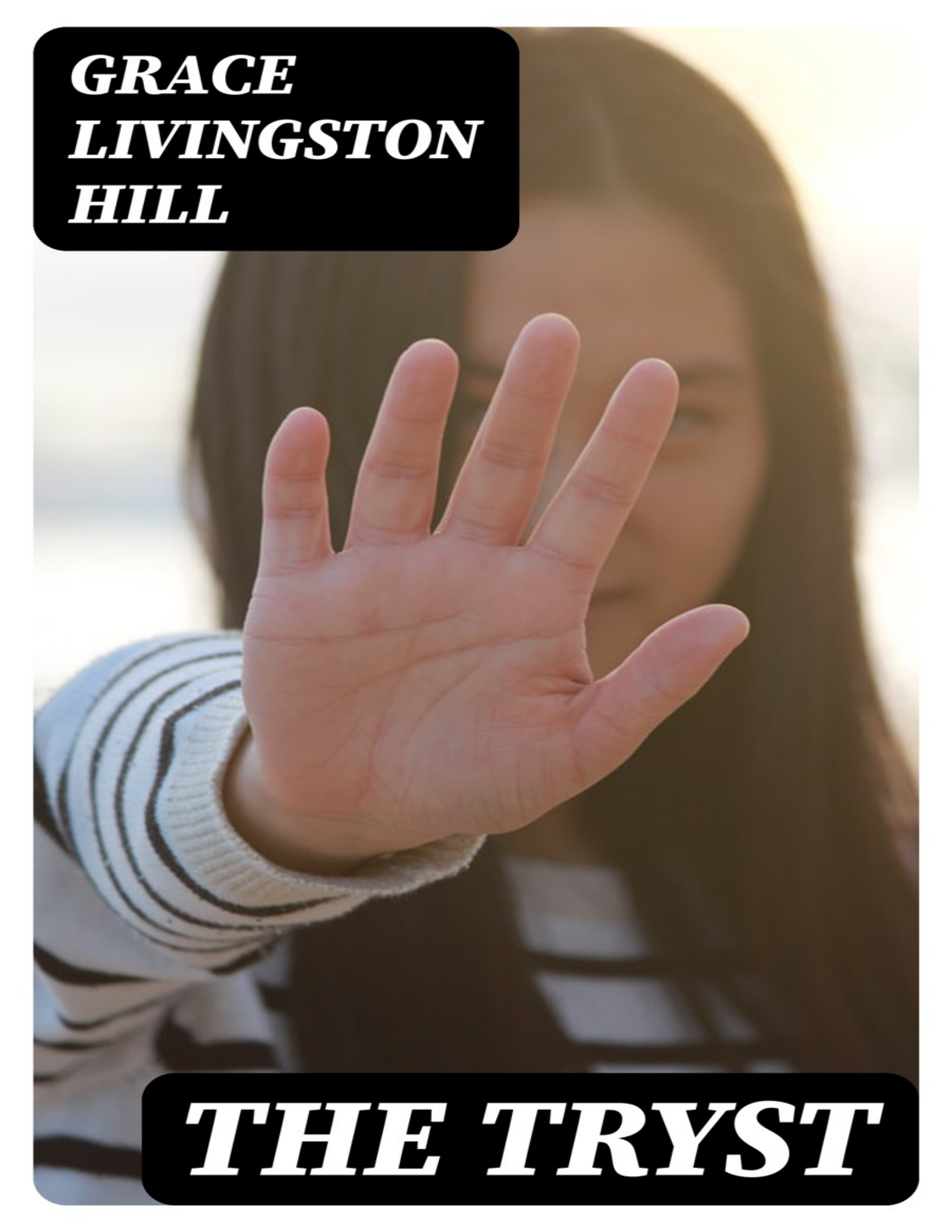




***GRACE
LIVINGSTON
HILL***

THE TRYST

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The Tryst

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CHAPTER I

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Patricia Merrill, richly clad in gray duvetyne with moleskin trimmings, soft shod in gray suede boots, came slowly down the stairs from the third story, fastening her glove as she went. The top button was refractory and she paused in the middle of the stairs to give it her undivided attention. The light from the great ground-glass skylight overhead sifted down in a pool of brightness about her, and gave a vivid touch to the knot of coral velvet in her little moleskin toque. She was a pretty picture as she stood there with that drifting light about her like silver rain, and a wistful look in her eyes and about her lips.

A voice sailed out like a dart from the half-open door at the foot of the stairs and stabbed her heart:

"Has Patricia gone?"

Why would her mother always call her "Patricia" in that formal, distant way, as if she were not intimate with her at all? And she always pronounced it so unlovingly, as if it were somehow her fault that she had such a long-stilted name. If they only would call her Patty as the girls used to do at school. How different it all was from what she had imagined it the last two or three years, this home-coming, with father far away in South America on business. He would have been at the station to meet her and called her his "little Pat!" A sudden mist grew in her eyes. Were mother and Evelyn always so much bound up in each other, and so distant? Their letters were that way, of course, but she had expected to find them different. It was all wrong keeping two sisters apart so long. If Evelyn hadn't been strong enough for

school and college they should have kept them both at home, and let them grow up together as sisters should.

The pucker on Patty's forehead deepened as the button grew more troublesome while these thoughts went through her mind like a flash, and then. Evelyn's voice rasped out:

"Yes, she's gone at last, and I wish she'd never come back!"

Patty stopped trying to button her glove and stood as if turned to ice, staring down the rich Persian carpeting of the stair to the half-open door of her mother's room, one hand fluttering convulsively to her throat, her eyes growing wide with horror and amazement.

"Hush!" said the mother's voice sharply. "Are you perfectly certain she's gone?"

"Yes, I am. I heard the door slam after her five minutes ago. She asked me to go with her. She fairly begged me. I suppose she thought she'd score a few more points against me! Oh, how I hate her! It isn't enough that she should turn the head of every man that comes to the house, but she had to set her cap for Hal Barron. She knew he belonged to me and that we were as good as engaged, yet she spends all her smiles on him every time he comes to the house, and this morning a great big box of American beauties comes with his card for 'Miss *Patty* Merrill,' if you please, Bah! I hate her little playful ways and her pussycat smile, and her calling herself 'Patty.' What right has *he* got to call her Patty, I'd like to know. She asked him to, of course! How else would he know? I think it is cruel to have her come home this winter just as things were going so nicely for me. I thought you promised to get father to send her away some-where? I don't see why she has to live here with us anyway! Didn't you ask him at all?"

"Yes, I broached the matter, but he was very severe, as usual, said it wasn't possible, of course, talked a lot about her being young and needing the protection of being here, reminded me of the conditions on which we occupy this house - it really was most unfortunate that I mentioned it, for it put him in such a mood that I didn't dare say anything about your trousseau - and the time was so short, you know - only a few minutes really in all!"

Then Evelyn raged in:

"It's simply unendurable, and I can't see why you couldn't have done something about it before it was too late!"

"If I had known he was going to sail so soon ——"

The mother's voice was almost pleading.

"It doesn't make any difference. You should have done something long ago. It's simply not to be thought of that I shall sit quietly and be cut out by that little pink-cheeked, baby-eyed kid. You can at least see that she doesn't get all that money to dress with, anyway. It ought to be mine. It takes a lot to dress me right, and you know it. I simply have to have the things that become me. I can't put on anything the way she can and look perfectly stunning. I wonder where she got the knack, anyway. They don't teach that at college. The sly little cat, she just intends to show me that she can get any man she wants, but she shan't take away the only one I ever really loved, not if I have to *kill* her! Oh, you needn't look so shocked. It won't be necessary. I'll find a way to get rid of her! - Mother - Did she never suspect that she wasn't ——!"

"Hush!" hissed the mother. "Shut that door, Quick! Mercy! I didn't know it was open! If a servant should happen to hear! How many times have I warned you ——!"

The slamming door shut off further words and left Patricia standing stricken in the pool of skylight on the stairs. Her delicate face white as carven marble seemed to have suddenly turned to stone. Her small gloved hands were pressed against her breast and her breath was suspended in the horror of the moment. The power of motion seemed to be gone, and her impulse was to sink down right there on the stairs and give way to the numbness that was creeping over her. Her strength had left her like water falling through sudden apertures. Her eyes were fixed in a blank stare of unbelief on the closed door just below her, and she seemed to have lost the power to think, to analyze, to take in what she had heard. It was as if unexpectedly a great rock had struck her in the face and stunned her.

Then below on the first floor a door opened and steps came up the first flight, steps and a broom trailing over the hard wood. The blood returned violently to its function, and Patty's feet were given wings. She turned and sped up the few stairs and into her own room as softly as a bird might have one, locked the door and dropped limply to the edge of her bed, staring around her room with its familiar objects as if to assure herself that she was really alive and the world was going on as usual.

She tried to rehearse to herself the dialogue she had heard on the stairs and to make out what it could possibly mean. Always had she known there was a barrier between herself and her mother, and of late she had suspected it extended to her sister also, but never had she thought it anything serious like this. Once when she was a little girl she remembered asking her father why her mother was not more "motherly," and he had smiled - smiled with a sigh she remembered now - and said that it was just her undemonstrative nature, that she must not think because

the mother did not kiss and fondle her that she was not loved; and she had always treasured that and tried to be satisfied with the cold formalities that had passed between them. But now - *this* - and Evelyn, too! It was beyond grasping! The only thing that seemed clear to her bewildered, hurt soul was that she must get away. Evelyn hated her and thought her trying to get away her lover. The only way to prove to her sister that this was not true was to go away and show them that she did not want any such thing. And she must go at once, quickly, before any one saw her.

Afterwards she could think what to do. Perhaps she could write to them and explain. She would have to think it out. But now she must get away.

She arose cautiously and gave a wild glance around the room. Her pretty patent leather suitcase lay open on the window-seat half packed for a weekend house-party to which she and Evelyn had been invited. They were to have gone that afternoon. Now with a pang she realized that all the pleasant anticipations were impossible. She could never go and meet the friendly faces and know all the time that her own life was broken, degraded, unloved.

She caught up a few things that lay scattered about the room, tiptoeing about with no lighter tread than a butterfly would have made, and giving about as little heed to her packing. Anything that came in her way went in, and without much ceremony of folding. When it was full she shut it and hurried to the door. Her handsome silk umbrella lolled across a chair and she snatched that and went softly down the hall toward the back stairs, cautiously working her way to the second, and then to the first floor, pausing to listen when she heard a servant coming, lest anyone should see her. She let herself out of the servants' side entrance and

walked swiftly down the side street, turned the corner for a block and then took another side street, putting herself as quickly as possible out of her own familiar neighborhood, and reflecting that it was fortunate that she had been home so short a time that she would not be recognized by many, nor her absence seem noticeably startling. She could just slip away and leave the home and the whole field to Evelyn and they could say she was away and nobody would think anything about it. There would be no shame or disgrace for her father to face when he returned. She felt like a little mouse that had suddenly been dropped from a great height, so hurt and stunned that all she could do was to scuttle away and hide under a dark wall. That was what she wanted now, a dark place to hide, where she might close her eyes and sob out the hurt and perhaps by and by think out the meaning of this terrible thing that had come to her.

Her own frank nature would have prompted her to go straight to her mother and sister and have a thorough explanation, perhaps be able to convince them that she had no such sinister designs as they were attributing to her, and that all she wanted was their love and a closer understanding. But there had been something so final, so irrevocable in the shock she had received that it seemed that there could be no mending, no possible explanation. There was nothing to do but get away as quietly and quickly as possible.

The crisp, clear air brought back a faint color into Patricia's cheeks, and took away a little of the bewilderment. She was able to summon a passing taxi and give directions to the station but during the short drive she sat as one stunned, and could not seem to think her way ahead of her.

At the station she paid her fare and allowed a porter to carry her suitcase.

"N'York train, Miss?" he asked quite casually in the manner of his knowing kind.

"Why - yes," said Patricia with a sudden decision, New York, of course. The idea was good. That was far enough away, and no one would ever think of looking for her there. She had never been to New York, but what did that matter? She could think all the better in a strange place.

"Got your tickets, Miss?" asked the porter as they neared the train gate.

"Oh! No!" gasped Patricia still looking bewildered. She was just wondering why Evelyn had thought she wanted Hal Barron for her own exclusive property, and the matter of tickets seemed so trivial.

"Better step to the window and get them, Miss. There ain't so much time. Right this way."

"Oh!" gasped Patricia, following him blindly through the crowd and bringing up at the window where three were already in line ahead of her.

"Got your 'commodations, Miss?" asked the porter eying her paternally, and deciding she needed protection.

"Why - no -not yet!" She drew her breath in a little quick flutter. There were so many things to be thought of, and she was going away into strange scenes with no one who cared - oh, her father! He had always protected her so carefully! What would he think? But her *father*! "What - how could it all be reconciled anyway?"

"Pretty late, Miss! 'Fraid you won't fare very well. Like me to see if there's anything left?"

"Oh, yes, please!" she answered gratefully, and moved up to the window as the last of the line moved on.

The porter put down the suitcase and went away for a moment. "Nothing left but the drawing room. Miss. Care to have that?" he asked anxiously, returning a moment later.

"Oh, yes!" sighed Patricia gratefully, handing him a bill from the roll in her bag. She had no idea how much she had, as much as was left of her allowance that had been paid her a few days before. She had not bought much since but chocolates, a magazine or two, and some flowers for a little sick girl. She had paid for her ticket and there seemed to be a lot left. She did not count it. It was not likely she would have been able to bring her mind to take in whether it was much or little. Money meant nothing to her just then save a miserable bone of contention between herself and her sister. Money, what did she care about it, if she could have only had love and a home! She would gladly have given up the pretty clothes. They had not meant much to her in themselves. She had always enjoyed picking them out, and wearing things that harmonized and were becoming, but that was such a minor matter compared to the great things of life!

The porter took her ticket and managed the whole affair for her, and she followed him relievedly to the gate and out to the train.

It all seemed so strange, this journey, following a porter with her suitcase, out a train gate to a pleasant compartment. She had always enjoyed journeys so much before, and this one was like hurling herself into space, knowing not where she was going nor what she was going to do when she got there. It must be that condemned men felt this way as they walked to their doom! And what had she done? Why had it all come upon her? Was she right in going away till she found out?

This last question beat upon her brain as she felt the train begin to move. A wild impulse to run back and think it over came upon her, and she half rose from her seat and looked about her frantically, then sank back into her seat again as she realized that it was too late. The train had started. Besides, she could always return after she had thought about it and found out what was the right thing to do. With a faint idea of looking her last upon familiar things she glanced out of the window and was comforted by the porter's respectful salute accompanied by a smile of most unporterful solicitude. He had just dropped from the front end of the car to the platform, and had been watching for his lady as the drawing room window passed. Patricia sank back on the cushion with a passing wonder at his care. She did not know that her sweet face had taken on a look like a lost Babe in the Wood, and that any man with a scrap of humanity left in his breast would be aroused by her wistful, hurt eyes to protect her. But it comforted her nevertheless and helped to relieve the tension. She put her head back and closed her eyes wearily. A soothing tear crept over the smart in her eyes that had been so intolerable. Somehow with it came a complete relaxation, so new to her vigorous, alert youth that it was fairly prostrating. She longed inexpressibly to lie down and sleep, yet knew she must not until the conductor had been his rounds. But she put her head wearily against the window glass and watched the passing scene with unseeing eyes, as the city of her home traveled fast across her vision, and the train threaded its way gradually from crowded city streets to suburbs, and then out into the wide open country. And yet she could not think. Could not even bear to face the words she had heard such a little time before that had turned all her bright world into ashes, and clouded the face of the universe.

The conductor came his rounds, and then the Pullman conductor, and she was left at last in peace. Her head dropped back on the cushions and she sank into a deep sleep of exhaustion from the shock she had received. The miles whirled by, the sun rose high to noon, afternoon came gaily over the western plains, and still she slept.

CHAPTER II

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The sun was casting long, low shadows over the valleys and plains when Patricia awoke, her cheek crumpled and pink where it had rested against the cushion. She sat up suddenly and looked about her startled, trying to realize where she was. For an instant she remembered the house-party and thought she was on her way; but Evelyn was to have gone to that, and Evelyn was not in the compartment. Then all in a rush came the memory of Evelyn's sharp voice rasping on her quivering heart, and she remembered. She was on her way to New York and she must have been traveling a long time!

She glanced at her wrist-watch and saw it was half-past five. She had not eaten anything since morning, and in spite of her trouble a healthy young appetite began to assert itself. She resolved not to think about anything until she had been to the dining-car. At least she would be better able to bear the pain of it all, and think clearly after she had eaten. She arose and straightened her hat at the long mirror, opened her bag, got out a diminutive comb and fluffed her pretty hair, shook out her rumpled garments and wended her way to the diner.

But somehow thoughts would come, and after she had made her selection from the menu and sat back drearily she found that just across the aisle from her sat a mother and two daughters, and their whole atmosphere of happy comradeship brought back the sickening memory of her own unhappy state. She glanced out of the window to turn aside her gloomy thoughts and tried to interest herself in the

wonderful landscape, but somehow the whole face of nature seemed desolate. Rock and tree and sweep of plain that would have enraptured her eyes a day or two before were nothing more than a map now, a space over which she had to travel, and a light little laugh from one of the girls across the aisle followed by the loving protest, "Oh, Mother, dear!" pierced her like a knife. The tears suddenly sprang into her eyes and she had to turn her head and pretend to be watching the view to hide her emotion.

And then the errant thoughts rushed in and almost overwhelmed her. Why did her mother and sister feel so unloving toward her? Why had she ever been born into a world where she was not wanted? No – that wouldn't do exactly, for her father was always loving and kind, always understanding of her, always anticipating her longings and trying to supply their need. Perhaps he had realized how the other two felt, and had purposely kept her at school so long that she might not feel it, knowing that she was sensitive, like himself. Was it possible that he had missed something in them himself? Perhaps she was like her father and Evelyn was like the mother. That was it, of course. She recalled how often her father had repeated the phrase: "You mustn't mind them; it's their way, little girl. They are all right at heart, you know."

For the first time the words seemed like a revelation. He, too, had felt the sting of the proud looks and haughty words, and yet he was loyal. How he must have loved her mother! And of course he understood her – or had he? Could anybody be lovable who had such an unnatural feeling toward her own child as had been shown this morning? *Stay* – was she perhaps *not an own child*!

Her eyes grew wide with horror and she stared at the waiter blankly as he brought her order and set it in array

before her. The thought seemed to rear itself up before her eyes like a great wall over which she could never climb, and for a moment she seemed to be sinking down into a horrible place from which there was no possible exit. For, like a convincing climax, came the words she had heard from Evelyn just before the door closed: "Did she never suspect that she wasn't —!"

Wasn't what? What could it possibly mean but "wasn't an own child"?

All the pent-up loneliness of the years came down upon her like a flood to overwhelm her then, and she sat staring blankly before her, forgetting where she was or that there were people looking at her.

"Will you have your coffee now or latah, lady?" the hovering waiter broke in upon her unhappy reverie. He felt that something was wrong and could not quite make out why she sat and stared ahead with her dinner all nicely before her.

She roused herself then and summoned an answer, scarcely knowing or caring what it was, but the floodtide of her thoughts surged back into more natural channels. How ridiculous for her to think of such a thing! She was just like a girl in a story, imagining a thing like that. Of course that was not true; for she could remember her father telling her about the night she was born and how he sat alone and thought about the little new soul that was coming to his home and for which he would be responsible; and how a surge of great love came over him at the thought. He had told her that one night when he bade her good-bye at the boarding school, and she had been more than usually dreading the parting. He had seemed to understand her so well and to anticipate her dreads and to know just what she needed to make her own soul strong. Oh, why did he have

to be sent to South America just now when she was coming home? If only he could have been here for a day so that she might have had a few minutes' talk with him! If only he were somewhere in this country now that she might fly to him and ask him the meaning of all this that had come upon her!

She turned to her plate and her healthy appetite reasserted itself and made everything taste good. It was comforting to think over her father's little note, left on her dressing table under the linen cover just where he used to leave bits of surprises for her sometimes when she was at home for brief vacations, or in her little girl days before she had gone away at all. The note was so precious. He had not forgotten her even in his hurry. She knew every word of it, every line of every letter was graven in her heart:

"Dear Little Pat:" it ran,

"This isn't the kind of homecoming I had planned for you at all. A cable has called me to South America to look after my business interests there, and I have only an hour to catch a train that will get me to the boat just in time, I'm overwhelmed with sorrow not to be at your commencement, little Pard, as I told you in my telegram. If I had twenty-four hours leeway I would wire you to go with me, but there isn't an hour to spare, I must make this boat or lose out. But never mind little Pat, you're my own brave little daughter, and we'll make it up when I get home, so be of good cheer, and don't mind the bumps on the road till I get home.

Your disappointed old Dad, who loves you more than tongue can tell."

As she went over the letter in her mind her face brightened. Surely, surely, how had she forgotten! He called her "his own brave little daughter." What a silly she had

been to imagine she was a stray child he had picked up on the street, or taken from some hospital!

And what would he think of her running off in this frantic way at the very first "bump on the road"? Would he blame her and say she should have stayed behind and borne it? Oh! No! Surely not that! But would he have said she ought to have asked an explanation before going away? Perhaps – but if she had they would have been obliged to keep her whether they wanted her or not, because it was their duty. This way they were relieved of her without any act of their own – and she was relieved of them! Yes, that was the truth, she just couldn't have faced them and kept an unmoved countenance after what she had heard. She would always be thinking how Evelyn had said she hated her, and the dreadful tone their mother had used in reply, quite as if she agreed with Evelyn, only it was not wise to say so. Patty gave a little shiver as she remembered the hard, cold tone. Somehow each time she thought of it the hurt was just as keen and new. She drew a deep breath and tried to get away from it all for a few minutes, forcing herself to watch the people around her.

Back in her compartment she faced the now darkened window and frowned into the night face to face with her problem again.

Oh, if she could have gone with her dear father! And yet even that might have made trouble, for it had often seemed to cause jealousy when she was alone with him for long, and sometimes when he had stopped at school to visit her he had apologized for bringing no message from them, saying that they did not know he was coming that way or they would have sent one, and she had often suspected that he had a reason for not telling them, so that there grew up

between her father and herself a quiet understanding like a secret pact.

Somehow in the light of what had happened things in the past seemed to take on a new significance. It was like the time when she went to call across the way on a neighbor never visited before, and looked over at her home in astonishment that it seemed so different from what she had thought, so now she seemed to be standing outside of her own life and finding out what it really had been.

The thoughts whirled on an endless chain in her mind, and she was no nearer to a decision about things. Her mind simply seemed to refuse to act farther, except to throw back upon her the words she had heard that morning. Lying at last upon her berth she fell into a troubled sleep in which she seemed to toss in an endless round of puzzle and bewilderment.

The second morning of her journey the train rolled into the Pennsylvania Station in New York and Patricia Merrill, no nearer a decision about what she ought to do, but neatly groomed and with shining eyes sat up and watched the approach eagerly. Somehow during the night the mists had rolled away from her mind and she was at peace again.

Whatever had been the cause of the trouble, whatever was to be the outcome, she was here in the great city of her heart's desire, and was all a-quiver to see the glories which she had read and dreamed about for many years.

Plans, she had none. She grasped her shiny suitcase and fell into line with her fellow-travelers, for a little moment forgetful of the terrible thing which had driven her forth from her home.

An attentive porter speedily relieved her of her baggage, and it seemed quite natural that she should give him a generous tip, unmindful of her rapidly diminishing

resources. The porter herded her with a chosen few around a sheltered way to an elevator, and so, still in the state of luxury to which she had been born, she rose to the station floor to face an unfriendly world single-handed and alone.

It was not until the porter enquired where she would go that it suddenly occurred to her that she had made no plans whatever, and in a small panic she dismissed him and sat down in the waiting room. With a gasp of dismay she realized that in her unchaperoned condition she must be exceedingly careful. Her years of school and college had been unusually sheltered ones, and certain laws of social life and etiquette had been drilled into her very nature. Not in an instant could she face the new and strange complexity of her situation and solve her problem.

There were acquaintances and friends in New York, of course, whom she might look up and be at once sheltered and welcomed. But that was out of the question under the circumstances. She must do nothing to bring disgrace or scandal on her father's honored name. No one must know she was there!

She knew the names of hotels of wide repute, of course, but shrank from going alone to one. Besides, in such a place she was likely to be recognized by someone sooner or later, for she had many school friends who lived in the East, and had met many people traveling in the West.

She was glad that she had written her father just the night before leaving home, and would not have to write him again for a few days. Somehow perhaps she could plan an explanation which would make the Eastern postmark seem perfectly consistent with the kind of life he expected her to live during his absence. Perhaps he would think she was visiting a school friend, or gone East for a course of study —

or —— But that did not matter now. She must know what she was going to do immediately, *to-day*!

Her eyes wandered to a company of gypsies in soiled and gaudy garments and many jewels who had swarmed into the seat across from her and she watched their absorbed chatter. There was a poise about the swarthy old grandmother in her tiers of flowing scarlet and purple calico skirts that would have sat well upon some platinum-set bejeweled woman of society. With entire unconsciousness of the staring throngs she ordered her flock of sons and daughters and grandchildren, and Patty, fascinated, watched; saw the goodwill, and kindness between the whole little company, and felt a sudden choking aloneness in her throat.

All at once the gypsies picked up their babies and their belongings and walked majestically away, as unobservant of any but themselves as if they had been passing by an ant hill, and suddenly Patricia, roused to the fact that she was hungry, that it was twelve o'clock, and she had not thought what she ought to do.

She arose with determination and went to check her suitcase. Then she started out into the great unknown city to find a place to eat. While she was eating she could think perhaps.

She wandered across Seventh Avenue, across the tangled tracks where Broadway intersects Sixth Avenue, stopped timidly to glance up at the elevated, then walked on uncertainly up Thirty-third Street and turned into Fifth Avenue. Ah! She had read and heard of Fifth Avenue, and here she was at last!

Presently she came to an inviting tea-room and dropped into it as naturally and happily as a flower blossoms on its native heath. Without thought she ordered what she would

as was her wont, and ate with relish, watching the people about her, and thinking still about the gypsies, contrasting them with this and that one she saw about her, wondering what their lives might be, and if any had a trouble like her own. In the midst of her thoughts they brought her the check marked with the costly sum of her dinner, and when she went to pay it and put beside it the usual tip for the waitress, she had nothing left in her pocketbook but one gleaming silver quarter, and ten cents of that she would have to use to redeem her suitcase!

CHAPTER III

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For two midnight black minutes the gay little throng at Mary Elizabeth's popular tea-room vanished into a medley of color and sound without meaning to Patricia Merrill's startled ears and eyes, while the chrysanthemums in the many paned windows swam like motes in the color of the room. Her head began to reel, and a queer faintness and fright possessed her, as one who finds herself suddenly upon the brink of a bottomless abyss, with more momentum on than can be instantly controlled. It was as if she swayed there uncertainly for long fractions of time anticipating a fatal plunge, which was inevitable, no matter how hard she tried to save herself. Then, gropingly, her fingers found the glass of ice water just replenished by an observing attendant who was a judge of duvetyne and moleskin and had an eye for high finance.

The cold touch of the glass to her lips, the frosty trickle of the water down her newly parched throat, brought her back to her senses once more to ask herself what had brought her to this startled brink of fear. Then over her wearied senses rolled the answer almost stalely. Why! It was only that she was alone in a great and strange city without funds! Ten cents between her and starvation! A paltry dime between her and the street! It seemed somehow trifling beside the great sorrow that had brought her on this sudden pilgrimage. After all, what was money? Just a thing with which you bartered for more things! One could get along without *things*. At least without many of them! Hadn't she always managed without pocket money when her allowance

ran out before the month was up, and without borrowing, too! Her father had hated borrowing and had succeeded in making her hate it also. Of course she had her board at the school, but surely there must be a way for an able-bodied girl to earn her bread in a great city. Of course there would be! She had once helped another girl with her lessons at school and earned enough to get through till allowance time without asking her father for any in advance. There would surely be some way. Of course there were friends to whom she might apply, but they were out of the question because her hiding might be revealed, and father wouldn't like it to have any one know she had come away so peculiarly. No, she must meet the emergency herself, and she would!

She set her firm young lips and straightened up self-reliantly the warm blood rushing back into its normal course once more as her fears vanished into the sunshine of the day, and the chrysanthemums and pretty ladies resolved themselves sanely into their proper relations. She was able to look about her calmly, and face the situation. She had been a fool, of course, to be so absent minded as to let her money all get away from her so swiftly. She just hadn't been thinking of money. Of course if she had counted it at the start and set out to save, she might have eaten toast and tea on the train, and have even traveled in the common car. That was probably what people did who earned their own living. She would have had enough to carry her through the first day or two comfortably if she had done that. But there was no use crying over spilled milk. The money was gone and she must get out and find a way to earn her living. She had not an idea in the world what she could do, for she had not been educated with such an end in view. She had fluttered about in her studies from science to literature, and arts, about as a butterfly in a garden goes from flower to

flower, looking at them all as curious amusements, not at all connected with her daily living. She had never really taken an hour of her schooling seriously, although she had been a bright student as students go. But as for any practical knowledge that she could turn to now as a help in her need, it was as alien to her as a strange tongue. She tried to think what she could do – what other girls did who had to earn their living. Anne Battell had been a statistician, and was now in a fine position, getting a fabulous salary. But Anne had been training all her school life with this object in view. Norah Vance was doing interior decorating with a big department store in Chicago. Elinore had gone to China to teach music in a college. Theodora and Emilie Whiting were in some social work, and that plain little Mary Semple, who worked in the college office for her board, was a stenographer somewhere. But they all had got ready for some life work, while she, Patty Merrill, had only been getting ready to go home and have a good time. It seemed she had for years just been existing till she could get home and enjoy being with her people, and now that she had got there, there wasn't any home nor any love nor any people for her. Even her father was away off in almost another world, and there was no telling whether they, any of them, even really belonged to her at all more than in name. It was all dreadful and suffocating and she must not think about it. There were tears swelling up her throat and bursting into her eyes, and that good-looking young man at the second table to the right was looking curiously at her. In a moment he would see those tears – he half-suspected them now – he had no right to look at her so curiously! She must brace up and stop the tears! It was all nonsense anyway! There was work somewhere for her and she would just go out and find it! She would scare up something just as she used to scare

up a costume out of nothing in a sudden emergency for a play sometimes only three minutes before the curtain rose. She would go out and try the first thing she came to. Maybe she would go up some front steps and ring a doorbell and ask for something! Why not! Anyhow she must get out of here into the cool air and conquer those foolish tears!

With a little motion of proud self-reliance she gathered up her gloves smilingly, paid her check with a curious glance of awe at the lonely silver piece sliding about in the otherwise empty purse and calmly made her way out of the crowded room, head held high, followed by the admiring glance of the aforesaid young man. There was not a sign about her from the tip of her coral and fur toque to the tip of her suede-shod feet that she was going out to seek her fortune, else I'm sure from his eyes he might have followed her. Coolly she turned up the avenue when she reached the door, and made her way as if she had had it all planned out beforehand, and walked on up among the gay shoppers.

The way seemed interesting and beautiful, and she was not unduly impressed by her situation, now that she was out in the sunshine again with the clear, bright autumn air tingling her cheeks. There would be a way, and this was an adventure. Since home was not what she had hoped and she needs must have come away alone, why not make a game of it? There would be a way out somehow. There always had been, although, truth to tell there had never been anything really terrible to face before. Somehow that very fact made it hard to believe that this was a truly serious occasion. She felt as though perhaps it might be just a long dream after all and she might wake up soon and find Evelyn calling her to get ready for that house party. Things were queer anyway. Here she was away off here, and but for her own act of going away - but for her having come

downstairs at that very minute when Evelyn thought she was gone and began to speak – she would have been at that house party at this very minute, smiling and talking and having a good time with a lot of nice people and never thinking of such a thing as that some people in the world had to earn their living. It was queer, too, that she had to be bothered just now with finding some work to do when she needed all her time and faculties to think about what had happened to her. Queer that she couldn't have time to feel bad when a terrible thing had happened just because she had to find things to put in her mouth, and a place to sleep nights. The whole world was a queer place. It had often struck her so before, at odd times, when things hadn't gone just right and when that ache for home had come in and spoiled things; but now it seemed that *everything* was queer, and hard, and always had been.

On up the avenue the shops grew less fascinating, and churches lifted frequent spires with fretwork of marble, and gothic arch. And now great piles of marble, ornate and stately, cluttered up a whole block here and there, intruding on the busy life, like selfish canines who have squatted in the way of traffic, and are too indifferent to care that they are impeding progress. Indifferently she recognized that these were mansions where her kind condescended to spend a few days or weeks now and then when business or pleasure caused them to alight briefly from their flitting pursuit of pleasure. What if she should walk up to one of them and demand employment? Well, why not? The next one she came to perhaps – but the next one was still with closed shutters and an air of not having waked up for winter yet, and her feet strayed farther. Another stone mansion loomed ahead, with carved gateways in a high and ornate stone fencing about a velvet patch of grass and flaunting

autumn flowers. The big plate-glass doors in their heavy iron grills had just been closed with that subdued thud of perfect mechanism, and a luxurious electric car was rolling out the gateway as Patty came to its crossing. She glanced up and saw a lady sitting within, rich furs about her shoulders, and a painted haggard look upon her face that reminded her of her mother; the look of a woman who was frantically trying to have a good time and being bored to death by it. Patty knew it well and it did not interest her. She would not have looked again, and would have passed on, but just then the glass doors shivered themselves open with a little gasp of haste and a liveried person hurried out and made some sign that attracted the attention of the chauffeur, who stopped the car on the sidewalk directly before her, so that she had to pause and wait until it was out of the way.

The liveried person came breathlessly to the car and spoke to the lady who looked annoyed:

"Mrs. Horliss-Cole, Miss Marjorie says some one has just telephoned from a hospital that Miss Morris has met with an accident on the way here, and has broken her leg. She says you'll have to get someone else to take her place."

The lady in the limousine rumped her thin forehead peevishly and uttered an exclamation of dismay:

"How tiresome! Well, Rogers, why didn't you tell Banely to telephone and arrange for someone else?"

"Beg pardon, ma'am, but Banely went out for the afternoon an hour ago. She said you told her you would not need her."

"Oh, yes, of course! Well, I suppose I must come back and phone, Miss Sylvia is so particular——! Well, Parke, you'll have to back in again. Rogers, you might call up the agency on the library phone. I'll come right in."