

ing. "I've—I've so many things to tell you I don't quite know where to begin."

Richard hugged her. "Considering that I'm never going to let you out of my sight again, you've the rest of your life to tell me everything."

Diane shivered a little, though the day was warm and balmy. The rest of her life! He was so confident of her, so trusting in his love, that for a horror-stricken moment she felt that to destroy this thing would be to make a murderess of herself.

The car drew up to the building in which she lived. It purred softly for a second more, then died as the door was opened for her.

"Here's home," Richard said in her ear as they stepped out.

The doorman stopped her and beamed upon her. "Well, Miss Lovering. Glad you're back, M'm."

Sadly, Diane smiled at him, "Thank you, Henry."

The elevator quickly brought them to her floor, and Richard unlocked the door. Flowers everywhere. Her penthouse apartment was filled with their sweet fragrance.

Richard took her by the shoulders. "Did they happen to have flowers like these in Buenos Aires?" he asked carelessly.

Diane stared at them unseeingly. "Yes—" Impulsively, she covered his hand with hers, overwhelming pity for him in her heart. "Dear Richard."

She *must* tell him—now. She must find the words that would put the dagger through his heart.

"Diane." He kissed her full on the lips. Vaguely, he felt her unresponsiveness, but he would not allow the complete thought to form in his mind.

"Richard, come here." Taking both his hands, she led him to the couch, and gathered herself together for the effort. Her eyes lingered on every dear object in the room in a last quiet farewell, for she knew, once she had broken her news to Richard, the loveliness of this beautiful room would be shattered for ever. The smooth creamy walls would stare back in hideous accusation. Every chair, every vase would shriek the pain of Richard's hurt. And the very air in the room would suffocate them both, with the poison of memories turned bitter.

She faced Richard, and her eyes pleaded with him not to let his heart break before her.

"What, dearest?" Richard looked his perplexity.

"Richard, I—"

But now he thought he understood her. Her unresponsiveness, her strange aloofness, all seemed to be clear to him in a bursting ray of light.

"Oh, I see," he chided, "still those same awful thoughts. Those thoughts you went away to forget and didn't." He tried to pull her to him.

Diane held herself away, pleading, "Richard, wait—please." Her voice was frantically supplicating.

He chuckled and stood up, raising her to her feet. "No, I'll not wait any longer. There's something you should see."

"My dear—you *must* listen—"

"Not another sound out of you until you've looked."

"Looked—?" She passed her hand through her hair wearily. This was taking her last ounce of reserve energy.

"In on your dressing table. Go on."

Her movements were like those of a sleepwalker as she entered the other room. Richard followed and stood behind her. At first, the newspaper lying on the dressing table meant nothing to her numb brain. Uncomprehendingly, she stared at it, until—there, before her rapidly glazing eyes, was a headline—a headline that rose from the paper and shouted out its loud jeering message. Her eyes closed and Richard barely managed to catch her as she dropped forward. For the first time in her healthy young life she had fainted.

"Darling, are you all right?"

Richard was bending over Diane anxiously as she slowly returned to consciousness and an all-too-clear remembrance of the newspaper item. Every word burned itself in her brain, "SHIP-PING MAGNATE TO DIVORCE. Reno, Nevada, June 3. It was discovered here to-day that Mrs. Richard I. Field had filed suit for divorce—"

She felt numb, frozen, as the meaning of the words penetrated her mind. Richard proffered a small jewel case. It snapped open to reveal a narrow wedding band. Diane's hand dropped limply to the floor.

"That's your welcome home present," Richard beamed at her.

"No, Richard—" Diane said weakly.

He took her protest for incredulity. "It's true, dear. Louise and I had it all out shortly after you left. She saw it was the only way."

"You—you can't do this—"

"It's all right now. She recognises there is nothing between her and me any more. She's an honest person, Diane. She's no wish for two people to live a lie, no matter how legal it is, as long as it's forcing two other people to live an illegal truth." He swept her cold figure into his arms. "So it's all settled. It'll be final in three weeks. And then I can take you out of this secret, hidden life of ours. We can be together always, Diane." He noticed her stillness. "What's the matter, darling? Don't you believe it yet?"

"It—it's just something I—I never counted on—" She rose and looked dreadingly at the newspaper again.

Richard, now vaguely puzzled, moved to her side. "At one time I never even dared hope for it."

Diane, labouring for self-control, turned around. "Richard, do people, your friends—do they know it's because of me—"

"Some of our closest friends I've told—yes. And now that it's out, I want to tell everybody! Shout it from the housetops! And show them you!"

"You've given up your family—" Diane said half to herself, "your home—your children. You must love me very much—"

(To be Continued.)

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