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**Elizabeth's Warning**

Outside the landscape was sodden and dreary. A chill rain beat against the pane and now and then sharp gusts of wind shook the naked limbs of the trees and sent flying the few withered leaves that still clung to the branches.

It seemed to Elizabeth, sitting at the window, that the day was typical of her own life, for the rain of discontent beat in upon her soul and the gusty winds of adversity shook her faith in mankind and sent scurrying through the void the dead leaves of her withered ideals.

Tomorrow she would go back home—home to the dingy little farmhouse where she had toiled and slaved through all her young life; back to the drudgery of baking, sewing, and the thousand and one tasks of domestic life, yet in her hand she held a letter which offered her an avenue of escape and assured her a cessation of the drudgery that had borne in upon her soul ever since she could remember.

Until recently she had been content, for she knew no other lot. Then had come an invitation from her sister to visit at the latter's home through the summer. Margaret, her elder sister, had married for money through the kindly offices of a summer boarder who had taken an interest in the clever girl. Her husband, Mr. Tobin, was compelled to remain in town this summer that he might be under the care of a famous specialist and, deprived of her accustomed visit "back home," Margaret had asked that Elizabeth might come to her.

For four months Elizabeth had moved through a dream life in the expensively-furnished home of the Tobins.

There were always guests in the evening, for Richard Tobin entertained lavishly, though he was forbidden the rich foods that he loved to set before those who enjoyed his hospitality. Dicky Belding had called it "eating Tobin's dinner for him."

And now she was to leave it all, to go back to the dull routine of the farm until, in the spring, Guy Rawlings should claim her as his wife. Marriage to Guy would mean only work in a new home; perhaps even more work, for his farm was small and a heavy mortgage had been left upon it by his father.

Cyrus Hartzell, too, had written her an offer of marriage, and the letter lay in her lap as she looked out of the window across the park. Hartzell was an intimate friend of Tobin's; a dry, withered, money-making machine, whose first wife had died—so it was said—because of the privations she had endured in Hartzell's early days of money-making, when every penny was put back into the business to be turned over and over again, multiplying itself until at last Hartzell was at once a widower and a millionaire.

And now he honored Elizabeth by offering her his hand and fortune. He wanted someone to preside over his home as gracefully as Margaret played the hostess for his friend. It was a business communication rather than a love letter, but Elizabeth preferred it so. She could not have endured it had he spoken of love. As it was, she rose, at length, and crossed the room to the tiny writing desk. There was no real engagement with Guy, and in a few short words she expressed her appreciation of the honor Hartzell had done her and accepted his offer.

She still sat at her desk, the letter, sealed and stamped, lying before her when Margaret entered. Something in the tenseness of her attitude alarmed the younger girl and she sprang to her sister's side.

"What is it, Meg?" she cried, as she threw her arms about her. "What has happened?" Margaret bent and kissed the girl's white lips. "Richard is dead, thank God," she said simply. "He was seized with an attack and died before we could get the doctor."

Elizabeth recoiled at the harshness of the tones and softly murmured "Thank God?" Margaret turned to her passionately.

"Yes, thank God," she cried. "Bess, you don't know what I have gone through with. No one will ever know what I have suffered unless they, too, have sold their lives for comfort and wealth. For six years I have been tied to a man I did not love, who did not love me, denied even one word of love. Now I have my reward. I am rich and a widow, but—God help me—I no longer have a heart. It is dead within me, killed by my loveless life."

Gently Elizabeth led the hysterical woman to a sofa and while the household, upset by the occurrence, hurried about to see that needful things were done, Elizabeth sat with her sister, vainly trying to comfort the stunned woman.

At last with an effort Margaret roused herself. "I must go and see that flowers are ordered. I must keep up appearances to the bitter end," she said dully. "Bess, you will wait until—until afterward, won't you?"

"I shall not go until you no longer need me," promised the girl, as she put her arm protectingly about Margaret. Slowly they moved toward the door, but on the threshold Elizabeth paused and ran toward the desk. In the tiny grate a cheerful fire burned to offset the disagreeable dampness of the weather, and on the glowing coals she laid the letter to Hartzell.

"Guy is not rich," she whispered to herself, "except in his love—but that is the best of all."

**WHITE ROSES**  
By CELIA MYROVER ROBINSON

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The room was bright with the soft light of shaded lamps and the red glow of an open fire and redolent of the spicy breath of roses. On a little spindle-legged table the blossoms were glowing in a mass of deepest crimson. Their heavy fragrance made Margaret's head throb and she pressed her hands to her eyes, wearily.

In her ears the applause was still ringing. From pit to gallery the storm had swept and again and again she had been recalled. When she had, with difficulty, eluded the black-coated throng about the stage entrance, she had sunk back in the cushioned depths of the barouche, too weary to do more than smile faintly in appreciation of her manager's extravagant praises.

Only the insistent ticking of the little Dresden clock broke the silence of the room, but from the streets below a dull, muffled roar came to her. She crossed the room and looked out on the busy lighted streets.

How the people jostled and elbowed! A good-natured crowd it was. She, in all the wide city, seemed to be alone.

From the little church on the corner came to her the hymning of the choristers, practicing the Sunday music, their fresh glad voices rising exultantly.

She put her hands to her ears, as if to shut out the sound, and then, crossing the room, seated herself at the piano, touching the keys softly. At first her fingers wandered idly, carelessly, but after awhile they evoked a plaintive little air, and she sang, her glorious voice filling the room with melody.

She broke off with a little discordant note and leaned her head against the music rest, like a tired child.

Presently she rose and stood regarding herself in a long glass. Her cloak had fallen to the floor and she stood revealed in all the magnificence of her stage gown, glittering with jeweled trimmings and billowy with costly lace. The coils of her hair were thrust through and through with jeweled pins and about her throat was a necklace of diamonds. She turned her head this way and that, watching the gems flash and sparkle. Then she drew from the bosom of her gown a note and read the words again that she had read and reread many times, a smile of scorn curving her lips.

He had sent her the note with the diamonds and the roses this morning, and tonight she had promised him an answer. It was much that he offered her—wealth, position and an old, if tarnished, name—and his love!

She drew the crimson roses from the bowl and then thrust them back with a gesture of loathing. They were too heavy, too sweet, too gorgeous. They reminded her too forcibly of him. They suggested too strongly the dollars and cents expended on them. She sank into a carved chair, and, taking a photograph from a silver holder on the desk looked critically at the cynical, world-worn face. As she pushed the picture back into the holder a pile of letters met her eye; she remembered that her maid had reminded her of her mail, on her return from the theater, but in the crowding thoughts which had submerged her, she had forgotten it. She pushed aside the letters contemptuously. She was used to, and weary of the effusions.

But as she pushed them from her a little oblong box met her eye, and beside it, addressed in the same handwriting, lay a letter. With a smothered exclamation she bent nearer, and her face showed oddly white under the rouge.

With trembling fingers she tore open the letter and read:

"My Little Love:  
"You will doubtless be surprised to hear from me. In your new and gorgeous surroundings the old life must seem to you like a dream; the old friends, like people of a dream. But to me you are ever the same Margaret—my little love."

"Even in this sleepy village rumors of your great fame come to us. I hear you have the world at your feet. But it has not spoiled you, I know. For with your beautiful voice and your beautiful face, God gave you a beautiful soul. You will grow weary of your gaudy, empty life some day, for love must conquer in the end."

"I passed our old trysting place to-day. The roses were in bloom all about it. A rush of old memories came to me and I plucked some of the half-opened buds to send to you. Goodbye, my dear, my dear,  
"With faith and love,  
"R."

She tore the cover from the box and drew out a cluster of white roses.

From the flowers in her hand she looked at the crimson blooms in the bowl, and again at the blossoms in her hand; little blossoms they were, looking insignificant and meagre beside their regal sisters, but she pressed them to her lips, a rush of tears blinding her. Then she bowed her head upon her hands—not sobbing—only remembering.

The noises of the street grew faint and far; instead, the grass was green beneath her feet, the sky was blue overhead, and under a canopy of little white roses she stood, her head upon her lover's breast, listening to the first whispers of love. The lumbering of some heavy vehicle roused her. With a sudden im-

petuous movement she unclasped the diamond necklace from about her throat and heaped it in a glittering pile upon the desk, and tossed the photograph upon the glowing coals. Then she rose, white and trembling; the voices of the choristers still hymning in the grey old church, came to her. She stood listening, with the roses crushed to her breast. After a while she went into the room beyond, and, kneeling down, drew from a drawer an oblong package. She shook out the folds of a white muslin gown and smoothed it, caressingly.

"You child," she whispered to herself, "you child!" But she went on smoothing out the crumpled folds.

Laughing softly, she slipped out of the heavy, silken gown and donned the simple white one. She let down her heavy hair and braided it in one long plait, washed the rouge from her cheeks, and pinned the white roses in the laces at her throat.

Then she went back to the sitting room and stood before the mirror, regarding, with grave eyes, the face that looked back at her; no longer that of a world-worn woman, but of a radiant girl.

The little maid stared when she entered with a card, but Margaret was too engrossed to note her surprise.

"I will see him," she said, and there was a hard note in her voice.

She was standing with her back to the door and at first he did not recognize her, but as she turned and addressed him, he went forward dramatically.

"Ah, it is you, Mademoiselle? It is a new role, then? It is something that I have not seen before, is it not so? It is not Elsa, nor Marguerite, nor any of those others, and yet—Ah, Mademoiselle, you are always beautiful, but tonight you are more than beautiful, you are—"

She held up her hand. "No," she said, "it is not Elsa nor Marguerite, nor any of those roles that you have seen me play so many times. It is an old role which I discarded years ago, but which I have resumed tonight, and which I hope to continue in throughout my life. It is a role which I have played many times, the only requisites of which are simplicity and truth, and the applause, the only applause worth while, the appreciation of truth and honest hearts."

"When I came to the city," she went on, "this great, throbbing city, with its beautiful, sad, wicked life, I was a young girl, untutored in the hard lessons of the world. I had lived among people whose women were good and men honest and I thought all men and women good and honest. When I think of the simple, untried girl I was and the dangers that menaced me, I shudder, even now."

"But the world was good to me. My voice and the beauty men say I possess, stood me in good stead. The world offered me its poor best, and I was dazzled with its glitter and gleam. I was like a fly, caught in a golden web, fascinated and yet afraid."

"Today, Monsieur, you asked me—you did me the honor to ask me to become your wife; you offered me wealth and position—"

"And my love, Mademoiselle."

"And your love. Tonight I give them back to you with these." She held out the great string of diamonds. "You did me a great honor, and I thank you for it, but tonight an influence that has exerted itself throughout my life has spoken to my heart in a voice which cannot be silenced. And so I am going away. I am going back to the old role again, the role of the simple, happy, quiet life. I shall marry a man who is not great, perhaps, as the world counts greatness, but who—"

"But Mademoiselle, what of me? Do I deserve no consideration? Am I to be thrust aside so? Surely I—"

"You cannot say anything of me—you cannot accuse me more mercilessly than I accuse myself. But because I have wronged you, would you have me make my wrong still deeper? My heart is far away in the south-land tonight where these little white blossoms came from." She touched with gentle fingers the roses on her breast.

The Frenchman stood with bowed head. For the first time it came to her that it was given, even to this worldling, to love sincerely. A great pity, born of the new beauty and light in her own life, stirred within her heart.

She layed her hand for a moment on his.

"Forgive me," she said.

He raised her hand and kissed it, reverently.

"Mademoiselle," he said earnestly, "do you know what you are relinquishing? Are you prepared to forego all the luxury, the pleasure, the splendor of your present life—to give up that which has become almost a part of your being?—to give up all this for a life narrow and petty—a life dull and, perhaps, even sordid?"

She raised her head proudly, and he thought he had never seen her more beautiful than when she answered him.

"No," she said, "it is not sordid, and it will not be dull. Monsieur, it will be glorified by love."

For a moment he stood in silence. Then he raised his head and looked into the clear eyes:

"Ah, Mademoiselle, it is worth an eternity of misery—one hour of love such as that."

He touched her hand again with his lips, and then went quickly from the room, without a backward glance. She sank down beside the window, resting her bowed head on her arms, and on the night air came to her the voices of the choristers, triumphant, joyous.

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