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# Woman AGAINST Woman

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(Continued.)

She was led into a large apartment; as in a dream she saw Roy Darrell standing alone, one hand leaning on a chair, behind him three or four policemen.

At the table was seated Sir Robert Carlyle, one or two other gentlemen; and Miles, the keeper, had evidently just given his evidence.

"Margaret Dornton," said Sir Robert Carlyle, speaking distinctly, "approach. Do not be frightened. Have you ever seen that gentleman before?"

Alice turned her eyes toward the silent form.

"Yes," she said, faintly yet clearly. "Who is it?"

"Lord Roy Darrell; and—and my husband."

The clear tones rang through the still room like a bell.

The pen dropped from Sir Robert Carlyle's hand; he rose to his feet.

"Your husband!" he repeated blankly. "Lord Roy, is this true?"

Roy met his glance full.

"It is quite true," he said.

"But since when has this marriage taken place?"

"We were married this morning, at Nestley, by the registrar."

"Good Heavens!"

Sir Robert took out his handkerchief and wiped his brow, then he waved the policemen away. The other gentlemen had risen, and were whispering together.

Sir Robert advanced to the young man.

"What made you do this?" he asked, much agitated. "Don't you see you condemn yourself?"

"I did it for my mother's sake," replied Lord Roy. "I was mad last night, I thought only of her misery—her agony, if—my innocence could not be proved, and—"

"But the disgrace now will be heavier," murmured the other. "Cannot you understand what the world will say?"

"I am innocent—I swear it!" cried Lord Roy. "Oh, what a cruel fate, is mine! Speak!" he cried again; "tell them of that other."

Alice gave him one swift sad look, and then clearly and decisively told of the man's face that had approached her just before she fainted.

She described it minutely, and Sir Robert hurriedly wrote down what she said.

"Thank you," he murmured as she finished. "Now please sign this."

Alice took the pen, hesitated a moment, then wrote her name, "Margaret Darrell."

"And you, my poor friend," went on Sir Robert, touching Lord Roy on the shoulder, "cannot remember this man?"

"I can remember nothing clearly, Captain Rivers and I were arguing (we—) we had quarrelled two days ago, when suddenly we seemed to struggle; and yet I have a sense of feeling it was not with him that I struggled; then I must have fainted. I only remember recovering and seeing that poor child standing before me nearly dead with fright."

"Then you cannot recollect striking the blow with this dagger?" asked Sir Robert.

"I can remember nothing. I never saw that dagger before. Where was it found?"

"Away from the body, through the bushes."

"I know nothing of it. If only my brain would clear."

Sir Robert looked at him sadly.

"Your life is saved," he said gently, "but—"

"But dishonor remains," added Lord Roy bitterly. "Yes, I see. I know now what you mean."

The door opened at this instant, and Eady Darrell appeared leaning on Valerie Ross's arm. Roy's mother looked suddenly wan and worn. Valerie seemed scarce alive.

"Forgive me, gentlemen," began Lady Darrell weakly; "I should not intrude at such a moment, but the suspense was so terrible it would have killed me had I remained another—"

She was interrupted by the sudden entrance of Chelmick, the butler.

"Oh, my lady—sir—my lord—pardon me!" gasped rather than spoke the old servant. "I have great good news! He has confessed! They are bringing him here!"

"He! Who? Speak, man!" were the hurried cries, while above them all rose the mother's voice.

"Oh, God, I thank thee!"

Alice stood rooted to the spot, while Lord Roy, who had grown deadly white at sight of his mother, and the pale, beautiful face beside her, now grasped the chair he held as in a vice, all thoughts pushed aside but the one that said his burden was about to be lifted from him.

"They found him in Madman's Drift, sir," continued the servant, wild with excitement, trembling all over. "Some men from Dixon's were passing along, and they heard his cries. They are bringing him here straight, my lady. He's almost dead. A thin, dark man."

"Dark!" whispered Alice to herself, but she did not move, and in another moment it seemed the room was filled with a crowd of people, and her eyes rested, as through a mist, on the face that had glared at her so horribly before her senses faded away. Lord Roy gazed at it too, but not for long. He turned involuntarily to look at her. He approached her swiftly.

"Is it the man?" he asked almost inaudibly from emotion.

"Yes, it is he," answered Alice faintly.

Lord Roy covered his face with his hands, while a great cry of thankfulness went up from his heart. He read the joy in his mother's eyes, and he went towards her, clasping her frail hands tenderly, as Sir Robert Carlyle bent over the deathlike form that was carried in on a mattress.

"I must take a statement," he said quickly. "Clear the room of the servants."

"The group of people passed away slowly, while Alice stood on alone, grasping a chair, and feeling suddenly weak. Valerie Ross seemed to turn to stone or marble, no touch of life was there in her white set face.

The mother and son stood together. All waited for the first faint words from the pallid lips.

The dying man looked round on their anxious countenances and a smile seemed to hover round his mouth. It died away in a second.

"It would have answered well," he murmured, "but fate was too strong."

Sir Robert listened eagerly.

"You killed Eustace Rivers?" he asked, as the man paused and breathed heavily.

A lurid light beamed in the sunken eyes.

"Yes, I killed Eustace Rivers—I stabbed him to death. My name is Bruce Gardyne. I—"

"Why?" a voice clear and hard rang through the room—"why did you kill him?"

It was Valerie Ross who spoke, but all were listening to the confession, and forgot their surprise that she questioned him.

The man shot a glance at her.

"Another," he whispered; "poor soul! I killed him because I hated him—because he stole my wife. On her broken—"

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