

# Thrilling Tales of Love and Adventure

## The Face That Came Back

By Enos Emory

C AUTIOUSLY the sick man raised himself on one elbow and listened. The gentle, regular breathing at the foot of the bed told him that Elise was in the deep sleep which comes from many broken nights.

Slowly and painfully he dragged himself from his bed to the case, which stood in a corner of the room, and with the cunning born of a distraught mind turned up the gas by degrees.

The weak fingers tremulously grasped the well-known brush and with a sigh of satisfaction he started feverishly to work. A new-born force seemed to thrill his being, and his hand responded in obedience to its influence.

The hours of darkness passed until the gray dawn filtering through the faded blinds found the artist still painting and the sleeper still sleeping.

The tired brain was beginning to play queer tricks. The colors danced before the aching eyes; the figures on the painted canvas assumed grotesque and fantastic proportions, and at times a wave of blood-red hue swept over the picture, obliterating all else.

His temples throbbed with the noise of some giant engine, and an unknown force compelled him to paint to the time of the quick throbbing.

Fresh figures—creatures of delirium—leaped to the canvas, laughing and mocking at him with hideous and devilish faces.

"Curse you, curse you!" he muttered

savagely, and a big spigote of color marred the left-hand corner. The strength of the thrust overbalanced the easel, which fell to the ground with a crash, carrying the picture with it.

"Maurice! Maurice! What are you doing?"

In the garish mixture of daylight and dawn she saw the overturned picture and easel, and her husband sitting with uplifted brush and eyes strangely glittering.

"They did it—they did it!" he kept on muttering, incoherently.

In soft, persuasive tones she prevailed upon him to get back to bed. He was still babbling, childlike, when the doctor arrived.

"Anxiety, weakness and want of sleep are responsible for this. I will send around a draft for him, and on no account must he be disturbed. And no more of that picture," he added with emphasis. "His reason and life are worth more than all the pictures in the world. Tomorrow may find him normal again."

In the afternoon Elise left the sickroom and went out for fresh air. As she walked along, her mind, naturally buoyant and optimistic, descended into the lowest depths of despair.

The picture—the candidate for the Grand Prix of 25,000 francs at the International Art Exhibition—had to be finished and sent off the next day. And what a great deal depended on its final success. There were full two months arrears for board and lodging due to the indulgent Mother Guerin.

In addition there was the doctor, M. Vidal, who had been in almost daily attendance for the last three months.

He was kind, too, and forbore pressing his claim. The interest which his patient's case aroused within him somewhat qualified the absence of monetary receipts.

He watched the slow growth of the picture with the keenest attention, and in his medical mind wondered which would finish the race first—the brush or those microscopic organisms which were attacking so voraciously the poor artist's lungs.

Sitting down on a seat nearby, Elise allowed her thoughts to run on despondently. Where were the things she so fondly hoped to realize when she married Maurice?

To her youthful imagination he had painted life in the rosiest of colors. He would do this, he would do that; his pictures would take the world by storm; he would enroll his name on that immortal list of great masters; a beautiful house, wealth, success—all should be theirs, and so glorious had been the vista of possibilities which he had opened out to her that her ingenious mind had been dazzled and hypnotized by it.

They had settled down and Maurice had started in grim earnest to establish his fame as an artist. But in reality fortune seemed to have dealt her worst cards to this ambitious claimer for her best favors.

True, he had sold some of his pictures; but very few, and for a poor price; necessity must strike hard bargains.

The pictures were very good, original and clever, portraying the artist in every line; but they lacked that indefinable something which captivates men's minds.

Never before had the future loomed so dark and hopeless. Her child, a gay little fellow of five, had been sent away to friends; even one month less is something—what was to become of him?

Two bright tears slowly rolled down the pale, pinched cheeks and splashed on to the time-worn dress.

She was too upset to notice the approach of a quietly dressed stranger who, seeing her distraught, stopped and looked at her in pity for some moments.

"Madame is in trouble!" he remarked gently, sitting down beside her. Elise started and looked up. The kind, fatherly gaze, the sympathetic voice, invited confidence, and before she had quite realized the situation her tale was told in a few broken sentences.

"And this picture must be finished and sent off by tomorrow," he repeated. "Take me to it my child, and we will see what can be done."

Elise felt too weak and miserable to raise any objection, and a few minutes' walk brought them to the humble lodging.

From behind the screen, which shut off the bed from the rest of the room, the quiet breathing of the invalid showed that the doctor's prescription had taken effect.

The stranger approached the window and gazed long and earnestly at the painting. Silently he took up a brush and painted swiftly.

Awestruck and wondering, Elise watched the growth and transformation of the picture under the magic power of his hand.

The hours crept on and still the un-

known one painted. At last just before midnight he heaved a deep sigh and put down the brush.

"My child," said he "I can do no more."

"O, monsieur!" exclaimed Elise, clasping his hand impulsively. "How can I ever repay you for what you have done? Let me know your name that I may live to always thank and pray for you."

"My little one," he replied with tenderness. "It is quite impossible for me to give you my name. Your thanks and prayers will be reward enough to one who has been only too pleased to benefit those in distress with the gift that heaven has bestowed on him. I leave the town early tomorrow, so farewell, as I doubt we shall ever meet again."

Stooping, he kissed her lightly on the forehead and was gone. With tears in her eyes Elise remained in front of the easel.

What man was this who in a few hours could so transform a picture? With wonder—nay, almost fear—she stared fixedly at the canvas.

In truth the picture was the same, yet different. A vague something had crept into it—a something which defied analysis and yet proved its presence; the picture seemed to breathe forth the influence of a mighty soul.

The next day Elise packed and sent off the picture. Maurice's attack of delirium would afford him little chance of recollecting the state of his picture when he last worked at it, and Elise felt confident that if success were gained he would in his innocence accept the work as of his entire creation, never suspecting the true state of affairs.

Three weeks passed—three weeks of nerve-torturing suspense and uncertainty, and still no news came from the committee.

Then early one morning the doctor rushed in, excitedly waving a newspaper.

"There! Your picture!" he shouted. "Didn't I always say so? Listen. Some time back the committee of the International Art Exhibition offered the magnificent sum of 25,000 francs for what was considered the best original painting. A very large number of entries was received, and finally after much consideration from the best critics, Mr. Maurice Natier's picture, 'Vale,' has been awarded the prize."

"This work of a hitherto unknown artist is undoubtedly a chef d'oeuvre, and the whole world of art will unite in congratulating and thanking Mr. Natier for having produced such a highly qualified work of genius. The picture is one which will work an era in the art of the future, and we predict a brilliant future for the artist."

The greatest interest had been aroused in the competition, and the massive hall in which the exhibits were shown was thronged with people all anxious to see the picture which had carried off the coveted prize.

As Maurice gazed on his work, placed so conspicuously and to the full advantage of the light bearing down from the glass dome overhead, his heart was filled with a sudden rush of awe and feeling.

"Good heavens! Elise," he said in a

hoarse whisper, "what an inspiration I had when I painted that!"

At the public presentation of the Grand Prix Maurice received the tremendous ovation, and amid wild acclaim he stepped forward to receive the much contested check.

All the dark past with its gloom and despair had given way to a future bright and bright with new-found aims and hope. Elise alone felt sad with strange weight gripping at her heart. She wondered whether among the vast throng there was one who was looking on with mingled feelings of pride and pity.

Many years afterward Elise came casually glancing through a book of portraits when her attention was arrested by a face which seemed strangely familiar to her.

Where had she seen that synthetic, fatherly gaze? Suddenly the dim memories of bygone days quickened to life, and she recognized the face as that of the unknown painter who had saved them in their hour of need.

At that moment there entered an old friend who was a frequent visitor to the beautiful art studio in Paris, where Maurice had opened to receive public better living and renewed interest in his life and work had done much to conquer his maudlin and bring him back health and strength.

"Monsieur, do you know who this is?" asked Elise, showing the portrait.

"What! don't you know?"

Malheur, the greatest painter of his age. Surely you saw the obligatory notice and account of his life about three months ago. Good old Malheur! A kinder, better heart never beat."

"Good heavens! Elise," he said in a

## An Heirloom and A Heart

By Annette Angert

IT WAS AN heirloom, that royal blue plate with its bizarre border of queer little cows and its center of quaint old cottage and trees. Also it was a relic and a souvenir, and hence very precious to Genevieve. A great-aunt of some royal duke or general or some noted person—Genevieve herself was a bit hazy about the point—had given it to a great-aunt of Genevieve's grandmother, who had bequeathed it to Genevieve with instructions to be very careful of it and hand it down intact to future generations.

Genevieve had always felt that her grandmother had greatly honored her. Several girl cousins had been bitterly envious. Which naturally enhanced the plate in Genevieve's eyes.

Before she was married she kept it in her trunk; in a compartment all to itself, where she insured safety by wadding of tissue paper. She had a younger brother who was careless and so no place but the interior of that trunk, which she kept in her closet, was remote enough to contain that

plate.

But, of course, as soon as she and Cort were married it was brought out and put on the sideboard. Cort admired it—after Genevieve told him its history. But he advised her to put it back in the safer trunk. "I don't feel easy in the same room," he joked, one arm about Genevieve's slim arched waist. "Suppose I break it. I'm awfully awkward—always was. And I'm twice as awkward when I'm trying not to be. I broke my mother's cut glass punch bowl and nearly had to leave home. I broke my father's shaving mug."

Genevieve laughed. "What is the use of getting married if you can't show off your valuable heirlooms?" she demanded.

"I believe that's all you married me for," opined Cort thoughtfully. "To get a flat that would have a sideboard that would hold that plate."

Genevieve laughed and leaned closer within his arm while she gazed admiringly at the blue plate, flanked on one side by a rococo stein and on the other by a cut glass nappy.

For a long time the plate was not disturbed, except when Genevieve's brother came for dinner. Then she hastily removed it from view, to her

husband's great amusement.

"What would you do, Gen?" Cort teased. "If some time you forgot to put it away and he broke it?"

Genevieve's lips compressed in an ugly, hard line. "He'd never be a brother of mine after he did it," she said determinedly. "He'd never eat dinner here again."

Cort laughed, but he uneasily took another step from the sideboard.

"Suppose I broke it?" gingerly. "Wouldn't you ever have me here again for dinner?"

"You wouldn't break it," she replied confidently. "You're always too careful."

"Knock on wood," he advised her earnestly.

She knocked idly. "Silly!"

A few days later she was much incensed. Mrs. Gray, a young married woman who had been in her class at school, called and she said sweetly: "I see you've got one of those queer plates that the 10-cent store has been showing. Aren't they sweet? I got a breakfast set."

Genevieve sat up haughtily. Then she explained the difference between modern blue landscaped plates and valuable old heirlooms.

She indignantly told Cort that night,

He thought it was funny, but he discreetly suppressed his amusement when Genevieve took it coldly.

And the next day he broke it; just a small bit chipped from the edge as he reached for a package that he had laid on the sideboard, and somehow knocked the gaudy stein against it.

Horrified, he turned to meet Genevieve's wide eyes. She jumped from the table where she was dallying over the evening paper and her pudding.

"What was that?" breathlessly. "Not—no—"

Cort glumly held it toward her. "Gen, I don't know how I did it. Good heavens. I've tried to be so blamed careful—"

"O—oh—Genevieve clasped the plate to her breast and began to cry. Her husband guiltily watched her.

Presently she wiped her eyes and put the plate back. "You couldn't help it, of course," she remarked in a dull, cold voice that made Cort writhe. Nothing more was said, but the evening was the forerunner of a series of glum, constrained evenings. Cort found himself wishing that she had taken it out in one good spell of wrath; this cold forgiveness set his nerves on edge.

When Genevieve's brother dined with them the plate was left on the sideboard; no more need to be careful of it. Cort worried again. He felt intolerably guilty.

Little by little he began to cultivate a sense of injury. Darn it all, Genevieve couldn't think very much of him or she wouldn't put a plate first. Somehow his feeling of injury increased the glumness and constraint.

The plate, with the nick carefully put down so that a tray hid it, seemed to mock him. And certainly it kept itself constantly in his. At the table his seat faced it. Gen sat with her back to it, but of course, she could see the blue reflection in the mirror of the sideboard. Sometimes when Cort was looking at the plate he met Gen's glance in the mirror behind it. Both hastily looked elsewhere and talk languished.

"If I could buy another," he suggested tentatively, one night.

Gen shook her head. "There is no other like it, and, anyhow, you couldn't afford it."

Cort gloomed behind the newspaper. Her tone was icily forgiving. He wished the blamed plate was at the bottom of the Atlantic ocean. He wished Gen—well, he wished a lot of things. And the next evening he

stayed down town and played pool. Genevieve's brother saw him and later told Gen, who cried herself to sleep when she heard it, and the next morning served breakfast in cold silence.

Cort didn't care. He had got to the point when he didn't care much for anything. The plate was a blue taunt. He glared at it as he went out—then his eyelids drooped in embarrassment. In the mirror over it he met Genevieve's wide glance.

That night he lagged home to dinner, wishing the meal was over. Genevieve was the same as usual, fiercely polite. But the dinner was unusually good—creamed new potatoes and a roast that their limited income didn't allow every night, and afterward came a sherbet ice that Genevieve prided herself on. She had learned it at cooking school.

Cort ate with appetite. When he had finished his ice, Genevieve rose to get a bowl of nuts on the sideboard. Cort didn't offer to get them for her. He had never touched anything on the sideboard since a certain night. Now he watched her wistfully. The dinner was good, but he wished it had been poorer, and he and Gen on the old easy, gay terms—as before that confounded blue plate cracked their lappiness in two. He wished—

There was a crash. He jumped—Genevieve turned to face him, her hands at her sides, her eyes big. The plate lay in a jagged heap of pieces, and the stein was a brown and black heap of fragments, beside it. "I broke the plate," said Gen in a low, stammering voice.

"Gen!" Cort cried in sympathy. "That's a shame—can we mend it—fix it together?"

She swept the fragments to one side and got the bowl of nuts. There was a certain indifference in her mind that puzzled Cort.

"I don't think so," she said carelessly.

"Let me try," he urged, picking up the largest piece.

She took it out of his hand. Her cheeks were red. "Don't try. Do as you please—I broke it purposely. I hate the old blue thing—it has more trouble for me—you don't care for me any more—"

Gen was half crying. Cort kissed her with a vim unknown for months. Then he gathered up the blue pieces of china and took them out to the garage can. "Thank heaven!" he said as he emptied them.

She said: "I don't know. It turned out I went a good way, and it wasn't easy to get back. Lately I've been thinking a lot about you, Serena. I know how you feel. My, you're just as pretty as ever—I don't love you prettier! Say, Serena, can't you mend that thing?"

Serena's face was too all save her brown eyes, and they were fire. "No, she said, 'not this evening or any other time. Good day to you.'"

She walked across the street and left him. She felt that he was looking after her in astonishment and she had her head very high.

At the corner Steve sat in the doorway of his house examining something closely. Serena caught a glimpse of pink and recognized the flowers that had given him that morning. Her heart gave a leap.

Serena tried to speak but she had no need. Her face told the whole wonderful story and her true love would be right.

serena dull was at work among the flowers in her front yard. It was a narrow yard and the flowers crowded it. They leaned over the low fence; they looked up the walls of the old-fashioned house with its great chimney, bearing witness to a long extinct fireplace, and the odd trap-door lifted for ventilation in the roof. There were phlox, sweet William, marigolds, and bachelors' buttons. The smell of mint sweetened the air as Serena broke off a bit and crushed it in her fingers. Whenever she did this she remembered a wonderful day years and years before when somebody had her good-bye and went away, promising to come

back before the flowers had all lost their petals on the rough salt wind. He had failed to keep his promise. She believed he had died; he must have died, else he would have returned. She had, however, never heard one way or the other.

"Morning, S'reny!"

She turned. A man was leaning over her low fence—a man of her own age, with a brown, broad face and blue, smiling eyes. He wore a loose blue flannel blouse and a round hat. His tanned throat and his arms, tattooed to the elbows, were bare.

There was a flash like that of blue steel through the air, and a great mackerel, fresh from the water, fell at Serena's feet. She picked it up, flushing reproachfully.

She broke off a piece of the pink and held it out to him.

He took it with a sigh of thanks and moved to go. Then he settled back into his former position, turning the pink flower tenderly in his big hand.

"S'reny," he began.

Serena grew pale. She knew from his tone what was coming. She stood holding to the great gleaming fish as for support.

"S'reny," said Steve again, "you've known me always. What schooling I got was when you were by. I began to love you then and I've loved you ever since. I shall love you till I get drowned, or die of old age. I'm just a fisherman, S'reny, and I know you're too good for me, but if you'd marry me I'd be good to you. God helping, S'reny."

Serena's head dropped. Her lips trembled. "Oh, Steve!" she sobbed. "I like you, but that isn't loving, and without loving is no way to marry a man. You know why, Steve. I can't forget him—" She paused. She heard his grind his teeth.

Serena, with wet eyes, hurried into the house. She flung the mackerel down upon the table, and, sinking into a chair, wept terribly. "If only I didn't like him so well," she sobbed. "It hurts me to hurt him. But I can't get over Cliff and I never shall."

The door opened and a woman entered. She stopped, staring at the sight of Serena's tears. "What in the world's the matter with you, S'reny Dull?" she demanded. She walked to the table and took up the fish. "My, that's a grand, good mackerel—full two pounds. I'm sure, Steve Bard left it, didn't he? S'reny, I want to tell you something. You're a fool not to marry Steve Bard."

"More than that—the old woman smiled and patted Serena's shoulder—"You love him, only you won't own it on account of Cliff Salkins. You see, I know a thing or two, S'reny. You will, too, when you live to be as old as I am. I only hope you won't have to look back and see how you let one mistake spoil your whole life. By the way, S'reny, if you should happen to be over town in the course of the day I wish you'd get me a box of Gibralters. There's the money."

Serena had no occasion to go over town, but that afternoon she went to get Mrs. Horn's Gibralters, a certain rocky kind of candy much in demand in the town. As she was coming out of the shop, with the package in her hand, very serious, for the thought of Steve had not left her all day, a man who had been lounging at the window outside stepped alongside her. "Why, how do, Serena?" he said.

Serena looked at him startled. Her first thought was that she did not know him. Then, as she met his eyes fairly, she did, and she turned deadly pale. "Cliff!" she gasped.

Cliff Salkins smiled. He was very dapper, and he carried a cane. "I wanted to speak to you when you went into the store, but I hardly had time. I was afraid you might not recognize me. I imagine I've changed considerably. But you haven't, except to grow older. How time flies, don't it. It's twenty years since I went away, and yet it doesn't seem no time. I've been all over mostly. I always used to think if I ever got shut of this town I'd stay shut one while. And I have. I've seen some big sights, I tell you."

"Then—then," Serena faltered, "you didn't intend to come back when you went away?"

"Well, I didn't know. It turned out I went a good way, and it wasn't easy to get back. Lately I've been think-

## Her True Lover

By Will Seaton

SERENA DULL was at work among the flowers in her front yard. It was a narrow yard and the flowers crowded it. They leaned over the low fence; they looked up the walls of the old-fashioned house with its great chimney, bearing witness to a long extinct fireplace, and the odd trap-door lifted for ventilation in the roof. There were phlox, sweet William, marigolds, and bachelors' buttons. The smell of mint sweetened the air as Serena broke off a bit and crushed it in her fingers. Whenever she did this she remembered a wonderful day years and years before when somebody had her good-bye and went away, promising to come

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## Mother's Little Son

By Elsie Endicott

At a moment Edith stood, white as marble, her eyes fixed and staring as one in a dream, at the tiny figure outlined on the little bed, and then a wild cry broke from her white lips.

"Jacky! Jacky, mother's little son," she sobbed, and, swaying unsteadily toward the little bed, would have fallen had not the ready arm of her husband upheld her. In a moment her mind reasserted itself, and the hallucination had vanished. She straightened instantly and pointing a finger at the bed inquired coldly, "Who is that child in Jacky's place?"

Before answering, her husband drew

her tenderly in his arms. "Little wife," he said, "for a whole year now I have watched you crying your heart out for our boy, our little son, for whom we planned such a wonderful future, and I can bear no longer to see you pining your young life away grieving for him. I know nothing can ever take his place, dear; but surely if some of the mother-love and longing in your heart could find an outlet, the pain would be a bit easier to bear. Up in the orphanage on the hill they watch continually at the window for you to come, as you did so often a year ago when our boy was here."

"The child worships you, Edith," he went on, tenderly stroking the soft hair on her forehead, "and he is just Jacky's age and a sweet, lovable child. He needs us, dear, and for some time

I have been wondering if we could not—"

"Oh, no," she shuddered; "not bring him here—to live—in Jacky's place! Surely you don't mean that, Jack. I—couldn't bear it, dear."

Out in the garden little Peter was having a glorious time. Such trees and flowers he had never seen before, for the orphanage had been bare of grounds or foliage of any description, and as for toys, Peter didn't think there could be so many toys in the world. He ought to be a very happy boy, but—Peter's underlip quivered, and he gazed sorrowfully in the direction of a little summer house, where Edith sat embroidering.

Peter adored his beautiful new mother, but with an aloofness entirely foreign to her tender nature Edith had closed her heart to the little fellow;

and beyond seeing that he was well taken care of, and supplied with an abundance of playthings, she ignored him completely.

But one night came when Peter could not bear it any longer. He guessed he would rather be back in the orphanage, without any toys or wonderful flowers and trees, than be in the way in Jacky's room, and, anyway, probably she would rather be alone each night with Jacky's picture, when she talked to it. His mind once made up, Peter proceeded to slip his thoughts into action. He would slip downstairs after his new father and mother, as he still called them, had gone out in the big machine for the evening, and then—he wasn't sure, but he guessed he might be able to find the way along the dark road up the hill to the orphanage.

No one heard the little feet patter softly down the thickly carpeted stair or saw him vanish through the big oaken door as Peter timidly made his way out through the shrubbery and down the long drive through stately columns of trees. How different everything looked at night! Peter wondered where the moon was, it seemed so dark and creepy out here, and the trees were so black, not pretty like they were in the daytime.

But just then little Peter didn't think any more about the dark or the gloomy trees, for a blinding light dazzled his eyes for a moment, something big and black crashed into him, his head whirled round and round, and a million flashes of light danced before his eyes, and then—everything grew inky dark.

Days and days afterward, it seemed

to Peter, he awakened. He lay on his little white bed, the one that had been Jacky's, and it was just twilight, and such wonderful odors coming in through the open window from the fragrant gardens. Peter lay a long while with his eyes closed—somehow it seemed such an effort to open them, and he felt so drowsy and comfortable. Then, as he made a feeble attempt to raise his arm, he felt a sharp twinge of pain, and opening his eyes, saw that it was all done up in white stuff, such as they used at the orphanage when anyone had fallen and hurt himself. Also, his head felt funny and throbbled and ached so. Peter wondered vaguely what it was all about, when he heard a soft footfall on his rug, and the dearest voice in the world saying:

"Thank heaven, Jack he has come out of it all right. Oh, pray, pray that he may be spared to me, for I couldn't bear to lose him now, for now, when I am learning to love him so. It would be just like parting with Jacky all over again." And before Peter could realize it, his new mother had fallen on her knees beside his bed, and actually gathered his little hands in her arms, and kissed him just as he had seen her kiss Jacky before he

went away.

And now, his new mother didn't talk to Jacky's picture nights after he was tucked in for the evening, and now they both kissed it together, and Jacky little Peter knew the joy he had craved; for Edith not only held him tight to her heart as she gave him his good night kiss, but softly murmured just as if he were Jacky. "Mother's little son—good night."

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ing a lot about you, Serena. I know how you feel. My, you're just as pretty as ever—I don't love you prettier! Say, Serena, can't you mend that thing?"

Serena's face was too all save her brown eyes, and they were fire. "No, she said, 'not this evening or any other time. Good day to you.'"

She walked across the street and left him. She felt that he was looking after her in astonishment and she had her head very high.

At the corner Steve sat in the doorway of his house examining something closely. Serena caught a glimpse of pink and recognized the flowers that had given him that morning. Her heart gave a leap.

Serena tried to speak but she had no need. Her face told the whole wonderful story and her true love would be right.

serena dull was at work among the flowers in her front yard. It was a narrow yard and the flowers crowded it. They leaned over the low fence; they looked up the walls of the old-fashioned house with its great chimney, bearing witness to a long extinct fireplace, and the odd trap-door lifted for ventilation in the roof. There were phlox, sweet William, marigolds, and bachelors' buttons. The smell of mint sweetened the air as Serena broke off a bit and crushed it in her fingers. Whenever she did this she remembered a wonderful day years and years before when somebody had her good-bye and went away, promising to come

back before the flowers had all lost their petals on the rough salt wind. He had failed to keep his promise. She believed he had died; he must have died, else he would have returned. She had, however, never heard one way or the other.

"Morning, S