## CHAPTER XXII

MOLLY SOMMERS found a new world in the dressing room of the Corsairs' Club. The conversation of the naked and half-naked girls might be vulgar, she thought, but it was spiced with a little humour and a vast wisdom; and it was coloured with the philosophy of Broadway: "Get as much as you can as quick as you can for as little as you can; get it now while you're young, for you'll get old soon, my dear; get it while you're still beautiful, for beauty fades like grass."

"I never left any of my husbands in anger," one of them was saying. "Honest, they're the best friends I got. Just like having diamonds in hock!"

She listened to some of the others.

"And she says, 'But he insulted me terrible.' So I laughed at her, and I says, 'Get down on your knees and thank God, because some day no man will think of insulting you.'"

"He's the sweetest boy in the world; and he's got a Rolls, too, all his own."

"Aw, she gives me a pain. She don't know the meaning of the word exclusive."

"Say, who do you think you are? Texas Guinan?"

"I wouldn't work for that show. I don't like the costumes."

Their soft, slim bodies were multiplied by the mirrors running under electric lights the length of two walls. Some of them stood and talked. Some of them smoked. Some sat in their places before the mirror and the shelf of creams, busy with comb and brush, eyelash beader, eyebrow pencil, eye paint, belladonna, lipstick, rouge, nail file, or buffer.

The floor was strewn with the costumes of the last number, silken skin-tight trouserettes of orange and red and green and blue—little bits of rainbow-scattered jackets embroidered with silver and azure and gold, buckled shoes and sheer half-stockings. On the backs and the bottoms of chairs were the pirate costumes that must be worn for the next number.

The room smelled of talcum powder and perfume and burning tobacco. It was just long enough to accommodate twenty girls sitting back to back. There were two doors, one leading into the wardrobe room, and through this to the cabaret. The other door opened on the roof.

"They're hard-burled, most of them," said the girl next to Molly, as though she had read Molly's mind. "But you got to be a five-minute egg to get by on this street. You'll find out. You're Eileen Drew, huh? I caught your songs last night. We was all listening. You got swell pipes, dearie, and don't let them tell you different. And you put over a song swell."

The girl was Peggy Wolfe, but nobody ever called her anything but "Babe." She had a "sweetie" she referred to as Mr. Blum. That is, sometimes he was a "sweetie," sometimes "the boy friend." Babe was a blonde with dark blue eyes; and there was a dash of freckles under the dash of powder on her nose.

"Most of these girls is just kids," she rattled on. "They haven't had any education to speak of—except maybe out of story books—though one or two of them have been through college. Business college, I guess. And a couple of them are married. One of them's been divorced four times—that's Renie. But then, of course, she's twenty-six. Well, the girls that has been through the mill tip the others off to the wrong guys. You got to steer them right—they're like babies. Get a load of Tippy McGill, in back of you, educating Dolly Wide-Eyes, and you'll see what I mean."

She twisted her lips maliciously, and, with her bare shoulder, indicated the two. Molly listened.

"Some cake of ice!" Dolly was saying, looking at Tippy's diamond ring.

"I'll say!" Tippy admitted. "I got it for being a good girl, for saying no."

"No!"

"Yeah."

"Yeah?"

"Say, listen, innocent. I told him no. See? So he gives me the ring so's I'd say yes. Get it?"

"And you're gonna say yes?"

"No. And two no's don't make a yes. They make a mink coat, or maybe it'll be chinchilla. I ain't decided yet."

Babe, pulling down an eyelid that she might colour the outside of it, whispered through a corner of her mouth. "Ain't it rich? The kid's a natural-born vamp, but she was raised wrong. Where you hiding out, Dearie?"

"I have a room in Fifty-seventh Street," Molly said, but seeing some incredulity in Babe's face, she added—"near Ninth Avenue."

"I was gonna say! I thought for a minute you was either putting on the Ritz or livin' a life of sin. Fifty-seventh Street, huh? But near Ninth Avenue —what a whale of a difference a few blocks makes! Listen. I got a little dump in Seventy-second Street, right near Broadway. Seventy-five a month. The girl friend who was sharing it with me was all wet, and I got the whole hangout on my hands.

"This dame did a dance with a six-foot python in one of the clubs; and she used to keep the damn thing in the bathtub when we was home. She fed it rabbits. Ugh! I hated to see that bunch of coils gobbling those poor little pink-eyed bunnies. But I says to myself, a snake's got to live, ain't he? I didn't mind that so much—except it was hell when you wanted to take a shower.

"But Virginia got exotic. She had to burn dim

lights all over the place. It began to look like a spookery. And she'd burn incense. That was all right, too. But when I caught her painting her stomach red I tied a can to her.

"Why don't you bring your toothbrush and bar of soap over and go halves with me? There's a maid comes in every day, and no work to do except make coffee and open a couple cans."

"Thanks. It's so lonesome where I am. Could I move into your flat to-day?"

"Swell! Right after the show. It ain't much, but it's got two beds—and—running water."

She stood up, powdered her body, and struggled into the pirate costume. She bent down and whispered in Molly's ear: "Big Joe's all hot and bothered about you already. I could see that last night. Watch your step, Dearie. And Snake Eyes thinks you're a dose of poison."

Molly looked around for Marcia. She saw her at the other end of the room. The girl was looking at her, her eyes hard and unwinking. A girl near Marcia was crying—and, it was evident, had been drinking.

"She's trying to get sympathy out of that boa constrictor!" Babe said. "Now you tell one! The poor kid's got the heeby-jeebies over her sweetie. All she got was a lousy little flat—and the rent not paid in five months. Give her a smile when you can, huh?"

"I never tried to get nothing out of him," Molly

heard the girl saying. "And I ain't asking him for nothing now. I ain't no gold digger. I only want him to love me. That's all I want."

"No man's worth it," Babe said. "Look me over, Dearie. Am I right?"

Theresa Mora waddled into the room, scowling, showing ugly yellow teeth. She spanked the girl who was crying—spanked her gently—and ordered her to dress.

"She speaks English!" Molly said.

"Hell, Dearie! Why shouldn't she? She was born on the East Side!"

A buzzer sounded. The girls started up, got into line, fixed their faces in a smile, and hurried out. Molly could hear them singing:

*"We are the pirates of old Times Square,*
*Cruising around for a millionaire. . . ."*

She pitied them. They were so young, so beautiful, and they were all dancing and singing down the road to heartbreak—with nothing to save them but the pathetic protection of being "hard-burled."

Theresa gathered up the garments from the floor, went out with them, grumbling, returned with an armful of new costumes, distributed them about the room, and vanished. She had ignored Molly. And Molly was glad of that, for it made it easier for her to carry out the plan that had taken shape in her mind. If she could make Marcia jealous—and Theresa, too—

she might learn something about the Larkin murder. Jealous women, she knew, often said things for spite, told truths they would not tell under other torture.

But weeks passed, and other weeks after them, and, though she was making progress, Molly had found out little. But she was not impatient.

Carozzo bought her stately gowns, the flowing, piquant gowns of other centuries, dresses with full skirts and lots of lace and tight bodices, wigs of spun glass and shiny gold, wigs of long black and auburn braids. And he made her sing old songs. The crowds of drinkers loved her. The newspapers called her a find, a sensation, "the treasure of the Corsairs' Club."

# CHAPTER XXIII

It was rapture to sing, to stand in the balcony in the glare of the spotlight, or by the tables where men and women ate and drank and whispered, to lift up her face, to breathe deep, to let her fancy soar out of her breast. Such moments helped her to endure Carozzo's eyes. But always, after her song, there was a moment of bitterness.

The song would end, and she would be aware of the crowd applauding, aware of her surroundings, aware of the reason for her presence in this place, aware that she had accomplished almost nothing.

In her flat in Seventy-second Street one day she wrote a list of everything she had learned—and the total was so meagre that she tore the paper into shreds.

Carozzo has one of my father's handkerchiefs.

Theresa Mora didn't need an interpreter at the trial. Why did she have one?

Both Pio Mora and Mickey Finn chew gum. Either one could have gummed the false diamond. Finn carries dozens of packages of gum, plays with them, builds log houses out of them. Did he drop the gum wrappers in the waste-paper basket?

Marcia's sleeping powders are heroin, according to Babe.

Finn is a drug addict, Babe says.

Flat Wheel—mysterious. Know nothing about him.

Sometimes after Molly had finished an encore she would sit with Platt, or Chet Qug, or Nat Retticker, or Irving Henschell. They told stories of Broadway, of rackets, of swindles, of strong-arm men, of bootleggers and hijackers, and dope, and women.

She began to like Qug, though he was such a barbarian, for he was candid about himself, and there was a chivalrous streak in him. He had never hit a woman in his life, he boasted. He told Molly he thought she was "the only square dame in New York."

Once he had broken a bottle over a wife-beater's head. "I like to bust them guys good," he said.

There was some fascinating mystery about Platt, but she could not fathom it. He always came to the Corsairs' with one or two other men, never with women. He did nothing but sit before a stale glass of ginger ale, and look at the people about him. He liked to talk about his mother and his little sister. "Illinois," he called his sister. Her name was Eleanor, he explained, but "Illinois" was her baby pronunciation of that name. It was some time before Molly learned that Eleanor was married to a Belgian count. It was Chet Qug who told her.

"You could talk to that guy all night," Qug said, "and never rap to him."

Platt was sweet, Molly thought. She liked him better every time she talked to him; and she knew that he liked her, too. That worried her, for she didn't want him to like her too much. This was one man she did not want to hurt. Yet sometimes she surprised in his pale blue eyes the same look she had seen in Retticker's when he said "I love you."

Sometimes she sat with Carozzo, or with Mora—seldom with Mickey Finn. Finn repelled her. Qug said he was a safe-blower—"and a bum one at that." Platt said he was a killer.

"Stay away from him," he advised. "He's mean all through—and treacherous. Of course you heard he was once tried for murder—shooting a man in the back. A great lawyer won his acquittal. But there are other things: There was a drunk who had spent a lot of money here one night—gave five-hundred-dollar bills to the waiter and the cigarette girl—an oil man fresh from the wells. Finn offered to take the fellow home. The man was found at the bottom of an elevator shaft the next morning. He hadn't a cent."

There was something about Finn, too, that vaguely frightened her—the yellow canine teeth, the sharp long jaw, the nervous hands that played with packages of gum, built them up, knocked them down, built them up again—the little red-rimmed eyes.

His arms were long and awkward. They seemed to bulge at the elbows. And his sleeves were always loose, and much too large. She discovered the reason for these peculiar sleeves and elbows the first time she talked to Finn.

He was playing with his gum one moment. And the next moment he was pointing two automatic guns at her.

He laughed at her surprise.

"There ain't nobody goin' to get me," he said.

The guns disappeared as suddenly as they had appeared.

"Feel my elbows," he commanded. Molly obeyed, felt something that might be bone and muscle.

"My seventy-fives!" he explained. "I got a gun strapped around each elbow. I click my elbows agin my sides. That touches off a spring. The guns snap down my sleeves—and I got them in my hands. I let them go—and they fly back to their little leather garages on rubber bands. Pretty slick, what? My elbow guns!"

"That's why you have such loose cuffs," she said.

"Sure. I have them made to order."

Sometimes Molly spent a few moments talking to Babe's boy friend, Mr. Blum.

Mr. Blum sat sedately at a table all night, waiting until the show was over, at six or seven o'clock in the morning, to escort Babe and Molly to their little flat

in Seventy-second Street. He would drink beer and eat pretzels. He'd bite the pretzels into letters spelling "Babe." Then he'd eat them, and bite some more into shape. He had but two topics of conversation: Babe and structural steel.

Pio Mora, Molly learned with some surprise, loved her with a reverence that bordered on the superstitious. He called her "*madonna mia*," and he was always giving her some little present, a rosary, a medal, a box of cheap and atrocious coloured underwear. Once he painted an exquisite little picture of her; and he told her he was carving her face in the gold handle of a stiletto.

"Theresa," he would say—and his laugh would roll out like thunder—"she ees watch through the crack in the dressing-room door. She theenk I am in the so great danger from your eyes, *madonna mia*. No? But you are like the angels, and I say leetla prayers to you."

At such times his great red moustaches would whip like flags in a gale, his teeth would gleam, his monstrous hairy hands would beat like mild thunder on the table, the scar would jump with a terrible joy, and his earrings would jingle madly.

"You are a joy, *madonna*. Some day——" His sea-green eyes would squint at her then, as though they were seeing visions, and he would sigh from unplumbed depths, and bellow for wine.

Was he as simple as he seemed? Surely there was something more sinister back of his eyes than most people would believe, Molly thought.

Carozzo never drank, never smoked. He talked quietly, but always his black eyes disquieted her. His words were flowery at first. But they became less flowery and more tender as the days went on. Sometimes he had difficulty in finding words for her. His fingers no longer caressed his moustache points, but pulled at them with violence. Sometimes his eyes were bloodshot.

She was not amazed when he sent Flat Wheel to her with the command that she come at once to his den. She had been waiting for it.

She found him pacing the rug in front of his desk when she entered. He was smiling, his hands were in back of him, one patting the palm of the other impatiently.

"Eileen," he said joyously when she came through the door, cool and lovely, a Colonial maid with spun-glass hair, a beauty patch near her left eye, a smile on her face, in her hand a great feathered fan.

"So stately," he said softly. "So beautiful." His eyes had yellow lights in them. He pointed boyishly to a silver bucket on the oak table, a bucket filled with ice out of which protruded the neck of a bottle covered with a wet napkin. "It is a little surprise. A party. We will have champagne, real champagne—and we will talk."

"But I never drink," she said, "and neither do you."

He regarded her with a little disappointment, walked toward her slowly, the smile coming back into his olive face, his eyes growing bigger and bigger.

"You are a bad girl," he said. "You have been avoiding your best friend, Big Joe Carozzo. You make eyes at Pio Mora, that no-good one; and Geoffrey Platt who loves no woman; and that hoodlum Qug. Even Mickey Finn—ugh! Mickey Finn—you like better than Big Joe!"

She laughed at him, closed the great feathered fan, and made him such a curtsey as Colonial belles made to their dandies.

"You mock me," he said. "And I love you. I am mad. I am crazy mad for you."

His eyes began to blaze. He seized her roughly, and held her—bent to kiss her. She was not frightened. She felt a little contempt for him.

"And you would take me like this?" she asked.

"Like this? Anyway. I tell you I am mad with love."

"And you think I will love you if you are rude to me? Any man can kiss a girl against her will. But it takes a real man to make her want to be kissed. Why don't you make me love you—if you can? Are you afraid to try?"

He dropped his arms.

"Afraid?"

"You are afraid that Mora will win me. He makes

love to me, too—but sweetly, tenderly. He calls me Madonna. He's married, of course, but——" She sighed a little and smiled at him, tantalizingly. If she could make these two men jealous of each other——

"You love him?" he demanded, scowling at her.

She shrugged her white shoulders, threw out her arms.

"I will wait for you," he said. "But not long. I am all afire. I do not sleep. I think of you—all the time. I am sick for you. And if you love any other man——"

She laughed lightly, to cover her fear, looked from his face to the diamonds in his stud, glanced at the spindles on his desk.

"It wouldn't be the first murder here," she said.

He seized her by the shoulders, made her look at him.

"You think I killed Spots Larkin?" he asked.

"I don't know anything about it—except what I read in the newspapers."

It seemed to her that he was relieved. He smiled again. "Wait," he said. "Wait one little moment." He opened a drawer in his desk and took from it a magnificent diamond ring. She looked at it eagerly, her eyes so shining that he thought love was born in them that moment.

"It is a little thing—to give to you," he said. "But I will give you diamonds. Ai! What diamonds you

shall have! I will wait—but there must be no other man."

"Don't worry about that," she said, her long lashes falling over her eyes that he might not read them

"And call me Joe," he said.

"This is like a book," she thought. And like a heroine in a book she answered: "All right—Joe!" Her voice was as soft as she could make it. He held her hand and kissed it, and she went out quickly.

Marcia met her just outside the door, and snatched at the ring.

"Damn you, give me that," she said. "It's mine."

Molly slipped the ring onto her finger, and smiled at the furious girl.

"Settle it with Joe," she said sweetly, and went to the dressing room.

## CHAPTER XXIV

THEY sat on a granite rock, Geoffrey Platt and Molly, far from the roof garden on the Allegheny Building.

The water plashed gently, lazily, beneath their feet. The late October sun was warm and soothing. There was no wind, yet far out in the Sound a three-masted schooner, holding its snowy sails against the light blue sky, moved slowly on its course; and in the little park in back of them tired leaves fell to the ground.

The tide was out, and in the crevices of the rocks, and in the little pools drying all around, were mussels and hermit crabs and starfish, and strings of kelp.

"The water's like a baby cooing itself to sleep," said Molly. The thought had spoken itself. She had not wanted to talk—not yet—only to feel, to let her senses be drugged for a little time. There would be an opportunity to question him by and by.

"It's like a rug," Platt contradicted, a drowsy note in his voice, "a blue-green rug."

"If it's a rug, it's wrinkled," she said. And he laughed and called her "a housekeeper at heart."

She made no answer to this taunt. She was thinking of many things, and of none of them clearly. She was thinking that the day held melancholy as well as

loveliness. The year was dying. The leaves were dying. A crow caw-cawed from a dying tree. The rocks were filled with dead and dying creatures of the sea. Her father was still in the prison hospital. She had heard no word from him. She had heard no word from Ted. And this gentleman she liked so much was about to make love to her; and she must hurt him.

She was thinking that love was bitter and without reason. Monica Lane had killed herself because she had loved Platt. And Platt loved Molly, and Molly loved Ted. Useless! Useless!

She had known for weeks that Platt loved her; and when she received the invitation from his mother she was sure he would ask her to marry him.

She had accepted the invitation to visit Mrs. Platt at her home in Larchmont Manor not merely for her own ends, she told herself, but also to please Geoff and his mother. The invitation had been so kind, so motherly.

> Geoffrey has told me so much about you and your songs, those old songs I love so much, that I felt I must come to New York [Mrs. Platt had written]. But I am almost an invalid, and my children would not let me go.

Yes, now that his mother and sister had met her, and been so sweet to her, she felt that Geoff would propose. She wished she could say yes. What had she done to make him love her? She remembered an old saying of her father's: "Every unmarried woman

looks on every unmarried man as a potential husband; and whether she realizes it or not, she spins a web of charms to snare him."

Perhaps she had spun such a web. She hadn't meant to. True, she had courted every opportunity to be alone with him, but only that she might question him about the Larkin murder, and the theft of the diamond. She had been alone with him many times in the Corsairs' Club, but only for a few minutes at a time, and something had always prevented her from asking the questions she wanted to ask. Here on the rocks she would put those questions to him. But not yet. Not yet.

She was thinking of the ride out from New York in Geoff's car, a roadster that made even the roads of Westchester County seem smooth; of the smell of fresh-cut clover as they passed a golf course; of the warm reception Mrs. Platt and Eleanor had given her. Queer, she thought, that Eleanor was a countess, this madcap girl so recently emerged from childhood, so soon to bear a child.

"Don't call me Countess," she had said before Molly had a chance to greet her. "It gives me the willies. Call me Illinois. That's a name!"

It was during breakfast that she had offered a sort of explanation.

"I met a princess in Paris," she said. "A friend introduced me; and I thought I would have to be stately and dignified with her. And what do you think

she said? She said, 'Hello, kid. Put it there. What part of God's country are you from?'"

She laughed gaily. "Paris is full of American countesses and baronesses and princesses," she added. "They tell me their husbands keep them in Paris, pay them so much for staying there."

It was during breakfast, too, that the countess had shown Molly the great diamond ring the count had given her.

Molly was thinking that Platt looked much better in sports clothes than he did in evening dress, thinking of many things and none of them clearly, and watching the schooner as it sailed across the dark blue of the water and the light blue of the sky.

And Platt was thinking of a verse of Edna St. Vincent Millay's:

*She is neither pink nor pale,*
*And she never will be all mine.*
*She learned her hands in a fairy tale,*
*And her mouth on a valentine.*

A peculiar sound beat at the door of Molly's consciousness, a persistent sound that was a multitude of lesser sounds, a faint gritty chorus that seemed to come out of the warm rocks all around her.

"It's the mussels," he said, seeing her wonder.

"Mussels? Are they singing?"

"They're stewing in their own juices," he said. "See the bubbles coming out of that purple shell.

And that green one. Some of them are rubbing one hard shell against another—gnashing their shell-like teeth."

He tore a shell off the rock, showed her the tiny serrated edges that fit against each other perfectly, and he spoke with a shy eloquence of the colours blended in the shell.

"It's beautiful here," she said. "There's only one spot I know that is more beautiful. It's a little place on Sentry Hill from which I could look down on the village where I was born, and for miles and miles around at gray and green and purple hills. I suppose now all those hills are covered with goldenrod and sumac—scarlet and gold. And the leaves are dying there, too, as they are here."

She sighed. She did not see the queer expression that came into his eyes.

He tossed a pebble into the water—and she saw a new wonder that excited her face to animation.

"What is it?" she asked, her hands going quickly to her heart, and her eyes glowing. "A flower? A living, breathing flower made of fire and jelly! No—it's a comet, a live comet! Do tell me quick what it is."

"Looks like a raw egg trying to get poached, doesn't it? It's only a jellyfish. They sting you when you're in swimming."

She watched its gelatine sides rising, forming a ruff that dulled but did not hide its orange heart,

saw the ruff lowered, raised again, lowered again, exclaimed at the tail that was like a woman's bright hair.

"Shall I bring it ashore?"

"No, please don't. It's so beautiful in the water, but——"

The excitement drained out of her, left a tired wistfulness.

"A fish out of water," she said, "is like an innocent man in jail."

She felt that was a good opening.

"You are Molly Sommers!" Platt said.

"You know?"

"I didn't know until you mentioned Sentry Hill. Your father used to talk of Sentry Hill. And once he showed me your picture. I knew that first night I saw you that I had seen your picture somewhere. And now I know why you have been playing the game the way you have."

"Yes? Then you know how desperate I am. You know my father is innocent. Monica Lane knew it. I came beating on Monica Lane's door—too late. And now—and now——" Her gray eyes looked at him, pleading.

"And now you must beat on another locked door," he said quietly. He took her hands and clung to them.

"Another locked door! You mean you will not tell me anything?"

"I cannot."

"Because you will not."

She jerked her hands free.

"Why won't you help me? Did you have some part to play in sending my father to Sing Sing?"

He debated his answer, staring at her, frowning, his lips twitching like those of a boy unjustly accused. He turned his head, looking into the water. She stared at the arched top of his ear.

"If I should admit I did play a part, wittingly or otherwise," he said, "you'd hate me. If I denied it, you'd believe me a liar, and despise me. And I don't want you to hate me, Eileen—Molly—or to despise me."

"And so you make yourself more mysterious than ever. And my father stays in his jail."

"You think I am one of Carozzo's gang?"

"No. And yet—Geoff, please don't be angry. But I must tell you this: I learned that you sailed for Paris the first moment you could. You took the first ship that sailed, after the murder. Monica Lane, who loved you, knew who killed Carozzo, and killed herself—perhaps because she would rather die than tell. No, that isn't quite correct. She wanted to tell, but changed her mind.

"When Larkin was killed his diamond was stolen. He had told everybody it was 'as big as a coconut.' This morning I saw on your sister's hand a diamond, the biggest diamond I ever saw. And she said a peculiar thing; she said, 'It is as big as a coconut,

isn't it?' She was abroad at the time of the murder. I wanted to ask you about that stone—and you tell me I'm knocking in vain on a door that will not open!"

"And you do think I am one of Carozzo's gang? You can't trust me, and be patient?"

Her eyes were honest as she answered, and her voice was low.

"You're the only man in the world I do trust. I don't know why I should. It isn't reasonable, but I do."

"Maybe it's because you know I love you!" he said.

She raised her hands in a little weary gesture, but he did not heed her.

"I loved you even when I thought you were flirting aimlessly with Carozzo, and with Mora. I loved you when I thought you were nothing but a scatter-brained idiot whose sole idea was to make a name on Broadway. I wronged you terribly, but I loved you. And now that I know who you are and why you have acted as you have——"

"Don't," she cried. "Geoff, please don't."

"I love you beyond all telling," he went on. "I wanted you to come to my home that you might see my mother and my sister, and love them—and that they might love the girl I'm going to marry."

"Wait, please, Geoff. Let me tell you something first."

He saw that her eyes were wet.

"Geoff, I did encourage Carozzo and Mora to make love to me. And I encouraged others, too—because I thought I might get them to tell me things. But you—I never encouraged you, Geoff. I never flirted with you."

"No," he said, and his head dropped, "you didn't have to, Molly. One looks at the sun and loves it. One looks on you—and dreams."

"When I spoke of Sentry Hill I was thinking of—someone I used to know—in Sommerville. I gave him up when I came to New York—gave him up because he fought my coming here alone. I put him out of my thoughts—or I believed I did. But every night I dream of him, Geoff. Even the smell of fresh-mown clover brings him back to me.

"You remember when we sped by the golf links this morning, a man was cutting the grass. I smelled the cut grass and the clover, and I wanted to leap out of the car and run back, all the way to Sommerville."

They looked out on the blue-green waters, on the white sails running across the blue horizon, at the jellyfish rising and sinking below them.

"Perhaps he will marry some other girl," Molly said after a time. "But I—I will never marry anybody, Geoff."

She turned to him then, and the tears were gone, and she was smiling. She gave him her hand.

"Friends?" she asked.

"Friends!" he said. "Friendship is rarer than love and finer—if not so warm."

"And not so torturing," Molly added.

"Some day I shall answer all your questions," he promised, "all the questions you have not asked—my friend."