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Another second and she had shut herself in the closet. She had not thought; she had only acted. A fraction of a second more and it would have been too late. For, as she closed the closet door, the other door opened and they entered!

THEIR steps across the room—the sound of a chair pushed back or forward—then silence. She sank down on the closet floor. Her limbs were trembling so she could not stand.

"I presume you have some idea of why I asked for this interview?" It was Will's voice, quiet and yet strained.

"Not the slightest," coldly.

"You know, I suppose, that I am Miss Woodard's attorney—and friend?"

"I believe I have heard her speak of you."

A moment's silence. A tense, vibrating silence.

"She has been ill for many weeks."

"I regret to hear that," the words came slowly as though they were carefully chosen. "But may I ask your reason for discussing Miss Woodard with me?"

"My only reason is my friendship for Miss Woodard."

"I hardly see how that justifies—"

"It justifies many things. It justifies my telling you that you are the cause of her illness. That you have treated her as perhaps some men treat some women—but not a woman like Miss Woodard. And that—" his voice broke. "It is difficult for me to speak of this calmly."

"It is the rankest impertinence for you to speak of it at all! I will bid you good-morning."

"You will first listen to what I have to say."

"Is that a threat?"

"If you wish so to construe it."

"Oh," with a contemptuous laugh, "I begin to understand! As her lawyer you are about to institute some breach of promise suit. If it's a question of money, why did n't she come to me direct? We can probably fix that up without your help."

There was a muttered oath, the sound of a chair pushed quickly back.

"You will take that back now!" The words came as if through clenched teeth.

"Do you think it's a question of money? Do you?"

No answer.

"If you have any decency, any sense of justice in you, you will answer that question. Do you think Miss Woodard wants from you—money?"

"No."

"Then what made you use that word?"

"Do you know, sir, that all of this is none of your infernal business? If Miss Woodard has made a confidant of you, it is only another proof of her hysteria, of her indiscretion. And if she has sent you to me—"

"Stop! Miss Woodard has not sent me to you. I have done this because I thought the man she cared for must have some inherent goodness, and that your difference and separation might be the result of some misunderstanding which I might help to make right. I was mistaken. I see now the futility of saying anything at all to you. We will let this matter end here."

"Your interference has been insufferable, sir. And if you are Miss Woodard's emissary, you may inform her for me that when I ended our engagement, I did so because I had ceased to care for her. And if my attitude had changed since, I would have been quite capable of making the overtures. Good-morning."

The opening and closing—hard, of the outer door. Then silence.

Katherine's hands were fumbling with the knob. It would not open, she had not the strength. Again she tried. Then it was thrown open from the outside.

"Katherine!!"

She was clinging to him with a sort of desperation, her face hidden against his arm. He held her silently. After that first involuntary cry, he did not speak.

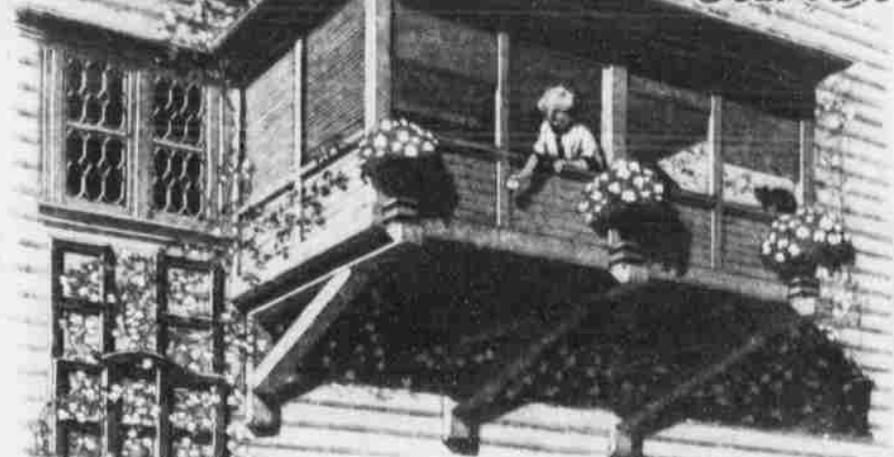
She was the first to break the silence with a whispered:

"Stay with me! Take me away with you—don't leave me alone!"

His lips rested against her hair.

"You will never be alone again."

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