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HARRIET *and the* PIPER

By KATHLEEN NORRIS

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CHAPTER XIII—Continued.

"Nina," he said, tenderly, "it's worse-hurried. And a chance—almost a sure thing for financial position, which I thought I owed her, has distressed her grievously. It will, truly, be out of the question for me to travel, as we had planned. The unfortunate speculation of my friend—"

"Whose name you withheld," Birdy said interrupted the theatrical voice to say, dryly.

"Because of a promise—" Boyd flashed promptly. "But," he resumed, turning to Harriet, "I shall be able to negotiate this business, as I assure Mr. Carter, without any assistance from him or his daughter," his lip curled scornfully, "and I do not see my power to give her up for any three months' absence."

Harriet could only look at him in silence, with an ashen face.

"God help me," she breathed in her soul. "God help me!"

"Well," said Richard with weary impatience, "we did not call you down to bore you with this." I asked to see you, Harriet, because Mr. Blondin has made the statement to me, just now, that you were heavily in arrears with his plans for Nina and that you approved of the affair."

The prayer in Harriet's heart did not stop as she bowed her wretched eyes to Blondin.

"I believed that you and she had not seen each other since December," she reminded him. "I lost no chance to advise her against the engagement—I thought it was all over."

"Well!" Richard said, with a breath of relief. He had been watching her closely, now he settled back in his chair and moved his contemptuous attention to Blondin.

"One moment!" Royal Blondin said, gently. But he was wise-just, "I believe that I would make Nina a good husband, don't you?" he asked Harriet directly and quietly.

She was not looking at him. Her eyes were on Richard Carter.

"I believe you would make her life—she said, hesitantly.

"Then," Richard said, "I think we're all in all. Mr. Blondin, I was aware that you had misunderstood Mrs. Carter when you made that statement."

"Not quite all!" Blondin persisted. "You believe that Nina would be wiser not to marry me?" he asked Harriet.

"I—I—" She cleared her throat. "You know that I think so!" she said, desperately.

Blondin laughed.

"And now, Mr. Blondin, you will gladly leave my house!" said Richard.

The other man was watching Harriet, with a menace in his narrowed eyes. Within that moment of silence almost six tightly closed lips set to work behind his beard. He had lost the game, truly, but she knew he would not let it have such good fighting. Presently, the calm of years fell from him, and his voice descended with a sort of cold and quiet fury as he said:

"Mrs. Carter, I am sorry that I don't pay you your wife what makes you happy. I am sorry that I am not a rich man. Why, I would pay you, if that had been bidding for your favor. I'm not rich, no. Why don't I pay her if she herself wasn't thrifty in love enough with her—when she was Nina's age, and whether she was married to you or not, ten years ago?"

He had shot the phrases at her with a distressed almost violent. Now

"And Her—She'll Tell You! Ask Her!"

his dry voice stopped, but his swift, vengeful glance at Harriet was not finished.

"And her—she'll tell you! Ask her!" he repeated.

Richard Carter stood up. He looked at his gleaming watch, then at Harriet, at the desk to the silent woman who stood before the desk. He looked at stroke he spoke again.

"Be quiet!" Richard said. "I don't know what you mean, Blondin. And let the girl neither raised her eyes nor moved. Richard, with a gesture of contempt, and quietly, to Jack Ayr want that to true?"

"If you have bought a farm, what you say is true," Jack said, with a look at Harriet's averted face.

"I do," said not. At last we farm is bought. I have paid for it. I have been long years with nothing—I have been poor, I have been rich. I am by nature voyager—Judge—"

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"Judge!" he repeated, with a sneer. "Judge! Judge what? Whether you're going to be the wife of a rich man or a poor man? Whether you're going to be a lady or a—"

"Be quiet!" Richard said. "I don't know what you mean, Blondin. And the girl neither raised her eyes nor moved. Richard, with a gesture of contempt, and quietly, to Jack Ayr want that to true?"

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