

Do not deny me your friendship. Do not exile me to the iceberg from which I would so gladly depart."

She bent with tearful eyes over the hand stretched toward her.

"I was not always alone," he said. "I once had a daughter. She would be like you were she living, but I lost her and have not even the consolation of knowing where she lies."

"I know not the grave of my parents," she said quietly.

"Why! have you not always been with them? From what Miss Rosa tells me they died before you left America."

"They were my foster parents."

Stöger became highly excited. "So Miss Rosa is not your true sister?"

"Not by blood. We grew up as sisters and it was the wish of my foster parents that I forget my true relation to them."

"Do you remember nothing of your parents?"

Stöger stood erect but reseated himself when he noticed the astonishment of the young women.

"Of my father I remember nothing, but the image of my mother is firmly connected with the remembrance of a night, the terrors of which I shall never forget.

"I must have been about four years old at the time and remember being aboard a ship, but my recollection of it is very hazy. Only that one night I was awakened by being roughly torn from my bed. I heard the howling of a storm, the groaning and creaking of the vessel and the despairing cry, 'The ship is sinking!' I did not comprehend what had happened, but I knew that it must be awful. My mother stumbled with me upon deck. There a scene of indescribable confusion was before us. The night roundabout, the roaring of the sea and the fearful cries of the crew nearly robbed me of my senses. I only know that suddenly the vessel lurched and we were hurled violently against the deck rail. Bracing herself here as best she could my mother took from her bosom this locket and put it about my neck with the words: 'Never part with it. Hear! Never give it away. It's from your father. His name is ——!'"

That is all I heard, and then hugging me for a moment so tightly that I almost smothered she cast me into a boat. After that all was blank, and when I recovered consciousness I found myself with my foster parents. They told me that my mother had been drowned by one of the boats upsetting and not knowing to whom I belonged they took me into their family."