

Carrots was clinging lightly to the side of the boat, talking at Marie.

"Wh—wh—what—why?" gasped poor Marie, who was horribly afraid she would upset the boat.

"Because it'll take your ugly bangs out of curl," said Carrots spitefully, shaking her own brilliant locks till they splashed all over Marie's neatly laid artificial curls. It was Marie who had first called her "Carrots."

"Were you swimming?" I inquired eagerly.

She nodded.

"I wish I could. Can you teach me?"

She looked me up and down coldly; then she said with immense scorn, "No—dudes always sink;" and before I could essay an indignant retort, she had dipped once more, and was swimming for the shore.

To prove to Carrots that I was in earnest, I came down to the beach the next day, for I discovered that this was her favorite haunt. Vacation time had just commenced, and, by some miraculous chance, my people were staying in the city. Carrots and my acquaintance grew apace. At first she was rude and unfriendly. Then she grudgingly showed me a few little tricks in the water.

After a time she unbent a trifle more, and I learned something of her history. Of course you understand that after that first day I had haunted Nun's Creek and Carrots with a persistence possible only in a stubborn English boy. Carrots had a stepmother whom she hated cordially. Her father was a sea captain, and away most of the time. She came naturally by her love of the water. She said she loved it better than anything else on earth, and she hated Marie Grenier worse. We spent whole days together on the beach or out on the water. Sometimes she would sing to me, and I would fall fast asleep on the beach.

But one day when I awoke I found Carrots had deserted me, and a sense of terrible loneliness and impending disaster possessed me. Jumping to my feet, and not waiting to find my hat, I sped like the wind along the beach, shouting her name. She came to meet me, her hands full of water lilies, her dress and hair dripping. The latter hung about

her in damp curls, but the sun was on it, and it seemed to me the most adorable color on earth. Moreover, Carrots had big gray eyes, shaded by long dark lashes. I noticed them for the first time this day.

"Carrots," I said, "I was afraid."

"Of what?" she asked briefly.

"I don't know. When I awoke, you were gone, and I felt dreadfully lonely, Carrots."

"I'm here now," she responded drily.

"Yes," I said lamely; "but, Carrots, don't leave me when I go to sleep again. I am such a sleepyhead, and your singing and the water and the wind and air—I can't help myself."

"And I had something to tell you today," she said slowly. "I can't keep you awake to listen."

"What is it, Carrots?"

She told me quietly. She was going away to the United States. Some rich uncle had adopted her. She was glad of the opportunity of leaving her stepmother.

I think I must have been a very stupid boy in those days. I know I stood tongue tied, staring dizzily at Carrots. When any one laughs at the idea of a boy experiencing deep feeling and emotion, I always think of my fifteen year old self, and the agony that surged through me then. I threw myself down on the sand and hid my face in my arms. Then I heard Carrots' voice. It was very savage.

"If you cry, I'll prick you," she said. "I've got a pin."

I felt her kneel down on the sand beside me.

"What you want to *cry* for, you—you boy, you?"

I wasn't crying. I was past tears.

"Look at me," she commanded.

I raised up.

"Do you *care*?" said Carrots in a little shaking whisper.

"Carrots, I *love* you," I said. Carrots' great eyes flickered, and then of a sudden her arms were about my neck, and we were mingling our tears.

We exchanged tokens. I gave her a little ring of my mother's, which I felt no compunction in parting with, and Carrots swore to wear it forever. But poor Carrots had nothing to give, and