

FOREVER by Mildred Cram

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by
MILDRED CRAM

A LOVE THAT WAS LONGER THAN
LIFE AND STRONGER THAN DEATH



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FOREVER is the story of an imperishable love — of a love that was truly longer than life, stronger than death.

It is difficult to explain what makes it so moving, what gives it an almost hypnotic fascination. But that it has those qualities there can be little doubt. It is mysterious, tender, fragile, yet it holds you until the last gleam of its unearthly light has vanished, until the last whisper of its ghostly voice is lost. And even then it will pervade your mind and heart and you will perhaps feel that you have caught a glimpse of the "something" beyond the earth.

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FOREVER

They met=Colin and Julie=not very long before they were born.

Perhaps we'd better begin again.

You see, Colin's mother, in England, had been married sixteen years and had never had a child. She wanted a son. She dreamed of a son. Prayed for a son. Thought earnestly, deeply, unceasingly about it.

And so, presently, out of the racial and social and spiritual ingredients, Colin began to gather himself for his next appearance in the flesh. This time he was going to be an Englishman. He travelled and studied in the north; he went to sea; he visited the provinces; and, whenever he could, he talked to men who had taken part in the drama . . . Gauls and Romans, Druids and Angles, Saxons and Vikings. Right on up through the great Victorians. And then the men of the World War.

He had a stirring time for about fifteen years. Strangely enough, he couldn't remember who, or where, he had been before this particular period of preparation. The old self had receded so abruptly that he could recall nothing of previous appear-

ances. He was sensitive about questioning others. But the thing bothered him. And so, finally, he asked an old legionary, who hadn't been back in the living world for centuries, but who could remember London when it was a Roman camp.

"You may have died at birth," he told Colin. "Some do. And they've nothing to remember. I wouldn't worry about it if I were you."

But no one would discuss the mystery of birth. They'd speculate. Advance ridiculous theories. Then give it up.

Colin talked to Darwin, whom he met in the Black Forest.

"It's so strange . . . not to *know*, sir. I didn't use to think much about birth. But now I'm certain that I'm going to be born again . . . any day! It's a sort of conviction. A premonition . . . I can't explain it. . . . Well, for one thing, living people don't seem so shadowy. At times I can almost understand what they say. I'm not in the least afraid of them. Rather like them, in fact! And recently I've wondered whether they aren't aware of *me*, too! They shy away when I go among them. . . . What's your idea about it all, sir?"

Darwin smiled and shook his head.

"I haven't been back myself," he said. "I know very little about it. But I imagine it's rather like this: you feel a tug at your elbow. Someone says: *Come now*, and you don't know another thing until you're about two years old! Simple, really. Nothing to be afraid of."

"But I don't understand—"

Darwin interrupted.

"The seed contains the tree. The conception encompasses the masterpiece. The adult is fully realized within the germ. . . . For a while after death we remain as we were. . . . Who knows why, since it is all inscrutable mystery? Then, before rebirth, we begin to change, to assume the adult form of the next experience, to prepare ourselves. . . . There is so much to learn before we return. And each step is higher, more difficult, than the last. . . ."

Colin lay back under the trees, his hands clasped beneath his head, his eyes on the topmost branches of the dark firs.

"I'm not sure I *want* to be born," he said. "I've had such an extraordinary time here. And the

Others, when I *do* happen to see them, don't look any too pleased. . . ."

"There's no choice in the matter," Darwin said. "Some day I shall lose this disguise I now wear, and find myself young again. Then I shall know—as you have known—what I must do. To make ready."

"As nearly as I can explain it," Colin said, "I've been preparing a racial consciousness! Which reminds me—I've promised myself to meet Thackeray over in France. He knows a lot about the English. He and another writer who has just come over are staying together at Chamonix. . . ."

Colin offered his hand to the old man.

"Thank you very much, sir. It's all very stimulating. Only I do wish they'd *explain* things. . . . One hates plunging into the unknown. . . ."

"Good luck," Darwin said, "and a safe return! And soon!"

Colin went on to France, looking for the two writers who knew so much about England. To Chamonix.

It was early in the spring. The valley was lush and green. The fruit trees were in blossom. And

fragile crocus carpeted the meadows. But the great wall of Alps glittered in frozen sheaths of unblemished snow. And the streams were icy, clear and white and deep. Colin came up from Martigny. He followed the road, because he was finding it more and more difficult to make speed. It was as if he were at the mercy of inexplicable forces. He must walk, as living men walk, and not move swiftly, propelled by volition, from one place to another. The difference frightened and depressed him. Until, with practice, he got the rhythm of the thing. Then he rather enjoyed pacing off the miles, head back, shoulders braced, arms swinging.

He found Thackeray sunning himself on the terrace of a small chalet behind the town. But the younger novelist, the modern, had gone down to Venice.

"Poor fellow!" Thackeray said. "Already he has had intimations of rebirth. Yesterday his mother began to think of him. He changed perceptibly before lunch. I believe he is destined to be a peasant—a coarse, rude creature—possibly a Russian! It's very difficult for him, really. . . . You see, he

remembers, so exactly, how it was! He told me he wanted a rest from his own very complicated and unhappy intelligence. He fears now that he will be called upon to save Russia—another Stalin. Just as he finds himself at peace, here. . . .”

“He may not be born for years,” Colin said.

“I’m afraid that’s too much to hope. These Russian women . . . ! He has a year at most.”

Thackeray was enjoying Chamonix . . . the deserted, remote chalet, the tangled garden.

“I sketch a little. Dream a great deal. Later, perhaps, I shall go to America—to California. I have always wanted to see their fields of golden poppies. . . . I would have gone sooner, only I am so happy here. . . .”

He hesitated and smiled.

“Curious! I still use words that don’t at all mean . . . I have no sense of time—when I came—or how. . . . I found my old dogs and cats over here. They follow me about. . . . Occasionally, a friend drops in. . . . A very pleasant existence. . . .”

“Of course.”

“Only I’m rather troubled. . . . I forget so

much that happened . . . the smaller details are rubbing out—like a smudged drawing. I can recall only the essential outlines.”

He smiled at Colin over his spectacles.

“How long will it be, I wonder, before I no longer care whether stories are written, or whether the truth is told, or whether justice is done.”

Late in the afternoon Colin left the novelist and went, alone, out of the village and a little way along the road toward Finhaut. The valley was in shadow. The white peaks blazed crimson. They filled the sky.

Colin wanted to think quietly. Much that Thackeray and Darwin had said was disturbing. Would he—Colin—perhaps belong to a Lost Generation? Accomplish nothing?

When? When?

He crossed the river, stepping from stone to stone. The glacial water bound his ankles as with a rim of frozen steel. On the other side a path led steeply up between fences to a wayside shrine. A cross. A figure. A crown of thorns. Beyond, over a sort of rustic stile, there was a field—a three-cornered field, knee-deep with wild flowers. Colin

waded in. The fragile blossoms brushed against him. The air was sweet with their honey. He knelt, pressed the grasses aside with both hands, and then lay down, his eyes on the smouldering cap of Mont Blanc. Immense. Lofty. Inspiring. Yet terrible in its beauty. Its weight. Its inconceivable aspiration. . . . The first light breeze of evening ruffled the field. Far up the rocky slopes, beyond the larch groves, a tinkle of small bells announced the presence of a herd of goats.

Then Colin saw Julie.

She came toward him through the flowers, stopping every now and then to pluck one to add to the bouquet she was carrying.

Colin knew that she wasn't alive. The living were never as clear as this. Like himself, she was just about to be born. She, too, walked. Her feet touched the earth. There was something experimental, a little uncertain, hesitant, about the way she pressed through the flowers. As if for the first time she sensed her own weight and strength.

Colin held his breath.

She was the loveliest girl he'd ever seen. Small. Slender. Compact and round. With tawny hair

and clean, fair skin and a curving, provocative mouth.

He sat up, afraid of startling her. And she stood still, immobile from head to foot, like a young animal surprised by a crackling of twigs. Head up, eyes dilated. In a beautiful, fixed suspension. . . . He never again forgot this loveliness. Never quite forgot. . . .

"Hello," he said. "I'm sorry. I didn't mean to frighten you."

She relaxed, sighed deeply, and laughed.

"Is this your field, too?" she asked.

"Is it yours?"

"I've been coming here every day for a week," she said. "This is the first time anyone else . . ."

"I'll go, of course. I didn't know."

She came quickly forward, to kneel beside him in the grass.

"Please don't. You have no idea how lonely I am. Lately . . . I'm getting a little . . . dim. No one will speak to me. And the others can't see me. I've been up on the mountain talking to the goats! They don't seem to mind."

"I'll stay, of course," Colin said.

*And so they met—Colin and Julie
Not so very long before they were
born.*

Julie's mother, overseas in America, had just been married. She wanted a daughter. A pretty, big-eyed baby. Julie's mother was very correct and old-fashioned. Her family had been impeccable, fastidious and proud for generations. And so poor Julie, with her sense of humour and her swooping, wingèd imagination, was preparing to be a lady. . . .

"All the resorts. All the watering-places. . . . I've met hundreds of fusty relatives. They tell me what I must do to be a true Fawcett. . . ."

She clapped her palm over her mouth.

"I've told you! And I'm not supposed to know who I'm going to be!"

"Who gave it away?"

"My great-great-grandfather. I met him at Baden-Baden, a month ago. He recognized me at once. Said I couldn't be anyone but Julie Fawcett."

She met Colin's eyes.

"What's *your* name?"

"I don't know. I believe I'm going to England. I hope so. I'd hate to turn up in Norway or Armenia with *my* education! I've been studying English history for fifteen years!"

Julie shook her head. She sat beside him, the flowers in her lap. And the wind lifted her hair, back from her forehead. Colin's heart did something queer. As if a small, warm hand squeezed and squeezed. . . . He felt the blood surge into his face. His throat was hot. He had a bewildering impulse to reach forward and put his arms around her. To put his face against her. Deep. A longing so intense, so consuming, that it got into his eyes and betrayed him. She caught her breath. Then suddenly, with the most beautiful gesture in the world, she leaned forward, as if she pitied his loneliness and his longing, and put her lips against his. Cool lips. Firm. Sweet. He kissed her. Again and again. Until her lips were as warm as her hands, and her eyes closed, and he felt her fingers caressing his hair. . . .

After a while he whispered: "This was meant to be. I knew . . . when I saw you coming toward me."

"But only for a little while!"

"Forever."

They were together for wonderful days. Spring deepened in the valley. The sun loosened the ice, and great cascades of glacial water leaped and danced and tumbled over the granite cliffs. New armies of crocus flower and asphodel marched up to meet the snow. The needle-point Dents des Aiguilles thrust blanched fingers into a cloudless sky. And at night fields of snow, blue-white, glittering, swung in mid-heaven, canopies of frozen crystal. . . . Dawn was a madness of birds. Noon was drowsy with the hum of flies. The tinkle of bells. The song of running water. . . .

Julie and Colin, hand in hand, explored the valley. Or climbed above tree-level to the glaciers. Or wandered in the forests of larch beyond Salvan. But mostly they stayed in their field, talking and laughing and knowing their love for each other. Because now they were almost alone. In a curious half-world, a nebulous, transient pause . . . Julie's mother had conceived. And Colin's mother waited in England for the son of whom she had dreamed for so many years.

Julie tried to be happy. But she was desperately afraid to be left alone.

"If you should go first. . . . And then what if I could never find you again? Or you me?"

"We'll find each other. Somewhere. Somehow. You'll be born knowing about me. You'll grow up thinking about me. Wanting me. And some day, we'll come back here—both of us—to this very field. We'll find each other again. And we'll be lovers in life as we've been lovers here. . . . We'll talk, and laugh together, and listen to the beating of each other's hearts. . . . You're not afraid of being born, are you, Julie?"

"No. I'm not afraid. But what *is* birth? I wish we *knew!* Why don't they tell us what it all means? *Why can't we understand?*"

"Some day we shall."

Julie leaned against him, her head in the curve of his throat. She took his hands and drew his arms around her waist and held them there, fast. He put his lips in the fragrant depths of her hair.

Suddenly he lifted his head.

"Did you hear someone calling?"

"No."

"A woman? A woman's voice?"

"No."

His arms tightened around Julie.

"*There it is again!*"

"But I don't hear anyone. Surely you imagine . . ."

"*No. Listen!*"

He tried to tear his arms away, but Julie clung to him.

"Someone's calling me! I heard someone calling me, I tell you! Let me go! *I've got to go!*"

Julie tried to hold him. But he was too strong for her. He stumbled to his feet, deathly pale. There was a look of fear and suffering in his eyes.

Julie flung herself against him. She tried to keep him back.

"Don't go. Don't leave me here alone. Wait for me. Please. I'm so frightened . . ."

For an instant he returned to her. He caught her hands, held them fast.

"Remember. Here. In twenty-seven years. . . . Good-bye, my sweet. Until then!"

She felt his hands slip away. He was gone so suddenly, so completely, that she fell forward, into

the grass. And lay there, her head buried in her arms, sobbing.

Colin was born, this May, in a small town in Devonshire. He was a lusty

baby. He came protesting. Raising such a row that the doctor said to the nurse: "Here! Take him into the other room. I can't hear myself think."

Later the doctor told Colin's mother he had never delivered a baby more unwilling to be born.

"Well, anyhow, I've *got* him!" she said. "And isn't he too lovely for words? *Look* at those eyes! As if he'd gazed upon other worlds. . . . I often wonder what makes babies so terribly *wise*. They don't *know* anything. But you'd think, to watch them, they'd been everywhere, seen everything. . . ."

"Perhaps they have," the doctor said.

He produced his watch—a fine platinum disk—from his waistcoat pocket and dangled it before Colin. Colin stared a moment at this small, rotating moon, then, with an expression of profound

nausea, turned his head aside and burst into tears.

"I wonder," the doctor said. "They often confound me, I confess."

He smiled, and pocketed the watch again.

"And often," he admitted, "they drive me mad."

"Not Colin!"

"Oh, no. Not Colin!"

Colin grew up. He missed the European Civil War, which raged from his first to his tenth year. He went to Eton. He was a whiz at English history. He spent his vacations in Devonshire, hunting and swimming and sailing. When he was eighteen, before he entered college, he travelled through Europe with his father and visited the destroyed cities of Paris and Berlin.

He was a slender, dark boy, with rather high, square shoulders and a well-shaped head. His skin, very clear and clean and taut, was always brown, as if tanned by hot suns. His eyes were sombre. But his nose belied them by tilting curiously at the tip, and he had a habit of laughing suddenly at himself.

That summer of his trip abroad with his father,

a strange thing happened. They were waiting in some rural railroad station somewhere and young Colin fell to studying the travel posters. One of them, a brilliant drawing, announced in French the superior advantages of Chamonix, on the banks of the Arve, as a tourist centre.

"Odd," he said to his father. "That place looks familiar—as if I'd been there. I seem almost to remember . . ."

"The French Alps?"

Colin's father shook his head.

"You wouldn't care for it. Your mother and I went there on our honeymoon. It was beastly cold. And overrun with Germans."

"I'd like to go, all the same! Couldn't we? I'd like to have a try at Mont Blanc."

"Next year, perhaps. I detest Alpine resorts myself. And Alpine mountains."

Colin tore himself away from the poster. For weeks it troubled him . . . that vision, sharp, suggestive, of a white mountain lifting itself, like a crested wave, out of a sea of flowers.

He forgot again during the crowded years of study. And later, as the youngest member of a

conservative law firm, there was no time to dream.

He had a curious flair for tracing down the past. Old grants. Forgotten deeds. Lost wills. Estates in chancery. Remote legal tangles buried in antiquity. He seemed to know more about England centuries ago than most men know about England today. And this gift of his—this instinct—made him valuable to his associates, whose particular business it was to establish rights of ownership.

Colin's mother lived to see her son a successful man. Dying, she sighed the deep sigh of perfect fulfilment.

When Colin was twenty-six, he suddenly remembered again.

He was to marry a pretty girl of whom he was very fond in a quiet, deliberate way. They went together one evening to see a motion picture—a bright, romantic, musical comedy about a tenor, a girl, and a crook. The picture had been a popular success in 1934. Its revival was both nostalgic and amusing. Old-timers flocked to the theatre to renew sweet memories of pre-Revolutionary days, and the youngsters went because they liked the music and the story.

The tenor sang with profligate voice, the girl smiled, the crook danced . . . gay melodies spun against a background of lakes and waterfalls and snow-clad mountains.

Colin looked. A bell seemed to ring in his heart. He sat through the picture twice, holding fast to his fiancée's hand in the dark. Later he went back to the theatre, alone, and stayed until they put him out. He couldn't understand himself. Scene after scene . . . and the conviction that he'd been in these very places . . . a familiarity that was doubly disturbing because there was no reason for it. Colin had never seen a snow-covered mountain. Nor had he ever looked from dizzy heights down upon the shimmer and sparkle of Alpine lakes.

He had a curious sensation of longing . . . the sort of happiness that is identical with suffering.

He began, that day, to think toward Chamonix. The thing obsessed him. He must go. He must. . . .

But there was no hope of a vacation. He was too young a member of the firm to make demands.

And he had, besides, to save every penny. He had promised his fiancée a wedding-trip to America. Some time in the spring.

He tried to thrust his longing down, out of sight. It woke him in the night, and he'd lie for restless hours imagining himself hiking through flowery valleys, his eyes on the white barriers . . . free . . . exultant. . . . Alone? He couldn't be sure. At times someone walked beside him. He almost heard a voice. Almost glimpsed a face. . . .

The senior members of the firm noticed that he was unusually silent. His eyes didn't quite focus on the important realities. They said he was working too hard. They were very solicitous. Very kind. Colin stared at them. "I'm quite all right," he said. "You mustn't worry about me, really."

But he worried about himself.

He was convinced that he was going mad.

Because, day and night, a nagging thought tugged at his consciousness. The desire, at first evanescent, formless, narrowed down to a definite and absorbing objective—he must be in the

Chamonix Valley in May . . . he must . . .
must. . . .

And there seemed to be no way.

*Julie Fawcett, over in Philadelphia,
was going through the same thing.*

Only she had always wanted Chamonix. Ever since a child, when she came upon a photograph, in her *Dougherty's Grammar School Geography*, of Mont Blanc seen from La Creusaz. . . .

Julie was born knowing.

She was a seven-months child. The attending physician remarked that here was a baby awfully anxious to get it over with! She arrived beaming, cackling with joy.

And why not? She had been alone in the flowery field for seven long months. And in all that time no one spoke to her save an old Roman, who was retracing Hannibal's passage across the Alps . . . "just for old time's sake." He stayed in the field a few days. He remembered Colin. "Oh, him. Of

course! A dark young fellow, English? He asked me about himself. Why it was he couldn't remember who he'd been, his last trip back. I didn't tell him. I thought it might upset him. But he was a soldier in the Great War. Blown to bits, he was. Battle of Vimy Ridge. That's why he didn't remember. They never do. . . . They die unprepared. Too bad."

"I hate waiting," Julie told the Roman. "I want to *go!*"

"Well, start calling! It *can* be done. Make such a racket your mother'll let you in ahead of time!"

And so Julie got herself born. And grew up to be the prettiest girl in Philadelphia, and made her *début*, and had her little fling, and married. His name was Wilson. He was a banker. And he adored his Julie.

"I can't believe my luck," he said. "Here I am—just an ordinary fellow—and I find myself by some miracle married to Julie! Julie's husband!"

Julie sat on the arm of his chair, her tawny head against his. And traced with the tip of her finger the outline of his profile.

"Could we go abroad this spring, do you think?"

"Still dreaming of the Alps?"

"I'm crazy to go."

"It beats me," he said. "That part of France is *terrible*, darling! Just a lot of cheap hotels and guides and glaciers. Let's go down to Java. Or China. Or . . ."

Julie shook her head.

"Chamonix. Please."

"But I'm a busy man. I can't go anywhere for a couple of years. Unless the bank should decide to send me to Paris. . . ."

And the bank did.

Julie wondered whether her wish had had anything to do with it. Her obsessing wish. To be in a valley, somewhere, a field . . . *in May*.

"Now are you satisfied?" her husband said. He lifted her clear of the floor and held her triumphantly aloft. "We're going! To Paris! I'll be there a week. We'll take the car. You can go on to Chamonix, alone, and when I'm through in Paris, I'll drive over and pick you up. We'll take a quick

turn through Italy and sail from Naples. How's that?"

"Marvellous."

She ducked down quickly to kiss him, because she was afraid he might look into her eyes and see there her wild happiness, her ecstasy. Lately she had wondered whether she wasn't a little overbred . . . a mad, mad Fawcett . . . last of a line, or something like that. Because she had such funny ideas . . . her mind went groping back, looking for someone, longing for someone. But she couldn't see his face or hear his voice . . . not yet . . . not quite . . .

She loved her husband. But she knew the Julie he loved was not the real Julie. The real Julie was romantic. Serious. Not a mad young modern at all. The *real* Julie . . .

They sailed the first of May, on the great airliner *Britannia*. Three days later they drove their car into the new Paris . . . the reinvocation of Bonaparte's city, stone for stone, arch for arch, bridge for bridge. . . .

"I wish you'd stay a few days," Julie's husband said. "I can't understand this mad desire of yours

for Chamonix. It's as dead as Hector this time of year. Cold."

"No," Julie said unexpectedly, "it isn't cold. The valley's warm. The fruit trees are in blossom. And the fields are full of flowers. . . ."

"All right," he said. "As my father used to say: 'Okay.' Off you go, tomorrow. But I'll miss you like the devil. You know, of course, I'm in love with you?"

"It seems to me," Julie laughed, "I've heard you *say* so! You're a nice fool. I love you, too. And I'll miss you every minute!"

But she didn't.

She arrived in Chamonix after dark.

Before breakfast the next morning she threw her windows wide upon the dazzling reality of her dream. She knew then that she had been coming toward this place, for some reason, all her life.

She dressed hurriedly. A sport skirt. A sweater. A ridiculous, minute béret, over one eye. . . . They brought her coffee and honey to spread on

thin slices of toast. Then she was off.

The streets of the town were in shadow, deserted. Julie went on, down the valley road toward Finhaut. She knew every turn. It was like flipping over the pages of a familiar book.

"As if I *remembered!* But I *couldn't!*"

She crossed the river and climbed a steep, rocky path. At the top, there was a very old, wooden shrine, weather-stained, lonely. The Figure. The Cross. A crown of thorns. . . . Julie sat down there, snatching off the *béret* and lifting her head so that the wind might touch her hair, caress her forehead.

"I'm too young to be in love with a *place!* But what I feel is *like* love. I feel it as one feels love. I'm warm and alive and eager, for the first time. . . ."

Then she saw the stile. She climbed up and looked over into a sea of flowers. Now the sun had topped the icy barrier and it was golden-warm in the valley. The bees and flies zoomed out for their day's foraging.

Julie jumped down into the flowers. She thrust forward, up to her knees in beauty. The long

grasses bent this way and that before her. . . .

She did not see Colin until she was almost upon him. He sat up, suddenly, and laughed. And Julie stood stock still, her heart silenced, her eyes enormous, like a frightened animal's.

"Sorry!" he said. "I didn't mean to startle you! I was very nearly asleep. . . ."

Her heart beat again. A warm tide of blood, released, rushed into her cheeks, her throat. . . .

"Is this your own particular field?" she asked. "Because if it is, I'll go, of course."

"I'll share it with you," he said.

She liked the clear brown of his skin, the white of his smile, the brooding darkness of his eyes.

"The view's magnificent," he said. "There's something rather extraordinary about the whole place. . . . Won't you sit down?"

"Yes," she said, "I will."

She knelt beside him. They regarded each other seriously, unfalteringly, for a long time.

"Isn't it curious?" he said; "I have the most extraordinary feeling . . . that somewhere I've seen you before. I haven't, of course. You're an American, aren't you?"

"Yes."

"I'm English, myself. My name's Curtis. Colin Curtis. I'm a barrister. London. And I've only just come out here, to see a client who happens to be staying in Chamonix. Today, thank heaven, he's off climbing a mountain. That's why I'm up here."

He laughed again.

"Now *that's* over."

"My name's Julie Fawcett," she said.

"I'm sorry I frightened you. I am, really. Your throat's all pink. And the pupils of your eyes are as big and as black as a cat's. . . ."

"I'm not frightened. Not now."

"Excited?"

"A little. I've seen you before, too, somewhere! But we *couldn't!* I've only just arrived, from America. I *haven't* seen you before—have I?"

"Perhaps."

He leaned a little forward, his eyes on her face.

"What is it that's so very special about this field? Do you know?"

She shook her head.

"I do. It's the place you and I were intended to

find. Call it destiny, if you like. Or fate. Or luck. Here we are."

Suddenly he held out his hand.

"Hello!"

"Hello!"

She dropped the flowers she was carrying and put her hand in Colin's. His fingers closed over hers.

"Hello, Julie Fawcett."

"My name's Julie Fawcett Wilson," she said. "I'm sorry. Just for a minute I forgot. I'm married. He's very nice. He's in Paris."

"And you're here."

"Yes. All my life I've wanted to come. I saw a picture of Mont Blanc in my geography, when I was a child. . . . And—ever since, I've had a dream. . . . But you wouldn't understand. . . ."

"Yes, I would. I do! . . . Was it like this? Did you know you *had* to come? Was it like a song you couldn't quite remember? You'd recall a note or two, but the melody eluded you . . . the way someone's face won't hold in memory?"

"Yes."

"I've been groping about, myself, trying to understand. Because I had to come, too. I didn't know why. I *had* to come! I thought perhaps I was potty."

"Potty?"

"Mad."

"Oh!"

"And today, when I found this field, everything seemed so right, somehow . . . so justified. All the struggle of growing up and learning things and getting started in life. The beastly trouble we go to, without knowing why. . . ."

He broke off and laughed.

"I *do* sound potty, don't I?"

She had allowed her hand to remain within his. Now he glanced down at their interlocked fingers, hers so white against his own.

"Perhaps I knew," he said, "I'd meet you here. I'm not certain, of course. It would be easy, now, to make myself believe so. The truth is . . . coming here wasn't a deliberate search for happiness. I *was* happy. Or fancied I was."

He glanced up again, his eyes dark with feeling.

"Engaged to marry an awfully nice girl. Doing

well enough. Getting pretty much what I wanted out of life. Books. A bit of country now and then. Thinking. Not very clearly or to much purpose. But thinking. . . . There you have my life . . . until today."

He turned Julie's hand over and stared into the delicate palm. Julie looked down at him. The smooth darkness of his hair, so neat and close and clean. . . .

She caught her breath.

"Until today," he repeated.

Once more he looked up at her.

"One thing's certain, I've only been marking time until this happened . . . until I found you."

"Perhaps you'd better not say such things," Julie whispered. "I'm not sure it's right, or reasonable. Five minutes ago I'd never seen you. I didn't know your name. And here I am, letting you hold my hand. Here I am, liking it. And I can't understand . . ."

"Don't try."

And so it began.

Before they left their field that morning, Colin kissed her. And Julie kissed him back. And both of

them forgot everything except that they had found each other.

At noon they went down the steep path to the valley. Colin's client was still climbing his mountain, so they lunched together on the terrace of their hotel. And that night they danced, in splendid isolation, to exciting music broadcast from Budapest. Julie, in white, with crimson slippers and ruby bracelets, floated in Colin's arms, her eyes closed, the tips of her fingers caressing his sleeve.

At midnight the Hungarian band signed off. Julie kissed Colin briefly, madly, in the chill moonlight on the terrace, and fled to her room . . . to her mirror, to stare into her own brilliant, frightened eyes. . . .

The telephone rang.

"Paris calling, madame."

And there was the husband she loved and had forgotten!

"I've been trying to get you since nine o'clock! Where in heaven's name . . . ? Julie! Julie! I miss you so! I'm in a stuffy red and gold room at the Meurice. Alone! What's it all about, anyhow? Why are you there and I here? I love you. I keep

looking at the pillow beside me and seeing you there, smiling at me. . . . Julie! Come back!"

Julie was crying. Her tears were salty on her lips. But she tried to laugh.

"Silly! I'm all right. I'm going to bed now."

"Do you miss me a little, Julie?"

"I can't *hear* you!"

"Do you miss me? Confound it! I can't make love to you at the top of my lungs!"

"I'd go to Paris," Julie faltered, "if I thought you really . . ."

"I know, sweetheart. I'm damned selfish. But it's because I love you the way I do. If anything should happen to you . . ."

"Bunny! It won't!"

"Don't come back, of course . . . I'll hurry through here and get away as soon as I can. We'll be rip-roaring happy for a week before we sail. Venice! What do you say, darling?"

"Marvellous!" Julie cried.

He kissed her good-night. His kiss, nostalgic and wistful, flew along the wires from Paris to Chamonix . . . across city roofs, wide rivers, valleys and mountains . . . the warm, promis-

sory, connubial kiss of a Philadelphian banker. Julie made a little clucking sound and hung up.

When she turned away from the telephone, her face was wet with tears. She put out the lights and, curiously ashamed to face the reflection that moved in the mirrors, undressed in the dark. In bed she lay rigid, awake, her bare arms flung across her eyes, to shut out the terrible beauty of the night.

But it was Colin she could not shut out. His face. The sound of his voice. The tense, speaking pressure of his brown hands. The hard, vital beating of his heart. . . .

She thought: "I'll run away. I mustn't stay here. I mustn't see him again. . . . If I do, I'll love him too much. I'll never be able to turn back. . . . As it is, I've dreamed. There's nothing wrong in dreaming. If I go, now . . . Bunny will never know. And some day I'll forget, I'll go on as if I'd never seen . . ."

She caught her breath.

"Colin! Colin! Out of all the world! Too late. . . ."

When the morning came, she ran to meet him in their field. To say good-bye, she thought.

Colin was waiting, sitting Turk-fashion in the flowers. He sprang to his feet and went to her. Their hands met and clung. And again, against his heart, with his lips caressing her hair, Julie forgot everything that had been in the miracle of the present.

"I can't explain," she whispered. "It's as if only this were real. This place. Us. What we say. . . ."

Every morning, then, they met. Every day they spent together. Colin's client came down from his mountains too exhausted for conference. The London firm wired: "What progress? If none, return." And Colin replied: "Nothing to report." Time passed, a swift, clear current of being, of knowing. Every night Bunny Wilson telephoned from Paris: "Be patient, darling. I'll be with you in a few days! Confound this business of making money! Are you happy?" And Julie, as if talking to a stranger, answered: "Oh, yes. It's so beautiful! You'd adore it, Bunny."

Now it was too late. They loved. Julie and Colin, out of all the world. . . .

Colin told Julie his most precious, personal adventures. And Julie told him everything about her.

self . . . the little, terribly important things. But she didn't talk about Bunny Wilson. Somehow she couldn't. Her marriage had nothing to do with the Julie she was now. This Julie loved Colin. There was no help for it.

The girl in London wrote Colin every day. He put her letters, unopened, into his brief-case. The time would come, he knew, when he'd have to open them and read them and make some sort of answer. . . .

Not now!

Julie was now. A now so crowded with rapture that there was no room for doubt, or for retreat.

"There's something extraordinary about it all," he said. "Our meeting like this. Our knowing! As if we'd planned to meet! We both came directly to the field. Why? *Why?* You know it's very strange . . . because at times I seem almost to remember having *promised* . . ."

He shook his head.

"I suppose it's all part of some story, read and forgotten. Some scrap of conversation. . . . But I can hear myself promising . . . someone, somewhere . . ."

He laughed.

"Ridiculous, of course! This curious conviction that we've already been together. You make a gesture, turn your head, smile, and I *remember*. . . . We'll be talking, and I find myself wondering whether we've not said the same thing *before*. . . . Every little while I come dead up against a situation I *recognize* . . . you know . . . the way one does when one stops short and says: 'But this very thing *has* happened!' You've felt like that, haven't you?"

"Often," Julie said.

"You don't suppose there's such a thing as re-incarnation? Not really?"

Colin's head was in Julie's lap. He looked now into her upside-down face. He saw himself reflected in her eyes.

"I'd like to be sure! Not to be afraid of death."

"Are you afraid, Colin?"

"Rather! Aren't you?"

Julie said: "I'm only afraid I'll never see you again."

She touched his hair, lightly, with the tips of her fingers.

"I try not to think of death," he said. "When I was a kid, I believed I'd escape. It couldn't happen to me! To fools—careless fools—but not to me!"

He turned his head and kissed her hand.

"But I mind less, now I've got you. I'm not alone any more."

"Some day—" Julie began.

She caught her breath. Shivered.

"Let's not talk about it."

"Let's not. After all, we're alive. In a marvellous world. . . . Somehow I can't believe this will ever end. I've lost count of time. I can't remember why I'm here. Who I am. I've forgotten the way back. . . ."

He sat up suddenly and put his face against her breast.

"If we could only be together, like this, forever. . . ."

They were silent, as if transfixed by a numbing shaft of fear.

"Tomorrow—" Julie began again.

His arms tightened. He lifted his head.

"Tomorrow we'll be happier than ever. We'll climb La Creusaz from Salvan. And spend the day

up there, where the facts of the case can't very well get at us. Later we'll meet our problem, and deal with it. . . . Tomorrow's ours."

But tomorrow changed everything.

Before dawn Colin's client pounded at his door.

"I'm having a try at the Aiguilles today," he said. "I thought you might like to come along. A fairly difficult climb. But I have two good men—Travsil and Burgstaller. Plenty of time to discuss matters. I dare say you'd like everything settled before I leave? And I'm off tonight. Genoa. And the States. . . . What d'you say?"

"I'll come," Colin said quickly, "of course. Ten minutes. I'll be with you. In the lobby? Right!"

He left a note for Julie, explaining his predicament.

"I'll be back in time for the dance tonight. They're having a small orchestra, you know. I'm leaving money for the leader, so that he'll play our waltz—the *Blue Danube*. . . . We'll dance it together tonight. A promise, my sweet. I'll get back, if I have to fly! Think of me all day. Pray for me. I'm not much of a climber. And my shoes aren't right. My client is wearing cast-iron boots studded

with steel spikes! Remember, the first waltz. And wear the white dress, the red slippers. I love you."

Julie got the note when they brought her tray at seven o'clock. Beside it, a telephone message:

"Mr. Wilson called early this morning from Martigny. He will arrive in time to breakfast with Madame."

Julie read Colin's note three times. Her hands shook. The scribbled words, written in pencil, blurred and ran together. Then she knew that she was crying. Bitterly, helplessly, as a distraught child cries. "He will arrive in time to breakfast with Madame." . . . She had known, of course, that this would happen. But not so soon!

She heard Bunny's car in the driveway. With desperate haste she tore Colin's note into bits and threw it away. Dried her eyes. Her cheeks. Powdered. Dragged both hands over her face, straining to erase that sudden look of despair and terror.

When her husband opened the door, she was smiling.

She put her face against his shoulder. Tried not to shiver. Yet shivered uncontrollably . . . unreasonably. . . .

"What's the matter, darling? I'm terribly sorry if I upset you, arriving like this. I thought you'd be glad to see me. . . ."

"I am."

"You're white as a sheet. And your hands—cold as ice. You're sure . . ."

"I'm all right, Bunny. I didn't expect you for several days. . . . How are you?"

He gave her a puzzled look. His eyes were very steady and blue and troubled.

"I'm fine," he said. "A little tired. I drove all night. I couldn't wait, you see, to get to you. I must be a damned fool. . . ."

"No, Bunny."

"You haven't kissed me."

"I will. Give me time, Bunny. You see, I'm not really awake. . . ."

His arm fell across her shoulders. He patted her back.

"Never mind. I only thought . . ."

"But I *want* to kiss you," Julie said. In her desperation, she clung to him, both hands clutching his coat. "I do, really."

She lifted her face. And then, in spite of herself,

with shame and pity, turned her lips away from his.

"Never mind," he said again. His face was flushed. He tried not to look at her.

Julie thought: "He mustn't guess. Now. Or ever. He's good. He loves me. I can't hurt him. I won't."

So when he told her that he had planned to drive straight on to Venice, she agreed to go at once.

"I'll pack, while you attend to the car. And the bill. Half an hour."

"Very well," Bunny said.

He went to the door, hesitated, came back to stare miserably into her eyes.

"You're sure you *want* to go? You're quite sure there isn't any reason why you'd rather I went on, alone, and left you here?"

"Bunny!"

"Because there's something damned queer about you. . . . Something different. I don't know . . . I don't dare think."

He made a great effort, licked his dry lips, stumbled on:

"If I thought you'd met someone else—"

"*Bunny! You fool!*"

"You'd tell me, wouldn't you?"

She put her arm through his.

"Don't imagine things . . ."

"Because," he said, "I couldn't bear it, that's all! I love you. And I trust you. I couldn't face living, without you. Now you know."

She kissed his shoulder.

"Dear Bunny," she said. "Yes. I know. It's all right. We'll go on. Together."

No time to leave a message for Colin. Half an hour, to pack. To dress. To take leave. . . . The big American car, throbbing, stood in the driveway. Porters strapped on her luggage.

The proprietor, smiling and rubbing his soft hands together, said in French: "Is there some small message, perhaps, for the young English gentleman?"

"No," Julie said.

"What's that he said?" Bunny demanded, as they drove away. "I'm a dub at French, you know."

"He wished us a happy journey," Julie said.

"And a quick return."

"Not on your life!"

The powerful car roared along the valley road. Bunny, as a rule, drove well. But now he wanted to escape.

Julie covered her eyes. She wouldn't look. Or think. Or weep. . . .

"Scared?"

"No."

But she was. Afraid of life. Of trying to live without Colin. Without happiness. . . .

Bunny Wilson's eyes, reflected in the little driving mirror, were curiously bleak. They stared ahead, with a new look of despair.

"I'm driving back to Geneva," he said, "to see a man I failed to see in Paris. I suppose you're thinking: 'Business. Even here.' Perhaps you're right. The habit of making money's hard to break."

He turned his head suddenly and stared at Julie.

"Am I driving too fast?"

Julie dropped her hands.

"No."

They were passing the shallow ford across the river, the steep path to the shrine. Her field of flowers! Beyond, the ponderous slow glaciers crept into the valley. . . . Somewhere, up there, Colin was thinking of her.

The road twisted and lifted, between high banks. Arched causeways bridged deep ravines filled with shouting, tumbling water. Dust spiralled in choking clouds behind the speeding car. The great tires hummed and screeched on banked turns. There was rage and terror and frenzy in the howled warning of the horn. *Get out of my way! Out of my way.*

"Too fast?" Bunny shouted. His eyes flickered sideways at Julie's white face.

"No."

She stared at the devouring road, that rushed forward like a road gone mad. Wind whipped stinging strands of hair into her eyes. She clung with both hands to the door.

"Bunny," she cried. "*Bunny! Look out!*"

Just ahead, down a sharp hill, the highway turned to the left into a narrow stone bridge. A cart drawn by two horses blocked the passage.

. . . Below, jagged rocks and rushing water. . . .

"I'll make it! Hang on! Look out, there, damn you!"

Bunny tore at the wheel. With a shrill scream of the brakes the big car drove straight at the cart, jerked aside, lifted, plunged. . . .

Julie saw the stone parapet. It parted, crumbled before the impact of hurtling glass and steel. . . . For a split second Julie looked down, a hundred feet, into the tortured river. She thought: "This is death. Colin will never know why I ran away. . . ."

Something struck heavily. Her clutching hands were torn loose. She was shaken and thrown . . . went hurtling down to the black rocks, the icy water . . . water that passed with deep, drowning smoothness over her twisted and broken body.

For a long time she knew nothing at all. When knowing returned, she found herself lying on her bed in the hotel. The room was in shadow. There were flowers on her folded hands, on her breast. And someone, someone she couldn't see, was crying bitterly. She lay very still, trying to remember

what had happened . . . after the car drove into the parapet.

"Why am I here?"

She wished whoever it was would stop that distraught weeping. The next room, probably. . . . What time was it? She opened her eyes and turned her head and saw that it was night . . . the window stood open. There were stars. . . . Down in the gravelled driveway cars arriving . . . voices . . . the sound of music somewhere . . . laughter. . . .

Then she remembered! She had promised Colin! The first waltz! She must have been asleep. . . .

She got up.

She felt a little giddy at first. A little sick. So many flowers. . . . And her feet seemed not to touch the floor.

She went to the mirror, leaning forward to stare at herself in the dim light.

She thought: "I look a little tired . . . I wonder . . . have I been asleep? I can't seem to remember. Did Bunny come? Did I pack my things and go with him? Was there a terrible accident? . . ."

She shook her head and caught her breath in quick puzzled laughter.

"I'm still dreaming, I guess! Unless I'm . . . dead."

She stood transfixed, her heart pounding, her face and throat flushed.

"But I *couldn't* be! I don't *feel* dead! I feel just a little . . . funny."

The thought that she might be dead frightened her. It was so . . . unusual. She decided suddenly not to believe it. She'd have a nice warm bath and dress and go down to meet Colin. . . .

The gush of water into the tub reassured her. She lay there, soaking, a long time, admiring her white body, her slim flanks jewelled with climbing silver air-bubbles, her narrow feet, her lovely knees. She even sang, just to try it out, in case. . . . Then she scrubbed and towelled herself into a rosy glow, dried her hair. . . .

When she went to look for her white dress and the crimson slippers and the ruby bracelets she found them, strangely, in the motor-trunk. The trunk itself was all dented and muddy and slashed. . . . But the dress was untouched. Its

soft, white ruffles went over her head, clung to her body, foamed about the stilt-heeled crimson slippers. . . .

Softly, then, with a secret smile, her eyes like stars, she opened the door . . . stood there a moment, listening . . . then went along the corridor, toward the sound of music and laughter. . . .

Bunny Wilson had been sitting in the darkened room, his head in his bandaged hands.

When the door opened, a shaft of light cut across the room. He jerked upright in time to see the door close again.

"What the devil . . ."

He stumbled to his feet, switched on a shaded light. Looked first at the bed . . . Julie was there, of course, beneath the blanket of field flowers . . . her hands hidden . . . her face wearing that curious pallid mask of death. . . .

Bunny had been weeping. Now, with a gesture of defiance and shame, he dragged his sleeve across his eyes. Soon, now, he knew he must begin to remember . . . all the rest of life would be an agonized remembering. How he had picked himself up, his mouth full of dust, the taste of blood

on his lips, and had run back to the wrecked car to look for Julie. . . . The stupid, blanched, terrified peasant still holding the reins, and staring down into the river. . . . The horses, shaking their heads, rattling their heavy harness.

"Why in hell didn't you get out of the *way*? Didn't you see me coming? Didn't you know I *couldn't* stop?"

He heard himself shouting and cursing. . . . He heard himself screaming: "Julie! Julie! Where *are* you? Are you *hurt*? Julie! For God's sake, *answer* me!"

Blinded by dust, he looked wildly about. Saw the break in the parapet. Followed the peasant's staring eyes . . . and in the sudden silence heard the rush and tumble of water, a hundred feet below. . . .

"Julie," he sobbed now. He leaned down and kissed her forehead. "Forgive me."

But Julie, the real Julie, was not there. She was down in the bright lobby, looking for Colin. She stood a moment at the foot of the stairway. And the proprietor, going up, passed her without being at all aware . . . save for a twitch of cold

fear. But then, enough had happened during this terrible day to give him an attack of nerves. He shivered and hurried to the door of Bunny Wilson's room, tapping discreetly, with folded, fat knuckles. . . .

"M'sieur, may I come in? A moment? I am sorry to intrude—at such a time."

"Yes," Bunny said. "Come in."

He turned away from the bed.

"I came to ask your forgiveness, m'sieur. It was not possible to stop the arrangements for this evening. . . . We try not to let the guests of the hotel realize . . . you understand. . . ."

"Of course."

"I have asked the musicians to play as softly as possible. . . ."

"I hadn't noticed," Bunny said.

The proprietor glanced toward the bed. Julie beneath the field flowers.

"My heart is with you, m'sieur. She was so young . . . she seemed so happy. Now they are both gone."

The proprietor met Bunny's eyes.

"You knew, of course? The doctor told you?"

"I don't know what you're talking about!"

"The young English gentleman. Madame's friend. . . . He, too, was killed this morning. Early this morning—at about the same time. But I thought M'sieur knew. They brought him back to the hotel. He is—up there—in his room. We have telegraphed his family."

The proprietor sighed and clenched his fat hands.

"A terrible day for me. Naturally. With the hotel full of guests. . . . These tragedies discourage people. They are bad for business. I am forced to appear heartless. . . ."

"You say," Bunny interrupted, "that Madame's friend—was killed?"

"This morning, on the glacier. He was with another English gentleman and two guides. Good, reliable men. They say he turned—in a place where he should not have turned . . . and looked down into the valley. They heard him cry out. Then he slipped and fell . . . a great fall. They were three hours, m'sieur, getting his body out. He had fallen between . . ."

The proprietor shuddered.

"I thought, of course, M'sieur knew. They seemed such happy friends. Every day, together. . . . M'sieur will pardon me, but I would have said—"

"Don't," Bunny interrupted in a voice strident with suffering. "What you intended to say has nothing to do with the truth. Leave me, please. I'm rather—tired."

"Of course, m'sieur. Good-night. If there is anything we can do—?"

"Nothing!"

The proprietor closed the door, paused in the corridor to wipe his perspiring forehead, then went softly downstairs to his guests.

The lobby was crowded. People poured in from their cars. Women in evening coats of brocade and fur. Men in black, with white mufflers and top hats. The sound of music came faintly from the ball-room. The air was sweet with the scent of flowers, the heady odour of perfume, the drifting aroma of cigarette smoke. . . . The proprietor erased the look of anxiety which had puckered his face. He assumed the mask of host. Beaming. Obsequious. Bland.

"Good-evening, m'sieur! Good-evening, madame! Supper is being served in the small room beyond the lounge. . . ."

He moved among his guests, aware of everything, of everyone . . . except Julie in her white dress.

She crossed the lobby, threading her way between the animated groups. She felt alone and frightened. Because these gay people weren't quite real. They were shadowy presences. They seemed to be on the other side of a veil. Their eyes slid over her, through her, without admitting her. She brushed against them and they failed to move aside or to respond to her polite: "Sorry."

"If it's true," she thought, "if I *am* dead . . . Colin won't find me. I'm changing. I can walk now without walking. . . . Colin! Colin! Where are you?"

There had been an interlude in the dancing. Now the violins twittered again. And the harp was swept by a hand that evoked a shower of notes, a thrilling star-burst of sound. The orchestra began to play. Colin's walk!

Julie ran toward the door. She caught the head porter's gold-braided sleeve.

"Have you seen Mr. Curtis? Has Mr. Curtis come back, do you know?"

The head porter, without answering, turned away and spun the glass revolving doors. Colin came in. . . .

He wore a rough suit. Heavy boots. His stockings were torn. His coat muddy. His hair was wet and clung to his forehead. In his eyes, at first, a look of bewildered accusation, as if a friend had stabbed him in the back.

Then he saw Julie. And his eyes cleared, turned dark and brilliant.

"Julie!"

"They're playing our waltz! Hurry! Hurry! Or we'll be too late!"

They raced across the lobby, hand in hand. Colin caught her and held her. She felt the blessed relief of being near him. They danced. Heart to heart.

Julie laughed. She let her lips brush his cheek. "I thought you'd never come."

"I hurried. Sorry, my sweet. How I've missed you! . . . It wouldn't be possible—I know, now—to live without you."

"To live?" Julie whispered. "But I'm not sure . . ."

Her hand tightened on his shoulder.

"Colin. Haven't you noticed? Something queer—about me, I mean?"

"Queer? Certainly not. You're Julie. You're the most beautiful thing in the world."

"But, Colin, I'm beginning to forget . . ."

The music stopped. Colin glanced up at the leader and nodded and smiled. The leader paid no attention.

"Please," Julie said, "let's go outside. I don't feel very well."

"Of course."

Colin made way for her through the crowd. They found themselves on the dark terrace, beneath a vast arch of sky ablaze with stars.

"Now," Colin said.

He took her hands, held them firmly between his own.

"I know what you're trying to say. I feel it, too."

Something damned strange has happened. Try to think—think back . . . to this morning. . . ."

"I remember being in a car, with someone. . . . I remember a cart and two horses and a narrow bridge. But I don't know where. . . . I remember a noise. Glass and metal. Then I must have slept. Because it was dark when I—woke."

"Or *did* you wake? I'll be hanged if I've got the swing of this yet. You see, I, too . . . I must have fallen. Then, for some reason, I was back in my room, upstairs. So I got up and wandered about the garden, trying to piece things together. I thought perhaps it was final. I thought perhaps I was . . ."

Suddenly he laughed.

"By George, Julie, I believe we're *dead!* Both of us! Of all the astounding luck!"

"Why do you think . . ."

"There isn't the shadow of a doubt. Oh, great Lord, we're *dead*, Julie! We're on the Other Side again!"

He pulled her close. His eyes were brilliant. She could hear the violent beating of his heart. Ecstatic and free.

"You get it, don't you? You're beginning to remember? Don't be frightened. Think straight. . . . Another time. We were together . . . somewhere . . . a field. Oh, *think*, Julie! We've got to understand."

She put her face against him.

"I do. But I'm frightened."

"Don't. Don't. It's a little strange at first, of course . . . like going under ether. I'll admit my head aches. I must have hit it a fearful crack when I fell. But don't you see, we're safe, now? We're *out* of all that! Life! The whole mess! This is wonderful! This is better than life any day!"

Julie lifted her head. "This is forever," she said.

He flung his arm across her shoulder. They turned and drifted the length of the terrace, down the steps into the garden. The sound of music came to them clearly from some open window. . . .