

CHAPTER VI. *Witcheries in a Woman's Hand.* A Dangerous Mood. Annabel's Tangled Situation. Heroism in Humble Duties. The Miracle Worked by Gentleness. Traitors Are Threatened.

Not word was spoken after I had dressed and we were returning to camp, but Captain Mason's walk lacked its usual firmness. What would he do? There is no accounting for the rashness of a man made suddenly desperate, and I remembered the temptation to strangle that had assailed me. Clearly, for the present, Christopher and I must not leave him alone for a moment. My imagination constructed this scene: Captain Mason, assembling the colony, telling them briefly that a man among them had been caught in the act of plotting to destroy us, turning upon Mr. Vancouver and pointing him out as the criminal, ordering me to tell off a squad and hang the knave in the presence of the crowd; and Annabel—Could Christopher and I stay the flood now while the dam was straining? I feared not; a finer hand was needed.

We went to our hut. Captain Mason seated himself on a stool. Christopher gave him some water, which was eagerly drunk. With a significant look at Christopher, I left the hut.

There was a good excuse for bringing Annabel now; I had promised Beelo that he should see her. It was necessary to secure Captain Mason's assent, and I had no doubt that he would agree with me that a friendship between her and Lentala might go farther toward solving our problems than all our masculine wit and fighting ability.

I reflected on the extraordinary complications in which Annabel would be involved, and the softening pressure which she would assist in bringing upon Captain Mason. There was no immediate danger from Mr. Vancouver. He lay snugly in the hollow of my hand.

Annabel was busy about the camp.

"Where is Christopher?" she cheerily asked. "It is time for him to make the fire for supper.

"Captain Mason has him," I answered. "Won't you come with me and call on our president?"

"I?" in surprise.

"Yes."

A flush mottled her cheeks, but she hesitated only a moment.

"Father won't care, I know," she said, and started with me.

She was bareheaded, and the witcheries of the twilight drifted over her. In the distance sang the deep monotone of the waterfall. Drowsy twitterings announced that the busy little people of the trees were content after their day's work. From the edges of the stream rose comfortable whispers between the water and the reeds. The lightly moving air swung odorous censers in the trees, and every flower poured out as perfume the sunshine which had filled its chalice. It was good to be thus again side by side with Annabel.

I explained tomorrow's plan for her meeting with Beelo, and impressed upon her the importance of keeping it secret. She showed the glee of a quiet child in her acquiescence, but she must have wondered why her father was not to know.

"An adventure!" she exclaimed. "And mystery! It is delightful. Do you men with so much freedom know how depressing it is to be cooped up in this camp?"

I had not thought of it, and was surprised. Annabel had always been cheerful, and I had not observed the other women.

"Isn't it life," I asked, "for men to work and women to wait, for men to dare and women to endure?"

"Yes," she answered, looking up at me with a smile, "but isn't it a remnant of savagery?"

“Perhaps,” I returned. “Yet Lentala, the savage, appears in her independence to have solved some latter-day feminine problems. I hope you will meet her soon. Then you and she can formulate a code for your sex. We are going to see Captain Mason in order to secure his consent to your meeting her brother. So you must exercise your subtlest graces on our president.”

“I—I’m afraid of him,” she declared in some trepidation.

“Why?”

“Because he is stern and silent and cold and

“That is all on the surface. His sea-training has given it to him. Underneath he has a woman’s gentleness and kindness. Trust him. Look for the best in him and ignore the rest. Just now he is worried and needs all the sunshine that you know so well how to give.”

She smiled her thanks, but there was concern in her question:

“Worried! Has anything special happened?”

“Was anything special needed? His responsibilities are great.”

Annabel was silent,—not daring, I know, to ask more questions. She had unfolded to my comprehension what the women of our party had been suffering patiently and silently during the dreary weeks that they had been held in prison. Annabel must have borne more than any other; yet she had held up her heart and her head. Dread must have sat on her pillow through many a long hour of the night, but her soul walked forth with the sunrise.

Christopher was sitting on a bench outside the hut.

“Christopher!” she cried, “the fire isn’t made yet;” but there was no chiding in her rosy smile.

“No, ma’am,” he answered, rising, but standing still.

“Go and make it now, please,” she said.

“All well, Christopher?” I asked, low.

His slow nod held a doubt. There was always in Christopher’s manner a suggestion that speech was largely a silly indulgence, and that animals other than human beings made themselves intelligible without it.

He fetched a delicious drink which he had made from wild fruit, and served Annabel with quite an air. Her voice carried music in its thanks.

Annabel bubbled with raillery and chatter. Presently my anxious ear heard a stir within. I knew that the man nursing his hurt in the dusk was aware of the invasion, and that he understood and resented my ruse in bringing Annabel to disarm him.

“Christopher,” she said, handing him the calabash from which she had drunk, “please go and make the fire and start the supper. After that, find father; ask him to come here for me.”

Christopher mutely interrogated me, and I nodded. He shambled away.

“Come out and join us, Captain Mason!” I called. It left him no choice. The darkness kindly falling veiled the grayness of his face. A touch of decrepitude lay on him as he stepped without and greeted Annabel with a stiff and stately courtesy, for he was shy with women of the higher world. The unsteadiness in his manner surprised Annabel, whose sympathies were keen and quick. I had prepared her, and, shocked though she evidently was, she met the situation bravely.

After some general talk, which was directed by me to show Annabel’s suffering, her courage and helpfulness, I saw that Captain Mason was softened. I then placed before him the plan concerning Annabel and Beelo. It took the breath out of his body, and he peered at me in amazement through the gloom. The perfect assurance with which I asked for his concurrence, a hint that her discretion might be trusted, and a casual remark that Christopher approved the idea, had effect. Annabel impulsively rose, seized both his hands, and pleaded:

“Please let me go, Captain Mason. Who knows what good may not come of it?”

I don't think she noticed the catch in his throat. It was the final breaking up of the ice.

"Yes, you may go. But you'll do nothing except as Mr. Tudor approves?"

"Nothing whatever, Captain Mason. Thank you." She released his hands and turned a beaming face to me. Pity for her welled within me. That she and her father, between whom there was so strong an attachment, should thus secretly proceed in opposite directions, each deceiving the other, was a terrible thing. No human perception could foresee the outcome, and it gave me an uneasiness that she must have dimly seen.

"You don't look glad!" she said in astonishment.

"I am too happy for mere gladness, my friend," I replied; "and may all the good angels help you—and shield you!"

She heard the note of solemnity, and turned to Captain Mason.

"Is our situation so serious?" she asked him, a slight quaver in her voice.

"Life can have no serious dangers for so brave a heart as yours," he answered.

Mr. Vancouver came up. I could feel a tigerish stealth in him. All danger from an immediate clash between him and Captain Mason had been banished by Annabel, but I knew that the future held dangers. I was glad that she and I had become partners in the secrets and exactions of defense. With such an ally as Christopher, and such a director as Captain Mason, we would give an account of ourselves.

The captain hardened when Mr. Vancouver came. That gentleman playfully scolded Annabel for running away, and was somewhat too affable toward the silent, unresponsive sailor. Soon he tucked Annabel's hand under his arm and was leaving.

"Just a word, Mr. Vancouver," said Captain Mason in a tone that stopped my breathing.

"Well?"

"I unintentionally witnessed a scene this morning that I didn't like. I wish you to hear the order that I'll give Mr. Tudor." His voice was ominously quiet. "Mr. Tudor," he resumed, "order Rawley to fall in with the field squad tomorrow. If he shows the slightest hesitation, clap him in irons and send for me. There's a rope for the neck of any man who undermines the discipline of this colony."

Annabel started, and reeled where she stood. Her father's nostrils were spreading with a sneering smile; but, seeing her state, he seized her arm, steadied her with a word, and in silence led her away.

CHAPTER VII. *Secrets For Two*. The Strange Meeting of Annabel and Beelo. Captain Mason's Cruel Decision. I Tell a Romantic Story and Make a Guess at Lentala's Origin.

Captain mason and I had a serious talk in our hut that night.

"Don't think for a moment," he said, "that my intentions with regard to Vancouver have been upset by a woman's pretty face."

"But she is very lovely," I interposed, anxious to turn his thoughts from whatever purpose he might have.

"That is as one thinks." I could not restrain a smile at his ungraciousness, particularly as I saw that Annabel's effect on him had impaired his frankness. "For that matter," he went on, "her father is blindly planning her destruction." In answer to my look he explained: "How can a man let his avarice and cowardice make such a fool of him! Can't he see that the king is using him as a tool to disrupt and destroy the camp, including him and his party?"

I knew, as well as I knew my own thoughts, that a terrible apprehension of a fate worse than death for us all rested on him, as on me; but we had dared not give it tongue. Both had seen the naïve inconsistency between the king's desire that the island should not be discovered and his promise to send us away one at a time, and so had Mr. Vancouver. No foreigner straying to the island had ever left it, and none except our colony was alive on it today. But in what dreadful manner had they been disposed of? And why had we been spared so long? We had been prisoners nearly two months.

Whether these fears and speculations haunted others of the colony we were both careful not to inquire, and were prompt in suppressing every uncomfortable hint. Captain Mason and I understood that the perfect cohesion of our colony, taken with our considerable numbers, offered the sole hope for our safety; and Mr. Vancouver was secretly planning to destroy our one means of defense.

We had been sitting in silence after Captain Mason's last speech. He broke it by saying:

"The situation is complex. Your interruption of Vancouver's plot and Christopher's dismissal of the native require us to lay a counter train. The king will infer from what Christopher told the native that Mr. Vancouver has abandoned his scheme to betray the colony, and that we are determined to hang together, and fight it out to the end. I imagine that the natives are growing impatient for a victim. What do you suggest, Mr. Tudor?"

"I suppose I should continue in the rôle of the king's emissary and inform Mr. Vancouver that the sending out of the young men is postponed. Fortunately we have stopped that."

"We have done nothing of the sort," declared the president. "They shall go out."

Astonishment silenced me.

"They shall go out," he drove into me again.

"To their destruction—and ours?" I asked.

"No. But they must go and take their punishment. Then they will hear from me. You can manage it through the native boy and his sister. Let her see that they are soundly whipped and sent back to the colony. She's our friend."

"That is unthinkable," I protested. "The risk is too great. Lentala can't

"Don't underestimate her. You have your instructions, sir." He rose. "I'll be on hand tomorrow when you call out the men for the fields."

I had risen, and stood facing a commander instead of an ally. After a moment's struggle with desperately rebellious emotions, I saw my own absurdity, and abruptly left without a word, to fight for patience and wisdom under the stars.

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The smiling ease with which Rawley stepped forth when I called his name with the others next morning might have disarmed me had I not caught a look of understanding between him and Mr. Vancouver, and known what it meant. My dread had been on Annabel's account, but she did not appear.

Rawley worked faithfully in the fields that day, but I saw the furtive way in which he talked now and then with certain of the men, and I noted all whom he thus favored. None of them had a guilty manner, though a concealing one. It was evidence of Mr. Vancouver's shrewdness in plotting.

* * *

Annabel met Christopher outside the camp that afternoon and came with him to Beelo and me. The boy betrayed a singular uneasiness as they approached, and, drawing his hat down, stood in awkward embarrassment. It puzzled me, for he had been anxious to see her. In a glow of excitement, Annabel was conspicuously handsome, and though dressed in the rougher of the two suits which she had saved from the wreck, showed in every line the thoroughbred that she was. Seeing the lad's confusion, she spared him by giving him hardly more than a smiling glance with her warm hand-clasp, and breezily said to me as she held out an exquisite orchid:

"See what I found on the way. Isn't it beautiful!" I took it and was fumbling to put it in the buttonhole of my lapel, when she stepped up and with frank comradeship adjusted it, remarking as she did so:

"He's very much like his sister, but smaller, and not so pretty and graceful." She did not realize that he understood English.

"I thank you—for Lentala," he constrainedly said, staring at her as his eyes began to burn.

"Oh!" cried Annabel in amused surprise. "But you are quite too good-looking for a boy, Beelo!"

He did not smile, but studied her with a disconcerting seriousness, and looked from her to me, as though watching for something which I guessed to be a sly understanding between Annabel and me that might mean ridicule of him. I saw that Annabel had innocently blundered into a wrong start. Evidently the pleasure that the lad had expected from the meeting had gone astray.

As though the words were wrenched from him by the striking picture that Annabel made, he said in a stolid, colorless voice:

"You are more beautiful than Lentala."

"Hear his disloyalty to his sister!" laughingly exclaimed Annabel, but I could see that the boy's bearing was trying her composure. "Come!" she added; "let's be friends, for Lentala and I are, and I want you to tell me about her." She coaxingly held out her hand as to an ill-tempered child.

But he ignored it, and lowered his head till his hat-rim concealed his eyes. Annabel looked at me in questioning surprise, but before I could say anything,—being as much astonished as she,—Beelo, without raising his head, asked half sullenly, half commandingly:

"Have you and—Choseph known each other a long time?"

"A year or so," Annabel promptly answered, anxious to show her friendliness. "He's been very kind. I became a skilful horsewoman under his teaching, and we've danced together and taken long walks in the country. He knows a great many interesting things. You see, he was educated at West Point, where young men are trained to be officers of our army, and has fought in the war, and—"

Beelo broke in with a toss of the head and a laugh that sounded much like a sneer.

Annabel opened her eyes and looked in wonder from the boy to me. She was not laughing now; alarm was creeping into her face. I could think of nothing to say, but was confident that the two fine souls would find a way.

Without raising his face to Annabel, Beelo slowly looked round at me, and regarded me deeply and in silence. Sadness stole into his eyes, and with it reproach. The mystery of it touched me as I steadily returned his look.

As he did not speak, I did. "Beelo," I kindly said, "I don't understand you, and I don't like your conduct. You wished to see Annabel. To please me, she kindly took the trouble to come and tried to be friendly to you. But you treat her rudely. You are not worthy to touch her hand."

He blazed and went rigid. For a moment he was choked with passion; then, locking his hands behind him, and throwing back his head and shoulders, he said loudly, while his nostrils quivered:

“No! I’m not worthy to touch her hand! I’m glad of it! You send fine words to Lentala, who has not a white friend in the world! Then you bring the white girl to Beelo, that Beelo may see how different they are and go back to shame Lentala. Riding! Dancing! Walking! Ah, Beelo is a little fool,—a fool no bigger than a toad! But he can be useful,—he can make Lentala a fool too! And Lentala can be useful. She can trick King Rangan. She shall be the tool of the white people who want to leave!” He paused breathless, but there was more of despair than anger in his attitude.

Annabel had gone very white. She gave me a glance of new amazement, and then went forward, seized Beelo’s arm, and forcibly turned him to look into her eyes. With a start she straightened, looking at me strangely, as if a great light had broken.

“There’s a misunderstanding,” she calmly said to Beelo and me as she apologetically held the quivering figure. To me she added: “You and Christopher please retire. I’ll call you soon.”

We left, and when screened and beyond earshot I gave Christopher a look of wondering inquiry. He blinked benignly at me, as a dog at his foolish master.

“What does it mean?” I demanded.

“Mean, sir?”

“Yes.”

“You are asking me, sir?”

“Of course.”

He looked away, but not with a listening manner, yet the mystery appeared to demand it. I did not happen to remember that he was the most chivalrous and the least meddling man I had ever known.

“Well, I’ll tell you, sir,” he presently said in his slow, gentle way; “it will be all right.”

So it apparently was when Annabel called us back, for the two were chatting amicably as they sat on the ground. Annabel’s serious mistake, by which she had imperiled my plans, had been turned by her to excellent account.

Christopher was waiting to conduct her back to camp; he would return, for Beelo had informed me that there were matters which he wished to tell us alone. The parting between him and Annabel was friendly and held promise, but Beelo’s face was not wholly unclouded. Holding Annabel’s hand and gazing into her face, he said, with a touch of sadness:

“Anybody would love you.”

Annabel blushed, and turned laughingly away.

“I’ll see you again very soon!” called the boy.

Annabel turned and blew him a smiling kiss. The lad stood and gazed long at the spot where she was lost among the trees.

“You like her, Beelo?” I asked.

Much to my surprise, a little droop pulled at his mouth-corners.

“She is very lovely,” he softly said.

“Is that a thing to be sad about?”

“Yes. Lentala can never be as sweet and beautiful.”

“She is as sweet and beautiful as Annabel, and—and—what shall I say?—more fascinating.”

His face was turned away, and he was silent. After a while he faced me, and said, while observing me closely:

“But she belongs to your kind, your world.”

“My heart finds my kind, and that is my world.”

He again turned away. In trying to find a reason why any of this mattered to him, or why he appeared in a measure to resent Annabel, the old suspicion that had lodged in a corner of my mind came forth. The remarkable difference between Lentala and her brother on one hand and the natives on the other must have some special explanation, and Beelo must have a secret which he had a good reason for guarding. Christopher and I had probably been the only white men to touch their lives, and there was in them that which knew and claimed its own. It was a hungry demand, and jealous. To see the desired companionship subject to an older claim, such as Annabel's, was the finding of a barrier. I determined to probe for the secret by indirect means.

“The soul that finds its kind finds its world, Beelo,” I said, “and souls have neither race nor color. Would you like to hear a strange little story?”

“Yes!” he eagerly answered.

I sat down, and he seated himself facing me, keenly interested.

“A long time ago a white man—a gentleman, no doubt—was in a ship that was sailing the seas. A great storm came on. His ship was wrecked, and he was cast up on the beach of a beautiful tropical island. It was decreed by the natives, who were jealous for their country, that he should suffer the fate of all who had drifted before him to those shores. But for some reason—that may be another story some time—he was spared, and the king gave him a wife from among the native girls. Two children were born to them, a girl and afterward a boy; but their father had so strongly impressed his racial peculiarities on them that they were in an unfortunate position,—outcasts in a way, and perhaps in danger of their lives, by reason of the deeply planted native hatred for the white blood. So the king, who had spared the man, took them under his protection, and as the queen had no children, she loved them as her own. But in time, as the children grew up, the white blood in them began to starve for its kind, and to whisper of a far country whence it had come. That is nature's way. She lets us go just so far from the plan on which she started us, and then she sends a voice that speaks deep within us. We may not know at first what it says, but—”

“Just a longing?” Beelo asked

“Merely that. We want something very much, but don't know what it is. We are dissatisfied. That comes in youth, when the tides of life flow free, and before the soul is fully awake. Afterward, when it has ripened and mellowed, it finds its kind and makes its home wherever

“After a while. But now!” demanded Beelo.

I ignored him with a smile, and went back to the story.

“At last the sister had grown to womanhood and the brother nearly to manhood. A much larger company of white people than had ever before been stranded on the island came to its shores. The girl and the boy had been spoiled by the king, and they had much their own way. The girl demanded that she be taken with the king to see the castaways. It was the voice in her heart.”

Beelo nodded, and then with nervous fingers began to weave a twig-house on the sand.

“Do you like the story?” I asked.

He looked up in surprise. “Is that all, Choseph?”

“Isn't that sufficient?”

He drew a deep breath. “She went there just to see them?” he said.

I smiled into his brilliant eyes. “I'll tell you the rest of the story some other time,” I remarked, satisfied, because at not a single point had he criticized my guessing. “There is one thing more,”

I went on. "Of course the children adopted the native dress, but their father's blood in them had lightened their native color, and that must be overcome."

His eyes kindled brighter; his lips had fallen apart. There was not a movement in his body.

"Lad, how did you learn to stain a fair skin so well that it looks like a native's?"

With that I seized the collar of his blouse, to tear it open and see the real color of his chest before he could prevent.

CHAPTER VIII. *A Crumbling Edge*. Beelo's Horror at the Fate Intended for Us. My Visit in Disguise to Mr. Vancouver. Annabel's Dramatic Defiance, and How She Was Humbled.

Beelo sprang away and scampered into the forest as though Satan pursued. That gave me no uneasiness. I gathered up his twigs and began laboriously to weave the hut.

A gurgling laugh raised my head. Twenty feet away, in a direction opposite to that in which Beelo had disappeared, I saw him lying on the ground, kicking up his heels, and, his cheeks resting in his hands, mischievously laughing at me.

"You haven't gone?" I said. "Christopher will come soon, and I have something to say to you first."

He rose, came forward gingerly, and halted a safe distance away. I sometimes wondered whether any other man would have borne with him at all. The wretch knew that I had grown absurdly fond of him.

"What do you want to tell me?" he asked, as he crept nearer and contemptuously regarded my hut-building effort.

In a few words I frankly told him of my experience as a Senatra with Mr. Vancouver. He listened absorbed and aghast.

"I didn't know," he breathed. "I am glad you told me. You do trust me, don't you?"

"Trust you, Beelo? Have I ever failed?"

"No, but you are always thinking of your people, never of Lentala and Beelo."

"You have taught me to think of you and Lentala, else I never would have told you about Mr. Vancouver and his plot. But don't you see? The king is using Mr. Vancouver to break up our colony, Beelo," raising myself in aggressive earnestness. "You talk of my trusting you. I have already put my life and more than two hundred other lives in your hands. But not for one moment have you ever trusted me."

He was deep in thought, and was distressed. Before I could ask him for the cause, Christopher came up.

"Something is going to happen very soon," Beelo said. "Christopher, what did you say to the native that came to see Mr. Vancouver?"

Christopher wore his stupidest manner

Beelo reached round, picked up a stick and threatened him.

"You know what I said. Now answer—quick!"

"Me?"

"Me?" mocked Beelo, and struck him. The nearest that I had ever seen to a smile on Christopher's face came then as a twinkle in his eyes.

"I'll tell you," he answered. "I told him Mr. Vancouver didn't never want to see him no more." That was a long speech for Christopher.

"Then what happened?" impatiently demanded Beelo.

"I done this a-way at him." Christopher crossed his eyes and made a grimace at Beelo. The act was so unexpected and terrifying that Beelo started back in alarm, and then rolled on the ground in laughter.

He sat up. "What did the man do then?"

"This a-way." Christopher's face assumed a look of astonishment and fear.

"What then?"

"He runned away."

Beelo nodded thoughtfully, and said:

"The king will think Mr. Vancouver changed his mind. Very well. Now he won't wait any longer. He will make a demand for one of your people." His manner was grave.

He was surprised when I informed him of Captain Mason's determination that the young men be permitted to leave the valley, and that Lentala should arrange for their being turned back,—I had no heart to say anything about their rough handling by the natives.

"I'll tell her," he said. "I think she can manage it."

"But are you sure?" I anxiously demanded.

"Don't worry, Choseph. You are too serious to be happy. Let's talk about the first man to go out when the king sends for one. Do you wish Mr. Vancouver to go?" The question came with a keen look.

"Not if it will expose him to any danger, or give him an opportunity to plot against us."

Beelo's look became suspicious. "What do you owe him, that he is not to be exposed to danger?" he asked.

Seeing the trend of his question, I was irritated, and sternly said:

"That is my affair, and I won't discuss it. If there's to be anything petty and spiteful in the matters of life and death that we are planning, I will stop everything right here, or demand that Lentala send some one else to me if it is impossible for her to come."

Beelo was staring at me in surprise. He turned inquiringly to Christopher, and saw gentler but none the less reproving eyes. For a second he floundered between resentment and irrepressible good-nature, and then with a laugh threw a handful of sand at Christopher.

"Choseph!" he cried; "I didn't mean anything, really I didn't. And I'll be good." After reflection he asked, "Who is Mr. Vancouver's best friend?"

"A man named Rawley."

"You think he knows Mr. Vancouver's plan?"

"He certainly does."

"Then let him be the first."

Darkness crouched behind all of this, but Beelo's intelligent eyes were a light ahead. Unquestionably his mind was working rapidly, but his speech was slow and had silent intervals. He and Lentala were evidently undertaking severe tasks and desperate risks the nature of which I could not even surmise. Some profound motive must be urging them on.

"When he is taken out of the valley," Beelo said after a pause, "I'll want you and Christopher to go too, with me. Will you?"

"We'll do anything you wish, Beelo."

"As natives."

"Good."

"It will be very dangerous."

"That is nothing."

"Not a soul is to know but your captain. Not Annabel, mind you!" he abruptly added.

“Certainly not.”

“And you both promise that if your lives are threatened, you will try not to hurt or kill any one except as a last resort?”

We promised.

“Now,” said Beelo, “I want Christopher to go with me at once, and we’ll make a raft. When we go out of the valley it will be by way of the river.”

“That is all fully agreed to, dear little brother,” I said firmly, “but some things must be understood. The first is that no harm shall befall any man taken out of the valley by the king’s order.”

“You don’t trust me, Choseph,” he replied, looking hurt.

“Far more than you trust me,” I kindly but emphatically said. “While I know that wisdom and a noble purpose are in your and Lentala’s every plan and ad, I have heavy responsibilities, and I know that four heads would be better than two in this matter. I have no right to go ahead in the dark, and I demand to know what the plans are.”

The pain in Beelo’s face deepened, but there was no resentment.

“It isn’t that I don’t trust you, Choseph,” he said, an appealing look in his eyes.

“What is it, then?”

He looked hunted, and blurted out:

“That’s what you and Christopher are going with me for,—to keep from harm the man whom the king will send for, and—”

“What is the danger to him?” I insisted.

“I don’t know! I can only imagine!” he passionately said. “It’s horrible. I think you understand. And you are to lay plans with Lentala for saving the colony.”

I was about to press the matter further, but a look from Christopher stopped me.

“I am sorry to have pained you, dear little brother.” I took his hand. “Will you forgive me?”

“Yes,” with a smile.

He rose, and his relief was shaded with anxiety. This parting was the first sad one. I also had risen, and the boy was looking up into my face.

“I am trusting you,” he said, “trusting you with my life and Lentala’s, and the lives of many others.”

“Yes, and you’ll find me worthy, dear little brother.”

“I know.” He withdrew his hand, took Christopher’s arm and pressed it to his own side, and peered deep into his eyes. “Do you love me, old Christopher?”

“Me?”

Beelo gently slapped Christopher’s cheek.

“Answer! Do you love me?”

“Yes.”

“Christopher,” impressively, “if my life were in danger, and you could save me by giving your own life, would you?”

“Me?”

“You needn’t answer if you don’t want to.”

“Yes, I would die for you.

In a burst of laughter Beelo drew his big head down and laid his cheek against it. “What an absurd old Christopher!” he cried. “Come.”

He stepped back, and again turned to me. “Choseph, one thing more! As the king’s messenger will you again see Mr. Vancouver?”

“Yes, if you wish.”

“It’s better. Tell him to send the young men out whenever he pleases, and to take the passage by which you entered the valley.”

“I understand.”

“That is all. Good-bye.” He walked away slowly with Christopher, and for the first time I noticed that he looked as though bearing a burden heavy for his strength.

* * *

After laying the matter before Captain Mason, I prepared my disguise and visited Mr. Vancouver that evening. He and Rawley occupied the same hut; Annabel slept in one adjoining. I had previously taken care to note that as Annabel was helping a young mother with the care of an ailing infant, she would not likely intrude on my visit.

The two men were startled when they found me standing silently before them. In the dim light of a nut-oil lamp I saw Rawley’s face blanch, and I wondered how he would bear the ordeal fronting him outside the valley.

“Well?” eagerly said Mr. Vancouver.

After instructing him as to the sending out of the young men, I informed him that the king was nearly ready for a man, and added that Rawley would be acceptable. Mr. Vancouver was disappointed that he himself could not go, but cheerfully said:

“Certainly. Mr. Rawley will be glad to go.”

I enjoyed the young man’s dismay. Not so Mr. Vancouver.

“Why, man, it’s the opportunity of a lifetime!” he declared to Rawley. “There’s no danger. The king will furnish a safe-conduct—won’t he?” he added, turning to me.

“I suppose so. Your friend couldn’t find the way otherwise.”

“Of course! Brace up, Rawley, and thank your stars for your good fortune. You’ll have important things to tell me when you return.” For all his cheering manner, Mr. Vancouver could not conceal his contempt. To me he said: “Give the king my thanks. Tell him that his kind offer is gratefully accepted, and that Mr. Rawley will be ready at any time.”

Rawley was a bluish white.

“Very well,” he faintly said; “I’ll have to go, I suppose, but who knows what is really to be done with me? I don’t—” With a gesture Mr. Vancouver stopped the indiscreet speech.

“Give the king my message of thanks and grateful acceptance,” he snapped out in his old business-like way. “Mr. Rawley will go whenever he is summoned.”

I bowed, and turned to leave, but found Annabel blocking the door. Her eyes were wide with surprise. She had never before seen natives near the camp at night, and never one alone. With unexpected firmness she refused to let me pass.

“Father, Mr. Rawley, what does this mean? Where is Mr. Rawley going?”

The men sat dumb. Annabel’s instinct told her that treachery was in the air.

“Does Captain Mason know about this?” she asked.

Mr. Vancouver was the first to recover, but he underestimated his daughter’s shrewdness.

“Not so loud, daughter. It is all right. Let the man pass. I’ll explain.”

Among Annabel’s charms was a certain rashness. Here she stood between affection and duty, and it would be interesting to observe the outcome. I was glad that she continued to bar my escape.

“If it’s all right,” she said, “let us three go with this man to Captain Mason and

“We’ll have no more nonsense, daughter! Are you aware what your attitude toward me means?”

“I don’t know, father. I—I don’t understand. You have never spoken this way to me before. Surely—”

“This foolishness must stop here,” her father brusquely said, rising and advancing, with the evident intention of dragging her from the door; but something in her face stopped him. It was time for me to interfere, lest she spoil everything. The risk was in lending my voice to her sensitive ear.

“He knows,” I gruffly said.

“Captain Mason?”

I nodded.

“Come with me and say that to him,” she demanded.

I nodded again. The exasperation and fear in Mr. Vancouver’s face did not escape his daughter.

“I won’t have it!” he nearly shouted. To me, “Don’t you go, or I’ll—”

I stopped him with a knowing look, which he rightly understood to mean that it would be well to lay her suspicions by going, and that I might be depended on to handle the matter satisfactorily. In truth, I was enjoying the situation too much for thought of graver things. And I had never seen Annabel so superb.

“Father,” she said, “you owe this to me, and I owe it to you.”

Mr. Vancouver’s uneasy face betrayed his predicament. Might he trust my ability to deceive Captain Mason? was his evident thought. The peril was great. I was maliciously happy over the grinding of the man. Suppose I should make a slip with Captain Mason: that would mean the hangman’s noose for Mr. Vancouver,—I knew he was thinking all that. I could not resist the temptation to harry him.

“I go,” I said to Annabel.

She wavered, but her courage rose, and with reckless heroism she stepped out without looking at her father. I followed in silence. She did not glance back, and I think she was glad that the men remained in the hut. With her head held up by the high purpose within her, she walked as though she were above the stars and they were her stepping-stones. Once she stopped short. I was certain that love had conquered and that she would tell me my willingness to go satisfied her, and so would send me away; but she went desperately on.

There was a brilliant tropical moon, and the captain was sitting in the shine of it on the outer bench of his hut. He rose in surprise.

“Captain Mason,” panted Annabel, “I found this native in our camp just now, and I wondered if you knew.”

He had recognized me, but Annabel did not see the twinkle in his eyes. He knew that I had blundered in letting her discover me with her father. I was amazed at the fine delicacy of the man. Instead of asking her questions, he demanded an explanation of me. With great caution not to betray myself, I said that I had the king’s permission to take Rawley out, that he might see something of the island, and procure some of the gems so abundant there.

The moonlight revealed the shame that burned Annabel’s cheeks because she had doubted her father. Would Captain Mason have the tact to cure her hurt?

“May I take your hand?” he asked. She wonderingly yielded it. As he held it and looked down into her lovely face there came into his voice a gentleness, a tenderness, that I am certain had been hitherto strange to it. “This is a wonderful thing that you have done,—the noblest, bravest thing that I have ever seen in my life. It was so not alone because it might have meant a matter of

life and death, but because it was hard to do. I am proud to know and be trusted by such a woman.”

Tears were slipping down her cheeks as he released her hand.

“If you have that kindly regard for me, Captain Mason,” she said, “let it extend to my father. He meant nothing wrong in violating the rule.”

“He has special privileges, Miss Vancouver. I will pay no attention to the incident.”

CHAPTER IX. *An Iron Hand Comes Down.* Anxiety Over Beelo’s Absence. The Runaways Return in Disgrace. Mr. Vancouver’s Predicament. Rebellion Breeding. The Arrest. Merciless Discipline.

Next morning the young men in Mr. Vancouver’s plot passed secret looks and words, and Mr. Vancouver and Rawley wore an indifferent air too conspicuously.

Annabel emerged late; she and Dr. Preston had been with the suffering child that night; but she looked much more worn and depressed than the night’s vigil warranted. I greeted her cheerily, and her quiet smile was ready. I saw nothing to indicate that she noted anything unusual afoot. Captain Mason gave her a pleasant bow.

The colony had early integrated into small social groups, particularly at meal-times. We sat on rough benches at two long tables under trees. There was a rearrangement of groups at breakfast this morning, so as to bring the conspirators together at an end occupied by Mr. Vancouver and Rawley. Annabel sat with the children. The maneuver of the men did not escape Captain Mason, who was some distance away and at the other table, having rigidly held himself aloof from all social preferences. After breakfast he gave me an unobtrusive look, and left. I soon followed, and found Christopher with him in our hut.

“You noticed, Mr. Tudor?”

“Yes. They will go out of the valley today. Lentala will see that they are turned back. What shall I do?”

An amused look came into his eyes. “You may abandon your usual plan of calling the names of those who shall go to the fields, and announce that only volunteers need go. That will spare such of the idiots as are on your list from sneaking out of the fields on pretense of headache. Give them a long rope. Everything is moving beautifully to a crisis. Take your men to the fields. Christopher will stay here.”

With the insistence of trifles thrusting themselves into a tense situation, every small thing of the morning marched with me back to the tables. I must observe the progress of some insatiably hungry nestlings in a tree, and laugh at a round scolding from their mother. Never had I heard so many birds singing at once. The solemn cadence of the waterfall sent a Sabbath spirit through the air. The forest shadows quivered with mysteries and portents, and the air was drunk with the perfume of many flowers.

Annabel’s glance showed that she had noted our leaving the tables, but a cheery word from me laid her uneasiness.

Relief appeared in some faces when I announced that only volunteers would go to the fields that day. Mr. Vancouver studied me, and Rawley was nervous. A small crowd responded to my call, and then amused shame swept over the men as I good-naturedly laughed at them, with the result that a larger squad than usual came forward. I kept Mr. Vancouver in sight, and was not surprised to catch him throwing a look at a conspirator here and there, causing the guilty to stand

forth with the innocent. I knew that he suspected something in my departure from the usual way lately of calling out the men.

The work in the fields went with a smoothness that gave no hint of trouble beneath the surface. The conspirators dropped away one after another, with my pleasant assent. Rawley remained. That meant his want of courage to join the daring expedition. When the remnant started for camp I went to the spot where I expected Beelo and Christopher.

The time for Beelo's appearance came and passed. I had an irksome wait, and in spite of my confidence in his skill, I grew uneasy lest he had fallen into difficulties. Never before had he failed to keep an appointment. His endurance and pluck had been extraordinary: From his home at the palace to our meeting-places had been a number of miles, without counting his trouble and ingenuity in avoiding detection, and the hard labor of scaling the valley wall; yet he had never failed, never complained, never mentioned the heroism for which his conduct stood. I bitterly accused myself and Captain Mason for our selfishness in accepting the boy's allegiance and labors as a mere incident of our struggle to escape. My heart went out to him now; I had been remiss in appreciation. Had he been of a more aggressive nature, less gentle and timid, relying more on force than ingenuity, perhaps my conscience would have been easier. The task which it had been so easy for me to send Lentala with reference to the malcontents, must have been severe for her, and must have involved her brother.

Christopher came at last, but not Beelo. The man reported all well in camp; Annabel had been downcast until Captain Mason cheered her; Mr. Vancouver was painfully restless; none of the conspirators had returned.

We waited until all hope of Beelo's arrival was futile. Christopher had been listening, but I dreaded to question him. Finally I remarked that we must go, as we could not expect Beelo so late. The readiness with which Christopher acquiesced assured me that he had not expected the lad, but I had no heart to ask him whether he thought that trouble had been the detaining cause. We returned to camp.

Dr. Preston had much patching of cuticle to do that night, for the young men returned after dark. There had been an uneasy hush over the camp all day. Upon their arrival, which was accomplished with all possible unostentation, a buzz arose and gossip leaked. I was with Captain Mason, who sat silent and in grim content as I told him what was going on. We were both curious to see what Dr. Preston, a quiet young man of fine intelligence, would deem his duty after the urgency of his offices had passed. After a while he came, excited and a little frightened.

He reported that there were no serious hurts, and that the men would be about next day.

"What account do they give?" inquired Captain Mason. The twinkle in his eyes was lost on the earnest young physician.

"They were peaceably exploring the valley, Captain,—just a lark, you know, although it had the serious purpose of finding out anything that might be useful in the escape of the colony,—when they were set upon by an overwhelming horde of savages, the evident purpose being to take them away by force. Our men, though so greatly outnumbered, held their ground, but the scrimmage was close and savage. They would have won without the fan-bearer's interference, but her coming up with a personal guard put an end to the affair, as she called the natives off."

Captain Mason's amused attention sharpened to a keen interest. "The king's fan-bearer?" he echoed.

"Yes; the one we saw at the feast."

The president nodded. "They have all told you the same story, I suppose," he remarked.

"Yes."

“Thank you. That is all.”

In leaving, Dr. Preston looked surprised that Captain Mason should appear so indifferent.

Captain Mason announced no plans concerning the young men that night, and there was nothing unusual in his bearing next morning when the colony assembled for breakfast. All watched him narrowly. When breakfast was over, and before we had risen from the tables, he sent Christopher for me, for I sat some distance away. As I rose, I had a strong feeling that something extraordinary was about to fall to my hand, for I knew Captain Mason's nature and his trust in me.

That brought Beelo vividly to mind. He had seen hardly more than the gentler side of me. Indeed, it had doubtless been his own gentleness, his innate delicacy and refinement, that had held in subjection the ruder elements in me, so deep was my fondness for him. And it had never been irksome, though the conduct which it had almost forced upon me was strikingly different from that which usually governed me. While I was glad that Beelo was not present to see what I knew was coming, still his spirit was with me, and so strongly that it was tangible. My whole outlook was filled with him, and I could not shake off the feeling that he was really near and observing.

Under the impulse, I sent a trained glance into the shadows about the camp, and suddenly stopped, for I found his bright eyes peering at me from the trees. A closer look discovered that underneath the almost conscious mischief that sparkled in his eyes was apprehension. I had a moment of anger that he should be there, and tried to give him a look that would send him away; but he made a face at me, and with deep misgivings I went to my duty, striving to put him out of my mind.

“Call for order,” Captain Mason directed, “and make a complete statement of the affair, omitting Mr. Vancouver's connection with it. Then tell off twelve steady men for a guard, and have them arrest all of the young men who disobeyed the rule. Manage the details in your own way. I'll take command after the arrest.”

Obedience to authority was a law of my training, but I was aghast, and wondered if the man realized that he might be touching a match to a magazine.

As Mr. Vancouver was the danger-center, I glanced at him. He had been closely observing the president. I shall not forget the picture that he made as I called for order and proceeded with the speech. By no effort could he control the emotions that surged to his face,—his consternation at the appalling correctness of my account, his ferocious resentment and anger, his sense of being baffled and humiliated while being spared from open shame, his white fear that at last he would be exposed as the arch-traitor.

I observed Annabel also, and saw her puzzled uneasiness as I reminded the colony of the king's injunction and the great danger of disregarding it; her furtive glances at her father; her amazement when I hinted at the plot for undermining Captain Mason's authority, and spoke of its secret working toward the destruction of the colony; the blanching of her cheeks when I described the effort of the young men to slip out of the valley, their being beaten and bound, and the mercy that had spared them, whipped and wounded, to sneak back in darkness to camp; and the lie they told to cover their treachery and shame.

There was a tense pause when I had done, and then I called out the names of the guilty. So overwhelming had been the presentation, that, as Captain Mason must have foreseen, there was no time for immediate reaction toward mutiny. I called out the guard. A death-like stillness followed. Captain Mason was standing with the silence and firmness of stone. I stole a glance at Beelo and saw that he had slipped round through the trees to be nearer.

I rapped out an order for the guard to step forward. They looked round curiously at one another, some with a half-smile as they glanced at Captain Mason, to see if he approved. His face was expressionless. I repeated the order, more peremptorily, and in slowly rising they regarded me curiously and in some wonder, as they had never seen me with such a bearing. Whatever they saw and heard quickened their action. There was an impressive solemnity in the proceeding, and it strengthened them moment by moment. I did not hurry them, since it was clear that a sense of serious responsibility was rising in them.

“Lenardo, step forward and submit to arrest,” I sharply said to one of the recalcitrants, a decent young carpenter.

He paled, then flushed, and blunderingly turned to Mr. Vancouver. But that gentleman was gazing at me with all the hate of his soul. Annabel shrank under the significance of Lenardo’s silent appeal to her father. Receiving no guidance from Mr. Vancouver, the young culprit sent a fluttering, desperate look abroad, picking out his guilty associates. All the comfort he got from them was a frightened glance in return.

The impaled man wriggled awkwardly to his feet,—for I was giving him time,—and with a grin and shrug made a pitiful attempt to treat the arrest as a pleasantry.

“Stand facing that end of the guard-line,” I ordered, pointing.

“Come, Henry,” he said to one of the conspirators. The bravado was clearly sham.

“No talking!” I ripped out.

It jerked Lenardo straight, and he came forward and stood where I had directed.

The young man addressed as Henry slouched up with a faint trace of Lenardo’s swagger, but my sharp “Step lively!” electrified him into firmer action, and his grin went sour.

“Hobart!” I next called. I selected him for the third, for I knew his independent, rebellious nature, his courage and pride, and wished the severest test of the discipline to come at once.

Because we had been good friends and he knew that I respected him, he stared incredulously, but found me a stranger. Then a vicious look flared in his face, and, still sitting, he fingered the handle of a heavy iron vessel on the table while regarding me defiantly. I waited, and then called him again.

“I won’t be made a fool of in this way!” he cried, rising, his face blazing, his hold on the iron vessel tightening.

“You two guards on the left, do your duty!” I commanded.

They hesitatingly advanced upon him. Making a great scattering of frightened women and children, Hobart stepped back, brandished the vessel, and shouted:

“I’m a free American citizen, I am! I’m a law-abiding man and I know my rights! Stand back, there,” to the guards, “or I’ll—”

“Two more guards from the left. Step lively!” I called.

The advance of the four guards was checked by a diversion. Mr. Vancouver, who had been sitting in apathetic silence, suddenly spoke out with biting clearness:

“Hobart, it is the duty of every one here to submit to authority.”

The young man opened his mouth in astonishment, and instantly drooped; the vessel clattered from his hand to the ground.

“I won’t make trouble now,” he grumbled, “but we’ve been played low down by somebody, and I’ll—”

“Silence!” I said.

With a threatening shoulder-lift at Mr. Vancouver, which deepened that gentleman's pallor, Hobart sullenly fell in. I quickly called out the other culprits; all obeyed and stood in line facing the guard. Then I looked round at Captain Mason for orders.

CHAPTER X. *The Finding of a Man.* Shame and Horror Follow Disobedience. A Violent Outbreak and Its Result. The Heads That Struck a Wall. A Frightened Face Among the Trees.

The president said nothing, but gave a signal to Christopher, who brought up a basket containing rope-ends and strips of cloth, of native manufacture. I understood what I was next to do, and under ordinary circumstances should have thought of nothing but the doing; but now a coldness seized my heart, for I thought of Beelo, as a horrified witness.

There was a craning to see what the basket held, and then came a quick drawing of the breath and afterward a hiss as the truth dawned on those of quick perception.

Picking up a rope-end, I stood facing the crowd in silence until perfect stillness had come. Then I went to Lenardo, the first in line, and said to the guard:

"Are any of you experienced in tying a man's hands?"

A head-shake was the response of each.

"Then observe how this is done," I said. And to Lenardo, "Turn your back and cross your wrists behind you."

All the blood fled his face. He glanced about with a shamed, beseeching helplessness, his eyes wide with horror and his look an appeal for protection from the outrage.

"Turn, and cross your wrists," came my command as evenly as before.

The prisoner obeyed, his hands trembling.

"Cross your wrists." My tone was such as a farrier might use to a horse he was shoeing.

Lenardo crossed them.

"Observe," I repeated to the guards, as I quickly wound the cord and knotted - it.

Hobart watched the proceeding narrowly, his face growing more livid, his eyes bulging farther, his breathing uneven. Once he sent a flaming glance at Mr. Vancouver, who winced under it, and sat with a sickly, shrunken look. I knew that the supreme test of discipline lay ahead, and I was warming to the situation.

"Tie the next one," I said to two of the guards, handing them a strip. At the same time, no longer able to resist a glance at Beelo, I found in his stricken face so strange a look that it disconcerted me for a moment. It looked to be both horror and appeal. But my duty was plain.

I stood by and observed the clumsy work of the two guards in tying the second man, who, meeker than Lenardo,—although both were manly fellows,—submitted more promptly.

Hobart's turn came next. He was looking about as a trapped beast, and he swayed and muttered. It was clear that under the approaching degradation he was letting his wits tangle.

Some women, sickened by the scene, and fearing a tragedy from Hobart, slipped away, a few softly crying, others very white. They hid in a huddle behind the storehouse, the mothers taking their children.

"One more turn. Tighter. Work faster," I ordered the guards tying the second man.

They obeyed with nervous eagerness.

Then came Hobart's turn. I stood before him. He knew what to do without my order, and I was silent.

"Haven't we any friends among you people?" he bellowed, stepping back and hardening every muscle. "Are you all cowards, to let these brutes ride roughshod over you?"

“Submit, Hobart,” cut Mr. Vancouver’s voice.

I turned upon him, but said nothing, and his cadaverous face whitened still more under my stare.

“We need no assistance from you, sir,” Captain Mason coldly said.

He started; a momentary flash enlivened his sunken eyes.

“Step up here in line,” I said to Hobart.

He wavered toward submission under Mr. Vancouver’s order, but my prompt suppression of that intervention thrust upon him an angry despair. “To hell with you!” he shouted to me. “You bully! You cur! Here, fellows,” addressing his comrades in line, “don’t be whipped dogs! We are free American Citizens, we are! Break away!” He stepped still farther back and edged toward the table. “Stand by me! Be men! We’ll settle this thing! Come on!”

The line swayed.

“Guard, re-form the prisoners in line,” I ordered.

They stepped forward.

“Fight, boys! Arm yourselves at the tables!” Hobart’s fierce words thrilled the camp.

“Lively there!” I snapped to the guards. “Seize Hobart first.”

“The tables, boys!” shouted Hobart. “Romer,” he added to a husky young man of the party, “tackle Captain Mason. I’ll attend to Tudor!”

Hobart sprang at Romer, gave him a shake, and shouted, “Get to work!” and then advanced toward me as Romer was hardening for assault.

As Hobart had rudely calculated, the moment was snatched by the other prisoners for a rush on the guard and the tables, and they broke on the bound as Hobart hurled himself upon me. But he was too precipitate, and lacked training.

It is doubtful that any in the camp except myself saw how the next thing happened. There was a muffled crack, and Hobart’s feet cleared the ground, his limbs whipped the air as though he were drowning, and he sprawled on the earth in a disorganized, quivering heap. A glance showed me that Romer had been stopped two yards from Captain Mason by a look such as he had never encountered before, and he stood staring like an imbecile.

A low cry broke from fifty feminine throats when Hobart’s body made its impact with the ground. But the entire rush had been paralyzed; it was clearly the impression that Hobart had been killed, and all were staring from him to me. The guard had responded; the prisoners were in subjugation, some by a collar-grip of the guard, others panting on the ground under urgent knees, still others standing inert.

“Hands off the prisoners. Re-form the line,” I ordered.

When this had been done, the young men sullen, sheepish, and silent, and viewing with awe the still body of Hobart on the ground, I looked round upon the circle till I found the man I wanted. My glance had included Captain Mason and found him stolid and motionless as he observed my procedure.

“Dr. Preston, come forward,” I said.

He instantly responded.

“Please examine Hobart’s jaw and neck,” I directed. “One or the other may be broken.”

As he was turning away to obey he discovered a red trickle from my right hand.

“Are you hurt?” he inquired.

He carefully examined the heap on the ground.

“Only a contusion and a slight brain-concussion,” he announced.

“You two,” I promptly said to two of the guards, “buck and gag Hobart. Do you know how?”

They shook their heads, but under my direction accomplished what appeared to be a disagreeable task. The process consisted in tying Hobart's hands and feet, flexing his knees, slipping his arms over them, and thrusting a stick under his knees and over his arms, thus reducing him to a helpless knot. Then they thrust a towel between his teeth and tied it at the back of his head.

"Shall I do anything to revive him, sir?" asked the doctor. It was interesting to hear the "sir" slip from his tongue.

I looked to Captain Mason for directions, but his face remained void.

"No," I said. Then to two of the guards, "Take him to the shade over there, on the ground," indicating a tree near by and in full view of the camp.

Meanwhile, the tying of the other prisoners had gone on rapidly and smoothly. When it was finished, I ordered the men taken to the shade and lined up behind Hobart, who lay on his side, the guards standing by. The prisoners were a very sober-looking crowd.

Then came a lull. I had regarded the subjugation of the men as merely the lighter preparatory work for some grave procedure which Captain Mason would direct after that was accomplished. At first I was doubtful of my wisdom in withholding restorative measures from Hobart, but I had done so hoping that it would have the effect both of softening Captain Mason and of impressing the other prisoners and the camp at large. Now I had to face unknown plans, but Captain Mason still remained mute. It was evident that, since quiet had come, it was from him rather than me that the camp awaited the next move; it was his crushing mastery that all felt; it was his iron hand that lay on every heart. He quietly seated himself, and without a glance at me waited, his face wearing the undisturbed calm that distinguished it always in dramatic situations.

The women in hiding peered out cautiously, and then joined those on the scene. A slight stir, accompanied with murmurs, rose in a spot where the women stood thickest, and a shrill voice came angrily.

"Yes, I will! You can't stop me! I say it's an outrage, and I'm going to untie that boy and take that strangling thing out of his mouth." She was advancing, a middle-aged woman, with a determined air, and she walked straight toward Hobart, ignoring me as I stood near him. "I just want to say to you, Mr. Tudor, that it was enough to knock the senses out of him, and that it's inhuman and brutal to keep him tied up like an animal. If the *men* in this camp can be bullied and scared, I'll let you know that there's a *woman* who can't. I'm going to untie that lad, and—"

I had stepped forward and laid a kindly hand on her arm as she spoke, but she threw it off.

"Let me alone!" she cried. "If you want to strike a woman dead, you murdering bully, do it! I dare you!"

Nodding to two of the guards, I said: "Take her to her hut, and keep her there. If she makes the least noise, bind and gag her."

"You brute! You coward!" she cried, making a dash forward.

The guards gingerly seized her, and she talked and struggled wildly. But they dragged her away, and no sound came from the hut. Captain Mason gave not the slightest attention to the incident, which greatly deepened the depression on the camp.

Hobart's slow, heavy breathing became regular, then fluttered; his eyes opened, and rolled unseeing. Intelligence began to dawn in his face, and with it came an unconscious straining at his bonds. That hastened his recovery. A wild, clear look that roved a moment and settled malignantly on me, showed that he had come to himself. His astonished glance at his helpless state preceded an effort for speech that his gag turned to a growl, and he made a mighty tug to snap the cords. That failing, he twisted his head to see the line of prisoners standing bound. Then

his gaze found Captain Mason, who was not observing him, and he savagely growled and champed his gag.

I looked furtively round for Beelo, and found him staring at me as at something strange and monstrous. It was more than I could bear, and on looking away I discovered the gathering of clouds, and then heard low thunder in the distance.

Hobart's fury wore itself out. Humiliation took its turn. Toward the end came a humbled spirit and dumb pleading. A quickening ran through the crowd, and eager, appealing eyes were upon me from every direction; but I waited. From humility Hobart sank lower, for the pain of his cramped muscles grew worse and worse, making him writhe and groan and strain. Still the moment had not come. I knew that many a life hung on the precision of my conduct, and Captain Mason did not interfere to the slightest extent. At last, when Hobart's dumb pleading had settled on my face and did not rove, I said to Dr. Preston:

"The gag—nothing else—may come away.

He removed it, and Hobart panted:

"Thank you, Doctor. Take the others off, please."

The physician looked to me, but I gave no sign. That started a movement in the crowd, and I had to quell that with a look.

"Let him take 'em off, Mr. Tudor," the prisoner begged.

I nodded, and he was free. He labored weakly to a sitting posture, Dr. Preston assisting. His head rolled, but he breathed deeply, and steadied himself. Dr. Preston felt his pulse.

"May he have water and a wet towel, sir?" he asked me.

I nodded. Hobart drank greedily. Dr. Preston nipped his head and face, and bound the wet towel over his forehead.

"Bring a seat for Hobart," I said to a guard.

Hobart was lifted to it, and thus sat facing the crowd. He had a finer look than I had ever seen from him; he had passed through purgatory. He looked openly at the people, and at last his glance rested on Mr. Vancouver. It seemed to hold a deep meaning. Mr. Vancouver shrank even more than when he had seen the iron hand come down.

I went up to Captain Mason and reported that Hobart was conscious.

The captain nodded, came forward, I beside him, and looked down on the beaten man, who anxiously returned the look.

"May I say a word, Captain?" Hobart asked.

"Certainly."

Hobart turned to me. "You are a hard man," he said, "but square and brave. So are you, Captain Mason. I deserved what I got, and a good deal more. But I'm sorry for what I did, and I ask you to forgive me."

There was frank admiration in Captain Mason's face, for he was observing another strong man emerge from the first hard lesson in a discipline that the sailor had known for many a year.

"May I say something to the boys?" asked Hobart.

"Of course."

Hobart worked round to face his fellow-conspirators. In silence he looked at one after another.

"Boys," he said, "we made a mistake, and are beginning to pay. I don't know what's going to be done with us, but, whatever it is, we must bear it like men. We made an agreement when we came into this valley, and we violated it. What we did might have cost the life of every member of this colony."

He paused, for he was weak, and a deep emotion tore him.

“Boys, if I had been Captain Mason and Mr. Tudor, and had protected and trusted the people as they have done, and they had tried to undermine me, and to benefit themselves to the harm of the others, I would have them taken to the nearest tree, and, God help me! I would have them hanged.”

Not a word of that astonishing speech missed an ear in the crowd. When Hobart had ended, his head dropped in dejection.

After a long minute of silence Captain Mason gave me a look. I went to Hobart, who raised a sad face to mine. But when he saw my smile and my extended hand, a glad surprise leaped in him, and his clasp was that of a drowning man.

I walked away. Dr. Preston next received Captain Mason’s glance, and the scene was repeated. I did not observe the hint that the president must have given; but while some of the guard came and took Hobart’s hand, others were untying the prisoners, and they also came in their turn.

There were tears in Hobart’s eyes, and his speech had fled by the time Captain Mason came up and took his hand.

“You are a man, Hobart,” said he, and without noting the effect turned to the other conspirators. “Young men,” he went on, “you are at liberty. The incident is closed.”

Without a glance at the assembled colony, he turned away and went to his hut.

I looked for Beelo, and saw his signal to follow him. A buzzing rose from the crowd. A hard, fixed look was in Mr. Vancouver’s ashen face. Annabel’s head rested in her arms on the table, and she was sobbing. From every direction I found furtive glances upon me, and wondered whether I had become a Pariah. The idea was dispelled by the friendly responses that my advances found, but I was uneasy on the score of Beelo.