

1: HOT FREE BOOKS – Lady Bridget in the Never-Never Land – Rosa Praed – 5

Mrs Gildea sighed as she read, and pictured in her imagination the wild wastes of the Never-Never Land and the rough head-station which was to be Lady Bridget's home. BOOK II From the Point of View of.

You call an act of common humanity folly—doing what one could to relieve the agony of a fellow creature. I am glad that I differ from you—and from your servant. Mrs Hensor refused to help that poor gin who had a spear through her arm and was shrieking with pain. What a great Viking he had looked! But what a MAN she had felt him to be then, among the other men! It seemed an outrage on her idealised image of him to hear him speaking in that dry, caustic manner. The Gulf natives have a nasty way of barbing and poisoning their spears. An ordinary spear-thrust is nothing to either black or white. Wombo could have pulled the thing out, and in a few hours the gin would have been all right again. I took her temperature this morning when I re-banded the wound. That what you did, eh? They were both starving. She heard him go into his office, and presently the door of it slammed behind him. She knew that he was going to the culprits in the hide-house, and wondered what punishment he would mete unto them. Had he gone to the office for his gun? She stood waiting, absorbed in her fears, so abstracted from her ordinary outside surroundings that she was unaware of the approach of two horsemen from the Gully Crossing. They did not stop at the garden gate, but made for the usual station entrance at the back. And just then, appalling shrieks, from the rear of the home, justified the impression. Lady Bridget ran through the sitting-room to the veranda behind, which again connected on either side the new house with the Old Humpey and kitchen and store-wing—the hide-house standing slightly apart at the end of the store building. The three verandas and garden plot made a kind of amphitheatre; and now, into the arena, came the actors in the little tragedy. From the hide-house, McKeith dragged the prisoners, and through the gateway in the palings which made the fourth side of the enclosure. With one hand he clutched Wombo, with the other Oola, who in her lace-trimmed petticoat and flowered kimono was truly a tragi-comic spectacle. McKeith carried his coiled stockwhip in the hand which held Wombo. Of course, Colin could not lift his hand to a woman, though he was a brute and the woman only a black-gin. Lady Bridget felt faintly glad at this. She watched the scene, half fascinated, half disgusted, all her attention concentrated on these three figures. She had but a dim consciousness of two men riding round the store-wing and dismounting. One of the two remained in the background screened by the trails of native cucumber overhanging the veranda end. The other—a wiry, powerful figure in uniform, with a rubicund face, black bristling moustache and beard and prominent black eyes, reminding one of the eyes of a bull—walked forward and spoke with an air of official assurance. He had released the pair and now stood grimly surveying them. Oola was crying and squealing; Wombo stood upright—a scowl of hate on his face. His whole nature seemed changed. There was something of savage dignity in the defiant way in which he faced his former master. What for no all same black fellow? The black boy sprang aside. McKeith pointed to the gidia scrub and issued a terse command in the native language. Her face was turned full towards the man hidden by the creepers, who was watching her with intense interest, but she was unconscious of his gaze. Oola, cowed, whimpering, behind him. Then, she made an appeal to Lady Bridget, stretching out her unbandaged arm imploringly. That fellow medsin man—husband belonging to me. Lathychap suppose Massa let Wombo sit down long-a head-station—two day, three day—black fellow get tired—up stick—no more look out. Her tribe will kill them, and they have no weapons and no means of protection. Will you, as a favour to me, let them stay for a few days? At least, till her arm is healed and the danger past? I never break my word. The whip lashed out again. The two ran screaming lustily towards the rocks and scrubby country at the head of the gully. Lady Bridget uttered a shuddering exclamation and made an impetuous movement with arms partly outstretched as if to follow the pair. Then her arms dropped and she stood stock still. There was a dead silence. In all the relations of husband and wife, never had there been a moment more crucial as affecting their ultimate future. They looked at each other unflinchingly, neither speaking. Here was the stubborn determination of a fighting man, never to admit himself in the wrong. He saw only contempt, repulsion in her gaze. The larger issues narrowed to a conflict of two egoisms. It seemed to both as though, in the space of that last quarter of an hour, they had become mortal

foes. The police inspector broke in upon the tense silence. Here was another egoism to be reckoned with—malevolently officious. No fear of them taking to the outside bush with the tribe hanging round. But as I was saying, with my respects, my lady, Mr McKeith knows very well how to treat the blacks. Then, without a word she turned her back on him. The inspector infuriated, muttered in his throat. Harris had never before stayed the night at Moongarr, and he had confidently expected to be received with honour. Just to concert our measures for the proper protection of the Pastoralists and the safeguarding of the woolsheds this shearing season. The spunk had gone out of him, as Harris would have phrased it; and the Inspector, looking at Lady Bridget, guessed the reason. Her graceful aloofness, which he knew to be merely a social trick, stung him inexpressibly, the faint bow she had given Harris when he bade her good evening had seemed to include himself. It galled him that he did not seem fitted by nature or breeding to cope with this kind of situation. The half-consciousness of inferiority put him still more at disadvantage with himself. She paused at the steps, her hand on the railings, her eyes under their lowered lids ignoring him. He went closer and spoke rapidly in a harsh undertone. Tall—though not as tall or as massively built as Colin McKeith, firm boned and muscular, but with a sort of feline grace of movement. There was the unmistakable stamp of civilisation, and, at the same time, an exotic suggestion of the East, of wild spaces, adventure, romance. Not in the least a Bushman, but wearing with ease and picturesqueness, a backwoods get-up. Clothes, extremely well cut; riding breeches and boots; soft shirt and falling collar with a silk tie of dull flame colour knotted at the sinewy throat, loose coat, Panama hat. So much for the figure. The face ugly, but distinguished, sallow-brown in colouring. Nose long, fine, with a slight twist below the bridge; cheeks and chin clean-shaven, an enormous dark moustache concealing the mouth. Hair black, slightly grizzled, and when he lifted his hat forming a thick lightly frosted crest above his forehead. Eyes black—peculiar eyes, sombre, restless, but with a gaze, steady and piercing when concentrated on a particular object, as, just now, it was concentrated on Lady Bridget. The gaze seemed compelling. The effect of it upon her was so marked that McKeith, watching her face, felt a shock of surprise. The change in her was noticed by the Police Inspector, with malevolent curiosity. So also by Mrs Hensor, a little further away. The new-comer saluted her with a low bow, his hat in one hand, the other extended. She stared at him as if he had been a ghost, and at first seemed unable to speak. But her confusion lasted only a few seconds. Almost before he had finished his sentence she had pulled herself together. Her hand was in his, and she spoke in her old fluty voice and little grand manner, with the old slow, faintly whimsical smile on her lips and in her eyes. It came over McKeith that he had not of late been familiar with this aspect of her, and that she was exhibiting to this man the same strange charm of her girlhood which had been to him, in the full fervour of his devotion, so wonderful and worshipful, but of which—he knew it now—the Bush had to a great extent robbed her. She laughed as she withdrew her hand from that of the newcomer. And standing on the steps, her head almost on a level with his, met his eyes with challenging directness. If my husband had mentioned your name I should not have been so taken by surprise. And later, we saw something of each other in London. He did not understand or care about my old environment any more than I understood—or cared about his. So we agreed to bury our respective pasts in oblivion. I admire your mutual courage in adopting it. The fact is, those Blacks put other things out of my head. I know the popular idea of asserting British supremacy over coloured races, by the force of the whip. I have not always seen it answer; but then my experience has been with natives rather higher in the scale of evolution than the Australian aboriginal.

2: Lady Bridget in the Never-Never Land: a story of Australian life by Rosa Praed

Lady Bridget in the Never-Never Land has 15 ratings and 2 reviews. Calzean said: Written in the early s, this is a love story between a Lady from Eng.

She was very young, soft and round of outline, with hair straighter and more glossy than is usual among her kind, and large black eyes now raining tears. She wiped them away with a sooty hand, pink in the palm. Her left arm hung limp by her side. Lady Bridget jumped to her feet, all concern. He had broken off the long end of the spear to expedite their flight-- so he explained in his queer lingo--but Oola had cried so much that he had not been able to draw out the rest of the shaft. You gib it one old fellow skirt. You must have that spear pulled out and your arm seen to. Come with me to the Humpey. What for Boss shoot Oola? Plenty black feller frightened. Boss has gone away. She knew also that McKeith had forbidden the black-boy, under pain of severe penalty, to seek the coveted bride. Of course, it was all nonsense about his shooting the poor creature, though no doubt, in ordinary circumstances, he would have sent them off the station. Lady Bridget hurried them over the crossing and up the hill. The white men were all out with the cattle. The thing is important. This poor gin has a spear through her arm--it must be attended to immediately. Wombo is hurt too. The wounds must be washed and dressed. Look at the poor creatures. They are used to being knocked about. You will answer to your master for this disobedience! She could have slain Mrs Hensor at that moment. She took the blacks to the veranda of the old Humpey and went to look in the office for antiseptics, lint and bandages. Chen Sing, the Chinese cook, came at her call, and rendered assistance with the bland phlegm of his race. In her spasms of East End philanthropy she had learned the first principles of surgical aid. Now that they were comfortable and out of pain, fed and given tobacco to smoke and a tot of rum apiece, they had time to remember superstitious fears kept at bay while they had been running for their life. Both were afraid to show themselves in the open. It means death or the direst misfortune. For this reason, Wombo and Oola had fled back to Moongarr. Now Wombo and Oola besought Bridget to hide them from the vengeful furies. There was that slab and bark hut at the end of the kitchen and store wing. Nobody was likely at present to want to go into it. The door had a padlock, and it was used as a store-house for the hides of beasts that had been killed for the sake of the skins when in the last stage of pleuro. Here Lady Bridget installed Wombo and Oola. That excitement over, the lonely mistress of Moongarr went back to her own habitation. She ate her solitary dinner and paced the veranda till darkness fell and the haunted loneliness became an almost unbearable oppression. Vast plains, distant ranges, gidia scrub and the far horizon melted into an illimitable shadow. The world seemed boundless as the starry sky--and yet she was in prison! She had longed for the freedom of the wild, and her life was more circumscribed than ever. A phrase in an Australian poem, that had struck her when she had read it not long ago came back upon her with poignant meaning. The gum trees enclosed for her one immense cell and she had become utterly weary of her mental and her spiritual incarceration. The most sordid sights and sounds of London streets, the most inane babble of a fashionable crowd would be more stimulating to her brain, sweeter in her ears than the arid expanse, the weird bush noises --howl of dingoes, wail of curlews, lowing of cattle--that a year ago had seemed so eerily fascinating. The romance of it had faded, as it were, into the dull drab of withered gum leaves. The charm of primal conditions had been overpowered by their discomfort. Nature had never intended her for the wife of a backwoodsman. At times she felt an almost unendurable craving for the ordinary luxuries of civilisation. The bathing appliances here--or rather, the lack of them--were often positive torture to her. She had come to loathe wild duck--when the men had time to shoot it. She could never bring herself to destroy harmless creatures, and was a rank coward over firearms. Talk of the simple life! Why, it was only since they had got Fo Wung that there had been any vegetables. And the climate--though the short winter had been pleasant enough as a whole--was abominable. The long summer heat, the flies and the mosquitoes! What had she not suffered the first summer after her marriage! And now the hot weather was coming again. That was not the root of the trouble, however-- Bridget was honest enough to confess it. The root lay in herself--in her own instability of purpose, her mercurial temperament. She had been born with that temperament. She was spoiling now for emotional excitement. Lady Bridget meant to stand by

the savage lovers. She would not allow Colin to treat them badly when he came back. Ninnis, the overseer, broke upon her restless meditations. He considered her flighty and extravagant in her ideas, and was always divided between unwilling fascination and grumpy disapproval. To-night he was in the latter mood and this incensed Lady Bridget. Lady Bridget set her little white teeth. Now the Government have sent up a military patrol, I believe. Had it been anybody else she would have encouraged him to stay and talk. As it was, she resumed her lonely pacing, and did not go to her room till the whole station was abed. When at last she went to sleep she dreamed again vividly of Willoughby Maule. McKeith returned, without warning, the following afternoon. He was not alone, but had spurred on in advance of the other two men he had brought with him. Lady Bridget, reading in her hammock at the upper end of the veranda, heard the sound of a horse approaching, and saw her husband appear above the hill from the Gully Crossing. She supposed, naturally, that someone at the Quarters had attracted his attention, then remembering that Ninnis and the white men were out with the cattle, wondered, as the minutes went by, who and what detained him. Tommy Hensor, running up from the garden with his evening dole of vegetables, enlightened her. I can see him. He is up, talking to Mother. Her sentiment of dislike towards that person was of quite another order. But she was just in the mood to resent neglect on the part of McKeith. She called to the child: McKeith had dismounted, and with one foot on the edge of the veranda, was facing Mrs Hensor, who looked fresh and comely in a clean blouse and bright-coloured skirt. The two seemed to have a good deal to say to each other, though Lady Bridget heard only the voices, not the words. Her Irish temper rose at the thought that Mrs Hensor might be giving him her version of the Wombo episode. She felt glad that the black-boy and his gin were comfortably sleeping off the effect of their wounds, and of the plentiful meals supplied them in the hide-house, and thus were not in evidence. When McKeith spoke, it was in a dictatorial, angry tone-- that of the incensed master. Clearly, however, Mrs Hensor was not the object of his wrath. As things happened, the beast lashed out at him, and Tommy had a very narrow escape of being badly kicked. Lady Bridget heard Mrs Hensor shriek and saw her husband drag the child to the veranda and examine him anxiously, Mrs Hensor bending with him. He was fond of children, specially so of this one. Lady Bridget knew, though he had never said so to her, that he was disappointed at there being no apparent prospect of her having a child. And she--with her avidity for any new sort of sensation, although she scoffed at the joy of maternity--felt secretly inclined sometimes to gird at fate for having so far denied her this experience. She herself liked Tommy in her contradictory, whimsical fashion; but now, the fuss over, the boy--who clearly was not in the least hurt--made her very cross, and she became positively furious at seeing McKeith delay yet further to unstrap his valise and get out a toy he must have bought for Tommy in Tunumburra. There, his wife was standing, very pale, very erect, her eyes glittering ominously. McKeith was through the gate and up the flight of steps in three or four strides. He seemed to sense the antagonism in her, and demanded at once, without waiting to give her any greeting. He stared at her for a moment or two as if surprised; his face reddened, and his eyes, too, glittered. I had to speak to Mrs Hensor about beds being wanted up there, and of course I asked her how things had been going on. She defied my orders. You call an act of common humanity folly--doing what one could to relieve the agony of a fellow creature.

3: Lady Bridget in the Never-Never Land by Rosa Praed () - Full Text Free Book (Part 5/7)

Free kindle book and epub digitized and proofread by Project Gutenberg. Lady Bridget in the Never-Never Land: a story of Australian life by Praed - Free Ebook Project Gutenberg.

While visiting Joan, Bidy meets Colin McKeith, a roughly-hewn, Scottish-born pioneer, drover, miner, sometime-politician, and magistrate in the north-eastern colony. Bidy and Colin fall in love: As Bidy and Colin embark on their life together, the contemporary issues of colonial Australia are revealed: The couple discover fundamental differences in their perspectives on many topics. How does All You Can Books work? The service works on any major device including computers, smartphones, music players, e-readers, and tablets. But "I warn you" ugly things happen in the Back-Blocks. He told me about a gun you have with a great many notches on the barrel of it, and he said that each notch represented a black-fellow that you had killed. What right had you to do that? You were the aggressor. They fought in the only way they understood. Read More Community Reviews 3. Lady Bridget is a feisty independent type with "modern ideas". She marries McKeith who is her image of a real man, plus she is in need of some financial se A love story of a man and a woman who come from utterly different worlds the Bush in Australia and an aristocrat from Ireland that also addresses topics of female independence, divorce, slavery, and union w What are your favorite books? Sign in with your email Your information is secure and only used for our communication with you. Your information is secure and only used for our communication with you. Read our clear Privacy Policy. This is about as close to nirvana as I have found!

4: Never Never (Australian outback) - Wikipedia

Lady Bridget had read so far when the door of the bathroom opened and McKeith came out, clean again in fresh riding gear, and with a valise ready packed and strapped in his hand.

It was a primitive cottage of the old style, standing in a garden and built on the cliff — the Emu Point side — overlooking the broad Leichardt River. The veranda, quite twelve feet wide, ran — Australian fashion — along the front of the cottage, except for the two closed-in ends forming, one a bathroom and the other a kind of store closet. Being raised a few feet above the ground, the veranda was enclosed by a wooden railing, and this and the supporting posts were twined with creepers that must have been planted at least thirty years. One of these, a stephanotis, showed masses of white bloom, which Joan Gildea casually reflected would have fetched a pretty sum in Covent Garden, and, joining in with a fine-growing asparagus fern, formed an arch over the entrance steps. The end of the veranda, where Mrs Gildea had established herself with her type-writer and paraphernalia of literary work, was screened by a thick-stemmed grape-vine, which made a dapple of shadow and sunshine upon the boarded floor. Some bunches of late grapes — it was the very beginning of March — hung upon the vine, and, at the other end of the veranda, grew a passion creeper, its great purple fruit looking like huge plums amidst its vivid green leaves. The roof of the veranda was low, with projecting eaves, below which a bunch of yellowing bananas hung to ripen. In fact, the veranda and garden beyond would have been paradise to a fruitarian. Against the wall of the store-room, stood a large tin dish piled with melons, pine-apples and miscellaneous garden produce, while, between the veranda posts, could be seen a guava-tree, an elderly fig and a loquat all in full bearing. The garden seemed a tangle of all manner of vegetation — an oleander in bloom, a poinsettia, a yucca, lifting its spike of waxen white blossoms, a narrow flower-border in which the gardenias had become tall shrubs and the scented verbena shrubs almost trees. As for the blend of perfume, it was dreamily intoxicating. Two bamboos, guarding the side entrance gate, made a soft whispering that heightened the dream-sense. The bottom of the garden looked an inchoate mass of greenery topped by the upper boughs of tall straggling gum trees, growing outside where the ground fell gradually to the river. From where Mrs Gildea sat, she had a view of almost the whole reach of the river where it circles Emu Point. Mrs Gildea could see the plan of the main street in the Middle Point and the roofs of shops and offices. The heat-haze over the town and the brilliant sun-sparkles on the river suggested a cruel glare outside the shady veranda and over-grown old garden. A pleasant study, if a bit distracting from its plenitude of associations to Australian-born Joan Gildea, who, on her marriage, had been transplanted into English soil, as care-free as a rose cut from the parent stem, and who now, after nearly twenty years, had returned to the scene of her youth — a widow, a working journalist and shorn of most of her early illusions. Her typewriter stood on a bamboo table before her. A pile of Australian Hansards for reference sat on a chair at convenient distance. A large table with a green cloth, at her elbow, had at one end a tray with the remains of her breakfast of tea, scones and fruit. The end nearest her was littered with sheaves of manuscript, newspaper-cuttings, photographs and sepia sketches — obviously for purposes of illustration: She had meant to be very busy that morning. It had been an immense honour when Mr Gibbs had chosen Joan Gildea from amongst his staff for a roving commission to report upon the political, financial, economic and social aspects of Australia, and upon Imperial interests generally, as represented in various sideshows on her route. But it happened that she was now suffering from a change at the last moment in that route — a substitution of the commonplace P. For this story dates back to the time when Mr Joseph Chamberlain was in office; when Imperialism, Free Trade and Yellow Labour were the catch words of a party, and before the great Australian Commonwealth had become an historical fact. She was wondering whether the English mail expected to-day would bring her troublesome editorial instructions. She examined some of the photographs and drawings with a dissatisfied air. A running inarticulate commentary might have been put into words like this: I can manage the letterpress all right once I get the hang of things. And Gibbs hates having amateur snapshots to work up. Hopeless to try for a local artist. I wonder if Colin McKeith could give me an idea. Money, I suppose — or a Man! The she appended her signature and wrote this address: Mr Gibbs was not quite so tiresome as she had

feared he would be. After him, the packet from her London flat was inspected and its contents laid aside for future perusal. Next, she tackled the local letters. The telegram was phrased thus: No funds â€” and other reasons â€” meaning â€” a Man. Had it been merely a question of lack of money with inclination goading, she felt pretty certain that Lady Bridget would have contrived to beg, borrow or steal â€” on a hazardous promissory note, after the happy-go-lucky financial morals of that section of society to which by birth she belonged. Or, failing these means, that she would have threatened some mad enterprise and so have frightened her aunt Eliza Countess of Gaverick into writing a cheque for three figures. Of course, less would have been of no account. Mrs Gildea opened the two envelopes and sorted the pages in order of their dates. The first had the address of a house in South Belgravia, where lived Sir Luke Tallant of the Colonial Office and Rosamond his wife â€” distant connections of the Gavericks. Likewise, the slapdash epistolary style of the MS. Vancouver was right, I suppose. I sent it from Rome. I should have loved the Australian trip. Your "Bush" sounds perfectly captivating, and, of course, I could do the illustrations you want. A man has come and upset the apple-cart. The letter answered her thought. The first moment I saw him, I had the queerest sort of arrested sensation. Joan, the experience was thrilling, positively electrifying â€” Glamour â€” personal magnetism. Descriptions are so hopeless. By the way, Molly annoyed me horribly the other day. For could you suppose," she went on to say, "that Chris and Mama â€” to say nothing of Aunt Eliza â€” would tolerate an adventurer who tells tall stories about buried treasure and native rebellions and expects one to be amused! Oh, how I detest the label! And that unspeakably dreadful idea of social sheep and goats â€” and the unfathomable abyss between Suburbia and Belgravia! Though I frankly own that to me Suburbia represents the Absolutely Impossible. After all, one must go right into the Wilderness to escape the conditions of that state of life to which you happen to have been born. Likewise a Champion of the Dispossessed. He has an intense sympathy with the indigenous populations, and thinks the British system of conquering and corrupting native races simply a disgrace to civilisation. With all of which sentiments I entirely agree. Luke has taken to him immensely, chiefly, I fancy, because he was once private secretary to some Administrating Rajah in an Eastern-Archipelago or Indian Island, and as Luke is hankering after a colonial governorship, he wants to scrape up all the information he can about such posts. I answered Molly that one may have a violent attraction to a man without in the least wanting to marry him, and that relieved her mind a little. As for Him, the attraction on his part seems equally violent. We do the most shockingly unconventional things together. A comfortable existence in England â€” his doctor advises him to settle down in a temperate climate â€” an appointment on some City Board â€” rubber shares and that kind of thing â€” you know it all â€” a red brick house in South Kensington and perhaps a little place in the country. He did not fill in the picture â€” but I did for him â€” with the charmingly domesticated wife â€” well connected: He must be genuinely in love with the nice English Girl. In fact, we are both in an impasse. To my mind marriage is only conceivable with a barbarian or a millionaire. And you know my reasons for adding another clause to my litany. Good Lord deliver me also from further experience of the exciting vicissitudes of a stock-jobbing career! Then again, apart from personal prejudices, I am appalled, quite simply, at the cold-blooded marriage traffic that I see going on in London. Any crime committed in the name of Love is forgivable, but to sell a girl â€” soul and body to the highest bidder is to my mind, the unpardonable sin against the Holy Ghost. What is there to like? She has just married the one before Hester to what she calls the perfect type of an English country gentleman â€” meaning that he owns an historical castle in Scotland, a coal mine in Wales and a mansion in Park Lane. Give me something real â€” anything but the semi-detached indifference of most of the couples one knows. My man must be strong enough to carry me off my feet and to break down all the conventions of "our class. Now, if my Soldier of Fortune were to ask me to climb the Andes with him in search of that buried treasure! Do you know, that since my violent attraction to him â€” or whatever you like to call it â€” all sorts of odd bits of revelation have come to me as to the things that really matter! I begin to understand and to sympathise with that pathetic striving after beauty which one sees in the tawdry finery and exaggerated hairdressing of a kitchenmaid â€” Rosamond Tallant has one who is wonderful to behold as she mounts the area steps on her Sundays out. Formerly I should have been horrified at that kitchenmaid. Am I not at this very moment sitting with complexion cream daubed on my face, in order that I may appear more attractive to my young man. The

other pair have disappointed us. Will I defy conventions and dine with Him alone? Of course I will. Mrs Gildea laid it down upon the earlier ones and took another from the little pile which she had spread in sequence for perusal. She smiled to herself in mournful amusement. For she scarcely questioned the probability that her friend would in due course become disillusioned of a very ordinary individual " he certainly sounded a little like an adventurer " who for some occult reason had been idealised by this great-souled, wayward and utterly foolish creature. On how many pyres had not that oft-widowed soul committed suttee to be resurrected at the next freak of Destiny! And yet with it all, there was something strangely elusive, curiously virginal about Lady Bridget. She had been in love so often: Joan Gildea perfectly realised the distinction. Bidy had been as much, and more in love with ideas as with persons. Art, Literature, Higher Thought, Nature, Philanthropy, Mysticism " she spelled everything with a capital letter " Platonic Passion " the last most dangerous and most recurrent. As soon as one Emotional Interest burned out another rose from the ashes. And, while they lasted, she never counted the cost of these emotional interests.

5: Lady Bridget in the Never-Never Land by Rosa Praed () - Full Text Free Book (Part 6/7)

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As she made no answer, he asked sharply: And perhaps you will be able to shoot somebody with a clear conscience, which will be more stimulating still. Really Mr Maule, you are lucky to have come in for a civil war--I heard that in South America that was your particular interest. Do you carry civil wars about with you? I wonder which side you would take. He looked straight at his wife-- shoulders and jaws squared, eyes like flashing steel under the grim brows. The expression of his face gave Bridget a little sense of shock. She raised herself abruptly, and her eyes flashed pride and defiance too. HE is to be allowed freedom of contract I presume, though the shearers are not. A kick in the beam and one end is up and the other end down. No rain, and the banks would foreclose on most of us. Two years ago the skies were all smiling on my fortunes. But the stars have never licked me yet. He should have gone his way and kept her out of his affairs. Maule got up and strolled into the sitting-room, where he seemed engrossed in the pictures on the wall. Just then Cudgee, the black boy, hailed McKeith from the foot of the steps. He sit down long-a Old Humpey. She got up from the long chair, and as she did so her cigarette case dropped from her lap. He picked it up and it lay on his open palm, the diamonds and rubies of her maiden initials glistening on the gold lid. They looked at each other across it. Her fingers touched his hand as she took the case from him, and he gave a little shiver of pleasure. They moved to the divan near the fireplace, where some red embers remained of the log of sandalwood. Its perfume lingered faintly in the atmosphere. Well, your husband has given me the chance of knowing you--better--and I warn you that I shall not scruple to avail myself of the opportunity. They both inhaled a few whiffs in silence. I can generally get on with open-air men. Besides, I wanted him to like me. I wanted him to ask me here. What do you imagine that I should think of it! The whole thing seems to me the most ghastly blunder--the most horrible anomaly. Your manner to each other; the lack of courtesy and consideration in him; his leaving you. I will try to obey you. At any rate, you allow me to be frank about myself. It was sweet of you to keep this--more than I could have dared hope for. You see it was not like an engagement ring. Is it quite fair to put it that way? Let us be honest with each other--this once. I daresay there will be time for a talk by and by. And, after all, I only want to know about you out of a sort of perverse curiosity. You always managed to infuse a bitter drop into your sweetness. If only I could ever have felt sure of you. We never could spend an hour together without hurting or annoying each other. The touch of your hand--the very sweep of your dress thrilled every nerve in me. I never in all my life loved a woman as I loved you. That last day when you walked out of my rooms. Fancy the properly brought-up English girl you used to hold up to me doing such a shocking thing as to visit you alone in your chambers! Is that Colin back again? Lady Bridget turned her head, her cigarette in her hand, and glanced up at his face. What she saw in it might have made a less reckless or less innocent woman feel uneasy. She was sure that he must have heard that last speech of hers about visiting Maule in his chambers. She did not turn a hair. Maule admired her composure. He extracted a bundle of papers from one of the pigeon holes. Maule had got up and was standing at the fireplace. Lady Bridget rose too. We keep early hours in the Bush. The station seemed in a state of unquietude till late into the night. The lowing of the tailing-mob in the yard was more prolonged than usual. And the horses were whinnying and answering each other down by the lagoon as though there were strangers about. McKeith was evidently busy upon preparations for his absence from the station. He must have been cleaning guns and pistols. There were two or three shots--which startled and kept her in a state of tension. Finally, her husband came to his dressing-room--not along the front veranda, as would have been usual, but by the back one, through the bathroom. Even this deviation from habit seemed significant of his mood--he would not pass her window. He moved about for a time as if he were busy packing. She imagined him on the edge of the camp bed, so seldom used, smoking and ruminating. Whiffs from his pipe came through the cracks of the door between the two rooms, and were an offence to her irritated nerves. She had grown accustomed to his tobacco, but, as a rule, he did not smoke the last thing at night. That attitude had appealed to all that was idealistic in both their natures,

and had kept green the memory of their honeymoon. It angered her that to-night, of all nights, he should disregard it. In personal details, she was intensely fastidious, and at some trouble and cost had maintained in her intimate surroundings a daintiness almost unknown out-back. Her room was large, and much of its furnishings symptomatic of the woman of her class--the array of monogrammed, tortoise-shell backed brushes and silver and gold topped boxes and bottles, the embroidered coverlet of the bed, the flowered chintz and soft pink wall paper, the laced cambric garments and silk-frilled dressing gown hanging over a chair. When service lacked, and there was no one to wash and iron her cambric and fine linen, she contrived somehow that the supply should not fail, and brought upon herself some ill-natured ridiculed in consequence. If they had known how much she wanted sometimes to throw herself into their lives--as she had thrown herself into the lives of her East-End socialistic friends! But the stations were few and far between, and the neighbours--such as they were--left her alone. Letting her mind drift along side-tracks, she resented now there having come no suggestion from the Breeza Downs women that she should accompany her husband and share the benefits of police protection, or-- which appealed to her far more--the excitement of what might be going on there. Of course, though, there was nothing for her to be nervous about here--she wished there might have been. Any touch of dramatic adventure would be welcome in the crude monotony of her life. But the adventure promised to be of a more personal kind. She did it on a wild impulse. She felt that she could not bear him near her to-night. He should see that she was not his chattel. But, perhaps, he did not want to come. Well, so much the better. In any case, she wanted to show him that she did not want him. She wondered if he would venture. She wondered if he did really care. He appeared in no hurry to test her capacity for forgiveness. Or it might be that the minutes went slowly--laden as they were with momentous thought. She lay in a tumult of agitation, her heart beating painfully under the lawn of her nightgown. She had a sense of gasping wonderment. She felt, as Colin had felt, that something tremendous had happened--and with such bewildering suddenness--altering all the conditions between them. Yet, through the pain and bewilderment, her whole being thrilled with an excitement that was almost intoxicating--like the effect of an insidious drug, or the fumes of heady wine. Try as she would--and she did try in a futile fashion-- she could not shut off the impression of Willoughby Maule--the sombre ardour in his eyes, the note of suppressed passion in his voice. There was no doubt that this unexpected meeting had restarted vibrations, and that his influence was a force to be reckoned with still. If Colin had acted differently--if he had not behaved so brutally to those poor blacks--if his manner to her had not been so hard and overbearing. And then his leaving her alone like that with Willoughby Maule! Of course, he was jealous. He had jumped at conclusions.

6: Lady Bridget in the Never-Never Land by Rosa Praed () - Full Text Free Book (Part 3/7)

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Lady Bridget was no exception to the rule of her family. She had accepted Colin McKeith in a blind impulse of escape from the old hedged-in existence of her order, of which she was quite tired and where-in she had proved herself a failure. She had been attracted by the idea that he represented, of wide spaces and primitive adventures. She had always longed to travel in untrodden ways, and had loved stories of romantic barbarism. And then, too, some queer glamour of the man had got hold of her. She was intensely susceptible to personal influence – his bigness, his simplicity, his strength and daring, and the feeling that he was quite capable of mastering her, not only by brute force – which always appeals to a certain type of woman – but by power of will, by a tenacity of passion which she recognised even through the shy reserve with which McKeith tried to cloak his adoration. For she was goddess to him, as well as lady-love – and that she realised plainly. A look from her would make him go white and his large hands tremble; an unexpected grace from her would fill him with reverent ecstasy. The thing happened one soft moonlit evening after dinner at Government House, when she had strolled out alone to a secluded part of the terrace, and he had followed her after the men left the dining-room. She was in a mood of tempestuous raging against her ordained lot. Letters had come from England that day which had irritated her and made her wonder how she could endure any longer her galling state of dependence. Eliza Countess of Gaverick had sent her a meagre cheque, accompanied by a scathing rebuke of her extravagance. Rosamond Tallant had been tiresome also and had made her feel that even here she was no more than a dependent who must conform to the wills of her official superiors. Joan Gildea might have served as a safety-valve, but Joan was away in or near the Jenolan Caves, and could not be got at unless Bridget chose to throw up other things and go to her, which Bridget was not inclined to do. The whole thing was a tangle. If only it were possible to find a way out that would not prove still more painfully complicated. At the moment the ting-tang of a steamer bell bound outward to the northern coast, borne to her on the river-breeze, intensified her desire for escape from conventional limitations. The heavy fragrance of magnolia and gardenia blossoms seemed freighted with exotic suggestion. The tropical odours blended with the perfume of autumn roses, which made a trellis over her head and overran the balustrades. The subtle mingling of perfumes that float in the clear air of an Australian garden, when the fierce heats of summer are gone, gave her a sense of almost intoxication. In fact, Bridget was in the mood for any desperate leap into the Unknown. Such was her unconscious thought as she crunched a spray of verbena in her fingers and inhaled the scent which had always a faintly heady effect upon her imagination. Presently he stood beside her, his tall form, in the well-cut evening suit which always became him best, towering head and shoulders above her small stature. There used to be a good deal of chaff between them about one of his personal predilections which jarred a little upon Bridget – his pipe and, particularly, the quality of his tobacco. But he did not change it in spite of her chaff. She was beginning to find a certain mule-like obstinacy about him in unimportant details. And then he had explained that, when camping out with the stockmen on their expeditions after cattle, he always smoked the same tobacco that he supplied to his hands. That was according to his rule of social equality by the camp fire, he said. Of course, Bridget had taken his banter in good part, and with a pretty grimace had told him she would get out a consignment of the stuff her Aunt Eliza gave at Christmas to the old men in their Irish village and present him with it. Above, the Southern Cross, set diagonally, in the dark clear sky gemmed with its myriad stars. There could be no doubt that Colin McKeith was in the grip of an infatuation such as he had never known before in his life. His breath caught in his throat and ended in an uncertain laugh. He stuttered in sheer awkwardness. Is anything the matter? Her eyes were softly glistening, her lips trembled. He thought of her as of a child seeking sympathy in a strange land, where nobody understood her and somebody had been unkind. He was intensely stirred by her impulsive appeal. Nobody wants me – here or in England either. Magnetic threads seemed to be drawing them to each other. He blurted forth instead? That does sound cheek!

Look here – talk it out. Had he been in any doubt as to its authorship that doubt must now be at rest. But he would never tell her of that episode. For one thing, his promise to Joan bound him. Like a stab came the remembrance of that man of whom Bidy had written – the man towards whom she had confessed a violent attraction – and who had behaved as a cad and a fortune-hunter would naturally behave. That he could have weighed money in the balance with this! She could not have cared for the fellow, or he must have thrown over everything else for her. Was it possible that she had cared – that she still cared? There must have been a lot of men in your life. Perhaps there was one who – whom you – loved. So much at such a price – birth, position, suitability, good looks – to be paid for at the market value. There was silence; Colin thought she must hear his heart thumping, but she seemed lost in her dreams. He put out his big hand and timidly, reverently, took hers, crushed verbena and all, as it lay on the balustrade. It rested like a prisoned bird within his; he could feel the nervous twitch of the little fingers. I like that word. I could yield to my master. But he would have to prove himself my master. He grasped her hand tightly as he spoke; she gave a little cry, for he had hurt her. He was all compunction and gentleness in a moment. I feel now that we, at least, are real – not social shams. Do you happen to own a gold mine, by the way? But rations were short and the Blacks bad. All the same, I suppose your grand relations would consider me a presumptuous boor for daring to lift my eyes to you. How strange that you should understand. You want more than freedom to make you content. Are you angry with me for saying it? I felt you were beginning to care for me, and I was wondering whether I ought to let you go on. As if you would be able to hinder it! Why, it seems to me that my feeling for you is as much a part of myself as the very blood in my heart. It was just a revelation, and then I bolted straight off to Alexandra City. After a few minutes, she answered deliberately. Dropping her hands, he stooped to her and his arm went round her. As his beard brushed her cheek, she shrank and moved a step from him. He, too, shrank, hurt by her rebuff.

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LibriVox recording of Lady Bridget in the Never-Never Land by Rosa Campbell Praed. Read by Kirsty Leishman
Following a failed love affair in England, Lady Bridget O'Hara accepts an invitation to travel to colonial Australia as companion to Lady Rosamund Tallant, the wife of the newly-appointed governor of Leichardt's Land.

Lifting herself slightly, she became aware that Colin was in the veranda with his back to her, looking out over the plain. The set of his figure as he bent forward, with his hands on the railings and his eyes apparently strained towards the horizon, reminded her of the determined hunch of his square shoulders and the dogged droop of his head when he had ridden away with Harris and the Organizer. She stared up at him, frightened at the look in his face. Something dreadful must have happened. She was too weak to go over coherently in her mind the sequence of events and feelings. She only sensed a menacing spectre, monstrous, terrifying. She could not realise her own share in the catastrophe she felt was impending. She could not believe that Colin could change so much in less than ten days. Everything had come about with such incredible swiftness. His face looked haggard, ravaged. The cheeks seemed to have fallen in. The features were rigid as if cut out of metal. The whites of his eyes between the reddened lids were very blood-shot and the eyes themselves seemed balls of blue fire. There was not a shade of kindness in them, only the gleam of a fixed purpose which no entreaties would alter. She could imagine that he might have looked like that, when, as a boy he had beheld the mutilated bodies of his father, mother, sisters, stretched stark, after the blacks had done their hideous work. And it was true that he did feel now somewhat as that boy had felt, for again to his tortured imagination that which he held dearest seemed to be lying foully murdered before his eyes. She, his love, had been ravished from him, and he could only regard her as dead to him for evermore. He laughed a dry ironic laugh. She heard him calling Maggie. After a few minutes he came back with a tumbler of beaten egg and milk, to which he had added brandy, and told her she must drink it. Her hand was too weak to hold the tumbler. He put one arm under the pillow, raised her head and held the glass to her lips until she had drunk every drop of the mixture. All this with no show of tenderness or one unnecessary word. She needed the nourishment and stimulant, and after them felt better. I must have been ill. What was the matter with me? I got a chill I remember. I should have thought you could have done what you wanted without that. And again the ironic laugh. She winced and drew her head aside. He took away his arm instantly from behind the pillow and straightened himself, looking down on her, still with that dreadful light in his eyes. She could not bear it, and turned her head away from him. What do you mean? I sent the men out. She got out of bed and tottered to the window. She could see now the wide range of the disaster. The lurid haze was spreading. The horizon shrinking, and the air was hotter than ever. The fire seemed still a long way off, but there was nothing to stop the flames if once they reached the great plain. The course of the river, here at best a mere string of shallow waterholes, was quite dry. The rain of the other night had been too insignificant and local to do any good. The brown mud-strip round the lagoon below, was not perceptibly diminished. She knew that the narrow water channels flowing from their one working artesian bore, must soon be licked up by the flames. And the Bore in process of construction, was at a standstill for want of workmen. Bridget gazed out despairingly towards the shrinking horizon and upon the parched plain with the rugged clumps of dun coloured gum trees scattered upon it--the near ones looking like trees of painted tin, sun-blistered. The swarms of flies, mosquitoes in the veranda offended her. She disliked the cattle dogs mooching round with hanging jaws and slavering tongues. And Colin was a part of the Bush. He too could be strong and sweet and tender as the great blossoming white cedar down by the lagoon, as rills of running water making the plain green--when his desires were satisfied. And he could be brutal and vindictive likewise, when anyone dared to thwart his will and defy his prejudices. She staggered about the room, feminine instinct prompting her to freshen her appearance, to change her soiled, crumpled nightdress, to throw a piece of lace over her dishevelled head, to pull up the linen sheets which had been rolled clumsily to the foot of the bed, so that the blankets could be wrapped round her. But she sank again presently, exhausted, on her pillows. In a short time McKeith came back, booted and spurred, and stood as before looking at her with forbidding sternness. She knows what to do. How dare you tell her to come near me. That seems a queer

way to put it. If you want to know I will tell you exactly what happened. I had some conversation with Harris this morning. But he thought better of it and walked rapidly away--perhaps because she avoided his look. But surely he would understand that she must have sent Maule away. What more can a wife do in the case of an over-insistent lover? Had he treated her differently after the Wombo episode in the beginning, she might have told him the truth about her former relations with Willoughby Maule. As things had been, it was rather for Maule than for Colin that she found excuse. She was bitterly hurt and offended against her husband. They could never again be the same to each other. If he had come back penitent, pleading for forgiveness, overwhelmed with contrition at her dismissal of Maule, she might then perhaps have explained everything and they might have become reconciled. But now, his vile temper, his insupportable manner, his dominant egoism made any attempt of conciliation on her part impossible. She had a temper too--she told herself, and her anger was righteous. She had rights--of birth, of breeding, to say nothing of her rights of wifehood and womanhood for which she must insist upon respect. If he would not bend to her, even to show her ordinary consideration and courtesy, then she would not lower her pride one iota before him. Thoughts of this kind went through her mind as she lay smarting under the burning sense of outrage, until the reappearance of Mrs Hensor. Then, the new effort she made in sending away the woman exhausted brain and body and left her with scarcely the power to think--certainly not to reason. She had not been in a condition to realize how all night through he had tended her, putting aside every other consideration, giving no heed to the affairs of the station, refusing to see the Police Inspector who had sent in an urgent message soon after his arrival. In ordinary circumstances, he would have been on his horse in a twinkling and riding as for life to fight the worst foe a squatter has to face in times of drought. He knew that if the fire spread, it might mean his ruin. As it was, he rushed up to the Quarters to rouse Ninnis and send him with Moongarr Bill and all available hands to do what he could in arresting the flames. But he himself dared not leave Bridget till the fever was down, and the crisis past. That could not be till she had awakened from the deep sleep into which she had fallen. Every now and then, he would creep on tip-toe to the veranda railings and gaze out upon the lurid smoke which it seemed to him was thickening over the horizon. From her he learned a considerable amount of what had been going on at Moongarr. From the Police Inspector, a little later, he learned a good deal more. They were saying in Tunumburra that his wife left him a quarter of a million. Harris drew in his feelers. He had dropped dead asleep--he confessed it--at his post. Then, how on awakening suddenly, for no apparent reason, all seeming quiet around, he had got up as he was, half dressed and in his boots-- had stepped across to the hide-house, had found the padlock intact and, hearing no sound, had concluded the black-boy was inside safe asleep. How then, with a relieved mind, he had been going back to his stretcher, when the noise of a goat bleating had set him on the look-out from his veranda. The question came in hoarse jerks. He freed himself by a dexterous duck of his head, and a sharp shake of his body, and stepped backward so that the office table was between him and his antagonist. But he was wary, and not anxious to provoke the devil in McKeith. McKeith made a slight assenting movement of his head, but said nothing. His brows puckered, and he stiffened himself as he listened, strung to the quick, while Harris continued. He just picked her up in his arms, and carried her right along, and when I stepped across I saw him take her into one of those rooms at the end of the front veranda. The Police Inspector avoided his gaze; but he too was watchful. I wanted to make sure, if I could, where the key of the hide-house might be. It never came into my mind then, that anybody could have used it. I noticed a bit of folded paper under the watch. He opened it out, and laid it on the office table in front of McKeith, keeping his own stubby finger on one corner of the sheet. Still McKeith maintained his difficult self-restraint. He seemed a long time in getting at the sense of what he read.

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And your Brotherhood of Man! She had a ringing laugh when she was amused. I could help you to break in horses. But it might amuse her to help cut out a few tame bullocks on a drafting camp if she had a good old station mount that knew its work. And I loathe cooking--domestic work--in a house. It would be different out of doors. The first time we camp out together. But she made a shrinking movement, and he, acutely sensitive, dropped her hands, and the love that had flamed in his eyes gave place to the dour look she did not know so well. And when you hold me off from the touch of your hand--the feel of your lips--well, it makes me wonder. You must keep your hands tight on her and let her go her own pace. There was an appeal in her voice. Be patient with me. I only know in a very confused sort of way WHY I want to marry you. It was the schemes, ideas, plans for living in the higher part of one. Tolstoy, Prentice Mulford--that kind of thing. It was my general attitude--expecting to meet something great and being disappointed. You are large--your surroundings are large. It will be just what I said--a new baptism--a washing in Jordan. But you will be patient, Colin; promise me that you will be good to me, and not ask too much--at first. But he restrained himself. He would not frighten her again. His breath came quickly, but he did not lose his self-control. He knew that he must go gently with her. She drew her hand down his coat sleeve and let it rest like a snowflake on his--a contrast in its smallness and whiteness to the great brown hand beneath. She looked at that, smiling whimsically, and he saw her smile, and reddened. It was on the last evening, and it made an ineffaceable impression upon him. They were standing, after dinner, close together by the balustrade of the terrace. It was a clear night, with a young moon, and the stars set deep in blue so dark that the sky gave an impression of solidity. The air was full of scents and of a soft balminess, with the faint nip of an early May in the Southern hemisphere. He had folded her light scarf round the child-like shoulders. The touch of his big hand stirred her--it had not often done so in that peculiar way. It roused something in her that she had thought dead or drugged to sleep, and took her back for an emotional moment to a certain late summer evening at Hurlingham, when she and Willoughby Maule had stood in the garden together under the stars. There came to her an almost fierce reaction against that moment. She felt a distinct emotion now, but it was different--less tumultuous, and bringing her a soft sense of enfoldment. He was the first to break the silence. It makes me tremble, darling--with happiness and hope, and with fear, too. What have I done, a rough Bushy like me--to win a woman like you? Well you know how I think about that. Whatever there was is past. There WAS somebody in especial--a man you cared for and might have married if he had been a finer sort of chap than he turned out to be? Has Rosamond Tallant been telling you? Let them lie--buried in oblivion. Is there any man in the world you care for more than you care for me? She looked up at him in the pale brightness of the thin moon and myriad stars. He stood with the faint illumination from the open windows of Government House upon his fine head and his neat fair beard. It intensified the gleam in his earnest blue eyes, while it softened his angularities and bush roughness, and as she looked up at him, she could not help feeling what a splendid fellow he was! So much finer than that other man to whom she had nearly given herself! Ah, she had had an escape! Under all his show of romantic adventure, his ardent protestations, his magnetic charm, that other man had been utterly sophisticated, worldly, self-interested. He had shown this in his money-grabbing, in his disloyalty both to the woman he had professed to love, and to the woman he had married for her fortune. Thinking of him in this way, Lady Bridget felt that in time she might come to care a great deal more for Colin McKeith, He caught up her last words. It would be hell. You seem to me such a child, Bidy, though you are always telling me you are such an old soul. A soul that has come back and back, and has lived a great many-- perhaps naughty--lives. I want you as you are in this one. And so I reckon would any man who has ever been in love with you. Let us go back now to what I was asking you. Bidy, there WAS a man--one man that you did care for? Let there be truth between us--truth at any cost. And of course, he has gone out of my life altogether. And this time she did not resist the caress. They were married with much flourish of trumpets and local paraphernalia. This one was regarded as

quite an official event. The Executive Council--at that moment about to undergo the pangs of dissolution--attended in a body. There were a great many members of parliament present also. But Colin McKeith vetoed that proposition. There, the repast was laid on tables decorated with white blossoms and maidenhair fern, under an awning festooned with flowers and exotic creepers, and supported apparently, by palm trees and tree ferns which had been taken from the Government Gardens. The bride looked small, pale, and quaint in her white satin dress and lace veil, now thrown back and partly confining the untidily curling hair. Some of the reports described her as being like an old picture; others as a vision from Fairyland. There was no doubt that he was extremely happy. The Premier too made a speech, and so did the Attorney-General, who was best man. All this had delighted the Leichardstonians, and when Sir Luke read out the congratulatory cablegrams received that morning from the Earl and Countess of Gaverick, Eliza, Countess of Gaverick, and one or two other members of the British aristocracy, the enthusiasm was great. The speeches were over; the wedding cake had been cut; the river-bar and the liner were in sight, when Lady Bridget went below and changed into sea-going blue serge. The mail-boat, beflagged in honor of the occasion, dipped a salute. The Governor led the bride along the gangway, introduced the captain of the mail-boat, and there were more congratulatory speeches, and still more of official ceremony as the bride passed by a line of inquisitive and admiring passengers-- fortunately there were not many--and down to the state-room prepared for her. She could not get away from the bewildering sense of unreality. It dominated every other feeling. She did not even reflect that there was no going back; that her fate was sealed, and that the Bush was henceforth to be her prison or her paradise. All the way up the river, Rosemary Tallant congratulated herself upon having done the best that was possible for poor Biddy the failure. It was all entirely satisfactory. Eliza, Lady Gaverick, was highly pleased, though she would not for the world have let her niece by marriage know it. Being Scotch herself she approved of the Scotch bridegroom, and began now to think seriously of the alteration she subsequently made in her will. Not being a good sailor Lady Bridget retired to her berth when the steamer got into a choppy sea. Of course she had no maid. Eh, but my word! The Company has done us both proud. A tender took them off with the mails--as it happened, they were the only passengers for that small sea-township. Ordinary business folk going north, preferred the smaller coasting steamers which put in at every port. The postmaster, the portmaster, the police magistrate, and a few local notables were waiting to receive them at the wharf. McKeith greeted them all heartily and rather shyly introduced them to his bride. The local men were shy also. They mostly addressed her as Mrs McKeith. The police magistrate--Captain Halliwell, lean, dark, sallow, with a rather weak mouth, but more carefully dressed than the others, and with an English voice, called her Lady Bridget. This man was a Christian Scientist which he announced when apologising for not offering the hospitality of his house, a new baby having arrived the day previously, ushered into the world, he explained, by prayer and faith and without benefit of medical skill. Bridget knew something about Christian Scientists. She plunged at once into faith-healing ethics with the police-magistrate, while Colin saw about getting the trunks off the tender. How odd it seemed to be talking about London and Christian science in a place like this! Leuraville too seemed part of a dream. But her face soon lost its bewildered look.

9: HOT FREE BOOKS € Lady Bridget in the Never-Never Land € Rosa Praed € 7

Leia «Lady Bridget in the Never-Never Land: A Story of Australian Life» de Rosa Praed com a Rakuten Kobo. Mrs Gildea had settled early to her morning's work in what she called the veranda-study of her cottage in Leichardt's To.

He came now by the covered passage on to that of the New House, and advanced towards her. He only came, she told herself, because it would have seemed too strange had he continued to ignore her existence. And he was conscious of her resentment. By a curious affinity, his own spirit thrilled to the unquenchable spirit in her. Qualities in himself responded to like qualities in her. He admired her pride and pluck. Yet the two egoisms reared against each other, seemed to him "could he have put the thought into shape" like combatants with lances drawn ready to strike. He believed that it was love which gave her strength "love, not for him, but for that other man whose influence he was now convinced had always been paramount, and who with renewed propinquity had resumed his domination. But when he saw the proud aloofness of her look, his longing changed to a dull fury, which he could only keep in check by rigorous steeling of his will against any softening impulse. So his face was hard as a rock, his voice rasping in its restraint, when he came near and spoke to her. I heard you go to the bathroom a long time ago, and I saw you going up to the Quarters. You must have loathed the sight of me. I was a disgusting object. If he had glanced at her he would have seen a piteous flicker of tenderness pass over her face "a sudden wet gleam in her eyes. And had he yielded then to his first impulse, things might have gone very differently between them. But he kept himself stiffened. He would not lift his eyes, when she gave him a furtive glance. The expression of his half averted face was positively sinister as he added with a sneering little laugh. She felt as if he had wilfully stabbed her. He on his side had again the confused sense of two antagonists, feinting with their weapons to gain time before the critical encounter. The end HAS come Answer me straight, Bridget. Well, that settles it! Again there was silence, and then he said: She moved abruptly, and stood gazing out over the plain till the hysterical, choking sensation left her. Her back was to him. He could not see her face; nor could she see the dumb agony in his. Presently she walked to a shelf-table on the veranda set against the wall; and from the litter of papers and work upon it, took up the cablegram she had lately received. There was something significant in the way he steadied it upon the veranda railing, and stooped with his head down to pore over it. The blow was at first almost staggering. It was as though the high gods had shot down a bolt from heaven, shattering his world, and leaving him alone in Chaos. They had taken him at his word "had registered on the instant his impious declaration. It WAS the end of everything. She was to quit He had said, the sooner the better By one of those strange links of association, which at moments of unexpected crisis bring back things impersonal, unconnected, the sound of his own laugh recalled the rattle of earth, upon the dry outside of a sheet of bark in which, during one of their boundary rides at Breeza Downs lately, they had wrapped for burial the body of a shepherd found dead in the bush. Both sounds seemed to him as of something dead "something outside humanity. He handed her back the telegram, speaking still as if he were far-off "on the other side of a grave, but quite collectedly and as though in the long silence he had been weighing the question. Ninnis could drive you to Crocodile Creek, and put you into the train; and Halliwell will look after you at Leuraville, and see you on board the steamer. I can drive myself. What are you thinking of to talk like that? In a few seconds he had recovered himself, and came back to her, speaking quietly. He went on in the same matter-of-fact manner. Anything you cared about could go afterwards. I want to take nothing "nothing except a few clothes. I only want the bare passage money. And directly I get to England I will pay you back. His face was terrible. At that moment, she could have bitten her tongue out. CHAPTER 9 If purgatory could hold worse torture than life held on that last evening Lady Bridget spent at Moongarr, then neither she nor her husband would have been required to do any long expiation there. It would be difficult to say which of the two suffered the most. Probably McKeith, because he was the strongest. Equally, he showed it the least when the breaking moment had passed. Yet both husband and wife seemed to have covered their faces, hearts and souls with unrevealing masks. No, it was worse than that. Each was entirely aware of the mental and spiritual barrier, which made it absolutely impossible for them to approach each other in the sense of reality. A barrier infinitely more forbidding than any material one of

stone or iron. Because it was living, poisoned, venomous as the fang of some monstrous deadly serpent. To come within its influence meant the death of love. There was not much more of the day to get through. Husband and wife both got through it in a fever of activity over details that seemed scarcely to matter. It surprised him a little that McKeith should not himself see his wife off; but he also recognised practical reasonsâ€”against that natural concession to sentiment. On the whole, it rather pleased him to find his employer ignoring sentiment, and he fully appreciated the confidence reposed in himself. The two men went over questions connected with the journey, overhauling the buggy so that springs, bars and bolts might be in order, seeing that the horses were in good condition, sending on Cudjee that very hour, with a second pair in relay for the long stage of the morrow, when over fifty miles must be covered. They calculated that under these provisions the railway terminus at Crocodile Creek, might be reached on the eve of the third day. Then there were letters to write, business calculations, a further overdraft to be applied for to the Bank, pending the cattle sales. Would there be saleable cattle enough to meet demands and expenses of sinking fresh artesian boresâ€”now that the fire had destroyed all the best grass on the run? That only added gall to his bitterness, new fuel to his stubborn pride, new strength to the wall between them. Then, after the ghastly pretence of dinnerâ€”during which appearances were kept up unnecessarily before Maggie and the Malay boy, by a forced discussion of matter-of-fact detailsâ€”looking out the exact time of the putting in of the next E. There was food for the journey too, to be thought of, and other things to talk about. As soon as the meal was ended, McKeith went back to the office, and Bridget saw or heard no more of him that night. He did not come even to his dressing-room. Her packing was no great businessâ€”clothes for the voyage, and a big furred cloak for warmth, when she should arrive in England in the depth of winterâ€”that was all. Everything elseâ€”her papers, knickknacks, personal belongingsâ€”she left just as they were. Colin might do as he liked about them. She felt reckless and quite hard. Only one among those personal possessions moved her to despairing tears. It was a shrivelled section of bark chopped from a gum tree, warped almost into a tube. She placed this carefully in the deepest drawer of her wardrobe. Would Colin ever find it thereâ€”and would he understand? All the time, through these preparations, strangely enough she did not think of any possible future in connection with Willoughby Maule. The events of the past few days seemed to have driven him outside her immediate horizon. When she came out in the morning dressed for her journey, she found her husband in the veranda waiting to strap up and carry out her baggage. Scarcely a word passed between them; they did not even breakfast together. He said he had been up early, and had had his breakfast already, but he watched her trying to eat while he moved about collecting things for her journey, and he poured out the coffee, and begged her to drink it. While he was there, Chen Sing brought in the basket of food he must have ordered for the buggy, and there was Fo Wung too, the gardener, with fresh lettuce and water-cress, and a supply of cool, green cabbage leaves in which he had packed a few early flat-stone peaches, and some Brazilian cherries. While they stood at the French window, McKeith filled flasks with wine and spirits, and packed quinine and different medicines he had prepared in case of her needing them. Then after shewing her the different bottles, he took the supply out to Ninnis to be put in the buggy. Everything was ready nowâ€”the buggy packed, the hood unslung so that it could be put up and down in protection against sun or rainâ€”this last alas! Alexander and Roxalana were champing their bits. Ninnis in a new cabbage-tree hat and clean puggaree, wearing the light coat he only put on when in the society of ladies he wished to honour, was standing by the front wheels examining the lash of his driving-whip. McKeith had given him his last directions. There was nothing now to wait for. McKeith went slowly up the steps of the back veranda, and in at the French window of the sitting room, where Bridget had been watching, waiting. At his appearance, she went back into the room. She stood quite still, small, shadowy, the little bit of her face which showed between the folds of her motor veil, where it was tied down under her chinâ€”very pale, and the eyes within their red, narrowed lids, dry and bright. She called him back in a hard voice. They stood fronting each other, and their eyes both smarting, agonised, stared at each other out of the pale drawn faces. For an instant too, the hardness of his face was broken by a spasm of emotion.

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