

MADAME LE BARGY

Diane, when I knew for certain that Maurice had fallen into the sea, that they had recovered his body, that he was buried in German soil, then I felt that I should never live another moment. I felt as you have felt. I wanted to die. I could not bear it. I came here to this house. I was mad for the sight of him, for the things that he had touched and loved. I flew into his room and dragged his clothes from the pegs and crushed them to me, but even the odor and touch of his personal belongings was not enough to calm me. I came into this room. Then I drew near that chair. Something—I don't know what—drove me to sit in it. I flung myself into it as if it were into his arms, and I wept out all my grief. Then, all at once, a great calm came over me. I looked upon my solemn black dress in amazement and distaste. I looked into my solemn and black heart with surprise and shame. I felt that Maurice was alive, that he was not dead, Diane. Then I remembered, as I sat there, that it was in this chair that he had sat when he came to say good-by. There he had sat talking happily and confidently—he had seemed filled with radiance. And so he has talked to me again and again. Every day, at the same time, at twilight, I have sat there and felt myself with Maurice. We have talked together, just as we always did. There is nothing weird or supernatural about it, Diane. He is just as we knew him, as we knew him in those swift, strange moments when, in a flash, the body seems to slip aside and spirit rushes out to meet spirit. That is all. People see me cheerful and smiling and they say that I am mad. The few to whom I have told of these talks pity me and are sure that I have lost my reason. Perhaps, in a worldly sense, I am mad. But I know this, Diane, that Maurice lives as usual, more truly, than he did six weeks ago. I know that his youth has not been sacrificed in vain. As the dead plant enriches the soil from which it grew and into which it finally falls, so will this young soul in all its bloom enrich the life out of which it sprang and from which it can never entirely disappear.

