
TWILIGHT
JULIA FRANKAU

Twilight

JULIA FRANKAU

Twilight, J. Frankau
Jazzybee Verlag Jürgen Beck
86450 Altenmünster, Loschberg 9
Deutschland

Printed by Createspace, North Charleston, SC, USA

ISBN: 97838496459393

www.jazzybee-verlag.de
www.facebook.com/jazzybeeverlag
admin@jazzybee-verlag.de

CONTENTS:

Chapter I

A couple of years ago, on the very verge of the illness that subsequently overwhelmed me, I took a small furnished house in Pineland. I made no inspection of the place, but signed the agreement at the instance of the local house-agent, who proved little less inventive than the majority of his *confrères*.

Three months of neuritis, only kept within bounds by drugs, had made me comparatively indifferent to my surroundings. It was necessary for me to move because I had become intolerant of the friends who exclaimed at my ill looks, and the acquaintances who failed to notice any alteration in me. One sister whom I really loved, and who really loved me, exasperated me by constant visits and ill-concealed anxiety. Another irritated me little less by making light of my ailment and speaking of neuritis in an easy familiar manner as one might of toothache or a corn. I had no natural sleep, and if I were not on the borderland of insanity, I was at least within sight of the home park of inconsequence. Reasoned behaviour was no longer possible, and I knew it was necessary for me to be alone.

I do not wish to recall this bad time nor the worse that ante-dated my departure, when I was at the mercy of venal doctors and indifferent nurses, dependent on grudged bad service and overpaid inattention, taking a so-called rest cure. But I do wish to relate a most curious circumstance, or set of circumstances, that made my stay in Pineland memorable, and left me, after my sojourn there, obsessed with the story of which I found the beginning on the first night of my arrival, and the end in the long fevered nights that followed. I myself hardly know how much is true and

how much is fiction in this story; for what the *cache* of letters is responsible, and for what the morphia.

The house at Pineland was called Carbies, and it was haunted for me from the first by Margaret Capel and Gabriel Stanton. Quite early in my stay I must have contemplated writing about them, knowing that there was no better way of ridding myself of their phantoms, than by trying to make them substantial in pen and ink. I had their letters and some scraps of an unfinished diary to help me, a notebook with many blank pages, the garrulous reticence of the village apothecary, and the evidence of the sun-washed God's Acre by the old church.

To begin at the beginning.

It was a long drive from Pineland station to Carbies. I had sent my maid in advance, but there was no sign of her when my ricketty one-horse fly pulled up at the garden gate of a suburban villa of a house "standing high" it is true, and with "creeper climbing about its white-painted walls." But otherwise with no more resemblance to the exquisite and secluded cottage *ornée* I had in my mind, and that the house-agent had portrayed in his letters, than a landscape by Matise to one by Ruysdael.

I was too tired then to be greatly disappointed. Two servants had been sent in by my instructions, and the one who opened the door to me proved to be a cheerful-looking young person of the gollywog type, with a corresponding cap, who relieved me of my hand luggage and preceded me to the drawing-room, where wide windows and a bright fire made me oblivious for the moment of the shabby furniture, worn carpet, and mildewed wallpaper. Tea was brought to me in a cracked pot on a veneered tray. The literary supplement of *The Times* and an American magazine were all I had with which to occupy myself. And they proved insufficient. I began to look about me; and became curiously and almost immediately conscious that my new abode must have been inhabited by a sister or brother of

the pen. The feeling was not psychic. The immense writing-table stood sideways in the bow-window as only "we" know how to place it. The writing-chair looked sufficiently luxurious to tempt me to an immediate trial; there were a footstool and a big waste-paper basket; all incongruous with the cheap and shabby drawing-room furniture. Had only my MS. paper been to hand, ink in the substantial glass pot, and my twin enamel pens available, I think I should then and there have abjured all my vows of rest and called upon inspiration to guide me to a fresh start.

"*Work whilst ye have the light*" had been my text for months; driving me on continually. It seemed possible, even then, that the time before me was short. I left the fire and my unfinished tea. Instinctively I found the words rising to my lips, "I could write here." That was the way a place always struck me. Whether I could or could not write there? Seated in that convenient easy-chair I felt at once that my shabby new surroundings were sympathetic to me, that I fitted in and was at home in them.

I had come straight from a narrow London house where my bedroom overlooked a mews, and my sitting-room other narrow houses with a roadway between. Here, early in March, from the wide low window I saw yellow gorse overgrowing a rough and unkempt garden. Beyond the garden more flaming gorse on undulating common land, then hills, and between them, unmistakable, the sombre darkness of the sea. Up here the air was very still, but the smell of the gorse was strong with the wind from that distant sea. I wished for pens and paper at first; then drifted beyond wishes, dreaming I knew not of what, but happier and more content than I had been for some time past. The air was healing, so were the solitude and silence. My silence and solitude were interrupted, my content came abruptly to an end.

"Dr. Kennedy!"

I did not rise. In those bad neuritis days rising was not easy. I stared at the intruder, and he at me. But I guessed in a minute to what his unwelcome presence was due. My anxious, dearly beloved, and fidgetty sister had found out the name of the most noted Æsculapius of the neighbourhood and had notified him of my arrival, probably had given him a misleading and completely erroneous account of my illness, certainly asked him to call. I found out afterwards I was right in all my guesses save one. This was not the most noted Æsculapius of the neighbourhood, but his more youthful partner. Dr. Lansdowne was on his holiday. Dr. Kennedy had read my sister's letter and was now bent upon carrying out her instructions. As I said, we stared at each other in the advancing dusk.

"You have only just come?" he ventured then.

"I've been here about an hour," I replied—"a quiet hour."

"I had your sister's letter," he said apologetically, if a little awkwardly, as he advanced into the room.

"She wrote you, then?"

"Oh yes! I've got the letter somewhere." He felt in his pocket and failed to find it.

"Won't you sit down? "

There was no chair near the writing-table save the one upon which I sat. A further reason why I knew my predecessor here had been a writer! Dr. Kennedy had to fetch one, and I took shallow stock of him meanwhile. A tall and not ill-looking man in the late thirties or early forties, he had on the worst suit of country tweeds I had ever seen and incongruously well-made boots. Now he sprawled silently in the selected chair, and I waited for his opening. Already I was nauseated with doctors and their methods. In town I had seen everybody's favourite nostrum-dispenser, and none of them had relieved me of anything but my hardly earned cash. I mean to present a study of them one day, to get something back from what I have given. Dr.

Kennedy did not accord with the black-coated London brigade, and his opening was certainly different.

"How long have you been feeling unwell?" That was what I expected, this was the common gambit. Dr. Kennedy sat a few minutes without speaking at all. Then he asked me abruptly:

"Did you know Mrs. Capel? "

"Who?"

"Margaret Capel. You knew she lived here, didn't you? That it was here it all happened?"

"What happened?"

"Then you don't know?" He got up from his chair in a fidgetty sort of way and went over to the other window. "I hoped you knew her, that she had been a friend of yours. I hoped so ever since I had your sister's letter. Carbies! It seemed so strange to be coming here again. I can't believe it is ten years ago; it is all so vivid!" He came back and sat down again. "I ought not to talk about her, but the whole room and house are so full of memories. She used to sit, just as you are sitting now, for hours at a time, dreaming. Sometimes she would not speak to me at all. I had to go away; I could see I was intruding."

The cynical words on my lips remained unuttered. He was tall, and if his clothes had fitted him he might have presented a better figure. I hate a morning coat in tweed material. The adjective "uncouth" stuck. I saw it was a clever head under the thick mane of black hair, and wondered at his tactlessness and provincial garrulity. I nevertheless found myself not entirely uninterested in him.

"Do you mind my talking about her? Incandescent! I think that word describes her best. She burned from the inside, was strung on wires, and they were all alight. She was always sitting just where you are now, or upstairs at the piano. She was a wonderful pianist. Have you been upstairs, into the room she turned into a music room?"

"As I told you, I have only been here an hour. This is the only room I have seen."

My tone must have struck him as wanting in cordiality, or interest.

"You didn't want me to come up to-night? "He looked through his pocketbook for Ella's letter, found it, and began to read, half aloud. How well I knew what Ella would have said to him.

"She has taken 'Carbies'; call upon her at once . . . let me know what you think . . . don't be misled by her high spirits . . ." He read it half aloud and half to himself. He seemed to expect my sympathy. "I used to come here so often, two or three times a day sometimes."

"Was she ill?" The question was involuntary. Margaret Capel was nothing to me.

"Part of the time. Most of the time."

"Did you do her any good?"

Apparently he had no great sense or sensitiveness of professional dignity. There was a strange light in his eyes, brilliant yet fitful, conjured up by the question. It was the first time he seemed to recognize my existence as a separate entity. He looked directly at me, instead of gazing about him reminiscently.

"I don't know. I did my best. When she was in pain I stopped it . . . sometimes. She did not always like the medicines I prescribed. And you? You are suffering from neuritis, your sister says. That may mean anything. Where is it?"

"In my legs."

I did not mean him to attend me; I had come away to rid myself of doctors. And anyway I liked an older man in a professional capacity. But his eccentricity of manner or deportment, his want of interest in me and absorption in his former patient, his ill-cut clothes and unlikeness to his brother professionals, were a little variety, and I found myself answering his questions.

"Have you tried Kasemol? It is a Japanese cure very efficacious; or any other paint? "

"I am no artist."

He smiled. He had a good set of teeth, and his smile was pleasant.

"You've got a nurse, or a maid?"

"A maid. I'm not ill enough for nurses."

"Good. Did you know this was once a nursing-home? After she found that out she could never bear the place . . ."

He was talking again about the former occupant of the house. My ailment had not held his attention long.

"She said she smelt ether and heard groaning in the night. I suppose it seems strange to you I should talk so much about her? But Carbies without Margaret Capel . . . You do mind?"

"No, I don't. I daresay I shall be glad to hear all about her one day, and the story. I see you have a story to tell. Of course I remember her now. She wrote a play or two, and some novels that had quite a little vogue at one time. But I'm tired to-night."

"So short a journey ought not to tire you." He was observing me more closely. "You look over-driven, too fine-drawn. We must find out all about it. Not to-night of course. You must not look upon this as a professional visit at all, but I could not resist coming. You would understand, if you had known her. And then to see you sitting at her table, and in the same attitude . . ." He left off abruptly. So the regard I had flattered myself to be personal was merely reminiscent. "You don't write too, by any chance, do you? That would be an extraordinary coincidence."

He might as well have asked Melba if she sang. Blundering fool! I was better known than Margaret Capel had ever been. Not proud of my position because I have always known my limitations, but irritated nevertheless by his ignorance, and wishful now to get rid of him.

"Oh, yes! I write a little sometimes. Sorry my position at the table annoys you. But I don't play the piano." He seemed a little surprised or hurt at my tone, as he well might, and rose to go. I rose, too, and held out my hand. After all I did not write under my own name, so how could he have known unless Ella had told him? When he shook hands with me he made no pretence of feeling my pulse, a trick of the trade which I particularly dislike. So I smiled at him. "I am a little irritable."

"Irritability is characteristic of the complaint. And I have bored you horribly, I fear. But it was such an excitement coming up here again. May I come in the morning and overhaul you? My partner, Dr. Lansdowne, for whom your sister's letter was really intended, is away. Does that matter?"

"I shouldn't think so."

"He is a very able man," he said seriously.

"And are you not? "By this time my legs were aching badly and I wanted to get rid of him.

"In the morning, then."

He seemed as if he would have spoken again, but thought better of it. He had certainly a personality, but one that I was not sure I liked. He took an inconceivable time winding up or starting his machine, the buzz of it was in my ears long after he went off, blowing an unnecessary whistle, making my pain unbearable.

I dined in bed and treated myself to an extra dose of nepenthe on the excuse of the fatigue of my journey. The prescription had been given to me by one of those eminent London physicians of whom I hope one day to make a pen-and-ink drawing. It is an insidious drug with varying effects. That night I remember the pain was soon under weigh and the strange half-wakeful dreams began early. It was good to be out of pain even if one knew it to be only a temporary deliverance. The happiness of a recovered amiability soon became mine, after which conscience began

to worry me because I had been ungrateful to my sister and had run away from her, and been rude to her doctor, that strange doctor. I smiled in my drowsiness when I thought of him and his beloved Margaret Capel, a strange devotee at a forgotten shrine, in his cutaway checked coat and the baggy trousers. But the boots might have come from Lobb. His hands were smooth, of the right texture. Evidently the romance of his life had been this Margaret Capel.

So this place had been a nursing-home, and when she knew it she heard groans and smelt ether. Her books were like that: fanciful, frothy. She had never a straightforward story to tell. It was years since I had heard her name, and I had forgotten what little I knew, except that I had once been resentful of the fuss the critics had made over her. I believed she was dead, but could not be sure. Then I thought of Death, and was glad it had no terrors for me. No one could go on living as I had been doing, never out of pain, without seeing Death as a release.

A burning point of pain struck me again, and because I was drugged I found it unbearable. Before it was too late and I became drowsier I roused myself for another dose. To pour out the medicine and put the glass down without spilling it was difficult, the table seemed uneven. Later my brain became confused, and my body comfortable.

It was then I saw Margaret Capel for the first time, not knowing who she was, but glad of her appearance, because it heralded sleep. Always before the drug assumed its fullest powers, I saw kaleidoscopic changes, unsubstantial shapes, things and people that were not there. Wonderful things sometimes. This was only a young woman in a grey silk dress, of old-fashioned cut, with puffed sleeves and wide skirts. She had a mass of fair hair, *blonde cendré*, and with a blue ribbon snooded through it. At first her face was nebulous, afterwards it appeared with a little more colour in it, and she had thin and tremulous pink lips. She looked plaintive, and when our eyes met she seemed a little

startled at seeing me in her bed. The last thing I saw of her was a wavering smile, rather wonderful and alluring. I knew at once that she was Margaret Capel. But she was quickly replaced by two Chinese vases and a conventional design in black and gold. I had been too liberal with that last dose of nepenthe, and the result was the deep sleep or unconsciousness I liked the least of its effects, a blank passing of time.

The next morning, as usual after such a debauch, I was heavy and depressed, still drowsy but without any happiness or content. I had often wondered I could keep a maid, for latterly I was always either irritable or silent. Not mean, however. That has never been one of my faults, and may have been the explanation. Suzanne asked how I had slept and hoped I was better, perfunctorily, without waiting for an answer. She was a great fat heavy Frenchwoman, totally without sympathetic quality. I told her not to pull up the blinds nor bring coffee until I rang.

"I am quite well, but I don't want to be bothered. The servants must do the housekeeping. If Dr. Kennedy calls say I am too ill to see him."

I often wish one could have dumb servants. But Suzanne was happily lethargic and not argumentative. I heard afterwards that she gave my message verbatim to the doctor : "Madame was not well enough to see him," but softened it by a suggestion that I would perhaps be better tomorrow and perhaps he would come again. His noisy machine and unnecessary horn spoiled the morning and angered me against Ella for having brought him over me.

I felt better after lunch and got up, making a desultory exploration of the house and finding my last night's impression confirmed. The position was lonely without being secluded. All round the house was the rough garden, newly made, unfinished, planted with trees not yet grown and kitchen stuff. Everywhere was the stiff and prickly gorse. On the front there were many bedrooms; some, like

my own, had broad balconies whereon a bed could be wheeled. The place had probably at one time been used as an open-air cure. Then Margaret Capel must have taken it, altered this that and the other, but failed to make a home out of what had been designed for a hospital. By removing a partition two of these bedrooms had been turned into one. This one was large, oak-floored, and a Steinway grand upon a platform dominated one corner. There was a big music stand. I opened it and found no clearance of music had been made. It was full and deplorably untidy. The rest of the furniture consisted of tapestry-covered small and easy-chairs, a round table, a great sofa drawn under one of the windows, and some amateur water colours.

On the ground floor the dining-room looked unused and the library smelt musty. It was lined with open cupboards or bookcases, the top shelves fitted with depressing-looking tomes and the lower one bulging with yellow-backed novels, old-fashioned three-volume novels, magazines dated ten years back, and an "olla podrida" of broken-backed missing-leaved works by Hawley Smart, Mrs. Lovett Cameron, and Charles Lever. Nothing in either of these rooms was reminiscent of Margaret Capel. I was glad to get back to the drawing-room, on the same floor, but well-proportioned and agreeable. Today, with the sun out and my fatigue partly gone, its shabbiness looked homely and even attractive. The position of the writing-table again made its appeal. Suzanne had unpacked my writing-things and they stood ready for arrangement, heaped up together on the green leather top. I saw with satisfaction that there were many drawers and that the table was both roomy and convenient. The view from the window was altered by the sunlight. The yellow gorse was still the most prominent feature, but beyond it today one saw the sea more plainly, a little dim and hazy in the distance but unmistakable; melting into the horizon. Today the sky was of a summer blue although it was barely spring. I felt my courage revive.

Again I said to myself that I could write here, and silently rescinded my intention of resting. "*Work whilst ye have the light.*" I had not a great light, but another than myself to work for, and perhaps not much time.

The gollywog put a smiling face and a clean cap halfway into the room and said:

"Please, ma'am, cook wishes to know if she can speak to you, and if you please there is no . . ."

There tumbled out a list of household necessities, which vexed me absurdly. But the writing-chair was comfortable and helped me through the narrative. The table was alluring, and I wanted to be alone. Cook arrived before Mary had finished, and then the monologue became a duet.

"There's not more than half a dozen glasses altogether, and I'm sure I don't know what to do about the teapot. There's only one tray . . ."

"And as for the cooking utensils, well, I never see such a lot. And that dirty! The kitchen dresser has never been cleaned out since the flood, I should think. Stuffed up with dirty cloths and broken crockery. As for the kitchen table, there's knives without handles and forks without prongs; not a shape that isn't dented; the big fish kettle's got a hole in it as big as your 'and, and the others ain't fit to use. The pastry board's broke . . ."

I wanted to stop my ears and tell them to get out. I had asked for competent servants, and understood that competent servants bought or hired whatever was necessary for their work. That was the way things were managed at home. But then my cook had been with me for eight years and my housemaid for eleven. They knew my ways, and that I was never to be bothered with household details, only the bills were my affair. And those my secretary paid.

"It was one of them there writing women as had the place last, with no more idea of order than the kitchen cat," cook said indignantly, or perhaps suspiciously, eyeing the

writing-table. I had come here for rest and change, to lead the simple life, with two servants instead of five and everything in proportion. Now I found myself giving reckless orders.

"Buy everything you want; there is sure to be a shop in the village. If not, make out a list, and one of you go up to the Stores or Harrod's. If the place is dirty get in a charwoman. Some one will recommend you a charwoman, the house-agent or the doctor." I reminded cook that she was a cook-housekeeper, but failed to subdue her.

"You can't be cook-housekeeper in a desert island. I call it no better than a desert island. I'd get hold of that there house-agent that engaged us if I was you. He said the 'ouse was well-found. Him with his well-found 'ouse! They're bound to give you what you need, but if you don't mind expense..."

Of course I minded expense, never more so than now when I saw the possibility before me of a long period of inaction.... But I minded other things more. Household detail for instance, and uneducated voices. I compromised and sanctioned the appeal to the house-agent, confirming that the irreducible minimum was to be purchased, explaining I was ill, not to be troubled about this sort of thing. I brushed aside a few "buts" and finally rid myself of them. I caught myself yearning for Ella, who would have saved me this and every trouble. Then scorned my desire to send for her and determined to be glad of my solitude, to rejoice in my freedom. I could look as ill as I liked without comment. I could sit where I was without attempting to tidy my belongings, and no one would ask me if I felt seedy, if the pain was coming on, if they could do anything for me. And then, fool that I was, I remember tears coming to my eyes because I was lonely, and sure that I had tired out even Ella's patience. I wondered how any one could face a long illness, least of all any one like me who loved work, and above all independence, freedom. I knew, I knew even

then that the time was coming when I could neither work nor be independent; the shadow was upon me that very first afternoon at Carbies. When I could see to write I dashed off a postcard to Ella telling her I was quite well and she was not to bother about me.

"I like the place, I'm sure I shall be able to write here. Don't think of coming down, and keep the rest of the family off me if you can..."

I spent the remainder of the evening weakly longing for her, and feeling that she need not have taken me at my word, that she might have come with me although I urged her not, that she should have understood me better.

That night I took less nepenthe, yet saw Margaret Capel more vividly. She stayed a long time too. This time she wore a blue peignoir, her hair down, and she looked very young and girlish. There were gnomes and fairies when she went, and after that the sea, swish and awash as if I had been upon a yacht. Unconsciousness only came to me when the yacht was submerged in a great wave... semiconsciousness.

But I am not telling the story of my illness. I should like to, but I fear it would have no interest for the general public, or for the young people amongst whom one looks for readers. I have sometimes thought nevertheless, both then and afterwards, that there must be a public who would like to hear what one does and thinks and suffers when illness catches one unawares; and all life's interests alter and narrow down to temperatures and medicine-time, to fighting or submitting to nurses and weakness, to hatred and contempt of doctors, and a dumb blind rage against fate; to pain and the soporifics behind which its hold tightens.

Pineland did not cure me, although I spent hours in the open air and let my pens lie resting in their case. Under continual pains I grew sullen and resentful, always more ill-tempered and desirous of solitude. Dr. Kennedy called frequently. Sometimes I saw him and sometimes not, as the

mood took me. He never came without speaking of the former occupant of the house, of Margaret Capel. He seemed to take very little personal interest in me or my condition. And I was too proud (or stupid) to force it on his notice. I asked him once, crudely enough, if he had been in love with Margaret Capel. He answered quite simply, as if he had been a child:

"One had no chance. From the first I knew there was no chance."

"There was some one else? "

"He came up and down. I seldom met him. Then there were the circumstances. She was between the Nisi and the Absolute, the nether and the upper stone ..."

"Oh, yes, I remember now. She was divorced."

"No, she was not. She divorced her husband," he answered quite sharply and a little distressed. "Courts of Justice they are called, but Courts of Injustice would be a better name. They put her to the question, on the rack; no inquisition could have been worse. And she was broken by it..."

"But there was some one else, you said yourself there was some one else. Probably these probing questions, this rack, were her deserts. Personally I am a monogamist," I retorted. Not that I was really narrow or a Pharisee, only in contentious mood and cruel under the pressure of my own harrow. "Probably anything she suffered served her right," I added indifferently.

"It all happened afterwards. I thought you knew," he said incoherently.

"I know nothing except that you are always talking of Margaret Capel, and I am a little tired of the subject," I answered pettishly. "Who was the man?"

"The man!"

"Yes, the man who came up and down to see her?"

"Gabriel Stanton."

"Gabriel Stanton!" I sat upright in my chair; that really startled me. "Gabriel Stanton," I repeated, and then, stupidly enough: "Are you sure?"

"Quite sure. But I won't talk about it any more since it bores you. The house is so haunted for me, and you seemed so sympathetic, so interested. You won't let me doctor you."

"You haven't tried very hard, have you?"

"You put me off whenever I try to ask you how you are, or any questions."

"What is the good? I've seen twelve London doctors."

"London has not the monopoly of talent." He took up his hat, and then my hand.

"Offended?" I asked him.

"No. But my partner will be home tomorrow, and I'm relinquishing my place to him. It is really his case."

"I refuse to be anybody's case. I've heard from the best authorities that no one knows anything about neuritis and that it is practically incurable. One has to suffer and suffer. Even Almroth Wright has not found the anti-bacilli. Nepenthe gives me ease; that is all the doctoring I want—ease!"

"It is doing you a lot of harm. And what makes you think you've got neuritis?"

"What ailed your Margaret?" I answered mockingly. "Did you ever find that out?"

"No... yes. Of course I knew."

"Did you ever examine her?" I was curious to know that; suddenly and inconsequently curious.

"Why do you ask?" But his face changed, and I knew the question had been cruel or impertinent. He let go my hand abruptly, he had been holding it all this time. "I did all that any doctor could." He was obviously distressed and I ashamed.

"Don't go yet. Sit down and have a cup of tea with me. I've been here three weeks and every meal has been solitary. Your Margaret"—I smiled at him then, knowing he

would not understand—"comes to me sometimes at night with my nepenthe, but all day I am alone."

"By your own desire then, I swear. You are not a woman to be left alone if you wanted company." He dropped into a chair, seemed glad to stay. Presently over tea and crumpets, we were really talking of my illness, and if I had permitted it I have no doubt he would have gone into the matter more closely. As it was he warned me solemnly against the nepenthe and suggested I should try codein as an alternative, a suggestion I ignored completely, unfortunately for myself.

"Tell me about your partner," I said, drinking my tea slowly.

"Oh! you'll like him, all the ladies like him. He is very spruce and rather handsome; dapper, band-boxy. Not tall, turning grey …"

"Did she like him?" I persisted.

"She would not have him near her. After his first visit she denied herself to him all the time. He used to talk to me about her, he could never understand it, he was not used to that sort of treatment, he is a tremendous favourite about here."

"What did she say of him?"

"That he grinned like a Cheshire cat, talked in *clichés*, rubbed his hands and seemed glad when she suffered. He has a very cheerful bedside manner; most people like it."

"I quite understand. I won't have him. Mind that; don't send him to see me, because I won't see him. I'd rather put up with you." I have explained I was beyond convention. He really tried hard to persuade me, urged Dr. Lansdowne's degrees and qualifications, his seniority. I grew angry in the end.

"Surely I need not have either of you if I don't want to. I suppose there are other doctors in the neighbourhood."

He gave me a list of the medical men practising in and about Pineland; it was not at all badly done, he praised

everybody yet made me see them clearly. In the end I told him I would choose my own medical attendant when I wanted one.

"Am I dismissed, then?" he asked.

"Have you ever been summoned?" I answered in the same tone.

"Seriously now, I'd like to be of use to you if you'd let me."

"In order to retain the *entrée* to the house where the wonderful Margaret moved and had her being?"

"No! Well, perhaps yes, partly. And you are a very attractive woman yourself."

"Don't be ridiculous."

"It is quite true. I expect you know it."

"I'm over forty and ill. I suppose that is what you find attractive, that I am ill?"

"I don't think so. I hate hysterical women as a rule."

"Hysterical!"

"With any form of nerve disease."

"Do you really think I am suffering from nerve disease? From the vapours?" I asked scornfully, thinking for the thousand and first time what a fool the man was.

"You don't occupy yourself?"

"I'm one of the busiest women on God's earth."

"I've never seen you doing anything, except sitting at her writing-table with two bone-dry pens set out and some blank paper. And you object to be questioned about your illness, or examined."

"I hate scientific doctoring. And then you have not inspired me with confidence, you are obsessed with one idea."

"I can't help that. From the first you've reminded me of Margaret."

"Oh! damn Margaret Capel, and your infatuation for her! I'm sorry, but that's the way I feel just now. I can't escape from her, the whole place is full of her. And yet she hasn't

written a thing that will live. I sent to the London Library soon after I came and got all her books. I waded through the lot. Just epigram and paradox, a weak Bernard Shaw in petticoats."

"I never read a word she wrote," he answered indifferently. "It was the woman herself..."

"I am sure. Well, good-bye! I can't talk any more tonight, I'm tired. Don't send Dr. Lansdowne. If I want any one I'll let you know."

Margaret came to me again that night when the house was quite silent and all the lights out except the red one from the fire. She sat in the easy-chair on the hearthrug, and for the first time I heard her speak. She was very young and feeble-looking, and I told her I was sorry I had been impatient and said "damn" about her.

"But you are all over the place, you know. And I can't write unless I am alone. I'm always solitary and never alone here; you haunt and obsess me. Can't you go away? I don't mean now. I am glad you are here now, and talking. Tell me about Dr. Kennedy. Did you care for him at all? Did you know he was in love with you?"

"Peter Kennedy! No, I never thought about him at all, not until the end. Then he was very kind, or cruel. He did what I asked him. You know why I obsess you, don't you? It used to be just the same with me when a subject was evolving. You are going to write my story; you will do it better in a way than I could have done it myself, although worse in another. I have left you all the material."

"Not a word."

"You haven't found it yet. I put it together myself, the day Gabriel sent back my letters. You will have my diary and a few notes..."

"Where?"

"In a drawer in the writing-table. But it is only half there.... You will have to add to it."

"I see you quite well when I keep my eyes shut. If I open them the room sways and you are not there. Why should I write your life? I am no historian, only a novelist."

"I know, but you are on the spot, with all the material and local colour. You know Gabriel too; we used to speak about you."

"He is no admirer of mine."

"No. He is a great stylist, and you have no sense of style."

"Nor you of anything else," I put in rudely, hastily.

"A harsh judgment, characteristic. You are a blunt realist, I should say, hard and a little unwomanly, calling a spade by its ugliest name; but sentimental with pen in hand you really do write abominably sometimes. But you will remind the world of me again. I don't want to be forgotten. I would rather be misrepresented than forgotten. There are so few geniuses! Keats and I... *Don't go to sleep*."

I could not help it, however. Several times after that, whenever I remembered something I wished to ask her, and opened dulled eyes, she was not there at all. The chair where she had sat was empty, and the fire had died down to dull ash. I drowsed and dreamed. In my dreams I achieved style, an ambient, exquisite style, and wrote about Margaret Capel and Gabriel Stanton so glowingly and convincingly that all the world wept for them and wondered, and my sales ran into hundreds of thousands.

"*We have always expected great things of this author, but she has transcended our highest expectations* ..." The reviews were all on this scale. For the remainder of that night no writer in England was as famous as I. Publishers and literary agents hung round my doorsteps and I rejected marvellous offers. If I had not been so thirsty and my mouth dry, no one could have been happier, but the dryness and thirst woke me continuously, and I execrated Suzanne for having put the water bottle out of my reach, and forgotten to supply me with acid drops. I remember grumbling about it to Margaret.

Chapter II

I began the search for those letters the very next day, knowing how absurd it was, as if one were still a child who expected to find the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. I made Suzanne telephone to Dr. Kennedy that I was much better and would prefer he did not call. I really wanted to be alone, to make my search complete, not to be interrupted. If it were not true that I was better, at least I was no worse, only heavy and dull in body and mind, every movement an almost unbearable fatigue. Nevertheless I sat down with determination at the writing-table, intent on opening every drawer and cupboard, calling to Suzanne to help me, on the pretence of wanting white paper to line the drawers, and a duster to clean them. In reality, that she should do the stooping instead of me. But everywhere was emptiness or dust. I crawled to the music room after lunch and tried my luck there, amid the heaped disorderly music, but there too the search proved unavailing. It was no use going downstairs again, so I went to bed, before dinner, passing a white night with red pain points, beyond the reach even of nepenthe. I had counted on seeing Margaret Capel again, getting fuller instructions, but was disappointed in that also.

The next day and many others were equally full and equally empty. I looked in unlikely places until I was tired out; dragging about my worn-out body that had been whipped into a pretence of activity by my driving brain. Dr. Kennedy came and went, talking spasmodically of Margaret Capel, watching me, I thought sometimes, with puzzled enquiring eyes. My family in London was duly informed how well I was, and the good that the rest and solitude were doing me. I felt horribly ill, and towards the end of my

second week gave up seeking for Margaret Capel's letters or papers. I was still intent upon writing her story, but had made up my mind now to compile it from the facts I could persuade or force from Dr. Kennedy, from old newspaper reports, and other sources. It was borne in upon me that to go on with, my work was the only way to save myself from what I now thought was mental as well as physical breakdown. I saw Margaret elusively, was never quite free from the sense that I was not alone. The chills that ran through me meant that she was behind me; the hot flushes that she was about to materialise. In normal times I was the most dogmatic disbeliever in the occult; but now I believed Carbies to be haunted.

When I was able to think soundly and consecutively, I began to piece together what little I knew of these two people by whom I was obsessed. For it was not only Margaret, but Gabriel Stanton whom I felt, or suspected, about the house. Stanton & Co. were my own publishers. I had not known them as Margaret Capel's. Gabriel was not the member of the firm I saw when I made my rare calls in Greyfriars' Square. He was understood to be occupied only with the classical works issued by the well-known house. Somewhere or other I had heard that he had achieved a great reputation at Oxford and knew more about Greek roots than any living authority. On the few occasions we met I had felt him antagonistic or contemptuous. He would come into the room where I was talking to Sir George and back out again quickly, saying he was sorry, or that he did not know his cousin was engaged. Sir George introduced us more than once, but Mr. Gabriel Stanton always seemed to have forgotten the circumstance. I remembered him as a tall thin man, with deep-set eyes and sunken mouth, a gentleman, as all the Stantons were, but as different as possible from his genial partner. I had, I have, a soft spot in my heart for Sir George Stanton, and had met with much kindness from him. Gabriel, too, may have had a charm—

they were notoriously a charming family,but he had not exerted it for my benefit. He and all of them were so respectable, so traditionally and inalienably respectable, that it was difficult to readjust my slowly working mind and think of him as any woman's lover; illegitimate lover, as he seemed to be in this case. I wrote to my secretary in London to look up everything that was known about Margaret Capel. Before her reply came I had another attack of pleurisy—I had had several in London,—and this brought Ella to me, to say nothing of various hungry and impotent London consultants.

As I said before, this is not a history of my illness, nor of my sister's encompassing love that ultimately enabled me to weather it, that forced me again and again from the arms of Death, that friend for whom at times my weakness yearned. The fight was all from the outside. As for me, I laid down my weapons early. I dreaded pain more than death, and do still, the passing through and not the arrival, writhing under the shame of my beaten body, wanting to hide. Yet publicity beat upon me, streamed into the room like midday sun. There were bulletins in the papers and the Press Association rang up and asked for late and early news. Obituary notices were probably being prepared. Everybody knew that at which I was still only guessing. It irked me sometimes to know they would be only paragraphs and not columns, and I knew Ella would be vexed.

When the acuteness of this particular attack subsided I thought again of Margaret Capel and Gabriel Stanton, yet could not talk of them. For Ella knew nothing of the former occupants of the house, and for some inexplicable reason Dr. Kennedy had left off coming. His partner, or substitute, whose Cheshire-cat grin I easily recognised, made no secret, notwithstanding his cheerfulness, of the desperate view he took of my condition. I hated his futile fruitless examinations, the consultations whereat I was sure he