new life and the people she had met in it. She had never thought of Jeff as a sanctuary before, and yet she now realized, when the support of his strength was denied her, that in her heart she had always more or less depended upon him for guidance.

And yet she feared him too. Awhile ago she had been filled with horror at his share in the Lone Tree affair, and since that time the knowledge had haunted her; but she had not dared to speak of it to him. She felt instinctively that this was one of the matters on the other side of the gulf that had always yawned with more or less imminence between them. Their relations were none too stable to risk a chance of further discord. The difference in his manner that she had noticed a week or more ago had become more marked, and tonight at the dinner table he had troubled less than usual to disguise his lack of interest in her opinions.

The image of Cort was ever in her mind, and the danger that threatened her seemed no less distant than before; yet she still hoped, as she had always done, that something would happen—some miracle, some psychological crisis—that would show her husband and herself the way to unity. Since she had seen Cortland Bent, she had lost some faith in herself, gained some fear of Jeff, whose present attitude she was at a loss to understand; but she still clung desperately to the tattered shreds of their strange union, though lately even those seemed less tangible. Tonight when she had asked him to take her West with him he had refused impatiently, almost brusquely.

She went into her own room slowly, and undressed. As she sat before her mirror the sight of the scratch on her face recalled the incidents of the day. Mrs. Cheyne! Her lips drew together, her brows tangled in thought, and she dismissed her maid who had come in to brush her hair. What right had Jeff to ignore her as he had? No matter what her own shortcomings, in public at least she had always shown him proper respect and had never in her heart dishonored him by an unworthy thought. For one brief moment in Cortland Bent's arms she had been swept from the shallows into deeper waters, but even then she had known as she knew now that her duty to Jeff had always been uppermost in her thoughts.

They must have an understanding before he went away. She would not be left here in New York alone. She had learned to distrust herself, to distrust Jeff, Cort, and all the charming, irresponsible people of the gay set into which they had been introduced.

In her dressing gown she sat before her fire and listened to the murmur of voices in the drawing room from which she had been banished. She could hear Jeff's steps as he rose and paced the floor, his voice louder and more insistent than Larry's. There was a coming and going of pages delivering and receiving telegrams, and she felt the undercurrent of a big crisis in Jeff's affairs—the nature of which she had been permitted only to surmise. His attitude had wounded her pride. It hurt her that Larry should see her placed in the attitude of a petitioner. Her one comfort was the assurance that she did not care what Jeff himself thought of her, that it was her pride that insisted on a public readjustment of their relations.

Camilla got up slowly, thoughtfully, and at last moved to the bell determinately.

To her maid she said, "Tell Mr. Wray I'd like to see him before he goes out."

WHEN Wray entered the room later, a frown on his face, the cloud of business worry in his eyes, he found Camilla asleep on the divan under a lamp, a magazine on the rug beside her where it had fallen from her fingers. His lips had been set for short words; but when he saw her he closed the door noiselessly behind him. Even sleep could not diminish the proud curve of the nostrils, or change the firmly modeled chin and the high, clearly penciled brows. Jeff looked at her a moment, his face showing some of the old reverence, the old awe, of her beauty.

And as he looked she stirred uneasily and murmured a name. He started so violently that a chair beside him scraped the floor and awoke her.

"I must have— Oh, it's you, Jeff!"

"You wanted to see me?" he asked harshly.

"Yes—I," she sat up languidly, "I did want to see you. There are some things I want to talk about, some things I want explained. Sit down, won't you?"

"I—I haven't much time."

"I won't keep you long. You've decided to go West—without me?"

"Yes, next week. Perhaps sooner, if—"

"I want you to change your mind about taking me with you."

"Why?"

"I want to go."

Jeff laughed disagreeably. "You women are funny. For a year you've been telling me that the only thing you wanted was a visit to New York. Now you're here, you want to go back. I've told you to get all the clothes you need, hired you an apartment in the best hotel, given you some swell friends, bought you jewelry—"

"I don't want jewelry, or clothes, or friends," she insisted. "I want to go back and watch them build Glen Irwin."

"They've stopped working on Glen Irwin. I wanted the money that was going into that."

"Oh!"

"I've a big fight on, and I need all the capital I can swing. Glen Irwin will have to wait," he finished grimly.

"Of course—I didn't understand. But it makes no difference. I can stay at the hotel or at Mrs. Brennan's."

"After all this? Oh, no, you'd be miserable. Besides, I have other plans."

"You don't want me?"

"No; I'll be very busy."

"No busier than you were before we came here."

Jeff paced the length of the room and returned before he answered her. "See here, Camilla! You ought to know by this time that when I say a thing I mean it. I'm going West alone, to do some fence building. You're to stay here and do the same thing—socially. I need these people in my business, and I want you to keep on good terms with them."

She gazed thoughtfully at the fire. "Don't you believe me when I say I want to go with you?"

Jeff made an abrupt movement. "Well, hardly. We've always got along pretty well so long as each of us followed our own pursuits. But I think you might as well acknowledge that you don't need me, haven't needed me now or at any other time."

"I do need you, Jeff. I want to try and take a greater interest in your affairs, to help you if I can, socially if necessary; but I'd rather do it with you than alone."

"I may not be gone long. In the meanwhile, you're your own mistress."

"You've always let me be that. But I have reasons for wanting to leave New York."

Wray turned and stared at her blankly. "Reasons?"

"Yes. I—I'm a little tired. The life here is so gay. I'm unused to it. It bewilders me."

"I think I understand," he said slowly. "But it can't be helped. I want you to cultivate the McIntyres, the Warringtons, and the Rumsens. Larry will stay here in the hotel for awhile. You can call on him."

She fingered the pages of a book beside her. "Then this is final?" she asked.

"Yes—you must do as I say!"

He had never before used that tone with her. The warm impulse that had sought this interview was dried at its source. "Very well, I'll stay," she said coldly, "no matter what happens."

He examined her shrewdly. "You're afraid?" he asked. "That's too bad. I thought I was doing you a service."

"What do you mean?"

"Cort Bent—that's what I mean! Cort Bent! He's yours! I give him to you!"

JEFF!" She rose and faced him trembling, and her eyes flickered like a sputtering candle as she tried to return his look. "How could you?" she stammered. "How could you speak to me so?"

But he was merciless. "Oh, I'm not blind, and I'm not deaf either. I've seen and I've heard; but I didn't need to see or to hear. Don't you suppose I've always known you married me out of spite, out of pique, because Cort Bent wouldn't marry you. I knew it then just as I know it now; but I hoped I could win you back and that things would be the same as they were before he came meddling in my affairs. Well, you know what happened better than I do. Our marriage has been a failure. I was a fool; so were you. We've made the best of a bad job; but that don't make it a good job. I let you go your own way. I've been good to you because I knew I'd been as big a fool as you were. What I didn't know was that you'd met Cort Bent behind my back—"

"That is not true!" she broke in. "That day he called here—"

"Don't explain," impatiently. "It won't help matters. I'm not blind. The main fact is that you've seen Cort Bent again and that you're still in love with him. These people are talking about you."

"Who, Mrs. Cheyne?"

"Yes, Mrs. Cheyne—and others."

Camilla steadied herself with a hand on the table. The brutality of his short, sharp indictment unnerved her for the moment. She had hoped he would have given her the opportunity to make an explanation in her own way, a confession even, which, if he had willed, might have brought them nearer in spirit than they had ever been; but that was now impossible. Every atom of him breathed antagonism, and the words of his avowal were choked in the hot suffusion of blood that pride and shame sent coursing to her throat and temples.

"And if I am still in love with him," she said insolently, "what then?"

He looked at her admiringly; for scorn became her. "Oh, nothing," he said with a shrug; "only be careful, that's all. Back in Mesa City I thought of shooting Cort Bent; but I found a better way to punish him. Here," he laughed, "I've a different plan. I'm going to give you a free foot. I'm going to throw you two together, to give you a chance to work out your salvation in your own way. Your marriage to me means nothing to you. Time has proved that. You and I are oil and water. We don't mix. We've worried along somehow to date; but it's getting on my nerves. I'd rather we understood each other once and for all. I'm past changing. You knew what I was,—a queer weed, a mongrel. I took root, and I grew as Nature made me grow, in the soil I fell in, hardy, thick ribbed, stubborn, and lawless. The world was my enemy; but I fought it as Nature taught by putting on rough bark and spines like the cactus that grew beside me. Oh, I grew flowers too, pretty pale blossoms that tried to open to the sun. You had a chance to see them; but they weren't your kind. You looked beyond them at the hothouse plants—"

"Don't, Jeff!" she pleaded. "I can't bear it!"

But he only laughed at her. "Well, I've brought them to you,—the roses, the orchids, the carnations,—

"You Can Sell for That," Roared the General, "or Be Wiped Off the Map!"