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appearance came as a decided shock to him, and nearly deranged him.

The mother's mind gave way under the weary strain of waiting; the loss of the child, and his wife's sad condition, soon sent Judge Fitzgerald to an early grave.

Just before his father died, he called Reginald to his side, and exacted a solemn promise from him that he would make his sister's whereabouts his life's work, and made the boy swear he would never marry till this was known.

Years had passed, the boy had come to man's estate, and always with the one idea of finding the little sister his own negligence had lost; his sad reverie was interrupted by Roy bursting into the room.

"Dr. Fitzgerald, Irma is worse, and mother wishes you to come at once."

"But my friend, how about Miss Grey? I thought she said—"

"Never mind what she said, she was just miffed, you know."

"Miffed?"

"Yes, you had given her the cold shoulder, you know, and, well, she is used to be treated like a queen."

The grim smile he always had when the physician was amused played around his mouth, while he followed Roy to Irma's bed side.

Mrs. Sheldon sat by Irma, crying softly, but rose to meet Dr. Fitzgerald with outstretched hands.

As the weary hours passed on leaden wings, Irma gradually grew weaker, and Mrs. Sheldon was never satisfied when Dr. Fitzgerald was away.

"Dr. Fitzgerald, have you given up all hope of Irma?" pleaded Mrs. Sheldon.

"I have not, my dear friend, to-night is the crisis of the disease, and if we can pull her thru, I will have great hope of her recovery, for she has naturally a strong constitution. I have done all I could, and would willingly give my own life to save hers."

The night lamp on the stand was turned low, and shaded, the marble clock on the mantel seemed to tick in subdued way, as if it realized how necessary quiet was to-night; passers by, knowing this night meant life or death to the fair stranger, passed quietly by, some with prayer on their lips for her recovery.

Mrs. Sheldon had drawn an easy chair before the fire in Irma's room, while Dr. Fitzgerald kneeled by the bed side, and taking Irma's wrist in his hand, counted the pulse. Slipping his arm into her pillow, to better facilitate her breathing, as he did so, she turned slightly, and lay helplessly against his breast; not daring to move for fear he would waken her, he bent his head, and for the first time in years, he uttered a prayer, silently, but with so much earnestness the strong man was overcome; a prayer that God would spare her life and restore her to her friends.

CHAPTER V.

Hours passed, mid-night came, and still this man, whom the world called a woman hater kneeling by the bedside; never mind if death claimed Irma Grey, he would find her in his arms, and if God should answer his prayer, why, she would still be there.

Surely, but slowly the life current ran again thru Irma's veins; her mother was now with her, and Roy was so kind and attentive, one thing alone saddened the invalid, that was thoughts of her absent playmate, he must have ceased to care for her, had almost forgotten her; it was time for him to return, yet he made no mention of it.

Lying on the cot prepared for her in the cozy sitting room, many startling thoughts came to her.

Irma Grey was a noble woman, and her childhood vows to Charles Winston were just as binding to her honest heart, as any that could be made, and she meant to be true to them but as she saw more of the world than her former narrow sphere had afforded her, she began to realize how weak and shallow Charles Winston was, purposeless in life.

Thoughts, like "Banquos ghost" would not down at her bidding, thoughts would come of a man, "Where every god did seem to set his seal," of a man just the opposite of Charles Winston; and though her conscience might rise in rebellion, her heart had to acknowledge Reginald Fitzgerald her liege lord; not even to herself would she acknowledge how eagerly she listened for the physician's footsteps, for he still came every day—the same masterful man, women both feared and loved.

No word had ever escaped the lips of Dr. Fitzgerald of the deep love he bore the fragile girl, for he felt it was useless.

Roy had told him of his cousin's engagement to her young friend, and if that had been all, it would have been different, for he knew by the bright look in her eyes she was not indifferent to him, and that it was only a case of exaggerated childish love she had for his unknown rival.

The oath he made to his dying father, he held most sacred; his friends who had dared to discuss the subject with him, had tried to persuade him his feeling on the subject was quiotic, and only binding while there was hope of lnding the lost one.

The poor mother, wearing her life away with grif was a constant reminder, and she still looked to him to perform his vow.

"When you are stronger, Miss Grey, I will take you for a drive.."

"I feel better at the prospect, and I must be getting better, as you have not been here for two days."

"Did you miss me?" he asked, turning suddenly and looking her straight in the face.

"Yes, very much indeed," she answered truthfully. "You have been so kind, have brought me almost up from the grave; you will always have my deepest gratitude."

"I do not like that word from you. Gratitude is a noble virtue, and something we seldom encounter, but it is not your gratitude, Lily, I want—but there, I have betrayed myself. I rechristened you when you were so ill, and I fear I have offended you."

Irma turned her face away to hide a look of joy she could not conceal. With a weary sigh Dr. Fitzgerald rose to leave.

"I have a sad case at the hospital, that I must not neglect, a young girl, apparently your age, a perfect stranger, a queer specimen of humanity. She seems suddenly to have dropped from the skies, refuses to tell her name, is queerly dressed, or was when she came, is an equal mixture of heathenism and inborn refinement; the nurses have tried in vain to find out something of her past, but she has bailed their curiosity."

"Where did you find her?"

"She was wandering up and down the streets, like a frightened child looking for its mother. She was brought to the hospital with a great deal of temperature, and raving but she is calmer now."

"Will you take me to see her? Perhaps I may do her good."

"I will take you to see her, certainly, but wait till you are stronger."

"I know what it is to need; we always lived in a neighborhood where there were few girls of my own age and I had no intimate friend but Charles Winston."

"By the way, will you not make me your confidente now and tell me something about Charles? I take a deep interest in him, and would like to know more about your youthful hero. Is he your ideal man? Do you care for him more than any one else?"

Irma was glad the friendly shadows were across her face, but Dr. Fitzgerald was evidently satisfied with her reply.

"Miss Grey," Dr. Fitzgerald asked a week after his quizzing about Charles, "has any one told you about my mother's condition?"

"Yes, Auntie has told me all about her sad trouble since my illness, and my heart goes out to her in her lonliness."

"I thank you very much for your sympathy. I never speak of our trouble, but felt you would think better of me if you could realize why I shun ladies' society. But I think you have forgiven my want of etiquette, have you not?"

"Don't speak of my feeling anything towards you but the deepest gratitude."

"There you go, using that prescribed word again; but come if you wish, I will drive you to the hospital to see my other patient."

"How is she now?"

"I hardly know what to tell you, she evidently has something on her mind, that bears on her condition, but refuses to talk."

A short drive brought them to the hospital. Dr. Fitzgerald being the physician in charge, he escorted her through a wide hall to a ward, where they were met by a pleasant faced nurse, and she took them to see the girl who had caused so much speculation.

The patient was lying on a bed, its snowy whiteness rivaling the pallow of her sad face, and but for a pair of brilliant dark eyes, that lost some of their lustre when they fell on Irma's face, she might have been unconscious, she lay so still.

"I have brought one of my friends to see you, and as you are both young girls, may be she can be of some help to you, if you will let her."

"I am past all help, Sir, and wish that I could die."

"You are far from having your wish gratified, for you are much stronger than when you came to us, and I yet hope to see you well and happy."

"You are kind, but the best thing you could do for me is to give me something that will send me to my future home, for I am homeless here."

"Dr. Fitzgerald how long will it be before we go home?"

"Just as soon as I see your strength failing."

"Then we are here for some time. I wish you would make your other visits, and leave me here; I want to tell this poor child something. You have no objection to me staying, have you?" asked Irma as Dr. Fitzgerald motioned to the nurse and left them alone.

"No, I do not care, I do not care much for any thing now."

"I have some idea how you feel, for I have been very ill myself, and but for our good doctor would not be here to-day. Do you like him?" Irma asked timidly; she longed to hear even this stranger praise him.

"Yes, he has done more for me than any one else since I left—"

"He takes a great deal of interest in you," added Irma, not noticing the girl's hesitancy. "He has a great deal of trouble himself, and sympathizes deeply with those who suffer, and he, knowing we are both young girls, thinks I can help you. You have suffered, I can see it in your face. Will you not tell me something of yourself? Do not think I am here from idle curiosity, but as one who would gladly render you any assistance in my power. I have been very ill, and am still weak, and only Dr. Fitzgerald's sympathy for you would have made him bring me here to-day."

CHAPTER VI.

"What is he to you?" suddenly asked the strange girl.

Irma was surprised and confused, but determined that Dr. Fitzgerald should not return and find her mission fruitless.

"Why, he is a dear friend who has brought me up from the dead almost", stammered Irma.

"Take care he is nothing more to you. You have been kind to me and I warn you not to trust him too far, or he will break your heart."

A man in the case, mentally soliloquized Irma. "You are young to be such a counsellor; do you speak from experience?"

"From the bitterest; I will tell you as much of my life's story as you will care to hear." She lay, looking into space, with such a weary, hopeless look that Irma's heart ached for her; she took the girl's fragile hands and held them between her own warm palms.

"When I was a little girl," she begun, "I lived on the western edge of a Texas prairie in a secluded spot, way off from all civilization, with my supposed father and mother. My father made his living trading with the Mexicans, while mother and I stayed from one year's end to another in that lonely cabin. I cannot tell you the horrors of that life, somehow even in my youngest childhood I hated the man who taught we to call him 'Father.' My life was one of drudgery, and the only ray of sunshine that fell across my pathway was the love borne me by the wife of the man we both hated so cordially." Even the recalling of these things caused a shudder to pass over her delicate frame, and her black eyes dilated as if she saw some strange beast.

Just then Dr. Fitzgerald stole to the door, and stood leaning on it. Irma was afraide the girl would not finish her story, but she seemed unconscious of his presence, save to mutter "What does it matter? Yes, she was kind to me when father was away; she seemed to be afraid all the time some one was going to take me away from her. She was superior to father, was educated, while he was ignorant, coarse and brutal; she taught me to read and write, but would never let father know of my accomplishment; we never had a visitor that I can remember but twice. The first was a stranger, a 'tenderfoot', as the traders call them; he seemed to notice me a great deal. One night he disappeared, and I noticed that father stayed a long time over on the Mexican side, while mother wept and prayed more than usual. Things went along after that in the same old groove, till one dark, stormy night some one came to our cabin and asked to be taken in our of the storm and darkness; he was also a stranger, had lost his way. Father had been in an ugly humor for several days, but he took him in. I was outside trying to do a piece of night work by the light of an old lantern, when father brought me a horse to put in the stable; I could see that mischief was brewing, and thinking some fresh piece of cruelty was to be prasticed on my friend, I hurriedly finished my work and went indoors, but as soon as I caught a glimpse of the stranger I knew she was not the victim. My heart was filled with compassion, he was so young and boyish looking. I determined to save him if possible. Strangers would come and go so often in this part of the country, that their disappearance seldom caused much remark, and for some unknown reason seemed to have a very hatred of them. I was told to fix the small bed room for him; that room was more remote from mother's and mine than any other, and had a low window that could be easily entered; I shall never forget that night. From a life of fear and suppression, I had become weak and cowardly, but the young man so different from the rough traders, had by his helplessness transformed me into a bold woman, and I determined to save him at the risk of my own life.

"After bidding us all good-night, the man retired, father leading the way, while I slipped outside and crouched in the darkness, wind and cold mist. I waited till I knew all was quiet, and father had gone to his

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