

# Hood River Glacier.

HOOD RIVER, OR., JULY 27, 1930.

## Her Rival's Valentine.

Without any design they left Vida to herself, but in it she saw a systematic avoidance of her.

Conscious guilt prompted the thought, and in her heart she hated and despised them all.

Shortly after ten o'clock she stole away to her room and shut herself in.

Then she took a retrospective view of her past, and it was not at all satisfactory. She saw the mad folly she had been guilty of, and repented so far as regards herself.

She was sorry she had woven such a terrible net about herself, but did not regret the misery and pain she had given to others.

"I would do it all over again," she said fiercely, "only I would do it better. I am not a Moore—there is nothing soft, or gentle, or forgiving in me. It is my mother's blood—the blood of the old Castilians—that burns in my veins.

"We love too well for ourselves, and hate too thoroughly for those who thwart us."

By-and-by Ruth came and knocked gently at her door.

"Vida dear, are you asleep?"

Vida would not answer, but stood quite still, with a scornful smile upon her face, until Ruth went away.

"I cannot play the loving cousin to-night," she muttered. "If she had come in, the temptation to stab her might have been too great."

From the folds of her dress she took out the small highly-tempered dagger with which she had taken Bardolph Dimsey's life. The keen blade was in a leathern sheath, and removing it, she held the glittering dangerous toy at arm's-length, and looked at it with a fierce light burning in the depths of her dark eyes.

"You were a friend to me," she said. "You saved me from a fate more bitter than death. By-and-by, when panned into a corner by my enemies, you shall save me again."

She slept she had recourse to one of the bottles on her toilet-table containing an essence that has been the bane of many women. The dangerous indulgence had become the habit of her life.

Unconsciousness of things around her she obtained, but it was not blessed sleep that came to her aid.

It was another stage of consciousness, vivid and horrible.

The dreams of the opium-eater were not more terrible.

Like him she felt an unnatural lightness, and yet had the weight of the Atlantic in her heart. A bright light surrounded her, and yet it seemed akin to unfathomable darkness.

No one was visible, but she could hear the tramp of men as if an army were passing by, and the shriek of women in peril of shame and death.

She was not here or there in any particular place, but in many familiar scenes at once, and it seemed to her as if her spirit had swollen to infinite size and was surging to and fro like the restless sea.

What words can depict the horror of such a night? And it is no wonder, then, when she awoke and found daylight had come that she hailed it as a friend.

"If that is sleep which I have endured," she said as she looked forth from the casement, "I wish to sleep no more. Let me be wakeful and watchful to the end."

A bird on a tree close by began to chirrup a morning-song to its mate, stimulated by the early sunshine.

She listened, but its sweetness of sound found no echo in her heart.

"The little feathered fool," she said, "believes in love. But at the best it is but a fleeting thing."

"Summer will soon pass, and when the cold of winter comes, your mate will leave you. But it is, perhaps, something to be loved a while. Even one brief hour of love has been denied me."

### CHAPTER XV.

#### THE DAWN BREAKING.

The secret of Basil's expected return leaped out, and all the country was ablaze with it.

The news reached the ears of the inspector, and he smiled as he thought of his words coming true.

"But what could have taken him away?" he thought; "had he anything to do with the death of that gipsy fellow?"

It was possible, of course, and the news was as good as any other that had presented itself.

The murder of Bardolph had remained a complete mystery up to that time, and the police had absolutely no clue.

Now the inspector thought that something might leak out.

"I'll ride over and see how the land lies," he thought, and in the afternoon of the twelfth he appeared at Briarwood, and enquired for Mr. Brandreth.

"Gone to Gordonfells," he was told, and to Gordonfells he rode without delay.

There he asked for Mr. Moore, and as he was being shown into the library, Vida passed by.

She knew the man, and a hot flush passed over her face as he bowed and said:

"Good-day, miss."

It seemed to her that his eyes had a portentous meaning in their depths, but it was a false alarm.

He had no suspicion of the proud handsome woman who glided by, and was busy comparing her with rather a plain wife he had at home as he entered the library.

Mr. Moore gave him good-morning, and bade him be seated.

"I've come to you, Mr. Moore," he said, "to take the liberty to ask you for a bit of advice."

"A strange thing for the doctor to come to the patient," replied Mr. Moore, smiling.

"Well, so it is, and it's about Mr. Basil

Brandreth, Mr. Moore. I hear he is coming back."

"Such, indeed, is the case."

"May I ask when he is expected?"

"To-morrow."

"Well, Mr. Moore, duty is duty, as you know."

"Assuredly it is."

"And I must do mine. If you will excuse me, I should like to be here to-morrow to ask Mr. Basil Brandreth a few questions."

"I don't know that there is any particular objection to your doing so, but it would be better if you waited until the next day."

"Mr. Moore, duty is duty: I must know why Mr. Basil Brandreth went so suddenly away."

"And suppose he does not choose to tell you?"

"I shall arrest him for the murder of Bardolph Dimsey, the gipsy, Mr. Moore."

Mr. Moore stared at the unmoved inspector, who went on in his business-like tone:

"I've ascertained that the gipsies left here about the time of young Mr. Brandreth's disappearance, and that Bardolph Dimsey did not go with them, nor was he seen about here after that time. Mr. Basil comes back alive, and as a matter of duty I must know where he has been, and what he has been doing."

"But he has given his word not to say anything about it," said Mr. Moore.

"Sorry for that, Mr. Moore," said the inspector; "but I can't allow that to interfere with the course of duty."

Mr. Moore was nonplussed. He could see that the situation was likely to be rather complicated.

He had no fear of Basil having to suffer for a crime of which he was undoubtedly innocent, but he could not clear himself without breaking his word, and with a lot of publicity that would be eminently disagreeable.

"Would you like to see Mr. Brandreth, Dennis?" he asked.

"No, unless he is prepared to give me the explanation I crave, Mr. Moore."

"I am afraid he is not at liberty to do that."

"Then I must wait until to-morrow."

"And not until the next day?"

"No, Mr. Moore, I dare not."

He rose up, and bowing, asked if Mr. Moore had anything to ask him more. On receiving an answer in the negative he took his leave.

As he was walking through the hall on his way out he met Phoebe, and being susceptible to female beauty in a rustic as well as a refined form, he stopped to exchange a few words with her.

"Fine day, miss," he said.

"Very fine, sir," replied Phoebe.

"Good news this about Mr. Basil Brandreth."

Phoebe smiled.

"Very good news," she said.

"And rather unexpected too. Curious thing his going away, anyhow."

"He didn't go," said Phoebe, "he was taken away."

"Oh, indeed," returned the inspector. "I should like to know who took him."

"No doubt you would," said Phoebe perily; "but you won't—at least, not from me."

"Come now," said the inspector, "let us be friends, and have a little chat together. I've got a wife at home, but she's sailing, and can't be long for this world. I shall want a number two one day."

"And if you do, what then?" asked Phoebe.

"Why, I should come to Gordonfells for her," he answered.

"Would you, indeed?" said Phoebe, with a mocking curtsy; "but wouldn't that be a waste of time. Nobody here would allow you to throw yourself away."

"We will see when the time comes. Now just tell me if you know anything of Mr. Brandreth."

"Of course I do!"

"He was fond of gipsy company, wasn't he?"

"Goodness gracious, no!" exclaimed Phoebe. "What nonsense you are talking!"

"But you have seen him talking to a gipsy girl; come now, haven't you?"

"No," said Phoebe; "and I'm afraid that Mr. Moore has been giving you wine, or you would not talk such rubbish. So I will bid you good day."

The inspector went off more puzzled than ever. He was groping about in the dark, and had no idea which way to face so as to get out of the mystery. But as he said, duty was duty, and with regard to Basil his course was clear.

As the whole country had rung with the story of the mysterious murder in the belfry, an elucidation of the affair would be of material professional service to him. Apart, therefore, from the sense of duty, he had his own interest at his back to urge him on.

Of course Mr. Moore did not keep the interview a secret. He saw no reason for doing so, and Mr. Brandreth was soon after made acquainted with what had passed. He laughed at the idea of Basil being guilty of the gipsy's death, and Mrs. Moore smiled at it; but they were one and all uneasy. There was still so much of the mysterious attached to Basil's story.

Vida was admitted by Mr. Moore to the discussion which followed, and only Ruth kept in ignorance of what had passed.

"She has suffered too much already," said Mrs. Moore, "and it would be cruel to anticipate further evil."

Vida earnestly advocated Basil's innocence, and succeeded in allaying Mr. Brandreth's suspicion of herself, if indeed he entertained any. She also suggested something that was at least very reasonable.

"I think," she said, "that the fellow must have been making love to some girl, and, having betrayed her, paid the penalty of his falsehood with his life."

"I never thought of that," said Mr. Moore.

"Nor I," said Mr. Brandreth, "and it does not appear to have suggested itself to our friend the inspector."

Mrs. Moore quietly said:

"Our rustic maidens are not given to assassinate their false lovers. They may weep, and go to the extent of taking their own lives in the nearest pool, but they have

neither the brains nor the resolution to avenge themselves in the manner suggested by Vida."

"It may not have been a rustic maiden," said Mr. Brandreth.

"Who else could lie to that class of vagabond?" said Vida intemperately, but she was white with sudden fear, and her voice had lost half the use of its tone.

Mr. Brandreth again looked at her with curious earnestness, as with a puzzled air. He was like a man with a problem before him, of which he knew not even the direction of the answer.

The change in Vida was noticed also by Mrs. Moore, and when she had withdrawn from the little circle of retired, she said: "Vida has not been well for some time past; I wonder what is her?"

"I have noticed also," replied Mr. Moore, "but women of our age are changeable. It is the unsettled era of their existence."

And so the subject is dismissed.

The morning of the thirteenth of February broke unpropitiously. There was a heavy murky sky above, and mist below upon the earth. The little wind that rustled the budding trees was cold and chill.

Among the first to moving was Phoebe, and it was evident that her heavy eyes and feverish air that she had passed a restless night. The corridor was still wrapped in gloom when she crept Ruth's door.

Listening intently she could just hear the soft breathing of the sleeper, and clasped her hands in thankfulness. For days she had been haunted with the belief that Vida would in some way attempt to take the life of her young mistress.

Long before the ten o'clock and quiet entered Ruth's room without disturbing her proceeded to undress and arrange it.

Ruth awoke earlier than usual, and for the first time during her long trial showed nervousness.

She had borne up bravely through suffering, but now that joy was near at hand she was in danger of being down.

"Won't you come a walk, miss?" said Phoebe; "it's not so late as it might be, but the air will do you good."

"Not until after breakfast," replied Ruth.

"And when you, miss, may I attend upon you?"

"I do not think it I shall need you, Phoebe."

"It is a fair one, miss," urged the girl. "Now that Mr. Basil is coming back I feel as if I was glad to part from you, and you have been kind to me."

"Nonsense, Phoebe," said Ruth, smiling; "I am not going to part with you, and if I have been a good stress you have fully deserved all you have received from me and more."

"It's kind of you say so, miss, and I'll ask it as a favor if you will keep me by you if you go out to-day."

"Very well, Phoebe," said Ruth.

Vida appeared slyly after, and seemed to be in the high spirits. She rallied Ruth on her pale cheeks.

"The upon you, sleep awake," she said, "and so rob you of the weeks of their roses! Basil will search you out."

"I shall be better soon," replied Ruth.

The feeling of titillation was not confined to her; it pervaded the whole household, from Mr. Moore's servants.

Only Vida calm and self-possessed. She was used in the course she had decided upon; she needed was the opportunity. Promptly by her embittered feelings she was ready to turn the joy of that house into mourning.

"He shall cohere with a heart full of a lover's yearning," she said, "and find her dead."

She had the phial filled with poison in her dress-pocket ready for use, but sought in vain for an opportunity for using it.

At the breakfast-table they sat apart, and afterwards Ruth refused for a walk.

"I will go with you," said Vida.

"Do, dear," said Ruth.

Vida ventisials, dressed, and came down again and not only Ruth ready, but Phoebe also.

"Do you wish the girl?" she asked.

"It is Phoebe's," said Ruth's reply.

Vida turned a flash upon Phoebe, but the girl did not quail. In what she had set herself to do she was as resolute as Vida herself.

"There is my of time yet," thought Vida; "I have whole day before me."

### CHAPTER XVI.

#### DAYLIGHT.

They waited the village, visited some of the old places, and after discussing all the prevailing matters returned to Gordonfells.

Lunches ready, and they simply left their hats mantles in the hall, and went in.

Ruth drank water, and Vida rallied her upon it.

"You need a little stimulant before Basil comes," she said. "It will never do to meet him with the face of a ghost."

"It is Bwana will bring back the roses," said Mr. Je.

It was, the whole, a dull party. All were struck to a piteous excitement that kept them talking much, and, occupied with their own thoughts and speculations, that for the most part silent.

Just as a meal was concluded, Barker came in his face a picture of joyous vivacity, glowing with solemnity, and laid an envelope containing a telegram by Ruth's side.

"Messrs waiting to hear if there is any answer said."

Ruthed the envelope, glanced at its contents, passed it to her mother in silence. It fell her at the moment.

It was a heavy handed round, as a look sufficed to discern the contents.

"What at four o'clock."

That all, but how pregnant with glorious tidings! And it was then two o'clock. Only ours, and he would be there.

A few moments their tongues broke loose, the news of Basil's coming was promulgated to the domestics by the feverish Barker, who, while lingering about outside accidentally heard the contents

of the telegram.

Ruth was the first to leave the dining-room, and Vida followed.

"Where are you going, Birdie?" she asked.

"I feel that I must be alone," answered Ruth. "I am going to shut myself in my room."

"May I not come with you?"

"Not now, dear."

"But by-and-by—before he comes?"

"Yes, a little before. I feel that I shall want you by my side."

With an evil light in her eyes, Vida glided away.

She thought she had all safe now.

It was at twenty minutes to four that Vida sought Barker and bade him bring some wine to her room.

"Port will be the best, I think," she said, and in five minutes Barker, guessing for whom it was needed, brought it to her with two glasses.

"Thank you, Barker; that will do."

He left the room, and in the left-hand glass Vida poured half the contents of the phial.

It was colorless, and without any perceptible odor.

"Now for the last scene of this eventful story," she said, and went to Ruth's room.

The door was unfastened, and she entered. Ruth was walking to and fro, pale and trembling.

"Come to my room," said Vida. "I have some wine. A little you must have, or you will break down."

She did not see Phoebe standing in the shadow of the curtain, and, Ruth passively obeying they went out, Phoebe following.

They entered Vida's room, and still she saw nothing of Phoebe. The door was left open, and Vida poured out some wine.

"Here, Birdie," she said, pushing forward the fatal glass, "drink."

"Hark!" cried Ruth; "I heard the sound of wheels."

She rushed to the window, and Vida followed.

A carriage was coming up the drive.

"It is Basil, my love."

"Come here and have some wine," said Vida hurriedly, "you will faint if you do not. Here, drink."

She took up the glass, and Ruth hastily drank the wine, Vida at the same moment emptying hers.

"Now," she said, "go and meet him."

Ruth lost no time. Warmed and stimulated by the wine, she walked quickly from the room. Then Vida for the first time saw Phoebe.

"What are you doing here?" she cried hastily.

"I came in with Miss Ruth," replied Phoebe. "I have been here all the time."

A sudden spasm caused Vida to start; there was a look in the girl's face that appalled her.

"Girl," she shrieked, "what have you done?"

"I don't know," replied Phoebe, trembling, "but I was afraid that you meant to do harm to Miss Ruth, and while you were at the window I changed the glasses."

The awful truth burst upon Vida with lightning force, and she staggered back.

The girl had not lied, for already the poisonous fires were leaping and darting within her. In a few moments she would be dead.

She heard a vehicle stop at the door, a glad cry from Ruth, and the cheery tones of Basil's voice mingling with the welcome of father and friends; then all the fury of a disappointed woman took possession of her, and she rushed on Phoebe.

The girl was taken by surprise, and fell back. The next moment she felt the small hand of Vida upon her throat.

"Your life for mine," was hissed in her ears, and Phoebe gave herself up for lost.

(Continued next week.)

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