men up the road every morning. There are hollows in the fields where a man could lie concealed. Some of the fields are growing up with young pine that would afford cover."

Delehanty looked at her with unwilling respect. "Anything else?" he asked.

"If he's in the woods when he heard the searchers approach how easy it would be to climb a tree until they had passed."

"Are you going to search every tree in the woods?" he asked sarcastically.

"No," said Pen.

"Will you take a couple of my men along with you?"

"No."

Delehanty scowled darkly.

"I shall call him as I go," said Pen. "If he saw or heard others with me he wouldn't be so likely to answer."

"Suppose you find him and he refuses to give himself up?"

"After three days without food he'd hardly be in a position to resist."

"Would you undertake to bring him in?"

"You can lend me a revolver if you want. I have none."

"Not on your life!" sneered Delehanty.

Pen shrugged. She had only mentioned the revolver as a bit of stage business anyway.

"Go and find him if you want," said Delehanty, "but excuse me from taking any chances of having my gun slipped to him."

Pen went back to the house and made up a packet of sandwiches. As she was setting out the second time she ran into Riever coming in by the drive. He had evidently been with Delehanty, and under his forced air of politeness an extraordinary conflict of feelings was suggested; hope, distrust and a gnawing curiosity. He would not speak of what was in his mind, of course. "Where are you setting out for so busily?" he asked with a false air of blitheness.

Pen was blunt enough. "I believe this man is starving somewhere on the place, and I'm going to find him if I can."

Riever put on a look of gladness and delight. The guiding rule of his kind is that by assuming a thing to be so you make it so. He therefore assumed that Pen had come over to his side, that the millions had won out, that he and she were now one in sympathy. It need hardly be mentioned though, that his eye still rolled with a hideous doubt.

"Oh, that's fine of you!" he said ... "But it's dangerous!"

"He wouldn't hurt me," said Pen.

Riever ground his teeth secretly. "How can you be sure?" he said with a great air of solicitude.

"Because I helped him in the beginning. I fed him."

"But you've thought better of it now?" murmured Riever.

"I'm going to find him if I can."

"I believe you're out after the reward!" Riever said, with a ghastly sort of facetiousness.

Pen caught at the suggestion. If she were obliged to bring Don in, the money might make all the difference to them. "Well, why not?" she said. "I could use the money as well as anybody."

There was a quality of eagerness in her voice that could hardly have been feigned. For the moment it lulled his doubts. "There's nobody I'd rather pay it to," he said grinning.

"You mean that?" said Pen. "If I give him up to you, will you pay me the reward?"

"If you give him up to me I'll double it!" he said meaningly.

"All right!" said Pen. "If I'm successful to-day, I'll hold you to that." She made to walk on.

Riever's face was full of triumph, but there was still a fear too, another sort of fear. "Wait a minute," he said. "Suppose you can't handle him?"

"I have no fear of that," said Pen.

He slipped his hand in his side pocket. "Here," he said, "take this." He produced an automatic pistol. "Do you know how to use it?"

She shook her head. He explained the mechanism.



"Thanks," she said putting it inside her dress, and walked on.

He strutted after her as far as the gates, and stood there watching. She turned into the path behind the cottage, and followed it into the woods. Her idea in making the little temple her starting-point was that Don in need of succor, might haunt the paths they had followed together.

The sun was looking straight into the little glade through the side that opened above the pond, filling the place with a rich yellow light. Between the shadows of the pillars a broad beam lay athwart the inscription of the gravestone, picking out the curly flourishes of the letters that had been sculpted with such loving care. Pen was indifferent now to her shadowy brother who lay under the stone. She had not remembered him in many days. Her thoughts were filled by a man of flesh and blood.

"Don! Don!" she spoke softly, not expecting any answer there, and not getting any.

She let herself down the bank to the spring around at the left which welled between the roots of a superb white oak that the axe had spared. For a tree which guards a spring is sacred even to a timber scout. Pen had hopes of the spring because it was one of the only two places that Don knew of where fresh water was to be obtained. She searched carefully about it but was not rewarded by finding any tracks. She made a wider circuit of the spot but could not see that the underbrush had been disturbed.

She forced her way slowly through the tangle of thorny creepers and thickly-springing sassafras around the pond to the old wood road. It curved away secretly into the gloom; old, undisturbed, overgrown; Nature had painted in this ancient blemish. Years ago the bed of the road had been packed so hard that even yet nothing would take root there except a mossy growth like fur underfoot. But at either side bushes had taken advantage of the free light to spring up thickly. Now for the most part they met overhead, though there were places where the sun splashed through.

Pen walked slowly, pausing often to softly call Don's name. Nothing answered her but bird sounds, and the soft chattering of leaves in the high sunlight. No breath stirred down below. She made wide detours through secondary roads, mere cuts through the woods that only a practised eye could follow now.

It was noon when she came out at the edge of the fields. She sat down under the fence to rest, and, from a sense of duty, to eat something. Afterwards she struck clear across the rough, neglected, cleared land to the woods on the other side, then back again, shaping a course that took her through every hollow. Her experience with sheep had taught her the exact lay of the peninsula, how each depression gradually deepened into a gully, running off to some branch on one side or the other. But nowhere did she find what she was looking for.

She spent several hours searching the banks of the little stream that meandered through the woods to the east of the fields. That was where she had sent him to make his camp that night. She found the site of his camp, but no evidences that he had revisited it. There were plenty of tracks in the mud of the stream, for the searchers had passed and re-passed this way, but no voice answered her soft calls.

Finally she struck across the corner of the farthest field, making for the path which went down through the woods to the arm of Back creek, that path they had followed on another night, a night of happiness. She thought of the old skiff drawn up on top of the bank, and had a wild hope that he might have launched it and succeeded in making his way down the arm and across the main creek to the mainland. True, the skiff was leaky and rotten, but a desperate man might make it serve for a short voyage. She ran the last part of the way.

The skiff was there, just as before! She dropped down upon it, weary of body and despairing of heart, and burst into tears.

"Don! Don! Don!" she called for the last time.

A green heron mocked her with its discordant croak.

The sun was low, and there could be no further searching that day. Pen made her heavy way back through the woods, and across the wide field. As she walked a merciful apathy descended on her. She could suffer no more. Imaginary pictures of Don starving in the woods no longer rose before her mind's eye. She was conscious only of a

ghastly vacuum inside her. Within it a little thought stirred like a snake: "This can't go on! If I don't hear in two or three days more..." She never completed the thought, but her soul was aware of her intention.

As she was letting down the bars that admitted her to the road, a squad of men straggled by, searchers homeward bound. Pen hung back to let them pass. The business was in the nature of a lark to them; young men relieved for the time being from the tedium of their usual lives, they were talking loud, laughing, jostling each other in the road. They stared at Pen as unabashed as animals, and Pen busied herself with the bars. Nevertheless she was aware that one of them did not stare at her. She looked at him, and was struck first, by his curiously self-conscious air. She looked afresh, rubbed her eyes so to speak, and her heart stood still.

It was Don.

True, his chin was covered with a four days' growth of reddish stubble, his bare head was touselled and unbrushed, he walked with exactly the same shambling slouch as the others. But it was Don. He had passed her, but the line of his cheek was enough, and the muscular back under the cotton shirt. She recognized the old garments she had herself carried to him. Far from being the starving wreck she had pictured, his cheek was full and ruddy, his whole body notwithstanding the shamble he affected, full of spring. For an instant she thought they had taken him. But that was manifestly ridiculous. He was skylarking with the rest. His whole bearing was that of a leader amongst them.

Pen leaned against the fence post. A welter of emotions seemed to shatter her; joy, incredulity, terror that her wits might be wandering, anger at his careless air of well-being.

Bye and bye she put up the bars mechanically, and started to walk along the road with a dazed air. She could not take in what had happened. Dusk was falling. In a couple of hundred yards a figure stepped out from the shadow of the bordering growth.

"Pen!" it whispered.

Her first reaction was to a shaking anger. She was a little beside herself. Stamping her foot in the road she cried in a soft, strained voice: "You Don! Cutting up like a school-boy in the road! Is that all you have on your mind!"

He fell back a step in surprise. Then he laughed softly like the boy she accused him of being. "But Pen ... aren't you glad?"

"Yes, laugh! do!" she said bitterly. "It's nothing to you what I've been through these last three days and nights!"

"I told you not to worry," he said sheepishly.

"Told me not to worry! What do you think I am?"

"There was no way in which I could let you hear from me. I thought you'd understand everything was all right."

"You didn't care! You didn't care!"

He moved close to her. "Pen dear, don't quarrel with me! We have only a moment. Even this is risky. There are more men coming along the road."

She attempted to push him away. "Don't touch me! You're heartless and unfeeling!"

Even as she said it she began to sob. She swayed on her feet, and Don flung an arm about her. She clung to him piteously.

"Oh my darling! my darling! ... Thank God! I have you! ... Don't pay any attention to what I say. I have suffered so. I was just at the end of my string. If I had not found you soon I ... I ..."

"Hush, dearest!" he murmured, sobered and remorseful. "You mustn't say such things. I can't bear it! ... It's true I never thought. I had such confidence in your strength."

"I thought you were starving in the woods. I couldn't eat when I thought you had nothing! I couldn't sleep, seeing you lying there."

"Hush! Hush!" he soothed her. "Everything is all right now. Pull yourself together, dearest. There are stragglers all along the road."

Indeed they could now hear footfalls coming along behind them. They started to walk too, Don straining Pen hard against his side. Everybody was traveling the same way. Gradually Pen's breast quieted down.

"What does it mean?" she asked.

"It means I'm one of the searchers for Don Counsell," he said with a chuckle. "Only place they'd never think of looking for me."

She looked at him a little aghast.

"And I've made good in the job, too," he went on. "I'm considered quite a valuable man. Delehanty has put me in charge of a squad."

"Delehanty!" she gasped. "Do you mean you have spoken to him?"

"Why not? He doesn't know Don Counsell by sight. None of his men do. The only one who knows me is Riever, and I take damn good care to keep out of his way. Luckily it's easy. He doesn't bother with the rough necks. And you can always see him coming a long way off by his gang."

"How did it come about?" she asked.

"Most natural thing in the world. My way is different from yours. You plan everything out, and I leave it to the inspiration of the moment. When I tried to get out by the cellar that night I heard a man down there. They had one out on the kitchen porch, too. So I took the screen out of the window on the other side, and dropped to the ground and hid in the shrubbery. I gradually made my way down to the beach. There were some natives camping there, but I was afraid to join them then, so I kept under cover until daylight. In the morning a raft of newcomers arrived from all over, and it was a simple matter to mix amongst them. They didn't all know each other."

"But you speak differently from these people," said Pen.

"Oh, I kept my mouth shut as much as possible. I gave out that I was Frank Jones from New Jersey, see? That accounted for my Northern speech. I said I was off a coasting schooner. Meanwhile I've been practising their lingo, and I can already speak Mar'land at least well enough to deceive Delehanty and the other Northerners. Doggone it honey Ah reckon Ah kin *tawk!* 'Deed, can I! Gemmen, it's the *trewth!*"

Pen laughed down his neck.

"Every day that passes makes my position more secure," he said. "I'm becoming known. At least Frank Jones is. This crop of saw-tooth is a wonderful disguise."

He softly rubbed his chin against her cheek. Pen liked it.

There came a hail from down the road ahead. "Hey, Jones!"

They moved apart. Don answered: "Coming!" To Pen he said breathlessly: "How can we meet? ... Oh woman, if you knew how I was hungering for you day and night!"

"No! No!" said Pen. "Everything's going so well. We mustn't take risks ... But we ought to have some way of communicating."

"Name it quick!"

She considered swiftly. "... Do you know my fattening-coop under the tree back of the kitchen?"

"I can find it."

"There's a little water-pan inside it. Look under that for a letter."

"All right," he laughed. "If I'm pinched for swiping chickens you'll have to clear me!"

He ran down the road. Pen followed at a sober pace—still a little dazed.

## CHAPTER XI

### PEN'S HAND IS FORCED

It was a justly aggrieved father that Pen found awaiting her in the dining-room.

"Half-past eight!" he said. "Where on earth have you been!"

Pen was quiet and starry-eyed with happiness. It didn't matter much to her what she said. But she rather wished to avoid a scene. She juggled with the truth a little.

"Mr. Delehanty wanted me to help him with the search."

"Delehanty! ... Wanted you!" he said amazed. It was too much for him.

"And Mr. Riever," Pen added as an afterthought.

The magic name mollified him a little. "Hum! Ha! ... Well, if Riever knew ... What suddenly started you off on this tack?"

"I want this business over with!"

"I confess I fail to understand you!" he said severely ... "What help could you give them anyway?"

"I know the place so well!"

"Do you mean to say you have been searching the woods ... with all these strangers about?"

"I had only to raise my voice to bring a dozen to my aid ... Besides, Mr. Riever lent me a revolver."

"Oh! ... Well you might have taken your father into your confidence ... Did you find anything?"

"No."

A more perspicacious man might have remarked the little catch of joy with which she said it, but never Pendleton. "The supper is cold," he said fretfully. "Aunt Maria's gone home."

"Never mind," said Pen. Out of the riches in her breast she could spare affection for him, the dear, trying child! She kissed his bald spot. "I'll make a cup of tea for myself."

"I got the mail this afternoon," he grumbled. "There's a letter for you."

"Eh?" said Pen sharply.

"On your plate. I never saw the handwriting before."

Pen glided swiftly around the table. "I never saw it either," she said. Which was perfectly true. A scrawling, half-formed hand. The post-mark "New York" told her all that she needed to know.

She thrust it carelessly in her belt and went out into the kitchen. Pendleton looked affronted. He was terribly curious. Pen lit the oil stove and put the kettle on. Then she read her letter.

"Dear Miss:

I'm not much at writing. Please excuse mistakes. Well Miss Broome I guess you were right, all right. Everything bears out what you said. I and the fellows have made a good beginning, but we haven't cinched it yet by a good deal. Of course in a job like this you got to be absolutely bomb-proof before you put yourself under fire. I guess you get me. Just at present we're stalled for the lack of coin. I've raised every nickel I could amongst the fellows and it's all gone flooey. And not a job stirring. We got to have five hundred quick. A thousand would be better. Bring it up yourself. We got to have somebody to stop at a certain swell joint. None of us was able to get by with it. For God's sake get the money, if you have to purloin your old man's sock. Everything depends on your turning up with it the next day or so. No need for me to sign this."

A few minutes later Pendleton entered the kitchen to find Pen leaning against the table in a brown study, the open letter in her hand. The kettle was boiling unheeded.

"Who's your letter from?" he asked.

"Oh ... that!" said Pen with a laugh. She was obliged to extemporize quickly. "Such an odd thing! Do you remember the little foundling that used to work for the Snellings on the Island? Something has led the child to write to me."

"Let's see," he said, holding out his hand.

"I can't, Dad. The poor little thing is telling me her troubles."

"Humph!" snorted Pendleton, and passed on out of doors.

Pen carried her supper into the dining-room. She sat, abstractedly stirring her cup, and munching a sandwich, while the same phrase ran around and around in her head. "Got to have five hundred, a thousand would be better!" Blanche might almost as well have asked her for a million, she thought sighing. Bye and bye Pendleton having finished his chores, came in again.

"Sit down a minute, Dad," she said. "I want to talk to you."

Anticipating something unpleasant, he dropped into a chair grumbling.

"This business has about finished me up," said Pen. "I must get away for awhile."

"You're looking particularly well to me," he said.

She refused to be drawn off.

"I don't know what to make of you," he went on crossly. "A while ago you were all for helping in the search."

"I hoped to end it," said Pen. "But I was unsuccessful."

Pendleton scowled sulkily at the table. "You know what I want you to do," he muttered.

"That can wait," said Pen cautiously.

"You may not get the chance, later."

"I don't know that I have the chance now."

"Oh, let's talk plainly!" Pendleton burst out, but still not meeting her eye. "This is no time for false delicacy. Anybody could see that Riever wants you. He's given me to understand in the broadest way that you have only to say the word. Even after the extraordinary way you have acted. You still have a chance. What makes you hold back? You've got to marry somebody. Men are all much the same. Marriage is no bed of roses at the best! ... Am I not your father? Would I be advising you to anything that wasn't for your good? It's a wonderful chance! a wonderful chance, I tell you! ... And you talk about going away!" The little man was almost ready to weep.

Pen schooled herself to patience. "If Mr. Riever is really in earnest my going away will not make any difference ... It's said to be a very good move," she added slyly.

"Not where a man like Riever is concerned!" cried Pendleton. "He's accustomed to be courted, to be deferred to. He'd never get over such an affront. He'd pull up anchor and sail away never to return!"

Pen thought: "Ah, if he would!"

"What was in that letter you got?" demanded Pendleton. "Has that got anything to do with it?"

Pen was startled. She saw, however, that it was merely a hit in the dark. He had no real suspicion. The best way was to ignore his question as unworthy of being answered. "Won't you give me the money?" she said.

"Where am I going to get it."

Pen was significantly silent.

"A while ago you would not touch that money with a poker!" he burst out.

"It is not easy to ask for it," she murmured.

"How much do you want?"

"Five hundred dollars!" said Pen with her heart in her mouth.

"Five hundred dollars!" he stormed. "Five hundred dollars! Why you could go to your Cousin Laura Lee's and back for twenty!"

"Wherever I went I would need clothes," said Pen.

"I offered you money for clothes, and you scorned it!"

"I'm sorry now. I have thought better of it."

"Oh, you have, have you? Well, permit me to remind you that the clothes were to wear here, and not to go away in!" He started out of the room blustering noisily to cover his retreat. "Five hundred dollars! To ruin your chances! Never heard of such folly! Never speak to me of this again! Five hundred dollars!"

He kept on talking right up-stairs. Pen remained sitting at the table looking at her empty hands.

She sat thinking and thinking; stirring the tea which had long ago turned cold. The only possible way she had of raising money was through the sale of her sheep. She had considered that once before. Her father would try to prevent her of course, but she might drive them up the Neck road at night and put them on the steamboat from one of the Bay wharves. But Delehanty's men were watching the road at a dozen points.

In her perplexity Pen felt a great longing to consult with Don. Two heads were better than one, she told herself.

Perhaps the truth was she just wanted to be with him. She was thankful she had made an arrangement to communicate. In the ordinary course he could hardly expect a letter from her until the next day, but thinking of his boyish eagerness it seemed quite possible that he might come back that night on the chance of hearing from her. At any rate it was worth trying.

She got a scrap of paper and a pencil, and wrote four lines:

"I must see you. I'll put on an old dress and a sun-bonnet and walk on the beach near the lighthouse at eleven. If you don't get this to-night I'll come to-morrow night."

Pen put this into the agreed place, and returned to the house, wondering how she would put in the hour and a half that remained before eleven. She determined to watch to see whether he came for the note. So she went up-stairs rather noisily, and came down again very quietly, carrying with her what she needed for her disguise.

She took up her position on a chair in the dark kitchen, placed against the wall in such a way that she could look obliquely through the window in the direction of her chicken coop. The moon was not up yet, and it was pitch dark under the tree. She could see nothing, but she was sure no one could visit the spot without her being aware of it.

And after all she dozed. She had had little enough sleep of late, and now that the most pressing weight was lifted from her breast, the night laid a finger on her eyelids without her being aware of it. The katydids, the crickets, the distant murmur of the waves on the Bay shore gradually undermined wakefulness. Her head swayed against the wall.

She awakened, scarcely knowing she had slept. Somebody was outside. She was electrically conscious of it, though for a moment she could hear nothing. Then a soft, masculine chuckle came out of the dark. There was more than one evidently, for men do not as a rule chuckle when alone. A voice whispered.

"Doggone, if it ain't a coop, fellas! What say to a nice fat pullet for breakfast?"

It suddenly came to her this was Don's voice, with his exaggerated Maryland drawl. Her heart beat fast.

Another voice answered: "Watch yourself, Jones. Those damn birds 'll raise the dead if you lay hand to them!"

"On'y one squawk before I get her neck wrung," laughed Don. "I got the lay of the land. That white-washed fence yonder marks the garden. Run down the rows to the next fence and you're safe!"

A silence followed. Pen, straining her ears heard, or imagined that she heard the latch softly raised, the door opened, and the little pan softly moved inside. Then Don's voice again:

"By Golly! It's empty!"

The words were spoken in the conventional tones of disappointment but Pen and none but Pen could hear the thrilling little lift in his voice. She was assured that the note was tight clasped in his hands. The voices moved away.

Pen cautiously consulted her watch. It was half-past ten. She must start at once in order to keep her appointment, for she must take a roundabout and difficult way. Pendleton's snores were resounding through the house, and in the back hall where the light could not betray her out-of-doors, she lit a little lamp and arrayed herself. She had a black cotton servant's dress that had been designed to fit a more ample figure than hers. She put it on and stuffed it out with old cotton until her own shape was altered beyond recognition. Drawing her hair straight back from her face, she twisted it into a tight knot behind, and pulled the sunbonnet over her head. For the dark it was a sufficiently effective disguise.

It was still very dark out of doors. Slipping out of the back door, she made her way to the old paddock behind the house grounds, and gaining the road from here, climbed a fence on the other side and struck across the little triangular field for the woods. It was the way she had gone once before to meet Don. Forcing her way through the undergrowth she gained her own path and so reached the little temple. From this point she struck out a line that would bring her out on the Bay shore. The sound of the waves guided her. When she had gone a little way she began to catch glimpses of the Broome's Point light between the tree trunks, and that gave her an exact course.

But this part of the woods was densely grown up, and it was hard, slow going. She had to feel her way through the tangle, and the thorns scratched her hands and tore her dress. She put her foot into unsuspected holes and came down heavily. It was only a couple of hundred yards, but she could progress but a foot at a time. It seemed as if an age passed before she slid down the steep bank and gained the sand. From around the point she heard six bells sounded melodiously aboard the *Alexandra*, and broke into a run. The tide was falling, and there was firm hard footing along the water's edge.

The lighthouse stood on its spidery stilts only a hundred feet or so off the beach. As she came close Pen could make out old Weems Locket the keeper, standing on the little gallery that encircled his octagonal house, with a companion. She slowed down. The two were leaning on the rail looking out across the Bay, smoking cigars. Even if they had looked in her direction they could scarcely have seen her, for her black dress was lost against the bushes that bordered the sand. There was a fresh breeze off the water that swallowed sounds. The first narrow edge of a smoky, orange moon was rising out of the Bay.

Pen breathed more freely after rounding the point. The old wharf was now about a quarter of a mile in front of her. The natives were camped on the beach on both sides of the wharf, and as she approached Pen could see the fires burning low in front of the tents, but no figures stirring. On board the *Alexandra* lights still shone from the deckhouse windows.

Pen, not daring to go close to the tents, came to a stand about a furlong off. There was no sign of Don. But presently she heard somebody coming from the other direction, the way she had herself come, someone softly whistling a tune. Thinking she must have passed him somehow, she turned eagerly. On this side of the point the rising moon was hidden behind the intervening high ground. A figure emerged out of the murk and Pen instantly perceived that it was not Don. It was too late to escape then.

"A skirt!" exclaimed a rough, young voice, surprised. "What are you doing out so late, sister?" He spread out his arms to bar her way.

"Let me by!" murmured Pen.

"Wait a minute! Wait a minute! Let's have a squint at you."

He lit a match with his thumb-nail. Quick as thought Pen blew out the flame. The young fellow laughed. Pen tried to dart by him. He flung out an arm and gathered her in. She struggled in silent desperation.

"Young and souple as willow, I swear," laughed the man. "What you got so much clothes on for? ... Gee! you smell as sweet as honeysuck'!"

Pen beat his face with her clenched fists. He simply lowered his head laughing, and clung to her. She had a sickening feeling of helplessness, and she dared not call for help. It was all over in half a minute. She heard running footsteps from the direction of the camp, and felt herself suddenly released.

The newcomer was Don. "What's this?" he cried with an oath that startled Pen—and charmed her.

"Hell, I didn't know it was your propitty, Jones," the other man said sullenly.

"Damn you...!"

Pen apprehended a blow about to be given, and as in a flash, the ghastly consequences of a fight there, were revealed to her. She flung her arms around Don, and clung to him without speaking. He understood. He conquered his rage with a groan.

"Well ... get out!" he said thickly.

The other man melted away into the dark.

Pen and Don clung to each other. Of the two the man was the more shaken. Moments passed before he could speak. Then:



"Oh my girl! my girl!"

"It is nothing," Pen said. "I am not made of glass."

"My fault because I was late," he groaned. "I couldn't get rid of those fellows I was with."

"I am safe," Pen said. "Forget about it. I have something to tell you. There is little time."

They started to walk slowly away from the direction of the camp. Pen repeated Blanche Paglar's letter to him word for word. It arrested his attention, and he quieted down. When they found themselves drawing too near the lighthouse, they turned and came slowly back, Don straining Pen against his side.

When she had described her problem, Don said instantly: "There's just one thing to do. You must give me up to Riever and collect the reward."

Pen's breast contracted sharply. She bitterly blamed herself. Why had she not foreseen that this was what he would say. She couldn't answer.

"How about it?" he asked.

"I couldn't!" she murmured.

"But if it's the best thing to do?"

"I simply couldn't!"

"Listen, dearest, we must think this thing clean through to the end. These people in New York seem to have started something. Well, that being so, this seems to me as good an opportunity as any, for me to come out and put up my fight."

"I must find out first how much they've learned."

"She says it is not complete. But they've started something. They seem to be on the level with us. We must back them up before the trail grows cold."

"I could find another way of raising the money."

"I'd rather use Riever's money," he said dryly. "I've got to stand trial anyhow. It will take a whole lot of money, and I don't see any other way of raising it. There'd be a sort of poetic justice in making Riever pay the expenses of my trial. But we must act quickly. He's bound to find out that you and I are working together. Then he'd never pay you the reward."

"How could I bring myself to do such a thing!"

"Wait a minute! Suppose we do nothing, what will happen? Oh, I'm in no particular danger now. In a few days they'll get sick of this search and give it up. I can see signs of it coming. Well, I can go back to the Eastern shore with the fellows I'm chumming with and get clean away. I've a new identity all established. But what then? What sort of a life would I have? I'd be a sort of wandering Jew without a friend in the world, except you, and I wouldn't dare communicate with you. I'd be one of the miserable floaters that have to do the dirtiest work for the least pay. God! when you are really on the outs of things you're up against it! You're at the bottom of a pit with smooth walls!"

"Wherever you were I would be," she whispered.

"I wouldn't take you!" he said simply. "Not that! Not unless we could hold our heads up."

"How could I do it?" murmured poor Pen. "How could I make my lips shape the words?"

"But if it was I you were doing it for, dearest...?"

Slowly pacing up and down cheek to cheek, they endlessly and lovingly disputed the question without being able to come to a conclusion. In their deep preoccupation they became careless. The slab-sided moon rose over the high bank, and shone upon them full, and they gave no heed.

The edge of the beach was bordered with the brittle woody bushes that the natives call water-weed. Pen and Don had paused in their pacing, and were standing looking into each other's faces with their clasped hands between them. Suddenly from behind a clump of bushes immediately alongside them rose the figure of a man. He was silhouetted against the moon with a significant raised arm.

"Hands up, Counsell! I got you covered!"

Don acted like a lightning flash. With a thrust out of his arms he sent Pen reeling backwards. She fell in the sand. At the same instant Don dived low through the bushes and caught the other man around the legs. He measured his length in the sand. It was so quick that he did not even fire. The pistol flew out of his hand. Pen following a blind instinct, scrambled on hands and knees and secured it.

Don had flung himself on the other man, and they were struggling furiously and silently in the sand. Don kept on top. When Pen's eyes were able to distinguish between them, she saw that Don was planted on the other man's chest, holding one of his arms down with one hand, and pressing his other hand over the man's mouth. With his free hand the man struck ineffectually up at Don's body, or tried in vain to pull away the hand that covered his mouth. His legs were thrashing wildly.

"Something to gag him with," panted Don.

Pen tore off her sun-bonnet and rolling it up with the strings out handed it over. She sat on the man's right arm, when Don was obliged to release it. Somehow Don managed to force the twisted roll of cotton between his teeth, and with Pen's aid, passed the strings under his head and tied the gag with the knots in front. Sepulchral groans issued from beneath it.

"Something to tie his hands and feet!" whispered Don.

Pen, anticipating it, already had her apron off. She managed to tear off the band, which with the strings attached, made a useful lashing. Between the two of them they got the struggling man turned over, and finally got his wrists tied behind him. With the rest of the apron they bound his ankles together. Don rolled his coat around the man's head to stifle his groans, and they stood up and looked anxiously up and down the beach. They were about half way between the lighthouse and the tents. Nothing stirred in either direction.

Don looked down at the helpless figure. "Who do you suppose it is?" he asked.

"Keesing, one of the detectives," said Pen. "I recognized his voice. He must have followed me down here ... But I don't see how he could."

Don shook his head. "More likely Pardoe—the man you ran into here, told him something and he came snooping around just on a chance. I gave myself away with my own talk."

They were silent for a moment. Both were thinking of the same thing.

Don said: "Well ... I guess the die is cast for us now."

Pen clasped her hands. "Oh, Don!"

"You've got to march me out on board the yacht quick and give me up."

"Oh, Don!"

"This fellow will soon wriggle loose. Then the fat will be in the fire. You must see there's no other way."

She nodded despairingly.

"Come on," said Don. "... I guess Riever won't mind being roused up for such a purpose," he added grimly. "Bring the fellow's gun with you."

They set off down the beach.

"This man will tell Riever that I didn't intend to bring you in," said Pen.

"We'll have to cook up some yarn ... Tell Riever you were bringing me in when this fellow Keesing tried to horn in on the reward."

There was no sound of waking life about the tents. On the beach in front, all sorts and sizes of skiffs were drawn up. They chose the first one that had oars lying in it. The falling tide had left it high and dry, and it required a strenuous effort on Don's part to launch it. At the scraping of the bottom on the sand, a voice issued out of the nearest tent:

"Who's that?"

A lean and disheveled shadow appeared in the tent opening.

"It's Jones," said Don lightly. "Just want to take a lady for a little row."

"Oh all right, Jones. Go as far as you like."

"I'm popular with the gang," murmured Don dryly.

He only had three hundred yards to row to the yacht. It was one thing to decide resolutely to give himself up, and another thing to put it into practice. He took half a dozen strokes energetically, and then loafed at the oars, gazing hungrily at Pen.

Pen suddenly conscious of the absurd figure she must be making, put up her hands and unpinning her hair, shook it about her shoulders. Don drew in his oars, and creeping aft caught up the dark tide and pressed it to his lips.

"Oh, why do you do that now?" he groaned. "You are so beautiful that way?"

Pen caught his head against her breast. "How can I? How can I? How can I?" she murmured.

Don with a sigh went back to his oars.

Pen with a twist or two, put up her hair in more becoming fashion. She began to pull out the various lengths of cotton with which she had stuffed out her bodice, and dropped them overboard. Don, the irrepressible, began to laugh shakily. Pen gasped, and laughed too. They looked at each other and laughed softly until they felt weak.

"Is that all?" asked Don at last.

Pen fishing around inside her dress nodded.

"Well, I'm relieved," he said.

"Oh, but it's dreadful to laugh now," Pen murmured remorsefully.

"It's the only thing to do," said Don simply.

He was sober enough when they touched the side of the yacht. He made the skiff's painter fast to the grating at the foot of the ladder, and stepping out, drew Pen up beside him.

"Kiss me," he whispered. "Maybe it'll be the last...!"

A murmur of pain was forced from Pen's breast.

"I mean for a good while," he hastily added.

They clung together. His face was wet from hers.

The sound of a footfall on the deck overhead caused them to draw apart quickly.

"Take the gun in your hand," Don whispered.

They went up the ladder, Don in advance. On the deck an astonished watchman faced them.

"What do you want?" he demanded.

"I am Miss Broome," said Pen. "I want to see Mr. Riever."

"He's turned in, Miss."

In order to avoid frightening him unduly, Pen kept the pistol hidden in a fold of her skirt. "He must be awakened," she said. "It is important."

The watchman, like everybody else on board the yacht, had gathered from watching his master that Pen was a person to be propitiated. "I'll tell him," he said, and disappeared within the deckhouse.

Pen and Don left alone on deck, leaned over the rail and pressing their shoulders together, gazed down at the black water etched with phosphorescence where the little waves lapped against the vessel's side and rolled back again.

"I love you," Don whispered. "Whatever happens, you have made life to me worth living."

Pen caught her breath. "Ah, don't speak," she murmured. "Or I sha'n't ... be able to go through with it."

They groped for each other's hands.

They had not to wait long. They saw Riever coming through the lighted deck saloon before he could see them. The watchman accompanied him, and another man, a sort of valet-bodyguard. Riever was wearing a gorgeous orange and blue flowered dressing-gown. His face looked puffier than by day, but his thin hair was carefully brushed. He had an expression of oddly strained eagerness.

As they came through the door, one of the men turned a switch and the deck was flooded with light. Riever's sharpened gaze flew first to Pen's face, and from Pen to Don. For a fraction of a second he did not recognize him, but Don grinned, and said coolly:

"Hello, Ernest!"

Then he knew. His face became convulsed. "Counsell!" he cried in a high strained voice. He whirled on the watchman. "Blow your whistle! Rouse the ship!"

The shrill, wailing sound pierced the night.

Half beside himself Riever cried to Don: "You fox! I've run you to earth at last!"

"You didn't," said Don, smiling at him steadily.

"Well, you're caught! You've seen the last of the sun. You're done for!"

Doors opened and slammed throughout the yacht. Feet came running. Among the first to arrive was the skipper from his quarters up forward, struggling into his coat as he ran. Pen looked on at it all, strangely detached. She felt as if she were watching the actors in the scene, including herself, from some point outside her body.

To each new arrival Riever cried: "We've got Counsell!" It was almost a scream. "There he is! Secure him! Put

him in the strong room forward of the staterooms. Have an armed guard at the door day and night. If he resists put him in irons!"

The skipper and another clapped hands on Don's shoulders.

Don said: "Take your hands off me, and I'll go with you quietly."

Surrounded by his creatures, Riever, his face swollen and flaming, walked up close to Don and all but spat on him. He had lost all control of himself. He had forgotten Pen's presence. "You grinning blackguard!" he cried. "Grin while you can! You won't be grinning when they lead you out to the chair! And I'll be there to see it!"

Pen turned away her face. She could not be angry at the little man; he was beneath it. She was sickened with disgust. As for Don, he merely drew down the corners of his lips aggravatingly, and drawled:

"Be yourself! Be yourself, Ernest! You're all wet!"

A titter was heard on the outside of the circle.

"Take him away!" Riever cried furiously.

Most of the men accompanied the skipper and his prisoner along the deck to the forward companionway. A steward or two was left hanging about the after deck, and a pretty, frightened stewardess, clutching a pink kimono about her.

"Get away! Get away—all of you!" yelled Riever waving his arms.

When they were left alone on deck Riever went to Pen where she stood on the same spot in the same position, the pistol hanging limply down. He said thickly:

"My darling! Now I know you're mine!"

A sharp little cry escaped Pen. She had overlooked this possibility. Instinctively her hands went up between them. She did not point the gun at him, but its mere presence in her hand was sufficient to bring him to a stand. She backed slowly to the rail. When she hit against it, she glanced down over her shoulder at the dark water with a curious lightening of the horror in her face.

That glance overboard was not lost on Riever. He looked at her, scowling and pulling at his lip. Lest he should hear what would be intolerable to his self-love, he made haste to furnish reasons for her conduct.

"Of course ... you're all upset!" he muttered. "It's natural after such a strain ... I understand..."

Pen was suddenly overcome by weakness. The gun clattered to the deck. She staggered to the nearest deck-chair and sank into it.

Riever called sharply: "Carter!"

The pink-clad stewardess appeared miraculously in the cabin doorway.

"Miss Broome is faint," said Riever. "Get smelling-salts!"

Pen wanted to keep the girl out on deck. "Wait!" she said weakly. "I'm not going to faint. I want nothing ... I only want to go home."

Riever bent over her. She closed her eyes to avoid seeing him. "Of course that's what you want," he murmured. "I'll take you just as quick as I can dress."

Pen did not protest, because by this time she had regained sufficient self-possession to realize that, until this man had fulfilled his promise to her, she must not rebuff him too much, though she did indeed almost faint with horror at his nearness.

As he left the deck he ordered the girl to stay with Pen. The girl came sidling towards her with an emotion in her face that she could not control. Her eyes were both hard and soft on Pen. In that look Pen saw as clearly as if it had been written on the girl that she was Riever's mistress, but at that moment the discovery caused her no feeling.

"Can I get you anything, Miss?" the girl asked in a purring tone.

"No thank you," said Pen. "You needn't wait."

She retreated to the deck saloon, where she stood hovering in the doorway, stealing glances at Pen that were diffident, wistful and sneering.

Riever came back fully dressed, and attended by various servitors. The speed-boat was brought around to the gangway ladder, and Pen handed in. She had picked up the gun and concealed it within her dress.

"That skiff belongs to one of the men in the tents," she said pointing.

A sailor was told off to row it ashore.

They landed on the old wharf, and Riever led her up the hill. To Pen's relief they were followed a hundred feet or so behind, by a body-guard. Riever had his hand under her elbow. She would not allow herself to object to that, though her flesh crawled at his touch.

"You feel better now?" he murmured.

She nodded.

"Tell me how it came about."

She had her story ready for him. She cut it as cunningly to the pattern of truth as she could. "I searched to-day in all the places I knew of, but I found no trace of him. On my way home along the road this evening I saw him returning amongst the other searchers. It seems he joined the searchers some days ago. That's why you couldn't find him."

"What devilish cunning!" cried Riever.

"It was growing dark," Pen went on. "He dropped behind the men he was with, and we had some talk. We couldn't say much there amongst all those people—I wasn't going to let *them* know, so I made an appointment with him to meet me on the beach at eleven, when I supposed everything would have quieted down. He suspected nothing."

"Oh, he thinks he's irresistible!" sneered Riever. "... It was dangerous. You should have arranged to have men concealed there."

"I wanted to deliver him up to you myself as I said I would."

"You are wonderful!" murmured Riever.

"I went armed," said Pen. "And I forced him to come with me. That's all."

Riever carried her hand to his lips. "You are a woman in a thousand!" he cried. "I never heard of such pluck!"

Pen pulled her hand away. "Please! *Please!*" she murmured. "I can't stand it! ... Not to-night!"

He eagerly snatched at the little promise she held out. "Ah, I won't press you," he said amorously. "I know how you must be feeling. Tender-hearted woman and all that. Cuts you all up to have to give up a man to justice. But believe me, he's a bad one through and through. You've done a service to all decent people. You'll soon see that yourself."

Pen sighed with relief, that he had so ready an explanation of her agitation. "There's something else I must tell

you," she went on. "As I was bringing Counsell along the beach a man interfered between us. I think it was one of the detectives. I suppose he wanted to share in the reward. Anyhow the two men fought on the beach. I let them fight it out. I helped Counsell because he was my prisoner. And he got the best of the other man and tied him up. I suppose he's lying there yet. Half way between the wharf and the lighthouse. As soon as it was over I forced Counsell to come along with me just the same as before."

Riever laughed loudly. "What a woman you are!" he cried. "You've earned that reward ten times over! Don't you worry. Nobody else shall touch a cent of it!"

That clear-eyed little familiar inside Pen whispered to her: "This is all very well, but as soon as he has time to think it over, he'll begin to see the holes in your story. You must get the money out of him to-night if you can."

But how could she bring herself to speak of it?

They lingered at the door of the big house. The body-guard was waiting off in the drive with his back discreetly turned. Riever took enormous encouragement from the fact that Pen did not try to hurry away from him.

"What are your plans?" she murmured.

"We'll weigh anchor early to-morrow," Riever said, "and steam to Annapolis where I will obtain the necessary extradition papers. Then I'll have Counsell sent North by train. Before nightfall to-morrow he'll be lodged safe in the Tombs."

"The Tombs?"

"The New York City prison."

Pen blushed crimson in the dark but doggedly forced herself to bring out the words: "But ... how about ... what you promised me..."

Riever laughed. It had an unpleasant ring, though he probably meant it good-naturedly enough. "What a funny girl you are! Anxious about your thirty pieces of silver, eh? Don't worry! I'll see you in the morning before I go."

Pen was obliged to let it go at that, though it was with a sickening anxiety.

Riever's voice thickened again. "You've quieted down now," he murmured. "You're not going to let me go like this..."

Pen's hands went up again, but he caught her roughly to him. He could not reach her face. He pressed a burning kiss on her neck. Pen tore herself away, and ran shudderingly to her room.

## CHAPTER XII

### THE *ALEXANDRA* SAILS AWAY

Next morning Pen was late, for her, in getting down-stairs, and her father was before her. He had already been out-of-doors and had heard the startling news. He was pale with excitement, and his expression presented a comical mixture of elation and outraged parental authority.

"What is this?" he cried. "Counsell is caught? And caught by you!"

"That pleases you, doesn't it?" said Pen, in a quiet way very aggravating to an excited man.

"Pleases me?" he cried. "My daughter starting out at night on such an errand! Wandering around the woods

with a gun! Pleases me!" He ended on a more human note. "You might have told me when you came in, instead of letting me learn it from strangers!"

"I was all in," said Pen simply. "I couldn't face the added excitement even of telling you."

"Um! Humph! Ha!" he snorted. "What will become of your reputation?"

"Mr. Riever didn't seemed to think it had suffered," Pen murmured slyly.

"Ha! ... Well, of course he wouldn't say so! ... I sha'n't be able to sleep quietly for thinking what *might* have happened!"

Pen saw that the indignant parent only wanted to put himself on record, and that underneath the man was delighted. She went ahead and gave him his breakfast. He ate it in a charming humor.

Afterwards she went about her household chores waiting for Riever, sick with anxiety. Suppose he didn't come? Suppose even then, the yacht was getting ready to sail? She couldn't go out to see. She simply could not humiliate her pride to the extent of going down to the wharf to look for her money.

After all Riever did come, and early, too. It still lacked a few minutes of nine. But he met Pendleton outside, who brought him in, and the two men were closeted in the front drawing-room for awhile. Pen felt by instinct that this interview boded her no good. Afterwards her father came to her in the kitchen saying:

"Mr. Riever wants to say good-by to you."

He avoided Pen's eye as he said it, and there were complacent little lines about the corners of his mouth. "Riever has given him more money!" Pen thought with sinking heart.

Pendleton did not accompany her back to the drawing-room. Riever was waiting for her, carefully dressed in his admirable, square-cut yachting suit. He was brisk, and inclined to be effusive, signs in Pen's eyes that he was secretly uneasy. But perhaps that was natural. His eyes were as devoid of expression as an animal's; she could not guess of what he was thinking; his words came merely from his lips.

"How are you?" he asked solicitously. "Ah, pale, I see! Not much sleep perhaps? Well thank God! this nasty business is about over."

Pen did not feel that this required any answer. She waited.

"I said I'd come to see you before I set sail this morning," Riever went on briskly—and then came to a somewhat lame pause.

Pen waited in an anxiety that was like a physical pain for him to produce a check-book or a bundle of notes. But he made no such move. There was an awkward silence. Finally he said as if at random:

"By the way do you know what became of Keesing's revolver? He's making a fuss about it."

"I haven't it," said Pen coolly.

"He said you took it from him," Riever said with a light laugh—but his eyes were tormented.

"He is mistaken," said Pen. "When he fell it flew out of his hand. I don't know what became of it."

"He said you carried it away in your hand."

"That was the pistol you gave me in the morning ... You saw it," she added, feeling pretty sure that Riever had been in no condition to distinguish one pistol from another.

"Why of course!" he said. "It's absurd." But there was no real conviction in his tones.



"If you'll wait a moment I'll get it for you," said Pen.

"Please don't bother," he said. "Keep it as a souvenir."

There was another silence. Pen saw that he dared not accuse her openly. The matter *had* to be threshed out to a conclusion, so she grasped her nettle firmly.

"What else did Mr. Keesing tell you?" she asked scornfully.

Riever's attempt to carry it off lightly was painful to see. "Oh, I don't take any stock in it," he said with his laugh.

"But I ought to know, shouldn't I?"

Riever laughed excessively. "Said you had no intention of giving him up until he surprised you together. Said you were just walking up and down the beach talking." His eyes were darting ugly, pained glances at her.

Pen laughed too. "In the full moonlight!" she exclaimed. She was secretly relieved. If Keesing had overheard their talk he would of course have repeated it.

"I told you there was nothing in it," said Riever.

"If I was ... friendly with him, do you think I'm the sort of person to give him up?" demanded Pen.

"Certainly not ... But Keesing said after he had recognized Counsell, there was nothing else for you to do."

"If I'd wanted to save the other man I could have shot Keesing," said Pen boldly.

Riever stared. "Well ... I believe you are capable of it," he muttered. That at least was honest.

Pen followed up her advantage quickly. "Obviously a crude attempt to get the reward for himself," she said.

"That's what I thought ... But Keesing clearly understood that there was nothing in it for him, anyway. He didn't bring the man in."

"Then it was just spite," said Pen.

"No doubt," said Riever.

Pen's heart sank. She was making no progress whatever. He would agree with everything she said, and act according to his own secret motives. She was determined to drag these out into the light.

"Well, what are you going to do about it?" she asked bluntly.

"Why, nothing!" he said with an air of surprise.

"I mean about the money," said Pen firmly.

He averted his head. "What do you want so much money for?" he muttered.

"What does anybody want money for?" said Pen. "Thousands of things!"

He came towards her eagerly. "Tell me what they are," he stuttered. "Anything ... anything money will buy! You have only to name it!"

"I can't take gifts from you," said Pen coldly. "I've earned this money, haven't I? You promised it."

"I don't go back on my promises," he muttered.

"Well then?"

"But just at the moment I haven't it by me."

Pen thought: "It's all over!" And tasted despair.

He went on more glibly: "One's money gets all tied up you know. And I've been under heavy expenses. Of course I can arrange it when I get back to town. I'll bring it to you myself. Just as soon as I can get this ugly business off my hands. It won't take long. Popular opinion demands that the man be tried speedily. And I can set certain influences at work. I fancy the trial will be brief. In six weeks you can expect to see me back again.... And under much happier circumstances I trust. I'm afraid at present you have certain doubts of me. Almost a dislike. This has been such a beastly business! When I come back my whole aim will be to remove your doubts. To show you what I really am. And what you mean to me. Thank God! time is on my side!"

Pen kept her eyes down to hide the thought she was sure must be speaking through them: "If you came back here under such circumstances I should kill you!"

Her stillness frightened him. He began to hedge. "But what am I saying? You don't have to wait for your money till I come back. It is a matter I can arrange with my bankers. You may expect a check within a week."

Pen was not deceived of course. She foresaw the silky, apologetic letter she would receive at the end of a week—without any check. She was silent.

Riever's instinct warned him against making any lovely demonstration at such a moment. "Good-by," he said.

Pen's generous, open nature imperiously demanded that she avow her true feelings, and crush him like the worm he was. It cost her a frightful, silent struggle to keep it in. She kept saying to herself mechanically: "We haven't convicted him yet. I must go on deceiving him!"

Without raising her eyes, she offered him her hand. He carried it lightly to his lips, and quickly left the room.

But how he got out, or what she herself did during the next half hour, Pen could never have told clearly. When she came back to the realization of things it was to find herself kneeling at one of the windows in her room listening to the clank of the yacht's anchor chain. The sound seemed to be striking on her bare heart. She saw the mud-hook slowly rise out of the water, and the yacht's screws set up a churning astern. The graceful vessel began to move. She came about in a wide circle and swept out of Pen's range of vision behind the trees. As she passed the lighthouse she saluted with three blasts of her melodious whistle, and the lighthouse bell tolled in answer.

Somewhere in the bowels of that vessel, in darkness perhaps, and manacled, sat the bright-haired Don, grinning derisively at misfortune. He was depending on her; keeping himself up no doubt with the assurance that she had secured the money to save him ... Pen's head dropped on her arms.

Upon the departure of the yacht, the crowd at Broome's Point quickly broke up. Slow-moving ox-carts started up the Neck road, and noisy motor-boats put off up the river and across the Bay. Before it was midday the old unbroken peace had descended on the remote estate, and all that had happened in between seemed like a dream. As of old, the fish-hawks plunged for their wriggling prey, buzzards circled high in the blue, hens clucked contentedly at the kitchen door, and the turkeys set up a sudden gobbling in the fields.

Pen could not long give herself up to despair. She must act if she wished to save her sanity. With a tormented face she went about the house in a whirl of activity. Black Aunt Maria's eyes rolled askance at her mistress. Pendleton remained down on the beach seeing the boats off. Pen suspected he was purposely keeping out of her way.

When he came in to dinner he was affecting an air of busy abstraction. When Pen addressed him he would reply, gently:

"Don't interrupt me, my dear, I have an idea just taking shape in my mind."

This was an old dodge of his, when he wished to escape something unpleasant. Pen smiled to herself without mirth, and quietly bided her time.

When he was finished eating he attempted to slide out of the room, but Pen was on the watch for that.

"One moment, father."

"Another time, my dear. I must get this down on paper before it escapes me."

Pen put herself determinedly between him and the door. "Sorry," she said. "But I have some rights as well as your ideas."

"Only an ignorant person sneers at ideas," he said loftily.

Pen refused to be drawn aside. She began mildly: "Now that this business is over, I hope there's no objection to my going away for a little while."

His eyes narrowed and hardened as a weak and stubborn man's must. "Why should you go away now?" he demanded. "The trouble is over. This is the best place to rest."

"Just the same I must go," said Pen. "Will you give me the money?"

"I'll take you for a visit to Cousin Laura Lee at Frederick," he said. "The trip will do us both good."

"I must have more of a change than that," said Pen patiently. "I need six hundred dollars."

"Preposterous!" he cried. "You know I have no such sum to fritter away!"

"I have worked for you six years," said Pen wistfully. "A hundred dollars a year does not seem much!"

"Oh, if you're going to measure your duty towards me in dollars and cents!"

"But I'm not! I..."

"That's enough. I am your father. I am the best judge of what is right for you."

Pen was too sore at heart to be very patient. "You got more money from Mr. Riever this morning," she said at a venture.

There was a significant exchange of glances, startled on his part, quietly assured on hers. He saw that it was useless to deny it.

"Well, if I did," he said with dignity, "you may be sure it wasn't a gift. I gave a fair return for it ... Anyway, that's my capital. I can't spend it."

"Did you undertake to keep me here for him?" Pen asked quietly.

By the way he puffed out his cheeks and wagged his head she saw that she had guessed somewhere near the truth. She was unspeakably saddened. Her father! What was the use?

Meanwhile he was noisy in his aggrieved protestations. "How can you say such a thing! Am I not your father? You must know that every act of mine is solely directed by a concern for your good. My life is devoted to that end."

Pen struggled on, though she was convinced of the hopelessness of it. "I grant that," she said. "Willingly! But you might be mistaken ..."

"Never!" he cried, without any notion of his absurdity.

"Well, we mustn't quarrel," said Pen. "I appeal to your affection for me. I seldom ask you for anything. I am not one of the flighty kind. You must see that I am in deadly earnest. I *must* go away! If I were kept here I should go out of my mind!"

But cupidity had for the moment overcome his natural affections—as it has a way of doing. "Pooh! you're talking like a flighty girl now," he said loftily. "Permit me to be the judge of what is best for you."

"Oh, all right," said Pen with a sudden change of tone. "Let's say no more about it."

Pendleton was a little astonished by his victory, for his case was bad. "Well, that's my own girl!" he said, approaching her full of fine, fatherly approval.

Pen cast an odd, cold glance at him and passed out into the pantry. Pendleton went up-stairs feeling acutely uncomfortable.

During the afternoon they pursued the usual routine. Pen's first act was to let Doug out of the barn. The good dog was wild with delight. Pendleton went for the mail.

When he came into the house for supper, his eyes sought Pen's face with a furtive anxiety. All was serene there, and his spirits rose mightily. In all these years Pendleton had learned little about his daughter's nature. He persisted in believing what he wished to believe. During the meal he was affable and discursive. Pen listened with a sufficient smile, and was as attentive as ever to his wants.

They spent their usual quiet evening under the dining-room lamp, Pen with her mending, Pendleton with his newspaper. An instinct of caution warned him not to read aloud any of the comment on the Counsell case. The news of the grand dénouement had not reached Baltimore in time for that morning's paper. They retired early, Pen offering her cheek for the usual good-night kiss.

As soon as the sounds of Pendleton's snores began to issue through the transom over his door, Pen came out of her room again. She was dressed in hat and suit, and carried a small valise. She also had a note addressed to Aunt Maria, giving certain directions for breakfast. As Aunt Maria could not read, Pen knew that it would be brought to Pendleton's attention early.

She slipped out of the house by the back door. Doug in his kennel whined with pleasure. She unfastened him with an admonition to silence. Doug was too experienced a dog to waste much energy in unnecessary noise. Pen walked swiftly back through the paddock, and through the stable yard gate to the road. Doug ran ahead with his tail high. It was a fair night with a pale sky, and dim stars.

She was too early. She loafed along the road. At the gate to the distant field where the sheep were pastured, she leaned her elbows on the bars waiting for the moon, while Doug pursued his canine investigations far and near. He had all the lost time of his imprisonment to make up. Finally when the silver rim appeared, Pen let down the bars and whistled for him.

"Fetch them out, sir!" she said. Doug knew his business thoroughly.

Half an hour later the huddled little flock was striking into the woods, with Pen at its heels and Doug, all intent now upon his charges. Pen paused to let them drink their fill in the little stream that flowed across the road. They plodded on through clogging sand and around mudholes that never dried up from one year's end to another. There was no regular beat to the thudding little hoofs, for those in the van were always hanging back, and those in the rear running to catch up. They passed along in little gusts of sound, like nervous fingers drumming on a window pane. Pen was choked with dust. "What will I look like in the morning?" she thought.

Little owls mourned far off, this way and that, and occasionally the bark of a fox brought Doug to a stand with raised ruff and murmured growl. Through openings in the branches, stray shafts of moonlight fell on the backs of the sheep making them look like little gray ghosts creeping along with bowed shoulders. There was a place miles deep in the woods where they passed a squatter's shack close beside the road. The nervous patter of hoofs brought a figure to the open door. In a curiously tense pose he watched them pass; transfixed; without a sound.

It was ten miles through the woods to the fork in the road where you took the right-hand-turn down to the wharf at Hungerford's Run, three miles further. Endless it seemed to Pen, the way the road twisted aimlessly first off in one direction, then back in the other. It was level for the most part except for once or twice when it precipitated them into a gully with a branch over which Pen had to jump. In spite of scurrying hoofs their net progress was slow. Dawn had broken before they came out on the open road. Pen dreading curious eyes urged them on as fast as she could.

She had one encounter. A farmer early at the plow, turned his team at the end of his furrow, just as Pen with her convoy passed in the road below. His jaw dropped; he all but rubbed his eyes at the strange spectacle of a modishly-dressed (to him) young lady covered with dust, driving a flock of sheep miles from anywhere. Pen did not know him, but he, by a process of elimination guessed who she must be. His face expressed a sort of agony of curiosity until the obvious explanation occurred to him, when it cleared.

"Driving your sheep to the steamboat?" he said.

"Yes," said Pen, blushing, and looking straight ahead.

He clambered over the fence, and slid down the bank to her side. "I just put up my clover last week," he said in friendly fashion. "Next field on the left. Drive 'em in and let 'em crop awhile. You got plenty time."

Pen thanked him. He walked beside her, glancing at her from the corners of his eyes. He opened a gate for her, and the grateful sheep scattered inside to their breakfast.

"You come far?" he ventured.

Pen nodded.

"Come through the woods at night alone!"

"I had my dog."

"Well it's more than I would have done. Why didn't you ride a hoss?"

"I'm going up on the boat," said Pen. "Had no way of getting the horse back. The dog can find his own way of course."

"Well, you're a good plucky young lady, I'll say ... You'll find a good spring down at the foot of the slope, yonder. How about some breakfast, I'll be going home to mine, directly."

"I brought it with me, thank you," said Pen, indicating the valise.

With many a backward look he returned to his horses, and Pen was free to wash at the spring, and brush her clothes.

Arriving at the dilapidated wharf a mile or so farther, she had to run a gauntlet of curious stares. Everybody wished to help her, and the sheep were quickly penned and tagged. Pen could see in the men's eyes what a storm of gossip would break loose once her back was turned, but she cared little about that.

The steamboat on her up trip was due at eight o'clock. Pen's chief anxiety was lest it should be delayed long enough to allow her father to reach Hungerford's Run on horseback. Pendleton had no right to stop her of course, and nothing he might say could shake her determination; but she shuddered at the idea of washing the family linen there on the beach before strangers.

However the *Princess Anne* arrived before her father, and the sheep were driven aboard. Pen put her arms around the good dog's neck, careless of who might witness her emotion.

"I can't take you! I can't take you!" she murmured. "Do not blame me for it!"

They had to lock Doug in the little warehouse before she could go aboard. Pen listened to him flinging himself against the door, and heard his sharp, anguished barks, feeling like a traitress.

The steamboat proceeded on her leisurely course from wharf to wharf up the bay.

## CHAPTER XIII

### IN CHAMBERS

The Criminal Court Building in New York City is a huge square block of yellow brick with an incongruous cornice and grandiose trimmings. It is of the Tammany period. Among architectural aberrations, architects give it a leading place. It was run up on the site of an old pond, and was no sooner up than it threatened to fall down again. There was a great scare at the time, but that has long ago been forgotten. The monument still stands, secure in its ugliness.

It is one of the busiest places in the city. It knows no long vacations during the heated term. Day in and day out the mills of justice grind feverishly without ever quite catching up with the grist that is offered. Judges from quieter jurisdictions up state have continually to be imported to relieve the overworked metropolitan incumbents.

Within the building there is a vast enclosed court surrounded by wide, cement-paved galleries tier above tier. Every day during court hours these galleries are thronged with what is surely the most diverse collections of humanity ever brought together under a roof; witnesses principally, or friends of the accused. Every walk of life is represented; every stratum of society. But among the countless types four are repeated over and over; wary-eyed initiates of the underworld, weeping women, shabby insinuating lawyers looking for business, and detectives with eyes as wary as the gunmen, but better fed men and full of a conscious rectitude. Dozens of little dramas are going on simultaneously.

On a certain stifling morning in mid-summer, amongst the dozens of court-rooms the interest of the building was focused in General Sessions, Part One, where the case of the People versus Counsell was being tried under Stockman, J. A murder trial. Common as they are in that building a murder trial never quite loses its zest, and this, owing to the prominence of the persons concerned, was a celebrated case. Every morning a great crowd struggled to get into the courtroom, though the evidence was not of a sensational nature. There was no woman in the case. It was a foregone conclusion too; one of those cases which had been tried out in the newspapers before being brought into court, and a verdict of guilty rendered. Nobody had a good word for the defendant except the morbid women who stormed the court-room doors, and who secured a majority of the seats inside, simply because they were more persistent than the men. These women always sympathize with the prisoner, particularly if, as in this case, he happens to be young and comely.

As a result of the furore in the newspapers many days had been taken up in the effort to secure an impartial jury. But once the taking of evidence began the proceedings moved swiftly enough. Only two days had been required by the prosecutor to present his case. Hackett, the particular star of the district-attorney's office, handled it. He had scarcely been obliged to exert himself; everything was going his way. In three days more the defendant's direct testimony was all in. Counsell was his own principal witness. He had told a straightforward story on the stand, and a ruthless cross-examination had failed to shake it. Unfortunately for him he had no witnesses to support his story. Proof of it rested with the dead man. There had been no witnesses to the final scene between them. The trial had now reached the stage of rebuttal testimony offered by the People.

When Court adjourned for the noon recess, Corveth of Defendant's counsel made his way out of the building with a heavy air of dejection. He was a young man, the same age as the prisoner, an old friend it was said, and he had full charge of Counsell's case. He had put up a strenuous fight for his friend, but not perhaps a brilliant one. He was a first-rate lawyer, but he lacked the art of certain famous pleaders who, when they have a bad case, set out to charm and dazzle judge and jury with moving if irrelevant eloquence. Corveth was in deadly earnest. He

passionately believed in his client's innocence, but he had scarcely succeeded in proving it. And he had often irritated the Bench by his dogged fight on points of law which took up time without apparently getting anywhere. Even now it was a mistake of tactics for Corveth so clearly to betray his discouragement to the inquisitive observers in the galleries.

Two hours later when he returned, the man's whole bearing had changed. Dejection had given place to an air of excitement so great that it was impossible to tell whether it was a pleasurable excitement or the reverse. His pale skin seemed to gleam with excitement; his clothing was a little disarranged; the man looked slightly stunned.

He was escorting a heavily veiled woman, a young woman judging from her figure and carriage, and they were followed by such an oddly-assorted group as you could only find walking together in that building. Witnesses obviously. It included two other women, one a flashy, pretty little thing, with hard, assured eyes, the other a domestic servant apparently. The men ranged all the way from a highly prosperous gentleman, a banker possibly, down to a couple of taxi-drivers and a farm laborer. The word went around the galleries like wildfire that there was something up in the Counsell case, and a new crowd pressed to the doors of the courtroom. It was too late to get in. Corveth left his witnesses outside where they remained guarded by a couple of young men from his office against the questions of the curious.

Within the court-room Corveth was seen to enter into an excited, whispered discussion with the defendant. Corveth was the excited one. Counsell appeared to be trying to soothe him. Their talk was interrupted by the entrance of the Judge.

When the proceedings were opened Corveth rose and in a voice that trembled oddly said: "If it please your Honor since we adjourned important new evidence has been offered to me."

The judge stared and bit his lip in irritation. There were so many cases on his calendar! Were they all to be dragged out past all reason by the lawyers! This of course was merely the grand stand play of a lawyer with a bad case. To do him justice, his Honor controlled his irritation before he spoke.

"Mr. Corveth, I trust you have taken thought of what you are saying. You have had every opportunity to present your case."

"Twelve new witnesses have just been brought to me, sir, whose existence I never suspected."

"Twelve! How could that be? You have been studying this case for weeks. In what manner were new witnesses brought to you at this late date?"

"They were brought to me by a person interested in this case, who has been conducting an investigation unknown to me."

"And you say their evidence is important?"

"Of the utmost importance, sir. It throws an entirely new light on the case."

In his irritation the overworked judge was understood to mutter: "I doubt it!"

Corveth flushed crimson, but held his tongue.

Observing the flush, his Honor went on more mildly, but still with bitterness: "Understand, Mr. Corveth, it is not your word that I doubt, but only your estimate of the importance of this evidence. A long experience on the bench has taught me that matters which appear of overwhelming importance to opposing counsel, have a way of shrinking sadly when they are brought out on the stand."

A titter went around the court-room. The gavel rapped viciously.

"Should this evidence not be admitted sir, it may put the State to the expense of a new trial."

The Assistant District Attorney was on his feet. "I object. Surely it is grossly improper for Counsel to make

such statements in the hearing of the jury."

"It is only his opinion," said the judge wearily. "It will not appear in the record." To Corveth he said: "Well, what do you want me to do?"

"To give me time to hear these persons' stories, sir. An adjournment until to-morrow morning."

The judge said nothing, but his face was set hard against it.

"Or if Mr. Hackett is willing to go on with his evidence in rebuttal, I only ask for leave to re-open my case to-morrow. I can sit up all night."

Mr. Hackett smiled rather pityingly. "With all respect to Counsel," he said, "I don't see that anything is to be gained by going on if Mr. Corveth is going to introduce an entirely new element."

"I agree with you," said the judge. He appeared to have made up his mind. "Mr. Corveth," he went on, "you realize of course that if I give you this time the District-Attorney is entitled to a similar indulgence. Where would we end? These gentlemen on the jury have already been detained from their homes and their businesses for many days. I owe them the greatest consideration. I must have some further assurance of the importance of your evidence before I can consent to any delay. You say this story has just been told you by somebody. Is he present?"

"It is a woman, your Honor. She is present."

The court-room pricked up its ears.

"Then why not put her on the stand?"

"It would be useless, your Honor. She could give little or no direct testimony as to what occurred. She has *collected* the testimony and brought me the witnesses."

"They are here, too? Then put your principal witness on the stand. I will give you as much latitude as I can in questioning him. And if anything important transpires I will grant the adjournment you ask for."

"I thank your Honor. Unfortunately, as I understand it, none of these witnesses can tell a complete story of what happened. Each one can only add a link or two to the chain. You could scarcely judge from the testimony of any one of them how important their evidence would be taken collectively."

His Honor sighed for patience, and bit his lip.

"But if I might offer a suggestion, sir...?"

"Well?"

"Could you not request the jury to retire and hear this lady's story in your chambers? You could then decide in a few minutes whether or not it warranted an adjournment."

His Honor tapped his desk reflectively with a pencil.

The Assistant-District-Attorney was protesting. "Your Honor, whatever may come of this matter, an impression is being created here highly prejudicial to the case of the people..."

Corveth interrupted him: "I should be quite willing to have Mr. Hackett present while this lady is telling her story, so that he may have the fullest opportunity to meet the evidence she has to offer."

This more than anything Corveth had said, inclined the judge to believe that he really had something up his sleeve. Moreover it was a generous offer. The judicial face thawed a little on defendant's counsel. It then turned to the jury.

"Gentlemen of the jury I will ask you to retire for a few minutes to give me the opportunity of deciding whether



this evidence is material to the case."

The jury filed out in one direction, and his honor went the other, his silken robe billowing behind him. The court-room buzzed with an excited whispering: "What do you suppose is up?"

Corveth brought the veiled woman to the Judge's room through another door. "Chambers" was simply a smallish room with a ceiling so lofty that it gave the effect of a room stood up on the wrong end. A wide flat-topped desk filled a great part of the floor space. His Honor, brought down from the eminence of his dais was revealed as a smallish man with a wise, humane face, much harassed as the result of over-work. In the little room he looked much more human.

He waved the lady to a chair at his right hand. Hackett, with a cynical expression, lounged in a chair by the window. Corveth was too nervous to sit. As the lady seated herself she threw back her veil.

"Miss Broome!" exclaimed the judge in surprise. "You have already testified in this case!" He looked reproachfully at Corveth. Corveth signed to him to wait.

"Did you not tell all you know?" Judge Stockman demanded.

Pen slowly shook her head.

"How do you reconcile that with your conscience?"

"I answered all the questions," she said softly. "Mr. Corveth could not ask me about these other matters, because he knew nothing of them."

"But you are acting in the defendant's interest, I assume. Surely his Counsel had a right to know what was going on."

"It was not from any lack of confidence in him," Pen said, with a warm glance at Corveth. "It would have been fatal to us if the least whisper of what we were doing had got about before we had complete proof. We tried our best to obtain a postponement of the trial. When that was denied it was very difficult to know what to do. Mr. Counsell decided, and I agreed with him, that we must go ahead and keep everything hidden. We did not tell Mr. Corveth because he is too honest to play a part. If he had known what we knew, our enemies would have read it in his face in the court-room. If we have acted wrongly I hope you will remember that we had a powerful and unscrupulous enemy."

His Honor did not appear much impressed, though it was not hidden that he approved of Pen's exterior. "And do you think you have complete proof now?" he asked with an indulgent smile.

"I obtained it only yesterday, sir."

"Well, tell me what you expect to prove."

Pen looked rather helpless. "Mr. Corveth said I must be brief ... There is so much to tell... I scarcely know where to begin..."

Corveth prompted her. "Tell Judge Stockman what witnesses you have brought me and what you expect to prove by each one."

Pen nodded. "The first witness will be a young woman named Blanche Paglar. She will testify that up to the day that Collis Dongan was shot she was friends with ... I mean lived with..." She hesitated, blushing.

Corveth helped her out with the legal euphemism.

"Yes, she was the common-law-wife of a young man known as Spike Talley. She will testify that Talley told her at this time that he had undertaken a job for a rich man, whose name he never told her, and that he was to get ten thousand dollars for it."

"What!" exclaimed Judge Stockman. "What sort of job?"

"Talley was what is called a gangster or a gunman," said Pen. "When they say 'a job' they mean a killing, a murder."

"Good Heavens!" exclaimed the Judge. "Do you mean to say you have had to associate with such people?"

"They were kind to me," said Pen simply.

"Go on."

"She will testify that Spike Talley's duties in connection with his 'job' necessitated his putting on dress clothes every evening and going to a certain fashionable hotel to dine. He never told her the name of the hotel, but on one occasion he brought her a menu-card with the name torn off. That card will be identified as one from the Hotel Warrington."

"Ha!" exclaimed his Honor as the connection began to show.

"Talley also told her that his 'boss' gave him a drink of whiskey every time he went to his house. He described to her how it stood on the sideboard in a handsome, square, cut-glass bottle, and how he was always invited to help himself."

"The importance of this will appear later," murmured Corveth.

Pen went on: "Blanche will testify that Spike Talley left her for the last time on the afternoon of May 27th, the day of the murder. Some days later she reported his disappearance to the police. They could find no trace of him, if indeed they ever looked. Blanche never connected his disappearance with the death of Collis Dongan, because the newspapers made out from the beginning that it was certain Mr. Counsell had committed that crime."

His Honor was now thoroughly interested in Pen's story. Even Assistant-District-Attorney Hackett had lost a good deal of his scornful air. The judge said:

"But if this Talley has disappeared can you *prove* anything?"

"You'll see, sir... The next witness is a taxi-driver who was a friend of Spike Talley's. He will testify that at this time Talley came to his garage every evening and engaged the witness to drive him up to the Hotel Warrington. I could prove by waiters in the hotel that Talley dined there every evening—they have identified his photograph, but Mr. Corveth says it will hardly be necessary, because the next witness, Mr. Slaughter, would carry more weight.

"Mr. Slaughter is a gentleman of means and position who resides at the Warrington. He will tell how he became acquainted with Talley through seeing him dine at the next table. Talley was a young man of much charm of manner. Mr. Slaughter never suspected what he was. The two became quite friendly, and on a number of occasions after dinner, Mr. Slaughter invited Talley up to his apartment which was on the same floor as Mr. Dongan's and Mr. Counsell's. Mr. Slaughter will further testify how on one occasion he discovered Talley ... what would you say ... flirting with the hotel maid on that floor, and remonstrated with him. Talley passed it off with a laugh. Talley visited him for the last time on the night of the murder.

"The next witness will be the maid, Mary Crehan. She will tell how Talley 'made up to her' as she says, and how on one occasion he took her to a moving picture theater. It appears from what she recollects of their conversation that Talley was pumping her for information as to the lay-out of Mr. Dongan's apartment, and Mr. Counsell's, and information as to the habits of the two men. But he did this so adroitly that the girl never thought of connecting him later with the shooting. She will testify how one evening after having talked with Talley in the corridor, she missed her keys. It never entered her head that the fashionably-dressed young gentleman had anything to do with it. She found them the next night in the cupboard on that floor where she was accustomed to leave them upon going off duty. The bunch consisted of half a dozen master keys which would admit her to any apartment on that floor.

"The next witness is a locksmith, an acquaintance of Talley's, who will identify the maid's keys as the same

bunch brought to him by Talley to be duplicated. He did duplicate them, and handed both sets to Talley, This was about ten days before the murder.

"The next witness is another taxi-driver who had no acquaintance with Talley, but is prepared to identify his photograph as that of a man who engaged him outside the Hotel Warrington about midnight on May 27th."

"Midnight?" interrupted Judge Stockman. "That was *after* the murder. Can't you connect this Talley directly with the deed?"

"No, sir. He was too clever ... Besides that was not my principal object. I was looking for proof against his employer."

"Oh, do you know him too?"

Pen nodded.

"Go ahead."

"This taxi-cab driver could not at first remember the address to which he had driven Talley, but he gave us the locality, and when we drove with him through the streets of that neighborhood he unhesitatingly picked out the house."

"How could he do that?"

"Well, it was a peculiar looking house; different from any other in the neighborhood, from any other in town probably. It is in Thirty-Ninth street, East of Lexington."

"Go on."

"He stalled his engine and had to get out of his car to start it. Thus he saw Talley admitted to the house, and had a glimpse of the man who admitted him. Out of a number of photographs handed him he picked out one which he is ready to swear is that of the man who admitted Talley."

"He could have got but the briefest of glances."

"But it is of a striking-looking man, your Honor."

"What next?"

Pen said slowly: "Talley was never seen alive after that."

"What!" exclaimed Judge Stockman, "you charge a second murder! ... Go on."

"For many days we could get no further," Pen said. "Finally one of Talley's friends volunteered to break into that house to look for evidence."

"But this is burglary!"

"The witness, known as Babe Riordan, is prepared to waive immunity when he goes on the stand. If a charge is laid against him he will stand his trial."

"Did he find anything in the house?"

"He found the square, cut-glass whiskey bottle on the sideboard. It had been emptied, but we took it to a chemist, our next witness, who is prepared to testify that it contained well defined traces of cyanide."

His Honor frowned. "Dubious evidence!" he said. "Even suppose a jury were inclined to believe the chemist, how would they know but that the last witness, a self-confessed burglar, remember, did not put the poison in the bottle himself?"

"There is more evidence," said Pen. "It appears that according to the law a druggist may not sell such poisons without a doctor's prescription. A search was conducted through the various drug-stores in the neighborhood, and several prescriptions for cyanide traced back. One was traced to the man who occupies that house on Thirty-Ninth street."

"The man identified by the second taxi-driver as he who admitted Talley to the house?"

"Yes, sir."

"Ah then, you're getting closer to it. Who is this man?"

Pen hesitated. "Mr. Corveth told me that his name should not be mentioned at this trial."

His Honor looked a little nonplussed. "... Er ... well perhaps not ... perhaps not! Have you more evidence against him?"

"We can show that three days before the murder he drew ten thousand dollars in cash from the bank."

"Ah, the price named by the first witness. But what good will that do you if it is your contention that he murdered his tool instead of paying him?"

"Because we can show that the day after the murder he re-deposited the amount in another bank."

"Ah! Anything else?"

"Our next task of course was to try to prove what had become of Talley's body. This took us many more days."

"You engaged detectives to help you?"

"No, sir. I hadn't money enough. But all of Spike Talley's friends helped me. They proved themselves as good detectives as professionals."

"But they are only making out their friend to be a murderer!"

"They seem not to mind that. According to their code he was simply doing his job. Instead of getting his pay for it he was murdered. They wish to avenge him by helping to convict his murderer. I might say that if it was not for me they would probably choose a more direct way of avenging him, but I have persuaded them that it would be a much more terrible punishment to bring the murderer into court."

His Honor wagged his head. "You have been keeping strange company, young lady!"

"I had no choice, sir."

"I suppose you know that these gunmen, gangsters, burglars and so on are not very credible witnesses."

"They are not my principal witnesses, sir. I rely chiefly on Mr. Slaughter, the different professional men, the servants, the second taxi-driver, all of whom are obviously disinterested."

"Where did you get so much information about what constitutes evidence and so on."

"We had legal advice, sir. Not from Mr. Corveth, but from another lawyer, who once defended Spike Talley."

"Go on."

"We had the house on Thirty-Ninth street searched from top to bottom without discovering any clues as to what became of the body. It was not until we went to Mr. ... to the rich man's country place, that we began to make progress. We learned there, that two days after the murder, that was Sunday, the owner brought a barrel up from the city in the back of his automobile. He informed his servants that it contained a new poison with which he intended to spray his fruit trees—I should explain that he is an extensive raiser of fruit, and under his supervision the barrel was

put in a little shed in one of the orchards where the spraying apparatus, the poisons and so on were kept."

"Can't you establish a connection between the barrel and the house on Thirty-Ninth street?"

"To a certain extent, yes. When we learned of the barrel some of us went back to the Thirty-Ninth street neighborhood to investigate. We have a grocer who will testify that he sold such an empty barrel to the man in question, who was particular to see that he got a perfectly fitting head to the barrel. He told the grocer he wanted to ship some china up to his country place. He carried the barrel away in his car."

"Did the grocer know the man who bought the barrel?"

"No, sir. But he can identify the man. And describe the car."

"Well, assuming that the barrel contained a body when it arrived at the country place, what became of it after that?"

"We have one of the rich man's laborers to testify to that. On the following day, Monday, this man was ordered to assist his master in one of the orchards. The day is fixed in the man's mind because it was Decoration Day and he was disappointed of getting a holiday. I should tell you that the rich man personally supervised his orchards and often worked in them himself, so that his actions on this day excited no particular remark among his servants. He ordered the laborer to gather up all the piles of twigs and branches which had been pruned in that particular orchard during the winter, and make one great pile to be burned. He pointed out a spot of waste ground at a little distance from the trees where the fire was to be made. He then went away.

"He returned to the orchard when the work was done. He then had a small can of coal oil. His laborer ventured to remonstrate with him on the danger of making so great a fire, but his master curtly replied that he knew what he was about. He sent the laborer on an errand to a distant part of the estate, saying that he would remain to watch the fire. The laborer after his rebuke, with a natural hope perhaps that the fire would get beyond his master, concealed himself behind some shrubbery at a little distance and watched.

"He saw his master go to the spraying house, bring out the barrel (he will testify that there was no other barrel of that sort in the house) and roll it down the orchard to the great heap of branches. He saw him place it in the center of the pile, pour coal oil all around, and set it afire. When the flames sprang up, the master began to look about him suspiciously, and the laborer fearing discovery, hastened away and saw no more. He told what he had seen to his mates, but it does not appear that any of them suspected that a crime had occurred. All their master's actions appeared to them so arbitrary and eccentric they never tried to explain them. As one of them said, 'You never knew what the boss was going to do next!'"

"Have you anything more?" asked the judge.

"Yes, sir. I will be the next witness. I will tell how the laborer took me to the spot where the fire had been, and how I searched it. Several weeks had passed, and the rains had leached out the ashes, but the place had not been disturbed by a rake or cultivator."

"How do you know?"

"In the center where the heat had been greatest there was nothing but washed out ashes, but all around the edge were the unconsumed ends of twigs and branches looking as if they had been arranged in an exact circle with all the charred ends pointing to the center. I searched every square inch of the spot while the laborer watched me."

"Where was the master of the place?"

"Oh, I took care to inform myself beforehand that he was not going to be there at that time."

"And you found...?"

"Some little burned lumps of bone, but it was impossible to say of what. A little lump of gold that might have been a finger ring—Talley wore such a ring, but it had melted into a shapeless lump. A piece of scorched fabric

barely recognizable as part of the brim of a man's silk hat. Finally, in a slight depression where water had gathered, part of a jawbone in which six teeth were still fairly intact."

The Judge shook his head frowning. "Scarcely conclusive! Scarcely conclusive!"

"There is one more witness, sir," said Pen. "Considerable dental work had been done on the teeth, and the fillings were still intact. One of the teeth it appeared was false, and it had been fastened to its fellows on either side in an ingenious fashion."

"Ha!"

"Talley it appeared was vain of his personal appearance, and employed a first-class dentist. The dentist is prepared to go on the stand and swear from the work on the teeth that this is a part of Talley's jaw."

"From memory?"

"No, sir. He is a modern dentist. He will offer his record in evidence, which includes diagrams of the man's mouth, showing the work he did on it from time to time."

Judge Talley forgetting judicial calm jumped up. "Ha! then you *have* a case!" he cried. "Eh, Mr. Hackett?"

"If it can be proved to the satisfaction of a jury," said the Assistant-District-Attorney sourly.

Judge Stockman paced slowly up and down. "This is extraordinary .... extraordinary!" he murmured. He came to a stand in front of Pen. "Miss Broome, has this man been in court?"

"No, sir. But his representatives are always there. I don't doubt but he receives hourly reports of the proceedings."

"I think you had better tell me the name of the man you accuse. Not with any idea of injecting it into this case, but simply that precautions may be taken against his escape. The police should be notified."

Pen looked at Corveth, who nodded.

"It is Ernest Riever," she said.

The effect on the two men was electrical. Hackett jumped to his feet, and supported himself with a hand on the back of his chair.

"Impossible!" he cried.

Judge Stockman in his amazement was staring at Pen almost clownishly. "Riever...!" he stammered. "Riever! ... Have you thought of what you are saying!"

A little flame of indignation was lighted in Pen's cheeks. "If he did it, does it make any difference who he is?"

"Certainly not! Certainly not! ... But Riever! ... We must be very sure! This would cause the greatest sensation of our time!"

"Best to proceed very slowly, sir!" said Hackett, pale with agitation.

"I have nothing to do with it!" said Judge Stockman with undisguised relief. "My duty is simply to try Counsell. The rest is up to the District-Attorney."

"No motive has been established," said Hackett.

"True! True!" The Judge turned almost accusingly to Pen. "What possible reason could Riever have had?"

Corveth answered for her. "I take it, it is not necessary to go into Riever's motives in this trial. But we are

prepared to show a motive just the same. Do you remember the Riever divorce case three years ago?"

"Dimly."

"It was a counter-suit. Mrs. Riever won. Riever's case rested principally on a letter that he produced in court. It had been written by Mrs. Riever to some unnamed man. We can show that it had been written to Counsell, and that Riever knew it had."

The judge stared. "Then your contention is that Riever had this inoffensive man Dongan killed merely so that he could get back at Counsell?"

"There is more evidence on that point besides what Miss Broome has brought out here. I don't need to point out to you how nearly Riever succeeded in his object."

"Good God!" exclaimed Judge Stockman,

"That would be something new in criminal jurisprudence," sneered Hackett.

"But not entirely unprecedented," corrected the breathless judge. "There was the famous Anstey case so often quoted when I was a young lawyer. And of more recent years the cases of the People vs. Reichardt and the People vs. Bowley ... But good God! ... Riever...!"

The little judge seemed to have been brought to a complete stand. He stared ahead of him muttering: "Ernest Riever! ... Good God! ... What a sensation will be caused...!"

Corveth said: "That is all Miss Broome had to tell you, sir."

It brought the judge to himself with a start. "To be sure! To be sure!" he said, and cleared his throat. He looked his age. "I will adjourn court until to-morrow morning. Mr. Hackett, you will get in touch with the police I suppose. If I were you, I would not take more than one man into my confidence, say Inspector Durdan of the detective bureau."

Hackett bowed in acquiescence.

"Gentlemen, let us return to the court-room."

## CHAPTER XIV

### EXTRA!

From the *New York Courier*, July 27th, 192—

At 3.40 this afternoon Ernest Riever was found dead in a house he occasionally occupied at — East 39th street, this city. He had shot himself through the head.

The sensational developments in the Counsell case during the past two days were brought to a still more sensational conclusion this afternoon when Ernest Riever was discovered to have killed himself. Ever since yesterday morning it has been an open secret around town that Riever was the unnamed millionaire so often referred to in the new evidence brought forward in Counsell's defense. It now appears that Riever has been under the surveillance of the police for three days, and this afternoon detective officers were sent to the above address to arrest him. Their ringing at the door elicited no response, and as the men who had been detailed to trail Riever insisted that he was in the house, an entrance was forced.

Mr. Riever was discovered lying in his dining-room with an automatic pistol in his hand. There was nobody else in the house. He had held the pistol under his chin pointing upward. There was smoke in the room, and the body was warm, indicating that the deed was done as the officers rang the bell. Death was instantaneous. So ends one of the strangest stories that has ever come to light in our courts.

Mr. Riever's self-inflicted death renders the acquittal of Counsell merely a matter of form. It is said that the District-Attorney will now make no effort to refute the testimony tending to show that Collis Dongan was shot by an agent acting under Riever's instructions. The jury is expected to bring in a verdict without leaving their seats.

## CHAPTER XV

### POSTSCRIPT

"Don't drive so fast Don! It makes my hair rise the way you take these curves!"

"I'll try to remember ... Lord! but it's good to have an accelerator under your big toe again! ... This lil' ole bus is about all I own, Pen!"

"You'll soon get a fresh start, now ... You're driving just as fast as ever!"

"Sorry! I feel as if that mob was still behind us. Wasn't it ghastly!"

"But they were friendly!"

"Oh, friendly! Three days ago they would just as lief have strung me up to a lamp-post. I could feel it in the court-room."

"Well, don't you suppose it was a feeling that they had been unjust to you that made them cheer so to-day when you appeared?"

"I hope so. I don't trust mobs ... Lord! when I came out and saw them massed in the street from curb to curb ... thousands! ... I could feel myself turning pea-green! I had no idea I had become so famous."

"They have been reading about nothing else for days."

"What a lot of idle people there must be!"

"I don't think it's idleness altogether. But nothing ever happens to them. They only live in the newspapers."

"A good many cars followed us out of town. When they saw which way we were heading I suppose they'll wire the news, and cheering crowds will be waiting for us..."

"Oh, Don!"

"I'll fool 'em! I'll circle around outside Philadelphia and all the big towns."

"It's horribly immoral our running off together in a car."

"Oh, what do morals matter after what we've been through together! ... We couldn't get married in New York with that mob at our heels. We can get hitched up wherever we happen to stop I suppose."

"You take it coolly!"

"I take it as a matter of course ... Shouldn't I?"



"I don't want to be rushed into it!"

"Pen! ... Have you any doubts of me?"

"No! How can you say such a thing!"

"Then what is it? ... What brings the tears to your eyes, dearest?"

"Nothing! ... Only I want to be quiet when I am married! ... I want to be quiet! ... Things are still roaring about me!"

"Would you like me to take you home first?"

"No! I don't want you to leave me!"

"Look out! You'll have us in the ditch! ... What is it, dearest? It's immoral our going away together. But you don't want to marry me yet. But I mustn't leave you either!"

"Oh, don't expect me to talk reasonably! ... I don't want to talk ... Marry me whenever you like, but don't talk about it ... I just want to be quiet ... with you!"

"Suits me! I'll bring you to quiet. I know a little place in the Virginia foothills ... Oh, my Pen! ... Look behind us!"

"Why?"

"Is there anybody in sight?"

"No!"

"I'm going to stop for a moment. Do you realize I haven't kissed you yet?"

THE END

\* \* \* \* \*

By HULBERT FOOTNER

Ramshackle House  
The Deaves Affair  
The Owl Taxi  
The Substitute Millionaire  
Thieves' Wit  
New Rivers of the North

NEW YORK:

GEORGE H. DORAN COMPANY

[The end of Ramshackle House by Footner, Hulbert]