

The Caller In The Night

By Burton Kline

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BY the side of a road which wanders in company of a stream across a region of Pennsylvania farmland that is called "Paradise" because of its beauty, you may still mark the ruins of a small brick cabin in the depths of a grove. In summertime ivy drapes its jagged fragments and the pile might be lost to notice but that at dusk the trembling leaves of the vine have a way of whispering to the nerves of your horse and setting them too in a tremble. And the people in the village beyond have a belief that three troubled human beings lie buried under those ruins, and that at night, or in a storm, they sometimes cry aloud in their unrest.

The village is Bustlebury, and its people have a legend that on a memorable night there was once disclosed to a former inhabitant the secret of that ivied sepulchre.

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All the afternoon the two young women had chattered in the parlor, cooled by the shade of the portico, and lost to the heat of the day, to the few sounds of the village, to the passing hours themselves. Then of a sudden Mrs. Pollard was recalled to herself at the necessity of closing her front windows against a gust of wind that blew the curtains, like flapping flags, into the room.

"Sallie, we're going to get it again," she said, pausing for a glance at the horizon before she lowered the sash.

"Get what?" Her visitor walked to the other front window and stooped to peer out.

Early evening clouds were drawing a black cap over the fair face of the land.

"I think we're going to have some more of Old Screamer Moll this evening. I knew we should, after this hot--"

"There! Margie, that was the expression I've been trying to remember all afternoon. You used it this morning. Where did you get such a poetic nickname for a thunder--O-oh!"

For a second, noon had returned to the two women. From their feet two long streaks of black shadow darted back into the room, and vanished. Overhead an octopus of lightning snatched the whole heavens in its grasp, shook them, and disappeared.

The two women screamed, and threw themselves on the sofa. Yet in a minute it was clear that the world still rolled on, and each looked at the other and laughed at her fright--till the prospect of an evening of storm sobered them both.

"Mercy!" Mrs. Pollard breathed in discouragement. "We're in for another night of it. We've had this sort of thing for a week. And tonight of all nights, when I wanted you to see this wonderful country under the moon!"

Mrs. Pollard, followed by her guest, Mrs. Reeves, ventured to the window timidly again, to challenge what part of the sky they could see from under the great portico outside, and learn its portent for the night.

An evil visage it wore--a swift change from a noon-day of beaming calm. Now it was curtained completely with blue-black cloud, which sent out mutterings, and then long brooding silences more ominous still in their very concealment of the night's intentions.

There was no defence against it but to draw down the blinds and shut out this angry gloom in the glow of the lamps within. And, with a half hour of such glow to cozen them, the two women were soon merry again over their reminiscences, Mrs. Pollard at her embroidery, Mrs. Reeves at the piano, strumming something from Chopin in the intervals of their chatter.

"The girl" fetched them their tea. "Five already!" Mrs. Pollard verified the punctuality of her servant with a glance at the clock. "Then John will be away for another night. I do hope he won't try to get back this time. Night before last he left his assistant with a case, and raced his horse ten miles in the dead of the night to get home," Mrs. Pollard proudly reported, "for fear I'd be afraid in the storm."

"And married four years!" Mrs. Reeves smilingly shook her head in indulgence of such long-lived romance.

In the midst of their cakes and tea the bell announced an impatient hand at the door.

"Well, 'speak of angels!'" Mrs. Pollard quoted, and flew to greet her husband. But she opened the door upon smiling old Mr. Barber, instead, from the precincts across the village street.

Mr. Barber seemed to be embarrassed. "I--I rather thought you mought be wanting something," he said in words. By intention he was making apology for the night. "I saw the doctor drive away, but I haven't seen him come back. So I--I thought I'd just run over and see--see if there wasn't something you wanted." He laughed uneasily.

Mr. Barber's transparent diplomacy having been rewarded with tea, they all came at once to direct speech. "It ain't going to amount to much," Mr. Barber insisted. "Better come out, you ladies, and have a look around. It may rain a bit, but you'll feel easier if you come and get acquainted with things, so to say." And gathering their resolution the two women followed him out on the portico.

They shuddered at what they saw.

Night was at hand, two hours before its time. Nothing stirred, not a vocal chord of hungry, puzzled, frightened chicken or cow. The whole region seemed to have caught its breath, to be smothered under a pall of stillness, unbroken except for some occasional distant earthquake of thunder from the inverted Switzerland of cloud that hung pendant from the sky.

Mr. Barber's emotions finally ordered themselves into speech as he watched. "Ain't it grand!" he said.

The two women made no reply. They sat on the steps to the portico, their arms entwined. The scene beat their more sophisticated intelligences back into silence. Some minutes they all sat there together, and then again Mr. Barber broke the spell.

"It do look fearful, like. But you needn't be afraid. It's better to be friends with it, you might say. And then go to bed and fergit it."

They thanked him for his goodness, bade him good-by, and he clinked down the flags of the walk and started across the street.

He had got midway across when they all heard a startling sound, an unearthly cry.

It came out of the distance, and struck the stillness like a blow.

"What is it? What is it, Margie?" Mrs. Reeves whispered excitedly.

Faint and quavering at its beginning, the cry grew louder and more shrill, and then died away, as the breath that made it ebbed and was spent. It seemed as if this unusual night had found at last a voice suited to its mood. Twice the cry was given, and then all was still as before.

At its first notes the muscles in Mrs. Pollard's arm had tightened. But Mr. Barber had hastened back at once with reassurance.

"I guess Mrs. Pollard knows what that is," he called to them from the gate. "It's only our old friend Moll, that lives down there in the notch. She gets lonesome, every thunderstorm, and let's it off like that. It's only her rheumatiz, I reckon. We wouldn't feel easy ourselves without them few kind words from old Moll!"

The two women applauded as they could his effort toward humor. Then, "Come on, Sallie, quick!" Mrs. Pollard cried to her guest, and the two women bolted up the steps of the portico and flew like girls through the door, which they quickly locked between themselves and the disquieting night.

Once safe within, relief from their nerves came at the simple effort of laughter, and an hour later, when it was clear that the stars still held to their courses, the two ladies were at their ease again, beneath the lamp on the table, with speech and conversation to provide an escape from thought. The night seemed to cool its high temper as the hours wore on, and gradually the storm allowed itself to be forgotten.

Together, at bed time, the two made their tour of the house, locking the windows and doors, and visiting the pantry on the way for an apple. Outside all was truly calm and still, as, with mock and exaggerated caution, they peered through one last open window. A periodic, lazy flash from the far distance was all that the sky could

muster of its earlier wrath. And they tripped upstairs and to bed, with that hilarity which always attends the feminine pursuit of repose.

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But in the night they were awakened.

Not for nothing, after all, had the skies marshalled that afternoon array of their forces. Now they were as terribly vociferous as they had been terrifyingly still before. Leaves, that had drooped melancholy and motionless in the afternoon, were whipped from their branches at the snatch of the wind. The rain came down in a solid cataract. The thunder was a steady bombardment, and the frolic powers above, that had toyed and practised with soundless flashes in the afternoon, had grown wanton at their sport, and hurled their electric shots at earth in appallingly accurate marksmanship. Between the flashes from the sky, the steady glare of a burning barn here and there reddened the blackness. The village dead, under the pelted sod, must have shuddered at the din. Even the moments of lull were saturate with terrors. In them rose audible the roar of waters, the clatter of frightened animals, the rattle of gates, the shouts of voices, the click of heels on the flags of the streets, as the villagers hurried to the succor of neighbors fighting fires out on the hills. For long afterward the tempest of that night was remembered. For hours while it lasted, trees were toppled over, and houses rocked to the blast.

And for as long as it would, the rain beat in through an open window and wetted the two women where they lay in their bed, afraid to stir, even to help themselves, gripped in a paralysis of terror.

Their nerves were not the more disposed to peace, either, by another token of the storm. All through the night, since their waking, in moments of stillness sufficient for it to be heard, they had caught that cry of the late afternoon. Doggedly it asserted itself against the uproar. It insisted upon being heard. It too wished to shriek relievingly, like

the inanimate night, and publish its sickness abroad. They heard it far off, at first. But it moved, and came nearer. Once the two women quaked when it came to them, shrill and clear, from a point close at hand. But they bore its invasion along with the wind and the rain, and lay shameless and numb in the rude arms of the night.

They lay so till deliverance from the hideous spell came at last, in a vigorous pounding at the front door.

"It's John!" Mrs. Pollard cried in her joy. "And through such a storm!"

She slipped from the bed, threw a damp blanket about her, and groped her way out of the room and down the stair, her guest stumbling after. They scarcely could fly fast enough down the dark steps. At the bottom Mrs. Pollard turned brighter the dimly burning entry lamp, shot back the bolt with fingers barely able to grasp it in their eagerness, and threw open the door.

"John!" she cried.

But there moved into the house the tall and thin but heavily framed figure of an old woman, who peered about in confusion.

In a flash of recognition Mrs. Pollard hurled herself against the intruder to thrust her out.

"No!" the woman said. "No, you will not, on such a night!" And the apparition herself, looking with feverish curiosity at her unwilling hostesses, slowly closed the door and leaned against it.

Mrs. Pollard and her friend turned to fly, in a mad instinct to be anywhere behind a locked door. Yet before the instinct could reach their muscles, the unbidden visitor stopped them again.

"No!" she said. "I am dying. Help me!"

The two women turned, as if hypnotically obedient to her command. Their tongues lay thick and dead in their mouths. They fell into each other's arms, and their caller stood looking them over, with the same fevered curiosity. Then she turned her deliberate scrutiny to the house itself.

In a moment she almost reassured them with a first token of being human and feminine. On the table by the stairs lay a book, and she went and picked it up. "Fine!" she mused. Then her eye travelled over the pictures on the walls. "Fine!" she said. "So this is the inside of a fine house!" But suddenly, as her peering gaze returned to the two women, she was recalled to herself. "But you wanted to put me out-- on a night like this! Hear it!"

For a moment she looked at them in frank hatred. And on an impulse she revenged herself upon them by sounding, in their very ears, the shrill cry they had heard in the afternoon, and through the night, that had mystified the villagers for years from the grove. The house rang with it, and with the hard peal of laughter that finished it.

All three of them stood there, for an instant, viewing each other. But at the end of it the weakest of them was the partly sibylline, partly mountebank intruder. She swayed back against the wall. Her head rolled limply to one side, and she moaned, "O God, how tired I am to-night!"

Frightened as they still were, their runaway hearts beating a tattoo that was almost audible, the two other women made a move to support her. But she waved them back with a suddenly returning air of command. "No!" she said. "You wanted to put me out!"

The creature wore some sort of thin skirt whose color had vanished in the blue-black of its wetness. Over her head and shoulders was thrown a ragged piece of shawl. From under it dangled strands of grizzled

gray hair. Her dark eyes were hidden in the shadows of her impromptu hood. The hollows of her cheeks looked deeper in its shadows.

She loosed the shawl from her head, and it dropped to the floor, disclosing a face like one of the Fates. She folded her arms, and there was a rude majesty in the massive figure and its bearing as she tried to command herself and speak.

"I come here--in this storm. Hear it! Hear that! I want shelter. I want comfort. And what do you say to me!... Well, then I take comfort from you. You thought I was your husband. You called his name. Well, I saw him this afternoon. He drove out. I called to him from the roadside. 'Let me tell your fortune! Only fifty cent!' But he whipped up his horse and drove away. You are all alike. But I see him now--in Woodman's Narrows. It rains there, same as here. Thunder and lightning, same as here. Trees fall. The wind blows. The wind blows!"

The woman had tilted her head and fixed her eyes, shining and eager, as if on some invisible scene, and she half intoned her words as if in a trance.

"I see your husband now. His wagon is smashed by a tree. The horse is dead. Your husband lies very still. He does not move. There!"--she turned to them alert again to their presence--"there is the husband that you want. If you don't believe me, all I say is, wait! He is there. You will see!"

She ended in a peal of laughter, which itself ended in a weary moan. "Oh, why can't you help me!" She came toward them, her arms outstretched. "*Don't* be afraid of me. I want a woman to know me--to comfort me. I die to-night. It's calling me, outside. Don't you hear?..."

"Listen to me, you women!" she went on, and tried to smile, to gain their favor. "I lied to you, to get even with you. You want your

husband. Well, I lied. He isn't dead. For all you tried to shut me out. Do you never pity? Do you never help? O-oh--"

Her hand traveled over her brow, and her eyes wandered.

"No one knows what I need now! I got to tell it, I got to tell it! Hear that?" There had been a louder and nearer crash outside. "That's my warning. That says I got to tell it, before it's too late. No storm like this for forty years--not since one night forty years ago. My God, that night!" Another heavy rumble interrupted her. "Yes, yes!" she turned and called. "I'll tell it! I promise!"

She came toward her audience and said pleadingly, "Listen--even if it frightens you. You've got to listen. That night, forty years ago"--she peered about her cautiously--"I think--I think I hurt two people--hurt them very bad. And ever since that night--"

The two women had once again tried to fly away, but again she halted them. "Listen! You have no right to run away. You got to comfort me! You hear? Please, please, don't go."

She smiled, and so seemed less ugly. What could her two auditors do but cling to each other and hear her through, dumb and helpless beneath her spell?

"Only wait. I'll tell you quickly. Oh, I was not always like this. Once I could talk--elegant too. I've almost forgotten now. But I never looked like this then. I was not always ugly--no teeth--gray hair. Once I was beautiful too. You laugh? But yes! Ah, I was young, and tall, and had long black hair. I was Mollie, then. Mollie Morgan. That's the first time I've said my name for years. But that's who I was. Ask Bruce--he knows."

She had fallen back against the wall again, her eyes roaming as she remembered. Here she laughed. "But Bruce is dead these many years.

He was my dog." A long pause. "We played together. Among the flowers--in the pretty cottage--under the vines. Not far from here. But all gone now, all gone. Even the woods are gone--the woods where Bruce and I hunted berries. And my mother!"

Again the restless hands sought the face and covered it.

"My mother! Almost as young as I. And how *she* could talk! A fine lady. As fine as you. And oh, we had good times together. Nearly always. Sometimes mother got angry--in a rage. She'd strike me, and say I was an idiot like my father. The next minute she'd hug me, and cry, and beg me to forgive her. It all comes back to me. Those were the days when she'd bake a cake for supper--the days when she cried, and put on a black dress. But mostly she wore the fine dresses--all bright, and soft, and full of flowers. Oh, how she would dance about in those, sometimes. And always laughed when I stared at her. And say I was Ned's girl to my finger-tips. I never understood what she meant--then."

The shrill speaker of a moment before had softened suddenly. The creature of the woods sniffed eagerly this atmosphere of the house, and faint vestiges of a former personage returned to her, summoned along with the scene she had set herself to recall.

"But oh, how good she was to me! And read to me. And taught me to read. And careful of me? Ha! Never let me go alone to the village. Said I was too good for such a place. Some day we would go back to the world--whatever she meant by that. Said people there would clap the hands when they saw me--more than they had clapped the hands for her. Once she saw a young man walk along the road with me. Oh, how she beat my head when I came home! Nearly killed me, she was so angry. Said I mustn't waste myself on such trash. My mother--I never understood her then.

"She used to tell me stories--about New York, and Phil'delph. Many big cities. There they applaud, and clap the hands, when my mother was a queen, or a beggar girl, in the theatre, and make love and kill and fight. Have grand supper in hotel afterward. And I'd ask my mother how soon I too may be a queen. And she'd give me to learn the words they say, and I'd say them. Then she'd clap me on the head again and tell me, 'Oh, you're Ned's girl. You're a blockhead, just like your father!' And I'd say, 'Where is my father? Why does he never come?' And after that my mother would always sit quiet, and never answer when I talked.

"And then she'd be kind again, and make me proud, and tell me I'm a very fine lady, and have fine blood. And she'd talk about the day when we'd go back to the world, and she'd buy me pretty things to wear. But I thought it was fine where we were--there in the cottage, I with the flowers, and Bruce. In those days, yes," the woman sighed, and left them to silence for a space,--for silent seemed the wind and rain, on the breaking of her speech.

A rumble from without started her on again.

"Yes, yes! I'm telling! I'll hurry. Then I grow big. Seventeen. My mother call me her little giantess, her handsome darling, her conceited fool, all at the same time. I never understood my mother--then.

"But then, one day, it came!"

The woman pressed her fingers against her eyes, as if to shut out the vision her mind was preparing.

"Everything changed then. Everything was different. No more nights with stories and books. No more about New York and Phil'delph. Never again.

"I was out in the yard one day, on my knees, with the flowers. It was Springtime, and I was digging and fixing. And I heard a horse's hoofs on the road. A runaway, I thought at first. I stood up to look, and--" She faltered, and then choked out, "I stood up to look, and the man came!" And with the words came a crash that rocked the house.

"Hear that!" the woman almost shrieked. "That's him--that's the man. I hear him in every storm!...

"He came," she went, more rapidly. "A tall man--fine--dressed in fine clothes--brown hair--brown eyes! Oh, I often see those brown eyes. I know what they are like. He came riding along the bye-road. When he caught sight of my mother he almost fell from his horse. The horse nearly fell, the man pulled him in so sharp. 'Good God!' the man said. 'Fanny! Is this where you are! Curse you, old girl, is this where you are!' Funny, how I remember his words. And then he came in.

"And he talked to my mother a long time. Then he looked round and said, 'So this is where you've crawled to!' And he petted Bruce. And then he came to me, and looked into my face a long time, and said, 'So this is his girl, eh? Fanny junior, down to the last eyelash! Come here, puss!' he said. And I made a face at him. And he put his hands to his sides and laughed and laughed at me. And he turned to my mother and said, 'Fanny, Fanny, what a queen!' I thought he meant be a queen in the theatre. But he meant something else. He came to me again, and squeezed me and pressed his face against mine. And my mother ran and snatched him away. And I ran behind the house.

"And by-and-by my mother came to find me, and said, 'Oho, my little giantess! So here you are! What are you trembling for!' And she kicked me. 'Take that!' she said.

"And I didn't understand--not then. But I understand now.

"Next day the man came again, and talked to my mother. But I saw him look and look at me. And by-and-by he reached for my hand. And my mother said, 'Stop that! None of that, my little George! One at a time, if you please!' And he laughed and let me go. And they went out and sat on a bench in the yard. And the man stroked my mother's hair. And I watched and listened. They talked a long time till it was night. And I heard George say, 'Well, Fanny, old girl, we did for him, all right, didn't we?' I've always remembered it. And they laughed and they laughed. Then the man said, 'God, how it does scare me, sometimes!' And my mother laughed at him for that. And George said, 'Look what I've had to give up. And you penned up here! But never mind. It will blow over. Then we'll crawl back to the old world, eh, Fanny?'"

All this the woman had rattled off like a child with a recitation, as something learned long ago and long rehearsed against just this last contingency of confession.

"Oh, I remember it!" she said, as if her volubility needed an explanation. "It took me a long time to understand. But one day I understood.

"He came often, then--George did. And I was not afraid of him any more. He was fine, like my mother. Every time I saw him come my stomach would give a jump. And I liked to have him put his face against mine, the way I'd seen him do to mother. And every time he went away I'd watch him from the hilltop till I couldn't see him any more. And at night I couldn't sleep. And George came very often--to see me, he told me, and not my mother.

"And my mother was changed then. She never hit me again, because George said he'd kill her if she did. But she acted very strange when he told her that, and looked and looked at me. And didn't speak to me for days and days. But I didn't mind--I could talk to George. And we'd go for long walks, and he'd tell me more about New York and

Phil'delph--more than my mother could tell. Oh, I loved to hear him talk. And he said such nice things to me--such nice things to me! Bruce--I forgot all about Bruce. Oh, I was happy!... But that was because I knew nothing....

"Yes, I pleased George. But by-and-by he changed too. Then I couldn't say anything that he liked. 'Stupid child!' he called me. I tried, ever so hard, to please him. But it was like walking against a wind, that you can't push aside. You women, you just guess how I felt then! You just guess! You want your husband. It was the same with me. I want George. But he wouldn't listen to me no more."

The woman seemed to sink, to shrivel, under the weight of her recollection. Finding her not a monster but a woman after all, her two hearers were moved to another slight token of sympathy. They were "guessing," as she commanded. But still, with a kind of weary magnanimity, she waved them back, away from the things she had yet to make clear.

"But one day I saw it. One day I saw something. I came home with my berries, and George was there. His breath was funny, and he talked funny, and walked funny. I'd seen people in the village that way. But--my mother was that way, too. She looked funny--had very red cheeks, and talked very fast. Very foolish. And her breath was the same as George's. And she laughed and laughed at me, and made fun of me.

"I said nothing. But I didn't sleep that night. I wondered what would happen. Many days I thought of what was happening. Then I knew. My mother was trying to get George away from me. That was what had happened.

"Another day I came back with my berries, and my mother was not there. Neither was George there. So! She had taken George away. My George. Well! I set out to look. No rest for me till I find them. I knew

pretty well where they might be. I started for George's little brick house down in the hollow. That's where he had taken to living-- hunting and fishing. It was late--the brick house was far away--I was very tired. But I went. And--"

She had been speaking more rapidly. Here she stopped to breathe, to swallow, to collect herself for the final plunge.

"I heard a runaway horse. 'George's horse!' I said. 'George is coming back to me, after all! George is coming back to me! She can't keep him!' And, yes, it was George's horse. But nobody on him. I was so scared I could hardly stand. Something had happened to George. Only then did I know how much I wanted him--when something had happened to him. I almost fell down in the road, but I crawled on. And presently I came to him, to George. He was walking in the road, limping and stumbling and rolling--all muddy--singing to himself. He didn't know me at first. I ran to him--to my George. And he grabbed me, and stumbled, and fell. And he grabbed my ankle. 'Come to me, li'l one!' he said. 'Damn the old hag!' he said. 'It's the girl I want-- Ned's own!' he said. 'Come here to me, Ned's own. I want you!' And he pinched me. He bit my hand. And--and I--all of a sudden I was afraid.

"And I snatched myself loose. 'George!' I screamed. 'No!' I said--I don't know why. I was very scared. I was wild. I kicked away--and ran--ran, ran--away--I don't know where--to the woods. And oh, a long time I heard George laugh at me. 'Just like the very old Ned!' I heard him shout. But I ran, till I fell down tired. And there I sat and thought.

"And all of a sudden I understood. All at once I knew many things. I knew then what my mother had said about Ned sometimes. He was my father. He was dead. Somebody had killed him, I knew--I knew it from what they said. George knew my father, then, too. What did he know? That was it! He--he was the man that killed my father. He was

after my mother then--he had been after her before, and made her breathe funny, made a fool of her. That was why my beautiful mother was so strange to me sometimes. That's why there was no more New York and Phil'delph. George did that--spoiled everything. Now he was back--making a fool of her again--my mother! And wanted to make a fool of me. Oh, then I knew! That man! And I had liked him. His brown hair, his brown eyes! But oh, I understood, I understood.

"I got up from the ground. Everything reeled and fell apart. There was nothing more for me. Everything spoiled. Our pretty cottage--the stories--all gone. Spoiled. So I ran back. Maybe I could bring my mother back. Maybe I could save something. Oh, I was sick. The trees, they bent and rolled the way George walked. The wind bent them double. They held their stomachs, as if they were George, laughing at me. They seemed to holler 'Ned's girl!' at me. I was dizzy, and the wind nearly blew me over. But I had to hurry home.

"I got near. No one there. Not even George. But I had to find my beautiful little mother. All round I ran. The brambles threw me down. I fell over a stump and struck my face. I could feel the blood running down over my cheeks. It was warmer than the rain. No matter, I had to find my mother. My poor little mother.

"Bruce growled at me when I got to the house. He didn't know me. That's how I looked! But there was a light in the house. Yes, my mother was there! But George was there, too. That man! They had bundles all ready to go away. They weren't glad to see me. I got there too soon. George said, 'Damn her soul! Always that girl of Ned's! I'll show her!' And he kicked me.

"George kicked me!...

"But my mother--she didn't laugh when she saw me. She was very scared. She shook George, and said, 'George! Come away, quick! Look at her face! Look at her eyes!' she said.

"Oh, my mother, my little mother. She thought I would hurt her. Even when she'd been such a fool. I was the one that had to take care of her, then. But she wanted to go away--with that man! That made me wild.

"'You, George!' I said, 'You've got to go! You've--you've done too much to us!' I said. 'You go!' And 'Mother!' I said. 'You've got to leave him! He's done too much to us!' I said.

"She only answered, 'George, come, quick!' And she dragged George toward the door. And George laughed at me. Laughed and laughed--till he saw my eyes. He didn't laugh then. Nor my mother. My mother screamed when she saw my eyes. 'Shut up, George!' she screamed. 'She's not Ned's girl now!' And George said, 'No, by God! She's *your* brat now, all right! She's the devil's own!'

"And they ran for the door. I tried to get there first, to catch my little mother. My mother only screamed, as if she were wild. And they got out--out in the dark. 'Mother!' I cried. 'Mother! Come back, come back!' No answer. My mother was gone.

"Oh, that made me feel, somehow, very strong. 'I'll bring you back!' I shouted. 'You, George! I'll send you away. Wait and see!' They never answered. Maybe they never heard. The wind was blowing, like to-night.

"But I knew where I could find them. I knew where to go to find George. And I ran to my loft, for my knife. But, O my God, when I saw poor Mollie in the glass! Teeth gone. I wasn't beautiful any more. And my eyes!--they came out of the glass at me, like two big dogs jumping a fence. I ran from them. I didn't know myself. I ran out of the door, in the night. I went after that man. He had done too much. That storm--the lightning that night! Awful! But no storm kept me back. Rain--hail--but I kept on. Trees fell--but I went on. I called out.

I laughed then, myself. I'll get him! I say, 'Look out for Ned's girl! Look out for Ned's girl!' I say...."

Unconsciously the woman was re-enacting every gesture, repeating every phrase and accent of her journey through the night, that excursion out of the world, from which there had been no return for her. "Look out for Ned's girl!"--the house rang with the cry. But this second journey, of the memory, ended in a moan and a faint.

"I said I would tell it! Help me!" she said.

In some fashion they worked her heavy bulk out of its crazy wrappings and into a bed. John arrived, to help them. Morning peered timidly over the eastern hills, as if fearful of beholding what the night had wrought. In its smiling calm the noise of the storm was already done away. But the storm in the troubled mind raged on.

For days it raged, in fever and delirium. Then they buried the rude minister of justice in the place where she commanded--under the pile of broken stones and bricks among the trees in the hollow. And it is said that the inquisitive villagers who had a part in the simple ceremonies stirred about till they made the discovery of two skeletons under the ruins. And to this day there are persons in Bustlebury with a belief that at night, or in a storm, they sometimes hear a long-drawn cry issuing from that lonely little hollow.