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Where Extremes Meet

By Otho B. Senga

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Hammond, strong, alert, silent, guided his dashing automobile in and out amid the crush of traffic. His companion was silent also, which fact might have disconcerted a less observant man than Hammond.

He stopped the machine before a massive granite building and sprang to the sidewalk. Miss Markham watched him absently. He had said that he must stop at his office, but the waiting was not unwelcome to her. She liked to watch the great drays and heavy wagons and to observe the sights and sounds of this unfamiliar part of the city.

Presently she noticed that Hammond had not entered the building, but was standing in the doorway, looking up

"SHALL WE LOOK FOR IT TOGETHER, ELIZABETH?"

and down the street as if watching for some one. He caught her wandering glance and waved his hand, smiling brightly. Then he put both hands to his mouth, making a horn, and called something to her, which she could not hear above the roar of the street.

"He is like a boy," she thought and laughed in sympathy with his evident joyousness. "There is never any gloom or any uncertainty about him," adding sadly: "Men are so sure of themselves—and of one another. I wish—I wish I knew if he thinks only of my money, as all the others seem to do."

Still watching his eager face, she knew that whatever he had been waiting for was coming, and he pointed up the street and laughed again as he ran lightly down the steps.

Two young Italians, a man and a woman, were making ready to play. The girl wore a rose wreath on her dark hair, and her eyes were filled with the light of love as she looked fondly in the face of her companion.

The strains of the music came to Miss Markham in fitful snatches, mingled with the noises of the street. She saw that Hammond was listening as if to a symphony, and she wondered a little as to the meaning of the scene. She saw him place something in the girl's small brown hand, and then the man took off his cap with low obeisance, and the girl courtesied prettily as Hammond raised his hat politely and made his way to the automobile.

"What is it?" she questioned briefly as he took his seat.

"Only the beautiful outcome of a little romance that I have watched as it blossomed here amid the sordid rush of business."

"They are lovers, these two?" falling in with his mood.

"Yes. Wedded last night. Two magnificent types of primitive humanity!" with the enthusiasm of artistic perception.

They watched the two as they went down the street, each pushing the piano with one hand, while the other hands were clasped.

"Will you tell me about them?" she asked as they reached a broad, quiet avenue away from the din and confusion of the city.

"Are you really interested?" turning to look at her curiously.

"Very much so. Please tell me."

"They are Antoine and Carita. They may have other names. These are all I know. I have watched them from my window all winter. He had a tiny fruit stand on the corner, and she was errand girl in a big millinery establishment on the next street. I saw the first love glances, and I swear by Bunker Hill they did not come from Antoine."

Miss Markham laughed softly.

"I watched Carita passing and repassing, making several trips by the little stand for each errand. Then there would be days when she did not come at all, and Antoine's neck would have been safer in those days if it had really been made of rubber instead of the material provided by the Creator."

Miss Markham smiled appreciatively. She could fancy the ardent Italian gazing up and down the street watching for his sweetheart.

"Well, occasionally making pretense of an abnormal desire for bananas, I rushed out to the stand while she was still lingering there, and so I sometimes overheard a few sentences—their soft Italian love words sounding like bird notes in spring. Can't you fancy them building a nest somewhere of boughs and moss—they wouldn't require much more than the birds, you know—and settling down like the birds to sing their love songs and rear their young?"

A new light shone in Miss Markham's clear eyes.

"And this is the man whom the girls describe as a mere business automaton," she thought, but she only said encouragingly, "Well?"

Hammond's head swam for an instant with a comprehension of the magnitude of what he meant to do, but he went on steadily.

"The day of the tornado—you remember it—when the wind tore shutters from the houses and overthrew chimneys and great limbs were stripped from the trees as the small boy pulls leaves from a twig—that day I witnessed the downfall of the house of Buona—in other words, the complete destruction of Antoine's fruit stand and peanut cooker."

Miss Markham sighed with quick sympathy. Hammond was unconsciously giving the little story a dramatic turn.

"Poor Antoine! He made one or two frantic endeavors to prevent the disaster, and then, crushed by the misfortune, he clung to the doorway of the office building and watched the gamins as they wildly scrambled for the scattered fruit."

"And was everything entirely ruined?" Miss Markham's hand instinctively sought her purse.

"The peanut cooker lay in the mud, bent and twisted out of all semblance to its kind. Antoine picked it up with trembling hands and then, realizing its uselessness, replaced it in the gutter, while the tears streamed down his cheeks."

"That isn't all?" expectantly.

Hammond continued obediently: "'Never mind, Antoine,' I said cheerfully—it's so easy to be cheerful over another's misfortunes, you know—'you'll soon be on your feet again. We must expect reverses in business.' At my words of sympathy the flood gates of his grief were opened, and the words fairly tumbled over one another, his soft broken English finally relapsing into Italian altogether as he told his story. He had been so careful of his money—he had saved twenty-three 'dolla.' They were to have been married tomorrow, he and Carita, and he was to have bought Carita a new gown and a rose wreath for her hair, and they would have been so happy! And now—then he pointed eloquently to the ruined peanut cooker, waved both hands in a gesture expressing the utter nothingness of his condition, and the ready tears came again.

"I missed him then for several weeks. The other day they came together and waited until I came out from the office. 'My brudda—he die,' began Antoine cheerily as soon as I joined them. 'An' leave Antoine seventy-four dolla,' said Carita, her eyes big with the magnitude of the fortune. 'An' his business,' Antoine added pompously. 'Did he have a stand?' I asked him. 'No, a piano. We marry ourselves tonight, Thursday.'"

Hammond paused abruptly. The expression on Miss Markham's patrician face was so unlike the usual air of polite indifference that he was almost startled into the telling of his own story, forgetful of the Italian lovers. "That is all," he added awkwardly.

"And how did you know they would be at your office this morning?" as if reluctant to leave the subject.

"Antoine hunted me up last night—at the club. Said his wife—you should have seen his eyes when he said the word—his wife wanted to come and play for me first, believing it would bring them luck. I hadn't intended to go downtown this morning, as you know, but I thought that was really very little to do if it would add anything to their happiness. Foolish things, aren't they?" He turned his head away. She would agree with this, of course, and he couldn't bear to have her do so.

She put her hand lightly on his arm.

"No, they are not foolish. They are wise. They have found the greatest thing in the world. Those who win love need look no farther; there is nothing more to have here. They who lose it lose everything.

He put his own strong hand over the smaller one resting on his arm.

"Shall we look for it—together, Elizabeth?"

She looked hastily about—there was no one near; they were quite in the country now—and raised her beautiful face to his. "I think we have found it already," she whispered.

A Very Large Mine.

There was once in Cripple Creek an odd character named Burns. He was an odd person, who always, no matter what his work, wore what used to be called a "Prince Albert." He struck a rich vein of ore and named that the Prince Albert. Being of a generous and convivial disposition, this lucky fellow was, of course, surrounded by many self seeking friends. When he and they were in their cups some of them, with an eye to the main chance, managed to wheedle out of Burns on one pretext or another a deed of a share in his mine. With royal prodigality he scattered deeds about among his retainers and camp followers until finally something had to be done, and the case was taken into court. One of the lawyers had Burns on the stand. "Now, Mr. Burns," said the lawyer, "will you please tell the court how you can explain your conduct? The evidence shows that you have deeded away twenty-nine twenty-fourths of your mine. What have you to say to that?" "Well, sir," replied the witness, "you must remember, sir, that the Prince Albert is a very large mine."

Flow of Spirits in Youth.

How unaccountable the flow of spirits in youth. You may throw sticks and dirt into the current and it will only rise the higher. Dam it up you may, but dry it up you may not, for you cannot reach its source. If you stop up this avenue or that, anon it will come gurgling out where you least expected and wash away all fixtures. Youth grasps at happiness as an inalienable right. The tear does no sooner gush than glisten. Who shall say when the tear that sprung of sorrow first sparkled with joy?—H. D. Thoreau in Atlantic.

The Rose and Its Thorns.

This is the old legend of how the rose came by its thorns: One day in paradise Cupid was flying over a garden of roses. Blossoming there was a beautiful pink rose. Cupid bent to kiss it when a bee hidden in the flower stung him on the lip. Crying with pain, Cupid fled to Venus, his mother, demanding vengeance. Venus, to pacify him, gave him a bow strung with captive bees and set the stem of the rose with stings torn from the poor bees. These stings now are called thorns.

His Appearance Under Difficulties.

"Robbed by footpads, were you? It must have made you feel like 30 cents."

"Yes, and I'll bet I looked like 12 o'clock."

"How do you mean?"

"Hands up."—Philadelphia Ledger.

Corrected.

She—Oh, you men, with your proverbs! You say that knowledge is power, yet— He—Well, isn't it? She—Knogledge! No; it's the way you do your hair.—Brooklyn Life.

The object of art is to crystallize emotion into thought and then fix it in form.—Delsarte.

Managing a Husband.

Mrs. Brickrow—How do you manage to persuade your husband to buy such expensive bonnets? Mrs. Topflatte—I take him shopping with me, walk him around until he can't stand and then wind up in a bonnet store. He'll buy anything to get home.—New York Weekly.

His Gladness.

"What happened? Has somebody left you a fortune?"

"No. I've just been up to have the dentist pull a tooth, but a notice on the door says he's at home sick abed."—Chicago Record-Herald.

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