

SEPTEMBER 28, 1919

The Voice in the Dark

by Holworthy Hall... illustrated by De Alton Valentine

The Little Blind God Works Magic in the Dusk.

THE direct route from the village lay across an upward slope of moorland, from which the ocean was invisible, even when the night was clear. But to one who halted at the end of the path the whole Atlantic rose up out of its setting and filled the imagination full; and down below the bank there was a narrow sand spit, and plenty of sun dried seaweed, rustling like paper, and a flat topped rock where a man of Dilworth's habits could smoke in solitude and watch the moonlight paint slow bands of silver along the breakwater.

The path ended so abruptly that tonight Dilworth had actually jumped down from the top of the embankment before he realized, through the soft darkness, that an unwanted visitor had claimed the rock. Her reaction as he arrived was no discredit to her nervous system; indeed, she held her poise remarkably well, considering that 175 pounds of compact energy had just presented itself, after a five foot drop, in the sand at her very shoe tips. But she did recoil, and she did say "Ow!" with much spontaneity and vigor, and the poise of her head was such that he suspected at once her entire lack of welcome.

"Well!" said Dilworth, scrambling upright. In spite of his own annoyance, he paid the trespasser what belonged to her sex. "Hope I didn't scare you too much."

The girl had risen, and stepped back a pace. "I was a little startled," she admitted. She stood in an attitude of calm expectancy; and the next thing was evidently for Dilworth to apologize, and to go away.

His hesitation had nothing whatever to do with his susceptibilities. For one thing, the moon was in its first quarter, and he couldn't tell whether the girl was attractive or not; he could discern only that she was small, and that she was wearing a light wrap of some sort, like a cape. For another, this was the only available spot along the shore where rapturous young people from the hotel weren't likely to be found twosing. It had

cost him a good half mile of travel over the moors to get here, and several marauding parties of mosquitoes were planning to waylay him on the return trip. Perhaps the girl was just about to start home, anyhow. It was rather late, he thought paternally, for her to stay outdoors alone.

"Don't let me disturb you," he said presently.

The girl wavered, and sat down again, thereby putting the question of procedure

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THE SAILOR FOLD-A-WAY DOLL.



"He saw an expression of agonized suffering come over her."

squarély up to Dilworth. It was apparent that she was challenging his intentions and that she fully expected him to be a gentleman and to remove himself. Instead he was stubborn enough to produce a pipe.

"I didn't know anybody else ever came here," said Dilworth, turning aside to light a match. "I ran across it by accident, myself."

"I just found it tonight."

He couldn't see her at all clearly, but he liked her voice, even at low temperature. He had a pleasing intuition that she sang contralto.

"I found it a couple of weeks ago." He deliberately walked around her and made himself comfortable on the sand. "It's one of the reasons why I don't bother about prohibition."

If he had said this to pique her curiosity, he was highly successful. "Prohibition?" she echoed. Immediately afterward she made herself more prim; and Dilworth wasn't dissatisfied, for he approved of recessive women. Moreover, the feminine voice had always seemed to him the most appealing of all feminine attributes; and hers was exquisite. He began to cancel his desire for her to go home. He had felt, by a sort of mental squatter sovereignty, that this peninsula was virtually his own; but if the trespasser would consent to talk a little he had no great objection to her lingering awhile.

"Why, there's nothing very remarkable about it," he said. "I guess that most of us come to the point, now and then, when we've simply got to get outside of ourselves or bust. Some people do it with champagne; and others don't. But this is plenty good enough for me. You can look out there over the water and hypnotize yourself in no time, and then everything's just the way you imagine it is—or ought to be."

She looked over at him, but her response was long delayed. Nevertheless, her manner was slightly more settled.

"Is that why you come here?"

"Partly."

"Not just to like it for itself?" Her modulation was a stimulant to his taste. He loved it.

"That's the other part."

She remained for several seconds on the point of speaking before she finally spoke. "I wonder if it's a good habit."

"It's better than the alcohol habit," said Dilworth. "And it doesn't cost so much, and it can't get you into trouble with the authorities."

"No—I mean, do you think it's a very