

cheeks, his red lips were parted, the collar of his cream flannel night-gown stood up in two peaks to his chin. 'Sleepy?' asked Elena smiling. He shook his head. Of course he was not sleepy. How could he have been sleepy with eyes like that. O how she longed to sing! 'What are you thinking about Peter?' 'Nothing my Mother' said Peter, giving the lie to his imploring beseeching eyes. 'Really nothing?' She bent down the better to see him. Suddenly he lifted his hands and then clasped them and let them fall—so—but still he did not speak. Only his eyes implored her—troubled terrified eyes. How strange he looked—he must be feverish. She put her pretty caressing hand on his forehead and brushed his fringe to the outside. Yes he was feverish. A little web of sweat hung on his face. 'Do you feel quite well?' she asked tenderly. He nodded Yes and at the same time she knew what his eyes were saying. 'Mother do not sing. Mother I could not bear you to sing tonight.' She never doubted his feeling for an instant. She knew, more plainly than if he had spoken, whether he were conscious of it or not, Peter was imploring her not to sing. But the knowledge did not take away her longing—her longing pushed in her breast. It was wild, it would not be denied. Free me—free me! Mother, implored Peter's eyes, do not sing tonight. But I must sing Peter. The longing is far stronger than I—and when she had asserted the fact to herself it became so. It leapt up, cruel and eager. If he did not want me to sing he would say so, she thought. He is not a baby—not such a baby as that. She took his hand between hers, tenderly, tenderly she stroked. She carried it to her eager bosom as though to make him feel how her desire pressed. A mysterious fascinating smile parted her lips, her nostrils quivered. She breathed deeply and with the breath her beauty flowered. Rich she was and powerful. 'You ought to be asleep' she whispered fondly. 'It's long past your sleeping time darling—would you like Mother to sing you to sleep, Peter?' Her words flew, explaining. Deliberately she veiled her eyes and did not meet his. 'But not really sing—just make up as I go along, a song for a sleepy boy, about the moon darling, about the moon.' The hand she held did not quiver. She put it down. She looked about her at the shadowy room, at the window where the strange light beckoned. As in a dream she saw the dark head on the white pillows. Beautiful! Beautiful! And she lifted her bosom to those urgent wings. But she would only sing gently, only softly Peter. Listen. Snow is falling. Out of the sky falls the snow, like green and white roses and nobody sees but the moon. From her cloud pillows the moon arises and floats with the falling snow and gathers the green and white roses, the little white buds of snow, in her gleaming fingers. Softly, softly. As she sang she stood up and singing still she went to the window and put her arms along the frame. Peter shut his eyes. He floated into his mother's singing bosom and rose and fell to her