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But this was no time to give way to
her feelings, to analyse the passions that
had forced such a dreadful decision pub-
licly from her lips.

She forced a laugh, and turned to her
embarrassed friends.

"I must apologise for treating you to a
domestic scene. Mr Armer entirely for-
got himself—for the moment."

She touched the bell, and when the
butler appeared, bade him announce din-
ner in five minutes' time.

During that five minutes Doris glided
about among her guests, trying to set
them at their ease.

One only was missing. Unable to con-
ceal her triumph, and also to satisfy her
curiosity, Isobel Vane had slipped out of
the room, and followed Roger Armer and
Paul Weston into the hall.

"Will you kindly give me some explana-
tion of the extraordinary manner in which
you have resented my presence in your
house, Mr Armer?"

Although seething with anger, Paul
Weston, for Doris' sake, forced himself to
speak quietly.

"Certainly, Dr. Weston. Come this
way."

They both entered, and the door was
shut. Isobel, remembering that a small
ante-room opened off Roger's den, slipped
into the little dark chamber. To her
gratification the door of communication
was ajar, and she could hear every word
that passed between the two men.

"I demand the reason for your insult,
Mr Armer. Mrs Armer gave me an in-
vitation to her house, and I availed my-
self of it."

"I countermanded that invitation, and
yet you forced yourself into my house. By
doing so you laid yourself open to any—
unpleasantness—"

"Hold, sir! There must be some mistake
here."

An unpleasant smile crossed Armer's
stern, cold face.

"None, Dr. Weston. I instructed Mrs
Armer to write and inform you that it
was not my pleasure to receive you. You
ignored my very natural request. And
so, for all that has happened you have
yourself to blame." He looked at his
watch. "If you will excuse me, I must
return to my invited guests."

The emphasis on the word sent the hot
blood flying to Paul Weston's face, but he
made no remark.

"Your car is at the door," said Armer
as he left the room.

As Paul Weston drove off, he thought
of Doris and her strange declaration of
silence.

"She never wrote—she disobeyed him.
Were I not certain that this is so, I would
have struck his cold, cruel face! Oh,
Doris! I grieved when I lost you! But I
thought—I hoped—you would be happy
with the man for whom you deserted me.
But you're not, my dear, my dear. You're
heart-broken! If only I could comfort
you! But—I may not." He sighed deep-
ly. "How will this tragedy of an un-
happy marriage end? Who can tell? There
was something relentless in Armer's face.
Oh Doris!"

But to what he read on his old sweet-
heart's, he could give no name.

The Armers' guests, though not all as
well-bred as they might have been, yet
had sufficient good sense to appear indif-
ferent to the unpleasant scene enacted
before their eyes. They took the wisest
course; they ignored it.

The dinner was excellent, the wines
priceless. Roger had ordered that no ex-
pense was to be spared, and he had been
obeyed. Doris, at the head of the table,
beamed and sparkled as though she had
not a care in the world. Those watching
her furtively marvelled at her self-control.

"She evidently liked making scenes! Look
at the humiliation she brought upon
Roger Armer in the church!" Thus the
women.

The men, more lenient to a beautiful
woman, condemned their host's conduct.
"Jealousy, of course! Paul Weston was
his wife's old sweetheart, and the fact
rankles. All the same—he'd no business
to insult the man as he did."

They ate and drank, and apparently en-
joyed themselves. But there was a feeling
of restraint on all present, and after din-
ner, one by one the guests dropped away.

Once or twice Roger pointedly addressed
Doris, but she made no reply. The long
period of silence had commenced.

Isobel was the last to go. Perhaps she
was hoping to be invited to remain the
night, as she had been on previous oc-
casions.

But Roger was impatient to be alone
with his wife; anxious to learn if the
girl had really meant what she said.

When Isobel stooped to kiss her hostess
goodbye, she ventured to whisper:

"You didn't mean it I know. No one
could live with dear Roger, and keep up
—spite against him."

She waited for a reply, but Doris only
smiled inscrutably, and was silent.

Roger sent Miss Vane home in the car,
and then returned to the drawing-room,
where he found Doris preparing to retire.
Closing the door, he went up to her.

"Doris, what possessed you to disobey
me? You are responsible for all that oc-
curred to-night."

She only looked at him; a strange, cold
little smile upon her tightly-closed lips.
His temper began to leap up. If she
showed temper, so could he!

"Answer me!" He seized her white
wrist. Still no word issued from those
soft red lips he longed to kiss.

"By heavens, I'll make you speak!" He
shook the wrist he held. "Answer me! Say
something! Explain—I order you to
speak!"

The faint smile remained. But for that
smile it might have been the face of a
dead woman on which Roger Armer's
eyes rested.

For, like a flash, it came to him that
she had meant what she said. Never
more would she open her lips to him! Never
again would that sweet voice ad-
dress him!

The idea was so appalling that, loosing
her wrist, he shook from head to foot. He
was afraid of himself—of what this un-
natural silence might tempt him to do—

But it wouldn't last. It couldn't last.
To-morrow she would forget, and speak,
and all would be well; or, if not exactly
that, they would settle down as other ill-
matched couples did. Even that was
better than this weird dumbness!

"You had better go to bed," he said
curtly. "If you still persist in this
childish course of action, I will take steps
to force you to speak. But I do not think
you will."

He was turning off the electric light
when he felt a light touch on his arm.
Doris was holding out a sheet of letter
paper, on which she had written some
sentences. Curious to see what their pur-
port might be, Roger perused them.

"It will be no different to-morrow, or
for all the to-morrows after. My lips
remain dumb. My vow of silence was
not lightly made. It shall be kept. It is
going to be kept. We live beneath the
same roof. Heaven help me, I am forced
to do this. The bargain which a lie
made possible shall be kept—but you can-
not force me to speak. I register my
vow on paper. I will never open my lips
to you again—Doris."

Before he had finished reading, Roger
heard her light footfall cross the hall and
ascending the stairs. His ears, abnormally
sensitive, heard the door of her suite open
—shut. A key turned in the lock—

From henceforth he was alone. He
owned no wife.

And then through his veins such pas-
sionate anger ran—the kind of anger that
breeds madmen. He laughed wildly, and
his laughter echoed through the quiet
house. But none heard. All, save
Doris, were at rest.

"Not force her! By heavens, I will
force her! I will lock her up in her room;
keep her a prisoner; deprive her of all
she cares for! I will break her stubborn
spirit—I will make her speak!"

For hours he sat brooding over the dy-
ing fire, his sombre eyes gazing on a
sparkling object that lay on one of the
tables. It was a diamond tiara which
Doris had worn that night, and in which
she looked so regally beautiful. She had
quietly removed it.

"I'll ask her why she left it here to-
morrow," he said.

And then he remembered she would not
answer him.

In the morning he woke unfreshed—
with a sensation making life almost in-
supportable. But for his masterful na-
ture. Roger Armer might well have given
in, and left his young wife the victory.

But in the man was that dogged, al-
most brutal strain that some strong na-
tures possess. Not lovable natures, per-
haps, but interesting, uncommon ones.
Accustomed to be obeyed by his subordi-
nates, he could not brook rebellion in his
wife.

The days that followed were intensely
wretched ones to him. What Doris felt
remained locked within her breast. They
met at breakfast, and again at dinner.

No word was spoken on either side, for
Roger had given up attempting to unseal
those closed lips, about which there was
a sad droop that might have caused a less
hard man infinite pity.

Visitors came during Roger's absence
in the city, where just now he was very
busy. Mrs Armer was always a charm-
ing hostess, turning off all sly allusions
to the fateful dinner party so adroitly that
they began to think that Doris's conduct
had been but a flash of girlish temper.

After all, Roger had behaved abomi-
nably!

It was left to Isobel to act the spy, to
carry tales to each other. To Roger it was:

(Continued on Page 4.)

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