

# Weird Tales



NOVEMBER, 1952

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Published bi-monthly by WEIRD TALES, 9 Rockefeller Plaza, New York 20, N. Y. Registered as second-class matter January 28, 1940, at the Post Office at New York, N. Y., under the Act of March 3, 1879. Single copies, 25 cents. Subscription rates: One year in the United States and possessions, \$1.50. Foreign and Canadian postage extra. The publishers are not responsible for the loss of unsolicited manuscripts although every care will be taken of such material while in their possession.

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PRINTED IN THE U. S. A.

D. McLWRAITE, Editor

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Vol. 44, No. 7

*"... look at her now, watching that road like a jealous woman."*



**Heading by Virgil Finlay**

# Black as the Night

By Alice Farnham

"BUT somehow," said the housekeeper slowly, "somehow I don't rightly feel that creature *is* a dog."

Her pleasant face was troubled. Behind the steel spectacles, her eyes wore a puzzled, thoughtful look.

"It's—it's more as if she was human, somehow, human as you or me—but *bad*. Bad all the way through!"

The grocer's man, on his weekly visit to the lonely house by the sea, looked uneasily down at the great black beast stretched out in the doorway, its unwinking amber gaze on the white lane that led into the London highroad.

"Look at her now!" said the housekeeper in a low voice. "Watching that road, like a jealous woman! Oh, it's fair give me the creeps, I tell you—knowing what I know, and staying here night after night alone with that beast!"

The grocer's man edged behind the table. "Oh, no fear of that! I've a good stout stick—you see it there in the corner—and I made sure to keep it handy. My husband will have me bring it. But it's not the likes of you and me she'd trouble with. And it's not her teeth I'm afraid of—it's the cunning mind of her, and what may happen now that his honeymoon's over and he's bringing his new wife home!"

The grocer's man brightened.

"Coming today, ain't they?"

Utterly indifferent, the dog continued to stare at the empty road that wound among the rocks, away from the cliff and the sea.

"Ah!" said the housekeeper darkly. "And stand in her shoes I wouldn't, not for a million pounds, George Ottey!"

She dropped her voice, almost as if afraid the dog might overhear.

"I remember what happened to his first

wife, poor thing, right here on this very spot!"

"Suicide, wasn't it?" faltered the grocer's man. "Suicide, they called it. Only some said, accident."

"It was murder," said the housekeeper, half beneath her breath. "Murder down among those rocks, and no one the wiser but me! Murder—and I know the one who did it!"

The dog lifted its head then and looked at her steadily, its yellow eyes alight with perfect intelligence. The upper lip lifted just a trifle over the sharp white teeth in a silent snarl; and then the dog turned its head back and once again lay motionless, watching the lonely road.

At its other end, in London, Moira Glenn stepped laughing into her new husband's car to begin a long journey.

BY CHARLES' expression she could see that the laugh had been a mistake, but you can't just switch a laugh off in the middle—your face feels so foolish. Oh dear, that's the worst of marrying on such short acquaintance, she thought. I don't know which things I can laugh at and which I can't.

Charles' nice mouth set in rather a stubborn line. He was thin and dark and intensely serious, which was perhaps why light-hearted Moira loved him. That, and his wonderful skill as an artist, and the hint of tragedy in his past.

"I'm sorry it strikes you as ridiculous," he said stiffly. "Mrs. Bunty told me at the last minute she won't stay any longer than a week, and I can't very well let Jet starve just because—"

"Just because she has a rival," Moira finished gravely. "All right, darling. It's Ho

for Road's End I can do with the sea breeze anyway!"

Ho for Road's End was all very well, but when Moira saw the place she felt a sinking of the heart. Lonely, Charles had said; but she had never pictured anything so savagely remote as this gray stone house on the cliff. Silent and dark and ugly it stood near the edge, under an overcast windbroken sky. Beyond it, a path led down through a scattering of jagged rocks to the sea. Three wind-bent fir trees at the back leaned inward, all their branches flung out toward the house, as if long ago they had frozen in that attitude of supplication.

Moira felt suddenly cold. Oh, why, why did it look like this? Why couldn't the sun have stayed out? She shivered as the car drew closer, and slid her hand under Charles' arm.

"A bit out of the world." He gave her a half-apologetic look. "But you said you wouldn't mind, you know, darling. As long as we're together, you said."

"I know." She squeezed his arm. "Silly, of course that's all that matters!"

But the feeling of chill and apprehension persisted. This house wanted none of her.

A furious barking broke out within the house, high-pitched and almost hysterical. Charles laughed, the tension broken.

"Jet's heard the car! Now Mrs. Bunty will let her out!"

The heavy front door opened slowly, and a black form came bounding out to tear round the lawn in widening circles, still barking wildly.

"What a beautiful dog!" exclaimed Moira involuntarily.

"She's taken two prizes." Charles' manner was offhand, as he guided the car to a stop. "I've had her from a puppy, you know. That's seven years."

Jet continued to race about in circles, her fluid black body moving with effortless grace. Her pointed ears were laid close to her head, her long muscles rippled under the smooth silky coat.

"She's a beautiful thing—I'm going to love her. But what's she running for?"

"Showing off, for my benefit. Now she'll

pretend I'm not here—it's a regular ritual. She hasn't noticed you yet."

Slowing to a stop, Jet abruptly sat down, a tall graceful creature with a fine economy of line that delighted Moira's artist soul. Conspicuously she did not look at the car, but at a point twenty feet to one side of it. Her yellow eyes were fixed upon that point with what appeared to be great interest; only the erect alertness of the pointed ears betrayed her.

"Born actress, isn't she?"

Charles spoke with pride.

JET'S head moved just a fraction. Her gaze wandered to the sky. A crow flapped across her range of vision, and she barked at it once rather mechanically.

Charles stepped down from the car, and on the instant she had covered the intervening distance in two bounds. In a frenzy of joy, she leapt to his face half a dozen times before he could quiet her.

Suddenly the dog stood back. Its body stiffened. Watchful, wary, hostile, the yellow eyes stared into Moira's.

"Get out and make friends with her. Don't be afraid!"

"I'm *not* afraid!" Moira was rather resentful as she scrambled out of the car. She held out a coaxing hand. "Hello, Jet! Good girl—come then!"

Jet backed away, her eyes still intent upon Moira's. Her coat bristled almost imperceptibly.

"It's no use, Charles." Something—reaction perhaps—caused an absurd prickle of tears behind Moira's eyelids. This overcast sky, this foreboding house, the unfriendly dog. "She—we'll just have to get used to each other by degrees."

Charles waved his newspaper at the stout aproned figure in the doorway.

"Back on time, Mrs. Bunty!" he called.

Smiling, Mrs. Bunty shook her head. She knew, and he knew, that she had stayed a day beyond her time, and that it was distinctly felt on both sides as a favor. Her presence was needed at home, and her bicycle stood waiting by the kitchen door.

"I'm glad to see you back, sir. Bunty's

been that impatient he's been ringing me all day on the phone. I told him I'd be along just as soon as I'd finished the clearing up."

"Yes, yes," said Charles hastily. "We'll try not to keep you. Er—my wife, Mrs. Bunty."

Moira thought she saw an odd look of compassion on the housekeeper's face as she turned toward her. It lasted only a second, while Mrs. Bunty civilly acknowledged the introduction and withdrew, but still it was somehow disconcerting. My own servants to be sorry for me! She thought with a trace of anger, of which she was immediately ashamed.

Dinner was a rather silent meal, served with an expedition quite new to Moira but to which she was later to become accustomed. The dog lay in a corner by the empty stone fireplace, chin resting on her outstretched paws, watching them steadily as they ate.

"Mrs. Bunty's the salt of the earth," Charles said once. "Good yeoman farmer stock. Husband's an invalid—that's why she needs the job."

"I like her looks," Moira admitted, "but I have a feeling that she thinks employers should be kept in their places. Sh—here she comes now with dessert."

They fell silent again. The dog continued to watch them from her corner.

Strangely, the constraint which Moira had mentally attributed to the intermittent presence of Mrs. Bunty still persisted after she had gone.

I've never felt like this with Charles before, she thought. I must be crazy. For a fleeting instant she saw the lighted coziness of their room at the hotel, felt again the warmth and gay intimacy that had so lately been theirs, saw Charles' face bright with eager longing, heard the rumble and the clatter of traffic in the streets below that intensified their delicious isolation. Already it seemed half a lifetime away.

It's a long way to Picadilly, she thought ruefully. But it wasn't; the trip had taken them less than two hours. That was why Charles had bought the house, he told her: close enough to London for him to keep up the necessary contacts with agencies and

advertisers, remote enough to provide the solitude that his work demanded. Moira felt a little homesick when she thought of the office; she wondered if they missed her. She might not be so gifted an artist as Charles, but she had carved a nice little niche there for herself all the same.

They'd tried to scare her out of her impulsive marriage, of course.

"My good girl, what do you know about the man?" Bill Conway had demanded, waving his pipe. "He comes, he goes, he sells, he gets commissions—and dwells in some Godforsaken hole in the rocks along the Cornwall coast. What do you think you'll do down there—count bats?"

Involuntarily now her gaze strayed to the dark beams. No bats.

"I'm going to inspire him to higher things," she had retorted. "And for your information I love solitude and I'm fond of rocks and I grow all pink and merry on sea air. And I'm going to—" she had hesitated, "make up to him a little, if I can."

For Caroline. But why had Caroline killed herself, she wondered now, looking across the room at Charles. Why, and how?

He was absently stroking the dog that lay at his feet. Looking up, he caught her eye and smiled.

"Lonely old place," he said apologetically. "Think you'll be happy here?"

Moira perched on the arm of his chair and ruffled his hair.

The dog gave her an inscrutable glance, got slowly to its feet and walked away. Charles' eyes followed it, but he said nothing.

"Of course I will, silly! Especially if Mrs. Bunty goes with it."

LATER that night she was not so sure. When they went up to bed, the dog followed as a matter of course, and Moira lost her temper.

"Charles, really! You're not going to tell me that animal stays in our room all night!"

Charles looked gently obstinate.

"But she'll get lonely! She always *has* slept in the bedroom, Moira. Even when—"

Moira wanted to cry, "Even when Caro-

line was your wife?" but she couldn't say the words, even in her anger.

Charles persevered.

"You told me you liked dogs, Moira. You said you were used to them."

"So I do, and so I am," said Moira shortly. "But in our family dogs were slightly subordinate to the rest of the family. They didn't dominate the household. And I warn you, Charles Glenn, if that dog stays in here at night I don't. We'll sleep in separate rooms."

Charles gave in. In a rather sulky silence he put Jet outside in the passage, despite beseeching jabs at him with her forepaw. She refused to go voluntarily, and in the end had to be dragged across the room in a sitting position by her collar. Charles' lips tightened as he shut the door on her whines, but he still said nothing.

The whining kept up all night. Sometimes it rose to the pitch almost of a howl, and at others sank to a sort of sobbing; but it never stopped for more than a few minutes at a time. And all night long Moira lay quite stiff and still on her side of the bed, in the unhappy knowledge that Charles, too, was awake and unmoving.

Toward morning she must have fallen asleep. When she awoke the room was empty.

"Mr. Glenn had to go to Pembroke on business," Mrs. Bunty told her, serving her lonely breakfast in the deserted dining-room. Sunlight peered timidly through the narrow windows and lay in thin fingers on the floor. The dog was nowhere to be seen.

"Mrs. Bunty—" Moira stopped abruptly. She amended her question. "Is—is Jet about?"

Again that curious look of pity, and then Mrs. Bunty averted her eyes as she set down the teapot.

"The dog went in the car with Mr. Glenn, madam."

"Too bad." Moira helped herself to marmalade and reflected on the stupidity of last night's jealousies and irritations when examined in the morning sunlight. "I was hoping to make friends."

"If you can, madam," said Mrs. Bunty

gently. "I recall the first Mrs. Glenn feeling the same. But she found, poor thing, some dogs and some people won't be made friends with."

She stood for a moment in the doorway.

"If you'll excuse me, madam, I think—it's not my place to say it—but sometimes I think it's important to know who our enemies are, at the very beginning."

The door closed very softly behind her. Moira sat staring at it for a moment, and very slowly and thoughtfully finished a piece of toast.

Strange. Very strange indeed. Dogs weren't your enemies. They were your friends. You just had to know them.

Nothing in the world more natural than that Charles should have become attached to the dog in the three years that had passed since Caroline's death. In a sense Jet had been his only companion. Charles, with his almost morbid sensitivity, would have shrunk even more than his wont from meeting other people. The dog had become the friend of his solitude. How silly of her to have resented that friendship, even for a moment! And how silly of Mrs. Bunty, to seem to suggest—

With a little impatient movement of her shoulders, Moira went out into the kitchen. Mrs. Bunty was scouring a table, her back turned. Absently Moira fingered a cup.

"Mrs. Bunty, how long has Mr. Glenn had this dog Jet?"

Mrs. Bunty straightened up.

"I couldn't say exactly, madam. I know he'd had her it might be three years before he married the first time. Then it was just two years after that—"

"I know," Moira struck in hurriedly. Only she didn't know; Charles would never speak of it. "You say—you say the first Mrs. Glenn didn't care for dogs?"

The housekeeper shook her head.

"She'd one herself when she came here, a cute little thing. Jet killed it. Oh yes!—Mr. Glenn would never believe it," she added, at Moira's startled look. "But Jim Roberts' boy, from the village—he saw them, up on the moors. The two of them went out for a run that day, but only Jet came back.

All happy and frisky and wagging her tail. They found what was left of the little dog, three miles on the moors, but Mr. Glenn said it couldn't be so. He said the boy was lying."

Mrs. Bunty dipped a reflective brush in the bucket of soapy water.

"It was about then that Mrs. Glenn stopped trying to make friends with Jet."

Moira felt a little sick. On impulse she said, "You don't like Jet, do you, Mrs. Bunty? Are you afraid of her?"

The housekeeper put her brush down. She did not answer for a moment. When she did, it was to nod toward a stout ash stick leaning in a corner by the stove.

"I'm not afraid of her—no. But there are bad dogs as well as bad people. I'd not stop in this house without that stick for company."

Moira's eyes went to the stick for a second, and then she turned away. Gossiping with a servant, she thought shamefacedly. And probably nothing but village talk, all of it. Prejudice and dislike: I'll close my mind to it.

WHEN she had finished unpacking, she spent the day in not unpleasant exploration. There was a savage beauty in that barren spot that somehow explained the hold it had on Charles. She followed the little ravine leading from the house to the sea, and clambered over the rocks tumbled about the water's edge.

Charles found her standing there, gazing out to sea, her hair blown straight back by the strong salt wind. When she heard his voice she turned and held out her hands. Her face was alight.

"Oh, Charles, isn't it splendid? This is where I'm going to spend my time!"

For just that instant she noticed an odd look of strain about Charles' face, and then it was gone. He kissed her and held her to him for a moment.

"Darling, I did make an ass of myself last night! Can you forget it?"

"Darling, there were two of us!" answered Moira promptly. Standing on tip-toe, she kissed him again. "Let's forget it!"

When he released her, she saw that he

was staring at the rocks beyond her. The look of strain was intensified.

"Look!" She pointed to a pool just below them, hemmed in by rocks on the shoreward side, except for a narrow passage. "That's where I'm going bathing tomorrow!"

A muscle twitched uncontrollably in Charles' cheek. Turning, he pulled her roughly along the path away from the sea. The hand gripping her arm was shaking.

"Charles, what—"

He didn't look at her.

"Get away from there!" he said harshly. "Get away, stay away! Get away from those rocks!"

He pulled her faster up the path, so fast that she stumbled.

"Charles, stop it! Tell me why—"

But suddenly she knew why. She stared at him with horror.

"Oh Charles, did—? Is that—?"

Charles' pace slackened a little, but he still wouldn't look at her.

"She couldn't swim." His voice was harsh. "She just—walked into the water. There. There in that pool. Nobody ever knew why. Jet found her when the tide went out. She—Jet stood guard over her. I found Jet there, between the rocks, and Caroline lying on the sand. The tide—the tide went out, and left Caroline lying in the bottom of the pool."

She could see it. She saw Caroline lying quite still in a few clear inches of water, Jet silently watching. Her scalp prickled.

"Charles—"

"Here's Jet," he said, in a different voice. "Mrs. Bunty's let her out. Hi, girl! Good dog!"

Jet bounded down the ravine with her ears back, her whole face one laugh of delight.

"Good dog!" echoed Moira faintly. She held out her hand. "Come then! Come along, Jet!"

With a shock of utter unbelief she saw the dog come toward her, wagging her black stub of a tail with a placating whine.

"You see?" Charles was triumphant. "I told you she'd make friends!"

Mechanically Moira patted the dog's eager head. Jet licked her hand, and then, barking excitedly, leapt up to lick her face. Involuntarily Moira shrank back, cloaking her revulsion with an unsteady laugh.

"But, Charles—Jet, what's come over you?"

Panting with eagerness, the dog continued to leap at her face.

"Oh, Charles, must she?" Moira pushed her away, with a look of apology. "I'm ever so happy that she's making friends—if only she wouldn't lick my face—"

"Down, Jet!" The dog groveled. "Stop it—you're making a nuisance of yourself!"

Jet slunk along at his side. The three walked up the path in silence. Moira realized with a slight sinking of heart that though the dog cast her a reproachful glance now and then, accompanied by a pathetic licking of Charles' hand, Charles himself would not look at her. Somehow, in spite of Jet's new-found friendliness, Moira had managed to offend him. She had been put in the wrong—"by a dog," she thought wonderingly.

"I notice Jet's making up to you," said Mrs. Bunty, a day or two later. "Just when Mr. Glenn's here."

Moira stared at her book without answering. So I didn't imagine it, she thought. It is only when Charles is here that Jet acts so friendly.

More than friendly, really. Affectionate—almost embarrassingly so. So heartbroken at the faintest breath of coldness, so pointedly going to Charles for comfort. As if—

Moira gave herself an impatient little shake and tried again to concentrate on her book.

"She used to beg him to get rid of that beast," said Mrs. Bunty, going ponderously toward her pantry. "Half crying, she was over it—yes, many's the time."

Moira closed her book. Jet was lying on the hearthrug.

"Here, Jet," she called softly. "Come, girl—come over and let me pat you."

The dog raised her head. She stared at Moira with an unwinking yellow gaze, but did not move. In that total lack of response

there was something almost of contempt.

Pressing her lips together, Moira crossed the room. She knelt down.

"Let's make friends, Jet. Shall we go for a walk?"

She put out her hand to stroke the sleek black head, but there was a barely audible growl. Almost in one movement the big dog got to her feet and sprang away, her hackles bristling.

Moira stared at her, her mind a confusion. Jet hadn't changed, then. But why the pretense?

AT A sound still inaudible to Moira, Jet pricked up her ears. Moira scrambled to her feet and heard it too—the low deepening hum of Charles' motor turning down the lane. The dog dashed to the front door and began to whine, pawing at it in her eagerness.

Moira stood beside the closed door and looked down at her. She was filled with sudden anger.

"Oh, no you don't!" she said through clenched teeth. "I'm sick of your always being first!"

Darting to the corridor door, she closed it swiftly behind her and drew a deep breath. When Charles switched off his motor and jumped out, she ran out the side entrance to meet him.

"Hello, darling!" she called gaily. "I thought you'd never get here!"

From the house there came wail after earsplitting wail. Charles' face darkened. He kissed her perfunctorily.

"What on earth's wrong with Jet? Is she locked up?"

Moira tried to laugh.

"No, darling—not really. I just forgot to let her out when we—I heard you coming."

Charles said gently, "You don't understand what a disappointment that was to her." Loosening her arms, he went toward the house, leaving Moira to follow. She dropped her eyes for a moment, to hide the sudden tingle of tears. But what utter nonsense—to be crying because Charles loved his dog!

Blinking the tears away with a little



shamefaced laugh, she hurried after him.

Jet, released, was ecstatic. Like an arrow from a bow she flew out, circled the house twice and then leapt to Charles' face over and over, with an hysterical abandon not to be denied.

When Charles finally pushed her away with a soft, "Down, girl!" she seemed suddenly to recollect Moira, standing rather stiffly to one side. Cringing, wagging her tail, her whole body writhing in exaggerated submission and supplication, she crawled over to Moira and began licking her hand. Without thinking Moira drew it away.

"Why do you do that, Moira?" Charles' voice held displeasure. "Don't you realize she's sensitive? Why must you show so persistently that you dislike her?"

"My God!" said Moira, and stopped herself. Never—and Mrs. Bunty still in the house. "Let's go in," she finished lamely. "You must be starving."

Jet followed them, walking close beside Charles, wagging abjectly and shrinking away whenever she caught Moira's eye, quite evidently in mortal fear.

"As she always does," Moira thought bitterly. "As if when Charles is away I beat her!"

Dinner over, the washing-up concluded, she stood at the window watching Mrs. Bunty pedal away, sternly erect, into the gray dusk.

"Let's go for a walk, Charles," she said, with a touch of wistfulness. "On the rocks. Just—" No, not just the two of them. Never just the two of them. Only at night, and even then that haunting tragic presence just outside their closed door.

Charles looked up from his paper.

"I'm a bit tired, dear. Why don't you go—and take Jet?"

At sound of her name the dog moved closer and laid her head on his knee.

"That's—not what I meant." There was a lump in Moira's throat. She sank down on the hearthrug. "I don't—think she wants to go for a walk. Do you, Jet?"

The dog's tail wagged. With an almost imperceptible glance at Charles, she grovled across the rug toward Moira.

"What an affectionate thing she is!" Charles' voice was fond.

Moira stretched out an unwilling hand. The dog cringed and drew back with a faint whimper, her body wagging apologetically as she shrank toward Charles. He put down his paper.

"Why on earth does she do that, Moira? She tries so hard to win your love—over and over I've seen her. But what have you done to frighten her?"

Moira sprang to her feet. She was shaking from head to foot.

"Charles Glenn, do you realize what you're implying? Are you really out of your mind?"

"I realize exactly what I'm implying," said Charles deliberately. "That your harshness and unkindness have hurt Jet's feelings so badly that she's afraid of you. A child could see that."

"I've never been unkind to an animal in my life!" Moira's voice rose. "You've put me in an impossible position ever since I came here—you and that dog between you! I've tried to be understanding, I've tried to—"

"Understanding!" His face was flushed with anger. "You don't know the meaning of the word! You're hard as nails where this poor dumb beast is concerned, and you know it. Jet's loving and sensitive—you've cut her to the heart. Don't you think a dog has feelings?"

"Don't you think a woman has feelings?"

Moira suddenly found herself screaming.

"Jet—Jet—Jet! Damn you, why did you get married at all? You don't need a wife—you've got Jet!"

She slammed the door behind her and ran up the stairs, weeping.

Charles slept in the guest room that night. He was gone when she came down, listless and swollen-eyed, to breakfast. Jet lay in the corner, her black body relaxed in easy grace. At Moira's entrance she raised her head but did not move.

Moira crossed the room and stared down at her. The dog's yellow eyes met hers without wavering.

"I hate you!" she said softly, bending

closer. "You understand that, don't you? I hate you!"

Not a muscle of Jet's face moved. Steadily she gazed at Moira.

In the end it was Moira who moved away, feeling shaken and slightly sick. She leaned against the open casement, staring at the heat-heavy garden without seeing it.

I must be losing my mind, she thought drearily. Talking to a dog like that—a dog!

For appearance's sake she attempted to eat the breakfast that Mrs. Bunty put before her, but it was no use. Her eyes kept straying to Jet in her corner. Always the dog's eyes were on her—watchful, steady, a depth of still dislike cloaked beneath that impassivity.

Abruptly Moira rose from the table and walked upstairs. Padding footsteps followed. Sitting down at the dressing table, she could see in the glass Jet stretched out in the doorway, watching her.

"Get out!" she screamed suddenly. "Get out, get out!"

Springing to the door, she pushed it with all her strength against Jet's weight, and when she had closed it leaned against it, panting.

I'm losing my mind, she thought again. This isn't me—I've changed, I've changed! Something ghastly is happening to me, and I don't know what it is!

The day was a still and breathless one, a weight of motionless heat oppressing the air. From her window she saw the sea, heavy and oily at the foot of the cliff. Not a bird was in the sky.

A dog, she thought wonderingly. A dog is breaking up my marriage. No, that's impossible! That's absolute nonsense! It's I, Moira Burton, I've had kittens and cats and dogs all my life, and a darling old pony named Whiffle!

She walked the floor restlessly, without realizing that she did it. I'll go for a swim—no, Charles didn't want her to go swimming, because of Caroline. Perhaps she could read. Perhaps—

If only Jet would die.

The day grew steadily hotter, till it was effort almost to breathe. In the after-

noon Charles put through a trunk call from London.

"Darling, I'll be a bit late. Look here, I'm frightfully sorry about last night. Did you sleep?"

Sunshine flooded Moira. She drew a deep breath.

"Oh, Charles! Oh, darling, I was so horrid!"

"I was horrider," he said apologetically. "I've got a bit unreasonable, I think—being alone so much. You know, I think perhaps we should stay in town. What do you think?"

"Oh, darling!" said Moira in a daze. "Just heavenly!"

"Better all around, I mean. You'd have company—and I imagine we could manage about Jet. Take her for walks and so on. Don't you?"

Jet! When Moira replaced the receiver a minute later, she felt curiously numb. Jet. Always Jet. Wherever they went, always Jet to be a third.

There was a slight movement behind her.

She turned and looked at the dog, her eyes narrowing.

"Oh, no!" she whispered. "You won't be there! He'll never know what carried you off—but believe me, my dear dumb friend, you won't be there!"

She felt strangely light and elated as the afternoon wore on.

"I'll have an early dinner, Mrs. Bunty," she said gaily. "I'm feeling quite ravenous. And then you can go, since Mr. Glenn won't be home until late."

When dinner was cleared away she still felt restless and excited, almost feverish. She was filled with the continuing intoxication of a decision taken which cannot yet be confirmed by action.

As she stood smiling by the drawing-room window, looking out with bright unseeing eyes, Mrs. Bunty came in to bid her good-night, her sensible hat set squarely atop her smooth head. She hesitated a moment in the doorway, regarding Moira with an odd concern.

"I'm not just easy leaving you here alone, madam. If you'd like me to stay—"

Moira laughed. She felt gay and triumphant.

"Not a bit of it, Mrs. Bunty! Run along home to your family! I'm off for a walk along the cliff."

Mrs. Bunty took one step toward her. Her eyes held Moira's.

"Madam—don't take that dog with you! Whatever you do, promise me you'll not take that dog with you—or here I stay!"

Moira wanted to laugh. Mrs. Bunty was so terribly in earnest.

"All right, then—I promise. I'll lock the door behind me."

But when Mrs. Bunty had gone, her mood was a little deflated. The house was so very quiet. From the window she could see the lurid sunset. The water shone crimson as blood among the rocks.

I will go for a swim, she thought suddenly. Charles is an old granny, but he needn't know. After all, I can swim.

A few minutes later she was slipping down the rocky path in her swim suit, fastening her rubber cap. From the house behind her came a sharp, angry barking, and she laughed aloud. Silence followed, and then as she was almost down to the pool there was again the familiar sound of padding footsteps behind her.

"Oh, bother!" Moira said, under her breath. "Jet's jumped through the window!"

For a moment she stood undecided, while on sky and water the crimson stillness deepened. Should she go back to the house and lock Jet more securely? She seemed almost to hear the housekeeper's warning voice again, with that note of curious urgency.

Then she shrugged and laughed, turning once more to the sea, as Jet came down the rocks behind her. It was really rather funny. She looked back at the dog with amusement.

"I'm sure you're waiting, dear, for me to commit suicide too. What a hope! I can swim, you know!"

Silent, indifferent, the dog followed.

When Moira had squeezed through the twin rocks that held the entrance to the cove, Jet sat down between them, her body blocking the passage. The overcast sky, fiercely lit by an angry sun, was red.

MOIRA slid into the water, gasping at the coldness of it. The surf was rougher and stronger than she had expected, but she found it exhilarating and rolled over in the water, gasping with delight. The little pool was quite deep, the tide still coming in fast.

There in the narrow confines of the rocks the waves seemed to break with intensified force.

"I should have expected that," she thought, clinging for a moment to a rock while she got her breath. The red of the sky was fading, but the water was still like blood. "A fine idiot I'll look if a wave bangs me against a rock and bashes my silly head in!"

In a lull between waves, she loosed her hold on the rock and began swimming toward the passage. Jet still sat there impassively, silhouetted against the sky.

Moira cast an uneasy glance over her shoulder. That big wave was rushing in fast—best grab on to something—no, there was nothing to grasp—faster, faster! She could feel the swell of it beneath her, lifting her up like a feather—and then cried out in pain and fright as the wave hurled her against the sheer rock wall of the inner cove.

For a moment she lost consciousness. When she came to, choking and spluttering, she was clinging desperately to a tiny spar of rock near the water's edge. Her side was numb; there was a sickening pain in her head. The pool had faded to gray now, but around her the water was red. Dizzily, she tried to shake the water from her eyes. It was blood.

The passage. She must get to the passage, drag herself somehow over the rocks and home. Bracing herself with one hand against the sheer rock, she made a weak essay to swim with the other. Her arm hung limp and lifeless beside her.

For one instant, in a lull between waves, she thought dizzily, she heard someone calling.

"Charles!" she screamed, but her voice was drowned in the roar of the incoming surf.

With her one hand she clawed at the rock wall, feebly pushed against it with one

foot. Inch by painful inch, gasping and sobbing, she crawled toward the break in the rocks where Jet still sat immobile, watching her. It couldn't have been Charles, she thought dully. Jet's still here. Something in the dog's implacable pose struck her then with a cold thrill of fear. Against the red afterglow, between black enormous rocks, she seemed to loom huge against the sky.

Her last reserve of strength carried Moira to the opening in the rocks, at the very second that she knew she could have kept up no longer. Crying weakly with relief, she started to pull herself out of the water.

With a savage snarl, the big dog leaped suddenly to its feet, every hair bristling. Moira made one last attempt to clutch at the ledge, and the dog sprang. Recoiling, she lost her grasp.

"Charles!" she screamed again, and knew it was no use. There was only Jet, and Jet had won again. Once more Jet would have Charles to herself.

In the sharp clarity of imminent death it all became plain to her: As she felt herself sinking, she looked again, with a detached and wondering vision, at that black featureless outline between the rocks. And looked again in anguished intensity, and clawed again at the rock. For another figure was suddenly silhouetted against the fading light—a sturdy figure, with a stout club which rose and fell as the dog whirled around just a second too late.

Mrs. Bunty dropped to her knees at the water's edge.

"Woman dear, catch hold my hand!" she gasped, forgetting decorum for the first time in her life. "God, I thought I was too late! I thought that black beast had done for you!"

For a second Moira hung helpless and limp from Mrs. Bunty's firm hold on her arms.

"I can't!" she whispered. "I can't make it!"

"You've got to!" Mrs. Bunty's voice was urgent. "Now!"

She pulled with a will, and slowly, with pain that seemed breaking her body in two, Moira crawled out of the water, averting

her eyes from the thing that had been Jet, and lay utterly spent on the wet rock. Mrs. Bunty was breathing hard from her exertion, and for a moment neither of them spoke.

"Something seemed to turn me back," said Mrs. Bunty. "A—just a kind of feeling, when I was almost half-way home. I just knew, like as if a voice had spoke, I shouldn't have left you alone with that dog."

A sudden noise sounded above the fret of the waves, the hoot of an auto horn.

"Charles!" Moira gasped. She raised herself painfully from the rock. "Oh, Mrs. Bunty, what will we do?" Their eyes met.

"He'll never believe it!" Moira whispered. "Quick, Mrs. Bunty—push Jet into the pool! We've got to tell him—what *can* we tell him?"

There was a splash, as Jet's body slid gently into the water. Mrs. Bunty knelt and washed the blood from the spot by the water's edge. Washing the club, she shoved it in a little recess in the rocks and pulled the scanty bushes across the opening.

"I found you in the pool together, madam," she said rapidly. "Jet was trying to save you—trying to save you, do you hear? The master would never believe what happened, not on our Bible oaths. He's deep, he'd cover it up—but all his life he'd hold it against you. Jet jumped in to save you, and a wave threw her against a rock and killed her, the same wave that nigh killed you."

"She died a heroine," murmured Moira, her eyes brightening. "Yes, he'll believe *that!*" Her mouth twisted with the irony of it. "I'll be hearing about it for the rest of my life!"

"I forgot something, we'll say, and come back and was a little worried to find you gone. Pulled you out just in time, and that's God's truth. When he sees the look of you, all covered with blood, and knows how close he was to losing you—trust me, madam, it's not Jet he'll be thinking of!"

"Moira!" called Charles, from the top of the path. "Moira darling, where are you? Where's Jet?"

Wildly, sobbingly, rocking back and forth, Moira began to laugh.