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The great, dark, empty theatre echoes back the strains falsely, mockingly. Far back in the shadows an army of auditors may be seated, but my eyes cannot discern that far. As the last chord crashes and dies away upon the silence, I fancy that a low sigh dies too.

The place is haunted by the ghost of the multitude that has sat here hours ago, even as my heart is haunted by Elida. My nervous fancy sees you often, loved one, where you are not; and tonight in the box yonder, for one fleeting moment, to my longing eyes, a girl appeared, alone, so like—so like you—

Out over the jangling keys I throw my arms and bury my face between them. And as I lie alone in the intense quiet of the great empty place, there comes to me the motif of the great song I shall write, the song that shall live when we both are long dead and forgotten. Twice before has its divine music sung in my ears. Once, faintly, when I lost you; once again the night the world acknowledged me. Yet never before tonight were the tones of that soul-sat s'fying melody so clear, so strong, so pure, so masterful. This shall be the significance of my life; this shall be my greatness, Elida.

In a fever of rapture I raise my head and drop my hands to the keys that the song may be born out of the silence, out of the sadness of my heart.

Yet I strike no note. For now all power in me is suspended, all my faculties are dead but one—I can see.

And I am not alone.

In the box nearest to me, on a level with the stage, so near that I can almost hear her breathe in the intense stillness, a woman sits. One gloved hand clutches the heavy curtain that half conceals her figure, the other holds a lorgnette whose gleaming rubies catch the flare of the one light. And the eyes behind are fastened upon me, here at the piano—we two—alone in the vast, dark, echoing hall, when night itself is dead and morning yet unborn.

If, in the dusk that hovers over the great stage, she can read my eyes, she must see terror there, my heart's panting fear of the unknown, my strained nerves' repudiation of the unexpected.

In her eyes—ah! but I cannot be sure. And this reflection studies me. Perhaps I am mistaken, as mistaken as when, earlier in the evening, I had thought this motionless figure Elida's glorious, free, supple body and those fixed eyes behind the dull gold lorgnette the frank, sweet, shining eyes of my love.

Before I reach the box I know that she is dead. Sitting there listening with her gaze upon me, she had passed into the great beyond. I know it all now; I realize the situation in every de-

tail. The theatre emptied, and still she sat in the shadow of the curtain, as I saw her sitting that once, when she reminded me of Elida. And when, returning I played alone to my lost love, she, this dead woman, sat gazing with sightless eyes through the lenses of her lorgnette.

I am mad to think of it. Yet I turn back from the box, and sitting down at the piano again begin to play. Of all the music that lives in my heart, of all the composers whose melodied passion lies waiting at my finger tips, none is mine at this moment. I have forgotten all. But one song lives for me—my own. Yet mighty, superb, complete it choruses within me now—a composition so great, so sorrowful, so human, that one might be content to die, and die worthily in giving it birth.

"When the Heart Breaks," it shall be called, Elida," I say in a stammering whisper.

For now I know her. From afar, out of the past, my heart has called her. And its imperious entreaty has wrought the miracle. While I had played before that vast audience of strangers, the one—the one in all the world who held the key which could translate into words the torrent of music that gushed from me—had heard.

While I had stormed through the streets, driven madly on by my yearning sorrow, she had been there waiting for me. Alive then?

When I re entered and sat playing to her the history of our old musical life together she had been there. Listening? God! To know when, just when Death had found her!

And yet—ye!—My fingers seek the keys. My eyes seek hers. Once again that wonderful melody leaps from within me, stronger, surer, perfected now,

alive with glorified passion, yet so eloquent of sorrow, so fraught with human misery, that tears fall upon my hands. My eyes are running over, and is hers—in hers—

She lives, then! I swear it. If dead before, my music, mine, has brought her back. Behind that ghostly, watchful, mocking lorgnette I see her eyes again; her own eyes vanquishing the cold, steady, vacant glare that froze the blood in my veins; her own sweet, shining eyes, alight with purity, afire with love for me.

* * * * *

And now I mourn two deaths. My song, my great heart's melody, the divine strain that should have been immortal, struggles within me. Yet even when its perfect beauty is nearest to utterance comes again the memory of that night, and I am again at the piano in that great dark hall, and I see those dead eyes behind the lorgnette coldly peering at me. But then comes mental torture, and the remembrance of the after part of that terrible night, which no one knows, grows clearer. Then I realize that if I follow the two memories, so closely linked that one is not but in the other, my song shall live again.

For then I shall know what followed when Elida's eyes grew cold again, and—and whither I carried her. I shall know—God! on what a thread does sanity swing—I shall know if the dead woman was indeed my love—my love!

I shall know if Mohr, to quiet me, lies; blunderingly, as he would lie, when he says there was no woman there.

* * * * *

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