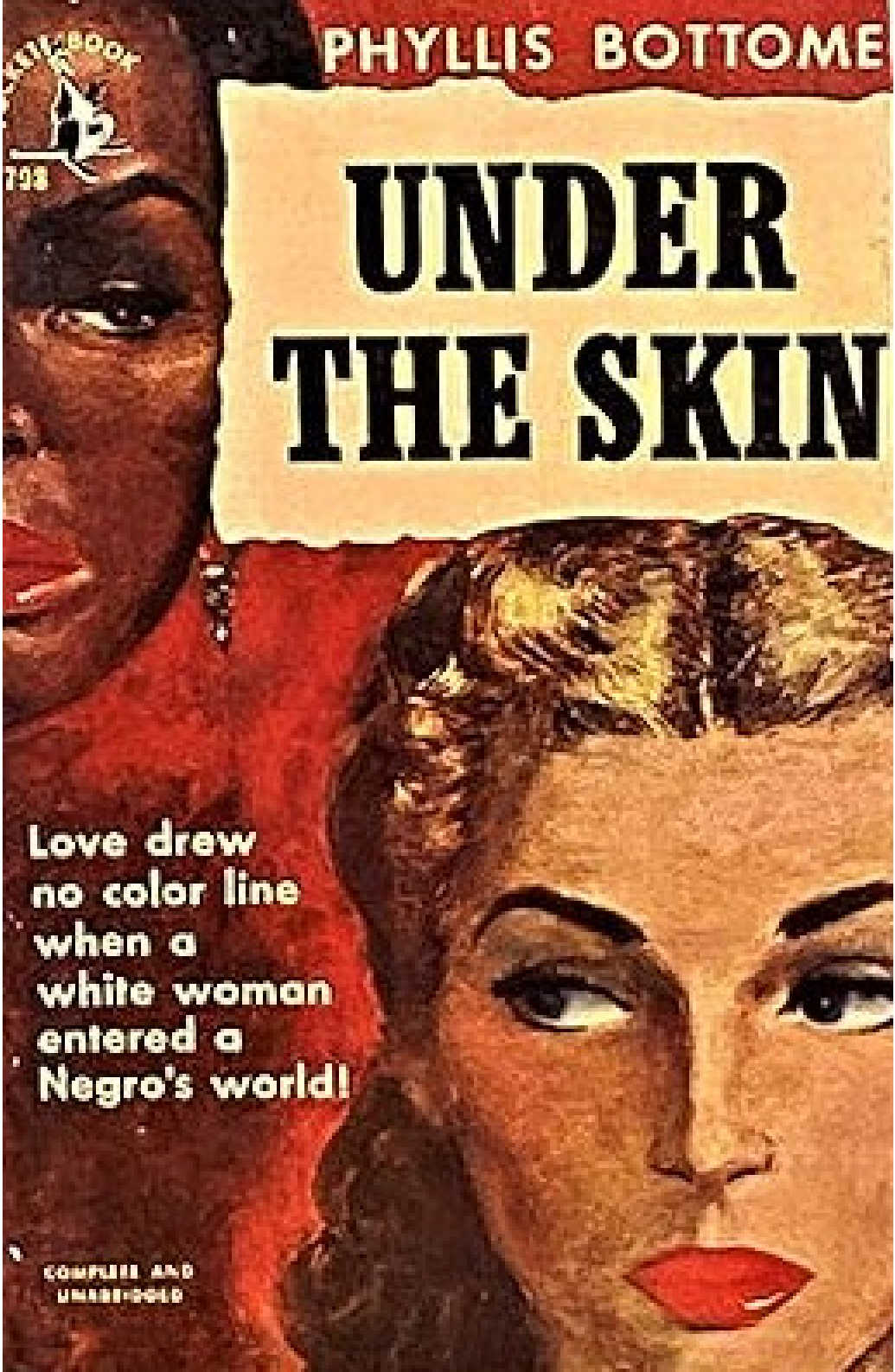
POCKET BOOK
798
PHYLLIS BOTTOME
UNDER THE SKIN
Love drew no color line when a white woman entered a Negro's world!
COMPLETE AND UNABRIDGED

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Search for a Soul

UNDER THE SKIN

A Novel by

PHYLLIS BOTTOME

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Under the Skin

CHAPTER I

Lucy Armstrong went on deck at dawn. The Chief Officer saw her, and let her see him; this was a great mark of approval on his part, for he usually remained wholly invisible to passengers except at meals. He disliked them almost as much as he disliked bananas, which were the chief freight his ship carried.

Lucy said in her polite, unobtrusive voice, "I was wondering when we should see land."

"It's there now," said Mr. Musgrave with a stiff gesture which put land into the exact spot on the ocean where he knew it should have been, "but you can't see it yet, not for another half hour."

"I was wondering," Lucy ventured, "I was wondering if you could show me where I could see it best—alone." Mr. Musgrave's eyes rested for an observant, but non-conducting moment upon Lucy's shell-pink face. The Chief Officer was deeply in love with his own wife, yet he knew that he would always remember Lucy's face. Lucy's was neither a glamorous nor a spectacular face, but once it had aroused attention, it was difficult to forget. She had the rounded brows and innocent, wondering eyes of Botticelli's Venus rising from the seas; but Lucy had none of the slightly tubercular look—wan and drooping—of Botticelli's ladies. She was instead very erect, slender and well-balanced. She took, the Chief Officer noticed, though there was a distinct swell on the sea, no particular care of herself—she had no need to take care; automatically, her trained and capable body took care of itself.

"Games—open air—discipline," the Chief Officer thought, "but not pigheaded."

Lucy didn't mind asking for things, and from the Chief Officer she got what she had asked. He found her exactly the place she wanted behind a lifeboat ready for lowering, where she could stand in a railed corner without anyone knowing she was there. Then, but not before, Lucy gave him a smile that gratified the Chief Officer to the core of his heart.

As for Lucy, she thought about Mr. Musgrave exactly as much and for as long as she thought about the railing on which, for a moment, as the ship lifted to a higher swell, she found it convenient to rest her hand. At last she was alone with the dawn, face to face with the new life she had chosen; although she was not yet quite sure why she had chosen it.

Lucy had lived for five years on duty and danger, as intemperate people live on cocktails. Not even her marriage to Michael at nineteen had altered these perpetual stimulants. They were a perfect match. Both were well born and well bred, yet an innate austerity prevented either of them from using these privileges in a self-indulgent manner. Just what Michael thought about cricket, food, the Royal Family, and how to treat those beneath you, Lucy herself thought.

Out of the three months of their spiritually uncheckered and violently changeable married life, they had had less than three weeks of consecutive living. Each of their meetings was as thrilling as the first, each of their partings as severe a cleavage as the last, except that the last was final.

Lucy always said while Michael was alive that she was sure he would come back safely from every flight. She simply hadn't a doubt in her heart. Fear would have been a kind of disloyalty to him. So that when he didn't come back it was an affront to both her heart and head. Still, Lucy continued to do her duty exactly as Michael would have expected her to do it. There is an expression, usually attributed to fear, but equally natural to grief, about people "freezing in their tracks." This is what happened to Lucy.

During the following two years Lucy's idea was that she was living in another world with Michael. She could not believe that Michael was dead; it was much simpler to behave as if she were not alive.

She was getting over an enormous, uncalled for shock, and this was the only way in which she could manage it. Young men, who were constantly thrown with her, in her daily tasks, tried to shake her out of this frozen state. They proposed marriage or its equivalent and were refused by Lucy, in a routine manner. Many of them got killed soon afterward and then Lucy felt faintly sorry, because if she had known for certain that they were going to be killed she might have accepted them.

It was two years after Michael's death before Lucy met Jerry.

One afternoon, when Lucy was at home on leave in the little flat which, after her parents were killed, she shared with her brother and sister, her brother rang her up and said he couldn't make his leave, and she must take his skipper, a perfectly good type, out on a beano. Jerry didn't know a girl in London and was not the kind that likes picking up tarts. Lucy had better take him to a dinner dance or a theater, or both, if possible. Jim and Jerry were on an M.T.B. together in the Dover Patrol so such a request was not an obligation that could be evaded. Lucy had to consent, and she had hardly finished brushing her hair into a glossy mist, when the door bell buzzed, and Jerry came in.

He was all that Michael wasn't, aggressively masculine, without neatness or suppression. He made no attempt to control his voice or his large clumsy movements. Lucy couldn't think who his people were, though she very soon found out that they were nobodies. Jerry had only been to a grammar school, yet he didn't seem to think it mattered, and was full of jokes. He had red hair and no manners, and Lucy felt she might have been his mother, and was glad she wasn't. She was not quite twenty-two, and Jerry was only nineteen.

He fell violently in love with Lucy and told her so before they had been half an hour together. He would not take no for an answer and Lucy had to box his ears before they went out to dinner. Still they did go out to dinner, and after it Jerry suggested returning to the flat in order to spend the night with her.

"You might just as well ask a stone to spend the night with you," Lucy told him furiously. "I don't feel anything at all for you, and I don't *want* to feel anything. Even if you were all the things I like, instead of all the things I dislike, I wouldn't take the risk of getting to care—like that—for anyone again!"

"Risk!" Jerry had exclaimed. "What a hideous little funk you are! Why, you've only had your heart broken *once*, haven't you? How many times do you suppose I risk my perfectly good young life—heart and all? Every few minutes, my girl. With luck I may hang on a few weeks more. And you're so stingy that you don't care to give me the only thing I want before I hop off into Eternity—or isn't it? I do call you a rotten little cad—though one wouldn't think it to look at you!"

That was how it began. Jerry went on rapping straight at Lucy's heart, he wouldn't let her muffle up her injury or keep it still. Like a modern surgeon,

he made her heart move rather than rest. He showed her neither sympathy nor admiration, but when he gazed into her eyes, his own bright with laughter, Lucy saw—at the bottom of Jerry's laughter his noisy, passionate, kindly, unfettered spirit—and knew that she had found at least a friend.

"I can't—I won't! I won't—I can't!" Lucy kept on saying for days and weeks; but to go on refusing Jerry was like shutting a good dog out in the snow. Lucy's R.A.F. camp was near Dover, and she began to listen constantly to what was happening to the M.T.B.'s on the Dover Patrol.

One evening, in the rain, under an empty lamppost, they suddenly agreed to get married, but it never happened. A torpedo struck Jerry's little ship and flames and smoke were the last Lucy heard of Jerry. Victory and Peace came soon afterward, and Lucy was summoned to Buckingham Palace to be decorated.

She went alone, except for her two ghosts, one on each side of her. Michael's ghost was reverent and deeply satisfied; Jerry's ghost was merry and derisive with a heart full of good fellowship, touched with embarrassment. Lucy hardly felt as if she had a self to be decorated, but ghosts or no ghosts, she behaved as she had been trained to behave and did not disgrace herself. This was the peak of Lucy's career in the country which had given her so much and required so much of her. It was as if Buckingham Palace had killed even her ghosts.

The Caribbean Sea grew slowly more and more visible. Darkness slipped away from it, so that Lucy soon became aware of the golden carpet of seaweed beneath the ship's keel, a stiff and intricate design, broken sometimes into patches through which a transparency of blue satin sea spread downward, into an unseen world.

Above her the darkness separated itself from an immense canopy of colorless light, where clouds thicker and brighter than any clouds Lucy had ever seen banked themselves out of the sky into a city of immeasurable palaces.

These cloud castles did not scrape the sky, they seemed to lean out of it, as if space balanced them on invisible wings.

An opening of apricot light appeared behind them, breaking into a flood of golden foam over the colorless air. She could hear noises behind her of the awakening ship—rough voices and sudden orders; water ran over the decks and figures passed behind the boat on mysterious errands, carrying ropes and buckets. Soon Robert Anstruther would start looking for her.

What a pity, Lucy thought, that more men were not like the Chief Officer, married to satisfying wives with whom they were constantly in love, and yet capable of being useful to unattended women passengers who wished to remain unattended!

Not that Lucy did not like Robert Anstruther. She had played deck tennis with him, and danced with him. She had been his partner at bridge, and thought what a good thing it was that bridge requires four people to play it.

Lucy had been sweet to Robert Anstruther because, as the Chief Officer had noticed, she was not pigheaded and liked being sweet. Still decks on freighters, Lucy thought, are too small. Anyone can sit on the chair next to you, and talk and talk, and get to know you better and better whether you like it or not.

There had been a sort of understanding that Lucy and Robert were to spend the last few hours of the voyage on deck together and it was this sort of understanding that Lucy most wished to avoid.

She hadn't come to the West Indies to be proposed to by Bob Anstruther, or else she might just as well have stayed at home and been proposed to by other men exactly like him.

Whatever she had accepted this strange new job for, it wasn't marriage.

Her mind slipped back to the time before she had any lovers, when she was a happy unconscious little girl protected by satisfactory parents.

Once every year, just before Christmas, an invisible but highly prized uncle from the island the ship was now approaching had sent Lucy's family a mysterious and splendid packing case, containing strangely succulent oranges, grapefruit, ginger and guava jelly, and indefinite quantities of celestial barley sugar. It was a Christmas box which seemed to spring into a bleak winter, out of high feathery blue waves and scarlet blossoms.

What her mother had told her about the Island, and what actually she had felt between her teeth, it was now difficult to differentiate, but the feeling was there still. This strange, nostalgic memory was really why Lucy had accepted her new job.

Lucy was glad no one was near her who would tell her anything about the Island, because looking across the golden sea she could invent whatever life she liked out of the deep purple shadows, which she now knew were land.

The ship moved swiftly on through the scented light, till Lucy saw quite clearly a queer zigzag of land like a broken picture puzzle, lying flat upon the turquoise sea.

The built-up, unsubstantiated life of twenty-eight years, with all its staggering griefs, fell away from Lucy. She wasn't Lucy any more; she was a part of a wild, strange universe of light and air. There were no walls to prevent the intense intrusion of golden light or check the scent of unseen flowers.

Lucy did not remember that the Island, once wrenched from Spaniards, and cajoled from buccaneers, belonged to the British Empire. She did not remind herself of her new duties stretching before her on a track which she must meticulously follow. She simply stood hidden behind the lifeboat, with the sun blazing down upon her, and the high, spineless foam breaking against the edge of the land, without a definite thought in her mind, but with all her heart roused to know itself alive. She was alone and free.

Something, after all, belonged to her separately from other human beings, something quite different from lovers and honors and duties, something which was flowing through her without her having made any effort of her own. The air lifted her carefully brushed hair and tossed it carelessly to and fro. Lucy did not even push it back into place. She forgot it had a place.

She was part of the air that pushed against her. She was part of the waves that she saw, feathery and white, rise high out of the smooth turquoise floor and lose themselves in the golden air.

A cold-eyed bird flew close to her with a searching glance. It was as if the bird said, "You and I are both alive and that is all that counts."

"I think you had better come out of there now." The Chief Officer's voice sounded over her shoulder. "That guy Anstruther will have it you've fallen overboard, and the passport officers are in the dining saloon."

CHAPTER II

Robert Anstruther looked down at Lucy in a most formidable manner. He was six feet two, and had gray eyes which glittered when he was angry. His smooth black hair fitted his well-shaped head like a cap. His features were impressively good, except his mouth, which was a little loose and careless, as if he had not made up his mind what to do about life and thought it didn't matter.

Lucy had made him very angry, for Bob felt that he ought to have what he wanted and he was always outraged when he did not get it.

A crowd surged around them, some of whom Lucy was afraid would hear what Robert was going to say.

"Where the hell have you been?" Robert demanded savagely. "I've had twins about you—thought you'd jumped overboard. I've been round and round this bloody deck till my head swims—I sent a steward to your cabin half a dozen times and even had the Captain out on the mat. Now the place is mucked up with passport people and baggage, let alone the whole ship's crowd! It's quite useless trying to talk to you." Lucy hoped that it *was* useless. She lifted eyes that carried an expression associated with innocence to Bob's angry glare.

"I've been on deck all the time," she murmured, so low that he had to bend his head at least a foot in order to hear her.

"Even her hair smells sweet," he thought in the midst of his anger. Lucy's eyes were deep blue, like a rain-washed hyacinth; they shone up at him between a fringe of dark lashes with disarming gentleness.

"Behind a boat," Lucy explained. "It seemed such a good place. I hoped you'd understand. I somehow just wanted to see the Island alone for the first time. I thought you might turn up, or not—but I didn't want anyone else to —to break in."

Robert's anger evaporated. He reminded himself of Lucy's dead husband and worse still of the fellow who had been lost in the drink a few days before their marriage. No doubt these ghosts had haunted Lucy. She'd have to learn to swallow them as Bob himself meant to swallow them, for this was the girl he intended to marry, ghosts or no ghosts.

"Anyhow, where's your luggage?" he asked abruptly, "I'll see you through the customs. My parents will be along somewhere—I'd like you to meet them. Got your landing card ready, and your passport?"

Lucy nodded. She always had the right papers ready, and needed none of the help which she so often received. She wanted Bob to keep away from Everslade until she had had time to learn a little more about her new world, but she was definitely glad that he lived on the same island. He belonged to her old world. He had spent the last few years juggling with death in the Bomber Command.

Those who had belonged to this juggler's world seldom spoke of it to each other, but when they were together they imperceptibly relaxed the inner strain of hiding what they knew. With civilians they were forced to live anonymously, since those who had not broken through the thin crust of the civilized world into chaos knew nothing about the sickness of fear or the bottomless relief of escape. If you tried to tell them of your war experiences they would think you a coward or a hero. They did not know that fear could be as natural as your morning tea, only very much colder. They had no idea that in danger what you did was automatic, and nothing to make a fuss about, unless you didn't do it.

Lucy knew what Bob felt for her and she was fully conscious of the strong tie between them; she would be sorry if she had to give up Bob and the easy fun they might have had together, in order to escape from his love; but she was quite certain that she would escape from it.

The sun poured down upon the docks. The golden city of dreams had suddenly become a noisy slum.

Slender little dark boys venturesomely dived for pennies into translucent water between the ship's side and the dock. There wasn't much room for them, but they came up somehow, while anxious passengers, incredulous of their agility, shouted to them not to try. Natives in long narrow caïques hung around the ship like flies, holding up pitiful rubbish which even they could hardly have expected anyone to buy.

Finally the little boats with their dubious contents were waved off by the crew, and the gangplank fixed. The passengers moved slowly down onto the dazzling strip of dock, to be seized upon by welcoming friends or acrobatic black porters.

Bob caught the shoulder of a man whom he instinctively knew would be the best porter, and soon had Lucy standing in a vast shed exactly in front of

the letter "A" before an accommodating black official, who seemed sure in advance that Lucy would have nothing to declare.

A small brilliant butterfly of a woman, who might have been any age, precipitated herself upon Bob.

"Bob!" she cried. "My Bob! How big! How absurd! How *lovely* to have you home again!"

Bob held her in his hands as carefully as if she were a butterfly and embraced her tenderly.

"My mother," he said to Lucy with laughing pride, "isn't she small and sweet? Where's Dad?"

"Oh, no doubt he's being useful in his own proper way!" his mother replied a little scornfully. "I believe there's a barrier or something that he's the other side of, but I just ducked under a policeman's arm. Do we take this nice girl, whom you haven't introduced me to, home with us—there's plenty of room in the car?"

"Her name's Lucy," Bob explained, "Lucy Armstrong, the new headmistress of Everslade, but we can't take her with us this time—she's got to be handed over to the King's House people, who said they'd have her met, and then we'll trot along."

"No!" his mother cried with a little squeak of incredulity and delight. "No, she can't be! It's impossible! But how heavenly—what a scream! How cross they'll all be! She's so young! Never you mind, Lucy, if the old cats on the committee tear you limb from limb you come to me, and I'll fight the lot of them for you. Here's Mabel Gosse coming along now, looking as if she expected outriders to clear the way for her. That's because Sybil Moreton sent her to meet you—Tommy's got the measles."

Mabel Gosse was obviously searching for someone whom it was important she should meet, but her eyes ran over Lucy with complete unconcern.

She stopped to shake hands warmly with Bob and to congratulate his mother upon his homecoming.

"I don't suppose," she said, "that headmistresses of girls' schools are much in your line, Bob, but since you have crossed with her, you must at least know her by sight, and I've *got* to find Mrs. Armstrong. Sybil Moreton has sent me to take her over—Tommy's got the measles—and I don't see anyone on the dock who looks as if she could be her."

"Well, don't go on looking for her," Bob said genially, "here she is, and she happens to be exactly my line. *This* is Lucy Armstrong, and she'll think 'Tommy's got the measles' is a code, because of course she hasn't the least idea who anyone at King's House is. Over to you, Mabel." And he pushed Lucy slightly by the arm toward Mrs. Gosse, who drew back as suddenly as if she had been stung by a nettle.

"It's not a joke?" she asked uncertainly, and then, recovering her poise, shook hands warmly with Lucy.

"Lady Moreton," she told her, "is terribly sorry—you've heard from her, haven't you, before leaving England? She particularly wanted you to stay at King's House for the night before going on into the mountains to your school, but most unfortunately her little boy has just developed measles, and Dr. Lemon says she mustn't put you up, or even see you, so as I am a member of your committee, she has asked me to act for her—and I *do* hope you'll come. . . ."

Mabel Gosse suddenly stopped speaking. It was more than a pause in speech, it was a pause in the flow of something friendly and warm, which had encircled the whole group. The friendliness, the ease of hospitality withdrew like a wave, as if a law of its being had forced it back into the deep, yet nothing had happened, only a tall, well-dressed woman, slightly swinging on her high heels, had stopped in front of Lucy. She had liquid, dark brown eyes, thick black eyebrows, and very carefully reddened lips. She smiled ingratiatingly at Lucy and said in a slightly singsong voice, "Is this Mrs. Armstrong?"

Mabel Gosse said afterward that it was one of the worst moments of her life.

There was nothing to be done about it but to introduce Lucy to Elvira Loring.

Quite apart from the fact that nobody had expected—far less wanted—Elvira to be there, Lucy looked like a new girl arriving at the school welcomed by a kind headmistress, instead of like a dignified headmistress being introduced to one of her own staff.

Besides, they all knew that Mabel was in the very act of inviting Lucy to go home with her, instead of to King's House. Mabel was to tactfully explain to Lucy the intricate problems of Everslade, and how best to deal with them, and here was its chief problem—Elvira Loring—cutting in! Elvira would now carry this poor ignorant girl up the mountain, giving her

her own particular slant as to the situation—in the way that was most favorable to herself.

Mabel Gosse had never liked Elvira Loring, and now she positively hated her.

If she took them both home to lunch, which was what Sybil Moreton would expect of her, Mr. Gosse might easily make a scene. He was more than race conscious—he was race rabid, and had sworn that no matter what King's House might choose to do, he at least would never have a colored person eat at his table. Elvira was very slightly, but unmistakably to the Island, a colored person.

Judy Anstruther grinned wickedly. She enjoyed the situation because, although she was Mabel's devoted friend, she was also her social rival. She actually knew the people at King's House more intimately than Mabel did, and had she been a member of the school committee, the question of offering Lucy hospitality would have devolved on her. Bob kept a poker face; all he cared about was to see that Lucy's innocence did not put her at a disadvantage.

Elvira Loring explained that she'd brought a car to take Lucy straight back to the school; it seemed that she too had heard that Tommy had the measles.

Mrs. Gosse, under the mocking eyes of her rival, thought out a compromise.

"But you'll lunch first," she said, turning rather markedly to Lucy, "with me at the St. George's Hotel. There's plenty of time for you to reach Everslade by nightfall afterward."

Lucy's eyes passed from Mabel's and rested upon Elvira's.

"Thank you very much indeed. We *could* do that, couldn't we?" she asked Elvira. It was clear that Lucy wasn't going to accept any form of entertainment that excluded Elvira. There hadn't been any way of getting out of it before, Mabel Gosse told herself, but if there had been, Lucy Armstrong had gently but firmly closed it.

"Of course you'll *both* come," Mabel said as graciously as she could manage.

Judy and Bob, having maliciously watched her defeat, vanished in a cloud of warmhearted farewells and prospective meetings.

But why, Lucy asked herself, should there have been that mysterious pause and the obviously truncated invitation on Elvira's appearance?

It was a question she continued to ask herself while she sat at a beautifully decorated table overlooking a lawn as green and smooth as a billiard cloth, beyond which the sea dazzled into colorless light against the hard blueness of the sky.

Mabel Gosse ordered a careful lunch. She was a skilled hostess and could hold her own against almost any social odds. But a prejudice no mere skill could evade poisoned the charm of Lucy's first lunch in the tropics. Orange-headed canary birds weaved their mystic patterns in and out of a flowering bush a few yards from her seat. Electric fans cooled the hot scented air. Strange fruits and exquisite tropical flowers were spread before her, and yet Lucy felt uncomfortably that *something* was wrong.

Their hostess, however hard she tried, appeared a little preoccupied and vague. It was war to the knife between her and Elvira, because Mabel meant to get hold of Lucy alone if it were only for five minutes, and Elvira meant that she should not get hold of Lucy even for five minutes, but Elvira's knife never showed, while Mabel could not always hide the edge of hers. She kept hoping that somebody in the vast, well-filled dining room might turn up, on whom she could dump Elvira.

There were of course plenty of people whom she knew, but if she had signaled to any of them to join her table, they would inevitably have talked to Lucy and left Elvira to her. Slowly but surely Lucy realized that Tommy's having had the measles had upset a particularly precarious apple cart. Elvira alone enjoyed the occasion. She looked her best. She was lunching with one of the Island's most famous hostesses and on the other side of her was an honored guest whom everybody in the room distinctly wished to meet.

Smoothly the whole drive of Elvira's powerful will moved toward its goal. She intended to make it impossible for Lucy to be parted from her until they left for Everslade; and she succeeded.

At two o'clock, in a swirl of heat and dust amidst polite but cool farewells, the hotel porter skillfully cleared a way for their small car in the stream of cars driving up and driving off, from the Hotel. Elvira, Lucy saw with relief, was a good driver. She not only knew how to drive her own car, but she had an uncanny power of divining the idiocies or willful knaveries of other drivers. Elvira was foolproof; nor did she expect anyone else to drive quite as well as she did.

CHAPTER III

The little car jerked in an inspired fashion through the rickety, disheveled streets. Irresponsible scavengers spilled from pavement to roadway, skulking on the fringe of a prosperity they could never share.

Was this the life, Lucy asked herself, that went on behind the rim of shining foam and graceful coconut palms presented to her so invitingly from the ship, so far behind her already that it was hard to remember she had ever been on her?

Was this island wavering toward bankruptcy a civilization coming to birth, or a civilization crumbling into decay? Whose responsibility was it? Whose interests were guiding it?

Clouds of slow-moving dust enveloped the traffic. Motor lorries looked terrifyingly close, holding the middle of the road with greedy determination. Donkeys carrying human freight, as well as baskets full of fruit and vegetables, held their own against chance.

At incalculable intervals an antediluvian tram punctuated the crowded streets with bloodthirsty shrieks and groans, moving on rails that obstructed every form of vehicle except their own.

Suddenly the ramshackle houses and the ancient tram-way stopped simultaneously. The road became shadowed by green trees. Larger houses stood back from greener gardens.

Poinsettias, like bands of brigands, crowded to the edge of the road with their spectacular javelins ready for any fray. Shrouds of bougainvillaeas, orange, magenta, or bright crimson, flung themselves over huge trees as if they wanted to smother them.

The traffic died into an interminable stream of natives from the hills, carrying bundles on their heads with effortless ease. Their bright, unchanging eyes stared straight in front of them. They moved as if their bodies could never have enough of light and tranquillity. What did their dark and shining eyes absorb? A girl spat in the direction of the car, before the dust caught her. Young men shouted derisive jokes, and children with obviously malevolent intent flung sticks and stones in their direction.

Only old people greeted the two women in the car with courtesy, as if they still lived in an unjostling past, where there was both time and inclination for friendliness.

"Oughtn't they to have paths for themselves," Lucy asked, "and not just be hustled into the gutter? We nearly killed that old woman."

"I didn't *quite*," Elvira objected, "and I did slow up for her. She should have seen us coming, but they're utterly irresponsible, these natives, as you'll find out for yourself when you've been here longer. They're ignorant and careless, let alone hostile. Hardly one out of every four goes to school, and when they do go, what are they taught that helps to make them decent human beings? It's simply awful at Everslade trying to get hold of suitable servants. The intelligent girls are too bored to stay there, and you have to pay even the stupid ones impossibly high wages. They're terribly immoral too, unless they're sickeningly religious—and even then you can't be sure—a look or a touch sets them off. They're as inflammable as matchwood. It's one of our worst problems. Why, actually our own schoolgirls have had to help with the housework! The girls in the annex, of course, don't mind what they do, but as I've often told Whiteleaf Ho Sung, their mothers and fathers don't pay us to have their daughters act as domestic servants."

"The annex," Lucy asked in a puzzled voice, "is the annex different from the school?"

"That's where they put the delicate girls," Elvira explained, "most of them come to school as well, but it's all most awkward. No doubt you'll hear the committee's version of it sooner or later, but I don't see why you shouldn't hear my version now. After all, I've been in charge of the school for two years since Miss Dawson resigned, but the worst of living on this island is, hardly anything *can* run on its own, or as a separate institution—either the Government, or the new Constitution, or else economic reasons mix everything up. Everslade ought to be either a school or a convalescent home, it shouldn't be both. And if it has to be one, at least it shouldn't be a Hydra-headed monster under dual control.

"Now we come to the foothills, and I am taking you rather a rougher and longer way so that you can see our greatest waterfall. Do you see the river through the logwood trees? We're close to it now."

There was so little sound that Lucy could hear the rustle and splash of the waterfall long before she saw it. The dust track wound its way among lichen-painted rocks, under strange, light-encircled trees. It was no longer

oppressively hot, though the sun bathed every leaf and dust particle in deep, warm gold.

At a bend in the path the trees fell apart, and Lucy found herself looking up at a cliff of falling water.

Straight as a pencil, from bank to bank, plunged the luminous chaos of the falls. Rainbows hung above it precariously resting on the flying foam. Below the cataract were clear golden brown pools in which shoals of small transparent fish, with the sheen of moonlight on their bodies, swept to and fro, while brightly speckled trout, alone and cautious, glided from leaf shadow to leaf shadow, or hung poised under rocks as if they were themselves shadows in the bright water.

On the opposite bank dense undergrowth closed a green door to whatever lay beyond it.

Far enough away from the falls, so that they could hear each other speak, Elvira laid out their tea on a rock, under the shade of a gigantic silk-cotton tree.

"There's such a lot I want to tell you," Elvira said, "that I don't know where to begin. What do you want to know most?"

Lucy hesitated. She wanted to know everything, but she was not sure that asking questions was the best way of finding out, and what she most wanted to know was what kind of a person Elvira herself was.

"I'm not quite sure," Lucy said at last. "But I *should* like to know what sort of bird that is with the aquiline beak that makes a sound like a lost child and looks like a cross between a parrot and a crow."

"That's a Savannah blackbird," replied Elvira a little impatiently, because she hadn't brought Lucy to this remote spot in order to discuss birds. "I meant about the school. I couldn't really tell you anything at lunch because of Mabel Gosse, and she couldn't either because of me, not that she knows much to tell, but I suppose they sent her to explain something!"

"Well then," Lucy said consideringly, thinking as she ate what a particularly nice and dainty tea Elvira had prepared for her, "before we even get to the school, I should like to know why Mrs. Gosse asked us to lunch at the hotel instead of her own home. I always thought planters were so hospitable, and she didn't say that any of *her* children had the measles."

"So you noticed that, did you?" Elvira said. Her eyes flickered away from Lucy's toward the waterfall. She sat very still, almost as if she were

frozen against the rock. If Lucy had noticed that, Elvira thought, she might notice anything, and she had begun to hope that Lucy would only notice what she wanted her to notice.

"Don't you really know why?" she murmured at last. "She took you to the hotel instead of to her home—where no doubt she had intended to take you—because she had to ask me as well as you—and I'm colored."

"Oh!" Lucy exclaimed with a little gasp of horror. "But why—if you are—should it make the slightest difference?"

Elvira was pleased at Lucy's horror. If Lucy had a heart as well as an intelligence, Elvira might find it easier to control both Lucy and the situation.

"It makes *all* the difference on the Island," Elvira said with tragic intensity. "For one thing it's the reason they brought you over. You see, I couldn't be a real headmistress unless the children were all black. I could only be a sort of deputy, and they found that wasn't quite enough."

"I'm sorry," Lucy said quickly, "they brought me over for any such reason. I wouldn't have come if I'd known. I think they ought to have told me."

"No doubt Lady Moreton meant to tell you herself—it was her idea to get you over—and she'd have told you," Elvira explained, "in such a way that you couldn't have objected. She'd have explained Whiteleaf Ho Sung too, but you can't, however tactful you are, or really kind, as I believe she is, explain away everything.

"Whiteleaf has control of the annex and I have control of the school, but she's a teacher in the school and is under me in a sense, and yet many of my girls live in her annex and there she is given complete authority over them. Once they're under her roof, to all intents and purposes I lose them. Philip Calgary always supports her against me. It isn't as if I could possibly approve of her influence, either. She and Philip Calgary are both mixed up with the Ransoms and they're as Red as Red can be—all of them—while I am passionately pro-British, Anglo-Catholic, and Conservative. Yet it's Whiteleaf that on the whole the committee backs instead of me. If it wasn't so cruel it would be funny, because the British always take the side of the people on these islands who want to get rid of them! Take Philip Calgary for instance. Practically everybody accepts him, just because the Calgarys were well off and gave him an English education.

"I dare say you don't know yet, but in the slave days there was a law against slaves marrying anybody, black or white. Yet white men often lived here all their lives and wanted to found permanent homes, and there weren't nearly enough white women to go round. So they quite often had their slave girls educated, freed them and made permanent homes with them, and naturally left their land and money to their children.

"Philip Calgary belonged to one of these old half-planter, half-freed-Negro families, and though he's far darker than I am, he gets accepted by the British just because of his family. If that's not disgusting snobbery, I don't know what is. But as a matter of fact, there's hardly a planter's family that's been on the Island for over a hundred years that hasn't colored blood in it, only of course they won't admit it."

Lucy was silent. She felt the bitter pain behind Elvira's vehemence and her own griefs had made her strangely vulnerable to pain. Yet she could never feel very sure of facts presented to her with such vehemence. There might, she felt, be something behind the vehemence as well as behind the facts.

"What has Philip Calgary to do with the school?" Lucy asked finally.

"To do with it?" Elvira asked her incredulously. "Haven't they even told you that? Still it's just like them really. I suppose they took it for granted you wouldn't notice him, except officially. He's our doctor—the only one at a possible distance, though he happens to be the best on the Island as well, so in that sense we're lucky. I don't suppose Philip Calgary would be so important to the school if the annex weren't run by Whiteleaf Ho Sung. He's been her lover for years. Oh, it's all quite respectable on the surface! They're tremendously careful and don't meet at the annex except before third people. In fact they always behave in public as if they were only just introduced. But the whole Island knows that they spend all their off time together.

"The committee pretend not to believe it, because they haven't a responsible matron to take her place. But no doubt it's the reason they didn't put her in charge of the school as well—instead of me. They hadn't quite got the face to leave everything to her. Besides, either the Bishop or the Admiral —let alone the old ladies—would have objected! It's a fact that (except the Bishop, who doesn't like her going to the MacTaggerts' mission on account of their being Presbyterians, and Miss Parr, who's very loyal to the school—and as far as that goes, to me) all the rest of the committee—and King's House into the bargain!—make a pet of Whiteleaf Ho Sung, and everything

she says is gospel to them. Personally I've no use for Asiatics. But you'll soon see for yourself."

"It sounds quite incredible," Lucy said slowly, picking her way carefully between the confidences she had received and her own reactions to them. "I don't mean that I don't believe you, but it's so odd that any such situation could have been allowed to exist. For how long has it actually gone on?"

"For two years," Elvira said bitterly. "Believe me it's true, and a thing can't be too bad to be true—not on this island."

"I almost wish you hadn't told me," Lucy said more slowly still, "and that I didn't know anything. You see, what they must want me for is to make the school work, in spite of this very awkward and difficult problem. I've been asked, I should think, to take over from you simply because I'm an outsider and not involved in the personal relationships which must have made it all so upsetting for you. There's something, however, I should like to know, if you don't mind telling me. Were you at all intimate with either of them before the situation arose?"

Elvira dropped her eyes before the candor of Lucy's. Lucy could control her expression because she never had to conceal anything. Her secrets, if she had any, were comfortably innocent. Elvira's were not.

"In a sense," Elvira agreed grudgingly, "we were once friends. I knew Philip Calgary years before I met Whiteleaf, for instance, we were in more or less the same set, and I actually worked in Miss Parr's school with Whiteleaf for several months before we started at Everslade. I didn't dislike her then, but she isn't easy to know; it's when you *do* know her that you dislike her."

"There *are* people like that," Lucy agreed. "It doesn't matter, of course, but it does, I think, make a situation a good deal worse if one's been a real friend before—and then becomes an enemy.

"I'm sorry—I'm horribly sorry, Miss Loring, that I have had to replace you. But I have got to warn you that my sympathy with you can't alter my behavior. I must be fair to the others. I must meet Miss Ho Sung as if you hadn't told me anything against her. You can't be friendly in any special sense, just because you're sorry, can you? And you certainly can't show dislike to a person who has given you no grounds for it."

Elvira's eyes ran over Lucy's face; her own were veiled by an expression which Lucy could not read. Perhaps it was resentment at having given so

much confidence for so stingy a return. Perhaps there was even a hint of derision in it.

Lucy could not be sure, but she felt unable to show more confidence in Elvira than she had grounds for.

Whiteleaf Ho Sung was an unknown quantity. Philip Calgary, Lucy dismissed entirely from her mind. He was not part of the school and his relationship to Whiteleaf Ho Sung—if indeed it existed—was not Lucy's business. But Elvira and her problems could not be put aside. The hostility between the two principal teachers in the school *was* Lucy's business. It must be inimical both to the school and the annex.

"You'll have to find out for yourself," Elvira said after a silence. "All I know is that I'm glad I've met you *first*. You see—until I saw you—how could I believe you'd be—even fair to me? Now I know you will be. And I should like you to know, Mrs. Armstrong, that I'll do my best to work loyally under you. Don't think I mind too much about you being put over my head either. For I've had a horrible time by myself, with them both against me."

"Well, you'll not be by yourself now," Lucy said, stirred beyond precaution, "and I'll be intensely grateful if you do feel that we can work together."

Elvira's eyes swam in tears, and Lucy, though she believed that she was not emotional herself, could not help being deeply touched by Elvira's emotion. She did not dream that what Elvira was saying to herself was, "She must be at least ten years younger than I am."

CHAPTER IV

The road beyond the waterfall climbed up the mountainside, and with every twist and turn the Island became larger and more mysterious.

Cruel red mounds of erosion scarred the mountainside, but as if to give them succor, groups of trees still cast their tropical luxuriance above their battered surface. Trees with scarlet and orange chalices, pimento trees with shining leaves, mango trees rich in smooth green foliage, bread trees with leaves like the spread fingers of a hand, bananas with their long loose shrouds, and high in the blue air, the stately feathers of the coconut trees, filled the flowering landscape. Strange, musical cries from unknown birds pierced the silence.

Talk between the two women became impossible; the uneven surface of the road and its blind corners would have silenced the most reckless motorist, but it seemed to Lucy that without speech the confidence between them deepened.

All that Elvira had told her sank into Lucy's consciousness with the vividness and insecurity of a dream.

The day withdrew without darkness. The clear light that remained had a hushed quality, as if it were receding before the approach of something more formidable than itself.

Under the mountain ridge a sudden eyelid of land stretched before them, upon which a large low house, covered with creepers, confronted the end of the road.

"There isn't anything else up here *but* Everslade," Elvira said, stopping the car.

Across a stretch of rough green lawn poured a stream of dark children of all ages and sizes. A wave of sheer terror swept Lucy. She longed to turn the car and dash down the hillside, across the plain, and into the first ship she could find. How could she ever reach or understand these strange children, with their masklike faces? What lay behind their queer, fluid presences? Even their voices had a shriller, more excitable sound than those of white children. Why were they so frightening—or was it because they themselves

were afraid? They stood in groups beside the big gateway, their eyes snapping with curiosity and excitement.

Elvira slipped out of the car, and with a mere wave of her narrow hand swept the children to one side.

"Later, my dears, later," she cried. "Poor Mrs. Armstrong is tired and wants her tea!"

Elvira led Lucy through a mist of children across the darkening terrace, on to a wide veranda set with chairs and tables.

"This is our staff room," Elvira explained, "where we have our social functions and entertain all our visitors—whenever we have visitors. But you will have a special office room to yourself, of course."

Elvira made another welcoming gesture with her narrow hands. The children had melted away, and Elvira and Lucy stood alone on the great veranda surrounding the creepered house. A brilliant ruby ring gleamed on one of Elvira's fingers, and her nails were lacquered the same blood red. It suddenly occurred to Lucy that she didn't like Elvira Loring's hands.

The staff came out on to the veranda, as if by a signal. Miss Penelope Lestrange came first. She was by far the oldest woman in the house, a dainty, withered, intensely shy old lady, who had never been able to like other human beings unless they could understand Bach. A new headmistress had a certain importance for Miss Lestrange, because she might prove to be obstructive, or even to like jazz.

"Much too young," she thought with disappointment, as her eyes took in Lucy's lithe young figure, "but probably not very important. Elvira will see to that. I should think things would go on much as usual. After all, she might be worse."

Miss Lestrange put her clawlike hand into Lucy's with something approaching cordiality, though she withdrew it again as soon afterward as possible. Behind her were the two Miss Myers. Rebecca was very sallow, with marked features and a delicate air. She was in reality extremely tough, but in order to appear to have a ladylike appetite in public she ate rapaciously between meals. Highly strung, intelligent, and without a natural vent for her strong emotions, she gazed hard at the new headmistress, and having already made up her mind to dislike Lucy, felt hatred flare up in her heart with unexpected ease.

Naomi was more delicate than her sister, less strongly marked as to feature, and while equally intelligent, she was considerably more

emotionally stable. She did not dislike Lucy on sight. She reserved her judgment and smiled cordially. If she could not go on as she began, at least she would begin well, she told herself.

There was a pause before the door of the inner room opened, the light clicked on, and revealed a small, beautifully neat Chinese lady.

Miss Whiteleaf Ho Sung came out onto the veranda very slowly. She had a charming smile which exposed her small, even white teeth. Her pale, primrose-colored skin was smooth as satin. She had features that were, Lucy thought, probably exactly the right ones for a Chinese face. Her liquid, almond-shaped eyes gleamed as if with pleasure. It was impossible to guess how old or how young she was, but it would have been a mistake to suppose that anything that took place escaped her. The hand she held out to Lucy was minute, but its pressure was firm.

Behind her came a tray of iced drinks, brought in by a tall, upright Negress. After introducing Miss Whiteleaf Ho Sung to Lucy, "This is Adassa," Elvira said affectionately. Adassa set down the tea tray with careful skill, and then gazed with avid eyes at Lucy, taking her in from head to foot. It was as if her glance ate what it rested on. Only when she had finished looking at Lucy did Adassa smile.

"Miss Nancy Peck," Elvira said a moment later, and in walked a plump, pleasant-looking young woman, as dark as chocolate, with shining eyes and teeth, and a suppleness of movement which seemed to go with the alertness of her amused black eyes.

"Miss Peck," Elvira explained, "is our P.T. exponent. We all look to her as the man of the household—when the electricity fuses, or a window won't shut, Nancy immediately sets things going again."

Miss Peck continued to smile, but her smile was directed solely to Lucy. Her eyes seemed to skirt Elvira, as if she were not there. They talked of Lucy's voyage, English food rations, and of how difficult it was to get the newest books or the best films on the Island.

Miss Lestrange wanted to know if Myra Hess played as well as she had played before the war, or whether organizing concerts in the blitz hadn't spoiled her touch. Lucy said that people thought it hadn't. Naomi Myers bemoaned the degradation of German music.

"But it belongs to them," Lucy objected. "I can't help thinking that the creative taste for music *will* return to the German people if only they can get rid of wanting to win wars."

"Wagner and Liszt," Miss Lestrange said sternly, "not to mention Strauss and the trivial light music of Austria, vitiated the German taste. Nor do I think Beethoven and Mendelssohn wholly guiltless."

"But perhaps," Miss Ho Sung said in a slightly shrill, but not unpleasant voice, "people *need* defeat and suffering in order to produce art."

Miss Peck looked uncomfortable at the idea of suffering being brought into general conversation, and Miss Lestrange, who had looked at Lucy as if she liked her, now looked away from her as if she didn't. After tea was over Elvira offered to take Lucy straight to her room.

"I'm sure you're tired to death," she said, "bumping over our impossible roads. We have supper at seven. The girls can quite well wait till then to meet you."

A silence spread over the veranda and seemed to reach into the gathering darkness. The teachers sat as if congealed on their chairs; the trade wind rattled the large, dry leaves of the almond trees till they clashed together like castanets in the hands of an unseen dancer.

Lucy, although she wanted nothing so much as to be alone in her room, felt that Elvira was disposing of her rather too easily. She was putting Lucy into her place, and there, once put, Lucy would remain. Elvira intended to treat Lucy with the utmost tact and generosity. Whatever glory there was in being outwardly the headmistress of Everslade, Elvira would see that Lucy got, but the power would remain in those long, narrow hands, already extended to guide Lucy out of the room.

Lucy suddenly realized that this was one of those disagreeable moments when pleasing and being pleased must go by the board. She smiled her sweetest smile, but she said with unmistakable firmness, "Oh, no thanks! I'm not at all tired. Will you summon the girls together *now*, and I will speak to them first, before I go up to my room. I don't think I ought to keep them waiting any longer."

There was again a strange, long silence. A green lizard, fond of silences, etched upon the wall, suddenly darted down across the veranda floor and out into the garden, where it found a point of vantage upon an almond tree.

It hardly mattered from there how much noise human beings made. But even the lizard might have noticed how long it was before anybody broke that particular silence.

"Oh, of course," Elvira agreed at last, "but the only thing is that this is their free time. I am not quite sure where all the girls are. It might be

difficult to bring them together at a moment's notice—unexpectedly." There was a definite pressure in her voice and eyes, rather than in the words she spoke.

"Let us count on their curiosity," Lucy suggested, "and perhaps you have a bell."

"Yes indeed, we have a bell," Miss Ho Sung told Lucy with swift incisiveness, "and sound carries very far upon the hillside."

"It shall be rung at once!" Elvira cried delightedly. She couldn't have said anything else, Lucy reflected, but she needn't have said it, unless she meant it, with delight.

In ten minutes a hundred girls sat before Lucy, their eyes popping out of their heads. Most of them were dark. But among the African faces there were a few spectacular white ones. A heavy-looking girl, half Chinese and half African, stared at Lucy, her mouth open, her brows meeting in a concentrated frown. It was a powerful, heavy, ugly face, and Lucy felt a little afraid of it.

There were half a dozen very dark faces with delicate chiseled features and straight black hair. Perhaps Indian, Lucy thought, or perhaps from far back, Spanish blood had mingled with African, and had produced these delicate Aryan features.

All the children's eyes were glued on Lucy like flies to fly paper. Here was not only their new headmistress, but amazingly, their new headmistress looked like a princess out of a fairy tale, dainty and small, pink and white, with bright hair and dark blue eyes. They all knew instinctively that Lucy wore very smart clothes. Her voice was clear and she spoke slowly, so that even the youngest child could understand what she said.

Lucy told them she was a stranger to their Island, and she did not know its ways. She hoped that they would show her as much as they could, and explain what she didn't understand. She told them that what she thought of their Island and how she got on depended entirely upon them. It was an appeal from one human being to the generosity of another, and as she spoke Lucy could see their eyes change from the mere hardness of curiosity to the welcome of hostesses.

She went on to tell them that though she was a stranger, she had not come to them quite empty-handed. She came from another island—an old, rich, friendly island, full of knowledge; and she had brought them some of that knowledge.

If they wanted what she had to give them they could have it, and if they wanted to give her what they had on their Island, she would be glad to take it. Then Lucy smiled at them, and stopped. She had said exactly what she meant to say, and it had not taken her five minutes to say it. The applause was warm and eager, led by Elvira.

Lucy stepped down from the little platform, and going to each girl in turn, shook hands with her and asked her name. Probably, she thought, she wouldn't be able to remember them all the first time, but the touch of each small hand placed in her own, and the glance of the dark friendly eyes, took away from Lucy once and for all the fear of the children's strangeness.

After all, she told herself, if a West Indian child was to come into a crowd of white faces, like so many snow flakes, blanched and cold, how queer and frightened that child might well feel! These children, surrounding her, brimming with curiosity and unspent life, weren't queer, they were just like all other children.

"*My* children," Lucy said to herself, fiercely, and she was conscious of fresh life surging through her, sweeping out of her heart the deadness of her lost lovers.

Elvira gently touched her arm. "Here," she said, "are the oldest girls, who have just come in. I am so afraid they've missed your lovely speech. They were too far away to hear the bell."

Lucy turned, feeling somehow defeated, to meet the hard, unsmiling stare of a tall English girl.

"This," Elvira said, "is Margorie Fielding, our head girl, in whom we all have very special confidence."

Lucy saw her mistake in Margorie Fielding's unsmiling eyes, and still more plainly in the eyes of the girls who stood behind her. All these elder girls shook hands stiffly with Lucy, and none of them smiled. Lucy felt her own smile fix itself on her lips like a grimace. She was confronting enemies. These girls had not wanted Lucy to come. They did not like her now she had come. They were the head girls of the school, and probably had more influence over the children than the teachers themselves. Lucy saw that they meant to make her work a failure.

CHAPTER V

When Lucy woke she found the Island flaunting an uninterrupted beauty, entirely unconcerned with man. The golden air was shot with songs of birds and blown clean by the dawn wind. The mountain dropped from the wide lawn's edge in terraces, through deep ravines, filled with fruit- and blossom-bearing trees into the feathery green plain. Beyond the plain the sea stretched like a thin silver frame. No other dwelling place was visible. A mocking bird with slate-blue wings rocketed its swift body across Lucy's balcony, shouting an urgent, unintelligible warning.

A dark man in blue cotton, with a huge umbrella-shaped hat and practically no nose, sauntered soundlessly across the terrace, drawing a thin, reluctant cow after him. The sun in its golden density blotted the figures out as if the light had swallowed them. Through a barrier of flowering trees Lucy caught sight of the red roof of the annex.

All teachers find unknown pupils formidable, but Lucy knew that she must face more than this general ordeal. There was enmity in the sleeping household, and part of this enmity was directed toward herself. She was unaware how far this hostility extended, or what were its real reasons. The whole mentality of these island children was as strange to her as the liquid, urgent calls of the brilliant birds darting beneath her balcony.

She dressed quickly, trying to feel important and capable, and resolving not to telephone Bob in order to slip back into the old atmosphere where there were no unknown factors and where she could immediately grasp how to settle problems. She decided to see all her staff separately in her office before she faced the school.

Lucy's first visitor was Miss Lestrange. Miss Lestrange came into the pleasant shaded little office opening out on to the sweet-scented lawn, as if there were a disagreeable smell to be avoided, and indeed to Miss Lestrange, practically every human contact *was* a disagreeable smell. The only thing she could enjoy was the beauty of classical sounds. When she was not actively engaged in studying or producing these, she found it endurable to sit on a hard bench out of the sight of other human beings, nibbling a dry biscuit and reading a weekly journal which expressed disapproval of all that was going on without offering any constructive alternative. Throughout her long life Miss Lestrange had been shaken by no devastating emotions. She

had once in her youth greatly admired a labor leader, to whom she had never spoken, and she clung to her mother's memory with adoration and remorse, though they had never got on well together during her mother's lifetime. St. Anthony might well have envied Miss Lestrange her immunity from all tempting visions. She accepted the ten commandments with undeviating persistency, in spite of the fact that she regarded the existence of a deity as highly problematical.

Miss Lestrange had seen quite enough of Lucy the night before to resent having to talk to her about anything so sacred as her work, for she rightly guessed that the new headmistress was not a trained musician. Lucy began their interview by saying that she had never heard before an Amen so beautifully sung after a grace, without accompaniment.

Miss Lestrange felt a slight inclination to unbend, but she corrected it. She reminded herself that people who began a conversation with a compliment were very seldom sincere.

"What do you think," Lucy asked her, "of these island children's capacity for music? They seemed, I thought last night, to have lovely voices. Do you think they can be cultivated into real musical talent?"

"Real musical talent is extremely rare," Miss Lestrange replied in a repressive voice. "Forcibly deported Africans have lived on this island for three hundred years, and are its main inhabitants. They have no language of their own, and as far as I know, have only produced one tolerable song —'Linstead Market.' Songs usually devolve from natural speech and self-chosen customs; these people have had none. No doubt the Island owes this particular song to the only free activity that as a slave people the Africans were permitted to enjoy. The slave owners discovered that it was cheaper to let their slaves grow their own vegetables; and as they grew more than they needed for themselves, they were allowed to go once a week to Linstead Market to sell the rest. After the Saturday market it was too late for many of them to find their way home, so they used to spend the night very uncomfortably and, no doubt, very immorally, upon the hillside, often having been unable to sell anything before returning home. That is where and how this song was composed. I am not particularly fond of Negro spirituals, still I think we must admit they are a form of music, and I should describe 'Linstead Market' as of that nature."

"I thought last night," Lucy ventured, "when I heard the children singing, that their voices sounded freer and richer than ours."

"All children enjoy making a noise," Miss Lestrange answered dryly. "No doubt these girls have fewer inhibitions than white children. They are, I find, as intelligent on the whole, though perhaps that is not saying very much. I try to teach them that music is an exact science, not a mere emotional display. Girls can seldom refrain from a desire to show off. Boys sing with much greater purity of tone, but this may very likely be due to the fact that they seldom care greatly for music and have sufficient vent for showing off in their sport life."

Lucy could not help smiling at the way in which Miss Lestrange uttered the word "sport" as if an inherent obscenity were attached to it. Miss Lestrange let the corner of her mouth twitch to meet Lucy's smile. She was even beginning to enjoy the conversation.

"And instrumental music," Lucy asked. "Do they learn that with you as well?"

"I teach them to torture the piano in the usual way," Miss Lestrange grimly admitted, "and I have, I hope, succeeded in proving to them that the hard pedal down will not prevent my hearing false notes. Two girls are learning the violin. Their parents insist upon it, and the results are extremely painful. Fortunately the music room is at some distance from the rest of the house. That mixed Chinese and African girl has some musical talent. She plays the flute. I myself play the cello, and we occasionally try some orchestral music. I can't say it is at all satisfactory, but we have very little time for practice. What time we might use Miss Loring takes in order to teach the girls what I believe is known as 'crooning.' This they enjoy very much, as they never have to go anywhere near the center of a note." There was the faint hint of a grudge in Miss Lestrange's last remark which Lucy felt for the moment it was wiser to sidetrack though she determined later on to find out its source.

"What do you think crooning comes from?" she asked instead. "We used to croon a lot in the Services."

"Did you?" Miss Lestrange answered, blinking rapidly and fixing her eyes afterward on the tips of her rather shabby, blunt-toed shoes. "Well, I always supposed crooning came from cats. The Puritan instinct was, no doubt, indirectly responsible for a period of repression, now over, and yowling is the symptom of the extreme to which, I believe, it swung. Crooning is, of course, sound, but I don't quite see why it should be connected with music. An electric drill is sound, but we are not yet obliged to listen to it on the radio."

"Oh," said Lucy. "Well, I must admit I hadn't thought of crooning like that. You see, with us, in the Services, in canteens and camps and lonely huts, it was such an anodyne. Perhaps repression of some sort *was* behind it. We were most of us deprived during the war of our natural life."

Lucy stopped, for she saw that Miss Lestrange had ceased to be interested. She did not want to hear what people felt about natural life. Lucy quickly changed the subject.

"I didn't know Miss Loring taught music," she said after a pause.

"No," Miss Lestrange replied, moving her feet under her chair, as if even the indulgence of having them to look at was too great a concession to emotion. "Not music, I think, but she gives the elder girls several hours a week for this particular indulgence. Miss Loring, you will find, is an active and brilliant mistress. She assists all of us in carrying out our duties."

Lucy shot a quick inquiring glance at Miss Lestrange, but the face confronting her remained rigidly and completely inexpressive.

Miss Rebecca Myers followed Miss Lestrange. She explained that she taught the younger girls their main subjects, but what she managed most to convey to Lucy was that she belonged heart and soul to Miss Loring. All her sentences were indications of the loyal desire which seeped through them: that Miss Loring, not Lucy, should be seated in a room sacred to her presence. The flowers on Lucy's desk should have been offered up to another deity. Her duties and her bread and butter kept Rebecca upon the edge of the hard chair she had chosen, while she directed her resentful eyes to the figure she didn't want to see. Certainly she would give Lucy all the information that she wanted. She was there to be asked questions and to answer them, but she wasn't there to enjoy herself or to contribute to Lucy's enjoyment. Protest moved in her restless fingers, and sounded in every tone of her dry, husky voice. She taught more children more subjects than any other teacher, and Lucy thought what she would teach them most was that they would be better off without Lucy and with Elvira Loring.

"But after all," Lucy thought to herself, "it's not surprising that she's loyal to anyone so nice as Elvira."

Rebecca Myers eyed Lucy's clothes with particular displeasure. She was herself one of those young women whose garments never seem their own. Everything they wear enters into a conspiracy to betray them. If they possess slips, they show beneath their skirts, if stockings, they wrinkle. If shoes, their laces come, and remain, unfastened. Their lipstick strays from their lips; their face powder stands well away from any portion of their faces it

was meant to cover, and makes a floury background for noses redder than they need be. All these misadventures had occurred to Rebecca simultaneously this morning, and though Lucy felt sorry for her, she thought she should have cleaned her spectacles. When Lucy's questions stopped Rebecca swallowed nervously, got up to go, and then sat down again, as if an irresistible pressure rested upon her shoulders.

"I'm sure," she said breathlessly, "that it's not your fault, and I dare say I oughtn't to speak of it. We know you were sent here, and we shall all do our best to help you as Miss Loring has told us. We quite understand the position because Miss Loring has explained it over and over again, but if you only knew how well we got on here, with Miss Loring as our head! She *knows* us so well you see, and she knows just what we *can* and *can't* expect from the girls. I thought I must just tell you this because she would never let you know herself, and it can't but make a difference, can it? And then your being so much younger than Miss Loring—than *all* of us, if it comes to that. I don't mean to be rude, but I've had it on my mind to tell you what my feeling is, once and for all!"

Rebecca took her handkerchief, which she had been twisting in her hands as if it were the neck of something she wanted to wring, and used it to wipe the rest of her lipstick onto her chin.

"And then, of course," she added, while Lucy still remained silent, "there's Whiteleaf Ho Sung. She hasn't any business to keep our girls at the annex as long as she does, or to interfere in what Elvira thinks best for them. You can't think how Miss Loring has suffered! She was *made* to suffer. But there are people here who wouldn't *stand* it if Elvira were made to suffer any more."

"I don't know why anyone here *should* be made to suffer," Lucy said gently. "I am sure Miss Loring is a peculiarly gifted, intelligent woman, and I am delighted to have her as my chief colleague. You know, our kind of work goes much better when we each tackle our special tasks in our own way and don't bother about who comes first. I don't believe people can teach to order, and as long as the children like their lessons enough to learn them you may be very sure I shan't have to interfere with anybody. As for Miss Ho Sung, we shall have to work out together what the rules for the annex ought to be, and no doubt Miss Loring will help us."

She paused. Rebecca got up again and went as far as the door. There she turned back and looked at Lucy with increased aggressiveness, as if the feel of the door handle helped her.

"My sister Naomi," she observed belligerently, "doesn't agree with me at all."

"Well," Lucy said, smiling in as friendly a manner as she could, "I often don't agree with my sister either." But this, she saw from Rebecca's vehement headshake, wasn't at all what she was meant to say. Before she could think of anything wiser Miss Nancy Peck came through the veranda window and reminded Lucy that she was the P.T. mistress.

Miss Peck was shining with health. The whites of her eyes were dazzlingly clear, and her teeth matched them. Her smile was full of vitality and friendliness. She sat down in a chair near Lucy, but she didn't look as if she were used to sitting down. Her every movement came from limbs that were in perpetual training for motion. Miss Peck wasn't in a hurry. She was simply easy, and whatever effort had been required of her she would have been equally easy in her fulfillment of it. She looked as neat and spruce as if she had taken her short white skirt and open shirt straight from the ironing board, although she had worn them for several strenuous hours.

"I hope you'll like our island—and us," she said in a rich contralto voice. It was exactly what Lucy wanted to hear somebody say. Miss Peck talked for ten minutes about her work, and at the end of that time Lucy felt strangely brisker than she had felt at the beginning of it. Nancy Peck had mentioned neither the annex nor Miss Loring. Nancy Peck, Lucy thought, would treat almost any problem as if it were a rubber ball capable of being bounced in any direction, and if it were necessary to catch such a ball, at however difficult an angle it was presented, Nancy's large, well-proportioned hands would close over the flying missile with imperturbable accuracy.

Miss Whiteleaf Ho Sung was the last of Lucy's visitors. She slipped into Lucy's room with the smoothness of water rounding a curve, and smiled at Lucy with enchanting grace; with just such grace, however, she might have smiled at her executioner. Whiteleaf Ho Sung could have been cut up into fragments without a single piece being discovered that was not composed of controlled courtesy.

Lucy felt very young and inexperienced under Miss Ho Sung's cool polished eyes. The strong small hands resting motionlessly in Miss Ho Sung's lap seemed capable of lifting anything.

"I hope," she said, "that you have slept well on our beautiful island and that the dawn brought you its freshest thoughts. We hope very much that

when you have inspected what is nearer home you will visit the annex. We shall be very pleased to welcome you."

"Thank you," Lucy said, flushing a little. "The dawn did bring me thoughts, but I am afraid, although the Island is beautiful, there are many problems left unsolved."

Miss Ho Sung's smile deepened. "We have a saying in China," she observed, "'Life is a procession of problems, but only human beings are their own problems.' You have been a very short time on this Island, and you will find that there is a great deal of time in which to solve our problems."

"How long have you been here?" Lucy asked her.

"Nearly eight years," Miss Ho Sung replied, "and before that for three years in America. I wished to learn to think in English as well as in Chinese."

"I'm afraid," Lucy murmured hesitantly, "that I do not know anything about your two subjects, mathematics and physics."

"You do not need to know them, since you do not teach them," Miss Ho Sung said pleasantly. "Your own subjects, we are aware, you have thoroughly mastered."

There was a pause between them. A ray of sunlight escaped the Venetian blinds and played upon the immaculate neatness of Miss Ho Sung's simple white dress. It was cut on severe lines and fitted her like a sheath. Her feet were very small and her legs slim and delicately formed. She wore spotless white suède sandals, and no stockings.

"Do you have time enough for your classes?" Lucy asked at last, "and are they arranged in the way that suits you best?"

Miss Ho Sung smiled again. "If you will excuse my saying so," she said, "your questions are both kind and wise. I should indeed be glad of half an hour extra every day for my backward girls. I find it discouraging for girls to feel backward. If I had them by themselves away from the intelligent ones, I think I could lessen this discouragement."

"We must certainly try to arrange that," Lucy said eagerly. "I think it sounds a splendid plan. Every child should have a chance to learn all she can."

"Yes," Miss Ho Sung said in her shrill, clear voice. "But I find sometimes that good plans are not easy to carry out. Even nature does not give full chances to every child, and there are many human beings in

authority who are more stingy than nature." There was another pause. Miss Ho Sung seemed to consider pauses in conversation as natural as speech. Her ease was so static that it almost frightened Lucy. It was as if Miss Ho Sung could communicate with stones, the outsides of books, or the ray of light across her dress, just as easily and perhaps more profitably than with Lucy herself.

"Do you—do you like West Indian people?" Lucy ventured at last.

"Do I like fish?" Miss Ho Sung replied laughingly, spreading her little fingers out as if they were fins and she was trying them for the first time in a pool, "or dogs or birds, or Englishmen? Yes, some, others not—that is the way I like West Indians. But I like very much that you call them West Indians. They do not like to be called Negroes, or even Africans, though they came from Africa, since *as* Africans they were used as slaves."

"But they can't *remember* being slaves," Lucy replied a little impatiently. "It's over a hundred years since they were all freed."

"Yes, in 1838," Miss Ho Sung said softly, "and even now what are they freed for? To be destitute? To be uneducated? To be sick? They have so little of their own on their Island—these dark ones—only what belongs to other people. No language, no tradition, no religion—even as a rule, though they cultivate them, no bananas! All the rich island produce goes away on ships! The people themselves carry onto the ships the best fruits of their Island and watch them go! I sometimes wonder what is in their hearts that *is* their own. The tongue perhaps still has its old twist for forgotten words. These people have had to learn always from the speech of others—other men's habits too have been forced upon them, but never other men's chances. Forgive me, but Anglo-Saxons do not often think of either Asiatics or Africans very thoroughly."

Lucy frowned. She had grown up on an island, and in a tradition of patriotic snobbery. She felt warmly and kindly toward those whom she believed to be her inferiors. She wanted to do right by them, more scrupulously and with greater effort than if she had thought them her equals. Michael would have expected it of her and Lucy expected it of herself. Slavery, of course, was terrible, but she felt that the British Empire had led the world in abolishing slavery, and should have full credit for its generosity. Lucy thought Miss Ho Sung might well have overlooked those two hundred years when England profited by her use of slavery.

"No," Miss Ho Sung went on with smiling firmness in spite of Lucy's frown. "Very few of your fellow countrymen think of other people

scientifically. They think we are funny or ugly or dirty. They do not think of us as similar human beings who have, by chance, come under other influences, geographical or historical, or perhaps religious. Nor perhaps do you sufficiently regard what we think of you in return. Take the United States, for instance. To us, lipstick and lynching seem a superficial type of civilization, or take the British—Asiatics cannot forget the Amritsar massacre, or that terrible lane where human beings, innocent and honorable human beings, were forced to crawl on all fours like dogs! To an Asiatic, such names as Jallinanwala Bagh prepared the way for Guernica and the Belsen camps. It is not only the Nazis who behave like Nazis, is it? I do not wish to sound political, Mrs. Armstrong, yet if you intend to understand this Island—and I see with admiration that you really wish to understand it—then you must understand the feelings of its people."

Lucy hesitated. She didn't want to remind Miss Ho Sung of Kipling, but after all, these were backward people who had to be controlled by more civilized ones, and the British *were* more civilized than Africans. She could explain all this better to Miss Ho Sung later on when she had looked up the facts. Meanwhile she said in rather a pained voice, "I always thought we got on so well with the Chinese."

Miss Ho Sung regarded Lucy with the same unwavering, courteous smile. "Yes, indeed," she said cordially. "But better still with the Japanese, we thought, while we were fighting single-handed against them, without the Burma Road, and at some disadvantage, since after the last war you gave the Japanese as prizes for their bloodless control of the Pacific all those islands which were our points of vantage or which could be turned against us. Also, in China we did not care much for the rights of extraterritoriality, nor that Hong Kong should remain a part of that mysterious entity, the British Empire. These were, to us, painful idiosyncrasies on the part of our foreign guests."

Miss Ho Sung laughed gaily, as if the subjects of their conversation were a series of nice little jokes. Lucy found herself laughing with her, but she didn't agree with Miss Ho Sung of course; she thought Miss Ho Sung must be a Red.

Lucy reminded herself of her own position and said decisively, after a friendly little pause, "I rather think education and politics had better be kept apart."

"Do you?" said Miss Ho Sung. "Then you disagree with the Athenians, who thought every child must be either a politician or an idiot?"

“Athens was a smaller and simpler world,” Lucy pointed out with smiling firmness. Miss Ho Sung did not answer Lucy except with a little gesture of farewell, a charming gesture, as if she were presenting Lucy with something rather than taking it away.

CHAPTER VI

At the classroom door Lucy met Elvira. Elvira's hands were outstretched, holding a freshly picked spray of gardenias, touched with dew.

"These will look beautiful on your shoulder," Elvira murmured, "it is not often that you find five perfect blossoms on a stem."

Lucy submitted to Elvira's decorating hands. The firm velvety white petals gave up an intense possessive fragrance.

Elvira smiled down at Lucy with a smile like the Mona Lisa's, as if she had a secret, a serene and genial secret which she was willing to impart.

"Yes, I'm afraid," Lucy whispered, answering the hint of a question in Elvira's eyes.

"But not *too* afraid," Elvira said, her smile deepening. "That in your case wouldn't be necessary. There—now you look perfect—go in and triumph."

The door closed softly behind Lucy as she stood alone, facing the school.

The old drawing room of Everslade ran the length of the house. The high French windows shaded with orange awnings, opened out on to the terrace. What air there was blew across the long lines of desks where the whole school was gathered to receive Lucy's first lesson. There was a quality of intense life and vigor in these dusky, dynamic children. Their parents had already gone far in the pursuit of culture, to make up for social disadvantages.

Out of the alien speech and manners which had been thrust upon them only a few generations ago, the children wanted to gain a quality that was universal which would put them into a position in which they no longer felt any sense of inferiority. They were asking themselves, with their eyes glued to Lucy as closely as flies to a fly paper, would she bestow this quality on them? Would she be friendly, or despise them? Would she give them the chance, their swiftly beating hearts demanded, to show her they were not to be despised?

Lucy hesitated for a moment. The orange awnings shut out the sight of the distant sea, the flowering trees and the tremendous golden world beyond

the classroom door. She had a feeling that she must bring this world, its glitter and its liveliness, even its dangers, into whatever she was going to teach them.

She thought, "I will tell them a story first. A sea story, because they are surrounded by the sea." And she opened a book of poems she had brought in with her, and turned the leaves till she found "The Ancient Mariner."

Every girl in the room listened with the wedding guest to the sailor's story.

Even the front row of girls, although they contrived to look, under Margorie Fielding's leadership, remote and inaccessible, listened.

They saw the ship with its white sails flying before the trade wind on a blue, unfrowning sea. They saw the white-winged bird that "every day, for food or play, came to the mariners' hollow."

On the vast empty sea he was their messenger of life, the symbol of their hopes and their security; and to the bird these sailors were a special, friendly Providence. At first all went well, the voyage was fair; the winds and sunny sky were at the ship's service. But mists and rain came later, and now the bird became a symbol of discontent and insecurity. It was the same bird, and one could look at it either way, Lucy explained to them. The bird was looking only one way at the ship—it was where food came to him, where men were his friends, where his winged life was safer than if he had been alone upon the empty seas.

Out of the gloomy thought in one sailor's mind came a black deed. He shot the albatross. His fellow mariners were at first horrified by his crime, but after it the weather unaccountably cleared up and everything seemed to conspire to make their voyage better than before, so they praised the murderer for his crime. Still, perhaps none of them felt quite easy about it, or as if they had come to the end of the consequences of this bad act. They must have liked the bird for its own sake, too, because there was a real relationship between themselves and this other living thing.

Suddenly the wind fell and they found themselves becalmed and lost upon a barren sea. No movement was possible to them any more. "She lay as idle as a painted ship, upon a painted ocean."

The sun struck at them all day long; at night there was no dew. Their water supply failed. In their anger and agony they tied the dead bird around the Mariner's neck and cursed him. The man who had shot the bird felt it was his fault. He not only suffered himself, but he had to watch the

sufferings of all the crew. They died one by one of thirst, and he was left alone on this becalmed and tideless sea. Torturing dreams pursued him through days and nights of ghastly thirst and loneliness. He saw visions of phantom ships in which skeletons diced for his soul.

In a strange moment of understanding and pity, watching the sea serpents he could see in the fathomless, glassy water, playing together, he blessed them for their joy and their companionship. Instantly pity and forgiveness in a flood poured over his soul. The albatross dropped from his neck, and his murderous act, which had brought agony and death to the whole ship, was by some unseen hand swept into penitence and remorse. A seraph stood by each dead man; dew fell from the sky to give him drink. The sailor felt relief from his remorse, as well as finding practical assistance in sailing the ship back to the harbor.

The children listened breathlessly. Lucy's clear, persuasive voice lit each verse she quoted into a picture. They saw the ship thinning beneath the tropical skies into a specter in the drought. They, too, knew how drought could make ghosts of human beings. They felt the sudden act of cruelty to the harmless bird as if it had happened to themselves.

Children accept punishment naturally when it is natural and the crime is real. Still more easily they understand redemption. Relief rushed to them from the Mariner's inadvertent mercy to the water snakes.

He had wanted to be unkind because he was miserable—so he shot a bird. Now he was mysteriously more miserable still—he wanted to be kind and blessed a water snake. It was quite the right story, Lucy saw, as she watched their sparkling eyes while the children took the shock of Coleridge's great poem for the first time.

The quality of Myra O'San's attention stood out from the rest; it was like the shout of a drowning man for help. She sat crouched over her desk, her frowning brows bent over her slanting eyes, intent on catching each word as it fell.

The room was very quiet. Outside on the terrace the noon heat had closed down. Even the mocking birds were silent. The children, caught by the spell of the poem, sat motionless.

Once more Lucy hesitated. Had Coleridge, she asked herself, made his hero escape too easily from the responsibility of his act? The broken and contrite heart has its moment of vision, and can create a new life from it, but the consequences of moral disaster are as irrevocable as falling over a precipice. The heart can never restore what has been lost by its act. God had

stepped into Coleridge's poem. The albatross had fallen from the Mariner's neck. Seraphs had taken the place of the dead men. The ship had reached her port. It was true, the Ancient Mariner still felt a compulsion to explain the whole story occasionally at rather inappropriate moments to strangers, otherwise he had escaped any further penalties attached to his crime. But there was somehow a deeper truth that was more universal in the poem. From it, and in it, there was no escape. Meeting the children's eyes, Lucy felt the words rush up out of her heart. The book slipped from her hand. Leaning across the desk, she said to them, as if they were her own, the words that came to her lips:

" 'He prayeth best, who loveth best
All things both great and small;
For the dear God who loveth us,
He made and loveth all.' "

Every child in the room, except the oldest girls in the front row, was glad that one of the greatest English poets knew that God loved them all alike; and each one of them felt sure of Lucy, because she felt the same.

Margorie Fielding, in a tone of studied insolence, broke the silence.

"Is that supposed to be Coleridge's *best* poem?" she demanded.

"I don't know if it is his best," Lucy answered quietly, "but it is considered to be, I think rightly, one of the finest poems in the English language."

"It *is* a fine poem!" Myra said suddenly, in a loud, harsh voice. "It hurts you. You are angry with it. You see always in yourself what happens, so it is fine. Perhaps not altogether true about the seraphs. They may have only been fear and thirst—like a mirage in a desert. You really do see water that isn't there. But what the poet *meant* when he wrote the poem—all that is true—any fool could see that!"

"Nonsense," Margorie Fielding said contemptuously. "It seemed to me the whole poem was completely made up, like a fairy tale."

The hour was over, yet Lucy did not ring the bell. She waited with her eyes on Myra's face. The girl sat staring, curiously enough, not at Margorie, who had spoken to her, but straight at Lucy.

"I can tell that the poem is true," Myra O'San said at last. "Anyone who's been afraid would know that!" and she repeated:

“ ‘Like one that on a lonesome road,
Doth walk in fear and dread,
And having once turned round, walks on,
And turns no more his head;
Because he knows, a frightful fiend
Doth close behind him tread.’ ”

CHAPTER VII

Myra edged her way, as inconspicuously as possible, through groups of excited, chattering girls, toward the lavatory. It was difficult to get out of the window, which had not been built as an exit for a large, rather clumsy girl of fifteen, but if she had gone the ordinary way across the garden to the annex, Elvira or one of her myrmidons might have stopped her.

She stood on the seat, cautiously twisted the upper part of her body through the window, and, clinging to the narrow ledge outside, hoisted herself through. Lowering herself carefully, she dropped onto the hard earth six feet beneath her. The drop jarred her spine, but she had got there. Now she was perfectly safe. She had cover from bush to bush until she reached the vine-covered veranda surrounding the annex. A moment more, and she stood in Whiteleaf's workroom.

"You should not have come here at this hour," Whiteleaf said, her delicate eyebrows lifted in reproach, but her eyes shining with kindness. "Have you forgotten how only on your father's insistence were you allowed to live here out of school hours—and these you must never break? This is a school hour. If we do not keep our side of the bargain we cannot expect Miss Loring to keep to hers."

"But what I have come to tell you is so important," Myra said urgently. "It is more important than bargains. Before she comes over here to see you you must know what this new English lady is like! She is not—she need never be—an enemy. In the lesson she gave us I knew suddenly that she is good! She understands us so everything will be all right!"

"If she understands—yes!" Whiteleaf replied. "Each of us understands what he thinks it is his interest to understand. But it is our interest also to understand those of other people—as *they* understand them. This knowledge seldom reaches us!"

Myra shook her head vehemently. "But she is like that—that is what I mean!" she explained with eagerness. "She is not shut into a box with herself. Though her eyes are round and such a queer deep blue, yet they have a kind light! Even at me she smiles!"

"You must not say 'even at me,'" Whiteleaf said sternly. "You are a good-hearted, intelligent girl, there can be no difficulty in smiling at you!"

"My ugliness *is* a difficulty," Myra replied firmly. "I have often said to myself, Why did God make me so hard to look at? He couldn't have known what it was like to be a girl with a bulgy forehead, a chocolate skin, the eyes of a pig, and a wide-open nose, or he would not have created me as I am. Perhaps an octopus does not mind what it looks like, or a shark. They don't have to be loved. It is easier for them."

Whiteleaf Ho Sung was silent for a moment, then she said: "These other girls who seem to you so much nicer to look at can only be pretty for a few years in this hot climate, but if you do well at school you can be intelligent all your life, and if you have a pleasant spirit your face becomes pleasant too. Your father is a successful tradesman on this island, a very wise man who has no son; he will expect you to take his place and carry on his business after him. It is true that to be beautiful is a wish in every woman's heart. But to attract men makes you a thrall to their wishes. You are shaken away from life when you long to attract. Cease to long for this and you will find yourself strong enough to face anything—even your own ugliness. Besides, ask yourself what has it really denied to you, to be ugly. You communicate your spirit through your face, just as if it were beautiful. You have earned by your spirit the love of your father, my love, Philip's love—I might say the love of everyone in this annex. So what more do you want? Are you not rather a greedy child? Go back now carefully so that no one sees you, and do not break a rule again in order to tell me what I hope I have sense enough to find out for myself."

Myra hung her head. Her heart, though vaguely comforted, was not wholly at rest. "But will Philip know?" she demanded. "Can you tell him in time before she comes? Will he see her when he comes? He can be very proud, Philip, or he can be very kind. Which will he be to her?"

Whiteleaf said slowly and thoughtfully, "He will see her. She comes over during his hour. This happens by accident, but it was necessary they should meet. He also has sense. Let us hope he will use it to judge her rightly. But, Myra, there is one thing we must all remember, you and Philip and I, if this English lady understands us and gives us her friendship, have you thought what may happen to her? Elvira will then be her enemy. Many disagreeable things might happen to her, whereas if she were not to be our friend she would still be perfectly safe. For none of us would wish to do her harm."

Myra thought this over with some dismay, then she shook her head. "We will not let things happen to her," she said sturdily. "I think it was because I was a little afraid that I had to come so quickly to tell you. I could not wait till after you and Philip had talked to her. I felt what she was like in the

poem story she told us, about the man who killed the albatross. You cannot have everything and be safe, though she thinks you can! There are some people you must *not* love—people who kill albatrosses—like Elvira Loring. She would be just as unsafe if she were not your friend. It does not say in the poem that the man who shot the friendly bird had not first fed it every day like the other sailors did."

"Such things do happen," Whiteleaf admitted, after a pause, "but perhaps it is not our business to believe evil of Elvira Loring. To behave like a comrade always is what we need to know. Not to judge others. Go now, and quickly!"

When Myra had gone, Whiteleaf left her desk and looked out into the noon sunshine. The garden was empty and it was too hot for even the canaries to sing. This girl, Whiteleaf thought—this European with the pink and white face, with her heroic record—would make a difference. The gulf between the school and the annex that was to be bridged by her—would it not be safer, she asked herself, *not* to bridge it? She and Philip had drawn a moat around the annex. Elvira hated them, but she was a little afraid of them, she left them alone, but now this extra weight that must come down on one side or the other, this new authority which was to bind them together —what new friction, what new complications might the Englishwoman not innocently cause?

"Yet it is right that I should know, and that Philip should know, that she *is* innocent!" Whiteleaf told herself sternly. "Rigid, but innocent, as they so often are, these good English people, so privileged, so prejudiced, so far away from what belongs to the rest of us: our basic insecurity!"

She sighed a little before she turned back to the immaculate small world she had made for the sick children in her charge.

The annex was not only in perfect order, it was brilliant in its neatness. Whiteleaf had made beauty out of order. Whether you looked at the flowers or at the sterilized instruments, shining under glass covers in the tiny, spotless theater, or at the eight children each in her bed with her own toys beside her; everything had equal beauty and every child was so tended and cared for, body and spirit, that she made a contented picture in spite of the fact that three had tubercular abscesses, four shook and burned with malaria, and the eighth lay stiffened with poliomyelitis, so that almost nothing in that young and lovely body made for activity could move at all. Henriette and the abscess children had their beds moved out onto the veranda every day where they could see and hear everything in the garden together, and pour

their lives into the flying birds or the wavering butterflies, but the malaria children lay in their little darkened rooms with wide-open windows, carefully shaded from the sun. As soon as the chills and fever were over they would join the other children, but now they liked best to be in the quiet semidarkness where Naomi spent most of her time with them. Naomi Myers was just as clean and cool as a nurse could be, and had an endless inspired kindness for every child. She thought she hid that little Henriette had won her heart of hearts, otherwise she had no favorite.

"And perhaps she *should* be loved best," Whiteleaf told herself as she stood by the child's bed, smiling down at her, "seeing we must do most for her and yet can never do enough."

"Will Philip come—will Philip *surely* come?" Henriette whispered as Whiteleaf bent close to her.

"Yes, he will surely come," Whiteleaf promised, but to her own surprise she did not feel her heart leap with the child's at the thought of Philip's coming.

She passed back through the house to the kitchen where she did almost all the cooking for each child herself, waited on by a kindly ignorant girl who could not be trusted with any but the simplest tasks. Vine could scrub and wash and not break things any more, because she watched Whiteleaf's every movement and knew, after six months' constant companionship, that she would never be spoken to harshly or misunderstood when out of her great good nature, disconnected from reason, she made her worst mistakes.

By three o'clock everything was cleaned up and put away. The eight little trays were got ready for tea, and the small world at rest. Vine slept on the shady kitchen porch, even Naomi lay down on the veranda while the children slept. Only Whiteleaf still moved noiselessly to and fro, cooling and easing the feverish children, who were just beginning to get restless with rising temperatures.

There was always something to be done in the annex and yet there was always the look as if everything had been already done. When the next need arose it would be met just as easily as the times in between had been met when there was no need. The cool mountain air passed ceaselessly through the doors and windows. Although the sea was far away yet it was on all sides of them, and every breath drawn tasted of its tonic wildness.

When Lucy arrived to inspect the annex the golden light had lost its weight and spread, thin and fragile, over the mountain peaks. The colors of flowers and trees no longer burned into one sultry flame together, but each

blossom offered up its separate fugitive loveliness. Whiteleaf met Lucy on the porch.

"Welcome," she said invitingly, "into your new kingdom!" Lucy smiled too, but she felt shy and did not know quite what to do, with Whiteleaf's courteous surrender.

"What will you see first?" Whiteleaf asked. "The children?"

"Yes, please," Lucy answered, and then she saw them. By each small bed was a garden in a deep plate. Each child had made her own garden, and if she could not move much, her plate was put on the bed table across the bed in front of her. Every day Whiteleaf would bring the children fresh treasures for their gardens—clean colored stones, peeled willow twigs, flowers or mosses. Friendly girls from the school would hunt the woods for fresh stores. Besides her garden, each child had a book to read, colored chalks and paper to draw on, and her own pencil within reach.

"But they have everything," Lucy cried when her inspection was over. "It's like a paradise!"

"They have everything but health," Whiteleaf said gently. "Now we will come and see our little French child, Henriette. She is our only white child. Her father was murdered in the East, and her mother died of exposure in the boat they escaped in. Henriette recovered from the exposure but suddenly this disease—poliomyelitis—struck her. We did not think we could save her, but we have saved her. Generally she is with the other children on the veranda, but on Saturday afternoons she likes best to be in her own room so that Dr. Calgary can talk to her by herself, and if she has to be hurt she likes best to have her pain alone, as I should also like it if I were in her place. You see, she must have pain in order to win back any power of movement and we must give it to her and see that she gives it to herself. But she trusts us. This makes it easier for us. Henriette is so brave that if it were not easier she would never let us know it."

Lucy was deeply moved. "You must love these children very much!" she said.

Whiteleaf's keen eyes rested on Lucy's with a flicker of amusement. "I have never found it difficult to love a child," she admitted. "Grownup people perhaps may be problems, because truth has often escaped them. But a child lives near the truth because it has not developed anything to challenge it, even when it lives in what we call a world of make-believe."

Henriette lay very flat and motionless on her narrow bed. She could not move even her head, so that Lucy had to stand at the foot of her cot straight in front of her. Although she was so helpless, Henriette had an expression of great precision and determination, as if she knew exactly what she meant to do with what she could still use.

"She speaks very good English," Whiteleaf told Lucy. "We think she had an English nurse, but generally we speak French together because she speaks it better than we do—so she can be amused at our mistakes."

"How old are you, Henriette?" Lucy asked the child in French. Henriette smiled approvingly.

"Now your French," she said, "it has very much the right sound to me—like Philip's French. Philip studied at the Sorbonne—it is as if he belonged to me—Philip! I am ten years old, but my tenth birthday, that I can't remember. It happened when there were so many bombs falling. My ninth birthday I remember very well, but I think I do not want to speak about it."

"No, no," Lucy said quickly, "I only wanted to know how old you are because I wondered if you were too old for a doll. I have one with me, a French doll, given me by someone who had bought it in Paris. She is wonderfully dressed, this doll, a grownup lady, and her eyes open and shut!"

"If her eyes open and shut, and if she's French, then I should not be too old for her," Henriette said, the color coming into her white cheeks. "Perhaps I am rather too old for dolls, but I have never had one yet that opened and shut her eyes."

"Tomorrow I shall bring her," Lucy promised, and then she saw the child's eyes change and fill with light.

Lucy turned and saw standing directly behind her a tall, dark man. His face might have been sculptured out of mahogany. It was a handsome, arrogant face that managed to look at the same time both bitter and kind. Lucy felt that she already knew those luminous eyes under their thick black brows, the clean-cut Grecian line between forehead and nose and those sensitive firm lips, which had been controlled so much that they were slow to smile. There were hollows in the man's temples and his black, crisp hair was slightly flecked with silver. But he was still young, and his body was a splendid sight, broad at the shoulders, straight-backed and tapering to slender hips, with limbs that fitted as neatly as a bird's wings fit into the body of a bird.

He did not smile when Whiteleaf introduced him to Lucy, and he seemed not to see her hand stretched out to meet his. Lucy, her own smile fixed a little foolishly on her face, was unable to get rid of it as quickly as she wished.

Henriette cried, "Philip!" and in a single stride he had reached her bed, and was on his knees beside her; then he smiled. Lucy thought she had never seen so brilliant and tender a smile, or one that held so much gaiety. It was as if he poured the power and rhythm of his whole body into this little stiffened frame so close to him.

"We will, if you will allow, leave them alone together," Whiteleaf said in a low voice to Lucy. "Perhaps Dr. Calgary will join us presently."

While they looked over the rest of the annex Lucy was aware, a little enviously, of outbursts of rapture, sudden cries of joy and peals of laughter from the veranda, where Philip had found the other children, but Whiteleaf did not suggest their joining them.

"I have never seen in my life so perfect a place for sick children," Lucy said with enthusiasm, when she had seen everything the annex contained.

"I should think the only danger would be that the children would be too happy ever to want to get well."

"I hope we do not make them feel that," Whiteleaf answered gravely, "but I do not think happy children ever want to be ill. You are not ill *because* you are unhappy, but it is seldom if you are altogether happy and at home in the world that you are ill."

"It must happen sometimes," Lucy objected.

"Oh, anything may happen sometimes," Whiteleaf agreed with a little laugh and a shrug of her slender shoulders. "It is a very various universe, Mrs. Armstrong. Have the scientists not discovered for us lately that the stars do not keep strictly to their courses? So the English poet is wrong, though poets are very seldom wrong, who wrote of them so beautifully, looking up into the sky at night, 'The army of unalterable Law!'"

CHAPTER VIII

Elvira sat on her balcony, screened by orange trumpet flowers, polishing her brilliant crimson nails.

Lucy had just left the annex, where she had paid her first visit. It was longer than Elvira could have wished, but Philip Calgary had not lingered. Elvira had watched him ride up, and he had ridden off even earlier than usual.

The elder girls on the terrace beneath avoided having to greet Lucy by a concerted evasive action. They were in her direct path, but they melted away before she reached them, only to come together again on the same spot after she had passed, leaving Lucy to feel uncomfortable without quite knowing why.

They meant to be nasty, and Elvira had taught them how. Unfortunately the younger girls had already forgotten to be nasty. That was the trouble, Elvira thought, with girls under twelve—they had no venom. They all ran now to greet Lucy and wavered about her like minnows in a stream. Elvira, who was susceptible to beauty, admitted to herself that it was a pretty sight to see the slim, pink and white Lucy surrounded by these dark children with their resilience and their lovely skins which had the bloom of purple grapes. Lucy, unfortunately, was Elvira's enemy. She was white, young, and in Elvira's shoes, otherwise Elvira would have wished that Lucy could really be her friend.

Elvira always lied first to herself before she lied to anybody else, since this gave her a conviction of moral honesty. Surely if you tell the same thing to others that you tell to yourself, you must be approaching truth? She told herself now that she liked Lucy. She liked her for not having seen that Elvira was colored, and for not having altered her manner to her after she knew it. Nevertheless, Elvira meant to get rid of Lucy. "The best thing, quite apart from my feeling quite fond of her," Elvira told herself, "is to keep in with her. She might marry young Anstruther, who keeps telephoning her, and if she does she would back my chances. I'm afraid my dear little bodyguard hates her too much. I must do something about it, and yet I mustn't do too much. Girls are so piecemeal."

She sighed reflectively. She couldn't afford a blunder now. Fortunately she was no longer young, raw, or at the mercy of her immediate sensations. Besides, Elvira knew that she could depend on the intractable loyalty of adolescents. She had great power over the older girls, and over their leader, the head girl of the school, Elvira's power was absolute.

Elvira was not vicious. She played on the awakening senses of young girls without any danger of losing control over her own. Girls had to wake up physically sooner or later, why should they not wake up to her? She made them aware of her as they had never been aware of anyone before. Her look, the curve of her crimson lips, the light touch of her narrow hands, electrified them. The cleverness of her carefully chosen clothes, the keen, sweet scent of flowers about her person, impressed them as tremendous human achievements. A smile from Elvira lightened the dullest work, the mere sound of her voice in another room roused their blood to run faster. She possessed their unpierced illusions, and all their vague unbalanced generous worship was at her disposal.

Elvira made good scholars out of her devotees. Like the poet Browning, where their hearts lay, they let their brains lie also. But sometimes they exaggerated. Sometimes they carried out her hints too forcibly. Margorie Fielding, for instance—she had been altogether too earnest in her hatred of Elvira's supplanter. Margorie was Elvira's star turn, her triumph, but, Elvira thought with a regretful sigh, Margorie was also the only real menace to her security. Like many English people, this white child was too thorough. It was not enough for her to have emotions, she wanted to carry them out to their logical conclusions. Margorie was a tightrope walker. High above the crowds she kept her precarious balance, while all the time the ground under her feet would have done just as well, without involving risk to herself or others. Elvira sighed again; it was not going to be easy to divert this single-tracked adventurer on her high and fragile rope. It made Elvira dizzy even to think of her.

Elvira finished polishing her last nail. Although she was thirty-six her hands were young, slender, velvety, and beautifully kept. They looked quite useless, but this was a mistake. They were highly efficient hands with great muscular power. A knock, low but determined, sounded at the door. Margorie Fielding came in, her back straight as a walking stick, her head erect, her eyes attempting to hide the sparkling adoration that sprang to them when they met Elvira's, but she couldn't hide it. The light flickered like a danger signal. All Margorie's fifteen years of suppressed emotions, innocent and wild, were bottled up behind her precarious self-control. She did not see

a made-up woman on the downward slopes of thirty in an overdecorated room. She entered Paradise to meet an angel.

The love of power over another human being is fixed to a track, you cannot move off it without an accident, even when the signals are set against you, and Elvira's smile of welcome was not as innocuous as she would have liked to make it.

"Sit down, darling," she said gently, "on the divan by the balcony. Forgive me if I walk about a little. If I sat down too I might not be able to cure what is the matter with me—I want to forget it. I want to walk it off. I don't want even to give a name to it. Perhaps if I did I should call it jealousy."

"But why should you not be jealous?" Margorie said vehemently. "If you can call it that—you have a right, you have every right to feel insulted and put upon. I burn with rage whenever I think of that silly girl set over you, in your place."

"Yes, but she has not put herself there," Elvira reminded Margorie. "I have been with her all day—don't think she hasn't been kind and nice to me. She's been exceedingly tactful and anxious to save my feelings—if only I could get used to taking favors, instead of granting them."

"Don't talk like that," Margorie said in a low, intense voice. "You make me feel so furious that I'm frightened. You can't think how I hate her. You will always be the only authority in the world for me."

"But we shouldn't hate her," Elvira said, turning at the end of the room and fixing Margorie with her dark, mournful eyes. "It's not her fault she's here, and it's her merit that she's nice. It's only that you're my friend and I can't easily hide from you that I'm a silly old woman who wanted to go on at least *feeling* that she was the headmistress of Everslade, but I can't be, and that's what I sent for you for, to tell you, Margorie dear, we just mustn't mind.

"This is what is called a 'fait accompli,' a thing you can't change and must accept graciously. Let us be thankful it is no worse. We might have had a tyrant to depose, not a very pleasant young woman to get used to."

Elvira sank down on the divan by Margorie's side. She could feel the dangerous thrill that passed through the girl's body, as if a skilled hand had swept across the strings of a harp, forcing their silence into music.

Margorie said nothing. She could not change the hate once roused in her for Lucy which consumed her like a flame. It was, indeed, part of the

consuming flame of the love that she felt for Elvira. It was unfortunate, Elvira thought, that those who could be trusted to do most for you were those whose company could take most out of you. Talking to this honest, silent child was like hanging by your hands from a tree. The full weight of your body was in your own keeping, but sooner or later you had to drop.

"My dear, foolish child," Elvira murmured. "If I had to give *you* up to her, I think I might find it harder than I could bear!"

"You need never be afraid of that!" Margorie whispered fiercely. "I'd kill her rather than make friends with her!"

"So you think now," Elvira said softly, "but for how long? She's only just come."

"Forever," Margorie said between clenched teeth. The force of her whole being was behind the word she tried to keep back. She did not move—she only trembled a little more when Elvira lightly touched her hand.

"Yes, but we must act differently, *think* differently now," Elvira told her. "Don't let them go too far, the older girls, don't let them show too much resentment—Angela and Petronella, for instance, don't let Petronella break rules and defy orders. A loyalty doesn't disappear because it is hidden; it can grow deeper underground. I want you to realize that I may have to act rather differently to what I had expected, but I shan't change fundamentally, nor need you. When we first talked of this together I meant to drive her out; now I am not so sure. By her own free will she may leave us—she may marry. We have to play a different kind of game, a waiting game. For this we need an even deeper confidence in each other, Margorie, a confidence that goes deeper than mere words."

"I don't need to learn that," Margorie said after a long, tense silence. "I know that nothing could ever alter what I feel for you—not even your liking Petronella better than you like me."

"Petronella," Elvira said scornfully, "is a capricious, naughty, difficult child! She accepts my care because it suits her, but she certainly doesn't care for me more than it pays her to. I know that as well as you do. But my blood is in her, she's my sister's child. My sister has other children, and is not well off, and that is why I made myself responsible for Petronella and her education.

"I am going to ask you even more than usual, my dear child—I want you for my sake to do for Petronella what I can't do. I don't disguise from you that I am anxious about her. She sleeps in your room—watch over her,

report to me anything that is against the rules. She is just the age for scrapes and I want to keep her out of them. I have been far too lenient with her as it is, because she can't be managed in any other way. You have to spoil a child already spoiled or else lose her love. I don't want to make an enemy of Petronella, but she is beyond my control. She might easily get herself into a pickle, when I could no longer save her from the consequences! This new Head looks gentle and kind enough, but she has had a very responsible position in the Services and I don't think she'd be willing to overlook any serious offense. English people are apt to take what they call 'justice' in a rigid manner."

Margorie lifted her eyes to Elvira. "You have to be fair," she said reluctantly. Elvira laughed half tenderly and half derisively.

"Oh! Yes! Yes!" she said. "You have to be fair, and I myself am in such a 'fair' position now, am I not? All that I have done for the school relentlessly thrust aside—all that I have the capacity to do for it still—ignored. This girl set over me and the choice given me between humiliation and my daily bread! Margorie, we see what we look at. When I think of my niece Petronella I look at a girl I want to save, not at the ten commandments, which after all perhaps I have not too slavishly kept myself."

Margorie said passionately, "I'll help you all I can. I'll do *anything* for Petronella, and I'll tell you everything that goes on. Even if it seems like sneaking. I'll tell you."

Pity in the heart of a girl who is still a child for the grief of an older woman is perhaps the keenest and purest of human emotions. It is a bush that burns forever without consuming itself.

Elvira was satisfied with her half hour's work. She kissed Margorie, and with her hands on her shoulders gently pushed her toward the door.

CHAPTER IX

By the end of a month the school was like a home to Lucy and the children had come out from behind their masks and were her friends; only the original group of older girls showed no break in their polite hostility. Margorie Fielding was perhaps a shade less aggressive, she had turned the edge of her insolence away from Lucy; but when her eyes met Lucy's they still regarded her with blank unresponsiveness.

The senior classroom, in which most of Lucy's teaching took place, was at the back of the house and must have been the government house dining room. It was a solid, spacious, wood-paneled room with long French windows opening on to a great round peak, the highest on the Island.

Long ago, instead of rows of desks with dark girls bending over them there had been a great mahogany table, sparkling with silver and glass, surrounded by favored and important guests. In those days the Islanders were really subjects and their governor a symbolic king.

It seemed strange to Lucy, whose uncle might very well have sat at the head of the polished table, that she had been chosen to teach the girls who were to take the place of those important ghosts, so that they would not need a king any more. What was she herself, she wondered, a ghost of the past, or a ghost of the future? Did she belong to Bob and the planters, with whom she spent her Sunday holiday once a fortnight, or did she really belong far more to these hard-working children who were to take upon their shoulders responsibility slowly being wrenched from her compatriots? Perhaps the antagonism of the older girls was an unconscious repudiation of her authority, perhaps they felt insecure with her, as if she promised them what it was not in her power to give them.

It was a hot noon hour, and Lucy felt uncomfortably unsure of herself and of her subject. They were preparing an essay on Shelley, who was her favorite poet, so she should not have felt this sense of insecurity. Suddenly she was aware of a ripple of excitement spreading across the room. The girls were quicker of hearing than she was. A far-off clip-clop of horse's hoofs had reached them. Their eyes darted alive with suspense toward the French windows. Lucy's eyes followed them. Philip Calgary came riding down the bridle path toward the annex.

How easily horse and rider moved, as if life poured through them in a secret rhythm! Golden and brown the sun caught them up and played with them till they were part of the same brilliant pattern.

The purple trumpet flowers which half screened the windows framed them, for one brilliant, burning instant, while horse and rider shone together, chiseled against the golden air, with an intense significance.

"That was a man," the girls' eyes said, "a real man who rode past our window!" More than a thought, a quickening of their whole being invaded them. They turned their eyes on Lucy challengingly, as if they were demanding what this man's image meant to her—this man who was one of themselves. Did she too recognize his male significance or—because he was dark—was he merely a shadow from the underworld?

Lucy felt her heart beating in her throat. She did not move. She tried to hide, even from herself, that when the window emptied and the purple trumpets framed nothing but golden air she had felt life withdrawn as they had. She did not want to acknowledge that Philip Calgary could stir the quick tides of her blood. Myra O'San's voice steadied her by a sudden question.

"I have chosen 'Arethusa' for my subject," Myra said, "but please, I do not quite know what this means:

" 'In the rocking deep
Beneath the Ortygian shore,
Like spirits that lie
In the azure sky
When they love but live no more.'

"If you do not live, can you love? And if you love, can you possibly be dead?"

There was a long silence while Lucy pulled herself together and thought what Shelley meant. The hummingbirds gyrating madly at the open lips of the trumpet flowers made the only sound the stunned earth had to offer. The girls had subsided, vitality sank away from them, they were prepared for "Arethusa" now, but something had happened to Lucy's cool, steady voice. When it took up Myra O'San's question, it was as if new life were in it, stronger and more persuasive; it was almost as if she herself had become Arethusa.

"We have to feel what Shelley felt," Lucy said, "before we know what he thought, because I think Shelley himself felt first, before his words came.

Arethusa is an image too small for the dawn spreading out into the world and losing itself in light. But through Arethusa—just because she was a girl—Shelley could pour his full emotion for the dawn.

" 'She leapt down from the rocks
With her rainbow locks
Streaming among the streams;
Her steps paved with green
The downward ravine
Which slopes to the Western gleams,
And gliding and springing
She went ever singing
In murmurs as soft as sleep,
The Earth seemed to love her
And Heaven smiled above her,
As she lingered towards the deep.'

"You can see the swift hurrying of light from rock to rock, as if a girl were leaping with the wind in her hair. Emotion in Shelley moves and lives through symbols, and yet nothing is ever big enough to hold what Shelley feels. He is perhaps the most universal of all our poets. Life itself is hardly enough for him; he has to break it up so as to give his whole spirit to the baseless, endless air." Lucy's voice failed her. The girls were all staring at her again. Only Myra listened beyond her words to reach Lucy's heart.

"Yes, now I see," Myra said tranquilly. "So when Shelley said in that other poem 'Epipsychidion,' 'I met her robed in such exceeding glory that I beheld her not,' what he really meant was that he had seen everything *through* her—because she was so beautiful."

"Yes," said Lucy, with her eyes on the empty bridle path. "Yes, I think he meant just that."

"And when he said, what Myra asked you," Margorie Fielding maliciously interposed, "that they loved when they weren't alive, what did he mean then?"

Lucy looked at her. "If they loved as Shelley meant they did, wholly, universally," she answered, "I think he thought that was all the life they needed."

"After all, they were only spirits," Petronella said in a bored voice, "and so as they were dead, they couldn't love any more than that, anyway!"

Lucy did not contradict her. Myra O'San returned to her essay writing, and Lucy thought that of all the girls in the school the one she liked least was Petronella.

CHAPTER X

Lucy sat on her balcony alone in the moonlight. The sky was pierced by enormous stars; unveiled and cloudless, she seemed to gaze into the heart of darkness.

Not a breath of wind stirred. The outlines of shadowy trees hung with blossoms were mere ghosts of color, motionless in the still air, as if carved out of nothing.

From time to time a nightjar trilled its long, whining note from branch to branch. "Chuck-willy's-wife!" it called with incredible urgency. A group of coconut trees, their slender trunks like silver candlesticks, dipped their feathered headdresses into a bowl of darkness.

The Island itself drew closer to Lucy. She longed to slip back into the fathomless stream of time, to when the golden Arawaks, the Island's first and freest children, danced unconcerned by civilization under the same brilliant, hollow moon. The golden Arawaks had not known war. They had not caught happy bridegrooms away from their brides in their first youth. They seemed no further away from Lucy, as she gazed into the empty moonlight, than her dead lovers. The human heart, she told herself bitterly, controls nothing, not chance, beauty, cruelty, or the uneven pace of time.

Beneath the peaks above her, piercing the darkness with their silver spurs, bestial pirates had picnicked in unchartered coves. Under the same deep night sky embittered slaves had wept their hearts out. Lucy shivered as she thought of their hungry, uncared-for survivors.

The mountains had changed neither shape nor color. The Island looked as beautiful and richly dowered, as if no human footstep had touched its shore, yet a few miles below where Lucy sat a town of inhumanly crowded, sordid shacks lay between a prison and a swamp. The main road from this town to the seaport city which ruled the Island was like a trodden cattle ranch. No grass grew there, only a few starved trees, and yet the bare, burned earth was the breeding ground of thousands of human beings. Men without homes, women without husbands, children without parents.

Horizonless and hungry people edged the busy roadside, mocked by cars full of overfed, gaily dressed men and women dashing recklessly past them,

covering these ruined scarecrows, who were as human as themselves, with dust and despair.

"I haven't come here just to drive down that road and back again to this survival of enchantment," Lucy told herself, and yet what could she do about it—sit back and look on? Marry Bob Anstruther and feel herself swept back into the old hierarchy of ruled and ruling? She seemed to see Bob's home, the great white house she had already visited, poised on the well-kept hillside like an owl with its wings extended, dropping toward its prey. Bob Anstruther's home was a beautiful house, the Anstruthers were good employers. They had a sugar estate, a farm, a house full of laughing servants.

Was this all the strange Island of her dreams had to offer her?

Suddenly she heard a sharp knock at the door. She thought it was Elvira, to whom she called, "Come in," but in a moment Margorie Fielding, reluctant and defiant, stood beside her.

"I know it's late!" she said defensively. "It's past ten o'clock."

"But I'm glad you've come," Lucy said welcomingly. "Won't you sit down? I was finding myself very poor company. The night is so beautiful I wanted to share it. Let's forget the time."

Margorie stood leaning against the balcony rail. She cast a brief, disparaging glance over the terrace. "I don't think tropical places are beautiful," she said grudgingly. "Same old moon. Same old rickety palms. Sharks in the sea, alligators in the rivers, and if there aren't snakes in the forest it's only because the mongooses eat them. I've always wanted to live at home, and I can't think why you ever came out. My father's a brigadier and was sent, so he can't help it. Anyhow, I've come to report to you. Angela and Petronella can't be found. I've looked everywhere for them, even at the annex. No one has seen them or knows where they are."

"Miss Loring is on duty tonight," Lucy said consideringly. "Haven't you asked her what to do?"

"Naturally I should have asked her if I could have found her," Margorie said with a touch of insolence in her voice. "Perhaps she thought as you were in, she needn't stay in herself."

"That would be odd," said Lucy, "since she is on duty. But you were quite right, if you couldn't find her, to come to me. It is quite possible she sent a message to me which has miscarried. You know more about these

girls than I do. Where would Petronella and Angela want to go at this time of night?"

"I don't see why I should tell you that," Margorie said fiercely. "After all, they're my friends. It's my duty to report their absence but I don't see why I need tell you what isn't certain and might make worse trouble for them. Find out for yourself where they are."

"I think you came to me," Lucy reminded her, "because you were anxious about them. I can't help them, can I, if you won't tell me what their danger is?"

Margorie's eyes searched Lucy's with aggressive intensity. She was angry, but under her anger lay fear, and it was her anger that at last surrendered to Lucy's unruffled silence.

"I can't be certain where they've gone," Margorie said at last. "If it isn't where I'm afraid it is—if Miss Loring took them with her—then they'll be all right, and I was a fool to have come to you."

She shivered as if the consequences of her folly might be more frightening than what had happened to her friends.

"No, that isn't possible," Lucy told her firmly. "Miss Loring might have gone out, perhaps leaving a message for me that I haven't got, but she would never take the girls out without referring to me. I quite understand what you feel about getting them into trouble, but I am afraid they are *in* trouble already, and whatever you can tell me may help to get them out of it."

"You don't know about the roadhouse, then?" Margorie said abruptly. "It's six miles away and three bicycles have gone. Of course it's absolutely forbidden, but it isn't the first time it's happened. Rum makes Angela as sick as a cat. She simply crashes after it. But they both love dancing, and I suppose because they're both colored they don't mind dancing with those black men. But they're a rough lot, and when they get excited anything might happen. Petronella's Miss Loring's niece. I can't *let* anything happen to her."

"I'll go and bring them back at once," Lucy said reassuringly. "Can I get there by my small car—I suppose if it's a roadhouse they must be near a road?"

"Well, actually it's in the forest," Margorie explained. "The girls would go by the bridle path, which is shorter. But you can get there by car, too. There is a path leading from the gorge above the waterfall. I'll come with

you, of course, and show you the way. I ought to tell you—if you don't know—that it's a bit risky for white people to butt in on these dances."

"No, no!" a shrill voice called from beneath the balcony. "You must not go, Mrs. Armstrong! It is not wise. Those girls will come back. To go after them isn't safe. How do you know this isn't a trick done to harm you? This one here, she is one of them!"

"Well, I do know," Lucy said with quiet conviction. "Why should anyone wish to harm me? Margorie came to help her friends. But where do you spring from, Myra, this time of night? Have you been listening to what we were talking about?"

"I heard only what she told you at the end," Myra explained breathlessly. "If I had been able to come earlier I would have listened from the beginning. But we too have had excitement tonight: Henriette has moved—she has moved *herself*. She turned her head and her arm moved! We called up Philip and he is with her now. Mrs. Armstrong, if you must go after these girls will you not let Philip go with you? As for listening, why should I *not* listen? I come every night under your balcony to find if you are safe."

"Safe," Lucy exclaimed, "why on earth shouldn't I be safe? But perhaps it would be wiser to ask Dr. Calgary if he can come with me. I will wait here till you get back." The distorted disk of Myra's face slid into the darkness before Lucy had finished speaking.

"Why did you do that?" Margorie demanded. "Don't you know that the people over there are our enemies?"

"You are talking nonsense," Lucy said firmly. "The annex and the school are part of one thing. They must naturally help each other in an emergency. If what you say is true, and going after the girls is dangerous, I am certainly not going to let you run into the danger I am trying to get them out of. I know something about danger—you're a fool if you don't take any help you can get. Dr. Calgary will be a help. He knows these people, and I don't."

"He's a Negro and you aren't!" Margorie said contemptuously. "Besides, he's worse than just colored—he's not a friend. Perhaps you don't know what he's like, but I do. You made me think I could trust you and now you've betrayed me—I'll never forgive you!"

Lucy made no attempt to stop or follow Margorie as she rushed from the balcony. Instead, she sat for a few minutes thinking over what this outbreak meant. She herself had no wish for Philip Calgary's help; what she had heard of him from Elvira made her think of him as a faithless and probably

vulgar Don Juan, and somehow it had made his offenses a little ranker that he had taken no notice whatever of Lucy. Prepared to snub his probable advances, Lucy had returned from the few interviews she had had with Philip asking herself whether she hadn't received instead of given the frosty inhibitions implicit in their short conversations. However, Philip was a man and no other man was available, and Lucy had the sense to see that this was an emergency which needed a man's help. By the time she had reached and unlocked the hall door she found Whiteleaf's neat, erect figure awaiting her under the shadow of Philip's tall one. Neither of them looked as if they had hurried, yet they were there as soon as Lucy had opened the door.

"Myra has told us," Whiteleaf said with calm incisiveness, "and Dr. Calgary will go with you to bring back the girls. These things can be dangerous at night to white people. If you will permit me, as Miss Loring is out, I will stay here till you return. Naomi will sit up with little Henriette, who is too excited to sleep."

"Thank you both very much for coming," Lucy said quickly. "I'm so glad about Henriette. I think all the girls here are asleep except Margorie—she's very unhappy at having to report her friends. Miss Peck and Miss Myers are on leave, but if you want Miss Lestrange she is probably still reading in her room."

"Thank you, I shall want no one," Whiteleaf replied. She went quickly into the house without looking at either Lucy or Philip before she shut the big door noiselessly behind her.

Lucy turned a little uncertainly away from the swiftly closed door. She was upset by the night's adventure. She was shaken by Elvira's having forsaken her charge, desperately frightened at what might happen to Petronella and Angela, and curiously baffled and distressed by her failure to keep—since for a moment she had possessed it—Margorie Fielding's confidence. She wanted help, if she couldn't find it anywhere else, even from Philip. But his silence was not of the kind that promised help. He was going with Lucy because he had to, not because he wished to. His silence, as they walked across the garden to his car, was without invitation.

"There's nothing on the road at night," he told her when they had reached it, "so we can drive fast. I hope you don't mind bumps."

They plunged into the silvery darkness before Lucy found breath to answer him.

"I too want to get there fast," she told him, a little stiffly. "What is this roadhouse they have gone to like?"

"Like any other roadhouse," Philip replied in a tone of courteous belligerency. "It's a place where people—scattered people from lonely holdings all over the mountainside—meet to drink and dance. We usually call them rum houses, since rum is our cheapest drink. They will, of course, be black people, and since they are half starved and their lives without amenities, they may be rather rough and primitive. It is not a place for schoolgirls. Otherwise it serves its purpose. When you have no money, your pleasures have to be cheap."

"I see," murmured Lucy a little forlornly. Above their heads a stream of stars dived from darkness to darkness. Nothing else was visible but the flung-back slices of the road. Lucy was constantly jerked against Philip's taut shoulder, and she was quite aware that he wished to avoid their enforced contact as much as she did.

"I think we shall get there before the men have time to get drunk," he said at last, in a more friendly tone. "I took the liberty of asking Myra O'San to call up Dr. MacTaggert to join us. His mission is nearer their shack than we are, so he ought to get there soon after us."

"Of course I don't mind. I've never met Dr. MacTaggert," Lucy said, "but I've heard a lot of things about him. He must be terribly nice. Only why did you think we ought to have him with us?"

"He has a great influence over our people," Philip told her after a short silence. "Besides, it's better for you that he should be with us. If the girls make any difficulty, and I'm told they're difficult girls, you would have to appear to act as an authority—and I'd rather that you kept out of it. You needn't be seen at all with me if you'll just wait till he comes up. I'll go in first alone and try to talk the men into a good humor till he comes. I know some of them. And then you can come in with MacTaggert."

"I should have thought it would be all right if we went in together," Lucy objected. "After all, I am their headmistress. It's not that I mind our having Dr. MacTaggert, only it seems silly, and the committee rather insisted that if I wanted any help, I should always apply to Mr. Anderson who is our padre and takes our services."

"He belongs to the Church of England and cuts no ice with our people," Philip explained, "besides living miles away without a car. Believe me, we'd much better have MacTaggert—he's white and a Christian, that's all I want him for. If I were forced to take these girls away against their will we could easily have trouble with the men. I don't say I couldn't get them out, but I

should act as a sort of challenge while MacTaggert would have natural authority over them."

"I don't see why," insisted Lucy. "The girls might not obey your orders, but they would certainly obey mine. I don't see what sort of a challenge you mean. I don't want to be protected at anyone else's expense."

"I think you forget," Philip told her, with an edge to his voice, "what you frequently make me point out. I am an African and you are white. Why should I be with you? Why should these girls come away at my bidding? These are the questions this crowd would certainly ask and I do not think I could provide them with suitable answers. MacTaggert could."

"I am their headmistress," Lucy said sharply. "I have a right to take my girls away and you have a right to help me if it should be necessary."

Philip laughed. "I'm sorry," he said, "but right is such a funny word when used by English people. They seem to think it belongs only to them. These men have quite a different interpretation. They will feel that they have a 'right' to dance with any girls who come to the roadhouse for that purpose, and they'll even perhaps think the girls have a right to come. If I were to act without MacTaggert I'd certainly get your girls away but I might cause a riot doing it, and if they unfortunately saw you as well, they'd think I was trying to get away with more than my share of the evening's entertainment."

"How disgusting," Lucy exclaimed.

"I was sure you would think that," Philip replied with icy politeness, "and so you see, I took my precautions against it."

Lucy had an uncomfortable feeling that she had expressed herself badly and even offensively to a man who was trying to help her.

She broke the long silence between them abruptly.

"Of course I don't understand the life on this island yet," she said. "I know I'm very ignorant and may make silly blunders—that's why I do think I ought to have been warned about the roadhouse and told that the girls had gone there before."

"If Miss Loring did not tell you, I imagine that no one else would have liked to mention it," Philip answered briefly.

"You blame Miss Loring," Lucy said, with the annoyance that had escaped from her voice back in it again. "But surely Miss Ho Sung is just as responsible."

"I hardly think so," Philip replied. "None of the annex girls have ever been to this place. Keeping order in the school is Miss Loring's business, not Miss Ho Sung's. As far as I am concerned I accept no responsibility whatever for what goes on in the school or the annex—my business is to attend to the sick when I am sent for, nothing else. I dislike schoolgirls as patients in a collective sense. I had to undertake Everslade because of the great distance and lack of transport on the Island. Also Miss Ho Sung is the only person here who is qualified to give the Kenny treatment for poliomyelitis. I have only looked after the school since my war services terminated, and the annex agreed to take my poor little shipwrecked war patient over for me. I may resign when these patients are all cured. I am considering it under the altered situation."

Lucy was silent. She had not felt that because she was white she had a right to snub a Negro, yet she could not keep feeling that since Philip Calgary was a Negro, he had no right to snub her. But Lucy had a logical mind and her sense of justice as well as her reason was shocked by this break in her own behavior. She knew that Philip Calgary had had a right to be offended, and that she had had no right to offend him.

At last she said in a contrite voice, "I'm very sorry. I had no business to be so rude—I expect I'm just frightened and upset about the girls and have lost my head. There are a lot of things about the school which I wish I knew and I don't know how to find them out!"

"That's natural," Philip said, less dryly. "Your duties are new to you and so is our island. We have our complications and no doubt we rather take it for granted that newcomers understand what they can't possibly know anything about till events have brought it home to them. Now this is where we leave the car and take to the forest. It will be dark under the trees, but I brought a torch, and there are no snakes or wild animals."

Philip, when he was not controlling his voice, had an extremely pleasant one, cadenced and musical, and behind his voice there was a source of hidden laughter. He was a man who had suffered intensely and worked to the limits of his tremendous physical powers, but he had always retained a sense of amusement in living. He had even found some of his own sufferings not without humor. He thought the girl beside him both attractive and entertaining, and although he meant to have nothing to do with her, he intended, while carrying out his Spartan decision, to save her from inconvenience or danger, if he had the chance.

The trees were filled with silence, no leaf stirred. The scarlet walls of the Flames-of-the-Forest above their heads were closed, as if a restraining finger had been laid on their petals. Through sudden gaps in the trees moonbeams latticed a silver leaf pattern under their feet.

"Nothing seems to be alive here any more," Lucy whispered, but even as she spoke a sound reached them. A harsh jangle of notes without music violated the night, robbing the moonlight of its frozen beauty.

"Perhaps you had better stop here under this Pimento," Philip told her. "MacTaggert will come by this path, you can't miss him. I'll go on ahead and try to talk the men into a good temper and then you and MacTaggert can come on together and read the riot act over your girls. We'll get them away as quickly as possible. He'll make a splendid chaperon for all three of you and prevent talk. Is that perfectly clear?"

"Of course," Lucy said, "but please don't think that I wouldn't go in with you anyhow—if there *wasn't* Dr. MacTaggert!"

"But fortunately, there *is*!" Philip told her dryly.

A finger of light caught Philip's tall figure as he approached the shack. The door opened suddenly and Lucy saw a room full of wildly capering shadows. The fierce clatter of the phonograph possessed their eager bodies. Girls and men swayed and scampered to and fro, as if scourged by an invisible fury. Sometimes a man, seized by the frenzy of desire, caught hold of a girl, half entranced, half struggling, and dragged her out with him into the moonlight. The glade in which the shack stood surged and shook with sound. The syncopated dance music broke provocatively into half and quarter tones as if to force forward the dancers' leaping blood. No one noticed Philip wading from the shelter of the trees through the moon-washed grasses. The dancers spun on, whipped like tops by the urgent jazz, till Philip's tall figure blocked the doorway; then the music stopped with a sudden jerk. Philip's voice, resonant and powerful, reached Lucy, though the words escaped her. He seemed to be cajoling and joking the men into good humor. There were answering protests, angry questions shot through the listening air, but one by one the protests changed to laughter, till a high shrill treble broke through the men's deep voices.

"But I don't want to go! I *will* stay and dance!" Lucy recognized Petronella's willful voice. "You can't make me come! You're only a doctor!" Lucy walked toward the shack. This was her business more than Philip's. Whatever the men thought, whatever discomfort might follow, she was determined to take her share of it. Quick footsteps came up behind her, and a

restraining hand was laid on her shoulder. “Are you not Mrs. Armstrong?” a deep voice asked her. From some tremendous height, the kindest and most piercing blue eyes she had ever seen smiled down into Lucy’s.

“I am MacTaggert,” the voice said. Shouts came from the open doorway. A crowd of men like angry bees threw themselves on Philip.

Dr. MacTaggert’s voice rang out above the commotion and separated the struggling figures as if by force; yet he had used no force. One by one the men stepped back and Dr. MacTaggert smiled down on them from his great height. His hand rested on Lucy’s shoulder, as if he wanted to introduce them to a new friend. The roughly carved faces of the men slowly took on some of the dignity of his. They all knew how the persuasion of a lifetime full of love and courage had been passed among them.

No one had ever come to Dr. MacTaggert for help in vain. He had often rebuked sin, but he had always respected the human being behind the sinner. Lucy hesitated; her eyes went past the men to the terrified faces of Petronella and Angela.

“Petronella!” she said in a clear, grave voice. “Angela!” Then she looked at the men with a friendly smile. “They must come home!” she told them gently. Instantly the men made way for the cowed and trembling girls. The battle was over without having been fought.

Philip stood in the shadow of the roof as they came out. He bent his head toward Lucy and said to her in a voice she had never heard from him before, “That was the right way to speak to our Islanders!”

CHAPTER XI

When Lucy woke at dawn a white wall surrounded her; the balcony, the great house, the Island itself, were lost in mist. She breathed air muffled in sea fog. It filled her throat with its cold and heavy substance; and her eyes tried in vain to pierce the blanched darkness.

The night with all its alarms and discords rushed back into her mind. While she dressed she tried to think of the great good fortune Elvira's friendship had been to her. Everything in Everslade would have been more strange and less successful without this warm and loyal harmony. Must Lucy lose it now? Had she already lost it? And what was the price which she was prepared to pay in order to retain Elvira's friendship?

The school opened as usual. Lucy took prayers. The girls sang a hymn with vigor and ate their breakfasts with equal heartiness. No one appeared to notice the absence of Petronella and Angela. Margorie, without question, took over Nancy Peck's hour of physical training for the school, while the whole staff assembled in Lucy's office and took their places around a center table.

All the teachers realized that something serious had happened. The three who already knew what it was looked only slightly less surprised and more depressed than those who waited for Lucy to tell them. When Lucy had finished her story of the night's adventure a long silence followed. The fog had seeped into the room so that each of the teachers was but a vague outline to the others. As no one broke the silence, Lucy said, "I realize that the responsibility for what is to be done with the girls is mine. If they are to be expelled I must expel them, and if we can keep them without harming the school, I shall have to accept full responsibility for their future conduct. But before I make my decision, I want to have the benefit of your personal opinions as to what their punishment should be."

The teachers made a murmur of agreement. Lucy turned toward the shadowy figure of Elvira, who sat on her right.

"Miss Loring," she said, "I know this discussion must be very painful for you personally. I wish I could have spared you, but you are my chief colleague. Your management of the school has been so highly successful that I cannot come to any decision touching its interests without your help."

"I do feel it difficult," Elvira admitted, "yet it is kind of you to ask for my opinion. Petronella is like my own child to me. You know perhaps that since my sister could not afford her education, I took it upon myself. This doubles my responsibility. She is my niece and probably this has made her feel the change of situation in the school itself in a very foolish way. I have tried my hardest to alter her state of mind, but I fear I have failed. That I was not here last night when I was actually in charge makes me feel personally involved in her disgrace. I was unexpectedly called to see a sick friend, and the message I sent begging to be excused was never delivered. I have already suggested to Mrs. Armstrong that I should resign, but she has generously urged that I should remain. I hardly know what I can say to the rest of you. Yet I do plead for clemency for the girls. They are young, and to expel a girl on the Island from such a well-known school as this is to ruin her moral reputation for life." Elvira paused, wet her dry lips, and looked at Lucy. "I don't think I can say any more," she finished, not without dignity.

Whiteleaf Ho Sung rose in her turn. "We must all sympathize deeply with Miss Loring," she said. "I feel that I should like very much, even without hearing her very moving appeal, to plead for clemency for these young girls, but I do *not* plead for it. Had this been the first occasion, I should have thought exactly as Miss Loring thinks now—that these girls were culpable enough for restraint, but by no means culpable enough for expulsion. All young creatures make mistakes from inexperience or from curiosity. What they do once need not therefore be judged drastically, but why should they go to the roadhouse a second time, and why indeed, having lived for several months under the new and quite benevolent leadership of Mrs. Armstrong, should they still—if this was their motive—be rebellious? Loyalty to a favorite teacher is a narrow and ignorant loyalty compared to loyalty to the school itself. I think highest of the health of the school. I should therefore remove these girls who do not appreciate the good of the community in which they live."

"Miss Myers," Lucy said, after a pause in which Miss Lestrange coughed as if she were trying to get rid of all she had as yet heard.

"I don't think for a moment that either of them ought to be expelled," Rebecca said angrily. "I think it is most unkind and unnecessary to suggest such a thing. I don't believe they'll ever run off again. Not if they are properly handled. Petronella I know very well indeed—far better than Miss Ho Sung can—because I live under the same roof with her. She is high-spirited and loves adventure. She doesn't like Mrs. Armstrong and that's the whole cause of this second adventure. She *hated* the first one. The men

frightened her, and she'd never have gone again if she hadn't wanted to make trouble. It's all very well to talk about schools and communities, that isn't what girls think of! *They* think of the people who run them. Margorie Fielding is the real leader of the older girls. She can be trusted not to let this happen again. I'm sure they'll tell no one if she stops them from talking. I agree with Miss Loring—punish them anyhow you like, but don't expel them! I'd think it downright cruel to take away a girl's chances by getting her talked about all over the Island! I wouldn't expel any girl unless she was actually going to have a baby, and I had to!"

"Miss Peck," Lucy said a little dryly, as Miss Myers flounced back into her seat. Miss Peck was on the verge of tears, her bright round face had lost its bloom, her eyes their brilliant snap, even her figure was robbed of its elasticity. "I don't know what to say," she began hesitatingly. "I like them both. I don't think they're bad girls. To tell the truth, I don't think young people ever are *quite* bad, though they may behave worse than older criminals. But it's not for the same reason—a lot of it's fun. But we can't only think of the girls themselves, can we? We've got to think of the Island. What will the Island think about this? Perhaps we can hush it up here, perhaps even the parents needn't know, but have you thought of what the men in the roadhouse will say? You can't stop them talking, can you? You see, I belong to the Island, more than any of you do, because whatever the rest of you are I *am* black—I *feel* black! and I want to be proud of being a Negress! I want every girl in the school that's dark like me, and most of them are, to know we can make a standard and stick to it. It's what the Island hopes for and expects of us. Mrs. Armstrong, the Island will *expect* us to expel these girls and they'll think the less of us and of our school if we don't!"

"I think Miss Peck has given us a very interesting and serious opinion," Lucy said slowly, "and that we must consider it very carefully. Until she spoke of it, I had overlooked the men's speaking about what has happened, and the effect on the Island. Please, Miss Lestrange, will you now give us your opinion? I have asked you last because you are our senior mistress and what you have to say must have a special value for us all."

Miss Lestrange took out a clean pocket handkerchief, unfolded it, and then restored it to her pocket unused. Her faded eyes gazed out into the misty room with a curious intensity.

"I must say," she began with unusual briskness, "that I am rather surprised that no one—not even our headmistress herself—has dealt upon what these girls have actually done. Girls' schools upon this island were

surely all founded in order to secure moral training. If any of our girls is not virtuous her education has been useless. Any knowledge she has managed to acquire would be dangerous without such self-discipline." So far, though Miss Lestrange spoke more sharply than usual, her voice had remained that of self-controlled and quiet culture, now, to everyone's astonishment, her tones became suddenly loud and even coarse. "These girls," she shouted, "have gone into a filthy dancing hall to get drunk with—with men! Surely you must guess what must be the *result* of such misconduct. How *can* you let them stay in the school corrupting innocent youth for which we have made ourselves responsible? Mrs. Armstrong, if you allow these girls—these harlots, as no doubt they already *are*—to stay in the school—I resign!"

The gulf of time had lost its bridge. All the teachers looked startled. The gusto of indignation in Miss Lestrange's voice shocked them all. Lucy flushed as if she had been struck in the face.

"We were talking about young girls," she said incisively, "not of hardened sinners. We must not underrate morality, but we must think more of the girls themselves. We none of us know exactly what took place, and since we don't know the facts, we can at least give them the benefit of the doubt. Nevertheless, Miss Lestrange, we do fully—all of us, I think—recognize the danger of the roadhouse. We are very isolated up here. It is partly the absence of cinemas, shops, and men and women to meet and think about which makes the roadhouse such a temptation, and therefore makes the girls, to my mind, distinctly less culpable. I thank you all very much for your opinions. Something in what each one of you has said has been a help to me in making a decision. I suggest that we do not immediately expel Petronella and Angela, nor expose them to any publicity, but ask their parents to withdraw them privately after the Christmas holidays and place them elsewhere. Nothing need be said to the school about what they have done. The girls must promise to keep silence about it for their own sakes and to keep the rules very strictly till they leave, under threat of instant and public expulsion. I think the Island will understand that if they do not return after the holidays, we have *not* overlooked what has happened, nor taken too light a view of such an exposure, while we have acted for the future welfare of the girls themselves."

There was a long silence after Lucy had spoken, but it had an element of relief in it. Only Miss Lestrange entirely withdrew herself from Lucy's decision. She said coldly, "The violation of moral standards should come first."

"But," Lucy said, rising impatiently, "I don't believe there are any moral standards higher than helping human beings out of their difficulties, and I don't think we would be helping these children out of theirs by taking away their characters."

"People take away their own characters," Miss Lestrange said grimly.

"Adolescent girls haven't *got* characters," Elvira said. "They're in the stage when they're arriving at them. I am sure mercy is best—I still think . . ." Her voice trailed away into silence.

"In my opinion," Whiteleaf Ho Sung said with biting distinctness, "Mrs. Armstrong has solved our problem justly. I should, however, like to add that it might perhaps be wise for us all to remember that the solution of a problem is not always the way out from danger. It is sometimes the way into it."

There was a startled pause before the teachers separated, yet no one asked Whiteleaf Ho Sung to what dangers she referred.

CHAPTER XII

When Whiteleaf telephoned Lucy and asked her to come over to the annex to see Henriette, the fog-bound day was nearly over. A wall of blackness had replaced a wall of white.

"We are unhappy about her," Whiteleaf explained. "Perhaps she tried too hard to move so that her muscles have become deadlocked—perhaps she feels too much pain. She has asked for you several times. Dr. Calgary is still at St. George's. I do not think he can get here tonight in this deep fog."

"I will come at once," Lucy promised. She had a strange feeling when she slipped into the freezing mist, as if she were stepping outside time as well as outside Everslade. To what moment did she really belong? On nights like this she had called the airships down one by one to their safe anchorage, or she had had to send some frozen pilot and his crew back into jeopardy, to land elsewhere or nowhere. These far-off voices in the sky calling to her had long ago been silenced, yet she found herself listening tonight as if she could still catch one of their messages. Nothing stirred; her flashlight showed her only a bare hand's breadth of white and glistening grass. Yet she had the feeling that there was danger near her, and that in the darkness something or someone moved near her, step by step.

Nothing happened. She reached the annex in safety. Henriette's small, spotless room was full of light. The Paris doll, splendid in turquoise blue taffeta under a golden lamé coatee, was poised within reach of Henriette's hand. Her garden, within its pottery walls, shone complete as the hanging gardens of a miniature Babylon. Yet Henriette wept bitterly. There was something terrifying in the enforced stillness of her small rigid body under a rain of tears.

"I am so so glad—so glad you have come!" Henriette whispered.

"Then you must stop crying," Lucy told her, "for I have never seen anyone glad with so grave a face. Why are you crying, Henriette?"

"I don't know," Henriette said uncertainly. "I wanted you. I wanted Philip. The others are good to me, but they are not good to me in French—I am French—Maman used to say to me, '*J'y suis, j'y reste*.' I can move—you know that I can move, Madame Lucy?"

"Yes," Lucy said eagerly. "I would have come sooner to see you move but I could not get away. It is a miracle, and you are crying after such a miracle!"

"I cried when I moved," Henriette explained gravely, "first because I thought it was a dream. I have often before dreamed that I could fly—run—move—and then woke up and found nothing in me moved. But this morning Whiteleaf came in and told me that it was not a dream but that was only part of why I cried. If I tell you, I don't want you to tell anyone else."

"It shall be our secret," Lucy promised. Henriette stopped crying but her eyes watched Lucy with the penetration of one all of whose other senses are trapped into that single one of sight.

"When I move," she whispered, "I remember! I remember what happened in the boat."

"What happened is now over and can't happen any more," Lucy said firmly, and saw for the thousandth time a man fall like a burning torch into the sea.

"It happened then," Henriette said sternly. Lucy was silent.

"There were a lot of people in the boat," Henriette went on, her eyes fixed earnestly on Lucy's. "I've forgotten how many—all men but us. I only remember the Captain well, because he was our friend till—till this happened!" She drew a long pained breath before she went on. "At night I slept in *Maman-chérie's* arms. It was easy then because I could move my legs and all of me, like anyone else. If anything ugly happened—and ugly things had to happen in that boat—*Maman-chérie* would tell me to hide my head against her, and I did. Once two men struck each other—it was terrible to watch their faces getting angrier and angrier, but the Captain stopped them, and once a man cried out for a very long time and when I looked again he wasn't there at all, and I said, 'Where is the crying man?' No one answered me. The waves, too, were so big you would not think there was room for them in the sky, and when they fell against the boat they hissed all over us."

A shiver came and went across the motionless body of the child. Lucy pulled the soft blue blanket closer. She wondered if she should try to stop the child's awakened memories, but before she could decide to check them, the high, feverish voice went on. "The Captain often smiled at us! Sometimes he said to the men, 'See how good they are, those two—a woman and a child!' He gave each of us our food and a little drink in a rubber cup. Our throats were dry so we were glad to drink it, but it was

nasty, that water in the little rubber cup. One night it was very cold and *Maman-chérie* held me tight, but she was cold herself so it wasn't much warmer to be held tight, and suddenly she stopped holding me and I fell out of her arms onto the floor of the boat!"

"Don't tell me any more unless you want to," Lucy whispered, her lips close against the child's cheek.

"The Captain picked me up," Henriette went on steadily. "He made me feel warm against his chest and he kept saying, 'Sleep. Sleep, little one. Sleep.' So I pretended to sleep, but I didn't really sleep, for I was afraid. I was *right* to be afraid, Madame, for even while he held me they took my *Maman-chérie* and threw her into the sea!"

"It was a dream; perhaps it was a dream," Lucy whispered.

"I used to say that," Henriette answered with her grave accusing eyes fixed upon Lucy's. "But when I could move—then I knew that it was all quite true—and that is why I don't want to move any more, even if I can. Because to move is to feel alive—and, Madame, I think it is too cruel to be alive!"

Philip's resonant voice broke the silence.

"If you are alive *enough*, life is not cruel—it is friendly," he told Henriette, kneeling beside her. "Your mother was dead. She could not feel any more when they threw her body into the sea. If she had been even a little alive, she would never have let you fall out of her arms."

"No, no, that is true," Henriette agreed. "But why *must* she be dead? That I find cruel."

"I don't know why," Philip said bluntly. "All my life I have wanted to prevent death, but often I cannot. I can only tell you that when our bodies die we have no further use for them. They can go into the sea or into the earth or into the air. It does not matter. But while you have life in you, you must use it. Life is power, it is movement, Henriette!"

The urgent strength in Philip's eyes took the place of Henriette's grief; with the quick resilience of a child toward action, she cried, "Shall we show her now—shall we show Madame Lucy now that I can really move?"

Their eyes met across the bed, for the first time Lucy felt that he had accepted her as a fellow human being, at work upon a common task.

"Yes, we will show her," he told Henriette quietly, while he drew down the soft blankets to free her from all restrictions other than her own.

"Have you watched a chicken break out of its shell? Only one little chip at a time, on and on, he has to tap with his own little beak, nothing else can help him, and in the end the whole chicken has set himself free!" Philip told her.

"Can you see, Madame," Henriette whispered excitedly. "This way—I move my head and then this arm! It hurts, it tingles—but I move it! It *does* move, Philip?"

"Certainly it moves," Philip told her triumphantly, "it moves more than yesterday! Soon you will be able to see on both sides of you. You will be making the world you live in larger every time you move!"

Lucy watched the slow tortured little jerk as if she were watching day break for the first time.

"Whiteleaf!" Philip called without looking up from the child.

It was of course natural, Lucy told herself, that he should call Whiteleaf by her name, and equally natural that she should be immediately at his side.

Lucy withdrew her arm from the bed and Whiteleaf slipped into her place. Henriette, ignoring the new pains that pricked and stung all over her unused muscles, strove to meet Philip's hands and voice in one consuming effort. Now at last, quite visibly, her little body moved. No one noticed when Lucy got up and slipped out into the fog.

CHAPTER XIII

Blotted out by fog, his car hidden in a siding off the main road, Philip Calgary listened intently until he heard the light footfalls he was expecting. "You are there, Philip?" Whiteleaf whispered.

The fatigue and tension of his exhausted mind and body sank into ease, the deep lines on his face smoothed themselves out into the face of a much younger man. He opened his arms to clasp her slender unseen body. The kiss that bound them together had lost the wonder of first love, but its significance had grown deeper.

"You are trembling," Philip whispered. "Were you frightened coming out alone in this fog?"

"I was not frightened of the fog," Whiteleaf answered. "But the way tonight seemed long, and suddenly—I don't know why—I thought you might not be here!"

"How should I not be here?" Philip murmured, touching the satin smoothness of her cheek with his lips as lightly as a butterfly's wings brush the petals of a flower. "This car is our home, and how beautiful you make it every time you come!"

"Tonight I see nothing but darkness," Whiteleaf said with a little laugh of mockery, "but comfortable I can still try to make it. Here is a thermos full of coffee and a packet of sandwiches. Eat and drink! I was sorry to make you dash up our mountain in this fog so late in the day, but for Henriette what has happened is a great adventure, the greatest perhaps in her life—indeed it is her life! And I did not dare to risk its going wrong. Now she is at peace, and Myra will sit with her till I return. So perhaps we can have one hour together? But you will have so short a night, after you drive back, two such short nights, Philip, and I am responsible for them!"

"I shall have been with you—I am already rested—and you were right to send for me both times. But I must confess I asked myself why that white woman was there at the annex again tonight?"

Whiteleaf withdrew herself a little, but her head still leaned against his shoulder and she kept her small strong hands in his. "She has a right, Mrs. Armstrong," Whiteleaf murmured, "since the child loves her. Philip, you

will think me very small and foolish when I tell you that I am jealous of this love. All these months I have worked on that little body and tried to draw strength out of her captive mind, and this girl comes—suddenly, by accident, without work, and the child moves! For this woman, for a few French words with the right accent—because of a doll from Paris—life is given back to Henriette! Can you believe that I should mind?"

"Without your work," Philip told her dryly, "without the Kenny treatment, no amount of dolls from Paris would have helped Henriette. When these cases at last release themselves it is always very mysterious and seems like a miracle. But I told you from the first, the blood vessels were not shriveled, I always believed that Henriette could regain movement, and that the root of the delay in her recovery from illness was shock. I saw her when the boat landed. She was very nearly dead, and though she recovered physically, something was blocked in her, so that when this illness seized her she had not the full strength needed to respond to the treatment. The great miracle is all yours, my darling. Mrs. Armstrong's part in it was the merest chance—a resemblance perhaps to the child's mother. I saw that Mrs. Armstrong herself had been crying. Perhaps she is a hysterical type, yet she behaved well last night—considering!"

Whiteleaf shifted in his arms, took a cigarette, lit it, and gave Philip one, lighting it from her own, then she said very slowly, and with little pauses to inhale, "What do you make of her, this English girl, with whom you were alone for the first time last night?"

"I make nothing of her," Philip replied brusquely. "You know as well as I do what any colored man thinks of a white woman when he sees her alone for the first time. He realizes that his manhood is a passive insult to her, and he behaves accordingly. If he has any pride he ignores her. If she speaks to him it is like a person on a cliff throwing a pebble into the sea. A man is, after all, a man as well as a human being. If he is a busy man with a satisfied heart as I am, he will not have even the flicker of a desire for such a woman, yet the knowledge of how she would repudiate such a desire makes him hate her at first sight. If she is a decent woman and treats him like a human being, he may in time get over this feeling, but dislike is his first reaction, and it was mine last night."

"Yet she is not altogether to be disliked," Whiteleaf said mildly. "She is human—I might almost say that she is human *first*, before she is a white woman."

"That would be saying a good deal," Philip observed ironically. "I believe that Mrs. Armstrong *did* talk to me in a way they consider friendly. The English have a superficially intimate and most misleading way of talking to strangers when they decide to unburden themselves of speech at all. They speak as if they really wanted to know you, and they take it for granted that you must want to know them—I can't think why."

"Perhaps that is true," Whiteleaf agreed, puffing contentedly at her cigarette. "I think in general the English do not wish either to be intimate or to be an enemy. It is quite strange how hard it is to force enmity into the English. One would have thought the Germans would have succeeded, but we may find even they have not. This girl is casual and kind—very kind, Philip—and that is all she is."

"And does it matter," Philip inquired, "what she is?" and as he asked Whiteleaf he drew her closer into his arms. Whiteleaf did not answer his question directly; before she spoke again she put out her cigarette and was silent for a long time, her head against his heart. At last she said: "Do you think them—European women—more beautiful than ours? Their pink color and the way their eyes are shaped, perhaps? I have looked at Mrs. Armstrong carefully, for I believe she is better-looking than most English girls on this island. She has also a sort of fineness. And I ask myself, What to an Asiatic or to a West Indian man does she really look like? What do you think of her yourself, Philip?"

"I have never looked closely at any white woman," Philip answered after a reflective pause. "If I pass them on a beach bathing, I think their bodies ungraceful and without curves—perhaps a very few stand out as worth a second glance, but most of them resemble a boy in early adolescence. This is a very nice sight too, and you say to yourself if he is a good specimen, 'This boy will turn out well,' but he is not yet turned out. Possibly these English girls suffer from the same inhibitions in their minds. They are stiff little creatures compared to West Indian or Asiatic girls, and if they are not stiff they cringe and poke their heads. As for their color, as most of it comes out of pots or is lost in powder, I do not always know where or what it is. I would as soon kiss a scarlet letter box as their lips."

"But Lucy is not very like such women," Whiteleaf reminded him. "Her cheeks are their own color. I do not think there is paint on her lips, and as for her eyes, I must say, Philip, they are a most heavenly blue!"

"It does not interest me very much to talk of her!" Philip said, moving impatiently. "What I *do* know about her is that she takes her times off with

Robert Anstruther. You can very well imagine that *his* friends are not people I should care to consider favorably!"

"But she cannot know what happened to Jenny—seven years ago," Whiteleaf objected gently. "I sometimes wish she knew a little more about us all—for her own safety."

"Well, yes, I too am sorry," Philip admitted, "that this girl has made such a dangerous friendship with Elvira, but what can we do about it? After all, it is not our business what mistakes she makes."

"But perhaps it *is* a little our business!" Whiteleaf objected softly. "I believe she truly wants to help our children. She is already loved by them. Except for that bad little group of Elvira's, all are drawn toward her. She gives them knowledge. You who think always of this Island, Philip, and what is good for it, would wish to protect any white person who wants to help us, would you not?"

Philip tossed his lighted cigarette into the fog and waited for the hiss it gave as the grass touched it, before he answered Whiteleaf.

"Yes, I do want her to be protected! We need education on this Island as a man dying of thirst in a desert needs water. Certainly we owe something to those who try to bring it to us. But what particular danger do you think threatens her?"

"I do not like coincidences," Whiteleaf said cautiously, "especially I do not like them when they seem to lead in the same direction. It was a coincidence that Elvira was out last night—she was in charge—she meets mysterious friends on the road in this fog, in which it is already mysterious that she should have gone for a walk. Adassa, to whom she telephones, forgets to give her message to Mrs. Armstrong. Margorie, who is always to keep an eye on those two mischiefs, Petronella and Angela, lets them elude her. She then suggests to Mrs. Armstrong at ten o'clock at night where these girls are. Margorie Fielding has lived many years on this Island, she must know that to go to a roadhouse at night to bring back unwilling dark girls is hardly the task for a strange white woman. Is it conceivable that Elvira is not concerned in all this? That she gave Margorie no explanation, no orders before she goes off into that fog?"

"What *is* between them?" Philip asked irritably. "What is between adolescent girls and older women, when an older woman wants power as a dope fiend wants dope?" Whiteleaf answered.

"I should suppose every gratification possible to lovers—without release. I am sure Elvira would avoid, and indeed has no need for physical surrenders. She can get what she wants from such girls without it."

Philip laughed. "You know her about as well as I do," he admitted. "She is like an octopus wanting its dinner—eight arms to reach it with, and that omnivorous stomach into which to pour her prey. If one arm misses, she has the other seven to fall back on. Well, so she held me once as a boy. Every dream I had was Elvira's, and crushed by her. God! I was glad to get away to England! And it was due to *you*, Whiteleaf, that the boy she trapped never came back to her."

"That he did not will hardly make her safer for other women," Whiteleaf reminded Philip. "I think Elvira has had enough of men—her career is now her main object. Ask yourself is it likely that Elvira will let her school stay in this white girl's hands?"

"But what can she do about it?" Philip demanded uncomfortably. "The committee made their choice. King's House backed it—an inconceivably foolish choice, I agree, to send a girl of that age to take over from a woman ten years her senior and of such a type as Elvira. But the thing's done. I don't see that Elvira can do anything beyond what she has set out to do—charm Mrs. Armstrong into an obedient tool. Certainly I can't prevent her, and I am sure you have already done all you could."

"I fear it is not so simple," Whiteleaf said with a sigh. "The girl has character. She is not supine. This morning she held a staff meeting to settle what should be done with the two girls. It was a clever move and she made a good decision to which each of us had contributed, but we decided what was against Elvira's expressed wishes. Of course Mrs. Armstrong does not know the full strength of Elvira's wishes. Petronella is Elvira's child."

"That I did not know myself!" Philip exclaimed in astonishment. "I knew she had one, a white man's child, long ago when she was fooling me. No doubt I would have accepted the child *as* mine—which was her intention—if I had not found out that she had lied to me. Even at sixteen I could not swallow lies. If Petronella really was this child I can see very well that Elvira might become dangerous in order to save her."

"She *must* get rid of Mrs. Armstrong now," Whiteleaf said firmly. "And she must do it soon, before Christmas, when Lucy has arranged to have the girls privately withdrawn by their families. As to enchant Mrs. Armstrong has not been enough, Elvira will soon become violent."

"Yes, she will get by guile what she *can*, and only by force what she must," Philip agreed. "Have you no access to the committee?"

"Oh, yes, I have access," Whiteleaf laughed. "By some of them I am very highly considered, but you must not forget that I am an Asiatic *and* that I have no proofs! Elvira has covered her tracks well—she is so respected and respectable. She goes to church and loves the King of England. Of what use is access to the committee against all that? *I* have no religion, I am only a Chinese, and as for as kings go, it is even suspected that I am a Communist!"

"Can Nancy Peck do nothing?" Philip asked. "She is a good girl. She lives under the same roof with Elvira and has common sense. You might get her to speak plainly to the committee—about Elvira's exerted attraction over the older girls. I suppose they *just* know such things exist and are not advisable?"

"And if she does—but she will not—would either Mrs. Armstrong or the committee believe her? Besides, Nancy is afraid. Something happened not long ago which upset her. She is a good girl, as you say, but she has not much courage. All that she has goes into her arms and legs. You cannot explain Duppys to committees without courage."

"Obeah!" Philip cried. "How has that got in? Such a thing is unbelievable in a good school."

"One evening when Mrs. Armstrong went to bed," Whiteleaf related with a gravity that matched his own, "while she was undressing she noticed a strange and disagreeable smell. It seemed to come from the bed, so she turned down the sheets and there lay a Johnny Crow, quite dead, of course—you know how the bird hangs—after rain to dry his wings, as if crucified—his shabby lattice wings stretched out on either side of him? His snake-small, evil head, pink and bare, stretched out on her pillow. An ugly thing for a young woman to find in her bed. Nancy's room is next to hers and it was to Nancy that Mrs. Armstrong went.

" 'What was it done for?' the English girl asked her. She was puzzled and not frightened, Nancy said. Nancy, knowing it was Obeah, was terrified. 'I am afraid someone wishes to do you harm,' she answered at last. 'Of course I am very fond of birds,' Mrs. Armstrong said, 'but this is such an ugly one. I couldn't mind its being dead less. I think this must just be a practical joke. We will throw it into the dustbin and say nothing about it. This will disappoint whoever did it.' And so—as a joke—the Johnny Crow went into the dustbin."

"Who did it?" Philip asked fiercely. "I must see MacTaggert at once about it. Ransom will be furious when I tell him. We have got to find out who is responsible."

"It is not easy to kill such a bird, in just that manner," Whiteleaf said thoughtfully. "Not Elvira, I think—she does not give warnings. No other teacher—these older women have a horror of Obeah because they were brought up to fear it, and also because they look upon it as a social *gaffe*! Adassa, Elvira's maid, perhaps. Perhaps Petronella or one of the older girls, if they had the nerve and the knowledge! Myra tried to find out who did it, but there was no trace of it—no excitement in the school—no whisper about it."

"I don't like what you tell me," Philip said. "It is much more serious than I thought. We must do what we can. You must go back now and get some sleep. You need rest, my darling. For two nights now neither of us has had very much, and all for the sake of a silly young Englishwoman, who means nothing to either of us. Do not mix yourself up with what goes on at the school. I'll speak to MacTaggert tomorrow."

Whiteleaf drew his head down to her lips and kissed him with the same firm tenderness with which she had greeted him, then with a long sigh that welled up slowly from the bottom of her heart, she slipped out of his arms into the wet darkness.

CHAPTER XIV

A wind blew over the summit to the sea, and at dawn the fog broke into strange drifting figures, slender ribbons, spirals and even balls of mist. They danced across the terrace of Everslade in a majestic saraband sinking into the dark mass of the old mansion, as if recalled by an invisible dancing master.

One star shone in the pale sky, remote and aloof, even from the ether through which it swung, vanished suddenly, and left the blue dome empty for the day.

At the gate of the mist-drenched garden Bob Anstruther held two horses, a black and a bay, their coats groomed to a gleaming satin. "I wanted to get the whole of your one free day," Bob said to Lucy as he mounted her on the tall black stallion, "so I suited before the fog broke. I'm not going to share your company with any of our greedy planters. W.A.A.F.-heroine fever has seized the Island! Everyone wants to meet you, but today I've something to show you very few people have seen. Nero will carry you like a padded rock, but it's a long ride." Lucy felt as she mounted Nero as if she had come back to something that especially belonged to her. She looked down at Bob from her seat on the big considerate stallion with the same happy sense of possession. She felt this morning as if she knew Bob as a mother knows her son. She liked his well-cut riding breeches, his open shirt, showing the white bare column of his throat. There was no mystery in the willful mouth and clear gray eyes looking upward into her own. The black horse shifted to accustom himself to the light, firm figure above him.

"All you've got to do is to trust him," Bob assured her, mounting his own restless bay. "Are you all right? We climb first."

Lucy nodded. The black horse moved with a strong, even stride, sure of himself and hardly conscious of his light rider. The wind blew in their faces with extraordinary freshness and freedom, as if it were just released from long captivity.

The clusters of blue petunia blossoms on the Lignum Vitae wavered and danced like butterflies. The mountains, flooded with golden light after their three-day fog, shone with untinctured splendor. Green was not a color but an orchestra of a hundred instruments, each surrendering its individual tone, to

form the general harmony. Little flowers shot out of fern shadows, ginger and orange, rose color or blue. From a stream's side a lily rose against its background of dark green with such startling whiteness that it looked as if it had been dipped in milk. Birds spilled their first songs into the air, each song a different device to snare a lover, mockingbird, canary, and linnet. Behind these distincter messages the wood doves never ceased their background of wistful soft complaint.

Wrapped in the first gentleness of the sunlight, Lucy forgot her problems. She wished that she could ride forever through fragrant air while the light flickered between wet leaves. Bob sat erect and yet elastic, singing a tuneless melody to himself, as if he too had slipped beyond private concerns into a genial realm where memory was blotted out. It was very easy to talk to him. Lucy never had to think what to say next or to ask herself if Bob would mind what she said. Their country and its habits of life were equally a part of them.

The moment Lucy saw Bob she had realized that the most vital thing that could happen to the Island was the next visit of the M.C.C. The races ranked second in importance, and finally there would be the tennis tournament, and both Bob and Lucy were strong players. She *must* go in for the tournament, Bob assured her as they reached the Gap, school or no school. Besides, nothing could be better for Everslade than a headmistress who could beat the Island champion. Mrs. Watkins had been the champion far too long anyhow; the Island liked changes.

"Yes, but, Bob," Lucy complained, "there is another island here—surely you forget almost all my children are dark, and so are their parents. I'm not at all sure they'd like my giving up my time to practice tennis when I ought to be running their school."

They stood their horses for a breather on the top of the ridge. A steady stream of air caught them up into itself. Beneath them the forest covered the slopes in a dense cloak of green, striped with gorges full of purple mist.

"After all, the British *are* the Island," Bob reminded Lucy. "We conquered it—we've held it for three hundred years—it's ours." "Does conquering make a thing ours?" Lucy asked herself, gazing in silence down toward the quivering plain.

Foothills feathered with waving palms broke away from the mountainside, each one a secret kingdom, their little valleys closed into invisibility by the waving foliage. Pines changed to palms and Flames-of-the-Forest punctuated the green background like blazing torches. By the

water course that descended with them ferns were as tall as trees. Occasionally a leaf-thatched wooden shack crouched back from a precipitous turn of the path, until the ridge itself melted into a distant line of blue. "Here's an even bit of land where we can stretch the horses," Bob told her. Obediently Lucy put the steel-muscled Nero into a canter. Peacock blue and emerald green, the Island flowed past. It did not look particularly English.

"As for the Americans," Bob continued, pulling up with a cautious trot as the path jerked downward, "they're perfectly sound about sport and with us to a man."

"Why must we always talk, whether we're English or American," Lucy asked, "as if we mattered most?"

"Because I suppose we *do*!" Bob answered in a shocked and puzzled voice. "We planters aren't such a bad set really, Lucy. All the darkies know, we've taught them. They share quite a lot of our tastes too. You ought to see the crowd that turns up for a cricket match, and even when they're practically starving over there in the red dust land they have regattas of their own—jolly good ones, too."

Lucy was silent. She wasn't quite sure herself what she felt about the Island, but she knew the test of possession wasn't cricket matches or regattas.

After a time, as they picked their way slowly down the precipitous bridle path, Lucy asked, "What did you really think about that roadhouse trouble—did I do right about those girls?"

"Yes, I should think so," Bob answered slowly over his shoulder. "I was sorry for the poor little brats though, and of course, I don't think you ought to have gone there yourself—even with MacTaggert. It was nice of you, of course, but I didn't somehow like to think of it. All those fellows staring at you and even turning nasty and shouting things perhaps. Still, if MacTaggert thought it was all right I expect it was. Did you know he preached about it last Sunday? Don't look so startled. The men talked, of course, so anyhow the beans had been already spilled. Our cook goes to his church and she seemed to think he'd been pretty fine explaining it all to them. The men had been on their ear at first, about the girls being penalized for having their bit of fun. Well, it seems old MacTaggert painted up the Island for them—said what fine women they had, and ought to have, and how it would never do to get these girls into bad ways and all that. What pleased the men most apparently was that you'd listened to Nancy Peck, who's one of themselves,

though mind you, in a perfectly different category, the pick of the Island. It was as if you'd foisted on them their own Joan of Arc! And after MacTaggert told them that, he got them eating out of his hand."

They came out on to a bare hillside with disheveled little wooden shacks, a locked, dim-windowed church, and a small scattered crowd of children, donkeys, and goats. "They call this part of the country Friendship." Bob laughed apologetically. "I suppose they're all at daggers drawn, poor fellows. There's hardly anything they can cultivate on such a slope, except yams, and I'm told they steal each other's. See that barn? It's their school, and quite a good one, I believe. Anyhow it's the center of any decent life there is for twenty miles round. They haven't a yard for the children to play in; the only bit of level ground is the churchyard. The church is locked though the school's far too full, and they aren't allowed the use of it. The Church of England parson keeps away and has the key. Well, you can't blame parsons altogether, though I believe the Romans and the Free Churches do better. Probably the Friendship parson lives miles away, has no car and half a dozen churches to look after. Nobody helps these people except a colored doctor, who hasn't a bean and no time to spare, but he comes up once a fortnight for a day to look after them and has actually started a baby clinic, though he hasn't a spot to see them in except half a shed, shared with goats and chickens. It's pretty rough luck for this part of the country. The hurricane took the life out of them and the rest of the Island just keep away. Now we're on the flat again—we can go."

The wind blew in soft, wild, and wet from the sea. A grass path led them over black rocks and stubble, across open bogland to the shore. Long swathes of coconut palm lay in mangled heaps, their tortured upflung branches stretched in the abandonment of a forgotten battlefield. As far as Lucy could see there was nothing but desolation. The cliff rose suddenly and obscured the sea.

"Now we leave the main road," Bob said quietly. "Look where you're going." He pulled back the boughs of what had seemed an impassable thicket and disclosed a narrow grass path. Nero padded his way through and the branches dropped behind him. The undergrowth was so thick they could see nothing on either side of them. The path dropped suddenly to a small grassy plateau. Between high and wooded cliffs there was a strip of golden-white sand. The stream they had followed over the mountainside reappeared across the sand and dropped from a green jade pool, like a rush of diamonds toward the sea. A grove of coconut trees, slender and undamaged, strode to the waves' edge. The cliffs were covered with undergrowth. Tall ferns

played their leaf shadows across the pool, pink orchids sprang from the trunks of trees.

The sea was a deep turquoise blue, edged with white foam. "Bob," Lucy cried, "this *must* be paradise!" To Lucy's astonishment Bob said nothing at all. He did not even smile. It was curious that he should not wish to share the incredible beauty he had brought Lucy to see.

"You'd think not even Robinson Crusoe had landed here," Lucy cried. "But, look, beyond those coconut trees, isn't there a sort of shack with a bougainvillaea spreading over it, as if someone had once lived there?"

"It's just a bathing hut," Bob told her without following her eyes. "You can undress there—it's hot enough for a bathe. I did tell you to bring something to bathe in, didn't I? Funny about that bougainvillaea," he added in an undertone, as if he were speaking to himself. He shouted, and as his voice rang from cliff to cliff a strange mocking echo followed it.

A man came out of the bushes. He came rather reluctantly forward, a tattered, emaciated man. Neither he nor Bob—though it was apparent that they knew each other—seemed particularly pleased at this meeting. The man took the horses and moved away from them, erect and careless, as if the sea and his own loneliness had given him, in spite of his starved look, a special courage. He was not in the least afraid of Bob, Lucy thought, but he didn't like him, and this was odd because Bob had a friendly and pleasant way of talking to natives, as if, even when they were strangers, he already knew them.

"He's good with horses," Bob said grudgingly, looking after the man.

"But how on earth did you know he was here?" Lucy demanded.

"Well, he should be somewhere about—he squats on the cliff. As a matter of fact this place belongs to me and I let him stay on, provided he doesn't let anyone else near, rent free. He can cultivate enough to live on, what he likes, where he likes, but he must keep his goats and children away from the cove. Whenever I turn up I give him something extra. As a matter of fact I haven't been here since I got back, so he quite well might *not* have been handy. I just took a chance. Ready for a bathe?"

Lucy said she was. She found the hut clean, with a wooden floor. It was large enough to live in, but there was no furniture, only a few nails on the walls, as if pictures had once hung there.

"Quite a lot of little things to remember," Bob told Lucy as they ran together hand in hand toward the sea. "Fish, currents, undertow—that reef

over there sucks you in like the dickens if you go too near it. Best way is to swim straight out, half as far as you feel you can, and keep in line with the coconuts while you swim back."

The first wave slipped seductively around Lucy and then she found herself suddenly out in a sea so alive with salt that it seemed to have a personality of its own. She had never been so managed by the sea before. No two waves came the same way, and even when they had swum into deep water where there was nothing but a rhythmic swell, a sudden wave might rear itself up and break all over you without the least warning.

"Feel all right?" Bob asked.

"I feel too good to be true," laughed Lucy. She had a new kind of body in this bright and willful sea, all the things she had learned about swimming she had to adjust to its enchanting irregularities. She was lighter than she had ever dreamed of being, and the sea, though less amenable to her knowledge of it, seemed prepared to do more for her. They swam out untiringly to a steady American crawl, but as Bob had told her, swimming back was a different matter. The indulgent sea, obedient to their every whim, their playfellow, became suddenly a stringent element alive to its own purposes. The coconut trees were pulled backward by an invisible hand, all the swimmers' strength had to be used to keep them from being carried toward the black reef.

"I can give you a tow if you want it," Bob shouted, but Lucy, sinking deeper into the water, fought for herself inch by inch. She swam deep and took her breath economically, turning on her back to rest, her toes pointed. The sky swooped down on her blue and gold, gold and blue, and there was Bob's voice again, "We're nearly in," and suddenly, "Let your feet down, and mind the surf!" Lifted in, and then thundered over as if she were caught by a waterfall, Lucy clung to the wet, warm sand.

It was over. The new element had gone, the heat swirled over her. They lay on the sand side by side under the shelter of a tall drooping fern, and watched the fish riding the surf in from the sea. A parrot fish, blue as a kingfisher, flashed magnificently past them upstream, into the green jade pool. Shoals of semitransparent fish with a faint pink glow from the light on the water pushed their wavering, less impulsive way up the stream. Fish coming down from the pool toward the sea glided by so fast the eye could hardly seize them.

"It's like watching a Disney film creating itself," Lucy whispered. "Do you see how their hearts beat through their cheeks? I shall never feel fish

can't be hurt any more!"

Bob had stored their lunch between two wet stones, well covered from the impassioned curiosity of an army of crabs. It was intact and they ate in wild rapture. Cider tasted like champagne. Lulled by sun and air, with Bob's rucksack under her head, Lucy dropped asleep. When she woke she saw by the depth of the shadows under the palms that it must be late afternoon.

There was no sign of Bob. The cove was hushed in golden peace. Only the stream made a sound, idly and inconsequently, as it slipped over the polished stones while further off the sea beat its hollow song at the sand's edge. The wind had dropped and no leaf stirred. A few yards from where Lucy lay, clear of the cliff's undergrowth, sailed a splendid bird. Its great wings flapped with soundless ease, its long, slim pink legs trailed in the sunny air. The bird was so dazzlingly white and luminous that Lucy thought, "This can't be real, it's part of a dream." Arching its wings against the invisible air, and taking a slow, intricate turn, the snow-white heron headed out to sea. Was it the wind's sigh, or the sigh of a human being, so close to Lucy's face? The sound followed the flight of the bird. Once more the cove was empty of any life except Lucy's own. "Bob," she called a little shakily, "Bob, where are you?"

Bob's voice answered her reassuringly. He must have been dressing behind a rock on the far side of the cove. He came slowly toward her through the coconut grove, a coconut in his hand.

"Do you want to go all out, Robinson Crusoe?" he asked Lucy. "It's a good drink and I found my old machete." He opened the shaggy ball, turning it into a goblet for its own milk. "You'd better dress," Bob told her reprovingly. "You'll catch cold. How incredibly white you are, Lucy! I suppose you'll get beige and bronze like the rest of us soon. Had enough?" Bob took the coconut away from her, turning it carefully so that he drank from the place Lucy's lips had touched. His eyes met hers with a serious, unsmiling tenderness.

Lucy hoped that Bob wouldn't make love to her. She thought to herself, "If he does, it'll spoil our day." But she was rather surprised that Bob didn't make love to her, and left the day unspoiled.

The tattered skeleton brought back the horses; rubbed down, fed and watered, they looked as fresh as when they had started. Bob lifted Lucy onto Nero's back and turned away a little to speak to the man. The man took the money Bob gave him without a nod, and while Bob was mounting Lucy watched his eyes grow heavy with hate as he gazed after Bob. They looked

like black polished stone. Yet Bob had spoken nicely to the fellow, he had given him money. The man didn't look at Lucy at all. She might not have been there for all the notice he took of her. He did not answer her good-by to him either, but turned his back and vanished into the bushes without a glance or a sound.

"I don't think I ever want to see that cove again," Lucy said as she and Bob took their last look at it together. "Why not?" Bob exclaimed, astonished. "I thought you'd fallen in love with the place."

"That's just why," Lucy answered. "It's too beautiful to believe in. I feel as if I'd walked out of the world and I have a feeling you can't do that twice, and come back alive. That cove is like a dream—not even my own—it's like somebody else's dream. I know it sounds queer, but I had the feeling all the time I was there that it *did* belong to somebody else."

Bob stared back at Lucy, his hand pressed hard on his horse's flank.

"Belonged to somebody else?" he said slowly and incredulously. "Well, it doesn't, Lucy. I thought I'd told you I bought it for a song, donkey's years ago. As far as it belongs to anyone, it belongs to me. I've never shown it to a soul since the war, and I never intend to show it to anyone but you."

CHAPTER XV

The golden day was closing fast when Bob rode away into the shadows. No child was visible on the terrace. The great house seemed to have moved back and to have become a part of the peak behind it.

Lucy paused on her way upstairs to listen for an accustomed sound, but she heard nothing at all, not the tinkle of a teacup nor a child's voice. Then the silence broke and the shadowy mansion filled to the brim with music. "It's Grace," Lucy reminded herself. "They're singing the Amen."

Phrase by phrase, the ascending melody floated through the darkening house. The Amen had reached its last reiterated close when Lucy leaned for a moment against her balcony rail to watch the vanishing light. The rail she leaned on moved a little under her weight, and then with a sickening jerk she found herself clinging to sticky closed convolvulus in the empty air. She tried to move back as the rail fell outward, but someone or something pushed her forward. Her hands tore vainly at the unsubstantial creepers. The crash when it came seemed to end the earth as well as Lucy.

When she woke both time and space had disappeared. She was conscious only of sensation. Violent rending pain beat through her head, and wave after wave of acute nausea swept over her. She heard a low voice saying, "She's coming round." "Round where?" Lucy thought irritably. When she lifted with incredible difficulty the weight of her eyelids, a faint light hideously assailed her. She could have screamed to be back again in complete darkness.

She found herself looking into a handsome, arrogant face, half-known but nameless. The brooding, luminous dark eyes under thick black eyebrows looked not unkindly into hers. Her eyes followed his presence more easily than her mind. Something banged and ached in her head as if it were a door that couldn't stop slamming, and she could only think between the slams.

"Who are you?" Lucy murmured, with long pauses between the escaping words.

"I am Philip Calgary," the face answered rather severely. "You have had slight concussion from a fall and your arm is broken. I have set it for you. It's in plaster so you won't be able to move it just yet." A very gentle and yet penetrating voice asked, "Shall I give the injection now?"

There seemed, however, not to be two people in the room, but one. Lucy could not explain to herself how this was since there were two voices. Philip's voice said, "Yes," yet the being whose skilled hands touched her with such firm lightness and the slight prick on her arm that followed seemed to emanate from the same mind, the same will, the same strong understanding serenity.

The pain receded slowly, as if what had been part of Lucy had now become an onlooker. Philip's eyes, meeting hers, smiled. "You'll be better now," he said. It was as if a lantern had been lit behind the heavy brows. All Philip's hidden humor, courage, and indomitable patience—the essential friendliness of the man himself—flashed into his brief smile, then his lips closed as if he had betrayed a secret to an enemy. "It is not necessary for you to see me again," he said coldly. "I will ring up Lemon, and I'm sure he'll come—at the latest tomorrow. You have only to keep still, and you'll be all right. The sickness will pass."

"Oh, but why?" Lucy cried. "Please come back, don't send for Dr. Lemon!" It was incredible to her, in the sinking darkness, to lose that strong, trusted face.

"You *must* go on helping her," the other voice said urgently, but still as if the heart to which Whiteleaf spoke was not a separate heart.

"Because you are white, and I am not," Philip answered Lucy, hardly moving his lips to say it.

"Please stay! Please go on helping me!" Lucy cried, before the door in her head slammed fast and left her in outer darkness.

When she emerged from the black world where there was only sensation without sense, Lucy found herself once more within time and space. Indeed the first words she said were "What time is it?" The room was darkened and yet Lucy had a feeling that there was light outside. She was not in her own room, the shaded lamp behind her revealed its clean emptiness. The walls were whitewashed, the ceiling was a smooth painted white, the floor was covered with glistening tiles. There was no furniture except the bed on which Lucy lay. Opposite her, a white porcelain vase stood on the floor holding a branch of poorman's orchid. This divided flower, half white, half dawn pink, so beautifully balanced, and with each delicate blossom carved upon the air, made her cry aloud, "But it's a Chinese room!"

"Yes, it's mine," Whiteleaf answered tranquilly. "It was the least noisy and I can keep it darker than the others. It is at the back of the annex. The window is close to you and when you can bear the light you will be able to

see the peak." As white as the room, as noiseless as a flower, Whiteleaf moved, so that Lucy's eyes rested on her small, immaculate figure without effort.

"It is ten o'clock in the morning," Whiteleaf told her, "and now you may have some tea, and since the pain must still be bad, an aspirin." It was curious how Lucy could see Whiteleaf and the room quite plainly for a moment and the next they were vague and indistinct as if walls of fog separated them from her sight.

She saw Philip more steadily when he came again. He was as tall as Michael and as well made, but Philip had a sort of tough litheness about him, different from Michael's slightly rigid stateliness.

Philip sat down by Lucy's bedside this time, instead of standing over her, and nothing was as gigantic about him as she had thought, though he still made the rest of the room look small. Lucy guessed how gentle his strong fingers could be before he touched her.

"I'm not going to hurt you much," he said quietly. "I'm just going to see how the scalp wound looks." Whiteleaf brought him a bowl and a towel. Everything Lucy needed came and went on a small glass table that moved noiselessly on rubber wheels.

The shutters of the windows were open, and the room was full of soft, shaded light, screened by heavy awnings.

"The scalp is healing up nicely," Philip said with satisfaction. "The skull isn't fractured—just rather a hard knock. I had to cut your hair away from each side of the wound, but it'll soon grow again. It's thick, healthy hair."

Lucy thought of the things other men had said of her hair, and smiled. Philip's lips looked for a moment as if they were going to smile too, but he stopped them in time. A sphinx couldn't have looked graver, Lucy thought, sitting alone for thousands of years on empty sand. "I don't remember your cutting my hair," she said reflectively.

"With concussion," Philip explained, "you are not always quite conscious."

"Is that what happened to the time?" Lucy asked anxiously.

"Yes," Philip told her, "that's what happened, but don't be afraid. You're not going to run away from time again. It will act as time usually acts, and run away from you. Just sleep whenever you can now, and don't talk more than you must."

"How much time," Lucy demanded, "did I run away from?" Philip was silent. Having rebandaged Lucy's head, he was feeling her pulse with his long steady fingers.

"A little over a week," he told Lucy at last. "You came round much sooner, but not for any length of time. Now you'll be all right except for headaches. Your arm will heal in no time. I shall take the plaster off next week."

"Oh!" cried Lucy, while pain tore through her head like an angry animal. "But the school, the school! What can they think of me? How could I have been such a *fool* as to fall off my balcony?"

Whiteleaf, moving softly as a shadow, stood between Lucy and the light.

"Nobody thinks the worse of you for an accident," she said reassuringly, "and the school is doing wonderfully well. Miss Loring carries out all your plans with the greatest faithfulness and success. Mrs. Gosse and Mr. Myers, our committee members, have both been up here, the Bishop's telephoned and the Anstruthers—mother and son—have called here twice. Mr. Robert Anstruther," Whiteleaf added, her voice taking a slightly higher pitch, "rings up daily. They ask constantly that you shall go to their house to recover as soon as you can be moved."

"Nothing could be more suitable," Philip said, rising and going to the window, where he stood with his back to Lucy.

"Did they—did the Anstruthers actually see me?" Lucy asked anxiously. "I must have looked so awful!"

"You looked—except for the bandage—very tidy," Whiteleaf told her. "Everything was in order. They came in only for a moment. It is not good to talk, whether one is conscious or not, with these head wounds."

"The children were singing as I came in," Lucy explained. "They'd hardly finished when I—I fell. It was dark on the balcony, and perhaps I made this up, but I *thought* someone pushed me!"

Philip said, without turning around, "I think you've talked enough now. I shall screen this light." Darkness and silence were what Lucy most longed for, and now she had them again.

Yet she felt sorry when she realized that neither Philip nor Whiteleaf was with her in the darkness.

CHAPTER XVI

It sometimes seemed to Philip Calgary that his mother knew all that was necessary for a human being to know. When she became blind and could no longer register the instant miracle of sight, her mind, retiring into its new hermitage, bereft of all external stimulants, gradually provided her with a new means of communication with the outside world.

Jessica Calgary was a silent woman, and through silence everything she had once seen now spoke to her.

Until her husband's death, when she was forty, every thought and feeling she possessed ran into her husband's heart. She had felt with his blood, seen with his eyes, and made her daily atmosphere out of the weather of his mind. After his early death Jessica's heart seemed to stop, and then, slowly righting itself, it flowed on, into her son's, yet there was a great gulf in the source of living between mother and son. Jessica Calgary had been educated by life, Philip by books as well as life.

His father had sold the land they possessed near the great seaport of St. George's to the Government for a fair price, in order to give his son the best education in his power. Only forest land, high up on the mountainside, remained to him, and there Philip built, after his father's death, the house in which his mother lived.

Jessica Calgary's mother had been a balm woman, and had brought her up to know the secret plants of the Island and their properties. Even now she could by the touch of her fingers and the scent on her palms tell each plant and move with untroubled certainty about her herb garden. Thyme and aniseed, sage and marjoram were the trusted sentinels of her small kingdom. Jessica alone knew the names and qualities of the rarer herbs she had planted, and what she could not grow she could find in more distant places.

She earned enough to keep herself in sparse and austere comfort, while Philip fitted himself, in exile, for his career. Balm women were now forbidden, but Jessica knew people from all over the Island who came to her regularly still for the ancient remedies. She cultivated all the crops her mountain land would bear, to live on; cassava, eggplants, yams, and beans flourished. A deep, sheltered ravine with a stream running through it was part of their property. Up the steep slope she planted bananas and coffee

berries. Close to the house pimento trees with their greenish bark and dark glossy leaves glowed like old bronze when a sunbeam touches it. Breadfruit trees and mangoes gave their fine deep shade to rest in, and provided her with fruit. Jessica knew each separate tree by touch, and where the wild birds nested. As for her chickens, their dangers and their habits, Jessica could have written a treatise on them as profound as any scholar's.

Now Philip was rich, and could give her far more than she needed. He had bought her a Seeing Eye dog who took her wherever she wished to wander, far up the mountains or deep into the forest. A patient of Philip's, a young girl once eaten alive by cruel abscesses but now free and healthy, full of joy and eagerness for mere living, cared for the needs of their small household.

All day long friends passed by Jessica's gateway, sometimes on donkeys going to market, sometimes on foot with burdens on their heads. If Jessica was on the veranda they would stop at her gate, or sit with her for hours, slowly giving up to her the problems of their lives. Either Whiteleaf or Myra O'San visited her as soon as their day's work was over to spend an hour reading aloud to her. For Philip's sake, his mother loved Whiteleaf. Her heart accepted this strange Chinese daughter-in-law, but her mind often rebelled against a woman who would not make her son a home or give him children.

Nature and God were one to Jessica, and she accepted both without troubling to sort their differences. What was Communism, she asked herself, to come between a man and a woman? She saw no sense in such an alien obedience. Why could not Whiteleaf marry Philip and bear his children, and having brought them up properly, leave them to choose what faiths they would?

Jessica had not interfered with Philip's faith, she had not so much as asked him what it was. When he was a child she had told him Bible stories and taught him to obey his father, but in their personal relationship she had seldom exacted obedience from her son, she had skirted his strong will, or diverted his attention, and only where dangers too severe for his small strength confronted him had she interfered in order to protect him. Every night she read her Bible and on Sundays she went to church but she did not force Philip to share her devotions.

Sometimes she talked to him of what she read, but this was when all the real interests of his long day were over, and he had gone to bed, where in his desire to extend the joy of living he would have welcomed any subject that

prolonged his waning consciousness. When her blindness struck her Philip had insisted on her learning to read Braille, and though it was difficult for her, Jessica had learned it, partly to please Philip and partly to keep her freedom to read the Bible to herself when and where she wished. Only once had she actively interfered with Philip's life. She had sent him to England for seven years to escape Elvira. Philip had yielded without dispute and they had never mentioned the subject again. When he came home, Jessica knew that he was safe. There did not seem to her to be any other difference in her son.

Once a week, for a single night, he slept under her roof—sometimes, if chance offered it, oftener. She said to Philip when she knew that he loved Whiteleaf, "Why do you not go with her to China and become a Communist, so that you may have a home? I shall be happier here without you, if you are a father in China with a wife you love, than if you remain childless by my side."

"Mother," Philip had told her, "I cannot run my mind under their harrow; besides, this Island is my home." Jessica said no more, but being a mother, she blamed Whiteleaf. "Communist children," she thought with good-tempered scorn, "what nonsense. They would be Philip's and Whiteleaf's children."

Yet Jessica knew that Whiteleaf gave Philip joy and that she was a singularly honest, fine, and temperate woman. Jessica knew everything about Whiteleaf through Philip's heart, and the two women became friends. Life was smooth between all three of them. For eight years this deep frictionless communion passed serenely into their blood. High winds, droughts, epidemics, earthquakes, the overturn of governments, the new constitution, Elvira's control of Everslade so close to them, made no great difference. Listening to Philip's voice, to his footsteps, to the pauses in which his thoughts guarded themselves in vain against her intuition, Jessica was content. But now this girl, this white girl, what part was she going to play in their completed lives?

Philip, Jessica told herself, should never have taken on this new case at Everslade. Never had Philip had to handle a white woman as a patient before. White children, yes, but not a young woman who might become a friend.

"They are precious to themselves, the white race," Jessica told Philip, "but their cost to us is more than we can afford. Let them alone." Whiteleaf had made Philip take this girl to the annex and was looking after her herself.

What a risk for Whiteleaf! Was she not an Asiatic? And if the girl died under her nursing, what a chance for Elvira to use Whiteleaf's compassion as a weapon against her!

"It is never safe to do what is best for the British because of their prejudices," Jessica told Whiteleaf. "It is better to let them die in their own way than to keep them alive in yours."

"I was not thinking of her as an Englishwoman," Whiteleaf said dispassionately as usual. "She is a human being—it seemed fairer to let her live."

Jessica said no more, but she thought with indulgent contempt, "Why should a Communist be fair? It is not their duty—they have no duty, except to be a Communist. Are there no white doctors on the Island to save this girl? Will she be fair to Philip when he *has* saved her?"

When Philip came home to sleep, after attending to the girl, his mother knew he had not slept. He made no mention of the girl. He talked instead about the Black River epidemic of typhoid.

There was drought over the red lands much earlier than usual this year, with a poor catch of fish. Since besides being starved, the patients who came to the hospital already had hookworm, malaria, and syphilis, they were not easy to cure of typhoid. Philip said they flared up and went out like spent matches. He was doing all Jackson's operations for him, to free him for the typhoids. Ten hours yesterday, and another batch today, and then he must come back for a look at this Everslade scalp wound. It was nasty and had dirt in it.

"And Dr. Lemon, why not let him come to attend to this white woman?" Jessica asked.

"He knows no more about penicillin than Noah did," Philip said contemptuously, "and he is no surgeon anyhow. Besides, as I daresay Whiteleaf told you, there is something bad going on at Everslade. It is better to keep it to ourselves till we know what it is. Someone sawed through the balcony rail Mrs. Armstrong leaned on. It was her day out, and no one heard her come in. She fell while they were all at supper. But for Myra, she would not have been found till morning, and might then have been dead."

"This Mrs. Armstrong," Jessica asked, "what does she look like? Whiteleaf speaks of her to me, and Myra often, but she has not been to this house, and never has anyone described her looks to me. As for you, my son,

you have never spoken of her at all. I should like to have a picture of her in my mind."

Philip pushed back his chair with unnecessary emphasis. "If I've not spoken of her," he said, "it's because I don't know her, and haven't looked at her except when I was obliged to make a thorough examination, for surgical reasons." The image of Lucy lying on the gravel path like a trampled flower disturbed Philip's mind. He wanted to say no more, but his mother's waiting silence drew the reluctant words out of him.

"She has no film-star prettiness," he found himself saying. "She's not at all striking, but it would have been a pity if such a face had been smashed. She is in danger since Elvira plans to get rid of her. It is this that makes us feel we must look after her."

Jessica felt his hand on her shoulder, his lips touched her cheek. She thought, "He is not really touching me. The whole of him is somewhere else. Why does not Whiteleaf give him what he needs—a home and children? She makes a mistake, she does not give Philip enough to live on. Even in his embrace, does she give him all she has? She cannot if she says 'No' anywhere! A woman should say 'Yes! Yes! Yes!' with her blood. Her whole being should say 'Yes!' to her lover! Instead there is always in Whiteleaf that withdrawal into rigidity! No, it is not enough! Even *all* she has is not enough for a woman who loves as she should love!"

"She will *live*?" Jessica asked as her son reached the door. "This Englishwoman?"

"If Elvira doesn't bring it off next time, I suppose so," Philip answered impatiently, throwing himself down the steps and into his car in one elastic plunge. He wanted to make his voice sound as if he didn't care, but his mother felt the care he was taking not to care.

CHAPTER XVII

Lucy thought it extremely odd, and disagreeable as well as odd, for Philip Calgary to urge upon her the advisability of a week with the Anstruthers before she returned to her work at the end of the Christmas holidays.

She even more resented the manner, impersonal and severe, in which he pressed his advice, without the faintest smile in his eyes, or softening of his mobile lips.

He simply, she saw, wanted her to go, almost as if to get rid of her was more important to him than her welfare. Whiteleaf had smilingly withdrawn directly she had ushered Philip into the little white room. Lucy was sitting up for the first time, by the open window, facing the purple mountains. Philip stood while he was talking to her, though Whiteleaf had left a chair for him. He brushed Lucy's objections aside as if they were thistledown.

"No," he said inflexibly, "it won't be the same thing to go back to Everslade and take it easy. Before you return in your official capacity, you need a change. The air above the bay is good. I'm told that Free Waters is a comfortable house to stay at. You'll get every luxury and every attention, and you'll be with friends."

"Well, I'm with friends here," Lucy objected. "I've got Elvira and Henriette, Myra and Miss Ho Sung—and I have you. Besides, I should look rather awful with a bandaged head and my arm in a sling. I'd rather wait till I'm more like myself."

A thread of a smile touched Philip's unwilling lips. "I should suggest your giving yourself a full week," he persisted. "The Anstruthers have offered to come over and fetch you. You could be ready by Tuesday."

"Oh!" Lucy cried in a voice of mingled laughter and dismay. "Do you really think you can *make* me go? You know women don't like looking a sight on a visit to their special friends!"

Philip gave Lucy a brief glance and then fixed his eyes on the wall behind her head. "You're not 'women,'" he told her impatiently. "You are, or should be, a sensible girl who wants to get well as quickly as possible, in order to return to her job in a suitable condition. Any friend who objected to

the sight of a bandage, almost hidden by your hair, and the temporary use of a sling, would hardly seem worth having."

Philip, who had been standing by the door since he had looked at Lucy's injuries, now turned as if to go. He had hardly been ten minutes in the room, but he had done his job. He was annoyed with Whiteleaf for not having stayed with him, and still more annoyed with Lucy for making him want to stay.

Lucy was silent till Philip turned away from her, then she said, "Well, of course, I'll go—since you order it—but before I go will you tell me why it is you are in such a hurry? I should have thought a visit to the Anstruthers' later on—perhaps my next long week-end after term begins—would have done just as well."

Philip's eyes were not hard any more, they looked hurt. He said after a pause, "I suppose people very seldom give their real reasons to each other, perhaps not even to themselves. But I do think this change would be best for you to take *now* or I should not have urged it. Please believe that much."

"I'll believe anything you tell me," Lucy said quickly, "if you will explain what your reasons are *for* telling me."

Philip leaned against the door, his figure casting a dark shadow across the shining white tiled floor. The wind had dropped. The Island floated in a sea of gold. Girls' voices in the distance joined the last cries of the birds.

"This fall that you had from the balcony," Philip said gravely. "Have you thought about it at all? When you first came round you said you felt as if you were pushed by an unseen hand. Do you really think you were pushed?"

Lucy hesitated. "I didn't see anyone on the balcony," she said. "There wasn't much light, of course, it must have been eight o'clock. Naturally I didn't expect anyone to be there—it only leads out of my bedroom. Perhaps, though, there might have been someone behind a pillar. I leaned on the rail to look at the stars, and when I felt it give, I tried to jump back. I'm pretty quick as a rule, but I found myself falling forward instead into the purple trumpets. Then I crashed. I think that's all there was to it. I realize that Petronella and Angela had a definite grudge against me, but they were at supper in their usual places."

"And no one else occurs to you," Philip asked, "who wasn't at supper?"

"It was Sunday night," Lucy said. "Several girls were out or had gone home, and wouldn't be in before nine, when they had to be. Miss Lestrange had her Sunday off. The other teachers were at supper with the children. It *is*

an old balcony railing. I suppose it just split, and I wasn't quite quick enough."

"It didn't split," Philip said quickly, "it had been sawed through. I examined it after I had attended to your injuries. It was intentional that you should fall. I would like this business cleared up before you go back. My asking you to go to the Anstruthers' now has something to do with it. Not only would you be safe there, but your being with them in itself might affect whoever had planned to harm you, and persuade them not to try again."

"Why?" asked Lucy, fixing her eyes to his. Philip's eyebrows rose toward his hair; his eyes, meeting hers, emptied themselves of all expression. "You can think that out for yourself," he suggested.

"Before you go, I want you to tell me more than this," Lucy said, ignoring his aloof evasion, "and I want to tell *you* something, too. The sawed-through balcony wasn't everything—there was the dead bird I found in my bed."

Philip nodded. "Yes," he said, "I know about the dead bird. I can't say if these two things are connected or not, but I should think it likely. The bird may have been sent to you as a warning that you'd better not stay, or if you did stay you'd die like the bird. Have you ever heard of Obeah?"

"Isn't it a sort of religion?" Lucy asked.

"It's a thug's religion, a black magic," Philip told her reluctantly. "It is very rarely practiced on the Island now, but it exists. I believe it to be the last echo of a slave mentality."

"Did the slaves that came here," Lucy asked, "bring their religion with them?"

"I doubt that," Philip said dryly. "A savage cult is, I know, the happiest theory, but I think Obeah is a slave's religion. You see, Africans were kidnapped and transported—they did not 'come' to the West Indies. They were brought here under agonizing conditions and kept here under the lash. No escape was possible except within themselves. My idea is that people make their own God out of the best or the worst that is in them. Christians, Buddhists, Jews, all free people, in fact, make what we call a 'good' god. Most of them don't make the effort to live up to their conception, but at least what they have put into the fire was once gold. The more civilized they are the more estimable is their God. Mahomet wasn't terribly civilized, but he was no doubt well ahead of the Arabs of his day, even of ours. The Jews had an exceedingly wise, though sometimes vindictive god, and their religion

was composed of admirable moral and hygienic laws. They got on with such speed and success as a people, owing to their laws, that they far outrivaled the tribes they lived among, and have, in fact, outrivaled ever since most of the nations into which they have scattered, in their tough, isolated, and organic manner. Their success is the measure of our anti-Semitism. The Jews also, though inadvertently, gave us a still better God than their own. Perhaps they might eventually have accepted Jesus Christ for themselves, but for their vindictive streak happening to combine with a streak of civil servant appeasement in Pontius Pilate which led to the crucifixion. Still, I have never seen why their descendants should be blamed for the crucifixion any more than we blame modern Frenchmen for having handed Joan of Arc over to us to burn. The responsibility of both crimes was mutually divided, and even the crimes spread the power of their victims. A good deal of this island is actively Christian today, because of the Free Churches, especially the Baptists, which stood up for the slaves against their masters. The only official church, the Anglican, supported slavery; it would not allow the slaves inside their church and refused them marriage."

"How very horrible!" exclaimed Lucy. "And how miserable for our poor Bishop now!"

Philip laughed. "It was thought most estimable by your government less than a hundred years ago," he told her. "Well, to go back to Obeah. Slaves don't want to be better than they are, they want to be stronger. Any form of goodness or morality implies choice, and the essence of being a slave is to be deprived of choice. Slaves got beaten up for choosing. A bad power was essential to them, in order to overcome the evil power of their masters. Sick with bitterness (even after a hundred years some of us are still sick with it!), these tortured outcasts invented Obeah. In Obeah West Indians possess a god who is wholly evil, and when they wish to do anyone harm, they get his support and so feel inspired and strengthened to carry out their crimes—just as Christians or Jews feel inspired by their God to carry out decent and friendly activities."

Lucy listened intently; it was the first time Philip had ever really let her see what he thought. He was reluctant to do so now. He moved impatiently from time to time as he spoke, tossing back his head in disgust, as if he were a spirited horse feeling a bit in its mouth.

"It must make it hard to be a Christian here," Lucy murmured. "Where do they practice this Obeah?"

"There is a hill on the opposite side of this mountain—you can look down on it from the ridge—called the Hill of Silence," Philip answered. "I believe people who live on that hill practice it. It is, of course, a secret practice, but Obeah addicts might be found anywhere on the Island. Anyone wishing to practice it must simply go out at night and cut down a cotton tree, then the spirit of this tree is supposed to enter into him, in order to help him commit his crime or series of crimes. I always suppose Nazis and Communists act from the same instinct. They give up their individual responsibility in order to gain more power to get what they want, by identifying themselves with a dictator. The dictator acts as a silk-cotton tree. Freedom is a small price for some people to pay in order to obtain power."

"But who at Everslade could want such power against me?" Lucy asked.

"You must ask yourself whose interest it is to get rid of you," Philip suggested. "Had you been killed the other day—before the Christmas holidays—those two girls who went to the roadhouse need not have left the school."

"Oh!" Lucy cried. "Oh—but that's impossible!" Philip said nothing. He knew that now she was aware of her danger it would be easier to get her to take precautions; but he saw that she could not yet envisage the chief precaution because she did not suspect Elvira.

"Elvira is my greatest friend. She was heartbroken over my accident," Lucy said, finally looking out into the fugitive last light with darkened eyes. "It is unthinkable."

"You must know better than I," Philip said cautiously, "how truly she is your friend, but even if she is, she might quite innocently be the cause of Obeah being used against you. No doubt Elvira has passionately disappointed friends among the children, the teachers, and the servants. Perhaps one of them may be responsible for your—accident."

Lucy was silent for a moment, then she said tentatively, "Elvira is frightened for me too, but she believes that Myra O'San is an abnormal child and she thinks Miss Ho Sung is not at all really friendly to me. She says Miss Ho Sung was more likely to have been chosen as headmistress than she was, because Miss Ho Sung has higher academic distinctions."

The face looking across the little room at Lucy from the shadows might have been carved from black ironstone. "And do you think," Philip asked her in his low, resonant voice, "that Myra O'San is a delinquent child, or suppose that a Chinese lady of high distinction and reliability is likely to practice a savage cult?"

"It seems to me as absurd and unthinkable as to suspect Elvira!" Lucy said quickly. "I love Myra—I would not be alive except for Whiteleaf Ho Sung! I only tell you this because you come from outside and because—because I trust you. I want you to know everything, and then to tell me what is the best thing for me to do. I don't want to be murdered but I don't want to give up the school either. I suppose when you said just now that I should be safe not only *with* the Anstruthers, but *by* being with them, what you really meant was that I'd be safe if the person who wants to get rid of me thought I was going to marry Bob! Well, I don't want to marry Bob either!" Philip took two strides across the little room, and stood opposite Lucy. His voice when he spoke was mocking, but it was a friendly mockery, and the eyes looking down at her smiled. "You have overlooked one highly likely suspect!" Philip told her. "I was up here on Sunday night. I was here before you got home. Why did I not saw through the balcony—lurk in the shadows and give you a little push? A ferocious black man, the acknowledged friend of Miss Ho Sung, a determined anti-Britisher? In America they would lynch me with ecstatic certainty and feel no shadow of a doubt that I was guilty. I simply can't think why you should suppose me worthy of the slightest confidence."

Lucy looked up at Philip. His eyes laughing down at her flickered and looked away. Perhaps he did not want to see the depth of the trust that filled Lucy's eyes.

"You are too proud to do me any harm," Lucy said slowly. "You might want to hurt people stronger than yourself, never weaker ones. Besides, I knew—when I woke up—after my fall—that you wanted to help me."

"Doctors do usually want to help their patients," Philip admitted. "It is true that I do not wish either to harm you or that harm should come to you—that is why I have given you the best advice in my power. In spite of what you have told me, I want you to visit the Anstruthers now. It gives us more time, for one thing—Whiteleaf Ho Sung, Myra, and me—to think out how best to protect you, and as I suggested, and as you supposed, your being there would give rise to the idea that you might marry Anstruther. No one commits a murder if he can get what he wants without it."

"Well, I'll go," said Lucy reluctantly. "I'll do what you tell me—though from my point of view it's a mistake to do it, and hardly fair to Bob."

Philip smiled down at her. "You can always make it fair to him," he suggested. "Use the arm a little every day, not too much at a time, wear dark glasses in the sun and don't read much."

He was gone before Lucy could make him say good-by to her, and he appeared not to have seen her outstretched hand.

CHAPTER XVIII

A gentle knock sounded and Whiteleaf Ho Sung drifted into the darkening room. She seemed hardly to have crossed the floor before she was standing by Lucy's bed, looking down at her with those inscrutable slanting eyes. A piece of dandelion fluff could not have moved more lightly through the air.

"I came," Whiteleaf said, "to see if there was anything you wanted before I went to bed—a book—a watch to wind? With one hand such things are awkward to arrange sometimes."

"You are so kind to me," Lucy said gratefully, "that I never seem to have any wants, but do sit down and talk to me for a little. Dr. Calgary wishes me to visit the Anstruthers for a week on Tuesday before term begins, did you know that?"

Whiteleaf's delicately arched brows moved a little higher. "That is very far from here, is it not?" she asked politely. "You pass through the Cock Pit country, I believe, where the men who were once Spanish slaves refused to become English ones. I have been told the British sent five hundred bloodhounds to chase them out of it, but were not wholly successful. The Cock Pit country is very secretive and the British very wisely left these fierce, ignorant people to govern themselves." Whiteleaf sat down, not near Lucy but by the open window letting in the night.

"How very horrible," Lucy murmured. "This poor island—what a cruel history it has had!"

"Yes," Whiteleaf tranquilly agreed, "and people who are afraid become fierce, too. Have you ever noticed that furious dogs hang their tails while contented dogs lift them? So I think it is with men. They become fierce when they are unhappy. Since the Maroons escaped a second slavery one might say that to be fierce is an advantage; yet I am told that the poor Cock Pit people are today the most degraded and wretched inhabitants of this island, so perhaps their freedom was not such an advantage to them after all. Or else to be isolated from your brothers is an even greater disadvantage than to be a slave."

"You're so much cleverer than I am," Lucy said a little ruefully. "You think about so many things and people you don't know—whereas I only

think about people I *do* know, and not always very intelligently even about them."

"It is less easy to think intelligently about those we know," Whiteleaf answered courteously. "Other factors enter into these personal problems—emotion, for instance."

"I was puzzling myself as you came in," Lucy went on after a pause, "about a human problem, not *quite* a personal problem," she added hastily.

"This problem," Whiteleaf asked lightly, "you really wish to speak of it, or you would like to be interrupted so as not to have to think about it—which?"

"A little of both," Lucy confessed laughingly. "But now I have begun, I think I would really rather speak of it. I was wondering if what people say is true; do men and women always know when they attract each other? And if they do, can they stop it? And does it greatly matter whether it is stopped or not? This visit might bring out these problems for me, and I should like to have some kind of a plan to meet them."

"But those are three problems, not one," Whiteleaf objected. "Shall we begin with the first? You speak of men and women as if they were a different species—yet both are human, and when it comes to emotion, I find they meet it in very much the same way. Shall we then say, 'Do human beings know whether they attract each other or not?' If your medicine is nasty that Dr. Calgary gives you, can you tell if you like it or not?"

"Oh, well!" Lucy admitted. "Certainly I can. But can I stop liking or disliking the medicine at will? Besides, in making a new friendship, isn't it rather important to know beforehand how far one wants such a friendship to go?"

"Now," thought Lucy triumphantly, "she will think I mean Bob, or perhaps Elvira, not Philip."

When Whiteleaf answered her, her voice sounded much more serious than Lucy's. "Does one ever *make* a friendship? I think that one discovers friendship rather than makes it. Attraction is there in the persons themselves, not only in what we bring to them—we have to find as well as bring, and perhaps one cannot always know what is to be found until time shows us, but it is within one's power to stop entering too far into any relationship. There is no question that it is within our power to stop."

"But why should people stop being attractive?" Lucy persisted. "Suppose you do like a friendship? Suppose you like your medicine and

think it does you good? Why should you stop taking it?"

"But we are not really talking of medicine," Whiteleaf objected. "Medicine is an image we have used in order to show that taste is given us to decide what we like. And we have decided that there is no doubt about this taste—we do have it. We know when we are attracted, and now we come to something quite different which we are unable to explain by an analogy, because there is always a lie somewhere in every analogy. Attraction between men and women is a natural instinct, so is the instinct of self-preservation. Both are therefore in a sense right, since they are natural, yet I can imagine occasions when it would be right to disobey them. People die for their friends, and they are sometimes true to them against the drive of their passions."

"You mean," Lucy said diffidently, "if other people were to suffer because of our following our instincts, we should not follow them?"

"Yes, that is what I mean," Whiteleaf agreed. "If we are in any way different from animals, this is where we differ. Their instincts are always right—they are safe to follow them. We are not—the power has been given us to choose."

She got up decisively, as if such a choice was in her own mind and she had already made it. Lucy was reminded of how Philip had gone to the door and then looked back at her with that hurt look in his eyes, but it was too dark for Lucy to see the expression in Whiteleaf's eyes. She was only conscious that Whiteleaf got up decisively and yet lingered a little by the open door. "I believe you Europeans have a saying that the night brings counsel," Whiteleaf remarked, before she left the room. "We Chinese have quite the opposite saying. We say, 'The day brings counsel.' We expect to see the things that were obscure to us in darkness more clearly in the light."

CHAPTER XIX

A vivid and startling figure in the retreating light, Elvira flitted along the terrace in a scarlet dirndl. Lucy, standing by her open window, saw her with a sinking heart. She did not want to talk any more. Her arm felt curiously vulnerable and heavy, freed from its plaster cast, and every finger tingled and ached as if it were solely responsible for her broken limb.

"I shall get into bed before she comes," Lucy said to herself hurriedly, but this was difficult, for it required a new kind of balance. She had only just succeeded, and was lying back, exhausted, against the pillow, when Elvira in the gathering dusk, like a panther leaping from an invisible tree, sprang through the window.

"Dearest," she exclaimed, "how wonderful to see you free from that stiff plaster! How wonderful to see you at all. I thought Philip Calgary would never go." Elvira embraced Lucy, retook, as it were, with her avid eyes and pliant hands, possession of her, and then moved to and fro about the room, with short, swift strides, taking in with every step every thought that might be straying in its quiet emptiness, as if her mind were a giant vacuum cleaner, powerfully sucking up each particle of emotion or expression which might desire to escape.

Elvira checked herself at last, and standing at the foot of Lucy's bed, she said with pathetic force: "I saw the girls off today—Petronella and Angela. I took them to the gate. They live near together at St. George's and their parents had sent a car to take them both home together. Nobody else knew that they were never to come back. You know the two young larches by the gate? They look sent out by us toward the forest. I felt—in the sunset light—they might have been images of those poor girls—denuded of their leaves and shivering into the wild darkness of the forest. I know we did right. I keep saying to myself even while they cried and I cried, 'They must go—they *can* make a new life!' But can they? Their plumage gone—their pride and their dignity shaken—their parents waiting for them without pleasure—to make new plans for them—without hope! Don't think I dispute your decision, Lucy, but what I wept for, what makes me feel hideously guilty and restless still, is why I couldn't have influenced them *enough*, couldn't have made such a disaster impossible."

"Yes," Lucy agreed, "I feel that too. We ought to have foreseen they *must* break out, and have given them some more normal vent. But it's not easy to control other people or guess their sense of values. I feel more inexperienced, too, than I used to feel in England because I don't know the forces on this Island. I don't know what kind of homes the girls come from or where they are going to. You must tell me more, Elvira. Don't let me run blind against danger signals I don't understand." Elvira sank on the bed beside Lucy. "Your voice shakes," she said. "They let you sit up too long. You'd be far better off with us, with most of the children off for the holidays and Nancy and me to take care of you. Why not come back tomorrow?"

"I must stay here till Tuesday," Lucy explained, "and then—then Dr. Calgary wants me to go—for a whole week—to the Anstruthers'—I don't even want to go *now* but I suppose I *must*."

"But it's crazy!" Elvira exclaimed, "simply crazy—you aren't a bit fit to look after yourself—you *must* come home and rest first!"

Lucy turned on her reading lamp so that she could see Elvira's face more plainly, and less, she felt, dangerously.

"Perhaps Dr. Calgary is right," she said slowly. "It'll buck me up to make an effort. He wants me to use my arm all the time now. You see, he knows what I care about most is to be fit for my job."

Elvira was silent for a little, she played with Lucy's free hand. She stooped across to her bed table and rearranged a bowl of mountain flowers, then she fixed her dark, glowing eyes on Lucy's face. "I'm going to be horribly indiscreet," she said at last. "Why *have* they made all this fuss against your seeing people, even me—and then suddenly when you can hardly stand on your feet, they rush you off to pay a visit among strangers? Let me phone Dr. Lemon and get him to take over your case. He's a first rate doctor, a member of our committee—he ought to have seen you from the first. He's safe. I don't believe you are fit to go tomorrow. It's a terribly long drive over rough roads to Free Waters. I honestly think that for some reason —perhaps not a healthy reason—Philip Calgary's trying to hurry you away from here."

"What other reason could he have?" Lucy objected.

"He *might* have many other reasons," Elvira said mysteriously. "One of them might be that he finds you too attractive."

"No," said Lucy promptly, too promptly, she immediately realized, to convince another woman. "Of course not," she added rather crossly, "why

should he? I sometimes think we make rather a fuss about white girls' looks, Elvira. Are we really as seductive as we think we are? Aren't we rather like bleached linen hung on sticks, compared with these lithe, bright blackberries of girls I've seen on the Island, moving like flowers in the wind? I can't help thinking if I were a West Indian and used to my own women, I should hardly cast a glance at white ones."

"You say that," Elvira retorted bitterly, "because you can afford to. If you *were* one of us you'd know there's an even greater attraction in white people than their physical one. There's the tremendous prestige attraction of being white."

"I don't think Dr. Calgary thinks there's much prestige attached to the white race," Lucy said slowly, "none that we *deserve* anyhow."

Elvira's face closed in upon itself. She wished to do her thinking about Philip Calgary alone. "He knows what other people think," she said at last. "His pride is just a smokescreen to hide his pain. You've been awfully nice to him, Lucy, nicer perhaps than any white girl on the Island has ever been to him before. You've talked and laughed with him as if there were no barrier between you. But there is a barrier, Lucy. Don't be surprised if he realizes that there is, and takes his precautions. Honestly, I think you'd be acting more fairly—even to him—if you had Dr. Lemon instead—and perhaps more fairly as well as more *safely*, if you *insisted* on leaving the annex and coming back to us tomorrow."

Lucy withdrew her hand from Elvira's pliant fingers. "Oh, dear, how tiresome!" she said, in order to give herself time to think. "Actually," she said lightly, "doctors are quite different from other men. Dr. Calgary thinks about me as a fractured skull and a broken arm. I hardly ever see him without Whiteleaf and then they're both amusing themselves with knitting needles and hot water. Besides, you can't have it both ways—if he *were* attracted by me, he wouldn't hurry me into this 'quickie' visit to Free Waters. To tell you the truth, I didn't particularly want to go there just yet, but if he thinks it'll do me good, I'm prepared to accept his word for it."

"Yes, but *why* are you prepared to accept his word for it?" Elvira demanded with a penetrating look that pierced Lucy's vague innocence as a searchlight thrusts through a fog.

"Why do you accept his word rather than mine, for instance, and against your own common sense?"

"Well," Lucy answered with determined lightness, "I suppose because he's a doctor and you and I are not. As for his thinking too much about me,

what becomes of your theory that his life's bound up with Whiteleaf's?"

"That's just it," Elvira said with increasing gravity. "You're playing about, my dear, with forces you don't understand. He *is* bound up with Whiteleaf. If you try to pull him away you'll have her to reckon with. Perhaps you already *have* had her to reckon with. And yet you insist on staying in their power, and in her hands. Have you forgotten that she often cooks what you eat?"

"Oh, don't!" Lucy cried in sudden exasperation. "Don't, Elvira! You've hinted before you don't trust her. I don't say she likes me, I don't think she does, but she just isn't *like* that. She'd save my life at the risk of her own and not like me a bit the better for having saved it. I'm perfectly safe here, and it isn't that—being safe, I mean—that matters most."

"Then what *does* matter most? What do you suppose I'm most frightened about—*except* danger to you?" Elvira demanded violently, her nostrils expanding and contracting. "Is it me you distrust?"

Lucy controlled herself with an effort. When at last she answered she spoke quietly. "It's being true," she said, "that I think matters most, and it wouldn't be true to distrust where you have every reason to trust. If people have nursed and cured you, you must accept their medical advice, and as for you, Elvira, we're friends, we simply *can't* afford to distrust each other!"

Elvira's hand slipped over Lucy's again. "I see," she said softly, "I see—well, that's for me the *main* thing—that the confidence between us is perfect. And as far as I'm concerned it shall always remain so. Only don't forget what I've said to you. Don't let them fool you—don't fool yourself. Asiatics don't think or act as we do. And as for Philip Calgary, I knew him well when he was a boy, and people don't change much, fundamentally. He was a passionate, susceptible, rather vindictive boy. Don't rouse passions in either of them you don't intend to satisfy."

"Oh, dear," said Lucy. "Passions—you use words like gongs and I *have* such a headache, Elvira. Before you go—I'd forgotten to ask you—what's become of Margorie Fielding? Is she off for the holidays?"

Elvira got up from the bed and went to the open window. Night had blotted out everything except the stars. They hung so far from the earth that they seemed to have separated themselves even from the darkness and to be on the other side of it, balancing on some invisible pathway of their own.

"Margorie," Elvira said without turning around, "is still with us—the Brigadier has been sent for to attend a conference on one of the other

islands." She stepped outside the window, and saying that she would come again tomorrow to see Lucy, disappeared.

The pleasant darkness settled around Lucy. She turned out her lamp and rested in it. She could think now quietly over her various problems. Was she in any real danger? And from whom? What were Philip's feelings toward her? He had made no advances. He had been reassuring and kind when she was in pain but always on his guard against a personal relationship. There had been, however, moments when naturalness had broken through and they found it a relief to be in each other's company. This curious, unacknowledged sense of relief came rarely, and neither of them had taken any advantage of it. It was more frequent when Whiteleaf was with them than when they were alone. Not until today, when Philip turned and looked at her with that hurt look in his eyes, had Lucy realized there was an actual relationship between them. Ought she, dare she, take the pain in Philip's eyes lightly? She knew that by letting her see his pain he had made an appeal to her and she felt ashamed of leaving his appeal unanswered. She knew what she owed him. Out of her acute pain she had seen Philip's dark clear-cut face as Andromeda must have seen the face of Perseus, while she was chained to her rock and within reach of the dragon.

From wherever her danger came, Lucy knew that Philip was her deliverer. What was it he had said to her once—or was it what she herself had said to the English girl Margorie, when she was trying to release the child's stubborn spirit and get at the truth? "Men are not only responsible for their acts, they are responsible for the consequences of their acts." Was she then responsible not only for attracting Philip but for all that might happen from it, to Philip, to Whiteleaf, to herself?

If she was, then it became a very important thing to go to Free Waters.

CHAPTER XX

The terrace was full of laughter and sunshine. Little dark girls crowded around Bob and his car, and piled flower offerings into Lucy's lap.

Elvira smiled a farewell that was infinitely reassuring and affectionate, as if in letting Lucy go she was at the same time welcoming her back. Lucy had a curious feeling that she was being carried away by a force that would never let her return. She glanced at Bob's profile; he had stopped smiling, but she saw that he was deeply pleased, not only because she *was* beside him, but because he was taking her away from all the things that made her want to stay.

Lucy was not in the least in love with Bob, yet she was deeply conscious of the fundamental tie between them—they knew more about life together than they would either of them ever know apart. Lucy knew why his eyes were homesick till they met hers, and she knew that she wanted to cure his homesickness.

They plunged down the mountainside, through moist rich ravines, till they came to a turning that took them toward the Gap. On the other side of the pass the country changed completely. They found themselves gazing down into a deep, wide valley beyond which lay a barren land, peppered all over with minute tulip-shaped peaks. These strange hillocks were covered with short, tinder-dry undergrowth, like russet fur, and it was impossible to distinguish one peak from the other. When Lucy counted a group of six she was suddenly aware that there were seven, and where she had a moment before counted seven, there appeared to be only six. Black cliffs covered with disheveled undergrowth and hollowed by deep caves rose up out of nothingness into the curious landscape. "Hunters' caves," Bob told her.

This was the Maroon country where the Spanish slaves who had precipitately lost their masters took refuge and stubbornly refused to serve the triumphant British. There was no further need for hiding and yet the few people that passed them on the narrow dusty road still looked secretive and belligerent. The valley beneath them opened out toward an empty, sunny land. Directly opposite them a round green hill sloped downward, licking at the valley floor like a long green tongue.

"What an odd-looking hill," Lucy exclaimed.

"They call it," Bob told her, "the Hill of Silence. Birds won't sing on it. Obeah people live there."

"But you can't see any houses," Lucy objected.

"They live in huts tucked away in the folds of the hill," Bob explained. "If you can call them people—or if you can call it life. It's a rum creed and a rum place—best steered clear of." He drew up the car, facing toward the vast, sunny emptiness where forgotten "Great People" had once lived their rich and ample lives and where their dead houses slowly melted into sunlight.

The slaves who had worked to make these enormous fortunes were gone too, but perhaps their heartbreaks and desires, perhaps their suppressed ferocities, still lingered on the Hill of Silence.

"It's funny that it's so green," Lucy said, "and all the rest of the landscape, red earth and sunburned undergrowth, has a dead look. It is as if something or other *kept* that one hill alive."

"There's a lot of funny things on this island," Bob answered Lucy as he took out the lunch his mother had sent for them, "and it's a damned sight better to let their funniness alone."

Far away across innumerable soft brown roofs Lucy's eyes sought the blue liveliness of the sea. The air blew sweet and hard across the ridge. There was no one to be seen, and no sound but the faint sighing of the wind broke the serene stillness. They might have been cast away on a desert island if it had not been for the quality of the lunch that they proceeded to eat.

"Now," Bob said, when it was finished, "I've been waiting to hear you tell me, but you don't seem very forthcoming about it—who pushed you off that balcony?"

Lucy met his eyes and looked away again. "I don't know," she said at last, slowly, "and I've got to a place in my mind where I don't seem awfully to *want* to know. I know who was in the dining room at the time and it couldn't have been any of them—that's a great relief. There were, of course, at least a dozen children out with their parents for the Sunday who might have come in without anyone knowing. The annex people don't come to our supper and so were equally unaccounted for. Besides, there is the whole Island to choose from. I sometimes think it was one of the men who were at that roadhouse and resented our taking off the girls—but I also sometimes think I just fell, because I didn't move back in time."

Bob's eyes ran over her slight, well-balanced figure. "Could be," he admitted, "but not likely. You and I, my girl, have had a bit of training in when to move quick. What about the annex, what about the Chinese lady, and that girl that tags round after her looking like a water buffalo? I have heard they're rather mixed up with a man I don't like. Calgary hates the British like poison and stands in with that fellow Ransom, who's a Red and wants to run the Island."

Lucy listened to this description of Philip with restrained annoyance. It was on the tip of her tongue to say, "Why don't you like him?" but on the whole she decided to leave the subject of Philip alone. "It's unthinkable it was the annex people," she said. "Of course I can't make Whiteleaf Ho Sung out. For three weeks she's been nursing me like an inspired angel. I think she and Myra saved my life between them. Certainly if they'd wanted to take it they've had every opportunity. I'm quite sure of Myra. She may look like a water buffalo, but she has a heart and mind that would be hard to match in any country. I like her more and think there is more in her than any girl in the school. But I often wonder why I never get to know Whiteleaf any better. You'd think seeing her half a dozen times a day all these weeks and having her do everything one person *can* do for anyone helpless, that I *should* have got to know her, but I haven't. We've talked a lot, but what she says, and she's awfully clever, sort of hangs in the air. It isn't a part of what I believe she *is*. I don't know how to explain but it's like being spoken to from a long way off through a mechanical instrument. Yet this morning she gave me a beautiful present. She brought me in my breakfast herself and on my tray there was a little porcelain bowl—very thin and of a lovely texture—the most beautiful blue. She said, 'This is my rice bowl—my mother gave us each one when we were very small children. It occurred to me the other day that it matched your eyes. I hope you will receive it from me as a memento of your recovery.' I was simply terribly grateful and touched, but before I could thank her properly she was gone. I didn't see her again till she waved from the balcony just now, and I *still* don't seem to know her any better."

"They say here on the Island that she's that black fellow Calgary's mistress—and they generally know," Bob said grudgingly, without looking at Lucy. "Chinese are awfully difficult to understand, but from what you say it isn't likely to be her or the girl. I'm up against it Lucy, but I've got to know—I can't, I simply *can't* let you go back into that damned old creepy place where there is a killer."

"But we don't know that there *is*," Lucy expostulated. "The only people who had a grudge against me were at supper—the people who weren't at

supper had no grudge. I more and more think it was an accident, and if it wasn't an accident, there was such a shindy made about it that I don't think there'll be another accident. Mr. Myers and Dr. Lemon came up and poked into everything, let alone an astonishing visit from the A.D.C. from King's House with a bunch of grapes. I have a corner room and Nancy Peck sleeps next door. She could tackle a boa constrictor, of course my balcony's mended, and I promised—" Lucy brought herself up short. She had very nearly said, "I promised Philip—" "I promised," she amended, "to lock my door at night. It's a pretty high balcony and no one could climb up it. If anyone brought a ladder I should hear it. I generally sleep on the balcony itself."

She saw that there was something more Bob wanted to say, but he didn't say it. He moved his hand and closed it over hers. Lucy's hand lay in his, as unresponsive as a piece of wood. She neither withdrew it nor returned his pressure. She thought, "Why does it never matter to me now—the touch of a man's hand—when it used to mean so much?" and suddenly the tears came to her eyes and she said, "Oh, Bob—I can't—it isn't as long ago as I thought." He dropped her hand quickly and turned the car back on to the road. But had she been quite honest, Lucy asked herself. Was it because it wasn't so long ago or because it was longer; and that for the first time the old desire had come back to her again, to share the quickening of her blood and her life, but not with Bob?

"We are coming to the country now," Bob told her. "See how green it is all getting, and like an English park. We're rather proud of the fact that we can't even see the sea from our house."

High on the airy green uplands, the great house of Free Waters rose like a huge white owl, its wings jutting out on either side, its beak outstretched as if to seize its prey. Never before had Lucy felt the vague panic which now invaded her. Nor was the feeling dispelled by Judy Anstruther on the veranda steps, both hands held out in greeting. When Bob lifted Lucy with infinite care, as if she were some priceless china vase, out of the car, and handed her over to his mother, the sense of spiritual danger only grew more acute. Yet here if anywhere Lucy was safe, here if anywhere she was at home. She could not give a name to what she was afraid of losing, yet she felt it was all she had, and that at any moment she might lose it.

CHAPTER XXI

The day nightingales woke Lucy at dawn. From her window she could see the big creamy birds with sepia brown wings splash through the pale light, across the dew-drenched lawns.

Their song was longer and sweeter than a thrush's song, and did not close in a chuckle, but melted into the fragrant air.

Great white Indian cattle with passive, tragic jaws above massive folds of chin, hanging like bibs, strolled in alien grandeur under the shadowy trees. Cocks crowed in an outlandish familiarity, and hens bustled through their morning miracles as if determined to remind Lucy that this island, too, was part of the British Empire.

Lizards began to move tentatively into strips of sunlight and invisible haunting doves moaned their perpetual melancholy, jeered at by mockingbirds, who could copy in a rough cartoon fashion any bird that they fancied putting out of countenance. Somewhere, to the accompaniment of low voices and giggles, breakfast was being prepared, and Lucy could smell bacon and coffee blending with the morning breeze. It was into the British Empire that she stepped an hour later, when she went down to the veranda at breakfast time and found her hostess awaiting her.

Judy Anstruther had never been pretty, but she had managed every other attraction. Lucy thought she had never seen a middle-aged woman, who made no bones about being middle-aged, present so happy an appearance. Neat as a water wagtail, the best groomed of birds, and gay as a morning glory, Judy's color was firm, her eyes bright, and every glossy hair was in its place.

"I thought only American women could dress as you do," Lucy told her, laughing. "As if they'd made their clothes overnight every time they put them on."

"Perhaps I have an eye," Judy explained smilingly, "but I have a skilled dressmaker too, and we both put our minds to it. 'Know what you are, and hide it!' has been my motto since I was a girl. I'm glad you can wear pink in the morning. Bob will begin to enjoy himself at last. He's been crazy to have you here, and now he's crazy that you *are* here. He seems to think the whole Island's in a conspiracy to destroy you."

"I do feel extraordinarily safe here," Lucy was beginning to say, when she found that her voice shook and she stopped speaking. Physically safe—that was what the sudden change in her whole feeling was—safe as a child feels who has lost itself in a vast railway station full of unknown people, and who suddenly sees in the distance the one figure who embodies all security, his mother, advancing toward him. More safety still came up the veranda steps in the shape of Bob's father, a slow, heavy, kindly man, persistently encircled by two golden setters, each equally determined to claim his entire attention. Tom's gray eyes slid over Lucy in casual benevolence, as if she were just another item in an always rather overcrowded house, none of which, except for short intervals, had much to do with him. He seemed to carry the farm with him in his loose tweed coat. His hair was thick and colorless with sun, and he held easily, but with care, what at first appeared to be a ball of golden silk in one large hand, but which turned out to be a setter puppy of a few weeks old. He liked Lucy, and by depositing the puppy slowly and with great care on her lap, and smiling down at her, he expressed all that he felt about her accident. From a French window Bob's brother, Bill, with his new Canadian wife, approached them, hand in hand. Bill and Daisy were a little bewildered by their new happiness, but as everybody around them took it for granted, they too tried to pretend that they hadn't noticed it. Bill was more solid than Bob, and more like his father. His eyes held the same desultory kindliness. Daisy was a nice, healthy-looking girl, and since Bill was convinced that Helen and Cleopatra had had nothing Daisy didn't have, she became, when Bill's eyes rested upon her, as lovely as he made her feel. Bob came down last and paid Lucy the least obvious attention. What he wanted most of all was not to let anybody know that this morning he liked everything better than usual. He therefore kept a stern poker face and ate his breakfast with selective austerity. In spite of the fact that he hit back with gibes at anybody who said anything to him, Bob seemed rather to add to his mother's gaiety than to subtract from it. Bill was full of jokes and what he couldn't hide of his joy in his new wife he put into pummeling and distracting the otherwise well-behaved setters. The whole family went out of their way, without ostentation, to be nice to Lucy.

She was Bob's cup of tea. She couldn't make any mistakes with them as long as she was prepared to *be* Bob's cup of tea. The only mistake she could make would be not to be, and that mistake, Lucy realized, would be fatal. Slowly their pleasant, hard-working, good-humored world expanded around Lucy. Because of her arm she was debarred from the more strenuous of their activities. She couldn't play tennis or swim, so she must be taken to the

races; dinners and cocktail parties, followed by bridge, were devised daily for her.

Lucy knew without having the least pressure brought to bear upon her that she was the center of every occasion. Once more she was with those of her own kind and generation, a war heroine decorated for unknown, incredible deeds in dire emergencies, by their own king, and even here, on this Island, once more (though inadvertently this time) exposed to mysterious dangers. No one bothered Lucy about what had happened to her at Everslade, they only more and more deeply accepted her, while to be one of themselves seemed, even to Lucy, to be a law of her being. Judy took her to lunch at King's House and when the day's work was over Admiral Bumpus from her committee and the Brigadier from the Gap came to dinner at Free Waters and gave Lucy their deep, unspoken approval. It was in their eyes when they looked at her, and in their quiet voices. They liked Lucy all the more when they found she was reticent about her adventures. They thought her a modest, unassuming girl of the old Victorian type, only considerably more active and useful.

Lucy's contemporaries would have preferred someone more glamorous and rather noisier than Lucy, a girl who would drink a good deal and be more like themselves. They vaguely suspected her of being a highbrow even when her arm wasn't in a sling. Bob, however, was satisfied with the place she took in his circle. She was nice to all his friends, and he didn't want his girl to be too nice. Let her be respected by the old and envied by the young and that would be enough for him. He saw that the men thought him a lucky fellow and that the girls realized that Lucy could rival them, though she didn't try. Lucy didn't snub them, she even seemed to want to be as nice to the girls as she was to the men, and this made the girls feel a little suspicious of her, though not precisely hostile.

They had no idea that Lucy judged them by another set of values altogether and judged them very kindly. These girls, Lucy thought, would come up in a crisis—cigarettes, laughter, lipstick, and all—just as those other girls she had trained in England had come up to face bombs falling, their nerves beneath the surface, sound through flames. Yet Lucy was a little sorry that now there were no bombs falling these island girls had let all responsibilities other than those of their own amusements fall away from them. They didn't think, they didn't read, they barely listened to the world news on the radio. They prepared themselves in no way to meet the insecurity in which their island and their whole world moved. They let acute poverty, the malnutrition of children, the fearful sufferings and angry

bitterness of the population, slide off them like water off a duck's back. Political problems were not in their outfit. Only games, men, drink, and clothes roused their vigorous consciousness. Lucy was so used to the men of her own race that not until Everslade had blotted them out of her immediate existence had she really noticed them. Suddenly she saw them with extraordinary vividness—a little unimaginative, a little slow, they had yet reached a point in civilization where, though it often took a prod of violent circumstance to reach it, a piece of conscience could always be counted on, as if it were part of their anatomy. The war wasn't over for them in quite the same way as it was over for these girls. Many of them had left their war responsibilities to return to heavier civilian ones. Whether they liked it or not, the problems of the Island attracted their attention, but they were accustomed to think in terms of enemies, and it struck Lucy as a little unfortunate that they continued to regard their problems with the same practiced hostility.

Bob and Lucy were not spontaneously alone together for several days. It was as if Bob had purposely stood aside in order to say to Lucy, "Get to know my life; judge me by that before you make up your mind about the future with me. After all, I'm its product; this is my family; all these people who surge over from the nearest camp or their own plantations to play tennis, drink our drinks, and share our meals are our friends and want to be yours. It is what I've got to give you, and it's all I've got."

But while he stood aside to make his purpose plain, Lucy was saying to herself with increasing urgency, "I want just to be free to enjoy myself with my own people, to feel this intense security, without having to take Bob or any of the rest of them too seriously for granted."

Lucy was excused from church on Sunday because of her still frequent headaches, and after everybody else had streamed off in cars, Bob strolled from an open window and dropped on the veranda steps at her feet.

"There's not a soul in the house and they won't be back for hours," he informed Lucy. "Take a cigarette and tell me what you think of us all. You've had it. Bags of bodies. That's our little lot. What do you make of us, Lucy?"

Lucy hesitated. This was her hour of reckoning, the hour that Philip Calgary, in the face of her extreme reluctance, had forced upon her. Her visit had already done her good. She was rested, her nerves were quiet; and now she had to pay for it.

"You know I love your mother," she said hesitantly. "She isn't like mine and yet she makes me think of her. I suppose she's just a bit, the nicest bit there is, of all mothers. She's generous—she's behind you—she's so funny and kind—and a beautiful fit all round. I think you've a terribly nice family. Bob, but of course you've seen I like them—I couldn't *not*. As for your friends, I suppose they're the best people on the Island, aren't they?"

"Others are much the same," Bob answered, wrinkling up his forehead. "I rather chose the pick—a lot are richer—a lot are stuffier—and some men on the Administration side may be a bit more intelligent, but they don't open their mouths much. There's schoolmasters too, who read more, but you'll have enough of them on your own, and missionaries, but we don't see much of them—so I think you've had the lot."

They puffed at their cigarettes in a companionable silence that was yet a little apprehensive and incomplete. Finally Lucy said defensively, "Mightn't you find them—some of them anyhow—rather binding after a bit?"

"Binding?" Bob asked her in a hurt voice. "What's binding about us? Just the usual types, aren't we?"

"Perhaps that's it," Lucy said a little uncomfortably. "Being on this Island hasn't changed them a bit. We *are* the usual types but ought we to be?"

There was a trade wind blowing off the sea, ruffling the bougainvillaeas and scourging the purple trumpets so that the hummingbirds had to alter their centrifugal spinning into little sidelong dashes, and to take their draughts of nectar in rapid insecurity. At ten o'clock in the morning the mystery of the light was not less, but it had a masklike quality as if you could easily find beneath it something not lovely at all, something not responding to hummingbirds in flowering bushes, but rather to the latticed wings of rackety Johnny Crows.

"I can see why people call the tropics melancholy," Lucy said at last. "Don't you sometimes get the feeling as if we ought to break all this up and get to the bottom of it? I can't take it as easily as the people here seem to do. There's a line of a sonnet of Rossetti's I keep remembering: 'Sad with the whole of pleasure.' I feel as if I don't want just to have a good time, but to get to see what the Island's really about, what the people—the dark people—mean, for after all we're only hundreds to their thousands and they need help—they need a different kind of help from any we've ever given them. Our women don't think about them at all except in terms of servants, and the

men—you too, I suppose, Bob—just think of how you can work them in order to make your estates pay."

"Well, as a matter of fact, what with wages and prices rocketing up, they *don't* pay, not like they used to," Bob replied rather ruefully. "I see what you mean, of course—you think we're all drinking and laughing and playing games because we've got into a flat spin and can't get out."

"Something like that," Lucy admitted. "When the war was on, we were caught in things like traps, but we were fighting the things we were in. Now we're still in traps, but we're playing about inside them, and not fighting to get out, or to get anyone else out, either."

"Well, just at this moment, I don't object to not fighting," Bob said with a grin. He leaned against the veranda post, his whole being released in Lucy's presence. All his bitter nervousness had left him. He felt young and gay. He was a man in his own home who knows that he has earned it. "Fun and games," he murmured, "fun and games. Do you really want them back, sweetheart? There you used to sit with your headpiece jammed over your nice smooth hair, listening to us chattering away to you out of the sky, our lives at the end of a cut rope. In a blind fog, perhaps, with petrol short, all dressed up and nowhere to go. And you having to shove us about from our landing place to another which you knew we might never reach, perhaps a raid on, and bombs screaming, and bumping up your 'drome, and you just thinking, 'All I ask is peace. Not to have to listen to chancy whispers or send that poor boob packing when he wants to come down. And in a few seconds I may be all blood and dust myself'—so what?"

Lucy nodded. That was exactly what she had felt with intensity for years and years and this boy beside her—his back touching her knees—was she to send him packing once more—away from his landing place—away from the chosen security of her arms? And what would she think of herself once she had sent him away? Was she to lose three such men?

"P'raps this is all painted tropics and what not to you," Bob went on, throwing his half-finished cigarette away and clasping his knees with his hands, "but it's home to me. Before every Op, I'd think what I'd give just to sit here and watch a hummingbird sizzling in the sunshine. And now, there they are sizzling and you're here too. What more could a fellow want?"

"I know," Lucy agreed cautiously, "you do deserve it, and in theory I feel just the same, and yet I know I'd be happier or feel perhaps less guilty if the dice were loaded against us like they used to be, instead of what I feel

here and now—as if they were loaded *for* us." Bob slipped his hand up and slid it over Lucy's.

"That's 'cos you've got a nasty little conscience," he told her. "A bloody, duty-loving type, that's what you are, my girl—always wanting to have someone step on your corns. Well, you ought to be satisfied with being flung off a balcony on to your clever little head, and getting your nice-looking arm broken. Relax, my good child, relax and think of marrying me. Bloody rigid I should have felt going for a Burton, and leaving no kids behind me—like most of my best pals did—and yours too, I know—but we couldn't help losing them, and it doesn't seem much good now that we've both survived going on our knees and letting our best chance slip. It is our best chance, being together, isn't it? You do *know* that, don't you, Lucy?" He turned around and faced her, his hard, anxious eyes fixed on hers.

"That's just what I mean," Lucy said miserably, "by the dice being loaded too much *for* us. I just can't take life that way any more. It may be Michael and Jerry—losing them, I mean, and yet never being quite able to feel I *have* lost them. If you've never seen a person you love dead it's awfully hard to make your nerves *know* they are dead. I don't know what I *do* want yet, but it isn't all this from you. It's beautiful, and it's safe being with you and—and it's part of me, too, really, but don't touch me, Bob—don't, please." He let his hand fall from her shoulder, but his eyes still held hers.

"I've got to find out what my work here means and what this Island means to me," Lucy went on after a pause. "I know it means something less safe, less happy perhaps than here, but it's what I *came* for. Your home *is* England, but I left England. I found I *wanted* to leave it. I can't just rush back into it now because someone pushed me off a balcony and put a dead bird in my bed."

"But you do *like* us, don't you, Lucy?" Bob demanded anxiously. "You do think what we fought for—to *be* British and *stay* British—was worth it? Besides, you and I clicked, honest to God, you know we clicked, don't you?"

"Clicking isn't enough," Lucy said rather coldly, "and of course it's just the trouble that I like you. I like all of this much better than I think I should. I didn't come out to be made love to and patted on the back by everybody. I could get that at home. I came out because I thought I was trained to hand on something I had, and now I don't know whether I've got it or not—or if I

have got it, whether I'm not afraid to give it. That's the sort of heroine I am —when people stop purring all over me!"

Bob took his hand away from hers. "You're good enough for me," he said firmly, "and you haven't answered my question. If you won't marry me —*why* won't you? You can start helping the Island afterward—I shan't stop you."

"I must ask you a question first," Lucy said after a pause. "Do you agree with your mother that we are different from these people—the educated dark ones, I mean, on this Island—because of course education is a basic difference everywhere? Are these children I'm teaching and have learned to love and respect to know that there is something in me I won't try to give them and that they'll never have, however much they want it? Are my friends who aren't white never to feel that I'm just the same to them as if they were white? You've lived here all your life—surely you can answer me —you *know*?"

"Funny your asking *me* that," Bob said in a low, bitter voice, looking away from her. "Asking *me* of all people. Still, if no one has yet told you, someone will soon, and I'd rather it came from me. It's a bit of a shower though—a damn nasty shower—to have to tell you on such a perfect morning! I wonder if it makes it better or worse that knowing you has made me forget the whole bloody thing, till you brought it up? Whoever said 'Let the dead bury their dead' had something. I was twenty when I joined the Air Force, and a few months earlier I'd fallen for a girl on this Island—hook, line, and sinker. She was gorgeous. It was my first common or Garden of Eden love. Anyhow I thought of this girl day and night, plumb through my solar plexus. She might have been the girl Byron saw who walked in beauty like the night. Trouble was she was too much like the night—she was African. Oh, educated all right. Been a year at Toronto University—nothing to choose between us except color. We met by chance on her vacation. I have a motorboat and I took her to that cove I showed you, and we lived there on and off, week ends together. I didn't think of marriage. I wonder if men in love for the first time ever do. It was just a case of 'all this and heaven too' with me. Then the bust-up came, and I pushed off for Britain. I suppose we could have got married before I left, but she was too proud to ask and I was fearfully busy getting things done and snatching every minute I could just to be with her.

"I think my people knew before I told them. But they didn't know Jenny —they'd never seen her and they took it hard. You know my mother, you say you love her. Well, could I, *could* I force a daughter-in-law on her who

would make her blood run cold, just when I was going away and might get killed? Jenny never told me till after I'd left the Island that there was going to be a child. She just wrote: 'It'll be all right if, when you come back, you want to marry me—and if you don't, that'll be all right too. Only I've got to know.' The letter reached me while we were racing round the sky, above London. Not ten to one chances against us—a hundred to one. I left her letter unanswered. After all, why wouldn't I be dead in an hour or two? When that do was over, I was ordered off to the Far East, and that looked pretty shaky too. I wired 'No can do.' I thought it was best by then. Everything I'd ever felt had gone stone cold. Jenny didn't write again. My mother wrote to me every few days—wonderful letters. You're right, she's worth loving. She went to see Jenny when the baby came and offered to take the boy and bring it up at Free Waters. Jenny wouldn't let her but she was perfectly sensible about it. Her people took charge of the boy—our boy, only I didn't feel like that when I hadn't seen him, and had left her in the lurch to have him without a name. Her brother sent her back to Toronto to finish her education and the baby died of malaria a year later. Jenny was with him. Afterward when the funeral was over she went for a swim—left her clothes on a rock, and never came back. Perhaps the sharks got her. Sweet story, isn't it, and I suppose it's the answer to your question—whites mustn't make friends with blacks?"

Lucy said nothing. She saw the cove and the green jade pool—the orchids hanging from the trees—she felt the silence she had felt there, as if someone were standing by her shoulder, someone she knew was there, but couldn't see.

"Who was her brother, Bob," Lucy asked slowly, "the man who sent her to Toronto and looked after the child?"

"Oh, didn't I tell you," Bob answered carelessly. "That fellow Philip Calgary, who physics Everslade. He looked after you too, didn't he, when you got bashed up?"

"Yes," said Lucy. "Yes, he looked after me when I got bashed up." Bob turned to face Lucy once more. His eyes looked into hers almost she felt, through hers, to read her heart.

"I'd not leave her now, if she were you," he said fiercely. "Not for a wilderness of mothers! But I couldn't fall for Jenny now either. I'm old. I don't want all that glamor shouting at me out of a clear sky. I want a girl who's lovely and kind, white inside and out, who knows all my gen—straight with the straightness I know. What's more, not hating me because

I'm white and my mother would rather die than touch her with a barge pole. Don't you see, when we're young and raw and have had things easy like I had, we can't help thinking the whole thing's ours! Life's eating out of our hand and our fun's nobody's business. Well! I've got over that, Lucy. I know we're lucky if we get anything from life, even ourselves intact, and I know we're luckier still if we've got ourselves tamed into facing everyday obligations."

Lucy said nothing. She could feel the pain and the urgency in Bob beating against her closed heart even before he took her by the shoulders and kissed her lips. Cool and soft, her lips met his. She did not try to stop him. It was a good-by kiss. Nothing in her senses answered him, and yet she felt curiously moved. She would have liked to comfort Bob, not because he wanted her and couldn't get her, but because long ago he had wanted Jenny and had not known how to take her. Bob let Lucy go because he knew there was no response to his passionate gesture, he felt checked but not humiliated by her coldness. There were, he told himself, still those dead lovers to reckon with. He did not dream that it was a living man whose image had suddenly—and to Lucy herself incredibly—blocked his path.

Lucy got up shakily. "I'm sorry," she murmured, "I have a headache. I must go indoors. I think it's the light bothering me." But when she got into the cool shuttered darkness of her own room she knew it wasn't the light. It was Philip Calgary's eyes that were looking into hers, his touch that she longed for, as she flung herself face downward on her bed and burst into a storm of tears. It was not for her dead lovers that she wept but because she saw that she must give up her world to reach a living lover, and that she might—even if she gave it up—never reach him.

CHAPTER XXII

Philip was so tired that he could hardly keep awake upon the back of his steady, plodding mule. He was vaguely conscious of the cool air blowing from the mountains and the thin gold of the last light.

Everything he saw touched his senses with a deep familiarity. The path, the hour, the beauty were all his own. Before he realized it, the ravine closed in and the tall tree ferns by the stream side arched over his head. He was on a path now which he himself had made. Suddenly the ferns parted and let the sky through. Black rocks broke up the smooth green sward. Here was Whiteleaf's garden. Ginger lilies grew in fabulous clumps, hedges of hibiscus rose waist-high. Coral pink, crimson, pale yellow and deep apricot, their veined and cuplike flowers lifted themselves into the golden air. Lilac sorrel strayed by the stream's side, and up and down the sharp spiked rocks, like little tongues of flame, ran scarlet putchella. These flowers had not grown by chance in their carefree niches. A hand and brain had planned with care and love their resting place. Wild begonias jostled forget-me-nots on shaded ledges, holding just earth enough for their frail foothold. A field of golden dewdrops spread themselves like a cloth of gold under a silk-cotton tree. Whiteleaf's mind had drawn these plants together and designed their background. Trees had been cut down to free them into light or planted to give them shelter. Their beauty and strangeness was not theirs alone. It belonged to a whole ancient civilization—they were the witnesses of Whiteleaf's Chinese heart. Before tonight Philip had never thought of Whiteleaf as Chinese. She had always seemed to him like a suddenly discovered part of himself. They had spoken the same language and wanted the same things for their world. Neither had used art or subterfuge in their dealings with each other. Never had repetition dulled the sweetness of their contact, nor rubbed the bloom from their deep courtesy of loving.

The gold air turned colorless as Philip looked through the cleared space before the house. A moment later he saw Whiteleaf. She was standing, her hands resting on the rail of the veranda, looking toward the gap in the trees. She wore a pale blue-gray kimono like the wings of a wood pigeon.

The soft vague color accentuated the black masses of her hair piled high above her smooth forehead. Philip stood quite still for a moment, looking up at her as if he saw her for the first time. Her skin had the velvety texture of a

primrose, while her brows, soft as the furred wings of a moth, arched above the liquid depths of her dark slanting eyes. "No wonder she knows so much about flowers," Philip thought tenderly as he looked at her, "she is one herself."

"Everything is ready for you," Whiteleaf said in her clear voice. She hesitated for a moment as if she too felt a curious sense of strangeness in the silent man below her. Then her lips parted in a smile, and she ran down the steps into his arms. "How I longed to be with you," she murmured, "in all that horror—that heat—that sadness—down below!"

"If you hadn't been with me," Philip answered, suddenly convinced of the truth of his words, "I could never have come out of it." The sound of the waterfall plunged all his senses into coolness. The hush of twilight wrapped the little hut in peace. Whiteleaf had laid their supper as usual on the veranda where they could watch the moon rise. Slowly the great silk-cotton tree standing in the center of the glade lost its shape and became one with darkness. Stars came out in the clear sky, growing clearer and larger as the earth below them lost its features one by one.

They talked very little to each other. Whiteleaf's light efficiency had no pressure in it. Rightness was like a bird's song to her in its easiness. Only their eyes meeting each other were graver than usual. Slowly, as he ate and drank, Philip told her the history of his last two weeks' epidemic; but in her presence each incident released itself from horror. He felt strength coming back into his body. He even heard himself laugh once at the flight of the nurses and the shifts he had been put to, and of how an old woman who had gone to hospital to die suddenly got up from her bed to cook for the whole hospital and became his greatest standby. Above their shack the Flames-of-the-Forest held high their colorless cups till—beating against their scarlet walls—the moon's slow radiance revealed color as well as form. A night-blooming cereus, crimson-hearted behind its spine of thorns, opened in silent splendor. Slowly the cotton tree unwound itself from darkness till they could see its separate great branches spreading in benediction over half the glade. Except for the uneven chanting of the waterfall there was no sound, save when on silken wings, white as a spirit, a great owl swept by, or there was a movement in the trees as if something wandered through them, brushing against their leaves in passing.

They rested side by side on mattresses spread out on the veranda, smoking and talking intermittently to each other. At last Philip rose and stamped out his cigarette. "Now we can bathe," he said. "The moon will be shining on the stream." Whiteleaf made no direct answer. She turned to

watch the hill divide itself from the moon and move nearer to them, then she said, "You go first, Philip." Philip threw off his clothes and, taking a towel over his shoulder, went down to the pool, alone for the first time.

The moon made one of those strange leaps she makes in mountain places, throwing darkness like a cast-off cloak behind her. The leaves of the palms were drenched with light, and the foam of the falls shone like diamonds.

Philip waited for a while until he knew that Whiteleaf was not going to join him. He was vaguely disappointed, because he loved to watch Whiteleaf's small curved body slip into the pool, not timorously but giving herself wholeheartedly to it without hesitation. The pool became enriched by the way Whiteleaf became a part of it. There was a smooth felicity in the way her bones fitted into her flesh; although she was under middle height, she was so erect and slender that she never gave the effect of smallness.

A surgeon notices how bones and muscles co-ordinate and work together in a well-proportioned body. It is rare to find this undriven natural force, since few people have trained their bodies from babyhood upward, untormented by the friction of their minds. The pool, though the moonlight made it shine like a looking glass, to Philip seemed dark and empty without Whiteleaf. He wanted to shout her name and make her come to him, but the law of their life together had been never to force or hurry each other into any action against the will of the other, so without waiting longer, Philip dived into the silvery water and took his swim alone. When he had finished, he lay once more on his mattress watching the moon sink long shafts of gold between the black shadows of the trees. He had time to light another cigarette and smoke it through while Whiteleaf went down to the pool alone, and came back alone. She lay beside him without touching him.

Desire began to creep through Philip's tired veins and he turned toward her, putting out his hand to take hers for consent, before he embraced her. For the first time in eight years Whiteleaf said, "No."

It was so strange to Philip that he held his breath after she had spoken. He found he could not ask her why. She closed her fingers around his hand and held it fast. At last he murmured uncertainly, "You are tired this evening, Whiteleaf—too tired even for love?"

"For that, never," she answered quietly, "but you see, Philip, you no longer love me!"

He cried out in his mind, "That is a lie!" but he could not force the words past his lips.

He was silent, listening to what the whole of him really felt about this bitter accusation. "Whiteleaf, I feel for you both desire and constancy," he said at last, "why then do you deny my love?"

"Yes," Whiteleaf answered quietly, "I do not doubt that you have both these gifts for me, Philip, but they are not enough. They are not all you have and—only all you have is enough."

"But—but, Whiteleaf," Philip stammered in his eagerness to break down the intangible barrier between them, "what more can there be? We have had everything—all these years. It is true that we have never been together long enough, for we have not been able to live together all the time, and only all the time would have been enough."

"Time," Whiteleaf said inexorably, "has nothing to do with love. Don't you know that what we felt for each other was outside time? It was life itself. All of me, and all of you, went into our love. There were no separate moments, and this made a third thing—a life. It should have been a child, I know, but since that could not be, what we had was nevertheless what a child *is*—a separate created life made by us out of each other. But we no longer share everything so now we cannot make a third thing any more."

Philip could not answer her, but he was glad that Whiteleaf still held his hand close in hers as if it belonged to her. He had never been able to protect her or to give her what a husband longs to give his wife—all his strength and all his manhood, enriched by her claims upon it. Whiteleaf had made no claims, but she herself had been what Philip claimed. The whole of his undivided life was in the bond between them, and now he felt like a beggar who has no rights and who has even been refused alms.

For a time he was so bitter with disappointment that he could not speak, then he said, "For you to leave me—if this means that you are about to leave me—I could understand. We both knew this parting must come. You have your creed and your country apart from mine. But why do you leave me before you must? Why do you refuse me now while we are still together? Why do you dare to speak as if my love had failed you, when it is you who go and I who must stay? This is my proper place as China is yours. Your creed calls you there—mine keeps me here. Why should we part except as space parts us? Why do you refuse me, Whiteleaf, this last time?"

Whiteleaf was silent. Her hand gripped his, but she did not draw him to her heart. "I find it difficult to say what I am going to say, Philip," she said at last. "To refuse you is also difficult. It is quite true that love does not alter

with space or time, it is deeper than both, but it must be complete. Between us now there would be falsity—if it were not complete."

"Has it not always been complete?" Philip asked, angrily drawing away his hand.

"Yes," Whiteleaf answered, "and it is because it always has, that now it is incomplete, we must stop being lovers."

Philip did not want to know what she meant, nor did he want to give up his desire without fulfillment. He felt ashamed, for he was not sure that his love for Whiteleaf was still complete. He knew that there are men and women who use love lightly as a mere physical need or as harlots use it for gain. Such a love is easy and insignificant. It can be given up as lightly as it is used, since it is not more part of a human being than plumbing or money are parts of us, though we may find both at times convenient. There are others who accept physical need as if it were a weakness or a disgrace. But to Philip, love had been true love, containing body and soul. It had penetrated his whole being, and he knew that it was this love which Whiteleaf now claimed and felt was missing. He could not argue with her about her loss. She lay beside him like a piece of seaweed from which the tide has withdrawn.

"Don't you see," Whiteleaf said at last, "that you cannot give me even your desire or your constancy now? They belong—as all the rest of you belongs now—to Lucy."

If she had ripped him with a knife between his shoulder blades it would have hurt Philip less than her words. He lay beside her like a log, for it was what he felt like—dead wood, severed from a living tree. Suddenly he knew that Whiteleaf was crying silently in the dark but he did not touch her. Only after a while her silent tears helped him to speak. "What nonsense," he said bitterly. "A white woman! Lucy!" And then he could have bitten his tongue out for having spoken her name. It hurt him as if he were denying the blood that was running through his heart. He knew the truth even while he was denying it. He loved Lucy.

"It will be a great pain," Whiteleaf murmured gently, "but it is not nonsense. She is a brave girl with a true heart—a little spoiled, perhaps, because she has been too much admired by too many men, and has always believed that to do her duty is enough. That is unfortunate because we seldom know what our duty is, nor is it ever enough. But these British limitations she will outgrow—through your love."

Philip sat up, clasping his arms around his knees. He was trying to be reasonable, but it did not come easily to him at the moment, staring into the bright, empty light with Whiteleaf close to him and yet as distant and as cold as the moon.

"I don't say that any man could *not* love Lucy," he admitted. "She has beauty and kindness, but to speak as if a white girl in her position could love me is an insult to her intelligence and to mine. No doubt she might like me to lose my head over her—out of vanity—with perhaps a dash of friendship. More than that could never happen—and even that cannot happen if I do *not* lose my head."

"And if I tell you that it has already happened, and that you cannot command the laws of the universe nor push time back?" Whiteleaf demanded, smiling through her tears. "My dear, foolish Philip, Lucy already loves you. When you saw Lucy lying broken on the ground you loved her, and when, waking up from her unconsciousness, she saw your face as she had never yet seen it—she loved you."

Philip sprang up and walked to the veranda's edge. He felt as if he wanted to break something, but he did not know what it was that he wanted to break.

The glade swam in moonlight—that perplexing light which is so clear, yet so weak, like the brain of a drunkard. He stood there for a long time fighting what Whiteleaf had said to him, and not being able to conquer it. He thought of the old nursery ballad his mother had taught him: "The Lion and the Unicorn were fighting for the crown. The Lion beat the Unicorn all round the town." Whiteleaf and he had been lucky in love, for each of them the crown had been a separate jewel so that they had never had to compete with each other. Nothing even now could take away from the happiness of those long years of understanding and love.

Philip turned back toward her at last, and once more sat crosslegged on his mattress beside her, but he knew that he was defeated. He was not the Lion any more.

"If what you say is true," he told her, starting on a fresh cigarette, "Lucy and I are both doomed from the start. I must try to get a job off the Island."

"In love," Whiteleaf said, laughing at him through her tears, "you cannot settle all such matters alone like the Holy Ghost brooding over the face of the waters! You are Adam, and Eve is a part of you! You must share your apple. There have been many successful mixed marriages after all—exceptional, I grant you—but you two are also exceptional."

"The most successful one I know," Philip said in a low, bitter voice, "is that of one of my own colleagues. He often sits with his back to his wife at breakfast so that she cannot see his face. Yet she loves him. She told me the story herself. It is only to *him* that it is unbearable that she should see his face."

"We cannot alter facts," Whiteleaf said in her clear reasonable voice, "but we can alter our ways of looking at them. Have we not been happy? Yet I am Chinese and you West Indian. If you turned your back on Lucy it is *she* who would suffer most. Not because your face is dark but because you turned it away from her. It would be highly unreasonable and unfair to punish Lucy because of a self-torturing sense of inferiority due to the law of pigmentation."

Philip gave a sound that was half a groan, half a laugh, and Whiteleaf suddenly covered her face with her hands, "No, no, no," she sobbed. He drew her into his arms, holding her as if she were the child that they had never had. It seemed to Philip that he had never loved Whiteleaf with so deep a tenderness. After a time she stopped sobbing. "If we had always been together, Philip," she whispered, "if we had had a home and children as you always wanted—and I refused because I am a Communist, trained by them for the use of China—then none of this need have happened. I was a fool. I thought to have both, my life and my creed, but they were not the same. Perhaps it is true what you say—we are human beings *first* before we are Communists or belong to our own countries. I was arrogant—I believed I could hold you while we were disobeying the laws of life, and before Lucy came it was true, I did hold you! I still hoped you would become a Communist and that when I had to return to China you would return with me. But now—but now . . . Please believe me, Philip, that this parting is all my fault. I only cry because I *made* my tears."

"They are *our* tears, we made them together," Philip insisted. "Are my eyes dry? No one can rob us of those years we have had together—they will outlast everything we feel now."

The moon dropped behind the cotton tree and lost itself in the smaller trees of the forest. There was no light left now, but the single, remote gleams, from separate stars, divided by darkness. Whiteleaf did not remind Philip that what would last would not be life, only a memory of living, but she moved out of his arms.

"Remember only this," she whispered. "If I had put love first we would not have lost it. Do not—you who were wise for us both together once, be

foolish now for Lucy. Put love first!"

Whiteleaf was soon asleep, although she loved Philip and knew that he no longer loved her. She had no guilt upon her heart, only sorrow. But Philip could not sleep. He felt guilty because he was sure that if he had cared for Whiteleaf as deeply as she had cared for him, Lucy would never have shaken him out of his security. He knew it was for him—not for the loss of him—that Whiteleaf wept.

Philip fell asleep at last, exhausted body and soul, and woke at dawn to find Whiteleaf no longer by his side. Each tree in turn was moving away from the massed darkness into the thin new light. Birds rustled and cried out to each other in short brief songs. Philip called her name twice and then stepped into the living room to find the last trace of Whiteleaf. A note lay waiting for him on the table.

> "My dearest, I have gone. My ship sails today. Do not try to see me again. We have had everything. Do not grieve for me, and do not make Lucy grieve because she is not me. I have my work. I go to comrades to make our new country—make yours here on this island that was our home."

She had not signed the letter.

Philip rushed out and plunged into the ravine. His strength had come back to him, but without hope. He used every atom of power that he possessed to reach the port in time, but knew that it was in vain. The ship had already left the dock but she passed close by the promontory on which Philip stood. The passage between the land and the Island through which the channel ran was deep. Big ships had to go at a great speed through the narrow passage because of the current's strength. Philip could see the separate figures on the deck and knew that they could see his own tall figure standing alone under the feathered palms. The ship flew like a strong white bird, between Philip and the Island, out to the sea. She grew smaller and smaller while he tried to hold her back with his eyes. There was nothing left at last but the Island with the foam rising high above its rocks, and where the ship had been, the emptiness of the unruffled sea.

CHAPTER XXIII

Into Jessica's quickened senses coolness poured with the approach of night. Her unseeing eyes would no longer be alone with darkness. Her hand, resting on the head of the big dog at her feet, felt his ears prick forward. A moment later she heard the quick approach of a car. But it was coming in the wrong direction, down from the Ridge, not up from the Gap, so that it couldn't be Philip's car. The dog's hair pricked upward under her fingers. He was on the balls of his toes and off in a flash toward the garden gate; his deep bark, like the bell of a cathedral, warned the approaching traveler of his formidable guardianship. Sooner than usual the barking stopped. The approaching footsteps were light.

"A girl comes," Jessica told herself, "and she is white—the whole of her foot is not on the ground at the same time." She rose, a stately figure, carrying sixty years easily in her great frame, to greet her unexpected visitor. Lucy, meeting the steady sightless eyes in the chocolate-dark face, felt a curious sense of awe and incredulity together. Was this a servant, this heavy-featured African, or Philip's mother? And what difference must it make to her which it was? "Does—does Dr. Calgary live here?" she asked diffidently.

"Yes," Jessica said in the soft, uptilting drawl of the Island, with its hidden depth of questioning, as if a human being had no fixed right to his own speech. "This is his home. He is not here now, but tonight he may come, for I have just heard the epidemic on the plains is over. I am his mother."

Jessica had educated herself late in life, she had taught herself to separate the fluid vowels of her race; in her mind she had almost isolated herself from her own people in order to speak as Philip spoke. Yet sometimes she was distrustful of this new art. Had she really crossed the gulf between the instinctive world of her childhood and this life of afterthoughts and swift corrections?

"This girl is afraid," Jessica said to herself, "she has seen Philip—that beautiful pale god my husband gave me, with the straight features and the golden skin—she could not know his mother was just an old Negress."

"Perhaps you would like to wait for him?" she said politely. "Will you sit on the veranda for a while? I cannot tell if the sun has gone yet because I am blind, but the twilight will soon come."

The girl moved up the steps and took Jessica's hand. She said in a quick, moved voice, "I always wanted to come and see you. I am one of the schoolmistresses from Everslade. My name is Lucy Armstrong." She did not explain why, if she had always wanted to come, she had not come. Perhaps she did not know herself how she had dreaded as well as longed for this strange moment, when she must know for the first time the difference between herself and Philip.

It was twilight, and the sudden hush of the withdrawing light already filled the garden. The contented murmuring of the small golden bees in the logwood fields before the house slowly grew thin and ceased. From time to time a bird called as if it wanted company and was afraid of the dark. Jessica settled herself unhesitatingly in her big rocking chair and the dog flung himself at her feet with a heavy sigh, as if he regretted that the moment's excitement was now over. Lucy could see through the opened windows into the little house. It was an astonishingly small house, pink walled like an empty shell, the only sitting room opened into two small bedrooms, spotlessly clean and neat, but supplying the minimum of human needs. A shed at the back of the house was where Mrs. Calgary cooked. Here she kept her herbs and all her kitchen utensils. The pride of her life was a real bathroom supplied by water from the stream that ran through her garden and dropped into the ravine, but she never thought of the bathroom as part of their house—it was like Philip's books, another world into which with a great effort her mind penetrated, as a child might look through a scientist's microscope. The trees and the sky pressed down upon the little house as if to absorb it into themselves.

"How beautiful the scent of the flowers is from your garden!" Lucy said at last.

"There is a little dampness in the air now," Jessica said. "In the daytime the scent is there, but it is struck out of the flowers by the heat of the sun, it does not become part of the air and melt into it, as the fragrance does after the sun is set. Plants are like people, they live best together in gentleness. People say we must have green hands who make good gardens, but it is really a green heart we must have to meet each need of every plant as it comes." Jessica paused and waited as if for Lucy to say what her own need was, and to Lucy's surprise she found herself saying it.

"Something has happened," she began, "at Everslade. I could hardly believe it. I have been away on a short holiday, and when I came back, Whiteleaf Ho Sung, our most trusted helper, who runs the annex for our delicate children, had gone. She has sailed to China. She left a note for me, but she didn't really tell me anything. That is why I came here—I thought your son—who looks after the sick children—might know more."

Jessica's chair stopped rocking. She had sat quite still before, but now she sat with a rigid stillness, her big dark hands closed tightly upon each other. "Whiteleaf has gone?" she murmured. Her voice had a way of entering the silence almost as if it were a part of it.

"I was so sorry," Lucy explained, "so surprised too, because somehow it isn't like her. Poor little Myra O'San, who is her devoted friend, knows no more than I do why she went, though Whiteleaf did say good-by to her, but that was all—and to the others she didn't even say good-by! I have to ring up the committee tomorrow and tell them, but I knew she was a friend of yours, and your son's, so I ventured to come here first."

"Yes, she is indeed our friend," Jessica said at last, but not until Hector had put his paw up and anxiously touched her knee, as if he sensed that something unusual had happened, which must receive his direct attention. "She is my friend—and Philip's. He will know why she went. I did not know this thing had happened. China is very disturbed—very unhappy—my son tells me there is a flood of new life there drowning out the old. It may be there was a call for her. She has many skills." Silence settled once more between them, a listening silence. Lucy could hear nothing but the tiny stirring of the night life in the garden—birds settling in their nests, or a leaf moving against another leaf.

Suddenly Jessica and the dog together rose with astonishing swiftness. "It is my son's car coming," Jessica told her. She was already down the steps, and Lucy watched her move unfalteringly across the garden and the field which separated the house from the road. She must have reached the gate before the car stopped, but the trees hid their meeting from Lucy. It was a long while before they came very slowly along the path together, as if they were carrying a heavy weight between them. Even the dog's eagerness was quenched. Lucy was aghast at the change in Philip. His cheeks were hollowed till the bones showed, the veins in his temples stood out like cords, his eyes were sunk backward into his head, his lithe, resilient body moved as if it took his last strength to drag it.

Jessica paused for a moment, turning in Lucy's direction but as if she could not quite place where she stood. "I will make some coffee," she said, "while my son tells you about Whiteleaf." Philip sat on the veranda steps, his back against the railing, looking out into the garden. His eyes had met Lucy's only for a moment, with a strange glance of reproach.

"I had to come," she said defensively, "I wanted so much to understand." He still said nothing, yet Lucy knew that he was intensely aware of her presence, though she could not be sure if his awareness gave him pain or pleasure.

"To be a Communist," he said at last, "is not a very good advertisement for a teacher, but since she has gone it will do her no harm to speak of it. I need not tell you that Whiteleaf meant to keep her faith to herself, but her creed was herself, and she belonged with it to her own country. Perhaps at this juncture I should tell you that I am not myself a Communist, though I am perhaps more in agreement with their spoken creed than I am with anything which a good Britisher would approve. But I do not accept dictatorship from human beings as faulty as myself. I like to be an individual and responsible for my own choice. Whiteleaf's reason for leaving us so suddenly was no doubt that she received an order from those who sent her here. She has had ten years' training in foreign lands, she is proficient in all she was sent to learn. Another day, another hour would seem to the Party a waste of time. Communists are economical—except of human rights. These they expend lavishly for their own purposes."

"She—she had no other reason?" Lucy asked in a strained voice.

"If she had, it was a private one," Philip answered briefly. His voice was low, and the bitterness in it was controlled, but it reached Lucy all the more for the restraint he had laid upon it.

"You are angry with me for coming here?" she murmured.

"Please don't think so," Philip answered with biting courtesy. "It was most kind of you to suppose our interest in Whiteleaf was equal to your own, and quite correct. I was unable actually to speak with her before she sailed, but I saw her boat leave and satisfied myself that she had sailed. She will not return."

Darkness slid into the flowered garden. One by one, trees and blossoms lost their color and their outline. The advancing shadows swept away the hollows in Philip's face, but Lucy could still see his profile, like a carving in some inflexible material.

"I wish you would read her letter to me," Lucy said at last. "I liked her so much—I felt she was my friend, but this doesn't sound like a friend's letter—will you read it and tell me what you think?" A faintly derisive smile touched Philip's lips; he turned his head and looked fully at Lucy.

"Does it really strike you as very surprising," he asked her, "that Asiatics, possibly even some Africans, might suffer from a color prejudice against white people? It is very regrettable, of course—all such discriminations are to my mind regrettable, but they exist."

"That couldn't be true between us," Lucy said in a shocked voice. "Whiteleaf wasn't like that—and she knew I wasn't!"

Philip held out his hand for the letter. "Doctors are skeptical people," he observed. "We must not always believe what our patients tell us, so we sometimes fail to believe what our friends tell us, or even what we tell ourselves."

There was just light enough for Philip's keen eyes to follow the clear exquisite handwriting, each letter a separate picture, which he knew by heart. He read Whiteleaf's letter very slowly and handed it back to Lucy without comment.

> "Dear Mrs. Armstrong," he read. "It is with great regret that I leave Everslade in this sudden manner and without bidding you farewell. I was told that by a sudden cancellation I could sail on a ship that left immediately, and I had received a message that I must take the first opportunity to return to China. I hope that you will find no great difficulty in replacing me. Many Toronto students well taught in my subjects would like to come to the Island for a time.
>
> "May I say how greatly I appreciate your kindness to Myra O'San? I commend this little girl, not assisted by fortune but rich in merit, to your friendly care. She has enemies at Everslade, so have you. They are the same enemies. Do not let them separate her from you, for both your sakes. Forgive my frankness. It grieves me to be no further use to anyone at Everslade.
>
> Your faithful colleague,
> Whiteleaf Ho Sung."

The silence deepened around them, the scent of tobacco plants and the sweetness of a bed of stocks mingled with the aroma of freshly roasted

coffee from the house. It was so friendly and domestic a scent and sharing it brought them so close together that Lucy ventured to say at last, "Why did you want to get rid of me? Was it because of Whiteleaf's going? Why did you throw me into Free Waters—you must have known what it meant?" She could not go on against the icy blankness of Philip's face. It was impassable as a crevasse in a glacier.

"Yes, I knew what it meant," he agreed with a lift of his heavy eyebrows. "It was a separation from things which did not concern you and I had hoped might lead to more insight into matters which *should* concern you."

Lucy felt helpless against Philip's mockery, outclassed and ashamed by what she thought was his far greater respect for Whiteleaf. Perhaps, she said to herself, Philip was in the right. She had let Bob kiss her after he had told her about Jenny. Whiteleaf would never have submitted to such an alien tenderness.

"But I didn't know about Jenny before I went there," she whispered half to herself and half to Philip. "If I had known I wouldn't have gone."

"It's better you should know, and from your own friends," Philip said gravely, dropping his mockery. "Here on this island such stories are of common occurrence. As long as such connections are illicit, miscegenation is countenanced, it is only in these rare cases when white men *marry* colored women that it becomes a stigma not to be handed down. People talk of a color bar but what they mean of course is a psychological disgrace. Jews were less despised—in the countries where they are still despised—*before*—than *after*—six million of them were murdered for the sake of their inferiority. It was not, you see, so obvious that they *were* inferior until they were murdered. Such knowledge as this is a part of what you must learn on the Island in order to safeguard yourself against your unfortunate lack of color prejudice."

"But I will never learn it," Lucy said passionately. "I have always wanted to explain to you—it's what made me come here—not that I thought about it quite like that. I just wanted to get away from a life that didn't seem real after the war—you see, I was so used to real things, being friends with everyone who was in your job if you could, or anyhow friends enough to work well with them, because you had to, because working together well mattered terribly. Where people are close to death all the time they have to behave properly: I don't mean we were proper in a conventional sense—we were often reckless, but not of each other—I mean when one of us was browned off or up against it we all stood by him. We—it was a different

relation—you can't get it now in the same way—the men I loved—you know I was married for three months and two years afterward I was engaged for a few weeks—made me different. It wasn't just romantic and tragic loving them, the way people pretend now, it was horrible and raw—and wrong—that was it, Philip, fundamentally *wrong*! People oughtn't to have to die like that, and if they oughtn't to die against each other, it must somehow come out of living *with* and *for* each other. You're a doctor, you ought to know we should only fight against death and disease and pain, never against each other. Whiteleaf knew that."

"Yes," Philip agreed, glad that he could no longer see her beauty in the gathering dark. "You are quite right. Whiteleaf knew it, and lived it, and that may have been one of the reasons which made her leave us. Do not think of me as your enemy, please, because I point out to you that we should consider our work first—you have yours, and I have mine. I do not think it is necessary or would be helpful for either of us to meet again. The annex can be closed. I will dispose of my little patients elsewhere. Let this be our last meeting."

"Philip," Lucy said desperately, "you can't possibly want this any more than I do! We *discovered* we were friends. Life isn't so rich that we can afford to sacrifice friendship for the sake of prejudices."

"Perhaps it is not altogether friendship that we are talking about," Philip said gently. "Be reasonable, Lucy." Her name slipped out before he could bite it back, and with her name his secret. Lucy knew now why Whiteleaf had gone away.

"You wouldn't be so cruel," she said slowly, "either to yourself or to me. You know quite well you are trying to tie me up to things I have outgrown and don't want any more. I have to learn to get into a different way of thinking and living and only you can teach me. Whiteleaf would have helped me and I had believed Elvira would, but I somehow don't think so any more. There's no one else but you, Philip."

"I think you're wrong to ask it," Philip said firmly. "I tell you I know what I am talking about. It's been burned into my blood. We dark people in countries owned and run by white ones drink in this agonizing sense of inferiority with our mother's milk. If we try to escape into the life of the mind we find you there before us. Our thoughts are colored by your thoughts, inhibited by your restrictions. It is true that some of us break out of our strait jackets and some of your people even help to release us, but there are a million dark people on this island—Africans, Indians, mixed races—

and how many of these can stand upon their own feet and compete on equal terms with their rulers? Who possess the riches of the Island? Who controls them? Do you suppose the mere handful of us who get over our limitations enjoy our isolation? The link between us—if there should be such a link—would ruin your work and mine. You have something to give our Island children. I respect your work and we are all grateful for it. I realize that you are not prejudiced, that you recognize and can train our children's potentialities into fresh powers. I understand that you would have chosen Whiteleaf and myself to be your friends if you had had your way. I wish I didn't. It would be a great help to me if I could think you arrogant and ignorant, as the arrogant always are. But I know you are not, and it is just because you are not that you can help to train the girls of this Island toward courage and show them how to lead fuller and richer lives."

He stopped abruptly; above them towered the tall dark shadow of his mother.

"I have brought you your coffee," she said, as Philip rose and took the tray out of her hands. "Now perhaps you are too tired to eat, Philip, but drink this and you will soon feel better. You too, Mrs. Armstrong, need strength." Jessica sat down again in the old rocking chair and the simplicity of her presence gave them both a strange new ease. Philip relaxed his long tension. He did not think or struggle any more against what was in his heart. Instead he watched Lucy's hand holding her coffee cup.

"Mrs. Calgary," Lucy said, "don't you think we ought all of us on the Island just to be human beings, equally friendly with each other? Do you think it matters whether we're black or white, or what language we speak?"

Jessica's chair stopped rocking. Philip turned his head toward his mother. His love saw the heavy features of the old dark face, but pain stirred in his heart with his love.

"The good Lord," his mother said slowly, "has made all his children and he must like us different—or surely he would have made us the same. The Lord doesn't have favorites. In my herb garden none of my herbs are the same. What I give folks for wounds heal wounds but won't heal fever, and what I give folks for fever heals fever but won't heal wounds. They are both good herbs growing in the same garden. It is as I have always told my son Philip and he knows it as well as I do."

"My mother oversimplifies," Philip said. He got up and stood effortlessly now, as if his strength were returning to him, and walked in friendly silence with Lucy to the gate. "It isn't as easy as my mother makes

it sound," he said when he had seen her into the car. "Herbs don't back-chat."

"But you won't give up the annex?" Lucy pleaded. "If you do I shall lose Henriette too, and perhaps Myra—I should be quite alone, with—with my enemies, if Whiteleaf is right and I really have enemies."

Philip shook his head at Lucy, but his eyes smiled. She had triumphed. She had drawn him to a point beyond which he couldn't go. He couldn't refuse to protect her.

CHAPTER XXIV

Lucy drove back to Everslade, strangely illumined and reassured to face her task.

She was not naturally fearful and she thought that any danger that might have lurked in the school was probably due to the false loyalties of the girls, or to antagonism between Elvira and Whiteleaf. Adolescent exaggeration may often lead to crime, and child delinquencies are more dangerous than those of adults, because children have no grasp of consequences. Probably, Lucy told herself, Petronella was the source of all the mischief, and Petronella with her tool Angela had now vanished.

Lucy worked up till midnight in order to free herself next day for an hour or two alone with Myra O'San. She felt that she must, if it were within her power, loosen the tension of the child's first acute sorrow. It was early afternoon before she could leave the school and take Myra with her.

"Do you think," she asked, "that you could drive me to the bamboo grove beyond the Falls? I have never seen it, and I still find driving tiring for my arm. I am free till teatime."

Myra's eyes shone like water over hard metal. "Yes," she said, "I have learned to drive, and if you want me Miss Peck will excuse me from our botany walk."

They started in silence down the long zigzag mountain road. "Could you tell me," Lucy asked Myra at last, "how long ago you knew that Whiteleaf was leaving us?"

Myra nodded. "I knew," she said, "because Whiteleaf warned me often that she had work in China that must come before her work here, and that when she was sent for she must go. But I don't think Whiteleaf herself knew *when*. The day after you left I found her packing—packing everything, not just what she needed for her free week-end—so then I knew, and when I asked her she told me."

"Did she tell you anything else?" Lucy asked. "I mean anything I have a right to know about the school, or—or about myself?"

Myra was silent for a moment, driving very carefully and slowly through the golden air, which still pressed down upon them with the heat of noon.

"She said you are to be my work—more even than my lessons. I am here to serve you. You see, when I knew Whiteleaf was leaving I wanted to go away too, back to my father, but she said my place was at present here, that I must not leave you."

Lucy said quickly, "I am very glad she asked you to stay—but not to serve me, Myra. I want your friendship if you can give it to me. Not one of the older girls yet has given me any friendship though I have been here nearly a year. Most of my work is with them, and I find it hard to teach against determined hostility. I know you are not hostile to me, and it helps me very much. I cannot be to you anything like Miss Ho Sung was—I wish I could. I admired her very much, but I do like you for yourself, and I hope that some day you may like me for myself, in the same way."

"That I already do," Myra assured Lucy solemnly. "I liked you at once, from the time you told us about the sailor and the albatross. I found that it was what I also saw. To have to wear a dead bird around your neck—whether you have killed it or not—is hard; but my father has told me not all misfortunes are useless. 'Be sorry,' he said to me, 'for those who have nothing wrong with them—they may have worse.' He meant, I think, that I should not be too sorry for my own ugliness and that perhaps I could turn it into a strength. You see, if I were not so ugly I might perhaps be cruel or false or a coward. If I were beautiful I might forget that such things are even uglier than a black Chinese face."

"But when you love a face," Lucy said gently, "it is never ugly to you. People come through their faces as soon as you know them. I think one seldom looks twice at a known face. I once met a girl who was as pretty as a painted plate on the wall, but after you had seen what the pattern was and how pretty the colors, you just forgot and even got rather tired of looking at her because she was a dull girl and never had anything new to show you."

"But the person to whom I was never ugly has gone away," Myra reminded her, and her voice, but not her steady hand on the wheel, shook as she spoke.

Lucy, to whom the emptiness of comfort was a well-known ache, made no direct comment, but after a pause she said: "Whiteleaf is not dead and you are young, some day you can go to China. I have a feeling she won't change and that you would find her just the same. There is something Whiteleaf said in the note she left me which I think you ought to know, she said that you and I both had enemies and that they were the same enemies. I hope she was not right, and that these enemies, if we ever had them, have

already gone away, but if you have any fresh difficulties or I have them, shall we tell each other about them?"

The heavy, troubled face of the child lightened slowly. "Yes," she said, "I think that would be a very good plan. I never had a white friend before. I had meant to be your servant, and look after you as Whiteleaf said I should. But what you speak of is different. It is much more."

"It will grow more, I think," Lucy answered, "because we have to make friends slowly, just through what happens, but it is my choice if it is also yours."

"It is mine," Myra O'San said firmly, but in a hushed voice, as if she were moving into a world which might have surprises—some of them even terrifying surprises.

In the distance they could see the bamboo grove; the long avenue of trees opened out in front of them, hiding the fields through which they drove. Overhead the branches spread so thickly that they formed a cavern of green drenched with gold. The bright emerald leaves dipped their light downward into the dusty road. Myra stopped the car so that they could hear the bamboos talk. The avenue was like a market full of softly chattering women, swept by a subject they loved, and to which each made a separate but simultaneous contribution. Looking up through the broken ceiling of leaves, Lucy saw a flock of jade-green parakeets as small as a child's fingers. Their heads and breasts were rose-colored, and their close-knit wings had a short fluttering movement, so that they looked like leaves transmuted into birds. Each bird slipped in and out of the light foliage on a separate errand, yet the same instinct united them, and they looked like a company of lovers on an excursion together. "Oh, Myra," Lucy exclaimed, "how beautiful!"

Myra made no answer, and Lucy, glancing at her, found that she was in tears. She held her big clumsy hands tightly together as if to keep herself quiet, though her sobs shook her. Lucy laid her hand on Myra's heavy hands, they felt very cold and trembled under her touch. "It was wrong of me to bring you into this lovely place," Lucy said in quick self-reproach. "I know how it makes you cry when the person you love can't see the same thing too."

Myra's oblique eyes fixed themselves, full of dread, on Lucy's small white hand as if it had the power to freeze her heart. She made a great effort and controlled the sobs that shook her. "Please forgive me," she said, "it is

not altogether Whiteleaf that has made me cry. It is also Philip. I am so sorry for Philip."

"Yes, I know," Lucy murmured. "He too has lost a friend, perhaps the best he had. I know we can't help him yet, but perhaps one day we *may* help him. I too will be his friend as I am yours."

"It is partly for that I cry," Myra unexpectedly explained. "You see, three women love Philip and none of their love is any good to him. It is all such waste—not happy like those birds. Whiteleaf loves him and she will never see him again. She told me this. If she has children they must be Communist children. You love him—I feel it in my heart—but Philip dare not love you because you are white, and he will never love me because I am so ugly, so we can never make beauty for Philip and Philip needs it—for it is his work to be all day long with pain and ugliness."

Lucy was aghast. She was not only appalled that Myra had read her secret—a secret which she herself had not yet fully accepted—but she was horrified to think of the child's own misfortune in loving Philip in vain, and beyond this distress lay a deep astonishment that Myra should doubt Lucy's ability to make Philip happy by her love.

"My dear," she said at last, "I had never thought of you—though you are so wise—as old enough to have your heart broken. But you mustn't think you can't be loved. Why, how easy it has been to love you—for Whiteleaf and for me, and of course for Philip, though like me he has thought of you only as a child."

"I am nearly sixteen," Myra reminded Lucy with dignity. "And Juliet was only fourteen when she pushed the dagger deep enough into her heart to kill herself and said: 'This is thy sheathe; there rust and let me die.' You see, like me, Juliet did not want to live without Romeo." For a long time they sat in silence hand in hand. The parakeets, encouraged by their stillness, broke into a thread of song, playing with the leaves that sprang back under their resilient weight. Suddenly the little flock broke through the wavering leaf barrier and lost themselves in sunshine.

Myra spoke then. "I did not want to disturb them," she said. "It is nice to think there is another world that does not belong to us, and where—unless we make it—there is so little pain. I do not only cry because we shall never, any of us, have Philip. Perhaps Juliet minded most that Romeo too had killed himself for pain. That may have been the real reason why she liked the dagger so much. Not just because she found her own joy dead as well."

"But, Myra, Myra, my dear," Lucy said urgently, "I *will* try to make Philip happy. I am quite *sure*—whatever difficulties there are—that I can in the end make him happy."

"Oh, yes," said Myra sadly, "you have a terrible power, but perhaps you do not know all about us poor colored people to whom you are so kind. And it may not have occurred to you that kindness is terrible to a lover. How can Philip bear it? He wants to give you the whole world—he does not want to take it from you! Besides, I think you still do not know what we feel here on the Island about—white people. Your hand lies here on mine, and it is white. Please do not take it away, but do not forget either that I must learn not to hate white hands."

"Oh, Myra," Lucy cried, "do you really mean that Philip could *mind* my being white? Why, I never think for an instant about his color. He is so handsome—his color to me is no more than sunburn. If what you say is true, I must get sunburned too."

"Yes—but it is *not* sunburn," Myra said inexorably, "it is his skin, and yours is white. Lucy, how strong your heart must be if your love can conquer the hate in Philip, which we all feel. Here for two hundred years we have been your slaves. My mother's blood is in me as well as my father's—and sometimes it speaks to me. No one can bear to be a slave to anyone else. Above all not a slave to people who think they are better because they are different while we are only different and no worse."

"You mean," Lucy said after a long pause, "that I must give up liking to be white? I must live in some other way?"

"Yes," said Myra. "If you marry Philip there will be nothing more for you but Philip and the Island—and if there is, Philip will hate you or he will die. He may prefer to die."

"You cannot possibly be sixteen—you must be sixty," Lucy said, trying to laugh, "and I must be a little girl with all her lessons still unlearned!"

"You are the headmistress of Everslade," Myra said, without an answering smile, though she had long ago stopped crying, "and I am your pupil." Myra seemed to think their talk was over, for she started up the car and the bamboos slowly relinquished them. The sun struck down hot and relentless, with the pressure of a hand upon their necks. Neither of them spoke again as the car protestingly climbed the long hill back to Everslade.

As they stopped before the gate, Lucy asked hesitantly, "Myra—do you yourself feel this—hatred for me?"

"Not often," Myra replied promptly, "only if I think you will hurt Philip more than he has been hurt already, and even then it is not you whom I hate —you I love—it is the feeling of your whiteness. I think it may do something that cannot be stopped. My father says white people have too much will—they do not let life do what it can. Perhaps that is what I fear. You gave me the words for it that day I first loved you. I thought perhaps that man in the poem 'who turned no more his head' was like me, 'because he knew a frightful fiend did close behind him tread.' He guessed that white people would take away from him all that he had—even his life—if he looked round—and yet perhaps he may have admired the figure behind him too. There can be beautiful fiends."

CHAPTER XXV

The staff sat on the big veranda playing bridge like slow-motion figures on a film, while Lucy approached them unseen, across the darkened terrace. Elvira dealt with her usual rapid skill, the cards drifting from her crimson-tipped fingers toward the players for whom they were destined with uncanny precision.

Lucy would have said, after the daily intimacy of ten months under the same roof, that she knew what each of her teachers looked like relentlessly well, but tonight she saw them again as if for the first time. Perhaps they looked so different because they could not see Lucy and were just a little more like themselves without her presence, but perhaps, too, Lucy saw them differently because her eyes had just been sharpened to a deeper sense of human relationship. Between Philip and his mother there existed an intimacy that dispensed with daily habits and penetrated unseen like the flow of blood. There was not only the bond between mother and son, but a secret depth of understanding that is born in all long-humiliated peoples.

Those who have been allowed no part in the common heritage of man must sink their shafts far deeper into private intimacy. The whole world of human understanding rests upon each other's hearts. No fresh habit alters it, no accident of human behavior stupefies it. As the mother and son walked up the garden path together, heavy with the loss of Whiteleaf, Lucy had felt herself outside a wall which she could never climb. Now she asked herself, "How well do I really know my teachers when they look so different when I am not there?"

Miss Lestrange sat in a corner reading till the nine o'clock news came on. She would have preferred to be alone in her own room, but her conscience did not allow her to rest until she had taken to bed with her an irksome sketch of the follies of mankind. She was less aware of Lucy as a factor in her inner life than she had been on their first meeting. It had been important then for Miss Lestrange to discover what obstacle or what relief Lucy's arrival might present, but once Miss Lestrange saw that she could pursue her narrow pathway toward her goal unhindered by Lucy, she had withdrawn her entire attention from her. "Now," Lucy thought to herself, "I might be dead at her feet for all she cares!" Her eyes traveled more hopefully toward the younger and more responsive spirits of the two Myers

sisters. Certainly they considered Lucy with a deeper ease, since they had worked together. They were both good workers and appreciated Lucy's letting them do their work in their own way. Rebecca didn't—and never would—like Lucy. She still made a point of accepting her duties as grievances, but she was a good teacher and only as rude to Lucy as she felt Lucy could bear. Something always checked her from being quite unbearable, though there were times when Lucy wished it wouldn't, and that they might both have the relief of a torn-down row.

Naomi had grown to like Lucy enough for Lucy to be pleasantly aware of her rather than unpleasantly, but contact between them had been superficial, since Naomi only came across to Everslade in her free time.

Lucy's eyes passed from the two sisters playing opposite each other to Nancy Peck's alert, substantial form. Whatever danger there might be, Lucy thought, here was an unswerving ally. Nancy Peck was both satisfied with Lucy and loyal in her satisfaction, but she was loyal as a subordinate is loyal, she was not a friend. It was to Elvira that Lucy looked for that kindred spark in another human being which deepens the joy of living.

"Anyhow, I'm not really frightened," Lucy told herself. "I only pretended to Philip I was because if I hadn't he wouldn't have seen me again. Besides, it couldn't be Elvira—it's unthinkable."

It wasn't, perhaps, very fair to Philip to stress a danger Lucy had ceased to believe in, but then it wasn't very fair of Philip either to insist on giving her up, when neither of them wanted it. Fairness, where the stakes are highest, has not yet been assimilated by most human beings. It was this fact perhaps that made it possible for Lucy to be a good deal fairer to Elvira than she had been to Philip.

Elvira caught the sound of Lucy's approaching footsteps. Her dark, gleaming eyes shone with instant welcome. "Lucy," she cried, "wherever have you been? I was getting nervous about you."

"Nowhere in particular," Lucy found herself saying. "It's so queer and hot today, I just took the car out for a run to get a little air." It would have been easy to say, "I went to ask Mrs. Calgary if she knew more about Whiteleaf's abrupt departure." Yet Lucy found that she hadn't said it.

"Come and join us," Elvira entreated. "Our rubber is just over. One of us will cut out and then you can cut in." Lucy agreed and cut in, and Naomi cut out.

"I hope you won't mind," Elvira said with the deferential affection she always used in speaking to Lucy in public, instead of the affectionate freedom—perhaps a little deferential too—with which she treated Lucy when they were alone, "but I gave Myra O'San leave to go back with her father for the night. He called to see her quite unexpectedly this afternoon by car, and although I knew it would mean her missing most of tomorrow's work, I thought the poor child so upset over Whiteleaf that she would be the better for a change."

There was a queer little silence before Lucy spoke to voice her agreement. Nancy Peck paused in her deal, Naomi, who to Miss Lestrange's unconcealed annoyance was fiddling with a knob on the radio, took her hand suddenly away from it. It was like the pause Lucy remembered on the day of her arrival when she had wanted to meet the girls sooner than Elvira had intended. On that first occasion all of them had been sitting where they sat now, including Whiteleaf. Now the only difference was the absence of Whiteleaf. Yet to Lucy the erect, significant little figure had never been more present. The phrases in Whiteleaf's letter leaped into her mind as audibly as any spoken word. "You have the same enemies. Do not let them separate her from you." But they *were* separated. This time Lucy could not ask if there wasn't a bell that could be rung, there was no use making any sound at all. She took up her cards and sorted them and the pause was over.

Elvira was a skilled bridge player, although she had the weakness, common to many skilled players, of slightly overcalling her hand.

Rebecca, who was Elvira's partner, played a nervous, uncertain game with flashes of brilliance. Nancy's play never varied. She played to the certain value of her cards and toward the probable value of her partner's. As a partner she had no surprises beyond the fact that unlike most partners she never made an inconsiderate mistake.

Nancy was not quite up to Elvira's form, but a better player than Lucy, who was in her turn never as erratic as Rebecca, so that the four were evenly matched. They played an exciting rubber just won by a startlingly intelligent bid of Elvira's, carried out with masterly skill.

"I don't really see how she *could* win with those cards," Lucy thought, "but I don't quite see where we could have stopped her either."

Adassa came in with a tray of drinks. Elvira and Nancy took gin and lime, Naomi and Rebecca drank orange juice by itself, and Lucy had a fresh lime squash.

Just as Lucy was about to drink hers Nancy made a clumsy movement, pushing Lucy's glass on to the floor, where it smashed to atoms. She apologized profusely and ran indoors to get Lucy another drink. Elvira said lightly, "How incredibly clumsy our Nancy can be!" But *could* she, Lucy suddenly asked herself. Was Nancy ever clumsy, Nancy who was so proficient in every form of manual dexterity that no one ever asked for her help with the inanimate in vain? Lucy could never remember seeing Nancy fall over, or upset anything. It was so curious an incident that after they had all gone up to bed Lucy called to Nancy across the balcony and asked her to come over.

Nancy came from her room next door, in a stream of light, smiling as if nothing had happened except an agreeable rubber.

"Wasn't that a good game?" she asked Lucy. "But somehow or other I think we ought to have won that last rubber."

"I felt just the same," Lucy admitted. "Elvira is really a most smashing player."

"She is all that," agreed Nancy.

There was a little pause before Lucy said in a lower voice, "I know it's silly to ask such a question—anyone *can* upset a glass—but, Nancy, did you, by any chance, *mean* to upset mine?"

The smile on Nancy's face vanished. Her eyes had a startled, hunted look. She moved closer to Lucy, as if she were listening to something, before she answered, "I just upset it—to make sure. After all, you are the only one of us who takes lime juice by itself. I don't say it wasn't quite all right. Only—Myra didn't want to go back with her father this afternoon."

"Didn't want—" Lucy began, "but why?" She broke off in sheer astonishment. "I thought she adored her father."

"So she does," Nancy replied, licking her lips as if they were dry. "Still, she wanted to stay here tonight all the same—wanted to enough to say so very distinctly. She's an odd child. In the end, of course, she had to go. Elvira just sent her and it seemed all right then. But it was what made me upset your glass."

"Oh, no!" Lucy said after a shocked pause. "It must have been a coincidence. It couldn't be Elvira. I couldn't possibly *believe* she could want to *poison* me, Nancy."

"No—I don't suppose you could," Nancy said with a queer little sigh. "As a matter of fact, Margorie Fielding fixes our drinks. She knows just how Elvira likes hers."

"And does Myra fix mine?" Lucy inquired. "I thought evening drinks were Adassa's job, anyhow."

"No. Elvira never lets Adassa touch spirits," Nancy explained. "The older girls like doing it for us. You know you allow them to stay up for the evening news if they choose. Well, as a matter of fact only Margorie and Myra care much about world affairs, so they always fix the drinks. Margorie is allowed the cellar key. It's quite safe really—they both hate alcohol."

"I see," Lucy said a little grimly, after a long pause. "It's wonderful what a lot of important things about a school a headmistress doesn't know. But do you really think Margorie Fielding hates me as much as that? Would she really try to poison me? Think what it means! I had hoped she had got over that disappointed loyalty of hers."

"I wouldn't say people get over things at all quickly on this Island," Nancy said. "There's so little going on—except what *is* going on—if you know what I mean. We're all rather mixed up, and perhaps we both exaggerate. There may have been nothing in your drink, or it may only have been dope, *not* poison. She might just have wanted you not to know what was going on for an hour or two."

"Then you think, anything that oughtn't to *does* go on—in spite of Petronella and Angela having gone?" Lucy asked anxiously. Nancy made no immediate answer. Her eyes had a glazed, secret look, as if she wanted Lucy not to read anything from them. The silence pressed down upon them both like a lid.

At last Nancy whispered, "That's just it. I don't know anything for certain. Nor does Myra. If I *did* know anything, of course, I'd tell you—but now—now I don't think it's any good our talking about it, the great thing is not to *seem* to know anything, then nobody'll get frightened and start doing things. We just have to remember there *might* be something wrong."

"But if there *is*, I want to know what it is or what it *may* be," Lucy urged, but she found herself alone on the balcony. Nancy had gone.

The blackness of the night was without mitigation. Neither moon nor stars penetrated the smoldering clouds. The light from Nancy's open doorway clicked off. Lucy felt as if she stood alone in a box of unilluminated space. It was a terrifying sensation. A sudden draft of air blew

a dry leaf against a bough with a scraping sound and then the silence settled down again heavier than before.

CHAPTER XXVI

All night long the faces of Philip and his mother floated before Lucy's eyes, while little gusts of wind spoke from the garden as if the voice of the Island itself, roused from its night silence, added a warning note to her own fears.

A child like Philip's mother with that inscrutable masklike quality—broad African features and heavy lips—a face that belonged to buried history, to an unexcavated and forgotten past, and yet was indelible in its descendants, or a beautiful child—with Philip's darkness perhaps but with his clear-cut beauty or her own? Which could it be? What heritage had Lucy to offer to this child of the future?

Lucy tried to be reasonable in her thoughts. She reminded herself that statistics had proved that a child of mixed parentage was lighter than his dark parent and darker than his light parent, but suppose the child "defied auguries"? What comfort had she had to give Myra for the heavy brown face half molded by her African descent, in which was strangely set unmistakable Chinese eyes and Asiatic features?

Lucy sprang from her bed and stared at her own face in the mirror. Her throat and arms gleamed white as milk, the faint rose color of her cheeks was semitransparent like fine porcelain, her eyes, inescapably blue, stared back at her. "There can be beautiful fiends," Myra had told her. Was this the part Lucy had intended to play, she who had come to give the best she possessed to this far Island? And if she gave even this—gave her clear-skinned white body into the dark stream of the Island's life—what good would come of it? What bitterness might not mar the fate of her children or her lover? A gust of sudden, heated wind drove her hair across her eyes and Lucy was glad not to see any more what she was looking at. She turned away to face the hot darkness of the balcony. She was still quite safe. Philip would make no movement toward her. His tortured arrogance was without claims. The barriers behind which he held his heart a prisoner would hold firm unless her own hands tore them down. And if she did this would she not be violating something as sacred to him as her own honor was to her? Or would she instead be releasing his splendid spirit from a bitter weakness forced on him as his sole defense against the cruel prejudice and snobbery of the white race, which had trained him to value what it would not let him

share? Philip was a citizen of her own country, and during the years of its direct peril he had served Great Britain with the same courage and ardor as Lucy herself had served it. Upon his own island no one doubted and everyone made use of his skill and integrity. No child of his need have a mean heritage or hang his head for what his father gave him. Yet *should* one of us be dark and one of us be white remained to Lucy still an unanswered question.

It was a curious night. Between the uneasy pantings of the wind the stillness was as intense as if the whole Island was listening. The breeze sprang up from nowhere and dropped back upon itself, leaving the Island out of breath and stricken with silence.

No message came from the dense blackness of the night. The Island might have been a shadow cast by a wave, or a cloud stooping from its place in the heavens. Thousands of miles away from any other land, it hung as vulnerable and insignificant as a dry leaf.

Lucy reminded herself that nearly two million people lived upon the Island at the mercy of the elements. Was there going to be an earthquake, and would all their activities of living, and her own tiny personal problems with it, come to pieces as suddenly as a bombed house falls? Very slowly as she stood there she became aware that the darkness was less dense. The trees massed themselves together, no longer a part of the sky; gradually each separate feature of the garden stood out, a shadowy entity.

The sky loosened its black pall, and a light, preceding color, broke across the horizon. Far below the terrace the plain lay like a dropped cloak, stretched out between the mountains and the sea.

Suddenly across the clear space of sky a great sheet of birds shot toward the mountains, rocketing and swirling like planes in an air battle, and yet keeping their supple and pliant formation in an incredible symmetry. Nothing hunted them, yet the whole sky was full of panic-driven fugitives, birds of all kinds and sizes were intricately bound in the same ordered mass. Zigzagging and suddenly dropping from level to level of the baseless air, they kept intact their wing-to-wing formation till, swirling over Lucy's head, they vanished behind the mountains. The wind fell, no leaf stirred. The dawn carried on its unhurried processes.

Lucy had hardly time to think what this sudden eruption of terrified birds foretold when she heard the telephone bell jangling in the room behind her. Philip's deep, controlled voice said, "Calgary speaking—is that Mrs. Armstrong?"

"Yes—yes, Philip," Lucy stammered.

"There is a hurricane warning." There was a moment's pause before Philip's voice went on a hint less smoothly. "It may strike your way. You should have an hour's grace. It would be best to send the entire school at once to the MacTaggerts' mission on the lee side of the Island. They are expecting you. Leave the sick children with the Brigadier at the Gap before you cross the pass. You should be safely over by the time it strikes. Some trustworthy person must stay with Henriette. Carry her by stretcher into Everslade. Close the house according to the formula you have learned. I cannot leave the hospital—good-by, Lucy." The telephone went dead before she had time to answer him.

For a moment she stood motionless, possessed by Philip's voice. It seemed to speak out of her heart as if an act of union had taken place between them and they were already one.

All that she had learned about hurricanes came flooding back to Lucy effortlessly, and with an odd sense of exultation. For such emergencies she had been fully trained. She gave one glance toward the sky. The day was upon them, sulphur-colored and gray, wholly devoid of beauty; then with unhurried precision, skilled as the flying birds, Lucy began to carry out her plans.

CHAPTER XXVII

Within half an hour every teacher was ready and instructed, every child marshaled and controlled. The annex children had already left for the Gap, driven by Naomi in Lucy's car. Each teacher was responsible for her own group of children and assisted by a few of the more reliable older girls.

The servants scattered precipitately, screaming like tropical birds, to their own homes. Henriette had been transferred to the safest back room at Everslade. Lucy stood by the gate and watched the last child file out onto the bridle path across the mountains, until the woods swallowed them.

Lucy was alone. The Great house, the whole hillside was empty. The wind pouring steadily in from the sea had not yet reached gale force, but the trees already swept their foliage toward the hills, bending all one way in fearful homage, as if a throne had suddenly become occupied by an invisible god. Lucy slowly returned across the terrace to the house.

All the hurricane instructions had been carried out. The whole front and sides of the house were closely barred and shuttered, while the back windows on the lee side remained open. When she had closed and bolted the great door after her the house behind her became a fortress. She had let no one stay behind to keep her company. The quick safety of the school had been her only thought. In an hour the children should be across the pass and in comparative security. In half an hour the Brigadier had promised to ring up to tell her if the sick children had arrived. Meanwhile he had ordered an empty isolation ward in the military hospital made ready to receive them. There should just be time, Lucy told herself, to make some coffee for Henriette and herself. Her whole body listened for the wind, but there was as yet no increase in its volume.

Henriette, used to the other girls going off on their excursions, was enchanted by her change of quarters and Lucy's single companionship. They drank their coffee made in the French way, and ate rolls and butter as if they were on a picnic. The classroom door stood wide open toward a peak swept clean of cloud. Trees and bushes streamed at their roots as if for the first time afraid of their tethered existence. Every leaf danced and quivered in the harsh sulphur-colored light with a separate, uneasy motion.

The big clock in the kitchen ticked as if time were moving, and yet Lucy thought the intractable minute hand made no perceptible progress. She washed up the breakfast things and turned on the radio to get a further report, but something had gone wrong with the radio; after giving vent to a racket of strange sounds, it went off altogether.

At last the telephone rang in the kitchen next door. The annex children were safe. The Brigadier warned Lucy that she might not get any more messages, the wires would soon be down. Yet a few moments later one message more came through from Bob, anxious, helpless, furious to reach her, but unable to cross the entire length of the Island before the hurricane struck. He was still expostulating, warning and explaining, when his voice checked into silence.

With an unearthly shriek the first blast struck the mountain. "It's only a hurricane," Lucy found herself saying reassuringly, with shaking lips, to Henriette's white lifted face. "Only a hurricane, darling. It isn't wild animals. The sea can't reach us here. It's only a big, empty wind!" But was it empty? The air streaming by on both sides of the house carried with incredible velocity a broken forest of blossoms, twigs, boughs, flying particles of anything that had dared to stand for an instant in its invisible pathway.

While they clung together, gazing with astonished eyes, the annex roof lifted like a pocket handkerchief into the air, floated above the trees for an instant, and sailed out of sight.

"Why, it's gone—Lucy, it's gone!" cried the terrified child. "All our home has gone into the sky!"

"Yes! Yes! But such a little roof," Lucy submitted, "such a little house to stand against a storm. Here in this big house we are very safe." Even as she spoke the entire house rose, shook itself, and settled down again. But perhaps, Lucy thought, only as a bird settles, poised for further flight.

The howling of the wind was a fearful sound; not all the shrieks of all the fierce animals in the world could sound more savage. The wind beat continuously, irresistibly upon the tortured earth. Trees snapped short beneath its flail, or with lingering agony dragged themselves up by the roots, their final death cry lost in the gale.

Henriette, seeing that nothing in the room had changed, slowly lost her fear. The outer world became a fascinating spectacle. Absorbed, she watched, identifying her imprisoned body with the wild tossing of every light and yielding tree. Only when the tree couldn't move fast enough, and

she saw that it was doomed, did her eyes grow large with horror, while the tree wrestling with the storm was flung ruthlessly from side to side, till with a final shriek, no longer able to withstand the savage pressure, the whole tree, roots and all, shot up into the air and vanished out of sight. For three minutes and a half there was sheer pandemonium. Whatever was in the sky seemed determined to make an end of the Island. The earth shook, the walls quivered, the house cried and swayed like a shaken child, and as suddenly an awful pause followed. Slowly surviving trees righted themselves, the house was still, the air was for a moment clear and empty, then once more, with a leap, the hurricane burst into louder clamor. The shattering force of the first onslaught was past, but the tearing, rollicking force of the gale remained.

"The worst is over," Lucy kept repeating to the child. Henriette sank back exhausted. She could watch and think no more, even her breath seemed to have failed her.

For a long while Lucy did not dare to leave the child. At last, worn out by terror, Henriette slept. Very lightly, Lucy left the room. It took all her strength to push open the door that led to the front of the house. In spite of closed shutters, the wind had filtered through into the front rooms and tore up and down the passages. Doors had been blown open and banged with senseless reiteration. It was useless to try to keep them shut. Pictures were blown off the walls, vases lay smashed on the floor, furniture slid about the room as if it were in a ship on a stormy sea.

One of the balconies had been ripped off, but the roof was still intact. The bars across the shutters had been bent but none of them had broken. Everslade was a buttressed and solidly built Victorian house; it had already survived many hurricanes, and Lucy believed that it would survive this one. She crept back, a little comforted, into the sheltered room. When she looked at the clock she saw with dismay that the storm was only an hour old.

It seemed unimaginable that so much terror, so much noise and fury, could have been concentrated into one short hour. How much longer could any building endure the ceaseless battering of the storm?

The worst raid Lucy had ever been in was less organic than this steady disruption of the earth itself by an unseen agent. Hurricanes could go on, Lucy remembered, for three days at a time, and they did not seem to get very much less terrible.

Had Elvira and Nancy been able to keep control of their frightened charges? Even if they got over the pass in time to escape the worst onslaught

the way to the mission would be a long, arduous tussle. Would the children's strength hold out—would their teachers make their orders obeyed implicitly and with good will?

Elvira, directly she had grasped that she was to lead and control the expedition, had replaced the blank terror in her face with eager determination. As for Nancy, she had taken in what was expected of her and acted upon it, in less time than Lucy took to tell her. Miss Lestrange had accepted the news with her usual stoicism; she simply didn't mind what might happen more than she minded what usually happened. This, Lucy thought, was the most that could be expected of her, but was it enough? Rebecca, more cowed by Elvira than by the storm, had been afraid to show her fear, and Margorie Fielding had behaved instantly like the soldier's daughter that she was. They had no invalids and only three miles of path to follow before they crossed the pass; once over, the peak would shelter them. They had had fifty-five minutes before the storm had struck to do it in. It was a race, but the decision had been Philip's, not hers. Philip had not thought the school should remain at Everslade. Philip, then, had not thought that Everslade was safe. He had not known, but he would perhaps have guessed, that Lucy herself would remain with Henriette. He would not, though, have supposed that no one else would have stayed with her. He would have counted upon Myra. Lucy must not even let herself think what a tremendous asset Myra's presence would have been. Elvira's hand had loosened the strong rope of that safety. But of course she had not meant to loosen it. The hurricane, at any rate, was not Elvira's fault. Lucy was alone with an act of God. Well! Now she would find out the strength of her religion.

She was not responsible for the consequences that might befall. She had no orders to give, no dangerous acts to perform, no hierarchy of disciplined authority behind her expectant of her courageous services. She was not a heroine any more. Just a girl with a sick child in the house, at the mercy of the elements. There was nothing that could be done about a hurricane. She must go on sitting in this room with a clock that hardly moved and a frightened child. The walls might cave in at any moment, the ceiling might be ripped off overhead. The electricity had already ceased to function, but she had candles and there was still a good deal of daylight. There was food enough in the larder to last them for a week or more. Perhaps before nightfall the wind might die down. She must not let any more wind get into the front part of the house if she could help it. She must go at once, while there was still light enough over that strange, disheveled no-man's-land

under the shrieking attics, and see what harm the wind had done—and still might do.

Henriette woke and whispered, "Isn't it over, Lucy?" and began to whimper a little, hearing once more the pummeling sound of the wind against the walls, and the shrieks from distant passages, where the wind ran to and fro like an angry dog. "Not quite over," Lucy reassured her, "but I think a good deal less. We'll have a meal now. I'll tell you what is in the larder and you shall choose just what you like to eat." Henriette, however, said that she wouldn't like anything to eat and didn't want Lucy to go into the kitchen. Lucy skillfully moved Henriette's bed nearer the open door so that she could watch Lucy's every movement and make suggestions, and when Lucy had cooked it they both found the meal a great comfort and felt much better after it. The clock, too, had actually moved forward. When everything was washed up and tidied again, it was already afternoon.

Lucy said she wanted to go to sleep and lay down beside Henriette, who finally did go to sleep. Lucy lay beside her, her eyes roving from window to window, but none of them showed anything new, only the little trees, low and supple, sweeping themselves to the ground and then flinging themselves frantically upward as if even their humility could be used against them. The blue ridge of mountains had a hard, strange color in the ugly shuttered light, but at any rate the peaks stood still. At four o'clock, when daylight began to wane, Lucy crept away from the sleeping child and once more roamed the quaking house. Everything was in the same disordered shifting condition, yet no new damage had occurred. Sudden squalls of rain joining themselves with the fierce air now flung themselves against walls and windows with the flattened weight of water. New blows, new retreats added themselves to the hours; while every now and then there was a strange uneasy drop in sound, as if the forces at war with the Island had withdrawn among themselves, to take further counsel how to destroy it.

You could go on being frightened, Lucy told herself, for just so long, then fear dulled down into monotony. Lucy knew all the facts. She knew what would happen if the roof went, if the walls caved in, if one of the huge, massive shutters was broken back—the glass smashed and the wind coming through. The house could not stand any more wind than that which was already in it. The child was light. Lucy could carry her, but where could she carry her to? She could not move against a wall of wind. She could hold the child in her arms and cover her with her own body, and then let death blow them where it liked. Where human responsibility ends, so does fear.

Whatever had to be done, Lucy told herself, would be provided for by the danger itself.

There was no malice in the elements. They did not hate Lucy and Henriette more than they hated the stones that rattled past the windows, or the trees gouged up out of the earth itself. Nature acts ruthlessly but without spite.

It was much more terrible to think of what might happen to Philip. His hospital was within a few hundred yards of a great open bay. There was nothing between it and the full force of the hurricane. The hospital was a ramshackle wooden building, a tidal wave would make short work of what the wind left. There were three hundred sick people in it and not one of them that Philip would not put before himself, so that Lucy knew he had three hundred chances less than any of them.

She found it harder than ever to close the door against the shrieking house. Henriette said in a small, unhappy voice, "Lucy! It sounds louder now it is darker. Can you sing to me, please?" Lucy lit candles and sang to her all the nursery rhymes she could think of and all the little light French songs.

There was no difference in the force of the wind, it raged and sobbed as if all the lost souls of unrecorded time had come trooping back to the earth and only could not get in because the door was shut.

Lucy got supper and sang more songs, till Henriette slept at last, her head against Lucy's heart. It was still only eight o'clock. Fourteen hours since Lucy had heard Philip's voice. She wondered if she would ever hear his voice again.

The wind had risen with the dark. The house shook more, the candle flickered to an end, while Lucy watched it.

It was curious to think what happened between the flame and the dark.

CHAPTER XXVIII

Lucy was glad that at nightfall she had shut and barred even the windows uninvaded by the wind. She felt stalked by shadows. The big classroom flickered in the light of two small candles as if nothing in it was solid any more. In the front of the house doors banged and shutters rattled, bursts of insane laughter filled the long passages, and through every crack and cranny the wind howled like a pack of hunger-driven animals in pursuit of prey. It was hard to believe the flimsy defenses of walls could withstand the tremendous force and pressure of the storm. The sleeping child in Lucy's arms increased her fear. The sense of Lucy's presence gave Henriette security enough, but her own presence gave no defense to Lucy. She asked herself what there was in her, behind this sick and stubborn sense of fear, that could outlast the storm? She knew she was in mortal danger beyond the use of her own wits. Was there then, beyond the reach of danger, no inner citadel? Was defeat the core of disaster? Lucy tried to pray. The closely constructed clauses of the Lord's Prayer stumbled through her tired brain as if the wind had broken their cohesion. Was there a Father behind all this insensate disorder? Did she want His will to be done if it meant, for herself and Henriette, destruction in a hideous storm of terror? What bread was worth Lucy's asking for? What trespasses mattered, forgiven or unforgiven? Only the last uncertain clause of this strange prayer, "Deliver us from evil," voiced her real need. These words went on and on in her head without stilling the rising panic in her heart. There was God or Nothing and moment by moment each wore the face of the other.

Suddenly all sounds ceased. They had reached the strange whirlpool of silence at the heart of the hurricane where sound leaps at the throat of sound. Henriette woke more frightened than before, crying, "Lucy, what is it? What is it?" in a frenzy of terror and Lucy did not know how to comfort her.

Someone knocked at the kitchen door. They clung together speechless and trembling—as if this little sound was the most terrible that they had yet endured. At last Lucy summoned courage to open the window and face the wall of darkness. A slightly shrill but very familiar and friendly voice greeted her. "My father and I are here," Myra called out.

Lucy rushed to the door, tears of relief streaming down her face. "How did you ever get here?" she stammered as the two drenched figures stepped

past her into the kitchen.

"Before the wind came we took the car," Myra explained, "and when it struck us we ran into the woods. There you can see what the wind carries and the trees hide you. We guessed it was you who would stay alone with Henriette." Myra swayed as she stood and Lucy caught her in her arms.

"The child is tired," Mr. O'San announced calmly. "But she will not be a care long. She only needs food and dry clothes."

The wind returned with redoubled violence, but Lucy hardly noticed its fresh onslaught. She ran to and fro making hot drinks and preparing food. She fought the door into the hall open to find dry clothes and drag down mattresses unmoved by clamor or by darkness, and all the while she could imagine Henriette's excited voice talking to Myra and her father as if she too felt new faith in the order of the universe; and yet nothing had happened to relieve them. They were in the same danger. The house rocked and shuddered. The gale whirled on its furious pathway, tearing up all that stood in its way. None of them knew what the sea was doing to the low plains at its mercy far below, yet the sense of being together was stronger than any refuge.

Dried, warmed, and fed, Myra and her father sat crosslegged on the floor by Henriette's mattress relating their adventures. They were bruised by flying branches, their clothes torn, and buckets of water had been flung at them out of the sky from every direction. What they thought was a particularly heavy branch writhing just in front of them had turned out to be a disturbed rock python about twelve feet long, and very unsure, in the bustle in which it found itself, which was its head and which was its tail. As quickly as possible they had left it to solve its dilemma, and later on were joined by a family of mongoose and a fox; puzzled but companionable, the animals remained with them till the edge of the wood.

"Not everything will happen to the Island," Mr. O'San explained reassuringly to Lucy. "This is the fifth hurricane I have known here and yet it is much the same Island as when I first saw it. Such winds strike only a path across the Island and destroy more trees than people. We reached the MacTaggerts' mission at midday and found all your children safe. Your little ones were weary, for it was a race to get over the pass in time, but all had arrived without injury and only when they were quite secure did some of the older girls begin to draw attention to themselves by the use of water power. When they began to cry or to turn faint Mrs. MacTaggert slapped their faces in a kind, firm way and they all recovered immediately. There was much to

do at the mission, for people from miles around came running up from the sea to take shelter with them. Each was given a task and Mr. MacTaggert prayed with them, in and out of his work, finding shelter for all. Such people as the MacTaggerts make harmony out of chaos—for it is already in them. They have created their world. They found time to feed us and we got well up into the woods before darkness. We walked hand in hand, bent double, so as not to lose each other or blow over easily. As long as it was light we could see the trees break and the branches fly, and so fall on our faces to avoid them. When darkness came we had torches. But all this took time. We should have been here before. I see now that it is already three o'clock. Upon these mattresses which you have so kindly spread out for us, we can sleep well."

Wrapped in the biggest dressing gown Lucy had been able to secure for him, Mr. O'San seemed to have stepped out of a Chinese print of a sage sitting under a pine tree or a waterfall. He did not need these or any other objects, however, to be at home wherever he found himself. His narrow eyes, reddened with fatigue and strain, glinted with laughter. He was a small, wiry man, with none of Myra's clumsiness, but in them both was the same calm stoicism and undeflectable loyalty. Anything might happen to them and a good deal already had, but for them "despair itself was mild."

"There is no tidal wave yet," Myra remarked, suddenly, her eyes meeting Lucy's. "In the hospital the sick that could be moved are moved. Philip stays with the rest."

"People live better through hurricanes than through earthquakes," Mr. O'San added cheerfully. "The houses are frail and fall easily without crushing their inhabitants. As for tidal waves, they knock over more than they drown. Philip has sense. He is strong. He has lived through hurricanes before. There are not many things you can do in a hurricane, but what can be done he will attend to better than most people. Owing to the good food you have given us, we shall, I think, all sleep well."

His smile deepened as he met Henriette's fascinated eyes.

"Shall we leave the candles lit?" Lucy found herself asking.

Henriette, who, as her confidence increased, had become at once more dignified and more conscious of her duties as a hostess, answered with conviction. "There is now no need for candles, Madame, since our friends are with us. We shall sleep better without light."

CHAPTER XXIX

It was the second night of the storm before Lucy found herself alone for the first time with Mr. O'San. The girls slept in the big classroom side by side. They were not used to the wind, for it varied its terrors with every shaken hour, but they were too exhausted to keep awake for long.

"I wanted to talk to you," Lucy said a little nervously, sitting down on a hard kitchen chair opposite him, with the big scoured table between them, "without the girls. It worries me why you took your life and Myra's in your hands—just to come here to me. I understand Philip moving the school to the other side of the Gap, but you were already there—yet you came—you brought her into the very teeth of the wind."

Mr. O'San regarded Lucy's resolute but anxious face with amused eyes. "For pleasure we did *not* come," he admitted. "Philip could not reach you—he could not leave the hospital. But other things besides storms are dangerous, or so he thought. He was not sure when he rang up to warn us where you would be, but Myra was sure. She said: 'She will stay with Henriette alone at Everslade.' We all knew that Everslade would be in the track of the storm. When Philip discovered that Myra was not here with you, we understood that he would be still more disturbed, so we said quickly, 'We have a car, before the wind strikes we will go to her.' Philip answered us, 'There is not time enough. But if you go, go at once and take to the woods when it strikes.' Then he rang off. His mother he had already warned, but she is one of those who look after themselves because they are so close to Nature that she shares her secrets with them. We did as Philip told us, ran with our car as far as we could, and when the wind struck, the woods hid us. Here we are. Have we not been happy together?"

"But, Mr. O'San," Lucy said with undiverted seriousness, "what other danger is there besides the storm? And if there *is* danger here at Everslade, how could you bring Myra back into it again when she was safe where she was?"

"Have you ever tried," Mr. O'San demanded with a twinkle, "to stop Myra from doing what she thinks she ought? She has the docility of a dove, my little one, but also the slipperiness of an eel in carrying out her own designs. Had I not come with her she would have come alone. As to danger—other danger than the storm—it is true that Everslade is a strong old

house, but a hurricane can kill people very easily in a great many unexpected ways, and suppose—since we are all cut off from each other while it is going on—that a murderer should use one of these ways to attain his object, during the hurricane? After the storm is over the person he wanted to see dead is found dead. No one will now say he did it—why should he? It is the result of the hurricane. So it seemed to us, as doubtless to Philip, very advisable that you should have friends with you during the hurricane. When some brave and kind person comes to help you—as Adassa came at great risk to herself this afternoon, though in the first panic she had, like the other servants, left you—she finds a group of four people looking after each other. Her services are not needed—in spite of the further risk of the storm and your kind invitation, she does not stay. She goes back to weep and wail with her relations. Very natural, very touching; they wish, she says to explain why she does not stay in safety with us, to die together. But she may have had other wishes. She may have had the wish to kill."

"Adassa!" Lucy exclaimed. "Why, Mr. O'San, I thought it was so *wonderful* of her to come here—when she was so frightened."

"It was too wonderful," Mr. O'San observed with a charming smile. "We need not all be as wonderful as that. For love, a child like Myra is so senseless she will risk her life, and for love, an old father of one child will also risk what still belongs to him to save her. But somebody else's servant, who has shown no affection over the short period of your acquaintance with her—why should she act against reason, for your sake? I have a belief also that I was told, perhaps by Philip, that Adassa is an old family servant of Elvira's. Would that predispose her to serve you?"

Lucy still looked grave. "I think it is a mistake," she said a little stiffly, "one made by Whiteleaf in the first instance, to imagine that Elvira has any connection whatever with what has happened, or threatened to happen, here to me. Her friendship has been a very strong and helpful part of my work here from the first."

"From the first," Mr. O'San repeated, his genial smile increasing. "Friends from the first! But what, I ask myself, was this 'first'? What was the state of things, honored instructress of my child, before you arrived? Miss Elvira Loring is a colored lady of great distinction who has been pushed aside by a white committee from a part for which during two years she has shown herself most fitted. In the past she had perhaps—because there was this weakness in her position, that she was not white—allowed very special privileges to a little circle of girls, some teachers and perhaps servants. All these fell with her when the post came to you. Any of them

may resent her fall. Do you not see how difficult it is to be quite certain what expression—or from what source—this resentment may take in order to replace Miss Loring? This time even the white committee might feel that it was best to overlook her color and retain her services in control, since when she was in control there were at least no disasters."

Lucy's brows drew together, they made a soft firm line across her smooth forehead, above the startled depth of her eyes. Mr. O'San thought to himself that she was very young, and for all her hard experiences very innocent, to be in such a position. "That is her appeal to Philip," he thought to himself. "Whiteleaf could take care of herself and others. This girl does not know of what to take care, but she too is resolute to save others; it is only that it is a pity she does not know what to save herself or them from. Yet to Philip this is an added attraction. He does not care for adult women."

"Yes, I do see what you mean," Lucy said at last, "and I have felt uncomfortable here, as if there were something wrong, but I'm glad you think it needn't be Elvira because I'm quite sure it isn't."

"What makes this certainty in you?" Mr. O'San asked her quizzically. "Because she is so nice to you, perhaps? I have sometimes thought that niceness—charm it is called—in a suppressed person, or in anyone who has to accept a lower position in a human relationship, is suspect—a kind of danger signal which invites disaster—before a friendship is established by experience. We like before we know. Would it not be wiser to learn to know before we like? Were Whiteleaf and Philip always 'nice' to you at first, or even my impulsive little one, Myra—was a smile what you first saw on her face? Yet I think you know now they are all three your friends."

Lucy nodded. "I know," she admitted. "They weren't at first—I couldn't understand why they were so—so grave and—and Philip snubbed me. He does still sometimes."

"When I ask myself whether I like or am liked by anyone," Mr. O'San observed thoughtfully, "I do not seek for a hand to stroke my fur the right way. For proofs of friendship I look to acts, and also at the direction in which both partners to a friendship are moving. I find if they move in opposite directions they cannot long be friends, and if an act is taken against the interest of one of these parties by the other I no longer look on this person as a friend, but as an enemy—an enemy the more dangerous that he still pretends to be a friend. Test Elvira Loring in this manner, honored lady, and you may be surprised at the little this trusted friend has really done to help you take your right place in the school. These older girls over whom

she has so great an influence—do they like you? If they do not, whose fault is it? I am sure they are treated by you with care and consideration. I know this because I trust Whiteleaf's judgment and she considers you fitted for your position."

"Then you don't think," Lucy asked, her voice shaking a little, "that it was *only* Petronella and Angela—as I hoped? I thought now they are gone it would be all right!"

"The English," Mr. O'San observed, "are very fond of that expression. I am not quite sure myself what it means. 'All right!' This is not a universe in which I find such an expression applicable; a little may sometimes be right if we take sufficient trouble to make it so, not otherwise."

"You have not said it *was* Elvira," Lucy whispered. "Did Whiteleaf think it was?"

"Do you not yourself know what Whiteleaf thought?" Mr. O'San asked her with a reproachful edge to his voice. "For a long time she suffered unjustly from Elvira's hands. After you came she suffered less. She thought you shared her ideas about the children in the annex. She was satisfied in her work with you. But did you try to find out *why* she had suffered? What this estrangement between the school and the annex was? It would have been worth while to find that out, Mrs. Armstrong. It would always be worth while for English people to find out what is wrong, and not wait till what is wrong finds them out."

Lucy took this rebuke in silence. She was not altogether happy about her relationship with Whiteleaf. "I always admired her," she said finally, lifting troubled eyes to the keen ones watching her.

"That is well," Mr. O'San said gently. "It is perhaps because of Whiteleaf and what she thought of you that Myra and I came to be with you in the storm. It is true that we both wanted to help Philip and knew that he was in trouble about you, but if we had not believed you were worth his trouble we would not have come. Whiteleaf had convinced us of your worth."

"Everything," Lucy said, in a low voice, watching the shadows dance and shake about the floor, "always comes back to Whiteleaf—even in my own mind. I—I have sometimes wondered—did Philip love her *very, very* much? I can imagine they were only great friends though I have been told otherwise—that they were lovers. I wonder *which* they were?"

"Does it make very much difference?" Mr. O'San asked. "They are both good people—what was between them must also have been good. We cannot divide a man's heart from himself. They had confidence in each other but life has drawn them apart. I think they will not meet again. Perhaps they do not need to—they may have given each other all that was necessary."

"I don't like to think she was a Communist!" Lucy said resentfully.

Mr. O'San shook his head, half in reproach and half in amusement at her vehemence. "I think you mean," he said, "that she would not be considered quite so admirable if she held such a belief? Well, communism is fresh still—it has done much harm—but in the long run if any country can free it from the grip of gangsters and use it with responsibility—you may live to see that it has done more good. We cannot test the future of so great a movement; now it has got into the hands of gangsters and is being used to bolster up an infamous police state. We need a miracle to show us what communism may still be; this may take place in China, and it is because she believes in this miracle and wants to work for it that our friend has gone there. Meanwhile you can be very sure that Whiteleaf has no belief in gangsters and that what she accepts as a creed is—or seems to her to be—good."

"There may have been good Nazis," Lucy said, still a little resentfully.

"They had no useful ideas upon which to base themselves," Mr. O'San replied. "Peace and universal brotherhood *are* useful ideas. Nevertheless, such words can be as barren as old snakeskins if we do not use them with integrity. Man has to learn that unless his means match his measures he will be in danger of destroying what he has set out to build."

Lucy frowned; it seemed to her that they had come a long way from the subject of Philip and Whiteleaf. "Philip," she said impatiently, "anyhow is *not* a Communist!"

"No," agreed Mr. O'San, "that he has often told me. He even believes that the white race can learn to co-operate with the black. After all, he was educated by them."

Lucy suddenly found herself at the core of her conflict. "Don't you think," she found herself asking, "that Philip—being what he is—makes a tremendous difference—I mean to the question of our marrying? If he ever *will* marry me! He wants to—but he won't. You know that, don't you? Well, I want to—but of course it's horribly difficult. I mean if I do—I must know exactly what I'm doing, mustn't I?"

Mr. O'San's pointed eyebrows rose, his lips moved upward as if to follow them, yet his eyes did not smile. "Certainly," he agreed. "You should always know what you are doing—before you do it. In this case it means you must marry an Island much smaller than your own, with only a fiftieth of its population—and most of the population belonging to a backward, undernourished, illiterate people, hardly yet evolved from a slave heritage. This must be your home for your whole life if you marry Philip. You will have no other."

"It sounds terrible when you put it like that," Lucy said doubtfully. "But there is this to think of. In the war I knew what I wanted—it was to win it, somehow, to work with the people I had to work with, to—well, to die together if we had to, but not to be beaten, not to give up—for each of us to do our share. And I still feel rather like that now about this Island. I know it's a difficult life and perhaps dangerous to live among people who aren't like my own—and who don't—*can't* like us! Most of them as you say *are* uneducated and—and rather terrible—but they are what the rest of us are fighting for, aren't they? We are fighting against the awfulness they can't help and which we, English people, I mean, are largely responsible for. We made, or helped to make, the whole muddle about Hitler, didn't we? Well then, we made the muddle about the slaves here too—we actually *brought* them here—to be our slaves. It was, if anything, worse than Hitler. We took away their rights as human beings just like he took away the rights of the Jews. Well, now we must help to give them back—it isn't just enough to *free* slaves. You have to help them to make themselves free. The MacTaggerts are doing this and the Quakers and lots of other white people who aren't specially religious. Doctors, teachers, all kinds of people, like Philip and his friends. Well, I want to be one of them—do you think I can? You can judge better for us, than either Philip or I can judge for ourselves. Because you're Chinese, you aren't involved in our particular problem. Do you think it impossible, what I want to give? Do you think Philip won't be able to take it?"

Mr. O'San was now quite grave. His eyebrows came down, his lips settled themselves into sadness. Yet when he spoke at last it was with cheerful firmness. "Who is to set a limit to what a human being can do?" he asked. "Explorers have discovered the poles and climbed seemingly inaccessible mountains. There are also explorers of the soul who have discovered continents before unknown. If you will remember that you are marrying a man who is not basically different from yourself, and if Philip will remember that you are not a fairy off the top of a Christmas tree, but a normal girl—why should you not marry? This Island has children of every

color, of every shade of color. The dark seem to me to go better with its rich beauty than the fair but the difference is esthetic and immaterial spiritually. Many of our planters have skins darker than those they call colored—yet they function as well as if they had a wholly Saxon heritage. The light-colored people—or for that matter those who are quite black—can feel equally British, if they hold the same opinion. I am myself a pure Chinese from Canton, but I married an African girl here, and we lived as the British-born live. There are those who think my child Myra plain to look at, but those who look deeper, like Whiteleaf, yourself, and Philip, consider that she is not without beauty. She suffers a little, perhaps, because she dislikes her own appearance, but nevertheless she enjoys life. She gives to it and this is enough to make any human being happy."

Mr. O'San was silent for a long time and Lucy could find no words to answer him. After a while he got up and looked at the barometer sunk below calculation. "It has moved a trifle," he told her. "I feel that tomorrow when we wake there will be less wind. I even think this may be the last night of the storm. Soon we shall know what has happened to the rest of our Island."

Lucy looked anxiously into his inscrutable black eyes. She was not sure what she saw there. It might have been sadness, in spite of the courteous smile upon his lips, but she thought it was kindness that she saw there, a kindness greater than his sadness.

CHAPTER XXX

Elvira hated missions, and above all other missions she hated Dr. MacTaggert's. She had found missionaries were not impressionable. Dr. MacTaggert was impressed solely by the Deity and his tenderest and most watchful attention was concentrated upon lost sheep. Nobody likes to be noticed *as* a lost sheep, and Elvira disliked this form of attention more than most people.

As for Mrs. MacTaggert, it is doubtful if even the Deity impressed her. If He came up to her expectations that was all. His creatures—including herself—she looked upon as worms. "Oo-aye!" was Mrs. MacTaggert's highest form of praise. When she said this dispassionately, it meant that she was satisfied with the act in question. When she uttered it doubtfully, with an interrogative stress, it meant she wasn't satisfied, but would pass whatever had been done, expecting no better from a worm. If she said, "Oo-aye-puir-body!" it meant that the work would have to be done over again by Mrs. MacTaggert herself at the first favorable opportunity. Mrs. MacTaggert had said, "Oo-aye-puir-body!" twice to Elvira when Elvira had ostentatiously performed some service for her.

In spite of the overcrowding due to the hurricane, Mrs. MacTaggert had given Elvira a small room with two beds in it and her own choice of a companion. This may have been due less to a desire to enhance Elvira's prestige than to prevent her circulation in a panic-stricken community; but it suited Elvira and she chose Margorie. Any of the other girls would have been easier to trick and would have given Elvira what she liked most, the small change of devotion, but they wouldn't have kept their mouths shut. Margorie would have made the most confirmed sadist of the Gestapo sing small. She retreated at will into some obscure fastness of the soul where nothing could touch her. Stones cannot be easily violated and it was into a stone that Margorie turned herself at any approach which she resented. Even Elvira sometimes felt afraid of the child who loved her with so austere a passion.

"Margorie," she said on the third morning of their mission life, "the wind has fallen very considerably on this side of the Island. We could go out in it. Probably we shall have news from St. George's tonight about the whole Island. Tomorrow we may even be free to go back to Everslade. But I don't

intend to wait for the MacTaggerts' messenger. I have my own. I am going to get news secretly this morning. I have found a way of slipping out without being seen while the breakfasts are on. I shall write a note to say that I have a slight headache and don't wish to be disturbed—you can give it to Mrs. MacTaggert for me and see that no one comes to this door to look after me or bring me food. You can say it's a bilious headache brought on by the storm and all I need is to be left alone. I shall lock the door."

"You can write all that and pin your note outside the door," Margorie replied firmly. "I am going with you. There's still a lot of wind and it's not safe to go out alone." Their eyes met. There was a long, silent battle of the will between them. Elvira would have preferred to go alone, but she yielded. She did not know why she gave in to that silent concentration of purpose in Margorie's eyes. It did not often happen. Elvira could always hurt Margorie more than Margorie could hurt her. Perhaps this ability to be hurt was in itself a strength; to be hurt so deeply and yet never to withdraw the blank check of the soul—which Margorie had laid, once and for all, in Elvira's hands—was in itself an ultimate power. But on this occasion Elvira saw a certain advantage in taking Margorie with her. The more she involved a brigadier's daughter in what she was doing the less involved she might herself be in what came of it.

"Very well," she said at last, "you *may* come with me. I am going to the Hill of Silence. You have never seen Old Sam. He lives there and he is the Obeah King. Adassa will send or bring a message there for me to let me know what has happened at Everslade. I arranged it with her before she left. She couldn't get to the Hill before this morning but she's sure to turn up while we are there."

"How will she know about Everslade," Margorie asked scornfully, "when she ran away in a panic like the rest of them?"

"She was not in too great a panic to listen to me," Elvira replied a little grimly. "She will go first to Everslade and bring us news of what she finds there."

Margorie's eyes had never left Elvira's face; now they seemed to slide beneath the surface of Elvira's nerves to the meaning behind the glazed brightness of her expressionless eyes. "How do I know?" Elvira answered irritably. "We go there to find out. Anything may happen in a hurricane. I always told you Everslade wasn't safe. Henriette should have been moved in the car with the rest, whether she couldn't lie straight or not. But that poor fool Lucy arranged it herself. She must take the consequences. A shutter

could blow open and let the wind in and blow off Everslade's roof. I warned her—I had nothing to do with her staying."

"No," Margorie repeated slowly. "You had nothing to do with it. Whatever happens, we can say that."

Elvira frowned. Stubborn people should always be stupid, she thought, but unfortunately they weren't always stupid. They not only stuck to things, they sometimes saw what they were sticking to.

Elvira and Margorie slipped out separately without being seen. The wind still blew with strength but with varying persistence, and along the valley floor they were almost completely sheltered from its uncertain force. In an hour they had reached the green tongue of hillside that ran down into the valley from the round-topped summit.

"Shall we *see* Old Sam?" Margorie asked her. "Does he know we are coming?"

Elvira did not like discussing Old Sam, but she admitted a little ungraciously, "It's quite likely he'll come to the hut. He's very uncanny that way. I don't believe anyone knows exactly where he lives, in some hole, probably, in the Bush. But if we go to the hut that's called his—where nobody lives—he may turn up. Not because he's seen you or knows when to expect you, but just because he *knows*."

"What *does* he know?" Margorie persisted.

"Well, somehow or other *who* you are and *why* you're there," Elvira admitted. "He'll know, for instance, about that night last June—when we went by moonlight and cut down the silk-cotton tree. I told you then—it makes us one with Obeah and he is the King of Obeah."

"You said it made us one with each other, that it was a kind of marriage," Margorie murmured in a low, moved voice.

"That's true," Elvira agreed a little impatiently. "It *does* bind you to the person you are acting with—it is a kind of vow. We couldn't have cut the tree down alone, for one thing, though it was a very young tree."

"What a shriek it gave when it fell," Margorie said, gazing up at the round, treeless hill above her, "as if a heart had been killed with it." Elvira said nothing. Why was the hill so green, Margorie wondered, when all the hills about it and the parched valley at its foot were dust-colored with drought? Although no homes or people were visible, they found a little path wandering up the hillside, and halfway up the hillside the path sank into a

little ripple of ground filled with undergrowth. A hut concealed itself among the low trees. There was only a bench inside it, and a little stool. Margorie had a queer feeling that someone had just been there, and she found that she did not want to shut the door after her. The hut was clean but had a musty smell, as if it had not been used for the purposes of life for a long time. They sat on the bench with relief after their long tussle with the wind, but it was not a restful feeling sitting there. The silence had no peace in it, only a strange sinister quality as if it were listening. The door they had closed behind them opened with a silent jerk. The most extraordinary figure Margorie had ever seen followed the wind into the hut. He was unusually tall and thin. The skin looked stretched out over his bones, as if there were nothing between the gray-black parchment and the wiry frame it hung on. You could not believe that behind that dry, tight skin any blood flowed. He was dressed in rags and tatters from different garments long fallen to pieces and showing bare patches of his skeleton frame. His eyes, deep sunk in his skull, burned steadily between red rims. He stared at them as if they were in the way of something else that he was looking at. He gave them no greeting, but, turning his head away from them, sat on the stool muttering to himself, his back half turned toward them. Elvira opened her lips to speak and shut them again. Margorie saw that Elvira was shuddering with long, convulsive shudders—as if she were a rabbit being drawn toward a boa constrictor. Elvira's body did not move, but her will and the strength of her mind went out of her toward the old man sitting with his back to her on the stool.

Margorie felt that she was looking at a ravaged, horrible old skeleton—and nothing more. The old man was dirty, perhaps he had never washed, old diseases lived and hung about him without the power to kill, or to be healed by life. Time passed but Margorie was no more conscious of its passing than if she had been under an anesthetic. A streak of sickly sunshine came through the unglassed window of the hut and crawled slowly across the floor till it reached the old man's foot. Margorie could not take her eyes from the shining distortion of the gnarled black toes projecting from half a hideous broken boot.

Suddenly the old man moved and, rising, unlatched the door. Adassa stood there in the entrance of the hut. Before she greeted her mistress she exchanged a long rambling greeting with the old man. Margorie could not understand a word they said to each other, although she was familiar with the West Indian dialect. Yet she got the impression that Elvira understood every word of it. Elvira ceased her convulsive tremblings when she saw Adassa; the color was drawn out of her face, but for the moment power flowed back into her and she sat erect and in control of herself.

Adassa greeted her mistress and Margorie in her usual singsong drawl. "I carried out your orders, Missie," she told Elvira. "I went to Everslade last night though the wind was terrible—dead I thought I was and scattered over the mountainside a dozen times before I reached the school—and what was there at the end of it all? The house stood, and in the back rooms the mistress and the sick child were, quiet and safe, and with them the two Asiatics, father and daughter O'San. I could do them no great service. They look after themselves, it seems, so I took the coffee the mistress gave me while I rested, and then I went back to my own people. Every minute might have been my last or theirs. Other huts went. The annex roof is off and all things in it carried away or broken. They all say the Devil breaks up the Island because of the sins in it. But do those who sin most get broken?"

"You did well," Elvira said, after a prolonged pause. "Since everything is now easier and the wind has fallen we may return tonight or tomorrow. It would be well if all the servants went back to Everslade today—can you get this order to them?"

"It shall be as you say, Missie, they will go back. The clouds are off the peak. There is nothing else I am to do?"

"There is nothing at all," Elvira said firmly. "Go now." Adassa bowed low to Elvira and with a curious half-sullen, half-reverent inclination in the direction of the old man, who had gone back to his stool, she closed the door after her. The old man turned slowly round to face the bench on which the two women sat. His strange, blank gaze swept across them like a searchlight that finds nothing in an empty sky. When he spoke it was quite clearly, in the native dialect they both understood.

"You have asked for Death," he said slowly. "But remember if you do not use Him—He will use you. You will get Death since you have asked for Him." Then he got up and opened the door. Margorie thought the trees took him, for he did not seem to move before they had swallowed him. Elvira started shaking again, cowering down on the bench and covering her face with her hands.

"What did he mean, Elvira?" Margorie demanded.

"Don't speak of it here," Elvira implored. "Everything you say up here is dangerous. Don't speak at all." They got up and went down the hill into the queer, glaring light. The sunshine glistened on the valley floor as if there were something sticky in its glazed substance. The wind behind them seemed to be trying to blow them off the Hill of Silence knowing that they were not safe.

"He did not mean anything," Elvira said at last when they had reached the valley. "He is just a queer ignorant old man. Let us forget what he said. It is all superstitious nonsense. I only went there to meet Adassa because I wanted to hear if Lucy was all right. I'm not sorry we can have this talk together in peace though. We mustn't feel violent or exaggerated about Lucy. I am sure there is some civilized method of getting her to go. I don't say accidents don't happen—they do, and it would be silly to suppose they're always unfavorable—but we mustn't *make* them happen when we can use our wits instead. Now you told me something the other day which interested me very much. I didn't say anything at the time because I wanted to think it over. Besides, you can't say important things in hurricanes, they don't sound important. You said you heard Lucy talking to Philip Calgary over the telephone before the wind struck. Do you remember? I want to know now how you came to hear it and exactly what it was you heard."

"Yes, I remember," Margorie said slowly, "but it wasn't much. I'd felt odd all night—I couldn't sleep—the wind got up and slapped things, and then dropped in such a funny way, so I got up early and went to take a bath in Mrs. Armstrong's wing, which has the nicest bathroom. The door of her room was open. She was standing by the telephone and I heard her say, 'Yes, Philip,' as if she liked saying his name. I thought it rather odd. She held the telephone a long time in her hand after she'd finished listening, and she still looked as if she were pleased about something. I didn't hear anything else."

"It was quite enough," Elvira told her in a satisfied voice. "There is no other Philip she could have been speaking to, and no doubt he'd just given her the first hurricane warning. They always send them out first to hospitals."

"But why should she be pleased about a hurricane?" Margorie objected in her matter-of-fact voice.

"There's no fool like a fool in love," Elvira said bitterly. "She was pleased to hear the sound of his voice—hurricanes meant nothing to her while she heard it."

"I can understand that," Margorie observed quietly. "It makes me a little sorry for her if she loves him like that—even though he is black."

"Well, it won't make the school committee feel sorry for her," said Elvira viciously. "It will have quite another effect. This will help us to get rid of her—without violence."

Margorie stood still. "But I don't like that," she said with conviction. "I'd rather have violence, I'd rather do it myself."

"Don't talk such nonsense," Elvira cried angrily. "Neither you nor I must be even indirectly guilty of violence. Would you throw away the very thing you want to get by removing Lucy? No, you must remain, for my sake, in the right. You must use your father to help me to get rid of her. The rest of the committee are all prejudiced in her favor, they might try to cover up her tracks. They aren't honest, but your father *is*—he'll expose her *and* get rid of her too. I want to do both now."

A spasm of pain crossed the girl's face. "But that's just it," she tried to explain. "Father is honest. I can't use him. Besides, there's this woman he's going to marry—instead of my mother. They talk over everything together now, even me, and how I'll take it. I'm polite, of course, to both of them, but I've stopped speaking to him really about anything. He knows what I feel. I can't begin with this."

"This hasn't anything to do with your feelings," Elvira insisted. "You must speak to him for the honor of the school. You respect *that*, don't you? You can easily convince him of what after all is the truth, that this love affair with Philip Calgary is why Whiteleaf went off in a huff. Once start this new scandal and it will run like fire through a dry wood. Lucy'll *have* to go. I was patient before because I thought in time she'd marry Bob Anstruther, but Philip Calgary—well—that's an insult I can't swallow."

"You say that as if you specially minded," Margorie observed. "Do you, Elvira? What is Philip Calgary to you?"

A faint derisive smile touched Elvira's lips. She put her hand on Margorie's arm. "Oh, no," she said ironically. "Nothing concerns me less than what happens to Philip Calgary. If I heard that he and all his nigger hospital had been blown into Great Bay and drowned overnight—why, I would laugh, Margorie, I would laugh! A good riddance, I should say, to that traitor Charles Ransom's friend and all his black rubbish. Don't you love your country, Margorie, don't you believe in it as I do? I am seven-eighths white, and every drop in me calls out that I am one with the British Empire. When he took Whiteleaf I laughed. And when she ran away and left him I laughed—but I didn't know *why* she had left him. Now I *know*, that is what makes the difference. If he marries Lucy, and there won't be any question with her of anything else, he tears down our flag and spits on it. Don't you agree with me?"

Margorie hesitated. "In a sense I do," she answered consideringly. "It would shock me—it would shock father, of course—it certainly ought to be stopped—but somehow or other, Elvira, I wish there was some other *way* of

stopping it! Besides, after all she only said, 'Yes, Philip,' over the telephone, when she had been told about the hurricane and was in a hurry."

"But you said," Elvira maliciously reminded her, "that she stood for quite a long time with the receiver in her hand, looking pleased. That wasn't panic about the hurricane."

Margorie's arm was locked in hers. The wind blew them on their way together as if they were one being. "You will act for me," Elvira asked in her deep rich voice, "you won't fail me or your country, you'll do what I tell you?"

"I will do *all* that you tell me—always!" Margorie answered. Elvira could feel the quick vibration of the girl's heart beating against her own. "But, Elvira," Margorie added in a troubled voice, "why did that old man say, 'If you don't use Death—Death will use you'? What did he mean by that?"

"He is mad," Elvira said sharply. "We must make our own plans now. He has failed us, we must pay no more attention to what he says. I always thought it was nonsense, but Adassa said it would be no harm to try. Forget it and never tell anyone, Margorie, that you have been to the Hill of Silence."

CHAPTER XXXI

Within five minutes of the hurricane warning Philip had retailed it to Lucy, his mother, and O'San; then he concentrated upon his own problems. He had three hundred and fifty patients, about a hundred of whom were as ill as human beings can be, and many of them already doomed to die. Another two hundred were complete liabilities; but perhaps fifty, within limitations, could be made useful at a pinch. His staff was composed of his medical colleague, the matron, six nurses, and six orderlies, yet once the wind struck, he could count with absolute certainty only upon one nurse.

This nurse had long been the bane of Philip's life. She passionately adored him, and leaped up under his feet when he wanted and far more often when he didn't want her. She was the only fully trained theater nurse the hospital possessed, and as necessary to Philip as an extra hand. He hated the sight of her. Women, when they are adored by male admirers whose passion they fail to return, are respected by the general public for their charms. But men, ardently desired by unwanted women, are much less popular: other men laugh at them, and women indignantly consider them either unkind or faithless. Flight and discourtesy are men's only means of escape. Yet Philip suddenly realized that this emergency would be considerably lightened by Aimée Baker's complaint. She would stick to him, hurricane or no hurricane, and since her spirit was the life of the hospital, she would shirk nothing of its demands.

The moment Philip began to take what precautions were available (unfortunately familiar to his native patients), all those who could walk, and many whom no one considered capable of walking, melted away. It was no use locking doors, for they vanished through windows, covered verandas, and even out of skylights and over roofs, until nobody capable of rendering the hospital practical aid remained in it. The matron and five nurses were among the missing. No orderlies could be found, except one robust, half-witted giant, known as Mutton, and the old lady who had cooked for Philip during the typhoid epidemic and whom no one had been able to get rid of since.

Philip's medical colleague, apologetically and belatedly, rushed to his home close by to help a shiftless wife and four young children, promising to return, but by the time he had fastened up his house one step outside it

would have whirled him into the bay. Before the full force of the wind struck, while Philip was closing the last and safest aperture, a knock came outside the door and he found two nuns in a wild whirl of black garments on the doorstep. He dragged them in, flung himself against the door, and fought it shut, as if he were dealing with a maniac. "A moment later and you would have been swept into the sea!" he gasped.

"Wherever we were, we should have been in the hands of God," the taller of the two sisters said rebukingly, her habit falling into its familiar folds as if by magic. "I am Sister Teresa," she added, "Sister in charge of St. Katherine's, and this is Sister Bridget. We can both nurse. As you know, the medical authorities on these islands have prevented our doing so on account of our habits. I do not, however, suppose that at this juncture you will refuse us permission to wear them."

Philip smiled grimly. "Sisters," he said, "if you were head hunters and wore scalps, I should welcome your presence, provided you could nurse. I have two hundred very seriously ill patients and one theater nurse. I have collected my patients into the two most sheltered rooms, these are, the mortuary chapel and the casualty receiving station. They will, however, require more adjustment than I have yet had time to give them. There are the beds and the patients in them, men on the right and women on the left. There are also a few rather imminent maternity cases in my own quarters, close to the theater."

"Sister Bridget will attend to the women and I to the men," Sister Teresa told him briefly. "Your theater nurse can perhaps be responsible for the maternity cases. Please do not have any further anxiety." Philip took one glance at Sister Teresa's steady gray eyes and realized that he had no further need for anxiety.

For three days and three nights, without sleep or rest, he and the Sisters ran the hospital together, gallantly seconded by Aimée and by a transformed and almost jubilant Mutton, who for the first time in his life found that he was considered useful. The kitchen was flooded out, and the old lady still cooking in it all but drowned. The wind punched a hole in the roof, but working in a dark pandemonium, while Sister Teresa standing on a ladder held a lamp close beneath them to guide them, Philip and Mutton closed it. Water seeped in through unknown sources from above and from below. Children were born and patients died. There was never an hour without a fresh call upon their wits and muscles.

"Men are sometimes quite useful," Sister Teresa remarked to Sister Bridget, pausing for an instant's consultation between the wards and what was left of the kitchen. "Fancy his having thought to put the food and medical stores out of reach—even before we came. Can anything be done to salvage the stove, do you think, now that you have resuscitated Mrs. Marsh? I should think she could go on cooking."

"We couldn't stop her," Sister Bridget agreed, "and when he has finished operating I expect Dr. Calgary can get out the stove. It's under three feet of water at the moment but the water is not rising. Can you prevent the ward from flooding?"

"I can keep enough water out for the present," Sister Teresa observed blandly. "There does not, however, seem a water shortage at the moment," she added, her eyes twinkling, for they lived in a land of drought.

"Sister," asked Sister Bridget, not fearfully, but as one who has the right to know what odds are against her, "will the sea come in—or was that just a chance wave that flooded the kitchen?"

Sister Teresa smiled reassuringly. "He thinks it was just a wave," she answered, "and he says the wind is gradually trampling down the sea so there is no great danger till it drops, if then." Their eyes rested with relief upon each other, as if a distant danger was a form of present security. "If we can go on as we are," Sister Teresa said, turning back into her ward of stricken men, "we shall do very well."

An eggshell on the brink of disaster, the hospital swayed and flinched against the storm. The sea and the sky thrashed at each other with resistless energy. Between the thunder of the sky and the thunder of the sea, a baby drew its first astonished breath and gave, through agony, a hint of joy.

Philip's mind, anchored in emergency, registered fleeting glimpses of Lucy's face, but it no longer tormented him with its forbidden beauty. He was safe beyond the region of choice. What he loved was no longer his responsibility or within his power. It was as if he were alive in another world from his heart. Sealed up in his hospital, alone with his backward and vulnerable people, Philip knew without the shadow of a doubt the purpose of his life. As he stood at the top of his wards and found the eyes of his patients drawn to him in passionate confidence, even their pain submissive to his presence, he understood why his heart had renounced Whiteleaf and why—since he was in a world beyond desire or hope—he was free to love Lucy. He found suddenly that loving Lucy and being alive were the same thing.

He was unaware of it, but Aimée Baker felt a kindred freedom. She who had always loved in vain felt her frustration vanish. In this turmoil of destruction she could serve what she loved without shame or vexation of spirit.

Although Philip's eyes glancing at her for co-operation valued her no more than the instrument she handed him, yet she knew that she was of value to him. He could not perform the chronic miracles of his hand and brain without her. Rocking on his feet with fatigue, holding the whole hospital together by his courage, Philip would have been beaten without Aimée's unflagging support. Hers was his victory. Even if death rollicked through the broken walls of their frail shelter and tossed them all into the sea, Aimée knew that she would have died for the same thing as Philip.

"You'd better see if that squalling girl in the maternity room is ready for the theater or not," Philip said without looking up from the operating table. "I'll put this fellow back to bed while you get her ready." No marriage service had words of a deeper unity than this meager acknowledgment of their partnership.

The smile Aimée gave him as she went roused even Philip's notice. He thought to himself that his fellow workers seemed to be enjoying the knife edge of catastrophe as much as he himself enjoyed it. It was his patients for whom he felt compassion. They had to be passive and could not use themselves against danger. When he could leave the theater, Philip spent all his time in the wards, so as to join his courage to his patients' helplessness. He liked to watch Sister Teresa and Sister Bridget going about their unceasing business with assured and unflinching serenity. They carried with them from patient to patient the reminder of powers beyond the scope of storms. Patients who were too ill to care what happened to them outside the mortal struggle taking place in their own bodies became calm in their company.

"They see God in the sky behind the hurricane," Philip thought, "and I feel God in my hands working for my people. Who can say which is the truer conception? There is a point where religion and science meet. We have to work with what we ourselves have—every bit of what we have—before either God or Law will function for us."

Sister Teresa came up to him with a cup of coffee in her hands and her long black veil sweeping unhygienically behind her. "Drink this," she said sternly. "It's eight hours since you've taken anything. And when you have drunk it, Mutton is prepared to help you dig out the kitchen stove."

CHAPTER XXXII

Lucy crept out onto the terrace. The dawn had wakened her, after her first uneasy sleep, with the shock of silence.

Myra and Henriette slept on, peace spreading deeper and deeper into their soothed and quieted bodies, but Lucy could feel no relief until she knew that Philip was alive. The beauty of the reawakened world was hollow to her. Far beneath the terrace the plain spread, a shining tapestry of emerald and peacock blue threaded with golden light.

Misty veils of rose and azure drank up the rising sun and covered the diaphanous regions of the sea. Birds' notes pierced the silence with rapture. Their wings, no longer pitted against the ferocious forces of the storm, flickered swifter than light through the unruffled air. A feather's movement was enough to balance them. Had they out-flown the rough fringes of the hurricane and reached some distant space of unviolated sky where they had found security? What messenger had told them their return was safe? What confidence had brought them back to their lost homes?

Lucy's ears were awake with a new keenness to the slightest sound. In her heart—and through all her roused senses—time came to a stop. She felt as if she were visiting a new world. There were no connections any more, no letters, no telephones, no other voices. Soon the needs of the day would come back to her, and all its duties, but now alone upon the terrace there was no "next thing"—instead, a strange sense of harmony began to invade her. She felt an inner certainty that Philip and his Island had survived together. Lonely and defenseless against the elements, cut off on all sides by the tideless sea, there was in both the same resilient life. The sun warmed Lucy as she stood in its first tentative rays. She watched a lizard dart across the wall she leaned on. She felt herself draw closer to Philip and his Island, till she became a part of the mystic light and the returning day. The great gates of Everslade lay flat. The garden was a shambles of uprooted trees, while strange survivals from the scattered contents of the annex blinked forlornly back at her in the sunlight. Armchairs were strewn with sodden leaves; a bedstead leaned drunkenly against a torn hibiscus bush. The world of precious and familiar things suddenly seemed to Lucy senseless and unnecessary. She turned away from it and stared back at the big, battered mansion behind her as if it were a stranger.

Two hours later she heard the children's voices ringing through the woods. In a rush they reached the terrace and swept toward her, full of eagerness and laughter. They clung around her, pouring out questions and interjecting their demands for what had happened to her with their own adventures, but slowly Lucy became aware that behind their affection and eagerness there was something hidden. They knew something—something they hadn't liked—and they wanted Lucy *not* to know it, for fear that if she did it might become more real to them. Their confidence in her was the same, but Lucy had a feeling that their confidence in life had been shaken.

Elvira, cleaving a rapid way through them, cried, "My dear! My dear! Thank God you're safe!" and would have clasped Lucy in her arms, but Lucy, drawing the children closer to her to act as a screen, evaded Elvira's embrace. Her eyes meeting Elvira's could not hide their coldness; but Elvira hid any reaction to it. She slipped her arm into Lucy's and appeared to the whole school as one with their Head, in shining amity and relief.

Yet it was to Miss Lestrange, not to Elvira, that Lucy said quickly: "You're all right, *all* of you, you're safe?"

Miss Lestrange, slightly touching Lucy's extended hand with her cool fingertips, replied with her usual indifference to emotion, but at greater length than was her custom. "The school is intact. Dr. MacTaggert's mission, though comparatively sheltered, was grossly overcrowded. They did the best they could for us, but there was no reading lamp by my bedside, and Dr. MacTaggert constantly called upon me to play appalling hymn tunes on a piano that had not been tuned for years, and must have been a mediocre instrument when new. This garden is in a terrible state!" Miss Lestrange looked disparagingly at the uprooted trees, as if they were an oversight on Lucy's part; yet she somehow managed to convey to Lucy at the same time that she was not unpleased by her survival.

Lucy told the assembled children that there was to be no school for the day. Everybody was to be put to some use setting the house and garden in order. Columbus discovering fresh islands that might turn out to be continents could not have felt better employed. The children dispersed in excited groups, streamed through the house, or headed for the lost treasures of the annex afloat in the garden. They were half shocked and half enchanted by the ravages of the storm.

"*They're* all right," Lucy said to herself, "but they've got something on their minds all the same—and it isn't only the storm."

It was some time before she could snatch a moment alone with Nancy in her office. "*Did* anything happen," she asked her anxiously, "I mean anything unusual, before you were safe?"

Nancy checked herself halfway down a list she was writing and answered without looking up at Lucy, "It is difficult to say what *is* unusual in a hurricane. We got over the Gap in time—but only just. The woods were stifling and the children got rather jammed up in them. Queer gusts of wind kept blowing the branches back into our faces. I was quite far behind with the little ones, probably Miss Lestrange saw better than I did what happened—only she didn't *stay* ahead. She came back to help me—with Margorie Fielding. All the other older girls, with Elvira and Rebecca, got too far ahead, no one could keep up with them. Finally—well, I think they took to their heels and ran away."

"They *left* you—with all the little ones in the wood?" Lucy asked incredulously.

Nancy raised her head and looked at Lucy; her nostrils were distended, her eyes shone into Lucy's with a hard, watchful look. "They ran," she repeated. "Miss Loring says she risked her life to get help for us, because she saw we couldn't make it. We did just make it. We carried the smallest on our backs, the three of us, and then ran back, when the first ones were over, to collect more. The big girls—and those two others—would have made all the difference. The children understood what had happened, but of course they'll never tell, and I suppose I'd better not have told either."

"Don't say that!" Lucy exclaimed sharply. "I must always know the truth: I trust you to tell me, and I know you *have* told it to me. I meant to tell you anyhow that I've begun to understand about Elvira Loring."

The watchfulness melted out of Nancy's eyes. "I'm sorry," she said, "I know you liked her. Well, so did I—once. Besides, I admit Elvira has had it hard. If it had been me it wouldn't have mattered; I'm so black I know it and I don't let it get me down. But to be so white you don't feel you *are* one of us, and yet to *be* one, and then to climb almost to the top of your profession and never reach it—well, it's tough, tougher than *you* can ever understand. If she weren't so dangerous I wouldn't have told you—and none of the others ever would."

"Perhaps I understand better than you think," Lucy said slowly. "But I'm not quite sure I know what to do about what I understand."

"Look here," Nancy said eagerly, "take my advice—don't do anything, not about this, because we can't prove it. Watch out for something we *can*

prove—and take care of yourself meanwhile. You may be sure Myra and I will go on doing what we can. And another thing—don't let her know you *are* any different to her, or that you have heard what happened in the woods."

"I'm afraid she knows already," Lucy admitted. "She tried to kiss me and I didn't let her."

"Oh, that wasn't wise," Nancy said thoughtfully. "On this Island we keep things to ourselves when we don't like them. It's safer."

CHAPTER XXXIII

The day after the hurricane was a mere welter of nerves reacting on small emergencies. Lucy, hurrying from one startling crisis to another, was infinitely relieved at the sight of Bob driving up with a lorry full of food and prepared to deal with choked pipes, dangerous walls, or any other threatening residue of the storm. He had a sure touch with the scatter-witted servants, and left Lucy free to deal with her own more immediate problems. All day long teachers and adolescent girls burst into tears without any perceptible reason. Miss Lestrange pushed a child, who thumped on the piano like a pawing horse, off the music stool, and shook her; she then added to the child's terrified amazement by giving her a flurried kiss and a stick of barley sugar.

"I think I should resign," Miss Lestrange said, meeting Lucy in the passage after this incident. "I seem incapable of carrying out my duties—thunder could not have thumped louder than this child did on the piano, and she threw her whole weight forward on the loud pedal as if she were riding a bicycle. Still, there are no real excuses for such a lapse as mine."

"If she rode a bicycle," Lucy murmured absent-mindedly, her thoughts on their first big meal, "she should lean back and pedal lightly."

Miss Lestrange, who had never ridden a bicycle in her life, refused this doubtful support with a wave of her hand. "It is the principle of the thing I allude to," she said with dignity. "I lost my head completely."

"Never mind," Lucy told her warmly, "when it was necessary to keep it you kept it, on the way to the Gap, as I've already heard. I daresay Ada enjoyed that music lesson more than any she'd ever had—winding up with barley sugar like that. And if she thumped rather worse than usual it was probably because I'd told the school they needn't *have* any lessons today."

"There—you see," Miss Lestrange agreed with gloomy triumph, "if I forgot your express order it must show that I was acting in a psychologically incorrect way. I probably felt my power instinct menaced by the hurricane and wished to exert it—over that poor defenseless child. A teacher who acts in any such way should choose another profession."

Lucy wondered how Miss Lestrange *could* choose another profession when she was over sixty and dependent on her earnings, but she said very

sympathetically, "Don't you think we all behave exceptionally in exceptional circumstances? I'm so very sorry but I've got to speak to Cook. There's some pork Mr. Anstruther has brought over which must be cooked at once."

"Pork," Miss Lestrange said to herself bitterly, "when I spoke to her of principles! She's far too young and feather-headed to be a headmistress."

Elvira flashed past them each in turn surrounded by a happy group of children on their way to the bathing pool. She helped the children to clear the pool of leaves and débris and then instituted a dancing and crooning game which kept them amused for hours. She felt herself reinstated in the fascinated eyes of the attentive children. Lucy too, Elvira thought, could not fail to be impressed by her unruffled nerves. She did not dream that the skin had formed too quickly over the hole she had made in the general confidence of the school, and would never heal.

"Wonderful," Lucy said to Bob, when she had spoken to the appeased Cook about the pork, and had seen the chimney begin to draw under Bob's expert ministrations.

"Lucy," Bob said, descending from the ladder, "Judy has a splendid idea —she's getting up a subscription dinner dance at the Grand Hotel, she and three friends of hers, considered the best hostesses on the Island for social stunts. They are paying for everything, and then charging five hundred chosen guests two guineas each for admission. That's one thousand pounds clear for hurricane victims. Everybody that gets tickets will *have* to subscribe two guineas, whether they go or not. Their names will be published in the *Reaper*, so they won't like to be felt left out—besides, they'll like to give, a thing like this makes people generous. I promised Judy you'd come."

Lucy stopped counting out stores for Annabella to cook. "A dance," she said, "on top of a hurricane? Won't that be rather funny—if people have been killed?" Annabella's face became masklike. She was listening avariciously to each scrap of the conversation. "Wicked," she thought, "not funny!" and her heart turned equally against both these rich and jaunty people to whom even hurricanes were opportunities for mirth and pleasure.

"Not in two weeks' time," Bob replied reassuringly to Lucy. "They won't ask the planters who've been too badly hit. No news had come in before I started out at dawn when the wind dropped, but our side of the Island anyhow wasn't too browned off. We lost some cattle and the sugar crop got superficially damaged. Nothing much. Of course the huts by the sea

got flooded out. But there wasn't any loss of life to speak of. Probably Black Water and the north of the Island copped it worst. A subscription dance is much the best way of collecting money—why, it's all sheer profit, with these four hostesses paying out of their own pockets for eats and drinks."

Lucy forced herself to say, "What—what heaps of sugar you've brought, Bob, and what a magnificent ham. It will last us over a week. Yes, of course I'll come," she added, meeting Bob's imploring eyes and holding onto the table with both hands. She thought she could manage quite nicely not to faint and found that she succeeded, though the picture of the dance and people being blown out to sea kept slipping in and out of her mind, like the jagged edges of a jigsaw puzzle which refuse to fit.

No news from the rest of the Island came in till sunset, when the Brigadier sent up a sergeant from the Gap, to say he'd keep the sick children a week longer, and did Lucy need anything. Filtered through the dramatic mind of the sergeant, although St. George's and King's House were unharmed, hundreds and thousands of pounds' worth of damage had taken place on the north and east sides of the Island. Six big planters had watched large fortunes whisked away from their eyes in a few seconds. Bananas had come off badly, sugar was damaged but might survive. No white people had been killed though thirty were injured. Over a hundred natives were dead and two hundred more missing or severely injured. Thousands of people were homeless and St. Bridget's, a small port on the Black Water estuary, had been blotted out by a wave.

"There's always far less damage than people make out at first," Bob told Lucy reassuringly. "You pop off to bed and get some sleep. You look as if you'd been running blind for a week. I'll get over as soon as I've helped my work people to get straightened out."

"Was the hospital destroyed too?" Lucy asked the soldier, as if she had not heard Bob speak.

"Well, I wouldn't rightly know, lady," the sergeant said with respectful glee. He had a natural flair for talking to ladies, though this was for the moment in conflict with a desire to enlarge upon honors. "St. Bridget's is near the hospital, but nothing was said about it," he admitted, "and it could be the wave just took that cove and not the big bay next it. If it had come over the big bay like, we'd be almost certain to have heard of it." The sergeant accepted the tip he had deserved and vanished.

Bob stood by his empty lorry wondering what kind of parting Lucy was going to give him. She stood a few feet from him, curiously remote and

aloof. Behind her rose the dark walls of the ruined annex. "It's been too wonderful what you've done," she said at last. "I can't thank you enough. I just don't know how I'd have got on without you."

"That's what I want you to feel always," Bob told her, moving a step nearer to her. A shadow by the annex wall moved at the same time.

"No—good-by," Lucy said with warning firmness. She felt it was of enormous importance that the shadow should not move again. Bob looked at her uncertainly. He did not want to take advantage of her gratitude, yet he longed with a desperate hunger for even a reluctant kiss. Lucy moved back a step but she did not look at the annex. She kept her eyes on Bob. "Good-by," she said again, urgently, "and tell Judy I'll come. Thank her for everything." This was dismissal, and Bob accepted it. He swung himself into his empty lorry and drove away.

The shadow had gone when Lucy slipped into the ruined annex. Philip stood there, his back against the wall, his hands clenched at his sides.

"Bob came to help me," Lucy said desperately. "You can't prevent people's kindness."

"You can prevent your own," Philip said without moving. Lucy looked helplessly about her. There was half a bedstead and an untouched blue Chinese vase. The broken white tiles under her feet were covered with dust and rubble. Lucy sat down on the bedstead, because she found that with nothing to hold on to she couldn't stand up.

"All I care about," she said after an endless pause, "is that you're alive. I didn't know it—till just now."

Philip did not move, but something in his voice changed. Gentleness crept into it, in spite of the burning anger in his eyes.

"I would have come before if I could," he told her. "I'm sorry that man was here. You know I nearly murdered him once, and I might very easily quite do so next time."

"But there won't be a next time—not the way you mean," Lucy said urgently. "Philip, come to me." He moved then, with one swift movement of his whole body, and stood looking down at her without anger. She could see now what the hurricane had done to him. She looked deep into his sleepless eyes and saw his temples beating above the hollows of his cheeks. He had taken time to dress immaculately before he came to her. His white silk shirt, open at the throat, left the column of his throat bare. The line from his athlete's head to his massive chest and shoulders was delicate and firm. He

bent his head toward her and she thought of his free, resilient body as of a wave rising above her, a wave into which she longed to sink and lose herself forever.

"Philip," she said softly, "sit down beside me." He sat down like an obedient child. "I believed you were alive all the time," she said in a low voice, "or I couldn't have gone on all day. Only I wasn't sure, and when the sergeant told us about Black Water—I was afraid!" As gently as a devout Catholic might touch a relic, Philip lifted a strand of hair that had fallen across Lucy's face. She would not have known that he had touched her if her heart had not known. "Did you come only to find out if I were alive—or because you weren't fighting me any more?" she asked him in a whisper.

"I knew by midday that you were alive," Philip admitted. "O'San sent me word. My mother was with friends, we'd arranged that earlier. So I took a short leave from the hospital to get some sleep. I suppose I came up here to—to help you—because I wanted to come."

"But you wouldn't have come if you hadn't cared?" Lucy whispered.

"Oh, I cared all right. Did you suppose I didn't?" Philip asked ironically. "That young Anstruther cared too, I noticed. And how many more competitors have I in the race? I always like to know the exact number before I decide to start. Didn't you know I was one of the Island's runners, before the war?"

"Don't laugh at me," Lucy said in a shaking voice. "This is different—what's between us two—and you know it. There is no one else." Even the dead, Lucy thought to herself, have left me alone with Philip.

They sat shoulder to shoulder with a space between and neither of them moved to close it. Yet they could not hear the birds' last songs nor see the procession of the mountains retreating from indigo to black before their eyes: they could see and feel nothing but each other.

"Lucy," Philip said at last, "in a sense, of course, I'm aware that there is this—feeling. But passion between a man and woman, however strong, is a very uncertain factor. I have learned to control it. I want both of us to be able to reckon what the results of our coming together might be. I still feel most uncertain. I—I—Oh, hell, Lucy, I need a night's sleep before I know whether I'm drunk or sober!"

In a flash Lucy's arms were around him, and she had drawn his head against her breast; her very being melted into his. "Oh, I'm so glad—so glad—not to be lonely any more," she whispered. She felt his arms tighten about

her and his heart beating against her heart. She had always felt sure of Philip, she knew instinctively that all his strength was used for gentleness. But now Lucy felt sure of him in a new way. The unknown territory of his being spread itself before her wide and deep, governed by a curious innocence. She did not need to ask him about Whiteleaf. She knew without being told, in the sudden release of his controlled passion when he touched her, that Philip could never have given himself to any woman as completely as he gave himself to her. He had forgotten himself, and all his pride was gathered up in her.

"I can't carry you home," he said at last, "but I'll carry you as far as I can. Look, it's dark now, and there's the evening star."

"You are my home," Lucy murmured. "I'm glad there's no roof and no walls, really—nothing now between us and each other, Philip."

He gave a quick, sharp sigh as he lifted her in his arms. "Unfortunately you can't occupy your home without a few preliminaries," he told her. "Don't say anything about this yet, Lucy. We have to go through all the proper forms and ceremonies for the sake of my self-respect as well as yours. Whatever law and order require of us is going to be done. We shall be condemned for the worst crime on the Island. We must learn to preserve our own innocence no matter what other people think of us."

Before they reached the first, thin beam of light from the house Philip put Lucy gently from his arms. "I shall stay here till I see the light from your balcony," he whispered. "Try to sleep the clock round. I shall. Now and when you wake, *think*, for God's sake *think*, whether what we've both got to face is worth it. Remember, if you love me at all, it's got to be from the center of your being and with every damned thing you've got. Love me like that—as I love you—or let me go!"

Lucy found that her lips trembled too much to speak, but she took the hand that still held hers and kissed it before she moved away from Philip into the light.

CHAPTER XXXIV

Elvira leaned over her balcony, screened by heavy purple bells of convolvulus, and watched a chance meeting take place between Lucy and Margorie Fielding. Unfortunately they spoke, as she had feared they would, too low and too little for her to follow what they said.

Elvira thought that there was no direct purpose in their meeting, though as they were crossing the courtyard at the same time it would have been more disconcerting for them to have avoided each other; still, in the ease of their coming together Elvira read with bitterness that there was no natural hostility between them.

Elvira noticed, as she often had before, how strong a likeness they bore to each other. They both had slim, erect figures, and the same well-shaped heads crowned with light brown hair that took the sunshine in golden gleams. Each as she moved toward the other walked with the same effortless, unspectacular dignity. Neither of them had ever been at the mercy of a power beyond her own resources. They had never known scorn or derision. They had never experienced destitution. Neither of them had ever irretrievably blundered before the bar of human judgment. How still they stood, half a yard apart, their neat, straight shoulders and even their hands as steady as if they were being drilled!

Lucy spoke first, and she was the last to leave off speaking, but Margorie listened as if she liked what she heard. Lucy moved away with a friendly smile. Margorie did not return her smile, nor did she move after Lucy had left her. She stood motionless in the hot noon air, as if there was no purpose left in her.

Elvira hesitated; sooner or later she must let down the barrier of silence that stood between her and this girl to whom she had lied, whom she had deserted, leaving her to take over her own duties in a hurricane, while she escaped to safety; whom she had for so long enslaved and corrupted, but who was not as yet finally estranged from her.

There always comes a moment in the lives of those who, feeling defrauded themselves, have met their sense of deprivation by defrauding others, when they have to expose their own dishonesty to their admirers. Elvira had postponed this moment. She had even tried to hide from Margorie

that she had saved herself at the expense of others. But Elvira was uncertain if she had succeeded. Margorie had made no comment on Elvira's selfish flight, nor had she expressed admiration for the heroism Elvira had speciously produced to cover her panic.

Elvira did not know, and had hitherto shirked finding out, if Margorie believed her lie or not. Had she managed to keep alive the false ideal of herself which she had planted in the heart of her worshiper, and if it were destroyed, or at best tarnished, how much had it shaken the emotional control upon which Elvira counted?

Elvira had no wish to see her image shattered, but she had often had a strong disinclination to pay for its upkeep. She felt like a stingy bargain hunter at a sale, extremely loath to give up a good bargain, but even more loath to pay for it.

Leaning a little farther over the balcony, she called softly, "Margorie!" The girl turned instantly at the sound, as if her whole being were redirected toward life. "Ah," Elvira thought with relief. "She still cares! I can still control her."

Yet it was an awkward meeting for both of them. Margorie stood before Elvira silently and with dread, perhaps awaiting a fresh enchantment, or instead a fresh bewildering pang of disillusionment. How could she tell what to say to this new Elvira, who had deserted her in danger, and lied to cover her desertion, but who had the same exquisite soft, deep voice, whose long slender hands were outstretched to greet her with the old terrible tenderness?

"My dear, my dear," Elvira reproachfully murmured. "What did you say to Lucy Armstrong on the terrace just now? Why did you stop to speak to her at all?"

Margorie's gray, unflinching eyes looked with challenging straightness into Elvira's. "I wasn't going to speak to her," she answered, "unless she spoke to me. When she stopped I had to. She thanked me for going back to the little ones to help them over the Gap. I don't think I said anything at all, except perhaps 'Oh!' What could I say?"

"You could have said you arranged it with *me*," Elvira told her impatiently. "I had to run on to get MacTaggert and the students to help the children. I happen to have always been a swift runner, but I have a weak heart from racing when I was young. I risked my life to save them, but that doesn't matter, of course—so did you by going back—but she hasn't thanked *me*."

Margorie's eyes wavered before Elvira's insistent liquid gaze. They wandered around the room as if she were looking at it for the first time. Everything Elvira possessed had had for Margorie a sacred look, as if it were the furniture of a shrine. Now the chairs and tables, the very bookshelves, and the deep crimson rug on the highly polished floor had an emphatic, overcolored aspect, as if they were willfully exaggerating a value which they had never truly possessed. She lifted her disenchanted eyes at last to Elvira's watchful face. "But there wouldn't have been time," she said at last quietly. "We made no plan. All the big girls ran away—so I ran back. I knew Nancy couldn't manage alone, and Miss Lestrange, though she stayed behind to help, is as flimsy as a moth."

"Why didn't you say all this to me before, at the mission?" Elvira demanded angrily, her wide nostrils dilating, her eyes blazing. "You behaved *there* as if you believed me. What has changed you? Why do you no longer trust me?" Margorie whitened, but her eyes remained fixed steadily upon Elvira's face.

"It was different there," she said slowly, after a pause. "Besides I—hoped. I hoped you'd tell me the truth. I shouldn't have minded your just being frightened. I could have understood that. All the older girls and Rebecca were, why shouldn't *you* have been? I was too, as far as that goes—horribly frightened. I don't even remember running back, I—just went. Your going the other way—well—I wanted you to be safe. Why should I care about that? I didn't! I don't! But don't let's talk about it! I wanted to forget what you said at the mission to the MacTaggerts, and then you said it all over again last night to Mrs. Armstrong—and—I saw her eyes!" Margorie flung herself suddenly on the floor and buried her head in the divan, shaking with sobs. "I knew she didn't believe you," she cried inconsolably. Elvira moved toward her with the intent gliding grace of an animal, and bending over Margorie, drew the girl into her arms. Her lips closed on Margorie's shaking lips. There was a careless insolence in the forced caress, as if whether Elvira were sure or not of what was in Margorie's mind, she was certain that she held her heart.

Margorie wrenched herself free from Elvira's arms. "Don't! Oh, don't touch me, not now, not like that!" she cried. "I'm so ashamed of you!"

"Of me?" Elvira cried, aghast. It seemed to her that she couldn't have heard aright. To be torn by the bleeding hands of her worshiper from her own shrine was too incredible a fate. "You can't mean what you say! Listen, Margorie, it's so absurd. One moment you're ready to murder my enemies, and the next you are upset like this because of a mere nothing. You say there

wasn't a plan? Well, surely you and I know each other so intimately, we act automatically together in a crisis. That amounts to a plan. Every school friend I have on the Island will tell you I can run like a deer and if you like I'll get a certificate from my doctor to prove to you my heart's weak! Do stop thinking you have to behave like Lucy Armstrong because you're both British. I think I have every right to be furious with you both for doubting me, and with you *most* for setting her and her suspicions up against me—I couldn't have believed it possible!"

The girl gave a long shuddering sigh, half of relief and half of despair, because she could not struggle any longer against the voice she loved. Her head sank against Elvira's knee, but there had been a pause first, rather a long pause, Elvira noticed, before Margorie's head rested against her.

"I didn't want to write that letter," Margorie said after a long silence, "but I wrote it, Elvira—to my father. I sent it back by that sergeant—about Mrs. Armstrong and Dr. Calgary. He was there again—last night at the annex after she had said good-by to Bob Anstruther."

Elvira's relaxed figure stiffened. "Philip there again? Last night at the annex?" she exclaimed. "What did you see? Was it in the dark? What did they say to each other?"

"It wasn't dark, not quite," Margorie answered reluctantly. "I just happened to be out there looking for a toy of Henriette's she thought might still be in the ruins. Mrs. Armstrong was sitting at the end of an upturned bed, and Dr. Calgary stood with his back against the wall. He looked rather —rather curious, I thought, like a person crucified. He didn't move at all, and when she asked him to sit down I thought perhaps he hadn't liked seeing Bob Anstruther saying good-by to her. He must have seen them."

"Did they kiss?" Elvira's voice, suddenly grown harsh and grating, asked above the still bowed head.

"Oh, no!" Margorie murmured in a shocked voice. "I don't think they're engaged, are they?"

"I don't mean Bob Anstruther and Lucy," Elvira said impatiently, "but Philip—Philip and Lucy?"

Margorie made a little movement of distaste. "I didn't stay to see," she said a little dryly. "I wasn't going to watch them. I suppose they had a right to talk there if they liked. People do come and see each other as soon as they can after a hurricane. The wires are down, there's no other way of telling whether your friends are alive or dead. Anyhow, it was getting dark, and

when I left they were just where they were when I came, and not saying anything. I expect they were both very tired. They'd done a lot."

Elvira hesitated, but she felt she could risk no more—she must reinstate herself rather than endanger what ground she had already won. Instead of again referring to Philip or Lucy she said in a low, moved voice, "You don't know what I felt at the Gap—when I ran for help. To leave you behind, that was what nearly killed me. But I knew you were right to go back, just as I was to go on. Each of us was doing what had to be done." Elvira had, of course, left Margorie without a qualm; but there was a grain of truth in what she said: the qualm had come later when she was herself in security—she had felt sorry for Margorie then, though even in her anxiety there had been a vindictive streak of derision. Why should these skin-sheltered, white girls never face danger? Let them taste what she had so often tasted. They were even allowed the innocence so often denied to their destitute dark sisters. They did not have to sell their bodies for food or clothes—no one dared attack them with violence or bribe them to give up their chastity because they were starved. Let the wind take them and their unexposed frail bodies. Let even Margorie, who was her willing servant, know horror; and let Lucy, who opposed Elvira's ambitions and her heart alike, know the sharpness of death. Deep in these angry thoughts, she was startled as well as relieved when Margorie's lips found her hand and kissed it in passionate contrition.

Elvira rose to her feet. She had for the moment done what she had intended, and with triumphant success. But it was not a safe thing to have told that last redeeming lie. No one who has lied to save himself can ever feel quite secure.

Truth, though it has many disadvantages, is at least changeless. You can always find it where you left it.

Elvira kissed her young friend more successfully this time, and with greater tenderness. She could afford to be tender now she had won back her slave, but there was a slight feeling of discomfort beneath Elvira's triumph. A slave is not wholly within a tyrant's power when she may still discover the truth. For truth has another attribute besides immutability, it has the power to set slaves free.

CHAPTER XXXV

Philip drove into St. George's at 5:00 A.M. and operated all day long at the hospital. They had saved some conservative operations for him, tedious and dangerous jobs, so that he had to concentrate upon them, without the intrusion of personal grief.

It was the day of the Grand Hotel dance. Half of Philip bent, sweating and calculating, over the operating table, the other half felt like a piece of dried-up seaweed on a blazing beach. Skill kept his thoughts at the disposal of his hands, but nothing stirred the deadness of his heart. If he hadn't known that he was juggling with death, and hadn't been trained by habit, even his attention would have been beyond his own control.

He operated from nine till one o'clock, and, after an hour's break, again till seven. The last hour or two he felt like an actor at the end of a long run, who just walks on and lets the right words drop out of his mouth. Philip had never before operated on patients without thinking about them. The last ounce in a surgeon comes from knowing the body he is working on is a person, and today this last ounce in Philip was missing.

An unconscious human body had always been to him the shell of an individual spirit. He had never let go of his pity, he had kept it in cold storage, as part of the source of his skill.

But today even his sense of common humanity failed him. His theater nurse fainted and he said impatiently, "Cart her away and bring me another one." He was on the verge of forgetting his usual kindly reminder, "Count the sponges, Sister." It was her business and her responsibility to count them, yet Philip always remembered that on the Island the sense of responsibility was weak and infantile because responsibility had been for so long denied its native people, so that he added his assistants' basic responsibilities to his own.

Nothing terrible happened, but Philip, leaving the theater, felt ashamed to know that none of his fellow workers had worked as well as usual because he himself had been halfhearted. Everything had been a little harder on the patients and his assistants than it need have been, there was no satisfactory sense of finish at the work's end, which is the surgeon's best reward.

While he was washing up, Philip was told that Mr. O'San was waiting for him. He had just been wondering how he could drive home, dripping with sweat and trembling like a girl, and how he could face the night so close to Everslade, which would be empty. "I just *didn't* kill anyone on the table today," Philip said to Mr. O'San with a wry smile as he got into the old man's battered car, "but it was a tossup."

"How much life do you think some of your patients have to take?" O'San asked him mildly. "What good can it do them to be let out again once you have cured them, to starve in these streets?"

The main thoroughfare of the businesslike slum, which was St. George's city, was crowded with leaf-thin, jostling inhabitants. The dust of the long hot day still powdered the golden air, but at last the burning weight of the sun—the heavy feeling across the neck and shoulders—had lifted. The air coming in from the sea had the vague coolness of approaching night. The beggars and thieves—and most beggars who had a chance to steal were thieves in St. George's city—the all day and half the night loiterers, were tasting their only stimulant except rum, the dark. Night was their cloak for crime and their cover for misery. There was a sort of shuffling, furtive movement in the streets, as if the ragged and destitute inhabitants were enjoying their secret freedom.

"Why did you call for me tonight?" Philip asked, turning his head aside from the sudden brilliance of the Grand Hotel, alive with light upon the gleaming edge of the dark sea.

"Myra is with me," O'San answered. "It was her idea—she said she wanted to have you with us tonight. After all, she has not seen you since the hurricane, and for a child such a storm is a great matter—it cannot be forgotten in a fortnight."

"It can be forgotten very easily by grownup people," Philip said with bitterness. "They dance, over there, on our destruction."

"To put in our pockets a thousand pounds out of theirs they must spend what, if added to it, might be yet more helpful," Mr. O'San murmured soothingly. "But we should not forget that there is a kindness behind it—for a thousand pounds is kindness, even if six or eight hundred have to go into their feet and stomachs first."

Philip made no answer, but he drew his breath more easily when they had passed the glare of the hotel and settled into the usual dimness of the suburbs.

"I could do with all the drink you've got," Philip told O'San as the old man drew up at his door, but he felt farther away from Lucy in Bob Anstruther's arms than he had felt all day.

Myra came down the steps of her father's home with the scent of jasmine in her satin-smooth hair. They sat on the veranda in the peaceful dark, while O'San went to fetch his cooled wine from his cellar.

"You should have stopped Lucy going to the dance," Myra told Philip quietly. "If you had told her what it meant to you she would not have gone."

"What is the use of telling a person what he should know without being told?" Philip asked her wearily. "Lucy would have thought, however docile and kindhearted her obedience was to my wish, 'He is a jealous Negro.' The real tragedy of Othello is not that Desdemona was innocent, but that Othello knew that if she wasn't, he was to blame for the wreck of her innocence by an unwise marriage. The lover did not matter, but being the wrong husband for that unsheltered loveliness made any lover matter. I shall not make that mistake now with Lucy."

Myra sat on a mat at Philip's feet in silence, but a little shiver went through her, as if she felt the night was cold. O'San came back with his finest wine and three tall glasses and when he began to talk it was about world affairs, and Philip felt eased by this cosmic interlude, and glad that neither of them could see his face, caught in its conflict between passion and reason.

"This little Island," O'San said reflectively, "is a microcosm of the planet we are on, and what a small thing—on this still night under the stars—our little planet feels! Sometimes the sense of trouble on this Island beats up so strongly from the distant beaches that I expect to see the whole thing rip apart. I see twenty thousand skeletons surrounding a few large houses where people like us feel our bodies pleasantly inhabited—tearing them to pieces. Nor do I blame them. And yet I know that we three belong to a trained and loyal group, who mean to give their lives to remedying this contrast, if they give us time. I do not blame us either, therefore, though perhaps because we are so comfortable we prolong the time lag. Sometimes I understand very well Whiteleaf's way, that of a Communist, an impatience to pull down our false economics with violence before we have learned to be voluntary Communists *without* violence. When we have educated ourselves to be good human beings we shall have the right economics; but this the Communists ignore, they are in too much of a hurry to match their methods to their aim. We, on our part, have not educated our rulers. We believe too easily in

civilization, while its most successful representatives disport themselves on our beaches, saturated with alcohol which they cannot even taste and making love to preposterous and savage ladies whom they bring or find there, and get rid of after their pockets have been picked and their tempers scratched. If the white race gets wiped out, as after the next war they are likely to be by the larger continents, and what is left of the small European rubbish heap is in charge of Asiatics and Africans, do you honestly think it will be so great a misfortune? A bath when you're hot, a drink when you're thirsty, cover when it rains—couldn't we manage to provide them, even if our complexions are a trifle darker than those geniuses whose plumbing system and skill in mixing alcohols we so much admire?"

Philip knew that Mr. O'San spoke like this only partly because he believed it, but chiefly because he wanted to make Philip feel Lucy less desirable. He smiled a little in the dark, yet his brain stirred to meet the argument. He could feel Myra's shoulders against his knees. She was a dear child and he loved her. He felt that her heart was always on his side, and because even though she was a child she was also a woman, he wanted to show himself braver than he felt.

"I have no particular reason for wishing the white race to survive its inventions," he admitted, "but I can't help remembering that the people we most prize are part of their build-up. Anything we believe, and perhaps feebly practice, of personal freedom and the rights of man comes from them. We may overwhelm the West, but first they will have taken their captor prisoner. It is on their thoughts that ours will be based. When we have destroyed them we shall find, the rest of us, Africans, Chinese, Indians, and the other peoples, that we have all gone West."

"Let us hope it will be soon," O'San replied, "before too many wars have reduced us—and our planet with us—to insignificance. I admit Europeans have taught us something. Man is an educatable animal. They may even yet teach themselves enough to avoid extinction. We can all perform more than we know, but we do not yet seem to me fit for our responsibilities as human beings."

"Perhaps," Philip admitted, "we have only reached the adolescent stage, and think of ourselves as grownup before we actually are. But what man can be we have learned mainly from the West. Socrates, Jesus Christ—a Western God, even though a man born in the East—Galileo, Giordano Bruno, Shakespeare, Newton, Dante, Goethe, Voltaire, Lincoln—a mixed bag. And I should slip into it Adler and Freud, though most men of my profession would put them the wrong way round, preferring—as secretly we all still

prefer—the freed libido of a spoiled child to the inferiority sense of a responsible human being, who learns by his mistakes that he has a psychic factor which can correct them.

"I have a feeling that to whatever use we put the atom, in the way of childish destruction, some of those particular values will outlast the cataclysm. We shall get rid of these dictatorships from Right and Left and forget who Hitler and Stalin were once they are safely dead. 'Nature,' as Adler used to say, 'is a good scavenger. She gets rid of her rubbish.' But these other names she will not forget she will have learned them by heart."

Mr. O'San opened a second bottle. "This wine," he said, "like many of man's best and dearest thoughts, comes direct from France. Nor did I sign papers for it. A boat landed one night and I was on the rocks with money, and the next day there was a handful of refugees, a little better off than refugees usually are, and a trifle safer."

"You are a bad old man, and this is a very fine wine," Philip told him with a chuckle. "If we had to pass under the cloud of a new dictatorship through your friends the Communists I think that we should miss this wine, and that we would soon find we have less memorable names to guide us forward, rather than more."

"Oh, it is good to remember ancestors," O'San agreed, "although our nation has had this habit rather too long, some of us think. Money—power and prestige—these are what destroy us. Perhaps homo sapiens needs a harder and stronger medicine against them than he has yet found for himself."

"Perhaps," Philip agreed. "But although homo sapiens has made many bad choices as long as he can still choose he may do better next time. What is at stake today is his right to choose. Take that away from him and any animal is happier and more at peace than man. Your friend the Communist would take away from me the only right I believe in, the freedom to create. Don't think I should not choose a purer and more honest democracy than we get here, but given time without violence it is what I believe we shall all willingly accept. Science has taught me that man has no limitations and need never be dependent on dictatorships, and the same is true of religion and beauty. I believe in free contribution toward the common good. It is being *forced* into an involuntary communism against which I should fight. No man —and what is a dictator but a man, a power-drunk man at that?—no man is fit for unchecked power over his fellows!"

O'San chuckled. "You speak well, Philip," he said kindly. "But where do you get your antediluvian notions of man's individual worth from—your hospitals?"

"Two nuns changed my hospital on Black River the other day from a pandemonium of fear and horror into a quiet place of peace. They did this with little outward aid in the center of a hurricane. Quakers, Presbyterians, Baptists, Seventh-Day Adventists, Methodists, even a few Anglicans—whatever these religions call themselves here on the Island—have they done our people no good? Round each one of these hard-working, positive Christians there is a nucleus of decent living, education and hygiene. Can you deny it?" Philip asked.

"No. I should not deny it," the old man said after a pause. "Nor should I deny that three hundred years of government by a so-called Christian state has reduced this Island, once a very livable and lovable place, into the shambles it is today. I cannot pat Christianity on the back. I am prepared to admit that some people may get some good out of it, but more people get harm from thinking they believe it, than from not believing it. They lean on God instead of on themselves. They look for a distant heaven instead of attending to the earth which it is their job to make habitable. No, Philip, I do not want to disappoint you, but when I look for fellow workmen to make a better world, I do not start knocking on the door of the Christian fold. For one thing it is not sheep that I am counting on to change the face of life."

"Do you really want to change the face of life?" Philip asked him. "I am much less ambitious. I only want to wash it. I like life, and I more than like it, I believe in it. Do you think life will do nothing to help us toward the changes we need? Can we not educate our children away from money and prestige and believe that they, too, will find a further contribution once we have given them a better chance to find it?" Suddenly the head at his knee moved.

"Father," Myra said, "it is late. Our grandmother waits to say good night to you. She thinks only in Chinese," she explained to Philip as without a word her father rose and went into the house, "and so she did not join us. Philip, why did you let Whiteleaf go? Was it because about these things you thought so differently?"

"I never let her go," Philip said softly. "She is with me still. This is our secret. I tell it only to you because you loved her. I shall never let anyone else know. Not even Lucy—if ever again I tell her anything. Lucy didn't take Whiteleaf's place with me but she did something to me that Whiteleaf

has never done. She put the whole of herself into me. That's why I can't understand about this dance."

"To you," Myra said softly, "life and this dance are one, all that you do is one, Philip. You are like that, but with Lucy it is not so. She sees life perhaps not so clearly as you do, and this dance is separate for her. It is a thing she can do outside her real life and forget."

"She knows he's my enemy," Philip objected sternly. "How can she not remember what her contact with him must mean to me?"

"I think she will remember," Myra told him softly, but with deep conviction. "She will remember and will understand. It is like what you have been saying to us, Philip, understanding each other is not quick, and it is not all you or all Lucy, it is also life. Be good to her in your mind—for I think she is very good to you in hers!"

"How do you know, Myra," Philip demanded. "Have you talked with her about me?"

"Yes, we have talked," Myra admitted after a pause. She got up and stood beside Philip, near but not touching him. "Now, I too must go and say good night to my grandmother," she told him, her voice shaking a little. "Because in China—though I shall perhaps never go there, yet I think like a Chinese—they never forget what belongs to each person, even if it is only a very little thing like saying good night."

CHAPTER XXXVI

Happiness clung around Lucy like a golden mist. Every bird's song set her heart flying upward to join its flight. The blue diaphanous sky, the red earth teaming with tropical life were all part of the rhythm of her love for Philip. Every tree and blossom were like his signature across a page. He was in the air she breathed and responsible for the freshness of all returning life. The strain of her hostile relationship with Elvira failed to register as a sensation. The school itself faded into a strange transparency. Her love for Philip even blotted out Philip himself.

The aftermath of the hurricane kept them apart. Philip was working from morning to night, but the only word he managed to send her, "Go on thinking till I get to you," was enough for Lucy's heart to feed on. It did not occur to her in the intensity of her wordless communion with him that he might resent her promise to Bob about the dance. This ball was to be the last act of her single life. After it she meant irretrievably and permanently to break with the past. She doubted if her committee would even retain her services. Lucy was content to pay the price for her love but it seemed unnecessary to explain to Philip that she was paying it. She shrank from writing to a man immersed in putting together bodies broken by the hurricane that dancing had been the method chosen by her own people in order to pay for the damage; yet she was still part of them, and it did not seem strange to Lucy, as it would have seemed to Philip, that she should join them in this curious blend of compassion and personal exhilaration expressed by a Charity Ball. It was Bob rather than Philip who stirred Lucy's conscience. There would have to be a bad moment before they parted, when she told Bob she was going to marry Philip Calgary.

Poor old Bob, he would hate it, but at least he must already know his feeling for her was hopeless. She needn't tell him till just at the end of the dance, and wouldn't it be better, she rather speciously asked herself, to put a final stop to all such misdirected cravings? Bob would get over his disappointment. He was attractive to women and the best match on the Island. Both his spirit and his body had been trained to meet adversity in a hard school. He wouldn't, Lucy told herself, mind for too long anything that happened to him.

Bob and Judy called for Lucy, early in the day in Bob's smart sports car, and they drove to St. George's together in a gale of laughter. Bob and Judy not only understood what Lucy said, they shared what she meant. Their flippant indecencies were founded on a common code, and could only be risked in each other's company. There was nothing too bad to say or too good to be believed in their untrammeled presence.

The dust and squalor of St. George's opened suddenly into a green portal. Ices climbed in tall glasses, verandas spread out of rooms that were themselves almost verandas. Lawns of incandescent green sloped toward the fiery sparkle of the sea. Birds sang and darted through shimmering leaves. Every token of the storm had been obliterated. The Grand Hotel was an enclosed Garden of Eden. "Now you see what money does for you," Bob said, driving up to the open, flower-encircled door, "quite a lot of money or else—!"

It wasn't really strange, Lucy told herself, to find no message from Philip.

Lucy was determined to enjoy this dance. She could hardly keep her feet still when the music began. Bob had warned her that he was going to dance with her the whole evening, and except for a polite dance with each of her hosts in turn, this was exactly what happened. Bob liked dancing. He carried the music in his blood with the dance steps that he invented to match it.

Economically and with precision he gave to the whole affair the delicate calculation of a good chess player. All he asked of his partner was suppleness and attention, and the moment Lucy caught Bob's rhythm she knew by instinct her part of the pattern. "What a mercy your muscles work to music," Bob said in a satisfied voice when the music stopped. "There are girls with lovely figures who jam into you like pieces of wood. You'd think their minds and feet belonged to different people. But you're all right, you roll on, like Old Man River, all of a piece. Now we'll go off into the garden for a breather and get the drink we deserve."

The darkness of the velvet night spangled with its own stars looked no more real than the trees hung with Chinese lanterns on the immaculately brushed lawns, nor did the lanterns among the liquid gray-green leaves look less real than the stars.

"Now," Bob said with a long sigh of content, lighting Lucy's cigarette from his own, before sinking into a chair facing the sea, "I feel as if we'd got somewhere—but it's up to you to tell me where we've got to."

This was the bad moment that Lucy had known must come. She drank from the tall, frosted glass in front of her, glad for once that it hadn't been just lime juice she'd ordered. Bob had chosen chairs at a distance from the path. They were alone with the night and she must make the best of it. They couldn't have a better or more private moment for giving or receiving blows. It was a pity she liked him so much, and that they knew the way about each other's minds so well. She put out her half-smoked cigarette. It wasn't any use trying to soothe nerves that by now knew they couldn't be soothed or soothing.

"We've got to where we always were," she said at last, "and there can't ever be anywhere else to get to, Bob. I want you to realize this is not for us. We've had it. Perhaps I oughtn't to say it because it sounds like a kind of excuse, but it's true: you and your mother are like my home to me, the one I lost in the blitz. I thought there weren't any people like my own people till I met you. I love you both the same, and when I hurt you it's myself I hurt."

"Well, you don't need to," Bob said reassuringly. "What's wrong with that for a start? I don't expect the tropics yet. I'll work for them. What I'm offering you *is* a home."

"You don't understand," Lucy said, her voice shaking. "I'm terribly in love. I thought you guessed I was at Free Waters, when you kissed me and it didn't click. That was when I knew first myself. It's my only excuse, I *didn't* know till then. And I couldn't stop the hurricane, could I—and your coming over to help? Bob, I'm—I'm frightfully sorry. You've been terribly sweet to me and given me the Island, and I've done damn-all back."

Silence dropped between them as if it were a solid substance too heavy to be pushed away. Bob's face, which Lucy could see quite plainly from the lantern's light, had not changed, only the fire in his eyes had gone out. He looked neither sad nor angry. He kept the poker face of an airman who has just been briefed for an operation so hazardous as to preclude a return. Lucy knew what airmen felt when they looked like that—firm and sick at the same time, and with no way of escape open to them.

He said at last, "Someone new then—on the Island? I'm prepared for those old ghosts who can't let you go—I think I can deal with them—but who else is there?"

"It's Philip Calgary," Lucy told him. Her voice failed her, and her eyes filled with tears.

The happy dream of eating her cake and having it broke once and for all before her eyes. "Good God!" Bob said under his breath. "Are you sure?"

He turned his head and stared at Lucy, his eyes full of incredulous, horrified anger. "You can't marry a black man on this island!" he exclaimed. "You must be stark staring mad, Lucy, to think of it!"

"Have you ever got over *not* marrying Jenny?" Lucy asked him, her eyes suddenly grown dry and her voice like a knife's edge. "Ask yourself *that* question before I answer yours!" Bob plunged his head in his hands, and then flung it back and sat up as straight as if he were holding himself to be shot. "They had no earthly right," he said in a savage undertone, "to be so damned good-looking."

"But it hasn't only to do with looks," Lucy told him impatiently. "There are some people who *are* what they look like! I don't know about Jenny because I never met her, but I do know about Nancy Peck, who if I were a man I'd have the sense to want to marry. Philip isn't just good-looking, he's the most kind, the most alert and brave, the gentlest, straightest man I've ever met—like Michael, only not a bit like him, cleverer and more fun—and anyhow—he's Philip. It might have taken me longer to love him if he'd been plain, but it would have been the same in the end. I couldn't *not* love him. Bob, it's horrible to hurt you. It was horrible of me to come to this dance at all. I know now *how* horrible, not only to you but to Philip, but I didn't know till you looked at me like that, that it had to be so horrible!"

"Well, you know *now*," Bob said grimly. "You can't go straying along having fun and games with everyone's scalps fastened to your apron strings and everything in the garden lovely. Any heart you happen to fancy, any face, any color, any poor damned torturable bloke you can get your bloody hooks into—!"

"I never meant—" Lucy began, then she stopped. What had she meant? She had meant to be as happy as she could, not to lose any one of those immense advantages her looks and her luck had given her. She had meant to exploit them all and to maintain her credit for decency and fair play while she was doing it. She saw what she had done to both the men who loved her and why she had done it. She had done it to please herself.

She said nothing. She sat with her head bowed and her hands clasped tightly together in her lap. If she cried, she told herself, she would only make it more tiresome for Bob, yet there was no answer to anything Bob had said but tears.

She thought perhaps if she kept quite still he would get up and leave her. As much as she could still want anything, Lucy wanted to be left alone, but Bob too sat quite still, looking away from Lucy at the dark, uneasy sea,

ribbed with rays of artificial light. At last he spoke, and his voice sounded as if all the personal part of his anger had gone out of him, leaving something far more serious behind. "Look here, Lucy," he said quietly, "it's no use our letting fly at each other. It would have been easier, perhaps, if we hadn't had this dance together, but I shouldn't have given you up anyhow till I knew it was hopeless. I never meant to marry a woman before—not from the first, quite steadily, as if there were nothing else. But all that's not so steep, though I've still got to face it. I could take it, I suppose, if it were all there is to it. It isn't even that the man you like better than me happens to be Philip Calgary. I hate his guts, of course, and he hates mine, so whatever you hoped about our staying friends, if you *did* hope it, has got to be washed out. I'd never willingly set eyes on you again—as Philip Calgary's wife. God! It's unthinkable! But this color snag you've run into isn't simply a matter of personal choice. If it had been I should have married Jenny. I loved her quite enough to take any personal risk.

"But it's not all tripe, what we fought for, is it? We liked England enough not to want Hitler messing about with it, telling us where we got off and all that—or didn't we?"

"No, it wasn't all tripe," Lucy agreed in a low, pained voice.

"Well," Bob went on, lighting a fresh cigarette for them both, but not, though he tried to, bringing any greater ease into the sound of his voice. "There isn't much I don't know about the West Indies, white or black. My people have lived at Free Waters for two hundred years. When I came back —after Europe, I looked at things afresh as you might say, and I saw that what is going on here now is dangerous. This is our Island, we British people fought for it, planted it, and have held it for three hundred years. You can't only take the black side of it, though I grant you they helped us to work it, and we forced them here for that purpose. I'm not trying to get out of what we did to them, nor saying they haven't the same rights on the Island that we have, but I don't think they have any greater rights.

"They used *not* to hate us, though how we got on together was nobody's business. But it worked. You ask the MacTaggerts, even they'll tell you the same. Thirty years ago, twenty years ago, it used to work. Our own place always had willing workers. Now we're on bad terms with the same people. We haven't changed. It's the Communists that have got hold of them. There's a perpetually increasing influence on this island, putting black against white. They hate us so hard, our own people, and so deep that they might any day try to wipe us out, then our troops at the Gap would come down and shoot. That's what they're there for. They know it, and we know

it. It's all that keeps the blacks quiet—and perhaps it won't always be enough. Which side would you be on then, Lucy, if you were to marry Philip Calgary?"

Lucy gasped. "But why should I take sides?" she demanded. "Why should they fight us? Couldn't they get to hate us less if we understood them better?"

"They'd fight to drive us neck and crop out of what they think of as *their* Island, just as we fought the Spaniards once and drove them into the sea," Bob told her. "Some of them might fight *for* us, but Philip Calgary wouldn't be one of them! He and his friend that damn clever chap Ransom would lead any black man that listens to him against us. And thousands *do* listen. You'll just have to choose, just as you've had to choose a husband, between Calgary and me. Which *island* do you care for most, England or the one we're on now? Because I warn you, it will be a hell of a party when it comes, and quite senseless, because this Island is too small to run itself without us. If we do get kicked out, Russia or America would take over. Anyhow, that's the setout. Do you see now what marrying Philip Calgary means?"

Lucy looked at Bob. She felt as if her heart were being slowly squeezed out of her body by his hands. "Bob," she said at last, "you know I *feel* English, don't you—as English as you feel yourself? I don't know any other way to feel. I just *am* English. I *must* care for England more than for any other place—wherever I am or whatever I do!"

"I know what you stand for," Bob admitted grudgingly. "We all know your war record. We were proud of having you here with us. Every white man or woman on the Island is out to respect you. That's what you stand to lose, Lucy, the respect of your own people."

"But that isn't what matters most to me now," Lucy said after a long pause. "It *does* matter, of course—I should hate to lose anyone's respect. But not *most*—what matters most is what I'm losing it *for*. If I'm English, I don't fight only for a piece of land I took and somebody else claims, but for what—while it belongs to me—best serves it. If I'm valuable to these dark people we made ourselves responsible for by bringing here, then I must serve them. You admit we forced them here. We released them from slavery at last, but we couldn't give them back their heritage. We still have to help them rule themselves, and now that so many of them are as educated as we are, and as valuable as we are, we must learn to work *with* them as well as for them. There mustn't be any more force. We *are* forcing them still

because of their hunger, and a lot of them *aren't* yet educated. We support our big industrialists, who govern them through hunger. Money *is* force as well as soldiers on the hillside. We've not given that way up, though it *is* the wrong way. So I think they're right or might be right if they revolted against it."

"He *has* injected you with his communism then, has he?" Bob demanded bitterly.

"Philip is not a Communist," Lucy said firmly, "because Communists believe in force and in the end always use it. There are English people as well as dark people on the Island who feel just as I do and who would act as I suppose I would act if I had to choose, and these are Philip's friends as much as they're mine. I think it would be a mistake for the dark people on the Island to try to drive the white ones off by force. I still think we can work it out together. I think we ought to try, but it isn't color that matters, whether I married Philip or not, it's what is beneath our color—it's our *real* selves!

"People used to think women weren't real selves either and hadn't any rights, but they've changed. Without a war, men are giving us equal rights, and it's the same with black people and white. We can stop looking down on them, without a war if we want to, and if there's time. Do you really respect me less because that's what I think, Bob?"

Bob put his hands on her shoulders. They stood up, facing each other. "It's the way things are," he said heavily. "You'll lose us, Judy and me and all the rest of us. And how do you know that you won't lose Philip, too? There's a much wider gulf between black and white than you imagine. I tell you, Lucy, you just don't know what *hate* there is in the hearts of these people. I often lie awake at night and sweat, thinking of the white women and their children whom we couldn't save and of the black people we should have to shoot—to check a massacre. Would you like it if we were driven off the Island and you were left behind?"

The tears ran down Lucy's cheeks, but she whispered through her tears, "I haven't got to like everything any more, Bob. I only have to stick to what I like best."

CHAPTER XXXVII

Lucy stared at the letter that lay before her, propped against a harmless glass of orange juice, as if it were poison. It was Philip's writing. He knew that she was at the Grand Hotel for the night, and that she had gone to the Anstruthers' ball. There was nothing else he knew. Not what she had thought about it when Bob invited her, before her love for Philip was an accepted fact, nor what she felt about it now, when the ball appeared to her, as it must have appeared to Philip, as a cruel insult. They had not been one person thinking of a thing one way, they had been two persons thinking of a thing in two different ways. They were inescapably different.

> "Dear Mrs. Armstrong," Philip wrote in his firm, clear handwriting in which every letter was formed in its fixed and final shape. "I am sending a formal resignation of my attendance at Everslade to your committee. Since the hurricane my work in the two hospitals I serve has been so pressing that I have decided, for this and for other reasons, not to return to the school. The children now in hospital at the Gap are all recovering, and Henriette can well continue at Everslade under your care with the usual medical supervision required by her case. Yours sincerely, Philip Calgary."

Lucy was free now of all conflicts. She would not have to give up her rights and privileges as an Englishwoman. She need not resign her school, or have an African mother-in-law, or become the mother of a Negro's child. She would not have to give up anything except her self-respect. Somewhere along the line of her life she knew that she had failed the human being she most loved. Philip's heart was no longer hers to release into a world of freedom and delight. She felt like an old woman with a young face. Nothing in her responded to the empty reflection in the mirror.

She moved stiffly to and fro about the hotel bedroom, dressing, packing her suitcase, drinking her orange juice. She could hear other voices, steps along the passage, an altercation between a waiter and a chambermaid carried on outside her door. She knew she was alive, but she thought a hotel bedroom was the loneliest place on earth.

At last Lucy crept downstairs and paid her bill. Now she had not even the right to be hidden in her loneliness. She had to take it out to the steps of

the veranda to be stared at by lascivious-eyed loafers till she made up her mind what to do next and where to go. Everslade, of course, but she had not brought her car. She had come with the Anstruthers and it was impossible to ask the Anstruthers to take her home.

There was a slight commotion in the crowded drive. The decorated and ubiquitous hotel porter was trying to prevent the arrival of a shabby and battered car at the pompous hotel entrance. The car was moving very slowly but definitely forward. The driver seemed not to have heard the raised voice or seen the menace of the porter's uplifted hand. His smooth and pleasant face was smiling, his eyes and lips crinkled at the corners, his black, satin-smooth head was somehow vaguely familiar to Lucy's eyes. She thought of a seal pushing itself against waves with effortless determination onto a steep rock, and then she knew with a leap of her dulled heart that she was looking at Mr. O'San.

She ran down the steps and flung herself onto the seat beside him. "Is it really you?" she stammered eagerly. "Did you come to fetch me?" Mr. O'San smiled vaguely. The dismayed, reluctant porter gave him his right of way, thinking to himself, "How can we ever understand the English when they not only behave not like other people but also not like themselves?" For everyone had told him how important Lucy was and he could see for himself how expensively clad, and there she was, sitting with obvious satisfaction by the side of that yellow, oily-faced chink.

Mr. O'San steered peacefully between an oncoming Rolls-Royce and an immense Packard before answering Lucy, then he said, "I had business in the city, and I am very happy if I may act as your escort home. It is true that this car I drive is an obscene, despicable vehicle not worthy of your presence, but I prefer to possess two such cars that can go on looking like tin cans rather than one car, however resplendent, which might be laid up."

Mr. O'San drove with the cautious incredulity of one who has taken to driving automobiles late in life, but with unruffled nerves.

"I didn't know what to do," Lucy murmured, "till I saw you. It was horrible standing there. Everyone in St. George's looks as if they long to commit crimes and can't! I don't know which is worse, to want to be bad or not to be *able* to be bad if you do want to, but to be both together is just awful."

"Very few people are very rich in this town, and very many people are terribly poor," Mr. O'San said thoughtfully. "When these are separate facts one forgets that it does not make sense. When they are together one sees

clearly it is a nonsense and leads to crime. But what to do about such a nonsense is not so clear."

Mr. O'San knew what was the matter with Lucy but it did not seem to him the moment to deal with it. It was like seeing a bird with a broken wing; you must not touch what is broken until you have won the bird's confidence. Lucy must be made sure that Mr. O'San would not come anywhere near what she was suffering, and then later on she might let him try to mend it. So he began to talk to her about the history of the Island. He pointed out to her the houses where great men, great forces or great criminals, had lived. He was full of stories about the events and characters of the past, and as she listened Lucy's heart became quieter. She could bear to talk about anything in the world except the ball—or Philip. Against these two rocks her heart was tossed by waves of emotion she could only just control, if no one noticed that she was controlling them. She even enjoyed finding that she could share Mr. O'San's field of unoccupied knowledge without flinching.

"There must be quite a lot of other places I can see and things I can think about which *don't* remind me of Philip," she told herself reassuringly, while the next wave of agony gathered itself together to break against her heart. She wished that they could drive forever and arrive nowhere, while Mr. O'San went on telling her long, inimitable tales of human vicissitudes which were none of them in the least like her own.

But with terrible rapidity the short two hours passed and they stopped outside the roofless annex. "I have, by a happy chance, heard from Whiteleaf this morning," Mr. O'San remarked. "She has arrived in China, and found at once work for which she is well fitted. If I may, I will ask you to give her letter to Myra. It will make her very happy."

It was no use trying to avoid it any more, the great wave struck. Lucy found herself saying between shaking lips, "Why didn't Philip go *with* her to China!"

Mr. O'San took out a cloth and carefully wiped his windscreen free from dust. "Perhaps," he mentioned cautiously, "because he did not want to go. It is the most frequent reason I find, why energetic and direct people such as Philip act. What they want to do they do, nothing stops them, and what they do not want to do, in the same determined and energetic manner they leave undone."

"But it isn't any use his staying now," Lucy said desperately, "he won't ever see me again—he might just as well be in China with Whiteleaf—all because I went to that senseless, cruel dance!"

Mr. O'San sat so quietly that he almost seemed not to be in the car at all, but just to have left his rather shiny old black alpaca suit on the seat beside Lucy. "Perhaps it was not a very good reason for a dance—a hurricane," he admitted, "and that you went to it may have been a pity—but we can easily exaggerate. You are both young and in love, and both live upon a not unlimited island. Neither of you has an irrecoverable illness nor has yet been sentenced to lifelong imprisonment. I can imagine worse situations for lovers than yours."

"No, you can't," Lucy said sharply. "His pride's worse than an illness and what I did was stupider than any crime. Philip won't stand it and he's quite right not to. Bob was his enemy. He can't see that what I felt about Bob was *different*! You see, the Bob I knew wasn't that *kind* of a Bob at all. There wasn't any Jenny when I first met him, and when I knew that there *had* been, and that she was Philip's sister, Bob told me himself and I could see just how it happened and how horribly it had hurt him. Just as badly, really, as if he'd drowned himself like she did. It wasn't all his fault—it was the war and his mother and everything. I know now that it wasn't my business what Bob felt, because I didn't love him, but you can't quite cut yourself off like that when you've been through a war together. I was all the time with men like Bob, trying to help them—I couldn't *stop* liking Bob. When one person gets killed, you have to feel just as sorry for the person who *didn't* get killed, don't you? I didn't get killed myself, so I know how it hurts *not* to be. But Philip doesn't see any of that—he only thinks I am arrogant and cruel and wanting to get scalps and be popular, and he'll go on thinking it always now—and it's just what Myra said, he won't *have* Whiteleaf or me or anyone."

"Philip too may have made a little mistake," Mr. O'San said soothingly.

"No, he didn't! He was perfectly right," Lucy contradicted. "I see that now, but I couldn't then—but what he won't see is that I *cared*."

"Philip also cares, I think," Mr. O'San murmured reflectively, "and that is sometimes confusing for a very proud very single-minded young man. His heart and his mind do not always tell him the same thing at the same time, so he does not act with wholeness—which is always a pity. Still, you can see the *direction* in which he acts. He will not go after Whiteleaf to China. He remains where he is. No doubt he says to you and to himself that everything is finished between you and that he will not see you again. Yet he remains where it is very unlikely that he will *not* see you again, and he does not go to China—where it would be far more possible to avoid seeing you and where he would certainly have the very good company of our friend Whiteleaf."

"How could I have done such a thing?" Lucy demanded. "Such a cruel, senseless thing? Even if he forgives me, and I know he won't, how can I forgive myself, and how can I be sure I mightn't be just as stupid again?"

"Oh, that, of course, is not one of our securities," Mr. O'San agreed, "not to be stupid again! How angelic that would make us, and if I may say so, Mrs. Lucy, how unlike a human being! In my poor opinion you saw too many things at a time, perhaps, and were too sure of what you saw. Two young men are not so easy to understand as one young man, and not nearly so necessary to a young woman's happiness. Perhaps you feel yourself more responsible than you need for all that happened, and Philip I think shares this disability. 'In the end,' Nietzsche, who had flashes of violent wisdom, remarks, 'we experience only our true selves,' and he might well have added that we are responsible *only* for our true selves, but had this occurred to him he might never have gone mad. You have found that the career of the Lord God is a difficult one, Mrs. Lucy, and I am not without hope that Philip may also see he need *not* have been perfectly in the right about this ball. Perhaps he has already discovered it—for it was his idea that I should call for you at the hotel in case you had no one with whom you cared to drive back to Everslade."

"Philip's idea!" Lucy gasped. "Then he was with you last night?"

"He was at my home with Myra and with me," Mr. O'San placidly told her. "It was, in fact, Myra's plan. She rang me up from the school and suggested that I should call for her after you had gone to the dance; avoiding the higher ministrations of Miss Loring, we won the consent of Miss Peck, so Myra spent the night at home. I sent her back to the school, however, in my other car early this morning; and I hope she will not have lowered the standard of her daily work by this permitted adventure."

Lucy's one idea now was to say good-by to Mr. O'San as quickly as possible and see Myra—Myra, she thought, would really be able to tell her about Philip. Mr. O'San had been talking in a very wise way, if it had been about anyone else but Philip. But wisdom when it is applied to the man you love is like a blind person coming into a strange room, he cannot know where or what the things are that he knocks up against. Myra would not talk in the same wise manner as her father but she would have seen Philip as Lucy herself would have seen him.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

Elvira swept upon Lucy from the open doorway and cut off all possible retreat. Her eyes were full of exultant fury and Lucy saw that she was in for an immediate battle.

For the last fortnight there had been a tacit war between them; but Lucy had been determined to avoid an open conflict, and Elvira had been unsure of her ground.

Now Elvira knew that she could afford to fight. All the discouragements, all the burning rage of a capacity long held at bay by unfair restrictions, rose up from their dark caverns to reinforce Elvira's resentment. Her eyes sparkled with released antagonism, her big untidy nostrils flared their crimson signals, her whole body seemed swollen and alert with rage.

"If you don't mind, Lucy," she said with bitter insolence, "before you go to rest after dancing all night, or start some fresh form of amusement for yourself, I'd like a professional talk with you."

Lucy's heart sank, her knees wobbled, but she retained enough outward composure to say quietly, "Then you'd better come in here," and opening the door into her office, she sat down at her desk.

It was three o'clock in the afternoon. No breath of air stirred on the mountainside, no sound broke its stillness. A letter lay prominently on the desk in front of Lucy. Automatically she picked it up and held it between her shaking fingers as if to steady them. The window was open and the sun blinds drawn and yet the heat filling the neat, uncarpeted room with its lifeless weight penetrated every nerve.

Elvira stood above Lucy, taut and tingling with power against her exhausted enemy.

She drew a deep, satisfied breath before she spoke. "Two members of your committee called here yesterday after you'd gone," she began. "There had been complaints about the way you were carrying on with Philip Calgary. People wanted to know why Whiteleaf had left so suddenly. Everyone knows now that she was a Communist. Probably you are one yourself, from the way you behave, and anyway you must have known Whiteleaf was, yet you never reported it. They wanted to know what you

had been doing up here all alone in the hurricane for three days and nights, having got rid of all witnesses except a sick child. They had to investigate why you sent a school of young children at the last moment to the mission, with such a storm coming on. A most unnecessary risk while you were safe, as I always thought, here at Everslade in comfort, doing who knows what behind our backs."

Lucy's nerves steadied to meet the breathless onslaught. "What members of the committee called?" she asked dryly. "I met most of them at the dance and they seemed perfectly unaware of all these ridiculous suspicions."

Elvira's temper mounted, her lips did not chatter with rage, but they moved faster than her speech, as if she were thinking in some other fiercer and more fluent language. Her scarlet nails plucked ominously at her skirt.

"Suspicions," she said, her voice thickening and coarsening, "can be based on facts. Mr. Myers and Mrs. Umberton called to find out *what* facts. They were not invited to your precious dance, nor would they have gone whoever'd asked them. Dancing on graves was what they called it. People who pretend to have sympathy with this island should at least have stayed away!"

"I rather agree with you about the dance," Lucy surprisingly admitted. "I am sorry that I went. I think it was a mistake to have gone, but the intention was not callous. We were trying to raise the largest sum of money for hurricane victims in the shortest space of time, but I think now that the choice of method was unsuitable. If Mr. Myers and Mrs. Umberton think I was wrong to go to the dance, so do I."

"Well!" gasped Elvira, torn between astonishment and fury that Lucy should, by accepting the condemnation of her adversaries, remove part of its weight. "That makes it all the worse—if you went to the dance *knowing* it was wrong. They thought it a most cruel and brutal entertainment and that your going was bad for the whole school. But of course it wasn't the *worst* thing they had against you. They were perfectly fair. They'd come up expecting to see you. They insisted on evidence about everything they had heard. They *had* evidence. Margorie Fielding saw you meeting Philip Calgary in the annex after dark. Now you will have to leave."

"Poor child," Lucy said under her breath. Elvira's arm jerked up, she leaned forward with her hand raised to strike, but there was no answering challenge in the eyes that met Elvira's. Elvira was confronting the most invulnerable of all human emotions, the carelessness of a broken heart. It

simply did not matter to Lucy whether Elvira struck her or not. Elvira's arm fell to her side, she moved a step backward.

"Poor child!" she repeated sneeringly, "it's not you who have the power to make that girl suffer, or to protect her, either, if I choose to make her suffer. I have always been able to make Margorie do what I like."

"I have no such power," Lucy agreed gently, "and it is true that I cannot protect her from you, unless she wishes it." There was a long silence.

Elvira drew forward a chair and sat down. It had occurred to her suddenly that standing over a beaten enemy who was not afraid of her was a doubtful advantage. "You can't get out of things now by owning up to them," she started with fresh malice. "It's all very well to say you're sorry about the dance—and that you have no power. Headmistresses *must* have power and *mustn't* do things they have to be sorry for. What your committee want to know as well is whether you *knew* Whiteleaf was a Communist, and if so why you didn't report it? Was it because you were one yourself, and if so why did she go as if she were running away from you?"

"I didn't know Whiteleaf was a Communist," Lucy said slowly, "and I *do* think it dangerous to have children taught by Communists. But perhaps not for the same reasons you do. It was particularly dangerous to the children here, because Whiteleaf lived her creed and I don't think—except Nancy Peck, perhaps—that any of us were living ours. It might make any child believe in communism to be taught by an unconvinced Christian, as well as by a convinced Communist. Don't you think so too?"

Elvira breathed fast. "You may be no Christian," she said contemptuously, "you certainly don't act as if you were one, but it's most arrogant and uncharitable of you to bracket the rest of us with yourself. How do you know what we are? We stick to our creed and our country and don't have black lovers on the sly—that's surely something! Besides, why, if you're so keen on the way Whiteleaf behaved, did you take Philip Calgary away from her? That doesn't sound a particularly Christian thing to do, does it?"

"I know what I believe now," Lucy said as if she were speaking to herself rather than to Elvira, "but I didn't when I came here, that is why things happened that I can't defend. I thought I was both a democrat and a Christian, but I found that I was neither. Whiteleaf was like a touchstone to me, I knew from her—even from her going away at the last—what I wasn't. What she converted me to was the opposite from communism—but she *did*

convert me. I now want to be *really* what I never was before—both a Christian and a democrat."

Elvira stared at Lucy with exasperated incredulity. She hated her more than ever but she couldn't withhold an unwilling respect. Flushed with the wounds they had inflicted on each other, neither could quite forget that they had once been happy friends. Lucy disliked talking about her emotions, nevertheless she felt that she owed it to Elvira to unmask herself. Intimacy, once established, has a right to truth.

"Elvira," Lucy said after a long pause, "I know you hate me now, and I know you want to get rid of me, you don't mind how, but after all, we were friends once, and as it now looks as if you had succeeded in getting rid of me, don't you think you can give up trying?" Elvira began to tremble with something that was not only anger. The one thing she was unarmed against was the truth. Did Lucy know it, after all, and could she prove what she knew? "This nonsense about the hurricane," Lucy went on with increasing confidence, "you might let that slide, I think. Nothing anyone can do is safe in a hurricane. The school arrived at the mission in time. The mission was on the sheltered side of the mountain. Everslade wasn't. Henriette and I had luck; and we were greatly helped and supported by Myra and her father's having come to join us. As for Philip Calgary, he came up here only after the storm was over, and for the same reason Bob Anstruther came, to find out what help we needed. It is true we are in love with each other, and when Margorie saw us—it must still have been daylight or she wouldn't have seen us—we were glad to find that we were both alive, and showed it, as lovers do. I am sure that Margorie will not be injured by having seen us together when we were happy. We were engaged to be married, but I do not think Philip will marry me now, because I went to that ball." Lucy gave a queer little sigh, as if she found there was no more air that she cared to breathe. "Even if the committee didn't ask me to resign now," she went on, "I had come to the conclusion that I must leave this school. I have been here ten months, and at the end of my first year our arrangement was that I could go if I liked and that they could insist on my resignation if they wanted to get rid of me. Well, I *will* go! And now would you mind leaving me alone?"

It was not how Elvira had wished or expected this triumphant interview to end. She had indeed won from it more than she had expected to win.

It might not have been so easy to get rid of Lucy, if Lucy, with all her social advantages, had chosen to fight it out.

In the excitement of her released rage, Elvira had gone much further than she had had any right to go. Mr. Myers had strongly advised her to hold her tongue, and promised that if she did so, he, with the help of the Brigadier's letter and Margorie's evidence, would succeed in forcing Lucy to resign. Now Lucy had got rid of herself, and Elvira found that this was not nearly so satisfactory. Lucy sat there neither indignant, alarmed, nor, apparently, crushed. She was still, in some peculiar and underhand way, mistress of the situation.

What was it, Elvira asked herself, trapped by her own duplicity, that kept Lucy so firmly balanced on an even keel? Did Lucy know about Elvira's efforts to get rid of her, and if she knew did she intend to use her knowledge?

"What do you mean," she forced herself to ask, "by trying to get rid of you? You've got rid of yourself."

"Certainly you might not have been able to dispose of me so easily if I had not made mistakes," Lucy agreed calmly, "but I didn't try to murder myself."

Elvira sprang to her feet, shaking with fear as well as with anger. "What nonsense are you talking—about murder?" she gasped.

"You know much better than I do what I am talking about," Lucy answered quietly, "you knew all the time. I couldn't, till quite lately, believe it. But I'm not going to act on what I know, Elvira—as far as I am concerned you are perfectly safe."

Elvira turned slowly toward the door, and shut it carefully behind her, as if she were trying to escape from something that was still dangerous.

CHAPTER XXXIX

Lucy sat without stirring in the hot little room which still contained so much fear and anger. Grief, which had receded while the battle raged, seeped slowly back like an incoming tide into full possession of her heart. There was nothing, she said to herself, now—nothing. Philip was irreconcilably estranged; and her working life was ended.

She would, of course, work again in England with neat, friendly, sport-built girls, good girls on the whole, with courage and very little malice. But not one of them alive and alert like these dark, dynamic children, not one turning to her with vigor and passion, for new life. These dark children had complete confidence in Lucy. They trusted life because Lucy had trusted them. She had been able to give them what they needed most, and what only a white woman who herself had it *could* give them: an innate respect for human beings. They had felt united not only to her but to other people through her. If Lucy, who was white and recognized as the flower of her own people, could make each one of them realize that they were of equal value, then all life was open to them—all fear behind them. Each child in turn had passed through this rebirth and Lucy had passed through it with her. Only Elvira's bodyguard of six spoiled, resentful, smoldering girls had stood aloof, wanting not equality but special privileges, and their own way over lesser beings than themselves. In Elvira they saw their prototype and had clung to her accordingly. Without Lucy the younger children would not be real to themselves any more, they would have to try to win toleration by pretending to be like what they didn't understand. Many of them would retain their self-respect and survive any régime that followed. Myra's self-respect would survive, and perhaps a dozen others might follow her example. Nancy Peck would do her best to help all of them, but she was one of themselves. The children believed in Nancy with loyalty and admiration, but a white teacher who respected them as Lucy had respected them imparted a new magic. Through her they had found themselves at home with life.

"I shall feel like an empty glove without them," Lucy thought to herself. "But now that I've lost the school, I can't stay on the Island. Philip's friends without Philip wouldn't want me, and I've lost my own. There really isn't

anything but the next boat back; and when I get back what is there? Only what I know there isn't—or what I didn't want before and want less now."

Her eyes wandered to the unopened letter she still held rigidly in her hand. "I suppose I've got to read this," Lucy told herself, "and then I can get some food and sleep."

> "Dear Mrs. Armstrong," she read. "I am sorry if what I am going to do will be a bother to you. I'm afraid it may be, but I can't help doing it. I just can't stick it any more. It's not only having lost you your job, it is other things as well. I found out what I thought I had was gone, and there isn't anything left. Perhaps if I'd known you earlier things might have been different, but I seem always to have wanted the wrong things at a time when I could have them and the right things at a time when I couldn't.
>
> "It's all been rather a muddle. I shall be dead when you get this. It won't matter awfully to father because he's going to marry again, besides, he'll understand after the way I've behaved, I can't go on living.
>
> "If someone's got to be dead because of cutting down the silk-cotton tree I think I'd rather it was me. I shall jump over the cliff at that queer place called the Judas Leap. They say someone jumped over there long ago because he'd betrayed his friend. I tell you this to save you the trouble of looking for me all over the Island. There's a strong current round that point so no one will be likely to find my body before the sharks get it. Margorie."

The room spun around her in a dark mist; then in a rush her trained young strength came back to her. "People," Lucy thought, "don't always commit suicide at once, and if they throw themselves over cliffs they sometimes get stuck on a ledge or caught in bushes."

She ran upstairs, changed into slacks, put on rope shoes, and rang for Myra. "Look here," she said without further greeting, "when did you last see Margorie Fielding?"

"She was at breakfast," Myra replied promptly. "But afterward she said she had a headache and asked to be excused from lessons. Miss Loring gave her an aspirin and let her go to her room. She didn't come down again."

Lucy calculated. "Just look in her room for me, and see if she's there—if she's not, see if she's taken her bicycle. I'm rather in a hurry to find her, but

don't tell anyone I'm looking for her till we know for certain she's gone."

Myra disappeared, returning as if by magic. "She's not in her room and her bicycle is gone," she said breathlessly.

Lucy's eyes held hers. "I think you'd better ring up Philip and tell him she has gone to the Judas Leap and that I have gone after her by car—I hope to catch her up—but tell him I'm afraid of what she has gone there for. If you can't get on to Philip tell Nancy Peck to wait till dusk, and then if she hasn't heard from me, phone the nearest police station to the Leap. Nobody else must know till we are certain what has happened." Lucy tried to smile into the narrow anxious eyes fixed upon hers.

"You will go alone?" Myra asked tremulously. "Do not forget—even this may be a trick."

"Yes, I must go alone. Margorie won't try to trick me any more," Lucy told her. "It's herself she's trying to trick now. I can just get there by daylight. I've looked it up on the map."

Lucy kissed Myra's forehead and, pushing her gently to one side, ran to her car.

She drove down the mountainside with blind audacity. Time and the girl she drove to save were fixed in front of her like alternating traffic signals. Each mile was a mortal enemy. The car rocked from side to side while the long, curving zigzags shuffled themselves behind her. She was out on the plain while the sun was still at its height. The red dust rose around the little car like rusty patches of cloud. The spring drought covered the land. It would kill every living thing before the summer's end. Starved white and yellow grasses poured past her. The wall of dust opened and closed behind her, admitting for anxious fragments of time a startled dark face, or a donkey hardly lifting its neat hoofs—but there was no girl on a bicycle. A huge pond shook and glistened before Lucy's eyes; she knew then that the sea was close. The road, rougher and less used by traffic now, began to climb. She reached the cliffs, and by the side of the road the blue, stretched sea opened and spread smooth as taffeta.

Lucy stopped the car near the cliff's edge and stood dizzily blinking in the hard light. The cliff she was on was covered with thick dry brushwood. Spiteful branches of undergrowth whipped against her every movement. The day's heat filled the smoldering air with overpowering fragrance. Everything she touched crumbled and fought against her.

There was a fence at the cliff's edge, and Lucy found a girl's bicycle leaning against it. "No one could jump from here," she said to herself reassuringly, for though it was precipitous, it was not sheer. The cliff was, Lucy thought, negotiable to a steady climber. This was the highest point of the headland, but pushing her way slowly and watchfully through the powdery undergrowth, she came on a cliff that was lower but far more formidable. There were a few yards of bush-covered slope ending in a precipice. Far below it the sea lipped the edges of sharp rocks. Lucy crept cautiously across the friable earth and peered over the edge. Something white fluttered on the rocks beneath.

"I'll have to get down there somehow," Lucy told herself.

Heat and exhaustion made her head swim and her heart pound, but the acute long slope of the headland when she returned to it looked no worse than when she had first calculated a climber's chances.

The slope was long, and at points acute; but there were bushes and trees for hand holds and the rocks had seams and occasional ledges. The unchanging blue floor mocked her with its distance, but Lucy crept on with long terrifying interludes, hanging above a rock face, or trusting to crumbling earth surfaces. There was a final long and nasty drop before she reached a heap of stones and found herself at the sea's edge. There she was confronted with the headland itself, and saw that she must swim around it to reach the foot of the precipice. There was no use bothering about sharks, so she tied her clothes in a bundle onto her head and plunged into the clear, translucent sea. There was a strong current against her, but once around the point Lucy found herself on a stretch of golden sand. She called Margorie's name again and again, but only her own voice was tossed back at her from the walls of the precipice. Slipping on her wet slacks and shirt, Lucy climbed the nearest rock. From its top she could see that the little heap of clothes was the body of a girl.

When Lucy reached it, she saw that Margorie was still alive. "I heard you shout," Margorie whispered, "but I couldn't answer—my throat feels funny. I can't move. I didn't know who it was shouting, but I'm glad it's you. I haven't any pain."

Lucy drew the girl's head onto her lap, shielding her eyes from the sun's glare. Margorie's eyes had a glazed look, like the eyes of a dog Lucy had once seen run over. The swift, irregular thread of her pulse raced and checked, tying itself into knots under Lucy's fingers. There was a long silence before the girl's little dry whisper came again. "I wanted to die,"

Margorie murmured, “but after I jumped—I didn’t. I’d like to live now—only I can’t.”

She closed her eyes as if Lucy were a hostess to whose perfunctory farewells she need no longer listen. After a long silence she opened them again and murmured, “My eyes are growing dim.” She spoke without fear but as one who registers a necessary fact.

Lucy bent closer to her. “Live a little longer,” she pleaded. “Philip Calgary is coming, he might help you!”

A look of amused recognition pierced through Margorie’s withdrawing consciousness. “Oh, but you don’t know what I did to you,” she murmured. “Why should he help me?”

“It doesn’t matter what you did,” Lucy said passionately. “It only matters now that you should live. Besides, I don’t mind leaving the school. Everything’s all right, really.”

The amusement in Margorie’s eyes flickered and went out. Her shallow, rapid breathing slowed and altered—her eyes grew fixed, and with a last, long wavering sigh, her life ended.

Lucy no longer heard the slap of the waves edge against the rocks. The last golden light of the day froze over the little cove. The shadows of the rocks were sharp-edged and looked as solid as the rocks themselves.

The Island and Lucy were bound together in a point of time, but they were alien presences, unable to get away from each other or to communicate anything.

A circle of small papery crabs, with round black eyes a pin’s length in front of their furrowed, irregular foreheads, stared at Lucy, prepared if she moved hand or foot to scuttle back into the nearest pool. Enormous hollow clouds moved across the sky, their white immensity touched with sunset gold. Lucy had not seen her lovers die. They had passed out of her life as a dream ends, without a visible moment between their full being and the mere impact of a spoken word forcing her to believe that they were dead. Now she saw life itself withdrawn from its living tenement, and felt that nothing else was alive, not even her own heart.

A pelican sailed leisurely over Lucy’s head. He glanced straight at her and the dead girl with a cold, dispassionate scrutiny. His ugly beak and clumsy wings had an irresponsible, fortuitous look, like a surrealist picture. Yet he was alive, and after he had passed out of her sight her living lover forced himself into her mind again. How had she dared to ask Myra to

telephone to Philip, since there was no Philip? There was only a formal and extremely busy surgeon, who had nothing at all to do with Lucy or the school, and had told her so. Yet when Lucy read Margorie's letter, she knew that Philip was their one chance of rescue; this certainty of Philip's response had gone with Margorie's last breath.

Lucy was alone with the Island she had come to serve; and neither of them had anything to give the other.

She tried to think about God, but God had expected her to do something that she hadn't done. He too had withdrawn and left her, crying beside a dead girl whom she had not saved.

CHAPTER XL

Darkness crept slowly across the glittering sea. On the cliff's edge a wild light lingered as if it hated to let go the day. A breeze reached the dead girl and blew her hair about her face. The color had not left her lips and cheeks, but the hand Lucy still held was growing cold.

A stone crashed through the silence, and then another, and another. Philip's voice shouted, "Lucy! Lucy!" Grief rushed into Lucy's heart, as if she had been waiting for Philip before she dared to feel it.

The whole cove came alive again with his presence. The menacing crabs leaped into the nearest ripple; the sea stretched less formidably toward the darkening sky. The Island was no longer strange. Even the light held itself back as if to wait till Philip, drenched by the sea, leaped over the rocks to reach Lucy's side. His eyes held hers for one brief moment of release, before he knelt by the dead girl, intent upon her injuries.

"She's gone," he said at last, with defeat in his voice. "Her back is splintered."

"I didn't get to her in time," Lucy cried, with the tears pouring down her face. "Oh, Philip—I might have saved her."

"There are some things that can't be saved," Philip answered with somber tenderness. "But it would have been much more dreadful if she hadn't died so soon. Was she still alive when you reached her?"

"Yes, she was just alive. She knew me—she wasn't sorry I came—but it needn't have happened! If I hadn't gone to that horrible dance, I might have seen in time how desperate she was. I could have stopped her being trapped into telling lies. And I kept thinking—it might be you who lay here dead because I was so blind."

"I take a lot of killing," Philip told her grimly. "You must have sat, by the look of you, letting your clothes dry on you. That isn't a safe thing to do on this Island. You must take a big dose of quinine directly you get back. You won't have to wait long now. The fishermen from White Bay will bring their caïque round the coast as soon as they get their catch in. I phoned the nearest constabulary to pick up our cars. They'll meet us at the bay and

notify her father. Fortunately Myra got hold of this child's letter to you; you left it on the floor. It might have made trouble if Elvira had found it."

"Oh, no, Philip! Surely not now!" Lucy cried. "When everything's all over—when Margorie's dead! Elvira wouldn't!"

"Once you have made enemies on this island they remain enemies," Philip told her. "If Elvira could have twisted this into a murder charge, or at least some criminal act of carelessness on your part, be very sure she would. But she can't now. I shall see to that. She will resign or be dismissed. Such a teacher is worse than a typhoid carrier among adolescent girls. Myra and her father—your queer little Miss Lestrange too—will all give evidence against her to the Committee; and I shall add my own. As for the poor child here—don't take her death too tragically. It wasn't your fault. We know whose hand it was. Even if you'd reached her in time to stop her, you'd only have checked *this* impulse.

"Sooner or later she would have had another—perhaps a more disastrous impulse. She was more damaged than you knew. I doubt if anything could have pulled her out of this cat-and-mouse game of Elvira's. She had to lose more than she could survive. Did you never realize whose hand pushed you over the balcony?"

"Not Margorie's?" Lucy cried, in horror. Philip drew his skilled hands over the dead girl's body, straightening it and lifting her gently away from Lucy. He clasped her hands across her breast and closed her blank, unseeing eyes.

"She is dead now," he said firmly. "You don't have to let what's over and done with give you fresh pain. Miss Lestrange saw her come out of your room after you fell. She didn't, for some time afterward, mention it—and then only as a sort of precautionary suggestion to Whiteleaf. They decided not to act upon it, because Elvira had already acted for them. She hadn't anticipated her devotee's attempt, and at that period she didn't want violence. She had made up her mind to become your mainstay and bosom friend, acting through you rather than against you. God knows what mental torture she didn't inflict on this poor child for nearly sabotaging her plan. Perhaps it would have been better if it had all come out then, but Margorie might have taken it with the same kind of violence she has used now. Whiteleaf hoped for a happier issue. She thought this girl would take to you after a time and be helped by you out of her difficulties."

"I was never any good to her. Why should she take to me?" Lucy asked sadly.

"Well, for one thing because you were so alike," Philip answered with a wry smile. "You were both the kind of girl who goes over precipices rather than takes the long way round, girls who don't know what's at the bottom of their own minds, or other people's."

"I suppose that's fair," Lucy said rather stiffly, "but it's very unkind. You might have guessed I went to that dance to meet them all together, for the last time *as* one of them, and then to be free of them forever. It was there I told Bob I was going to marry you."

Philip's eyes fixed themselves on Lucy's. "You *wanted* to be free of them?" he asked incredulously. "And Bob Anstruther, too—forever?"

"But of course. Don't you remember you said I was to *think*—well, that was what came of my thinking," Lucy said reproachfully.

Silence deepened around them. Darkness rose from the sea and met the cliffs above, hiding them from each other's eyes. "You did your thinking alone," Philip said at last, "after we had—as I thought—come together. That was why I lost you."

"But not now," Lucy cried. "I don't feel lost any more. When this happened I knew if I called to you you'd come. And you *have* come, Philip."

"Yes. I've come," he said slowly, in his deep, low voice. "I am prepared now to be with you always, if you feel that you can accept the little I have to offer. But we shall have to *really* live together, Lucy, and share all our thoughts. We shall be very much alone. We have a poet, Basil McFarlan—one of ourselves on this island—who has written what we are better than I can explain it. He calls it 'The Final Man.'

" 'In this light that is no light.
This time that is no time, to be
And to be free;

This is the final man,
Who lives within the dusk.
Who is the dusk always.'

"Do you really want it, Lucy, to be with the dusk always?"

"Yes. I really want it," Lucy whispered quickly. Beneath her grief she felt the strength of Philip's nearness—and yet she was glad that he had not taken her into his arms.

The dead girl was between them, and the weight of her broken life still rested on Lucy's heart. "But it's not only me," she said into the friendly darkness. "It's you as well, Philip. Myra said something once about my hands, as if she had to learn to like them because I was white."

Philip laughed softly, his hand closed over hers, warm with his life. "That's not one of my troubles. After all, I am a scientist, I am only concerned with facts, not with men's fancies and prejudices about facts—theories in the air that come out of personal prestige or the vagaries of power and money. A surgeon's business is to mend bodies, he has no other. Every human being is the same to me. Why should I trouble myself what color the skin is when the blood beneath it is always life? Still, I have a trouble about you, Lucy, which unfortunately we must share. This Island is all I have to offer you as a home. It is a small, beautiful, and dangerous island; and I can't give you a home in any other country. We might visit Canada or England, but even those countries to which we belong by right often give us a sour welcome. You will find many humiliating and awkward things happening to you—unimaginable little things to which I am hardened. I have never been ashamed to belong to my own people, but I do feel ashamed to have to ask you to share disabilities that are beyond my control."

"I want no other home than you," Lucy said under her breath. Philip made no direct answer, but he sighed a long, deep sigh, as if his whole being was released into the region of her heart. Neither of them moved again until out of the flat darkness of the sea a crimson light flowered like a rose.

"Those are the torches from our boat," Philip said. "I must go down and meet the men."

As the boat neared the shore the flares danced and flickered over the cove and Lucy caught sudden glimpses of the men's dark, anxious faces, full of concern and wonder. Their tattered clothes hung loosely on their emaciated bodies. They dragged their long caïque swiftly up the beach and crowded around Philip talking eagerly to him. Lucy could not understand what they said, but she could feel their pity and their kindness.

Philip turned and came back to Lucy and the dead girl. He lifted Margorie and carried her across the rocks into the boat, while the men held it firmly so that it could not shake the motionless light form. Lucy did not wait for Philip to help her, she took the men's outstretched hands as if they were her brothers.

The caïque slipped without a sound from the still cove into the open darkness of the sea. Above them the stars shone, remote and golden. Their

brilliant worlds did nothing to change the black floor of the sea, or lighten the darkness of the night. The men's oars invisibly rising and falling feathered the sea with fountains of bright foam, and as the boat sprang forward to meet the quickening of the waves, the fishermen sang to hearten themselves and their bereaved companions. Their voices were not beautiful or strong, but they had a natural penetrating sweetness. They sang for this lost white child as people sing who have themselves lost children.

TRANSCRIBER NOTES

Misspelled words and printer errors have been corrected. Where multiple spellings occur, majority use has been employed.

Punctuation has been maintained except where obvious printer errors occur.

[The end of *Under the Skin* by Phyllis Bottome]