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"Who? Larry Jolio? I should say he is—greater than any one else in the world!" Her eyes glowed with the fire of a woman defending her ideal.

"Humph!" Bristle snorted. She rose, and began to stir the great pot whose fragrance fairly tickled the nose.

"Soup?" he hoped aloud. She nodded her head: "Vegetable; don't you love lots of pepper?" She was sprinkling the condiment violently; but suddenly paused, transfixed. Bristle wondered if she were going to sneeze.

The woman seemed to grow taller, more vivid—a creature magnetized by some unseen force. Bristle started to speak to her; she halted him with a hand, silenced him with her eyes. He paused mutely.

The clock in the adjoining room slowly struck four! It was the first time in twenty years that Bristle had not felt the hour. This gave him a shock; but even that was secondary to the strange impression made on him by the transformation in the woman. His expression demanded an explanation. She relaxed, dropped into a chair and laughed ripplingly:

"I know you are wondering, and I doubt if I can explain. You see this friend—Larry Jolio,—had a strange theory. Perhaps, to make it clearer to you I'd better remind you that many consider four A. M. the hour at which vitality is at its lowest ebb; it is often the time of crises in the sick, and many release their breath for ever at that fragile hour. Now, Larry believed, on the contrary, that life is at its flood tide at four P. M. The mind, the emotions, the artistic creative faculties are then at their supreme height. It is the hour of achievement. Taking advantage of the abnormal forces engendered by this climax of the day, Larry gave to the world the greatest, the most splendid, art."

Bristle gasped. How dared this Larry—What's his name flinch his theory and enlarge upon it?

"I've found it true in my own case, too," the sweet voice was continuing; "ever since I discovered four o'clock, I've been able to harness my powers. All my very best things have been written between four and five. If only Pan-of-Punkhookie could have been induced to accept this theory, he might have been a more successful poet—Mr. Fondé always said so."

"Fondé?"
"Yes."
"What a queer name," weakly commented Bristle.

"Which—Fondé? I'd never thought it so; but his friends did have strange names. For instance, there were Larry-Jolio and Pan-of-Punkhookie. I did not really know either of them, you know," she added demurely; "but I always felt so intimate with all Mr. Fondé's friends. He had such a vitalizing way of describing them."

A quiver ran over Bristle. Light was breaking. "Pan-of-Punkhookie"—the poet of the little cedars. Was the grave, too, giving up its dead?

"Would you like to come up to my studio?" she asked. "I've something to show you that will, I think, convince you of the truth of the theory I was mentioning. Yes, let the dog come too. What's his name?"

"Seraggs."
"Seraggs? How remarkable! I, too, once had a dog named Seraggs."

Bristle felt so queer and ethereal, he no longer knew surprise. Perhaps, his longing for something tangible, mundane, caused him to ask, when half way up the stairs:

"You're sure the soup won't burn?"

She laughed reassuringly:
"Be not alarmed, Oh, Greedy One! Turn thy thoughts from the things of the flesh to the realms of the soul."

She led Bristle into a room dusky as twilight. Walking to a window, by a single touch she loosened the shade at one spot, throwing the light upon an old lamp-reflector, which in its turn threw its gathered and intensified rays upon a painting on the opposite wall.

Bristle stood transfixed.
Six years before, an idealistic painting by Lassalle J. Bristle, entitled "The Song of Betsinda-Sue," had been the

sensation of the Academy. Created and creator once more gazed silently on each other. The woman beside Bristle smiled triumphantly at the evident impression on the man.

"Is n't it the most mysterious thing?" she almost whispered. "She really breaks the silent bonds of art's transfixion; she sings—sings—sings. Can't you hear her limpid high notes now?"

Bristle shifted his eyes with difficulty to the ones nearest him; "And you; how did you come by the painting?"

"My dear friend, Mr. Fondé." Her eyes were shining with tears. "He is dead now." She paused a full minute. "He left it to me—was n't it beautiful of him?—gave it because I loved it. He always fancied it looked a little like me; then, he thought, too, for some reason, that Larry would like me to have it. Of course, I was never so lovely, not even in my most poignant youth."

"It didn't do her justice," Bristle voiced his thoughts.

"Her? Did you, then, know the model?"

"Yes. She—she was the woman."

"The famous singer?"

"Yes."
"Oh!" Her voice was hushed and reverent. "How exquisite. Did you, could you, have known the painter—my Larry Jolio,—Mr. Bristle?" Her eyes riveted him; her hands fluttered nervously.

"N-no, I've never known him well. Your friend Fondé knew him a little better; but the only person who really knew him, understood him, was a woman." He paused, reaching a hand toward his heart. "The owner of this; and he held out the pink slipper; "dear Betsinda-Sue."

At the sound of Fondé's old name for her, the woman started, made an inarticulate beginning, snatched the slipper, and throwing her head back with a birdlike motion, burst into peals of girlish abandon.

"Well, well, well! That clears up the greatest mystery." She held up the slipper. "Oh, my poor head is whirling! Wait a minute;" and she dashed into the next room, leaving the door open, through which Bristle caught the glints of an old brass bed, the shadows of faded brocade.

She reappeared, her eyes two stars, her cheeks two fires. In her hand lay another pink slipper.

"Been looking for its mate six long years!"

"So have I," Bristle replied solemnly. "But I'm not going to take any chances of being fooled now by one of Cinderella's artful sisters. The fit is the only proof, you know." His eyes fell on her pink skirt frills.

She flung herself on an old stool. "There, then!" She poked out two provoking feet.

Down on his knees fell the Prince Bristle. Clumsily, he unbuttoned a shoe with one unsteady hand, fighting away Seraggs' excited, intrusive nose with the other.

"No, Seraggs, don't be too certain. Nothing but a fairy princess ever had a foot to fit our slipper."

But Seraggs was n't listening. He was being squeezed by two pink arms. His master held two palms of two tiny feet, in two broad palms of two trembling hands.

"Mistress Betsinda-Sue, I hereby solemnly offer in the name of 'Larry Jolio,' the devoted heart of his double, Lassalle Jacques Bristle; and I furthermore have the honor to inform the owner of my pink slipper that she starts tomorrow on a wedding journey, chaperoned by Seraggs."

Seraggs was pushed aside, the two pink arms flung themselves around another neck.

"Oh, Larry! Larry! I'm so happy. Kiss me quick!"

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