"There's rosemary, that's for remembrance: pray, love, remember; and there is pansies, that's for thoughts."

HERE were four of us, and we were fond of yarning. Two, Raynold and I, had been classmates at college, and formed the nucleus. Joggins had shot a tiger off my back in India five years before, and had refused to be anything less than a revering companion because I got healed of the bite in my neck.

Tatarentuello was the only original one of the four. We called him Tarantula, because we knew it, and were the only ones who dared to chaff him; also because women said he was poisonous. Tarantula was a symphonic product of the sunny South,—a Peruvian and a New Orleans creole. How the last two found each other has nothing to do with the case,—enough that their joint offspring was ample excuse for the trouble. Tarantula's claim to our consideration was based upon three facts: he had followed Tongue-in-the-Mud, the most blood-bespattered chief who ever chased scalps with the Sioux, into the Black Hills, tracked him for six days, and on the seventh sent his scalp to the Secretary of War; he had rescued an American girl from the harem of Mahmoud the Second, and restored her to her palpitating Boston lover, and he never wore his medals.

It was our custom to meet at six o'clock on Christmas Eve, spend thirty-six hours together, and then separate for any time, from a week to fifty-one and the fraction. We were always together Christmas Day, and some of us were separated by at least the diameter of the globe for the rest of the year. This year we three were waiting for Tarantula. It was five minutes of six, and we were hungry. On the other side of the portières Mulek was softly putting in place the last dishes; the smell was delicious.

"Tarantula's coming late, and it's his yarn this year," complained Joggins. Joggins was skeptical.

Six dull alarms sounded from some spire in the neighborhood, the portières were clapped back by Mulek, and Tarantula stepped across the threshold from the hall. We greeted with a Merry Christmas each to Tarantula, and Tarantula to each, and took our seats. When Mulek had cleared the board, had laid a box of cigars by three plates, and a jeweled cigarette case by Tarantula's, had uncorked the bottle of curaçao, and withdrawn, Tarantula began his story.

"June I spent in Paree. I was in the Hotel M——, on the Rue de Rivoli. My room looked out upon those peaceful Tuilleries, where the moonlight was very beautiful, the trees were very still, and the shadows were very soft. Soon I was going to hear La Belle Narcisse at the Astrologes. Paree was then off her feet to get to hear her sing. Nevertheless she sang well; she had a heart, and she used it to help her sing.

"I was on the balcony, listening to one of Narcisse's songs in my memory. I heard a sound in my room; I turned around, and there was a woman there. Ah, she was beautiful! She was what Joggins would call a queen,—wishing to say a woman who is so beautiful that her worshipers are as many as all those who have had queens since Cleopatra.

"She was twenty-eight, and her figure was superb. She stood in the center of the room, and looked at me. I stood up quickly, and then I could not move; I could only look too, while her lovely face spoke to me through its splendid eyes, you would call those of other women; hers were lakes and skies of Italy, and I have only seen something like their mellowness in a grotto in a glacier in the Alps.

"All at once she raised her arms and the cloak fell away from them, and she stretched them, bare and pleading, out to me. Tears came up into her eyes, and they seemed more beautiful because they were softer.

"'Madame,' I said, 'where is he?'

"Her eyes grew softer, still softer, and for a moment they were not looking at me, and I felt cold. Then she spoke:—