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man who was now within the darkest shadow of her new suspicions?  
Feeling almost intolerably friendless and alone, weakened both by her recent fright and by her encounter with Struve, Helen considered as calmly as her emotions would allow and decided that this was no day in which pride should figure. There were facts which it was imperative she should know, and immediately; therefore, a few minutes later, she knocked at the door of Cherry Malotte.

When the girl appeared, Helen was astonished to see that she had been crying. Tears burnt hottest and leave plainest trace in eyes where they come most seldom. The younger girl could not guess the tumult of emotion the other had undergone during her absence, the utter depths of self-abasement she had fathomed, for the sight of Helen and her fresh young beauty had aroused in the adventuress a very tempest of bitterness and jealousy. Whether Helen Chester was guilty or innocent, how could Glenister hesitate between them? Cherry had asked herself. Now she stared at her visitor in hospitably and without sign.

"Will you let me come in?" Helen asked her. "I have something to say to you."  
When they were inside, Cherry Malotte stood and gazed at her visitor with inscrutable eyes and stony face.

"It isn't easy for me to come back," Helen began, "but I felt that I had to. If you can help me, I hope you will. You said that you knew a great wrong was being done. I have suspected it, but I didn't know, and I've been afraid to doubt my own people. You said I had a part in it—that I'd betrayed my friends. Wait a moment," she hurried on, at the other's cynical smile. "Won't you tell me what you know and what you think my part has been? I've heard and seen things that make me think—oh, they make me afraid to think, and yet I can't find the truth! You see, in a struggle like this, people will make all sorts of allegations, but do they know, have they any proof, that my uncle has done wrong?"

"Is that all?"  
"No. You said Struve told you the whole scheme. I went to him and tried to cajole the story out of him, but"— She shivered at the memory.

"What success did you have?" inquired the listener, oddly curious for all her cold dislike.  
"Don't ask me. I hate to think of it."

Cherry laughed cruelly. "So, failing there, you came back to me, back for another favor from the wif. Well, Miss Helen Chester, I don't believe a word you've said, and I'll tell you nothing. Go back to the uncle and the rawboned lover who sent you, and inform them that I'll speak when the time comes. They think I know too much, do they?—so they've sent you to spy? Well, I'll make a compact. You play your game, and I'll play mine. Leave Glenister alone, and I'll not tell on McNamara. Is it a bargain?"

"No, no, no! Can't you see? That's not it. All I want is the truth of this thing."  
"Then go back to Struve and get it. He'll tell you; I won't. Drive your bargain with him—you're able. You've fooled better men—now, see what you can do with him."

Helen left, realizing the futility of further effort, though she felt that this woman did not really doubt her, but was scourged by jealousy till she deliberately chose this attitude.  
Reaching her own house, she wrote two brief notes and called in her Jap boy from the kitchen.

"Fred, I want you to hunt up Mr. Glenister and give him this note. If you can't find him, then look for his partner and give the other to him." Fred vanished, to return in an hour with the letter for Dextery still in his hand.

"I don't catch dis feller," he explained. "Young mans say he gone, come back maybe one, two, seven days."  
"Did you deliver the one to Mr. Glenister?"  
"Yes, ma'am."  
"Was there an answer?"  
"Yes, ma'am."  
"Well, give it to me."  
The note read:

Dear Miss Chester—A discussion of a matter so familiar to us both as the Anvil creek controversy would be useless. If your inclination is due to the incidents of last night, pray don't trouble yourself. We don't want your pity. I am your servant.  
ROY GLENISTER.

As she read the note, Judge Stillman entered, and it seemed to the girl that he had aged a year for every hour in the last twelve, or else the yellow afternoon light limned the sagging hollows and haggard lines of his face most pitilessly. He showed in voice and manner the nervous burden under which he labored.

"Alec has told me about your engagement, and it lifts a terrible load from me. I'm mighty glad you're going to marry him. He's a wonderful man, and he's the only one who can save us."  
"What do you mean by that? What are we in danger of?" she inquired, avoiding discussion of McNamara's announcement.  
"Why, that mob, of course. They'll come back. They said so. But Alec can handle the commanding officer at the post, and, thanks to him, we'll have

soldiers guarding the house hereafter."  
"Why—they won't hurt us"—  
"Tut, tut! I know what I'm talking about. We're in worse danger now than ever, and if we don't break up those vigilantes there'll be bloodshed—that's what. They're a menace, and they're trying to force me off the bench so they can take the law into their own hands again. That's what I want to see you about. They're planning to kill Alec and me—so he says—and we've got to act quick to prevent murder. Now, this young Glenister is one of them, and he knows who the rest are. Do you think you could get him to talk?"

"I don't think I quite understand you," said the girl, through whitening lips.  
"Oh, yes, you do. I want the names of the ringleaders, so that I can jail them. You can worm it out of that fellow if you try."

Helen looked at the old man in a horror that at first was dumb. "You ask this of me?" she demanded hoarsely at last.  
"Nonsense," he said irritably. "This isn't any time for silly scruples. It's life or death for me, maybe, and for Alec too." He said the last craftily, but she stormed at him:

"It's infamous! You're asking me to betray the very man who saved us not twelve hours ago. He risked his life for us."

"It isn't treachery at all. It's protection. If we don't get them, they'll get us. I wouldn't punish that young fellow, but I want the others. Come now, you've got to do it."

But she said "No" firmly, and quietly went to her own room, where, behind the locked door, she sat for a long time staring with unseeing eyes, her hands tight clinched in her lap. At last she whispered:

"I'm afraid it's true. I'm afraid it's true."

She remained hidden during the dinner hour, and pleaded a headache when McNamara called in the early evening. Although she had not seen him since he left her the night before, bearing her tacit promise to wed him, yet how could she meet him now with the conviction growing on her hourly that he was a master rogue? She wrestled with the thought that he and her uncle, her own uncle who stood in the place of a father, were conspirators. And yet, at memory of the judge's cold blooded request that she should turn traitress, her whole being revolted. If he could ask a thing like that, what other heartless, selfish act might he not be capable of? All the long, solitary evening she kept her room, but at last, feeling faint, slipped down stairs in search of Fred, for she had eaten nothing since her late breakfast.

Voices reached her from the parlor, and as she came to the last step she froze there in an attitude of listening. The first sentence she heard through the close drawn curtains banished all qualms at eavesdropping. She stood for many breathless minutes drinking in the plot that came to her plainly from within, then turned, gathered up her skirts, and tiptoed back to her room. Here she made haste madly, tearing off her house clothes and donning others.

She pressed her face to the window and noted that the night was like a close hung velvet pall, without a star in sight. Nevertheless, she wound a heavy veil about her hat and face before she extinguished the light and stepped into the hall. Hearing McNamara's "Good night" at the front door, she retreated again while her uncle slowly mounted the stairs and paused before her chamber. He called her name softly, but when she did not answer continued on to his own room. When he was safely within she descended quietly, went out, and locked the front door behind her, placing the key in her bosom. She hurried now, feeling her way through the thick gloom in a panic, while in her mind was but one frightened thought:

"I'll be too late. I'll be too late."

CHAPTER XVII.  
EVEN after Helen had been out for some time she could barely see sufficiently to avoid collisions. The air, weighted by a low hung roof of clouds, was surcharged with the electric suspense of an impending storm, and seemed to sigh and tremble at the hint of power in leash. It was that pause before the conflict wherein the night laid finger upon its lips.

As the girl neared Glenister's cabin she was disappointed at seeing no light there. She stumbled toward the door, only to utter a half strangled cry as two men stepped out of the gloom and seized her roughly. Something cold and hard was thrust violently against her cheek, forcing her head back and bruising her. She struggled and cried out:

"Hold on, it's a woman!" ejaculated the man who had pinioned her arms, losing his hold till only a hand remained on her shoulder. The other lowered the weapon he had jammed to her face and peered closely.

"Why, Miss Chester," he said. "What are you doing here? You came near getting hurt."

"I am bound for the Wilsons', but I must have lost my way in the darkness. I think you have cut my face." She controlled her fright firmly.

"That's too bad," she said. "We mistook you for"— And the other broke in sharply. "You'd better run along. We're waiting for some one."  
Helen hastened back by the route she had come, knowing that there was still time, and that as yet her uncle's exhortations had not laid hands upon Glenister. She had overheard the judge and McNamara plotting to drag the town with a force of deputies, setting not only her two friends, but every man suspected of being a vigilante. The victims were to be jailed without bond, without reason, without justice, while the mechanism of the court was to be juggled in order to hold them until fail, if necessary. They had said that the officers were already busy, so haste was a crying thing. She stooped down the dark streets toward the house of Cherry Malotte, but found no light nor answer to her knock. She was distracted now, and knew not where to seek next among the thousand spots which might hide the man she wanted. What chance had she against the posse sweeping the town from end to end? There was only one; he might be at the Northern theater. Even so, she could not reach him, for she dared not go there herself. She thought of Fred.

She froze there in an attitude of listening. her Jap boy, but there was no time. Wasted moments meant failure. Roy had once told her that he never gave up what he undertook. Very well, she would show that even a girl may possess determination. This was no time for modesty or shrinking indecision, so she pulled the veil more closely about her face and took her good name into her hands. She made rapidly toward the lighted streets which cast a skyward glare and from which through the breathless calm arose the sound of carousal. Swiftly she threaded the narrow alleys in search of the theater's rear entrance, for she dared not approach from the front. In this way she came into a part of the camp which had lain hidden from her until now and of the existence of which she had never dreamed.

The vices of a city, however horrible, are at least draped scantily by the mantle of convention, but in a great mining camp they stand naked and without concealment. Here there were rows upon rows of criblike houses clustered over tortuous, ill lighted lanes, like blow flies swarming to an unclean feast. From within came the noise of ribaldry and debauch. Shriill laughter mingled with coarse, maudlin songs, till the clinging night reeked with abominable revelry. The girl saw painted creatures of every nationality leaning from windows or beckoning from doorways, while drunken men collided with her, barred her course, challenged her, and again and again she was forced to slip from their embraces. At last the high bulk of the theater building loomed a short distance ahead. Panting and frightened, she tried the door with weak hands, to find it locked. From behind it rose the glare of brass and the sound of singing. She accosted a man who approached her through the narrow alley, but he had cruised from the charred course in search of adventure and was not minded to go in quest of doormen; rather, he chose to sing a chanfey, to the bibulous measures of which he invited her to dance with him, so she slipped away till he had tattered past. He was some longshoreman in that particular epoch of his inebriety where life had no burden save the dissipation of wages.

Returning, she pounded on the door, possessed of the sense that the man she sought was here, till at last it was flung open, framing the silhouette of a shirt-sleeved, thick-set youth, who shouted:

"What 'n 'ell do you want to butt in for while the show's on? Go round front." She caught a glimpse of disordered scenery, and before he could slam the door in her face thrust a silver dollar into his hand, at the same time wedging herself into the opening. He pocketed the coin and the door clicked to behind her.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

Ladies' all wool underwear at F. Newhouse's. Now is the time to buy.



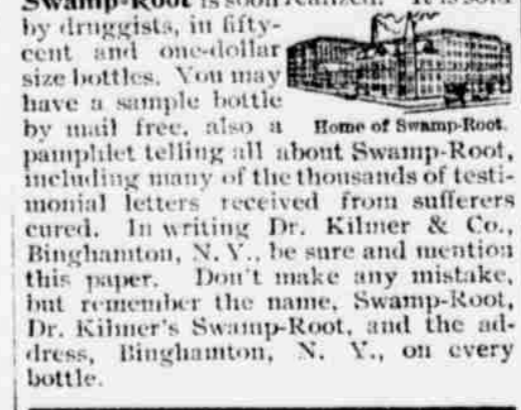
She froze there in an attitude of listening.

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