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Gloria Waldron, her beautiful face flushed with anger, faced her father defiantly. "You have no right to decide whom I am to marry, especially when you have chosen a man whom I detest and distrust."

Colonel Waldron's jaw tightened, and then he drew nearer to the girl.

"You will marry Captain Newton in a month's time," he retorted harshly. "He is in every way a suitable man—rich, handsome, and well-connected, and a fine soldier. You understand, Gloria?"

A look of pain appeared on the girl's face, and she gazed up appealingly into her father's face.

"Dad dear, I have always submitted to your rule, even when it was against my own judgment. Surely you are not going to ruin my life now by forcing me to marry a man I don't love!" Her voice broke. "Oh, dad, I can't do as you ask!"

Colonel Waldron turned towards his desk. "To-morrow we leave here, and I take up governorship at Fenmoor Prison," he said coldly. "You will have plenty of time there to get used to my ideas when once you are away from your companions in the town."

A low sob escaped the girl's lips, and she crossed to her father's side.

"Do you mean that—that you will force me to marry a man I loathe?" she asked.

Colonel Waldron looked away from the beautiful face.

"That's all nonsense, Gloria," he returned sternly. "Newton is a most worthy fellow, and your dislike is merely a foolish girl's whim. A month from to-day you will marry Newton, or you will have to find another roof to shelter you."

Gloria Waldron's face flushed with anger.

"You mean that you will turn me out of your home?" she said. "Well, if that is your intention, I will save you the trouble by going at once!"

Colonel Waldron swung round, and gripping Gloria by the shoulders, peered into her eyes.

"You—you wouldn't dare!" he muttered, his face livid with rage.

The girl drew herself away from him.

"You may as well know why it is impossible to do as you want," she answered, returning his gaze unflinchingly. "I was married this morning to a man whom you do not know, and of whom possibly you would not approve. But I love him, and that is sufficient for me. I know I shall be happy with him."

A low snarl of rage broke from Colonel Waldron's lips, and, crossing to the door, he flung it open.

"Go, go, before I forget myself!"

But Colonel Waldron made no sign. He stood there, his face set in an expression of grim anger.

### II.

A wild thunderstorm broke over the country around Fenmoor Prison.

Colonel Waldron, governor of the prison, was seated in the dining-room of his house. He had just concluded his evening meal, and, in spite of the fact that it was late summer, he shivered slightly as he looked out through the window.

The storm was increasing in violence every minute, and great flashes of lightning lighted up the scene at regular intervals, while the thunder roared and reverberated through the heavens.

"Great powers, what a terrible night!" ejaculated the governor, leaning back in his chair, and puffing the blue smoke from his cigar. "There's not much likelihood of any of the convict's making a dash for it on a night like this. Even a prison cell is preferable to a night spent in hiding on the moors in this downpour."

He sat there immersed in his own thoughts, as, from time to time, the lightning zig-zagged its way into the apartment.

Colonel Waldron's thoughts were far from happy ones, for his fancy had conjured up, in the shadows of the room, the face of his daughter Gloria.

From the time she had left his home on that memorable night, nearly four years before, he had not seen her. Three times she had written to him, appealing, womanly notes, but Colonel Waldron had steeled his heart against them, and they had gone unheeded.

"What a proud old fool I have been!" he muttered, after a while. "Here am I, doomed to spend the evening of my days alone, unloved and heartbroken. My little girl!"

A terrific clap of thunder sounded in the heavens, causing the house to vibrate.

The governor gazed half-fearfully towards the window.

"Heaven grant the world has dealt kindly to my little one," he muttered softly, "for she was unused to the cruelties and struggles of life!"

With an effort the governor threw off the feeling of depression which threatened to master him, and, rising from his seat, he turned to the bookcase, and looked along the shelf to select a book.

As he did so his eyes wandered in the direction of the window, and a cry of amazement burst from his lips.

A pale face was staring in at him.

"An escaped convict!" gasped Waldron, his thoughts turning at once to the prisoners.

Without pausing to consider the risk he ran, Colonel Waldron dashed across to the window. At the same moment the face disappeared.

"I wonder who on earth it could have been?" muttered Waldron. "The face didn't look like that of one of the men. And yet, who else could have been out in such a terrible storm?"

As he spoke he unfastened the long French windows, and flung them open.

The rain came swirling in with terrific force, and it was some moments before Colonel Waldron could see before him.

Colonel Waldron could see before him.

Then, a few yards before the window, he saw a form swaying dizzily.

It was a woman, and in her arms she carried a baby.

The governor hurried to where she stood and passed one arm around her.

"My poor soul," he ejaculated. "You must be drenched to the skin. Come along inside until the storm is over."

Half supporting the figure, Colonel Waldron drew her into the room, and, as he did so, the light fell upon the girl's face.

With a gasp of astonishment, Waldron recognised the sweet, pale features.

"Gloria! My child!" he cried, clasping the soaked figure tightly in his arms. "My dear—dear little girl!"

Assisting the girl to a settee, he forced her down gently upon it. Then, for the first time, he noticed that the baby she carried was a little girl, about three years old.

The little one had been well wrapped up in a large shawl, and was certainly none the worse for the weather.

Colonel Waldron took the child from her mother, and placed her down on a large tiger-skin rug.

At the sight of the large, stuffed head, the mite gurgled happily, and it was apparent that, however the mother had suffered, her baby had been well cared for.

A mist swam before the eyes of Colonel Waldron as he crossed over to the French windows and fastened them. Then he turned again to where the girl remained staring before her.

"Gloria! My poor little girl!" went on the governor, choking back a sob in his throat. "But all this is past now, little one. In your sorrow you have returned to me, and we must forget all that is past."

Colonel Waldron stopped abruptly, and peered more closely into the expressionless eyes.

"Gloria, what is it, dear?" he cried hoarsely. "Gloria!"

The girl rose to her feet, and then passed her hand to her forehead.

"I don't know you!" she murmured dully. "But—I—I—oh, my head—my head!"

Her voice died away in a wail, as her hand still remained clasp her forehead. Then, with a loud cry, she fell prone at her father's feet, unconscious.

### III.

The prison doctor turned from the bed in which Gloria had been placed and addressed Colonel Waldron, who was standing pale-faced near the door of the room.

"Poor little thing!" he murmured sym-

pathetically. "She is in a bad way, Waldron. Her brain is partially unhinged, and I fear for her life. She must have suffered terribly to get to such a state."

"What can we do, doctor?" asked Waldron anxiously.

"I really don't know, Waldron. During the time I have been watching her she has raved unceasingly for her husband. But where he is Heaven alone knows, for the girl herself is not in a state to tell us. If only he could be fetched, recovery is almost certain."

"And without him?" queried the governor.

"Then the end is inevitable, for her brain cannot stand the strain," returned the doctor. "She may last a few days—or less than that even; but all the skill in the universe can do her no good now. I am firmly convinced that the sight of her husband can restore her reason, and then her recovery would naturally follow."

"Oh, Heaven, this is too cruel!" cried Waldron brokenly. "But she must not die, doctor, she must not die. She is all I have to live for now. Something must be done."

"That is easy enough to say, but where in the world do you propose to seek the husband?" returned the doctor.

A brief pause followed, and then Colonel Waldron turned sharply to the doctor.

"I had forgotten the child," he exclaimed. "We may be able to learn something from her. Anyhow, there is a chance, and we can't afford to let one go by."

The child was with a maidservant who had taken charge of her. The little one was very anxious about her mother, but listened attentively to the doctor.

"When did you last see your daddy, little one?" he asked kindly. "Would you remember him again, if you saw him?"

"Yes, 'cos I would," returned the mite. "Here's a picture of him."

She drew a locket from inside her dress, and held it up. The doctor examined the face closely.

"I don't seem to recognise the face at all. Perhaps you have seen something of him, colonel?"

The governor of Fenmoor prison examined the portrait eagerly, and a look of horror appeared on his face as he did so.

"Great heavens!" he gasped hoarsely. "This man is a convict—a convict under my charge at the prison!"

A gasp of astonishment broke from the doctor's lips, but he soon recovered his usual complacent expression.

"Nothing could be better," he cried.

"Have the man brought here immediately."

"Here!" gasped the governor. "The man is a branded felon, and it is my duty to keep him in safe custody within the prison walls. I—I can't do it!"

"Your first duty is to consider the life of your child!" cried the doctor sternly.

"Colonel Waldron, I tell you solemnly that the presence of that man here if only for a few seconds, will be all that is required to save her life. If you refuse to do as I ask, your daughter will die, and you will be solely responsible for her death!"

Waldron stared into the face of the doctor, his face twitching nervously. In his position as governor at Fenmoor prison, his conduct had been exemplary and he had the reputation of being a strictly fair and just man. Was it right for him to let the call of love interfere with that of duty?

A brief pause followed, then at length he turned to the doctor.

"You are right, Convict 83 must be brought here at once. I will telephone instructions immediately."

Twenty minutes later Convict 83 was brought to the governor's house in charge of three warders.

"Remain on guard outside the building," commanded the governor to the men in charge. "I will be responsible for the prisoner."

Convict 83 was handcuffed, and Colonel Waldron took him to the room where Gloria lay.

"Go in," ordered Waldron as the man hesitated outside on the threshold.

The convict, not knowing what to expect, pushed the door open cautiously.

At the sight of the pale face on the pillows, a wild cry burst from the man's lips, and, crossing swiftly to the bed, flung himself down on his knees by it.

"Gloria, my dear one! Gloria!"

Choked by his sobs the convict buried his face in the bed-clothes, and as he lay there the girl opened her eyes slowly.

The convict's hand closed upon it, and the next moment he was raining passionate kisses upon the frail fingers.

"She has recognised him," whispered the doctor to Colonel Waldron as they stood in the doorway. "See, she is crying. Splendid! I'll go now, colonel, I shan't be wanted any more to-night."

The doctor departed, and for over an hour the governor left the convict and his wife together. Then, bracing himself up, the governor returned to the bedroom. The object had been attained, and the man must return.

"I'm sorry, my man," began Waldron unkindly. "But your time is up, you must go back."

"No, no! You shan't take him away!" cried Gloria frantically. "We have been parted so long, and now that we are together again, I can't let him go."

"My dear little girl," returned the father, "your husband is a convict, and he must return to Fenmoor to work out his punishment. I would do anything to make you happy, Gloria, but this is quite beyond my power."

Convict 83 drew himself up, and looked appealingly into the governor's face.

"I know you have every cause to doubt my word, sir," he said brokenly, "but I swear by everything I hold most sacred that I am innocent. I have never done anything to deserve such punishment. I am an innocent man suffering for another's crime. Give me a chance—only a chance to get away and prove the truth of my words, and Heaven will surely reward you. I will risk being shot, anything if you will let me leave the house without warning the warders who are on guard outside."

A gasp of horror sounded from the governor.

"It is impossible—impossible!" he cried.

"Dad, for my sake, for my baby's sake, my baby who loves her daddy just as I love you, give him a chance!" pleaded Gloria.

"But my duty!" cried the governor weakly. "I have always been strictly honourable in all I have done, and cannot disgrace myself."

"It would be no disgrace, dad," went on Gloria, "for Heaven will surely right the wrong which Jack has suffered, and then you will be proud of the part you have played."

"God help me! Your husband shall have a chance!" muttered the old man. "I risk my honour and my position to save your child. And if he gets free, he makes good, you will be able to join him later, and be as happy as you deserve."

Jack Barton, he said, turning to the convict, you can leave the house by the back entrance. That is the darkest way, and you may be able to get clear safely. You will find an overcoat in the hall, take it."

"May Heaven bless you, sir," murmured the convict brokenly. "Some day I hope I shall be able to thank you for your goodness."

"You had better go quickly, before I change my mind," said the governor sternly.

Jack Barton kissed his wife passionately and then crossed swiftly to the door.

At the same moment a loud rattle sounded upon the hall door below.

"One moment," said the governor sharply. "That is a messenger from the prison. You had better wait here until he has gone."

Jack Barton returned to the bedside as the governor passed from the room and down the stairs to meet the warden who had just stepped into the hall.

"Special message from the Home Office, marked 'Urgent,' sir."

"Thank you, Roberts," returned Colonel Waldron.

With trembling fingers the stern old man tore open the envelope and drew out the folded sheet of paper.

He read it through quickly, and then turned to the man who was waiting.

"It's all right, there will be no answer," he said briefly; and then hurried back to the room where he had left the convict.

"The very best of news, Barton," he exclaimed as he entered. "This is a message from the Home Office ordering your immediate release. It appears that your solicitor has been working unceasingly on your behalf to prove your innocence. This he has done by producing the guilty party, who has confessed to the forgery for which you have suffered."

"Thank God!" muttered Barton fervently.

"You must, of course, return to the prison to-night," went on Waldron. "to-morrow you will be free."

But neither Gloria nor her husband quite heard the governor's last words, for the girl was sobbing on her husband's shoulder.

The governor paused and endeavored to clear his throat, then a sound behind him caused him to turn round sharply.

In the doorway stood Gloria's baby girl.

At the sight of her father she ran fully towards the bed.

Half ashamed of the tears of happiness which trickled down his lined old face, the governor left them to their joyous reunion.

(The End.)

It is not long since Mr Joseph Headley made £200,000 in five minutes by the clock on the New York Cotton Exchange, and before he sat down to his dinner he was £800,000 richer than when he cracked his morning egg.