

could be no doubt that the woods beyond sheltered spies. If I could but have a visible foe, instead of stealthy sounds, peering eyes, shadows! We had no open daylight attack to fear, but the more deadly ambush of the night. I looked at my pretty Pauline, and thought ten thousand fortunes could not compensate for any injury to her.

IT was a beautiful white night, with a silver moon shining on the hard, frozen sand. The doctor was out flying his tailless kites with a string of lanterns attached. It was his one amusement, though he seldom got a chance to indulge in it, and no cold could deter him. He called me to hold the cord for him while he went in the clouds. I could not refuse; so Pauline threw on her wraps and came with me. When the doctor again took the line, we were loath to go in; it seemed both pleasanter and safer out of doors. I felt in my pocket for the emerald, and then, remembering that I had left it with Pauline, asked her of it hastily in a whisper.

She began to laugh softly. "I hid it in a fine place, Jerry," she said. "I jammed it under the candle in the socket of the doctor's Chinese lantern, and hung it on the piazza."

"The deuce you did!" said I. "No, no, no, Pauline, don't be frightened! But I gave the lantern back to the doctor when I came home, and it's one of those on this string soaring above us at this minute. Was there ever such a mess? Don't—don't cry, dear; there's no harm done yet. I'll get the doctor to haul in his kites at once."

But this the doctor utterly refused to do. "You must be crazy," he said, letting out an extra supply of silken string. "Take them down for a minute, indeed! It would take a great many minutes to get them up again as high as they are now. I've been wanting to take observations all this week. If you're tired, go in; I expect to be out here for an hour more at least. It's a glorious night! I'll explain to you my theory."

I tried different arguments; but he remained good-naturedly impervious to them. There was no help for it! A many-thousand-dollar emerald was at present flying some three thousand feet above us. We were doing business in the thousands, it seemed! It was kept in security only by the candle whose light was flickering away off in the upper ether. Suppose the jewel was not recovered; suppose we were accused of having stolen it; suppose—

Could I throttle the doctor and reel the kites in myself? But he was a far larger and stronger man than I.

"Look!" whispered Pauline; but she had no need to speak. At the same instant we had both seen the glimmer of a light in the second story of our cottage. "Did you take up the sitting room lamp?" I asked, between my teeth.

She shook her head.

"Then they're in there, and I've left my pistol! What a fool, what a fool! Well, let them search; they could not have a better opportunity." I smiled grimly.

She clung to my arm. "Oh, how can we ever go in there again?" But my brain was reeling with another problem. Suppose the candle burned out in the lantern before the kites were lowered? Then the jewel might fall out anywhere, into the ocean itself, and be lost forever.

"Search in there all you want to, my friends!" I muttered as I looked at the now darkened house. "I'll outwit you yet, and I'll not lose the emerald either!"

It seemed hours that we walked up and down, chattering with the doctor, while our treasure roamed among the stars. At last, however, I grew desperate. I whispered to Pauline and loosened her arm from mine. Then I twitched the silken cord.

"There's a pretty good strain on it," I said. "Will it break?"

"I hope not," said the doctor.

Then, as he turned his head, I cut the cord.

"They're off!" I cried. "I was afraid they'd break loose. Stay with my wife! I can run faster than you," and set off on the chase.

AS I ran past the pine woods I turned once, to see that two shadows had detached themselves from the bushes and were after me. How I ran! Through the low scrub that skirted the sand, out on the sand again and through the woods, following the course of the fast falling kites. Through sand and scrub and forest, I could feel, rather than hear, the soft, muffled sounds of double footstep following mine. Those feet were not shod in leather.

I am a swift runner. What could be the outcome I did not stop to think. I must see that lantern in safety, and for the rest I gripped my knife firmly. I felt the strength of ten, and a wild exhilaration that made breathing easy and went to my head like wine. The clear, frosty air, the moonlight, the emerald prize, the footstep following! And the footstep did not gain.

The floating derelict was settling lower. I breathed a prayer of gratitude that the wind did not set oceanward; the deep, sullen roar of the sea filled my ears. I was on the edge of the pine woods again; I had distanced the muffled footsteps. I felt a glow of triumph, and then—my foot caught in a loosened shoestring and I pitched heavily forward.

I must have been stunned for a few minutes. When I tried at last to rise something was thrust over my face and a sweet and insidious odor filled my nostrils. I feebly struggled against it, and relapsed into unconsciousness.

When I opened my eyes I was lying on the sand, with the moon shining down on me. Something wet touched my hand, then my cheek; in my confusion I fancied it a dog licking me. Then I half raised myself and looked around. I was lying on the edge of the ocean, and it was the waves that had touched me. My outer garments had been removed; stockings and shoes also; they were in a heap near me. I had been searched for the emerald!

On the wet sand not far off were the remains of kites and lanterns, sodden and wrecked, half caught already in the ebb of the waves. I crawled toward them. The candles were still in their sockets, not quite burned out; but the one lantern I coveted was not there.

I was very cold, and somewhat light headed. I put on my clothes, with fingers that trembled, and peered suspiciously from left to right. But as I looked upward I saw something that took my breath away—a lantern caught in the top of a tall pine tree, swaying with the branches in the moonlight.

I am no sailor. The top of that pine tree was as inaccessible to me as the Mountains of the Moon. But I felt a new thrill of triumph. If the jewel were there, as I believed, it was where pursuit would never dream of it, and I could wait for the morning to plan its recovery.

I walked home around by the beach and through the village, where a few lights were still flickering. I looked at the dark woods beyond the two outlying cottages, and shivered as I thought of the mystery that lurked within.

PAULINE was in the doctor's sitting room. A fire blazed on the hearth, and his old servant was bringing in a steaming pot of coffee. Strange contrast to what I had been undergoing! Pauline started as she saw my face, and hers went white with sympathy; but I put my finger on my lips.

The doctor mourned his kites. He incidentally mentioned that he had seen a campfire in the woods that

day, and that tramps might have been the prowlers I had heard the night before. I seized this opportunity to get him to go over to the cottage with me and reconnoiter before taking Pauline. It was as we had left it, with no trace of its stealthy visitors.

Pauline and I prepared to watch again that night. I told her all that had happened, as we sat downstairs amid a blaze of lamps and candles, to make secret attack impossible. Whatever might be our own peril, I believed that the emerald was safe.

"Where did you get these things?" asked Pauline at last.

"What do you mean?"

"These," she held out in the palm of her hand what looked like small liquorice drops. "They have such an odd taste, like sandalwood."

"How many have you eaten?"

"Oh, I don't know—half a dozen—they are rather good. You should not have left them in my work basket if you didn't mean me to eat them."

At that moment I heard the sound of wheels hurrying away, and I knew that the doctor had gone beyond my reach. Then I took the pellets and flung them fiercely into the fire.

"You have eaten enough," I said to Pauline, with a voice that I tried to make steady, not to frighten her. The drug made a strange odor as it burned. Pauline, Pauline, my Pauline—were the thugs going to kill her?

Suddenly she lifted her face and listened. Her face had a strange, translucent pallor, and her eyes gleamed. "Who is that talking to me?" she said. "Such strange voices—such strange words—yet I understand them! Why, where am I?"

"Here, here, in my arms."

"Oh, yes, yes; but they are talking. Listen! They want me to tell where you have hidden the emerald. Ah, ah, ah!" she shrieked. "I will not tell! I will not tell! Jerry, keep me from telling, keep me from telling!"

"Pauline, Pauline!" I cried in anguish.

She turned on me almost fiercely. "Say that again, keep on calling me, so that I shall not hear the voices. Talk to me, don't you understand. No, I'll not—no listen! Tra la la la!" she sang wildly. "Give me the mandolin, Jerry. No, you play it—louder, louder, louder! Oh, in mercy's name, louder! No, I'll not tell you!" she interrupted herself passionately. "Well, sing, Jerry, why don't you sing? I can't remember the songs. No, not!" She threw the mandolin out of my hand. "Put your arm about me, and we'll walk up and down the room, and you talk, talk, talk to me." Her voice broke.

I talked. Heaven only knows of what, those miserable, awful hours as we walked the narrow room like caged animals. I called her endearing names, brought back the days of our early love and betrothal, told her thrilling passages of adventure, college scrapes, silly stories, jokes, repeated poems, sang songs, as her arms clung to me and her dragging footsteps followed mine. But just as I fancied some security, the hunted look would return to her, and with it the shriek, "I will not tell! Jerry, Jerry, don't let me tell! Keep me from hearing—hide me, hide me!" And the whole horrible task would be begun over again. That night defies description. I gnawed at the tortures of my darling, while I forced myself to chatter ceaselessly.

At last there came a longer interval between her terrors. The influence of the drug seemed to be waning. Then, as the morning light filtered slowly into the room, between the still burning lamps, I saw a peaceful look come over the face that lay on my shoulder. She pressed my hand weakly. "Hush!" she said, and stood listening. "Hush!" Then she looked up with a dear smile, her hand sought my lips, she murmured, "They have stopped calling me," and, slipping from my embrace, fell to the floor.

I gathered her in my arms and carried her to her bed upstairs. Then I talked to the doctor, who was just returning. I told him as little as I could divulge.

"She is suffering from hysteria, brought on by fright," he said. "Sleep will do more for her than I can. I will leave a powder for her if she wakes, and send my old Agatha over to sit with her." Yet he looked grave. "It's a curious story of yours," he said musingly. "An old sailor who worked for me told me once of some such drug that he had seen used among the natives—somewhere,—in India, Corea, Siam—I can't remember where. It worked, according to him, in just such fashion, a cheap kind of telephonic communication. Of course it was merely a sailor's yarn; but it's a queer coincidence."

LATE in the morning, as Pauline slept peacefully, I hired a boy from the village to walk to the pine tree with me and get the lantern down. After he left I took the emerald from it, and looked at its baleful green light, tempted to throw it at once.

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I Saw Something That Took My Breath Away.