

exclamation from Max Browning (who shadowed her every moment) caused her to hurry to his side. He was kneeling beside the body of a woman—evidently young and beautiful—upon whose bosom was found a child—a tiny girl marvelously resembling the mother. "The child is not dead," Max said as he loosened it from the icy breast. "See! its heart beats. Mildred, if no one claims the child I shall keep it; but for the present you must take care of it, and I will continue the work here. Take it to the nearest cottage and I will send a doctor up. One can be spared here."

Mechanically the girl obeyed, saying: "Search for some clue to its identity before they take her away and—wait." Kneeling beside the dead woman she severed a lock of the drenched golden hair, and pressed a kiss on the sealed lips, murmuring: "For somebody's sake."

Two hours later she sat by a fisherman's humble fireside, holding the little ocean waif in her arms and almost smiling into the big wondering blue eyes. "Mamma!" whispered the child, for she was still very weak. "Here, darling, I am your mamma now, answered Mildred gravely.

"Be oo?"

"Yes, and now go to sleep, pet."

"Es, me's pet," she answered dreamily, and fell asleep.

Thus Max found them when he came in. "Let me take her," he said gently, extending his arms as if accustomed to caring for babies all his life.

"Have you found—?" She faltered, and the young man shook his head.

"You had better get ready and go home now. Your mother will be anxious; Lee was looking for you."

"I may take the baby—'Pet,' I think they must have called her—with me for the present?"

"If you wish, Mildred."

Leaving a piece of money in the hands of the fisherman's wife, the young couple passed from the house, he with the sleeping child in his arms.

Days formed into weeks and weeks into months, and still there was no tidings of Mildred's lost lover, excepting that a spar was washed on shore with a handkerchief knotted about it, in the corner of which were the initials "T. V."

Tenderly the girl laid it away among her choicest treasures bedewing it often with her tears.

A year and a half before the events recorded in the first chapter, Tom Veeder came to San Francisco to fill a position, obtained through a friend, in a large mercantile establishment; and fate, providence, or whatever one chooses to call it, directed his steps toward the home-like boarding house kept by Mildred Mason's widowed mother. It had been a genuine case of love at first sight between Tom and Mildred.

Max Browning and the latter had known each other from childhood, and though, as the years advanced, Max, from being Mildred's chum became her most humble slave and devoted lover, she could not bring herself to look upon him as anything or anybody but "Max," and was surprised and resentful at his bitter antagonism for Veeder.

"I don't see, Max Browning, why you should be so spiteful toward Tom, he always treats you well, and that is more than you do him," she had said.

"Don't see, eh? Well, perhaps I have no reason for feeling spiteful toward the man who is robbing me of the one woman I care for in all the world; but I am unreasonable enough to hate him with my whole heart."

"Now Max, aint you ashamed? It's wicked to hate folks, besides I like you just exactly as well as I ever did. Now don't be silly."

The result of it all was, however, a decided coolness between Max and Mildred; and truth to say, the latter cared very little about it, as her whole attention was given to Tom. They were to be married in the spring—meanwhile the house sent him to Japan for a few weeks to look into their interests there. Mildred felt that the time would never pass; and to make matters worse, a sense of impending ill rested like a pall upon her spirits. Eagerly she had counted the weeks and then the days, and at last the ship was due. As it never came to harbor, no doubts remained in the mind of the people that it was the one that sank that fateful morning.

Poor Mildred! One ray of light only shone on her darkened pathway. Pet the tiny "ocean maid," as Max called her, largely engrossed and diverted her mind, and in time became her idol. About the child seemed to entwine all the tendrils of affection so rudely severed in the loss of her lover.

Pet was queen of two loyal hearts at least, and right regally she wielded the scepter. She was a very beautiful, winsome creature with a sunny, happy disposition. Max was uncle, Mildred auntie in her vocabulary, and basking in their love she never felt the loss of other friends.

Again and again the two, sitting together watching the golden-haired fairy, or receiving her impartial caresses, would wonder and conjecture who she was, and if any one living was mourning for her. Of course Max advertised the child at first, but as time went on their one fear was of losing her. Perhaps with Max, however, his fear of losing Mildred, if the tie furnished by their mutual interest in the babe was destroyed, was of paramount importance. A year passed and he had spoken no word to startle her. Openly in his presence she had mourned for Tom as she would had he been her brother.

Mildred sat rocking the little one in her arms one