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really going to leave him?" the older sister questioned.
"I don't know what I'm going to do!" Cherry half sobbed.
"But, dearest—dearest, you're only twenty-four; don't you think you might feel better about it as time goes on?" Alix urged. "Now that the money is all yours, Cherry, and you can have this nice home to come to now and then, isn't it different?"
Cherry was looking at her steadily. "You don't understand, Sis!" she said.

"I understand that you don't love Martin," Alix said, perplexed. "But can't people who don't love each other live together in peace?" she added, with a half smile.
"N-not as man and wife!" Cherry stammered.

Alix sat back on her heels. In the ungraceful fashion of her girlhood, and shrugged her shoulders.
"Think of the people who are worrying themselves sick over bills, or sick wives, or children to bring up!" she suggested hopefully. "My Lord, if you have enough money, and food, and are young, and well—!"

"Yes, but, Alix," Cherry argued eagerly. "I'm not well when I'm unhappy. My heart is like lead all the time; I can't seem to breathe! People—aren't it possible that people are different about that?" she asked timidly.

"I suppose they are!" Alix conceded thoughtfully. "Anyway, look at all the fusses in history," she added carelessly, "of grande passions, and murders, and elopements, and the fate of nations—resting on just the fact that a man and woman hated each other too much, or loved each other too much! There must be something in it all that I don't understand. But what I do understand," she added, after a moment, when Cherry, choked with emotion, was silent, "is that Dad would die of grief if he knew you were unhappy, that your life was all broken up in disappointment and bitterness!"

"But is that my fault?" Cherry exclaimed, with sudden tears.

Alix, after watching her for a troubled minute, went to her and put her arm about her. "Don't cry, Cherry!" she pleaded sorrowfully.

Cherry, regaining self-control, resumed her work silently, with an occasional, sudden sigh. She had opened the subject with reluctance; now she realized that they had again reached a blank wall.

Three days after their talk in the moonlit garden Peter found chance to speak alone to Cherry.
"Are you ready?" he asked.
"Quite!" she said, raising blue eyes to his.

"It's tomorrow, then, Cherry?" he said.
"Tomorrow!" He saw the color ebb from her face as she echoed him. This was already late afternoon; perhaps her thoughts raced ahead to tomorrow afternoon at this time when they two would be leaning on the rail of the little steamer, gazing out over the smooth, boundless blue of the Pacific, and alone in the world.
"Tomorrow you will be mine!" he said.

"That's all I think of," she answered. And now the color came up in a splendid wave of flame, and the face that she turned toward his was radiant with proud surrender.

He told her the number of the dock; they discussed trains.

"We sail at eleven," said Peter, "but I shall be there shortly after ten. I'll have the baggage on board, everything ready; you only have to cross the gangplank. You have your baggage check; give it to me."

They were waiting in the car while Alix marketed. Cherry opened her purse and gave him the punched card-board.

"I'll tell Alix that I have a last dentist appointment at half-past ten," she said. "If she goes in with me, we'll go to the very door. But she says she can't come in tomorrow, anyway. I'll write her tonight, and drop the letter on the way to the boat. Tomorrow, then!" was Cherry's only answer. "I'm glad it's so soon."

"Good-by!" said Cherry, leaning over the side of the car to kiss her sister. Alix received the kiss, smiled, and stretched in the sun.

"Heavenly gay to waste in the city!" said Alix.

"I know!" Cherry said nervously. She had been so strangely nervous and distracted in manner all morning that Alix had more than once asked her if there was anything wrong. Now she questioned her again.

"You mustn't mind me!" Cherry said with a laugh. "I'm desperately unhappy," she said, her eyes watering.

"I'd do anything in the world to help you, Cerise!" Alix said sympathetically.

"I know you would, Sis! I believe," Cherry said, trembling, "that there's nothing you wouldn't give me!"

"That's easily said," Alix answered carelessly, "for I don't get fond of things, as you do! My dear, I'd go off with Martin to Mexico in a minute. I mean it! I don't care a whoop where I live, if only people are happy."

Alix embraced him lovingly.
"Well—if he wanted to go with you!" she conceded unwillingly. "But he wouldn't!" she added quickly. Cherry, going to the train, gave her an April smile, and as she took her seat and the train drew on its way, it seemed to her suddenly that she might indeed meet Peter, but it would only be to tell him that what they had planned was impossible.

But on the deck of the Sausalito steamer, dreaming in the sunshine of the soft, lazy autumn day, her heart turned sick with longing once more. Alix was forgotten, everything was forgotten except Peter. His voice, his tall figure, erect, yet moving with the little limp she knew so well, came to her thoughts. She thought of herself on the other steamer, only an hour from now, safe in his care, Martin forgotten, and all the perplexities and disappointments of the old life forgotten, in the food of new security and joy. Los Angeles—New Orleans—France—it mattered not where they wandered; they might well lose the world, and the world them, from today on.

"So that is to be my life—one of the blamed and ignored women?" Cherry mused, leaning on the rail and watching the plunge of the receding water. "Like the heroines of half the books—only it always seemed so bold and so rightful in books! But to me it just seems the most natural thing in all the world. I love Peter, and he loves me, and the earth is big enough to hold us, and that's all there is to it. Anyway, right or wrong, I can't help it," she finished, rejoicing to find herself suddenly serene and confident.

It was twenty minutes past ten, a warm, sweet morning, with great hurrying back and forth at the ferry, women climbing to the open seats of the cable cars, pinning on their violets or roses as they climbed. Cherry sped through it all, beside herself now with excitement and strain, only anxious to have the great hands of the clock drop more speedily from minute to minute, and so round out the terrible hour that joined the old life to the new. She was hurrying blindly toward the dock of the Los Angeles line, absorbed in her one whirling thought, when somebody touched her arm, and a



In Utter Confusion She Looked Up. It Was Martin!



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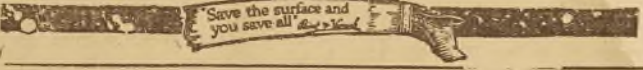
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cooked. senseless. laughing at nothing, or almost nothing.

One evening, when in the sitting room there was no other light than that of the fire that a damp July evening made pleasant, about a week after her arrival, Cherry spoke for the first time of Martin. She had had a long letter from him that day, ten pages written in a flowing hand on ten pages of the lined paper of a cheap hotel, with a little cut of the building standing boldly against a macerated sky at the top of each page. He was well, he had some of his dinners at the hotel, but lived at home; he had been playing a little poker and was luckier than ever. He was looking into a proposition in Durango, Mexico, and would let her know how it panned out.

Peter had been playing the piano lazily when the letter was tossed to Cherry by Alix, who usually drove into the village every morning after breakfast for marketing and the mail. He had seen Cherry glance through it, seen the little distasteful movement of the muscles about her nose, and seen her put it carelessly under

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