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# Shadow of the Sheltering Pines

A New Romance of the Storm Country

By GRACE MILLER WHITE

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## CHAPTER XVII.

### Payment In Full.

Edith Devon, with the small black bag in her hand, crept out of the Pendlehaven garden, unapprehensive. She had no power to think—no desire to go anywhere or do anything. She lingered about Pendlehaven place until the morning dawned. During the hours preceding daylight she studied over the events of the afternoon and evening. As her mind cleared, all her love for Uriah rose up and clamored to help him. She remembered leaving him stretched out on the floor as if he were dead. When the town below began to show signs of day she walked back into Pendlehaven place and slowly up to the house.

It was a servant who ushered Mrs. Devon into the library where Doctor John and Doctor Paul still sat, struggling with the mystery that had come into their usually quiet home. After vainly trying to force more than monosyllabic replies from Tonnibel, they had put her to bed, gibbering with fright.

Edith advanced to the middle of the room, holding the little bag in her hand, looking first at Doctor John, who tried unsuccessfully to recall where he had seen her, and then at Doctor Paul. "Where's my man, my Uriah?" she asked hoarsely, and then Doctor John recognized her and rose to his feet. "You got my husband here with a bit of lead in 'im," went on Edith, motionlessly. "I want to see 'im—I want to take 'im back to the boat."

For the space of thirty seconds, perhaps, no one ventured a word. Then, as the woman swayed, Doctor John leaped forward and put her into a chair. The bag dropped to the floor beside her. Tears began to flow down her cheeks and, with her sleeve, she brushed them away.

"Where's my man, my Uriah?" she demanded again fiercely. "Give 'im back to me, mister, and I'll—Where's the pup that shot 'im?"

"Who shot him?" cried Doctor John. Edith gave him a peculiar look. "Reggie, Reggie Brown," she whimpered. "I saw 'im, and Tony, thinkin' I did it—"

A sharp cry fell from Dr. Paul Pendlehaven. "Tony vowed she did it," he gasped. "Oh, my poor little girl! She didn't even mention your being here."

"Tony's like that," assented Edith. "She wouldn't peach on a dog." Doctor John came to her side with one long stride. "Are you ready to swear Reginald Brown shot your husband?" he demanded.

"Of course I am, mister," nodded Edith. "He was always runnin' after Tony, and she hated 'im. He was right over there when, suddenlike, he banged a bullet smack at my man. That duffer, the dirty pup, ain't fit to clean Britch's boots. When Tony pushed me out of this house she says, well, she says, 'Run, mummy, before somebody gets you, and I was kind o' dazed like and ran away.'"

Just then Philip hung into the room. "I'm half crazy," he exclaimed and then stopped, seeing Edith Devon, but he was so filled with misery that he gave no further heed to the stranger and went on hastily, "Jack, Paul, there's something behind that affair of Reggie's!"

"There sure is," said John Pendlehaven. "Sit down, boy. We're just getting at it. This is Mrs. Devon."

"And my man," she insisted, struggling up. "Uriah always was a d—n fool, mixin' up with swells like Reggie Brown, but I love 'im; and, mister, she wiped her face and, shudderingly, appealed to Paul Pendlehaven, "if you give 'im to me, mister—"

"We'll see Tony first," he interrupted. "Wait."

Edith Devon, with the small black bag in her hand, crept out of the Pendlehaven garden, unapprehensive. She had no power to think—no desire to go anywhere or do anything. She lingered about Pendlehaven place until the morning dawned. During the hours preceding daylight she studied over the events of the afternoon and evening. As her mind cleared, all her love for Uriah rose up and clamored to help him. She remembered leaving him stretched out on the floor as if he were dead. When the town below began to show signs of day she walked back into Pendlehaven place and slowly up to the house.



Tony Received the Call to the Library Listlessly.

Philip got out of his chair, but Doctor John put him back into it again. "Wait," he whispered into the boy's ear. "I want to tell you, everyone," went on Tony, fiercely, "that I'll swear 'til I die my mother—"

Paul Pendlehaven took the speaker by the shoulders and forced her face up to his. "This woman, here, your mother," and he waved his arm toward Mrs. Devon, "says you didn't have that gun in your hand, and it's loaded to the brim now. She didn't use it, either."

Reggie's jaw dropped. He made a dash for the door, as Mrs. Curtis screamed. Doctor John caught the fleeing boy and wheeled him around to face his horror-stricken mother. "It's a lie! I didn't," he mumbled. "Where'd I get a gun to shoot anyone? This woman did it herself. I saw her."

"Then you were here," cried Philip. Mrs. Curtis acted as if she were going to faint, but, as no one paid any attention to her, she slumped back beside her daughter, who turned away contemptuously.

"That settles one question," commented Doctor Paul, grimly. "You shot Devon, Reggie," and the boy sank into a chair beside his mother. "Now," continued the doctor, "who robbed the safe?"

To know that her mother hadn't done the shooting relieved but one of Tonnibel's worries. Uriah wasn't hurt much anyway, but the doctor's question brought vividly to her mind another danger, not a whit less serious. Edith was certainly involved in loading the safe!

"I told you once," Tony began wearily. "Child," interposed Doctor Paul, "you'll shield no one else. I shudder to think what might have happened if your mother hadn't come here for her husband."

His tones were low and stern, though much moved. His eye caught sight of the black bag at the same time his brother's did. Doctor John opened it and, amid an appalling silence, took box after box out of it.

"Plain stealing," he growled, and then he stared at Mrs. Devon in open-mouthed amazement. "What'd you bring 'em back for?" he questioned. Edith paid no attention to Doctor John's query but addressed her husband.

"Uriah, how 'im went and done it again!" She turned to Doctor Paul. "You got everything back, give me my man. He didn't know what he was doin', sir."

had not dared to make any inquiry about it. He had to run over the situation, and it appeared to him as hopeless as possible, but five thousand dollars was a good thing for a man to have, whatever his position. If Mrs. Curtis claimed the money, her cooperation with him would come out, and that might make things easier for him. If she didn't, he'd have the cash anyhow.

"That's mine, mister," he grunted, "and I didn't steal it, neither. Give it to me."

The same considerations had been chasing through Mrs. Curtis' mind, and, in the general cataclysm that she saw before her, she concluded the money might be very necessary for her and her children.

"Don't let him have it, John," she screamed. "It's mine. Give it to me."

Doctor John arose and stood between Uriah and Mrs. Curtis, holding the roll of bills in his hand. Amidst the closest attention of the rest of the group, he looked from one to the other, while the claimants indulged in a dispute.

"You give it to me, didn't you, ma'am?" asked Uriah, roughly. "Didn't you?"

"Yes, I suppose I did," she acknowledged, "but you haven't done what you said you would."

"Twasn't my fault," Uriah grumbled. "If that foot of a son of a b—n hadn't hunted in and shot me, I'd taken Tony like I bargained to."

Then Doctor Paul interposed, and (Concluded on page six)

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