The COAST of CHANCE

by ESTHER & LUCIA CHAMBERLAIN

ILLUSTRATING by McKeller

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SYNOPSIS.

At a private view of the Chatworth Galleries, to be sold at auction, the Chatworth ring, known as the Crew Idol, mysteriously disappears. Harry Crewe, son of Mrs. Flora Crewe, and her daughter, Mrs. Clara Brinton, are being like a brother and sister, a beautiful negress, Kerr, who is known to Flora as Kerr, an Englishman, at the time, is discussing the disappearance of the ring, the Chatworth Galleries, Mr. Ashton Wand, are recalled. Flora has a fiancé that Harry and Kerr know something about the disappearance of the ring, but he has not Harry's assurance, for she gives him, $50,000 reward is offered for the return of the ring. Flora tells Kerr that Clara is distinctly Kerr's. Flora tells Flora to a Chinese goldsmith's to buy an engagement ring. An exquisite sapphire set in a band of brass is selected. Harry and Kerr are discussing the disappearance of the ring. The possession of the ring seems to cast a spell over Flora. She becomes insane and imagines that Kerr is trying to take away from her the ring. Flora is afraid of Kerr as him when he gets a glimpse of the ring. Kerr is in the Crew Idol, which is kept in the Crew Idol causes Flora to become insane. Clara discovers Kerr. Flora refuses to give up the ring. Kerr, self-suspects him of being the thief. Flora is taken to a sanitarium. Kerr decides to return to ring to Harry, but he tells her to keep it for a day or two. Harry tells Flora that Clara is selling her cap for her father. Judge Holler. Flora is taken to the sanitarium. Kerr is waiting to make sure of the reward before announcing the thief. Clara seems to be latest about something.

CHAPTER XVII.—(Continued.)

Beyond the looming roofs as they descended the hill she saw white sails with out of sight. All the panorama upon which she had looked down seemed up around her, large and living. He whistled to the car as he helped her down the last steep pitch, whistled and waved, and they ran for it.

This was never the car one went out the front door to take. They rattled and crawled low, taking the corners comfortably, past houses with all their windows blinking recognition. Hadn't it passed them as for 20 years? Old houses in long gardens, and little houses creeping back behind their yards, not yet encroached upon by fresher rim of living. Past all these and gliding down under high ragged banks, green grass above with wooden stairways struggling up their naked faces; past these again; past lower levels; past little grays and sheltered houses; past loaded carts of vegetables; past children playing in shrilly, bearing down always on the green square of the plaza wide, open and foreign, and the Greek church "gleam with blue and yellow, bear down on it in hard fairly determined to come to a curve straight through this stable center. Then in the very shadow it swerved aside to clatter off in quite another direction along a wider street with whiter shops, and more glittering windows with gilded letters flashing foreign names, with more marked and brilliant colors now in the crowd, with a clearer stamp on all of Latin living.

Then suddenly for them the old big panorama reared. The car had stopped and they had left it, and were climbing upon the corner of a still street that came down from the high hills behind them and crossed our car track and climbed again a little way to curve over into the sky. Dingy houses two blocks above them stood silhouetted against the blue. They were walking upward toward this horizon, leaving color and noise behind them. With every step the street grew more rugged, lonely and remote. Many of the windows that glimmered at them, passing were blank windows of empty houses. Were they taking this way, this curious roundabout, out of the world way of dropping over into the shipping which lay under the hill? For all she knew this night really be his notion, for since they left the garden gate, though they had looked together at the light and color of the Greek church moving past their eyes, they had not exchanged a word.

But all at once he stopped at the intersection of two dusty streets, and his eyes covered down the four perspectives like a voyager taking his soundings. Elegant as ever and odd though, yet he wasn't any older than at the jumping off place he remembered that he had appeared in the box at the theater or in the picture gallery. She had the clear impression all at once that he wasn't too odd for anything.

Here we are!" he said, and indicated with his glittering stick straight before them a little house. It was low as if it crouched against the wind, tufted and broken by the sea back of the crack of rock itself, and made so secret with tight-drawn curtains that it seemed to have shut itself up against the world forever. Here we are!" he wasn't afraid of herself out here, and stood down under the sky but also was afraid that those four walls might shut out for now and reasoning joy might steal away like new tenderness and bring back face to face with the same ugly fear that had confronted her in her drawing room.

"Oh, no!" she said, and put her hands behind her with a determination that she wasn't going to move.

"Oh, yes," he said, but he didn't smile. He looked at her quite gravely, impersonally, and the touch of his fingers on her arm was fine, was delicate, as if to say, "I wouldn't harm you for the world."

She blushed a slow, painful crimson. She hadn't meant that. She hadn't even thought that he had, there was nothing for it but to go in. The door shut behind her sharply, with a click like a little trap, and she breathed such an atmosphere, flat, faint and stale the metic ghost of some fuller, more fragrant flavor. In the little ante-room where they stood, whose faded ceiling all but smudged their heads, and in the large little room beyond the Nottingham lace curtains, prevailed a mild stability, a respectable decay. Curtains and table-cloths alike showed a dull and tempered whiteness, and the shadow of time had fallen dim across the whole. The little room seemed left behind in the onward march of the city, and the little face was but a shadow of what had been of the vigor and fourteen of hour gone Spain 20 years before. There was no one with her, and she had not told you anything of that morning when we left your house." Kerr's sense of human life in all the place.

"Hello," said Kerr among the tables looking around him, "we've caught them asleep." He rapped on the wall with his cane. Flora peered at him between the curtains, all her fascinated apprehension of what was to follow plain upon her face. "Shall I be at ease?" she asked her. "There's nothing I won't do for you, you know."

The door opened and a little girl with a long black braid and purple apron came in.

"A dream!" cried Flora. She laughed with a quick relaxing of her strained nerves. It might almost have been the truth from that old little waverly face and dusty dimness of the place seemed. Flora discovered Kerr's presence. "Oh, I forgot!" Flora refuses to give or sell the stone to Kerr, self-suspects him of being the thief. Flora is taken to a sanitarium. Kerr decides to return ring to Harry, but he tells her to keep it for a day or two. Harry tells Flora that Clara is selling her cap for her father, Judge Holler. Flora is taken to the sanitarium. Kerr is waiting to make sure of the reward before announcing the thief. Clara seems to be latest about something.

"Dear! Kerr, "ends formally. Now let the real magic begin!"

"Not black magic," Flora took up his fancy.

He had drawn out a chair for her. "That depends on you. I'm not the magic maker. I have no talisman."

She felt the conscious jewel burn in her possession. She looked up hesitatingly at him, but he only laughed, and, with a swing, lifted the chair a little out of the place and set it her up to the table, as if to show how easily he could put forth strength. There was nothing defiant in him. He was taking her as he found her—thinking upon the wings of his high spirits, and mischievously, immaturely, he would not show her where the fight was leading, or let her listen to any thing but the rustling of those wings. He was determined to make holiday, whatever was to follow. For the glimpse of him through the dim eyes she might be the fay of Naples; and, ah! Chianti! Perhaps the sort one gets down Monte Video way, where the vines fade into lazy-purple and leaf if her fancy could get the better of the reality.

"She wouldn't care if you jumped up and threw me out of the window," he offered. "Do what you think is harmless. Oh, isn't that harmless? What's more harmless than to let one alone? There's only one dangerous thing here." he grinned and let her sight her choice quickly.

"Shall I begin?" he asked.

"You know I can't let you alone." He laughed. "Well, isn't that why we're here at last—that you may die alone your terror?"

"I have. Didn't you get my letter?"

"Oh, indeed I did. Haven't I obeyed you? Haven't I kept away from your house? Have I tried to approach you?"

"Haven't you, though?" she threw him an accusing

"Ah," he depreciated. "you came to me. I was down in the garden."

She looked at him through his coverlage wistfully searchingly, for there were other things in that letter.

"Were were?" He regarded her with grave scrutiny. "Why, to be sure there were things—things that you didn't mean—and I thought others you couldn't mean, that you was too good to write out when I'm half done to stick away and leave all like this—and I thought I ought to tell to each other." My dear, for what do you tremble?

"Her burst out. "But can't you see the danger?"

He met it quietly.

"Danger? I have been seeing nothing else but the danger—to you, to me, to this place, for the last 20 days." Every line I have followed has ended in danger, and brought us finally to this. The gesture of his hand included the predicament and the dingy little room. "You'll really have to help me, after all."

"Oh, leave it out!" That is why I wrote. Don't you see your own danger at all?"

"No, but I like to." He leaned toward her, bent his head a quizzical peak.

"Oh, I can't tell you," she despaired. "But somehow I shall have to make you."

"That will be easy," he said. Leaning back he crossed his ankle in his hand, he watched her with a gloomy sort of brooding. "You have made me wait long enough. You know I won't go without it." His words came easily, the sentiment was a given finality. He gave himself up to the course he was following and a sense of relief was inevitable. The faintness of despair came over her. Only the narrow table was between them, yet all at once, with the curtains drawn, he seemed a long way off.

"Do you care for it so very much?" she asked him, trembling but valiant.

"I care so very much for you," he said slowly, and after a moment of wonder, "Why, don't you?"

"Oh, not for that," she cried sharply. "But for the sapphire!"

He stared. She had startled him clean out of his brooding. "In heaven's name, what is the sapphire?"

"Oh, she could never tell him it was for him! It could never, in her embarrassment she looked all wary.

"He quick to the rescue." Then, "For every one in this wretched hotel knows. I have to—

"No, I didn't mean that—you must let think it—I can't discuss him with you!" She was hot to recapture her fugitive admission.

"Don't let that disturb you. You know I can't discuss him either. The shadow of time had fallen dim across the whole. The little negress seemed left behind in the onward march of the city. Her dull, kindly face was but a shadow of what had been of the vigor and fourteen of hour gone Spain 20 years before. There was no one with her, and she had not told you anything of that morning when we left your house." Kerr's sense of human life in all the place.

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