

dew gathered on her forehead. It was all too evident that she could not last until her son came. She sought Miss Mary's grief-drawn face and turned from it to sobbing Kittie Klein. Her eyes, said much, but they were softened and pitying.

'Tell my son—I will—watch—over him,' she said, and died.

Kittie Klein did not seek Hank to deliver that message, for Hank would not see her. Even when she had followed them to Sayre after the death of her parents and a consequent change of fortunes, her one-time lover so managed it that he never encountered her. Miss Mary, with all a woman's unforgiving pride, had little sympathy for poor Kittie in her lonely state, and for fifteen years Kittie had not been able to break through the wall of Miss Mary's cold disdain.

Hank had not gone to Mass since his mother's death, and it was twenty years now since he had gone to his duty. Miss Mary's sad old face bore marks of the heartsick worry which this had caused her. Every prayer and act of her life was wholly for his redemption. It was the one boon that she craved from God.

'If nothing more, let it be the grace of a happy death, dear God,' she prayed again and again.

Hank knew that she was incessantly praying for him. Sometimes he scoffed at her. The railroad had hardened him until he was a bit of unreasoning mechanism. He had drunk until he thought that he could not live without it, and he had lost all pride in his personal appearance. At forty, Hank was unbelievably changed from the gay, handsome, healthy youth whom Kittie Klein had first loved.

To-day Miss Mary was even shorter than usual in her replies to the little dressmaker. There had been a big smash-up in the freight-yards the night before, and someone had been killed. It hurt Miss Mary to think of it. Dear God, how near Hank was to death every night of his life! And his soul!—ah, that was the worst of it!

An old white-haired lady in faultless widow's weeds was going into church just ahead of them. She walked with a cane, which she hit upon the ground determinedly as she walked. Miss Mary and the little dressmaker exchanged a sudden glance; the same thought had come to both of them.

'How like—' Kittie Klein began impulsively.

Miss Mary's mouth set hard, with a click. She turned from her companion and swept into the church, her cheeks burning with resentment, her eyes bright with sudden tears.

It was that very week that Hank was to lay off and did not. There was no good reason for his postponing this desired vacation. The hand of God guides our acts. The little dressmaker was making a bride's dress, and she had sat up late into the night to finish it. It had been very hot all day and evening, and the big kerosene lamp in her room had drawn added heat and many flies. These buzzed around her now and made her nervous with their droning noise. The clock ticked monotonously, and the heavy night breeze blew the window curtains at her back with a rubbing, flapping sound. Off in the freight-yards the engines shrieked and clanged their bells, and the switching cars came together with intermittent crashes. She shivered at each new crash and patted down with caressing fingers a fold of the wedding gown. She had wept many bitter tears over its making. The memory of her own wedding gown folded away in lavender blossoms lived very dear to her heart.

Kittie Klein was not a brave woman. She was a timid one, and now, as she sat alone at night, she had barricaded her opened window with a curious arrangement of chairs to thwart any intruder's attempts to enter. She blessed herself when a belated wayfarer's step passed along the board walk beneath her windows, and she breathed more freely when it had echoed away into the distance. The hollow ring of the clock made her heart quicken; and when suddenly, without a warning step, a knock sounded at her door, fear seemed to drive the breath from her body. She crushed her hands into the wedding gown and sat, unable to stir. The clock said three-thirty. Who could it be at this unearthly hour?

The knock sounded again impatiently. It was a light, feeble knock, like a child's.

'Who's there?' she called. She stood up, grasping the table, and her knees shook her whole body. There was no answer. 'Who's there?' she called again.

The knock was repeated and prolonged with feeble strength.

Kittie grasped the scissors in her right hand and the lamp in her left, and went to the door. She unlocked

it with trembling fingers, and opening it cautiously, with her light held up, peered out into the porch. The night was without moon or star, an inky blackness.

A small, thin boy stood in the porch. He had on overalls with a bib over the shoulders and a pair of little bare arms. His hat was tattered around his face. He was unmistakably a railroad's child, but the little dressmaker did not seem to recognise him.

'What do you want?' she exclaimed.

'There's a man been hurt under the big bridge, and he wants the priest,' the child piped. 'I seen your light, and I'm afraid to go alone.'

'You poor darling!' cried Kittie. 'I'll go right along with you!'

She turned and hurried back into the room, screwing down the light as she went. She set it on the table and ran back to the door, just as she was, without waiting to throw a wrap over her perspiring shoulders. The dying light of her lamp shone into the porch and showed it empty. She called to the child and ran to the gate, but she could not see him. Fear choked her. The freight cars in the yard just then came together with a mighty crash, and somewhere a yardman yelled an order. His voice was terrible in the night air. It seemed to give wings to Kittie's feet. The child had said that a man had been injured under the big bridge and that he wanted a priest. She tore open the gate and ran out over the uneven board walk. At the corner she turned towards the church.

She had been running some minutes before she heard the footsteps beside her. She turned her head; she felt that someone was running with her, but she could see no one. She looked over her shoulder and ran faster. She was no longer 'a young girl nor lithe, but fear spurred her onward.

In a little while she knew that footsteps persistently kept beside her, and before she reached the corner she heard the labored breathing of a spent runner at her right.

The little dressmaker fell up the parochial steps and pounded upon the door.

'Father, Father Perschal!' she cried, 'a man is dying in the yards and wants you!'

The good priest had put his head out of the upper window. 'Why, why, Miss Kittie!' he cried, 'I'll be with you in a moment.'

Kittie threw herself about, her back against the door panels, and peered into the darkness. She called, but no one answered her. She could see nor hear no human thing.

'I must be going crazy!' thought the little dressmaker.

The priest joined her in an incredibly short time, and they started back towards the yards on a run.

'Who is it that is hurt, my child?' he asked.

'Oh, I don't know, Father!' she cried. 'A child came to the door and told me that a man had been hurt under the big bridge and that he wanted a priest, and when I stepped out to come with him to get you the child was gone.'

The priest looked at her strangely. He took her arm, to aid her tired steps, for somehow it seemed quite natural to both of them that she should be going with the man of God on this strange night mission.

And now again as she ran, on her other side the little dressmaker heard a third person running, a little ahead of them this time, as if guiding and urging them onward. She wondered if the priest heard the footsteps too. His face was white and strained, and his brows were knitted. The uneven boards trembled beneath their feet, and now and then a dog barked at them.

Down the main street they sped and turned down the black, bush-lined path that led beneath the great bridge. Lights were moving about on the ground before them, and there was a curiously hushed confusion all about. Kittie's throbbing heart grew suddenly still with choking horror. She had remembered all at once that Hank's shanty was here, beneath the great bridge.

An engine was snorting at the brink of the ditch beneath the bridge and beside it a man was upon his knees holding the head of a prostrate comrade.

'It's poor old Hank Murphy,' a grimy fellow told the little dressmaker, kindly, surprise at seeing her stamped upon his shining black face. 'The engine just struck him backing up.'

'Just struck him!' cried Kittie.

'Not a minute ago,' said the man. 'We all saw it, but we hadn't time to do a thing!'

The men gathered back respectfully towards Kittie and the shanty, and for the first time in twenty years Hank was alone with a confessor. Miss Mary's prayers were answered in God's own way.