

A SENSATION NOVEL

BY A SMALL BOY

CHAPTER I

We meet at the Hick's, Jane Reid and I. On Twelfth Night. I love Jane Reid as soon as I see her. She is tall, grandly tall, graceful, dark, with big rolling eyes. She is older than I: in point of fact she is twenty-seven. I forgot to say that I am nine. I dance twice with her; I fight James Jones for her, and I thrash James Jones, though he is ten-and-a-half, and in trowsers. I give Jane Reid a harlequin off the Twelfth Cake. She does not eat it. Agony! She observes my sorrow and asks its source. I tell her. She pleads that it will disagree with her. So it will! I see it all! Rapture!

CHAPTER II

Our loves progress. James Jones has gone to school. I am to remain at home and have a governess. Poor James Jones! I have not yet declared myself, but we, that is Jane Reid and I, understand each other. On the fourteenth I send her a valentine - an original one. It is to the following effect:

“Friendship fills the heart with love and admiration;
Adieu, Jane, frank and hoppy!”

It should have been “happy,” but no matter. It must not be supposed that I was going to leave her because I bade her adieu. I used the word in a poetical sense. I watched her as she opened it. She laughed - with joy, no doubt. Darling girl!

CHAPTER III

Thunder! Our dream of bliss is destroyed. I hate Jane Reid. I loathe, I detest the false-hearted tigress. This is strong language from one so young, but no matter. I will have her blood! Why? Listen! *She has slapped me!!!* Why? For tearing her dress out of the gathers. In point of fact I was in the act of throwing myself at her feet. I miscalculated my distance (being new at it) and so worked my loves destruction! Revenge!

CHAPTER IV

I cannot help loving her - she is so grandly beautiful! She has given me some barley sugar, which I wear next to my heart. The days are getting warmer, and the heat begins to tell upon it - the barley sugar, of course. It trickles in an uncomfortable manner. Nevertheless, I persevere. It shall abide there as long as the weather will allow it. Everybody loves Jane Reid. Even my papa adores her. If I had a mamma, she would, I am sure, adore her also. I drink to her in ginger-wine!

CHAPTER V

Joy! Jane Reid is coming to stay with us as my governess. Dear papa is very fond of her. I think he has noticed our mutual attachment, and he already treats her as

a daughter. She sits on his knee for hours together. Dear Jane Reid! I am so glad you like your future papa! What a happy family we shall be!

CHAPTER VI

Misery! James Jones has come home for the holidays! He lives next door to me, and makes love to Jane over the balcony. He has certain personal attractions, there is no denying that. But he is a boy of an ill-regulated turn of mind, and has a taste for skinning mice. I caught Jane asking him whether he liked his school. A hideous double meaning may lie beneath those remarkable words. I will watch him with her, carefully.

CHAPTER VII

It is but too true! They love each other. She is unwell - he sends her a bottle of leeches of his own gathering, and she has accepted them, and they are now pulling away at *her* own gathering! For it *is* a gathering! On the thumb! I need hardly say that James Jones dies. I catch him in our parlour one day when papa is out with my Jane. He is at the jam. I hit him on the head. He kicks and dies. How to dispose of him? Agony! Papa and Jane are at the door - another moment and they will discover all! Ha! The grate! A good thought. I stuff the body in the drawing-room grate and conceal it with the fire board. I receive them with a smile. Jane says I am a good boy. And so I am.

CHAPTER VIII

Mr. and Mrs. Jones bear the loss of their boy with singular equanimity. They do not even allude to it. What can this mean? Callous parents. But Jones was always a nuisance, and I have no doubt they were glad to get rid of him.

CHAPTER IX

That body haunts me! I cannot sleep! I cannot enjoy myself in the drawing-room with the knowledge that young Jones's bones are behind that board! Who could be light hearted with such a blighting secret in his bosom? So I am glad to go to Margate with Papa and Jane.

CHAPTER X

For a month I have been happy. Papa's affection for Jane is delightful. He asks me how I should like Miss Reid to live with us for ever? I reply, "Rapture!" He rejoins, "Quite so." Darling Jane, I must soon declare myself. This wooing of ours has continued long enough.

CHAPTER XI

Home to that dreadful drawing room! We have begun fires, and on the next occasion of our having any friends, the drawing-room board will be removed and all will be known! But cannot I conceal the hideous remains ere it be too late? Agony! It

is too late. I might hide him in my play-box in the nursery, if he were fit to be removed. But he isn't. Despair!

CHAPTER XII

I will propose to Jane, marry her, and leave this horrible house, and the ghastly evidence of my hideous crime. Ha! What is this my papa tells me? I am to have Jane for a second mamma. Ha! ha! ha! ha! ha! These are, of course, hysterical. I see it all - his attention to her - her devotion to him - her devotion to me! I will go and drown myself. In the Serpentine. But ha! who is this? What is this dread apparition that gravely stalks towards me? *Can* it be - Jones? It is! Ha! ha! Have at thee, denizen of the sepulchre! We struggle - he explains that he was only stunned - that he escaped from the fireplace, and that he kept the thing a secret on account of the disgraceful circumstances under which I found him. I thrust him into the inky waters. They close upon him. I hold him down. It freezes. It freezes hard. The ice thickens around my arms, though it is still "in a very dangerous state." I am a fixture! I cannot get out. I must remain here until I die!

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