

There was the sound of heavy feet at the far end of the conservatory. Both Janet and Rowley turned instinctively. Through the green of the tree-ferns they caught a glimpse of blue, and as he perceived it the young man looked at Janet, and saw that her eyes were full of apprehension.

"They are coming," he said in a level voice. "Your warning was just in time."

CHAPTER XX

ARRESTED

THE two policemen drew nearer. They were accompanied by Janet's father, and in the background hovered Vernon Shapland, who from his position on the terrace had seen Mr. Selby and the officers of the law enter the conservatory by a side door, and had followed in their wake. There was a troubled look on Mr. Selby's face, a look which grew more pronounced as he caught sight of Janet standing by Charles Rowley.

"Oh, what will you do?" whispered the girl in a voice tense with emotion.

"Go with them, of course," answered the young man with a wry smile. "There is nothing else to be done."

"But——" She broke off as a thought struck her. "The locket!" she said. "Let me have it for a few days. I will return it as soon as I can."

"Why do you want——" He caught the appeal in her eyes. Mr. Selby was very close now, and he saw the opportunity to explain was not to be

given. Quickly he detached the locket from the chain, and handed it to her as Mr. Selby stepped forward.

"Rowley," he said haltingly, "I want a word with you in private." He turned to his daughter. "If you do not mind leaving us, Janet——"

The girl withdrew a little way, and her father, noticing the look upon her face, did not press her further. He had a very unpleasant duty to perform, and he felt that one unpleasant thing at a time was sufficient.

"Rowley," he said, speaking in a low voice, "I have something to tell you which I am afraid will upset you a great deal. I do not like the part I have to play in the business, but you are my guest, and I owe you a very great deal for what you did for Janet the other week, so I felt that I ought to come with the sergeant and explain——"

"There is no need for you to explain, Mr. Selby," interrupted the young man. "I have already heard why the sergeant is here. I understand that he proposes to arrest me for the murder of Jack Cordery."

Mr. Selby was surprised at the coolness with which Charles Rowley accepted the situation, but he was relieved to find that there was not to be a scene.

"Yes," he said, "that's it! It's all confounded nonsense, of course, but he feels that it is his duty, and as he applied to me for a warrant, on what on the face of them seem reasonable grounds, I have been forced to grant it. But if it is any comfort to you to hear it, I don't mind telling you that I am sure there is a bad mistake somewhere, and that I don't think for one moment that you did this despicable thing."

"I'm very glad to hear you say that, Mr. Selby. And it is very good of you."

"Not at all, Rowley. I've only known you for a few days, but I know that you are incapable of anything like that. Can you offer any explanation to the sergeant here that will serve to remove his suspicions? In that case your arrest might be obviated."

Rowley smiled slightly and shook his head.

"Not at present, Mr. Selby."

His host's face grew more troubled.

"I'm sorry to hear you say that. I was hoping that you would be able to clear up the wretched business without it becoming a public matter, and I am terribly upset that this should take place under my roof, and that a man whom I was beginning to count a friend——"

"I hope you will still do that," said Rowley quickly.

Mr. Selby looked at him, marked his open face and frank gaze, and then held out his hand.

"There's my hand upon it," he said.

The young man took it, grasped it hard for a moment.

"Thank you," he said simply, and then turned to the two officers. "If these men are ready, I am."

Mr. Selby also turned. "Now, sergeant, since you insist on making a fool of yourself you had better read that precious warrant."

The sergeant looked uncomfortable, but unfolded the paper in his hand, and stolidly read it, ending with the stereotyped caution, "And it is my duty to inform you that anything you have to say may be used against you, Mr. Rowley."

"In that case," answered Rowley with a faint smile, "I will say nothing."

"You'll have to come with us, sir."

"Willingly, after I have got my hat and coat."

"I'll send them round to you, Rowley," said Mr. Selby quickly. "And I'll have a car at the side door inside of five minutes. If you care to wait in my study, it will be better than remaining here. People may come in, and——"

"I understand," was the reply, "and I thank you. We will go to the study."

Mr. Selby led the way, and as Charles Rowley made as if to follow him the two policemen fell into step on each side. As they moved forward he looked back. Janet was standing by a giant fern. Her face was white as her dress, and her eyes glistened with unshed tears. He waved a hand in farewell, and she waved back, and a moment later they were out of sight of each other.

As he disappeared the girl sank into a seat, and covered her face with her hands. The pent-up emotion of the last few minutes found expression in a sob which broke from her lips, it was followed by another and another, until her shoulders were shaking convulsively in the stress of grief. A step sounded, and the next moment a harsh voice called her name.

"Janet!"

She looked up to find Vernon Shapland regarding her with blazing eyes, his face convulsed with passion. He had seen the silent farewell the two had made, and he was tortured with the jealous thought that there was an understanding between them. At the sight of him standing before her, the girl, by a supreme effort, obtained control of her feelings once more.

"Well?" she asked frigidly.

Her question and her sudden self-control rather non-plussed him, and something in her face startled him. What it was he could not have told, but it filled him with vague alarm, and when he spoke his voice was much milder.

"What is the meaning of this?" he asked. "Why are you weeping here? Is it because a scamp is likely to get his deserts?"

For a moment Janet did not reply. Her eyelids dropped for a moment, and when they were raised again there was something like scorn in the depths of them, and her voice, as she replied, smote him like a whip.

"You ask me that?" she said. "You?"

Vernon Shapland's alarm grew more pronounced. He had not the key to her thoughts, and stumbled blindly among conjectures.

"Why should I not?" he asked. "It is true that that man Rowley saved your life, but the fact that the police have taken him away is proof that whatever claim upon your gratitude he may have, he is unworthy to associate with decent people, and as he is likely to be hung for murder——"

"You must not say that," she broke in stormily. "It is not true!"

"Facts are facts," he said icily. "And in spite of what he did for you, the man deserves——"

"I do not believe it," she asserted vehemently. "Charles Rowley is as innocent as myself."

Her manifest faith in the arrested man stung her lover to the quick. His face darkened again, and there was a sneer in his voice as he answered:

"Such faith is creditable to your heart, but not to your understanding, Janet. The man is as guilty as Cain."

"It is not true," Janet answered quickly. "He is innocent. My heart and my understanding are at one in that conviction, and in any case, where Charles Rowley is concerned I would trust my heart even against my understanding."

"Feminine intuitions——" he began sneeringly, but before he could say another word, she interrupted him.

"Feminine intuitions are always right. That is a fact that has become proverbial. And, as I have said, in any case where Charles Rowley is concerned I trust my heart."

Her persistent belief was like a lash to Shapland's jealousy. He was rapidly losing control of himself, and his voice was passionate and angry as he replied:

"Why do you speak of your heart where this man is concerned? Is it that you have regard for him? I saw you wave your hand just now, and I am bound to say that I did not like it. You forget that we are shortly to be married——"

"No," she broke in quickly, "you are making a mistake there. We are not going to be married. I have changed my mind. Nothing would make me marry you now."

As she made this declaration Vernon Shapland's face grew almost purple. He shook with rage, and his eyes were full of a fierce light. For a moment he stood there inarticulate, then words came bubbling to his lips.

"Then you do love this—man from the Never-Never," he cried, "this upstart, who by accident did you a service, but who is a murderer. I understand now why you were so anxious to warn him. I half suspected it at the time, and now I know."

"Yes," answered the girl quietly, "now you know."

Her calm admission staggered him. For a moment he stared at her as if he could not believe his ears. Then he broke out once more.

"But you can never marry him. The law will see to that. Even if he escapes hanging he will be outside the pale. Your father will not allow you to make such a mistake, and when this momentary madness is over you will see reason—you will come back to me——"

"Never!" she answered, "never! Indeed I think I shall never speak to you again."

And before he could reply, before he could anticipate her movement, she turned and fled up the leafy aisle, leaving him standing there, with his face the index of blackest thoughts.

CHAPTER XXI

JANET INVESTIGATES

ON the morning following Charles Rowley's arrest on the charge of having murdered Cordery, Janet Selby sat in her own room, thoughtfully considering the miniature of herself which he had left with her. The pallor of her face and the bluish shadows under her eyes told of a sleepless night, whilst the slight frown of perplexity indicated that she was considering some course of action to which as yet her mind was not made up. Presently, however, the frown cleared, and as she snapped the locket she gave a little nod of decision.

"Yes," she whispered to herself, "I will go to