

talk with uncle one night in a hard storm. Uncle would not let me stay that night; I was sent off to bed, and I never saw you any more. It was all like a child's pretty dream. I used to call you Miss Marjorie. Oh, it's been so long a time, I'm sure you must have forgotten.

Margot—(Looking steadily at the girl)—No, I remember quite well.

Claire—It—it must be that I remember you so well all the time because you were the only lovely woman I ever knew in my home.

Margot—Ah, you have been frightfully lonesome, child.

Claire—Madame, I am sick of it here! School was far better, even though I was always anxious to get away. I believe there is not another colored person around here except your maid. Since uncle died I have lived with a great-aunt. I don't know anything about her. I never saw her before his death. And—and—somehow I—I do not believe she is any kin to me at all. She never talks at the right time, and, oh it's terrible! This is a summer resort—a place for a good time, and everybody has it but me. They're all white—I don't want to go with them—but I am absolutely alone!

Margot—Why did you come here, Claire?

Claire—Oh—you—remember my name?

Margot—To be sure I do! Why did you choose this place for the summer?

Claire—(Bursting into sobs)—Oh, I didn't choose it! I did not choose it! I tell you I don't believe she's any kin to me—Miss Jenson! She acts all the time as though she were being directed, still there's no one to direct her. She made the doctor say I must come here for the climate, and I'm not ill! I'm just lonely.—I want Uncle. He's the only mother I ever knew.—And—and this morning was so black—it is getting lighter now—I just could not stay in that big cottage and hear the ocean all by myself. I knew you were here. I saw you play in "Crinoline" the other night—and—I—I—

Margot—You came because you knew—that—I—was—

Claire—Colored.

(Margot had expected this and so is not surprised. She sits thinking for a moment.)

Margot—(Calmly)—It's really good to hear someone say it. This masquerading, once entered into, is not so easily put aside. I took a big chance when it came to me,

and circumstances swept me on.—Once started I had to—go on. I pleased the people and they gave me this fame. I lost old ties and friends for it—this fame; but I could not go back—I needed the money for—I needed the money.

Bertie—(Entering)—Will you have the table prepared for lunch, madame?

Margot—No, Bertie, I shall not. It is time for them to arrive, but there will be no need for lunch. (Bertie looks surprised.) That will be all right, Bertie. You may go.

(Bertie starts out to the next room, but the bell rings and she turns back to answer it.)

Claire—(Rising to leave)—Madame Cotell, you have been so kind. I shall go now. Perhaps some other—

Bertie—(Reëntering with cards on a tray)—The guests, Madame.

Margot—(Pushing Claire gently upon the seat from which she has just arisen) Have them enter, Bertie.—You're not going now, Claire, child. Sit there and be perfectly at home.

(The maid ushers in the distinguished-looking party of five,—three men and two women. They exchange greetings with Margot.)

One of the Women—Ah, the weather is wretched to-day. So dark!

Margot—Yes. I thought perhaps it would prevent your coming.

First Man—Now, now, Margot, weather never keeps one from a luncheon engagement! (The others laugh.)

Barter—You're not Margot Cotell to-day. What's wrong?

Margot—Oh, fatigue I suppose. It's the day—and the ocean. I'm so glad it's growing more like daytime. Goodness! Every-time the ocean roars it drowns me. (The women are busy pretending to listen to the conversation and taking in Claire at the same time. The girl, seeing this, becomes interested in a book.)

Barter—Ha, ha, ha, that is the way these grey days get on the nerves sometimes. But let me say what—

Second Man—(Turning from other conversation)—I say, Barter, spring the news on Madame.

First Man—Yes, yes—she'll like to hear it.

Margot—Pardon if I am abrupt. I shall not entertain you to-day, Mr. Barter. I

shall not even ask you to sit. I am sorry, but—

Barter—Oh, then we'll just charge it to Dame Temperament and lunch out. (They laugh.) But first hear the new proposition. Margot Cotell's fame will be doubled! Now folks!

(The others stand around ready to chime in, but Margot stands very still, half defiant, half frightened, yet very composed withal.)

Margot—It will be of no use, Mr. Barter I am breaking my contract to-night—now.

(There is quite a little commotion at this, but it does not seem to affect Margot. She still stands quietly. Mr. Barter is quite alarmed, yet he does not believe her.)

Barter—Ye gods, this is temperament, Madame! Just what's the trouble may I ask?

Margot—(With a short cynical laugh, and slowly)—You will want me no longer, sir. You, nor any of them. Ah, you conceive in a flash a vital idea.

(This as his keen eyes search her then shift to Claire upon the chaise-longue. Claire has been watching the whole procedure from over her book.)

Barter—(With pointed shrewdness)—Who is our interesting little friend?

Margot—(In what is almost a retort)—She will prove more interesting than you might imagine. She is Claire Meade, my daughter, who is with me now from school, for good.

(This produces a shock. There is no word spoken for the space of a half minute. Then Margot, shaking her head gently, goes to Claire, who sits rigid, staring at the woman, her book dropped to the floor, her lips parted but dumb.)

Margot—(Forgetting everyone else and talking only to Claire)—I know—I know—it was—you'll understand Claire, you'll understand! No, you will not! You must, Claire, child, you must understand! Your father died; you were too precious not to have the best; there was no one to get it for you but me! (Calming herself) Your father died and I went to the stage. Why? Because it fascinated me and I was young enough to yield to fascination. It was vaudeville, and I made enough with what my husband had left, to keep a woman for baby and the home. Then I went to a stock company for bigger pay, and let a neighbor, a dear old friend, take you. He was a wid-

ower and he loved children. I had to make the money, and to do so I left you with him.—Yes, you do remember me, child. I came whenever I could to be with you. We kept putting off telling you until I came home for good. I know it sounds incredible—I know—but it was the only way to manage. There was no trade for me, no other profession. The company was white, so they took it for granted—they never asked me my race, I never told them. I worked hard and they liked me; a big producer starred me. It meant the loss of my people and old ties, but—it also meant the very best for you. Still it did not mean having you, but I kept putting off just a little longer. Your old guardian loved you dearly. When he died I was sure that I would come immediately to take you, but just then, came this contract for the summer. I swore I would not make it, but I let myself be persuaded, declaring it would be the last time. I sent this woman who is with you; she seemed gentle and kind. Oh Claire, God knows I'm sorry! I had you come here from school because I wanted you near me. Oh, I was coming for you,—to tell you,—to bring you home with me to have a holiday—a real holiday—more than a vacation. I've planned for it so long. My heart has ached, has done nothing but ache. Fame is nothing, child, I only—

Claire—Hush! Don't tell me any more. You have let me live in cold luxury with a poor old man pitifully trying to mother me, when I should have had some kind of woman-mother. I should have loved her, had we had to dig in a ditch together. You—

Margot—But Claire, child, do listen—

Claire—No! All this time I've wanted you and never, never knew. It was your selfish ambition that made you leave me behind. What harm could there have been if you had let me know that I had a mother? As I know myself, I sprang from some comforting myth told by a soothing old man.—Heartaches! Longing! I've had just a thumping pain where my heart ought to be. You didn't care—you—

(The visitors are spellbound and they stand watching, touched in spite of themselves.)

Margot—Claire, Claire, child you're young—you can't see! You still want me, child you do!

Claire—No! Look at them there, waiting